

CHAPTER 10

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHANGE



The great English landowners did as they pleased in the eighteenth century. More than one gentleman had an entire village demolished or flooded because it stood in the way of his landscaping plans. Another wrote, "It is a melancholy thing to stand alone in one's own country. I look around, not a single house to be seen but for my own. I am Giant, of Giant's Castle, and have ate up all my neighbors." Fences and servants kept venturesome interlopers far away. Some men of great means gambled fantastic sums on horse races. Sir Robert Walpole's estate guests drank up £1,500 of wine a year, the combined annual wages of more than 100 laborers. English nobles seemed particularly vulnerable to overeating. A certain Parson Woodforde carefully entered in his diary the day of his death, "Very weak this morning, scarce able to put on my clothes and with great difficulty get downstairs with help. Dinner today, roast beef, etc."

At about the same time, in Switzerland, a peasant lived a very different and arguably more productive life. Jakob Gujer, who was called Kleinjogg (Little Jake) by his friends, inherited an indebted small farm and transformed it into something of a model enterprise, where he grew vegetables and new crops and raised cattle. It is said that when the duke of Württemberg came to see the famous peasant, Kleinjogg told him how flattered he was that a prince should pay a visit to a humble peasant. The prince, teary eyed, replied, "I do not come down to you, I rise up to you, for you are better than I." To which Kleinjogg is alleged to have answered with tactful deference, "We are both good if each of us does what he should. You lords and princes must order us peasants what to do, for you have the time to decide what is best for the state, and it is for we peasants to obey you and work with diligence and loyalty." But there were few peasants with the means and initiative of Kleinjogg on the continent. In England, there were relatively few peasants left at all.

Although in some ways society remained the same as in earlier centuries, economic, social, and political developments transformed Europe during the last half of the eighteenth century. To be sure, these transformations were uneven and regionally specific, affecting England and northwestern Europe the most, while bypassing much of Central and Eastern Europe. In economically advanced regions, some of the traditional checks on population growth became less imposing. Increased agricultural productivity supported a larger population that, in turn, expanded the demand for food. Manufacturing developed in and around northern English towns, leading to the beginning of what we know as the Industrial Revolution.

In a related change, distinctions within the highest social estates or orders were becoming less marked in Western Europe. Moreover, increased wealth generated some fluidity between social groups, contributing, in particular, to the dynamism that made Britain the most powerful state in the world. In France, too, wealth increasingly blurred lines of social class without, however, eliminating them entirely. Distinctions in title no longer necessarily corresponded to patterns of wealth distribution. By contrast, social barriers remained much more rigidly defined in Central and Eastern Europe.

THE SOCIAL ORDER

In much of early modern Europe, social structure was marked by birth into particular estates, or orders, which conferred collective identities and privileges. Each order was legally defined, with specific functions and rights conferred to it by virtue of being part of the order, not through individual rights. The nobility was a privileged order, with special rights accorded by rulers and law, such as exemption from taxation. Noble titles were hereditary, and stemmed in principle from birth, although in reality many families during the century were able to purchase titles. The clergy was also a privileged order and, like the nobility, generally exempt from taxation. In France, the "third estate" was simply everyone who was neither noble nor a member of the clergy, and included peasants and townspeople, all of whom were subject to taxation. Within and between these estates, or orders, some degree of social movement was possible, particularly in Western Europe. The extent of social mobility that existed within the "societies of orders" was debated by contemporaries, as it has been subsequently by historians.

Nobles

In most of the continental European states (with the exception of the Dutch Republic and Switzerland), nobles dominated political life during the eighteenth century, although in most of these states they numbered no more than 2 to 3 percent of the population. They accounted for a much larger per-

centage in Russia, Spain, Poland, and Hungary, which together probably accounted for almost two-thirds of the nobles in Europe. In Spain's northern provinces and in Poland, more than 10 percent of the male population held noble titles. In Hungary, what may have been the first accurate census in European history in 1784 counted more than 400,000 people claiming to be nobles, about 5 percent of the population. In France, by contrast, there were only somewhere between 25,000 and 55,000 noble families.

The vast majority of nobles drew their wealth and status from land they owned but that other people worked ("I am idle, therefore I am," went a Hungarian saying about Magyar nobles, spoofing the words of the French philosopher Descartes). Noble landlords owned between 15 and 40

percent of the land, depending on the country, and an even higher percentage of productive land. In Prussia, only nobles could own land that was exempt from taxes; in Poland, commoners could not own any land at all. Russian commoners lost the right to own property to which serfs were legally bound. Austrian nobles held half of the arable land in the Habsburg domains, hiring agents to collect what peasants owed them. Nine thousand nobles owned a third of all Swedish land. In the Italian states, the nobility's share of the wealth was even more than that of the Catholic Church.

Many continental nobles retained specific rights, often called seigneurial rights, over the peasantry. Nobles drew income in rent (cash), kind (crops), and dues (often labor) owed them by virtue of their social status and ownership of land. Some dispensed justice in their own courts. Peasants were obligated to pay to have their grain ground in the lord's mill, to bake bread in his oven, and to squeeze grapes in his press. The burden of seigneurial dues and debts left peasants with little or sometimes nothing left to pay state taxes and church taxes (tithes), or to feed their families, which might well include parents and unmarried sisters, brothers, and children.

Nobles proved remarkably adept at maintaining their privileges while adapting to the challenges and possibilities resulting from the growth of the centralized state. Such privileges included being exempt from virtually all taxation, as were nobles in Prussia, Poland, Hungary, and Russia, or exempt from the direct tax on land. Other noble privileges included the nobles' right to bear a family coat of arms, to wear certain clothing and



Hungarian noblemen in the eighteenth century.

jewelry, to occupy special church pews near the altar (in some places Mass could not start until the local nobles had taken their accustomed places), to receive communion before anyone else, and to sit in specially reserved sections at concerts and on special benches at universities. Commoners were expected to bow, curtsy, or tip their hats when a noble walked by, gestures upon which nobles increasingly insisted. The right to duel over family "honor" in some states and the right to wear a sword were honorific privileges that served to distinguish nobles from their social inferiors.

There were significant differences in the wealth and status of European nobles, however. The wealthiest, most powerful nobles considered themselves "aristocrats," although this was not a legal category. They were proud possessors of the most ancient titles (in France, they were the nobles of the sword, whose titles originated in military service to the king), and many of them were members of the court nobility. Aristocrats viewed themselves as the epitome of integrity, honor, and personal courage, and the embodiment of elite culture. The *grands seigneurs* in France and the *grandees* in Spain were identified by their great wealth and ownership of very large estates. But the wealthiest nobles may have been the great landed magnates of East Central Europe. Prince Charles Radziwill of Poland was served by 10,000 retainers and a private army of 6,000 soldiers. Another Polish nobleman's property included 25,000 square kilometers of land, territory about four-fifths the size of today's Belgium. A single Russian prince owned 9,000 peasant households.

On the other hand, in every country there were also nobles of modest means who eagerly, even desperately, sought advantageous marriages for their daughters, and state, military, and church posts to provide a living for their sons. Demographic factors put pressure on poorer nobles, because now more noble children survived birth and childhood. Many Sicilian, Polish, and Spanish nobles owned little more than their titles. About 120,000 Polish nobles were landless, many so poor that they were referred to as the "barefoot nobility." The *hobereaux* were the threadbare nobles of France. Spanish *hidalgos* depended on modest state pensions, and some were so poor that it was said that they "ate black bread under the genealogical tree." In Spain, these impoverished nobles retained the right to display their coat of arms and to be called "Don" ("Sir"), and freedom from arrest for debt. But until 1773 they were not permitted to engage in manual work, and hence they had few ways to emerge from poverty.

Nobles who could afford to do so tried to maintain an aristocratic lifestyle, keeping up châteaux (manor houses) on their rural estates, some also owning elegant townhouses with gardens designed to recreate the illusion of a rural manor. Some nobles of lesser means attempted to keep an aristocratic lifestyle, going into debt as a result.

The British Landed Elite

In Britain, there were only about 200 families that claimed noble title. Yet the percentage of English land owned by nobles rose from about 15 to 25 percent, a far larger percentage than in either France or the German states. Unlike their continental counterparts, British nobles had to pay property taxes, and the only special privileges that peers retained (besides their vast wealth) were the rights to sit in the House of Lords and, if accused of a crime, to be tried there by a jury of their equals. Because in Britain only the eldest son inherited his father's title and land, younger sons had to find other sources of income. One such source was the Anglican Church and its twenty-six bishoprics, the plums of which were reserved for the younger sons of peers and which offered considerable revenue and prestige. Whereas in the previous century about a quarter of Anglican bishops had been commoners, by 1760 only a few were not the sons of nobles.

Although only nobles could sit in the House of Lords, the British ruling elite of great landowners was considerably broader. British landowners became even more prosperous during the eighteenth century, particularly after about 1750, when they raised rents on their estates and amassed fortunes selling agricultural products. Wealthy newcomers who owned large chunks of land also joined the elite. The ownership of landed estates conferred "gentry" status, which a broad range of families claimed. At the time of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, the landed elite numbered about 4,000 gentry families.

The wives of gentlemen oversaw governesses and domestic servants while instructing their children in the responsibilities of family, religion, and social status—to behave politely, but confidently. It was considered poor form to show too much emotion, to be too enthusiastic, and, above all, to be overly passionate, sensual or, worse, licentious. One did not seek openly to convert the lower classes to better manners and virtue, but rather to set a good example. The writer Horace Walpole (1717–1797) once claimed he attended church only to set a good example for the servants.

Young gentlemen were tutored at home, or they attended secondary schools, such as Westminster and Eton, boarding schools that characterized a gradual shift to out-of-home education throughout Europe for elites. Oxford and Cambridge Universities then beckoned some, although few actually graduated. Scottish universities, in contrast, offered more dynamic thought and research. Young gentlemen were expected to know something about the classics and contemporary poets. Yet, to many if not most wealthy families, academic knowledge seemed superfluous, even suspect. When Edward Gibbon (1737–1794), the historian of ancient Rome, presented one of his books to a duke, the latter exclaimed, "Another damned thick square book! Scribble, scribble, scribble, eh Mister Gibbon?" A wealthy dowager offered her grandnephew and heir a handsome annual stipend if he would "chuse to travel" and thus forsake "one of the Schools

of Vice, the Universities." The goal of the "grand tour" of the continent, servants in tow, was to achieve some knowledge of culture and painting. Such trips further enhanced the popularity in Britain of the classical style of architecture, so called because it emulated classical Greek and Roman edifices.

