Provincial Politics in the French Revolution
Paul R. Hanson

Provincial Politics
in the French Revolution

Caen and Limoges, 1789–1794
For Betsy, Timothy, and Christopher
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Preface

This study represents an effort to pursue a regional analysis of provincial politics during the early years of the French Revolution. I have chosen for that purpose a comparative approach, focusing on Caen, a federalist center in 1793, and Limoges, a departmental seat that opposed the federalist revolt. There are two reasons for undertaking a comparative study. First, examining two towns that were in many ways similar should make it possible to determine what was unique to each town and to isolate the factors that led to their political differences. Second, the comparative method will better explain regional variation in local responses to national events.

For the comparative method to succeed, of course, the cases being compared must be carefully chosen. Caen is an obvious choice—it is the only one of four centers of the federalist revolt that has not already been extensively researched. Since Series L in the departmental archives has until recently remained virtually unclassified, little serious research has been undertaken concerning the Revolution in Caen.

Limoges meets the criteria for a second town in this comparison. First, it was a Jacobin town. In the weeks following May 31, 1793, the Limoges and Haute-Vienne administrators were initially noncommittal and then openly hostile to suggestions from other departments that they join in a protest directed against Paris and the National Convention. Additionally, Limoges resembled Caen in size and administrative function. Although Caen was
somewhat larger than Limoges at the end of the Old Regime (Caen's population stood at just over 35,000 and Limoges' at approximately 22,000), both were among the thirty largest towns in France. Each town was the seat of an intendancy and the site of the important regional courts. Neither town hosted a parlement, Caen falling in the jurisdiction of Rouen and Limoges in that of Bordeaux. Limoges was a bishop's seat and Caen was not, that honor falling to the nearby town of Bayeux. The Church must thus be said to have been more important to Limoges, but both towns possessed numerous religious establishments. The role and fate of the clergy during the Revolution was much the same in the two towns. A more interesting contrast is the fact that Caen possessed a sizable Protestant minority, whereas Limoges did not.

Each town was an important regional trade center, Caen dominating Lower Normandy and Limoges doing likewise for the Limousin and the Marche. Limoges lay on the crossroads between Lyon and La Rochelle, between Bordeaux and Paris. Caen bisected one route between London and Paris, though war often disrupted trade between these two capitals. Because of Caen's proximity to the coast, merchants there traded more actively in international markets, though the Orne River and the port of Caen were not capable of handling ocean-going vessels until the very eve of the Revolution. Agriculture presented the greatest economic difference between the two towns. Whereas Caen lay at the heart of a rich grain district, the area around Limoges was hilly and rocky, very poor for cultivation.

This book is first and foremost a study of revolutionary politics, of what molded and determined those politics at the local level. More than simply to compare the local politics of two towns, however, my goal has been to establish the links between local and national political actors, between local and national political issues. Although the nature of local politics tells us a great deal about national political divisions, we need to consider social and economic factors to understand why local politics took the shape they did. Indeed, since I consider those factors to be primary, the manuscript begins and ends with them. Chapter One establishes the economic context in each town and also discusses urban geography and associational patterns among both the social elite and the lower classes of Caen and Limoges at the end of the Old Regime. Chapter Two explores the development of political alignments and confrontations during the first three years of the Revolution. By 1793, the local elite dominated the political arena in Caen, while in Limoges that
arena was much more open and contentious. An examination of the events of 1789 through 1792 sheds some light on how that contrasting situation came to be. Chapter Three departs from the local scene to shift our focus to Paris in 1792 and 1793, where an emerging political crisis was increasingly drawing the attention of provincial leaders. My concern in that chapter is to emphasize the ongoing political dialogue between Paris and the provinces and the degree to which national and local issues were intertwined. Chapters Four and Five describe and discuss the federalist revolt and the subsequent repression and reorganization of departmental administrations, stressing the themes established in Chapters Two and Three. Throughout these chapters, the sections devoted to Caen are somewhat lengthier than those devoted to Limoges. This denotes no implicit judgment as to relative importance but rather the simple fact that Caen produced a revolt, with the resultant mountain of documentation, while Limoges did not. Chapter Six analyzes the social and economic factors that, in my view, explain the political differences already established. The Conclusion returns to the broader context of French revolutionary politics in order to appraise the explanatory value of the conceptual interpretations offered by Albert Soboul, Edward Whiting Fox, and Alexis de Tocqueville (discussed first in the Introduction) and to ask whether a regional analysis can help us to understand the federalist revolt and the French Revolution.
Acknowledgments

It is humbling to think that in the length of time it has taken me to complete this modest project, the French challenged and deposed their king, had a revolution, and saw Napoleon come to power. At least in my case, I did not lose my head in the process.

