

Thomas Paine or the Defender of the World Revolution

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Thomas Paine was born on January 29th 1737 at Thetford in Norfolk, England. His father, a Quaker, Joseph Paine was a staymaker (maker of corsets – J. B.). Paine, under the influence and education of his father, inclined to the Quakers. Many of his works and central ideas were influenced by Quaker beliefs.¹ If he had decided not to leave England and not to travel to North America in autumn 1774, maybe he would never have become famous in his homeland. It was during the American Revolution that Paine became famous for the first time as an outstanding theoretician. In the course of this Revolution he launched his lifelong career as a “professional revolutionist”. It was from that time that he began an open struggle against his former homeland and against the monarchical establishment which lasted until the end of his life. In America Paine became famous especially for his work on, *the Common Sense*, which was published anonymously on January 10th 1776. It was an immediate success but originally, mistakenly, attributed to John Adams or Benjamin Franklin. According to Paine an incredible one hundred and twenty thousand copies of his work were sold.² *The Common Sense* significantly contributed to the spread of Republican ideas and encouraged American colonists to break away from the parent Britain. Paine pointed to the tyrannical system of hereditary monarchy and its utter meaninglessness. He

¹ P. S. FONER (Ed.), *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, New York 1945, p. 9, <https://zelalemkibret.files.wordpress.com/2012/02/the-complete-works-of-thomas-paine.pdf>, [2014–04–07].

² S. LEE (Ed.), *Dictionary of National Biography (DNB)*, Vol. 43, New York 1895, p. 69, <https://archive.org/details/dictionaryofnati43stepuoft>, [2014–04–07].

returned to this topic constantly even during his stay in France. The arguments against the hereditary crown appeared also in one of his most famous works, *the Rights of Man*.

Thomas Paine left the United States and went to Paris in the spring of 1787. At that time, on May 25th, the Assembly of Notables was dissolved and a tense political atmosphere was buzzing.³ Paine originally arrived in France because of his draft plan for the construction of an iron bridge to be built over the river Schuylkill near Philadelphia. His aim was to gain the support of the French Academy of Sciences and he also planned a trip to London where he hoped to defend his project before the Royal Academy. In Paris Paine met with the American ambassador Thomas Jefferson and also with his friend from the time of the American War of Independence, the Marquis de Lafayette. Both friends brought him into a higher circle of society where Paine met with the Secretary of the Controller General of Finances, André Morellet. Thanks to Morellet, Paine achieved approval for his project of the iron bridge from the French Academy.⁴ Paine wrote that Morellet was a wise and warm-hearted man and after personal conversations he found that Morellet had “*completely identical views regarding the insanity of war*”.⁵ Further, both Morellet and Paine expressed an interest in creating better relations between France and Britain. These views were for the idealistic and pacifist Paine extremely sympathetic.⁶ Paine firmly believed that all military conflicts were the result of a monarchical establishment and were conducted because of the vanity of Monarchs. According to Paine, the only way to stop the bloody conflict and eternal enmity between the states was to establish a Republican form of government.⁷

³ S. BLAKEMORE, *Crisis in Representation: Thomas Paine, Mary Wollstonecraft, Helen Maria Williams, and the Rewriting of the French Revolution*, London 1997, p. 26.

⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 26–27.

⁵ T. PAINE, *Práva človeka: odpoveď na útok pána Burka proti Francúzskej revolúcii*, Bratislava 1959, p. 8.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ T. C. WALKER, *The Forgotten Prophter: Tom Paine's Cosmopolitanism and International Relations*, in: *International Studies Quarterly*, No. 44, 2000, pp. 51–72.

Paine travelled to London twice, in the winter of 1787, and then in the summer of 1788. His programme was not only the defence of his bridge project, but he also became an unofficial ambassador of Jefferson who authorized him to obtain some information from British politicians. Paine had to inform Jefferson about the atmosphere of the British political scene which could be useful for American interests.⁸ In London Paine also met with his future rival in the field of political thinking, Edmund Burke⁹ and he became acquainted with Charles Fox a future sympathizer of revolutionary France.¹⁰ After the storming of the Bastille and the events that followed, Paine decided to stay in France for a long time. He immediately forfeited the joy of implementing possible political changes in France. Paine never perceived the events of the American Revolution as a local matter. Universal principles of the American Revolution were considered inherent in all “lovers of humanity”. “*What was only a theory in mechanics, the American Revolution showed in politics [...] Freedom has been hunted round the globe; reason was considered as rebellion; and the slavery of fear had made men afraid to think [...] Once the system of American government was revealed to the world [...] people began to think of a remedy.*”¹¹

Paine believed in cosmopolitanism and was driven by ideas of messianism which led to a universal revolution. Therefore Paine considered the American events as the beginning of a new democratic order. Even in 1795 in his work *Dissertations on First Principles of Government* he emphasized the role of the American Revolution as the very beginning of the new organization of society. Paine strongly noted that “*no improvement has been made in the principle, and scarcely any in the practice, till the American Revolution began. In all the countries of Europe (except in France) the same forms and systems that were erected in the remote ages of ignorance, still continue, and their antiquity is put in the place of principle.*”¹²

⁸ BLAKEMORE, p. 27.

⁹ DNB, p. 72.

¹⁰ *The Complete Writings*, p. 26.

¹¹ PAINE, p. 142.

¹² G. DAVIDSON (Ed.), *The Political Writings of Thomas Paine: Secretary to the Committee*

At the beginning, Paine kept written contact with Edmund Burke whose views on the French Revolution were sceptical.¹³ “*When Mr. Burke gave the English parliament his harsh speech against the French Revolution and the National Assembly, I had just arrived in Paris.*”¹⁴ A little later Paine decided to travel to London in order to draw up a defence of the French Revolution because he had learned about the forthcoming Burke’s pamphlet on this subject. The open counter-revolutionary appearances of Edmund Burke started a dispute which led to the edition of two significant and influential works, *the Rights of Man and Reflections on the Revolution in France*.¹⁵ *The Rights of Man* became popular immediately and within a few weeks fifty thousand copies were sold in Britain. Many readers were even hoping that a spark of the French Revolution would jump onto their island.¹⁶ *The New Annual Register* for the year 1791 couldn’t miss Paine’s work which was given considerable space in the section *Domestic Literature*. The magazine emphasized Paine’s personal participation in some Parisian events. After this Thomas Paine was asked for his expert advice in the creation of *the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*. They pointed to Paine’s friendly relationship with some major revolutionary leaders as varied as the Marquis de Lafayette. “*The next publication which we have to mention is ‘Rights of man; being an Answer to Mr. Burke’s Attack on the French Revolution’ [...] In the argumentative part, the author steps forward as a bold and intrepid defender of the principles which Mr. Burke endeavoured to consign to detestation and contempt; and delivers a number of just and important political truths, in a style and language which though not elegant or correct, are peculiarly forcible and interesting.*

of Foreign Affairs in the American Revolution: to which is prefixed a Brief Sketch of the Author’s Life, Dissertations on the First Principles of Government, Charlestown 1824, Vol. 2, p. 325, <https://archive.org/stream/politicalwriting02painrich#page/324/mode/2up>, [2014–04–07].

