We have seen that in the radical press, events were subordinate to ideology. While the publicists passed hurriedly over specific occurrences and skimped in their descriptions, they repeatedly selected events that would validate and emphasize their concern with popular sovereignty. In a similar way, the institutions and individuals treated in the radical press were superseded by ideology. First, only those groups with some role in the struggle for popular sovereignty were likely to receive much coverage. Second, the radicals found it difficult to describe or evaluate these groups without reference to popular sovereignty.

Although the coverage of institutions and individuals was greatly influenced by ideology, this reporting must itself be considered. The radicals believed themselves to be judging these bodies by their actual performance, and they were not totally inaccurate. The radical press was especially attentive to the activities of certain institutions—particularly the court at Versailles, the ministers, the monarchical family, the church, the Jacobins and Cordeliers, the Paris Municipality, the National Guard, and the National Assembly. In addition, the journalists of the six papers singled out the preeminent members of these bodies—Necker, Jean Sylvain Bailly, Lafayette, Louis XVI, and Marie-Antoinette—for special treatment. Thus, to extend our answer to the question, What did the radical press say? we must now investigate the treatment of the individuals and institutions thought to be important by the Cordeliers. This chapter, then, begins with those men and institutions that the Cordeliers despised (the villains), proceeds to those they idolized (the heroes), and concludes with those first praised but ultimately condemned. The chapter
focuses on the quality of and the changes in the radical descriptions of these bodies and their leading members. Finally, consideration will be given to the role ideology played in the radical viewpoint.

**DURABLE VILLAINS AND DURABLE HEROES**

From the onset of the Revolution in July 1789, the royal court was the object of much abuse by the radical press. The brothers and cousins of the king (Orléans usually excepted), dukes, peers, ladies-in-waiting, upper clergy, high nobles—all of court society was attacked, both individually and collectively, as the center of iniquity, as the *aristocratie* of the *aristocratie*. Fréron insisted that “it was the court which nourished the audacity of all our enemies.” Prudhomme condemned the court, whose example had encouraged the luxurious habits of the *aristocratie* and had caused the impoverishment of the peasants, who had to pay directly and indirectly for the aristocratic life style. Moreover, in the eyes of the radicals, the mainspring of court opposition to the Revolution was the ministers. Detesting the court as the core of the *aristocratie*, the radicals thought of its power largely in terms of what the ministers were capable of doing.

And, for the Cordelier journalists, the ministers were pointing toward a single goal—counterrevolution. They conspired with foreign governments; they manipulated elections; they played a nefarious role in the grain trade. Nothing—nothing that could upset the Revolution—escaped their purview. For example, Desmoulins insisted that the ministers oversupplied the army garrisons to quell just popular uprisings. Also, he listed ministerial appointments to military posts, claiming that these new officers were nothing but counterrevolutionary conspirators. Audouin likewise found that the regulations in the army imposed by the ministers were all part of an effort to corrupt the military in order to effect a counterrevolution. For Marat, the goal of the ministers was a war whose horrors would discourage popular support for the Revolution. The list of ministerial actions, alleged by the radicals as efforts to overthrow the new regime, could be indefinitely extended, but Fréron has epitomized the radical view of ministerial intentions: “The Constitution has no more heated enemies than the ministers; they might present to the nation the cup of peace. I would break the chalice against the altar of liberty because this goblet would be full of the most fatal poison.”

Moreover, this hostile treatment was continued even for ministers who had the general approval of most revolutionaries. The treatment of Necker, the secretary of finance, is a case in point. Although he was admired by most revolutionaries and his removal from office precipitated
street protest that led directly to the seizure of the Bastille, the radicals detested him and accused him of conspiracy. As early as September 1789, when his public credit was quite high, he was assailed by Marat for undermining the National Assembly and for working to reestablish despotism. Not much later, Marat attacked Necker as a speculator, a charge often repeated by the radical press. The rest of the Cordeliers, previously neutral, followed the lead of Marat and began to defame Necker in the first few months of 1790. In April, Desmoulins termed the minister a hypocrite, and on May 2, Audouin recommended his exile. Likewise, in early April, the Révolutions de Paris, which had briefly supported Necker, insisted that he had libeled the National Assembly. Furthermore, as Necker failed to right French finances and consequently lost popularity among more moderate revolutionaries, the radicals increased their abuse. In July 1790, Marat arraigned Necker as the soul of all the plots in the country. The article went on to assert that Necker had feigned patriotism as a ploy to gain the funds necessary to corrupt the National Guard, the National Assembly, the patriotic writers, and the Châtelet. The Révolutions de Paris chided itself for its earlier support of Necker and soundly condemned the minister as a liar, speculator, and a counterrevolutionary. The Cordelier journalists not only assailed Necker, they contended that all the ministers, regardless of their reputations, worked for the aristocratie and against the Revolution. By the time the Cordelier press had been established, those ministers irrevocably opposed to the Revolution had been replaced. By midsummer of 1789, the ministers in office, Saint Hérenn Montmorin, Saint-Priest, La Tour du Pin, Luzerne, and Champion de Cicé were willing to work with the National Assembly. But their willingness spared them nothing. The radicals asserted that these ministers were involved in the vilest plots against the Revolution. Fréron and Prudhomme implicated all of them by name in plots to overthrow the new regime. Each ministerial decision provoked virulent attacks from the Cordeliers. Commenting on a ministerial investigation of a meeting in Marseilles, Desmoulins designated Saint-Priest as the leader of the ministerial efforts to destroy the new order. The Mercure National contended that some new administrative regulations on coin and grain were ministerial efforts to monopolize these products and to overthrow the government of the peuple. Finally, the radical press had an opportunity to join in a successful campaign to oust these ministers.

By mid-summer of 1790, many others, especially the Jacobins in the National Assembly, shared the radical antipathy for the ministers. The Revolution had run into difficulties with finances and with the church, and a scapegoat was required. This widespread anxiety coalesced around
a demand for the “recall” of the ministers, who were actually removed in early November, 1790. Montmorin, the minister of war, was excepted because public opinion still considered him a friend of the Revolution.\textsuperscript{16} Although the radicals were probably not the most influential participants in this coalition, they were the most aggressive and the most longstanding enemies of the ministry. They gave free vent to their hostilities and were pleased with the ouster of these opponents. Nonetheless, their habitual hatred of ministers precluded any favorable reception of the new appointees.

The radicals should have been completely intoxicated with this shared victory, for the new ministry favored the Cordelier positions far more than the old. Their old \textit{bête noir}, Necker and his cabinet, had been replaced by four cronies of Lafayette, still popular in 1790, and by Adrien Duport de Tertre, a comrade of Lameth, the current darling of the radical press.\textsuperscript{17} But the ministers, no matter what their politics, were an anathema to the Cordeliers. After a brief respite, in which the radicals promised to judge the new ministers fairly but circumspectly,\textsuperscript{18} the journalists launched new assaults as vitriolic as the old. Drawing attention to the permission given to Austria to move troops through French territory, Marat insisted that the new ministers had arranged for a foreign attack. He predicted that these ministers would continue all the iniquitous projects of their predecessors.\textsuperscript{19} The \textit{Révolutions de Paris} and the \textit{Révolutions de France et de Brabant} asserted that the ambassadors appointed by Montmorin were part of a plan to engage foreign assistance against the Revolution.\textsuperscript{20} Fréron warned also of the counterrevolutionary dangers posed by the new ministers.\textsuperscript{21}

Ministers, new and old, regardless of their past or current records, were constantly attacked for their political actions. Every incident, important or inconsequential, revealed to the radicals the treasonous actions of the ministers. The grounds for this hostility were complex, many based on specific grievances, and often peculiar to an individual journalist. Nonetheless, two general antagonisms do emerge. First, the radicals assumed that one could not be a minister and maintain allegiance to the \textit{peuple}. In the \textit{Mercure National}, François Robert voiced his doubts that ministers could be loyal. In refuting some comments of Duport de Tertre, Robert remarked that a minister could never preserve the “dignity of a man.” Exposed to the court, a minister would be easily seduced and corrupted by its mores.\textsuperscript{22} Marat likewise insisted that the court could easily manipulate and corrupt any minister in its midst, no matter how high-minded his principles were on assuming office.\textsuperscript{23} Thus, because the court, the epitome of the \textit{aristocratie}, was incorrigible in its hatred for the Revolution, there could be no hope for the ministers who
worked in such a milieu. Ironically, the radicals also believed that it was the ministers who directed the court's machinations against the Revolution.