It has been ten years since I began research on the project, and even longer since I first conceived the idea in a graduate seminar at Berkeley. A great many people have helped me along the way, and I should like to thank a few of them here. Lynn Hunt gave me crucial early guidance and advice and throughout the writing and revising of the manuscript has been unfailingly generous with her time and good counsel. Among my graduate school colleagues, David Lansky listened patiently to my ideas and provided a sympathetic sounding board in the early stages of research and writing. During my first lengthy research trip in France, John Merriman introduced me to the pleasures and perils of living in Limoges, and his subsequent reading of the entire manuscript was enormously helpful.

A special note of thanks must go to M. J. Sydenham, who offered much-needed encouragement to a struggling young assistant professor and generously agreed to read this study. I benefited greatly from his extensive comments and criticisms. Jack Censer, Steven Vincent, and Steve Batalden have also read the manuscript at various stages, and I appreciate their advice and encouragement as well.
I should also like to acknowledge the assistance of the archivists and librarians in Caen, Limoges, and Paris, without whom this study would not have been possible. At the other end of the process, it has been a pleasure to work with the entire editorial staff at Louisiana State University Press. At several points in the preparation of the manuscript, Butler University has supported me with faculty fellowships and financial assistance.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Betsy Lambie, who endured a winter in Caen with me, and a summer in Limoges. Her careful eye has saved me, or perhaps I should say the reader, from any number of transgressions against the English language. Betsy has read this manuscript almost as many times as I have, and for that she has my unending gratitude.
Abbreviations

A.C. Caen  
A.C. Limoges  
A.D. Calvados  
A.D. Haute-Vienne  
A.N.  
B.M. Caen  

Archives Communales, Caen  
Archives Communales, Limoges  
Archives Départementales, Calvados  
Archives Départementales, Haute-Vienne  
Archives Nationales  
Bibliothèque Municipale, Caen
Provincial Politics in the French Revolution
Introduction

On June 2, 1793, surrounded by the menacing ranks of the Parisian National Guard, the French National Convention proscribed and placed under watch twenty-nine of its members. The forty-eight sections of Paris, rallied by Robespierre and the Jacobin club, had revolted on May 31, demanding the abolition of the Commission of Twelve (called in May to investigate the Commune of Paris) and the exclusion from the Convention of twenty-four deputies. The proscription of twenty-nine Girondin deputies two days later marked the culmination of the May 31 revolution and was the breaking point in the eight-month political struggle between the Montagnard and Girondin factions. The Montagnards, under the growing leadership of Robespierre, emerged victorious and were to rule France until Thermidor.

But the political victory of the Montagnards came much less easily in the departments of France. Nearly fifty of the eighty-three departments protested the proscription of the deputies. Many formed departmental committees of public safety to coordinate these protests. In some, constituted local authorities convened primary assemblies. A much smaller number engaged in violent resistance to what they considered an incomplete and unrepresentative National Convention. Indeed, not until October did the cities of Bordeaux and Lyon submit to republican troops, bringing the insurrection to an end.
As early as June, the provincial protests were labeled as manifestations of "federalism," and the scattered resistance was described as a "federalist" revolt. Jean Julien of Toulouse opened his report to the Convention in early October, 1793, as follows: "Citizens, the people have conquered, federalism has expired, the misled departments have rallied to the Convention, and to indivisibility." In this two-hundred-page document, Julien detailed a well-developed plot, extending back to at least January, 1793, that he claimed had united internal enemies of the Republic in an effort to undermine the liberty won by the Revolution and deliver France to the tyrants whose armies were then besieging the country.

The use of the label "federalist" to describe either the political intentions of the Girondin deputies or those of the departments that rose in their defense is problematical, but it has been adopted almost unquestioningly by historians of the Revolution. Thus, the uprisings in the provinces from June through August, 1793, have collectively been termed the "federalist revolt" and are generally understood to have been a reaction to the proscription of the Girondin deputies.

