Comparative Regicides: King Charles I of England and King Louis XVI of France

by

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To Nancy Greenberg
Mere words cannot describe my love or gratitude for you
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Introduction

In the first month of 1649 in England, the truly unthinkable occurred. On January 27, the High Court of Justice sentenced King Charles to death for the crime of perpetuating a war against the English people. All 67 commissioners of the High Court unanimously voted to find him guilty. Three days later on January 30, Charles I of the House of Stuart, King of England, Scotland and Ireland (see Figure 1) faced his executioner. Less than 150 years later, Louis XVI of the House of Bourbon, King of France and Navarre (see Figure 2), was executed on January 21, 1793. At his trial, the National Convention charged Louis with 33 different crimes, which Louis had allegedly committed to allow his tyranny to destroy the liberty of the French people. Though some of the deputies abstained from voting, the remaining 693 deputies all voted to convict him. Two kings, who had once ruled over their kingdom as absolute monarchs, both stood trial and went to their deaths as criminals.

Most modern readers would consider such a rapid reversal of positions to be surprising. Yet the vast majority of seventeenth-century Englishmen and eighteenth-century Frenchmen would have regarded killing a king as utterly unthinkable. Many of these witnesses of the first two European regicides viewed the monarch as their rightful and true superior. Indeed, early modern political theory often depicted the king as an infallible sovereign. Such descriptions of the monarch remained prominent in England even after Charles’s execution. In Sir William Blackstone’s 1765 Commentaries on the Laws of England, the author defined all kings as an example of perfect rulers. “The king, moreover, is not only incapable of doing wrong, but even of thinking wrong: he can never mean to do an improper thing: in him is no folly or
Blackstone uttered this monarchist rhetoric more than one hundred years after Charles’s death. His assertion reflected a commonly held opinion among subjects in Europe’s many monarchies. Yet despite prevalent support for this theory, political radicals deposed and executed these arguably perfect kings. Even one occurrence of regicide in this monarchist society seems incredible; the fact that two such regicides occurred almost defies belief. A large portion of both the English and French populations continued to support the monarchy even after the execution of the kings. However, over a short period of time a sufficient number of people transitioned from viewing the king as faultless to supporting his death. This work seeks to explain how such a dramatic shift in political perspectives happened.

Even at the conclusion of the first English Civil War in 1645 and after the start of the French Revolution in 1789, the vast majority of political actors and the populace regarded monarchy as the correct form of government for a state. Thus, for a sufficient majority of legislative representatives to support the execution of their sovereigns, each kingdom needed to experience significant changes. Without particular events occurring like the kings’ betrayal of the legislatures’ trust or the radicals’ seizure of power, the regicides might never have taken place. The relationship between Charles and Louis with their legislature showed certain common trends, events, and motivations. These commonalities suggest the existence of a specific early modern European path to reach a regicide. This work aims to explain how reverence towards the kings turned into antipathy by examining and analyzing

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how Charles’s and Louis’s political circumstances deteriorated from reigning over a kingdom to facing capital punishment for their crimes.

Defining Regicide

Given regicide’s importance as the focal point of this project, it becomes necessary to define it as a term. Obviously throughout history, dozens of kings, queens and assorted rulers have died violently, yet only a handful of these have died because of a deliberate and organized killing of a monarch. Regicide does not include any king who died in battle or was assassinated. For instance, the death of King Richard III of England in 1485 during the battle of Bosworth Field, for instance is not a regicide; Richard died as a result of the battle rather than because of a direct attack on his person. Similarly, historians would not describe the assassination of French King Henry IV in 1610 as a regicide. While both Richard III and Henry IV died violently, neither of their deaths occurred because of an organized and planned decision to kill the king.

Regicide as a term first appeared in the late sixteenth century to describe the monarch who ordered the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots on February 8, 1587, Queen Elizabeth I of England. Following Mary’s death, Pope Sixtus V issued a bull of excommunication against Elizabeth, in which he described her as the crowned regicide. Unlike with the assassinations or murders of a monarch, Queen Mary died because of an authorized execution; the Scottish Queen actually stood trial before going to the scaffold. These specific legal proceedings differentiated her death from

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the usual violent death of a ruler. Both Charles and Louis faced similar judicial procedures before their subjects legally executed them. Unlike Mary, who died on the order of a fellow monarch, these kings died because their own subjects demanded it. Not only did both the English Parliament and the French Convention order their respective monarchs’ death, they did so legally. This project seeks to examine how such a remarkable event came to pass.

Sources

The primary sources utilized in this research, chiefly focused on examining the major political moments, which occurred in the English and French legislatures and the motivations of the principal actors involved in the events of the regicides. My choice of primary document reflected my emphasis on the relationship between the kings and their legislatures. I examined important political documents such as the French constitution of 1791, letters of the kings, radical petitions, and summaries or transcripts of Parliament’s meetings to understand the motivations and reasoning behind certain political decisions.

I found readily available access to a large number of primary sources about the English Civil War. I utilized one source, which contained daily summaries of meeting from both Houses of Parliament. This provided a great perspective on how Parliament dealt with the many events occurring throughout England between June 1645 and January 1649. Meanwhile, the various proposals and treaties exchanged between the king, Parliament, and other political actors provided an insight into the

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prominent figures involved in the Civil War. In an effort to better understand Charles’s motivations, I also read some of his letters to his family, close advisors, and other major political figures of the time period. When discussing the immediate events leading up to Charles’s trial, as well as the actual trial, I relied heavily upon *The Trial of Charles I.* This source book contains detailed transcripts and summaries covering the convening of the High Court of Justice and the trial from December 1, 1648 to January 30, 1649.

Finding primary sources for the French Revolution proved somewhat more difficult since I cannot read French. Thankfully editors have previously translated a sizable number of sources about the Revolution. The “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity” website proved particularly helpful for my research. This website, contained over 300 translated documents about various events in the French Revolution. Like with the Civil War, I found other governmental documents like the 1791 Constitution or various political petitions through research. When analyzing Louis’s trial, I also used Michael Walzer’s *Regicide and Revolution,* which included translated transcripts of speeches made by major political figures. These speeches provided a critical understanding of the Convention’s ongoing debate about regicide and the king’s fate.

**State of the Field**

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During my research, I came across a wealth of secondary sources on both the English Civil War and the French Revolution. This made sense given the major importance of both events to subsequent world history. Several works also explored a regicidal narrative in England and France. However most of these works concentrated a more specific portion of this narrative. For instance, Munro Price’s *The Road From Versailles* focused mainly on examining how Louis responded to the advent of the revolution and speculating about Louis’s motivations. Price placed a particular emphasis on Louis’s correspondence with his foreign operative the Baron de Breuil to discern his precise foreign interests during this time period. Given his primary focus on Louis’s political dealings with the revolution, Price wrote significantly less about Louis’s circumstances following the August 10 Coup as by that point the king had lost all political power. As a result Price provided significantly less insight and detail into the last several months of Louis’s life. David P. Jordan essentially picked up the story of Louis’s regicide from there in his appropriately named work, *The King’s Trial*. Jordan provided a detailed account of how the Convention agreed to put Louis on trial and eventually sentence him to death. Jordan’s detailed account and analysis of the political circumstances surrounding the trial partially served as a model for the overall analysis of this project. Still I felt that his decision to begin his work with the August 10 Coup, somewhat limited his overall understanding of the trial and the events that informed the proceedings. I also used Saul Padover’s *The Life and Death of Louis XVI* and Rupert Furneaux’s *The Last Days of Louis and Marie-*

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Antoinette, both of which more closely resembled biographies about Louis. While both provided a valuable insight into Louis’s motivations and concerns about the revolution, they offered little substantive information about the politics of the Assemblies and the Convention.

The secondary sources I examined when researching the English Civil War, also focused on specific events. For instance, David Underdown’s *Pride Purge* closely examined the political dynamics within Parliament in the events leading up to the eponymous event. His examination of the build up to the purge and the military coup itself provided a detailed articulation of the many political factions of the Long Parliament. Regrettably as Underdown depicted Pride’s Purge as the climactic event of the Civil War, he overlooked several of the important points such as many of the events of 1646. Still Underdown provided an articulate account of the political history of 1647 and 1648 England. In many ways, In *A Coffin for King Charles*, C.V. Wedgwood examined how the Rump Parliament ensured that Charles would die. She interestingly accepted by late 1648 Louis’s life was forfeit, instead discussing how Parliament ignored the wishes of other authorities to not execute Louis. Her decision to make the Rump Parliament her main actor in this narrative proved quite beneficial for my understanding of my topic. I found Graham Edwards’s *The Last Days of Charles I* mostly helpful as it developed a brief overview of Charles’s

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behavior and interactions with different groups throughout the last years of his life. However I found upon further research that several of the sources were not entirely attributed in a correct manner. Thus when I used Edwards’s work, I carefully reexamined any claims he made. Sarah Barber’s *Regicide and Republicanism* effectively traced the growing republican sentiment in England. I would contend that Barber at times credited the republicans with holding more sway in England and especially over Parliament than they actually did. Additionally I felt the discussion of topics after Charles’s death to be unnecessary given the regicide had already taken place. Still she effectively examines the ideology, history, and background of an important fringe group of the English Civil War.

Overall, all of these authors provide detailed investigations into specific parts of the regicidal narrative that I wanted to explore. However, none of these explored the full account of how either the English or the French regicides took place. In this project, I wanted to recount a comprehensive depiction of the march towards a regicide, which I feel some of these authors have sacrificed in exchanged for a detailed look at the intricacies of particular events. Additionally rather than solely investigating the regicide of Charles or Louis, I chose to examine both regicides. Admittedly, dealing with two separate accounts of regicide forced me to sacrifice some of the detail present in these other secondary sources. Still I would argue that comparing the events leading up to the executions of both Charles and Louis provided me with a great and potentially unique insight into the concept of regicides.

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Outline of the Chapters

I chose to separate the chapters thematically with each chapter corresponding to one of the different phases of the regicidal narrative. During my research, I divided the events leading up to the execution of the kings into three separate stages. This allowed me to focus on and explore particular themes within each chapter. When discussing each specific phase, I also chose to switch between examining seventeenth-century England and eighteenth-century France to better allow for comparisons between the two events. Though this may create some confusion for readers, I think that it provided the opportunity to witness the parallels between the two studies. I chose to focus my study on the interaction between the monarchs and the legislatures as both Parliament and the National Convention oversaw and supported the executions of the kings. Thus the breakdown in their relationships led to the regicides.

Chapter 1 focuses on the initial negotiations between the kings and the legislatures in the aftermath of the English Civil War and the formation of the French National Assembly. The chapter begins with the June 1645 parliamentary victory in the English Civil War and the initial success of the French Revolution in July 1789. It then examines why both negotiations between Charles and Parliament and Louis’s incorporation into the French Republic failed. The chapter concludes with the Charles and Louis both exiting the negotiations by fleeing from the watchful eyes of their respective legislatures. Chapter 2 explores the increased level of factionalism and political rivalries in the legislatures following the legislatures’ initial failures to reach a compromise with their monarchs. The chapter starts in the immediate aftermath of
both kings’ flights. I then discuss the moderates’ vision for England and France in the form of the Newport Treaty and the 1791 Constitution respectively. I finally show how radical dissatisfaction with these moderate proposals led to their seizures of power. I conclude the chapter by describing these power grabs and comparing Pride’s Purge with the August 10, 1792 coup. Chapter 3 deals with the trials and convictions of the two kings. I describe the necessary steps each legislature took to bring their fallen monarch to trial and I compare how the legislatures conducted the two trials and the reason for their diverse methods. I conclude with a brief analysis of the choice both to convict and sentence the monarchs to death and the difficulty involved in taking such a drastic action.

In this project, I worked to understand the major transformative experience that both legislatures underwent on the path to committing regicide. The typical opinion of monarchy dramatically shifted in both England and France over a period of only a few years. This project examines and contrasts the radical change of political perspectives in Parliament and the French Assembly. Such an investigation allows for a comprehensive understanding of the regicides.
Chapter 1: A Failure in Negotiation

Introduction and Outline of the Chapter

Why did both King Charles I and King Louis XVI chose to reject their positions of authority within the post-conflict governments of England and France? Even after the turmoil of the first English Civil War and the early events of the French Revolution, a majority of representatives within both Parliament and the newly established National Assembly discussed with their kings about how both of these states would incorporate the monarchy in 1646 and 1789 respectively. Yet despite somewhat successful compromises in England and France, both Charles and Louis withdrew from any such agreement when they fled from their captivity. Both monarchs ultimately decided to seize power rather than reach a compromise with the legislature. This chapter seeks to understand how the relationship between the kings and their legislatures transformed to such an extent that both sovereigns would take these actions.

To accomplish this, I began the chapter in the seeming aftermath of the English Civil War and the French Revolution. This placement allowed a discussion on the initial motives of all parties involved in the negotiations between the kings and the legislatures. Following the discussion of motives, I examined the actual negotiations themselves and speculated on why they failed. Finally I investigated the events leading up to and the impetus behind the flights of both Charles and Louis. I

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15 William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution: Second Edition*, (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2002), 118, kindle edition. The National Assembly only actually existed from June 13 to July 9, 1789. Afterwards it was officially called the National Constituent Assembly until that dissolved in September 30, 1791. For the sake of simplicity in this work, I will refer to both entities as the National Assembly.
have arranged this chapter to provide Charles and Louis with a shared beginning of negotiating with their legislature and ended this section with their attempted escape. I made frequent comparisons between the two paths, which the kings took. This should provide a greater understanding of how both the similarities and differences of events in England and France affected the narrative of the two most famous accounts of regicide.

**Motives of the Kings**

Negotiations between King Charles and Parliament began shortly after the conclusion of the martial phase of the English Civil War. By this point, the power dynamic had shifted completely from how it was under Charles’s personal rule over England from 1629 to 1640. Following the royalist defeat at the Battle of Naseby on June 14, 1645, Charles’s supporters lacked the martial forces necessary to defeat Parliament’s well-trained military force, the New Model Army. During the battle the Army captured approximately 5,000 royalist troops, which significantly damaged Charles’s hope for victory in the Civil War. Though the royalists fought the parliamentarians in several more conflicts between June and September of 1645, none

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16 Maurice Ashley, *The Battle of Naseby and the Fall of King Charles I*, (St. Martin’s Press: New York, 1992), 107 – 108. The first phase of the civil war lasted from August 22, 1642 to June 24, 1646.
18 Ashley, *The Battle of Naseby*, 75. The New Model Army was officially founded in 1645 by the Parliamentarian side, most of whom would make up the Independent faction. Unlike most other armies of the 17th century, this army served on all fronts and consisted entirely of professional soldiers. As a result it soon became a dominating force within England. In this project, I will often refer to them simply as the Army.
19 Ibid, 90.
of these battles altered the king’s growing realization that he could not win the war.\textsuperscript{20} After the legislature rebuffed his initial request to begin negotiations, Charles sent a letter to Parliament on December 26, 1645, offering to come to London himself. “Since all other overtures had proved ineffectual, he desired to enter into a personal treaty with the two Houses of Parliament at Westminster and the commissioners of the Parliament of Scotland upon all matters which might conduce to the peace and happiness of the distracted kingdoms.”\textsuperscript{21} Charles described the conflict as a distraction for England and Scotland likely in an attempt to downplay the damage of the Civil War. Perhaps the king believed that depicting the war as an easily solvable disturbance would persuade a majority of members of Parliament to listen to his terms. Resolving the underlying issues of the war such as the future of religion in England and the continued power struggle between king and legislature would prove difficult for Charles and the members of Parliament. Yet given Charles’s military situation by the end of 1645, he recognized that only through negotiations could he ever hope to rule over England again. The personal baggage of having fought a war against one another, made ending this strife that much more arduous for the two sides. Unlike what would happen about 140 years later in France, the king and Parliament entered into negotiations with a recent history full of bloodshed and tension.

With approximately 10,000 loyal soldiers remaining encamped at royalist strongholds, by September 1645, Charles lacked the necessary military resources to

\textsuperscript{20} Kishlansky, \textit{A Monarchy Transformed}, 168. Officially the war did not end until 1646, but the skirmishes of that year mostly consisted of finishing off the remaining royalist outposts.

defeat the New Model Army.\textsuperscript{22} Though the king had hoped to receive additional troops from either Ireland or foreign mercenaries, neither source delivered any reinforcements.\textsuperscript{23} Bereft of any hope for a military victory, Charles could either flee England and live in exile or try to negotiate with Parliament. While compromising with the legislature would reduce his power and influence over England, it would allow the king to retain his throne. Yet if he instead fled England, then Charles would save his own life but at the cost of his title, honor, and beliefs. The king explored this dilemma in a letter composed to his son and heir, Prince Charles, on March 22, 1646. In this letter, Charles explained why he considered it a mistake for his son to leave England, which hints at his own decision to stay. “But, if you depart from those grounds for which I have all this time fought, then your leaving this kingdom will be (with too much probability) called sufficient proof for many of the slanders heretofore laid upon me.”\textsuperscript{24} Here Charles described his son’s potential escape, and by extension his own, as the true sign of surrender. The king cautioned his heir against fleeing England as doing so could suggest that Charles I and his family were unfit to rule the kingdom. By fleeing to France, the prince seemingly would place his own life above the well being of his father’s subjects. Given Charles’s clear disdain for the idea of living his life in dishonorable exile, he instead chose to cooperate with Parliament. Like his French counterpart, Charles only acquiesced to his legislature’s demands because of coercive methods. Admittedly Charles required significantly more

\textsuperscript{22} Ashley, \textit{The Battle of Naseby}, 107.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid, 107. At the time Ireland was in a state of rebellion and ruled by the Irish Catholic Confederation from 1642 – 1649. Though the Irish offered a minimal token of support for the royalists during the Civil War, for the most part they stayed out of the conflict. Several months after Charles’s regicide, Oliver Cromwell led an invasion of Ireland in August 1649, to suppress the confederation.

inducement than Louis. Neither of the kings would give up their authority willingly without the use of threats.

Within France, the initial discussions between king and legislature occurred without having undergone the same level of turmoil as in England. Though in 1789 the French Revolution undoubtedly sparked some chaos, the conflict initially proved less destabilizing than the English Civil War. Louis compromised much more easily with the French revolutionaries than Charles had with Parliament, thereby preventing a large-scale internal conflict. Still the king never displayed any sign of welcoming or encouraging revolutionary sentiment in France. Like most monarchs of the eighteenth-century, he firmly believed in his right to rule with minimal hindrance from other government officials. Indeed Louis only established the Estates General because of the financial crisis of the 1780s and even then worked to maintain his authority over the representatives by using his guards to prevent them from meeting.

Meanwhile many representatives of the Estates General, particularly within the Third Estate, determined to take advantage of their meeting together in Versailles. Louis attempted to block these gatherings by barring the Third Estate from meeting. In conjunction with the revolutionary fervor spreading throughout France, the Third

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25 Munro Price, *The Road From Versailles: Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette and the Fall of the French Monarchy*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2003), 57. Though skirmishes did occur during the early years of the French Revolution such as with the Taking of the Bastille, none of these events could be considered full scale battles.


27 Sylvia Neely, *A Concise History of the French Revolution*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 55 – 56. In an attempt to deal with the financial crisis of the 1780s, Louis called the Estates General for the first time since 1614. Upon the assemblage of the Estates General, the third estate considered the setup of the Estates General discriminatory against them and formed the National Assembly in response. While Louis tried to stop them, by this point revolutionary sentiment was to prominent for him to suppress.

Estate resisted Louis’s suppression tactics by swearing to implement an official Constitution on June 20, 1789 and officially forming the National Assembly.29

With the establishment of the Assembly there finally existed the possibility of replacing the ancien régime with a new government. Yet many of the Assembly representatives disagreed about what role Louis would play in this new French government. Though he certainly had attempted to prevent members of the Assembly from meeting together on June 20, 1789, the threat of a 5,000 person strong mob gathered outside of Versailles on June 23 convinced the king that trying to end the growing revolutionary sentiment in the Estates General could prove perilous.30 In response to these threats, Louis ordered the First and Second estates to join the Third Estate in the National Assembly on June 27, 1789. He explained to the first two estates, “That he would never abandon his nobility, but that he was forced by circumstances to make great sacrifices for unity.”31 Here Louis justified his actions by blaming external circumstances. He asserted a continued devotion to the aristocracy and clergy, but defended his actions as necessary for France’s survival. This fear of violence coerced the king into ordering the first two estates to abandon their privileged status on the Estates General to join the National Assembly.32 This episode both raised and answered several questions about how the king would conduct himself throughout the Revolution. While Louis clearly opposed revolutionary sentiment, threats to both the safety of France and his own person would cause him to

29 Doyle, The Oxford History of the French Revolution, 106. This oath to write a Constitution was known as the Tennis Court Oath. This is because deprived of their normal meeting space, the Third Estate met together on a Versailles tennis court.
30 Padover, The Life and Death of Louis XVI, 170 – 171.
31 Louis XVI “June 27, 1789 Speech to the First and Second Estates” in Price, The Road From Versailles, 69 – 70.
acquiesce to most demands. However because of his behavior, revolutionary leaders
found it difficult to define Louis as either a friend or an enemy to the Revolution. In
1646 England, members of Parliament negotiated with Charles secure in the
knowledge that he was a defeated enemy. Yet the National Assembly lacked the same
feeling of antipathy towards Louis, making an initial compromise with the French
king much more likely.

Coercive means prompted both kings to listen to their respective legislatures.
Yet their responses varied tremendously. While Charles willingly waged war against
Parliament, Louis firmly opposed fighting against the Third Estate. For the French
king, warring against his own people would violate the principle responsibilities of a
monarch.33 His refusal to fight the revolutionaries in battle arguably prevented the
1789 Revolution from turning into a full-scale war. One noblewoman and friend of
Queen Marie Antoinette, the Countess d’Adhémar, wrote in her personal recollections
on June 1789 about Louis’s unwillingness to suppress his own subjects:

This well-informed princess knew all about the plots that were being
hatched against the government. She brought them to the attention of
Louis XVI, who told her, ‘But when all is said, is the Third Estate not
also my children – and the greatest in number? And will I not still be
their king even though the nobility may lose some of their privileges
and the clergy a few snatches of their income?’”34

According to the Countess, Louis described himself as a father figure to all of the
French people. Indeed many monarchs of early modern Europe similarly depicted

33 Padover, The Life and Death of Louis XVI, 175.
34 Countess d’Adémar, “The King of the Third Estate,” June 1789, in Liberty, Equality and
Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution, ed. Jack Censer and Lynn Hunt,
themselves as a type of paternal figure to their kingdom.\textsuperscript{35} Louis likely subscribed to this image of himself as a father to all of France, which may have played a role in his reaction to the revolutionaries. If he fought against the Revolution, then based on this belief Louis essentially would have declared war on his own children. Though he strongly disliked several revolutionary policies such as the removal of noble privileges, the king begrudgingly permitted such changes. Louis willingly would give up many traditions of the old regime in exchange for maintaining stability throughout France. Attacking his own subjects would have defied the primary responsibility of all absolute monarchs. Alternatively, Louis might have considered how the events of the English Civil War ended with Charles’s death and avoided embroiling his nation in a potential civil war. For some combination of these reasons, when a skirmish broke out at the storming of the Bastille on July 14, 1789, Louis refused to fight his own people.\textsuperscript{36} Instead he accepted the demands of the revolutionaries and approved major changes to France. While always reluctant to support the interests, Louis never dreamed that supporting the revolution would claim his throne and his head.

**Motivations of Major Factions**

When both legislatures began negotiating with their kings in 1646 and 1789, the vast majority of representatives never would have considered executing Charles and Louis even as a potential decision. Most of the major legislative factions believed that instituting any type of government other than monarchy inevitably ruined a


Though anti-monarchists and republicans existed within both Parliament and the Assembly, they lacked any significant power within either legislature in 1646 and 1789. Thus when the legislative factions discussed with each other and their kings about the future of England and France, practically every representative agreed that the monarch would continue to play an important role in the governance of these kingdoms.

Because of this common acceptance of monarchy, when Charles expressed a willingness to surrender the vast majority of Parliament wanted to reach a compromise with their king. However, by 1646 Parliament had fragmented far too much for the legislature to immediately work out an agreement with Charles. During the Civil War every parliamentary member nominally had opposed the king, as the fervent royalists had all left their posts at the beginning of the war. Yet members of Parliament disagreed about major issues such as the future of English religion, compensation for the military, and the role of the monarchy in post-Civil War England. Eventually continued tension over these issues brought about the formation of two major factions: the Presbyterians and the Independents. Neither of these factions possessed the unity or coherence of a modern political party and certainly did not encompass all of Parliament’s members. Nevertheless both groups would play major roles in the English regicide.

The Independents established themselves as an archaic political party near the end of the Civil War by late 1645 or early 1646. They consisted mostly of members

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of the pro-war faction, which had favored fighting the king as opposed to initially compromising during the war.\footnote{Underdown, \textit{Pride’s Purge}, 45 – 46. Describing the Independents or any of the factions discussed here as a political party would not be entirely accurate as all of the coalitions discussed here lacked the necessary structure to function as a modern day political party does. However for convenience I will sometimes refer to them as political parties.} This faction maintained their distrust for the monarchy even after the end of hostilities and thus remained suspicious of Charles’s intentions. Because of these doubts, many within the Independent faction favored not immediately disbanding the New Model Army despite the potential monetary costs.\footnote{Ibid, 72. This desire to keep the Army active until matters were settled with Charles acted as one of the few unifying beliefs of the Independent faction.} Due to this support for the military, the Independents maintained close ties to the senior officers of the Army. Though most Independents desired some measure of governmental reform, they opposed any radical changes. However, they firmly opposed Presbyterianism becoming the official doctrine of the Church of England.\footnote{Kishlansky, \textit{A Monarchy Transformed}, 168. Calvinism was another unifying feature for the Independents.} They instead advocated limiting the powers of the Church of England and allowing each individual congregation to worship independent of oversight.\footnote{James Scott Wheeler, \textit{The Irish and British Wars, 1637 – 1654: Triumph Tragedy and Failure}, (London: Routledge, 2003), 149. This idea of independent congregations and ending the Church of England should not be mistaken for religious freedom. The Independents still fervently believed in Calvinist doctrine, but they wanted each congregation to have some independence over how to worship.} Because of the lack of republican or anti-monarchical ideology in these policies, no belief precluded the Independents from reaching an agreement with the king. Yet many of the Independents mistrusted Charles and as a result opposed his later attempts to manipulate the negotiations. Additionally as the major political representation for the Army, this faction often adopted a more hostile attitude towards the king. Though in 1646 the Independents like the vast majority of Englishmen desired a restored
monarchy, the majority of them favored preventing Charles and any future kings from holding an excessive amount of power.

As the principal opposition to the Independents, the Presbyterians unsurprisingly differed in their political and religious beliefs. The Presbyterians expressed great interest in compromising with Charles as many of its members previously had belonged to a parliamentary pro-peace faction during the Civil War. This predisposition to compromising with the king informed much of their actions following the royalist defeat. The Presbyterians desired stability and a return to the order of pre-war England. Sir John Holland, a prominent MP of the Presbyterians, argued in late 1647 that a return to the Stuart monarchy could prove beneficial to the kingdom. “[Charles I] was a prince under whose government we may yet be happy.” Notably Holland referred to Charles as occupying a space over the populace, suggesting his faith that a reversion to pre-war England would profit everyone. Yet despite their nominal support for the king, the Presbyterians greatly differed with Charles on matters of religion. In addition to their desire for stability, this faction had united around the shared hope of seeing the Church of England adopt Presbyterianism as its official doctrine. This desire would cause difficulties for reaching an agreement with the king given his previous opposition to the doctrine.

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45 Underdown, *Pride’s Purge*, 59 – 60. None of the peace party members officially were royalists. However most of them wished for religious reform but a maintenance of the current political system.
46 Sir John Holland “1647 Speech to Parliament” in Underdown, *Pride’s Purge*, 60. John Holland was a Presbyterian MP in the House of Commons. He later was ousted from Parliament during Pride’s Purge but returned to his seat in 1661 following the Stuart Restoration.
47 Wheeler, *The Irish and British Wars, 1637 – 1654*, 148 – 149. The Presbyterians particularly wanted a reduction in the importance of Episcopal Bishops and a removal of the Book of Common Prayer, while allowing the Scottish Kirk to take on a role of greater importance in English religious affairs.
48 Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 130 – 132. Many of Charles’s reforms implemented by the Archbishop of Canterbury William Laud were specifically intended to reduce Presbyterianism. This also helped start the civil war in the first place.
Yet simultaneously, it would promote a close relationship between the Scots and the Presbyterian faction because of a shared religious belief. The Presbyterians favored allowing Charles to retain much of his old authority, provided that he accepted a Presbyterian church. Both factions developed a vision of what post-war England would look like, but these hopes for the kingdom’s future could not both occur. If one of these factions achieved their political goals, then it would necessarily require the defeat of their rival. Thus when the English Civil War ended, a new political battle between the Independents and the Presbyterians had begun.

In the first years of the Revolution, France did not experience quite the same level of factionalism as the English Parliament. By late 1791 most Assembly deputies belonged to one of several major factions such as the Feuillants, Girondins, and the Jacobins. However in 1789, the revolutionaries barely had established a new government.  

Thus unlike the English Parliament with its years of political alliances and rivalries, Assembly deputies lacked the necessary political history to have aligned themselves with a political faction immediately following the formation of the French government. Still within only a few years, factionalism occurred within the French legislature at a far greater and more deadly rate than in England.

