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Introduction

DOUGLAS JOHNSON

THE FOLLOWING ARTICLES HAVE ALL APPEARED IN *PAST AND PRESENT*. They do not include all the articles which this periodical has published relevant to the history of the Ancien Régime and the French Revolution, and it is unfortunate that for reasons of space, certain have had to be omitted.¹ But they do suggest some of the aspects of French history in this period which have most interested British and North American researchers. At a time when we have recently been reminded that every year French scholars publish more books and articles on the Revolution than on the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries put together,² and that there is enough information available to invalidate any impressionistic generalization whilst being too much for systematic analysis, it has also been pointed out that the *Annales: Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* (to which *Past and Present* has often been compared) has tended to neglect the history of the French Revolution.³ If "l'école des *Annales*" admits that it might have shied away from a subject which, in terms of syllabus, dating and concept, fitted too easily into the "histoire événementielle" which "l'école des *Annales*" was only too eager to avoid, then it could be that this is an argument for believing that British and North American historians have a distinct contribution to make to the debate on the French Revolution. It has been claimed that in the past this was because of their lack of imagination or mental effort;⁴ but it can now be claimed that historians who are not French, writing on the French Revolution, avoid the only too obvious schools and cliques into which many French historians seem easily, naturally and perhaps inevitably, to fall, and that they address themselves more directly towards the major problems of the period.⁵ It could be too that they have less hesitation in approaching and developing certain themes than do their French colleagues. Professor

¹ For example, Albert Soboul, "Robespierre and the Popular Movement of 1793-4", *Past and Present*, No. 5; "The French Rural Community in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries", *ibid.*, No. 10; Clive H. Church, "The Social Basis of the French Central Bureaucracy under the Directory", *ibid.*, No. 36.

² Norman Hampson, *The French Revolution: A Concise History* (London, 1975), p. 6.

³ François Furet, "Ancien Régime et Révolution: Réinterprétations", *Annales, E.S.C.*, xxix (1974), p. 3.

⁴ See Richard Cobb's review of Hedua Ben-Israel, *English Historians on the French Revolution*, 1968, in *Tour de France* (London, 1976), pp. 35 ff.

⁵ Douglas Johnson, "From Below and Above: French History, Anglo-Saxon Attitudes", *Encounter* (January 1976), pp. 47 ff.

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Olwen Hufton, commenting on the importance of violence in the social life of the Ancien Régime (such as emerged from the study by T. Le Goff and D. Sutherland, reproduced in this volume), has suggested that historians may have shunned a close analysis of violence because they thought that in some way it detracted from the essential worthiness of those destined to win the ultimate political crown.⁶ A French historian, commenting with some cynicism on the controversy whereby the class struggle as the motivating force which brought the Ancien Régime to an end was replaced by the importance of “ceux qui constitue l'élite”, whether of wealth, culture, or ability, has said that all this discussion would simply remain as an example of the ideological discussions which were taking place within French historiography within the 1960s.⁷

This is not the place to try to define the “état actuel des questions”, concerning the end of the Ancien Régime and the Revolution. A number of historians have written interesting and important articles, in which they have tried to put together the social and political elements,⁸ or in which they have surveyed a particular problem, for example that of the exclusivity of the nobility,⁹ or the role of the State in the Ancien Régime.¹⁰ But whatever the details of the research, or the nature of the assumptions, there is one viewpoint from which much else stems. And that is the largely dominant French view that the French Revolution was the outstanding bourgeois revolution, that it was the culmination of a long economic and social evolution, that it marked the emergence of a bourgeois, capitalist society in France. But it is the achievement of British and North American scholars to have highlighted the complex reality of late eighteenth-century French society, and the essays which follow consider the problems of change in ways which are particularly relevant and perceptive.

⁶ Olwen Hufton, *The Poor of Eighteenth Century France* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 360-1.

⁷ Michel Vovelle, “L'Élite ou le mensonge des mots”, *Annales, E.S.C.*, xxix (1974), p. 49.

⁸ C. Mazauric, “Voies nouvelles pour l'histoire de la Révolution française: histoire politique”, *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, xlv (1975), pp. 159 ff.