Beyond this, however, lies considerable disagreement, both with respect to the nature of the division within the National Convention and with respect to the character and significance of the federalist revolt. Historians have, for the most part, addressed these two questions separately, choosing to focus either on the Girondin/Montagnard conflict in Paris or on one of the provincial federalist centers.

Twenty years ago, Michael Sydenham published the first serious analytical treatment of the group of deputies that has come to be called the Girondins. In The Girondins, Sydenham carefully examines the political history of the first nine months of the National Convention, with particular attention to the political and social affiliations of alleged Girondin deputies (for example, which salons in Paris they attended), and concludes that no such political faction existed. He acknowledges the existence of a Montagnard faction but insists that one can go no further than this, that one can establish a division only between the Montagnards and the rest of the Convention. The group traditionally called the Girondins, he argues, was nothing more than a political myth created by a small group of Jacobin deputies to advance their own political fortunes.²

Alison Patrick has directly challenged this view in her book, *The Men of the First French Republic*. Citing voting records and speeches of the deputies, as well as their participation in committees or on political mission, Patrick asserts that one can indeed speak of a Girondin faction within the Convention, identified primarily by its opposition to the growing strength of the Montagnards.

If we accept the reality of a Girondin faction (and Patrick is very persuasive in her argument), the crucial question of what produced the political division between the two factions remains. The traditional Marxist interpretation of the Revolution, expressed by such prominent French historians as Georges Lefebvre and Albert Soboul, has associated the Girondins with the *haute-bourgeoisie*, specifically the commercial bourgeoisie, arguing that their politics reflected their social and economic interests. In Soboul’s words, the Girondins “were passionately attached to the idea of economic freedom, freedom to undertake trading enterprises and to make uncontrolled profits, and they showed their hostility to economic regulation, price controls, requisitions, and the forced use of *assignats*, all measures which were, by way of contrast, strongly advocated by the *sans-culottes*. "" The problem here is that very few members of the National Convention can reasonably be defined as sans-culottes. Lawyers, landowners, and merchants predominated among both Montagnards and Girondins. A 1980 study contends that virtually no difference in social background existed between these two contending factions within the Convention.

The relationship between the Girondin/Montagnard conflict and the federalist revolt is an obvious one. The Girondins are generally associated with federalism, and it was undeniably the proscription of the twenty-nine deputies that sparked the provincial revolts in June, 1793. Lefebvre and Soboul describe the provincial protest as a revolt of the commercial bourgeoisie rising in defense of their economic interests. To quote Soboul again: “This rising was essentially the work of the middle classes who dominated the departmental administrative organs and who were anxious about their property.” That the revolt was centered in such commercial towns as Bordeaux,

Marseille, Lyon, and Caen is cited as evidence in support of this argument. Although this interpretation of the federalist revolt has not gone unchallenged, it has withstood criticism more successfully than the Marxist analysis of the Girondin/Montagnard conflict. That criticism has come from two directions. Sydenham, though he has not looked closely at the provincial protests, has denied the relationship between federalism and the Girondins, arguing instead that the revolts were essentially royalist in nature. This view must be dismissed, as Sydenham himself would now agree. Supporters of the monarchy did indeed participate in the revolts, particularly in Lyon and Toulon, but the principal aims and leaders of the movement were not royalist. Issues other than the fate of the Girondin deputies combined to motivate the provincial rebels, but the restoration of the monarchy was not among them.\footnote{Sydenham, \textit{The Girondins}, 21. See also M. J. Sydenham, “The Republican Revolt of 1793: A Plea for Less Localized Local Studies,” \textit{French Historical Studies}, XI (Spring, 1981), 120–38. Despite Sydenham’s legitimate objections to the term “federalist,” I have chosen to use it in this book, both because it has been general practice for nearly two centuries and because I see no clear and satisfactory alternative. The label “republican” could apply equally to those who supported the May 31 revolution and those who opposed it and thus would itself be controversial. The label “provincial” is less value-laden but also less discriminating, and to adopt it in this book would be a source more of confusion than of clarity.}

