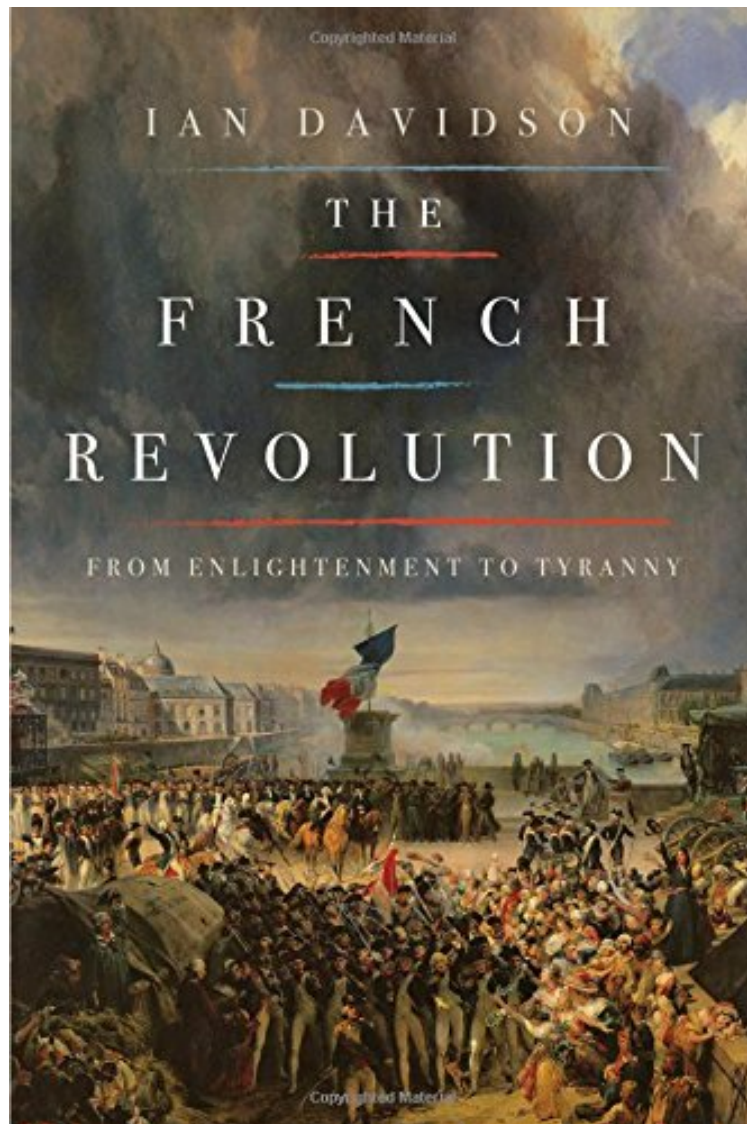


[Get free] The French Revolution: From Enlightenment to Tyranny

The French Revolution: From Enlightenment to Tyranny

Ian Davidson

*DOC | *audiobook | ebooks | Download PDF | ePub*



DOWNLOAD



READ ONLINE

#379103 in Books Pegasus Books 2016-12-06 2016-12-06Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.30 x 1.30 x 6.40l, .0 #File Name: 1681772507336 pagesPegasus Books | File size: 76.Mb

Ian Davidson : The French Revolution: From Enlightenment to Tyranny before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The French Revolution: From Enlightenment to Tyranny:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Must read historiansBy Earl V. Phillips IIGreat book if you have ever studied the French Revolution22 of 23 people found the following review helpful. Refreshing Perspective on French RevolutionBy J. NormanI have read several other books on the French Revolution but this is the first one that clearly puts into perspective the original lawful and noble goals of the early revolutionaries and how several years later

