

average tariff levels are belied by stubbornly high barriers against imports of textiles, apparel, steel, and many agricultural goods, such as sugar, cotton, beef, citrus, and dairy products. So-called antidumping laws are used to impose tariffs on imports that are allegedly being sold at an unfairly low price, but in reality are being priced according to normal market conditions.

Libertarians agree on the desirability of free trade, but not always on how to achieve it. Some libertarians are skeptical of trade agreements between governments, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement, because such agreements can exclude politically sensitive sectors from liberalization or can create new bureaucracies to monitor environmental or labor standards. They see the World Trade Organization (WTO), the successor to the GATT, as an unnecessary governmental body and a potential threat to national sovereignty. Other libertarians argue that such agreements, including those negotiated through the WTO, restrain the power of governments to interfere in peaceful commerce, and that any flaws are usually outweighed by the trade liberalization they achieve. Debate also continues on whether trade promotes peace among nations, as Richard Cobden and others believed. A decline in international wars in recent decades, along with rising globalization, appears to support the connection, although some economists challenge whether there is any significant correlation.

Despite the political controversy it generates, free trade has become widely accepted by economists as the best trade policy for promoting a nation's prosperity. It is a genuine libertarian idea that has gained widespread acceptance in theory, if not in practice.

DTG

See also Anti-Corn Law League; Development, Economic; Globalization; Mercantilism; Taxation

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FRENCH REVOLUTION

The French Revolution, which usually dates from the meeting of the Estates-General in 1789 to the end of the Directory in 1799, or sometimes to 1815, was part of a more general movement for liberal reform that transformed Western Europe and North America in the late 18th century. This movement for liberal reform, whose aims included deregulation of the economy, constitutional limits on the power of the monarch, equality before the law, freedom of speech and of the press, and religious tolerance can be seen as originating in the American Revolution, continuing in several parts of Europe during the 1780s with the reforms of the “enlightened despots,” among them Joseph II of Austria, and intensifying with the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789. The historian R. R. Palmer has shown how reform ideas, money, and people flowed back and forth between America and Europe during those decades as the aptly named “trans-Atlantic” revolution swept away the old regime and created the foundations for the modern liberal, constitutional, and democratic societies that were to emerge in the 19th century.

The French Revolution not only transformed France by sweeping away the legal and political privileges of the ruling elites, but also triggered independent revolutions in other states, such as the French colony of Haiti, where ex-slaves created an independent state. More important, it carried the reformist ideals of democracy and republicanism via the French Civil Code to the neighboring European states as Republican and then later Napoleonic armies conquered much of Europe. One of the many paradoxes created by the French Revolution is the idea that all the people of Europe could be liberated from feudal oppression at the point of a French gun. Another paradox, which was hotly debated by liberal historians in the 19th century, was how to explain a movement whose original intentions were to increase individual liberty, deregulate the economy, and limit state power that yet produced the Jacobin Terror and the military dictatorship of Napoleon Bonaparte. It might well be that every revolution for liberty sows the seeds of an inevitable period of counterrevolution before more stable and workable political and economic institutions emerge in which liberty can flourish.

It is useful to view an event as complex as the French Revolution as a series of sometimes overlapping stages in

which rival groups contended for control of the state, with various political groups having the upper hand at different times. Classical liberals were active at some of these stages and were able to implement many of their reforms, but at other times they were forced into exile, as was Benjamin Constant. Still others went into political retirement or even were arrested and killed.

The first of these stages was essentially prerevolutionary and took place between 1787 and 1789, when the fiscal crisis of the Old Regime forced Louis XVI to call a meeting of the Estates-General, the first since 1614, to enact new tax measures to stave off bankruptcy.