At the local level, one can discern two strains of scholarly interpretation of the federalist revolt. The greater number of studies have adopted a sympathetic view of the federalist rebels, describing the proscription of the Girondin deputies as an illegal attack on the National Convention and interpreting the revolt itself as a legitimate effort to defend national sovereignty. In this group, we can include Henri Wallon’s two-volume survey of the federalist movement and Georges Guibal’s work on Provence.\footnote{H. Wallon, \textit{La Révolution du 31 mai et le fédéralisme en 1793} (Paris, 1886); Georges Guibal, \textit{Le Mouvement fédéraliste en Provence en 1793} (Paris, 1908).} Fewer studies have taken the opposing view, implicitly accepting the proscription of the Girondins as an expression of popular will and describing the provincial protests as an irresponsible action taken by local administrators who failed to heed the desires of their constituencies. Here we can cite Paul Nicolle’s study of the Orne and Daniel Stone’s work on Rennes.\footnote{Paul Nicolle, “Le Mouvement fédéraliste dans l’Orne en 1793,” \textit{Annales Historiques de la Révolution Française}, XIII (1936), 481–512, XIV (1937), 215–33, XV (1938), 12–33, 289–313, 385–410; Daniel Stone, “La Révolte fédéraliste à Rennes,” \textit{Annales Historiques de la Révolution Française}, XLIII (1971), 367–87.}

Few of these works, however, seriously consider the social basis of the fed-
eralist revolt, a question that has been addressed by three more-recent studies. William Scott and Alan Forrest, writing about the early years of the Revolution in Marseille and Bordeaux, respectively, each lend support to the orthodox Marxist interpretation. Both historians are cautious about attributing too much to social and economic factors, but their conclusions stress the dominant role played in local politics by the commercial elite of these two federalist centers. Challenging the argument of Scott, and the interpretation of Lefebvre, is the unpublished dissertation of John Cameron, Jr. In his study of Marseille, Cameron asserts that “there was little or no economic or social difference” between the Marseille federalists and their opponents and that the revolt of the sections in Marseille was essentially a reaction against local terrorists, which intensified and broadened after the June 2 proscriptions.10

The social character of the federalist revolt thus remains as controversial as the goals and motivations of its adherents. This controversy is in part a product of the inherent weaknesses of local studies. The monographs cited here do not give us a full understanding of federalism for two reasons: they do not compare the situation in one area with that in other federalist centers or, perhaps more importantly, with that in Jacobin towns; and they do not establish firmly enough the relationship between local and national politics. These works have advanced our understanding of revolutionary politics in various federalist towns, but the question still remains: What motivated certain towns to join in the federalist movement while others supported the Montagnard Convention?

This question is firmly tied to the Patrick/Sydenham debate regarding the existence of a Girondin faction. Patrick herself suggested that a look to the provinces might help to elucidate the nature of the Girondin/Montagnard conflict.11 Surely the character of local constituencies and the political situat-


tion in given departments should tell us something about the deputies who represented them in Paris.

In his very sound article on federalism, Bill Edmonds focuses precisely on local politics in particular cities (Lyon, Marseille, and Toulon) in an effort to understand the character of the revolt. He makes three main points in his analysis: first, that “violent shocks from outside combined with unusual local circumstances” to trigger protest in the provinces; second, that a qualitative difference existed between federalist “protest” and federalist “revolt”; and third, that the revolts were principally “a defensive reaction against Montagnard centralism” and not an aggressive assertion of provincial interests.¹² I am in general agreement with the first two points, although where Edmonds stresses local political conflicts, I would stress the interrelation of local and national political issues as a fundamental aspect of the federalist movement. Edmonds and I further disagree on whether one can discern a “popular” component to the federalist revolt. Edmonds argues that the federalists enjoyed considerable popular support, whereas I maintain just the opposite in this book. This disagreement is partly due, I think, to the fact that Edmonds focuses his attention on Lyon, Marseille, and Toulon. I would argue that Bordeaux and Caen are more representative federalist cities.

Edward Whiting Fox, in a very provocative book, has proposed a framework of analysis that may help resolve this multifaceted debate. He asserts that the French monarchy, developing in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was built on the administrative and agricultural towns of the French hinterland. Fox argues that the commercial towns, principally the ports, were not fully integrated in the new state—that, in fact, there existed a self-contained commercial society with its own distinct social system and values—and that the dichotomy between the agricultural hinterland and the commercial periphery came to a head during the Revolution. The confrontation came, as he sees it, during the drafting of the constitution and reached its crisis point in June, 1793. Fox suggests that “because this Federalist revolt against the Jacobin government was based mainly in port cities, it seems plausible that it represented the last stand of the old commercial society against integration in the administrative state.”¹³