The royalist sympathizing faction known as the Monarchiens established itself as one of the earliest cases of an influential political group in September 1789. The Monarchiens emerged as an influential faction during the initial writing of the French Constitution. They primarily concerned themselves with ensuring that the king would

49 Doyle, The Oxford History of the French Revolution, 118.
hold significant power and influence over the Assembly even under this new
government. The Monarchiens proposed that Louis would wield veto powers over the
Assembly, which would allow the king to dismiss any proposal passed by the
legislature.\textsuperscript{51} They likely hoped that this absolute veto would halt most radical
changes from occurring in France, while also continuing to provide the king with a
respectful level of power.\textsuperscript{52} Despite some early political successes for the
Monarchiens, the majority of the Assembly disliked their proposal to give the king an
absolute veto power. One Parisian radical described the possibility of Louis receiving
such control over the legislature as a catastrophe. “If the king gets this Veto, what is
the use of the National Assembly? We are slaves, all is done.”\textsuperscript{53} This man clearly
feared that the king’s acquisition of veto powers would ruin the Revolution. Though
such an opinion might appear somewhat extreme, this common dread of a possible
regression to the old regime significantly impacted how the Assembly interacted with
Louis. Due to a lack of political support, the Monarchiens never would call for a vote
on the issue of the absolute veto.\textsuperscript{54} After this failure in the legislature, the
Monarchiens lost much of their influence in the coming year. Following the first
successes of the Revolution, the Assembly would not tolerate any royalist agenda.
Nevertheless in 1789, very few deputies ever expressed republican or anti-
monarchical sentiment. Indeed on September 15, 1789, the Assembly granted

\textsuperscript{51} Doyle, \textit{The Oxford History of the French Revolution}, 119.
\textsuperscript{52} Price, \textit{The Road From Versailles}, 103.
\textsuperscript{54} John Abbott, \textit{The French Revolution of 1789 As Viewed in the Light of Republican Institutions},
suspensive veto powers to the king by a vote of 673 – 352.55 A sizable majority of deputies still wanted to maintain a non-impotent monarchy in the newly established French government.

Most of the deputies would not identify as royalist, however they still opposed the idea of a non-monarchical France. The radical Marquis de Sillery accurately described this viewpoint to the king during an Assembly meeting. “The French, Sire, worship their kings, but they never want to have to fear them.”56 At the beginning of the Revolution, even radical deputies like Sillery desired for Louis and his successors to occupy a place as kings of post-revolutionary France. Yet the marquis also warned Louis about taking any action that might cause his subjects to fear him. Sillery left an unstated threat in this speech, which hinted at reprisals should the king act in a tyrannical manner. Evidently some radicals considered the possibility of retaliating against the king should the situation demand it as early as 1789. Though no prominent figures voiced support for committing regicide at this point in time, many deputies still mistrusted their king.

The Jacobin Club also emerged as one of the first political factions in revolutionary France. When the club first formed in January 1790, the political party had not yet embraced its famous extremist ideology.57 Though the club emerged as the radical party within the Assembly, it covered a large spectrum of political

55 Doyle, The Oxford History of the French Revolution, 119. The suspensive veto granted the king the power to suspend the Assembly’s discussion of a particular issue for a matter of days. Though it could not halt change, when wielded effectively the king could stall the assembly.
56 Marquis de Sillery “July 1789 speech to the Assembly” in Padover, The Life and Death of Louis XVI, 181. Charles-Alexis Brülart was the Marquis de Sillery and a noble representative to the Estates General. He later served on both the National Assembly and the National Convention before being executed in October 1793 as a victim of the Terror.
57 Doyle, The Oxford History of the French Revolution, 142. The Jacobin Club was originally known as the Revolution when it met in Versailles. Following the Assembly’s move to Paris, the club based itself in a Jacobin Church. The church would give the club its more commonly used name.
perspectives within its ranks. The Jacobin deputies particularly focused on advocating for and passing major reforms in the Assembly. Though they would not have described themselves as royalists, neither did the early Jacobins display any major opposition to the king. Due in part to the club’s rather broad range in political ideology, it quickly grew into one of the largest political clubs in France. By November 1790, more than 200 Assembly deputies considered themselves affiliated with the Jacobin Club. The club expressed no official position on the role of the monarchy in revolution France, which made sense given its politically diverse membership. In 1790 the most specific ideology Jacobins espoused appeared in the official club rules. “The Society will be dedicated to spreading truth, defending freedom and the constitution. Its methods will be as honorable as its objectives and openness will be the guarantor of all its initiatives.” These club guidelines articulated that the Jacobins existed to protect the freedom of the French people and their constitution. The club’s wide political spectrum likely necessitated this vague description of their ideology. Attempting to not discriminate against their supporters, the club lacked a clear political stance on most issues, such as the future of the monarchy.

Mostly the major political factions of the 1646 Parliament and the 1789 Assembly neither fervently supported nor opposed their monarchs. Though the

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59 Price, *The Road From Versailles*, 153 – 154. One early tactic the Jacobins used to increase their power was to form affiliate clubs throughout the French provinces and maintained communications between these clubs through issuing mass petitions. In many ways it was one of the first formal political parties in history.
60 Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, 142. Of these 200 deputies, only some would continue their association with the Jacobins after the political fallout from the king’s flight.
Presbyterians and the Monarchiens expressed more of an interest in working with the king than the Independents and the Jacobins, none of these groups had determined fully their opinion on the future of the monarchy. When Charles first negotiated the terms of his surrender with Parliament and Louis discussed with the Assembly his role in the French government, the monarchs potentially could have persuaded these factions to their side. Though royalists and republicans voiced their opinions on the kings without hesitation, the majority of factions had yet to pick a side.

**Anti-Monarchism in the Legislatures**

Most political theorists of this period agreed that any good form of government would include a monarchy. Yet some small groups of legislative representatives opposed this commonly accepted wisdom, instead preferring the idea of a republican government. The political climates of post-Civil War England and early revolutionary France often prevented individuals from voicing these anti-monarchical beliefs. Despite the stigma against their political philosophy, radical anti-monarchists appeared in the legislatures of both countries.

Republicans certainly existed within both England and Parliament, although most radicals knew better than to espouse such views openly. Prior to the beginning of the English Civil War, both the legislature and the crown regarded an expression of republican ideology as tantamount to treason. Parliament maintained this view even

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63 Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 38. During the reign of King James I every church read an official statement about the king and treason. “Let us mark well and remember that the high power and authority of kings are the ordinances not of men but of God. We may not resist, nor in any wise hurt, an anointed king.”
during the Civil War, despite their ongoing military conflict against the king. Parliament enforced this viewpoint in 1643, when the House of Commons removed radical MP Henry Marten from Parliament and imprisoned him in the Tower of London for his expression of republican sentiment.\(^{64}\) During a parliamentary session, Marten devalued the lives of the royal family in a speech. “‘Better that one family [Charles’s] be destroyed than many.’”\(^{65}\) For Marten, if the death of Charles limited the number of English casualties, then killing the king made sense. Most modern audiences likely would not consider this observation extremely radical or violent, as he had not expressed an actual desire to kill the king. Yet for the majority of Parliament, Marten committed treason by cheapening Charles’s in his speech. This radical MP later espoused even more extreme rhetoric about the king, which suggested that he deliberately might have refrained from expressing the full extent of his radicalism. Indeed he privately championed killing Charles. “[I want to] send the king to heaven.”\(^{66}\) Though Marten clearly relished the idea of a regicide, even he knew better than to publicly admit such feelings. Yet following the conclusion of the Civil War, English authorities released Marten from the Tower of London and allowed him to rejoin the House of Commons. Admittedly, a majority of Parliament still viewed him as a dangerous radical and a possible atheist, to the extent that some of his writings were censored by Parliament.\(^{67}\) Yet his very release suggested the

\(^{64}\) Underdown, *Pride’s Purge*, 60 – 61. Henry Marten was a republican lawyer and prominent MP. He later served as one of the court commissioners in Charles’s trial and may have convinced others to support Charles’s execution. He was far less politically active during the era of the English Commonwealth due to his dislike for Cromwell. Following the Stuart Restoration he was exiled but not executed for his part in the regicide.


\(^{66}\) Ibid, 19.

\(^{67}\) Barber, *Regicide and Republicanism*, 20.
beginning of Parliament’s tolerance for his republican ideology. Though most of Parliament remained fervently opposed to republican thought, Marten’s readmission to the House of Commons indicated the beginnings of a shift in opinion.

Ironically for a state famous for its revolutionary radicalism, France’s National Assembly lacked any active republican deputies immediately following its formation. Though some of the more liberal representatives likely sympathized with such ideology, no individual openly voiced republican thought like Marten had in Parliament. Even the famous Jacobin leader, Maximilian Robespierre, refuted any attempt to classify him as a republican during the first year of the Revolution. Whether Robespierre lied about his political beliefs or had not adopted these views yet remains uncertain. However his reluctance to identify as a republican showcased how even the political environment of early revolutionary France rejected anti-monarchical thought. Nevertheless some prominent representatives quietly may have sympathized with republican views. During the vote on the king’s veto, only a few deputies including Abbé Sieyès and Robespierre had opposed providing the king with any particular power over the legislature. Though these deputies may not have expressed republican ideology, they clearly disliked offering Louis more control. Additionally, despite Robespierre’s protestations to the contrary, many prominent figures such as the British ambassador, W.A. Miles, still viewed him and others

68 Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, 150. Maximilian Robespierre was a prominent deputy of both the Assembly and the Convention. He emerged as a leader of the Jacobins and was one of the major advocates for Louis’s death. Afterwards he became the leader of the Committee of Public Safety and oversaw much of the Terror before finally succumbing to the guillotine himself in July 1794.

69 Ibid, 120. Abbé Joseph Emmanuel Sieyès was a prominent French clergyman, politician, and political theorist. He wrote the famous pamphlet “What is the Third Estate?” and voted for Louis’s execution. He survived the Terror and later helped Napoleon seize power in 1799.
deputies as republican. Miles reported as much about Robespierre and others in an April 1791 letter to his superiors in England. “There is a set of men, whose object is the total annihilation of monarchy.” Miles evoked absolute certainty in this claim within his writing. Though Robespierre and others might have denied such allegations, their later actions indicated that republican ideology might have festered quietly within France. Though like in England most deputies opposed anti-monarchism, it certainly had existed in France as an ideology for quite some time.

**The New Power Dynamic**

The events of the English Civil War and the French Revolution drastically affected the traditional power structures of England and France. Both Charles and Louis found themselves in the unfamiliar position of political weakness. Having both grown accustomed to reigning as extremely powerful sovereigns, neither of the kings particularly enjoyed their newfound political frailty. Meanwhile both Parliament and the Assembly had acquired substantial authority over their governments due to the legislatures’ victories in the Civil War and the Revolution respectively. Neither of the legislatures displayed any desire to surrender their newly gained power. Thus when the monarchs negotiated with Parliament and the Assembly, all of the involved political actors struggled to find an agreeable compromise. While Charles and Louis preferred a return to the traditional monarchy, most of the legislative representatives favored their newfound positions of authority. This disagreement over political power made reaching an agreeable solution that much more difficult for the kings and the

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legislatures.

Following the decisive victory of the New Model Army in June 1645, the Long Parliament recognized the approaching end of the war. However the coming end to hostilities created large-scale turmoil amongst an allied coalition, which based itself solely on its opposition to the king. With Charles nearly defeated, old conflicts about religion and power soon emerged between these former allies. Though all the parliamentary factions desired some degree of political and religious reform, they disagreed about the nature of such changes. The Presbyterians and their Scottish allies pictured the implementation of a kingdom wide Presbyterian Church. They additionally wanted to weaken significantly the existing power of the church bishops. Meanwhile the Independents preferred a less uniformed church, which would grant some autonomy to each of the congregations to worship in their own way. The incompatible nature of these two separate visions of English religion enhanced the already existing rivalry between the two factions. These political disagreements quickly turned into a rivalry between the two groups. Antagonistic encounters between these factions, such as when Presbyterians labeled the Independents as a radical heresy similar to groups like the Baptists, quickly became the norm. After the conclusion of the war in 1645, these discussions on religion dominated much of Parliament’s time in 1646. The increase in rivalries and factionalism within Parliament ensured that Charles would conduct negotiations with

73 Ibid, 168.
74 Ibid, 168. The Independents did not support religious toleration for other Christian doctrines. They simply wanted a mostly Presbyterian Church, which lacked any strong central authority.
75 Underdown, *Pride’s Purge*, 15 – 16. Though some Episcopalians (supporters of the current religious system in England) still existed and only wanted moderate religious reform, they lacked the necessary support in Parliament to put such desires into action.
a disjointed legislature. Thus the chaotic nature of Parliament might have allowed Charles to achieve with speeches and treaties, what he had failed to accomplish with armies and weapons.

Since nearly the moment of his military defeat at Naseby on June 14, 1645, Charles had worked for a possible political victory by negotiating with one of the various factions involved in the Civil War. Such a desire likely motivated him to surrender himself to the Scottish forces camped outside of Newark on May 5, 1646. In an April 6 letter to his wife, Queen Henrietta Maria, Charles admitted his intention to pit the Scottish forces against the parliamentary military. “I believe, (if I miscarry by the way,) will be a means to make the English rebells and the Scots irreconcilable enemies.” Even before surrendering himself to the Scots, the king intended to continue fighting the war albeit with different weapons. Military defeat simply prompted a change in strategy rather than a capitulation. Contrary to Charles’s hopes, the Scots only would support his restoration to the throne in return for England adopting Presbyterianism as its official religious doctrine. After the king rejected this proposal, the Scots treated him more like a prisoner than an honored guest.

Eventually they turned him over to English military forces on February 3, 1647 as part of an agreement between the Scots and the English. Charles’s stubborn refusals cost him a potential chance to reclaim his throne. If the king had adopted Presbyterianism as a doctrine, as his wife and many of his advisors urged him to do,

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77 Ashley, The Battle of Naseby, 110 – 111.
78 Charles I in 1646: Letters of King Charles the First to Queen Henrietta Maria, ed. John Bruce, (London: J.H. Nichols and Sons, 1856), 32.
79 Kishlansky, A Monarchy Transformed, 169 – 170. Ironically Charles would later agree to such a deal in late 1647 in return for the support of the Scottish military.
80 Ashley, The Battle of Naseby, 114 – 115. The Scots agreed to turn Charles over to the English and withdraw from English territory in return for a payment of £400,000.
then both the Scots and the English Presbyterians might have supported his immediate restoration to the throne. However Charles’s obstinacy prevented this possible return to power from occurring.

Charles believed he had reasons for this intractability. As the king, he detested the idea of capitulating on policies he felt strongly about such as religion. Furthermore he considered any form of submission to Parliament as both non-kingly and unnecessary for his restoration to the throne. In a letter he wrote on March 26, 1646, Charles discussed his attitude about surrendering with his close supporter, Lord George Digby. “I am endeavoring to get to London, so that conditions may be such as a gentlemen may own and that the rebels acknowledge me as king, being not without hope that I am able to draw either the Presbyterians or Independents to side with me, extirpating the one or the other, that I shall really be king again.” By agreeing to some of Parliament’s demands, Charles hoped to continue reigning as king with parliamentary support. However he notably stipulated that he would only agree to a settlement, which a gentleman would find suitable. Stating this caveat foreshadowed his later refusal to cooperate with the Scots. The king recognized the political turmoil present in England, especially between the Independents and the Presbyterians. However by confining himself to considering only the agreements amenable to a gentleman, Charles damaged his own negotiating ability.

Admittedly, Charles recognized that gentlemanly concessions might not persuade either faction to side with him. Without such political support from at least

81 Charles I “March 26, 1646 letter to the Lord Digby” in Ed. James Orchard Halliwell, *Letters to the King of England*, (London: Henry Colburn Publisher, 1848), 402 – 403. George Digby was a royalist MP and a close supporter of Charles I. Though he spent much of his time after the Civil War in exile, he remained a confident of the king. Eventually following the 1660 restoration, Digby returned to prominence in England.
one of the factions, the king might face dethronement or even execution. However he
confided in the same March 26 letter to Digby that he preferred such possible
punishment to debasing himself by submitting to a non-honorable agreement.

“However, I desire you to assure all my friends that if I cannot live as a king, I shall
die like a gentleman, without doing that which may make honest men blush for me.”82
As he suggested in this letter, Charles recognized the dangers he faced. However he
never would behave contrary to his status as a king regardless of any potential threat.
Charles preferred to rule or die in an honorable fashion. The king would reject any
other possibility. Just as he refused to flee England, this letter indicated that he never
had any intention of serving in a subordinate fashion to Parliament. To do so would
betray his definition of kingliness. Thus even as Charles negotiated with Parliament,
he already had concluded that he would either reign a king or die a martyr.

Circumstances in France clearly differed from England, due in large part to
their king’s different policies. Unlike the English king, Louis continuously displayed
a willingness to compromise. Indeed many of the early events of the French
Revolution suggested that Louis had made a wise decision. On July 17, 1789, Louis
arrived in Paris and accepted the placement of a national blue and red ribbon on his
hat from Paris Mayor Jean Sylvain Bailly to cheers from a crowd of 150,000 people.83
Due in part to Louis’s apparent acceptance of revolutionary symbolism, even radical
Parisians supported him at first. His acceptance of their desire for political change

82 Charles I “March 26, 1646 letter to the Lord Digby” in Ed. James Orchard Halliwell, Letters to the
King of England, 403
83 Doyle, The Oxford History of the French Revolution, 111 – 112. Bailly was a French astronomer,
who was selected first as a deputy of the Estates General and later became the first president of the
National Assembly. He also became the first mayor of Paris and occupied an important political role
during the early years of the Revolution. He retired from politics following the massacre at the Champ
de Mars on July 17, 1791. He later was executed during the Reign of Terror on November 12, 1793.
may have curbed temporarily whatever anger or resentment they felt towards the king. Important revolutionary figures even used the old monarchical argument of having a good king with bad advisors as a justification for their support of Louis. Bailly engaged in such behavior when discussing in his memoirs the oppressive tactics used by the French government at the beginning of the Revolution. “The ministers and military authority agents in positions are responsible for any enterprise that violate the rights of the nation and the decrees of the Assembly.”84 Such a sentiment excused bad situations as the fault of malicious advisors rather than an incompetent king or even a tyrant. Rather than blaming Louis for barring the Third Estate from meeting together or the bloodshed at the Bastille, Bailly and others portrayed both the king and the French people as victims of malicious political advisors.

Even with his initial popularity in revolutionary Paris, Louis still faced danger. When the king had traveled to Paris on July 17, 1789, both he and his wife feared that he might not return to Versailles.85 While the revolutionary leaders undeniably respected the king, they abandoned certain monarchical practices to remind the king of the new order in France. For instance, Bailly stood upright while introducing Louis rather than bowing as was traditional. The Mayor also reportedly gave such a message to Louis when handing him the keys to Paris during the ceremony. “Sire, I am bringing Your Majesty the keys of the good city of Paris; they are the same that were presented to Henry IV. He reconquered his people; here it is

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85 Padover, *The Life and Death of Louis XVI*, 181.
the people who have reconquered the king.” Bailly and many of the revolutionaries wanted Louis and his successors to reign as king. However they envisioned the monarch as subordinate to the interests of the French people. Unlike earlier absolute monarchs, Louis would answer to the will of the people in this new France. Many of the revolutionaries displayed other signs of disrespect when interacting with the king. Presumably such actions reminded the king of his reduction in status following the early events of the Revolution. Yet the disrespect afforded to him and the loss in both power and privileges could not have pleased the king. But with his kingdom erupting in violence Louis recalled the fates of past monarchs in similar situations, such as Charles I by reading a historical account of the English Civil War. Resolving to act differently than his English counterpart, Louis tolerated these disrespectful acts. Thus for a time, Louis chose to swallow his pride and accept the revolution out of fear for his own safety.

In addition to his desire for self-preservation, most sources indicated that Louis misunderstood the full ramifications of the French Revolution. The king viewed the Revolution as just another revolt akin to the peasant uprisings of the Middle Ages. In a letter to his brother, the Count of Artois, he described the revolutionaries as unruly children. “All Frenchmen are my children. I am the father of a big family entrusted to my care. Ingratitude and hatred are arming against me; but the eyes are merely clouded, the minds misled, the heads troubled by revolutionary

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86 Bailly “July 17, 1789 Speech to Paris Gathering” in Padover, *The Life and Death of Louis XVI*, 182. King Henry IV of France was notable for ending the French Wars of Religion (1562 – 1598) by issuing the 1592 Edict of Nantes and founding the French House of Bourbon. He was also the great-great-great-grandfather of Louis XVI. He was later assassinated in 1610.

Like most aristocrats of the time period, the king viewed major political reform with contempt. After he indulged the French people’s revolutionary fervor, Louis hoped that his subjects would grow tired of such games. His interpretation of the revolutionaries showcased his misunderstanding of the events in France. Though Louis initially reached an agreement with the revolutionaries, his ignorance about the Revolution would help lead to his undoing.

**The Opening Negotiations**

The English Civil War and the French Revolution likely could have ended by 1646 and 1790, respectively. By that point in both conflicts, the allied coalitions opposing the old regime had taken control of the kingdoms and coerced the monarchs into accepting a role within the new government. However, the power dynamic between the kings as a representative of the humbled old regime and the revolutionary leaders would prove problematic. Because of the recent conflict between the monarchs and the legislatures, the idea of a constitutional monarchy in either state ultimately failed. In both England and France, this failure occurred because of a breakdown in trust between the kings and the legislatures.

Charles’s stubborn temperament and unyielding policies actively prevented an acceptance of peace and compromise within England. Despite his defeat in the Civil War, Charles still planned to reassert full control over his kingdom. The king remarked in a November 14, 1646 letter to the Earl of Lannerick that he had not truly accepted the consequences of his military defeat. “Yet I cry you for mercy; for kings

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used to dispense, not to be dispensed with.” Such a lament explained the king’s continued refusal of Parliament’s demands. Charles asserted that the negotiations with Parliament caused him some measure of discomfort. As a monarch used to ruling without any oversight, he vehemently disliked the new power dynamic in England. Such emotions informed his reaction to the Newcastle Propositions, which Parliament presented to him on July 30, 1646. In an effort to prevent Charles from stalling, Parliament forbade him from corresponding with anyone other than them. Charles responded by rejecting the propositions, for reasons that he explained to his son, Prince Charles, in an August 26, 1646 letter.

Next to religion, the power of the sword is the truest judge and greatest support of sovereignty which is unknown to none. Wherefore, concerning this, I will only say that whomsoever will persuade you to part with it, does but in a civil way desire you to be no king; reward and punishment (which are the inseparable effects of regal power) necessarily depending upon it, and without which a king can neither be loved nor feared of his subjects.

In Charles’s mind, granting Parliament control over the military and the Church would remove all of his authority as monarch. Thus he felt that the Newcastle Propositions effectively demanded an unofficial abdication. Accepting these terms would allow him to serve as king in name only. He considered the idea of a puppet monarchy as both horrifying and contrary to the very definition of a king. However, despite his admitted disdain for the Propositions, he attempted to compromise with Parliament by supporting the temporary establishment of a Presbyterian Church of

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90 Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 169 – 170. This proposal included provisions requiring the establishment of a Presbyterian Church, Parliament’s continued control over the military over 20 years and the agreement that over 50 particular prominent royalist could not receive a pardon from the king.
England. By offering alternative terms, Charles displayed his interest in reaching an agreeable compromise with Parliament. Like most skilled politicians, he wanted control over the negotiations.

Reaching a lasting agreement with the king grew less likely as factionalism within Parliament dramatically increased. Though the original rivalry between the Independents and the Presbyterians occurred over matters of religion, their disagreements spread to other political issues such as the future of the English government, the king, and the military. These political disagreements caused the religiously motivated factions to coalesce into early versions of political parties.

While the Presbyterians maintained a numerical majority over the Independents in both Houses of Parliament, they lacked the necessary numbers to assert their will fully. Thus rather than reaching an agreement on negotiating with the king, Parliament debated endlessly about the Scottish military presence, the possible disbandment of the Army, and the future of religion in England. The prominent Presbyterian leader Denzil Holles wanted to find solutions to these problems before reaching an agreement with the king. Regrettably for his political vision, these plans only exacerbated Parliament’s factionalism. Within England, the political rivalries

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93 Edwards, *The Last Days of Charles I*, 54. His proposition would have allowed for the three year establishment of Presbyterianism as the official church of England. He also provided for harsher restrictions against Catholics. However he notably wanted a guarantee that his wife’s Catholicism would not be disrespected. He also expressed dissatisfaction about giving control of the military to Parliament.


95 Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 169 – 170. Denzil Holles was a prominent member of the House of Commons and one of the 5 MPs whom Charles attempted to impeach in 1642. Following the end of the war, Holles emerged as a leader of the Presbyterians and opposed the wishes of the New Model Army. Though he was one of the MPs targeted during Pride’s Purge, Holles fled to France to escape his enemies. He later returned to England during the Restoration and resumed a prominent political role until his death.
soon dominated parliamentary politics to such an extent that establishing a peace with
the king almost became a secondary concern.

The Independent-Presbyterian rivalry coalesced about the status of the
military. An important component of Holles’s plan required providing a solution to
the monetary costs of the Army.96 In response to this problem, Presbyterians such as
Holles suggested sending some Army regiments to another military campaign in
Ireland and disbanding the remaining regiments.97 Though the Army maintained an
apolitical status throughout the war, many of the more conservative Presbyterians
disliked both the culture and the costs of the soldiers.98 Due to these concerns, the
Presbyterians adopted an increasingly hostile stance against the Army throughout the
early months of 1647. One Presbyterian MP, William Strode, boasted about taking
action against the Army. “We will destroy them all.”99 Such a statement evoked the
large amount of distrust, which the Presbyterians felt towards the Army. On March
30, the House of Commons even labeled military opponents to the proposed
disbandment of the Army as enemies of the state.100 Though Parliament later
withdrew this petition, they had turned the Army into their enemies. Holles’s hopes of
stabilizing England before restoring Charles to the throne ultimately created conflict
rather than peace.

96 Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*. Due to its status as the first real standing army of England
many within Parliament were unsure what to do with it. The army also cost quite a large amount of
money and presented a potential source of turmoil.
97 Mark A. Kishlansky, *The Rise of the New Model Army*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
1983), 105 – 106. Catholic rebels in Ireland had caused significant disturbances, which demanded
action from the English.
98 Underdown, *Pride’s Purge*, 77.
99 Ibid, 79.
100 Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 172.
Meanwhile, the Independents developed a different plan from the Presbyterians regarding the religious future of England. The Independents displayed a similar interest in conducting negotiations with the king, so that Charles would support their policies.101 Though Charles held almost no power as a captive, his influence and support potentially could make any one of the factions the dominant power within the kingdom. As a result, both the Independents and the Presbyterians desired Charles’s endorsement. The Presbyterian alienation of the Army helped the Independents’ goals. Whereas this faction previously had developed a close link with the military, the attempted disbandment turned the Army into the Independents’ most valuable ally. Independent MP Henry Ireton introduced a series of pro-military petitions to the Army, which successfully portrayed his faction as the military true friends.102 The influence of the Independents, many of whom served as high-ranking officers in the military, transformed the non-partisan Army into a political weapon. The Army Council stated as much in their Representation from the Army, which they released on June 14, 1647. “We were not a mere mercenary army, hired to serve any arbitrary power of a state, but called forth and conjured by the several declarations of Parliament to the defence of our own and the people’s just rights and liberties.”103 This document defended the Army’s existence as essential to both the physical and political protection of the English people. Furthermore it rejected the right of the Presbyterians to decommission their regiments. This act of defiance against the

101 Underdown, Pride’s Purge, 87.
102 Ashley, The Battle of Naseby, 118 – 119. Henry Ireton was a general in the New Model Army, a prominent leader of the Independents and Cromwell’s son in law. He played a major role in the purge of Parliament and helped oversee Charles’s trial and execution. He later died on a military campaign in Ireland in 1651.
103 “A Representation of the Army” (June 14, 1647) in Ed. A.S.P. Woodhouse, Puritanism and Liberty: Being the Army Debates (1647 – 1649) from the Clarke Manuscripts with Supplementary Documents, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), 404.
Presbyterian majority in Parliament, which began on June 1, 1647, placed large portions of the Army in a state of mutiny.

The Presbyterians characterized these rogue regiments as mutineers and enemies of the state. Despite this unflattering characterization, these regiments retained a monopoly on military power in England. Therefore when two troops of cavalry led by Cornet George Joyce arrived at Holdenby House to take the king into custody on June 3, 1647, the Presbyterians lacked the strength to oppose them. Upon meeting with Charles, Joyce justified his illegal kidnapping of the king. “I am sent by the Authority of the Army, to prevent the design of their enemies, who seek to involve the Kingdom a second time in blood.” According to Joyce, orders from the senior officers of the Army, who were also called the Grandees, legitimized his seizure of the king. Even though Parliament labeled them as state enemies, the Grandees considered commanding Charles’s capture well within their rights. Joyce also rationalized his abduction of the king as necessary to defeat their enemies, the Presbyterians. With Charles in military custody, the Independent-Army alliance hoped to reach an agreement favorable to their interests. This conflict between the factions over access to Charles showcased the continued importance of the king in England. Even after their victory over the royalists in the Civil War, both of the factions still sought the king’s support for their reforms. While Charles had lost much of his power, his kingly office retained a considerable level of influence.