The Clergy

Although in France, Prussia, and Sweden the clergy was technically the first order or estate, the clergy did not really form a separate corporate entity, but rather reflected the social divisions between rich and poor that characterized European life. Most village priests and ministers had prestige and local influence, but they shared the poverty of their parishioners. Yet in many places, the material advantages of being a priest (including exclusion from some taxes) attracted the sons of peasant families. On the continent, the members of the French clergy were likely to be the most literate, Russian Orthodox priests the least.

The lower clergy, drawn from the lower middle class, artisans, or the relatively prosperous peasantry, resented the undisguised ambition, greed, and arrogance of the bishops. Wealth and rank, not piety, usually determined such selections, as in the Italian states, where bishops were invariably



A baptism performed in Italy, a religious ritual that maintained its importance in most Catholic places.

drawn from the families of the great landowners. Even so, few monarchs were as brazen as King Philip V of Spain, who named his eight-year-old son to be archbishop of Toledo. Many bishops did not take their responsibilities seriously. In the 1760s at least forty bishops resided in Paris, only one of whom was, in principle, supposed to live there.

Although some parts of Europe, especially regions in France, had already become "de-christianized," meaning that religious practice and presumably belief had declined (see Chapter 9), in most places religion still played an important part in village life. The clergy baptized children,

registered their births, married couples, and buried the dead. Priests and ministers supervised charitable activities and provided certificates of good behavior for those leaving to search for work elsewhere. Religion offered consolation to many impoverished people: everyone could go to church, even if the poor were restricted as to where they could sit or stand. In general, the quality of the parish clergy seems to have been quite high in the eighteenth century (when compared to the next century), due in part to efforts to improve clerical training. Nonetheless, many parish priests were still caught between liturgical demands and the persistence of popular superstitions shared by all social groups—for example, the duchess of Alba in Spain tried to cure her son's illness by having him ingest powder from the mummified finger of a saint.

The "Middling Sort"

Most of those people who engaged in commerce, trade, and manufacturing were known as the "middling sort" by the English and the "bourgeoisie" by the French. The term "bourgeois" evolved from the medieval sense of "privileged townsmen" (in earlier times they had been exempt from having to pay taxes to territorial rulers; see Chapter 1).

The middle classes ranged from wealthy entrepreneurs, who had developed the economies of trading and manufacturing cities, to struggling retail merchants, craftsmen, and innkeepers, who made barely enough to hang on to their businesses. Purchasing land and titles when they could, the wealthiest commoners owned about a quarter of the land in France and most of the land in Switzerland. Great Britain had already become the proverbial "nation of shopkeepers," with one shop for every thirty or forty people.

In Western Europe, the middle decades of the eighteenth century brought an expansion of the liberal professions, particularly in the number of lawyers. Men trained in law took positions in state bureaucracies and law courts. In England and France, some of the best students, or at least the best connected, became barristers; this gave them the right to plead in court, which attorneys (solicitors), their subordinates, could not do. Distinguished medical schools produced few physicians, not yet a profession viewed with great respect. Beneath them were surgeons, some of whom were former barbers. Military surgeons tended to be a cut above the others, their skills honed in the heat of battle. Despite the fact that some universities taught anatomy, surgical techniques were learned on the job.

To some nobles, "bourgeois" was an expression of contempt, seen in the sense of a seventeenth-century play in which a protagonist is jeered by a young nobleman: "Bourgeois is the insult given by these hooligans to anybody they deem slow-witted or out of touch with the court." In the eighteenth century, the term had not lost the sense provided by a seventeenth-century dictionary: "Lacking in court grace, not altogether polite, overfamiliar, insufficiently respectful."



Triumphant merchants at table. Note that one of the merchants is smoking tobacco, a new fad. Note also the aristocratic wig on the dog on the right.

Peasants

In 1787, the peripatetic Englishman Arthur Young was traveling in Champagne in northern France when he encountered a peasant woman who looked to be about sixty or seventy years of age. To his astonishment, she gave her age as twenty-eight, a mother of seven children who survived by virtue of "a morsel of land, one cow and a poor little horse." Each year her husband owed 42 pounds of wheat to one noble, and 168 pounds of oats, one chicken, and a cash payment to another noble. He also owed taxes to the state. The woman, old before her time, stated simply that the "taxes and seigneurial obligations" were a crushing burden, one that seemed to be getting worse.

Peasants still formed the vast majority of the population on the continent: from about 75 percent (Prussia and France) to more than 90 percent (Russia). Peasants were the source of the wealth that sustained the incomes of crown, nobility, and church. Peasants stood at the bottom of society, condemned as "a hybrid between animal and human" in the words of a Bavarian official. An upper-class Moldavian called peasants "strangers to any discipline, order, economy or cleanliness . . . thoroughly lazy, mendacious . . . people who are accustomed to do the little work that they do only under invectives or blows." Such cruel images were particularly prevalent in

regions where lords dominated peasants of another ethnic group, as in Bohemia, where German landowners drew on the labor of Czech peasants.

The village was the center of the peasant's universe. Village solidarities helped them pull through as best they could in hard times, through harvest failures, epidemics, and wars. Villagers viewed outsiders with suspicion. Folk songs celebrated peasant wisdom and wiliness, as humble rural people outfoxed naive and bumbling outsiders, whose wealth could not impart common sense.

All peasants were vulnerable to powerful outsiders in the overlapping and interdependent systems of domination that characterized early modern Europe. The state, nobles, and churchmen extracted taxes, produce, labor, and cash. The proportion of peasant revenue in kind or cash that disappeared into the pockets of nobles, officials, and clergy ranged from about 30 percent (France) to 70 percent (Bohemia). Rulers extracted money, commodities, and labor payments, imposing additional taxes when they were at war.

The peasantry was not, however, a homogeneous mass. In Western Europe, where almost all peasants were free, a peasant's status depended upon the amount of land, if any, owned or controlled through leases. In northern France, Flanders, southwestern Germany, Switzerland, and Sweden, many peasants owned or rented plots of sufficient size and productivity to do well enough in most years. Swedish peasants owned about a third of the cultivable land in their country. Recognized formally as a fourth estate, the Swedish peasantry maintained a degree of independence perhaps unique in Europe. Charles XII of Sweden bragged that he would rather be the most miserable Swedish peasant than a Russian noble unprotected by law from the whims of the tsar. Rural industry—for example, linens—provided supplementary income for peasant families in parts of France, Switzerland, and in German states. In Zurich's hinterland in the 1780s, about a quarter of the population spun or wove at home for the cotton and silk industries.

Many landowning peasants were constantly in debt, borrowing against the often empty hope of the next harvest. Sharecroppers worked land owned by landlords in exchange for one-third to one-half of what was produced. Landless laborers scraped by, if they were lucky, working on rural estates. All over Europe, some peasants took to the road as peddlers. Seasonal migrants left their homes in the Alps, Pyrenees, and other mountain regions each year for construction work in Milan, Lyon, Barcelona, or other large cities, or to work in the grain fields in the summer or in the vineyards in the fall.

Serfdom had largely died out in Western Europe. Yet many free peasants continued to be subject to some kind of seigniorial justice. In France, thousands of manorial courts still existed in 1789, providing lords with additional income by virtue of legal fees and fines assessed on peasants. Most of these courts, presided over by nobles, occupied themselves with minor

offenses such as poaching and trespassing, civil suits for debt, and family matters such as inheritances and guardianships.

In addition to taxes on land and salt, peasants also owed obligatory labor service, usually work on roads, in France, Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland, Poland, Russia, and some German states. Obligations varied from only a couple of days in parts of France to as much as 200 days per year in Denmark. In Eastern Europe, peasant children were sometimes required to work in the service of the lord. Other obligations included the duty to provide the lord's household with a certain amount of food—for example, a chicken or goose on a holiday, or even just a few eggs—to provide food for the lord's dogs, or to spin or weave cloth for the lord's household. To these were added mandatory payments to the seigneur upon transfer of land held by peasants with hereditary tenure. When a peasant with such tenure died, the lord claimed both money and the best animals the peasant owned.

The conditions of peasant life became worse the farther east one traveled. Peasants in Russia and Eastern Europe lived in hovels made of earth, clay mixed with straw, branches, twigs, and sometimes caked manure. Floors were of mud and beds of straw. Only well-off peasants could afford wood as building material.

The farther east one went, too, the more authority lords wielded over peasants. Most peasants east of the Elbe River were serfs, some of whom had to take an oath of loyalty to their seigneur, as during the Middle Ages. There were some free peasants in the Habsburg domains and in Poland, but very few in Russia. The number of people who lost their freedom by becoming serfs had increased so much in eastern Prussia and Brandenburg that the German term for serfdom had become the same word for slavery.

Gallows stood near some Prussian manor houses, symbolizing the judicial prerogatives nobles held over serfs, including the right to dispense corporal punishment. In Poland, nobles could have their serfs executed until late in the eighteenth century. Russian lords could torture serfs, as long as they did not die immediately from such treatment, or they could send them into exile in Siberia. In Poland, a noble convicted of murdering a peasant paid only a small fine.

In Russia, proprietary serfs remained personally bound to the land of the nobles and, after Catherine the Great's Charter of 1785, to the nobles themselves. Lords could sell serfs, give them away—for example, as part of a dowry—or lose title to them through gambling. Serfs could be sold individually or as a family to another noble, or be exchanged for animals. Lords could refuse permission for their serfs to marry or to choose a certain occupation. A good number of serfs took their chances in setting out to seek their freedom in the vast expanses of Siberia. In Russia, as well as in Central and Eastern Europe, a few serfs managed to put together enough money to purchase their freedom.

