

St. Just, *Republican Institutes*

J.H. Robinson, ed.
Readings in European History 2 vols.
(Boston: Ginn, 1906), 2: 451-454

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Robinson's Note: Among the terrorists none was more ardent and indefatigable than Saint-Just, a young fanatic of unimpeachable probity, who, as a member of the Committee of Public Safety and as agent of the Convention in the provinces, urged on the war against all the enemies of the Revolution, whether within or without France. He was a firm friend and admirer of Robespierre and suffered death with him on the 10th Thermidor (July 28, 1794). He left behind him some unpublished notes on republican institutions written during his last months, when he foresaw that, among so many opponents of his exalted ideas, he was likely to lose his life. The few selections which are given below serve to show how Saint-Just, Robespierre, and their sympathizers proposed to elaborate and to carry out, at the cost of no matter how much bloodshed, the ideas of Rousseau, whose ardent disciples they were.

[Page 452] I challenge you to establish liberty so long as it remains possible to arouse the unfortunate classes against the new order of things, and I defy you to do away with poverty altogether unless each one has his own land. . . . Where you find large landowners you find many poor people. Nothing can be done in a country where agriculture is carried on on a large scale. Man was not made for the workshop, the hospital, or the poorhouse. All that is horrible. Men must live in independence, each with his own wife and his robust and healthy children. We must have neither rich nor poor.

The poor man is superior to government and the powers of the world; he should address them as a master. We must have a system which puts all these principles in practice and assures comfort to the entire people. Opulence is a crime : it consists in supporting fewer children, whether one's own or adopted, than one has thousands of francs of income. . . Children shall belong to their mother, provided she has suckled them herself, until they are five years old ; after that they shall belong to the republic until death. The mother who does not suckle her children ceases to be a mother in the eyes of the country. Child and citizen belong to the country, and a common instruction is essential. Children shall be brought up in the love of silence and scorn for fine talkers. They shall be trained in laconic speech. Games shall be prohibited in which they declaim, and they shall be habituated to simple truth.

The boys shall be educated, from the age of five to sixteen, by the country; from five to ten they shall learn to read, write, and swim. No one shall strike or caress a child. They shall be taught what is good and left to nature. He who strikes a child shall be banished. The children shall eat together and shall live on roots, fruit, vegetables, milk, cheese, bread, and water. The teachers of children from **[Page 453]** five to ten years old shall not be less than sixty years of age. . . . The education of children from ten to sixteen shall be military and agricultural.

Every man twenty-one years of age shall publicly state in the temples who are his friends. This declaration shall be renewed each year during the month Ventose. If a man deserts his friend, he is bound to explain his motives before the people in the temples; if he refuses, he shall be banished. Friends shall not put their contracts into writing, nor shall they oppose one another at law. If a man commits a crime, his friends shall be banished. Friends shall dig the grave of a deceased friend and prepare for the obsequies, and with the children of the deceased they shall scatter flowers on the grave. He who says that he does not believe in friendship, or who has no friends, shall be banned of ingratitude shall be banished. A man convicted of ingratitude shall be banished.

The French people recognize the existence of the Supreme Being and the immortality of the soul. The first day of every month is consecrated to the Eternal. Incense shall burn day and night in the temples and shall be tended in turn for twenty-four hours by the men who have reached the age of sixty. The temples shall never be closed. The French people devote their fortunes and their children to the Eternal. The immortal souls of all those who have died for the fatherland, who have been good citizens, who have cherished their father and mother and never abandoned them, are in the bosom of the Eternal.

The first day of the month Germinal the republic shall celebrate the festival of the Divinity, of Nature, and of the People; the first day of the month Floreal, the festival of the Divinity, of love, and of husband and wife, etc.^[1]

[Page 454] Every year on the first day of Floreal the people of each commune shall select, from among the inhabitants of the commune, and in the temple, a young man rich and virtuous and without deformity, at least twenty-one years of age and not over thirty, who shall in turn select and marry a poor maiden, in everlasting memory of human equality.

Footnotes

[1] Robespierre, in a remarkable report made to the Convention, May 7, 1794, on the relations of religious ideas to republican principles, exhibits the same confidence in festivals. Among the sentiments which he would celebrate are liberty, equality, glory, immortality, frugality, disinterestedness, stoicism, old age, and misfortune (*Histoire Parlementaire*, Vol. XXXII, pp. 353 sqq.). See also another similar report submitted on February 5, 1794 (*Histoire Parlementaire*, Vol. XXXI, pp. 268 sqq.). Compare in this connection an address of Billaud-Varennes on the

theory of democratic government (Histoire Parlementaire, Vol. XXXII, pp. 335 sqq.) and Fabre d'Eglantine's report on the new calendar (Histoire Parlementaire, Vol. XXXI, pp. 415 sqq.).

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