104 Kishlansky, A Monarchy Transformed, 173. Other military endeavors during the mutiny included the seizure of a treasure caravan and the official release of several military petitions justifying their actions.
With Charles safely in custody, the Independents turned its attention to their Presbyterian rivals in Parliament. Several disbanded regiments soon joined with the mutinying soldiers to bolster their ranks throughout the summer of 1647. When they demanded the immediate impeachment of Holles and ten of his closest supporters on June 16, 1647, the Presbyterians lacked the necessary strength to reject such demands. The New Model Army had demonstrated their martial dominance during the Civil War. Thus when thousands of Army soldiers marched into London on August 3, they encountered no military opposition. The eleven MPs chose to flee Parliament rather than face impeachment. With their departure, Parliament ordered an end to the Army’s disbandment. Despite the evident success of this operation, members of the Grandees opposed any idea of a military coup. Oliver Cromwell said as much to his more radical allies. “That which you have as force I look upon it as nothing. I do not know what force is to be used except we cannot get what is good for the kingdom without force.” Cromwell evidently preferred only to use a military coup only as a last resort. Despite the apparent ease of forcibly coercing Parliament into doing the bidding of the Independents, he and several of his contemporaries disliked employing such tactics. By mid 1647 circumstances had not changed sufficiently for the Grandees to contemplate seizing power by force. The

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107 Ibid, 174. Prior to the military’s march into London, a mob had seized control of the Parliament on July 26 and forced them to vote on their interests. However when the Army arrived, the mob quickly dispersed.
109 Arthur Paterson, *Oliver Cromwell: His Life and Character*, (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1899), 169. Oliver Cromwell was a prominent general of the New Model Army and a leading member of the Independent faction. He served as a member of the Rump Parliament and was one of the signers of Charles’s death warrant. In 1653 he became Lord Protector of England, a position which he occupied until his death.
Independents would continue abiding by parliamentary law until they deemed it necessary to employ force and thereby achieve their goals.

When reaching an agreement with the French revolutionaries, Louis deliberately conceded to them several times as an intentional contrast to Charles. The king accepted the new French government forcing his kingdom through any large-scale military conflict. However Louis remained a product of the old regime. As a result he often displayed reluctance at or even completely opposed some of the Assembly’s reforms. For instance, Louis attempted to temper more radical proposals such as the Assembly’s August 11, 1789 abolition of feudal privileges with various amendments on September 18. The king also proposed slowing down the writing process on the Declaration of the Rights of Man. Though Louis justified his delaying tactics on both of these documents his repeated use of such tactics suggested the possibility of other motives. Given his admitted dislike of governmental change, the king likely wanted to counteract significant chances that the Assembly had proposed. Still Louis only offered a slight amount of resistance against any of these proposals. As a result when the Assembly passed the Declaration on August 26, 1789, Louis merely declined to support them. Despite Louis’s retention of the suspensive veto, he lacked the necessary political authority to block such reforms. Based on these events, a majority of the Assembly deputies ignored the king’s input. Following his submission to the Revolution, Louis had kept his throne but lost his power.

110 Price, *The Road From Versailles*, 103. Louis also pointed out that abolishing feudalism on land controlled by German princes like the Alsace region would create tension between the Germanic states and France.
111 Ibid, 103. He specifically stated that writing the declaration before the ratification of French constitution was unwise.
Even with the Assembly’s apparent disregard for Louis’s political opinions, they showed some respect for his position as monarch. Despite the many changes occurring in France, a king still received some esteem from his subjects. Even after the abolition of feudalism, Louis kept several specific privileges such as exclusive hunting rights. The Assembly deputies apparently believed that the monarch still deserved certain concessions, which reflected the widespread effect of monarchical ideology. These beliefs also displayed themselves in the August 11, 1789 document banning the feudal system within France. “The National Assembly shall present itself in a body before the King, in order to submit to him the decrees which have just been passed, to tender to him the tokens of its most respectful gratitude.”

This description of political procedure highlighted the role Louis played during the early years of the Revolution. Though the eighteenth article of this document required that the king receive the passed law in a respectful manner, it made no mention of Louis needing to approve the abolition of feudalism. Based on these dealings with Louis, the Assembly likely envisioned that the king would hold a mostly ceremonial position in the French government. Such a figurehead could represent the traditional aspects of the *ancien regime* and ensure continued recognition from the other European kingdoms, while allowing the legislature to oversee the daily running of France.

Louis might have suited such a position well, had he willingly embraced the revolutionaries’ changes. However following the success of the Revolution, Louis altered his life in only the slightest manner. Rather than trying to serve as the ceremonial King of the French and Restorer of French Liberty in Paris, Louis

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returned to live at his palace at Versailles. This decision might seem to have a relatively minor impact on the situation, however it helped spread a feeling of mistrust towards the king. Much of the French populace felt that if Louis truly supported the Assembly, then he should live in Paris at the heart of the Revolution. Instead he remained with his foreign-born and unpopular wife at the overly decadent palace of Versailles. Admittedly, the Assembly had given him tacit approval to stay in his palace. If the Assembly had wanted to keep him in Paris, they would have been able to do so when Louis came for the July 17 event. Indeed, Marie-Antoinette had feared they would and had begun making plans to flee if that should happen. Yet by choosing not to participate actively in the new government or reign in the nation’s capital, Louis suggested to many both within and outside of the legislature that he secretly opposed the revolutionary government.

Rumors quickly exacerbated this level of tension after Louis assembled a military presence at Versailles. The Parisian revolutionaries, who were usually considered the most radicalized group in France, responded quite poorly to the gossip about a budding royalist army. Upon summoning a new regiment of guards to Versailles on October 1, 1789, Louis welcomed them with a feast. While at this celebration, the king reportedly employed several variations of propaganda to gain both the sympathy and the loyalty of the French soldiers. According to various sources these attempts worked and during the banquet many of the guards shouted

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114 Doyle, Oxford History of the French Revolution, 119 – 120.
115 Padover, The Life and Death of Louis XVI, 183.
117 Price, The Road From Versailles, 104. The forms of propaganda included displaying Louis’s son, the dauphin, to the soldiers and also showing an opera about the captivity of King Richard I of England.
that, “We do not belong to the Nation! We only belong to our king!”¹¹⁸ Such a response from the soldiers indicated the possibility of a civil war between royalists and revolutionaries. If Louis continued recruiting soldiers with such mentalities, then the occurrence of a military conflict inside France became much more likely. Though pursuing a military response to the Revolution contrasted with Louis’s previous policy of acquiescence, perhaps the Assembly’s radical policies and disrespectful treatment of him motivated the king to contemplate more drastic actions. Alternatively he may have established regiments of loyal bodyguards merely for defensive purposes. Despite having worked with the Assembly in forming a new nation, this event suggested that Louis retained a healthy mistrust for the architects of revolutionary France.

An account of the regiment’s banquet soon found its way into the radical press, thereby fueling the leftist dislike for the monarchy.¹¹⁹ Many radicals viewed Louis’s continued presence at Versailles away from scrutiny as a potential threat. His actions soon spread rumors that the king and his family planned on leaving Versailles to raise a royalist army either in France or abroad to take back the nation.¹²⁰ Furthermore, many of the more radical Parisians felt that the inaction of the Assembly had permitted the king to begin plotting against France. A combination of this fear of conflict, as well as hunger, anger and resentment against noble privilege helped spawn a city riot on October 5, 1789. The riot famously consisted of several thousand women driven by hunger.¹²¹ The march eventually reached the Parisian city

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¹¹⁸ Price, *The Road From Versailles* 104.
administration at the Hotel de Ville, where several thousand soldiers of the National Guard and their commander, the Marquis de Lafayette confronted the marchers. However upon interacting with the mob, many of the soldiers empathized with and supported their goals. With both the mob and the National Guard calling for a march on Versailles, Lafayette and the Parisian government found themselves bereft of many options. Members of the military bolstered mob remarked that Lafayette answered to them in this matter. “It is not for Lafayette to command the people, it is for the people to command Lafayette.” The rioters definitively had asserted their intention to confront Louis at Versailles regardless of Lafayette’s choices. In an attempt to place some measure of control over this chaotic mob, the Parisian government directed Lafayette to accompany the marchers to Versailles. They hoped that Lafayette’s presence might inhibit any radical occurrence from happening.

With this decision, the Assembly began its practice of acquiescing to Parisian radicals. Many deputies within the Assembly viewed the marchers as a potential tool, which they could use to coerce the king into ending his objections to the Declarations of the Rights of Man. So long as Louis was officially recognized as the “defender of French liberty,” many people wanted him to stay in Paris. This would allow him to ostensibly continue protecting the rights of French citizens, while also keeping the king under closer scrutiny. The Assembly had maintained nominal authority over the king, since his capitulation on June 27, 1789. However given his apparent efforts to

122 Price, The Road From Versailles, 105. In addition to his service in the American Revolutionary War, Lafayette also played a key role in the French Revolution. During the early years of the Revolution, Lafayette served as commander of the National Guard, which led him to be involved in both the October 5, 1789 march to Versailles and the July 17, 1791 massacre at the Champ de Mars. Lafayette was a prominent member of the Feuillants, who lost much of influence and power by the early months of 1792.
124 Kropotkin, The Great French Revolution, 156.
organize a royalist army, many of the deputys feared that he was planning a royalist uprising. Thus despite not initially supporting the march to Versailles, the Assembly quickly found that it could be used to their benefit.

Upon the arrival of the rioters at Versailles on October 5, 1789, Lafayette immediately went to speak with the king to suggest that he and his family accept an escort back to Paris.\(^{125}\) By speaking with the king first, Lafayette temporarily may have saved his life. The mob demonstrated its propensity for violence when a group of women attempted to murder Marie-Antoinette and killed two royalist bodyguards.\(^{126}\) Though none of the demonstrators attempted to attack Louis himself, he had begun to see the wisdom of Lafayette’s advice. Indeed if Lafayette had not accompanied the mob to Versailles and persuaded the king to return to Paris, the mob might have murdered the entire royal family. Though the Assembly lacked control over the radical Parisians, a governmental presence proved capable of curbing their rages. Out of fear for their lives, Louis and his family accepted a military escort to Paris and left Versailles for the final time. Upon his arrival at the Tuileries, Louis reportedly asked for Clarendon’s *History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England*.\(^ {127}\) After giving up much of his power and accepting a form of captivity, Louis had begun to realize just how similar he was to the executed English monarch. “I am menaced by the same fate. The only way to escape from it is to do the opposite of everything that unfortunate monarch did.”\(^ {128}\) Both before and after his forced march from Versailles, Louis intentionally acted in an opposite manner to Charles.

\(^{125}\) Price, *The Road From Versailles*, 106.
\(^{126}\) Ibid, 107.
\(^{127}\) Padover, *The Life and Death of Louis XVI*, 192.
\(^{128}\) Ibid, 192.
Rather than playing the Parisian radicals against the more conservative groups, Louis submitted to the demands of both radical mobs and the established legislature. The French king had determined that only continued acquiescence could save him from meeting the same fate as Charles.

**The Impetus Behind the Flight**

The results of the New Model Army’s mutiny in July 1647 and the October 5, 1789 march to Versailles firmly placed both kings under the control of the legislatures. Charles remained in military custody, while Louis returned with the National Guard to Paris. Their statuses as borderline prisoners left them with two options. Either they could submit to the demands of their captors or fight against them. Even while faced with these two choices, both kings witnessed a growing trend towards radicalism. Repulsed by the significant political and social changes, which were occurring in their kingdoms, each of the monarchs rejected any potential compromise with their legislatures. Instead both Charles and Louis sought foreign support to revert their kingdoms back to their traditional regimes.

Having reasserted their control over both Parliament and the king, the Grandees decided to introduce the Heads of Proposals to Charles on August 1, 1647.129 Though they evidently possessed the resources to seize power, the Independents preferred reaching an agreement with Charles. The document offered Charles terms, which arguably were more favorable to his interests than the

129 Ashley, *The Battle of Naseby*, 120 – 121.
Newcastle Propositions. Though the proposal would reduce Charles’s power in a significant manner, he could continue to reign as a king in both fact and name. For the Independents, the proposals addressed most of their major political concerns. Additionally, negotiating with the king allowed them to avoid dealing with the concerns of the conservative Presbyterians and the more radical Levellers. Cromwell and Ireton met with the king at Hampton Court to discuss the proposal when they met with him in early September. Charles stated in a September 9, 1647 letter to Parliament that he found the Army’s proposals preferable to the Newcastle Propositions. “They [the Proposals] much more conduce to the satisfaction of all interests, and may be a fitter foundation for a lasting peace, than the Propositions which are at this time tendered to him.” Charles evidently considered the Proposals a preferable solution to the concerns of both his kingdom and his own person. The king’s plan of letting increased factionalism provide him with a more favorable compromise appeared mostly successful. If Charles had accepted such an agreement, then his execution might never have taken place.

The path to compromise found itself waylaid with objections from multiple political factions. Though the Independents expanded their sway over the Army during the mutiny, the more radical Levellers accumulated a large amount of influence over the Army soldiers. They eventually garnered sufficient support to submit the Agreement of the People to the Army council on October 28, 1647. The

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manifesto called for parliamentary supremacy, significant election reform, and a reduction in political authority over the church. The Levellers notably omitted any mention of the king in this petition, even when discussing their envisioned hierarchical structure for England. “That the power of this [Parliament] and all future representatives of this Nation, is inferior only to theirs who choose them.” The Agreement’s exclusion of describing the king as a superior to Parliament suggested that the Levellers might support republican ideology. Other Leveller statements, which heavily criticized the Grandees for negotiating with the king, apparently confirmed their biases. Such anti-monarchical sentiment quickly spread throughout the lower ranked soldiers of the Army. The Independents addressed these concerns at the Putney Debates, which took place from October 28 to November 11, 1647. If the Independents failed to reach a consensus within the Army ranks, then they risked losing their most valuable political weapon. During the debate several of the Levellers advocated an anti-monarchical ideology, with one civilian advisor to the Army, John Wildman, offering a particularly harsh indictment of Charles. “There may be an agreement between the King [and the Parliament] by propositions, with a power to hinder the making of any laws that are good, and the tendering of any good [laws].” Wildman’s description of the king as contrary to all good laws displayed the Leveller’s disdain for the king. Having fought against him during the Civil War,

132 Kishlansky, A Monarchy Transformed, 176.
134 Underdown, Pride’s Purge, 84 – 85.
135 Ashley, The Battle of Naseby, 124.
136 Woodhouse, Puritanism and Liberty, 24 – 25. Wildman became a somewhat prominent officer during the English Civil War. Following its conclusion in 1646, he became a civilian advisor to the Levellers. He was later arrested in early 1648 as a suppression tactic against the Levellers. He later was released and remained a prominent agitator under the Commonwealth. He was later imprisoned following the Restoration but released by the time of the Glorious Revolution and later died in 1693.
many soldiers still viewed Charles as their enemy. These commonly held beliefs made negotiating with the king that much more difficult.

This extreme Leveller rhetoric demanded a response from the Independents. During the Putney Debates, the Grandees asserted their desire to stabilize a shattered realm without embracing any form of radicalism. Ireton clung to this position of moderate reform throughout the debate. “I do not seek, or would not seek, nor will join with them that do seek, the destruction either of Parliament or King. Neither will I consent with those, or concur with them, who will not attempt all the ways that are possible to preserve both, and to make good use, and the best use that can be, of both for the kingdom.”137 Ireton steadfastly opposed any radical republican sentiment, likely based on his belief that Charles would agree to the Army’s Proposal. Ultimately, the Independents successfully convinced the majority of the Army council to oppose the proposed reforms of the Levellers. The officers quelled further discussions of Leveller led mutiny through both persuasion and brute force.138 Though Leveller sentiment undoubtedly continued to exist after the Putney Debates, it had decreased in prominence. After successfully addressing the potential military insurrection, the Grandees finally returned their attention towards the king.

Charles may have regarded the Heads of the Proposal as an agreeable compromise, until the feud between the Independents and the Levellers reached its zenith. Upon hearing about the Levellers’ distaste for the monarchy, Charles presumably grew more distrustful of the entire Army. Rumors about a Leveller plot to assassinate the king also contributed to Charles’s growing unease about working with

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the Independents.\textsuperscript{139} The Scots took advantage of Charles’s suspicions by offering him military support in exchange for adopting Presbyterianism and increasing the Scottish presence in the governance of England.\textsuperscript{140} The Scots wanted to combat the potential Independent takeover so they proposed an alliance based on the same conditions they had made to Charles in 1646. However when news of the Scottish offer reached Parliament, both major parliamentary factions reacted poorly to news of Charles’s manipulations. They responded by issuing a less favorable proposal to the king known as the Four Bills on December 24, 1647.\textsuperscript{141} Two days later, Charles signed an agreement with the Scots in exchange for their military support. Upon realizing that the Scots represented his best political option, Charles adopted their policies as his own. Having spent the majority of 1646 and 1647 looking for the best agreement possible, the king embraced the renewal of war. All hope for peace in England disappeared when Charles signed an agreement with the Scots on December 26, 1647 and restarted the English Civil War.

Upon his return to Paris on October 5, 1789, Louis ceased living as a free king and became a kingly prisoner. Though he and his family lived in great comfort within the Tuileries, soldiers of the National Guard carefully watched every aspect of their lives. Following his forced relocation to the seat of government, Louis continued to acquiesce to most of the Assembly’s demands.\textsuperscript{142} However, Louis considered all of his public support for such revolutionary matters to have been enacted while under

\textsuperscript{139} Kishlansky, \textit{A Monachy Transformed}, 175 – 176.
\textsuperscript{140} Wheeler, \textit{The Irish and British Wars}, 194 – 195.
\textsuperscript{141} Kishlansky, \textit{A Monachy Transformed}, 177. The bills granted Parliament control over the military for twenty years and forced the king to accept church reform including the abolishment of the bishop system.
\textsuperscript{142} Price, \textit{The Road From Versailles}, 108.
threat of physical violence. Out of a desire to keep both himself and his family alive, the king chose not to oppose the passage of several proposals even though he strongly opposed them. One such case was seen in the matter of a civil reformation of the Catholic Church. When the Assembly mandated that all citizens regardless of religion would take part in the election of bishops, the religiously devout Louis voiced no opposition to the plan. He did not even take a stance regarding the Civil Constitution of December 1790, which required all religious officials to take an oath of loyalty to the French nation.\textsuperscript{143} Despite his compliance with all of these religious reforms of 1790, Louis privately acknowledged his hatred for such motions. He wrote in a letter to the Bishop of Clermont, “The unfortunate predicament in which I find myself through my acceptance of the decrees on the clergy; I have always regarded my sanction of them as acting under duress.”\textsuperscript{144} Thus despite Louis’s apparent acceptance of revolutionary policy in 1790, in reality he hated these radical changes that had altered his former kingdom.

Due to Louis’s apparent compliance with revolutionary values, the Assembly maintained a relatively non-antagonistic relationship with him throughout 1790. Though they often coerced him to support political decisions and appointments that he disagreed with, most deputies never when out of their way to mistreat him.\textsuperscript{145} Instead the Assembly primarily concerned itself with restructuring France and writing a constitution. When it came to Louis, the legislature simply wanted to ensure that he remained alive and confined to Paris. Guarded on a daily basis by members of the

\textsuperscript{143} Timothy Tackett, \textit{When the King Took Flight}, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 41 – 42. Pope Pius VI actually urged Louis not to approve this document, but the king ignored the advice of the pope.
\textsuperscript{144} Price, \textit{The Road From Versailles}, 113.
\textsuperscript{145} Tackett, \textit{When the King Took Flight}, 44.
National Guard, Louis was denied permission to leave Paris for an Easter trip in April 1791. The more radical Jacobin faction as well as the people of Paris had become increasingly antagonistic towards the royalists, with some extreme members even attempting to abduct the king in 1791. Even members of the National Guard had threatened his life upon occasion. Yet deputies of the Assembly, including luminaries like Lafayette and Bailly, refused to suppress these anti-monarchists as they were unwilling to risk angering the mob. In a letter to the Comte de Mercy-Argenteau Marie-Antoinette commented that, “The Guard which surrounds us is our greatest menace. Even our lives are not safe. We must given the impression of yielding, until we are able to act.” Based on his decision to flee Paris, Louis clearly agreed with his wife’s opinion. At a certain point, Louis decided that the Assembly lacked sufficient power and motivation to keep himself safe. Thus in an attempt to save himself, his family, and his kingdom from the evils of radicalism, Louis chose to flee from Paris.

Despite his intention to avoid antagonizing his people as Charles had done, many Parisians had come to regard Louis as a traitor to the nation. Due to this combination of threats of violence and watching France transform into something radical, Louis came to believe that flight from Paris was his only option. The escape plan relied on the support of royalist supporters and foreign officials. Louis’s exact intentions had his escape succeeded remain unclear. Yet the fact that an army of Austrian soldiers awaited his arrival, suggested that he intended to retake France by

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146 Padover, The Life and Death of Louis XVI, 212.
147 Tackett When the King Took Flight, 44 – 45.
148 Padover, The Life and Death of Louis XVI, 214 – 215. The Comte de Mercy-Argenteau was also the Austrian ambassador to France and a close associate of Marie Antoinette.
force. Indeed in a letter that Louis left before fleeing in June 1791, he alludes to a return to the old regime. “Frenchmen… distrust the suggestions and lies of your false friends, come back to your king, he will always be your father, your best friend.”

Thus it appears that after two years of capitulating to the revolution, Louis finally decided that cooperation was no longer achievable. The only remaining option for him was a civil war.

Analysis

Charles and Louis clearly took very different approaches on dealing with their respective insurrections and legislative bodies. Whereas Charles instigated a major civil war and acted obstinately even after his defeat, Louis continuously acquiesced to the Revolution after reacting to a relatively minor skirmish at the Bastilles. Indeed Louis deliberately acted in direct contrast to Charles’s behavior. Additionally, different motivations inspired the formation of political factions in England and France. Yet despite these differences, the interaction between king and legislature in both countries clearly resembled one another. Though both Parliament and the Assembly endeavored to incorporate their kings into the newly established political order, these attempts failed. After a lifetime of believing in absolutist monarchy, both Charles and Louis struggled with accepting their new positions within the government. While Louis undeniably expressed a greater willingness to accept these changes than Charles, even the French king grew to dislike the major political changes his kingdom had undergone. As the embodiment of the old regimes, both

149 Padover, *The Life and Death of Louis XVI*, 218.
kings labored to familiarize themselves with the new political order. After their repeated attempts to incorporate themselves into the post-conflict states had failed, the kings decided to stop trying. Instead they sought out military assistance to restore the familiar monarchical regimes of England and France.

The vast majority of legislative representatives in both states supported monarchy as a political concept. Even after the turmoil of the English Civil War and the French Revolution, both Parliament and the Assembly still wanted their government to include a role for the king. However, the legislatures envisioned a position of reduced power for the king. While the monarchs would play an important part in these imagined states, they would possess less authority than they had in the old regimes. The legislatures’ plan to weaken the monarchy’s control created difficulties during the negotiations with Charles and Louis. Nevertheless, both Parliament and the Assembly might have reached an agreement with the kings, if not for the increased condition of factionalism occurring in states. The major shifts in power following the Civil War and the Revolution allowed for several heated political rivalries to occur in both England and France. The hostilities between the factions produced an increasingly radicalized atmosphere, which directly threatened both Charles and Louis. Due to their fears of radicalism and a general discomfort with the new regime, both monarchs chose to depart from negotiations with the legislature and regain their throne in a different way. This shared decision of Charles and Louis produced a common mistrust towards the monarch, which would serve as the impetus behind the eventual regicides.
Chapter 2: A Radicalization of Legislatures

Introduction

Even after the collapse of negotiations between the kings and their legislatures, both monarchs nominally retained their thrones. Despite the negative reaction towards the attempted flights of Charles and Louis from a variety of different factions, many of the moderate members of both legislatures still advocated for the continuation of the monarchy. In both England and France, the Presbyterians and the Feuillants nearly reached a lasting agreement with their king, which would restore the monarchy to the respective kingdoms. Only the radical seizure of power in response to this prevented a reversion to the traditional monarchical rule in England and France. In Chapter 2, I examined how both the moderates and the radicals reacted towards the kings’ flights. I further investigated how certain events motivated both the Independents and the Jacobins to seize control of the legislatures. This radical victory would provide them with sufficient power to begin the process of regicide.

The Flights and Their Aftermath

The flight of King Charles I from his captivity at Hampton Court Palace on November 11, 1647 and the subsequent reigniting of the English Civil War temporarily stalled any hope of compromise between the king and Parliament.151 Having escaped from military custody and received the promised support of the Scottish military, Charles presumably believed that he no longer needed to come to an agreement with Parliament. The king expressed such an optimistic perspective in a

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November 19, 1647 letter to the Earl of Lannerick. “But for the end of it, a personal treaty, I hope all reasonable men on all sides will concur with me, as I expect your Scots commissioners should do.” The king believed that military aid from the Scots guaranteed the signing of a lasting treaty, which he would personally like. Through a decisive use of military force, the kingdom would return to its old ways of peace and stability. In Charles’s mind if reaching this land of harmony required first another outbreak of violence then he considered it well worth the sacrifice.

Louis exhibited a similar willingness to embroil his kingdom in an internal conflict. After he fled from Paris on June 21, 1791, a troop of Austrian soldiers awaited his arrival at the border of France. Though Louis never reached these soldiers, he likely intended to use them to regain his throne. The king expressed this more aggressive policy in a letter he left in Paris, which explained his reasons for his escape. “In view of all these reasons and the impossibility for the King, from the position in which he is placed, effecting the good and preventing the evil which is perpetrated, is it astonishing that the King has sought to recover his liberty and to put himself in safety?” Here Louis stated that a desire to regain both his safety and liberty motivated the flight from Paris. Still the king left ambiguity over what he specifically meant by liberty. Louis may have referred to his liberties as an individual, which he thought the revolutionaries had infringed upon. However as a supporter of the ancien régime, Louis considered his right to rule France as one of the liberties

152 Ed. Halliwell, *Letters of the Kings of England*, 447. Charles defined a personal treaty as an agreement that would stabilize the kingdom, meet the approval of all factions and not tarnish his conscience in any way.
inherent to his kingship. The king most likely left the explanation ambiguous in an effort to not anger the revolutionaries should his escape plan fail. Still the presence of the Austrian regiments at the border suggested that Louis intended to escape from France and then reclaim it by force.

Louis’s flight and probable attempt to retake control over France certainly resembled Charles’s reigniting the English Civil War. Yet despite this similarity, several other factors differentiated the decisions of Charles and Louis. Though many of the English would have considered the Scots to be untrustworthy if not outright foreigners, any conflict between them remained an internal matter. However, Louis looked to gain the support of foreign powers, such as his distant cousin King Charles IV of Spain and the Holy Roman Emperor Leopold II. This dissimilarity in where they searched for military support would later play a factor in how their accusers characterized the fallen kings. Whereas Parliament feared that Charles might rally an army against them for a third time, the National Convention instead viewed Louis as a possible puppet of the foreign powers. Both kings made similar choices, yet the differences also played an important role in the tale of these two regicides.

Unsurprisingly, neither the English nor the French legislatures reacted enthusiastically to the flight of their kings. In both cases the escapes prompted a more radical anti-monarchical reaction from legislative representatives, whom only months earlier had worked on reaching a compromise to restore the monarchies. This would

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155 Price, *The Road From Versailles*, 144 – 146. Leopold II was a member of the Hapsburg family and a brother of Marie-Antoinette. Though Leopold displayed a willingness to aid Louis, he also expressed some reluctance due to Louis’s previous submissions to the revolutionaries. Leopold viewed such gestures as signs of cowardice. While the Hapsburgs served as Holy Roman Emperor, they had become more personally identified with the Austrian identity. In this project I refer to the Holy Roman Empire and Austria interchangeably.
suggest that both Parliament and the Assembly felt somewhat betrayed by their
sovereigns. Upon hearing of Charles’s agreement with the Scots, Ireton quickly
embraced an anti-monarchist sentiment. He expressed these new views in a January 3,
1648 speech to Parliament. “The King has denied safety & protection to his people by
denying the four bills; that subjection to him was but in lieu of his protection to his
people; this being denied they might well deny any more subjection to him and settle
the kingdom without him.” For Ireton, Charles’s rejection of the parliamentary
proposals and his abandonment of the duties of kingship disqualified him from
holding the throne. This interpretation of the law allowed for an abandonment of the
monarchy due to the king’s egregious behavior. Though Ireton notably refrained from
discussing Charles’s fate, he essentially supported republicanism by calling for a
government settlement, which deliberately excluded the king. Such a statement
indicated that prominent Independents like Ireton had begun to consider a resolution
to the Civil War, which did not involve Charles remaining on the throne.