Second, the Cordelier writers reviled the ministers because these journalists, like other revolutionaries, required a scapegoat for the personal and policy failures of the king. For most of the period 1789 to 1791 they wanted to absolve Louis of his failure to accept the radical program, and consequently, they asserted that it was the ministers with aid from the court who were responsible for royal errors such as Louis's delay in signing the Declaration of the Rights of Man and his continued taste for a luxurious life style. Fréron insisted that all the ministers were corrupt and took advantage of the vacillating personality of the king to perpetrate their schemes. Marat likewise faulted Louis's advisers for monarchical error and compassionately sympathized.

It is not against the king that I have wished to oppose the arguments of justice and reason, but against his counsellors. . . . No one can appreciate as well as I the natural goodness of the king and the unfortunate position of this monarch, who is surrounded by knaves who abuse his confidence each day and who will end by making him lose the love and esteem of his comrades . . . the peuple. . . .

Ministers, as described in the radical press, were durable villains, who, under the influence of the court, were completely committed to the service of the aristocratie and would spare no means to overturn the Revolution. Perhaps, the underlying reason for this trenchant criticism was the desire of radical publicists to excuse serious royal shortcomings.

The second of the villains was the queen, Marie-Antoinette. However, while the radical press treated her with contempt, they portrayed her in a substantially different manner than did the Paris "grub-street" writers of the 1780s. For the latter group she was extremely important, if not central, to their disillusionment with the Old Regime. She represented to the "grub-street" radicals the moral degeneracy of the court. In their essays, the queen was dangerous because of her incessant involvement in scandals where the king was humiliated and where sexual license and impulse replaced calm reflection as a basis for public appointments and decision making. By contrast, the Cordeliers did not regard Marie-Antoinette as a very important opponent, and these former "grub-street" radicals did not see her in 1789 as a major threat to the morality of society.

In fact, the radical newspapermen tended to ignore Marie-Antoinette from 1789 to 1791. It would be difficult for a reader to find many references to the queen in the radical press. This was especially true from 1789 to mid-1790, and the remarks that were made were only mildly or indi-
rectly hostile to the queen. Of the radical journalists, Camille Desmoulins was most hostile to the queen, but even his animosity was guarded. Although he believed that the principles of the Revolution required changing the status of Marie-Antoinette from queen to the wife of the king, his arguments relied on involved references to the Salic Law and to the Declaration of the Rights of Man rather than on a direct attack on the person of the queen. True, such references were only a sophistic cover for Desmoulins’s hostility; true, contemporaries and the queen herself were well aware of his below-the-surface anger; but, still, Desmoulins hesitated to make open charges against the queen. Moreover, other radical journalists gave more neutral treatment to the queen. Reporting the arrival of the royal family in Paris in October 1789, Prudhomme addressed himself to Marie-Antoinette. He observed that, in general, the peuple had been mistreated by the queens of France, but that the present queen still had an opportunity to reverse this sad history. Her arrival from Versailles had made him optimistic; now it was up to her to confirm his hopes by demonstrating her patriotism. True, there was some concern that the queen might be a villain, but the tone of the article was one of hopeful confidence in her. In sum, until the middle of 1790, the radical newspapermen seldom mentioned Marie-Antoinette, and when they did they evinced only a mild animosity.

Although the radicals generally continued to ignore the queen throughout 1790 and 1791, their occasional remarks became markedly more hostile. During this period, the Cordelier publicists warned that the queen’s every action was designed to foment counterrevolution. Abandoning the charge of the “grub-street” radicals that Marie-Antoinette debased public morals, the radicals attacked her for her political machinations. Marat posited that the aunts of the king should not be permitted to emigrate because of the perilous situation faced by the nation. Among such perils was the fact that the queen was “the sister of a tyrant who is armed and waiting at our frontiers, and she only breathes for the moment when she may bathe herself in the blood of the French. . . .” Marat was seconded by the other radicals in his conviction that Marie-Antoinette was an avid conspirator for the counterrevolution. The Cordeliers, indeed, often insisted that the center of such plotting was a group of the queen’s advisers, which they dubbed the Austrian Committee. The name given to this group indicates the radicals’ obvious belief in the queen’s involvement, for she was the sole Austrian that the radicals or their readers knew. And, in order that there could be no mistaking the complicity of the queen, the journalists sometimes wrote of the “comité autrichienne.” The use of the feminine gender of Austrian to modify the masculine noun comité was, of course, grammatically incorrect. Nonetheless, this usage was politically intentional, for it indicated to the naive
reader and listener that the committee was inspired, not only by an Austrian but also by a female Austrian. Only the most ignorant French reader could fail to guess the identity of the chief conspirator.

In brief, although the radicals increasingly treated the queen as a villain from 1789 to 1791, she was ignored in most of their articles. It is not quite clear why Marie-Antoinette was treated so mildly in 1789 to 1791 after the blistering attacks of the 1780s, but this difference in reporting suggests that the former "grub-street" radicals redirected their attention to other villains during the first years of the Revolution.

The radicals also treated the Catholic church as a durable villain. From the very first, the newsmen identified the nonparish clergy, both monastic and regular, with the aristocratie and with opposition to the Revolution. The church hierarchy was guilty, so said the Cordeliers, of participating in the counterrevolution to protect their property and lascivious opulence. The hostility of the radicals for the upper clergy certainly contributed to a picture of a church mired in self-indulgence, luxury, and conspiracy.

Early in the Revolution, the radicals had adopted the notion of a parish clergy united with the peuple. This alliance saved the church from blanket condemnation for a brief period, but it was not long before these journalists began to harass the lower clergy as well. By mid-1790, the radicals were accusing the parish priests of working with the regular clergy to preserve a haughty, useless materialism and to overturn the Revolution. Prudhomme, or perhaps one of his associates, expressed his reaction to the clerical resistance to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. He insisted that the curés had allied politically with the bishops simply to continue enjoying an insolent luxury. Other journalists insisted that the parish priests were dedicated to maintaining luxury and halting the Revolution. Reasoning much as Prudhomme, Audouin wrote:

Yes, the race of priests is an evil race! I except a small number of virtuous and good ministers; because certainly there are a few who are respectable and respected, who never dishonor their ministry by a shameful irreligion, by thirst for gold or blood, by a rage of passion against the decrees of a free and sovereign nation. . . .

The attack, widened to include the parish priest as well as bishops or abbots, could hardly fail to tarnish further the damaged image of the church.

Finally, the picture of the church was still more clouded by radical skepticism of the validity of church doctrine. Usually, even when the radicals violently assailed the hierarchy of the church, they accepted the spiritual functions of the church as necessary and desirable. Nonethe- less, there were scattered attacks on Catholic teachings as well as on
"clericalism." Desmoulins noted in a sarcastic passage that Paul was unintelligent and mistaken in his teachings. Fréron asserted that the doctrines of Christianity were unbelievable to modern man. Although such remarks were the exception in the radical press, they represented a growing attack on the church—already conceived of as an institution infected by villains who were trying to preserve "aristocratic" ostentatiousness and self-indulgence, and who were conspiring to destroy the Revolution.