Fox is not the first historian, of course, to utilize an interpretative frame-

¹². Edmonds, “‘Federalism’ and Urban Revolt,” 53.
work stressing geography and the growth of the state. Alexis de Tocqueville singled out state centralization as the most fundamental development of the Old Regime monarchy, a development consolidated by the Revolution and Napoleon. Tocqueville saw this centralization both as a cause of the Revolution and as a reason for its failure. The aristocracy resented the encroachments of the crown on its traditional prerogatives and consequently forced the convening of the Estates General. But once the Revolution erupted, the people, having for so long been ruled by a despotic state, failed to responsibly exercise their newly gained political liberty. This is the second major theme of Tocqueville’s book: the conflict between liberty and equality that the French people could not satisfactorily resolve. The French people, Tocqueville felt, preferred legal equality under a dictator to political freedom under representative government. State centralization under the monarchy had in effect so stifled the Frenchman’s capacity for political action that he was unable to accept, after 1789, the responsibility for self-government.¹⁴

This encroachment of the state, however, had not extended to the limits of the kingdom’s boundaries in 1789. Tocqueville distinguished between the pays d’élection and pays d’état, observing that the latter enjoyed greater autonomy on the eve of the Revolution and presumably a greater propensity for responsible self-government. Tocqueville said little about the respective attitudes and experiences of the pays d’élection and pays d’état during the turmoils of the Revolution itself. It requires but a moment’s reflection, though, to realize that the pays d’état roughly equal Fox’s commercial periphery, while the pays d’élection match, on the map, the administrative hinterland that Fox describes.

The juxtaposition of Fox’s and Tocqueville’s analyses yields a conceptualization in which state centralization and commercial development are the dynamic elements. Their interaction in late-eighteenth-century France produced a political confrontation between the hinterland, already integrated in the centralizing state, and the commercially oriented periphery. Clearly, economic and social factors remain important in this analysis. Fox posits the existence of distinct social systems and values in the hinterland and the periphery, though he does not describe those social systems. In this conceptualization, the Marxist interpretation is modified, not rejected. The

state becomes a more active agent than Marxists allow, and the unit of social analysis becomes regions, rather than classes, which have proved so difficult to define in a precapitalist society such as eighteenth-century France.

The federalist revolt provides an excellent context within which to examine the relationship between national and local politics, between Paris and the provinces, between elected officials and their constituencies during the Revolution. All of these were highlighted during the three months following the May 31–June 2 revolution of the Paris sections. More than previous Paris revolutions, this outburst elicited an immediate and widespread response from the departments of France. Although the reaction proved to be short-lived, for several weeks it was an intense expression of grievances against Paris and the Jacobin minority, a reaction itself led by a relatively small number of administrators, whose final victory would not come until 9 Thermidor.

The proscription of the Girondin deputies and the revolt that followed came barely eight months after the National Convention had opened. Dissension and factionalism within the Convention marked this period. The drafting of a new constitution, the primary task of this renewed legislative body, was hopelessly mired in vituperative debate. Letters from the departments poured into Paris decrying this delay and calling for unity within the Convention. The Girondin deputies, who formed a majority, first attempted to break the stalemate not through compromise but rather by trying to silence their political opponents. Their two-pronged effort failed on both counts, first in the unsuccessful trial of Marat and then with the ill-fated Commission of Twelve, formed to investigate the activities of the Paris sections and municipality. In the end, it was the Montagnards, backed by the Paris sections and finally supported by the moderate Plain, who carried the day in early June. With the uprising of June 2, we see the resolution of a political crisis that had simmered for two-thirds of a year.

It is because this conflict existed over such a relatively long period that the revolt that followed its climax offers such an important insight into national and local politics and the interrelation between the two. The federalist revolt was not simply a protest of the proscription of twenty-nine deputies, though this action did trigger the revolt. The provincial protest, which initially included nearly fifty departments, was more broadly directed against the dominance of Paris in national politics. Particularly offensive, and threatening, to departmental administrators was the unprecedented political activity of the Paris crowd. Both deputies and departmental administrators talked in early
1793 of shifting the Convention to Bourges, where the national representatives could deliberate in a calm and untroubled atmosphere, or of accomplishing the same goal by bringing troops to Paris to protect the Convention from outside interference. Underlying these fears was the feeling that a fair and just constitution, the anticipated remedy for all France’s ills, could not be delivered under the intimidating surveillance of the Paris sections—certainly not by a legislature that had been stripped of twenty-nine of its members.