Until news of Charles’s alliance with the Scots had reached Parliament, only
radicals like Marten supported a strong anti-monarchical stance. Yet in light of the
king’s perceived betrayal, the Independents cooperated with the more radical MPs by
voting on January 3, 1648 for the Vote of No Addresses, which ordered the end of
communications between Parliament and the king. Though the Independents lacked
a majority in the House of Commons to pass this vote by themselves, a sufficient

156 Clement Walker, Relations and Observations: Historical and Politick, upon the Parliament
(London, 1648 – 1649), 70.
157 “House of Commons Journal Volume 5: January 3, 1648”, Journal of the House of Commons:
number of parliamentary moderates also voted against the king.\footnote{Barber, \textit{Regicide and Republicanism}, 55.} Evidently news of Charles’s alleged treachery turned a sizable number of the moderates against him. When Parliament refused to negotiate further with the king, by extension they rejected all proposals from the Scots as well. This breakdown in communication between the two sides ensured the outbreak of the second phase of the English Civil War, which would begin on March 23, 1648.\footnote{Ashley, \textit{The Battle of Naseby}, 130. On March 23, Colonel John Poyer, who served as governor of Pembrooke Castle in Wales, captured the nearby castle of Tenbry and declared for the king.} Following Charles’s refusal of the Four Bills on December 24, 1647, the Independents reacted so strongly that they worked with people, whom they had characterized previously as radical and even heretical.\footnote{Kishlansky, \textit{A Monarchy Transformed}, 177.} They risked the certain outbreak of war rather than accede to the demands of a king, whom they believed had betrayed his own people. The Independents’ dramatic shift in opinion on the monarchy served as a major turning point in the tale of the English regicide. Before the beginning of 1648, Cromwell, Ireton, and the rest of the Independents never would have contemplated the idea of ending the English monarchy. Yet following Charles’s escape, they began to consider that England might prosper without a king.

The French displayed a similarly dramatic response to Louis’s attempted escape. Immediately upon hearing of the flight in the morning of June 21, 1789, Paris erupted into a state of violence and confusion.\footnote{Price, \textit{The Road From Versailles}, 177. Crowds gathered outside the king’s residence at the Tuileries and a mob almost murdered Lafayette because they suspected his complicity in the escape.} Upon hearing of the flight, Lafayette ordered that the National Guard pursue the royal family without consulting the Assembly while also publicly claiming that enemies of the Revolution had abducted
Due to the turmoil in both Paris and the Assembly, Lafayette presumably wanted to avoid exacerbating the tenuous situation. Just like during the march to Versailles on October 5, 1789, Lafayette attempted to curtail the radical reaction. This required the perpetuation of a lie and the king’s immediate retrieval. While the Parisians refrained from exhibiting further violence, many of the city’s residents had their faith in the monarchy irrevocably shattered by Louis’s escape. Yet despite this reaction from Parisian radicals, the Assembly never fully experienced the same shift in ideology that Parliament had exhibited. As Louis’s flight lasted only three days from June 20 to June 22, the Assembly lacked the chance to fully process the situation. This legislature never underwent the same transformative experience as Parliament. By the time of Louis’s capture in Varennes on June 22, the Assembly only had succeeded in deciding to send three representatives to accompany the royal family back to Paris. When the National Guard escorted the Bourbons back to Paris on June 25, the Assembly had not received the necessary time to process the situation and form a consensus regarding the king. By the time the second phase of the English Civil War concluded on August 25, 1648, the Independents had the chance to adjust their political opinions following Charles’s betrayal. But in France, the legislature had to respond immediately to Louis as opposed to having several months to process the situation like Parliament did with Charles. This produced a set of events distinct

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162 Price, The Road From Versailles, 177.
163 Tackett, When The King Took Flight, 101 – 103. Most newspapers like the Chronique de Paris adopted a more anti-monarchical ideology following the flight. Given that most of the literate French gathered information from the newspapers, this played a large role in turning the populace against the monarch.
164 Price, The Road From Versailles, 187. The three representatives were Barnave, Latour-Maubourg, and Pétion. They were also escorted back by a regiment of the National Guard commanded by Adjutant-General Mathieu Dumas.
165 Ashley, The Battle of Naseby, 133 – 134. The Duke of Hamilton’s surrender at the Battle of Preston marked an end to the martial phase of the war.
from anything that occurred in England.

Upon returning to Paris on June 25, 1791, Louis likely recognized the
mounting danger surrounding him. He originally had fled Paris due to a dislike of the
Assembly’s treatment of him, but after the flight his circumstances certainly would
worsen. Immediately following his arrival in the city, the Assembly voted on
commissioning a specific guard for the king and his family, which passed despite
royalist objections.\textsuperscript{166} The presence of these guards effectively made Louis and his
family prisoners in their own home. Louis certainly realized that circumstances had
grown more perilous when he met with Lafayette upon arriving in Paris and
commented on the situation. “It seems that I am much more at your orders than you
are at mine.”\textsuperscript{167} Louis’s observation about the shift in power would prove prophetic as
the Assembly took precautions to prevent the king from acting against them again.
Whereas before the flight, the Assembly had treated Louis as a mere figurehead,
following his return to Paris he became their prisoner. Guards were posted throughout
the royal family’s quarters in the Tuileries and instructed to keep a constant eye on
Louis and his family.\textsuperscript{168} After the king’s forced return to Paris, the Assembly
prevented him holding any substantial power.

Charles’s escape from the Army lasted only slightly longer than Louis’s flight.
Despite the renewal of the military conflict, Charles played a minimal role in the war
following his confinement to the Isle of Wight on December 30, 1647.\textsuperscript{169} However

\begin{footnotes}
\item[166] Padover, \textit{The Life and Death of Louis XVI}, 231 – 232.
\item[167] Louis XVI “June 1791 Remarks to Lafayette” in Price, \textit{The Road From Versailles}, 190.
\item[168] Price, \textit{The Road From Versailles}, 206.
\end{footnotes}
his agreement with the Scots and the continued presence of royalist sympathizers throughout England ensured that Charles’s presence was not required for a war to break out. The mere influence of a king could restart a full-scale military conflict. It took Cromwell and the Army until late August to finish suppressing this royalist insurrection, by which point England had suffered from considerable bloodshed. Following the conclusion of the second Civil War, Parliament attempted once more to reach a peace with Charles. Inspired by the renewal of the war, the House of Commons desired a swift return to a stable government of monarchy. Parliament’s willingness to compromise with the king might appear rather strange given the royalist uprising of 1648. Yet by April, the Presbyterian faction had regained control over the Commons as several of the Independents had departed from London to fight in the war. The Presbyterian majority also found itself bolstered from the support of several unaligned moderates, who desired a lasting conclusion to this decade long conflict. As a result, Parliament adopted a considerably more conservative perspective. This permitted the Presbyterian majority to vote by a margin of 165 – 99 to forbid any major changes to the government on April 28, 1648. “This House doth Declare, That they will not alter the fundamental Government of the Kingdom, by Kings, Lords, and Commons.” This law essentially forbade both houses of Parliament and the monarchy from undergoing any significant changes. While the law

Hammond would support him, the governor instead imprisoned him at the Isle of Wight and wrote to Parliament asking for further instructions.

172 Underdown, Pride’s Purge, 96 – 97.
173 Kishlansky, A Monarchy Transformed, 185.
would still allow for the Presbyterians’ proposed religious reforms, its authors intended for it to ensure the safe restoration of the Stuart monarchy. The Commons later agreed to temporarily suspend the Vote of No Addresses on May 24 and reopen communications with the king by a staggering vote of 169 – 36. The Presbyterians stipulated that once Parliament had settled the issues of religion and control over the militia, they would again work with the king to reestablish him on the throne. While the Presbyterians supported monarchical rule, they had not forgotten Charles’s unpopular religious policies prior to the Civil War. Even as the Army fought against royalists and Scots, the Presbyterians took advantage of their absence from the legislature by attempting to broker a peace with the king.

Having corresponded with Charles throughout the duration of the war, the Presbyterians agreed to meet with him following the cessation of hostilities. The negotiations, which took place in Newport beginning in September, initially proved more fruitful than the previous dealings between Charles and Parliament. Perhaps after his second defeat, Charles began to realize the dangers he faced. As a result he agreed to more concessions, such as allowing Parliament to maintain control over the military for twenty years. Yet simultaneously he refused to consider weakening the power of the church bishops. This refusal was likely intended to act as yet another delaying tactic since Charles realized the parliamentary Presbyterians would not accept a treaty that did not allow for the ascendency of their own doctrine. In fact he

176 Kishlansky, A Monarchy Transformed, 183.
177 Underdown, Pride’s Purge, 111.
confided to a royalist supporter that even his agreement regarding control over the military was a stratagem. “The great concession I made this day was merely in order to my escape… for my only hope is that now they believe I dare deny them nothing and so be less careful of their guards.” 179 Whether Charles truly believed another escape was possible at this point remains unknown. Yet whatever his motivation, he certainly could not have suspected how quickly England would turn against him.

The political rivalries between the factions likely served as a motivating factor behind the Presbyterians’ enthusiasm for finally reaching terms with Charles. If this faction reached an agreement with the king, then they could successfully stabilize England according to their own goals. On September 15, 1648, fifteen parliamentary commissioners arrived at the Isle of Wight to reach an agreement with the king. 180 While previous negotiations between the king and the Presbyterians had fallen apart, the events of the Second Civil War made both parties eager to reach an accord. In light of his second defeat in 1648, Charles presumably realized that his supporters could not achieve a martial victory. With this knowledge in mind, the king entered into these negotiations with a greater willingness to reach a compromise. In an August 10, 1648 letter to the Speaker of the House of Lords, Charles expressed his eagerness at reaching a resolution with Parliament.

Since you my two houses of parliament have opened (it seems to me) a fair beginning to a happy peace, I shall heartily apply myself thereunto; and to that end I will as clearly and as shortly I may, set you down those things which I conceive necessary to this blessed work, so

179 Underdown, *Pride’s Purge*, 112.
180 Ibid, 104. Of the fifteen commissioners, five were from the House of Lords and ten from the House of Commons. The five peers consisted of the moderate Say and four Presbyterians: Northumberland, Pembroke, Salisbury, and Middlesex. The ten MPs included the non-aligned moderates Pierrepont, Crewe, Samuel Browne, Bullkely, Vane, and Sir John Potts and the Presbyterians Glyn, Holles, Lord Wenman, and Sir Harbottle Grimston.
that we together may remove all impediments a happy conclusion of this treaty, which, with all cheerfulness, I do embrace.  

In this letter, Charles expressed a greater desire for peace in England than he had exhibited during the negotiations of 1647. Rather than implementing a more manipulative strategy, Charles openly stated that he retained certain interests that he would not give up. This straightforward approach to the negotiation contrasted with his behavior when attempting to play the various factions against one another. Whereas in 1647 Charles wanted to take advantage of the political turmoil, by late 1648 the king had realized the importance of reaching an agreement with Parliament. Meanwhile the Presbyterians and their moderate allies desired stability in England even more in light of the Second English Civil War. Additionally their continued rivalry with the Independents ensured that they would seek out any necessary allies to prevent an Independent seizure of power. For these reasons, both the Presbyterians and the king planned to continue negotiating until they had reached a compromise. It appeared that desperation from both sides would prove the surest path to peace.

This potentially successful treaty drew a great deal of criticism from the more liberal groups, especially the Levellers. Though the Levellers had lost much of their influence at the conclusion of the November 1647 Putney Debates, the Presbyterian efforts to negotiate with the king somewhat reawakened their political prominence. Parliament’s apparent concessions towards Charles provided the Levellers with a new cause to criticize. On September 11, 1648, the Levellers issued the *Humble Petition of Thousands of Well-affected Persons* to Parliament, which insulted Parliament’s

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willingness to accommodate to the wishes of the king.\textsuperscript{183}

But to our exceeding grief, we have observed that no sooner God vouchsafeth you victory, and blesseth you with success, and thereby enableth you to put us and the whole Nation into an absolute condition of Freedom and Safety; but according as ye have bin accustomed, passing by the ruin of a nation, and all the blood that hath been spilled by the King and his Party, you betake your selves to a Treaty with him, thereby putting him that is but one single person, and a public Officer of the Commonwealth, in competition with the whole Body of the People, whom you represent.\textsuperscript{184}

The Levellers criticized Parliament’s approach towards the king given the large number of casualties in the Civil War. Additionally they argued that the parliamentary military victory enabled Parliament to dispose of Charles however they deemed appropriate. For this reason, the Levellers viewed any potential treaty with the king as unnecessary and unjust. Furthermore by accommodating Charles’s desires, the Presbyterians apparently had misrepresented the English people. Though this petition never called for the complete dissolution of the monarchy, its disparaging tone towards Charles hinted at the republican sympathies of the Levellers. These radicals gained significant support for this petition, especially from the growing wave of anti-monarchism in England. Soon after the release of this document, a variety of other Leveller groups throughout England issued similar petitions to Parliament in October 1648.\textsuperscript{185} Though these Leveller petitions hardly spoke for the majority of Englishmen, they still reflected a growing anti-monarchist sentiment in England.

With the compromising Presbyterians to their right and the radical Levellers to their left, the Independents found themselves pressured by both sides to support

\textsuperscript{183} Barber, \textit{Regicide and Republicanism}, 56.
\textsuperscript{185} Underdown, \textit{Pride’s Purge}, 119 – 120.
their plan for the king’s future. Though the Independents had supported a compromise with Charles prior to the renewal of the war, the second outbreak of violence altered their opinion of the king. In contrast to the Presbyterians, the military conflict soured the Independents on the idea of reaching terms with Charles. Even after Charles’s first defeat, many soldiers and officers of the New Model Army had opposed a compromise with the king. In response to the king’s incitement of another armed conflict, anti-monarchical sentiment had spread throughout the Army. Having fought in two bloody conflicts, which many in the military believed Charles had instigated, a sizable portion of the Army wanted to see Charles punished. This desire for either justice or vengeance hurt the chances of the Presbyterians’ attempts to compromise with the king.

Following Louis’s return to Paris on June 25, 1791, the more conservative deputies of the Assembly also attempted to reach an agreement with the king. Though Louis’s flight certainly soured the deputies’ opinions of him, many of them such as Lafayette indicated that they retained a loyalty to their king. “Despite everything, he is the best prince of his family and, taken all in all, the best in Europe.” Lafayette’s remarks about the king displayed how the more conservative deputies would continue to support their king regardless of his actions. Given the growing opposition to the monarchy, which had resulted partially because of the flight, Louis desperately needed such pro-monarchical fervor. In an effort to regain the support of the more recalcitrant deputies, Louis offered an official apology to three Assembly deputies,

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186 Barber, Regicide and Republicanism, 40.
187 Kishlansky, A Monarchy Transformed, 180.
188 Marquis de Lafayette “June 1791 Remarks on Louis XVI” in Padover, The Life and Death of Louis XVI, 231.
who then read this speech to the Assembly on June 27, 1791. In his apology Louis adamantly affirmed that he had never had any intention of overthrowing the newly established French government. “The outrages committed upon and the threats made against my family and myself on April 18 were the reasons for my departure… One of my principal motives for leaving Paris was to vitiate the argument concerning my lack of liberty, which might furnish occasion for disturbances.”

Louis described his decision to depart Paris as a personal choice rather than a political one. His threatened liberty referred to a series of personal freedoms. In this apology, the king gave no indication of ever wanting to leave France, thereby equating his attempted escape as more akin to a short vacation than the beginnings of a royalist power grab. Additionally, Louis justified his flight as beneficial to France given that outrage over his treatment might spark an internal military conflict. Though Louis’s exact intentions may never be fully understood, these claims appeared rather farfetched to both the eighteenth-century and modern audiences. Indeed despite their best attempts, the conservative factions within the Assembly failed to stymie a radically anti-monarchical belief from infecting much of France.

For the kings, their escapes from custody ultimately proved detrimental to the monarchist causes. Neither Charles nor Louis actually remained free for all that long and both failed to bring about a royalist takeover. Though Louis may have arranged for foreign aid from Austria, his recapture at Varennes ensured that the Austrian forces waiting at the French border would not intervene in France. Admittedly,

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189 Padover, The Life and Death of Louis XVI, 232. The three deputies were Louis Tronchet, Adrien Duport and Antoine d’André.
Charles’s grand plan to restart the English Civil War with Scotland’s support initially succeeded. However, the might of the New Model Army brought this phase of the conflict to an end after only a few months of fighting. With the failure of these escapes, Charles and Louis appeared disloyal to the legislatures. Upon their recapture, both kings’ popularity suffered immensely due to a lack of trust from their subjects. As a result rather than solving their problems, the flight of the kings only succeeded in causing them more woe.

**The Emergence of Anti-Monarchism**

For both the English and the French, the flights of their monarchs represented a definitive turning point in the story of regicide. Before the escapes, the majority of English and French legislators showed no apparent interest in bringing about the end of monarchy. Yet afterwards a sizable portion of both populations expressed significant anger towards the kings. Additionally, the once maligned ideals of republicanism began to play a more important role in political discourse. These two responses suggested that many of the legislative representatives experienced a common feeling of betrayal towards their kings. Yet at the same time this sense of betrayal allowed the more radical anti-monarchist factions to voice their opinions without the fear of being labeled extremists. In England, the Levellers began holding large demonstrations throughout the kingdom calling for the end of monarchy and noble privileges. Meanwhile in France, both the Cordelier and the Jacobin Clubs issued similar petitions calling for an end to the monarchy. The flights of Charles and Louis allowed the radical undertones present in both kingdoms to become much more

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accepted and mainstream. This radical tendency would prove instrumental in bringing about the regicides.

The Leveller’s petition of September 11, 1648 demonstrated this rise in anti-monarchical thought in England. Interestingly while the petition relentlessly attacked Charles for his actions during the Civil War, it provided no real solution for the problem of the monarchy. Instead this petition and others like it offered only veiled hints on what to do about Charles. “That you would have laid to heart all the abundance of innocent blood that has been spilt… by the express commissions of the king and seriously to have considered whether the justice of God be likely to be satisfied or his yet continuing wrath appeased by an Act of Oblivion.”

Though this petition clearly suggested that Charles should face justice for his crimes, it notably avoided calling upon the English government to take action. This likely occurred because of a fear that the authors of this document might face repercussions from Parliament if the petition were too extreme. Even when the king had become tremendously unpopular, many people still feared to express their true antipathy for Charles. Nevertheless the Levellers’ casting of the blame for the Civil War on Charles partially explained the motivation behind the animosity for the king. Even after Charles had instigated two bloody wars, the Presbyterians intended to restore him to the throne. However, the Levellers refused to allow this without resistance.

A similar level of monarchical dislike also appeared in France soon after the flight. One radical political club, called the Cordeliers, advocated for the overthrow of

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the monarchy on June 24, 1791, before the royal family even had returned to Paris. On July 14, the club issued a petition, which explained their anti-monarchical perspective. “It [The Cordeliers Club] can no longer close its eyes to the fact that monarchy, above all hereditary monarchy, is incompatible with liberty.” The Cordeliers’ petition asserted that a monarch served no purpose in a state based on the ideals of liberty. In order for France ever to embody liberty, the Cordeliers believed that the Assembly must eradicate the monarchy. When the Cordeliers referred to themselves as tyrannicides, they overtly asserted their intention to eliminate Louis. The small amount of time between Louis’s flight and the Cordeliers’ call for the abolition of the monarchy suggested that many of the club members covertly might have supported anti-monarchical thought for some time. However until the king’s flight, most of the French populace would not tolerate such radical ideology. Yet the success of the petition showcased how quickly republican ideology spread throughout France in the wake of Louis’s return to Paris. Meanwhile, the Assembly’s clumsy attempt to portray Louis’s trip to Varennes as a kidnapping only aided the surge of anti-monarchism. When the Assembly made an obviously false claim, it damaged the credibility of the legislature. However the moderate deputies steadfastly persisted in the telling of this fictitious account and officially published a decree on July 15.

Price, *The Road From Versailles*, 206. The Cordeliers were a radically left political club, whose prominent members included Georges Danton and Jean-Paul Marat. They were far more populist than any other of the political clubs including the Jacobins and welcomed both men and women of various economic backgrounds into their club. They served as important allies of the Jacobins during the August 10 coup, the regicide of Louis, and later the Reign of Terror. Most of the prominent Cordeliers later faced execution themselves at the end of the Terror.

which blamed the exiled royalist General Bouillê for the entirety of the flight.\textsuperscript{197} As a result several of the left-wing political clubs began to view the Assembly with distrust.

Louis’s flight may have failed, but it nonetheless profoundly reshaped the political dynamic of the French Revolution. This governmental transformation perhaps best exhibited itself with the dissolution of the Jacobin Club. Before the flight, the Jacobins consisted of many prominent deputies with diverse political opinions.\textsuperscript{198} However after the club published an anti-monarchical petition, the Jacobins split into several different political clubs based on their disagreements about the petition. On July 15, 1791 around 4,000 Parisians invaded the Jacobins’ meeting place to demand that the club issue a republican petition.\textsuperscript{199} In the petition, the Jacobin club asserted that Louis’s treasonous flight effectively served as his abdication from the throne.

“Louis XVI, having accepted Royal functions, and sworn to defend the constitution, has deserted the post entrusted to him; has protested against that very constitution in a declaration written and signed in his own hand; has attempted, by his flight and his orders to paralyze the executive power.”\textsuperscript{200} The Parisian supporters of this petition believed that when the king fled Paris, he had turned his back on his people and his throne. Due to his abandonment of the French people, they maintained that Louis had surrendered his rights to the throne. Though the petition avoided criticizing the

\textsuperscript{197} Tackett, \textit{When the King Took Flight}, 137. The Marquis de Bouillê was a noted French general and governor of Guadeloupe. He played a major role in Louis’s attempted flight by preparing a regiment of soldiers to escort the royal family over the border. After this attempt failed Bouillê lived as an exile in London until his death in 1800.

\textsuperscript{198} Doyle, \textit{The Oxford History of the French Revolution}, 142.

\textsuperscript{199} Price, \textit{The Road From Versailles}, 207. This occurred on the same day as the Assembly’s issuing of their false assertion that Louis was kidnapped. The reaction from the Parisians may have partially been influenced by this event.

overall practice of monarchy, it argued that Louis no longer had a legal right to rule.

This petition provoked a major backlash from the conservative deputies in the Jacobin Club, who disliked this petition. In response to this petition, almost every Assembly deputy severed ties with the club. Where the Jacobins had once encompassed the majority of Assembly deputies, by late July 1791 only Robespierre, Jerome Pétion and a few other radicals remained in the club.201 The vast majority of these former Jacobins, including Antoine Barnave and Lafayette formed a new political party called the Feuillant club.202 The Feuillants fervently supported and the idea of a French constitutional monarchy. Though the Feuillants would never identify as royalist, they became some of Louis’s closest allies during this period. Marie-Antoinette certainly considered the Feuillants allies, a belief which she expressed in a July 31, 1791 letter to the Comte de Mercy-Argenteau. “I have reason to be satisfied… with Duport, Lameth and Barnave. I currently have a sort of correspondence with the last two which nobody, not even their friends, knows about. To do them justice, although they stick obstinately to their views, I have so far seen nothing in them other than great sincerity, forcefulness, and a real desire to restore good order and in consequence the royal authority.”203 Based on this letter, the staunchly conservative queen evidently trusted all three of these prominent Feuillants.

201 Doyle, The Oxford History of the French Revolution, 153. Jerome Pétion was a prominent French politician and the Second Mayor of Paris. He later became a leading member of the Girondins, but was a leading supporter of both deposing and then executing Louis. He died in 1794 during the Reign of Terror.
202 Ibid, 153. The Feuillants also took their name from their church meeting place the Congregation of the Feuillants. This church was a French Abbey for the 16th century Cistercian Order of the Catholic Church. Barnave was a prominent leader of the Feuillants, who closely corresponded with Marie Antoinette. He died in 1793 during the Reign of Terror.
203 Marie Antoinette “July 31, 1791 Letter to the Comte de Mercy-Argenteau” in Price, The Road From Versailles, 210. The Comte de Mercy-Argenteau was also the Austrian ambassador to France and a close associate of Marie Antoinette.
Meanwhile the moderate deputies’ abandonment of the Jacobins helped to radicalize the club into a leftist political party. Though the remaining Jacobin leaders including Robespierre attempted to curtail the club’s newly acquired leftist ideology by rescinding their support for the July 15 petition, the Jacobins’ transformation had already begun.²⁰⁴ Whereas before the flight the various clubs served mainly as large political discussion groups, the reaction against Louis created two distinct political parties.

The reactions towards Louis’s flight also caused a major stir in the Parisian populace, which was most prominently seen in the formation of a mob on July 17, 1791. Approximately 50,000 people came together at the Champ de Mars to express their dissatisfaction with many of the Assembly’s current policies, including its continued cooperation with the king.²⁰⁵ While present in this public space, many intended to sign the Jacobins’ July 15 petition. No event during the English Civil War could compare to this massive civic engagement and it seemed a confirmation that in Paris the tide had turned against the monarchy. While such republican fervor had not reached most of France’s largely agricultural population, the vast majority of Parisians apparently had adopted republican ideology as their own.

Before the gathering at the Champ de Mars, the National Guardsmen already had begun repressing anti-monarchical opinions.²⁰⁶ Yet never before had they seen such a widespread rally. Following the orders of the Assembly, the National Guard came out in force to disperse the demonstration. In order to suppress this gathering,

²⁰⁵ Price, The Road from Versailles, 207 – 208.
the National Guard killed approximately fifty people in what would come to be known as the “massacre of the Champ de Mars.” This event proved considerably more violent than any of the Old Regime’s attempts to contain the revolution. When the National Assembly immediately declared martial law, their policy decisions resembled anti-revolutionary tactics. Several supporters of the petition suggested that partisan politics rather than a desire to keep the peace had motivated the National Guard’s violent suppression of the event. Given the previous instances when a mob of Parisians had exerted influence over the Revolution such as during the march to Versailles, the National Guard may have attempted to contain another mob driven event. Having previously endured threats from a gathering of radical Parisians, Lafayette might have feared that significant unrest could occur because of the large event. Whatever their reasons for doing so, National Guard violently dispersed the supporters of the petition with the approval of the Feuillants. In the following weeks, the Feuillants imposed martial law on Paris, which allowed them to retake control of the city. With the arrests of more than 200 radical activists and the temporary cessation of club meetings for the Jacobins and the Cordeliers, this marked a significant defeat for the radical anti-monarchical movement. The Feuillants exerted control over Paris through violence rather than diplomacy. This incident showcased that utilizing coercive means often proved more effective than coming to agreements through diplomacy.

When examining the startlingly rapid development of anti-monarchism in England and France, both Parliament and the Assembly evidently failed to address

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207 Andress, Massacre at the Champ de Mars, 1 – 3.
208 Ibid, 200.
growth in republican fervor. Upon hearing about the end of the Second English Civil War, the Presbyterians immediately sent out envoys to Newport to again negotiate with Charles. Many radicals within England, particularly the soldiers, regarded this willingness to ignore the utter failure of the negotiations of 1647 as intolerable and ridiculous. Yet the Presbyterians blatantly ignored these concerns. In a similar neglect towards Paris’s growing attachment to republican ideology, the Assembly published a blatantly nonsensical cover story of kidnapping to explain Louis’s flight. Due in part to the growing circulation of newspapers in eighteenth-century France, most of the French people recognized this tale as a work of fiction. ²¹⁰ Rather than addressing or even taking advantage of the increasing resentment towards the monarchy, the moderates in both legislatures chose to compromise with and lie on behalf of the kings. Within France, the National Guard oversaw the massacre of 50 people while protecting the king’s honor. When the anti-monarchists published petitions to voice their great dislike for the policies of the legislature, the Presbyterians ignored the Levellers while the Feuillants suppressed the French petitioners. This dismissal of the more radical perspective firmly classified both moderate legislatures as obstacles, if not outright enemies, of the left. Thus for the English Independents and the French revolutionaries removing the moderates from power became a necessary step in order to prevent a return to the traditional Stuart and Bourbon monarchies.

The Decline of the Moderate Legislatures

Following the conclusion of the Second English Civil War in August 1648 and the July 17, 1791 massacre at the Champ de Mars, moderate factions in England

²¹⁰ Price, The Road From Versailles, 207.
and France had assumed control over their respective legislatures. With this power both the Presbyterians and the Feuillants attempted to settle the ongoing question regarding the king’s status in the new regimes. Beginning in September 1648 at Newport, the Presbyterians closely worked with Charles to draft an agreeable compromise for king and legislature alike. The French Assembly successfully coerced Louis into signing the 1791 constitution on September 13. However neither the 1648 Treaty of Newport nor the 1791 constitution would prove effective. Both moderate factions underestimated how much their political rivals disliked these settlements. Additionally, neither of the kings truly liked the agreements and eventually worked against the moderate factions. Due in part to their overreliance on reaching an agreement with uncooperative monarchs, both the Presbyterians and Feuillants lost much of their political power in the legislature.

Despite receiving several Leveller petitions, the Presbyterians made little effort to address their concerns.\footnote{Kishlansky, \textit{A Monarchy Transformed}, 180.} Thus while they noticed the Army’s vehement opposition to the Treaty of Newport, they chose to concentrate on coming to a compromise with the notoriously stubborn Charles.\footnote{C.V. Wedgwood, \textit{A Coffin for King Charles: The Trial and Execution of Charles I}, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), 24.} By ignoring the Army, the Presbyterians permitted radicalism to spread throughout the Army. Indeed the soldiers and officers of the New Model Army served as the principal obstacle to the completion of the Treaty of Newport. Under Ireton’s leadership, the Army formally adopted a document commonly known as the \textit{Army Remonstrance} on November 18, 1648.\footnote{Edwards, \textit{The Last Days of Charles I}, 74 – 75.} The Remonstrance argued for an end to the negotiations and asserted that
Charles stand trial for his crimes. While individuals had previously expressed outright hatred to Charles, this marked one of the first attempts at bringing him to justice.\textsuperscript{214} The Army council’s sentiment expressed in this document definitely opposed the conciliatory approach of the parliamentary commissioners at Newport. “First, we conceive and hope that from what hath been said, you may find abundant cause to forbear any further proceeding in this evil and most dangerous treaty, and to return to your former grounds in the votes of non-addresses, and thereupon proceed to the settling and securing of the kingdom without, and against, the King.”\textsuperscript{215} The authors of this document described the Newport Treaty as potentially destructive to England. The Remonstrance charged Charles as being opposed to the stabilization of England. While the Remonstrance refrained from calling for the dissolution of the monarchy, its suggestion of instituting an elective monarchy reflected the Army’s common disgust for Charles.\textsuperscript{216} Evidently the Council wanted significant restrictions of power placed on any English monarch. Though the military commanders were not republican, they clearly had developed an extremely negative opinion on the king. For these reasons the Grandees strenuously objected to the Newport Treaty.

