The House of Saulx-Tavanes

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The House of Saulx-Tavanes: Versailles and Burgundy, 1700-1830.

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By January, 1789, reports of a severe winter in Burgundy reached the duke. He instructed his agents to distribute 600 livres among eleven parish priests to help "those on his lands hurt by the rigor of winter and the high cost of grain." In the same month he donated another 300 livres to the poor of St. Sulpice in Paris. These were the largest sums the duke had ever contributed to charity. Besides occasional gifts to the parish poor—at the time of his son's marriage, for example—the family accounts allude to only two regular charities. One was a foundation paying 36 livres annually for the poor at Beaumont and another paying 30 livres per year to help support a student at the Royal School of Design at Paris. Given this background, local agents and priests had apparently impressed the duke with the seriousness of rural distress in early 1789.

There is no mention of the Great Fear in the duke's papers. It appears that peasant violence in the summer of 1789 passed the Tavanes properties, though the reverberations were very close indeed. Dijon stood at the outer reaches of the peasant risings in Champagne to the north and in Franche-Comté to the east. Arthur Young's encounter with two seigneurs in the provincial capital in July was not reassuring. They reported that three out of five châteaux along the road from Langres to Gray had been pillaged. Gray, the iron port on the Saône River, was only ten miles east

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1 A. D., E-1723, Duboy Accounts, January, 1789.
2 A. D., E-1716, Cure of Saint-Sulpice to M. le Duc, January 10, 1789.
3 A. D., E-1719, Godard Accounts, 1790; A. D., Q-8762, Oeuvres de Bienfaisance, 1792–An II, Beaumont.
of the duke's estate along the Vingeanne. Panic actually reached Chazeuil where the duke possessed seigneurial rights and dîmes, but his properties were spared. The milice at Gray and a detachment from Dijon helped keep order in the local countryside, despite riots at Auxonne and Saint Jean-de-Losne less than fifteen miles down the Saône from the new "Duchy of Saulx-Tavanes." If the peasant uprising that summer had frightened Tavanes, there was no change in the administration of his estate to indicate it.  

In brief, there was nothing cataclysmic about the year 1789 for the duke in Paris. In 1790, his correspondence with his new general manager, Jacques Fénéon, suggests little change from two years before. The lease for the forge and wood at Tilchâtel was signed with a new tenant on schedule for 30,000 livres per annum, 12,000 livres in advance. Fénéon began submitting monthly accounts on a new form which he insisted was considerably better than his predecessor's. Billard had collected some 58,000 livres before the summer of 1789, and Fénéon collected the rest by the end of the year. In fact, the duke received as much rent from his lands in Burgundy in 1789 as he had the preceding year—61,510 livres—and his rents for Normandy even rose by 5,000. If there had been difficulty collecting seigneurial dues from the peasants and small holders, the principal tenants shouldered that task. In any case, prices had been good; the duke's dîmes were approaching an all-time high. True, the financial plight of the government was reflected in delayed payment of royal pensions. In 1789, revenues from the duke's pensions fell from 40,000 to 20,000 livres. But in 1790, the treasury was not only able to remit the regular pensions but even pay the arrears for 1788. Even the rentes on the Clergy of France were paid for 1790. In March, 1791, the duke closed his annual account with Godard with a revenue (uninflated by new loans) of 231,038 livres, the highest sum ever attained.

It was not until 1791 that the duke began to encounter serious difficulties, not all at once, but in gradual, irritating stages. First of all, taxes had risen. In 1788, he had paid only six per cent of his total revenue for 

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6 The dîmes from the region of Calais rose from 7,900 livres in 1788 to 8,800 livres in 1789, and to 12,700 livres in 1790. A. D., E–1715, E–1717, and E–1719.
7 A. D., E–1717 and E–1719.
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taxes. Although the twentieth taxes (*vingtièmes*) in 1788 were supposed to claim eleven per cent of the revenues established by the leases, the duke pared his assessment down to half this rate. In 1789, however, the new government made a fresh assessment of the land, based on acreages and subleases. The dreaded new *cadastre* had come at last. Revenue estimates jumped about 25 per cent. The government then established the tax rate at ten per cent of the income, no higher than the two *vingtièmes*, but with the full intent to grant no privileges. And in this instance the central government moved quickly. Tavanes was paying increased taxes for the last half of 1789. In 1790, the new *contribution foncière* was operating efficiently, and the duke paid over 12,000 livres in direct taxes. The year 1791 was much worse. The government raised the rate on the “former privileged” to 7 sous 9 deniers per livre-revenue and collected over 10,000 livres on Tavanes’s Burgundian properties alone.

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<th>Table IV.1 Royal Taxes in 1788</th>
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<td><strong>Tax</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Livres</strong></td>
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| *Vingtièmes:*
| Burgundy | 4,978 | 89,269 |
| Normandy | 1,231 | 27,173 |
| **Capitation:***
| Paris | 2,751 | 36,371 |
| Servants | 52 | |
| **Total** | 9,012 | 152,813 |

*Source: A. D., E-1715; A. D., E-1721; A. D. Calvados, E-711.*

Fénéon did his best to keep the duke’s taxes down. He protested that the duke had been overcharged at Bourberain in 1790 and supported his case with figures on acreage and revenues based in part on his own survey of 1782 and 1783 for the *terriers*. As usual, he was thorough and precise. He calculated the total revenues of the community at 48,980 livres, and the duke’s share at 17,852 livres, including his *champarts*. Based on this ratio, the duke should have paid 2,032 and not 3,498 livres. More-

8 The tax returns for this period are unfortunately incomplete. The land tax at Arc-sur-Tille was 2,543 livres; the lease was 23,000 livres. This is over ten per cent. A. D., E-1744, *Impositions*, 1790. See also A. D., E-1725, *Impositions*, 1789; A. D., E-1719, *Contribution Patriotique* of 3,333 livres, 1790; and A. D. Calvados, E-710.

over, argued the agent, even this smaller amount should be apportioned as follows:

1) for M. le Duc for all his taxes ........................................ 1,001 livres
2) for Sr. Bureau, his wood merchant .................................. 655
3) for Sr. Paris, his tenant .................................................. 376

Total .................................................. 2,032 livres

Taxes at Bourberain, observed Fénéon, had risen by 2,434 livres, almost double the amount levied in 1789. Yet the duke alone had absorbed the entire amount. “Not one village habitant has suffered from this increase. On the contrary, his taxes have diminished, proving the injustice of the new apportionment.”

Neither the local villagers nor the new tax officials drew the same conclusions. The full impact of the disappearance of the Commission Intermédiaire of the Provincial Estates, which had apportioned village taxes before 1789, was now becoming clear to the duke and his agent.

Still, the duke and his chief agent hoped that all this was a temporary dislocation. Fénéon wrote from Dijon in February, 1791, that the price of wood had fallen, but that if the duke could wait until the following year, he was sure that the trade would have revived by then. Wood consumption at Dijon had dropped because “all the rich families had evacuated the city.” The seigneurial toll at Tilchâtel had been suppressed, and payment had stopped on the pension from the duke’s lieutenant-generalcy. Yet Fénéon dismissed these items almost casually, promising to send a summary of the “deductions” necessitated “by the new order of things.”

There was one serious problem. Rent payments from the fermiers had been delayed by the suppression of certain seigneurial dues which required an adjustment of the leases. By March, 1791, the duke was pressing Fénéon for more money. “I will do everything possible to send you a lot of money when I receive the first payments on the leases, assuming that the new taxes are no obstacle.” He asked if the duke wanted to continue to pay the five doctors treating the sick on his lands. Together with the medicines, this cost 672 livres in 1790. “If this expense seems too great to you, I shall stop payments immediately and terminate the agreement which was only for one year anyway.”

