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THE CARL AND WINIFRED LEE HONORS COLLEGE
CERTIFICATE OF ORAL DEFENSE OF HONORS THESIS

Kiri Johnson, having been admitted to the Carl and Winifred Lee Honors College in the fall of 2010, successfully completed the Lee Honors College Thesis on April 18, 2012.

The title of the thesis is:

Revolutionary Events: Jean-Paul Marat and His Role

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Marion W. Gray'.

Dr. Marion W. Gray, History

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Molly Lynde-Recchia'.

Dr. Molly Lynde-Recchia, Foreign Languages

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Background and Context	Page 1
Chapter Two: Historiography	Page 14
Chapter Three: Marat as Revolutionary	Page 23

Chapter One: Background and Context

The French Revolution occurred because of an aggravated mix of growing ideas regarding the institutions of monarchy and religion, a poor economic climate exacerbated by poor harvests and involvement in costly wars like the American Revolution, and a variety of complaints from each of the different French social classes against their government. In addition, many historians argue that the Revolution sprouted from Enlightenment ideas, while others support the view that the Old Regime collapsed under its own flaws. Both of these interpretations help one understand the overall situation in France when revolution broke out in 1789. The tensions which arose from lower-class Frenchmen suffering under a semi-feudal economic system which kept them in poverty and a system of government in which they were egregiously underrepresented also contributed to the outbreak of revolution. The lower class became increasingly frustrated with their situation as France's financial situation became worse and their tax burden increased.

Many historians claim that Enlightenment ideas such as individualism, rationality, and utility, and the questions these ideas raised of traditions like monarchy and religion inspired the French people to rebel against their government. The Enlightenment upheld beliefs that the government should treat people from all classes more equally and that governmental issues should be determined based on logical thought instead of tradition.¹ The ideas of Enlightenment thinkers such as Rousseau, Montesquieu, and Voltaire disseminated the French public during the late eighteenth century, with both upper class and common people enthusiastically reading their works. Skeptical and nonreligious thinking became not only common, but "fashionable" in France, even among clerics as the frustrations of parish clergy grew against bishops gaining

¹ William Doyle, *Origins of the French Revolution*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 32 & 81.

wealth and power. By 1788 and 1789, the practice of pamphleteering caused terms such as citizen, nation, social contract, and the rights of man to become a part of common political terminology and contributed to a collective public ideological attitude full of ideas that the government should serve the people. These concepts helped unify the different French social classes, each with their own complaints against the Old Regime, and propel them into a mindset that it was time to change their government, they did not have to accept it as it was.²

Another viewpoint claims that the French revolution occurred because the Old Regime collapsed under its own flaws. This viewpoint theorizes that the stress of the financial crisis France faced in the 1770s and 1780s, combined with the corruption and inequality of the Old Regime led to the outbreak of revolution in 1789.³ In the 1770s and 1780s, France was in a dire financial state that several bad harvests and a growing population intensified. Thus, the price of food was rising, which triggered recurring acts of violence from the lower class.⁴ In addition to this, between 1776 and 1783, France involved itself in the American War of Independence, which only increased the national debt.⁵ The Old Regime's involvement in the American Revolution was also detrimental because it called the French citizens' attention to a revolution in which the people freed themselves from what they considered an oppressive regime similar to France's own reigning monarchy.⁶

The *cahiers de doléances*, (lists of complaints against the French government from each of the three estates of the Estates General) can help explain the grievances of the Third Estate (the general population of France).⁷ The Third Estate had many complaints against the Old

² George Rudé, *The French Revolution: Its Causes, Its History, and Its Legacy After 200 Years* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991), 7.

³ Doyle, *Origins of the French Revolution*, 46-47.

⁴ Doyle, *Origins of the French Revolution*, 66.

⁵ Doyle, *Origins of the French Revolution*, 46.

⁶ Doyle, *Origins of the French Revolution*, 90.

⁷ Rudé, *The French Revolution*, 37.

Regime and demanded a number of reforms. Some of these envisioned reforms included the right of citizens not to be arrested without reason, the rule that the tax burden must be borne equally by all classes, the provision that the nobility and the clergy give up all special privileges (such as hunting rights and the ability to collect tithes and feudal rent), and the establishment of freedom of speech, press, and assembly. The *cahiers* obviously do not paint a comprehensive view of what caused the revolution, and at the time, the Third Estate had no clear intentions of turning to revolution. However, their complaints reflect the early frustrations of the Third Estate that would later become part of the revolutionaries' demands (fairer taxation, equal representation, inviolability of property, and liberty).⁸

In addition, there was also a good deal of political tension in France during King Louis XVI's reign. Louis was willing to consider reforming the system that allowed the nobility and aristocracy to possess many liberties and privileges, such as paying low taxes while the rest of France suffered under huge tax burdens. However, the aristocracy believed that the Crown was being tyrannical and unfair to them by working against their desires. The nobility and aristocracy promptly revealed to their King that they were resolved to maintain these privileges. The result of this tension was a series of "reactions" of the upper-class French (mostly members of the Assembly of Notables and the Parliament of Paris) to the Crown's efforts to reform. These events, collectively known as the Aristocratic Revolution (or the Aristocratic Reaction), occurred between 1787 and 1789. In 1789, the nobility called for the convocation of the Estates General in an effort to retain their privileges and to address the financial crisis.⁹

Tensions also developed between the different socio-economic classes in France during the 1770s and 1780s, stemming from disagreements over the semi-feudal economic system and

⁸ Rudé, *The French Revolution*, 39.

⁹ Rudé, *The French Revolution*, 29.

the various frustrations of the different classes. The peasants, to begin with, while not always subject to the impoverished life of tenant farmers, suffered under great taxation that became simply unbearable by the late eighteenth century in the context of poor harvests and the economic depression in France. The nobility and aristocracy meanwhile, although the monarchy excluded them from high-level political offices, enjoyed almost total freedom from taxation, while the monarchy also allowed them to collect dues as feudal landlords. In addition, middle-class Frenchmen faced the issue that even though they were becoming more educated and more successful, they had less access to government jobs. By the middle of the eighteenth century, many prestigious job posts began to require men to be noble to a certain degree. The lack of social significance that the middle class could achieve caused a growing resentment of them towards the nobility and aristocracy.¹⁰

It is clear therefore that each class of French citizens was not content with the Old Regime in the period leading up to the French Revolution, specifically between the 1770s and 1780s. The French lower class suffered great economic burdens and wanted economic policies to be equal, especially in terms of taxation. The monarchy at this time was willing to make these reforms. However, the French nobility, who would then have to share part of the responsibility for paying taxes, aimed to maintain their virtually tax-free existence. Between these two groups lay the French middle class, which was becoming increasingly more educated and wealthy, yet received fewer opportunities to partake in government positions. The combination of these complaints, mixed with the financial crisis in France during this time (which was partly caused by the French government giving aid to the American Revolution and a number of poor agricultural harvests which caused a rise in food costs), and a growing criticism of the institution of religion and monarchy created an atmosphere for revolution by 1789.

¹⁰ Rudé, *The French Revolution*, 1-3.

To deal with France's increasing financial difficulties, Louis XVI convoked the Estates General on January 24, 1789. On May 5, 1789, the Estates General met for the first time since 1614. In the Estates General, voting was by estate, rather than by head, meaning that the first two estates (the clergy and the nobility) could easily overrule the Third Estate (the common people). Frustrated by their lack of influence, members of the Third Estate began meeting on its own, and on June 17, it proclaimed itself the National Assembly. On June 27, the king unwillingly acknowledged the National Assembly and ordered anyone from the first two estates who had not already done so to join it.¹¹ On July 9, the National Assembly renamed itself the National Constituent Assembly to begin its work drafting a constitution.¹² On July 14, 1789, the first major revolutionary uprising of the common people took place. Revolutionaries attacked the Bastille prison to acquire the weapons stored inside but also to dismantle an ancient symbol of the Old Regime's power.¹³ Violence continued both in Paris and in the French countryside as crowds called for reform, resulting in the August Decrees of the National Constituent Assembly on August 4 and 5. The August decrees established a number of reforms, including the abolishment of tax exemptions, taxes collected by the church, and forced labor, and the provision that all offices were open to anyone.¹⁴ On August 26, the National Constituent Assembly adopted the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, which included many reforms demanded by revolutionaries, such as the establishment of natural rights to be shared by all men, freedom of the press, freedom from arbitrary arrest, protection of property, equal eligibility for office, and equal taxation.¹⁵ On October 5, a crowd of women, angered by the cost and shortage

¹¹ Linda S. Frey and Marsha L. Frey, *The French Revolution* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004), 3-4.