Though the Army council’s dislike for the king undoubtedly played a major role in the genesis of this document, the political rivalry between the Independents and the Presbyterians also proved an important factor. The Independents certainly wanted to prevent the Presbyterians from acquiring the political advantages of reaching an agreement with the king. If the Presbyterians succeeded, not only would

\textsuperscript{214} Underdown, \textit{Pride’s Purge}, 116.
\textsuperscript{216} Ibid, 234.
the treaty reflect their political and religious goals, but the resulting prestige from bringing peace to England would allow their faction to dominate Parliament for years to come. Due to their ongoing rivalry, the Independents wanted to prevent a Presbyterian takeover and often spoke rather harshly about them. For instance Ireton presented a specific petition to the Council, which characterized the Presbyterians as the puppets of Charles. “There is yet a prevalent party of his [Charles’s] own Creatures, who, in Parliament and elsewhere, act his Designs and endeavor to reinthrone him.”

Ireton and his supporters attempted to spread fear about the possibility of Charles’s unconditional restoral to the throne. In this creative description of events, Charles’s secret supporters had prepared themselves sufficiently to place the king back on the throne without any limitations. By exaggerating Charles’s power, Ireton likely hoped that the more moderate Army commanders like Thomas Fairfax would support a decision for the Army to take action against the Presbyterians.

Even in October 1648, Ireton presumably contemplated seizing power through force rather than with diplomacy. Though Ireton and his supporters undoubtedly would have preferred for Parliament to accept their Remonstrance, they nevertheless prepared themselves for the worst-case scenario.

The French Constitution, which was adopted on September 3, 1791, based itself on the moderate deputies’ vision of a constitutional monarchy. The Feuillants also worked closely with Louis to determine what type of amendments he would

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218 Underdown, Pride’s Purge, 116 – 117.
219 Kishlansky, A Monarchy Transformed, 156. Thomas Fairfax was the commander in chief of the parliamentary military forces during the English Civil War. However Cromwell quickly gained greater prominence and influence. As a fairly conservative figure he opposed Charles’s trial and execution and played almost no role in the English Commonwealth.
accept. Though Louis acted as a reluctant participant during the writing of the constitution, he believed that refusing the Feuillants would worsen his present situation. Like Charles, Louis held a particular attachment to the traditional French clergy and worked to ensure that the constitution would not include a requirement for the clergy to take a civil oath. Members of the Feuillants readily agreed to many of the king’s demands and even corresponded with Marie Antoinette during the writing of the constitution. The Feuillants wanted the king to support the constitution, likely out of a desire to avoid antagonizing the other increasingly hostile European kingdoms. Though Louis remained quite conflicted about supporting the constitution, by September 13, 1791, he agreed to sign it. Two days later, the king wrote a letter to his brothers, in which he explained his reasons for signing the constitution. “I have carefully weighed the matter and concluded that war presents no other advantages but horrors and more discord. I also believe then that this idea should be set aside and that I should try once again by using the sole means remaining to me, that of joining my will to the constitution.” Louis’s desire to avoid embroiling France in a war prompted him to agree to something he did not actually support. Though he regarded his previous attempts to collaborate with the revolutionaries as a failure, the king expressed a grudging willingness to again cooperate

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221 Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, 154 – 156. Louis opposed the civil code for the clergy as he believed it violated the rightful authority of the Pope.
222 Price, *The Road From Versailles*, 208 – 209. Austria under the rule of Leopold II in particular threatened France, partially spurred on by Marie-Antoinette.
224 “Louis Accepts the Constitution,” (September 14 – 25, 1791) in *Liberty, Equality and Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution*, ed. Jack Censer and Lynn Hunt, http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution. Louis’s brothers, the Counts of Provence and Artois, had both gone into exile but were also plotting to restore the old regime. Both brothers would later come to reign in France themselves as King Louis XVIII and King Charles X.
with the Assembly. Such a decision notably differentiated him from the less agreeable English king.

Despite the level of respect the Feuillants offered the king, he recognized his substantial loss of power. Though the constitution provided the king with direct authority over the military and foreign policy, he had no oversight over the legislature other than the suspensive veto.\textsuperscript{225} The change in conduct towards the king became evident when Louis officially swore an oath to uphold the constitution on September 14, 1791 before a room of seated deputies. Under the ancien régime, most people would have considered their decision not to stand as a sign of disrespect.\textsuperscript{226} Despite accusations from the Jacobins about the Feuillants’ close association with the king, they refrained from treating him like an absolute monarch. The constitution even provided legal justification to remove a monarch from the throne should he act criminally against the nation.\textsuperscript{227} Several of these crimes against the nation actually resembled Louis’s actions during the flight. For instance, the Constitution defined any king, who fled the country or raised an army against the nation, as having abdicated the throne. Evidently the authors of the Constitution specifically restrained Louis from acting in this way again. The Feuillants wanted a king involved in this new France, however they ensured that this monarchy would function based on their terms.

The king heartily disliked the constitution and believed it would eventually cause great damage to France. Nevertheless by all accounts Louis attempted to keep his oath to the constitution. Unlike Charles, who constantly searched for a opportunity

\textsuperscript{225} Price, The Road From Versailles, 218.
\textsuperscript{226} Ibid, 219.
to reassert his authority over England, Louis accepted the legal stipulations of the constitution. Admittedly, self-interest motivated his adherence to the law. The king believed that by following the constitution literally, its many flaws would become inherently obvious to the French people. He expressed this viewpoint in a September 1791 letter to his close friend the Swedish Count, Axel von Fersen. “The king must acquire confidence and popularity by acting according to the constitution; if he executes its provisions literally, all its vices will become obvious.”

Louis made no real attempt at opposing or resisting the 1791 constitution based upon the certainty that its own inherent failings would lead to its own demise. The king never explicitly described the flaws of the Constitution, but his mention of its vices suggested that Louis viewed the document as morally corrupt. Given his belief in absolute monarchy, the king presumably considered other forms of government unnatural. Nevertheless Louis made a fairly accurate prediction about the Constitution’s flaws, given the Revolution’s later abandonment of it in July 1792. However he erroneously assumed that following the failures of the 1791 Constitution, France would willingly revert back to the old regime. Due to his own biases, Louis could not comprehend how even the moderate deputies of the Assemblies had rejected the old regime.

With the grudging support of the king and provisions within the constitution to suppress any radical opposition, by 1791 the Feuillants apparently had succeeded in establishing a stable constitutional monarchy. However, the approved constitution proved incredibly unpopular with factions across the entirety of the political spectrum. Outside observers to France like the British ambassador observed

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that, “...the present constitution has no friends and cannot last.”\(^{231}\) Much of the left, especially the Jacobins, opposed this new constitution. Meanwhile the conservative royalists disliked the rejection of the old regime and the Assembly’s decision to penalize and the French nobility who had fled France immediately following the revolution.\(^{232}\) In fact, possibly out of spite towards the Feuillants, these noble deputies often supported the radical proposals of Jacobins like Robespierre. This unpopularity ensured that the Feuillants’ moderate approach to politics would not last and when martial law ended in early August their unpopularity soon became quite clear.\(^{233}\) Thus, when the Constituent Assembly reformed into the Legislative Assembly on October 1, 1791, with new elections and the provision that current deputies could not run for reelection, the Feuillants lost a great deal of their power.\(^{234}\) Robespierre, who had proposed this ordinance, hoped that it would hurt his political rivals. His plan succeeded as the Feuillants’ unpopularity and their needing to run new candidates for the Legislative Assembly caused their club to fracture. In terms of numbers, the Feuillants elected a surprising number of their supporters as deputies, who took up 345 seats of the 745 available spots in the Assembly.\(^{235}\) However the removal of their political leaders from the Assembly left the Feuillants directionless and inactive as a political club. Meanwhile though the Jacobins only acquired 135 seats, they quickly coalesced as a group through hosting a series of regular meetings and public debates. The Feuillants lost even more power as the Girondin club emerged as the new moderate faction of the Assembly. In late 1791, the Girondins established itself based

\(^{233}\) Ibid, 156 – 157.  
\(^{234}\) Kropotkin, *The Great French Revolution*, 238.  
on a mutual dislike for both the royalists and radicals alike. As they gained prominence, the Feuillants simultaneously lost considerable support. Bereft of a direction, membership in the Feuillant club quickly dwindled until by December 1791 it stopped holding meetings all together. Though the Feuillants set out to find a moderate solution and a way for king and revolutionaries to compromise, it appeared not nearly enough people were interested in this vision.

The Takeover of the Legislatures

Unlike in France where Louis nominally supported the constitution, Parliament never fully acquired the chance to reincorporate Charles into the government. Though the Presbyterians certainly intended for the aborted Treaty of Newport to enact this, the intervention of the Independents and the New Model Army prevented this from ever occurring. With the November 18, 1648 Remonstrance drafted, the Independents decided to make good on their claims. Admittedly, Ireton and other Independent leaders experienced some difficulty uniting the Army behind a single goal and dealing with both radical groups like the Levellers and more conservative minded officers such as Fairfax, who was still willing to consider compromising with the king. However, the conservative officers’ willingness to still compromise with the Presbyterians quickly dissipated when they learned that on November 15, Parliament had approved of Charles’s request to return to London to

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236 Kropotkin, *The Great French Revolution*, 341. The Girondins took their name from the Gironde region in southwestern France, one of its primary leaders was Jacques Pierre Brissot. After the collapse of the Feuillants, the Girondins became the new opposition party to the Jacobins.


238 Underdown, *Pride’s Purge*, 118 – 120.
complete negotiations.\(^{239}\) This overture to the king combined with the promise of
returning to Charles his land and income indicated to the Independents that the
Presbyterians might restore Charles to the throne without the necessary constraints.
This quickly grew into a major concern for the Army as they decried the king’s return
to London as potentially calamitous in the Remonstrance.

To look no further into particulars, that great and dangerous evil, of
old so much declined and abhorred by you and our brethren of
Scotland, and much more lately so struggled against by yourself in the
previous debates concerning this Treaty, viz. the King’s return to
London, and to his parliament and throne again, without Satisfaction
and Security before given, is thus at last like to come upon you.\(^ {240}\)

In the Remonstrance, the Army officers expressed a warning to the Parliament about
the dangers of inviting Charles to negotiate in London. Even the most conservative
officers feared the potential consequences of the king’s unconditional return to the
throne. Their opposition to Charles’s arbitrary style of ruling had sparked the war and
now Parliament seemed on the brink of returning significant power to the king. Due
to this somewhat exaggerated fear, the Army’s support for the Remonstrance grew to
such an extent that even the conservative officers came to support the document by
November 18.\(^ {241}\) Interestingly the Army council decided to support the Remonstrance
not out of anger towards the king or an ideological desire for justice. Instead the fear
of Charles’s unconditional restoration to the throne served as the principal motivation
for the Independent’s support of the Remonstrance.

By late 1791, many of the French deputies developed a similar suspicion

\(^{239}\) Ibid, 122.
\(^{240}\) “Remonstrance From the Army” (November 18, 1648) in Ed. William Cobbet, Cobbet’s
Parliamentary History of England: From the Norman Conquest in 1066 to the Year 1083, Volume VII,
towards Louis. However this worry was more focused not on Louis himself, but rather what he could represent to the other European kingdoms. After he nominally supported the ratification of the 1791 Constitution, Louis never asked any of his fellow monarchs for their support. Still Marie Antoinette made several overtures to her brother, Holy Roman Emperor Leopold II, on her husband’s behalf. Given the success of the Revolution and the constitutional checks placed on the king, by himself Louis presented no major threat to the safety of revolutionary France. Nevertheless several foreign powers, which considered sending in military force to suppress the revolution, used the destruction of Louis’s authority as a rallying cry. On August 27, 1791, Leopold II and King Frederick William II of Prussia came together at Pillnitz to sign a document expressing this perspective. “They will not refuse to employ, in conjunction with their said majesties, the most efficient mean, in proportion to their resources, to place the king of France in a position to establish, with the most absolute freedom, the foundations of a monarchical form of government.” The two monarchs considered the Revolution’s depriving Louis of his natural right to rule over France as an especially heinous act. Though Louis played no major role in the writing of this document, Leopold and Frederick William justified a potential invasion of France by evoking the disenfranchisement of Louis’s rights as a monarch.

Louis might not have encouraged his fellow monarchs to issue the Pillnitz Declaration, but during the last few months of 1791 he covertly affirmed where his loyalties lay. The king’s dissatisfaction with the revolutionaries had developed over

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242 Price, The Road From Versailles, 222 – 223.
243 Padover, The Life and Death of Louis XVI, 235.
the past year. However a disagreement with the Assembly over the status of French aristocrats living in exile, who were commonly called émigrés, particularly angered Louis.\textsuperscript{245} Following the ratification of the constitution, Louis attempted to invite the émigrés back into France. When the Girondins learned of the gathering of nobility outside of France, they acted quickly to prevent an aristocratic incursion into France. On November 9, 1791, the Assembly issued a decree accusing all of the émigrés of conspiring against France.\textsuperscript{246} Fear of a return to the old regime likely influenced the reaction from the Girondins. This fear tainted their impression of Louis as well, especially after he utilized his suspensive veto on this decree against the nobility on November 11.\textsuperscript{247} This disagreement over the status of the émigrés marked the end of Louis’s mostly cordial relationship with the legislature.

Motivated by anger and distrust following this incident, Louis later covertly expressed a desire for a foreign invasion to occur. In a December 3, 1791 letter to Frederick William II, Louis even suggested the possibility of foreign coalition to prevent any future revolutions.

\begin{quote}
I have just written to the emperor, the empress of Russia, the king of Spain and of Sweden, and proposed to them the idea of a congress of the major powers of Europe supported by an armed force, as the best means of checking the factious here, of reestablishing a more desirable order of things and of preventing the evil which torments us from gaining hold in other states of Europe.\textsuperscript{248}
\end{quote}

In Louis’s private letters, he displayed his dislike for the revolution. Before Louis displayed a willingness to cooperate, however he now clearly regarded continued

\textsuperscript{245} Padover, \textit{The Life and Death of Louis XVI}, 247.
\textsuperscript{246} Price, \textit{The Road From Versailles}, 227 – 228.
\textsuperscript{247} Ibid, 228 – 229. By January, 1792 in an attempt to regain popularity Louis later encouraged the dispersal of the nobility gathered on the borders of France.
\textsuperscript{248} Louis XVI “December 3, 1791 Letter to Fredericik William in Padover, \textit{The Life and Death of Louis XVI}, 249.
cooperation with the revolutionaries as impossible. Admittedly, Louis might have engaged in hyperbole to gain Frederick William’s support, yet he still supported a foreign invasion of his own kingdom.

Despite the best efforts of the king and queen, the Assembly eventually noticed their involvement in the coming war with Austria and the other European kingdoms. Beginning in December 1791, members of the Girondin club spoke about the alleged Austrian Committee, which they described as an organization created by the queen to help prepare for the eventual Austrian invasion of France.\textsuperscript{249} The Girondins never directly accused Louis of working with this alleged conspiracy. Still by implicating Marie Antoinette’s as a perpetrator, they insinuated that Louis played some role in this treasonous committee. This attempt to link Marie-Antoinette and by extension Louis with foreign enemies damaged the king’s already fragile credibility even further. Shortly after news of this somewhat fabricated Franco-Austrian conspiracy broke in the Assembly, the Girondist, Marguerite-Élie Guadet, called for all French agents involved with the oncoming Austrian invasion to face justice.\textsuperscript{250} “Let us mark out a place for traitors, and let it be the scaffold. Let us decree this instant that the French nation denounces as infamous, betrayers of the fatherland, and guilty of treason towards the nation any agent of the executive power, any Frenchman who participates directly or indirectly… in any bargain with the German princes in Alsace.”\textsuperscript{251} While Guadet’s speech never mentioned any specific traitors, its

\textsuperscript{249} Price, \textit{The Road From Versailles}, 264.

\textsuperscript{250} Albert Sorel, \textit{L’Europe et la Révolution Française Deuxime Partie: La Chute de la Royauté}, (Paris: E. Plon, Nourrit, et Cie Imprimeurs-Editeurs), 1889, 360. Guadet was a prominent Girondin, who while sympathizing with the king, still supported the revolution. He supported the appeal to the people for the trial of Louis XVI and later voted for the death penalty but with the possibility of an appeal. He was executed during the fall of the Girondins in 1793.

\textsuperscript{251} Ibid, 360.
discussion of foreign agents likely was intended as an attack on the royal family. The Assembly greeted the proposal with great. This legislation, which formally established the crime of treason to the nation, would prove invaluable to both the regicide of Louis and the events of the Terror as well. The Feuillants might have tolerated Louis’s lack of support for the Constitution, however neither the Girondins nor the Jacobins displayed a similar patience. The Assembly’s implied threat of charging Louis with treason towards the nation ensured that the king would no longer conspire with Austria or act as an obstacle to the will of the Assembly. As a result when the Assembly voted on April 20, 1792 to declare war on Austria, the king also supported this motion. Furthermore he accepted the suggested dismissal of his Feuillant ministers in favor of Gironid officials. As the Feuillants had associated themselves with the royal family, both the Gironid and the Jacobin clubs found them easy scapegoats as potential collaborators with the Austrian Committee. Due in large part to the implied threats of the Gironids, Louis ceased his covert activities and seemingly returned to his old behavior of acquiescence.

In England, the Army officers took a more direct approach to prevent their king from regaining power than the French. However many of the Grandees initially hoped that they would not have to engage in such extreme actions should Parliament approve the terms of their Remonstrance. When the Army officers read the document to Parliament on November 20, 1648, they received a diverse set of reactions. Some conservative figures like William Prynne accused the Army of being subversive by

252 Price, The Road From Versailles, 267.
253 Price, The Road From Versailles, 267. Its discussion of treason towards the nation included both direct and indirect traitors, allowing for the later mass executions of the Terror.
255 Price, The Road From Versailles, 269 – 270.
issuing the Remonstrance.\textsuperscript{256} Meanwhile the parliamentary Independents supported the document, further highlighting the close link between the Army and the Independents. Ultimately, Parliament decided to postpone any further discussion on the Remonstrance, explaining more pressing issues required the attention of both houses. “The Remonstrance in itself was tedious; and the particulars in it very many, and of too great moment to be debated, with sufficient caution and discretion, upon so short warning.”\textsuperscript{257} When they delayed addressing the concerns of the Army, Parliament effectively deprioritized addressing the concerns of the military. The legislature attempted to pacify the more radical Army officers by promising to eventually give the Remonstrance the full attention it deserved. However Parliament’s almost concluded treaty with Charles questioned the veracity of this statement. By agreeing to a treaty with Charles, Parliament already would have acted contrary to the Remonstrance’s suggestions. Thus when the legislature agreed to postpone discussion of the document for a week, they really just wanted to delay addressing the Remonstrance until it became irrelevant.\textsuperscript{258} By that point the Presbyterians hoped to have reached an agreement with Charles regarding the Newport Treaty. The Presbyterian majority possessed enough wisdom to make an attempt at not angering the Independents and the Army by dismissing the Remonstrance out of hand. However their delaying tactics would not prevent the Army from taking drastic actions to implement the demands of the Remonstrance.

Parliament undoubtedly recognized the possibility of the Army taking action

The events of the June 1647 Army mutiny showcased the officers’ willingness to act drastically if they deemed it necessary. However they believed that should Charles agree to the Newport Treaty, an agreement between the Presbyterians and the king might inhibit any extreme military actions. While militarily both the Presbyterians and Charles lacked the necessary forces to challenge the New Model Army, the inherent authority of a compromise between king and Parliament might have proven sufficient to somewhat quell the most radical plans of the Army. Yet even at this crucial moment, Charles continued to stall the negotiations. Charles most likely delayed reaching an agreement with Parliament in one last effort to obtain a better settlement for himself. “That he was not so short sighted, as to not foresee the inconvenience would follow to himself if there were not a happy agreement.” Charles still concerned himself with the potential side effects of a treaty, which would benefit him. Though he displayed tremendous political acumen in reaching such an agreement with his former military enemy, the king would not accept a treaty, which he could not fully support. For this reason, he delayed a ratification of the Treaty of Newport and thereby inadvertently provided the military with an opportunity to seize power.

Upon hearing of Parliament’s dismissal of the remonstrance, the Army officers decided to act. Military leaders like Ireton believed that more drastic measures were absolutely necessary for the safety of England. While some debate persisted between both the Grandees and the Levellers as well as between the Army

officers and parliamentary Independents, eventually they decided to purge Parliament of their enemies.\(^{262}\) On November 27, 1648, the New Model Army began its march on London. In an effort to justify their actions, several officers including Ireton wrote a declaration the same day, which explained the reasoning for their actions.

"We apprehend ourselves obliged in duty to God, this kingdom, and good men therein, to improve our utmost abilities in all honest ways for the avoiding of these great evils we have remonstrated, and for prosecution of the good things we have propounded; and also that such persons who were the inviters of the late invasion from Scotland, the instigators and encouragers of the late insurrections within this kingdom, and (those forcible ways failing) have still pursued the same wicked designs by treacherous and corrupt counsels, may be brought to public justice, according to their several demerits. For all these ends we are now drawing up with the Army to London.\(^{263}\)

When referencing the instigators of the Scottish invasion, the Independents referred to Charles. Though they stated their intent to bring justice to this inviter of the Scots, the authors of this declaration also expressed a desire to take action against those who encouraged the invasion. Whether this meant only royalists or any MP willing to negotiate with the king remained uncertain. Whatever the meaning, the Independents used this apparent desire for justice to justify their planned seizure of power. While ideals of justice and stability for England undeniably motivated the Independents to march to London, they were also concerned about defeating the Presbyterians. Their rivalry with the Presbyterians had devolved to such an extent that only a military coup would settle the issue.

The New Model Army succeeded in implementing a bloodless military coup without any complications. On November 30, 1648, Lieutenant-Colonel Ralph


Cobbett led an Army regiment to take custody of the king at Newport and escort him to Hurst Castle. Another regiment of the Army arrived just outside of London on December 2. Thus when Parliament approved Charles’s revision’s to the Newport Treaty by a vote of 129 – 83, they all knew of the Army’s seizure of Charles and the forces camped right outside the city. In response to this vote, the House of Commons December 5 journal stated that, “The answers of the king to the Propositions of both Houses are a Ground for which the House to proceed upon, for the Settlement of the Peace of the Kingdom.” Presumably despite Charles’s kidnapping and the nearby presence of the Army, the Presbyterians still believed they could establish a lasting peace. Indeed during the parliamentary session, the Commons formed a committee to confer with the Army commanders. Perhaps they simply underestimated the Army’s intentions or alternatively clung to their positions despite the martial threat outside.

On December 6, 1648, Colonel Thomas Pride and his regiment of soldiers waited outside Westminster Hall to arrest the MPs deemed threatening to the interests of the Army. As the members of Parliament entered Westminster Hall, Pride would prevent any of the people on his lists that the Army had arrested them. Pride and his

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268 Gardiner, History of the Great Civil War, 270. Westminster Hall was where the House of Commons Meetings were held.
soldiers arrested approximately 80 members of Parliament on December 6. Due to the strong military presence outside Westminster, Pride and his soldiers arrested all their targets without any excessive use of violence. Several other prominent Presbyterian MPs either fled London or were arrested the following day. The Army’s removal of dozens of their political opponents from the House of Commons completely reworked the political situation within Parliament. Where before the Presbyterians enjoyed a sizable majority in the Commons, this purge shifted power to the Independents. Parliament experienced such a drastic change that historians have referred to the post-purge Parliament as the Rump Parliament in an effort to distinguish it from the previous Long Parliament. Not only did the Presbyterian faction cease to hold a majority, but their remaining supporters also operated under the knowledge that any display of major opposition to the Independents could result in their arrest as well. As Fairfax explained to Parliament in a December 6 letter, due to the Purge the Independents could legally proceed without any interference. “We shall desire and hope you will speedily and vigorously to take order for the execution of justice.” Fairfax specifically meant that Parliament finally possessed the ability to deal with Charles. Thus through the use of military force, the New Model Army went from having Parliament ignore its petitions to having complete authority over the legislature. With the royalists defeated, the Scots returned home, and the Presbyterians removed as a political threat, no major obstacle remained between the

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269 Cobbett, *Cobbet’s Parliamentary History*, 1248. According to the list provided in this book, 47 people were imprisoned while 40 were simply secluded from participating in Parliament again.  
270 Underdown, *Pride’s Purge*, 145. William Prynne reportedly tried to force his way into Parliament and was forcibly removed. However no permanent damage was done to him.  
271 Ashley, *The Battle of Naseby*, 142.  
272 Cobbett, *Corbett’s Parliamentary History*, 1246.
Independents and eliminating Charles.

Fear about the king’s imminent return to power also prompted the French to radicals to seize control. Throughout the early summer of 1792, opposition to the king had grown due in part to the ongoing war with Austria and Prussia, which officially began on April 20, 1792. This anti-monarchical sentiment even resulted in a full-scale riot on June 20, which saw the first prominent emergence of the *sans culottes*. These protestors called themselves *sans culottes*, which meant those without pants, to emphasize their humble origins. While the National Guard successfully quelled the riot, its occurrence displayed the tension present in Paris. By late July 1792, circumstances worsened as the allied invasion coalition of Austrian and Prussian under the command of the Duke of Brunswick prepared to invade through the northeast border of France. On July 25, Brunswick published the Brunswick Manifesto on behalf of Holy Roman Emperor Francis II and Prussian King Frederick William III, which demanded Louis’s full restoration to the French throne.

Their said Majesties declare, on their word of honor as emperor and king, that if the chateau of the Tuileries is entered by force or attacked, if the least violence be offered to their Majesties the king, queen, and royal family, and if their safety and their liberty be not immediately assured, they will inflict an ever memorable vengeance by delivering over the city of Paris to military execution and complete destruction, and the rebels guilty of the said outrages to the punishment that they merit.

The Duke of Brunswick offered an explicit threat in this ultimatum. With an army of

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274 Ibid, 186. Somewhere between 10,000 and 20,000 *sans culottes* protestors broke into the Tuileries to threaten the life of the king. However Louis convinced them to back down and leave without harming him or his family.
276 Ibid, 188. Francis II had recently become emperor following the death of his brother, Leopold II.
80,000 foreign soldiers invading France, this coalition seemed quite capable of marching into Paris without considerable difficulty.\textsuperscript{278} Upon hearing of Brunswick’s delivering specific threats, the Assembly ordered all citizens receive armaments and activated them as official defenders of France.\textsuperscript{279} Ironically, despite Brunswick’s intention to protect the life of Louis and his family, this document actually played a crucial role in portraying Louis as a traitor to France. The king almost certainly had not contributed to the writing of this document, due to the fact that at the time of its release he remained in custody at the Tuileries.\textsuperscript{280} Yet the promised assistance of the foreign invaders eroded what little remaining support Louis had in the Assembly and gave credence to the rumors of an Austrian committee. Thus when the Jacobins initiated mass petitions beginning in late July demanded the overthrow of King Louis XVI, the Girondin majority in the Assembly promised to consider the proposal.\textsuperscript{281}

Prominent members of the Jacobin club such as Robespierre and Jérôme Pétion actually had advocated for the overthrow of the monarchy for a few months before the July 1792 ultimatum.\textsuperscript{282} Though these arguments energized many radicals, only the combination of an Austrian military invasion and anger at the king’s presumed betrayal caused this sentiment to spread. These feelings inspired several republican gatherings and petitions, which called for an end to the French monarchy.\textsuperscript{283} Even this increased amount of anger, could not persuade the Girondin majority in the Assembly to take action against Louis. After the publication of the Brunswick Manifesto, the

\textsuperscript{278} Price, \textit{The Road From Versailles}, 294.
\textsuperscript{279} Doyle, \textit{The Oxford History of the French Revolution}, 188.
\textsuperscript{281} Price, \textit{The Road From Versailles}, 295.
\textsuperscript{282} Doyle, \textit{The Oxford History of the French Revolution}, 187.
Assembly finally agreed to consider the proposals of the August 3 Parisian petition to depose the king, which Parisian Mayor Pétion brought to the Assembly. “He [Louis] has separated his interests from those of the nation. We, too, separate them. Far from having opposed the enemies without and within by any formal act, his conduct is a perpetual and formal act of disobedience to the constitution. As long as we have such a king freedom cannot grow strong and we want to remain free.”

Rather than invoking republican ideology as previous petitions had, this document explained how Louis had betrayed the ideology and practices of the 1791 Constitution. Though the petitioners offered no specific evidence for these allegations, its release immediately after Brunswick’s ultimatum demanded a response from the legislature. Yet on August 9, 1792, when the Assembly officially considered this petition, the republican deputies lacked the necessary majority to legally remove Louis from the throne. Despite the large amount of anti-monarchical rhetoric appearing throughout France, conservative and moderate deputies held a sufficient number of Assembly seats to block any attempt to abolish the monarchy. Just as in 1648 when the Presbyterian majority in Parliament had ignored the Remonstrance of the Army, in the summer of 1792 the Feuillants and Girondins in the Legislative Assembly disregarded the republican sentiment of the Jacobins and their allies. This avoidance would result again in a similar pattern of events as the radical revolutionaries decided to circumvent the Assembly’s conservative behavior and take action against Louis themselves.

