

The French Revolution

Three questions have usually been asked about the French Revolution. Why did it happen? Why was it so violent? What was its legacy? These questions seem to beg other, more conceptually ambitious queries about causation, violence or legacies. This book aims to answer both sets of questions by bringing together events and ideas. Michael Sonenscher draws on neglected aspects of eighteenth-century intellectual and political life and thought to demonstrate the importance of ideas for making connections between historical explanation and historical narrative. Concisely synthesising a broad range of established scholarship, Sonenscher utilises new and fresh information to explore why using ideas as evidence adds a dimension of novelty, possibility, expectation and choice to the social, cultural and political history of the French Revolution. This is history about what was expected, but did not happen, and what was unexpected, but really did.

MICHAEL SONENSCHER is a fellow of King's College, University of Cambridge. He has written several books on the French Revolution, including *Before the Deluge* (2007) and *Sans-Culottes* (2009), as well as two broader studies in the history of political thought: *Capitalism: The Story behind the Word* (2022) and *After Kant: The Romans, the Germans and the Moderns in the History of Political Thought* (2023).

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THE FRENCH REVOLUTION
EVENTS AND IDEAS

Michael Sonenscher
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