⁹ G. Lemarchand, “Sur la société française en 1789”, *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, January-March 1972; David Bien, “La réaction aristocratique avant 1789: l'exemple de l'armée”, *Annales historiques*, xlv (1975), pp. 23 ff. and pp. 505 ff.

¹⁰ Régine Robin, “La nature de l'état à la fin de l'ancien régime”, *Dialectiques*, No. 1-2 (1974), pp. 31 ff.

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I. *Was There an Aristocratic Reaction in Pre-Revolutionary France?**

WILLIAM DOYLE

AMID THE TURMOIL OF DEBATE WHICH HAS CHARACTERIZED THE STUDY of the French Revolution and its origins in recent years, it might seem that no aspect could escape renewed and critical scrutiny. Yet this impression is deceptive. The history of the Revolution continues to be charted with reference to many landmarks seemingly so well-established that historians take them for granted. One such landmark is the "aristocratic reaction" of the last years of the old régime. Emphases differ, and some historians use the idea in a far broader sense than others. But it finds its place in most of the standard works,¹ and writers of monographs feel equally obliged to take account of it. Most descriptions of the aristocratic reaction comprise one or more of four elements:

1. *Political* reaction. This was the campaign of the nobility, beginning in 1715 and culminating in the "noble revolt" of 1787-8, to recover the political power it had lost under Louis XIV. The main vehicles of the movement were the parlements, which became the spearhead of all noble pretensions over the century.²

2. *Ideological* reaction.³ This was exemplified by the works of such writers as Saint-Simon, Fénelon, Boulainvilliers and Montes-

* I am grateful for the critical comments of Professor Douglas Johnson and the members of his seminar, before whom an early draft of this paper was read. I am also indebted to Professor Norman Hampson for many helpful suggestions.

¹ E.g. R. R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution*, 2 vols. (Princeton, N.J., 1959), 1, pp. 458-60; A. Goodwin, *The French Revolution* (London, 1959), pp. 24-5; N. Hampson, *A Social History of the French Revolution* (London, 1963), pp. 2-13; M. J. Sydenham, *The French Revolution* (London, 1969), pp. 25-6; F. Furet and D. Richet, *The French Revolution* (London, 1970), p. 23; G. Lefebvre, *The Coming of the French Revolution* (New York, 1947), pp. 14-19; A. Mathiez, *La Révolution Française*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1922-4), 1, pp. 8-9, 17; A. Soboul, *La France à la veille de la Révolution: Économie et Société* (Paris, 1966), pp. 79-86.

² The classic statements of this case are J. Egret, "L'Opposition aristocratique en France au XVIII^e siècle", *L'Information Historique*, x (1949), pp. 181-5; and F. L. Ford, *Robe and Sword: the Regrouping of the French Aristocracy after Louis XIV* (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), *passim*.

³ Well summarized in Ford, *op. cit.*, chaps. ix, x, xii; and more briefly in Soboul, *La France à la veille*, pp. 79-82.

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quieu; and the remonstrances of the parlements, all of which were manifestoes for noble control of the state.

3. *Social* reaction, “caste spirit” or “noble exclusivism”.⁴ This refers to the aristocracy of Louis XVI’s ministers, the noble monopoly of high ecclesiastical positions, the exclusion of commoners from the parlements, and is most classically exemplified by the famous Ségur ordinance of 1781, excluding non-nobles from the officer corps of the army.

4. *Feudal* or *seigneurial* reaction. This means the reconstruction by aristocratic landlords of their terriers, and the revival of obsolete or moribund rights and dues, which took place in the last two decades of the old order, and so incensed the peasantry in 1789.

Some historians only stress some of these aspects, others attempt to synthesize them all into one great movement. But however it is used, the idea of a reaction helps to dramatize the Revolution’s break with aristocracy and all it stood for; it emphasizes the difference between the incorrigible old order and the radical new.