In Russia, a poll tax on males (called "souls"), from which only nobles were excluded, added to the dependence of the "bonded people" to the



A family of serfs paying homage to their lord. Note the wife kissing the noble's hand.

state. Villages were collectively responsible for the payment of taxes. Moreover, all male peasants could be conscripted into army service for terms of twenty-five years, a life sentence for most soldiers.

Possibilities for peasant resistance were limited; yet the "weapons of the weak" were not insignificant. These ranged from sullen resentment and foot-dragging to arson, or even insurrection. All nobles in an idle moment—and there were many—pondered the possibility of a massive uprising of "the dark masses." As the legal and material conditions of the serfs deteriorated, rebellions were endemic in eighteenth-century Russia. During the reign of Catherine the Great, the Cossack Emelian Pugachev appeared on the Siberian frontier claiming to be "Tsar Peter III" (the real Peter III had spoken of reforms but had been dethroned and then murdered). He led several million peasants against their lords in 1773 and 1774. Pugachev's followers included Cossacks, Old Believers (dissidents persecuted by the Orthodox Church and doubly taxed), miners from the Ural Mountains, and desperate serfs. About 3,000 landowners perished in the Pugachev rebellion before it was crushed.

In Bohemia and Moravia, 40,000 royal soldiers were required to put down peasant uprisings in 1775. And in the middle of the next decade, about

30,000 Transylvanian peasants rose up after a false rumor spread that those enlisting in the Habsburg army would gain freedom from serfdom. They demanded the abolition of the nobility and burned several hundred manor houses to make their point. The uprising ended with the torture of several of the leaders, parts of whose bodies were nailed to the gates of towns.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

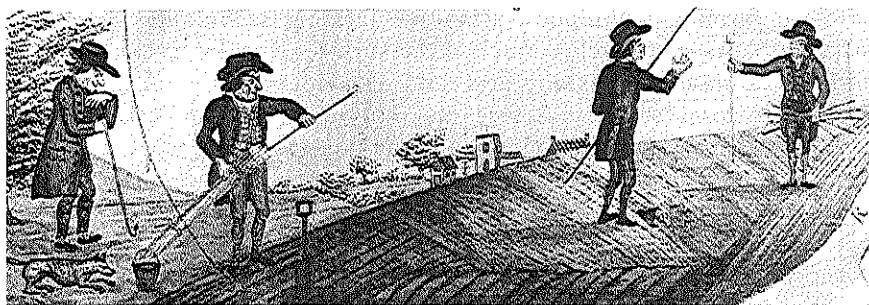
The Industrial Revolution began in England during the eighteenth century. For the most part, its early stages brought an intensification of forms of production that already existed: small workshops and cottage-industry manufacturing, the production of goods at home. Technological innovation played a part, but in the beginning its role was not as large as has sometimes been assumed. Ultimately, however, a new source of power, the steam engine, would replace animal and human power, and in the nineteenth century manufacturing increasingly would be characterized by factory production.

The growth in manufacturing itself depended on two interrelated factors: agricultural productivity, then the principal source of wealth, and population growth. The two were so closely linked that it is sometimes difficult to know which followed which. An increase in agricultural productivity permitted the European population to increase during the century. At the same time, greater demand for food encouraged capital-intensive farming, including specialization of cash crops (such as olives, grapes, and raw silk) and the raising of cattle and poultry for the market. Greater profits from agriculture generated a surplus of funds that could be invested in manufacturing. In turn, a larger population, with some of the growth concentrated in and around cities and towns, increased the demand for manufactured goods and provided a labor supply for town-based and rural industry.

Stagnation and Growth in Agriculture

New agricultural methods, first applied in the middle of the seventeenth century, helped raise farm yields, in England above all, aided by the application of natural and artificial fertilizers. Gradually the practice of leaving part of the land fallow every other or every third year gave way to crop rotation, which helped regenerate the soil. Landowners planted fodder and root crops such as clover and turnips. This provided food for animals as well as for human beings, in addition to enriching the soil by helping it absorb and retain nitrogen.

By 1750, English agricultural yields had increased to the point that almost 15 percent of what was produced could be exported abroad (although about a third of the British population still did not have enough to eat). On average, at the end of the seventeenth century an acre of agricultural land yielded perhaps 2.5 times more food in England than in France. Agriculture's contribu-



Measuring land in preparation for enclosure.

tion to the British gross national product reached a peak of 45 percent in 1770, and then only slowly was overtaken by English manufacturing as its place in the economy rose remarkably. Increased farm profits provided capital not only for further investment in agriculture but also in manufacturing (although landowners were still more likely to invest in government bonds than in speculative ventures).

One of the impediments to the expansion of agricultural production in England had been the widespread existence of open fields or common lands, which made up about half of the arable land in 1700. Beginning in the sixteenth century, on request from landowners, acts of Parliament permitted the "enclosure" of common land, transforming open fields or land that was communally owned into privately owned, fenced-in fields that could be more intensively and profitably farmed by individual owners (see Chapter 5). Between 1760 and 1815, 3,600 separate parliamentary acts enclosed more than 7 million acres of land, more than one-fourth of the farmland of England. Over two centuries, enclosure acts forced perhaps half of English small landholders from the land, swelling the ranks of agricultural laborers. Small tenant farmers, too, suffered, as many could not afford to pay rents that rose rapidly after about 1760. The poorest members of the rural community lost their age-old access to lands on which they had gleaned firewood, gathered nuts and berries, and grazed animals. Before enclosure, it was said, a "cottager" was a laborer with land; after enclosure, he was a laborer without land. The Irish-born writer Oliver Goldsmith commented with playful, bitter irony:

The law locks up both man and woman
Who steals the goose from off the common,
But lets the greater felon loose
Who steals the common from the goose.

Agricultural change came far more slowly on the continent. Most producers remained at the subsistence level, farming small plots without an agricultural surplus that they might have used to expand their holdings or

improve farming techniques. Primitive farming techniques (including wooden plows that barely scratched the surface of rocky terrain) characterized the mountainous and arid land of southern Italy and Sicily, the Dalmatian coast, southern France, much of Spain, and the Balkans. Peasants lacked farm and draft animals and therefore fertilizer, meat, and milk. Markets and transportation networks remained inadequate to the task of agricultural modernization.

On the continent, a bewildering variety of land tenures and agricultural practices under which they were held seemed to set rural poverty in stone. Most continental farmland remained divided into small strips, and each year more than one-third of arable land may have lain fallow, with crops rotated between fields. Traditional peasant agricultural methods also blocked a major expansion of production. "Slash and burn" tillage survived in some parts of Europe where peasants simply burned the stubble on their land once the harvest had been taken in, replenishing the soil with ash.

The studied attention many English country gentlemen gave to their lands may be contrasted with the approach of many French, Spanish, and Prussian nobles, content to sit back and live from revenue extracted from peasants. While the state had an interest in increasing farm output to generate additional tax revenue, most royal officials, seigneurs, and churchmen looked first to better ways of extracting peasant surpluses, not to improving yields. Nobles resisted occasional royal attempts to reduce the peasants' obligations, or to change them, such as by commuting labor service to payments in cash or in kind. Furthermore, much of what peasants managed to produce they owed to landlords, the state, and to a lesser extent, the Church. "Why should I build a better house," asked a Bavarian peasant, "so that my seigneur can line his pockets with the requisite fees to be paid?"

Serfs had even less interest than other peasants in innovation. In Central and Eastern Europe, an old adage went "there is no land without a lord" because in most places only a noble, the crown, or the Church could own land. The absence of independent peasant proprietors left a formidable obstacle to agricultural development.

Changes on the continent comparable to those taking place in England were mainly confined to northwestern Europe. In northern France, Flanders, the Dutch Republic, Schleswig-Holstein, parts of northern Italy, and Spanish Catalonia, the fertile land and sufficient capital facilitated investment in commercial agriculture. Moreover, these were regions generally farmed by people who owned the lands on which they worked, and who therefore had more incentive to augment production. But even in the less densely populated countryside of Eastern and southern Europe, more land was brought into cultivation, as in Russia where the population pushed into the steppes of the eastern frontier lands.

Other factors, too, contributed to improvements in Western European agriculture. During the eighteenth century, Europe as a whole experienced warmer, drier weather, particularly in the summers, in stark contrast to the

unusually cold and damp seventeenth century. This had a salutary effect on population, agricultural yields, and commerce. Land reclamation projects helped expand the amount of land under cultivation. The Dutch continued to reclaim land from the sea, and land reclamation added significantly to the amount of land under cultivation in the Southern Netherlands (Belgium) and Brandenburg.

Though not to the same extent as in England, the enclosure of separate strips of land and the sale or consolidation of common lands in northwestern Europe permitted the development of "agricultural individualism," as more land passed to peasant-owners. Beginning in the 1760s, state policies created small farms owned by peasants, helping transform Danish agriculture from the stagnation of serfdom to relative prosperity. Royal decrees encouraged enclosure and forced the commutation of labor obligations to rent payments.

Gradually some techniques that characterized agricultural improvements in England reached the continent. Innovative landowners and tenant farmers began to implement crop rotation (growing foliage crops to improve the fertility of fields), replacing the old three-field system so that little or no land lay fallow. As in England, turnips, potatoes, and rice enhanced dietary nutrition. Yet many peasants remained prisoners of tradition, refusing to plant or eat potatoes (Russian peasants called them "apples of the devil"), despite the fact that they can grow almost anywhere under any conditions. The cultivation of sugar beets (from which sugar can be made), the tomato (despite the fact that some peasants believed it to be poisonous), and chestnuts (the "bread of the poor") also spread, sustaining population growth.

Animal husbandry also benefited from improved techniques. Oxen, mules, and especially horses could pull plows more easily than peasants. More cattle provided manure for fertilizer, and meat and milk for nutrition. Sheep-raising developed rapidly, providing both food and wool.

Some landowners formed societies to discuss agriculture, and a handful began model farms. Such groups included nobles, wealthy bourgeois, and clergy. French physiocrats, who believed that land was the source of all wealth, urged landowners to make their property more profitable and encouraged state policies to free the price of grain. Publications on agriculture dramatically increased in number.