Thus, in the minds of the radicals, the villainous ministry, the queen, and the entire clergy were actively plotting against the Revolution. Further, as we shall see, the National Assembly, the Parisian authorities and the king were later to join these original conspirators. Opposing these groups and institutions was a beleaguered group of steadfast men of principle, durable heroes—chiefly the Cordeliers and the Jacobins. These durable heroes, few in number, were praised from 1789 to 1791 for all their actions, whether or not these actions were central to, or even consistent with, Cordelier "philosophy." A few examples should clarify this statement.

In an article entitled "Quelques réflexions sur le club des Jacobins et sur le club 89," Robert lauded the Jacobins for their support for the issuance of the assignats, for the bill ascribing war-making powers to the nation, and for their decorum in the National Assembly. In the case of the assignats, Robert praised the Jacobins for their fiscal wisdom, not for their moral purity or commitment to popular sovereignty. He backed them specifically for their position without any extrapolation or claims that by this action the Jacobins had proved any extraordinary revolutionary ardor or had any special commitment to popular sovereignty. This praise for a specific meritorious action should be contrasted with the remarks of the radicals about the villains, whose every action was interpreted not on its own characteristics but as part of a design either to ensure outrageous opulence or to facilitate the counterrevolution.

The other radical journalists praised the durable heroes in the same specific way. Fréron examined the disgruntlement of the Cordeliers with Lafayette and praised them specifically for their move to censure the general. But, in addition, Fréron and his comrades often used an action of this heroic organization to illustrate a conformity with general radical principles. For example, when the Cordeliers protected Marat in one of his encounters with the Paris Municipality, Prudhomme lauded the district for its defense of the rights of the individual and waxed eloquent over the commitment of the district to the Revolution and to popular sovereignty.

Finally, whether the radical journalists restricted their praise to the specific action or expanded their praise to include ideology, they were
unrestrained in their enthusiasm for the Jacobins and the Cordeliers. Audouin reported Cordelier resistance to a municipal decision that would forbid the posting of criticism of the political authorities. He praised their position, associated himself with the Cordelier cause, and then concluded.

Our blood [the Cordeliers'] will be the fecund germ of a new generation of patriots. The municipality wishes to prevent us from revealing the plots of the enemies of the Revolution and the vices of the administrative bodies . . . but despite our enemies, these so-called friends of the law, public understanding will make irresistible progress each day, the love of liberty will triumph over all obstacles and will assure the happiness of future generations. Indeed our patriotism, our virtue, our persecution, perhaps even our blood will have cemented this happiness.41

Audouin may have limited his praise to the Cordeliers' posters and to their defiant desire to keep them in circulation, but he obviously did so in the most extravagant fashion. The Jacobins were treated to similar, though not quite so hyperbolic, plaudits by the radical newspapers. Their policy of exclusive membership and their frequent capitulation to the National Assembly cost them a measure of adulation, but they were still widely applauded.42 Audouin asserted that the Jacobins were the highest moral force in the Revolution.43 Likewise Desmoulins affirmed that the Jacobin Club, for its efforts on the Journée des Poignards, was the "most wonderful institution that has ever existed."44 Thus, the Jacobins like the Cordeliers were abundantly praised from 1789 to 1791 for diverse activities and in a diverse pattern that included both specific remarks and general ideological approval.

FROM HEROES TO VILLAINS: THE PARIS MUNICIPALITY, BAILLY, LAFAYETTE, THE NATIONAL GUARD

Following the opening of the Estates-General, the police and executive bodies that had administered Paris either atrophied or were purposely dismantled. This decay continued at an accelerated rate after the seizure of the Bastille. All that remained to fill the local power vacuum were the electoral districts of the capital, which, their original function having been completed, had become almost dormant by July 1789. However, in July when the arrival of royal troops threatened the Revolution, the district councils revitalized and assumed local leadership. Under their aegis, the National Guard was formed and the Revolution secured. But coordination among the districts was needed and to this end a central body, the municipality, was formed. In addition, a mayor, Bailly, and a commander for the National Guard, Lafayette, were elected. In July 1789, Bailly,
Lafayette, the municipality, and the National Guard, so recently created by the districts, shared the support, indeed, the acclaim, of all those who approved the direct action taken by the district leadership. The radical press joined in unbridled and unreflective praise for these new institutions and their leaders. Bailly, Lafayette, and the municipality, the creation of the districts, and the institutional embodiment of popular sovereignty, enjoyed an imposing mandate that precluded criticism. But this acclaim did not long endure. By 1791 the radical journals would insist that each had abandoned the principles of popular sovereignty and had committed other transgressions that justified acid attacks in all six papers.45

First to come under criticism was the municipality. The Cordeliers granted some grudging admissions of respect,46 but very soon after the events of July, the municipality found itself indicted by the extreme-left press. The initial radical complaints centered on two charges—one, that the municipality was trying to usurp the powers of the districts, and two, that the municipality was composed of “corrupt” men. On September 25, 1789, the Révolutions de Paris, after reporting some recent decisions of the ministers, demanded that the municipal authorities give up efforts to usurp the legislative powers of the sixty districts. This journal returned to its defense of district sovereignty in October. Its editors claimed that the municipality was attempting to deny the citizenry the right to remonstrate.47 Not much later, Marat agreed with the Révolutions de Paris that the districts were being denied their right to deliberation; however, Marat directed his charge more at immorality within the municipality. Reviewing the actions of the municipality, he asserted that their meeting place, the Hôtel de Ville, was filled with the aristocratie, disreputable characters, hoarders of coin and grain, and agents of the ministers.48

These lines of attack were repeated by both journals and later were echoed by the entire radical press. In October 1790, Desmoulins noted the closing of the Parlement by the municipality and launched a diatribe against the pomp displayed by the Paris officials on this occasion. He assailed their ostentatious attire and their inflated honor guards.49 Elsewhere, complaints about the usurpation of powers by the municipality persisted. Audouin noted in early 1791: “Why is the Municipality of Paris already incorrigible? Why does it play with despotism? Why does it frequently arrogate to itself an unconstitutional authority?”50 Thus, dating from September 1789, and persisting through 1791, there were attacks on the municipality for its efforts to ape the ostentatiousness and manners of the aristocratie and for its “unconstitutional” assault on popular sovereignty.

But this loss of faith led to a more serious charge against the municipality. No longer were its members simply debauchés or even dangerous usurpers of power; they were active counterrevolutionary
plots. In September 1790, Marat claimed that the municipal officials had formed *compagnies de famine*, whose ultimate purpose was to weaken the resistance of the *peuple* to the armed counterrevolution.\(^{51}\) This same charge was sounded by Fréron a few months later.\(^{52}\) Relating another theory of conspiracy, Audouin insisted that it was through misappropriation of funds that the city officials favored the "aristocratic" plot.\(^{53}\) In brief, the municipality enjoyed only a short-lived popularity in the radical press, and it soon joined the durable villains as a participant in the effort to overthrow the Revolution.

The head of the municipality, Bailly, enjoyed only a slightly longer period of grace. In late 1789 when Marat launched his attack on the municipality, he remained relatively silent about Bailly's complicity in its actions. The mayor, the executor of municipal decisions, seemed immune to Marat's scathing pen. Possibly, the mayor's charisma, shown by his courage at the *Jeu de Paume*, restrained Marat. However, in December 1790, Bailly drastically reduced the number of hawkers permitted to peddle journals in the street. Marat immediately accused him, not of obstruction of political rights, but of threatening the financial support of the journals. Marat exploded:

\[
\ldots \text{you have become insensitive the moment you were presented some honors. Success then hardens the heart of a philosophes as much as a common man.} \ldots \text{Drawn in a shiny carriage, you cover us with mud in the streets, you drink our blood in cups of gold.}\]^{54}\]

Although Bailly would later be accused of many crimes by the radical press, this caricature of an intellectual, addicted to pomp and luxury, would often return to haunt him.