¹² J. M. Roberts, *The French Revolution*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 16.

¹³ Frey and Frey, *The French Revolution*, 4.

¹⁴ Frey and Frey, *The French Revolution*, 4-5.

¹⁵ Rudé, *The French Revolution*, 60.

of bread, marched on Versailles demanding bread and insisting that the royal family and the National Assembly move to Paris.¹⁶

Throughout 1789, revolutionaries thus made major strides toward changing their financially distressed and underrepresented status in France. In 1790, the Assembly passed several acts against clerics and abolished nobility.¹⁷ The next major revolutionary upheaval occurred on June 25, 1791, when the king and his royal family were discovered attempting to flee the country and required to return to Paris.¹⁸ This event changed the views many had of the monarchy. Many people who had previously favored the monarchy became opponents following this event. Others, while not rejecting the institution, did not favor retaining Louis as king. The people were dismayed at the king's attempt to flee from his people, although there still was not talk of killing their king.¹⁹ In response to the king's forced return to Paris, Leopold von Hapsburg, brother of Queen Marie Antoinette, sent out the Padua Circular to other European nations on July 5 in an effort to gather support for an invasion of France.²⁰ On July 15, the National Assembly declared that they would restore the king to his throne once he officially accepted the finished Constitution of 1791.²¹

Only two days later, a large crowd of revolutionaries gathered on the Champs de Mars in protest to the Assembly's decision to reinstate the king. Events quickly turned violent, and the event ended when the National Guard killed approximately 50 people and arrested 200 more, as discussed in detail later in this work.²² The National Assembly finished the Constitution in June, which outlined the king's powers and new limitations on that power. It also established a

¹⁶ Rudé, *The French Revolution*, 57-58.

¹⁷ Frey and Frey, *The French Revolution*, 5-7.

¹⁸ Rudé, *The French Revolution*, 74.

¹⁹ P. M. Jones, *The French Revolution, 1787-1804* (New York: Pearson Education Limited, 2003), 43.

²⁰ Rudé, *The French Revolution*, 75.

²¹ David Andress, *The French Revolution and the People* (New York: Hambledon and London, 2004), 150.

²² Graeme Fife, *The Terror: The Shadow of the Guillotine: France 1792-1794* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004), 46-47.

legislative body to be formed through elections, which the king may not disband.²³ Thus, the Constitution created a constitutional monarchy, which the king officially accepted in mid-September.²⁴ The first meeting of the new legislative body, the Legislative Assembly, occurred at the beginning of October 1791, replacing the National Assembly.²⁵

At this time, outside threats were endangering the revolution. In April 1792, France declared war on Austria, and by summer 1792, both Austria and Prussia were ready to invade France. On July 25, the Duke of Brunswick issued the Brunswick Manifesto, which threatened the revolutionaries with retribution if the royal family were harmed.²⁶ By July 28, Prussia and Austria were already nearing Paris.²⁷ Revolutionaries were divided between two parties, the Girondins and the Jacobins. The Girondin Club contained many members who were formerly clerics or came from noble families.²⁸ As such, most of the issues this group was concerned with (such as protection of property and equal eligibility for office) had already been resolved at this point in the revolution. The Girondins believed then that the next action of the revolutionaries should be to eliminate threats from both foreign nations and the émigrés, former French nobles who had fled France earlier in the revolution, and who the Girondins suspected of conspiring to defeat the Revolution.²⁹ The Jacobins, on the other hand, a group with fewer members from noble families or members who had been clerics and many more members from provincial towns, still had unaddressed concerns. This group, as a composition of mostly middle class members, was more concerned for the lower class Frenchmen who were still hungry, despite all

²³ Owen Connelly, *The French Revolution and Napoleonic Era*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1991), 105-106.

²⁴ Connelly, *The French Revolution and Napoleonic Era*, 107.

²⁵ Roberts, *The French Revolution*, 43.

²⁶ Frey and Frey, *The French Revolution*, 8.

²⁷ Fife, *The Terror*, 28.

²⁸ Timothy Tackett, "Nobles and Third Estate in the Revolutionary Dynamic of the National Assembly, 1789-1790," in *The French Revolution: Recent Debates and New Controversies*, 2nd ed., ed. Gary Kates (New York: Routledge, 2006), 149-150.

²⁹ Fife, *The Terror*, 49.

other reforms.³⁰ The Jacobins thus believed that the revolution still had not achieved all of its goals at home; therefore, it was necessary to secure the revolution from counter-revolutionary threats within France, rather than fighting against foreign threats, which could risk the survival of the revolution.³¹

Not two weeks after the invasion of Prussia and Austria, on August 10, revolutionaries, full of fear for the survival of the revolution from foreign and counter-revolutionary threats, descended on the Tuileries Palace to arrest the king. The bloody result was the death of 600 Swiss Guards and the death or wounding of 400 members of the crowd in the confrontation.³² Shortly thereafter, crowds of revolutionaries killed over 1,200 prisoners in the September Massacres of September 2 to September 7, 1792, in an effort to rid the country of counter-revolutionary threats (as explained in greater depth later in this thesis).³³ With the arrest of the king, and thus the end of the constitutional monarchy, the Legislative Assembly closed and the National Convention held its first meeting in September 1792, when it declared the first French Republic.³⁴ The king's trial began on December 3, 1792, with the Convention acting as a tribunal and continued into January, until it finally decided to execute the king, which occurred on January 21, 1793.³⁵

In 1793, the Jacobins continued the revolution in their own way (as opposed to the Girondin way), in an effort to establish more reforms that addressed the needs of the lower class, by establishing the organizations of the Terror to secure the revolution from counter-revolutionary threats, including a Revolutionary Tribunal. The conflict between the Girondin and

³⁰ Tackett, "Nobles and Third Estate," 149-150.

³¹ Fife, *The Terror*, 49-50.

³² Paul R. Hanson, *Contesting the French Revolution* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 167-168.

³³ Hugh Gough, *The Terror in the French Revolution*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 24

³⁴ Roberts, *The French Revolution*, 47-48.

³⁵ Robert Gildea, "Province and Nation," in *Revolutionary France, 1788-1880*, ed. Malcolm Cook (New York: Oxford University Press), 152.

the Jacobin parties escalated through May, and on June 2, the Jacobin party was finally able to expel the Girondins.³⁶ The Revolution continued through 1799, and some historians argue it continued even longer. However, this overview will end in mid-1793, as that period is the focus of this work.

It is undeniable that the revolution has had a lasting impact, with subsequent revolutionaries modeling their own revolutions after it (most notably the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917), and with references to the events of the years 1789 to 1799 being common still today. Thus understanding the significance of the Revolution is also important. The three most common interpretations of the French Revolution are the Marxist, revisionist, and Tocquevillian. Hunt provides a brief overview of these interpretations, while arguing that the French Revolution had primarily political, not social significance. As an essentially political occasion, the French Revolution birthed the concepts behind many political ideas that have come to fruition since that time. The roots of many modern political ideas and ideals can be found in the revolution, such as the concept of political parties (established in the formation of the Jacobin and Girondin clubs), legal equality for all people, secular governments, socialism, communism, totalitarianism, and even terrorism.³⁷

The Marxist interpretation of the French Revolution calls attention to the bourgeois origins of the revolution in terms of class conflict between the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy. This interpretation claims that the bourgeoisie collaborated with the lower class in the revolution in order to dismantle the feudal system in France and end the power of the aristocracy. During the Terror, the bourgeoisie broke from their alliance with the lower class when it seemed the revolution was spinning out of control and later cooperated with Napoleon to safeguard their

³⁶ Rudé, *The French Revolution*, 83-85.