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10 A. N., T-1095, Fénéon Observations, March 8, 1790.
11 A. D., E-1725, Fénéon Correspondence, Letters of February 9, 1791, March 20, 1791, March 6, 1791, February 21, 1791.
More disturbing was the activity in the local villages. The inhabitants of Renève were submitting a constant stream of complaints to the new “Bureau of Peace and Conciliation” at Dijon about the duke’s dimes. This was the month when the mayor of Dampierre wrote directly to the duke on behalf of the commune, contesting the duke’s rights to the village oven and a parcel of wood. The duke’s response revealed an unshaken confidence in previous connections. “Was this mayor, Monsieur Maulbon, the son of Maulbon d’Arbaumont, former Secretary of the King? If so, please write to him and explain that his claims are unfounded.” He also suggested that Féneon contact Monsieur Arnoult, advocate at Dijon, who had established the duke’s claims at Dampierre a few years before. Arnoult had been recently elected deputy of the Third Estate from the Bailliage of Dijon and would surely prove helpful, thought the duke. Féneon replied in April that he doubted whether any letter from Arnoult (even if he could get one) would be enough. The situation was much more serious. “Without any authorization from the administration that is supposed to govern them,” wrote Féneon, “the municipalities are drawing up demands. The country people are convinced that all dues have been ended and the municipalities are committing the same error.” The village of Chazeuil demanded the duke’s titles in 15 days and threatened to cease payment of the dimes of 1,800 livres. “I will try to change their minds, but their attitude will make it difficult.” The agent then reported his difficulties collecting rents. He managed an agreement with Moniotte, the tenant at Beaumont, whereby the rent was reduced by 1,065 livres, to cover the seigneurial rights that were suppressed. But the peasants were less reasonable. After spending five days along the Vingeanne arguing with the municipalities, Féneon was greeted at the château of Lux by a ‘huissier’ (beadle) from Bourberain, claiming the inhabitants would not pay the twelfth-sheaf. “Suspicion is rampant in all of the municipalities, and any proposals in the name of a seigneur make little impression.”

Still, the duke had not grasped the “new order of things.” He blamed Féneon for poor administration, for not sending enough money to Paris,
and especially for failing to be sufficiently economical. Fénéon could be pardoned for feelings of frustration.

I have received your letter of April 7th in which you express your discontent with my administration. Almost as unhappy as you, I have taken the 3,500 livres collected this month, rushed to Arc-sur-Tille to collect more . . . , repaired the bridge . . . and sent all the money and paper I have to Godard by the Saturday and Sunday stagecoach.

Let me observe a few things. You think that my administration is expensive and you recommend the strictest economy in the future. I admit that you would be right to regret the demise of Monsieur Billard if his loss was the cause of the enormous diminution in your revenues. First of all, it is the result of unforeseen events beyond my control. Secondly, it would have been better for both of us if there had been a little less economy so that I would have found everything in better condition when I took over the management of your affairs.\(^\text{15}\)

Fénéon went on to explain that, although his salary was higher than Billard’s, he had performed the services of a *feudiste* as well as those of a land agent. Moreover, he had fired Saulaville, the chief forest guard, saved his salary, and more efficiently arranged surveillance of the duke’s forests. The principal expenses, he insisted, were for taxes and interests to local creditors. As for repair of the château, forge, or mills, he would abandon these projects if so ordered. Despite his efforts to defend himself, Fénéon said nothing that would trespass the bounds of deference. The duke was still *maître*, and the agent would do his best. His subsequent letters to Paris invariably began with a report of the money sent to the Rue du Bac. But the registered letter was replacing the sacks of silver as hard money disappeared in the countryside. In May, Fénéon observed that not a single *écu* could be found in the Saône Valley. The tenants were paying their rents in assignats.\(^\text{16}\)

The duke was only slowly coming to grips with the situation and his actions seemed unsystematic, not to say frantic. When the Committee of Finance at Paris refused to compensate him for his office of lieutenant-general the duke appealed to Monsieur Charlot, commissioner of the former Estates of Burgundy, to refund his money. There had been talk of a meeting of departmental commissioners in Dijon to liquidate all

\(^{15}\) *A. D.*, E-1725, Letter of April 20, 1791.

\(^{16}\) *A. D.*, E-1725, Letters of May 4, 1791, May 27, 1791.
The duke also claimed that he had paid too much capitation tax for 1790 and should receive a refund for this too. At the same time he sent Fénéon a collection of decrees of the National Assembly and a map of the new department. He also thought it best to send a portrait of the King to his château of Lux for safekeeping. The duke was trying to come to terms with a new set of laws and institutions, but he was certainly unprepared for the changes taking place in the Burgundian countryside.

In the summer of 1791, the municipal revolution in the Saône Valley came into its own. It was not a unique event. Throughout France, the municipalities, down to the tiniest village, took full advantage of their new powers and the collapse of the old royal administration to contest the whole seigneurial system. They did not hesitate to bypass the new district government and to petition Paris directly. At last the peasantry had an institutional base of power—the village commune—and, more important, the will to use it.

Even before the meeting of the Estates General in Paris, the local communes had begun to organize. On February 1, 1789, representatives of thirty-one rural communities assembled at Arc-sur-Tille. The deliberations were printed, an indication of the importance of the meeting and perhaps of support from the Third Estate at Dijon, eight miles away. The local communities, most of them located in the Saône Valley east of the provincial capital, sent from two to a dozen delegates. The bourg of 170 households must have bustled with some 200 country-lawyers, marchands-fermiers, and small landed proprietors. Arc-sur-Tille itself was represented by six men, the most important of whom were Pierre Jacquemard, an independent resident farmer with almost 100 acres of land, and his son. After a few words from the échevin Curot, who reminded the assembled delegates that their purpose was to suggest reforms of the

17 A. D., E-1725, Letters of June 6, 1791, June 20, 1791, May 19, 1791. These June letters were apparently written by the duke himself. They are awkward in their expression with numerous crossouts, inserts, and occasional misspellings. At fifty-two, the duke seems prematurely old or under tension, perhaps both.

provincial administration, one of these six—almost certainly Jacquemard the younger—set a radical tone in an obviously prepared speech.

“This is the most important moment in our lives,” he began, “a chance to remedy abuses,” especially those affecting the distribution of taxes.

For too long the entire burden of taxes has fallen on us; for too long the Clergy, the Nobility, and the Privileged, paying only the lightest taxes, have enjoyed in perfect tranquillity the revenues from property that we unfortunate ones have acquired for them, while their fellow-citizens and brothers have sustained with tired arms this enormous burden [of taxes]. It is clearly destroying their will to work and their attachment for their privileged fellow-citizens.

Knowing that Jacquemard employed a number of day-laborers on his own fields, his suggestion that the revenues of the “privileged” were unearned may seem hypocritical, but it no doubt strengthened his argument against tax privileges. He added that the needs of the ordinary citizen had been hidden from the king by “perfidious hands,” but at last the king had responded. “Let us profit from this precious moment . . . so that he will permit us to vote in numbers equal to the first two orders combined in the Estates of Burgundy. I present this petition, Citizens, and solicit your support” (in writing).

Insisting on the importance of this moment when all the townships (corps de villes) are forming assemblies, the speaker proceeded to other grievances. “Agriculture, Sire, occupies at least five-eighths of your subjects. Yet it is discouraged . . . for many reasons.” Among these were the corvées, “the droit d’indire which is levied only too often by illustrious families,” fines, cens, and other seigneurial rights. He ascribed the “almost total deprivation” of wood to the growing number of forges and to luxury heating (feux de luxe) in the towns. Less expected perhaps was his protest against the cost of local charities, “often forced on the poor and the vagabonds.” On balance, the speech was a defense of the independent owner. He was the real “unfortunate.” Burdened with fiscal and seigneurial payments, misunderstood and even misused by the townspeople, “the well-to-do farmers (cultivateurs) have sought other occupations (états) for their children, and the unhappy ones who remain grow only what is absolutely necessary to live on.” Yet the solution would seem to lie in political changes. “Vote by head” and admission of curés to the Estates of Burgundy would presumably open the way for non-political reforms as well. Equalize and lower the fiscal burden, and hard
work would seem to do the rest. Arc-sur-Tille was not alone in condemning the idlers (oisifs) at both ends of the social scale. A final few words assured the crown that “the people continue their respect and hommage for the Clergy and the Nobility and will cooperate with them in maintaining equality and justice in the distribution of taxes.” A touch of irony or sound political tactics?219

The speech had not been given in a void. Arc-sur-Tille had had considerable experience with seigneurial claims, communal rights, and tax privileges. Arc-sur-Tille had been the only one of the duke’s nine villages to resist the droit d’indire for two years. This contest along with the renewal of the terriers and the enforcement of the dîme had not been forgotten. Nor had the duke’s arrangement over the division of the dîmes and the responsibility of church repairs been forgotten by the curé. In 1777, Terguet, the curé of Arc-sur-Tille, had been summoned to the duke’s townhouse on the Rue de Varenne in Paris where an “arrangement” on the dîmes had been concluded. In the light of subsequent increases in the dîme, one wonders how Terguet felt about his share or about the duke’s refusal to contribute to church repairs. In any case, by 1789, the curé was clearly on the side of the community and against the duke’s agent and tenant.20

In 1789, a new issue had developed over the communal right to 44 acres of wood that the duke’s tenant Calignon had begun to clear. Fénéon had approved Calignon’s project and the tenant, who had just accepted the new terms of the duke’s lease, was hard pressed to maximize his profits. But he irritated the community further by employing woodcutters from outside the village and refusing to await the results of the legal action begun by the community. Conflicts over communal rights were hardly new in this region, but the year 1789 witnessed a broader conflict, a more active and better developed village organization, and a seigneurial agent and tenant clearly on the defensive.

