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Like many other fields of history, the history of the French Revolution has gone through a period of vocal disagreements by differing schools, then the building of a consensus, followed by a collapse of agreement. In particular, a consensus had built up among historians concerning the general validity of Georges Lefebvre's The Coming of the French Revolution in the 1940's and 50's, which collapsed by the mid to late 1960's. William Doyle, in his volume Origins of the French Revolution, attempts to incorporate many of the more recent discoveries and insights of historians about who and what caused the French Revolution in a new synthesis, even though a fair amount of Lefebvre's analysis is still present.

One of the main aspects of Lefebvre's work to come under fire was the traditional Marxist view that the bourgeoisie was the main force behind the revolution of 1789: This was the year it seized power. This view has been very seriously undermined by historical investigations that have shown the nobles, as a class, had not been in a serious financial decline, and that a significant proportion of the nobility had sided with the bourgeoisie in calling for reforms and restrictions on the king's absolutism. While Lefebvre accepted this latter contention to a great degree (being the first revolution of four in his view), it assumes the nobles and bourgeoisie operated largely *But the issue is one of timing.* separately, which was not the case. For instance, Elizabeth Eisenstein argued that the Council of Thirty, which played such an instrumental role in propagandizing people not to accept the forms of 1614 when the Estates-General was called that would have disadvantaged the Third Estate, had many nobles on it (Doyle, p. 23, 143-144). A further general argument against Lefebvre consisted of how the upper class in France in the decades prior to the Revolution had become an amalgamation of nobles and upper bourgeoisie; i.e. a group of "notables" (D., p. 14, 16-18). For instance, the noble class in

France had become the most heavily taxed nobility in Europe (so they were not entirely exempt due to the virtue of birth), were often involved in industry and commerce, still had the bulk of France's wealth, while the bourgeoisie at the same time derived the bulk of its income from land and other proprietary sources and not industry or commerce, and, if wealthy enough, eagerly sought to obtain a title and so become nobles themselves (D., p. 17-18, 116-117, 121, 129-130). Hence, any kind of lockstep Marxism concerning the opposition between the nobility and the bourgeoisie concerning the French Revolution has taken a number of serious historiographic blows.

However, Lefebvre's analysis is by no means entirely scrapped, even in Doyle's book. For while the nobility and bourgeoisie get largely amalgamated in Doyle's treatment, making Lefebvre's first two revolutions largely one, Doyle still gives Parisian workers and the peasants each a semi-autonomous revolution of their own, showing how their revolutions (Lefebvre's third and fourth) still were identifiably different from the changes the elite were accomplishing in the Estates-General cum National Assembly. And while Doyle would deny the Enlightenment was the ideology of the bourgeoisie, he would agree with Lefebvre that it had a significant impact on the course of the Revolution (D., p. 9, 83-86) as against those who would discount its influence (D., p. 27). Lefebvre's "Great Fear" among the peasants (and the unrest among Parisian workers due to the high cost of bread) plays a prominent role in Doyle's analysis as well concerning the peasantry. It was the peasantry's helped to revolt that ~~make~~ the night of August 4 so revolutionary since the National Convention was trying to satisfy them through its reforms in order to stem rural anarchy (D., p. 200-201).

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Hence, while Doyle and others have continued to modify Lefebvre's analysis, and totally scrap other aspects of it, it is by no mean totally dead. While the aspects of Lefebvre that reflect a lockstep Marxism have been sharply challenged, the parts of his analysis that are not so closely tied to Marxism often stand up well, or at least partially.

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