The timing of the radical takeover after the Assembly’s refusal suggested that planning for this coup had started well before August 9, 1792. Just one day after the

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Assembly’s refusal, the radical revolutionaries took action by seizing the Tuileries and effectively deposing Louis. Though many political actors such as the king or the conservative deputies would characterize these events as illegal, several prominent radicals argued that the large amount of support from both Paris and the rest of France justified such actions. Within the capitol, support for the coup principally came from the 48 revolutionary sections of Paris, which were established in July 1790. These sections, which were known collectively as the revolutionary commune, served as the primary organizers behind both the sans culottes and the republican movement. One prominent Jacobin, Anaxagoras Chaumette, argued in his personal writings that the Commune’s leadership justified the August 10 insurrection. “There [in the Assembly] they were like lawyers crazily disputing, without cessation, over trifling matters, under the whips of their masters… Here [in the sections] the very foundations of the republic were being laid.” Chaumette argued that support from the Parisian sections rendered their perspective more legitimate than the Assembly. Chaumette and many other radicals, considered themselves the true representatives of both Parisians and the French people. Therefore when approximately 2,600 radical volunteers and members of the National Guard assaulted the Tuileries on August 10 in an effort to capture and dethrone the king, revolutionary leaders like Robespierre, Georges-Jacques Danton and Antoine Santerre believed this justified the violent insurrection. After two weeks of planning, the military supporters of the revolutionary municipal government

287 Doyle, The Oxford History of the French Revolution, 126 – 127. Each revolutionary section was overseen by a civil committee, a revolutionary committee, and an armed force.
289 Price, The Road From Versailles, 297 – 298.
secured most of Paris without difficulty.

Like the officers of the New Model Army, the French radicals willingly employed violent methods after they felt that the political course had failed. Though considerably more violence occurred during the August 10 revolt than in the bloodless purge of Parliament, both events saw the armed seizure of both king and capitol. However while the New Model Army acted in the interests of the military, the revolutionary Commune claimed to speak for the people. They claimed such a justification with its issuing of their first decree, immediately following the insurrection. “The people, placed between death and slavery, foreseeing the ruin of the country, seize once again its rights. The sovereign has spoken.”

This proclamation depicted the Commune as an extension of the French people, who also served as the sovereign of the nation. Rather than appearing as bloody partisan aggressors, the united Parisian sections viewed themselves, and wanted others to see them, as the liberators of Paris. In their minds, every bloody incident of August 10 was justifiable because the French people had chosen to exercise their rights as sovereign.

When thousands of armed sans culottes appeared outside the Tuileries to forcibly depose Louis, the king faced one of his last decisions as a monarch. Though the Commune had organized several thousands of volunteers to attack the king’s stronghold, the 2,000 combined troop strength of Swiss mercenaries and royalist National Guards prevented the sans culottes from entering without sparking a major skirmish. These troops guarding the Tuileries certainly expected an eventual attack from the radicals as following the June 20 riots, the increase in republican petitions

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291 Furneaux, The Last Days of Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI, 23.
and the Brunswick Manifesto. Indeed by the events of August 10, 1792, almost every Frenchmen anticipated the inevitable conflict. In the days leading up to the insurrection, several of Louis’s supporters counseled him to flee Paris. However this time the king chose to stay in Paris, likely dreading the idea of a life in exile. Indeed Marie Antoinette once commented that she would rather die than live like King James II of England. Yet despite his knowledge of the coming attack, Louis made fairly few preparations to defend the Tuileries. Perhaps curtailed by the considerable limitations placed on him by the French constitution or simply his own reluctance to go to war, on August 10 Louis lacked the necessary strength to fight for his kingship. When Louis asked the Assembly’s representative and Attorney General, Pierre Louis Roederer, for permission to declare martial law, his subsequent refusal actually mattered fairly little. Though the loyal soldiers stationed in the Tuileries willingly would defend the king and his family, they lacked the necessary numbers to repel the sans culottes. Yet other witnesses of the revolt, such as then French lieutenant Napoleon Bonaparte, contended that Louis might have retained his throne if he had employed different tactics. “If Louis XVI had shown himself on horseback, the victory would have been his.” While Napoleon’s own preference for a more direct form of leadership undoubtedly colored his analysis of the events, the king’s poor leadership undeniably left his protectors confused and uninspired. Rather than acting in accordance with Napoleon’s suggestion, Louis preferred to stay with his family.

292 Padover, *The Life and Death of Louis XVI*, 269. James II was the King of England and the second son of Charles I. He was ousted in the 1688 Glorious Revolution and lived the rest of his life in exile.
293 Jordan, *The King’s Trial*, 5 – 6.
295 Norwood Young, *The Growth of Napoleon: A Study in Environment*, (London: John Murray, 1910), 276. This quote of Napoleon’s was taken from a missing letter to his older brother, Joseph Bonaparte, who later summarized it in his memoirs.
inside the Tuileries. While he occasionally spoke with his soldiers, the king refrained from giving clear orders on how the troops should respond to the inevitable attack. This reluctance to confront a potential danger resembled his indecisive behavior throughout the revolution. Thus when the *san culottes* assaulted his palace, Louis found himself woefully unprepared.

Confronted with an insurrection assembled to overthrow him, the indecisive king turned to his wife and Roederer for advice. Whereas the queen initially counseled him to stand firm against the radicals, Roederer suggested that Louis and his family should seek shelter with the Legislative Assembly. Such an idea likely appealed to the conflict-averse king. When faced with similar situations during the revolution, like the October 5, 1789 march to Versailles or the riot on June 20, 1792, Louis preferred persuading his subjects to back down. Yet when he attempted to speak with representatives of the *san culottes* about their intentions, the conversation quickly devolved into shouts regarding the deposition of the French tyrant. After realizing that words would not soothe the crowds of people outside the Tuileries, Louis decided to follow Roederer’s advice and seek sanctuary with the Assembly. The king might have attempted to rally soldiers of the National Guard both inside and outside the palace to fight as Napoleon suggested after the culmination of these events. Yet he indicated when speaking to the nobility present in the Tuileries that any such efforts would fail. “Gentlemen, I beg you to withdraw and abandon a useless defense. There is nothing to be done here for you or for me.”

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hopeless he must have felt. After enduring a tumultuous revolution, the king apparently accepted that his reign soon would come to an end. Departing for the safety of the Assembly, he never actually left orders to his remaining troops at the Tuileries. Such an oversight arguably played a role in the ensuing destruction as the abandoned mercenaries still defended the Tuileries against the radicals before eventually being massacred. With the king’s surrender to the Assembly, Louis’s reign had come to an end. Though the revolutionaries would officially dethrone the king later, this effectively served as the abdication of King Louis XVI.

_A Comparative Analysis_

When examining these two narratives from the aftermath of the king’s flight to the radicals’ forceful seizure of government, several similarities between the English and French became apparent. Because of the commonalities between Charles’s escape from military captivity and Louis’s flight to Varennes, it certainly makes sense that the factions of the French Assembly would share a comparable reaction to this event with the political groups of the English Parliament. Though neither legislature rejected their monarchs upon their return, these events brought about a sizable increase for membership in the radical movements. The Independents and Jacobins grew large enough to establish a large vocal minority within the legislatures, but found themselves increasingly unsatisfied with the moderates’ conciliatory approach towards the king. Even after the monarchs committed treason in the view of the radicals by colluding with the foreign invasion of their state, the moderates refused to support a republican government. Based on the belief that the legislature never would overthrow
the king, both radical groups decided to instead seize power by force. After these successful coups, the radicals finally could depose the hated kings.

The clear similarities between events in England and France indicate the possibility of a common narrative occurring in the two states. Undoubtedly several other historical moments articulated clear differences between the civil war and the revolution. For instance, historians could not consider Scotland as foreign to England in the same way Austria was to France, making the foreign invasions quite different. Additionally, while the Independents and Grandees accepted radical republicanism, they never really embraced the ideology quite like the Jacobins. Perhaps most importantly, Charles and Louis continued to follow two fundamentally different political approaches to their deteriorating circumstance. Charles thrived on the conflict between the Presbyterians and Independents and might have managed to restore himself to power if not for the purge. Contrarily Louis detested political infighting, preferring instead to soothe tensions. Because of these many differences in culture, history, legislature, monarch, and foreign involvement, many people might have assumed that the ultimate fate of the two kings would diverge in a spectacular fashion. Yet despite several dissimilarities, the English Independents and the French Jacobins shared comparable motivations behind their seizure of power. In both kingdoms, the republican sentiment grew after the flight of the monarchs. After months of watching the moderate legislatures compromise with the kings, the English and French radicals each took action and seized control of their government. By seizing control of their government, the Independents and the Jacobins finally had acquired enough power to deal with the monarchs as they saw fit. Thus it became clear that only through a forced
radicalization of a legislature could a regicide ever occur in early modern Europe.
Chapter 3: A Condemnation of Monarchs

Introduction

Following the radicals’ seizures of power, both the Independents and the Jacobins acquired the necessary political authority to place their deposed monarchs on trial. This process highlighted the political factions’ different motivations behind the regicides. The Independents and Jacobins approached trying the king through remarkably different ways. The newly purged House of Commons established a biased High Court of Justice, while ignoring legal and moral critiques from the House of Lords, the Scottish Parliament, and prominent English citizens. Admittedly, the Independents provided Charles with a chance to explain himself and his actions before a tribunal. But the king’s lack of a lawyer and the appointment of heavily partisan court commissioners guaranteed his eventual conviction. The military might of the Independents had decided Charles’s guilt on December 6, 1648. Contrary to the events in England, Louis’s trial proceeded in an almost fair way. Many of the Jacobins undoubtedly preferred a summary execution to legally trying the king. However, the Girondins’ presence in the National Convention ensured that Louis would have the chance to defend himself in court and consult with a lawyer. The National Convention’s two party system allowed Louis to receive a mostly fair trial. Unlike the Rump Parliament, the Convention preferred legally sound reasons to commit their regicide. The radically different ways in which Parliament and the Convention conducted the trials, revealed their motivations behind the executions. Whereas the Independents wanted him to die for purely practical reasons, the Jacobins advocated for his death because of ideological motivations.
Decision to Try the King

Following the success of Pride’s Purge of the Presbyterian MP’s on December 6, 1648, the House of Commons’ majority opinion on the status of the king dramatically shifted. Whereas on December 5, 1648, Parliament had expressed their approval of the king’s favorable answer to the Treaty of Newport, a little more than a week later on December 15 they ordered that the army relocate Charles to Windsor in order to stand trial. The Independent seizure of power, which granted them a majority of votes in the House of Commons, clearly explained Parliament’s rather abrupt shift in policy. Yet even after the Grandees had secured the necessary political support to try the king, they still needed to concern themselves with the opinions of the people. The removal of Presbyterians from Parliament had not diminished their influence in England and several Presbyterian ministers preached against both the events of the Purge and new Rump Parliament. Additionally, even after the second defeat of the royalists in August 1648, several monarchists retained positions of influence such as control over several prominent publications. Therefore even with the Independent control over both the military and the legislature, the Grandees needed to justify their decisions or risk the outbreak of a third phase of the Civil War.

The House of Commons provided such a rationalization with their release of the official charges against King Charles on December 28, 1648. Because the Rump Parliament considered these allegations an official document of Parliament, most of

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300 Wedgwood, A Coffin for King Charles, 42 – 43.
301 Underdown, Pride’s Purge, 163 – 164.
302 Wedgwood, A Coffin for King Charles, 50 – 52. For instance Mercurius Melancolicus, Mercurius Elencticus, and Mercurius Pragmaticus were all prominent royalist newspapers.
England’s literate population likely would have read it.\textsuperscript{303} Indeed following Pride’s Purge, both a large number of both literate and illiterate Englishmen closely followed Parliament through several different publications.\textsuperscript{304} Thus for the Commons, the charges justified the trying of Charles in both the legal and popular spheres. These indictments against Charles blamed him for all the horrors of the English Civil War. “That Charles Stuart hath acted contrary to his trust in departing from the Parliament, setting up his standard, making a war against them and thereby been the occasion of much bloodshed and misery to the people who he was set over for good.”\textsuperscript{305} This list of charges failed to acknowledge Charles’s status as king, instead referring to him as an ordinary English citizen with a surname. This lessening of the king to a mere defendant seems rather strange, especially given that unlike Louis’s trial in France Charles stood trial as the recognized king. By referring to the king as Charles Stuart rather than his majesty, the Commons might have implied that Charles owed the English government deference rather than the other way around. Additionally in these allegations, the House implicated Charles as the instigator of the Civil War and all of its resulting casualties and chaos in England. This reshaped what many saw as an attack on the king into a needed punishment for a tyrant. Characterizing Charles as a hated tyrant certainly would damage the king’s already fragile popularity by a significant degree. Though this character assassination attempt would not convince the royalists of anything, for others in England it proved convincing. The House of Commons wanted the English people to view the trial of King Charles I as a legal and

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\textsuperscript{303} Ed. Lagomarsino and Wood, \textit{The Trial of King Charles I}, location 463.  \\
\textsuperscript{304} Wedgwood, \textit{A Coffin for King Charles}, 49 – 50.  \\
\textsuperscript{305} Ed. Lagomarsino and Wood, \textit{The Trial of King Charles I}, location 510.
\end{flushright}
necessary endeavor. To accomplish this they somewhat unfairly blamed him for all the ills of the English Civil War.

After the Commons decided to proceed with Charles’s trial, they sought the concurrence of the upper house of Parliament. On January 2, 1649, the House of Commons sent the House of Lords this ordinance to vote on. “The Lords and Commons do declare and adjudge that by the fundamental laws of this kingdom it is treason in the King of England for the time being to levy war against the Parliament and Kingdom of England.” 306 Most people of this time period would have considered treason acting against the interests of the king. Thus the possibility that the king actually could commit treason was almost absurd. Unsurprisingly the more conservative House of Lords opposed this ordinance, though they offered no specific reason for this decision. 307 As the official representatives of the aristocracy, a majority of the House of Lords possibly feared that bringing down the king could hurt their own positions. Perhaps they realized directly resisting the Independent controlled Commons and military would accomplish fairly little. Whatever their motivations, the House of Lords rejected this ordinance but in a fairly weak manner. Thus when the Commons ignored the upper house’s refusal, the aristocracy neither approved of nor did they attempt to block the resulting trial.

Immediately upon hearing of the House of Lords’ rejection, the House of Commons worked to bypass such opposition. Legally speaking, the Commons could not proceed with Charles’ trial without the support of the House of Lords. Yet with 

306 Ed. Lagomarsino and Wood, The Trial of King Charles I, location 573.
the force of the New Model Army behind them and the lingering fear from the purge, the Independents decided to pass a law, which would render such an objection irrelevant. On January 4, 1649, the Independent majority in the lower house determined that they would try Charles with or without support from the nobility.\footnote{Ed. Lagomarsino and Wood, \textit{The Trial of King Charles I}, location 625.}

The major republican figure Henry Marten introduced the legal principle to Parliament, which rationalized this ploy. “The people are, under God, the original of all just power [and] the Commons of England, in Parliament assembled, being chosen by, and representing the people, have the supreme power in this nation.”\footnote{Henry Marten “January 4, 1649 remarks to the Commons” in Barber, \textit{Regicide and Republicanism}, 122.} This provision essentially eliminated both the king and the House of Lords from the political structure. Using the argument that they alone truly represented the people of England, they attempted to justify their dismissal of the House of Lords. Despite the Independent faction’s earlier opposition to republican ideals, their collective desire to try Charles drove them to advocate for the principles of republicanism. This decision combined with the earlier events of the Purge suggested a growing tendency for the House of Commons to remove any potential political obstacles in their way. With the Independents receiving support from the anti-Stuart New Model Army, they could afford to ignore the voices of opposition. With an awareness of the parliamentary purge and the effectiveness of the Army serving as a deterrent, no political faction took any major steps against the Independents. Though Parliament claimed to speak for the English people, the Rump Parliament gave voice only to the Independents.

The French National Convention faced a similar problem of justifying their indictment against Louis. Even before the formation of the National Convention in
September 21, 1792, the question about the future of the fallen monarch perplexed many of the major French political figures. Immediately after the August 10 coup, the victorious Commune controlled Paris, the legislature and the fate of the king. After Louis and his family sought sanctuary with the Assembly, the moderate deputies presumably wanted to continue holding Louis as a potential negotiating tactic. However after receiving a proclamation from the Commune demanding custody over the king, the Assembly acquiesced quickly enough. Just three days after the coup, a procession of Commune guards escorted the king and his family to a comfortable captivity inside the Temple. The Assembly’s swift submission to the Commune in this matter exemplified its political weakness during the last month of its existence. Though the Assembly passed several laws, which included the official suspension of the king and the formation of a provisional governing council, they lacked the necessary force to enact such policies. With the strength of the National Guard and the support of most Parisians behind them, the revolutionary leaders mostly ignored the Assembly’s feeble grasps for power. Much like the Independents in England, the radicals governed based on the threats of violence. Fearing the dissolution of the Assembly or an even worse fate, the moderate deputies meekly conceded to most of the Commune’s demands. Threats and violence provided the Commune with control that months of political compromise and wrangling had failed to produce. After acts of violence had secured power for the Jacobins and their allies, none of the radicals would willingly throw away this valuable political tool.

310 Jordan, *The King’s Trial*, 39.
311 Price, *The Road From Versailles*, 315. The Temple was formerly the stronghold of the Templar Order in Paris.
Even after the success of the *san culottes* revolt and the failure of the Assembly, both moderates and royalists alike still maintained a fairly large base of supporters. Their continued survival seriously worried the radical Parisian, who speculated about the possibility that these royalists might act as a fifth column for the invading force commanded by Brunswick.\(^{313}\) Attempting to avert this possibility, on August 17, 1792 the Commune ordered the assemblage of a special tribunal to seek out political criminals, try and execute these dangers to the security of France.\(^{314}\) Such an aggressive pursuit of political enemies exceeded the mere suppression tactics of the English Independents. Yet the Commune had reason to fear royalists especially following the Austrians’ decisive victory at the Battle of Verdun on September 3, 1792, which provided the Austrian troops with an almost clear path to Paris. The ensuing fear and panic inspired Parisian citizens to massacre suspected Austrian sympathizers and political prisoners, claiming approximately the lives of 1500 people.\(^{315}\) Though neither the Commune nor the Assembly officially approved this September Massacre, the radicals likely appreciated the systematic silencing of royalist opposition. After this massacre and the surprising French victory against the Austrian invaders at the September 20 Battle of Valmy, all royalist hopes for a return to the old regime had evaporated.\(^{316}\) Following the retreat of the First Coalition in late 1792, all supporters of the old monarchy ceased playing any major role in this regicidal narrative.

The victory at Valmy obliterated the last hopes for Louis’s restoration and also signaled a feeling of security for revolutionary France. With the safety of France temporarily secured, the revolutionary Commune decided to officially end all government institutions of the French constitutional monarchy. On September 21, one day after Valmy, the National Convention assembled with 749 deputies in attendance, all of whom were elected by universal male suffrage.\(^{317}\) The founders of the Convention designed the legislative body to author a new constitution to replace the 1791 document, which advocated a constitutional monarchy.\(^{318}\) This intended constitutional convention quickly became another legislative body as conflict and division quickly arose in the form of the Jacobins and the Girondins. Though the two factions previously had worked together against the monarchical supporters, the September Massacres left both groups without a common enemy. By late 1792, the Jacobin Club functioned as the clear representative of radical Paris. They supported egalitarianism and civic pride, but willingly hurt others in order to protect such principles. Meanwhile, the Girondins preferred a more conservative republic, emphasizing liberty as more important than equality.\(^{319}\) These two factions displayed their vastly varied ideologies clearly when the Girondin leader, Jacques Pierre Brissot predicted what a Jacobin France would look like. “The disorganizers are those who want everything leveled, property, freedom of movement, the price of commodities, the diverse services rendered to society. They want the field worker to receive the compensation of the legislation, they even want to level talents, knowledge, virtue

\(^{317}\) Jordan, *The King’s Trial*, 45 – 47.


because they lack all these qualities." Brissot like many of the Girondins viewed the Jacobins as dangerous radicals. He clearly displayed such an opinion when he inaccurately described the Jacobins as a French version of the Levellers. Yet besides this difference in political opinion, the Jacobins also differentiated themselves from the Levellers by controlling significant power and influence in both the Convention and the entirety of France. This power dynamic differentiated post-coup France from England in a significant manner. Whereas following Pride’s Purge, the Independents determined all political action without substantial interference from either conservatives or radical levelers, the feud between the Jacobins and the Girondins embroiled much of France. Though both factions opposed Louis XVI and any form of monarchy, they vehemently disagreed on the necessary steps to make Louis the last king of France.

Due to the difficulty of trying a king, several Convention deputies of both factions likely regretted the king’s survival of the August 10 coup. If Louis had died during an outbreak of violence in August or September, then the Convention would avoid the legal problems of placing the king on trial. Yet Louis’s continued existence created problems for both factions even as large numbers of Parisians, republicans and other radicals throughout France demanded that Louis face justice for his crimes against the French people. France strode towards such a goal when the Convention abolished the monarchy as one of its first official acts on September 21, 1792. This official end to the line of French kings passed without any opposition from either of the major factions. In fact the deputies barely bothered even discussing it as

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320 Jordan, *The King’s Trial*, 50.
321 Ibid, 56.
evidenced from a comment made by Bishop of Blois Abbé Grégoire. “Why is there a need to discuss this when everyone agrees? Kings are in the moral order what monsters are in the physical.” Though Grégoire referred to Louis in a rather harsh manner, several of the king’s actions arguably justified these allegations. Louis’s attempted escape and later his tacit approval of the Austrian invasion condemned the king as a traitor to his nation in the eyes of his former subjects. For the entire Convention and the majority of the French people, these crimes delegitimized Louis’s claim to the throne. Despite the great political rivalries occurring within the Convention at the time, the French monarchy finally dissipated without much struggle. However, the question of what to do with this fallen monarch inspired a major conflict

Both the English Independents and the French radicals fervently believed themselves justified in dethroning their monarchs. Admittedly both groups suppressed any opposition from the few remaining influential supporters of the monarchy. In England most royalists were quiet after the dismissal of the House of Lords, while the French simply eliminated many of the suspected monarchists during the September Massacres. Both their contemporaries and scholars of the modern era have judged these violent actions as needless and illegal. Yet the radicals of both nations rationalized these drastic actions as necessary due to the existing threat of the surviving kings. Even while held in captivity, Charles persuaded the Scots to invade thereby reawakening a finished war. These actions indicated to the Independents that a living Charles could always pose a threat to them. In contrast to his English

counterpart, Louis maintained no real control or influence over the First Coalition, even though they acted in his name. Despite Louis’s passivity following the events of August 10, his mere existence still threatened republican France. While Charles threatened English stability due to his individual characteristics, the widespread belief in the French monarchy threatened the French Republic considerably more than the captive Louis could. The active and passive influences, which Charles and Louis respectively maintained, would impact the motivations behind the regicides.

**The Convening of the Tribunals**

The English Independents assembled a court to try Charles with considerable difficulty. The consequences of Pride’s Purge and the rejection of the House of Lords showcased the Independents’ willingness to ignore all other major political factions. Thus when the House of Commons ordered that the king stand trial for his crimes, no MP voiced significant dissent to this proclamation. Unlike in revolutionary France, many non-legislature affiliated royalists willingly voiced their hostility to such a notion. However with Independent control over a well-trained Army and Parliament, these expressions of opposition failed to impact the decision. Additionally, the Commons prohibited any suspected royalists from even entering London during January 1649 and ordered the arrest of any “delinquent or papist” found breaking this prohibition. The Independents disallowed any royalist interference with the proceedings of the trial. Though Parliament undoubtedly went to

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323 Wedgwood, *A Coffin for King Charles*, 76.
324 Ed. Lagomarsino and Wood, *The Trial of King Charles I*, location 625.
extreme lengths, the fear of yet another war breaking out demanded that the Independents take these actions.

Even with the adoption of preemptive measures against suspected monarchists, many prominent and influential Englishmen still questioned the need for an actual trial. As an answer to this confusion, Parliament rationalized the trial as necessary for England’s continued stability in the January 6, which officially ordered the assemblage of the court.

Whereas also the Parliament, well hoping that the restraint and imprisonment of his person… would have quieted the distempers of the kingdom, did forbear to proceed judicially against him, but found by sad experience that such their remissness served only to encourage him and his accomplices in the continuance of their evil practices and in raising of new commotions, rebellions and invasions.325

This act framed Parliament’s leniency towards the king after his first capture as indirectly responsible for the subsequent Scottish invasion and ensuing military conflict of 1648. The act depicted the monarch as an unpunished criminal, who had committed the same crime twice. For the writers of the act, this lack of chastisement suggested to Charles that he could continue his evil practices without interference. Following this argument, Parliament should try and punish the king because the lenient approach had failed. Based on this reasoning, the authors of the act implied that refusing to reprimand Charles for a second time would cause another war. While the Independents certainly engaged in political framing during this description of the king, they feared a very real threat. The Commons mistrusted Charles because he once had planned an invasion of England even while in captivity. Because of the

danger this captive king posed, the Independents believed in the absolute necessity of placing Charles on trial.

The actual composition of the High Court of Justice ensured that the King’s judges resembled the House of Commons in terms of bias. The Independents refused even the slightest semblance of objectivity as the court filled itself with army officers. “That Thomas, Lord Fairfax, Oliver Cromwell, Henry Ireton… shall be, and are hereby appointed, and required to be commissioners and judges for the hearing, trying and adjuging of the said Charles Stuart.” Of the 135 commissioners chosen for the High Court, most consisted of Army officers and members of the House of Commons. Given this makeup of the court, the Commons showed no interest in conducting a marginally fair trial. The vast majority of the court commissioners either participated in or supported the Independents’ seizure of power. Because the architects of the coup maintained a fairly strict anti-monarchist perspective, the king lacked even the slightest chance of having a non-biased group of court commissioners appear at his trial. Based on their choice of commissioners, the Commons clearly desired a show trial with the expected verdict of guilty. Additionally, this selection of judges showed that Parliament cared fairly little about allegations of bias from the opposition. The military and political strength of the Independents guaranteed that a one-sided court would occur without interference. Thus even before Charles’s first day in court, the choice of commissioners already ensured his conviction.

Due to the Rump Parliament’s tendency to circumvent established law, a variety of groups from a large spectrum of political beliefs opposed the formation of the High Court. An expected amount of opposition arose from certain influential

groups like the royalists, the House of Lords and the Scottish Parliament. But on January 9, 1649 the House of Lords again merely discussed their disapproval of the trial without agreeing to any common decision.\textsuperscript{327} Meanwhile the entirety of the Scottish Parliament sent a letter to the Commons, which criticized the legal proceedings taken against the king.\textsuperscript{328} Yet neither formally challenged the military minded Rump Parliament, which promptly ignored these protests. However more surprisingly, several of the Commons’ appointees to the Court also objected to involving themselves in this trial. Parliament’s three original choices to oversee the trial, Chief Justices Henry Rolle and Oliver St. John, and Lord Chief Baron Wilde of the Exchequer, all refused to serve on the Court.\textsuperscript{329} Even though all three men held anti-monarchical beliefs, they also heartily disliked the Independent seizure of power. For these men, the disregarding of the House of Lords and the formation of the High Court both acted in defiance of English law.\textsuperscript{330} For these reasons they withdrew from the trial, despite their own political sympathies for the Jacobins. A similar case also occurred when only 67 commissioners of the 135 appointees actually agreed to take part in the High Court.\textsuperscript{331} Though many of the appointees offered no specific reason for their refusals, several of them voiced complaints similar to those of Rolle, St. John, and Wilde. These outright refusals from dozens of suspected republican sympathizers indicated that a sizable portion of Englishmen disliked both the Court and the actions of the Rump Parliament. Although some derided the High Court as illegal, these opinions mattered little to the Independents. Both the officers and

\textsuperscript{327} Ed. Lagomarsino and Wood, \textit{The Trial of King Charles I}, location 743.
\textsuperscript{328} Ibid, location 896 – 903.
\textsuperscript{329} Wedgwood, \textit{A Coffin for King Charles}, 105 – 106.
\textsuperscript{330} Ibid, 106.
\textsuperscript{331} Ibid, 109.
soldiers of the New Model Army wanted the king to meet justice. The sheer strength of the military guaranteed the fulfillment of this desire. On January 8, 1649, the commissioners of the court began assembling together at Westminster Hall. After twelve days of preparations, Charles’s trial officially began on January 20.

Revolutionary France experienced a similar amount of tension over placing Louis on trial. However, it differed from England in having much of the debate over the fate of the king take place in the National Convention. The side effects of having a two party legislature prevented the Convention from moving as the Rump Parliament. Soon after the abolition of the monarchy on September 21, 1792, radical groups both inside and outside of the Convention advocated charging Louis for his alleged crimes. The first formal demand for a trial came from Merlin de Thionville, who was a radical member of the Jacobins. On October 1 1792, Merlin insisted that the deposed king must face swift justice. “It is time that he fall under the national sword; and that all those who have conspired with him follow him to the scaffold… the Convention ought to be, for him, both the jury of accusation and the jury of judgment.” Like the English Independents, Merlin desired the death of a king not a fair trial. Rather than arguing for the formation of an official court, he outlined the execution. For Merlin and many of his political allies, Louis already had displayed his guilt. They only wanted to determine when exactly first the trial and then the execution would take place.