Recently indeed some doubts have been raised. Miss Vivian Gruder has used the conclusions of her work on eighteenth-century intendants as a departure point for a critique of the idea of a social reaction, while in France M. François Furet has raised a whole series of terminological doubts.⁵ But *clichés* die hard. Others who have come within intellectual striking distance of questioning the concept of a reaction have preferred to use their conclusions to add nuances to the old picture instead.⁶ Yet if such doubts are well founded, we shall sooner or later be compelled to revise our whole view of the origins of the Revolution. Important theses on broader topics, which attach some weight to the reaction, might also be undermined.⁷ So the question is perhaps worth pursuing. Was the aristocratic reaction an illusion? Even if we cannot reply definitively, we can at

⁴ The terms are Soboul’s, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

⁵ V. R. Gruder, *The Royal Provincial Intendants: a governing elite in eighteenth century France* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1968), ch. viii, *passim*, and pp. 219-24; F. Furet, “Le catéchisme révolutionnaire”, *Annales, E.S.C.*, xxvi (1971), pp. 255-89.

⁶ A. Goodwin, “The Social Origins and Privileged Status of the French Eighteenth-Century Nobility”, *Bull. of the John Rylands Library*, xlvii (1964-5), pp. 393-4, comes close to questioning it but does not follow his conclusions through, although in “The recent historiography of the French Revolution” in *Historical Studies*, VI, ed. T. W. Moody (London, 1968), pp. 132-3, he goes somewhat further. A. Cobban, *The Social Interpretation of the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 1964), p. 52, prefers to question the nature of the “feudal” reaction rather than the thing itself. F. Furet, *loc. cit.*, pp. 263-9, takes this line too.

⁷ E.g. C. Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution* (New York, 1965), pp. 36-7; Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (London, 1969), pp. 63-6; Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution*, i, ch. iii.

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least review some of the evidence which suggests that it was; and in so doing we can perhaps indicate where further research might prove more conclusive.

I

Much of the argument about a political reaction turns not upon what we know of the eighteenth century, but upon what we know of the seventeenth. The eighteenth-century evidence which gave rise to the idea is not open to question; what is in doubt is the singularity of that evidence. If the policies of Louis XIV were not anti-aristocratic, and if under him the nobility were not stripped of all power, then what has looked like a new set of developments in the eighteenth century may turn out to have been far less important. Had the nobility lost so much that it took a century to recapture? A clear view of the reign of Louis XVI, from this point of view, depends on an accurate knowledge of that of Louis XIV.

There can be little doubt that Louis XIV was not hostile to aristocracy as such. His whole way of life, surrounding himself at Versailles with the cream of the nobility, and upholding their privileges and social standing, shows how profoundly he accepted it and its values.⁸ The search after false nobles of which some historians still make so much,⁹ far from being anti-aristocratic, was directed against those who adulterated nobility and usurped its privileges. Many legitimate nobles welcomed it.¹⁰ The expansion of the nobility's ranks through the sale of venal ennobling offices was a fiscal expedient, not a hostile policy.¹¹ Arguably it strengthened rather than weakened the position of the nobility in society by making noble status a constantly attainable aspiration.¹² The campaign to strengthen the law of derogation (*dérogeance*), shocking as it may have been to the commercial noblemen of Brittany, can only with perversity be described as anti-noble.¹³

⁸ See P. Goubert, *L'Ancien Régime*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1969-73), i, p. 155; R. Mandrou, *La France aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles* (Paris, 1967), pp. 149-50; G. Pagès, *La Monarchie d'Ancien Régime en France* (Paris, 1928), pp. 178, 191; J. B. Wolf, *Louis XIV* (New York, 1968), p. 271; and Ford, *Robe and Sword*, pp. 9-18.

⁹ E.g. P. Goubert, *Louis XIV et vingt millions de Français* (Paris, 1966), pp. 66-7.

¹⁰ See Mandrou, *op. cit.*, p. 93; P. Deyon, "A propos des rapports entre la noblesse française et la monarchie absolue pendant la première moitié du XVII^e siècle", *Revue Historique*, ccxxxii (1964), pp. 354-6.

¹¹ Cf. Goubert, *Louis XIV*, p. 67.

¹² See G. Pagès, "La vénalité des charges dans l'ancienne France" *Revue Historique*, clxix (1932), pp. 492-3.

¹³ See J. Meyer, *La Noblesse Bretonne au XVIII^e siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1966), i, pp. 46-7, ch. vi, *passim*, and ii, pp. 1245-6 for the conclusion that such

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Despite Saint-Simon's jibes, all Louis's ministers enjoyed nobility.¹⁴ His anti-aristocratic reputation in fact seems to rest mainly on his diminution of the political power wielded by a few *great* noblemen, a tiny handful of over-mighty subjects.