³⁷ Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 3 & 10.

legal and property achievements from the revolution. Marxists also classify the French Revolution as a class revolution because of the distinct success of the bourgeoisie in the aftermath of the revolution with the establishment of capitalism in France.³⁸

The revisionist interpretation, although it disputes many other claims of the Marxist interpretation, agrees with the essentially social interpretation of the Revolution. However, the revisionist interpretation says that instead of the revolution being a bourgeoisie uprising with capitalist results, it argues that French professionals, who were losing their fortunes, spurred the Revolution, which led to benefits for landowners and actually slowed the development of capitalism in France. Revisionists argue that the bourgeoisie actually had no qualms with the aristocracy and instead liberal aristocrats who were frustrated with despotic monarchs created the Revolution. The most significant outcome of the revolution as seen by revisionists was a more united notable class who placed emphasis on landownership. The revisionist view sees the revolution as a sort of mistake in the path of creating this notable class unified by common interests. The Revolution to revisionists was a trial and error process to determine which system worked best.³⁹

As opposed to the Marxist and revisionist interpretations, the Tocquevillian explanation, while not totally dismissing the social component of the French Revolution, describes the revolution in a political framework. This interpretation says that no social class came out ahead of any other and that the revolution did not form a capitalist system. Instead, the Revolution was a process that broke down the existing monarchy only to eventually build an even more powerful, centralized government that thrived under Napoleon after the Revolution.⁴⁰

³⁸ Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class*, 4-5.

³⁹ Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class*, 5-6.

⁴⁰ Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class*, 6-7.

Thus, these different interpretations yield different beliefs of the most significant outcomes of the revolution, focusing on what the Revolution meant in France. However, Hunt focused her attention on the political aspect of the French Revolution and emphasized political achievements that have blossomed in other nations since 1799. Hunt claims that the principal achievement of the French Revolution was the creation of a drastically different political culture. She states that the revolution did not greatly improve economic expansion or political stability. However, the revolution did bring to life more powerful opinions regarding the possibilities of a change created through revolution and the possibilities that can arise from an organized democratic republic. She maintains that the French Revolution did not create politics but enabled a redefinition and rethinking of political ideas in many ways. It opened up a floodgate of interpretations of what government is and should be.⁴¹

One of the most significant contributions of the French Revolution to modern politics was that it led to the creation of political parties. During the Revolution, different opinions erupted over how best to rearrange Rousseau's idea of a social contract to work in France. To clarify these differences of opinion, revolutionary thinkers conceived many different ideologies, including authoritarianism, conservatism, socialism, and democratic republicanism. In addition, concepts like secularism were practiced to an extreme, communist ideals lived in price controls and calls to even the finances between the rich and the poor, and concepts like terror and genocide were born and lived in the darkest period of the revolution.⁴²

To understand the execution of revolutionary events more thoroughly, this thesis will follow the life of one prominent revolutionary, Jean Paul Marat, and the influence he had on inciting several different revolutionary events. Marat's actual influence on the revolution is

⁴¹ Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class*, 15.

⁴² Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class*, 12-15.

impossible to prove. However, one can determine from examining accounts of his contemporaries, excerpts from his own publications and their similarities with actual events that transpired, and the actions of others to detain Marat and even take his life, that Marat was very influential in inciting several specific revolts. However, before a close examination of his influence, it is important to understand his background.

Marat was eager to learn since his boyhood, always attempting to achieve glory and fame.⁴³ Marat himself stated that he “was bitten by a passionate desire for glory which changed course at different stages of my life but has never for a single instant abandoned me.”⁴⁴ At age 16, Marat began to study medicine. Enthusiastic to learn, he also studied literature, physics, political theory, electricity, philosophy, and optics. He worked as a doctor in a number of places, moving many times, always hoping to gain recognition in each new place. Over the years, practicing medicine while continuing his studies, Marat wrote several works on a variety of subjects, including medicine, electricity, politics, science, philosophy, optics, and even romance. Finally, Marat’s reputation as a physician grew, and the Comte d’Artois, who later became Charles X of France, appointed him brevet-physician to his royal guard. With this new, higher-paying job, Marat began to lead a more comfortable life but continued working frantically on writing and developing his scientific theories. Determined to create a name for himself, he applied for admission to the Royal Academy of Sciences and attempted to publish some of his scientific theories. Despite Marat’s best efforts, publishers rejected his works frequently, and the Academy of Sciences denied him admission.⁴⁵ Marat became bitter from these rejections, and according to Fife, he wrote so passionately during the Revolution because these obstacles made

⁴³ Fife, *The Terror*, 42.

⁴⁴ Jean-Paul Marat, “Autobiography, Collected Works,” in *Voices of the Revolution*, ed. Peter Vansittart (London: Collins, 1989), 230.

⁴⁵ Fife, *The Terror*, 42-45

him feel he could relate to the plights of the oppressed, lower class.⁴⁶ Marat poured all of his own rejection into his efforts to raise the status of the lower class.⁴⁷ In fact, Marat's motto became "to restore prosperity to the deprived at the expense of the arrogant" (a line he took from *Arts Poetica* by Horace).⁴⁸

Marat's life as a revolutionary leader was not long-lived, however. On July 13, 1793, Marie-Anne Charlotte de Corday d'Armont sought Marat out at his home and killed him with one stab in the chest that penetrated both Marat's lung and aorta, killing him quickly. Corday was a twenty-five year-old woman from Caen, who came from a noble family that had become impoverished during the Revolution.⁴⁹ Corday was well educated, and had read a great deal on Rousseau. She was very enthusiastic about Rousseau's ideas before the revolution even began and sided with the Girondins after its inception. In June 1793, many Girondins deputies sought refuge in Caen after the Jacobins expelled them from the Assembly. Corday encountered these Girondins, who were opposed to Marat, and her ideas had become more solidified. Although these contacts helped Corday resolve herself, her decision to go after Marat was all her own.⁵⁰ Corday had planned to kill Marat at the Convention hall on July 14, in a public, theatrical act that she hoped would symbolize her love for France. However, even the knowledge that Marat was very ill and had not been to a Convention meeting since June 2 did not deter Corday from her mission.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Fife, *The Terror*, 45.

⁴⁷ Fife, *The Terror*, 45.

⁴⁸ Fife, *The Terror*, 42.

⁴⁹ Fife, *The Terror*, 1 & 6.

⁵⁰ Chantal Thomas, "Heroism in the Feminine: The Examples of Charlotte Corday and Madame Roland," in *The French Revolution 1789-1989: Two Hundred Years of Rethinking*, ed. Sandy Petrey (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 1989), 69-70.

⁵¹ Fife, *The Terror*, 1-7.

Chapter Two: Historiography

During Marat's life and since his death in 1793, historians have viewed Marat with many different perspectives. One camp of historians has believed Marat to be a monstrous man who advocated for abominable acts during a time of upheaval in France. The other camp has believed that although Marat did call for many violent acts, he had good intentions and fought for values that he believed would grant the lower class, the people he cared very deeply for, liberty, and violence was simply the only means Marat saw for attaining that.

Marat himself described his course of action in the March 19, 1793, edition of his newspaper during the Revolution, *L'Ami du Peuple*. He stated that he saw the Revolution as a means to thwart his oppressors after the disappointing failures he suffered at the hands of the Academy of Sciences. He explained that he decided to found *L'Ami du Peuple* as a method of transmitting his ideas through popular society and acknowledged that he published at first in a moderate tone.⁵² Marat was, however, soon frustrated that "it did not produce the entire effect that [he] had expected," and saw fit to "renounce moderation and to substitute satire and irony for simple censure," the "bitterness" of which steadily increased over time.⁵³ Marat also explained that he did not believe that the revolutionaries could achieve anything through the existing royal family and government except by force, and he was upset by the continuation of "laws serving only to tyrannize over the innocent whom they ought to have protected."⁵⁴ Thus, he called on the people to realize that it was up to them to acquire liberty for themselves. Marat

⁵² Louis R. Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat: A Study in Radicalism* (1927; repr. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), 52-53.

⁵³ Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 53.