Even though the Girondins disliked the idea of trying the king, they recognized that they needed to address the Jacobins’ popular proposal of executing

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332 Jordan, *The King’s Trial*, 61.
the king. Thus they formed a committee of 24 deputies, which consisted almost entirely of Girondin members, to discuss the issue and determine the legality of trying the king. When the committee presented its findings on November 4, they offered a disorganized report about the lawfulness of such a trial. Yet the account provided no conclusion about Louis’s fate. Based on these lack of findings, several political contemporaries questioned the motivation behind this committee. The committee’s rather unimpressive reports suggested that they opposed a trial. For the Girondins trying the king would give the hated Jacobins exactly what they wanted. Instead they preferred the idea of keeping the king alive as a captive. Louis might have proven a useful hostage against both their political rivals and hostile monarchical states. As long as the king lived, his mere existence would inhibit the Jacobins from proceeding with their radical republican ideals. Additionally, not killing the king might lessen the chances of another foreign invasion in the name of avenging the fallen French king. For these reasons, the Girondins disliked any definitive answer to the problem of what to do with the dethroned monarch. With a large plurality in the National Convention, the Girondins desired to keep this problem unsolved. Unfortunately for their interests, neither the radical citizens nor the Jacobin deputies intended to leave the king’s destiny alone.

When the Girondins formed a delaying committee to address the fate of the king, the Jacobins responded in kind. Forming a new committee led by the factionally unaligned Jean-Baptiste Mailhe, the Mailhe committee formed a very different

334 Jordan, The King’s Trial, 64.
on the first one. On November 7, 1792, they recommended that Louis legally could and should stand trial in a court overseen and judged by the Convention deputies. “Louis XVI can be judged. He can be judged for crimes which he committed while constitutional monarch…The nation alone has the right to arraign Louis XVI for his crimes against the Constitution. Consequently, the National Convention itself must either judge his crimes or refer the matter to a tribunal formed by the nation as a whole.” Though the committee accepted the king’s constitutional immunity, it maintained the right to try Louis for any crimes committed during his reign as a constitutional monarch. Furthermore it mandated that as king Louis required either a specially assembled court or the legislature itself to judge him. As in England, the committee recognized Louis as more than an ordinary criminal. The report also insisted on Louis’s right to choose his own attorney and review the evidence against him. Contrary to Merlin’s preference, the Mailhe committee intended to conduct a fair and legal trial. Unlike the English High Court of Justice, which completely ignored protestations of illegality from the House of Lords, the Scottish Parliament and their own supporters, the Mailhe committee actually inspected questions of legality. They paid special consideration to whether or not the king still retained the immunity granted to him in the 1790 constitution. After a majority of Convention deputies agreed with the findings of the committee, it became clear that they similarly agreed that Charles deserved a fair trial.

337 Jordan, The King’s Trial, 63 – 64.
338 Ibid, 65.
339 Jean-Baptiste Mailhe “November 7 Speech to the National Convention in Walzer, Regicide and Revolution, 104.
In the ensuing debate, the Girondins continuously asserted the illegal nature of such a trial. However most attached themselves to the immunity defense, as any other argument might result in the Jacobins labeling them as a royalist, which was wholly unacceptable by late 1792. In one of the more notable Girondin defenses, Charles Morisson defended the life of the king by arguing that France had already punished him by abolishing the monarchy. Thus he considered any further punishment illegal. Morisson asserted that Louis already had endured the punishments for his crimes as a constitutional monarch. In his mind any further sentence against the newly made private citizen would defy France’s own judicial code. Morisson denied the Convention’s right to try or execute Louis and viewed any such attempt as both illegal and unnecessary. He questioned the basic purpose of regicide, arguing that executing the man served no legal, moral or practical purpose. “But is it really so much in the interest of the French Republic that he be judged? Citizens, permit me to remind you at this moment of the love, the enthusiasm, of the Frenchmen for liberty, the energy of a free people, the constantly replenished means of this rich and fertile land. Without doubt whatever becomes of Louis XVI, he can never again enslave us.” In his speech Morisson examined what danger Louis actually posed. As he pointed out, the former king lacked any substantial power as a prisoner. The symbolic power Louis maintained as king would just as easily pass on to either of his escaped brothers. Additionally even executing the king as a symbolic end of the monarchy

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341 Walzer, *Regicide and Revolution*, 110. Morisson previously was a fairly loyal supporter of the monarchy and worked hard in this speech to assert his own republican leanings. Though he was later denounced as a royalist in August 1793 and removed from the Convention, he later served as a judge in Bonapartist France.

might not work given the restoration of the Stuarts to England. For Morisson the execution of Louis would accomplish nothing for France and therefore he deemed it unnecessary. The Rump Parliament never actually debated the question of the necessity of regicide due to the Army’s insistence on Charles’s blood. But immediately following Morisson’s arguments against regicide, one of the Jacobins justified regicide in response to these claims.

During the same debate session the young Jacobin, Saint Just, rationalized proceeding against the former king as a response to Morisson.343 “The single aim of the [Mailhe] committee was to persuade you that the king should be judged as an ordinary citizen. And I say that the king should be judged as an enemy; that we must not so much judge him as combat him; that as he had no part in the contract which united the French people, the forms of judicial procedure here are not to be sought in positive law but in the law of nations.”344 Though the Parisian radicals wanted revenge against Louis, something more than just vengeance needed to motivate the ostensibly rational French Republic. Saint Just depicted Louis as an enemy of the entirety of France. Whether as a king, prisoner, citizen or exile, Louis by definition always would oppose French interests. Only death would solve the problem of this perilous foe to the Republic. Admittedly, Saint Just unfairly vilified Louis in this speech. When looking at the king’s reign, he obviously cared for the wellbeing of his people. Yet in this speech Saint Just depicted Louis more as extension of monarchy and tyranny than an actual person. In this manner he transformed the hatred towards monarchy into something positive and pro-French. A desire for vengeance against

343 Walzer, *Regicide and Revolution*, 120.
344 Saint Just “November 13 remarks on regicide to the National Convention” in Walzer, *Regicide and Republicanism*, 121.
Louis also protected France. Additionally, this explanation rationalized Louis’s trial as proceedings against an enemy rather than a typical criminal trial. By describing Louis’s trial as the next step in the revolutionary struggle, Saint Just and his fellow regicide supporters garnered significant support from not just the Jacobins but also from several deputies, who were unaffiliated with either of the major political factions. This support ensured that the discussion over the trial would continue.

Although Morisson and Saint Just each respectively offered a brilliant condemnation and defense of regicide to the Convention, neither argument swayed the majority of deputies to one side or another. The debate continued on with allegations that Louis caused the food shortage in France and the release of private letters, which implicated the former king as an enemy of the French Republic. While these political developments certainly galvanized the radical base, they had little effect on the obstinate Girondins. Fearing the potential ramifications of both regicide and radical control over France, the Girondins rejected all attempts to try the king. Eventually the revolutionary Commune and radicalized Paris threatened to act against Louis with or without the support of the Convention. On December 2, 1792, members of the Commune sent the Convention a delegation, who told the deputies that they need consider only two questions in their debate. “Is Louis, king of the French, deserving of death? Is it advantageous for the republic to have him die on the scaffold?”

Though the Convention had discussed these questions during the course of the debate, the Commune’s stipulation hid the veiled threat of another coup. When the Legislative Assembly similarly trapped itself within a never-ending debate about

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345 Jordan, The King’s Trial, 69 – 73.
346 Ibid, 74.
the abolition of monarchy, the radicals forcibly dethroned the king. The Commune implied a willingness to engage in similar behavior regarding Louis. The blatant threat of another Parisian uprising convinced the Girondins to concede to the demands of the radicals.

Even with this submission, both factions still contended with one another over. Neither the Jacobins nor the Commune actually wanted a trial, preferring instead the summary execution of Louis. Robespierre summarized the Jacobins’ reasoning for this in a speech to the Convention on December 3. “If Louis could yet be tried, he might be found innocent. Do I say ‘found’? He is presumed innocent until the verdict. If Louis is acquitted, where then is the revolution? If Louis is innocent, all defenders of liberty are slanderers.”

For Robespierre, the potential trial of Louis allowed the potential condemnation of the Revolution. As he considered the revolution infallible, neither Robespierre nor the other Jacobins wanted even the possibility of its disavowal. However the Girondins derailed this argument with their attack on Jacobin supporter and Louis’s cousin Philippe Egalité. The allegation that the Jacobins wanted to place their own club member on the throne derailed the debate sufficiently that both sides eventually agreed to hold a trial for Louis. After two months of debate on December 5, 1792, the Convention finally assembled a Commission of 21 deputies to prepare criminal charges against the king. Despite the efforts of both Girondins and Jacobins to avoid it, King Louis XVI would stand trial.

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347 Maximilian Robespierre “November 13 remarks on regicide to the National Convention” in Walzer, Regicide and Republicanism, 131.
348 Jordan, The King’s Trial, 75.
349 Price, The Road From Versailles, 318.
The National Convention undoubtedly experienced more trouble than the Rump Parliament in bringing their monarch to trial. The House of Commons showcased the obvious benefit of a one party system with its efficiency in assembling a High Court. The House of Lords and the Scottish Parliament’s protestations of illegality and improper conduct left the Independents and the Army completely unaffected. Yet similar accusations against the French radicals resulted in weeks of legal justifications for charging the French king. The Jacobin-Girondin rivalry ensured that the trial would not occur in France without considerable deliberation. Yet even with this system, it was ultimately veiled threats from the Commune that finally ended the debate over the fate of the king. The king’s trials in England and France occurred not because of a vote from a fair republican legislature, but as a result of the implicit threats of violence. Though these legislatures represented the interests of powerful groups like the New Model Army and the Parisian radicals, neither could claim they acted in the interest of the English or French public.

Evidently, the removal of a king offered no guarantee of obtaining a fair government. The debate between Morisson and Saint Just over the utility of executing Louis spoke not just to the events in France but also to England’s past and to any other potential regicide. Morisson correctly noted Louis’s lack of power and influence over France. By himself Louis posed no danger to France. Whether he lived as a prisoner or in exile, the man likely never would trouble France again. Yet as Saint Just alluded to in his speech, Louis represented a danger, which extended beyond his own person. Enough people both inside and outside of France believed that Louis deserved to sit upon the French throne. So long as Louis lived, these royalists would
act in his name, regardless of the deposed king’s circumstances. Whether Louis lived as a prisoner, French citizen or exiled monarch, his mere existence endangered revolutionary France. Charles posed a similar threat to the newly established government of the Independents. However, Charles took a much more active role in stirring up royalist support. By trying each man for capital crimes, both the Independents and the French radicals hoped to eradicate any remaining threat from the king. However whereas the Rump Parliament wanted the elimination of Charles and the Stuarts, the Jacobins sought to eradicate the French monarchy as a concept.

Reactions of the King

When Charles and Louis each heard that they would be tried, their reactions differed immensely. This reflected their different approaches to interacting with their radical opponents. Additionally, it foreshadowed their subsequent behavior during their trial. However most of England or France never actually heard about the responses from the dethroned kings. Following their seizure of power, the new English and French authorities isolated Charles and Louis from their former subjects. Therefore the following reactions from the fallen monarchs only ever reached the ears of their captors.

The New Model Army detained Charles by removing him from Newport to a new captivity at Hurst Castle on November 30, 1648, shortly before Pride’s Purge.350 During the subsequent power shift in Parliament, the military continued its imprisonment of Charles. While a prisoner he lived in distinctly non-royal

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His captors also ensured the king would have no hidden supporters during his captivity, when they expelled the suspected royalist James Harrington from the castle. The military captors may have preempted any potential royalist insurrection by cutting Charles off completely from his power base. They intended to avoid a third war against the king. Despite this isolation, Charles may have smuggled a letter out with the support of royalist supporters following his incarceration at Hurst Castle. In mid December, royalists released a declaration, which claimed authorship from the king. Due to his secure confinement at Hurst, the veracity of this claim remains in doubt. However the following words either came directly from Charles or reflected the royalist perspective on their fallen king: “There is nothing [that] can more obstruct the long hoped for peace of this Nation, than the illegal proceedings of them that presume from servants to become masters and labour to bring in democracy.” Like most of his contemporaries, Charles viewed the very notion of democracy as a horrid and corrupt form of government. Charles condemned the Independent power grab as illegal and destructive of the proper political order. Like his supporters, he linked the radical Leveller perspective with the comparatively less extreme Independents by discussing the possibility of servants taking power and the institution of a democracy. The authors of this declaration viewed the Purge and the subsequent preparations of the High Court of Justice as both treasonous and unnatural. Charles would continue to spout these charges against his own judges for the fairly short remainder of his life.

351 Edwards, _The Last Days of Charles I_, 80.
352 Ibid, 80 – 81.
353 Wedgwood, _A Coffin for King Charles_, 66.
354 Charles I in a Coffin for King Charles, 66.
Surprisingly, in a complete contrast to his English counterpart, Louis reportedly expressed relief when hearing of his own official dethronement. Though such a sentiment occurred only after a long struggle to retain his throne, Louis’s apparent acceptance of his loss in status informed his conduct for the rest of his life. Three days after the events of August 10, 1792, the revolutionary Commune moved the royal family to confinement in the Temple. Though their captors provided Louis and his family with quarters quite unlike the usual French royal palaces, they still lived in rather comfortable accommodations. In another contrast to Charles, Louis expressed more outrage at the charges laid against him than the fact of criminal proceedings against a king. His lack of protest against the Convention’s right to abolish the monarchy indicated his acknowledgment of their legitimacy. Allegations of tyranny angered Louis more than the idea that a king could stand trial. He said as much to his attorney Lamoignon-Malesherbes. “Me, a tyrant? A tyrant does everything for himself. Have I not constantly done everything for my people? Who among them has ever hated tyranny more than me? They call me tyrant and they know as well as you what I am.” Louis vehemently objected to the radical depiction of his reign as tyranny. Furthermore he accused them of deliberately lying to the French people about his reign. Yet at no point did he challenge the radicals’ right to lay such accusations against him. By arguing against their claims, Louis tacitly accepted their right to try him. Unlike Charles he recognized the authority of

356 Ibid, 54 – 58. The Assembly spent 500,000 livres to see to the upkeep of the Royal Family.
357 Jordan, The King’s Trial, 88 – 89. Guillaume-Chrétien de Lamoignon de Malesherbes was a noted French attorney, who served as Louis’s lawyer during his trial. Malersherbes was later arrested and guillotined himself in April 23, 1794.
358 Louis XVI “December 1792 Remarks to Malesherbes” in Jordan, The King’s Trial, 89.
the new government. Though he argued vociferously against the allegations laid against him, he effectively submitted to the French Republic. Indeed Louis behaved more like a typical defendant than a dethroned king during the course of his trial, which further differentiates him from his English counterpart.

The Trials of the Kings

On January 20, 1649, the trial of King Charles I began in Westminster Hall. The Lord President of the High Court of Justice, John Bradshaw, oversaw the court with the aid of 67 commissioners. Though a complement of officers escorted the king into the hall as if he were a prisoner, he still received certain signs of respect such as being permitted to sit in a rather ostentatious chair. John Cook would prosecute the king on behalf of the House of Commons, while Charles elected to defend himself. At the very beginning of the trial, Bradshaw explained the reason for convening the trial in the first place.

Charles Stuart, King of England, the Commons of England assembled in Parliament, being deeply sensible of the calamities that have been brought upon this nation, (which is fixed upon you as the principal author of it) have resolved to make inquisition for blood, and according to the debt and duty they owe to justice, to God, the kingdom and themselves, and according to the fundamental power that rests in themselves, they have resolved to bring you to trial and judgment, and for that purpose have constituted this High Court of Justice before which you are brought.

Bradshaw described the trial as repaying a specific debt to both justice and the English people. Though he abstained from specifically condemning the king, Bradshaw and most of the court commissioners seemingly assumed Charles’s guilt.

360 Ed. Lagomarsino and Wood, The Trial of King Charles I, location 1185.
361 Ibid, location 1198.
before the trial even started. Indeed the format of the trial itself appeared biased against Charles. He stood in court without any attorneys or supporters surrounded by his political opponents.\textsuperscript{362} When Cook read out the long list of charges against Charles, he blamed the defendant for almost the entirety of the Civil War’s costs. “By which cruel and unusual wars by him levied, continued and renewed as aforesaid, much innocent blood of the free people of this nation have been spilt, many families been undone, the public treasury wasted and exhausted, trade obstructed and miserably decayed, vast expanse and damage to the nation incurred.”\textsuperscript{363} Cook portrayed Charles as the principal architect of all of England’s woes of the past decade. While Charles undoubtedly bore much of the blame for the Civil War, the charges unfairly scapegoated the king as the principal architect of the conflict. Presumably, the Independents wanted their fellow countrymen to share their hatred for Charles. Throughout the duration of Charles’s trial, neither the prosecution nor the court commissioners held much doubt about the guilt of their king. Thus his judges appeared to have decided Charles’s guilt before he even defended himself.

The king damaged his own case even further with his unique defense. When Cook described him as a tyrant, the king laughed.\textsuperscript{364} Perhaps the advise of an attorney might have persuaded Charles to display more respect for his judges. Yet without such a presence, Charles chose not to defend himself against any of the charges. Rather than attempting to justify his actions, Charles denied the legitimacy of the court.\textsuperscript{365} When Bradshaw asked him to respond to the charges laid against him, the

\textsuperscript{362} Wedgwood, \textit{A Coffin for King Charles}, 137.
\textsuperscript{363} Ed. Lagomarsino and Wood, \textit{The Trial of King Charles I}, location 1231 – 1240.
\textsuperscript{364} Ibid, location 1249.
\textsuperscript{365} Wedgwood, \textit{A Coffin for King Charles}, 150.
king showcased his clear contempt for the court. “Let me know by what lawful authority I am seated here and I shall not be unwilling to answer. In the meantime, I shall not betray my trust. I have trust committed to me by God, by old and lawful descent. I will not betray it to answer a new unlawful authority.”

The king considered his forced escort to London tantamount to kidnap. Indeed he compared the court commissioners with thieves and highwaymen. Charles certainly realized such claims would not convince the court of his innocence. Thus something other than simple survival must have motivated his refusal to cooperate with the court. Charles’s continued assertions of his rights as king indicated that he cared more about the Stuart legacy than his own life. Earlier during his first captivity, the king had expressed a willingness to die as a martyr should he fail to reclaim his throne. By denying the court’s legitimacy, Charles asserted his belief in the infallibility of the monarchy.

This refusal significantly slowed the proceedings of the trial. As Bradshaw explained, Cook legally could not prosecute the king until Charles acknowledged or denied the charges brought against him. Yet even after three separate appearances before the court on January 20, 1649, January 22, and January 23, Charles still rejected the authority of the High Court and refused to answer the charges. This necessitated a response from the court. Given the high level of interest in the trial shown by every major faction, the Independents needed to rationalize both the king’s trial and the new English regime. Bradshaw explained as much in one of his replies to Charles on January 22, 1649. “You [Charles] speak of law and reason. It is fit there should be law and reason and there is both against you. Sir, the vote of the Commons

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368 Ibid, 162 – 163.
of England assembled in Parliament – it is the reason of the kingdom. And they [the Commons] are these that given to according to which you rule and reigned. Sir you are not to dispute our authority.”\(^\text{369}\) For Bradshaw and most of the judges, the tribunal justified its trying of the king as a natural extension of both justice and the will of Parliament. Therefore, despite all of Charles’s protestations about the court’s illegitimate authority, he still could and should stand trial. For this reason they proceeded with the calling of witnesses, even though Charles still refused to acknowledge the charges of treason.\(^\text{370}\) Though this decision to ignore Charles’s denial of the court’s legitimacy certainly raised questions about the legality of the proceeding, the political sympathies of the judges triumphed. Regardless of Charles’s repudiation, on January 25 the prosecution’s case against the king began in earnest.

Approximately thirty-five witnesses testified against Charles in his trial. Their backgrounds ranged from yeomen and craftsmen to even wealthy gentlemen. Their numbers included former royalists, soldiers of the Army, and other observers of particular events. None of these people actually witnessed the king engaging in unusually violent or heinous acts. Most of the witnesses simply recounted how they had seen the king involved in various conflicts of the Civil War.\(^\text{371}\) While Charles committed no war crimes, the prosecution believed his mere presence at these battles was sufficient to convict him. One of the more extreme allegations came from Humphrey Browne, a husbandman of Rutland County, who had observed the royalist sack of Leicester in June 1645.\(^\text{372}\) He recounted that the king supported the violent

\(^{369}\) Ed. Lagomarsino and Wood, *TheTrial of King Charles I*, Location 1434.

\(^{370}\) Wedgwood, *A Coffin for King Charles*, 168.

\(^{371}\) Ibid, 170.

\(^{372}\) Ibid, 171 – 172.
abuse of captured soldiers and repeated Charles’s alleged words at the time to the court. “I do not care if they cut them three times more, for they are mine enemies.” Such an account of wanton bloodshed would condemn Charles, if it actually happened. While a royalist pillaging certainly took place in Leicester around late May or early June of 1645, this account still lacked credibility. The likelihood of Browne coming close enough to hear Charles speak of devastating the town without suffering himself, seemed rather unlikely. The framing of Charles as a brutal murderer behind this and other horrible events was rather convenient for the prosecution. Though Charles undoubtedly bore much of the blame for the civil war, he likely never ordered an indiscriminate slaughter of captive soldiers. However, the bias of the judges ensured that the court would hear every allegation against him.

Unlike the English High Court of Justice in 1649, many important figures within the French Republic of 1792 worked to try Louis in both a fair and legal manner. Following the legal procedure of the 1791 criminal code, the prosecution had to prepare an allegation against the suspected criminal before the commencement of the trial. On December 6, 1792, the Convention ordered Robert Lindet to write such a list, which would later form the basis of the criminal charges against Louis. Lindet prepared a detailed account of Louis’s many crimes and treason since the beginning of the French Revolution, which ranged from his attempt to prevent the Estates General from meeting to blaming him for the violent assault on the Tuileries on August 10, 1792. Lindet’s accusation concluded with an explanation of how

373 Ed. Lagomarsino and Wood, *The Trial of King Charles I*, location 1773.
375 Jordan, *The King’s Trial*, 102.
376 Ibid, 103 – 104.
Louis bore responsibility for all the turmoil and devastation, which occurred during the French Revolution.

Louis is guilty of all these attacks, whose design he conceived since the beginning of the Revolution and which he as tried to execute on several occasions. The coalition of foreign powers, the foreign war, the sparks of civil war, the devastation of the colonies, the troubles at home, which he caused, maintained and fomented are the means he used either to reestablish his throne or bury himself under its debris.  

Lindet’s characterization of Louis as responsible for all the unpopular side effects of the revolution certainly misrepresented his role in the events. The image he painted of a king, who would either reclaim his throne or die trying, more clearly resembled Charles than Louis. He even blamed Louis for the 1791 slave revolt in behind the French colony of Saint-Dominique, despite Louis’s lack of involvement in such events. Rather than reflecting some sort of historical truth about Louis, this accusation instead spoke more about how the radicals regarded both Louis and the concept of monarchy. As the representative of monarchy, which remained the true enemy of republicanism, Louis found himself blamed for actions he never even contemplated. Lindet and the other Jacobins intended for these charges to paint Louis a horrible tyrant. As a weak prisoner, the deposed king acquired some degree of sympathy from his former subjects. Lindet endeavored to transform him from victim into criminal. This attempt certainly succeeded, as on December 10, 1792 the Convention accepted Lindet’s accusations against the king. The deputies agreed that Louis should answer this accusation by standing before the Convention on the following day.

When the Convention deputies ordered Louis to be brought before them, they addressed him not as a king but as Louis Capet. With such a name, the deputies depicted him as a common French citizen on trial. Though they certainly recognized the proceedings would differ from most criminal cases, the Convention asserted its right to try Louis in the first place. Yet Louis the defendant ultimately shaped his own trial more than anyone else. When the Convention presented its list of accusations against him, Louis defended himself to the best of his ability. Rather than questioning the legitimacy of the National Convention and its right to try him, Louis tacitly accepted such a right. This submission to the legal authority of the Convention allowed Louis to defend himself properly. Thus he answered each of Lindet’s accusation with an explanation of his actions rather than a simple affirmation or rejection. Additionally he requested the presence of a lawyer, which the Convention initially denied to him. By acknowledging the Convention’s right to charge him with treason and other crimes, Louis gave credence to the authority of republicanism. Unlike Charles, he expressed little commitment to preserving the idea of kingship. Instead he showed considerably more concern for the preservation of his legacy.

During his appearances before the Convention, Louis essentially challenged the deputies to conduct an actual trial rather than the show, which they had planned on displaying. Many of the Jacobins expressed outrage at the very idea of granting Louis an attorney or the possibility of an acquittal. For these radicals, the Convention should have convicted Louis because all kings were by definition

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379 Jordan, *The King’s Trial*, 107. The name comes from the founder of the Capetian Dynasty and one of the early French kings, Hugh Capet (r. 987 – 996), who was also Louis’s direct ancestor. Naming him Capet however was not only rude but also incorrect as his dynasty’s name went by Bourbon. Thus if the Convention cared about accuracy they would have named him Louis Bourbon.

380 Jordan, *The King’s Trial*, 117 – 118.
enemies of the state. The radical Jacobin, Jean-Paul Marat, argued against strict legal proceedings immediately following Louis’s departure from the Convention on December 11, 1792.381 “This is not a question of an ordinary trial. We don’t have to concern ourselves with the chicaneries of the court.”382 Marat and other radicals expressed considerable contempt for the legal intricacies of the judicial procedure. They already had condemned Charles and simply waited on the court to do the same. Yet the Jacobin presence in the Convention was too weak to prevent Louis’s fairly reasonable request from passing. On December 12, the Convention gave permission for Louis to choose his own lawyer and permitted him time to mount his own criminal defense.383 This allowance for legal counsel distinguished the French trial from the English. Despite the best attempts of the Jacobins, enough deputies apparently wanted the appearance of a fair trial for Louis.

Louis requested as lawyers, either Guy-Jean Target or François-Denis Tronchet, both of whom had worked as lawyer during the ancien régime. Though Target refused because of poor health, Tronchet agreed to Louis’s request.384 Several other attorneys including Malesherbes also expressed interest in working on Louis’s defense team. With the aid of Tronchet, Malesherbes and Raymond Desèze, Louis

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381 Jordan, *The King’s Trial*, 114 – 115. Jean-Paul Marat was a Swiss born physician, who moved to Paris in 1776. During the revolution he emerged as a radical journalist and eventually went into hiding fearing reprisals from the moderate Assembly. Following the events of August 10 he joined the Convention as a radical deputy and voted for the execution of Louis XVI. In July 1793, he was assassinated by a Girondin extremist.


383, 384 Jordan, *The King’s Trial*, 117 – 119

384 Ibid, 117 – 118. Tronchet had worked as a lawyer in the old regime and later served on the Estates General. Following the events of the revolution he had retired to the Parisian suburbs. Following the execution of the king, he again escaped into obscurity before reemerging following Robespierre’s fall. He served on the Directory Senate and supported Napoleon’s power grab before dying in 1806.
crafted a defense.\footnote{Jordan, \textit{The King’s Trial}, 124. Désèze was another prominent lawyer of the old regime, who was later arrested during the Terror. After his release he retired from public life, but returned under the Bourbon restoration to serve as a judge.} Despite their legal advice, Louis still believed the trial would result in his conviction and execution, which he expressed to Malesherbes upon first meeting with him. “I am sure they will make me perish; they have the power and the will to do so. That does not matter. Let us concern ourselves with my trial as if I could win; and I will win, in effect, since the memory that I leave will be without stain.”\footnote{Louis “December 1792” remarks on his Trial in Jordan, \textit{The King’s Trial}, 127.} Though Louis undoubtedly hoped for his own survival, he recognized the Convention’s considerable vitriol against him. Yet rather than following the path of Charles’s obstinacy, Louis would defend both himself and his reign in court. Regardless of his chances for survival, Louis intended to protect the legacy of his reign and his family.

The Convention allowed the former king two weeks to prepare a defense against his accusers. With the accusations against Louis already published, the law ensured that he would have the opportunity to argue against these charges. On December 26, 1792, Louis and his lawyers arrived at the Convention prepared to defend his record as king. Desèze argued that the king retained his immunity from the 1791 Constitution, which made the trial invalid. Furthermore he disparaged the motivations of the Convention, describing them as having already decided against Louis even before they heard his defense.\footnote{Ibid, 131 – 132.} Presumably Desèze hoped such criticism might shame Convention deputies into deciding in Louis’s favor. Additionally he portrayed Louis as a proponent and supporter of the revolution rather than its most dangerous enemy. When discussing the August 10 assault on the Tuileries, Desèze
argued that Louis played no official role in the massacre, having already surrendered himself to the Assembly when those events took place. In this defense, his attorneys depicted Louis as a benevolent if ineffective king, who was unfairly placed on trial. Desèze finished his argument by offering a sympathetic view of Louis’s reign as king.

