

Proofread by “OP”, editor’s notes in blue. All I speak is English, so my recommendations are based solely on how the English text reads.

On June 17, 1789, the deputies of the Third Estate, pressed by the revolutionary fervor of the whole country, constituted the National Assembly and **thus** gave rise to the gigantic social upheaval we call the Great Revolution "par excellence".

The hopes which gave rise to this initiative were immense, but ~~were~~ still surpassed by the chain of events that was to follow. The edifice of the feudal State, which once appeared so solid, fell like a house of cards ~~to~~ **under** the assault of the masses. In the space of a few months, all the chains broke which had ~~restrained~~ **shackled** France and would have strangled it to death. Like a giant still in infancy, the new mode of production could from now on benefit from fresh air, light, and all possibilities of a full bloom. In ~~front~~ **face** of the enthusiasm of an enfranchised? people, all resistance vanished. France, which during the old regime had ~~become~~ **been?** the laughing stock of Europe, now victoriously resisted the combined assault of the allied European monarchies and the internal counter-revolution. The banner of the revolution did not hesitate to overrun the whole continent, ~~winning~~ **flying over** victory after victory.

Three questions for this paragraph:

1. What is the meaning of the word “enfranchised” here? Does it serve as another synonym for “freed”, “liberated”, etc, or does it specifically imply the act of voting?
2. “The old regime had *become* the laughing stock of Europe” – how does he imply France was the laughing stock? Had it always been ridiculed, or only became so recently, IE the last century?
3. Do we want to use “old regime” or stick with the French “Ancien Regime”? We should put this to a vote with the other contributors.

On the other hand, indeed, it appeared that many **of the** hopes ~~fed by~~ **fed to** (1) the men of the revolution were chimeras. The abolition of ~~privileges~~ **prerogatives** (2) was not enough to bring about the reign of liberty and fraternity. New class antagonisms ~~emerged~~ **were emerging**, and they were full of new social struggles and upheavals. Poverty did not end, the proletariat grew, and so did the exploitation of the working population. The state and society which gave birth to the revolution neither corresponded to the **ideals** of Montesquieu nor ~~that~~ **those** of J. J. Rousseau. The reality of objective conditions was stronger than ideas.

1. Does “fed by” imply the ideas were “provided by” leaders or demagogues? If so, use “fed to”, if not, use “hopes harbored by”.
2. “Prerogatives” is a more accurate word for the legal privileges enjoyed by the feudal ruling class.

An? historic event like this ~~presents so many different facets which all currents can find some nourishment~~ presents so many different facets that all political currents can find some vindication, from those who want to glorify and celebrate it, to those who want to vilify, ridicule, and shame it.

I’m one of those philistines who prefers “an historic”. This is not proper English grammar today, however it would be back in 1889.

It is even easier to ~~find what nourishes~~ feed partisan objectives if we look from a ~~moralizing~~ moralistic point of view. A drama of this size magnitude heats the passion of the actors to an extreme. We can find in ~~every party~~ all parties examples of the most pleasant and sublime virtues, examples of matchless heroism and altruism, but ~~as well~~ also examples of an ignoble baseness, cruelty, cowardice, and greed. Each can easily enjoy the exaltation of their own sympathetic traits, and throw the ignominy of others in the face of adversaries.

This way of writing history may be somewhat strange, but there are few historians of the French Revolution who can avoid it. This has a very natural explanation. The antagonisms which exploded during the French Revolution have not ~~completely passed~~ yet been completely overcome (1). It created new antagonisms, which have manifested for the first time and since then have only sharpened. There is no modern party which ~~doesn't~~ does not feel one in way or another, by tradition or sympathy, or by analogy to the situation or the ~~goals being~~ aims pursued, an affinity with ~~some~~ a certain? tendency of the French Revolution, and ~~therefore would be~~ inclined to judge it leniently, while judging the tendency of the adversary harshly.

1. “The antagonisms ... have not *completely* passed” – “completely” is key. Is Kautsky implying that class antagonisms have subsided since the French Revolution, ala Bernstein?

Yet, the French Revolution itself opened the way to a conception of history which makes possible an objective examination of historical phenomena ~~like all~~ just as all others (1), a conception which sees, in the ~~last~~ final analysis, the driving force of historical evolution not in human wills, but in the objective relations which link individuals ~~wills? together~~ while being independent of them, or, ~~to put it another way~~ better said? Put simply?, which dominate them.

1. I feel like Kautsky is trying to say that historical science can be just as objective as natural science like chemistry, etc, but it's hard to communicate that while keeping it brief.

Those who paint the picture of the French Revolution by presenting it ~~like~~ as the work of philosophers, of Voltaire and Rousseau on one hand, and on the other hand of the speakers of the National Assembly, of Mirabeau and Robespierre, cannot ~~grasp~~ comprehend that the conflict ~~which led to~~ at the root of the revolution came from the antagonism between the first two Estates and the Third Estate. They have seen that this antagonism is not ephemeral and contingent; it already showed itself in the Estates General of 1614 and in those that preceded it, it was an essential factor in historical evolution, and at first it was also the main factor in the consolidation of absolute monarchy. It cannot escape them that this conflict ~~has~~ had its roots in economic structures.

Certainly, for most works which focus on the revolutionary period, the class struggle ~~does not appear~~ is not present, nor does it appear today, ~~like~~ as the driving force of the upheaval, but only ~~like~~ as an episode ~~situated~~ in the ~~middle~~ midst of the struggles of philosophers, orators, and statesmen, as if these were not the necessary results of class struggle. It has taken a gigantic conceptual effort to recognize that which seems like an episodic phenomenon as the real basis, not only of the ~~whole~~ entire French Revolution, but also of the ~~whole~~ entire evolution of societies since ~~the~~ class antagonisms formed.

The materialist conception of history is again today very contested. Yet the idea that the French Revolution is the outcome of a class struggle between the Third Estate and the two other Estates ~~is~~ has been, on the other hand, almost universally admitted for a long time. It has ceased to be a theory held only by specialists, and has become very popular, ~~notably~~ especially? among the German

working class. The adepts of this idea currently have less need to defend it, than to preserve it from being watered down.

When we bring the path of history down to the class struggle, there is a great temptation to suppose that in the society in question there are only two camps, two struggling classes, two compact and homogenous masses, the revolutionary mass and the reactionary mass, such that there is only one "us and them". ~~From this~~ [On this account](#), the historian's task ought to be easy enough, yet ~~the~~ reality is far from being so simple. Society is an extraordinarily complex organism which becomes more complex by the day, a tangle of multiple classes and diverse interests which can, depending on the situation, regroup into various parties.

[Very good](#)

This is true of today, and it is also true of the French Revolution.