A few continental rulers took steps to intervene in the interest of agricultural progress. The elector of Bavaria in 1762 offered farmers an exemption from taxes for ten years in the hope that they would plant foliage crops in their fallow fields. Several princes in the German Rhineland encouraged the selective breeding of cattle. In 1768, Queen Maria Theresa of Austria ordered the division of common pasturelands in some parts of the Habsburg territories and the establishment of agricultural societies.

The European population rose from about 120 million to about 190 million people during the eighteenth century (see Table 10.1). Historians have long debated the causes and consequences of this demographic revolution, studying parish registers of births, marriages, and deaths. Europe's birthrate increased, particularly after about 1740, and the number of deaths each year—the mortality rate—declined even more rapidly. These changes came first and foremost in densely settled regions of soaring agricultural productivity: England, the Netherlands, Flanders, northern Italy, and northern France (see Map 10.1). This suggests that an increase in agricultural production was the most important factor in explaining why the European population began to rise.

Plagues and epidemics, as well as chronic malnourishment, still intervened periodically to check population growth. Many monarchs ascended the throne because elder siblings had died young, as did Frederick II of Prussia, who came to the throne because his two elder brothers did not live past their first birthdays. Poor people were particularly vulnerable to infection, and rates of infant mortality remained high. Epidemics such as influenza, typhus, smallpox, and the plague occasionally ravaged populations. In 1719, 14,000 people in Paris died of smallpox. Malaria epidemics occurred frequently in Spain during the 1780s and 1790s. During the plagues of 1781–1783 in Salonika (Thessalonika) in the Ottoman Empire, more than 300 people died every day. Whooping cough alone killed at least 40,000 children in Sweden during a period of fifteen years in the middle of the century, and more than 100,000 people died of bacillary dysentery in Brittany in one year. In Moscow, half the population died of disease early in the 1770s. Some states tried to close their frontiers and ports to prevent the arrival of disease, or to put those arriving into quarantine, but

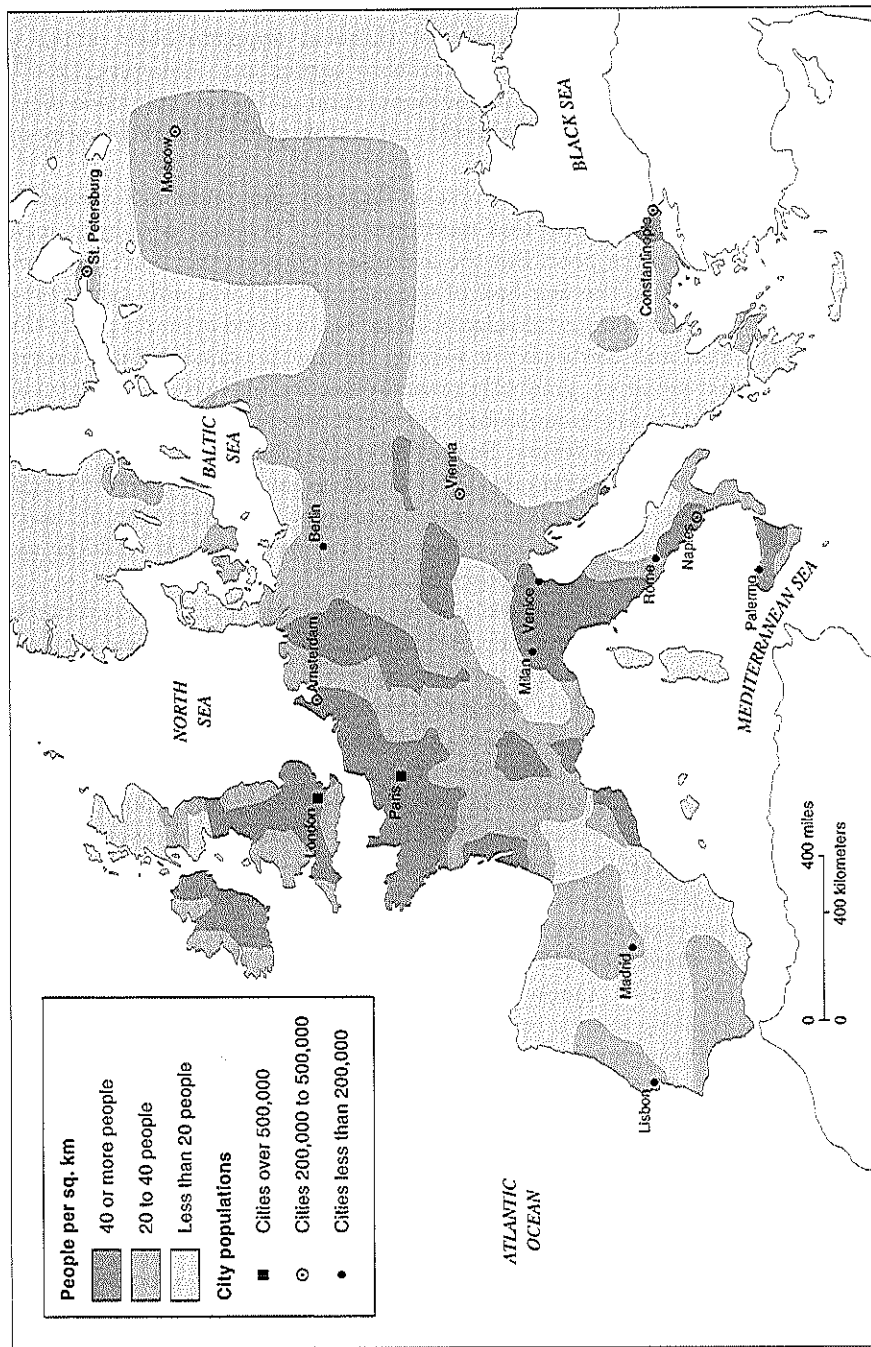
TABLE 10.1. EUROPEAN POPULATION, 1700–1800 (MILLIONS)

	1700	1750	1800
Great Britain	9.0	10.5	16.5
France	19.0	21.5	28.0
Habsburg Empire	8.0	18.0	28.0
Prussia	2.0	6.0	9.5
Russia	17.5	20.0	37.0
Spain	6.0	9.0	11.0
Sweden	1.5*	1.7	2.3
United Provinces	1.8	1.9	2.0

*Data for Sweden is from Franklin D. Scott, *Sweden: The Nation's History* (Carbondale, Ill.: University of Southern Illinois Press, 1988), p. 260.

Source: Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*. (New York: Vintage, 1989), p. 99.

MAP 10.1 POPULATION IN 1780 Distribution of the European population in 1780.



often to no avail. Famine, following several successive harvest failures, accentuated disease, particularly for those at opposite ends of the life cycle—infants and the elderly. Hardship turned into calamity. In 1769 alone, as much as 5 percent of the population of France may have died of hunger. Cities and towns remained unhealthy places where more people died than were born.

Yet life expectancy gradually rose as diseases and epidemics ravaged the population less often and less murderously. In general, people of means lived longer than the poor. But the average life expectancy for French men and women during the last half of the century still was only twenty-nine, and in Sweden, a country of relative longevity, it stood at about thirty-three years for men and thirty-six for women during the same period. Vaccinations against smallpox gradually proved effective, at least in Western Europe, although mass inoculations were not yet available. Quinine water helped people survive fevers. Scientific and medical societies encouraged towns to supervise waste removal and to take greater care when burying the dead, forbidding inhumations within town walls. The expansion of the cotton industry provided clothing, especially underwear, which could be more easily washed than wool and other materials.

Warfare, which had checked population growth during the seventeenth century, became less devastating. Armies became professionalized, and more under the control of stronger dynastic states. Military discipline and supply improved, sparing civilians the long, bloody conflicts (such as the Thirty Years' War) that had taken a heavy toll in earlier centuries. The New World offered new sites for battles between the great powers.

Economic opportunity, such as the expansion of cottage industry, encouraged couples to marry earlier—in their early twenties in England—and to have more children. Contemporaries were aware of the rise in population. For the English clergyman Thomas Malthus (1766–1834), the rise of the European population was alarming. Malthus predicted in his *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798) that natural checks on population growth—plague and disease, famine, war, and infant mortality, what he called “nature’s auditing with a red pencil”—would become less significant. He believed that population would “increase beyond the nourishment prepared for it,” that is, the food supply would grow only arithmetically (2-3-4-5, and so on), whereas population would henceforth multiply exponentially (2-4-8-16-32 . . .). To be sure, the rise in population put more pressure on the land, particularly where most land holdings were small and often too subdivided to be profitably farmed. Yet Malthus did not take into consideration rising agricultural productivity, nor the fact that some people had already begun to limit the size of their families. We have only hints of this, such as when the British writer James Boswell referred delicately to his sexual encounters “in armor.” In France, coitus interruptus is credited with bringing about a small decline in the birthrate after 1770. But birth control was unreliable, to say the least.

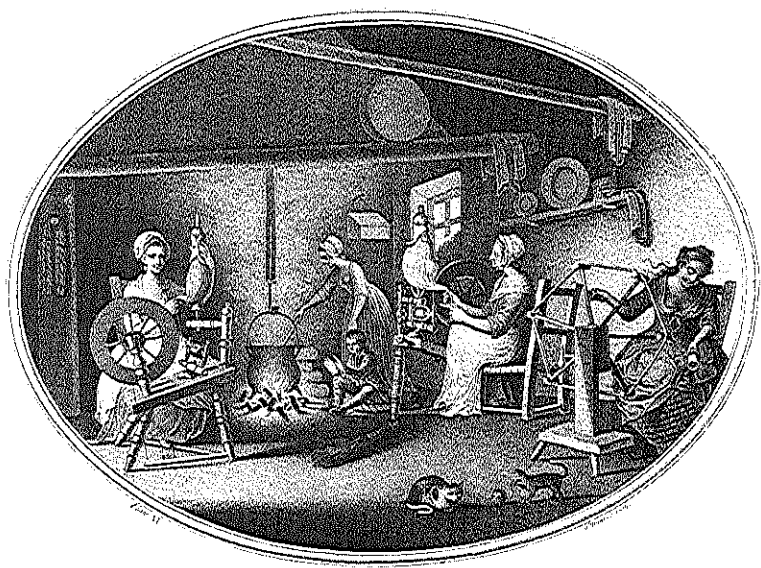
Manufacturing: Guilds and Domestic Industry

The workshop remained the basis of manufacturing in eighteenth-century Europe. In most countries, merchants and artisans were organized into corporate guilds by the goods they sold or produced. Guilds conferred a type of privilege, because rulers awarded them monopolies over the production or sale of certain products, particularly luxury goods. Masters' guilds and associations of journeymen gave rights and status to craftsmen; they limited and oversaw the training of boys as apprentices, beginning at the age of twelve or thirteen. In France, journeymen perfected their skills while completing a "tour of France," the origin of the modern bicycle race. A journeyman stopped in a number of cities over a period of several years; he was housed in the craft association's "mother house" before returning home with skills acquired from serving many masters, and with hope of one day becoming a master himself.

