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Response to Donald Sutherland's Review of *Non-violence and the French Revolution: Political Demonstrations in Paris, 1787-1795*. Cambridge ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2015.viii + 292 pp. Tables, notes, bibliography, and index. €93.57 £58.50 \$82.67 U.S. (cl). ISBN 078-1-10708279-3.

Review by Micah Alpaugh, University of Central Missouri.

My thanks to Donald Sutherland for his perceptive review. No book titled *Non-Violence and the French Revolution* could remain free of all controversy, nor would the subject be well served if it did. I hope my study will help us think harder about violence as well as non-violence--and the roles each play in shaping social movements, revolutions and political change. May many more such conversations follow.

Sutherland, the author of notable and ongoing studies of lynchings, massacres, and revolutionary justice recently for the South of France and now the Ile de France, makes an ideal interlocutor. Although the study of Parisian protest during the French Revolution received surprisingly little detailed attention for a half-century following Albert Soboul's 1958 *Les sans-culottes parisiens de l'an II* and George Rudé's 1959 *The Crowd in the French Revolution*, the field appears prime for new debates and perspectives.

As my book broadly explores, popular violence (at least in uneven, spasmodic, relatively rare, and usually unplanned episodes) was an integral part of the French Revolution, and will always remain an important part of our general narrative of the era. The use of force helped (if only in part) achieve the two revolutions of July 14, 1789 and August 10, 1792, and helped establish an image of popular power that Parisian protesters sought to retain--marching with arms, threatening enemies or perceived waverers, and in cases of confrontation sometimes accepting violence as a last recourse.

Understanding the limits of such violence, however, appeared to me the most urgent historiographical task. Particularly since Simon Schama's bicentennial bestseller, historians have commonly at least semi-consciously followed his lead presuming the ubiquity and efficacy of revolutionary violence. In so doing, we risk badly misunderstanding the roots of modern politics. As studies of French Revolutionary terror (particularly exaggerated misinterpretations of it) have elaborated a model for the use increasingly limitless political violence over the last two centuries, we risk further legitimizing such violence if we do not look more closely at how French Revolutionary politics functioned and what such excesses actually accomplished. Historians must better contextualize the practical uses of violence, its limitations, and the many alternatives to its use.

Most Parisian Revolutionary protests did not use violence, nor can their peaceful actions be seen merely as preludes. My study finds 666 of 754 group street protests (88 percent) in Paris between 1787 and 1795 successfully avoided physical violence, and many of the Revolution's most prominent *journées*--including the Réveillon Riots, Bastille insurrection, and the second revolution of August 10, 1792 began as peaceful interventions that only incorporated physical force after attacks by royal forces. Rather than focusing on bloodshed and terror, organizers typically focused on building fraternal relations with the National Assembly and other Revolutionary officials--typically (with the rare exception of Prairial) peacefully appealing to officials using a remarkably modern set of protest tactics. Political demonstrations, mass-

meetings, petition-campaigns and banquets became regularized tactics for the first time in the Revolution's democratizing order.

In such context, should I necessarily (as Sutherland suggests) have paid more attention to the September Massacres? Based upon surrounding evidence, I found empirically little reason to do so. The six days of bloodletting (supervised by Paris section leaders and permitted – or perhaps tacitly encouraged—by the National Assembly) occurred in the context of military collapse, in the midst of which the Austrian and Prussian forces had threatened Paris' utter destruction. All elite and popular authority was implicated in the killings—and no repercussions followed. As Jean-Marie Roland famously orated afterwards, “over such events we must cast a veil.” If ever there was an exception—an isolated event, no matter how horrific – this was it. Thereafter, if the September Massacres inspired anyone towards terror, it appears to have been the political elites whose open use of mass killing and terror had gone unchecked.

As a full chapter of my book explores, after the September Massacres Parisian protesters successfully avoided large-scale political violence over the rest of the revolution's radical era. In contrast to Sutherland's claim in his review that popular politics became “skewed towards violence and lack of compromise” as the Revolution advanced, my study demonstrates that at least within Paris quite the opposite occurred. Between September 7, 1792 and the end of 1793, 151 of 156 Parisian protests remained peaceful. As the Revolution became embroiled in civil wars in the provinces and several major conflicts abroad, the *sans-culottes* forged a political alliance with most legislators advantageous to each group. Though using aggressive tactics (while in league with Convention radicals) to expel the Girondins between May 31-June 2, 1793, and enthusiastically participating in all forms verbal violence against the Revolution's opponents, their relationship with radical legislators would be short-circuited only by Jacobin repression as the Terror advanced. After the demonstrations of September 4-5, 1793, the contentious content of Parisian protests quickly vanished, remaining absent throughout the Year II, and would not re-emerge until after Thermidor. Though many Parisian radicals had previously enthusiastically called for the use of force against the Revolution's professed enemies in the provinces, implying a direct link between the *sans-culottes* and the *grande terreur* appears faulty.

Interpreting the demonstration of 1 Prairial Year III, like so many other revolutionary *journées*, becomes a question of context. The demonstration occurred in a context of de-democratization, with sectional assemblies limited by Thermidorian decree and increasing state arrests of popular radicals. Those marching sought not the return of the dead Robespierre, but rather the reenactment of recently revoked price-ceilings and Constitution of 1793's broad democratic protections. The (unplanned) killing of a Convention legislator barring their entry should not be justified, but neither should dismantling of participatory democracy in Paris that followed—including the arrest of 1,200 partisans and guillotining of thirty-six Parisians accused on flimsy evidence of taking part. Thin pretense indeed.

“Negotiation,” as a term to describe the exchanges between Revolutionary protesters and legislators, seems an entirely apt to me. What high-level negotiations do not contain at least an implicit threat of conflict (and often violence) should they break down? Parisians carefully moderated their threats before legislators, on almost all occasions directing them against exterior enemies or scheming sub-groups. Intimidation (and, in some cases, potentially lasting trauma) could result—yet in this regard we should not privilege Revolutionary elites' fears over those of the *sans-culottes*. Popular movements lasted months, and activists repeatedly showed patience in seeking contentious goals. Throughout, protesters faced the continued possibility of state repression—as indeed they almost comprehensively were suppressed in April and October 1789 and July 1791, as well as nearly in July 1789 and August 1792, before finally being fully politically annihilated in 1795. All serious political actors (whether rank-and-file or elite) must accept the possibility of violence against their persons and causes. Few nonviolent movements of the last century have succeeded without direct or implicit threats of violence—from late-colonial India to the American Civil Rights Movement to Apartheid South Africa—and a full renunciation of violence would not have suited Parisian protester goals.

At least two paths appear open for interpreting Parisian Revolutionary protest. One, well-trodden in recent years, focuses on violence, destabilization, and the path towards terror. Another, however, appears possible. In seeing the protesters of Paris as the chief progenitors of the modern French social movement, inaugurating the tactics still common to this day, we gain a powerful view of the possibilities of collective action and their ability to bring about real change.

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