⁵⁴ Jean-Paul Marat, quoted in Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 53.

also stated “[I am] the anger, the just anger, of the people and that is why they listen to me and believe in me.”⁵⁵

However, not all historians viewed Marat’s actions as Marat himself described them. To begin with, Joseph de Maistre, one of the most prominent counterrevolutionary publicists in Europe,⁵⁶ made the claim in some of his unpublished documents that Marat was simply a “monster” and a “scoundrel” with the aim of destroying society.⁵⁷ Mgr. de Salamon, a clerical councilor in the Parliament of Paris during the Revolution, held similar sentiments regarding Marat. In his memoirs, Mgr. de Salamon declared that Marat was a “monster” and a “scoundrel.” He claimed that Marat once prescribed him horse medication that he believed could have killed him if he had taken it. Instead, Mgr. de Salamon consulted a reputable medical authority who, Mgr. de Salamon notes, called Marat a “madman.”⁵⁸

Dr. John Moore, an English physician who spent time in Paris during the Revolution, included a note on Marat in his memoirs that he about what he witnessed in France. Moore claims that at the time he witnessed Marat, even the Jacobin party had become ashamed of him, its members refused to speak to him, be near him, or even let him touch them.⁵⁹ According to Gita May, Madame Roland, a very vocal Girondin member who historians remember as a symbol of powerful women in the Revolution, also remembered Marat in a negative light. She reflected in a letter on the fear she felt for the lives of her Girondin husband and his friends as she recognized the threat the radical Jacobins posed. She made her fears of Marat clear in a September 5 statement, shortly after the events of August 10, that they were “under the hatchet

⁵⁵ Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 178.

⁵⁶ Paul H. Beik, *The French Revolution* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1970), 343-344.

⁵⁷ Joseph de Maistre, “Oeuvres complètes de J. de Maistre,” in *The French Revolution*, ed. and trans. Paul H. Beik, (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1970), 349.

⁵⁸ Mgr. de Salamon, *Unpublished Memoirs of the Internuncio at Paris During the Revolution, 1790-1801*, ed. Abbé Bridier, (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1896), 15-16.

⁵⁹ John Moore, “Memoir,” in *Voices of the Revolution*, ed. Peter Vansittart (London: Collins, 1989), 219.

of Robespierre and Marat.”⁶⁰ May also takes note of Roland’s particular fear of Marat over anyone else. She states that Marat terrified Madame Roland far more than Robespierre or Danton did and notes that when she spoke of him in her memoirs and letters she seemed to regard him as a sort of inhuman beast.⁶¹

Thus, many of Marat’s contemporaries viewed him very negatively, and many historians over the years have held similar views. Henri Béraud stated that Marat was extremely vain and claimed that Marat’s purpose in writing scientific works was merely to humiliate the Academy of Sciences. However, Marat did not take well to degradation of himself. Béraud argued that the reason Marat was so dictatorial was that when others disagreed with him, Marat felt that the whole world was mocking him. Béraud continued to criticize Marat by stating that Marat condemned everything, yet he never suggested any solutions to the problems he discussed. What made Marat likable to the public was that he had many respectable qualities in his private life, as he was a faithful man who married an upright woman, was very honest, and did not value money.⁶²

J.M. Thompson also argued that Marat was very vain, claiming that Marat liked being a martyr, who would stay in hiding long after arrest threats had passed to increase his paper sales and his reputation. He also asserted that arrogance made Marat denounce so many people during the Revolution, stating that Marat complimented himself on his scientific works, claiming them to be innovative and momentous discoveries. He used this same principle during the Revolution, according to Thompson, determining himself to be “saviour of the country, who protected France from dangers no one else had seen, aiming to see deceit where no one else had, and thus

⁶⁰ Gita May, *Madame Roland and the Age of Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 226-227.

⁶¹ May, *Madame Roland*, 251.

⁶² Henri Béraud, *Twelve Portraits of the French Revolution*, trans. Madeleine Boyd (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1928), 119-126.

declaring, carelessly, nearly every leader and every National Assembly at some point during the Revolution.⁶³ Thompson argues, however, that it was not Marat's virtues but his sincere concern for the poor that was his redeeming characteristic for the public.⁶⁴ Thus historians were still condemning Marat in the twentieth century. However, these are not the only opinions of his character.

Many of Marat's contemporaries viewed him in a more positive light. Marat's fellow journalist Louis-Marie Prudhomme stated in defense of Marat that he "loves blood no more than anyone else," he simply wanted to be original, and this desire led him to exaggerate his statements, though he had good intentions.⁶⁵ Panis, a member of the Committee of Surveillance along with Marat, also argued that Marat's intentions were good but stated that his radical cries for blood were intended instead to scare wrongdoers from their wrongful behavior.⁶⁶

Marquis de Sade said in an address in the Place de Piques after Marat's murder that "though slaves revile [Marat] as a bloodsucker, [he] did no more than wish to rid the world of those who had made it too full. 'Great men'! Their blood alone you wished to spill, and you were lavish with it, so that the lives of the real people should be spared."⁶⁷ Marquis de Sade clearly thought that while Marat was adamant in his persecution of these "great men," who in Marat's eyes were responsible for the oppression of the lower class, Marat's intentions were good because he only went after such people in order to save members of the lower class from perishing. Paul Barras, a member of the Convention and later the Directorate during the

⁶³ J. M. Thompson, *Leaders of the Revolution* (New York: D. Appleton, 1929), 169.

⁶⁴ Thompson, *Leaders of the Revolution*, 169-170.

⁶⁵ Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat* 122-123

⁶⁶ Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 123.

⁶⁷ Marquis de Sade, "Address in the Place de Piques," in *Voices of the Revolution*, ed. Peter Vansittart (London: Collins, 1989) 231.

Revolution,⁶⁸ remembered seeing Marat at the Convention and stated that he was “far from believing Marat as monstrous a fiend as he was and ever will be considered.” He stated that he liked Marat because, no matter what, Marat’s primary concern was the wellbeing of the Republic. He continued to say that Marat defended his enemies and denounced his friends throughout the Revolution, because he had such strong convictions to uphold the Republic. Barras described a time when an angry crowd captured a woman, known for her democratic beliefs, outside the Convention Hall. He stated that members of the committee put their own lives in danger just by hesitating to hand her over, but when Marat arrived, he took the woman by the hand, and spoke to the people. Barras said that the crowd fell silent as Marat spoke, making the statement that only the law could proclaim a death sentence for the woman, and then proceeded to take her back into the Convention Hall. Barras showed his belief in Marat’s goodness in his account of Marat using his influence over the public to save a woman’s life. Barras also argued that Marat’s own death occurred because of his generosity. Marat was very ill and soaking in a medicinal bath when his murderer called upon him. Marat’s family initially refused to allow Corday to see Marat, but after managing to have a message sent to him describing that there was a distressed woman who wanted to speak with him, he admitted her at once. Thus out of concern for a troubled woman, Marat lost his life. In addition, Barras goes on to note that Marat made a habit of donating all his possessions to the poor, handing over his profits from his publications. He concluded his remembrance of Marat with the statement, “it is difficult for me to realize that a man who at times showed acts and even impulses of feeling, should have uttered speeches and written pages which will make future centuries shudder.”⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Paul Barras, *Memoirs of Barras: Member of the Directorate*, vol.1, ed. George Duruy, trans. Charles Emile Roche (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1895), liii-lxiii.

⁶⁹ Barras, *Memoirs of Barras*, 135-139.

Along with some of Marat's contemporaries, many historians have held positive views of Marat. Elisabeth Roudinesco detailed Marat's relationship with women. Roudinesco provides several versions of the same episode Barras related, in which Marat saved the woman, Théroigne de Méricourt, from the fury of the crowds. Roudinesco described Marat as being very sympathetic to the plight of women and notes that he stood up for them as much as he did for male *sans-culottes*. Roudinesco thus deems him the "women citizens' god."⁷⁰ These women showed their appreciation of Marat pointedly during his funeral, Roudinesco emphasizes. She details the scene of women collecting blood from Marat's wound and parading the bath he was in and the bloody shirt he was wearing when Corday murdered him through the streets during the procession. Théroigne de Méricourt herself described Marat as "mad," however, "if he had been in his right mind, he would have rendered his country immense services."⁷¹ She continued, saying: "since he wished to see his fatherland at liberty he lost count of the number of heads which had to fall for this great emancipation to be realized."⁷² She concludes with the statement "Nature had made him a maniac, he suffered from delusions . . . but once he was restored to the tribunal of his wisdom, he was a warm friend, an incorruptible patriot, etc."⁷³ Thus, evidence from Marat's contemporaries seems to suggest that although he used his newspaper to provoke crowds into rebellion, Marat was well intentioned and known to use his influence for good.