It was, however, becoming increasingly difficult for a journeyman to become a master, particularly if he did not have a father or other male relative to smooth the way with money. By the 1770s, Spanish and French skilled trades, in particular, had become glutted. Parisian guilds faced competition from outsiders who escaped corporate controls, such as craftsmen who lived on the outskirts of the city and produced cabinets and other goods more cheaply than their Parisian rivals, whose goods were taxed.

Since at least the sixteenth century in England, partially to circumvent the guilds, some merchant-manufacturers had looked to the countryside for workers to produce goods. This shift to domestic industry (also known as proto-industrialization, the cottage industry, or the putting-out system) contributed to what would eventually become a worldwide revolution in manufacturing. The early stages of the Industrial Revolution showed an increase in domestic industry rather than a shift to new forms of production. New technology would only gradually lead to mechanization and the standardization of tasks previously done by hand.

Britain's manufacturing base expanded early in the eighteenth century. Indeed, if in 1500 about a quarter of the people of England worked in non-agricultural occupations, by 1750 the proportion had increased to about half. The quest for profit was considered perfectly respectable, the manufacturer worthy of emulation. Daniel Defoe (1680–1731) described the Yorkshire countryside in 1720 as "one continuous village" in which were "scattered an infinite number of cottages or small dwellings, in which dwell the workmen which are employed, the women and children of whom are always busy carding and spinning." Home workers carded, spun, or wove with equipment (spinning wheels and looms) that they either owned or, in most cases, rented. Hand spinning continued throughout the century to be the largest source of female employment. Master clothiers, or merchant-manufacturers, provided domestic workers with raw materials, such as wool or Indian cotton purchased at a cloth hall, later coming back



Carding and spinning at home.

to collect and pay for the goods that had been completed. They would then transport the goods to the next stage in the production process, for example, to a dyer. Low pay rates in the countryside encouraged the persistence of rural industry. At the end of the eighteenth century, hand-knitted stockings produced by rural Scottish families still cost less than those knitted on a power loom.

As the cottage industry was organized by household, women had a major, even determining, role in the organization of the household economy, including training young children. There were both male and female wool spinners. One man, later a successful inventor of textile machinery, recalled, "my mother taught me to earn my bread by carding and spinning cotton, winding linen or cotton weft for my father and elder brothers at the loom, until I became of sufficient age and strength for my father to put me into a loom." Many families of home spinners, weavers, glove-makers, and shirt-buttoners also worked the land—theirs or someone else's—part time. Rural industry paused at harvest time.

Inventions

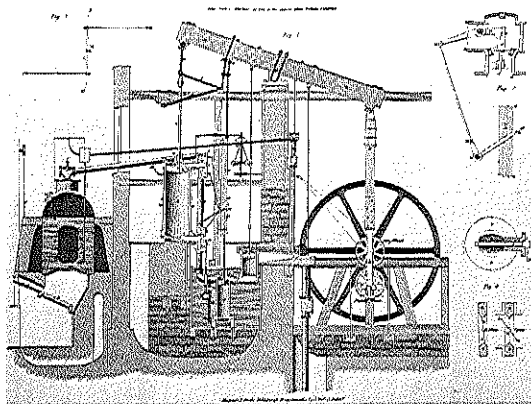
Technological change contributed to the Industrial Revolution. Between 1660 and 1760, 210 new inventions were patented in England; during the next twenty-nine years, there were 976. But inventions at first had little to do with increased productivity. They were probably less important than the infusion of investment capital into manufacturing and the expansion of

the number of workers in the textile industry, the leading edge of the Industrial Revolution. Some inventions were only gradually diffused, or their importance not recognized until later. No invention, however, was of greater long-term significance than the steam engine, invented by James Watt (1736–1819), a Scot who made musical instruments. Watt added a separate condenser to a primitive steam engine, resulting in a more powerful engine, which he patented in 1769. Yet, like its predecessor, Watt's costly invention was first used only to drain mines, making it possible to dig deeper shafts and to rapidly increase coal production, so essential to the Industrial Revolution. Slowly, the steam engine was put to use in manufacturing.

In 1709, Abraham Darby, a foundry man, came up with a process to smelt iron ore into cast iron by using coke (coal residue) instead of charcoal. This process spread only slowly; in 1775, there were still only thirty-one blast furnaces in Britain. Moreover, charcoal smelting continued to be important, further depleting Britain's forests. In 1784, Henry Cort (1740–1800), an ironmaster, invented the "puddling and rolling" process in iron casting. Molten metal in a furnace was raked to remove carbon and other impurities, producing wrought iron, which was far stronger than cast iron. Iron bridges replaced their flimsy predecessors. Iron made new buildings sturdier and basically fire-resistant. Cast-iron railings and gates began to appear on landed estates and in elegant townhouses. Low-cost iron made possible sturdier plows and other farm implements that, in turn, significantly increased the demand for iron.

Improvements in the spinning wheel and basic looms had already accelerated textile production in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The stocking frame produced lighter and more fashionable cotton and silk stockings that replaced the heavier woolen hose of the upper classes. John Kay (1704–1764) invented the "flying shuttle" (patented in 1733 but

(Left) James Watt. (Right) The steam engine.



not diffused for more than twenty years), which ultimately made it possible to weave at a much greater speed, doubling productivity. But Kay's invention, too, has to be seen in the context of traditional manufacturing: its principal effect was to increase the productivity of hand-loom weavers.

Gradually machines powered by water and then by steam eliminated bottlenecks in textile production. In about 1764, James Hargreaves (c. 1720–1778), a carpenter and weaver, invented an apparatus known as the spinning jenny, which wrapped fibers around a spindle (a long, slender pin). Drawing on medieval technology, Hargreaves multiplied the number of thread spindles a worker could operate from one to eight, and then soon to eighty spindles. In 1769, Richard Arkwright (1732–1792), a former barber turned entrepreneur, borrowed some money from a publican and patented a mechanized “water frame,” which, combining spindles and rollers, became the first spinning mill. The water frame turned out a strong, coarse yarn of quality that transformed the cotton industry and increased production of wool worsteds (combed wool). With the exception of its water-powered rollers, Arkwright built his power spinning machine out of the same components as the ordinary spinning wheel that had been found in Europe since medieval times. He had his portrait painted with his hand touching his famous spinning machine, as the same painter might have formerly depicted a country gentleman standing with his hand resting on a fence, his hunting dogs sitting at his feet.

Cottage industry, artisanal workshops, and factory production often coexisted within the same industry. With the gradual mechanization of spinning, weaving could only keep pace with the rapid expansion of the number of hand-loom weavers. Even a rudimentary power loom, invented in 1784, was too expensive to compete with domestic industry, which continued to be based on the availability of an inexpensive workforce. Hand-loom weavers survived well into the middle decades of the nineteenth century.



Richard Arkwright with his famous water frame at his fingertips.

The inventions that slowly revolutionized the textile industry did not inevitably lead to factory production. Like frame-work knitting, the first spinning jennys and mules were small enough to be adaptable to workshops and even some

houses, where skilled workers and their apprentices used stronger, more reliable hand-operated machinery or tools.

The factory, however, slowly became the symbol of the new industrial age in England. One of Arkwright's textile mills in the early 1770s had 200 workers, and ten years later it had four times that number. An ironworks employed more than 1,000 workers by 1770, a concentration previously seen only in great shipyards. In 1774, Watt and Matthew Boulton (1728–1809), a toymaker, went into business in Birmingham producing engines and machine parts in the largest factory in the world. It was not a single structure but rather a number of adjacent workshops, which drew on the work of about 20,000 men, women, and children in the countryside around Birmingham.

The development of the factory at first had relatively little to do with technological imperatives. Manufacturers preferred bringing workers under one roof so that they could more easily supervise them, imposing the discipline of factory work on people used to having their schedule defined by the rising and setting of the sun and the passing of the seasons. When a defective piece of pottery emerged from the kilns, the pottery manufacturer Josiah Wedgwood (1730–1795) would storm over and stomp on it with his wooden leg, chiding his workers. "Thou shalt not be idle" was Wedgwood's eleventh commandment; "Everything gives way to experiment" his favorite maxim. His goal was to train his workers so thoroughly as "to make such machines of the men as cannot err." Putting workers in factories facilitated such a goal. By the middle of the eighteenth century, factory manufacturing had begun to alter the northern English landscape. "From the Establishment of Manufacturers, we see Hamlets swell into Villages, and Villages into Towns," exclaimed a gentleman in the 1770s.

Expanding British Economy

The production of manufactured goods doubled during the last half of the eighteenth century in Britain. Cotton made up 40 percent of British exports by the end of the century. India's domination of the world market for textiles ended. The production of iron followed in importance, along with wool and worsteds, linen, silk, copper, paper, cutlery, and the booming building trades.

Despite its relatively small size, Britain's significant economic advantages over the nations of the continent help explain why the manufacturing revolution first began there. Unlike the German or Italian states, Britain was unified politically. People living in England spoke basically the same language. France and the Italian and German states still had internal tariffs that made trade more costly, whereas in Britain there were no internal tariffs once the union between England and Scotland had been achieved in 1707. Weights and measures in Britain had largely been standardized.

Great Britain was by far the wealthiest nation in the world. Its colonies provided raw materials for manufacturing and markets for goods produced by the mother country. English merchants supplied slaves snatched from the west coast of Africa for the plantations of the West Indies in exchange for cotton. The amount of raw cotton imported from India increased by twenty times between 1750 and 1800. Beginning in the 1790s the United States provided Lancashire manufacturers with cotton picked by southern slaves.