Most of the aristocracy, for example, were left quite untouched by Louis's decision in 1661 not to call any prince, duke, peer or ecclesiastic to his policy-making councils. Such distant metropolitan manoeuvres were governmental changes, but hardly a new social policy. It was the same when Louis imposed restrictions on the powers and tenure of provincial governors, and indeed when he concentrated the magnates of the realm around his person at Versailles, away from their provincial power bases. Those affected were a relatively small group of notables. Moreover, when we examine the precise nature and the subsequent history of these innovations, we find either that they were not entirely novel, and were only partly reversed in the eighteenth century; or that, once made, they survived until the old order ended.

There was obviously a clear reaction in 1715 against the exclusion of princes, peers and clerics from policy-making. A system of *polysynodie* was introduced, an attempt to govern the kingdom through a series of executive councils staffed partly at least by great nobles;¹⁵ but the most notorious fact about *polysynodie* is its short life, its failure to work. Within three years the experiment was abandoned. It is true that even after the collapse the categories excluded from policy-making by Louis XIV continued to play a part in the process. Princes like Orléans and Conti, peers like Choiseul, d'Aiguillon and Castries, clerics like Fleury, Bernis, Terray and Brienne are examples. To this extent there was something of a reaction, although it was century-long and certainly did not intensify as time went on. Yet it is arguable that a better description than reaction would be diversification of recruitment. Most of the personnel of the royal councils continued to be recruited from the upper echelons of the venal hierarchy, from the masters of requests and, ultimately, the sovereign courts. Louis XIV's innovation had been to confine recruitment to these groups, all noble,¹⁶ but certainly not composed of men of "high consideration"¹⁷ who might delude themselves that their

measures strengthened noble exclusivism rather than broke it down; see too R. B. Grassby, "Social Status and Commercial Enterprise under Louis XIV", *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., xiii (1960-1), pp. 19, 25-6, 35.

¹⁴ See below, p. 13.

¹⁵ See M. Antoine, *Le Conseil du Roi sous le règne de Louis XV* (Paris Geneva, 1970), pp. 80-100.

¹⁶ See below, pp. 13-14.

¹⁷ *Mémoires de Louis XIV* (Paris, 1806 edn.), i, p. 7.

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power was independent of the king's. Most of the personnel of the royal councils, in fact, was already drawn from their ranks before 1661,¹⁸ and all Louis did was to exclude others and so in a sense professionalize his administration. This made it more exclusive too.¹⁹ The eighteenth-century trend was to broaden recruitment once again, not restrict it.²⁰

In other respects, the eighteenth century was remarkable for changing nothing. The concentration of the great at Versailles, for example, went from strength to strength, and the complex restrictions on access to the "honours of the court" which were elaborated in the eighteenth century were mainly a logistic device to stem the demand.²¹ Similarly, provincial governorships, which Louis XIV kept as the preserve of the great nobility, remained in their hands until 1789. Admittedly Louis had restricted tenure of these offices to periods of three years, and this restriction apparently did not survive into the eighteenth century. But even under Louis himself appointments were normally renewed, the term being merely the guarantee of good conduct. He did deprive the governors of control of royal patronage, through which in the early seventeenth century they had been able to build up an extensive and semi-independent network of clientage, but this too was a permanent development. Indeed the eighteenth century saw a further decline in the governors' provincial power in the sense that from 1750 they were forbidden to reside in their provinces without royal permission.²² The intendants too survived, concentrating in their own hands powers of justice, taxation and public works which the governors had often been able to usurp during years of internal disorder.²³ The powers of governors were above all military, and it is no coincidence that Louis XIV singled out those of frontier provinces as the most dangerous.²⁴ The policy of Louvois was to diminish these powers too by appointing subordinate commandants or lieutenants-general to exercise the

¹⁸ R. Mousnier (ed.), *Le Conseil du Roi de Louis XII à la Révolution* (Paris, 1970), pp. 23-31.

¹⁹ See below, pp. 18-19, for other links between exclusivism and professionalization.