The fact that the affair became known in Dijon and that several printed précis of the case were in circulation attests to its wider significance. Calignon was not without friends in Dijon, and he had the local support of Fénéon, the duke’s agent, and Joannet, a local notary who had worked for Tavanes in the past. But the village community had its own

20 A. N., T-1091-2.
leaders in the Jacquemards, father and son. By the end of the year, the community had gained the upper hand against an isolated triumvirate.

One reason for this victory was a new local organization, partly inspired by events outside the village. In the fall of 1789, after a visit by fifty dragoons dispatched by the new Municipal Government at Dijon, Arc-sur-Tille turned its “provisional committee” into a permanent one, duly registered at Dijon. A few weeks later it formed a national militia and proceeded to elect officers. Now the village began to send delegations to the committee of Dijon defending its positions on communal rights. This was in marked contrast to previous representation by a mayor chosen by the Estates.

Calignon was not idle. He also made his case in Dijon, accusing the habitants of Arc-sur-Tille (or at least their present leadership) of having “committed excesses” on July 14 and of provoking “sedition” in general. The committee of Arc answered these charges. If they had “murmured” against the treason of the grands along with all other decent citizens (honnêtes gens), they were proud of it. If there were doubts about their attachment to order in the countryside, the committee reminded the authorities at Dijon that, during the past summer, the municipality had arrested a band of thieves, consigning one to the galleys for life and whipping and branding another. Brigands would be tolerated even less than vagabonds.

Jacquemard was apparently a popular figure at Arc in the fall of 1789. His election to major in the milice bourgeoise gave him legal authority to act. He arrested Calignon's woodcutters, hauled them before the local committee, expelled them from the village, and threatened to beat them up if they came back. Calignon's “indoctrination,” which apparently consisted of generous servings of wine, was not enough to attract new workmen. To make sure, the municipality denounced Calignon to all the surrounding villages.

Calignon and Fénéon continued to fight what they called “Jacquemard and his band” with pamphlets at Dijon. They employed such terms as “criminal enterprise,” excitement of the “fury of the people,” and other phrases intended to capture the support of the sober lawyers at Dijon. The village delegated Jacquemard and the curé Terguet to plead their case before the November meeting of the municipality of Dijon. They also knew their auditors. They accused Calignon of contributing to the general shortage of wood in the region. Suspected of being a “hoarder”
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in the winter of 1789–90, Calignon was summoned before the municipality of Dijon, and apparently escaped conviction only by exposing his lease terms and placing blame on the duke. Little wonder Calignon eventually dissociated himself from Fénéon and joined the new powers that be.

As for Jacquemard, he pursued a more consistent radical course. His rivals accused him of speaking publicly about château-burning. On one occasion, in a Dijon cabaret, in the winter of 1789–90, he allegedly boasted that he was seriously tempted “to lead the inhabitants of Arc-sur-Tille to Lux and to put the château to the torch, sparing no one but Fénéon’s wife.” Whatever the facts were, pamphlet wars could excite participants far beyond the original issues.21

Was it from ignorance that the “country people,” as Fénéon called them, confused dimes and champarts a year later? Indeed, the legislation of the National Assembly regarding the dimes was sufficiently ambiguous and dilatory to provide the peasants an excuse.22 By a decree in March, 1790, the dimes inféodées were arbitrarily classed with those seigneurial rights which were “repurchasable.” Then, a month later, it was decided to indemnify the owners directly out of the Public Treasury. But the National Assembly also decreed that the dimes must be paid through 1790 and thereafter until the indemnities had been paid. The estimation of the indemnity caused further irritation, since the hired “experts” and even the district administrations were notorious for their overestimation of the capital value of the dimes, perhaps encouraged by a consideration from the owners. But probably more decisive than these legal ambiguities, delays, and disappointments was the fact that the dime had become a symbol for seigneurial dues of all kinds. “The dime,” writes Marcel Garaud, “was so unpopular that it symbolized in the minds of the peasants, more than any other seigneurial due, the most unfair, unjust, and arbitrary obligation of the Old Regime. And since it had profited so many seigneurs and was considered a droit féodal, the hatred of the country people focused on it.”23 Moreover, had not the famous decrees of August 4th proclaimed that “the National Assembly entirely destroys the feudal system”? Many a deputy at Paris may have regretted the wording

21 A. N., T–1091.
23 Garaud, La Révolution et la propriété foncière, p. 255.
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of that opening sentence, but it seemed clear enough to the peasants of the Dijonnais. In any event, at least four villages were refusing to pay Fénéon any dues at all. The agent said that he would attempt to refute their arguments, but "if the bad advice they are getting results in a refusal to pay, then we must go to court."24

Fénéon was soon before the justice of the peace of the Canton at Bèze, explaining, as he put it, "the real meaning" of the decrees of the National Assembly regarding seigneurial rights. The burden of his argument was that the champart was not a dime and was still payable unless the owner was indemnified at 25 times the value of the annual rent. He got nowhere. He then proposed an "arbitration" of the case, only to be refused by the new president of the commune of Bourberain. Then the communes took the offensive. The municipal council at Bourberain forbade any proprietor or cultivator to pay any champarts to the tenants of the duke. This action was repeated in six other local communes. Some of the municipal councils asked for the duke's titles; some prohibited payment under any circumstances; and some kept silent when individuals openly refused to let the agents or tenants of the duke collect the thirteenth-sheaf in their fields. "The same epidemic has spread to Lux and Spoy," wrote Fénéon.

People tell me that they are exempt from all types of dimes and will not pay them in the future. Others at Tilchatel say that the decrees of the National Assembly were passed expressly for them. You see, Monsieur, how far things have gone. This will cause further trouble with the leases. The tenants will now refuse to pay their full rents.25

Among the observations of the village communes regarding the dimes was the bold protest of the community of Spoy, a village of 90 households. Not limiting their resistance to the dime, they contested all seigneurial titles. The wording of the document is worth examining in some detail.26

The terriers were very suspect:

1. because all the acts of this terrier have been approved by notaries who were agents of the seigneur and had no right to do so;

24 A. D., E-1725, Letter of June 6, 1791.
25 A. D., E-1725, Letter of July 12, 1791. Italics mine. The French is "fait tout exprès pour eux."
26 A. D., Q-733, Tableau par district du taux de la dime, Canton de Bèze, Observations (Spoy).
2. because these terriers have been inaccessible to the former vassals and have not been examined or discussed by the interested parties;

3. because each terrier is a formal disavowal of the one which preceded it, since at each renewal the former seigneurs of Spoy have always increased and extended the so-called right of champart;

4. because under the Ancien Regime the former vassals, always fearful (toujours tremblans), preferred signing the articles that the hirelings of the former seigneur put before them to breaking their poor, frail earthen vessel against the iron kettle that was opposing them.

5. finally because the last terrier of the former seigneur of Spoy, begun in 1788, is not yet completed and therefore must be counted among those that the National Assembly has very wisely proscribed.