England's stable banking and credit arrangements facilitated the reinvestment of agricultural and commercial profits in manufacturing. London's banks, particularly the giant Bank of England, were profitable and respected. Merchants and manufacturers accepted paper money and bills of exchange with confidence. Gentry invested in overseas trade expeditions and in manufacturing without the reticence of continental landowners. London's financial market could provide information twice a week on what investments were worth in Amsterdam and Paris. Joint-stock companies, which had begun in the late seventeenth century, offered limited personal liability, which meant that in the case of a company's financial disaster, individual investors would be liable only to the extent of their investments.

Expanded demand for manufactured goods led to a dramatic improvement in Britain's roads. A new process of road surfacing—macadamization—improved travel on the main routes. Turnpikes were extended and improved; investors formed "turnpike trusts," repairing the highways and turning a profit by charging a toll. In 1700, it took fifty hours to travel from Norwich to London by coach; by 1800, the journey could be achieved in nineteen hours. The daunting trek to the Scottish city of Edinburgh from London had been reduced to a mere sixty hours of travel.

England's water transportation was also unmatched in Europe, a gift of nature. Rich coal and iron ore deposits lay near water transportation. By 1800, Britain was extracting about 90 percent of the world's coal. No part of England stands more than seventy miles from the sea. Navigable rivers facilitated the transportation of raw materials and manufactured goods; so did canals built in the middle decades of the century, including a ninety-mile-long canal linking Manchester to the Mersey River and the Irish Sea.

The British government offered businessmen more assistance than any continental rivals could anticipate from their own governments. The Royal Navy protected the merchant fleet, which tripled in size during the first three-quarters of the century. Navigation Acts forced foreign merchants to ship export goods to Britain in British ships. Bowing to pressure from woolens producers, the British government in 1700 had imposed protective tariffs on imported silk and calico, undercutting imports from India. Agreements with the Dutch Republic and France in the late 1780s reduced trade tariffs with those states, which helped British exports. Political influence kept taxes low on business. Other British strategies were even more imaginative: a law dating from the late seventeenth century required that all

corpses be dressed in woolens for burial, a clever way of helping woolens manufacturers.

Yet the British government rarely interfered in operations of the economy in ways that businessmen might have considered intrusive. Adam Smith (1723–1790) emerged as the first economic theorist of capitalism (see Chapter 9). Smith rejected the prevailing theory of mercantilism and extolled economic liberalism. He also observed that the greater division of labor was increasing productivity. Taking a famous example, he argued that a single worker could probably not make a single common pin in one day, but that ten workers, each repeating the same task, such as straightening the wire, or grinding its point, could make hundreds of pins in a workday. Smith's logic anticipated the age of factory manufacturing.

Expanding Continental Economies

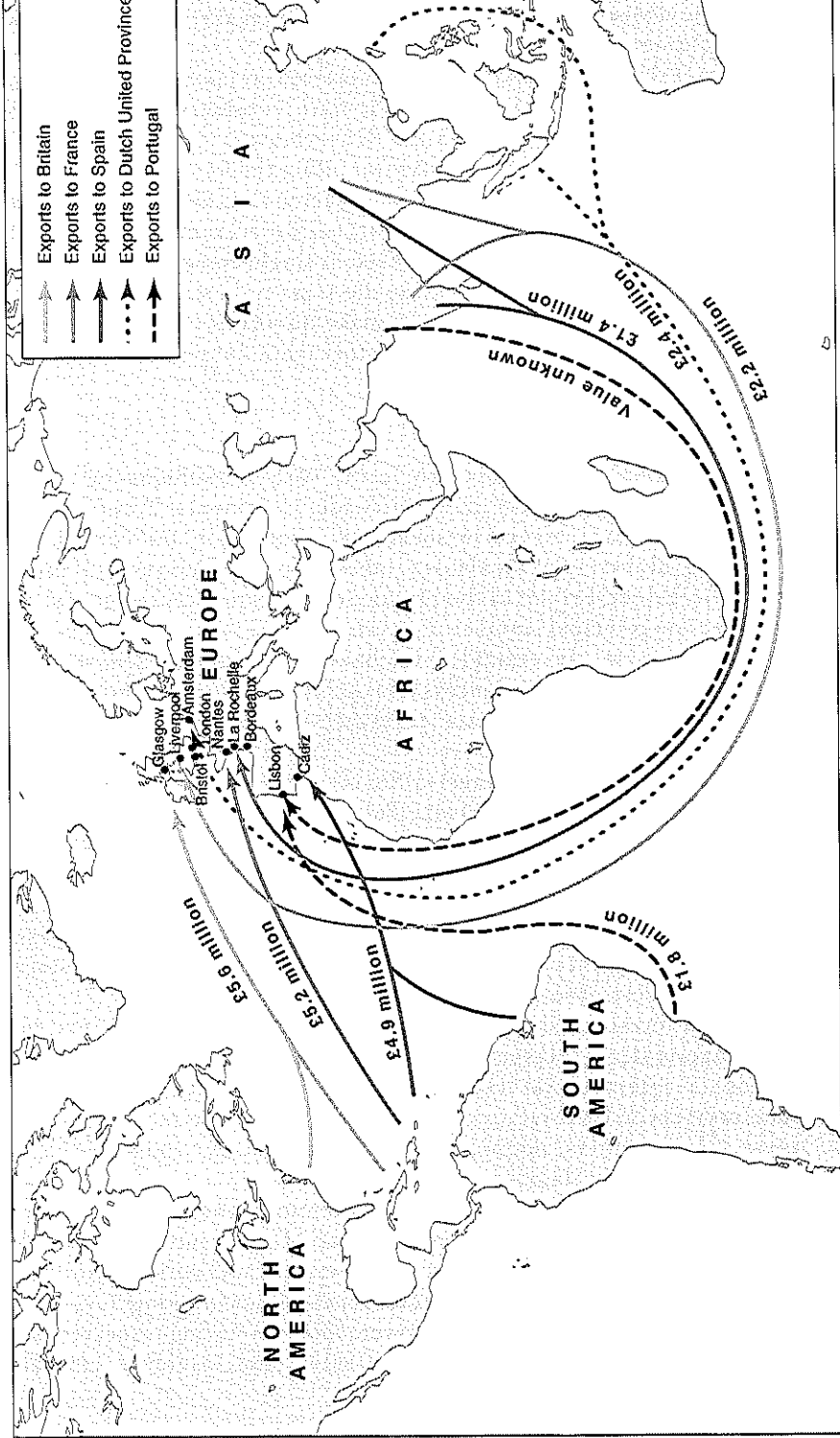
On the continent, too, particularly in the West, manufacturing expanded rapidly in cities, towns, and the countryside. Continental European manufacturing was characterized by small-scale production and cottage industry (taking advantage of an almost endless supply of laborers). France did not lag far behind Britain in the production of manufactured goods, and it remained the principal supplier of Spain and its empire. Despite bewildering differences in, for example, weights and measures, currencies (even within large states), and calendars (Russia's was eleven days behind that of the West), European commerce developed rapidly during the eighteenth century.

Global trade also contributed to the economies of the Italian and German states, and to those of Spain, Portugal, and France (see Map 10.2). Increased trade with the wider world brought new products—Chinese silk and porcelain, Indian cotton, West Indian sugar and rum, East Indian tea, South Seas spices, and much more. In the chancy sweepstakes of the globalization of colonial trade, traders and their investors could make considerable fortunes, but they could also easily be ruined when a sudden storm or pirate attack destroyed a ship and its cargo.

Bankers, investors, shipbuilders, wholesale and retail merchants, insurance underwriters, transporters, and notaries profited from the marked increase in international trade. Some of the prosperity trickled down to more ordinary folk as well, providing work, for example in prosperous port towns, for carpenters, dockers, haulers, and artisans, who supplied luxuries for wealthy merchants.

Considerable obstacles remained, however, to further economic development on the continent. Traditional suspicion of paper money, the problems of obtaining credit and raising investment capital, and periodic government debasing of currencies created hurdles for those undertaking long-distance commerce. London and Amsterdam were alone in having respected banks, credit facilities, relatively low interest rates, and insurance companies.

MAP 10.2 TRADE FROM COLONIES TO EUROPE, c. 1775 Exports from the colonies to Europe, including the value of the trade.



Even in Western Europe, Britain's South Sea Bubble (see Chapter 11) and the collapse in 1720 of John Law's bank in France scared off investors. Capital remained for the most part in the hands of wealthy families and small groups of associates who loaned money to states, pushing up the cost of credit. The absence of investment capital led the Prussian and Austrian monarchies to supply capital for some manufacturing enterprises. Guilds held monopolies on the trade and production of certain products; international tariffs and tolls complicated trade between the many small states in Central Europe. Furthermore, as we have seen, relatively few nobles took an active interest in manufacturing, although exceptions were to be found in France, the Austrian Netherlands, and Russia, where some nobles developed coal mines and invested in the iron industry. Despite the development of the copper and iron industry of the Ural Mountains, in the Russian Empire the possibilities for increased manufacturing were limited by the monumental distances between population centers and natural resources, as well as an inadequate transportation network that had barely changed since the time of Ivan the Terrible in the sixteenth century.

SOCIAL CHANGES

Urban growth, particularly after 1750, was one of the most visible changes engendered by the rise in population and the expansion of trade and manufacturing, as well as the continuing centralization of state power. Other changes included the rise of the "middling sort" and the greater vulnerability of the laborer who was displaced by enclosure and forced to move from place to place in search of work.

The Growth of Towns and Cities

Although Europe remained overwhelmingly rural, cities and towns grew faster than the population as a whole, meaning that Europe, particularly the West, slowly urbanized. Cities grew as people moved to areas where there was work, or for the poorest of the poor, where they might find charity. New manufacturing centers served as magnets to which those who had no land or prospects were drawn. By the end of the century, Europe had twenty-two cities with more than 100,000 people (see Table 10.2).