In fact, only a week after Marat's accusation, Desmoulins attacked an agent of the *Hôtel de Ville*, Boucher d'Argis, for his overbearing pride and then blamed the example of Bailly for the vanity of his subordinate. According to the journalist, the ostentatiousness of the mayor had infected local government and caused a certain "petitesse."\(^{55}\) Despite the attacks of Desmoulins and Marat early in 1790, the other journalists remained silent or defended the character of Bailly for a few more months. For example the *Révolutions de Paris* lauded the mayor specifically for his assiduous scavenging of grain for Paris and, elsewhere, praised him generally for his support of popular sovereignty.\(^{56}\) But Bailly was seldom mentioned or only neutrally discussed by the other journalists, though he received criticism from Marat and Desmoulins for his superfluous display.

By the second half of 1790, this relative respite from criticism had ended. First, Desmoulins and Marat broadened their charges against Bailly. In May 1790, Marat blamed Bailly for the proposal to destroy the districts and asserted that the mayor wished to obstruct popular sover-
Two months later Desmoulins reached the same conclusion. Noting the boundaries and the hurried organization of the newly formed sections, Desmoulins asserted that the mayor intended to destroy the right of the people to self-government.

The other publicists, perhaps swayed by Bailly's role in the suppression of the districts, joined in the assault. In September, Fréron called Bailly a pompous, inconsequential man. The editors of the *Mercure National* joined in discrediting Bailly with the serious charge that he, with Lafayette, had designed a plan to corrupt the National Guard. In October, Audouin questioned Bailly's support for certain decrees proposed by the ministers, and by November he had concluded that Bailly was in league with these "villains."

In fact, by the end of 1790, all the radical journalists were charging Bailly with complicity in counterrevolutionary plots. Earlier the defender of Bailly, the *Révolutions de Paris* now noted that the mayor had refused to present the demands of the sections to the National Assembly and concluded that he had joined with the ministers in suppressing such complaints. Fréron also asserted that Bailly was an active conspirator who had personally designed a "project" to induce a civil war. Charges of counterrevolutionary plotting continued unabated from the end of 1790, and continued into 1791; predictably Bailly's earliest opponents, Marat and Desmoulins, joined in this campaign. In April, Marat informed his readers that the mayor was a member of a coalition whose goal was to make Alsace the first theater of civil war. Desmoulins reinforced Bailly's image as a conspirator by charging that he had aided the flight of Louis XVI to Varennes in June 1791.

Thus, in a relatively short period from 1789 to 1791, Bailly had passed from fame to infamy. All the stages of this transformation would be impossible to trace, but the radicals first pointed to his opposition to district sovereignty and his ostentatiousness. Once Bailly was distrusted for his pomp and his local political policies, the radicals began to regard his actions as conspiratorial. Bailly's reputation declined more slowly than that of the municipality; nonetheless, by 1791 he was associated with the durable villains and by 1793 he would face the guillotine.

Although historians have found it difficult to differentiate between the policies of Bailly and those of Lafayette, the radicals apparently believed them to be quite distinct. At a time when the radical editors were either opposed or indifferent to Bailly, they were effusive in their praise for his counterpart, the general and commander of the National Guard. Indeed, during all of 1789 and the first five months of 1790, nothing but praise for Lafayette appeared in all six journals.

Lafayette must have felt encouraged about his political security by the complimentary remarks of the radical press. Marat found him to be a
man suited for freedom and Desmoulins could write unashamedly about a painting of Lafayette: “Then let me prostrate myself before this image. . . . I love to contemplate it, not as an ideal, but as the object of our dearest hopes.” While there was some hint here that Desmoulins did not want such adulation to go too far, his affection was open and obvious. Indeed, despite his commitment to weak government, he praised Lafayette for the able use of spies to stifle “conspiracies” in Paris. This dithyrambic praise was especially persistent in the *Journal Universal*, where Audouin as late as mid-May 1790, lauded the general for his role in the National Assembly. The hyperbolic remarks of an anonymous poem were not uncommon fare for the readers of this paper. One author wrote in January of 1790:

Ah! que plutôt sous le glaive assassin,
Puissetomber ma tête, ou s'ouvrir tout mon sein,
Avant que La Fayette ait, d'un trait homicide,
Reçu le coup fatal, dont menace un perfide—!
Dieu juste, Etre éternel, prononce, et j'obéis
Ouvre-moi le tombeau; j'y défends à ce prix
Sans effroi, sans regret, je donnerai ma vie
Pour sauver le Héros qui sauve ma Patrie.

Par Madame de M——

There was no single style for their praise. These plaudits might be limited to a single action, or they might praise Lafayette for contributions to freedom and popular sovereignty in general. But their passion and enthusiasm for the “Hero of Two Revolutions” was uniform.

Yet, the affection of the radicals was soon to wane. By spring of 1790, some faint rumblings could be heard against Lafayette. The editors of the *Révolutions de Paris* and the *Révolutions de France et de Brabant* criticized Lafayette’s vanity, and Marat impugned his organization of the National Guard. Although these criticisms were meant only to correct and not to vilify the general, they tarnished his image as a hero and warned of future disintegration of his popularity among the radicals.

In June 1790, Marat turned sharply against Lafayette and expanded his earlier criticism about the structure of the National Guard. He insisted that the National Guard had obstructed the sovereignty of the *peuple*. Marat’s charges increased in intensity, climaxing with the following indictment on June 28, 1790:

I will not paint here the picture of your [Lafayette’s] old demerits; I will not cry again how your conduct is contrary to the principles that you claim; I will not oppose here your devotion to the court, whose interests you feign to neglect, to your disloyalty for the *peuple* whose cause you feign to serve; I will not speak here of your connivance with the ministers. . . . I will speak
to you of the composition of your general staff... the action of your paid troops... and the spirit of the National Guard.

Marat went on to claim that the general staff, the paid troops, and the haughtiness of Lafayette's soldiers jeopardized the ability of the peuple to govern themselves. The status of this hero was, thus, seriously endangered. While hesitating to charge Lafayette openly as a conspirator, Marat depicted him as a threat to popular sovereignty.

In mid-July, Desmoulins's Révolutions de France et de Brabant launched the second assault against Lafayette. Desmoulins complained of the idolization of Lafayette, which had attained dazzling heights at the first anniversary celebration of the fall of the Bastille. At this festival, Desmoulins observed the growth of a development he greatly feared. In the hero worship for Lafayette, Desmoulins saw the emergence of a vanity, a pride, commonly associated with the aristocratie. He hoped that the general would renounce these attentions, but, in fact, Lafayette had cultivated them. Desmoulins, with his confidence in his hero broken, concluded by echoing the charges of Marat:

Thus, after the destruction of arbitrary ordres, M. Motier [Lafayette] has raised a new order, the most formidable of all, the order of citizens armed with rifles and sabers... M. Motier, in place of royal censors, has substituted 30,000 municipal censors armed with bayonets, of whom a great number cannot or do not wish to read.

For Desmoulins as well, Lafayette had created a National Guard willing to stifle the political expression of the peuple.

In the first week of August, Prudhomme and his chief journalist, Loustallot, joined the ranks against Lafayette and blasted him with attacks that paralleled those of Marat and Desmoulins. Precipitating this new hostility was a decision by the general to expand further the responsibilities of the National Guard in order to guarantee law and order. To Prudhomme, this decision was no less than a declaration of war on the sovereignty of the peuple in particular and on the Revolution in general. It was also convincing proof that the praise tendered Lafayette had corrupted him. He had become an egotist, seeking to aggrandize his position at the expense of the peuple.