Louis Gottschalk argues, as Fife does, that Marat's early failures at publishing his scientific works and efforts to attend the Academy of Sciences caused Marat's writing later to be very bitter toward authority figures in the Old Regime and anyone else with views different from his own. He contends that Marat became acutely suspicious of anyone who had an opinion which

⁷⁰ Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Madness and Revolution: The Lives and Legends of Théroigne de Méricourt*, trans. Martin Thom (London: Verso, 1991), 128 & 138.

⁷¹ Théroigne de Méricourt, quoted in Roudinesco, *Madness and Revolution*, 176.

⁷² Théroigne de Méricourt, quoted in Roudinesco, *Madness and Revolution*, 176.

⁷³ Théroigne de Méricourt, quoted in Roudinesco, *Madness and Revolution*, 176.

differed from his, supposing them to have ill intentions. Because he could only be convinced of his own honesty, he could not imagine those in opposition to him being sincere. Thus, Gottschalk claims, Marat always felt he was a victim, persecuted by ill-meaning villains while he stood up for the truth.⁷⁴ Gottschalk deems this his “martyr complex.”⁷⁵ Because of this “complex,” Gottschalk argues, Marat believed that his rejections were due to some prejudice possessed by the Academy of Sciences and various publishers against him and that they had denied him honors that he deserved.⁷⁶ Thus, when Marat began his publications during the Revolution, he wrote as one who felt the upper class had deeply wronged him, as many French citizens did. This argument is in great contrast to the arguments that it was Marat’s vanity and arrogance that led him to suspicion and his undertaking of scientific research.

Marat’s contemporaries and historians have viewed Marat in many different lights. This work will take the latter view discussed. Although Marat advocated for violent atrocities to meet his goals, his pronouncements stemmed from his passionate desire to achieve equality for and to meet the basic needs of the lower class. Marat grew more frustrated and thus more radical between 1789 and 1793, as the revolutionary crowd did. As the crowd became hungrier, Marat became even more determined to do all he could to end its plight. Marat felt so strongly about achieving the goals of the lower class, and was so swept up in the revolutionary climate, that he became willing to go to violent lengths to accomplish these objectives.

Although both his contemporaries and later historians perceived Marat from a variety of different perspectives, many have described Marat as very influential. Barras described in his memoirs an occurrence in which Napoleon Bonaparte himself, who was still a very young army man, was handing out pamphlets in November 1793, to a crowd and proclaiming, “This will

⁷⁴ Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 25-26.

⁷⁵ Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 26.

⁷⁶ Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 26.

show you whether or not I am a patriot! Can any man be too much of a Revolutionist? Marat and Robespierre are my saints!”⁷⁷ This proclamation shows that Marat was so well remembered as an influential revolutionary leader after his death that Bonaparte specifically compared himself to Marat to demonstrate his own revolutionary sentiments. Dr. John Moore asserted in his journal entry of October 17, 1792, (a period well into the Terror when Marat was very influential) his amazement at Marat’s ability to silence a crowd. He was shocked at the amount of “patience, and even approbation, with which [Marat] was heard,” especially considering the size of the crowd gathered. Moore also stated that Marat “speaks in a hollow croaking voice, with affected solemnity, which in such a diminutive figure would often produce laughter, were it not suppressed by horror at the character and sentiments of the man.”⁷⁸ Moore’s comment shows that Marat was so influential that he was able to silence very large crowds when he spoke, even with a voice that would normally provoke the opposite of fear.

Some historians have argued that Marat’s particular writing style contributed greatly to his influence. Hunt discussed particular writing styles employed by journalists during the Revolution. She described one method employed by journalists such as Marat that she calls the “rhetoric of denunciation,” which is characterized by the suggestion of conspiracies.⁷⁹ She explains that conspiracy theories had been an age-old obsession in France, and this obsession became stronger prior to the Revolution, as the hungry and distressed public thrived on communicating news through word of mouth, which promoted exaggerated rumors. Suspensions increased among French citizens who speculated that aristocrats might be stockpiling weapons

⁷⁷ Barras, *Memoirs of Barras*, 129 & 131-132.

⁷⁸ John Moore, “Journal During a Residence in France,” in *English Witnesses of the French Revolution*, ed. J.M. Thompson (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1970), 205-206.

⁷⁹ Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class*, 39.

and food, contributing to rising grain prices and starvation for many.⁸⁰ Marat's publications therefore fed into this well-established environment of suspicion and conspiracy theories. Thus, it was easier for Marat to incite others into action both because the public was already highly suspicious and because they identified Marat as being one of the people since he shared many of their sentiments and misgivings.

Alan Forrest also emphasizes the particular writing style employed by radical journalists, particularly Marat. He explains that one source of Marat's strength and influence was the fact that Marat thought like the crowd. He endlessly sought to bring to light suspects and conspiracies, arousing suspicion and blaming attacks on citizens' rights on aristocrats and crooked politicians. Forrest emphasizes that many people looked to Marat as their champion, a man who protected them by revealing the true nature of people and events and defending them against criticism.⁸¹ Marat's accusatory style and distrustful mindset reflected qualities already predominant among the public, making him more relatable and thus more influential.

⁸⁰ Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class*, 39-40.

⁸¹ Alan Forrest, *Paris, the Provinces and the French Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2004), 124-125.

Chapter Three: Marat as Revolutionary

To understand most thoroughly Marat's influence, it is necessary to evaluate his ability to incite the public into action. The events that this work will examine include the Women's March on Versailles, the Champs de Mars Massacre, the Storming of the Tuileries Palace, the September Massacres, and the grocery riots of February 1793. The influence of the press on revolutionary events was very strong, attested to by the fact that several people arrested during the Terror were news distributors who authorities believed were circulating revolutionary publications. Many people arrested during the Champs de Mars Massacre claimed to have said that they read Marat and gained their ideas from him. This included one person who possessed a copy of *L'Ami du Peuple* when authorities arrested him.⁸² Because news distributors were frequently exposed to the press, they were more likely to participate in uprisings. Marat's publications were specifically influential in inciting revolutionary events.

Ian Germani outlines Marat's history as a writer. Marat had been living in Newcastle, England, since 1770 working as a veterinarian and doctor. In 1774, an Englishman named John Wilkes successfully, with the support of the press and many popular societies, secured the possession of Lord Mayor of London, after being barred from his seat in the House of Commons and controversially imprisoned. The Wilkes Affair taught Marat how influential the press and popular societies could be, contributed to Marat's distrust of monarchical leaders, and caused Marat to lose faith in the ability of representatives to act in the interests of the nation. The Wilkes Affair thus pushed Marat to publish his first political work, an English language publication entitled *The Chains of Slavery* in 1774. Marat began to write this work in France, but after the Wilkes Affair Marat began to feel an urgency to publish his work and to do so in time for the English parliamentary elections of 1774, in hopes that his work would have some influence on

⁸² George Rudé, *The Crowd in the French Revolution* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986), 212.

them. As Marat was highly influenced by Enlightenment thinkers like Rousseau, Marat's work argued that the only just reason for government was to maintain the happiness of the people and that if it did not work for the welfare of the people, it was the right of the people to rebel against their leaders.⁸³

Marat returned to France in 1777 after the Comte d'Artois appointed Marat to be his physician. At this time, Marat turned his attention to his scientific works, but as noted earlier, he did not have much success in those endeavors and consequently returned his attention to politics with an enlivened sense of rejection and injustice from the upper class.⁸⁴ Marat published the first of his many revolutionary pamphlets entitled *L'Offrande à la Patrie* in February 1789.⁸⁵ This publication was moderate in nature; Marat encouraged the lower class to rise up as a cohesive group against their oppression, yet he remained sympathetic to the institution of the monarchy and reflected favorably on King Louis XVI.⁸⁶ In April 1789, Marat published a *Supplément à l'Offrande à la Patrie* in response to the *Lettres Royales*, which the king had published on January 24, 1789. (Marat wrote the first *Offrande* before the king published the *Lettres*.) Marat's *Supplément* criticized the monarchy because the *Lettres* asked for each of the three Estates to compose lists (*cahiers*) of their grievances. In Marat's opinion, the king was not worried about the complaints of the people, but about his dwindling finances. However, it was the king's advisers and not King Louis himself whom Marat held responsible. Marat reaffirmed in this *Supplément* the statements he made in his February pamphlet, imploring the people to work together to change the government.⁸⁷ It was not until after the Storming of the Bastille on

⁸³ Ian Germani, *Jean-Paul Marat, Hero and Anti-hero of the French Revolution* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 9.