This meeting was followed by a stage marked by liberal reforms passed by the National Assembly, the parliamentary body created when the Third Estate (i.e., those who represented neither the nobility nor the clergy) declared itself, in June 1789, to be the National Assembly of France and invited the other estates to join it. The Assembly immediately proceeded to enact reforms that effectively ended the Old Regime. On the night of August 4, 1789, in one of the most dramatic moments of the Revolutionary period, one member of the nobility after another stood in the Assembly and renounced all feudal obligations owed them. Several weeks later, the Assembly proclaimed the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. In the form of a new National Constituent Assembly, it was the Third Estate that undertook the more difficult tasks of drawing up a new constitution, reforming the administration of the country, and reforming the judiciary. The result was the Constitution of 1791, which, for the first time in France, created a liberal constitutional monarchy.

The third stage saw a militarization and expansion of the Revolution. It began on September 20, 1792, with the declaration that France was a republic, and continued through the fall of Robespierre on 9 Thermidor Year II (July 27, 1794). It and the subsequent stages of the Revolution were generally marked by centralization, war, and expansion, until the final defeat of Napoleon in 1815. This constant warfare was partly a reflection of the pressing need for France to defend itself against a coalition of monarchical powers opposed to the Revolution, a coalition that was led and financed by Great Britain and that sought to restore the monarchy and the privileges of the clergy and nobility. It also was partly the result of the desire to liberate the rest of Europe from the burden of feudalism by force of arms if necessary.

Internally, the Revolution became more radical with the trial and execution of the King in January 1793. From then onward, the radical, antimarket Jacobins gained in political power, purged their enemies, and initiated the Terror, which was to characterize the remainder of the Revolution's third stage. During the Terror, the Jacobins suspended the rule of law in order to eradicate their enemies. For example, the "Law of Suspects" facilitated the arrest of anyone suspected of opposing the regime. During this period, any power previously in the hands of liberals was removed. Liberal policy,

which since 1789 was aimed at creating a free society in France, was replaced by an economic dictatorship whose primary goal was to fund the state and the army. Perhaps the most famous decree falling under this rubric was the Law of the Maximum, which introduced stringent price controls. In addition, the "Ventôse Decrees" allowed the state to confiscate the property of "enemies of the state." It is estimated that 17,000 people were officially executed during the Terror—many by the newly invented humane killing machine known after its inventor as the guillotine. A further 10,000 to 12,000 people were summarily killed without trial. That illiberal madness only ended when Maximilien Robespierre, the leader of the Jacobins, was arrested on the ninth of Thermidor (July 27, 1794) as a result of internecine struggles among the ruling elite. He was guillotined the following day.

The fourth stage reflects a period of relatively more moderate, liberal republicanism under a government known as the Directory (1794–1799). Under the Directory, the inflationary paper money, *assignats*, originally issued in 1790, was replaced by a more stable metallic currency, and the policy of massive economic interventionism came to an end. The wars of expansion, however, continued, especially in northern Italy, where a young general, Napoleon Bonaparte, was in the process of creating the foundations for a future political career as someone who could solve the problem of continuing political chaos with strong leadership. The hopes of many liberals for the Directory were dashed by persistent corruption, the threats of political coups from both the "left" (radical Jacobins) and "right" (royalists), the annulment of elections when royalists did better than expected, and an ongoing policy of anticlericalism.

The fifth and final stage of the Revolution began with the coup d'état on 18 Brumaire (November 10, 1799), which brought General Bonaparte to power, first as Consul and then as self-proclaimed Emperor. The Empire is marked by a curious amalgam of legislation that entrenched many aspects of the Revolution in French society—under the Civil or "Napoleonic" Code of 1804—and resurgent militarism and statism that were antithetical to the liberal ideals of 1789. When Napoleon was finally defeated at Waterloo in 1815, the French Bourbon monarchy was restored in name, but was forced to coexist with a new legal code and a constitution—the "Charter" of 1814—that realized many of the ideals of the liberal, constitutional monarchists who had begun the Revolution.