But the three other radical journals restrained themselves. No longer did they shower Lafayette with extravagant praise, but they did avoid attacking him. However, in the wake of the massacre at Nancy in mid-August, Fréron and the Roberts joined in the assault on Lafayette. François Bouillé, a known royalist, had led an attack on some mutinous army regiments and had left 3,000 soldiers dead. Lafayette was implicated in this disaster because he had supported the repression of these mutineers, because he was the brother-in-law of Bouillé, and because he was
active in trying to make this slaughter more palatable to Parisian opinion. The radicals, by principle and political association, shared the viewpoint of the rebellious troops at Nancy, whose complaints had centered upon the right of the common soldier to review and appeal orders and decisions made by the officer corps. Consequently, the radicals, as a group, were outraged by the killing of so many who stood for a good cause. They anathematized those who supported either the sending of troops or the “cover-up” that followed. The participation of Lafayette in this incident cost him almost all his remaining support in the radical camp.77

Fréron found Lafayette’s role in suppressing the complaints of the Nancy garrison sufficient reason to end his silence and to attack the general openly. He charged Lafayette with abetting the aristocratie by defying the right of the troops to regulate their affairs.78 The subsequent concealment of the incident at Nancy outraged the Roberts. They asserted that it was the vanity of Lafayette, his need for recognition, that had encouraged him to try to justify this massacre. Hoping for the luxuries and the prestige that the court could provide, Lafayette had done what he could to aid their cause.79

Only Audouin hesitated to attack the general, but he was soon to fall into step. In late October, Audouin appealed to Lafayette to prove that he was not controlled by the ministers.80 In the following month, Audouin’s suspicion deepened that his former hero was a conspirator. However, it was not until February 1791, that he finally concluded that Lafayette had deceived the public and was working for the counterrevolution.81

While Audouin was growing distrustful, the other radical newspapers were stiffening their charges. At first they had claimed that Lafayette was either an egotist needing adulation or an opponent of popular sovereignty; in late 1790 and early 1791, they came to consider him a zealous conspirator in the service of the counterrevolution. Robert, in the Mercure National, labeled Lafayette a traitor and claimed that he desired to massacre half of the Paris population in order to overturn the Revolution.82 The editors of the Orateur du Peuple and the Révolutions de France et de Brabant, alarmed by the machinations of the general, called for his death.83 And in the Ami du Peuple, Marat wrote:

It is with this plan of organization [described in detail in a passage omitted here] that the counterrevolutionary Moitié has succeeded in forming, in all the realm, an innumerable army of satellites. He flatters himself that with these men he will be able to overturn the altar of liberty. His first try was at Nancy. But since this horrible massacre, how many other attempts has he made to cause a civil war! In these attempts, when they have failed, he never misses a chance for a “cover-up” or a deception. Such were the massacres at Rapée and at La Chapelle.84
Thus, while Lafayette had escaped the radical attack longer than Bailly or the municipality, he finished in the same way. Lauded in 1789 and in early 1790, he was brutally condemned in late 1790 and 1791.

Last of the Parisian governmental institutions to come under radical attack was the National Guard. Although it is difficult to distinguish the activities of this body of citizen-soldiers from the other authorities of the city, it received no criticism for a long period. When Cordelier opinion did change, there were only infrequent and unsystematic allegations. Possibly, the radicals spared the National Guard because they believed it to be composed largely of the “beloved” peuple.

While the radicals usually left the National Guard unmentioned and unassailed, they accused the general staff, Lafayette’s hand-picked subordinates, with the same vigor and at about the same period as they criticized the general himself. For example, throughout July 1790, the Révolutions de Paris insisted that the general staff was trying to “establish servitude” for the peuple. Further, the Orateur du Peuple attacked the general staff along with Lafayette for collusion with the ministers. Likewise, when the Mercure National called Lafayette a conspirator against the Revolution, it named the general staff as accomplices. This distrust for all these leaders must reveal a certain distrust for the National Guard itself.

Nonetheless, only infrequently was the guard as a whole maligned and denigrated. In April 1790, there was a growing concern about the National Guard. By the middle of 1790 all the journalists had stopped praising the guard and had become either neutral or noncommittal in the treatment of this body; occasionally a publicist would launch a limited attack. These charges recommended that the guard correct certain abuses, but these complaints did not impugn its general character. A good example of radical anxieties was the challenge of Audouin that the National Guard patrols were too numerous. He did not find conspiracy or an attack on popular sovereignty in this hyperactivity; rather he chose to refer to the problem as a “misunderstanding” and proposed the very practical solution of publicizing the schedule of patrols in order to reduce possible confrontations between the citizenry and the soldiers.

For most of the journalists such mild rebukes were the extent of their disillusions with the guard, but in August 1790, Marat changed course. He stated that there must be an insurrection of the peuple to secure their needs, since there could be no reliance on the National Guard in the struggle for the popular cause. Claiming that these soldiers were haughty and blinded by their leaders, Marat found them an obstruction to, not an instrument of, popular sovereignty. Marat continued his attacks throughout 1790 and 1791 and finally gained an ally in April 1791.
Like Marat, Audouin assailed the National Guard for suppressing the political activity of the "passive citizens." But only these two were willing to assault the guard directly. The others might attack the leadership and implicitly attack those who obeyed such leaders, but generally the publicists refused to do more than question specific practices of the citizen army.

Therefore, in widely varying degree, all major components of the revolutionary government of Paris were discredited. First to be attacked was the municipality, then Bailly and Lafayette, and finally the leaders of the National Guard. Was there a connection between the changes in editorial opinion and the events of the Revolution? Did radical views shift following "key" events, such as the October Days or the flight of the king—events that historians have commonly felt explained major shifts in public opinion? Consider first figures 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, and table 5.1.

A careful survey of these tables indicates that, from Bastille Day, there was no single month and no single event that coincided with a uniform shift in radical opinion of either the municipality, or Bailly, or Lafayette. Further, only one journalist, Fréron, altered his opinions of all three authorities at the same time or following a single event. Consequently, in these cases, the impact of single (even the so-called key) events on
editorial opinion was limited, and one must look elsewhere for the influences that changed the editorial views of the radical press. This negative conclusion may seem obvious enough here, but one should recall the persistent efforts of historians to explain the "course of the Revolution" in terms of these "key" events, such as the massacre at Champ de Mars, as the prime movers of public opinion.

On the other hand, there does emerge some commonality in the qualitative treatment of these institutions and individuals. At first all were

FIGURE 5.1. The Paris Municipality in the Radical Press

SOURCE: Appendix D

FIGURE 5.2. Mayor S. Bailly in the Radical Press

SOURCE: Appendix D
heroes, and they were often praised, in ideological terms as defenders of the *peuple* and of popular sovereignty. On other occasions, the praise was specifically related to the action performed, and the substance of this praise had little to do with radical ideology. Recall, for example, the support given to Lafayette for his spies and to Bailly for his help with provisions—topics that the journalists did not relate to Cordelier ideology. Subsequently, these groups and their leaders moved into a period where the journalists gave them neutral treatment, but where specific actions were subject to criticism. At this stage praise and criticism were usually unaccompanied by any political overtones or ideological elaboration. For example, Marat’s first objections to Lafayette were constructive ones, designed to assist in a practical reorganization of the National Guard. Finally, as trust evaporated, as former heroes appeared to be villains, the journalists turned to a stylized treatment. Villains acted, not from sheer stupidity, or from any misguided practical considerations, but because they were haughty and egotistical, or because they were opposed to popular sovereignty, or because they conspired against the Revolution. While heroes and “semi-heroes” could be judged with no particular pattern in mind, villains were attacked in a systematic fashion that was dictated by the ideology of popular sovereignty. One should have no difficulty in recognizing the similarity between the conspiratorial, haughty, and antipopular villain, and the *aristocrate*. This villain of the radical press was hated for the very same crimes as the *aristocrate*. The treatment given by the radicals to the National Assembly and the monarch will substantiate and give depth to this pattern.
Like the Parisian revolutionary government, the king, Louis XVI, passed from hero to villain in the radical press. Despite a general hatred of monarchies and suspicions about the Bourbon monarchy, the radicals initially applauded Louis XVI. In fact, most revolutionaries praised Louis throughout 1789. They approved of his reliance on Necker, then thought to be a champion of liberal reforms, and they credited the king for the doubling of the representation of the third estate. Overlooking Louis's shortcomings, the revolutionaries blamed mistakes on his advisors and eagerly pointed to those royal actions that could be interpreted as signs of the king's advocacy of the revolutionary cause. Apparently, radical writers were in agreement with the general revolutionary sentiment, since 1789 found the press replete with the praises of Louis XVI.