Louis ascended the throne at the age of twenty, and at the age of twenty he gave to the throne the example of character. He brought to the throne no wicked weakness, no corrupting passions. He was economical, just, severe. He showed himself always the constant friend of the people. The people wanted the abolition of servitude. He began by abolishing it on his own lands. The people asked for reforms in the criminal law... he carried out these reforms. The people wanted liberty: he gave it to them. The people themselves came before him in his sacrifices.388

According to Desèze, Louis always placed the interests of his subjects before his own. Therefore given Louis’s character as a king, the Convention would act unjustly to condemn such a self-sacrificing monarch. This interpretation certainly overlooked the many extravagances of Versailles and Louis’s obvious dislike for revolutionary practices. As a king Louis behaved both in an unwise and arguably tyrannical manner when he prevent the Estates General from meeting on July 17, 1789 or covertly conspired with the Austrians. Yet his lawyers humanized the Convention’s personification of monarchy’s evil. By describing Louis’s reign from his own perspective, Desèze depicted the king as a truly benevolent ruler. Such a portrayal defended him against the accusations of tyranny and oppression. Both Louis and his lawyers hoped such efforts might prove sufficient to protect his legacy and his life.

Like many of the events in this regicidal narrative, Charles’s trial simultaneously differed from and time resembled Louis’s trial. Both courts displayed clear levels of bias against the defendants, which suggested both the English

388 Jordan, The King’s Trial, 135.
commissioners and the French deputies already had found Charles and Louis guilty before the trials began. Yet despite this shared injustice of combating a prejudiced court, Charles and Louis defended themselves in remarkably different manners. Charles clung to his title as king and condemned the High Court of Justice as illegitimate and criminal. Meanwhile Louis valued the lives and legacies of himself and his family far above any abstract notion of kingship. Though Charles might have disparaged Louis for engaging in his own criminal defense, the French king still believed the chance of persuading the Convention to his side was better than refusing to acknowledge their legitimacy as a tribunal. Thus, in their different defenses, the contrasting political policies of Charles’s obstinacy and Louis’s accommodation reasserted themselves. Additionally the Convention’s decision to provide Louis with attorneys indicated a desire to conduct the trial in a legal manner. This directly contrasted with the English High Court of Justice, which many royalists and Independents decried as illegal. While the Rump Parliament simply invoked the power of military force to justify their actions, the majority of French deputies wanted a legal and fair government. Such variant desires reflected each state’s conduct following the radical seizures of power. In England, the Independents contended themselves with assuming control over traditional governmental institutions like the House of Commons. None of the prominent Independents expressed much interest in founding any new form of government. However following the August 10 insurrection in France, both radicals and moderates endeavored to create a better government. Because they truly believed in the revolutionary ideals of liberty and equality, the Convention deputies wanted Louis’s trial to reflect such principles. Due
in part to these different motivations behind their revolutionary activity, the Rump Parliament and the National Convention oversaw the kings’ trials in remarkably different ways.

The Verdict and Sentence

Shortly after the trials ended, each court would decide the fate of their monarch. Such choices carried with them significant political ramifications. The English Parliament never formally ended the monarchy, leaving Charles nominally as king throughout his trial. If the incredibly unlikely occurred and the High Court deemed him innocent of treason, then legally speaking Charles could reclaim his right to rule. The National Convention encountered similar difficulties, despite their formal abolition of the monarchy. Many French radicals equated finding Louis innocent with a condemnation of the revolution. Therefore in both kingdoms, factors other than the innocence or guilt of the kings motivated the judges.

Meeting in private immediately following the testimony of witnesses against Charles, the English court commissioners decided upon Charles’s guilt and sentence on January 25, 1649. Forty-five of the court commissioners met together in the afternoon to confer about the trial. Though 22 commissioners could not attend this judicial discussion for various reasons, enough commissioners attended to come to a preliminary conclusion. The exact details of this conference remain unknown. Yet whatever the specifics, the commissioners either quickly came to a decision during the meeting or they already had decided upon the king’s fate before speaking with one another. They released a preliminary condemnation of the king soon after the

meeting on January 25. “Resolved, that the condemnation of the King shall be for a tyrant, traitor, and murderer; that the condemnation of the King shall be likewise for being a public enemy to the Commonwealth of England; that this condemnation shall extend to death.”390 The court condemned Charles specifically for his actions during the civil war, which they defined as both tyranny and treason. Notably they referred to Charles as having committed treason against the English Commonwealth rather than the English Kingdom. Such a distinction justified their accusing the king of treason. This document suggested that English no longer owed allegiance to any king, thereby allowing for a monarch to commit treason against his own people. For such crimes, the commissioners agreed upon death as an appropriate punishment. While the commissioners exhibited an apparent ease at sentencing the king to death, historians should not interpret this as a universally supported decision. The commissioners merely represented the Independent-led Rump Parliament of 1649.

The High Court of Justice formally sentenced Charles to death on January 27, 1649. Before the court read its official statement, they permitted Charles to speak one last time.391 In this speech Charles again expressed his concern for the safety and stability of England over his own life. “If I had a respect to my life more than the peace of the Kingdom, and the liberty of the subject, certainly I should have made a particular defence for my self; for by that at leastwise I might have delayed an ugly sentence, which I believe will pass upon me.”392 Here Charles clearly recognized he would soon face execution. Yet the king adamantly stressed his own obligation to his

390 Lagomarsino and Wood, The Trial of King Charles I, location 1825.
kingdom, perhaps attempting to portray himself as a martyr. Indeed Charles earlier expressed a willingness to die in such a way. He recognized his impending fate and wished to protect the legacy of his reign and the Stuart dynasty,

Immediately following Charles’s statement, the court read out Charles’s sentence. All 67 of the court commissioners attended this session of court to support their verdict of guilty.\textsuperscript{393} Given the Independent bias of the commissioners, neither the prosecution nor the court spectators nor the defendant expressed any particular surprise at the king’s conviction. Arguably, the Army’s seizure of power in December 1648 had decided Charles’s fate. The High Court’s sentence merely formalized it. The official sentence outlined Charles’s many crimes, which he allegedly committed by instigating and perpetuating the civil war. It additionally justified both Parliament and the court’s right to condemn the king to die. The account concluded with an official sentence of death: “For all which treasons and crimes, this court doth adjudge that he, the said Charles Stuart, as a tyrant, traitor, murderer, and public enemy to the good people of this nation, shall be put to death by the severing of his head from his body.”\textsuperscript{394} The court described Charles as a public enemy, which implied the possibility of his creating more danger to the English people. Thus an execution would eliminate the dangers of both Charles and the English monarchy. With this pronouncement, the Rump Parliament prepared itself to execute Charles I.

The French in 1793 faced considerably more trouble when sentencing Louis to death. Given that his judges comprised of the highly factionalized National Convention deputies, their difficulty in deciding his fate seemed unsurprising. Even

\textsuperscript{393} Edwards, \textit{The Last Days of Charles I}, 152 – 153.
\textsuperscript{394} Lagomarsino and Wood, \textit{The Trial of King Charles I}, location 1972 – 1981.
before the convention ruled on the matter of Louis, several groups planned to thwart any guilty verdict. The Girondins proposed an appeal to the people, where the French people would determine Louis’s fate. After hearing how many of the citizens outside of Paris sympathized with Louis following his court defense, the Girondins recognized a clear political opportunity. If they implemented a nationwide vote on Louis’s verdict, such an endeavor could mobilize an anti-Jacobin coalition, which might block the impending execution of Louis and establish a new power base of Girondin supporters. The proposed appeal to the people also garnered interest from unaffiliated deputies, who wanted to avoid explicitly approving the execution of their former monarch. Several other Girondins like Brissot and Pétion also supported an appeal to the people because of the nature of the defendant. However the Jacobins, determined to spill Louis’s blood, successfully framed the appeal as a politically motivated endeavor. They branded the Girondin faction as royalists, who would allow for a return of the old regime. In a December 28 speech to the convention, Robespierre labeled their appeal to the people as a potential threat to the French republic.

Do you not see that this plan threatens the destruction of the Convention itself, that once the primary assemblies are convoked, intrigue and feuillantisme will cause the consideration of propositions which could only serve their perfidious purposes. They will reexamine everything, even to the proclamation of the Republic, the cause of which is quite naturally tied to questions concerning the dethroned king.

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395 The King’s Trial, 143 – 144.
396 Ibid, 142.
397 Maximilian Robespierre, “December 28 speech to the National Convention” in Walzer, Regicide and Revolution, 186.
Robespierre and other members of the Jacobins smeared the appeal to the people and all of its supporters as anti-revolutionary. For Robespierre, any proponent of this idea naturally wanted to ensure the safety of the king and to block France’s continued transition to a republic. The Jacobins successfully discredited the idea to the extent that it lost considerable traction amongst the both the convention and the French populace. The hated label of royalist produced such fear and scorn that many influential revolutionary figures avoided further interaction with the supporters of the appeal. Additionally, many feared that a close nationwide vote might spark a civil war between radical Paris and the more conservative provinces. As a result, support for the appeal to the people lost popularity. On January 14, 1793, the day before the official vote on Louis’s fate, the convention deputies debated for several hours about the appeal. Ultimately, they decided as a compromise between the factions that the deputies would vote on implementing the appeal immediately after the vote on Louis’s guilt.

On January 15, 1793, just three weeks after Louis’s defense, the National Convention officially determined Louis’s guilt for his allegedly tyrannical actions as king. 693 deputies out of 745 members of the convention voted to convict Louis. During this vote 26 other deputies were absent from the convention, while an additional 26 deputies offered guilty verdicts with some form of condition attached to it. The appearance of a substantial majority vote in the traditionally factionalized convention spoke to the power of the accusations of royalism. According to the

399 Jordan, *The King’s Trial*, 161 – 162.
401 Jordan, *The King’s Trial*, 172.
Jacobins, any deputy who deemed the defendant innocent of the charges, also condemned the goals of the Revolution. Not even the staunchest of conservatives would risk such a condemnation in this increasingly partisan political era. Even the probable royalist sympathizers only offered unhelpful declarations, like defining Louis as guilty but not voting for his guilt for personal reasons.\footnote{Jordan, \textit{The King’s Trial}, 172.} The political environment of the convention had transformed sufficiently that most deputies would not tolerate any overt royalists in their midst. Yet despite this apparent universal agreement on Louis’s guilt, the second vote on the appeal to the people would prove far more contentious. 424 deputies (59.1\%) opposed the appeal, while 283 deputies (39.5\%) supported it and ten deputies (1.39\%) abstained from the voting.\footnote{Doyle, The Oxford History of the French Revolution, 195.} Going into this session many of the Girondin faction likely believed they would win the vote. However several traditional supporters of the Girondins actually opposed the appeal for ideological reasons; for example Charles-Antoine Chasset disapproved of giving the French citizenry too much power.\footnote{Jordan, \textit{The King’s Trial}, 175.} As much more of political faction than a party, the Girondins simply lacked the necessary internal structures to ensure all their supporters voted uniformly on the issue. Many of the deputies who opposed the appeal still retained a healthy distrust for both the Jacobins and radical Paris. Though both of these votes favored the radicals their way, they certainly had not begun to dominate the convention. So despite opposition to their radical policies, the Jacobins successfully blocked one of the final attempts at saving Louis’s life.
The vote on the sentencing of the king took place on the following day, January 16, 1793.\textsuperscript{405} Even before the deputies voted, rumors spread about the possibility of a backlash from Paris.\textsuperscript{406} Fears of another violent riot certainly must have played a factor for some of the deputies, given the events of August 10. Thus while the radicals never formally threatened their fellow deputies, there existed an understanding for some of them of the potential drawbacks of not sentencing Louis to death. One Girondin, Jean Denis Lanjuinais, argued for a two-thirds majority vote because too many of the deputies feared the wrath of the Jacobins. “[We are] threatened by the poignards and cannons [of the Jacobins].”\textsuperscript{407} Using the fear of political violence, Lanjuinais attempted to inhibit any vote on executing Louis. During the ensuing debate other Girondin and Jacobin proposals emerged, which were designed to make executing Louis harder and easier respectively.\textsuperscript{408} The debate might have devolved into another shouting match, if Danton had not proposed a compromise to the convention that a simple majority decide the fate of the king. Thus when the decision of whether or not to execute Louis came to a vote in the National Convention, neither faction could predict the outcome.

The vote on the death of King Louis XVI lasted from late on January 16, 1793 into the early hours of January 17. Every deputy present at the convention voted on the issue and explained his reasoning. Given the sheer magnitude of the decision they faced, each deputy wanted the opportunity to rationalize his position. This was in direct contrast to England’s High Court of Justice, where Lord President Bradshaw

\textsuperscript{405} Doyle, \textit{The Oxford History of the French Revolution}, 196.
\textsuperscript{406} Jordan, \textit{The King’s Trial}, 178 – 179.
\textsuperscript{407} Ibid, 180.
\textsuperscript{408} Ibid, 181.
spoke for all of the commissioners during Charles’s sentencing in January 1649. Even during this final vote, another attempt to save Louis’s life emerged. Mailhe, who was the first deputy to vote, proposed a conditional death sentence. “I vote for death. I will make a simple observation: if death has the majority I believe it would be worthy of the National Convention to examine if it might be useful to delay the time of execution.” Mailhe presumably intended this proposal as the basis of compromise between the rival factions. The Jacobins and their allies would gain the pleasure of sentencing the fallen king to death, while the Girondins and their supporters would indefinitely keep Louis alive. While this amendment garnered support from 23 deputies, it would not prevent the execution from taking place. By the morning of January 17, 361 had deputies voted for the execution of Louis without any additional conditions. 360 deputies opposed an unconditional capital punishment for the defendant. One determined that Louis would face the guillotine within the next few days. This barest of majorities indicated how contentious the idea of regicide was for many of the revolutionary leaders. Rather than achieving a resounding consensus in support of regicide, the radicals merely accumulated the minimal amount of votes necessary. While all of the deputies nominally opposed monarchical government, many of these supposed revolutionaries still struggled with the idea of executing their former king. This incredibly narrow vote broadcasts the sheer level of difficulty in executing a monarch.

409 Jordan, The King’s Trial, 183.
410 Ibid, 190. Of the 360 deputies who voted against an unconditional death for Louis, 319 voted for imprisonment until France was stabilized at which point Louis would then be banished, 23 supported Mailhe’s proposal, eight voted for death and the requirement of exile for all the remaining Bourbons, two voted for life imprisonment in irons, and two voted for death after the establishment of peace in France.
A Comparison of the Trials

The French National Convention undoubtedly struggled more than the English Parliament and High Court of Justice while trying and sentencing their kings. With an extremely powerful military force supporting the proceedings against Charles and an alarming disregard for certain legalities, neither the House of Commons nor the High Court encountered much trouble during their quest for justice. They ignored all critiques regarding illegalities related to the trial from both their opponents and even their supporters. Thus when the court condemned Charles, only the court president voiced his perspective on the verdict. After the Independents took power in Parliament, only their viewpoint held any importance for the entirety of England. In contrast to this, the French National Convention argued about judging the king right up to the sentencing. The existence of two political factions in the Convention ensured that there would be continued debates regarding Louis’s. Even though historians often remember the French Revolution for its radical extremism, the French found sentencing a king to death to be comparatively harder than the English.

When comparing these two regicides, it becomes evident that Louis’s trial and execution took a greater amount of effort than executing Charles. Whereas the National Convention concerned themselves with providing Louis with a fair trial and the chance to defend himself, the Rump Parliament never provided Charles with such opportunities. The difference in how their trials were overseen reflected the underlying motives behind the regicides. In England, the Independents and the New Model Army regarded Charles as a hated enemy. The English king’s actions had helped spark two wars in 1642 and 1648. If left unchecked, he potentially could do
much worse. Thus the Rump Parliament determined that in order to protect England, Charles must die. The Independents wanted to eliminate the king, because he remained a potential threat to both their faction and the entire kingdom. Thus Charles’s trial was intended to move as quickly as possible in an effort to eliminate a grave threat to England. In contrast to this, Louis died because of ideology. Though many of the prominent Jacobins and other radicals disliked Louis because of his behavior, they particularly detested what he represented. Several deputies described the monarchy as incompatible with the ideals of the French state. Indeed Saint Just described the king as alien to the French culture. Thus the deputies’ desire to execute Louis partially arose from ideological reasons. For these republican ideologues, Louis and the taint of monarchy needed to be removed. However given their fervent belief in the ideals of the French republic, they would still provide Louis with the chance to defend himself properly. Unlike the Rump Parliament whose members simply wanted to execute Charles, the National Convention hoped to establish a French Republic. The deputies would not betray republican ideals just to make a regicide that much more easy. This distinction more than anything else separated the English regicide from the French one. Whereas Parliament merely wanted to eradicate a dangerous monarch and leave the rest of their government unchanged, the National Convention envisioned a new and revolutionary government for France.
Figure 3: The Execution of King Charles I on January 30, 1649
This engraving was made by an unknown German artist in 1649.

Figure 4: The Execution of King Louis XVI on January 21, 1793.
This engraving was made by the French artist Isidore-Stanislas Helman in 1794.
Conclusion

The Execution of the Monarchs

Both kings went to their executions shortly after the High Court and the National Convention sentenced them to death. On January 30, 1649, King Charles I of England walked to the scaffold outside the palace of Whitehall.\textsuperscript{411} Later the same year, an unidentified German artist rendered one of the most well known depictions of the regicide based on second-hand information (see Figure 3). Despite the relative fame of this engraving, the artist notably made several minor mistakes when it came to recreating the event. For instance, while the engraver accurately showed the large crowd present at the execution, none of the Army officers permitted the audience to come so close to the scaffold. When Charles attempted to give a final speech, he discovered that the crowd was kept too far away to hear him properly.\textsuperscript{412} The regicides had deliberately prepared the site of his execution this way to prevent him from being heard. Evidently, even on the cusp of the king’s death, the Independents still feared the effect his words might have on the audience. Still the German artist correctly portrayed both the executioner and his assistant, whose identities remained unknown, as wearing masks. Even before the execution took place, the Independents regarded finding the correct headsman a particularly important task. Two highly ranked officers spoke with an assortment of sergeants about serving as Charles’s executioners. Despite promises of significant compensation, many of the selected

\textsuperscript{411} Hugh Ross Williamson, The Day They Killed the King, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957), 100 – 101. Whitehall was the traditional residence of the monarch in London.

\textsuperscript{412} Ibid, 138 – 139. Charles ended up giving a speech anyway to the fifteen people on the scaffold with him. In the speech reaffirmed his innocence and commitment to England.
soldiers immediately rejected the offer. Though all of the sergeants willingly fought against royalist forces during the Civil War, many could not stomach the idea of personally executing the king. The name of the man the Army officers eventually chose as the executioner remains unknown even in the present. The Independents feared a potential backlash against the executioner, due to the large groups of royalists still present in England. In many ways, Charles’s death occurred quite differently from the typical English executions. His executioner begged Charles for forgiveness before killing him, and the crowd reacted to the sight of his severed head not with cheers but with groans. Most of the prominent Independents believed the king’s death necessary for England to enjoy stability once again. In their view Charles’s stubbornness and treachery had led to his death. Nevertheless to the audience, his supporters and his enemies, the condemned died as the King of England, Scotland and Ireland. Whatever his many crimes, many of the witnesses discovered executing a monarch was not an easy task to undertake.

The attendees at Louis’s execution on January 31, 1793 experienced a radically different atmosphere at the event. In 1794, the French artist, Isidore-Stanislas Helman, designed an engraving of this execution (see Figure 4). The signs of elation on the faces of several watching soldiers and hats thrown in the air hinted at the French support for Louis’s death. Arguably this engraving highlighted Louis’s differences from the ordinary French citizens. Whereas much of the crowd appeared slender and wearing clothing of various hues, Helman showed Louis’s large body in white. Such differences might have reflected Saint Just’s description of Louis as alien

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413 Williamson, *The Day They Killed the King*, 80 – 81.
414 Ibid, 144.
415 Ibid, 145 – 146.
to French society. Thus, in the engraving the crowd rejoiced at the elimination of someone who had proved incompatible with the revolution. Despite Helman’s interpretation of Louis as an alien foe, the architects of Louis’s death set out to portray the former king as an ordinary man. Unlike Charles’s, Louis died not as King of France but as the mere citizen Louis Capet. 416 Additionally, on his way to the guillotine, one of his guards bound his hands behind his back just like any other criminal. 417 Thus Louis died not as a king but as a convicted criminal, whose death was cheered with shouts of “Vive la république!” 418 Unlike the emotional portrayal of Charles’s death, Louis’s execution is depicted in more ideological terms. The image of Louis as a convicted criminal, implied that all monarchs were also criminals. For many Frenchmen, Louis’s death marked the elimination of a symbolic opponent to the revolution. With the death of both Louis the criminal and Louis the symbol, the French Republic could at long last reach its full potential.

The Meaning of the Regicides

The English regicide indirectly occurred due in large part to the actions of King Charles I himself. For many of the Independents and high-ranking Army officers, the king deliberately hindered England’s return to peace and stability. His obstinate behavior and attempts to pit Englishmen against one another restarted the English Civil War in 1648. Many prominent Independents even blamed him for the initial outbreak of the Civil War in 1642. Admittedly, these characterizations of

417 Ibid, 3.
418 Ibid, 4.
Charles unfairly shifted an excessive amount of blame onto his shoulders. Nevertheless, all of the accusations against him contained some degree of truth. Many of the Independents supported regicide because they specifically opposed the current king. Most of the high-ranking Independents disliked most radical policies including republicanism. Even when the Independents successfully seized control of Parliament, they left it unaltered. Evidently the Independents cared more about running the existing government than improving it. Only the Levellers ever desired significant governmental change in England. While both the Independents and the Presbyterians advocated for significant changes to the religious structures of England, neither faction expressed any great interest in political reform. The Independents simply wanted their enemy and obstacle, King Charles, eliminated. The Independents’ opposition towards Charles also extended to both of his sons. Thus, we should not interpret the regicide of Charles as a triumph of radical sentiment, given that political ideology played only a minor role in these events. Charles angered the Army to a sufficient extent that they believed him an unavoidable impediment on the path to stability. Instead Charles’s death primarily occurred due to the personal failings of the monarch and political necessity. Thus despite the reverence many Englishmen continued to feel for both their king and monarchy as a concept, by 1649 the dominant political faction deemed it necessary that Charles die. Charles died on January 30, 1649 as the defeated enemy in a struggle for England’s future.

The impetus behind Louis’s execution was ideology. Distrust and dislike of the king, which increased tremendously after first the flight to Varennes and then his putative support of the Austrian invasion, undoubtedly played a major role in the
eventual abolition of the monarchy. Full-scale protests like the July 17, 1791
demonstration at the Champ de Mars or the riot at the Tuileries on June 20, 1792,
displayed how a large portion of the Parisian citizenry despised Louis. This antipathy
surfaced to a lesser extent within first the Assembly and later the National
Convention. However despite some popular animosity for Louis, the French people
never truly controlled Louis’s fate. Instead, as in England, the legislature ultimately
would decide what happened to the former king. Interestingly, most of the
Convention’s debates about placing Louis on trial centered on questions of political
ideology. Rather than discussing the former king’s innocence or guilt, deputies
questioned whether placing him on trial made political sense. Louis’s somewhat
unwilling protectors, the Girondins, argued that the deposition of Louis had
sufficiently punished him for his crimes. Additionally, following the abolition of the
monarchy, the moderate deputies ceased considering the king a true threat to France.
The Girondins deemed sentencing the king to any additional punishment both
unwarranted and unnecessary. Meanwhile the Jacobins wanted to execute Louis
because he was the manifestation of French monarchy. While several of them still
heartily disliked Louis, most of the radical deputies spoke of Louis in ideological
terms. Thus Louis needed to die for the crime of holding the office of king rather than
any particular action he took. Unlike Charles, who died because of his actions as
king, Louis went to the guillotine simply because he had been a king. Despite the
considerable anger personally directed at Louis, the National Convention ultimately
executed their monarch for ideological reasons.
Despite their close proximity in geography and time, Civil War era England and revolutionary France differed from one another in a number of ways. Whereas debates over the Book of Common Prayer started the Civil War, calls for representative institutions inspired the French Revolution. The religions, histories, societies, and cultures of the kingdoms varied tremendously. Even their motivations for killing their monarchs differed. Yet despite contrasts between political actors, motivations, and historical background, the events leading up to the regicide in each country resembled one another in a significant way.

Each regicidal narrative began with the same story of a weakened monarch and a troubled kingdom. Though the source of this reduction in royal power varied, in both England and France the monarchs discovered they required the assistance of legislatures. This began a process of compromise between the formerly absolute rulers and the legislative bodies. Often taking advantage of the situation, factions in both Parliament and the Assembly further wanted to limit their king’s already weakened authority as a part of the negotiations. Inevitably, these diplomatic talks would end poorly. These legislative bodies rejected the notion of a reversion to the old regime. Meanwhile, monarchs, who were accustomed to ruling with absolute authority, heartily disliked the possibility of a limited monarchy. Due to these opposed political perspectives, the attempts at reaching a compromise would end because both monarchs exited the negotiations. Charles and Louis each fled from talks with the legislatures in an attempt to restore fully the old Stuart and Bourbons regimes. Both of the kings had realized that they could not tolerate their diminished power and the increasingly less respectful attitudes even commoners showed them.
The escapes both failed, and in their wake led to a distinct lack of trust between king and legislature. Such suspicions quickly undermined the renewed attempts at compromise between king and legislatures. The unfaithfulness of the monarchs legitimized such radical thinking as seen with the Levellers’ rise in prominence or the republican takeover of the Jacobin Club. The more moderate political factions tended to dislike the growing prominence of these republicans and endeavored to limit their influence in forceful approaches. For instance, the Presbyterians discontinued the Vote of No Addresses in April 1648 despite the fact the Independents were fighting a war for them.\footnote{The Vote of No Addresses, which was passed on January 3, 1648, prohibited Parliament from communicating with the king in light of his alliance with the Scots.} In France, the Feuillants oversaw the National Guard’s repression of petitioners at the Champ de Mars on July 17, 1791. These incidents increased the level of animosity between the legislative factions to such an extent that each political group began to regard one another as enemies.

The debate about the role and trustworthiness of the king contributed to the growing sense of political factionalism in both kingdoms. Eventually after somewhat reasserting their control over their respective legislatures and states, the moderate political groups endeavored to reach a lasting agreement with their monarch. Though neither the Presbyterians nor the Feuillants desired a return to the old regime, they still supported the idea of monarchy. Somewhat prompted by the rapidly deteriorating circumstances they faced, both king agreed to a compromise with their moderately led legislatures. Charles eventually agreed to some of the terms of the 1648 Treaty of Newport. Louis actually formally supported the ratification of the 1791 Constitution.
by signing it on September 14, 1791. However the radical factions feared these associations between the moderates and the kings might cause a reversion to the old regime. Prompted by this fear and their dislike for both the moderates and the king, the anti-monarchists decided to act. The radicals responded with a forceful seizure of power in both former kingdoms. On December 6, 1648, the New Model Army marched into London and arrested or excluded all undesirable members of Parliament in Pride’s Purge. In the French case, the *sans culottes* under the direction of the Parisian sections wrested control of Paris away from the Assembly on August 10, 1792. Dissatisfied with the moderates’ willingness to compromise, the radicals forced their anti-monarchical perspective on the state and pushed for a trial. Due to the level of anti-monarchism present in both legislatures, both Charles and Louis were considered guilty even before the beginning of the trials. With a guilty verdict, the victorious radicals could finally execute their kings.

Admittedly, this discussion of similarities simplified events to stress commonalities in this narrative. For instance, the analogous foreign invasions of the Scots and the Austrians did not perfectly parallel one another. While the Scottish military had departed England before Pride’s Purge in December 1648, the Austrian invading coalition still threatened France during the August 10, 1792 insurrection. Indeed the recounting of events will never appear fully analogous. Yet despite this and other exceptions, the English and French regicides clearly resembled one another. For the executions of the sovereign to occur, certain processes first had to take place. These notably included a loss of faith in the monarch and a radical takeover of the
institutions of government. Without these events, the regicides of Charles and Louis likely never would have happened.

The Uses of the Past

Some critics might question the utility of this comparison. After all, an account based on only two regicides might say fairly little about larger historical concepts. For that matter, given the infrequency of regicide, some might consider such a narrative unnecessary. Yet regicides have claimed an important role in major historical events. For instance, the execution of Tsar Nicholas II on July 17, 1918, and the events preceding it proved a pivotal moment in the Russian Revolution. Indeed many of the events leading up to Nicholas’s execution such as the Bolshevik takeover clearly resemble events in both England and France. Such similarities suggested the existence of a regicidal narrative. Historians could also apply this comparative analysis of the downfall and execution of kings to non-European revolutions like the July 14, 1958 Iraqi Revolution, which culminated with the execution of King Faisal II. Russia and Iraq in the twentieth century shared little in common with either seventeenth-century England or eighteenth-century France. Nevertheless, undeniable commonalities existed in all four of these states.

Historians could even apply this analysis to non-regicidal revolutions. When examining revolutions like the 1688 Glorious Revolution, the French Revolutions of 1830 and 1848, and the 1979 Iranian Revolutions, scholars could apply this model to theorize why the revolutionaries of these three countries chose not to execute their
ousted rulers. A greater understanding of how regicide occurred could lead to insights on many important revolutions and regime changes. Undoubtedly, the execution of the former ruler only occurred in a small number of revolutions. Still providing an explanation for why regicide occurred in some revolutions has the potential to shed light on other revolutions. Thus an understanding of the executions of two men, who each died hundreds of years ago, still has value in the modern era.
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