28 January, 1791
and the Third Year of Liberty
of the French Empire
Guelaud, Ballant,
Secretary Commissioner

It can be argued that this document reveals the hand of the articulate local notary—Fénéon's “trouble-maker”—rather than the authentic voice of the inhabitants of Spoy. But the village council authorized this protest and most surely read it. At the very least, it demonstrates a willingness on the part of the villagers to follow the lead of Guelaud and Ballant. The protest loses no opportunity to relegate “seigneurs” and “vassals” to an “ancien régime.” It asserts that the obscure village of Spoy is entering a new era—“the third year of liberty” as part of a “French empire.” By inference, a new peasant is emerging, no longer toujours tremblant before the ci-devant. Beneath the rhetoric, there is expectancy and the conviction that past injustices will now be made good.

Other villages of the “former duchy,” if less strident in tone and vocabulary, left no doubt about their basic agreement with Spoy. The cahier of Beaumont had qualified the droit d’indire as “ridiculous and unjust” and demanded that the terriers, both old and new, be deposited in the village “so that every interested party could see them and make extracts of relevant articles.” Then followed a host of other grievances regarding taxes and dues. But more indicative of a new awareness was the description of the assembly of the village inhabitants in February, 1789.

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Moved by the same Patriotism and filled with respect for the worthy citizens who have attempted to raise their voice and open the eyes of Our Beneficent Monarch to abuse of all kinds....

Perhaps the hand of Bartet, local notary who convoked the assembly, was helpful here, although he was not alone. He had the confidence of the commune. A year later, the village council demanded in crisp terms that the titles of M. de Saulx-Tavanes be deposited in Bartet’s house at Beaumont.27 At Orville, Fénéon was summoned before the new “Bureau of Conciliation” by Citizen Perriquet, one of the duke’s own tenants, chosen special solicitor for a group of proprietors who had refused to pay the champart.28

The commune of Renève, outwardly respectful of the name of Saulx-Tavanes, accused Fénéon of willful fraud. The agent had conceded that critics of the new terrier might travel the five miles to Beaumont and compare the new one with those of 1547 and 1611. Reading these heavy tomes required something more than bare literacy, but in 1791 the villagers made the effort. They found the terrier of 1611 at Bartet’s house and made a systematic comparison of articles, uncovering a number of “errors” in the new one. The essential part of their protest read:

All the tenants are supposed to follow the articles of the terrier exactly. Nevertheless, Srs. Blandier and Guignon, the present tenants, have always demanded and still demand one chicken per inhabitant or 12 to 15 sous fine, although there is no mention of either in the old terrier.29

Was there a touch of irony in the sentence that read, “It could not be said that M. de Saulx ever intended that his tenants demand either one or the other”?

Even after the duke had given up all hope of collecting dîmes or champarts, Fénéon persisted. Perhaps it was his legal bent of mind as much as a desire to please the duke. Perhaps he had not fully appreciated what had happened to the local administrative machinery. The word égarement that Fénéon employed to fit the situation is revealing. It suggests that the whole affair was an aberration, a bewildering error that must soon pass. He would continue to test the courts and appealed

28 A. D., Q–1117, Declaration of Fénéon to the Citizens Directors of the District (Orville).
29 A. D., Q–734, Renève, January 31, 1791.
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to the district tribunal at Is-sur-Tille. He soon discovered that the new district tribunal was a far cry from the *bailliage* court of the Old Regime, much less the ducal one. Fénéon was appalled when the court confirmed the non-payment of dues of any kind. Technically, the tribunal “suspended” payment, but the effect was permanent. He attributed this “illegal” judgment “either to the weakness of the judges working under pressure from the large number of interested parties in the audience or to a particular hatred toward the owners of such rights.”

The observation indicated that the duke’s agent was beginning to understand the meaning of recent events. The local courts as well as the communes were both in the hands of a new group of “interested parties” with a new “attitude,” to use Fénéon’s own words.

The district and departmental authorities had to bow before such local action. The directors of the district were suspiciously long in replying to Fénéon’s protests and ended by denying his case. The more conservative department, caught in the cross-fire between enforcing the decrees of the Assembly to the letter and yielding to local pressure, combined delay with a pro-forma defense of the law. The department “invited” the communes to pay their dues provisionally. As Fénéon put it, “the commune did not appear disposed to accept.”

At the end of the year, he confided to the duke that further efforts to collect seigneurial dues would be fruitless.

What portion of the duke’s landed income did the seigneurial dues represent? According to an estimate in 1793, they yielded 26,986 livres in 1789, 30 per cent of the income from the Burgundian estate in that year. The *dimes inféodées* represented almost 20,000 of this sum. The duke had not clung to these revenues only as a matter of principle or a mark of rank. Their loss was a heavy financial blow and may well have hastened the death of the first duke and provoked his son’s emigration.

For more than a year, the duke waited for the compensation promised by the National Assembly for his *dimes*. In December, 1791, he wrote to M. Arnoult, the advocate who had helped the duke establish his *droit d’indire* before the Revolution. Arnoult, deputy to the Estates General in

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30 A. D., E-1725, Letter of September 6, 1791.
31 A. D., E-1725, Letters of July 12, August 10, September 6, 1791.
32 A. D., E-1725, Letter of December 14, 1791.
33 A. D., Q-1117, Declaration of Fénéon, May 18, 1793; A. D., Q-733-734 (Dimes); A. D., E-1744, Letter of May 8, 1813.
1789, was now solicitor general of the department and in a position of influence. The duke's letter to Arnoult made no allowance for the possibility that the political rise of this Dijon lawyer since 1789 might have altered his relations with the ci-devant noblesse.

I have not received my indemnity for the dîmes inféodées. We are waiting for the decision of the Department. It is very important for my affairs that this decision be made promptly. Accustomed, Monsieur, to your friendship and your assistance in the past, I dare hope that you will render me a new service and expedite the liquidation [of the dîmes].

Again, former connections were insufficient. The Tavanes family was never indemnified for their dîmes.

When Fénéon attempted to collect the September rents for 1791, the principal tenants had a good excuse to delay payment, for it took some time to adjudicate the portion of their rent represented by seigneurial dues. Collecting dîme arrears was, of course, hopeless, though Fénéon kept the accounts for future reference. The Revolution would not last forever and what had been done could be undone. But there was little doubt that Tavanes's finances had taken a bad turn, and Fénéon informed the duke that there would be little left for 1791 after the dîmes and taxes had been deducted. No longer could the duke count on those monthly packets and sacks of 5,000 livres, arriving regularly by coach from Dijon. In December, Fénéon began borrowing to pay off local creditors, something he had never had to do before. He was fortunate to obtain half in coin and half in assignats and at only five per cent.

Since it has been suggested by some historians that the seigneurial dues were insignificant, it might be well to estimate what their removal meant in this instance. For the small holder on the Tavanes' seigneuries, a dîme of one-twelfth of the gross harvest was no insignificant burden. It should be measured as a percentage of the net harvest after deductions for rent, taxes and seed in order to understand what the tiller of a journal (0.8 acres) of grainland had gained. The dîme was paid on all grains, vegetables, and even flax in that region.
REVOLUTION IN THE DUCHY OF SAULX-TAVANES

Table IV.2  The Burden of the Dime on Rented Land in the Dijonais

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Maximum Estimate</th>
<th>A Minimum Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gross Yield: 16 measures</td>
<td>Gross Yield: 18 measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent 8.0 (at ½)</td>
<td>Rent 6.0 (at ½)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes 1.0 (at 6%)</td>
<td>Taxes 1.0 (at 5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seed 4.0 (at 4 to 1 yields)</td>
<td>Seed 3.6 (at 5 to 1 yields)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Deductions: 13.0 measures</td>
<td>Total Deductions: 10.6 measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Harvest: 3.0 measures</td>
<td>Net Harvest: 7.4 measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dime ($\frac{1}{6}$): 1.33 measures</td>
<td>Dime ($\frac{1}{6}$): 1.50 measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Net Harvest: 44.4</td>
<td>% of Net Harvest: 20.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: A. D., Q-734; A. D., E-1878 (May 1784). P. de Saint-Jacob, *Les paysans de la Bourgogne du Nord au dernier siècle de l'Ancien Régime* (Paris, 1960), pp. 504-5; A. D., E-1818 (Bourberain Revenues, 1783); G. Lefebvre, *Questions agraires au temps de la terreur* (La Roche-sur-Yon, 1954), p. 150. Although rents of one-third of the gross harvest were more common, there are examples of one-half. A. D., E-1768 (Beaumont Revenues, 1783). In 1794, a petition from a village near Châlon-sur-Saône proposed that a tenant who demanded more than half of the harvest of a cultivator be regarded as a ‘suspect’ and punished. Lefebvre, *Questions agraires*, pp. 208-9.