It was February 1790, before any significant rumblings of discontent appeared in the radical newspapers, and some Cordelier journalists persisted in praising the king long after that date. Figure 5.4 should make this clear.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the following diagram. The radicals' initial disenchantment with Louis closely paralleled in time their discontent with Lafayette. However, soon after they had begun to lose faith in the general, they attacked him sharply as a pompous aristocrate, an opponent of popular sovereignty, and a conspirator for the counterrevolution. On the other hand, the radical journalists were loathe to discredit Louis in any irretrievable or definitive way. They all wavered for at least seven months after July 1789, some for over a year, about whether they should attack the monarch. Just as they could not decide whether or not France should depose its monarchy, they were undecided as to whether or not France should depose its monarch. But while the publicists failed in 1791 to advocate a republic explicitly, they eventually agreed, by June 1791, that though the monarchy might remain, Louis must go.

Further, when the radical journalists did change their opinion of Louis XVI, they acted at about the same time. True, they did not shift in unison following a single event; each journalist changed his mind at a different time after a different event. Nonetheless, these changes did occur within a limited time. All began to waver in early 1790; four newspapers changed between May and July. All began to distrust the king completely the following year; four journalists adopted a hostile stance from April to June, 1791. In sum, for the king as well as for the Parisian authorities, no single event swayed opinion. On the other hand, the shifts in the treatment of the king did occur in a relatively brief period of time. A search for the causes of their shift is beyond the scope of this book, but
the cultural milieu of the radical editors seems a more promising area of research than a detailed chronology of political events. In short, this study suggests the need for a social history of ideas in the Revolution itself with emphasis on the ideological formation of the would-be opinion makers of the decade.

The qualitative substance of radical writing about Louis closely paralleled the treatment of other "fallen" heroes of the Revolution. The king was praised by the radical press throughout 1789 and into the first few months of 1790. The Cordelier journalists lauded Louis in a variety of ways. They sometimes praised him for his specific policies; on other occasions they used his actions to describe him as defender of the Revolution and of popular sovereignty. The editor of the *Rèvolutions de Paris* acclaimed the king for a series of activities—among them an effort to procure grain for the capital in October 1789, and a conciliatory speech on February 4, 1790. In the first case, the journalist applauded the king as an honest supplier of grains; while in the second instance, he claimed that Louis was an advocate both of the Revolution and of popular sovereignty. Audouin likewise approved Louis's speech of February 4 as evidence of the king's revolutionary ardor. Desmoulins praised the king as a man who generously donated supplies for the Parisian winter.

But the praise of these journalists usually centered on the good intentions of the king, not on his actions, which they believed were effectively thwarted by the court, the ministers, and even the National Assembly. The publicists credited him with a variety of worthwhile desires, even if he was unable to enact them. Marat insisted that the king himself had no wish to make the French citizenry "his personal chattel," as the ministerial language often implied. Rather, Louis sincerely believed...
that he was dependent on the nation and was a true advocate of popular sovereignty. Robert, speculating about the intentions of the monarch, characterized him as an honest man who was unfortunately surrounded by courtiers and by a tradition that encouraged corruption. Prudhomme likewise attributed to the king the desire to prevent efforts of the National Assembly to restrict the suffrage and limit popular sovereignty.

Trusting the actions or at least the good intentions of Louis, the radical journalists indulged in some extravagant praise for the king. Not only did they mimic other revolutionaries in acclaiming Louis the "Restorer of Liberty," but they even surpassed the adulation of many of the supporters of a constitutional monarchy as shown in the following exclamation of Audouin after the speech of February 4, 1790: "Louis XVI, whom one may justly call the father of his peuple, has given yesterday yet another dazzling proof of his love for his subjects and of his desire to see them finally finish the great work of the Constitution." Freron lauded Louis as the "Citizen-King," and Prudhomme exhorted his readers to yearn for freedom in order to be worthy of having Louis for king.

Nonetheless, this surfeit of praise diminished in the latter half of 1790 as the radicals began to mix their approval with gentle criticism. At first they had believed that the king, besieged by courtiers and ministers and unable to execute his good actions, would still maintain a favorable disposition toward the Revolution. Now they began to worry. Their confident assurances of the loyalty of the king alternated with troubled questions about Louis's judgment. There was much criticism of the royal request concerning the king's domain. The radicals were shocked at the size of the request, but they ended by suggesting a reduction in the amount of the petition, no more. They did not charge that the king was a haughty egotist or a conspirator, only that he was too demanding. Similarly, the radicals suggested that Louis cease hunting, his favorite pastime. The radicals questioned whether this was a proper use of his time or a dignified pursuit for a monarch. For the most part, at this stage the radicals kept their criticism within bounds of monarchical loyalty and civic propriety.

But if they usually avoided emotional and ideological charges, the publicists issued some strident reprimands to the monarch where they attacked him in the most vitriolic manner. In these assaults the publicists never called Louis a pompous aristocrate. No—much worse, he was pictured as a conspirator for the counterrevolution. Indeed, for several months in the second half of 1790 the radicals interspersed praise, mild criticism, and defamation of the king in their press. Witness some of these extreme blasts against Louis occurring within a period when the norm was a favorable or only mildly critical portrait of the king. Marat was the first to write of the monarch's collusion in the "aristocratic conspiracy," and in
a later report he concluded that the king actually was its leader. Fréron complained that Louis had not promulgated the Constitution of the Clergy and asserted: "Finally Louis XVI has torn up the Declaration of Rights, which is the main foundation of the sovereignty of the peuple, and now he openly declares war on the Constitution, and he rebels against the laws of his country." In sum, praise, moderate criticism, and occasional acid attacks all coexisted from about July 1790 to early 1791 in each of the radical papers.

By mid-1791, the radicals had ended entirely their laudatory remarks, ignored their former limits on criticism, and multiplied their assertions that Louis XVI was a willing partner, if not the leader, in the plots to overthrow the Revolution. In April 1791, when Louis proposed to journey to Saint-Cloud for Easter as he had done the year before, Fréron exploded:

But your decision is taken, you are starred for despotism. Ah, well, if you leave, we shall no longer see in you but Tarquin chased from Rome. We shall seize your chateaus . . . your palaces, your civil list; we shall proscribe your head.

For Robert, the flight to Varennes was sufficient proof that Louis was involved in the counterrevolution. Other journalists concurred at about the same time. While Marat had long insisted that Louis was deeply implicated in conspiracy, the "Friend of the People" wavered in his treatment of the king until April 1791. Subsequently, whatever the monarch's action, Marat was able to link it to Louis's role as leader of the counterrevolution. When it was rumored that Lebègue Duportail, then minister of war, would retire, Marat saw in this resignation an effort by the king to lull the peuple into false security and to foment counterrevolution. Later, when the king fled to Varennes, convincing most people of his antirevolutionary sentiments, Marat stiffened his attack: "The thirst for absolute power which devours his soul will soon render him a ferocious assassin; soon he will swim in the blood of his citizens who have refused to submit to tyranny." By June, all the journalists ceased wavering, stopped speaking of the good intentions of the king, and treated him as counterrevolutionary. Their hatred led them to advocate his removal from the throne, his imprisonment, and even his death.

To recapitulate, the monarch followed the fate of the revolutionary authorities of Paris. Widely praised at first for all his actions, the king saw his popularity decline among the radicals during the second half of 1790. For most of the next nine months, he was still applauded or criticized only in a limited way, although signs of his future harsh treatment began to appear. But by March 1791, there was consensus among the radicals
that the king was not to be trusted—that he was actively undermining the Revolution.