¹³ BLAKEMORE, p. 27.

¹⁴ PAINE, p. 7.

¹⁵ *Reflections on the Revolution in France* was published in the Czech language: E. BURKE, *Úvahy o revoluci ve Francii*, Brno 1997.

¹⁶ *The Complete Writings*, p. 28.

His defence of religion, liberty, and of the right which God and nature have given to every man [...] is original and incontrovertible."¹⁷ However, the magazine emphasized that readers could take some of Paine's ideas as dangerous novelties which may not, after interpretation, give a full guarantee of the inviolability of property rights. But Thomas Paine had never thought about the violation of the "sacred" right of personal property. However, Paine's thinking about social inequality could encourage the misinterpretation that the author sympathized with egalitarianism. Paine asked how it was possible that people who were called the coarse and ignorant rabble were so extremely numerous in all countries.¹⁸ He indignantly noted that the mass of people were oppressed, in order to shine even more intensive life of the aristocracy.¹⁹

After the release of the first part of *the Rights of Man*, Paine reaped tremendous success. In 1791 he left London and travelled to France. After arriving in Paris, Paine began to meet educated men involved in the revolutionary movement, such as the mathematician and philosopher Condorcet, the author of the famous pamphlet *What is the Third Estate?* Abbé Sieyès also Nicolas de Bonneville the founder of the *Cercle Social*.²⁰ In Paris, Paine wanted to continue with writing the second part of his work *the Rights of Man* but his literary intention was significantly interrupted by a ground-breaking event.²¹ In

¹⁷ G. G. J. – J. ROBINSON (Eds.), *The New Annual Register or General Repository of History, Politics and Literature for the Year 1791*, p. 258, <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433082425061;view=1up;seq=7>, [2014–04–07].

¹⁸ PAINE, p. 35.

¹⁹ Ibidem.

²⁰ *The Cercle Social* also called in French *Les amis de la Vérité* was an intellectual movement during the French Revolution which included religious and democratic spiritualism of the revolutionary period. The founders were Claude Fauchet and Nicolas de Bonneville and this movement was formally established in February, 1790. The Members emphasized the universal role of the Cercle Social and the importance of spreading of Christian brotherly love. However, the Cercle Social was in fact opened to the intellectuals rather than the wide popular masses. When Abbé Fauchet was accused of alleged preaching of egalitarianism and so-called Agrarian Law the movement began to decline. After the uprising against the Girondists, who were actively involved in this movement, the Cercle Social was completely prohibited. The movement was restored after the 9th Thermidor but their former glory was not reached.

²¹ BLAKEMORE, p. 28.

the night of 20th to 21st June 1791 the French King tried to escape the country with his whole family. Their journey infamously ended in Varennes where the King was recognized and the Royal Family were escorted back to the capital. Silent and menacing acceptance from the crowd that lined the streets indicated the impending conflict between the supporters of the Constitutional Monarchy and the Republicans. The Constitutional Monarchists didn't want to give up the Constitution which was planned to enter into force on September 3rd, 1791. The Republicans, after the king's attempt to escape, explicitly refused to recognize his authority.

On July 1st 1791 the manifesto *La Proclamation Républicaine* appeared on the walls of Paris. The authors of this manifesto were Thomas Paine and Achille Duchâtelet and so they openly declared their Republicanism before there was a bloody event on the Champ de Mars on July 17th 1791. Then the citizens of Paris, under the direction of members of the Cordeliers club, signed a petition requesting a repeal of the King.²² According to Paine the King became not only politically redundant but also a burden to the nation. His presence was no longer needed. *“He has abdicated the throne in having fled from his post. Abdication and desertion are not characterized by the length of absence; but by the single act of flight [...] The nation can never give back its confidence to a man who, false to his trust, perjured to his oath, conspires a clandestine flight, obtains a fraudulent passport, conceals a King of France under the disguise of a valet, directs his course towards a frontier covered with traitors and deserters, and evidently meditates a return into our country, with a force capable of imposing his own despotic laws.”*²³ Next, Paine raised the question of whether the escape of the King should be considered as an act of conspirators which affected the King, or should *“his flight be considered as his own act”*.²⁴ Was it a spontaneous decision of the King himself or was

²² M. D. CONWAY (Ed.), *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, New York 1894, Vol. 3, pp. 8–9, <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/31271>, [2014–04–07].

²³ Ibidem.

²⁴ Ibidem, p. 9.

he inspired by others to do it? It was not at all essential, emphasized Paine, whether he was a fool or a hypocrite, an idiot or a traitor. “*The King has proved himself equally unworthy of the important functions that had been delegated to him.*”²⁵ Paine thus responded to statements made by some Constitutional Monarchists that the King was in fact kidnapped. The King no longer held any authority, continued Paine, and “*we owe him no longer obedience. We see in him no more than an indifferent person; we can regard him only as Louis Capet*”.²⁶ However, on the issue of the personal safety of the King, Paine idealistically hoped that the French would not bow to such a condemnable matter as retribution because it would be humiliating for the French nation. General peacefulness is still undeniable proof and the nature of free people who respect each other.²⁷ As if Paine didn’t see previous events associated with constant pressure and violence. He remained in his idealistic naivety and peacefulness even during a court appearance with the King where he openly claimed to want to preserve the life of Louis XVI. Paine thus antagonized not only the deputies of the Mountain but also Jean-Paul Marat. By his manifesto, *La Proclamation républicaine*, Paine pointed out that he was indeed an inveterate enemy of Monarchism but his hostility was not directed against the person of Louis XVI.

During July 1791 a five-member Republican club was founded. Including Paine, the club members were Duchâtelet, Condorcet, Lathenas and Nicolas de Bonneville. They advanced so far as to print *the Republican* (Le Républicain) however, only one edition ever appeared.²⁸ *The Republican* was written, “*as to the word Monarchy, though the address and intrigue of Courts have rendered it familiar, it does not contain the less of reproach or of insult to a nation. The word, in its immediate or original sense, signifies the absolute power of a single individual, who may prove a fool, an hypocrite, or*

²⁵ Ibidem.

²⁶ Ibidem, pp. 8–9.

²⁷ Ibidem.