The burden on non-rented property was, of course, less, ranging from 11 to 12 per cent, using the estimates in Table IV.2 above. In fact, most cultivators at Lux, Arc-sur-Tille, or Beaumont were both owners and renters, but they rented more than they owned. The conclusions of Dupont de Nemours on this point appear to hold for the Dijon plain:

There are areas where the *dime* at 1/25th costs only one-tenth of the net harvest, but there are *a greater number* where it takes one-sixth and others where it takes a third or even a half of what remains for the proprietor.\(^{37}\)

For the small cultivator, therefore, the removal of the *dime* and the *champart* represented a substantial gain. Not enough to provide any capital accumulation—the margins were too small—but enough to increase the level of family food consumption and, more important, to stimulate hope of better things to come. That is why the abolition of the *dime* and the proscription of all seigneurial justice did not end peasant agitation. The village councils proceeded to reassert old communal claims that had not fared well in the courts of the Old Regime. In Northern Burgundy, woodland served as a focus for century-old friction between seigneur and village. Dispute over rights to the wood or outright pro-

\(^{37}\) Martin, *La Dîme*, p. 122 (italics mine). Before the abolition of the *dîme* was finally legislated, some deputies proposed as a compromise that it be levied on the “net,” not the “gross” harvest.
prietorship was made likely by the proximity of communal and seigneurial holdings. When village and seigneur owned portions of the same forest tract, it was almost inevitable that boundary differences would arise. It appears that the seigneurs of Saulx-Tavanes had won most of these disputes in the course of the century, making good their rights of *triaje* at the expense of the villages.\(^{38}\)

The tension had been greatly increased by the critical shortage of the 1780s. No other commodity rose so dramatically in price in the last third of the century. Some communities had enough wood to enter the market and provide a regular village income.\(^{39}\) More important, the communal wood provided brushwood for heating in winter and pasture for the peasants’ livestock, sheep, and goats. A large majority of the villagers owned some livestock. Threats to the communal holdings were fiercely resented. As prices rose and scarcity increased, the duke’s forge at Tilchâtel must have been regarded as a veritable monster, consuming the precious combustible at a prodigious rate. Little wonder that the peasants often foraged for wood in the duke’s preserve.

In 1790 and 1791, this foraging assumed major proportions. It is possible that the forest wardens were more inclined to overlook many of these incursions; they had never been popular with the local peasantry and the breakdown of the seigneurial system did not increase their security from local agitation. In any case, ten guards were simply not enough for over 5,000 acres of forest. Fénéon urged the duke to make an inquest in preparation for formal court procedure, but Tavanes replied that he preferred to let the other proprietors initiate such action.\(^{40}\) In June, 1791, the duke seemed more concerned with economy than prestige. Moreover, he may have also recognized that the threat of going to the law was no longer a sure weapon.

Encouraged perhaps by the duke’s lack of action, the village communes now seized the offensive. The commune of Chazeuil revived a transaction of 1761, to claim and cut fifteen acres of the forest of Velours. The


\(^{40}\) *A. D.*, E-1725, Letters of June 6, June 20, 1791.
commune of Veronnes unilaterally revoked the *triage* of 1730 and regained 150 acres of communal wood, lost sixty years earlier. Three other communes—Lux, Bourberain, and Arc-sur-Tille—basing their claims on similar acts of *triage* dating back to 1683 and 1747, seized and distributed parcels of woodland. Thus the communities were not only able to benefit from the abolition of the right of *triage*, but also to apply the new law retroactively and reverse earlier court decisions. Fénéon later explained that the duke had failed to take counter-action, not from lack of legal means, but "out of fear of exciting further violence."41

The threat of violence on the part of the communes was not lost on the duke's agent either. By 1793, Fénéon was cast in the curious role of defending the right of the local inhabitants to pasture their horses in the duke's wood "by a very old custom."42 But even in the fall of 1791, after a summer attempting to collect *dtmes* and *champarts*, Fénéon had learned to temporize. The region was plagued by extreme dryness and the municipality of Lux threatened to force M. Bureau, the ironmaster at Tilchâtel, to open his sluice gates that were blocking the waters of the Tille. Fénéon claimed that there was so little water in the river it would be absorbed in the sand before it ever reached Lux, five miles away. "Nevertheless, I thought we had better do it, to calm the inhabitants of Lux. The privation of water, a real calamity in this region, might have otherwise led to damage to your forge."43

The "country people" were obviously restive, and the abolition of the *dtme* had not ended their agitation. On the contrary, it had apparently encouraged them to further action. The new commune was an ideal instrument for the assertion of older communal rights, especially to the forest. But would success even in this direction satisfy the villagers? How would they respond to the emigration, the new decrees from Paris, the flight of the King, and the events of 1792—war, inflation, counter-revolut-

42 *A. D.*, Q-1117, Observation on the Wood. "The *laboureaux* will be reduced to poverty if this *usage* is abolished before the economic system of crops is changed at Lux and Bourberain by the establishment of artificial meadows. . . . In the meantime, the horses need the wood [for pasture]." Apparently, artificial meadows, sign of an advanced agriculture, were to be established in 1793, while the estate was under the administration of the government.
43 *A. D.*, E-1725, Letter of September 6, 1791.
tion, the Republic? Much would depend on the action of the fermiers who still controlled the market for farm produce, provided leases, work, and credit to the countryside, and had political contacts in the market towns and provincial capital. Which way would the fermiers go?

The tenants welcomed the reduction in rents and were relieved of the nasty task of enforcing the array of seigneurial dues. Calignon, the tenant at Arc-sur-Tille, was able to overestimate the amount of dimes included in his lease and to reduce his rent by over a third. All tenants had a more secure margin of profit after the abolition of the dues, if only because seigneurial rights were difficult to assess and collect even before 1789. At the same time, the local courts were more kind to tenants. Leases could still be broken, but the abuse was no longer the unique prerogative of the proprietor. For example, Bureau, the new tenant at Tilchâtel, refused to perform the cartage services stipulated in his lease. With little concern for historical accuracy, Fénéon complained that “the obscure clauses of a lease are always interpreted against the leasor, but in this case I find nothing obscure.” Bureau, like the dime-payers of Bourberain, could now count on the courts, and Fénéon heeded the advice of the duke to avoid any legal expense. Henceforth, Fénéon paid the cartage costs at Tilchâtel.

This is not to say that Fénéon was no longer able to drive a hard bargain. It was not only with the intent of impressing his employer that he wrote in late 1791:

> I want 800 livres for 12 years and the tenant to pay the taxes. I consider 21 years too long, given the lost opportunities to raise rents. If I don’t get all of this, I will come close.

As for wood sales, Rochet, the ironmaster at Bèze, offered 150 livres per arpent but Fénéon held out for 200 livres. The precious combustible was selling better than ever. A new legal framework and a bureaucracy

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44 A. D., E-1744, Letter of May 8, 1813. The lease was reduced by 8,140 livres; Fénéon claimed it should have been reduced only by 4,984 livres, Calignon having overestimated the area on which the dime was collected.
46 A. D., E-1725, Letter of August 10, 1791.
47 A. D., E-1725, Letter of September 6, 1791.
48 A. D., E-1725, Letter of December 14, 1791.
more responsive to tenant interests could not mitigate the shortage of wood and the pressures of the market.