⁸⁴ Germani, *Jean-Paul Marat*, 10.

⁸⁵ Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 36.

⁸⁶ Germani, *Jean-Paul Marat*, 13.

⁸⁷ Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 39-40.

July 14, however, that Marat became motivated to take his mission further. After the establishment of the National Assembly a few days following Storming of the Bastille, Marat's distrust of representatives led him to the decision that he would take it upon himself to report the Assembly's actions to the people in a newspaper in order to announce their crimes and inhibit wrongdoing. However, it was not until September that Marat was able to find a publisher for his newspaper,⁸⁸ which he named the *Le Publiciste parisien*.⁸⁹ After five editions, however, Marat changed the name of his newspaper to *L'Ami du Peuple*.⁹⁰ Marat continued to publish pamphlets throughout the revolution, but *L'Ami du Peuple* is the best remembered of his publications. The newspaper was at first relatively moderate, as his first pamphlets were, but over time became increasingly radical. Marat criticized government actions, deeming nearly all activities counter-revolutionary and expressed his acute distrust of almost every person who had any sort of authority. Marat's denunciations earned Marat a summons to the Paris Commune within the first month of *L'Ami du Peuple*'s circulation to account for accusations he had made in the newspaper. This event sent Marat into hiding for the first time, and he began to publish his paper underground. The Commune eventually found and arrested Marat, but acquitted him of the charges against him.⁹¹

One of the first revolutionary events the Assembly accused Marat of helping to provoke was the Women's March on Versailles. On October 4, 1789, riots erupted in Paris over bread shortages in the marketplace. By October 5, a crowd consisting of around 7,000 women embarked on a march from Paris to Versailles. The crowd reached the National Assembly by evening, a small delegation entered the hall calling for food for the Parisians. They confronted

⁸⁸ Germani, *Jean-Paul Marat*, 15.

⁸⁹ Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 49.

⁹⁰ Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 49.

⁹¹ Germani, *Jean-Paul Marat*, 15-16.

Robespierre, a Jacobin member of the National Convention,⁹² who promptly demanded an investigation into the shortage and price of bread in Paris. Robespierre's proclamation did nothing to quiet the crowd, but his actions did divert their anger from the Assembly. The crowd then marched on the Palace of Versailles, invading it and demanding that the royal family and the Assembly return to Paris.⁹³ The day before, on October 4, 1789, Marat had urged the crowd to action in his newspaper, *L'Ami du Peuple*:

. . . there is not a moment to lose; all the good citizens must assemble in arms to send a large squad to remove all the powder from Essone. Every district must withdraw its cannons from the Hôtel de Ville. The National Militia is not so deprived of good sense to not realize that it must never be separated from the rest of its fellow citizens and that, far from obeying its leaders, if they [its leaders] forget themselves to the point that they give orders hostile [to the revolution], it must take care of them. Finally, if the danger becomes too great, it's all over for us if the people do not name a tribunal and if they do not arm it with the means to carry out the will of the people.⁹⁴

This was Marat's reply to a notification that military officers had stomped on the tricolor cockade at a royal reception.⁹⁵ He argued that the people must prepare themselves in the event the leaders turned against revolutionaries and that if they did so, it was the military's duty to take care of such leaders. Marat's point is clear. He is urging the people to act against the government. He published the report of the officers' behavior to provoke the public against the offenders and the royal family. Marat's publications had become noticeably more radical at this

⁹² Jack R. Censer and Lynn Hunt, *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 66.

⁹³ Ruth Scurr, *Fatal Purity: Robespierre and the French Revolution* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006), 104-105.

⁹⁴ . . . il n'y a pas un instant à perdre; tous les bons Citoyens doivent s'assembler en armes, envoyer un nombreux détachement pour enlever toutes les poudres d'Essone: chaque District doit retirer ses canons de l'Hôtel-de-Ville. La Milice Nationale n'est pas assez dépourvue de sens, pour ne pas sentir qu'elle ne doit jamais se séparer du reste de ses Concitoyens; que loin d'obéir à ses Chefs, s'ils s'oublioient au point de donner des ordres hostiles, elle doit s'assurer d'eux. Enfin, si le péril devenoit éminent, c'en est fait de nous, si le Peuple ne nomme un Tribun, & s'il ne l'arme de la force publique. *L'ami du Peuple*, no. 25, October 4, 1789. This and all other translations done by author unless otherwise noted.

⁹⁵ *L'ami du Peuple*, no. 25, October 4, 1789.

point, not even a month after he began publication. Marat was now making violent demands, calling for the deaths of army officers if they act against the people.

On October 7, Marat continued to support the March:

The king, the queen, the crown prince, and company arrived in the capital at seven in the evening. This is a celebration for the good Parisians because they finally own their king. His presence is going to quickly change the face of things and the poor will no longer die of hunger. But this happiness would soon fade away like a dream if we did not keep the residence of the royal family in our midst until the Constitution is fully consecrated.⁹⁶

Marat was celebrating the arrival of the royal family in Paris, showing his support for the March on Versailles. In keeping with his usual style, Marat also warned against what would happen if the people did not keep the king and his family in Paris until the Assembly could fully implement the Constitution. However, Marat was not very critical of the king or the monarchy at this time.

Camille Desmoulins, a fellow journalist, reported in his newspaper, *Révolutions de France et de Brabant*, that Marat travelled to Versailles with the crowd but quickly returned after reaching Versailles in order to report on the event in Paris. The Commune of Paris and Jacques Necker, the king's Director General of Finance,⁹⁷ also believed Marat helped incite the event. These forces pursued Marat from the time he went into hiding in October until December, when they discovered him hiding in the city of Versailles. The Commander-in-Chief of the National Guard, Lafayette, questioned Marat. Marat was able to use his communication skills to escape further persecution, however, he refused to allow these forces to silence him.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Le roi, la reine, le dauphin, &c. sont arrivés dans la capitale sur les sept heures du soir. C'est une fête pour les bons parisiens de posséder enfin leur roi : sa présence va faire bien promptement changer les choses de face : le pauvre peuple ne mourra plus de faim. Mais ce bonheur s'évanouiroit bientôt comme un songe, si nous ne fixions au milieu de nous le séjour de la famille royale, jusqu'à ce que la constitution soit complètement consacrée. Jean-Paul Marat, *L'Ami du Peuple*, no. 27, October 7, 1789.

⁹⁷ Jones, *The French Revolution*, 9.

⁹⁸ Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 60.

Marat published a denunciation of Necker on January 18, 1790. Determined to put a stop to Marat's outcries, a force of around three hundred men sought him out. Marat was able to hide for a short time near Paris but quickly decided to flee to England and remained there until April. During Marat's time in England, he continued to publish pamphlets criticizing the Commune and Necker. Upon returning to France after his three-month stay, Marat began publishing *L'Ami du Peuple* again. Over the next year, Marat's continued publications demonstrated his changing attitude towards Louis XVI. Marat had before been sympathetic to Louis, blaming his advisers for the monarchy's troubles. However, after the king and his family tried to flee the country on June 21, 1791, Marat had no favor left for the king.⁹⁹

The National Assembly also accused Marat of inciting the Champs de Mars Massacre, which took place on July 17, 1791. This event occurred in response to the National Assembly's decision to restore the King to his throne after it suspended him from power when he and his family attempted to flee the country on June 21. A crowd of perhaps 50,000 people congregated on the Champs de Mars on July 17 to sign a petition against this decision, an event that Marat planned in cooperation with Danton, an early leader of the Revolution who later became the president of the Committee of Public Safety.¹⁰⁰ During the protest, the crowd discovered two men hiding under an altar and, assuming that the men were spies for the government, the crowd promptly lynched them. The Parisian mayor, after hearing of the execution of these men, declared martial law, and the National Guard quickly surrounded the crowd. When members of the crowd began to throw stones at the Guardsmen, the Guard opened fire. The Guard killed fifty petitioners, injured many, arrested approximately 200, and Marat went into hiding.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 74-76.