The British urban population (any settlement of more than 2,500 people qualified as "urban") grew from slightly less than 20 percent of the population in 1700 to more than 30 percent in 1800, when London's population reached nearly a million people, nearly twice that of Paris. London was the world's largest port, the center of banking, finance, insurance, manufacturing, exports, and empire. In the eighteenth century, a fifth of the British population spent part of their lives in London. Two-thirds of the residents of London had been born outside of the city, migrants who had come to the

TABLE 10.2. EUROPE'S LARGEST CITIES AT THE END OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

City	Population	City	Population
London	950,000	St. Petersburg	270,000
Paris	550,000	Vienna	230,000
Naples	430,000	Amsterdam	220,000
Constantinople	300,000	Lisbon	180,000
Moscow	300,000	Berlin	170,000

capital in search of opportunity. Indians and blacks had also begun to appear in the imperial capital.

Some contemporaries believed that wickedness and crime increased almost inevitably with larger cities and towns. In the case of London, the book *Hell Upon Earth, or the Town in an Uproar* (1729) was subtitled "The Late Horrible Scenes of Forgery, Perjury, Street-Robbery, Murder, Sodomy, and Other Shocking Impieties." It denounced "this great, wicked, unwieldy, over-grown Town, one continued hurry of Vice and Pleasure, where nothing dwells but *Absurdities, Abuses, Accidents, Accusations.*"

London's emerging social geography reflected the paradox that Britain was both an aristocratic and commercial society. Bloomsbury Square and Bedford Square, elite districts in West London, near Westminster, the seat of Parliament, were largely aristocratic creations, as nobles developed some of their land. At the same time, commercial London also expanded rapidly along with the British Empire. Near the burgeoning docks of the East End on the River Thames, dilapidated buildings housed the poor.

As England's economic dynamism began to shift northward with increased manufacturing, Liverpool, a teeming port on the Irish Sea, "the emporium of the western world," and Manchester, a northern industrial town, developed rapidly. By 1800, Manchester had become the "metropolis of manufactures," with 75,000 inhabitants and growing industrial suburbs.

Continental cities, too, added population. In France, the growth of Paris, above all, but also Lyon, Lille, Bordeaux, and other cities was deceptive, as only about 10 percent of the population lived in towns of more than 5,000 people in 1789, compared to 25 percent in England. In the German states, there had been but twenty-four towns with more than 10,000 people in 1500; by 1800, there were sixty of them. In Berlin, royal officials, lawyers, and soldiers accounted for about 40 percent of the Prussian capital's 140,000 inhabitants in 1783. In southern Italy, Naples was barely able to support its impoverished population of more than 400,000 people. No other town in southern Italy had 10,000 inhabitants. In Rome, the clergy constituted about half the population of 160,000 people. East Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans had relatively few cities. In the middle of the eighteenth century, only three cities within the vast Russian Empire

had more than 30,000 inhabitants: Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Kiev. Yet the Polish capital, Warsaw, which had only 7,000 inhabitants in the mid-sixteenth century, had grown to 150,000 a century later.

As cities developed, those with money and leisure time found more to do. The largest English towns sported theaters and concert halls, gentlemen's clubs, scientific societies, and racetracks. Towns took pride in their development, publishing guides for visitors and directories listing the names of shops. Elegant buildings of brick and stone replaced tottering wood-beamed medieval structures. Streets were widened, paved, and cleaned, at least in wealthy neighborhoods. Dublin, Boston, and Calcutta offered smaller versions of English urban society, sporting private clubs and municipal pride, at least for British residents.

Wealthy merchants and bankers lived in elegant townhouses near the docks in Hamburg, Nantes, and Genoa, bustling port cities of international trade. Expanded trade and urban growth engendered consumerism. Paris became the European capital of luxury goods, as French nobles continually raised the standards of conspicuous consumption. Polish lords traded grain for luxury goods from Western Europe. In Sweden, such luxury reached court, aristocrats, and wealthy bourgeois, but a diplomat in 1778 estimated the market for such goods in Sweden to be only 70,000 people of a population of 2.5 million. Thomas Jefferson, who espoused simplicity in life, nonetheless paid for a stream of luxury goods from London and Paris to be shipped to Virginia.

Noble and wealthy bourgeois alike insisted on personal prerogatives of taste, for example, in decoration and food. It became a compliment to say

Elegant shops on Capel Street in Dublin.



that someone or something reflected "urbanity." Three-cornered hats, along with wigs, which wealthy commoners as well as nobles increasingly favored, and stockings emerged as symbols of respectability. Cafés took their name from the coffee served there, a drink only people of means could afford. Upper-class men and women became concerned as never before with modesty; "water closets" became more common. A code of conduct served—with income and private space itself—as a barrier between wealthy and ordinary people.

The eighteenth-century consumer revolution extended to the poor, as well. By the mid-seventeenth century, resourceful households in northwestern Europe were finding ways to purchase consumer goods that would make their lives somewhat more comfortable. Families drew upon the labor of women and children, as well as longer working hours by husbands. Now the number of ordinary families able to acquire household utensils and even books and cheap prints increased dramatically. Different kinds of apparel were available even to the very poor. Many mill hands now had a change of clothes. Some servant girls wore silk kerchiefs, and an occasional laborer sported a watch, for which he paid the wages of several weeks. Even some infants deposited at foundling homes had been dressed in printed cottons. For very ordinary people with a little money or some credit, taverns and bars provided cheap liquor and sociability. For people with neither, there was the street.

Social Movement within the Elite

With the growth of manufacturing, trade, and cities came concomitant social changes, including mobility of the "middling sort." Bankers and wealthy merchants aspired to social distinction and an aristocratic lifestyle. In Paris, wealthy merchants purchased elegant townhouses and mingled with nobles. In Barcelona, members of the trading oligarchy earned the right to carry swords like nobles. The bourgeoisie of the Austrian Netherlands demanded the same privileges Habsburg rulers had granted to Belgian nobles. Noble titles could be purchased in most European states, providing a relatively easily obtained means of social ascension, without eliminating the distinctions between nobles and commoners. As the rising cost of warfare (larger armies to equip, train, and send into battle, and expensive fortifications to maintain) and reduced tax revenue during hard economic times weighed heavily on royal coffers, the sale of titles and offices swept more commoners into the nobility in France, Austria, and Castile. The number of French nobles doubled between 1715 and 1789, and relatively few noble families could trace their origins back more than a couple of generations.

In Britain, on the other hand, it was rare for commoners to move into the nobility. The sale of offices had never been as widespread in England as on the continent, at least not since the English Civil War in the mid-

Notice the marked contrast between the poor worker and the elegant member of the gentry in this English etching from the eighteenth century.



seventeenth century, and the purchase of noble titles was nonexistent. Yet the crown occasionally elevated spectacularly successful, wealthy commoners into the peerage with hereditary noble titles (baron, viscount, earl, marquis, and duke), which carried with them a seat in the House of Lords. The monarchy rewarded other landed gentlemen with various titles, including knight (a nonhereditary title) and baronet (a hereditary title, granted less frequently), both of which carried the title of "Sir." Very few people, however, ever rose from trade into a peerage, or even to the upper gentry.

Entry into the British elite, however, was generally more open than into its continental counterparts. Gradual shifts in social structure in English society, beginning in the seventeenth century, contributed to the nation's social stability. No legal or cultural barriers in Britain prevented bankers, manufacturers, merchants, and urban professionals from ascending through wealth to social and political predominance as "country gentlemen" through the purchase of landed estates that made them gentry.

Daniel Defoe, who wrote *Robinson Crusoe* and other novels for an expanding middle-class readership, claimed that "men are every day starting up from obscurity to wealth." Trade and manufacturing in England were honored occupations. Unlike on the continent, where second and third sons often were automatically relegated by their fathers into Church or military posts, many of these sons marched proudly into business. A Manchester cobbler wrote in 1756:

See, as the Owners of old Family Estates in your Neighborhood are selling off their patrimonies, how your townsmen are constantly purchasing; and thereby laying the Foundation of a new Race of Gentry! Not adorn'd, its true, with Coats of Arms and a long Parchment

Pedigree of useless Members of Society, but deck'd with Virtue and Frugality.

In France, Denmark, and Sweden, tensions remained between old noble families and those more recently ennobled, whom the former viewed as boorish newcomers. The number of ennobled commoners in the eighteenth century may not have been significantly greater than that in the previous century, but those who were ennobled were wealthier. However, the older noble families still controlled the most important and lucrative offices in the royal bureaucracy, the Church, and the army.

The French army began to phase out the purchase of commissions in the late 1770s, and early in the next decade nobles demanded and received royal assurance that the crown would respect their monopoly on the most prestigious military titles. Directed against newcomer nobles, the Ségur Law of 1782 asserted that no one could be appointed to a high post in the army who could not demonstrate at least four generations of nobility on his father's side. However, barriers between the bourgeois and nobles in many states were starting to break down. In some places, a small number of nobles entered commerce or manufacturing. The expansion of trade and manufactur-



This painting depicts a socially mobile French merchant and banker receiving envoys from Joseph II, the Holy Roman Emperor, requesting a loan.

ing led more continental nobles to seek new sources of wealth. French and Russian nobles were principal owners of mines. Swedish nobles contributed to the modest expansion of manufacturing in their country. In eighteenth-century Spain, little stigma was attached to noble commercial ventures, perhaps because there were so many nobles. In contrast, in Prussia, Poland, and Hungary most nobles still considered participation in commercial activity (above all, retail commerce) or manufacturing to bring derogation, implying a loss of status and honor.

The Changing Condition of the Poor

For millions of people, only a thin line stood between hav-

ing enough to eat and hunger or starvation, between occasional employment and begging, and between relatively good health and sudden illness and death. If both partners were young, healthy, and could occasionally find work, marriage increased the odds of survival in "an economy of makeshifts." But economic crisis often pulled a couple apart, as one partner might be forced to leave to look for work elsewhere.

At the end of the eighteenth century, almost 30 percent of the British population depended on some sort of poor relief; more than a million people were classified as "paupers" in England and Wales. Laborers, some of whom had been chased from village common lands by parliamentary acts of enclosure, wandered in search of work. Yet residents of a given village or neighborhood were far more likely to benefit from local charity than outsiders, often feared as thieves or worse. Beggars in Austrian law were referred to as "push people," because authorities sought to push them away.