these noble goals turned into lawlessness and terror. For the first time I feel that I really understand this confusing, fascinating time in French history and the major players involved. I am very grateful for this well written, researched and easy to digest history book. 43 of 51 people found the following review helpful. Life is too short ...By GDPIan Davidson's 'The French Revolution' is a major disappointment, serving up a shallow and stale historical analysis of limited insight. As evidence one look no further than the introduction which states, "The most fundamental fact about [the French Revolution's] opening phase is that Louis XVI simply surrendered to the advancing tide of the bourgeoisie" (p. 6). This is just a tepid restatement of something the Marxist historian Albert Soboul wrote in 1953, "The essential cause of the Revolution was the power of a bourgeoisie arrived at its maturity and confronted by a decadent aristocracy holding tenaciously to its privileges." Now the author states, "I have made no attempt to register the latest refinements in academic research" (p. 7), but what he has actually failed to do, apparently, is to have made an attempt to consider the last sixty years of academic research, during which time a rich and more robust imagining of the origins and unfolding of the French Revolution has occurred. The 'bourgeoisie' Davidson so blithely refers to are actually the focus of a most lively debate, where not only is the definition of the bourgeoisie a point of contention, but the very existence of a bourgeois social class of meaningful mass has been questioned. The 'social imaginary' of pre-Revolution France, it is claimed by some, did not include a class that consciously thought of itself as bourgeois and, importantly, the goal of those Davidson now considers to be bourgeois was to achieve some form of privilege (as many did). For someone who wants to explore this argument in some depth, Sarah Maza's *The Myth of the French Bourgeoisie: An Essay on the Social Imaginary, 1750-1850* 1st edition by Maza, Sarah (2003) Hardcover is a little quirky, but thoroughly provocative. For an inexpensive and concise exploration of the issue, see T.C.W Blanning's *The French Revolution: Aristocrats versus Bourgeois?* (Studies in European History). In fact, much historical writing for the period of pre-Revolutionary France has focused upon the permeability of social designations that renders the stratified, ossified portrait of 18th century France society by many Marxist historians inadequate. Nobles engaged in commerce, prosperous merchants sought (and achieved) nobility and privilege, and wealthy peasants might have more resources than impoverished rural nobles. The reality of 18th century France bears little resemblance to the simplistic portrayal of social classes marching in lock-step according to their presumed economic interests. In another instance, Davidson writes, "In 1786, Louis XVI found himself, once again, in deep financial difficulties and turned for help to his traditional class allies: he called a meeting of nobles, but they refused to help" (p. 5). Presumably he is referring to the Assembly of Notables that Louis XVI convened in 1786 and met in February of 1787. Far from refusing to help, the Assembly of Notables was too reform minded, not obstructionist. Simon Schama writes in 'Citizens', "the merest glance at the debates confirms that something extremely serious was in the offing" (p. 244); "The debates over the land tax do not at all suggest a group of rich landowners (for that indeed what they were) digging in their heels at the threatened onslaught on their privileges" (p. 243); and, "Taxation was widely discussed in light of its relation to other economic activities and for the first time there was no disagreement that its acceptance was strictly conditional on some form of representation" (p. 244). Schama is far from alone in his assessment. Other examples of the author's mischaracterization of the conditions and realities of Revolutionary France as generally accepted by respected historians are plentiful. For example, see pp. 164-66 for Davidson's chronicling of events of the Vendee in 1793 (you can preview them by means of the "Look Inside" function of the book's product page). The uprisings of the Vendee were a genuine Counter-Revolutionary movement, although Davidson writes, "Sometimes the Vendean rebellion is characterized as pro-Catholic or pro-Royalist, but that is not what it is about" (pp. 164-65). One of the most respected scholars of the French Revolution is Timothy Tackett, and in his excellent book *The Coming of the Terror in the French Revolution* he gives a more complete treatment of the events in the Vendee. Certainly Tackett, like Davidson, observes conscription as being one triggering event, but he also observes that "Religious disturbances ... persisted through early 1793, notably in regions with large numbers of refractory priests" (p. 257); "In the eyes of many rural citizens, the decrees of the Revolution had taken away priests, killed their king, and passed a variety of laws that scarcely diminished or even raised their taxes" (p. 258); and "The central factor, however, uniting virtually all the rebels in the west, was anger and indignation over the Revolution's religious policies" (p. 259). Tackett's history has greater texture, and is far more credible (based upon primary sources), while Davidson practices a stunning dismissiveness towards the depth and range of human motivations. There is still a role for Marxist historical analysis as it is capable of presenting an interesting prism through which the French Revolution can be viewed and appreciated. To be valuable, however, it requires far more nuance and subtlety than Davidson musters. He does tell a clear, easily digested tale of the French Revolution, unfortunately it comes at the expense of the complexity of human nature and historical evidence. I rated the book 'two stars' because according to 's guidelines 'one star' means, "I hated it." Life is too short for hate, as it is for weak books. Take a pass. Addendum 3/11/17: An excellent history of the French Revolution published last year is Peter McPhee's *Liberty or Death: The French Revolution* (5 stars). In his Introduction, McPhee writes, "The consequences of the events of 1789 were so complex, violent and significant that reflection and debate on their origins and course show no signs of concluding. The Revolution continues to fascinate, perplex and inspire" (p. xi). McPhee's narrative considers the decisions individuals were often forced to make and that their choices were not a simple matter of materialism (although he claims it was a key determinant), but could also be,

"a function of individual and family position and outlook, ... these were embedded in the particular circumstances of a person's occupation, neighborhood and region. ... [and] particular types of social relations that created loyalties and hatreds" (p. 189). In short, McPhee's history considers the greater complexity of the human equation and is significantly more satisfying than Davidson's smug, tidy tale.

A vital and illuminating look at this profoundly important (and often perplexing) historical moment, by former Financial Times chief foreign affairs columnist Ian Davidson. The French Revolution casts a long shadow, one that reaches into our own time and influences our debates on freedom, equality, and authority. Yet it remains an elusive, perplexing historical event. Its significance morphs according to the sympathies of the viewer, who may see it as a series of gory tableaux, a regrettable slide into uncontrolled anarchy or a radical reshaping of the political landscape. In this riveting new book, Ian Davidson provides a fresh look at this vital moment in European history. He reveals how it was an immensely complicated and multifaceted revolution, taking place in different places, at different times, and in different spheres; and how subsequently it became weighted with political, social, and moral values. Stirring and dramatic and filled with the larger-than-life players of the period and evoking the turbulence of this colorful time, this is narrative history at its finest.

More than 200 years later, the world's first true working-class revolution is little-enough understood that a new, nuts-and-bolts history, subtly but importantly reframed, feels essential and sadly all-too-relevant. The terror that followed feels inevitable today, but Davidson shows that it wasn't. - *Vulture* (7 Books You Need to Read This December) What we don't know about the French Revolution could fill a book; Davidson has done just that in spades. An invaluable history of the French Revolution and its repercussions through the years - *Kirkus* (starred) An even-handed, step-by-step account of key moments of the French Revolution. A serious work of popular history, challenging enough to intrigue those already familiar with the revolution and accessible enough to engage those who are not. - *Shelf Awareness* Davidson aims to correct modern misperceptions of the French Revolution that toppled the ancien régime in 1789 and ushered in the First Republic. He persuasively argues that the aftershocks of this most turbulent era continue to reverberate into the 21st century. - *Publishers Weekly* About the Author After graduating in Classics from Cambridge, Ian Davidson worked for the Financial Times for many years as their Paris correspondent and chief foreign affairs columnist. He is also the author of *Voltaire* (Pegasus) and *Voltaire in Exile* (Grove). Ian lives in England.