The National Assembly followed much the same pattern as the Parisian authorities and the monarch in the radical press. Throughout 1789, the radicals glowingly praised the National Assembly. They applauded first and foremost the adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of Man. Had the National Assembly done nothing but formulate this document, the Cordeliers would have still regarded this body as the fount of revolutionary heroism. In this Declaration of the Rights of Man, the radicals could find support for their ideology of popular sovereignty. In their own minds, the declaration substantiated their political, economic, and social assumptions. Furthermore, the Assembly's resistance to the first two orders in May, June, and July 1789, and the policies adopted on August 4 won this body acclaim from revolutionaries in general and the radicals in particular. In sum, it is no surprise to find these six journals praising the National Assembly with unremitting enthusiasm and without qualification.

But this period of praise was brief as figure 5.5 reveals. With the exception of the Mercure National, the radical press by early 1790 had turned from praising the National Assembly to treating it either with some reservations or with unmitigated disdain. At one extreme was Marat, the editor of the Ami du Peuple, who after losing his passion for the National Assembly, quickly slipped into censuring all its actions. At the other pole, the editors of the Journal Universel and the Mercure National hesitated to make villains out of the representatives, and it is apparent from the chart that from 1789 to 1791 they never totally condemned the National Assembly. True, in mid-1791 they assailed the National Assembly as counterrevolutionary. Nonetheless they did not consistently maintain this view, as they interspersed their virulent attacks against the National Assembly with recommendations that the public support the delegates on this or that point.

Such wavering on the National Assembly was characteristic of the radical press. In addition to the mixed portrait drawn by the Mercure National and the Journal Universel, Fréron vacillated for six months and Prudhomme for almost a year. Desmoulins wavered for six weeks, then attacked for four months, and then hesitated again for another six months. Why was there a strong tendency toward wavering by men whose habit elsewhere was to regard men and institutions as either heroes or villains? One possible explanation is that the court, the ministers, the church, the staff of the National Guard, and the Parisian Municipality, all acting behind closed doors, could be more readily seen as monolithic, composed of individuals who were unanimous or at least uniformly duped in their dedication to counterrevolution. But in the case of the
National Assembly, with its open meetings, public debates, clearly identifiable factions, and published records, the radical publicists had to accept the existence of an opposition, of a division of view, and it proved more difficult to apply to this institution the stereotyped label of hero or villain. The radicals were surely loathe to condemn the Jacobins, one of the major groups within the National Assembly. Thus, aware of competing factions among the delegates, the radicals might label the National Assembly the bastion of counterrevolution on one day and on another the rallying point of the Revolution. Only when the radical journalists could believe that the Jacobin deputies were turncoats to the Jacobin Club, or completely uninfluential delegates, might they systematically assail the National Assembly.115

In short, only after mid-1790 did even half of the newsmen attack the National Assembly. They all began their attacks at different times and as a result of different events. These times were so infrequently spaced that there must have been no coordination in the timing of these shifts. Nonetheless, although this change took place according to the pace of each individual journalist, there was a commonality in the tone of radical reporting. When the radicals did praise the National Assembly, these plaudits all sounded somewhat the same from paper to paper. This same commonality existed as well when the radicals attacked or wavered on the National Assembly.

The radicals usually limited their praise of the National Assembly to applauding specific achievements. Sample the treatment given by Audouin to the National Assembly. After reading the record of the pensions administered by Necker prior to 1789, the journalist lauded the
National Assembly for its decision to relieve Necker of his post. Likewise, the writer flattered the delegates for their efforts to prepare the Constitution. He stated in March 1790:

The accomplishments of the National Assembly, their efforts on the Constitution, increasingly admired and cherished, will silence all by their quality, by their beautiful simplicity, by their useful grandeur. They will inevitably form the code of human reason and the code for all the French.

This unqualified flattery was matched by other journals. Applauding the efforts of the representatives to assure grain and to complete the Declaration of the Rights of Man, Prudhomme wrote:

The representatives of the nation continue their work with an unparalleled zeal. They hold two sessions daily. . . . Such a visible ardor when linked to brilliant insights that one sees sparkle each day in this august Assembly, can only produce excellent results.

Such examples should make clear the character of the plaudits for the National Assembly. The praise for the representatives conformed to no general political principles; it was limited to the specific action they performed. When they were lauded for finding grain, they were trumpeted as heroes because of their diligence and judgment, not because of any ideological contribution to the Revolution.

But the glorification of the delegates in the radical press was not to last long. At first, while continuing to praise the National Assembly, the publicists criticized them in a manner designed to correct but not to oust their representatives. Their criticisms usually focused on a single issue with a suggestion of how to resolve the problem. However, over several months the tenor of these criticisms changed. The National Assembly was vigorously attacked, not only in a limited way but also as the center for "aristocratic" conniving. These vicious assaults alternated with praise for, or at least acceptance of, the National Assembly. Finally by 1791, four of the journalists lost all faith in the representatives and considered them full partners in the counterrevolution.

Thoroughly distrustful of the National Assembly, these four editors attacked them in much the same manner as they had attacked the Parisian authorities. No matter what the activity, the radical journalists saw the representatives acting for personal wealth and self-indulgence, against popular sovereignty, or for the counterrevolution. The treatment given to the National Assembly by Marat should serve as an adequate example. Once he had decided, in the last days of December 1789, that the delegates were unworthy of any praise, he initiated a campaign to prove that they wished to block popular sovereignty. Pointing to the desire of the National Assembly to establish a new municipal structure, Marat
observed that their real goal was to deprive the citizens of the right to govern themselves. Not much more than a week later, he described the National Assembly's handling of an accused counterrevolutionary. Here again Marat saw in the action of the representatives an effort to usurp the rightful powers of the peuple. Marat continued to condemn each move of the National Assembly as an assault on popular sovereignty until mid-September 1790, when he also began to include counterrevolutionary plotting and a wish to share in "aristocratic" luxuries as motives for the misdeeds of the nation's delegates.

Now the various activities of the National Assembly were part of a conspiracy to overturn the Revolution. Marat informed his readers that the deliberations and decisions of the National Assembly on the massacre at Nancy were governed by the delegates' desire to curb the Revolution. Indeed, Marat repeatedly found the National Assembly members acting as counterrevolutionaries. For example, after describing in detail a new measure calling for increased appropriations, Marat speculated about the underlying motives for this bill. He finally concluded with the assertion that this expenditure was passed simply to finance counterrevolution.

In late 1790, Marat also began to attribute the positions of the National Assembly to a third factor—the desire of the delegates to imitate the ostentatious life of the aristocratie. Increasingly Marat attributed the uncivic actions of the representatives to their high living, to their need for silver to underwrite superfluous spending. In despair over the delegates' lenient treatment of the king after the flight to Varennes, Marat listed the crimes of the National Assembly, concluding that: "It [the National Assembly] has perfidiously betrayed the nation, selling itself to the prince for a part of the gold that it had extracted for him from the rights and interests of the peuple." In sum, Marat, once he was distrustful, often saw the legislative bills, directives, and the decisions of the National Assembly as instruments against the sovereignty of the peuple and against the Revolution. Somehow, the rest of the Assembly's actions were aimed at obtaining the luxuries necessary for those delegates who aped the aristocratie. The treatment of the National Assembly in the Ami du Peuple was echoed in much of the radical press. Three other Cordelier journalists, at first dazzled by the National Assembly, came to regard the delegates as villains, whose vices were the same as those of the antipopular, antirevolutionary, and luxury-loving aristocrate. Audouin and the Roberts resisted this extreme, but their treatment of the National Assembly, save for an occasional laudatory remark, was scarcely less hostile than that of their comrades.