But in 1791, the tenants were still hopeful. New legislation could go far beyond the abolition of seigneurial rights. And the tenant knew his grievances. Did not the petitions of 1793 and 1794 from all over France indicate increasing demand by fermiers for further agrarian reforms? Their departure from the grievances of other social groups in the countryside was not immediately apparent. Foremost among tenant demands was the longer lease-hold. Fénéon referred to a tenant who asked for 21 years; petitions throughout France proposed from 18 to 27, a major improvement over nine. Nine years hardly gave much incentive to improvements by the tenant, especially since proprietors used the opportunity to raise rents at each lease renewal. Compensation by the proprietor for specific farm improvements by the tenant was a related demand. The fermiers also demanded legal preference for the incumbent tenant at the time of renewal in order to escape the practice of auctioning. Also related was the proposal that the landlord not be permitted to terminate the lease unilaterally before its expiration without compensation. Other demands included making the entrance fee (pot de vin) an annual payment or eliminating it altogether, diminution of rent in case of a weather disaster—a kind of calamity insurance against lightning, hail, or frost—and some guarantee regarding the sharing of the tax burden. These last demands touched on the tenants' margin of profit, though there is no evidence of an effort to establish a "fair" rent-income ratio. Although these demands were never incorporated into a single national program, they clearly represent the principal economic grievances of tenants such as those on the duke's Burgundian estate. Were any of them implemented?

The high hopes of tenants for national legislation regarding farm leases were first dashed in September of 1793, when a proposal for tenant

50 Contemporary critics of French agriculture such as Arthur Young and Antoine Lavoisier stressed the nine-year lease as a major obstacle to agricultural progress. Yet it appears from the English experience that brevity of the lease was not the only problem. Annual, even verbal leases were quite common in England. Yet it was not the "custom" to raise rents on a "sitting tenant." See J. D. Chambers and G. E. Mingay, The Agricultural Revolution, 1750-1880 (New York, 1966), pp. 46-48, 165-66. But given the outlook and attitudes of landlords like Tavanes, a longer lease was necessary in France.

51 G. Lefebvre, Questions agraires, pp. 80-88 and passim.
compensation for farm improvements was voted down in the National Convention. The Civil Code of Napoleon was to reaffirm the inviolability of contract. Given the continued, indeed increased, shortage of grain and the pressure of population on the land, freedom of contract gave the proprietor-leasor the full advantage of bargaining power. The history of the tenant interest in the national legislature—National Assembly, Convention, or Council of Five Hundred—is still to be written, but there is no doubt that it will be a record of failure.

The Napoleonic Code did not go very far to recognize tenant grievances. True, the very fact that mutual obligations of proprietor-leasor and tenant-leasee were made explicit was of some advantage. The code, for example, specified what “ordinary repairs” included, what the consequences of default in payment were, or what standing a verbal lease had at law. It made some provision for “fortuitous events”—damage by hail, lightning, frost—providing compensation to the tenant if half or more of the harvest were lost. The code also provided for indemnification of the tenant in case the land was sold during the course of the lease. The new rural code actually did more for the subtenant by making him liable only for his rent to the chief tenant. Other tenant demands were not considered. And even in the case of calamities of weather, the appraisal of damage was in the hands of third parties (judges or experts) who in 1807 were no longer those of 1791.

The nineteenth century brought few changes beneficial to the fermier of the Dijon plain. A table of leases for 31 properties in the department of Côte d’Or from 1817 to 1907 demonstrates the uniform use of the nine-year lease. As late as 1907, local societies of agriculture were still discussing the question of indemnifying tenants for an increase in the value of the land. Although the terminology of rents (pot de vin, prélèvement) may have changed, the rent-income ratio remained high, probably reaching a peak about 1877. A rough calculation based on the sample referred to above would put rents at 80 per cent of the net income of the land. Only with the agricultural recession after 1880 did rents fall and lease terms improve, but even then it is not certain that the rent-income ratio was more favorable to the tenant. In the Dijon plain at least the

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fermier was unable to exploit the first breakthrough against the old order and obtain legislation providing him with security of tenure and encouragement to make improvements on the land.\footnote{54}

There is a certain irony in the failure of the fermiers to gain more from the Revolution. Part of the explanation lies in their inability to organize sufficient political support in legislative circles at Paris or in the country at large. After all, fermage was not a form of leasehold the majority of the peasants had an interest in reforming along lines advocated by the fermiers. For many small holders, especially in the Beauce and Flanders, fermage connoted exploitation and they thought it should be abolished altogether. What is more, the fermier was himself caught up in the mystique of proprietorship. How could it be otherwise in a country where the land was so widely distributed and where the landowner, especially the owner-occupier, was held in such high esteem? In the social world of the village and bourg, the propriétaire, even a small one, commanded a respect and confidence that a fermier, despite his economic hold on the rural community, might envy. But respect of the village community was only part of it. Tenants from Calignon to Bartet, who rented Tavanes's land, must have wondered whether outright ownership might not be preferable to leasing. Had the counts of Tavanes encouraged them to develop the land and increase their profits, they might have seen their interests differently. Proprietorship would offer less illusory profits and, above all, independence from landlords like the duke. For the fermier's grievances were aimed at both "seigneurialism" and "landlordism." Could either one really be "reformed"?

Even before the fermiers were to see their desires for reform of tenure largely ignored, they might take advantage of the unsettled times to buy some land of their own. Here was a goal the fermier could share with the rest of the village community. When the national government embarked upon a plan of confiscation and sale of church and, later, émigré land, the fermiers demonstrated no hesitancy to buy. Perhaps the fermiers did not need this incentive to join the villagers in 1791. Given the way

\footnote{54 G. Martin and P. Martenet, La Côte d'Or: étude d'économie rurale (Dijon, 1909), pp. 98–100, 100n, 105–7. This work suffers from a failure to calculate the rent-income ratio systematically. A sample calculation for a domain of 268 hectares (204 in arable, 64 in meadow) in the mid-nineteenth century indicates a rent-income ratio of 82.4 per cent. This seems incredible. Ibid., pp. 113–14.}
events were developing in Paris, was there any reason (or sentiment) to defend the duchy of Tavanes—or even remain judiciously neutral?  

* * *

Mild and gradual though it may seem by twentieth-century standards, this was nonetheless a rural revolution. Although the local social groups involved were by no means identical in economic condition and social status, they revealed a remarkable unity of purpose in 1790 and 1791. Can a rural leadership be identified? Historians have frequently alluded to "rural bourgeois" who profited from the Revolution, but did they also lead it? The revolution on the properties of Saulx-Tavanes points to two categories of rural leadership—village notaries and tenants.

Fénéon alluded to the trouble-making lawyers like Morizot who set the villages against the seigneur even before 1789. It was Bartet, the notary of Beaumont, who made the _terriers_ available to the protesting peasants in 1786. Later, he convoked the inhabitants to submit their grievances to be recorded in the village _cahier_. It was Joannet, notary of Arc-sur-Tille, who drew up the _cahiers_ of twenty villages in the Dijon plain, and later rivaled Calignon for leadership in the new commune. It was Jacquemard, his rival and the radical leader of Arc in 1789 who became "commissioner expert" for the sale of the Tavanes' estate, and surely the same Jacquemard that fired at the windows of Verchère d'Arcelot, President of the Parlement, to encourage his emigration. The tax rolls make it quite clear that there was a large number of these rural notaries. They were of a more radical inclination than advocates such as Arnoult, the deputy of the _bailliage_ at Paris and later departmental administrator. A certain idealism, or at least sympathy for the villagers, should not be ruled out among these notaries, despite Fénéon's charge of cupidity and "trouble-making."

Less obvious as revolutionary leaders were the _fermiers_. Yet, like the

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_55_ Admittedly, much of this is speculation; correspondence or memoirs of _fermiers_ are hard to come by. Were many of the new owner-occupiers of the nineteenth century former _fermiers_?

notaries, they had many of the attributes necessary to lead the communes. They were literate; they had contact with the market towns and river ports; they often leased property in different parts of the region. Their very insecurity of tenure made them search for other leases and, consequently, escape the isolation of one village community. Jean Calignon, for example, was fermier at Norges, then at Cessay-sur-Tille, finally at Arc-sur-Tille. He was also referred to as a marchand of Dijon, suggesting his dual economic function as well as his mobility. No doubt less active than the notaries before 1789, the tenants were often quick to adapt to changing times. Calignon is an excellent example. Known before the Revolution as “hard driving,” he was still able to gain peasant confidence. Elected mayor of Arc in December 1791, he joined the Club of Friends of the Constitution, made speeches on the virtues of the new regime, and exercised his talents in the municipal council.  