²⁸ Ibidem, p. 4.

a tyrant".²⁹ Paine constantly emphasized in his other works that in the system of hereditary Monarchy the King didn't become a man who is blessed with a strong character and the ability to govern wisely. By mere coincidence it was the king's role to choose the next monarch. The firstborn son may be a fool or a madman but according to the Law of the Receiving he would be the King. Paine condemned hereditary Monarchy "*because the idea of hereditary legislators is as inconsistent as that of hereditary judges or hereditary juries; and as absurd as an hereditary mathematician, or an hereditary wise man; and as ridiculous as an hereditary poet-laureate*".³⁰ In *the Rights of Man* Paine wrote that if one generation chose the government, the following generations could not be tied to that decision. An example of this was according to Paine, *the Glorious Revolution 1688*. "*The Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, do, in the name of the people aforesaid*" (meaning the people of England then living) "*most humbly and faithfully submit themselves, their heirs and posterities, for Ever.*" He (Mr. Burke – J. B.) quotes a clause of another Act of Parliament made in the same reign, the terms of which he says, '*bind us*' (meaning the people of their day), "*our heirs and our posterity, to them, their heirs and posterity, to the end of time.*"³¹ The National Constituent Assembly of France in 1789 copied the same mistake as did the English Parliament in 1688 because it incorporated into the Constitution the possibility for the creation of hereditary succession within a family, Kapet.³² Finally, Paine in *the Republican* wrote, "*I hope that I have at present sufficiently proved to you that I am a good Republican; and I have such a confidence in the truth of the principles, that I doubt not they will soon be as universal in France as in America. The pride of human nature will assist their evidence, will contribute to their establishment, and men will be ashamed of Monarchy*".³³

²⁹ Ibidem, p. 10.

³⁰ PAINE, p. 62.

³¹ Ibidem, pp. 14–15.

³² *Dissertations on the First Principles of Government*, p. 333.

³³ *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, Vol. 3, p. 11.

After returning to London Paine finished writing the second part of *the Rights of Man*, which was issued on February 16th 1792 and his work had the same success as the first part. In the second part of *the Rights of Man*, however, Paine focused more on the interpretation of his ideas about the ideal principles of government and society. He dealt with the analysis of the root causes of social discontent and drew up a proposal for social rehabilitation. In this work evolved Paine's idea of a world revolution as the way to a new era of humanity. "*As revolutions have begun, it is natural to expect that other revolutions will follow. The amazing and still increasing expenses with which old governments are conducted, the numerous wars they engage in or provoke, the embarrassments they throw in the way of universal civilisation and commerce, and the oppression and usurpation acted at home, have wearied out the patience, and exhausted the property of the world. In such a situation, and with such examples already existing, revolutions are to be looked for. They are become subjects of universal conversation, and may be considered as the Order of the day.*"³⁴ Paine was a typical enlightener who believed in constant progress. He also believed that his homeland would be the scene of another in a series of many revolutions. British society however began to turn away from the French Revolution. In France the Legislative Assembly meanwhile proceeded with a euphoric campaign requesting the entry of France into a war with European tyrants and the main advocates were the Girondists. The rhetoric of Brissot, Vergniaud and Guadet was full of idealistic notions of the sacred duty of the French nation to spread the ideas of their revolution into other countries and to open the way for a new dawn of society where the thrones of despots would crumble under the pressure of the new ideas. The idea of a simple "liberation" war was about as wrong as French troops being welcomed with open arms beyond their borders.³⁵ However, it is important to emphasize that Thomas Paine despite his pacifism endorsed and supported the initiative of the Girondists in their war campaign. According to Paine, it was

³⁴ PAINE, p. 144.

³⁵ S. SCHAMA, *Občané, kronika Francouzské revoluce*, Praha 2004, pp. 602–619.

not in fact a classic offensive war but rather the march of a free French Army which had to suppress despotism and to establish a new democratic order.

Paine's concept of transformation principles of government and society appeared not only in *the Rights of Man*, but also in his other works. To better understand the personality of Thomas Paine it is important to present his ideas in more detail. He was an intellectual who advocated the ideas of Cosmopolitanism. In the preface to the French edition of the first part of *the Rights of Man*, which appeared in May 1791, Paine turned to the French and encouraged them in the belief that their Revolution was and would be welcome by the people of all countries, it just needed a little spark. He wrote that the case of the French Revolution did not concern only Europe but the whole world. Paine returned again to the example of Britain and remained in the naive notion that with the exception of the British government the vast majority of British people inclined towards the ideas of the French Revolution. "*The government of England is no friend to the Revolution of France [...] The English nation, on the contrary, is very favourably disposed towards the French Revolution, and to the progress of liberty in the whole world [...] The French should know that most English newspapers are directly in the pay of government, or, if indirectly connected with it, always under its orders; and that those papers constantly distort and attack the Revolution in France in order to deceive the nation. But, as it is impossible long to prevent the prevalence of truth, the daily falsehoods of those papers no longer have the desired effect.*"³⁶

Thomas Paine was not only a theoretician of a world revolution. On a proposal of the deputy La Révellière-Lépeaux the National Convention approved on November 19th 1792 a controversial decree proclaiming that the French nation would be willing to help all other nations if they wished to get rid of their oppressive burden and sow the seeds of freedom.³⁷ Paine after this

³⁶ M. D. CONWAY (Ed.), *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, New York 1894, Vol. 2, pp. 213–214, <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/paine-the-writings-of-thomas-paine-vol-ii-1779-1792>, [2014–04–07].

³⁷ D. TINKOVÁ, *Revoluční Francie 1787–1799*, Praha 2008, p. 105.

decree immediately contacted the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pierre Lebrun, and presented him with a revolutionary plan for a possible new revolution in Britain. According to this new decree, the French Republic could help the Irish revolutionaries in their struggle for freedom. Cautious Lebrun, however, decided to find out through Eleazer Oswald, who had secretly travelled to London, whether English people inclined to a potential revolution. Oswald was an Irish American and a good friend of Paine. By November 1792 activities began in Paris in an infamous British club in which Paine was a member. The British club worked in conjunction with the French government and was known for its espionage activities. This club was “*making grandiose plans for a world revolution that would overturn all oppressive governments*”.³⁸ Paine’s task was to write a Universal Republican Constitution.³⁹

Hereditary monarchy was for Paine an incomprehensible system where “*Kings succeed each other, not as rationals, but as animals. It signifies not what their mental or moral characters are. Can we then be surprised at the abject state of the human mind in monarchical countries, when the government itself is formed on such an abject levelling system?*”⁴⁰ For the author the monarchical system was in general an ongoing war. “*There can be no such thing as a nation flourishing alone in Commerce [...] When, therefore, Governments are at war, the attack is made upon the common stock of Commerce, and the consequence is the same as if each had attacked his own.*”⁴¹ Paine wrote in the preface to the French edition of *the Rights of Man*, that monarchical governments had a constant need to “create” new enemies. The English government presented, according to Paine, a “curious phenomenon”. The government saw that the French and English people got rid of prejudices and false notions that previously opposed each other “*and which have cost them so much money, that government seems to be placarding*

³⁸ BLAKEMORE, p. 31.