¹⁰⁰ David Lawday, *The Giant of the French Revolution: Danton, A Life* (New York: Grove Press, 2009), 37 & 194.

¹⁰¹ Fife, *The Terror*, 46-47.

Marat himself confirmed that he was present at the Champs de Mars Massacre:

Know that after the Champs de Mars Massacre, if I had found two thousand men animated with the thoughts that burned my breast, I would have been at their head to stab the general in the middle of his battalions of brigands, to burn the despot in his palace, and to impale our atrocious representatives on their seats, like I told them at the time.¹⁰²

Thus Marat indicated that he was not only involved in the event but was more than willing to take this uprising further, continuing to strike against the National Guard for opening fire on the public. Marat was growing increasingly radical. He was calling for more detailed violence than he had previously.

Pierre Vergniaud, a Girondin leader of the National Assembly and National Convention, accused Marat and Robespierre of inciting the Champs de Mars Massacre in a speech to the Convention in December 1792, (eighteen months after the event). Vergniaud accused Marat and Robespierre of provoking the crowd: “you drew up then . . . a petition which had for its object to consult the people on the fate of Louis, returning from Varennes. Your heart was not tormented by any fear of discord.”¹⁰³ Vergniaud, a prominent revolutionary leader, clearly believed Marat to have played a major role in orchestrating the Champs de Mars gathering.

Discouraged at the establishment of a constitutional monarchy and the reinstatement of Louis to his throne, Marat left France for England once again in December 1791. Marat, however, returned to Paris in late February or early March 1792, and began publishing *L'Ami du Peuple* again in March.¹⁰⁴ The Legislative Assembly passed a decree of accusation against him on May 3, 1792, for his criticism of the Assembly, which forced him to go into hiding again until

¹⁰² Apprenez qu’après le massacre du champ de mars, si j’avois trouve deux mille hommes animes des sentimens qui déchiroient mon sein, j’aurois été à leur tête poignarder le général au milieu de ses bataillons de brigands, brûler le despote dans son palais, et empâler nos atroces représentans sur leur sièges, comme je leur déclarai dans le tems. Jean-Paul Marat, *L'Ami du Peuple*, no. 648, May 3, 1792.

¹⁰³ Pierre Vergniaud, quoted in Claude Gernade Bowers, *Pierre Vergniaud: Voice of the Revolution* (New York: Macmillan, 1950), vii-viii & 296-298.

¹⁰⁴ Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 91.

August 10, 1792, the same date another major revolutionary event occurred.¹⁰⁵ Leading up to this event, the Girondin and Jacobin parties became more clearly divided. Confronted with greater foreign threats, the Girondin party advocated spreading the revolutionary theme abroad. The Jacobins, in contrast, thought going abroad was too risky to the survival of France's own revolution, and instead argued for consolidating power at home. Two subsequent events, the Storming of the Tuileries and the September Massacres, swung favor toward the Jacobins.¹⁰⁶

Girondins leaders also accused Marat of inciting the storming of the Tuileries Palace on August 10, 1792. On this day, crowds descended upon the Tuileries Palace in an attempt to remove Louis XVI from his throne. They killed 600 Swiss Guards, and in the confrontation, 400 members of the crowd were killed or wounded.¹⁰⁷ Although Marat had been in hiding since May 3 of that year, Marat did call for these actions in the August 7, 1792, edition of *L'Ami du Peuple*.¹⁰⁸ Marat urged the people to capture and take as hostages the royal family, all of the judges of the Old Regime, and all of the department leaders. He declared them to be "traitors . . . whom [the nation] must first sacrifice for public safety."¹⁰⁹ On August 13, three days after the event, he argued: "at the same moment when the cannon was striking down the palace of the despot, the [unfaithful deputies] were plotting to remove [the king] from the justice of the people, they were working to hide from the public the incontestable proof of their deceptive

¹⁰⁵ Germani, *Jean-Paul Marat*, 20-21.

¹⁰⁶ François Furet, *The French Revolution, 1770-1814*, trans. Antonia Nevill (1992; repr. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, Inc., 1998), 109 & 113-114.

¹⁰⁷ Hanson, *Contesting the French Revolution*, 167-168.

¹⁰⁸ J. Gilchrist and W. J. Murray, *The Press in the French Revolution: A Selection of Documents Taken from the Press of the French Revolution for the Years 1789-1794* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1971), xiii-xiv.

¹⁰⁹ Louis XVI, sa femme, son fils, ses ministres, tous vos infidèles représentans, tous les membres de l'ancien département, et du nouveau, tous les juges de paix vendus ; voilà les traîtres dont la nation doit demander justice, et qu'elle doit d'abord immoler au salut public. Jean-Paul Marat, *L'Ami du Peuple*, no. 677, August 7, 1792.

darkness.”¹¹⁰ Marat was justifying the crowd’s actions by stating that while at the same time the crowd stormed the Tuileries, certain representatives were still planning to hide the king, who was responsible for the deaths of many common people, in order to save both the king and themselves from the justice of the people. This publication indicates Marat’s noticeably changed attitude toward the king and the monarchy, not only calling him a traitor but also demanding his execution along with that of many other leaders and representatives. Léonard Bourdon, a social, political, economic and educational reformer during the Revolution and a member of the National Convention claimed in his memoirs that Marat’s involvement in the events of August 10 was obvious.¹¹¹ It is clear therefore, that Marat did call for these exact events leading up to August 10 and that prominent revolutionary leaders did believe him to be part of the cause. Following the suspension of the monarchy on August 10, the Legislative Assembly established the National Convention to inaugurate the first French Republic.¹¹² The Committee of Surveillance granted Marat membership on September 2, 1792, the same day the September Massacres occurred.¹¹³

One of the most often heard claims against Marat is that he played a hand in inciting the September Massacres of 1792. Leading up to the September Massacres, revolutionaries fell under threat from invading Prussians and counter-revolutionaries. In late August, the Commune ordered the apprehension of all political suspects in an effort to secure the survival of the revolution from these forces. Several hundred citizens were imprisoned, but rumors soon circulated that the prisoners planned to escape, slaughter women and children, and forfeit Paris to

¹¹⁰ Au moment même où le canon foudroyoit le palais du despote, ils machinoient pour le soustraire à la justice du peuple qu’il faisoit égorger, il travailloient à dérober aux regards du public, les preuves irrécusables de ses noires perfidies. Jean-Paul Marat, *L’Ami du Peuple*, August 13, 1972.

¹¹¹ Léonard Bourdon, *Léonard Bourdon: The Career of a Revolutionary, 1754-1807*, ed. Michael J. Sydenham (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1999), 101.

¹¹² Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 98.

¹¹³ Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 120.

Prussia. Amidst these rumors and news that Prussian forces were further advancing, uprisings broke out across Paris on September 2. On this day, the crowds killed a group of prisoners traveling across Paris to the Abbaye prison. In the subsequent five days, the crowd subjected between 1,100 and 1,300 to spontaneous trials and then murdered them in prison courtyards.¹¹⁴

Members of the Convention used Marat's publication of *L'Ami du Peuple*, on August 19, 1792, as evidence against him for the charge of inciting the September Massacres.¹¹⁵ In this publication, Marat asks:

But what is the duty of the people? . . . The last option, which is the most sure and the most wise, is to go into the Abbaye armed, extract the traitors, especially the Swiss Guards and their accomplices, and pass them through with a sword. What madness to want to hold their trials! It's all done: you have caught them, arms in hand against the fatherland, you have massacred the soldiers, why spare their officers, [who are] incomparably more guilty? . . . It is the traitors should have been killed on the spot, for there can never be any other view of them.¹¹⁶

Marat therefore called for the exact actions that took place during the September Massacres in this August publication of his work. This publication is the most violent yet, as it demanded the mass execution of military officers without a trial.

Marat, known for such radical proclamations, was elected to the National Convention, which first met on September 20, 1792. Many members of the Convention were divided between Girondins and the Jacobins, with neither having a majority, and most members did not express sympathies for either party.¹¹⁷ The Convention grew more and more against Marat, however.

¹¹⁴ Gough, *The Terror in the French Revolution*, 24.

¹¹⁵ Gilchrist and Murray, *The Press in the French Revolution*, 267-269.