Perriquet, tenant at Orville, not only refused to pay his rents to Fénéon, but accused the landlord of illegal behavior. He represented what the duke’s agent called “a large number of owners in a coalition” who refused to pay seigneurial dues and summoned Fénéon before the local tribunal. Guelaud, who signed the truculent petition of Spoy as secretary of the commune, was Tavanes’s tenant at Blagny. Was Bartet, the notary at Beaumont, the same Bartet who was tenant at Champagne?  

The functions of notary and rent collector were not so different. The municipal council minutes at Arc expose the rivals for political leadership in the village—two fermiers, two notaries, and the village priest. It was the same at Saint-Julien and probably other villages of the Dijonnais.  

It would be wrong to depict the fermiers as forming a unanimous bloc of revolutionary leadership in the countryside. The inactive ones were not so conspicuous. Moreover, there is more than one way of “taking hold” of a revolutionary situation. Consider the case of Bureau, the fermier at Tilchâtel, probably the most affluent of the duke’s tenants.  

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57 Garnier, Arc: La Révolution; Saint-Jacob, Les paysans, pp. 430-31, 430n; A. D., Q-1117, Arc, An v.  
58 A. D., Q-1117 (Orville).  
59 A. D., E-1768 (Beaumont leases).  
60 Garnier, Arc: La Révolution; M. Balotte, La baronie de Saint-Julien à travers les âges (Dijon, 1961). There is a great need for village studies during the Revolution. They will no doubt expose the petty political rivalries more related to personal feuds before 1789 than to ideological or economic conflicts, once the ci-devant seigneur had been disposed of.
Instead of entering local politics actively like Calignon at Arc-sur-Tille or Guelaud at Spoy, Bureau took advantage of the confiscation of the Benedictine monastery at Bèze to attempt to launch a cotton textile mill. His relations with the deputy Arnoult at Paris led to negotiations for the establishment of a Rouen spinning "machine," offered gratis by the new national government. Bureau's correspondence in the winter of 1789-90 does not suggest a man leading a village revolution, but an entrepreneur anxious to keep the countryside calm. No Rouen machine-smashers for him at Bèze.  

Recall, too, that as ironmaster at Tilchâtel, Bureau was not dealing directly with peasant cultivators, but with a small industrial work force and a score of woodcutters. He was therefore not exposed to the same pressures as the tenants elsewhere on the Tavanes properties.

The tax rolls list a number of social categories for the village communities of the Dijon plain. Neither the taille rolls of 1780 nor the land tax of 1790 employed the term "peasant." The first distinction from a fiscal point of view was that between the habitant and the forain, the resident and the absentee owner. Although the forain was suspected of tax evasion by the residents, he was not, in most cases, a privilégié from Dijon. He was more likely a habitant of a neighboring village, a cultivator or artisan like the other residents. All residents were divided into various categories, the largest being laboureurs, vignerons, artisans, manouvriers, and widows. These categories would seem to imply differences in function and wealth, but a closer look reveals that these were not the distinctive features. Many artisans tilled the soil, many winegrowers considered themselves artisans, and many manouvriers or day laborers were property owners. Functional distinctions were approximate at best. The tax rolls sometimes indicate a radical change in these categories, suggesting a shift from grain-growing to winegrowing, for example. Again, nothing of the sort was occurring. The tax officials had changed their

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61 S. de Montenay, "L'établissement d'une manufacture à Bèze sous la Révolution," Annales de Bourgogne (1966), 188–97. Letters of December 22, December 29, 1789, and January 3, 1790. Bureau formed a société (partnership) with 400,000 livres capital in early 1790; in 1794, we find him importing specialized workers from Neufchâtel in Switzerland. But there was no trace of the enterprise after 1797. The cotton spinning machine was probably Richard Arkwright's invention, employed in Rouen before the Revolution.

62 The taille rolls for the villages of the Dijon plain are very complete and the reformation of the rolls between 1772 and 1781 makes them especially informative. The contribution foncière for 1790 and especially 1791 are equally complete. See Document IX.
terminology quite possibly in response to the desire of the residents for more prestigious labels. Better to be called a winegrower than a day laborer. The amount of prestige attached to one's place on the tax roll should not be underestimated. The search for status was not limited to the upper classes. The blurring of functions went hand-in-hand with an overlap in sources of wealth. In the case of the villages of the Dijon plain, the distribution of property was wide. In 1781, 61 per cent of the householders at Beaumont owned some land, and 68 per cent owned some livestock. The cahier of Beaumont tells quite a different story. Article 16 reads:

The taille, established in 1782 by the commissioner, was to be only about 1,000 livres which is still too much since the community has only 80 households among whom there are 15 tenant farmers (laboureurs pour autrui) and the rest winegrowers and day laborers and not a single proprietor. The tax rolls make it quite clear that the cahier had grossly distorted the actual case.

Jean Loutchitsky, almost 75 years ago, was the first to stress the wide distribution of ownership among the rural population of the Old Regime. Using the Dijonnais as one of his three regional samples, he denied the persistent view that the countryside was made up of a small number of property holders and a mass of property-less. The distribution of income does not indicate great disparities of wealth either. Again at Beaumont, there were only six residents with incomes over 1,000 livres and 23 with revenues under 200 livres. The remaining 54 (65.1 per cent) had revenues between 200 and 1,000 livres. At Lux, the proportion of this middle groups was 61.8 per cent (84 of 136), and at Arc-sur-Tille it was 50.0 per cent (86 of 172). This is not to say that there was no poverty. In all three villages more than one in four families had incomes below 200 livres. But it is to say that one finds a substantial bloc of middling cultivators, winegrowers, artisans, and even day laborers before the Revolution who were not desperately miserable. This is further substantiated by the large number of "active citizens" in these villages after 1789.

63 A. D., C-5927 (1781).
64 A. D., E-Supplément, Cahier de Beaumont, March 12, 1789. Italics mine.
66 A. D., C-5927; A. D., C-6018; A. D., C-5916. See Document IX.
67 A. D., L-838 (Beaumont).
Since the tax assessments ignore wage payments in kind, even the lowest quarter of the population was not so deprived as their revenues suggest.

To conclude that material interests played a part in the revolt of the villages is one thing; to say that it was an uprising of the miserable, quite another. The majority of villagers who refused to pay their dîmes, contested the terriers and the right of triage, filled the tribunal at Is-sur-Tille to encourage the judges, demanded that the sluice gates be opened at Tilchâtel, and eventually bought the duke's land and château furniture—knew what was to their advantage. They also knew how to organize. Although the political experience of the villagers of the Dijon plain had been less extensive than among those of Provence, the new communal governments with elected mayors and general councils functioned effectively and forcefully. There is an impression of political awareness and a cohesiveness difficult to imagine among the desperate day laborers of Brittany or the property-less harvest hands of the Beauce. But one can imagine these small owners and artisans conversing across their narrow strips in the fields or across a work bench in the village shop. Marc Bloch reminds us that this was the region of open fields without hedges or other enclosures where communal rights were still strong. The land of the entire village was divided into three "cultures" (winter wheat, spring wheat, fallow) and each culture or sole was plowed, seeded, and harvested by all the cultivators at the same time. One walked over the neighbors' parcels to reach one's own plot. The sense of community in the daily farm operations was of long standing.

In the early 1790s the countryside was alive with rumor and expectancy. Bartet and Jacquemard, Calignon and Perriquet seemed to know what to do, while Fénéon cut a more sinister figure as he rode from village to village after his rents and rights. Note that Fénéon was not physically harmed nor hounded out of the region, but rather worn down by litigation, obstructionism, and the threat of direct action. The villagers in the former duché of Saulx-Tavanes seemed remarkably respectful of human life and of "legitimate" forms of property. This comparative restraint may have been related to the stake they already had in society, modest as it was. Furthermore, to be above the subsistence level was to have time and energy for self-esteem.

