

Chapter five. The revolt of the privileged

The struggle between the ~~noblesse de robe~~ ~~defending Parlements~~ Parlements, advocates of the Nobles of the Robe (1), on the one hand, and the rigorously centralised and despotic administration of the state, on the other, sometimes reached the pitch of a general struggle of all the privileged against both this administration and the absolute monarchy: a struggle which did not stay within the ~~limits walls?~~ of a court intrigue --brutal, but ~~invisible to the~~ ~~unseen by the~~ people outside --but which rather ~~called upon the entire non-courtesan~~ (2) class called upon all classes outside the court, ~~and carried the multitude along with it.~~ and carried the masses along with it. (3)

1. Chapter 4 and the order of the text implies that “Parlements”, the institution, should be the focus, not the class of Nobles of the Robe (kept in English also as per Chapter 4)
2. “Courtesan” implies a prostitute in English – better to use “Courtier”
3. This whole first paragraph is definitely the roughest of the chapter, but I’m having a hard time thinking of a way to fix it. Also, I don’t know if “masses” here is the same word as when Marx uses the concept – best to consult the German.

The most significant ~~movement~~ upheaval? (1) of this kind was the Fronde, which we mentioned in the previous chapter. This took place in the first half of the seventeenth century, at a time when the nobility still had ~~energy~~ vitality and self-confidence. An analogous ~~movement~~ upheaval was on the verge of breaking out in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. ~~The Fronde had culminated in a reinforcement of absolutism.~~ The upheaval of 1648 had culminated with the reinforcement of absolutism. (2) The ~~movement~~ upheaval which ~~started~~ began in 1787 would culminate in the victory of the Third Estate; (3) it would be the ~~prologue~~ prelude to the ~~great~~ Great? Revolution.

1. I feel like “movement” downplays the violent conflict of these events. “Upheaval” fits better in English, but the word doesn’t appear as accurate to the source (The German is “bewegung”).
2. Rather than “the Fronde”, the original German mentions something along the lines of “The movement of 1648” (bewegung von 1648). I think that the emphasis on different outcomes in different historical periods is an important theme to keep. A less confusing middle ground would be “The Fronde of 1648 had culminated with the reinforcement of absolutism”. Also, I have to mention: we could replace “had culminated” with “was

crowned” for a play on words with “absolutism”, but I doubt this was implied anywhere in the original.

3. Colon from the German original

We have already noted Louis XVI's ~~hesitant~~ ambivalent (1) attitude in the second chapter.

1. Fits his dualistic nature below

~~This was~~ His tenure represents the most classic incarnation of the dual nature of the absolute monarchy of the eighteenth century. ~~Under his reign, these two facets were typified by~~ , and at his side sat the most classic representatives of these two tendencies: Turgot on one side and Calonne on the other. (1) The first, a profound thinker as well as a strong personality, genuinely sought to put the state at the service of economic development, to free it from the obstacles that hindered it, and to put into practice the measures that the ~~theoreticians~~ theorists had ~~decided~~ determined were ~~necessary for maintaining~~ needed to maintain the cohesion of the state and society. He refused to ~~let~~ allow the state administration to be exploited in the interests of the court nobility. He abolished the corvée, internal customs barriers, and the guild system, and set industry free from the constraints of regulation. He wanted to put ~~tax?~~ (2) the nobility and the clergy ~~at~~ on the same level as the Third Estate, and to ~~put~~ subject public expenditure ~~in~~ to the control of an Assembly of Estates. These were unacceptable attacks upon "sacred rights." Led by the queen, the mass of exploiters revolted against the reformist minister, and Turgot succumbed to the assault in 1776.

1. This was a really tough sentence to revise. The German mentions “most classic” (Klassischste) twice, so I tried to implement that into the text. I personified the king more than I think the original did (at his side, etc.) but I don’t think there’s any other way to do it.

2. Put them on the same level in what way? The same tax obligations?

After a whole series of experiments, of attempts to ~~roast~~ shear? the sheep without it realizing (1), the king called Calonne to the helm (1783). He was a man after the queen's own heart. A superficial charlatan, but crafty and shameless, his ~~only~~ sole method was to sacrifice to an increasingly insatiable court nobility not only the current, but also the future income of the state, and to plunder not only the existing finances, but also its credit. ~~Borrowing proceeded borrowing.~~ One loan after another was taken out; (2) Over the three years that he governed, he borrowed 650 million livres (a precise breakdown can be found in Louis Blanc, I, 233), an enormous sum at the time. And almost all of this went into the pockets of

the court, of the king and queen, and of their favourites. "When I saw that everyone was holding out their hands, I held out my hat, too," recalls a prince evoking the atmosphere of intoxication **debauchery?** of the time. And indeed, the court was swimming ~~with~~ **in** delights; not a voice was raised ~~in warning~~ **to warn** of the fatal results of these delirious schemes. ~~Louis XVI himself manifested the ravishment with which his finance minister filled him~~ **Louis XVI was elated with his new finance minister (3)**, who, ~~significantly, upon his appointment, had his debts paid off by the king, amounted to 230,000 livres.~~ **characteristically, began his assignment by having the king pay off his own debts to the tune of 230,000 livres. (3)** The whole court was ecstatic about the ease and speed with which the great man had succeeded in solving the social question. [8]

1. This is the second time I've seen this analogy, the other one is in Chapter 6 about high finance. It appears to a variant of a German saying about washing pelts without water? We should ask a German anon what the heck this saying means and maybe add a small translator's note.
2. Having a hard time thinking of a verb besides "taken out" – "fulfilled?" Also, in the German text a comma links these sentences; I turned it into a semicolon.
3. Does this have the same meaning? The original seems redundant and overlong.