The role played by classical liberals in the French Revolution was significant, although they had to compete (not always successfully) with radical democratic Jacobins, militaristic Napoleonic imperialists, and unrepentant monarchists. During the last decades of the Old Regime, many prominent Enlightenment figures had argued for religious toleration (Voltaire), economic liberalization (Turgot), the abolition of slavery and the slave trade (the abbé Raynal and Grégoire), and other liberal reforms. They helped create a climate of opinion on the eve of the

Revolution that was reflected in the *Cahiers des doléances*—the books of complaint drawn up in each region for the Estates-General in 1789. These documents reflected the almost universal opposition to the unequal and heavy tax burden placed on ordinary citizens. Thus, like the American Revolution, the early phase of the Revolution can be understood, at least in part, as a tax revolt against the Old Regime. There were numerous classical liberals among the clergy and the nobility who were members of the Estates-General and who defected from their Estates to join the Third Estate in the National Assembly. There they introduced the reform legislation of the period 1789 to 1791, during which the liberalization of French society was most advanced. The classical liberals active at this stage of the Revolution tended to be supporters of the free market, among them Pierre Samuel Dupont de Nemours, and of constitutional monarchism—such as the members of the “Society of 1789,” which included Lafayette, Sieyès, and Mirabeau. Their agenda was to abolish the legal privileges enjoyed by some groups, to free the economy, and to place constitutional limits on the powers of the King.

At a time when formal political parties did not exist, like-minded individuals formed loose and informal groupings or clubs to pursue a common political agenda. Prior to the Terror, the most liberal of the groups was the Girondins, so called because its most influential members represented the Gironde region around Bordeaux. The Girondins were active in the Legislative Assembly (1791–1792) and in the early National Convention (1792–1793), where they continued their liberal reforms. However, their position as defenders of individual liberty was severely weakened by their support for the war on those nations that supported the French monarchy. Their primary motive in doing so was to rally popular support for the Revolutionary regime, but it required spending vast resources on the army, resources that were not available to the government, but that were procured by inflating the newly issued currency, paper *assignats* supposedly backed by the expected future sale of land confiscated from the church and the nobility. The hyperinflation that followed did much to alienate the poorer classes from the liberal revolution and to radicalize the urban poor, thus paving the way for the political victory of extremist Jacobins. The war was used as justification for massive interventions in the economy, notably the Law of the Maximum, which imposed price controls on staple goods. The Girondins were further weakened by a split in their ranks over the trial and execution of the King. Some of them were radical republicans who voted for the execution and for the formation of a republic in order to protect the Revolution from aristocratic counterrevolution. Others were moderate republicans, such as the American Thomas Paine, who in the Convention opposed the execution and favored exiling the former Louis XVI to America. Still others were constitutional monarchists, who wanted only to chastise the King and to tighten the constitutional limits on

his power. Thus, weakened by internal disputes, the economic crisis brought on by hyperinflation, and military reversals, the Girondins were driven from power by the Jacobins in June 1793. The Jacobins forced many Girondins to flee, arresting some, including Paine, and executing others. The Jacobins reversed many of the liberal reforms that had been introduced since the Estates-General was first convened. The rule of law was suspended so that “enemies” of the revolution could be more easily arrested, tried, and executed; the currency was further devalued to finance the revolutionary armies; and extensive price controls and other government interventions in the economy were introduced to supply the urban crowds with cheap bread and the armies with materials.

Not all the liberals involved in shaping the Revolution were Girondins. The so-called *Idéologues* were influential during the period of the Directory and the early years of Napoleon’s rule. The Directory reintroduced free markets and limited government and was thus naturally attractive to liberals recovering from the Terror. One notable liberal, Antoine-Claude-Laurent Destutt de Tracy, found a home in the newly created National Institute’s Class of Moral and Political Sciences, where he pursued his study of human behavior and the nature of free institutions, a study he called “idéologie.” Other classical liberals were active as journalists or in politics, among them Benjamin Constant and Jean-Baptiste Say. With Napoleon’s rise to power, liberal criticism was less and less tolerated, and many *Idéologues* fell silent, retired, or were forced into exile. This state of affairs continued until 1814, when Napoleon belatedly rediscovered the virtues of liberal constitutionalism on his return from Elba.