The impatience for a new constitution and the apprehension about Parisian domination were not fleeting issues. They had preoccupied people in Paris and the provinces for several months. Widely circulating newspapers and journals reported on events and spread rumors. Many of the deputies maintained regular contact with their constituents by letter. The departments closest to the capital often sent their own delegations to the Convention to carry messages and then report back regarding conditions in Paris. This volatile political atmosphere erupted into violent protest in the months following the proscription of the Girondin deputies.

Historians have tended to exaggerate the scope of the federalist revolt, with most estimating the number of protesting departments at roughly sixty. However, even with reliance placed primarily on the account of Henri Wallon, whose sympathies lay clearly with the Girondins and federalists, it is evident that only forty-seven departments firmly protested by letter the May 31 revolution, while thirty-four either declared open support of the Montagnard Convention or remained indifferent. A majority of the protesting departments took no significant action beyond the letter of protest. Most of these had retracted their protests by late June or early July, after the new

15. Wallon, *La Révolution du 31 mai, passim*. The Vendée and the Deux-Sèvres were, of course, engaged in royalist insurrection. These two complete the total of eighty-three departments that existed at that time. Bill Edmonds and I differ somewhat in our categorization of federalist departments. We both rely on Wallon to a considerable extent, and our differences are thus indicative of the degree to which Wallon’s often ambiguous characterization of departmental political postures requires subjective interpretation. Sometimes Wallon is misleading. Based on his work alone, one might well group the Haute-Vienne with the federalist departments, as Edmonds does. I think this is clearly in error. After reading Edmonds’ article I went back through Wallon’s analysis, department by department, and made one or two adjustments in my own breakdown. Edmonds employs four categories for the federalist departments, compared with my two, and identifies forty-three federalist departments, compared with my forty-seven. Edmonds includes the Aisne, Haute-Saône, and Haute-Vienne, while I do not; I include the Alpes-Maritimes, Cantal, Maine-et-Loire, Marne, Meurthe, Puy-de-Dôme, and Pyrénées-Orientales, while he does not. Edmonds groups the departments I have described as “engaging in prolonged resistance” under two headings: “Contribution to ‘federalist’ armed forces”; and “Armed revolt.” I include the Ain, Jura, and Morbihan, while Edmonds does not. He indicates
The constitution had been published. Only thirteen departments engaged in prolonged resistance to the Convention. The departmental alignment is given in Table 1 and Map 1.

The map shows that the departments supporting the Montagnard Convention were located in the north and northeast. The departments protesting the proscription of the Girondin deputies lay in the west, southwest, and south. The four centers of prolonged federalist resistance—Bordeaux, Marseille, Lyon, and Caen—were all commercial towns in these peripheral areas. The thirteen departments that engaged actively in the revolt were clustered around those four centers.

A striking correlation emerges between the distribution of federalist departments and that of departments whose delegations to the Convention were predominantly Girondin. Map 2 represents the political alignments of the 1793 departmental delegations, as constructed by Alison Patrick. It shows that the departments of the southern, western, and coastal areas were generally Girondin, while the Montagnard departments lay in the central, northern, and eastern parts of France.

The geographical distribution of the federalist/Girondin departments and the Jacobin/Montagnard departments lends added weight to Fox’s thesis of a political split between the commercial periphery and the administrative hinterland of France. There are exceptions to the pattern, however. Several important commercial towns—Rouen and Nantes notable among them—did not join in the federalist revolt. Several departments of the hinterland—the Côte-d’Or, the Marne, the Meurthe—did not initially support the Montagnard Convention. Some departments that sent Montagnard delegations to the Convention—the Côte-d’Or and the Sarthe, for example—still protested the proscription of the Girondins. The reverse was true as well. The Haute-Vienne and the Aisne, despite sending predominantly Girondin delegations to Paris, supported the Montagnard Convention after June 2. Closer scrutiny, then, is required before it can be determined whether Fox’s thesis remains as persuasive at the local level as it appears to be on a national scale.

that the Loire-Inférieure, Orne, and Sarthe contributed troops to the federalists, while I am quite certain they did not. Finally, Edmonds includes the Var among his departments engaging in armed revolt, while I am inclined to consider resistance in the Var predominantly royalist. These are mostly, though not entirely, minor differences. We do not disagree substantially on the number of protesting departments or the geographic distribution. I do not believe that our differences can be resolved by reference to Wallon. Local archives and local histories will have to be consulted.
### TABLE 1 Departmental Alignment Following the May 31 Revolution