³⁹ Ibidem.

⁴⁰ PAINE, p. 157.

⁴¹ Ibidem, p. 200.

its need of a foe; for unless it finds one somewhere, no pretext exists for the enormous revenue and taxation now deemed necessary".⁴² Paine never had an idealistic vision of mankind having a kind nature. However, according to Paine, Monarchism defended human education and suppressed the good features in people. Only a democratic system could cultivate human beings. These ideas were reflections of the French Enlightenment philosophy which proclaimed that only the new legislature and thus the social system may provide moral behavior. Jean-Jacques Rousseau considered that an essential part of education was faith in God and fear of his punishment. Human beings, according to philosophers, are not essentially evil. However, as people formed social institutions, they developed vices. These evil social institutions paved the way for corruption and egoism.⁴³ Therefore, these institutions must be changed. Paine emphasized that the revolutions which took place before the American and French revolutions were nothing because they were not political revolutions and they limited themselves only to changes of ministers and appropriate measures.⁴⁴ According to Paine, humanity would grow on the basis of mutual and open discussions. Peace should ensure international policy giving preference to open talks before military conflicts. Then peace will naturally follow in the interest of an enlightened society and a monarchical system will be prohibited. Paine was convinced it would not be possible for a Republic and a Monarchy to operate next to each other. According to Paine both systems would bring their different principles into conflict. Therefore, he hoped for a world revolution and the creation of Republics which would mutually live peacefully together under a common free international trade. This form of contact should also develop an interest in mutual acquaintances between nations. This way would secure a pacifist system in a new democratic world.⁴⁵

⁴² *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, Vol. 2, pp. 213–214.

⁴³ J. L. T. TALMON, *O původu totalitní demokracie: Politická teorie za Francouzské revoluce a po ní*, Praha 1998, pp. 34–41.

⁴⁴ PAINE, p. 144.

⁴⁵ WALKER, pp. 56–57.

Paine also became a member of the movement, *the Cercle Social*. This movement could be seen as something between a revolutionary political club and an academy. The aim was to combine the ideals of a revolution with the Christian tradition.⁴⁶ One of the founders, Nicolas de Bonneville, presented *the Cercle Social* as an intellectual vanguard which prepared Europe for a series of apocalyptic revolutions.⁴⁷ Based on these ideas, in October 1790 *The Society of the Friends of Truth* or the *World Confederation of Friends of Truth* (Confédération Universelle des Amis de la Vérité) was founded. From this Federation flowed the ideas of a brotherhood based on the principles of freedom, equality and unity. Although the first meetings were public it was from the beginning a movement of intellectuals connected via correspondence with other revolutionary clubs in Utrecht, Geneva, Philadelphia and London.⁴⁸ Bonneville created this movement as a purely intellectual society which should, according to his own words, help to regenerate the world by initiating an ideological revolution against despotism.⁴⁹ *The Cercle Social* was also in close contact with the Girondists. The movement had a strong religious character. However, *the Cercle Social* did not enforce ecclesiastical interests but through the interpretation of the *Social Contract* by its member Claude Fauchet, he reported this movement to be “the preaching of a gospel of universal love and brotherhood which the revolution awakened to a new life”.⁵⁰ According to the ideas of Rousseau the *Cercle Social* was directed by this interpretation to the religious and political unity of the state. The philosophy of the Enlightenment saw the ideal of society in general unity and according to this philosophy “the citizen is nothing and nothing is achieved without other citizens and the source of life of the whole society is identical or superior to the source of life of individuals [...] Individualism would have to retreat from collectivism

⁴⁶ H. MAIER, *Revoluce a cirkev*, Brno 1999, p. 67.

⁴⁷ BLAKEMORE, p. 30.

⁴⁸ R. B. ROSE, *Socialism and the French Revolution: The Cercle Social and the Enragés*, in: *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Manchester 1985, pp. 139–165.

⁴⁹ BLAKEMORE, p. 30.

⁵⁰ MAIER, p. 69.

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and egoism would have to retreat from morality".⁵¹ Robespierre's ideas based the ideas of Rousseau. A religious sense of awe and a patriotic obedience should not collide. On the contrary, religion and patriotism should blend with each other and the new Republican religion would create a perfect unity with political objectives. This meant that there would be no distinction between priest and judge. Religious and patriotic ceremonies would be the same and to serve the country would be the same as to serve God.⁵² This attempt at unity was expressed by Robespierre at a festival of the Supreme Being. Paine identified himself with many ideas of the internationalism of *the Cercle Social* but on the questions of faith and religion refused any ceremonies and celebrations. Paine's thoughts were certainly noble but his ideas about political reality, in this case concerning Britain, could not be merged with his grandiose plan. It seemed that Paine was indeed blinded by his ideas and therefore couldn't immediately recognize a real political situation. However, he was not utopian but as an enlightener he believed in a continual progress and so hoped that the French Revolution was not in any way the last. On the contrary, Paine expected within a short time a flare of new revolutions.

On September 25th 1792, in an *Address to the People of France*, Paine congratulated the National Convention "on the abolition of Royalty". At the same time he was asked to become a member of a committee which was to draw up a new Republican Constitution. Paine worked with such personalities as Brissot, Condorcet, Pétion, Vergniaud, Gensonné, Danton, Barère and Sieyès. The draft of this Constitution however was never adopted. After the insurrection against the Girondists, the Jacobins began work on their own Republican Constitution.⁵³ After the execution of King Louis XVI which took place on January 21st 1793, events took a new direction. The French Republic on February 1st 1793 declared war⁵⁴ on Britain and on the United Netherlands.

⁵¹ TALMON, p. 52.

⁵² Ibidem, p. 36.

⁵³ *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, p. 34.

⁵⁴ The Legislative Assembly declared war on France on 20th April 1792, not as The Holy Roman Emperor but as the King of Bohemia and Hungary, hoping that they would not have

Spain responded to the execution of the French King by denouncing the French ambassador in Madrid and thus the National Convention on March 7th declared war on another European state. Into the growing conflict were involved the Italian sovereigns of Tuscany, Naples and Venice and finally most of the local rulers of the Holy Roman Empire. In the winter of 1792, when France still had not stood against this first coalition, the Republican armies had recorded achievements. General Dumouriez had defeated the Austrian army on November 6th 1792 in the battle of Jemappes and after this success the victorious General could set foot on the territory of the Austrian Netherlands. Consequently, there had been the annexation of Savoy, the Rhineland and Niza.⁵⁵ By the beginning of 1793 came the first failures of the French army against foreigners as well as domestic enemies. In March an uprising broke out in the Vendée and in the same month, i.e. March 18th 1793, General Dumouriez was defeated in the battle of Neerwinden by the Austrian Army. The French Republic by this battle lost the recently conquered Austrian Netherlands. This defeat but mostly the escape of General Dumouriez to the enemy where he wanted to mobilize the army against “the Jacobin Paris” had a very negative impact on domestic policy and the fate of the Girondists. In fact the General had been in close contact with some of the deputies of the Girondin faction. After his escape on April 6th 1793 the first *Committee of Public Safety* (Comité de salut public) was created.⁵⁶

In the National Convention a majority of deputies, so-called *the Plain* (la Plaine or le Marais), started moving onto the side of the Montagnards⁵⁷ because of their distrust of the undecided policy of the Girondists which was steadily growing. The political crisis was accompanied by an economic crisis because the country again appeared to have enormous supply problems. The

to enter a war with the whole Empire.

