

but the empirical evidence suggests a different explanation. He adopts Braesch's view that it was the intrusion of legally passive citizens into the National Guard and the local assemblies which was responsible for the overthrow of the monarchy, but he does not adduce evidence to show this was the case in the section Droits-de-l'Homme. Certainly those who came to power do not seem to have been from the lower classes: they had fixed residences, had already held government posts, and were members of the liberal professions or had small shops of their own. Many of the leaders of Year II had been activists since 1789, adapting themselves to changing regimes. Slavin also does not have evidence to show that in the section struggles over the purge of the Girondins, or later over whether to side with the Convention or the Robespierriest Commune on 9 Thermidor, were between groups with different social origins. In fact at the time of the so-called royalist revolt of 14 Vendémiaire Year III, the social composition of the sections had not changed much. Nevertheless, Slavin does not draw the revisionist conclusion that these were *political* conflicts over government leadership, management of the war, and how to cope with scarcity and soaring costs.

Perhaps it is asking too much, but one would also like to see more on some other aspects of sectional life — how news and ideas were spread, participation in the great festivals, dechristianization and the cult of martyrs, and the role of women. These are either not treated or dealt with cursorily. Overall, however, the reader gets new insights into many of the activities and institutions of a section, and above all a moving close-up view of the lives of ordinary people.

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DONALD SUTHERLAND — *The Chouans: The Social Origins of Popular Counter-Revolution in Upper Brittany, 1770-1796*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1982. Pp. xiv, 360.

“As a movement, chouannerie has no history” writes Dr. Sutherland. Historians have usually presented the Breton peasant guerilla war against the Republic as an inchoate chronicle of raids, brigandage and botched skirmishes. With this compelling and tightly-argued book, together with Maurice Hutt's admirable *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution* (Cambridge, 1984) chouannerie now has not one history, but two. But whereas Hutt, though taking into account the social background of rebellion, concentrates on the course, organization and logistics of the struggles in Brittany, Sutherland's purpose is different. True, he does manage in one closely-packed chapter to make narrative sense of this war, which broke out in late 1793, feeding on earlier tensions and confrontations in the countryside. But the main interest of this book lies in his elegantly-structured analysis of the social tensions which made counter-revolution possible in the north-eastern, French-speaking part of the province.

Like Paul Bois, Charles Tilly and Marcel Faucheux in their studies of the royalist risings in the nearby Sarthe and the Vendée, Sutherland has a region, the Department of the Ille-et-Vilaine, which was split into revolutionary and counter-revolutionary zones. Like them, he sees antagonism between peasants and bourgeois at the bottom of the insurrection; but for Sutherland, the nature of the bourgeois-peasant clash was different, because it was unconnected with anything resembling an “urbanization” or “modernization” process. In the Ille-et-Vilaine the urban market pulled in goods from the countryside but did not “commercialize” the rural world. Market demand neither accustomed the countryside to bourgeois leadership, thereby smoothing the way for the Republic (as Bois claimed for the eastern Sarthe) nor created rapid and unbalanced modernization in the form of the introduction of handkerchief weaving whose boom-and-bust shocks impelled the rural world of the western Vendée towards counter-revolution (according to Tilly). Indeed, the contradiction between these two explanations is what pushed his analysis in a different direction. There were no abrupt

changes in social structure and perhaps less of an economic crisis in the west than elsewhere in France on the eve of the Revolution. Attitudes to religion, the clergy and the seigneurs seem to have been the same in both revolutionary and counter-revolutionary zones. The real reason for the different political behaviour of these zones, and between revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries within those zones themselves, had therefore to be something else, namely, landholding. Peasant proprietors' gains from the abolition of tithes and the seigneurial system helped offset the higher taxation, religious persecution and general disruption of the Revolution. But tenant farmers, whose landlords had been squeezing them with rent rises for the previous three generations, were given no relief by the revolutionary legislators and failed to support a Revolution carried out by bourgeois, many of whom were landlords, and their rural allies. In regions where such tenants made up the bulk of the better-off peasantry, the *chouan* guerrillas moved like Chairman Mao's proverbial fish in the water.

This is a conclusion which in its broad outlines Dr. Sutherland and I were happy to discover we had arrived at independently, each in our own research on different parts of Brittany. We have recently attempted to extend its validity to the whole of Western France, and it would therefore be improper to comment on its merits here. But apart from this general thesis, there are sections of this book which are important contributions to the social history of eighteenth-century France. I shall concentrate on only two of these.

The first is the novel interpretation of the role of the nobility in the countryside. In order to account for the way in which the bourgeois bore the brunt of peasant resentment despite their own activity as landlords, and despite explicit peasant criticism of the seigneurial regime in the region's *cahiers de doléances* of 1789, Sutherland has to explain the absence of antagonism towards nobles. He proceeds backwards from the Revolution itself, analyzing the often strained relations of the *chouans* with the nobles they chose or had imposed on them as leaders. As there was no eighteenth-century Mao to formulate a simple theory of guerilla warfare on which leaders and followers could agree, nobles persisted in trying to make the *chouans* fight proper campaigns while the *chouans* preferred raids and pillage. Nevertheless, nobles and *chouans* stuck together: at bottom they were agreed on who the enemy was. Both also knew the real reason for hating him because they shared a common notion of the community that the bourgeois and their rural allies had shattered.