Meager harvests and bitter winters periodically took terrible tolls on the poor, with indigents found frozen to death in church doorways, barns, or fields. When food shortages occurred or the police expelled beggars from large cities, country roads swarmed with young children who had been abandoned, told by their parents to make their way as best they could. The elderly, particularly widows, were often the poorest of the poor, unable to move elsewhere, depending on neighbors little better off than themselves.

The poor were perpetually undernourished. Bread remained the basis of the diet of the vast majority of Europeans—white bread for people of means; black bread, porridge or gruel made from rye, potatoes, or buckwheat for everybody else. Vegetables—peas and beans, and cabbage in Central and Eastern Europe—were prized as occasional additions to soup or porridge. Poor people rarely consumed meat, except for heavily salted meat that could be preserved. The orphanage of Amsterdam, a prosperous city, served meat and fish twice a week and vegetables once a week. But dried peas, beans, porridge, or gruel comprised most meals there. Fish and shellfish were common only at the sea's edge for ordinary people (especially because they were not allowed to fish in most rivers and ponds). Water, often not very clean, was the drink of necessity; wine and beer were beyond the budget of most people. Swiss peasants prosperous enough to drink coffee and eat chocolate were the exception in Europe. Yet overall, ordinary people experienced a modest improvement in diet and health during the eighteenth century.

Charity, however impressive, fell far short of relieving the crushing poverty, particularly in France, where it provided only about 5 percent of what was needed. During the Catholic Reformation, the Church had emphasized the importance of charitable works in the quest for eternal salvation. Most Protestants, too, believed in the importance of good works—after all, Christ had washed a beggar's feet. Parishes and, in Catholic countries, monasteries and convents regularly provided what relief they could afford to the poor, particularly around Christmas and during Lent. Hospices and

other charitable institutions cared for the sick, invalids, and the elderly as best they could. But during hard times the number of abandoned infants increased dramatically, far beyond the capacity of institutions to care for them.

SOCIAL CONTROL

By the middle of the eighteenth century, many upper-class Europeans believed that they had entered an age of clamoring crowds and even riots. In the 1770s and 1780s, particularly, the lower orders seemed increasingly less deferential. The poor protested the purchase and removal of grain from their markets at prices they could not afford. They stopped wagons, seized grain, and sold it at what they considered to be the “just price,” a sum that would permit even the poor to buy enough to survive.

Work stoppages by craftsmen became more widespread. Following a London strike by journeymen tailors protesting cuts in their pay, the British Parliament passed the first Combination Act in 1721. The law established wages and working conditions for tailors and allowed the jailing of striking workers without benefit of a trial. Seeing that many craftsmen and skilled workers were leaving Britain, some for the colonies, Parliament then passed legislation forbidding their emigration.

Protecting Property in Britain

The British Parliament represented the interests of wealthy landowners, who consolidated their property during the eighteenth century and alone could elect members of the House of Commons. Thus, in 1723, Parliament passed without discussion a law that added fifty capital offenses against property.

Hunting was a badge of living nobly. It was a domesticated, usually non-lethal—at least for the hunters—version of warfare. The exclusive right to hunt was a vigilantly guarded prerogative of any and all who could claim noble status. But acts against poaching were invoked more often to protect property rights. Wealthy English landowners set brutal mantraps—including trap-guns—and snares that maimed poachers who snuck onto their property, including in the “deer parks” established on land that had once been common land. The felonies listed under the Black Act, among them the blackening of one’s face as a form of disguise—hence the law’s name—included poaching game or fish, chopping down trees, or gleaning branches blown down in storms. Henry Fielding (1707–1754) called attention to such a felony in his novel *The Adventures of Joseph Andrews*: “Jesu!” said the Squire, “would you commit two persons to Bridewell [prison] for a twig?” “Yes,” said the Lawyer, “and with great leniency too; for if we had called it a young tree they would have been both hanged.”

The concern for protecting property could be seen in the Marriage Act (1753), which forbade clandestine marriages. It specifically sought to protect property against ambitious men who might be tempted to try to elope with the daughters of wealthy property owners. Parliament also passed a law permitting divorce by parliamentary act—which none but the very wealthy and well-placed could seek—at least partially because gentlemen wanted to be free to divorce wives who shamed them with adultery or who could not produce heirs to inherit their estates.



A gamekeeper snags a poacher.

Subordination and Social Control

People of means debated strategies of social control with increasing urgency as economic crises widened the gap between rich and poor. During 1724–1733, the French state undertook a “great confinement” of paupers, beggars, and vagrants in workhouses, where they were to learn menial trades under conditions of strict discipline. The subsequent reorganization and expansion of royal efforts at policing the poor represented an increase in the reach of the state. Yet temporary programs of poor relief were common on the continent, as were periodic repressive campaigns against beggars and vagrants. Since the beginning of the seventeenth century, English parishes or townships provided charity to those wearing the requisite “P” for pauper. In order to keep indigents off the road, towns established workhouses, where the poor would be forced to work in exchange for subsistence. A 1782 English law replaced workhouses with somewhat more humane “poorhouses.” In 1795, the Speenhamland system, so called after the parish in which it was conceived, provided for a sliding scale of assistance, determined by the current price of bread and wage rates. But such programs merely scratched the surface as the problem of poverty entered public discourse to an unprecedented degree.

Britain did not undertake the kind of largely successful campaign found in some places on the continent to limit the number of capital crimes to those that threatened life or the state. Parliament added almost two hundred capital offenses to the law between 1688 and 1810, sixty-three of



A public hanging at Tyburn in London.

them between 1760 and 1810. About mid-century, two young men were arrested for poaching. Their wives went to the landlord's estate to beg his merciful intercession. The lord, moved to tears, said that their husbands would be returned to them. True to his word, he sent the two corpses to the wives. But English juries, in particular, hesitated to convict those accused; only about two hundred criminals were executed each year. Executions drew huge throngs at London's Tyburn. Corporal punishment, such as branding or being exhibited in stocks to public contempt, was far more common. Children were worked and punished as adults, though not all as harshly as the seven-year-old girl who was hanged in Norwich for stealing a petticoat. England was relatively under-policed, particularly when compared to France (Paris had four times more policemen than London, which was twice its size).

Authorities everywhere tended to lump the poor into one of two broad categories—"deserving" and "undeserving," that is, whether they were considered worthy of pity and charity. Among the latter were "false beggars" who simulated horrifying wounds or injuries with the skill of a makeup artist and, clutching at the clothes of the wealthy passing by, received a few cents as his benefactors scurried away as rapidly as possible. These categories reflected the belief that many, if not most, of the poor were destitute because they were lazy and that stiff punishment would be enough to end begging.

In small bourgs, villages, and the countryside, people feared bands of thieves, whose threat of arson could intimidate, as a fire would destroy a harvest or a farm in a matter of minutes. Brigandage was rampant in southern Italy and in Sicily. In the grain-rich Beauce region south of Paris, some

bandits were known as *chauffeurs* because they held their victims' feet to the fire to force them to reveal the hiding place of their valuables. Yet many poor people considered some bandits as heroic Robin Hoods, who stole from the rich to give to the poor.

A CENTURY OF CONTRASTS

The eighteenth century was a period of contrasts. Musical performances at court and in châteaux and elegant townhouses took place while peasants and rural day laborers struggled to survive, toiling in fields they rarely owned or working as dock or market porters, chimney sweeps, or common laborers in town. The well-heeled financier, wholesale merchant, manufacturer, or lawyer in Paris, Amsterdam, Barcelona, or Vienna lived in a vastly more cosmopolitan world, increasingly shaped by consumerism, than did their counterparts in the relatively few cities and towns in Prussia, Russia, and the Balkans. In many ways a century still dominated politically by nobles, the eighteenth century also was a dynamic period of economic and social transformation, beginning with the Industrial Revolution in England. Commerce and manufacturing increased on the continent, as well. Developing trade across oceans changed patterns of consumption in Europe. Trade remained the basis of the British Empire, which stretched across the world. Rivals Spain and France, too, were colonial powers.

Economic and social changes brought remarkable political consequences during the 1760s and 1770s. English country gentlemen who invariably supported court policies and those who sometimes opposed them began to look and act like political parties. And the domination of political life by an oligarchy of landowners came under challenge from ordinary people without the right to vote. In the North American colonies, the king's subjects protested the fact that they were taxed without representation, and they rebelled against British rule.

On the continent, denunciations of unwarranted privilege began to be heard, including calls for reform of the French absolute monarchy. Public opinion gradually began to see parlements as blocks against absolute rule and defenders of the rights of the "nation," a term that increasingly came into use. Elsewhere on the continent, too, opposition to entrenched privilege became more insistent.

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY DYNASTIC RIVALRIES AND POLITICS



King George III (ruled 1760–1820) proclaimed that he “gloried in the name of Britain.” Indeed during his reign, despite his personal failings, a nationalist cult developed around the British monarchy, significantly after the empire suffered its biggest loss, that of the thirteen American colonies.

The king projected the image of an ordinary family man, surrounded by his homely wife and fifteen children. Less interested in goings-on in Hanover, his family’s dynastic home, than his predecessors, he won popular affection in Britain. “This young man,” assessed the writer Horace Walpole, “don’t stand in one spot with his eyes fixed royally on the ground, and dropping bits of German news; he walks about and speaks to everybody.” The king’s domesticity also made him a target for the gentle spoofs of caricaturists. His nervousness led him to bombard almost everyone he encountered with questions, ending with “hey, hey?” By the last decade of the century, symptoms of a hereditary disease made George III appear to be quite mad.

Early in his reign, King George III held strongly to royal prerogatives, even within the context of the British constitutional monarchy. Yet not only did British nationalism develop rapidly with him on the throne, but the idea developed in and beyond Parliament that a party of opposition formed an essential part of the parliamentary system of representation.

The nature of the European state system itself also underwent fundamental change in the eighteenth century as the rivalries between Great Britain, France, Spain, and the Dutch Republic (the United Provinces) broadened to a global scale. Whereas Europe in the period of Louis XIV had been marked by frenetic war-making—much of it at his instigation—and the pursuit of alliances against France, Europe’s dominant state, the wars fought between the great powers in the middle of the eighteenth cen-