⁵⁵ TINKOVÁ, p. 105.

⁵⁶ BLAKEMORE, p. 32.

⁵⁷ The Montagnards (les Montagnards) were the most radical revolutionaries in the French National Convention and resolute opponents of the Girondists. They sat on the highest benches in the Assembly.

assignats growing inflation and the policy of the Girondists, who promoted free trade against any form of planned economy, led to the fact that the Jacobins in Paris were successful in their agitation against their political opponents. The Girondists were the group of deputies who were also commonly known as *Brissotiens* according to their considerable representative Jacques Pierre Brissot. They were not in fact a coherent and uniform “party” but rather a loose group of deputies associated with mutual friendship but not always with the same political views. They did not have meetings in the Jacobin club but political plans were discussed especially in the salon of Madame Roland,⁵⁸ wife of the Minister of the Interior, Jean-Marie Roland. “*I prepared lunch twice per week. Once it was for colleagues of my husband and for several deputies. The second time it was for different people and also for some deputies [...] I prepared fifteen sets of cutlery for the usual number of guests who were rarely eighteen and twenty only once [...] After lunch we talked for some time in my salon and then everyone returned to their work [...] Such were my lunches which public speakers presented at the tribune of the Jacobin club as festive banquets [...] It was an alleged court, a centre of conspiracy of which I was alleged to be Queen...*”⁵⁹ The Girondists were accused by the Jacobins of conspiring and secretive negotiations just because of this form of private political meetings. Political tension in the National Convention continually grew and the Montagnards, who had a strong background just in Paris because many of their members were elected for the capital, attacked the unsuccessful policy of the Girondists. The Montagnards, due to a more successful propaganda, gradually gained support among the popular societies in Paris. The Jacobins decided, very tactically, to take part in a program of the so-called Enragés who were a dispersed group of street agitators. The Enragés demanded strict control of the distribution of grain, the introduction

⁵⁸ It is worth mentioning characteristics of Thomas Paine, who was the frequent guest of Madame Roland. She said about Thomas Paine, that he was more fit to scatter the kindling sparks than to lay the foundation, or “*better at lighting the way for revolution than drafting a constitution [...] or the day-to-day work of a legislator*”.

⁵⁹ M. ROLANDOVÁ, *Paměti I, II.*, Praha 1909, pp. 123–124.

of maximum prices concerning basic food, progressive taxation for the rich people and severe penalties for “the speculators” who stored food and grain in order to raise the prices of these products. Against this radical programme, in firm opposition stood the Girondists who advocated free trade and accused Paris of centralization and ignoring election results in other departments. Open attack on the capital city led by deputy Isnard at the National Convention destroyed the last remnants of popularity of the Girondists. The Jacobins presented them as “pests” and enemies of the people who refused at a critical time any radical revolutionary measures.⁶⁰

Thomas Paine was known to be a friend of many Girondists and also often acted politically with them because he agreed with their political programme. Sampson Perry who in 1796 published a *History of the French Revolution* left an interesting account of his visit to Paine in January 1793: “*I breakfasted with Paine about this time at the Philadelphia Hotel [...] and added that he (Paine – J. B.) was going to dine with Pétion, the mayor, and that he knew I should be welcome and be entertained. We went to the mayoralty in a hackney coach, and were seated at a table about which were placed the following persons: Pétion, the mayor of Paris, with his female relation who did the honour of the table; Dumouriez, the commander-in-chief of the French forces, and one of his aides-de-camp; Santerre, the commandant of the armed force of Paris, and an aide-de-camp; Condorcet; Brissot; Guadet; Gensonné; Danton; Kersaint; Clavière; Vergniaud; and Syèyes; which, with three other persons, whose names I do not now recollect, and including Paine and myself, made in all nineteen.*”⁶¹

When the Montagnards proposed in the National Convention to establish a Revolutionary tribunal the Girondists stood firmly opposed to this radical proposal. When this proposal was finally enforced some Girondist deputies decided to send before the newly established Revolutionary tribunal Jean-Paul Marat. The Girondists accused him of fanaticism, of attempting to enforce dictatorship and open attacks against the members of the Convention by

⁶⁰ SCHAMA, pp. 735–737.

⁶¹ *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, Vol. 3, pp. 3–8.

calling the street in his newspaper *L'Ami du Peuple* to violence and murders. "In conjunction with Brissot, Paine tried to discredit Marat by suggesting that his Republican beliefs were suspect."⁶² Paine even presented himself as the alleged victim of Marat's plan to assassinate him. Finally, for Paine it was an awkward affair because Marat was acquitted on April 24th 1793 by the Tribunal and was seen by the mob as the winner.⁶³

Thomas Paine began to be pessimistic about the French Revolution. A letter written on April 20th 1793 to Thomas Jefferson illustrated Paine's fear and disappointment. "We are now in an extraordinary crisis [...] Dumouriez, partly from having no fixed principles of his own, and partly from the continual persecution of the Jacobins, who act without either prudence or morality, has gone off to the Enemy, and taken a considerable part of the Army with him. The expedition to Holland has totally failed, and all Brabant is again in the hands of the Austrians [...] Dumouriez threatened to be in Paris in three weeks. It is now three weeks ago; he is still on the frontier near to Mons with the Enemy, who do not make any progress. Dumouriez has proposed to re-establish the former Constitution (the Constitution of 1791 – J. B.) in which plan the Austrians act with him."⁶⁴ Paine confessed, in this letter, to the fear that the General could actually invade France and with the help of the Austrian troops restore the Monarchy. Thomas Paine also hinted that his faith in the successful spread of revolutionary ideas began to decline. "Had this revolution been conducted consistently with its principles, there was once a good prospect of extending liberty through the greatest part of Europe; but I now relinquish that hope."⁶⁵ If the enemies invaded France but were defeated Paine would still hope for a recovery plan for his world revolution. However, as he pointed out it was all just about fortune and he feared that if the wheel of fortune turned he could not bear the failure. "As the prospect of

⁶² BLAKEMORE, p. 32.