This leads the author into a novel analysis of noble-peasant relations in the old regime. Brittany is often thought to have had the harshest seigneurial regime in France, but Sutherland, after an extensive study of seigneurial accounts, rural leases and property transfers in the *centième denier*, found that in Upper Brittany there was no *champart*, the worst of the fixed dues, and that because the land market was very sluggish, the *lods et ventes* and *retrait féodal*, the most onerous of the occasional dues and obligations, hardly affected most peasants. "If it had heirs, did not buy or sell land, and paid its dues regularly, a peasant family would not have been much disturbed by the seigneurie as a financial institution ... more than half a noble's income could derive from seigneuries, but they scarcely affected vassals.... Feudal dues extracted no more than 5 percent and more likely 2 percent of a typical peasant's gross income" (p. 182). The seigneurial judges were in practice what the J.P.s of the Revolution were supposed to be in theory — arbiters of community and family disputes rather than instruments of class justice. There were grasping and absentee seigneurs, but the seigneurie still functioned often enough as a community institution in the region for the ideal to have a reality. Complaints against the seigneurs were grounded in a sense of what a seigneurie ought to be, not in a radical rejection of the institution. The common bias of modern historians is to assume that peasants are natural egalitarians, yet when there was no omnipresent economic burden, and particularly in an area with a complex social hierarchy such as existed in the West of France, there is no reason to assume that peasants should not have shared the same ideal of a structured and deferential society that their seigneurs held. Still, the reader may want to introduce some nuances into this picture when he is told that "one-quarter to one-third of the cases which came before the (seigneurial) judges dealt with the seigneurs' interests" (p. 183). It would be interesting to see if it is possible to differentiate between the impact of the seigneurial courts, and indeed seigneurial obligations of all kinds, on peasant proprietors as opposed to that on peasant tenants. One would imagine that the seigneurial regime in all ways bore less heavily on the latter, and this would reinforce Sutherland's argument which links peasant proprietorship and support for the Revolution.

The treatment of the role of the parish clergy and religion in old regime society is likewise subversive of general assumptions. He rejects, not surprisingly, Léon Dubreuil's radical-socialist certitude that peasant counter-revolution was "un des épisodes de la lutte millénaire engagée entre l'esprit d'autorité et l'esprit de liberté"; as also its mirror-image drawn by clerical and royalist historians in which the trusting peasants rose up in defence of the *bons curés*. But, relying on the recent work of the late Fr. Berthelot du Chesnay, he also refutes the notion that the *curés* were predominantly of peasant origin and therefore defended by the peasants because they were all from the same milieu. What, then, did the *curé* represent for countryfolk? He was the most educated man in the parish (though no apostle of the *lumières*); a mature man with a long previous experience of the rural world as an assistant *curé*; the organizer of parish relief works; a man with a decent tithe income but who attracted no envy for it because he performed his duty well and with dignity. Contrary to what the more ignorant students of "la religion populaire" would have us believe, he did not passively or cynically dispense élite doctrine to ignorant boors who attended his liturgy in order to transmute his words and prayers internally into a crypto-pagan folk religion. True, there was in Brittany, as elsewhere, a large grey area of practices — holy wells, curing saints and the like — with which the Church had long ago had to come to terms. But on the essentials, peasants and priests shared reasonably clear concepts of dogma and salvation: "Pour quelle fin avez-vous été mis au monde?" asked the penny catechism which country children learned by heart. "Pour connaître, aimer et servir Dieu sur la terre et parvenir au bonheur au ciel". "Clear, simple, orthodox, but hardly profound" is the author's verdict on this; we may wonder about the final adjective when we consider the layers of experience subsumed in that laconic answer. In any event, Dr. Sutherland shows by analysis of peasant petitions the immense importance of the Church as an instrument of social integration for countryfolk in the West, and, even more, the need they felt for Christian sacraments, doctrine and liturgy as the source of their personal and collective identity. Though Chartres-de-Bretagne was a republican area, its parishioners, asking for the return of their *curé* in the year III, explained that "nous en avons besoin pour nous consoler dans nos peines et nos malheurs. Nous ne voulons point vivre comme des bêtes, comme nous avons déjà fait pendant trois ans" (p. 218). As the author observes, "the liberal-humanist Revolution had ended up by attacking the sense of humanity of the people it had long professed to help." This judgment, like the whole book, has implications which take us far beyond the problems of the Ille-et-Vilaine and, indeed, the Revolution itself.

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A.J.B. JOHNSTON — *Religion in Life at Louisbourg, 1713-1758*. Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984. Pp. 223. Illustrated.

Throughout this study of "the spiritual dimension" of Louisbourg during the brief existence of the eighteenth-century city and colony, A.J.B. Johnston blends two complementary lines of analysis. The first is a detailed institutional history of religious organization in Isle Royale and of each of the religious orders that served there. Yet as he presents that history, Johnston also searches for the society's prevailing attitudes: to religion, to morality, to the stages of life, and to death. Emphasis gradually shifts from institutions to attitudes, and this dual approach succeeds. The institutional analysis gives structure to what might otherwise be a shapeless subject, while the depiction of attitude and behaviour reveals life in the institutional structures, and justifies the title of the book.

Johnston's first chapter shows that Louisbourg was almost unanimously Catholic and that Church and State were officially linked. Religious and public festivities tended to merge, and royal officials influenced many ecclesiastical decisions. There is little in all this to surprise anyone familiar with eighteenth-century France or New France. Yet at the same time the church in Isle Royale col-