Material grievances alone do not account for the hostility the villagers felt for the seigneur. For “seigneur” implied its counterpart, *vassaux*. Anachronistic as this term may sound for the eighteenth century, it was common coin in all the seigneurial documents and the duke, his agents, and the peasants themselves employed it often. More important, it was employed with increasing frequency in the years immediately before 1789. The seigneurial reaction in this case had been marked as much by seigneurial pre-eminences as by seigneurial obligations. The ducal bailiage, the *droit d’indire*, the complete renewal of the *terriers* in a dozen villages at once, and the replacement of Billard by the *feudiste* Fénéon as chief manager of the estate are all examples of a new emphasis on the form and apparatus of seigneurialism as distinct from landlordism. The peasant was freshly reminded that he was a “vassal” of Duke de Saulx-Tavanes.69

In itself, this might not have been the cause of intense bitterness. But the peasant had reason to regard himself otherwise in the course of the century. The royal government had treated him differently. For whatever fiscal burdens they implied, the tax rolls employed another vocabulary. In the village *taille* rolls, the peasant was neither *vassal* nor *paysan*, but *habitant*, a word that in this context implied “taxpayer” or “citizen.” By a curious coincidence in 1781, the year in which the duke began his seigneurial reorganization, the royal administration began to reapportion the burden of the *taille* in the communities of the Dijon plain. The reassessment was a response to local petitions and involved the convocation of the “general assembly of *habitants*” and the election of assessors. At Beau­mont, the four nominated included a winegrower and a day laborer. Throughout the region, ordinary peasants were not only treated as taxpayers in public forms of address, but employed in the important task of tax apportionment.70

The contrast in treatment should not be ignored here. Almost simultaneously, the villagers were reminded that they were “vassals” of the Duke de Saulx-Tavanes and owed him deference and dues, while the royal government treated them as citizens who could apportion their own taxes. The public powers, as Tocqueville said, were “teaching” not only

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69 See Chapter II, above.
70 See Loutchisky, “De la petite propriété,” and *taille* rolls in *A. D.*, C-5911 to C-6113.
equality of treatment, but also a certain measure of citizen participation. Together, the activities of the duke and the royal government in the 1780s must have disturbed and irritated the average winegrower or artisan of the region. Is it too much to speak of an ambivalent self-image? Could one be both “vassal” and “citizen”? Did the vocabulary of the modern state—“citizen,” “nation,” “rights”—that the remote village of Spoy could employ spring up over night? Self-respect played a role here as substantial as material grievance.

It has become almost commonplace to emphasize the rise of bread prices and of royal taxes in the years before 1789 as the twin blades squeezing the peasantry of France. In the Dijon plain, however, neither grain prices nor taxes seem to have played an important role. Grain prices fell through most of the 1780s—so much so that in 1786 the royal subdelegate claimed that “grain and wine are at such a price that even the poorest inhabitants can live with a certain affluence.” It is true that prices began to climb dramatically in 1788 and 1789, but to ascribe rural tensions to the long-run effects of inflation in grain seems misleading. Wheat prices, as we have seen, rose only 22 per cent between 1750–55 and 1785–89.

As for the dreaded taille, complaints about inequities of assessment were often justified, though in the 1770s and 1780s a large number of communities in the Dijonnais thoroughly reformed their tax assessments and at rates that were not exorbitant. But the most interesting fact is that the global tax figure for each village did not change much between 1760 and 1789. Royal taxes were always disliked, but there is little evidence that they were rising, at least in the villages where Tavanes was seigneur. The standard economic explanation, therefore, does not carry us very far here.

71 See the forthcoming work of Sasha Weitman on the relationship of centralization to demands for equality in the cahiers.
72 This is the classic thesis of C. E. Labrousse, almost religiously reiterated in every French regional monograph. No doubt it holds for many parts of France, but not for the Dijonnais.
73 A. D., C-100; See Price Table in Document X.
74 A. D., C-5916, C-5927, C-6018, Nouveau pied des tailles, for the new tax rates which varied from five to ten per cent of gross revenues. On the value of this source, see Loutchisky, “De la petite propriété,” pp. 85–86, 87n.
75 See Table IV. 3 on royal taxes. The cahier of Beaumont claimed that its taille was set “at about 1,000 livres” in 1782; this is substantially true (the precise figure is 1,275 livres), but the villagers selected the lowest tax in 20 years.
REVOLUTION IN THE DUCHY OF SAULX-TAVANES

Table IV.3 Royal Taxes in Three Villages in the Jurisdiction of the Seigneurs of Tavanes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Village</th>
<th>Tax</th>
<th>1760</th>
<th>1765</th>
<th>1770</th>
<th>1775</th>
<th>1780</th>
<th>1785</th>
<th>1789</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arc-sur-Tille</td>
<td>Taille</td>
<td>3,096</td>
<td>3,165</td>
<td>3,251</td>
<td>3,542</td>
<td>3,251</td>
<td>3,825</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and Vingtieme</td>
<td>684</td>
<td>717</td>
<td>621</td>
<td>712</td>
<td>859</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>612</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Capitation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,780</td>
<td>3,882</td>
<td>3,872</td>
<td>3,671</td>
<td>4,401</td>
<td>3,851</td>
<td>4,437</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of</td>
<td></td>
<td>157</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxpayers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beaumont</td>
<td>Taille</td>
<td>1,980</td>
<td>1,894</td>
<td>1,764</td>
<td>1,886</td>
<td>1,661</td>
<td>1,944</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and Vingtieme</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Capitation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,418</td>
<td>2,324</td>
<td>2,101</td>
<td>2,009</td>
<td>2,344</td>
<td>1,974</td>
<td>2,254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of</td>
<td></td>
<td>82</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>94</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxpayers</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lux</td>
<td>Taille</td>
<td>2,012</td>
<td>2,264</td>
<td>2,108</td>
<td>2,323</td>
<td>2,482</td>
<td>2,481</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and Vingtieme</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>557</td>
<td>615</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>506</td>
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<td>Capitation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,459</td>
<td>2,690</td>
<td>2,520</td>
<td>2,880</td>
<td>3,097</td>
<td>2,978</td>
<td>3,678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of</td>
<td></td>
<td>130</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxpayers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: A. D., C-5916 (Arc); A. D., C-5926, 5927 (Beaumont); A. D., C-6017, 6018 (Lux).

* * *

Slowly, between 1789 and 1791, the village communes became aware that they could take action on their own, that the local courts could hand down favorable decisions, and that the local administration from canton to district and from district to department would not obstruct communal action, even if it would not openly encourage it. Before 1789, the village communities had some corporate unity, but they had long been on the defensive against the Saulx-Tavanes who were almost always favored in the local royal courts. By 1791, the villages began to realize that there was a national legislature. For the first time there were men in high places doing something "expressly for them." To grievances both material and psychological was added the possibility of effective action by means of the new municipality and a distant but powerful benefactor, the National Assembly.

The new awareness that change and reform were possible did not come from the August 4th Decrees alone. Other issues were crowding the scene by the beginning of 1791. There was the discussion in the department about the new Constitution of the Clergy. It must have encouraged
the rural municipalities to learn that 71 per cent of the local priests took the oath. Indeed, the curés must have reflected the views of the villages. The Côte d'Or was no Vendée. In February, the commune of Arnay-le-Duc, southwest of Dijon, arrested the aunts of the King who were bound for Italy, and dispatched them to Dijon where they were imprisoned for ten days despite the instructions of District and Department. In May, the new political club, Amis de la Constitution, with affiliates throughout the department, had a major reunion in the old Palace of the Dukes at Dijon. Did Calignon and Bartet mount the same steps which had caused such a battle of prestige for the duke's grandfather, thirty-five years earlier?

The countryside was also " politicized" by the national elections in September. Fénéon alluded to them as " occupying all the public officials" and interrupting his own legal proceedings. This election, reinforced by new municipal elections, marked the real beginning of a second revolution in the countryside. An older generation of gens de robe, including moderates such as Arnoult, were being replaced by more active " patriots" recruited or supported by the " comité des avocats" at Dijon. By 1792, the villages and bourgs were pushing the more conservative departmental administrations and openly supporting the journées at Paris. Dijon itself (population 20,000) was fast becoming Republican. A year later, the department would elect three future members of the Committee of Public Safety—Carnot, Prieur, and Guyton-Morveau—and one member of the Committee of General Security—Basire, known as " the implacable leveller" (le farouche niveleur) to his enemies. Again, unlike the Vendée, the rural communes were as " patriotic" as the departmental capital.

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76 A. D., E-1725, Letter of September 6, 1791.
77 Montenay, "L'établissement d'une manufacture," pp. 189, 189n.
78 Drouot and Calmette, Histoire de Bourgogne, pp. 359–62.