⁶³ Ibidem.

⁶⁴ *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, Vol. 3, p. 71–73.

⁶⁵ Ibidem.

a general freedom is now much shortened, I begin to contemplate returning home."⁶⁶ Paine wanted to wait for the declaration of the Constitution⁶⁷ he helped to create and which was predominantly the work of the Girondists. The Montagnards distanced themselves from this project. The "Girondin Constitution" in fact was never ratified because the Jacobins planned to draw up their own draft of the Constitution.

On October 20th 1793 Thomas Jefferson received another letter from Paine which was written after the uprising against the Girondists. "*There is now no prospect that France can carry revolutions into Europe on the one hand, or that the combined powers can conquer France on the other hand. It is a sort of defensive War on both sides. This being the case, how is the War to close?*"⁶⁸ Paine thus gave up all hopes for the spread of revolutionary ideas and began to prefer the view that it would be better to end the war because without an ideological content it all ceased to make sense. He claimed that Great Britain and United Netherlands were certainly tired of war because their commerce and manufacturing suffered exceedingly. According to Paine it was for them completely useless and without purpose to wage war. He realized however that no belligerent would ask for peace negotiations at the first stage. Paine therefore turned to Jefferson who was at that time the Secretary of State: "*I cannot help repeating my wish that Congress would send Commissioners, and I wish also that yourself would venture once more across the ocean, as one of them.*"⁶⁹ Paine wished the United States to become facilitator of the European peace and according to him, in the current situation, it was the only way of how to bring peace.

It is very interesting to watch the opinion which Paine advocated during the trial of the former French King Louis XVI. So I think it is necessary to present this issue in more detail.

⁶⁶ Ibidem.

⁶⁷ Ibidem.

⁶⁸ Ibidem, pp. 72–73.

⁶⁹ Ibidem.

The London newspaper, *The Times*, issued on September 12th 1792 reported on the state of the Royal Family imprisoned in a temple by a gentleman who escaped from Paris. The servant of this gentleman originally served in the ranks of the French National Guard. As a guardsman he had on several occasions to guard the royal prisoners. The guardsman gave this gentleman valuable details of the privacy of the imprisoned Royal Family. *“The King and Queen are never permitted either night or day to speak together, but in the presence of one of the Municipal Officers, who when they walk, goes between them; when they eat, he sits between them; and at night they sleep in different rooms. In each of these are always four guards, who to avoid being seduced, are changed every half hour. As the new guard has orders to see themselves that the King and Queen are in their beds, on entering their rooms, they always ask Monsieur Louis, Madame Antoinette, êtes vous dans votre lit? They ask this question until the King and Queen answer, —Yes [...] The National Guards smoke their pipes, and eat and drink in their prisoner’s apartments, as if no one was there; and their conversation is particularly ordered to be directed to the arrest; — the death of the King’s friends; — the reports of the defeat of the Austrians; — insurrections; — desertions in their armies, and other such false rumours, in order to augment the miserable situation of the royal family.”*⁷⁰ Such a picture of the treatment of the former French King and his family was presented to British society. In the winter of 1792 Thomas Paine could only dream about plans for a world revolution. On January 11th 1793, Paine together with his colleague Robert Merry, proposed that the British Club send an address the National Convention requesting “a war to liberate the British people”. The proposal was voted down by one vote.⁷¹

One of the crucial turning points in the French Revolution was a process with the former French King Louis XVI which took place at the National

⁷⁰ *London Times*, Monday, Sept. 12, 1792, <http://oldsite.english.ucsb.edu/faculty/ayliu/research/around-1800/FR/times-9-12-1792>, [2014–04–07].

⁷¹ BLAKEMORE, p. 31.

Convention and which ultimately led to the former French King being condemned to death. The trial of Louis Kapet, as the former Monarch was commonly called according to his ancestors, lasted from 10th to 26th December 1792. Before the process started however the National Convention had a long debate about whether Louis XVI should be brought before a civil court because according to the Constitution he had secured immunity.⁷² Another question was who should be his judge. It was in connection with this matter, when for the first time on November 13th 1792 Louis Antoine Saint-Just, Robespierre's future faithful collaborator and member of the Committee of Public Safety, drew attention to himself.⁷³ Saint-Just came up with a radical and simple solution: *"I say that the King should be judged as an enemy and that even more than judge him, we must fight him [...] The social contract is between citizens, not between citizens and government. A contract is useless against those who are not bound by it. Consequently, Louis, who was a part to it, cannot be judged by Civil Law [...] These reasons lead you all not to judge Lewis as a citizen, but as a rebel [...] By what right does he demand to be judged by Civil Law, which is our obligation toward him, when it is clear that he himself betrayed the only obligation that he had undertaken towards us, that of our protection?"*⁷⁴ Furthermore, Saint-Just went on in his interpretation of the argument to say why Louis should not be brought to a civil court but rather should be considered as a traitor and a tyrant. Louis, according to Saint-Just, could not be identified as a citizen because he fought against human rights and the civil society. *"It is impossible to reign in innocence [...] All Kings are rebels and usurpers [...] Louis is a foreigner among us [...] It is therefore you who must decide if Lewis is the enemy of*

⁷² *Archives parlementaires de 1787 à 1860 Convention nationale*, series 1, Vol. 53 (du 27 octobre au 30 novembre 1792), p. 78, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k49568z.r=Archives+parlementaires+de+1787+%C3%A0+1860+Convention+nationale++tome+53.lan-gEN>, [2014-04-07]. [2014-04-07].

⁷³ *Ibidem*, pp. 390-392.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*.

the French people, if he is an alien."⁷⁵ He finally said coldly, either the King should die, or should govern.⁷⁶

On the question of whether to lead with a King as a normal process Thomas Paine drew up for the Convention his own report.⁷⁷ According to Paine all the evidence pointed to the fact that Louis XVI was an ally of the "crowned brigands of Europe", as Paine liked to call European Monarchs, who prepared a conspiracy against not only French freedom but also against the whole of Europe. "*We have seen the unhappy soldiers of Austria, of Prussia, and the other powers which declared themselves our enemies, torn from their fire-sides, and drawn to butchery like wretched animals, to sustain, at the cost of their blood, the common cause of these crowned brigands.*"⁷⁸ The European Monarchs loaded their inhabitants with new taxes and cast them into bloodshed. One group of these "cowards" used weapons openly, the second group used conspiracy, secretly supported without military intervention. Paine thought that Britain did not enter the war only because they feared revolution in their own country. He stated that the European despots were in fear of the ideas of the French Revolution and so prepared a plot to consolidate their own position and kept their people oppressed. Paine was therefore convinced that Louis XVI was not only involved in conspiracies against his own country but also against the whole of Europe. France had to reveal this great conspiracy against freedom to the world. Therefore, Paine agreed with the process and presented arguments he considered crucial for the trial of Louis XVI. If the National Convention decided on a moderate punishment and showed compassion, it would not be because of the "inviolability" of the Sovereign but an example of national magnanimity.⁷⁹ Paine based his arguments on

⁷⁵ Ibidem.