²⁰ See below, p. 14.

²¹ F. Bluche and P. Durye, *Les Honneurs de la Cour* (Paris, 1959); P. Du Puy de Clinchamps, *La Noblesse* (Paris, 1959), p. 62.

²² On the governors, who deserve more attention, see P. Viollet, *Le Roi et ses Ministres pendant les trois dernières siècles de la Monarchie* (Paris, 1912), pp. 324-34; M. Marion, *Dictionnaire des Institutions de la France aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles* (Paris, 1923), pp. 259-61.

²³ G. Zeller, *Aspects de la Politique Française sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris, 1964), ch. xii, *passim*; also J. H. Shennan, *Government and Society in France, 1461-1661* (London, 1969), pp. 60-2.

²⁴ *Mémoires*, i, pp. 15-16.

military authority theoretically at least still vested in the governors. These officers also continued into the eighteenth century, but since they were normally peers or great magnates of similar social standing to the governors themselves, the significance of their institution was limited.²⁵ On the other hand, we should beware of thinking that Louis reduced the governors to complete ciphers, and that ciphers they remained. In provinces with Estates especially, where local notables had to be managed and conciliated, the king relied heavily on their help.²⁶ From the mid-eighteenth century, when quarrels with provincial parlements became more bitter, the government resorted more and more to the help of the governors or commandants in order to coerce parlements undaunted by the authority of mere intendants, and this led to such famous disputes as those between the parlement of Toulouse and the duc de Fitz-James, or that of Rennes and the duc d'Aiguillon.²⁷ It was the governors and commandants who remodelled the provincial parlements on behalf of Maupeou in 1771, and they who received back the old ones in 1774-5.²⁸ But such a growth in the political rôle of these officers was hardly a sign of reaction; it was an institutional response to opposition among provincial parlements.

The parlements and the provincial Estates were also aristocratic institutions. In these spheres at least Louis XIV's policies affected more than the great nobility, although how far the latter would have regarded their position as linked in any way to those institutions is dubious. Louis kept a tight rein on the Estates, and the meetings of some were allowed to lapse. Yet most survived in all their aristocratic glory, and kept their powers, without increasing them, until the old order fell. In the case of the parlements, admittedly 1715 quite clearly saw a reaction against Louis's policies. In 1673 he had crowned a policy hostile to the pretensions of the sovereign

²⁵ Viollet, *op. cit.*, pp. 361-5.

²⁶ Viollet, *op. cit.*, p. 362, alludes to this neglected fact, but does not elaborate. For further substantiation, however, see A. Rebillon, *Les Etats de Bretagne de 1661 à 1789: leur organisation, l'évolution de leurs pouvoirs, leur administration financière* (Paris/Rennes, 1932), pp. 161, 183-5, 190; M. Bordes, "Les intendants de Louis XV", *Revue Historique*, cciii (1960), pp. 46-51; and R. C. Mettam, "The Role of the Higher Aristocracy in France under Louis XIV, with special reference to the 'Faction of the Duke of Burgundy' and the Provincial Governors" (Univ. of Cambridge Ph.D. thesis, 1966), pp. 200-384. Dr. Mettam shows that the active rôle of the governor in Brittany, often cited as an exception, had its counterparts in the Lyonnais, Boulonnais and Languedoc.

²⁷ For convenient summaries, see J. Egret, *Louis XV et l'Opposition Parlementaire, 1715-1774* (Paris, 1970), pp. 149-56, 158-70.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

courts ever since 1661 with the rule that henceforth remonstrances should follow the registration of laws and not precede it. In 1715 the government of the Regency reversed this rule and allowed remonstrances once more to precede registration.²⁹ The parlements built their whole constitutional position throughout the eighteenth century upon this reversal. By 1715 the aristocracy of their members was not in doubt.³⁰ Were they not, then, the vehicles of a broader aristocratic reaction? To prove rather than assume this we should have to demonstrate, first that they conducted a fairly conscious and successful campaign to increase their power in the state, and secondly that the policies they advocated were concerned with the promotion of aristocratic power. But neither of these propositions is self-evident.