We return to our starting point: What did the radical press say about the individuals and institutions that concerned them? What were the
characteristics of their qualitative treatment? The Cordelier journalists depicted men and institutions as either heroes or villains or as a mixture of the two. They lauded their heroes in the most extravagant manner. But, though the praise was undeniably characterized by the incessant use of superlatives, it was most often limited to approval for a specific act. If an institution had successfully acquired a quantity of grain or had worked to increase suffrage, the radicals tended to praise it only for such actions. Sometimes the radicals used such efforts as an occasion to recite an ideological apotheosis, attributing to the hero special commitments to morality, to the Revolution, and to popular sovereignty. But generally they praised the specific action of the hero and left ideology for other situations.

As these newspapermen became partially disillusioned, they would alter their treatment of these individuals and institutions. They might continue the same praise, but they also initiated some restrained criticism. In these times, the journalists attacked the actions of the former heroes, but they did so in a fashion designed to correct, not condemn, their subjects. This mild treatment revealed some disagreement without a fundamental loss of faith in the institution under consideration. The journalists also might take a more neutral and noncommittal stance in their reporting during these periods of partial disillusionment. Finally, on rare occasions, even while their overall treatment remained favorable or at least noncommittal, the publicists would publish biting articles condemning these “semi-heroes” as counterrevolutionaries.

Finally, when these heroes had become villains in the opinion of the radicals, or when durable villains were under consideration, the newspapermen ignored their former flexible and diverse lines of attack. With heroes and semi-heroes, the publicists usually varied their remarks according to the issues; with villains, the publicists employed a very repetitive treatment. No matter what the action taken by a villain, the radicals reported it as part of a larger effort to ensure a wealthy lifestyle, or to obstruct popular sovereignty, or to defeat the Revolution through conspiracy. They repeatedly described the villains at least one of these three ways, though the political crimes of the villains received greater emphasis than their propensity for a life of luxury. Not only was the treatment of villains stereotyped, but it was also ideologically determined, for the misdeeds of the villains were exactly those of the aristocrates. Apparently, after the level of distrust was so great as to preclude an impartial evaluation, the journalists relied on their ideology for a response and accused existing institutions of the crimes they imagined their enemies would commit.

Therefore, as the number of heroes decreased and the number of villains rose, the coverage of the radical press grew proportionately more
ideological. Indeed, by the opening of the Legislative Assembly, the only significant institutions not considered as villains were the Jacobins, Cordeliers, and usually the National Guard. All the rest were heartily assailed; consequently the newspapermen were relying increasingly on ideology to interpret the actions of those men they reported.

It would be an important addition to the current understanding of the Revolution if one could ascertain the cause of the radical disaffection with the major institutions and individuals of revolutionary France. A complete answer would be beyond the scope of the study, but we can tentatively state that no single event was responsible for significant alterations in radical opinion. Chapter four has already demonstrated the relative unimportance of events, and figures 5.1 through 5.5 confirm this. These diagrams clearly reveal that the journalists never collectively shifted their opinions on any one subject at the same time and, therefore, as a direct result of any particular event.

It should also be noted that each journalist usually changed his opinions about these men and institutions one at a time. But even in the two cases where a journalist recast several of his opinions in only a month, a single event did not precipitate this shift. In June of 1790, Fréron stopped praising and began to waver on the merits of the municipality, Bailly, and Lafayette. However, this change was only vaguely related to the occurrence of a particular event; rather it resulted from Fréron's peculiar situation. He had only begun publishing his paper on May 22, 1790, and had probably treated the Parisian authorities mildly to avoid undue attention. After all, he had signed a contract agreeing not to publish a competing newspaper. Thus, one month later when he revealed his first doubts about Bailly, Lafayette, and the municipality over one of their united efforts, he was probably not showing a change of opinion. Rather he was then daring to show his true opinions, which dated from before the establishment of his newspaper. Similarly, in July 1790, Prudhomme stopped treating the king as a hero and began virulently attacking Lafayette and the National Assembly. However, a closer look at this newspaper reveals that these shifts of opinion came after a series of different, if closely spaced, events. In short, such exceptions do little to weaken the assertion that the journalists did not change a group of their opinions because of a particular event. Consequently, in searching for some general causes for these shifts of opinion, one might well discount cataclysmic events as an answer.

If the causes of these changes of radical opinion must remain obscure, one can at least attempt to determine when they took place. The timing of the changes may even help to explain why they occurred. This information is available to us in figures 5.1 through 5.5. To ascertain the shifts in radical opinion, one must analyze the tenor of the press for each
month. For example, in July 1791, two journalists wavered about the National Assembly, while the other four attacked it. Thus, two-thirds (sixty-seven percent) of the newspapers were hostile to the National Assembly, while one-third (thirty-three percent) were undecided. One may repeat this process for radical opinion in July in regard to Bailly, Lafayette, the municipality, and the king. Indeed, all six journals were attacking all these bodies and consequently were completely unfavorable (one hundred percent). A compilation of the attitudes for July 1791 of these six newspapers for the five institutions, is shown in table 5.2. Thus, an average of each column of percentages shows that the approach of the radical press to these individuals and institutions was six percent undecided or wavering and ninety-four percent hostile. There was no evidence at all (zero percent) of unqualified praise. Admittedly, these numbers by themselves would be a crude way of characterizing the treatment given these institutions in the radical press; but here they should serve, not to replace, but only to summarize earlier qualitative description. With that qualification, one may forge ahead to calculate the tenor of the treatment for each month. The result is shown in figure 5.6.

The smooth curves of this graph reconfirm the assertion that there were no precipitous changes of opinion in any short period, that is, in relation to any single event. The curves do, however, indicate certain broad time spans that witnessed significant changes. Through January 1790, the general opinion given of the king, Lafayette, Bailly, the National Assembly, and the municipality by the radical press was favorable. In this period, one could most often expect to find these institutions being treated as heroes. However, the praise diminished so that in March 1790, waverer on these institutions had become the predominant approach of the radical press. This condition lasted only a few months, for by October 1790, the Cordelier publicists were primarily referring to the Parisian authorities as villains. Increasingly, the radical journals abandoned any wavering, and by May 1791, there was little indecision, only extreme distrust, of all these institutions.

The significance of the timing should not be overlooked. Long before the flight to Varennes or the massacre at the Champ de Mars, the radicals were very hostile to their institutions and their leaders. It was in the first half of 1790 that they wavered over their opinions of their governing bodies. It was in the last half of 1790 and early 1791 when they made up their minds. Too much has been made of the emigration of the king's aunts (January 1791), the Journee des Poignards (February 1791), the king's abortive departure to Saint-Cloud (April 1791), and the king's flight to Varennes (July 1791), as the collective cause for the efforts of the Cordeliers at the Champ de Mars.\textsuperscript{124} Apparently, the developments in 1790 warrant more attention than they have received.
TABLE 5.2
Percentage of Newspapers Praising, Wavering, or Attacking Various Institutions in July 1791

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutions</th>
<th>Praise</th>
<th>Wavering</th>
<th>Attack</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>King</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Assembly</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipality</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lafayette</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bailly</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Average)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIGURE 5.6. Percentage of Radical Newspapers Praising, Wavering, or Attacking Selected Institutions and Individuals, 1789–91

SOURCE: Appendix D
NOTE: See text and note 123 for selection

The radicals, then, did not shift their opinions of men and institutions because of a sequence of the “key” events of 1791. Rather, their changes coincided more with a series of relatively obscure occurrences in 1790. We may rightly question whether these isolated and mostly forgotten incidents of 1790 were the main cause of the radical disillusionment. Is it not rather to the ideological predilections and cultural milieu of the editors
that we must look? The personal frustrations of the radical publicists before 1789 and their participation in the underground “grub-street” society made them likely to distrust any constituted body and to see haughtiness and “aristocratic” conniving in any effort to govern. The efforts of Bastille Day, the passage of the Declaration of the Rights of Man, and the decrees of August 4, assuaged this fundamental distrust, but the respite was only temporary. Without repeated covenants of cooperation between the peuple and the government, the tendency of the radicals was to focus again on their old antagonist—constituted authority. Inevitably, they mounted the battlements once again, ready to train their weapons upon these villains, the enemies of the peuple.