⁷⁶ Ibidem.

⁷⁷ However, because of his weak skills of French language, he couldn't personally read his report before the Members of the National Convention. Therefore Paine asked on November 21st, one of his colleagues about the translation as well as the recitation of his report in French.

⁷⁸ *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, Vol. 3, pp. 63–65.

⁷⁹ Ibidem.

a European wide conspiracy of the Monarchs and the traditional approach to the monarchical system which was based on constant wars and taxes loaded onto the inhabitants. He was convinced that the revolution refused only the governments but not nations. Louis XIV had to be judged. The young French Republic had to show its strength and determination and also to reveal the extent of the conspiracy and absurdity of the monarchy to the world. As it later turned out Paine very vigorously refused the death penalty. His aim was only to discredit the monarchy as such. In fact Paine did not want a severe punishment for Louis XVI, whom he considered a weakling. Louis was not for him a prototype of the typical “tyrant”.

Thomas Paine radically opposed the death penalty⁸⁰ for the former King of France. On January 15th 1793, Paine again spoke in the National Convention. *“My hatred and abhorrence of monarchy are sufficiently known [...] but my compassion for the unfortunate, whether friend or enemy, is equally lively and sincere [...] I voted that Lewis should be tried, because it was necessary to afford proofs to the world of the perfidy, corruption, and abomination of the monarchical system.”*⁸¹ Paine continued as an advocate of Louis XVI. *“Nevertheless, I am inclined to believe that if Louis Kapet had not been born in obscure conditions, had he lived within the circle of an amiable and respectable neighbourhood and at liberty to practice the duties of domestic life, had he been thus situated, I cannot believe that he would have shown himself destitute of social virtues.”*⁸² According to Paine, Louis was basically a good man but he was destined to be a King and it ruined him. Furthermore, Paine strongly reminded the National Convention that since the King attempted to escape he had acted radically against his reinstatement to power and had demanded the establishment of a Republican system of government. Because of this fatal error Louis stood before the court and Paine demanded that the punishment for the former King be exile, not death.

⁸⁰ *Archives parlementaires*, p. 344

⁸¹ *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, vol. 3, pp. 65–68.

⁸² *Ibidem*, p. 65.

The accusation, according to Paine, should be directed rather against the National Constituent Assembly because during the crisis in the summer of 1791, this Assembly reinstated Louis on the throne. *“I am far more ready to condemn the Constituent Assembly than the unfortunate prisoner Louis Capet [...] and this very circumstance affords to the French nation a blessed occasion of extricating itself from the yoke of kings, without defiling itself in the impurities of their blood.”*⁸³ Thomas Paine also reminded the National Convention that it was the French monarchy which helped the American colonies to gain their freedom and independence from the British tyranny. No matter how bad was the monarchism, this action must be counted as a good thing for freedom. *“Let then those United States be the safeguard and asylum of Louis Capet. There, hereafter, far removed from the miseries and crimes of royalty, he may learn, from the constant aspect of public prosperity that the true system of government consists not in kings, but in fair, equal, and honourable representation.”*⁸⁴ Paine also deliberately mentioned the proposal of Robespierre which was held at the beginning of the revolution. Robespierre at that time opposed the death penalty. Paine stressed that this idea should be inherent in any enlightened politician and advocate of humanity. Paine therefore proposed: The National Convention should send Louis Kapet and his family into exile in the United States as ordinary citizens but only after the end of the military conflict.⁸⁵

During the negotiations of January 19th despite the fierce resistance of Marat was enforced the fourth question concerning the possibility to have a respite of the death penalty because of the potential international political impact. Deputies had to vote by a simple “yes” or “no”, to the question whether the execution of the sentence should be in respite to a later date. On the same day Paine expressed his opinion on this issue. This speech was read by his colleague, at that time the Secretary of the

⁸³ Ibidem, p. 66.

⁸⁴ Ibidem.

⁸⁵ Ibidem, pp. 67–68.

National Convention, Bancal. Paine in the introduction expressed deep regret that the Convention voted for the death penalty for Louis. “*My language has always been that of liberty and humanity, and I know that nothing so exalts a nation as the union of these two principles, under all circumstances [...] what today seems an act of justice may then appear an act of vengeance.*”⁸⁶ In the National Convention the restless turmoil could be heard. However, the loudest dissatisfaction came from Marat when he cried: “*I submit that Thomas Paine is incompetent to vote on this question; being a Quaker his religious principles are opposed to capital punishment.*”⁸⁷ Some deputies cried “freedom of speech” and demanded to take action against such interruptions in the negotiation.⁸⁸ Bancal could proceed afterwards with Paine’s speech. By these views Thomas Paine antagonized not only the Montagnards but also Marat.⁸⁹ Thomas Paine then in his speech expressed concern about the honour of the French Republic. It would be better to make a thousand errors in one act of mercy than to approve a severe punishment. Paine admitted: “*I voted against an appeal to the people [...] but I so voted in the hope that this Assembly would pronounce against death.*”⁹⁰ Certainly here a role of fear played heavily. If the question of the penalty for the King from the National Convention reached the people in the country it could break out into riots and even civil war. There was also a general distrust within the education of the lower class and maybe even a hidden fear of rural areas such as in the west of France where the peasants maintained loyalty to the Church and to the King. Paine again returned to the possibility of exile for the Royal Family and stressed that the United States was the only real ally of the

⁸⁶ Ibidem, pp. 68–69.

⁸⁷ *Archives parlementaires*, series 1, Vol. 57, (du 12 janvier 1793 au 28 janvier 1793), p. 454, [http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k49585j.r=Archives+parlementaires+de+1787+%C3%A0+1860+-Convention+nationale++tome+57.langEN, \[2014-04-07\].](http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k49585j.r=Archives+parlementaires+de+1787+%C3%A0+1860+-Convention+nationale++tome+57.langEN, [2014-04-07].)

⁸⁸ Ibidem.

⁸⁹ BLAKEMORE, p. 32.

⁹⁰ *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, Vol. 3, pp. 68–69.