The pattern of *parlementaire* resistance to royal authority over the eighteenth century is not one of crescendo. Up to about 1750 the provincial parlements remained relatively quiescent, and that of Paris was only sporadically active. They made no constitutional advances on what they had already achieved in 1715.³¹ Nor were religion and finance, the two main issues which agitated the parlement of Paris in the troubled decades that followed, new ones. The religious question had been contentious even before Louis XIV died, and had been at the centre of the crises of the Regency and the early 1730s.³² It had nothing whatever to do with the nobility and its aspirations. The finances had also been a constant subject of disagreement since 1715.³³ Naturally, in their protests against increasing taxation the magistrates sometimes alluded to the privileges of the nobility; but far more often they reiterated that the nation as a whole was overtaxed and would be ruined by further impositions.³⁴ Indeed the theme of *national* rights and *national* sovereignty is a far more striking feature of their remonstrances in the later eighteenth century than their occasional espousal of specifically noble interests.³⁵

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

³⁰ Ford, *Robe and Sword*, p. 59.

³¹ Egret, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-9.

³² J. D. Hardy, Jr., *Judicial Politics in the Old Regime: the Parlement of Paris during the Regency* (Baton Rouge, La., 1967), chaps. ii, iii, vii; J. H. Shennan, "The Political Role of the Parlement of Paris, 1715-23", *Historical Jl.*, viii (1965), pp. 183-5, 194-5, and "The Political Role of the Parlement of Paris under Cardinal Fleury", *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, lxxxi (1966), pp. 526-40; Egret, *Louis XV et l'Opposition*, pp. 17-33.

³³ Egret, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-43; Hardy, *op. cit.*, chaps. iv, vi, viii; Shennan, *op. cit.*, *Hist. Jl.*, pp. 186-94, and *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, pp. 522-6.

³⁴ Egret, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-9, 131-2. See too the remarks of Shennan, *op. cit.*, *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, p. 526.

³⁵ R. Bickart, *Les Parlements et la notion de Souveraineté Nationale au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris, 1933), *passim*; see too Mathiez, *La Révolution*, i, p. 8.

These remarks also apply to the provincial parlements, which began to make the pace in opposition after about 1750. Their main preoccupations were with taxes again, and with the powers of the government's local agents — intendants, governors, commandants. What was at stake was local autonomy; and it was not the localities and their parlements which sought change. If they were “reacting”, it was not against a *status quo* going back to Louis XIV, but rather in defence of a *status quo* threatened by the ever-increasing encroachments of a revenue-hungry government. Allegations that the cry of public interest was a mask for noble ambitions will only take us so far; the parlements could not have achieved support as they did without a genuine and persistent defence of the interests of all, not just the nobility.³⁶ Support for the convocation of the Estates-General only spread when it became clear, from 1771, that the parlements were no longer defending the interests of all. This was not because they ceased to be willing to do so. It was because the work of Maupeou showed that in the last analysis they had not the power to do so. The last twenty years of the old régime, when we should expect to find the aristocratic reaction at its height, were in fact years of great weakness for the parlements, when their influence on the government fell back almost to pre-1750 levels.³⁷ The tax increases and extensions of the early 1780s passed with unprecedented ease. Even if we could call the zenith of their power, that is to say the 1750s and 1760s, part of a reaction (which is dubious), we should still have to admit that by the time of Louis XVI it had manifestly failed. The “noble revolt” of the summer of 1788 was not the confident knock-out blow aimed at a government tottering from previous aristocratic onslaughts. It was a desperate movement of non-co-operation with a government which had shown itself contemptuous of institutional checks on its power.

II

That the rule of Louis XIV provoked an “ideological” reaction in certain noble circles is well established. Around the prospect of the duc de Bourgogne coming to power congregated a group of great noblemen and supporters who saw France's salvation in an end to Colbertian mercantilism, the encouragement of agriculture and the

³⁶ Egret, *op. cit.*, pp. 230-1; see too Meyer, *Noblesse Bretonne*, ii, p. 1250, for the conclusion that the Breton nobility was on the defensive, and p. 1252 for noble defence of the general interest.

³⁷ W. Doyle, “The Parlements of France and the Breakdown of the Old Regime, 1771-1788”, *French Historical Studies*, vi (1970), pp. 441-53.