**Jacobsin departments (departments supporting the Montagnard Convention)**

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<thead>
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<th>Aisne</th>
<th>Haute-Loire</th>
<th>Nord</th>
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<td>Oise</td>
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<td>Haute-Saône</td>
<td>Pas-de-Calais</td>
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<td>Saône-et-Loire</td>
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<td>Haut-Rhin</td>
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**Federalist departments (departments protesting the Girondin proscriptions)**

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**Departments engaging in prolonged resistance**

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MAP 1. Departmental Alignment in June, 1793
Colleen Baker
MAP 2. Political Alignment of the 1793 Departmental Delegations

At this point, one encounters difficulties, for Fox does not elaborate on the differing “social systems” that he claims characterized the hinterland and the periphery. A regional model may be a useful heuristic device in describing the political divisions within France during the Revolution, but for a historical explanation of why those regions differed, one must descend to another level. If Fox’s thesis is generally accurate, then at the local level one should be able to find a reflection of the administrative/commercial dichotomy in social structures and to see the connections between those structures and local politics.

Several factors merit attention as one searches for those connections. The most obvious is the nature of the local economy in a particular town or area and the social fabric that it produced. Additionally important at a time of revolutionary upheaval are the patterns of sociability both within and between social groups. A number of questions are relevant to this issue. Was the social elite cohesive or divided? Was the elite at odds with the lower classes or linked to them through patron-client relationships? What agents of sociability functioned among the lower classes under the Old Regime, and what impact did this have on their ability to organize and express their views after 1789? These factors varied greatly across France at the end of the Old Regime, and if Fox’s thesis is valid, one should see their influence on the political divisions that emerged in the revolutionary era.

The relationship between social structures and political attitudes lies, of course, at the center of controversy in historiography of the French Revolution. Marxist historians, particularly Soboul, have interpreted the events of 1789 as a “bourgeois revolution,” a class struggle between the declining aristocracy and the rising bourgeoisie. Critics of this “Marxist orthodoxy” insist that 1789 was not a product of social tensions—that far from being a class struggle, it was instead a political revolution with social consequences.¹⁶

This debate has principally focused on the causes of the Revolution, but it clearly carries over into conflicting interpretations of the Revolution itself. It is Soboul, again, who has made the most explicit argument with regard to the relationship between political posture and social class. He identifies two competing concepts of representative government in France during the Revolution—one popular and the other bourgeois. The outlines of these two opposing political philosophies emerged clearly in 1792 and 1793. The

Girondin deputies, Soboul argues, championed the concept of a truly representative government, along the lines of the English model, in which elected deputies acted as the autonomous representatives of their constituents. The Parisian sans-culottes, and the Jacobin deputies to some extent, contended that such an arrangement would impinge on the freedom, indeed the sovereignty, of the people and that deputies should serve only as "agents of the people."

These two concepts came into open conflict in 1793 when Marat and the Paris sections demanded the recall of those deputies who had voted for a referendum on the fate of the king. The Girondins responded by defending the inviolability of elected deputies. The sans-culottes in turn insisted on the right—in fact, the responsibility—of all citizens to vigilantly watch and review the conduct of their elected representatives. This confrontation heightened in April and May with the trial of Marat and the formation of the Commission of Twelve. On June 2, 1793, with the proscription of the Girondin deputies, the popular concept of representative government triumphed, at least temporarily. The sans-culottes consolidated their victory in September, 1793, but then saw it institutionalized in the revolutionary government of the year II and finally reversed by the reactionary regime that followed Thermidor.  

The political conflict that raged in the capital during the early months of 1793 expressed itself in the provinces of France as well. In neither arena was the debate over what the new regime in France should be a matter confined to 1793. It began in 1790, as the first political clubs came together, and it continued through the Directory. But the lines of debate were most clearly drawn in the spring and summer of 1793, both within the National Convention and among the departments of France. It was this central issue that brought national and local politics together.

Soboul’s notion of “agent versus representative democracy” may not be the answer to the political riddle that the French Revolution in a sense represents. But it does offer a possible bridge between the impersonal level of regional analysis proposed by Fox and the personal level of popular politics as acted out in the many cities and towns of revolutionary France. Both ideas merit further study, and the federalist revolt provides an ideal context within which to carry it out.