French Republic. In America Louis was still considered the friend of their revolution. *“His execution will be an affliction to them, and it is in your power not to wound the feelings of your ally. Could I speak the French language I would descend to your bar, and in their name become your petitioner to respite the execution of the sentence on Louis.”*⁹¹ Paine’s speech caused vigorous reactions from some deputies. The Montagnard Thuriot responded incredulously: *“This is a mockery! This is not the language of Thomas Paine!”*⁹² Another Montagnard Basire and others of his colleagues of the Montagne cried: *“Paine doesn’t know French! It can not be his opinion!”*⁹³ Marat ran at the tribune next to Paine to completely interrupt his speech. Then he descended into the midst of the hall of the Convention where he cried indignantly and blamed the interpreter Bancal. According to Marat it wasn’t Thomas Paine’s opinion. It was an untrue translation. Finally this turmoil was ended by deputy Garran who said that he could confirm the authenticity of the correct translation of Paine’s speech because he read the original.⁹⁴ Bancal could again proceed with Paine’s speech. *“Ah, citizens, give not the tyrant of England the triumph of seeing the man perish on the scaffold who had aided my much-loved America to break his chains!”*⁹⁵ It was the last possible argument with which Paine tried to convince the deputies not to send Louis to death or at least to have a respite of capital punishment. Louis XVI was guillotined on January 21st 1793. Paine never again mentioned Louis’ trial or death.⁹⁶

Despite the fact that Thomas Paine was imprisoned during the revolutionary terror and according to his words narrowly escaped the guillotine he remained faithful to the original revolutionary ideals and

⁹¹ Ibidem.

⁹² *Archives parlementaires*, series 1, Vol. 57, (du 12 janvier 1793 au 28 janvier 1793), p. 454.

⁹³ Ibidem.

⁹⁴ Ibidem.

⁹⁵ *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, Vol. 3, pp. 68–69.

⁹⁶ BLAKEMORE, p. 32.

advocated a period for a “Girondin Republic”. Paine conceived himself as the father of both revolutions and thereby the creator of a new political world. According to his words, both revolutions were closely linked. Revolutionary events in France had its origins in the American Revolution where Americans fought alongside French. On the other hand, he also felt personally betrayed by men of both revolutions. On the side of the American Revolution there were the Federalists, on the side of the French Revolution there were the Jacobins.⁹⁷ Paine explained terror as the personal betrayal of himself and betrayal of the principles of the Enlightenment on which were built both revolutions. In his vision, Paine joined Robespierre’s terrorist regime with Washington’s federalist faction and believed that both these political orientations not only caused his imprisonment but also betrayed both revolutions which he created ideologically.⁹⁸

In his work *Dissertations on the First Principles of Government* of 1795 Paine wrote, that “*all the disorders that have arisen in France during the progress of the Revolution have had their origin, not in the principle of equal rights, but in the violation of that principle [...] Had a Constitution been established two years ago (as ought to have been done), the violences that have since desolated France and injured the character of the Revolution, would, in my opinion, have been prevented*”.⁹⁹ The Nation would be united and every individual would know his place in society. Instead of this, a revolutionary government usurped power without any enlightened principles and the authority replaced the Constitution. “*Virtue and crime depended upon accident; and that which was patriotism one day became treason the next.*” Paine clearly advocated the opinion and policy of the Girondists who promoted the legal way and the constitutional state. Really pure patriots were his Girondin colleagues who finished under the guillotine due to the terrorist policy of the Jacobins. The Constitution was

⁹⁷ Ibidem, pp. 35–37.

⁹⁸ Ibidem, p. 19.

⁹⁹ *The Political Writings of Thomas Paine*, Vol. 2, pp. 341, 343.

replaced by the Committee of Public Safety. The members of the committee and particularly the triumvirate ideologues of Robespierre, Saint-Just and Couthon represented in their vision the role of Rousseau's "Legislature". According to Rousseau at the moment when the people, or rather their leaders, would bring the revolution to a victorious end the government would take over the so-called Legislature. Rousseau's Legislator would see the situation from a perspective without being blinded by partial interests and passions and who would form the young nation by laws that would be the work of his "great wisdom". He would prepare the nation for the adoption of *the general will* (*volonté générale*).¹⁰⁰ The appointed members of the committee were convinced that they were able to replace the Constitution and any opposition to their conduct was considered treason and counterrevolution. Paine explained that all terror was based on the absence of a Constitution, the existence of which should prevent one-party rule. "*All these things have followed from the want of a constitution; for it is the nature and intention of a constitution to prevent governing by party, by establishing a common principle that shall limit and control the power and impulse of party, and that says to all parties, thus far shalt thou go and no further. But in the absence of a constitution, men look entirely to party; and instead of principle governing party, party governs principle.*"¹⁰¹ Paine compared Robespierre and his appetite for power to hereditary monarchy.¹⁰² Thomas Paine felt the need to explain the failure of the French Revolution because he also felt personal disappointment. For Paine the ideal of the French Republic was with the Girondin Convention but all his revolutionary ideals vanished after the insurrection of 31st May – 2nd June 1793.

Thomas Paine died on his farm in 1809 within only a small circle of close friends. He was buried in a quiet ceremony on the soil of his farm in New Rochelle, New York. Revolutionist Paine had no peace even after the death.

¹⁰⁰ TALMON, p. 57.

¹⁰¹ *The Political Writings of Thomas Paine*, Vol. 2, p. 344.

¹⁰² *Ibidem*.

His admirer William Cobbett secretly transferred his dead body to England where he planned to erect a monument to his idol. However, the monument was never built and the dead body of Paine thus irrevocably disappeared.¹⁰³ Paradoxically his most significant political opponent regarding *the Rights of Man*, Edmund Burke, was buried in an unknown place. The reason, however, was neither the transfer of his mortal remains, nor a plan to build a monument. Burke at the time of his death in 1797 feared that if the French invaded Britain, Jacobins could desecrate his mortal remains.¹⁰⁴ Both men thus posthumously joined the fates of the anonymity of their graves.

Abstract

Thomas Paine was a typical professional revolutionist. He actively participated in both the American and the French Revolutions and his contributions were mainly in literary activities. By his most important works, *the Common Sense* and *the Rights of Man*, Paine significantly influenced public opinion on both continents. In both works he defended the Republican Establishment and denounced the Hereditary Monarchy. He believed, like many of his contemporaries, that neither the American Revolution nor the French Revolution were the last. Paine hoped for a series of revolutions that would destroy the European Monarchies in favour of establishing a Republican System across the whole of Europe. According to Paine only a Republican form of government could ensure a universal peace and understanding between the nations. An ideal constitutional Republican System represented for Paine just a period of so-called Girondin Convention. On the contrary, the Jacobin terror destroyed all Paine's ideals and any hope of a universal revolution. Despite the fact that Thomas Paine was imprisoned during the revolutionary terror he remained a loyal Republican and these views he advocated until his death.

¹⁰³ WALKER, pp. 51–52.

¹⁰⁴ BURKE, p. 13.

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Thomas Paine or the Defender of the World Revolution

Keywords

Thomas Paine; French Revolution; Rights of Man; Hereditary Monarchy;
Trial of the King; World revolution