¹¹⁶ Mais quel est le devoir du peuple? . . . Le dernier parti, qui est le plus sûr et le plus sage, est de se porter en armes à l'Abbaye, d'en arracher les traîtres, particulièrement les officiers suisses et leurs complices, et de les passer au fil de l'épée. Quelle folie de vouloir faire leur procès! Il est tous fait: vous les avez pris les armes à la main contre la patrie, vous avez massacrés les soldats, pourquoi épargneriez-vous leurs officiers, incomparablement plus coupables? . . . Ce sont des traîtres qu'il falloir immoler sur le champ, car ils ne pouvoient jamais être considérés sous un autre point de vue. Jean-Paul Marat, *L'Ami du Peuple*, no. 680, August 19, 1792.

¹¹⁷ Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 139.

Calls for a decree of accusation sounded again in September 1792 and again in October. The Convention was soon distracted from his denunciations of Marat, however, as the trial of Louis XVI approached. The trial began on December 3, 1792, with the majority of the Girondin members advocating more moderate action against the king, such as sentencing him to exile or life in prison. Marat saw this as treason and declared the Girondins to be royalist sympathizers. Girondins retaliated with attacks on Marat and other Jacobins.¹¹⁸ After the Convention finally came to a decision, Louis was executed on January 21, 1793.¹¹⁹ Attacks on Marat did not resume until February 25, 1793.¹²⁰

In Marat's February 25 edition of *L'Ami du Peuple*, he proclaimed:

While waiting for the nation, tired of disordered revolts, to take it upon itself to purge the land of the liberty of this criminal race, the cowardly representatives encourage crime through impunity. One must not find it strange that the people of this city, driven to despair, do their own justice. In all countries, where the rights of the people are not merely an empty phrase in a simple declaration, the pillaging of some stores, to the door of which one would hang the embezzlers, would put a quick end to their embezzlements, which reduce five million men to despair and which cause thousands to perish of poverty. . . . Leave aside repressive measures of the law, isn't it too obvious that they have always been and they will always be without effect? The only effective measures are revolutionary measures.¹²¹

On the same day as this publication, food riots broke out in Paris and continued until February 27. Marat led the crowd in calling for the heads of hoarders of all goods and merchants

¹¹⁸ Germani, *Jean-Paul Marat*, 27-28.

¹¹⁹ Rudé, *The French Revolution*, 83.

¹²⁰ Germani, *Jean-Paul Marat*, 28.

¹²¹ En attendant que la nation, fatiguée de ces désordres révoltans, prenne elle-même le parti de purger la terre de la liberté de cette race criminelle, que les lâches mandataires encouragent au crime par l'impunité : on ne doit pas trouva étrange que le peuple dans chaque ville, poussé au désespoir, se fasse lui même justice. Dans tout pays, où les droits du peuple ne sont pas de vains titres, confignes fastueusement dans une simple déclaration : le pillage de quelques magasins, à la porte de quels on pendroit les accapareurs mettroit bientôt fin à ses malversations, qui réduisent cinq millions d'hommes au déferpoir, & qui font périr des milliers de misère ? . . . Laiffons-là les mesures répressives des loix, il n'eft que trop évident qu'elles ont toujours été, & qu'elles seront toujours sans effet : les seules efficaces sont des mesures révolutionnaires. Jean-Paul Marat, *L'Ami du Peuple*, no. 133, February 25, 1793.

who overpriced their goods.¹²² Pierre-Toussaint Durand de Maillane, who served as deputy of the Third Estate and member of the Convention, insisted that this uprising was the last straw for Marat. Durand de Maillane asserted that the Convention took Marat before a tribunal because “he had long been inciting murder and assassination in his journal, the *Ami du Peuple*.”¹²³

It was not until April, however, that the Convention was able to bring charges against Marat. On April 5, Marat became president of the Jacobin Club. That same day, Marat, as president, signed a circular that denounced army generals and the moderate members of the Convention. On April 12, the circular was read before the Convention and cries for his arrest immediately erupted.¹²⁴ The Convention resolved to arrest Marat and imprison him until they could indict him. The Convention also ordered the legislative committee to prepare a report on Marat and his publications, which the Convention then dispersed among its members and evaluated. On April 14, agreeing with the report’s argument against Marat, the Convention voted to put Marat on trial.¹²⁵ Arnauld Meillan, a Girondin member of the National Convention, explained the reasoning behind the decision: Marat had proclaimed the need to cut off 260,000 heads in his publications, and the grocery store riots demonstrated his influence.¹²⁶

The Bill of Indictment issued against Marat charged him of having incited “murder, assassination, and massacre” through his publications and specifically noted the pillaging of grocers on February 25 as one event instigated by the journalist.¹²⁷ Although many Convention members were against him, Marat still had many supporters as evidenced by the events during his indictment. Marat arrived at the tribunal on April 24 amid raucous applause from the public

¹²² Fife, *The Terror*, 98.

¹²³ Pierre Toussaint Durand de Maillane, “Histoire de la Convention Nationale,” in *The French Revolution As Told by Contemporaries*, ed. Earl L. Higgins (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1938), 285.

¹²⁴ Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 156.

¹²⁵ Higgins, *The French Revolution*, 285.

¹²⁶ Higgins, *The French Revolution*, 260.

¹²⁷ Higgins, *The French Revolution*, 284.

galleries and had to ask for the crowd's silence to speak his defense.¹²⁸ One supporter of Marat cried out: "Citizen President, we bring you the brave Marat. He has always been the friend of the people and the people will always be the friend of Marat."¹²⁹ Many citizens looked to Marat as their champion. The tribunal acquitted Marat the same day, and a crowd of Jacobin followers returned him to the Convention where his supporters greeted him with cheers. One supporter claimed, "Marat deserved, not a condemnation, but a civic decoration."¹³⁰ These accounts of Marat's impeachment reveal the great public support that he enjoyed. The public truly identified with him, which meant his publications would influence them more easily.

Marat spent the rest of April and all of May continuing his condemnations of Girondin party members, as overall Jacobin opposition to the Girondin party grew as well. On June 1, Marat called for the arrest of the Commission of Twelve, a group that was set to investigate the legality of the conduct of the Paris Commune and its insurrectionary committees. He also named twenty-two additional Girondins. On June 2, the Convention passed a decree of arrest against thirty-one Girondins whom he believed should be arrested. With this accomplished, Marat resigned from the Convention on June 3.¹³¹

Yet another indication of Marat's influence is his murder. Corday believed that the only way she could put a stop to The Terror that had besieged France was to kill Marat.¹³² Her choice to kill Marat out of all the revolutionary leaders indicates his perceived influence, considering that Marat had already resigned from the Convention and was extremely sick. In a letter to her father from her jail cell on July 16, the day before her trial, Corday wrote, "I have avenged many

¹²⁸ David Andress, *The Terror: The Merciless War for Freedom in Revolutionary France* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2006), 166.

¹²⁹ Bowers, *Pierre Vergniaud*, 381.

¹³⁰ Higgins, *The French Revolution*, 285

¹³¹ Gottschalk, 161-166.

¹³² Fife, *The Terror*, 1-7.

innocent victims and prevented many disasters. One day, when the people have their eyes opened, they will rejoice at being delivered from a tyrant.”¹³³ During her trial, Corday defended her actions by stating: “anything was justified for the security of the nation. I have killed one man in order to save a thousand. I was a republican long before the Revolution and I have never lacked that resolution of people who can put aside personal interests and have the courage to sacrifice themselves for their country.”¹³⁴ Corday’s statements, which are ironically reminiscent of many of Marat’s own claims, indicate that she believed that if one person had to die to save France from the Terror, that person was Marat.

Although it would be impossible to prove Marat’s exact influence on the Revolution, it is clear that he was very significant in provoking many uprisings throughout the revolution. In many cases, Marat called for the exact events that occurred during these uprisings in his newspaper before they took place. It is very unlikely that this is merely a coincidence, and the statements of Marat’s contemporaries, whether they held Marat in high esteem or not, show that the public listened to Marat. The actions taken by the Assembly and Charlotte Corday to stop Marat’s publications in order to stop the revolts also show that significant revolutionary leaders believed Marat to be one cause of these events.

¹³³ Fife, *The Terror* 7.

¹³⁴ Fife, *The Terror*, 9

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