

Editorial Foreword

People, Power, and Revolution. The French Revolution remains the magnetic pole by which our compasses are calibrated. It separates old regime and modern society, measures the capacity of the state—marks the rise of nationalism, and remains the model of revolution, an endless morality tale about the demand for democracy and its dangers. Although much that has been written about the Revolution, especially in bicentennial outpourings, takes a tone of final moral judgment, smoke rising from the battlefields of interpretation has not altogether obscured some classic questions. Among these, the issue of what rural Frenchmen sought on the eve of Revolution has, as John Markoff shows, been pivotal to explanations of how the revolution came about (in *CSSH* see Skocpol, 18:2, and Hunt, 18:3). Arguments about the role of ideas, class interests, and social structure all make claims about what the peasants wanted (compare Scott, 29:3; Mitchell, 21:1). Many rest those claims on the *cahiers de doléances*, which may be the most cited historical source since the Donation of Constantine, and it is to these that Markoff also turns. Using computer-based analysis, he lays out a vista never seen before by closely analyzing specific demands. The rural society he discovers, although immersed in its own concerns, also expressed a coherent set of attitudes about particular policies that constituted a shared sense of citizenship, of rights, and of the proper role of the state.

Markoff found a way to listen closely to ordinary people, and that is what Michael Foley also did, similarly using their concerns to reflect on the larger scholarly literature about peasant revolutions (Adas, 23:2; Somers and Goldfrank, 21:3), a subject that has proved especially lively in Latin American studies (see Kincaid, 29:3; Taussig, 19:2; Singlemann, Waterbury, and Wasserstrom, all in 17:4). Carefully plumbing the political discourse of activists in a small Mexican town, he, too, notices a sense of justice that extends to relationships up and down the social hierarchy. That can include a debilitating ambivalence about politics (compare Levine, 20:4) despite effective mobilization built on a sense of solidarity and the personal emancipation felt by some of the village women. The Brazilian frontier was different (see Katzman, 17:3; Baretta and Markoff, 20:4); for there, power was neither diffuse nor hidden. The peasants Todd Diacon studies also believed in social compacts and moral order, but their world disintegrated with the commercial transformation that accompanied railroad building and stronger links to São Paulo. Rough old rules of domination disintegrated, the meaning of landholding changed, and government emerged as the agent of a new order. When peasants mobilized, they did so within a millenarianism (contrast Sharot, 22:3; Wilson, 6:1) doomed to defeat. In each of these cases people with a consistent

view of the world and a practical sense of the possible tugged at the levers of power within their reach.

Ethnic Identity. Having effectively shown that ethnic identity is no mere natural growth but rather a contingent and often contrived phenomenon, social scientists are left with the problem of explaining its persistence and power (Bentley, 29:1; Wilkie, 19:1). The two articles in this issue meet that problem head on. In a remarkable comparative study, Stevan Harrell looks at three groups of the Yi people of China who variously respond with indifference, acceptance, or resistance to their ethnic classification; and he shows how combinations of state policy, cultural markers, and local factors explain these diverse reactions (compare Halperin, 26:3; Diamond, 25:3; Katzier, 24:2; McGilvray, 24:2). They do so indirectly, however, mediating attitudes and practices that sustain the social psychology of ethnic identity. That linkage, social and personal, cultural and psychological, is the crux of Liah Greenfeld's piercing analysis. Russian identity, she argues (see Shanin, Bromley and Kozlov, 31:3), was hammered out by the peculiar history of state policy and the frequent rediscovery of Russia's backwardness. Disciplined to service, a Russian nobility frustrated in its expectations suffered a prolonged crisis of identity that led it to adopt a national, Russian identity and a different set of expectations. When these, too, were disappointed and painfully challenged by repeated comparison with the West, individuals, intelligentsia, and caste all found solace in the discovery of the Russian soul.

CSSH Discussion. Feudalism in Japan and Western Europe has remained a classic topic for comparative study despite doubts about the very concept among medievalists on three continents (see Hall, 5:1); but strikingly similar social arrangements invite other comparisons, as readers of Hitomi Tonomura's article will quickly recognize. Sensitively exploring warrior household records, she delineates a picture, as spare and finely controlled as a Japanese print, of society transformed. By concentrating on the position of women, she finds the signs of far-reaching change; fluid marital relations, varied inheritance patterns, and the independent stewardship of women gradually give way in the fourteenth century to advancing patriarchy supported by military needs and multiple devices for preserving patrimony—a pattern poignantly familiar to students of other societies (see Saltman, 29:3; Lindholm, 28:2; Kumar, 27:2; Goody, 15:1).