The insane escapades of the court naturally had the result of bringing about the collapse of the entire system. Three years later, Calonne's wits were at an end. The annual deficit had now reached 140 million livres, and Calonne himself was forced to admit that no loan could save them from inevitable bankruptcy. They had to increase revenue and lower spending, which was only possible at the expense of the privileged. It was impossible to squeeze any more out of the people.

Very good

When Calonne announced this to the Assembly of Notables that he had convoked (February 1787), he was greeted with howls of anger from the privileged. An anger which was not ~~directed~~ **aimed** at the scandalous policies of Calonne, but ~~which instead was~~ **rather** let loose at the **very** idea of seeing them stopped for the simple reason that it was no longer possible to ~~carry on with~~ **continue** them. Calonne fell, but his successors were obliged to resume his policies of ~~increasing~~ **restoring** the burden on the privileged, who ~~ended up convincing themselves~~ **became convinced** that the monarchy no longer had the means to continue to guarantee them the exploitation of the country ~~in the same proportion as~~

~~formerly~~ to the same extent as before. They thus revolted against the monarchy itself. Incredible, but true: the nobility, the clergy, the Parlements, ~~the totality of the privileged~~ the whole privileged stratum (1), whose position was already undermined to the core and which only held steady at all thanks to the support of the royalty, united themselves into a coalition in order to saw off the branch that they were sitting on. Such is the degree to which a doomed class, which has lost all reason to exist, can be blinded and driven by its own greed to do everything ~~in~~ order to bring about its own fall.

1. Stratum instead of class since I don't want to drop the C-word with its political implications unless it's necessary. Can you clarify the meaning of this passage to me please?

The privileged had not the slightest idea of the ~~upheavals in the relations of forces~~ changes in the balance of power? within society; they believed that everything was as it had been in the past, at the time when they had defied the kings and the Third Estate: so much so that they vehemently ~~protested~~ agitated for (1) the convocation of the Estates-General on the model of 1614. While they only stayed afloat thanks to the monarchy, they pretended now once more to preserve their privileges, their exploitation, by resorting to their own strength. At the very moment when, faced with a great menace, they should have ~~held together~~ held fast (2), a mutiny ~~exploded~~ broke out in their midst for the division of the loot!

1. "Protested" implies that the nobility opposed convoking the Estates-General – is "agitated for" what you're looking for? "Demanded?"
2. A sailing metaphor to go with "mutiny", remove if needed

Blinded by their wrath, the privileged entered into the revolutionary field. The Parlements were all suspended in May 1788; the clergy refused to contribute in any way to the state finances as long as the Estates-General were not convoked; the nobility rose up, armed, in the provinces, and Provence, the Dauphiné, Brittany, Flanders, and the Languedoc saw serious unrest.

More and more, the Third Estate took part in these movements and contributed to the chorus calling for the convocation of the Estates-General, but this did not anger the privileged: the monarchy had shown that it could no longer continue to be anything but the nerve centre of exploitation, and the monarchy had thus become the enemy, and the task of the privileged to shatter this absolute power. They hated the Third Estate too much to fear it. Who was going to tremble before a few rustics, shoemakers, tailors, and a handful of lawyers?

Excellent paragraphs

The absolute monarchy could not stand ~~up~~ in the face of a combined assault from all ~~other~~ (1) orders. It was forced to consent to the convocation of the Estates-General, whose inaugural evening took place on the 5th of May 1789, a date now remembered as the beginning of the revolution. But it must be noted that the upheaval against the absolute power of the King ~~had already started by then~~ **by then had already begun**; that it was the ~~privileged who set the ball rolling and began~~ *privileged* (2) **who set in motion** the movement which would culminate in their own ~~destruction~~ **downfall?**; and that it was they who ~~imposed~~ **demande**d? the convocation of the assembly which was destined to seal their doom.

1. Isn't the monarch supposed to stand above the orders?
2. Everything in bold in the French is in italics in the German

Of course, the nobility and the royalty, those rivalrous siblings, soon reconciled their differences. ~~Naturally the privileged united~~, **and the privileged coalesced again** behind the King ~~as soon as~~ **once** they realised how much the people and the deputies of the Third Estate hated them. But it was already too late.

Note

8. When the fallacious promises of Calonne led to an ~~over-subscription~~ **overdraft?** ~~of~~ **on** the first loan, an important figure exclaimed, "I knew that Calonne would rescue the state, but I would never ~~had~~ **have** imagined that he would succeed so quickly"