It remains to evaluate the impact of the French Revolution on European society, especially its contribution to creating a free society, both in France and elsewhere in Europe. This assessment poses a difficulty for the classical liberal, in that some stages of the Revolution were marked by considerable liberal reforms, whereas others witnessed the reversal of those reforms and the reemergence of political and economic oppression in a variety of forms. The classical liberals of the early and mid-19th century generally held, given the refusal of the Old Regime to reform itself, that the Revolution was inevitable and was the only means whereby the old ruling elites could be dispossessed of their privileges. Despite its ups and downs, on balance it made a major contribution to individual liberty by creating the foundation for the free societies that were to emerge in the 19th century. As the liberal historian and politician François Guizot noted with some wisdom and insight in 1820:

I will still say that the Revolution, brought on by the necessary development of a society in progress, founded on moral principles, undertaken with the design of the general good, was the *terrible* but *legitimate* battle of right against privilege, of legal liberty against despotism, and that to the

Revolution alone belongs the task of regulating itself, or purging itself, of founding the constitutional monarchy to consummate the good that it has begun and to repair the evil it has done.

When trying to draw up a “balance sheet,” one needs to take into account the complexity and long duration of the Revolution and the short- and long-term changes brought about in European society. Many of the beneficent reforms took some years to emerge, which suggests that Edmund Burke’s vigorous criticism of the Revolution in 1790 was somewhat premature. Some of the gains were short-lived and were overturned by later regimes, thus making an overall assessment of its achievements difficult. The positive achievements of the Revolution include the following: the abolition of the legal privileges of the ruling elites of the old order; the sale or privatization of church and émigré land that created a new, more diversified property-owning class; the abolition of slavery and the granting of many civic rights to women, such as divorce; the creation of the Civil Code—begun before Napoleon but completed under his rule—that provided legal guarantees for the protection of life, liberty, and property, but that unfortunately severely reduced the rights of married women; the spread of the idea that a constitution should spell out the rights and duties of citizens and limit the power of the monarch; and the spread of the ideas of individual rights, democracy, and republicanism.

The negative consequences of the Revolution also were quite numerous. They included the virulent anticlericalism of some of the radicals, which alienated potential supporters of the Revolution, such as the liberal-minded clergy and pious peasants; the hyperinflation of the *assignat* paper money that produced economic chaos, corrupted the state, and imposed a severe economic burden on the poor and thus radicalized and militarized the main constituency that helped bring the Jacobins to power; the Terror and economic dictatorship of the Jacobins whose violation of individual liberty on a massive scale brought the nation near to economic and social collapse; the conquest and annexation of neighboring countries in the name of liberating them from feudalism, which alienated potential supporters of the Revolution and stimulated the rise of nationalism, especially in Spain and the German states; the administrative and tax reforms of the Revolution that continued the centuries-old practice of centralizing state power in Paris at the expense of federalism and the autonomy of the regions; the demands of war, combined with unstable and corrupt governments that resulted in the rise to power of a military dictator who eventually proclaimed himself Emperor; and the more conservative and reactionary regimes that followed the radical phase of the Revolution, which led to the loss of freedoms that had been won earlier (especially for slaves and women).

In many respects, the most positive achievement of the Revolution was the creation of a new language of politics,

natural rights, constitutionalism, democracy, and republicanism—which can be summarized in the revolutionary slogan of “liberty, equality, fraternity”—along with the expectation that the institutions of a free society would be built during the coming century on top of the precedents established during the liberal stages of the Revolution. But, like a two-edged sword, the Revolution did much the same thing for the enemies of individual liberty. For example, Marx and other socialists looked to the political violence and massive government intervention in the economy of the Jacobin Terror as a model for the future socialist revolution. Today, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the discrediting of Marxism, it seems likely that the liberal aspects of the French Revolution will be its most enduring legacy.

DMH

See also Burke, Edmund; Constant, Benjamin; Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen; Paine, Thomas; Rousseau, Jean-Jacques; Say, Jean-Baptiste; Voltaire

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FRIEDMAN, DAVID (1945–)

David Friedman, like his late father Milton Friedman, is both an academic economist and a popular intellectual with an unabashed libertarian orientation. However, there are important differences between the views embraced by the two men. Academically, David Friedman is best known for his largely theoretical work in the economic analysis of law