



The Crisis of the Absolute Monarchy: From the Old Regime to the French Revolution (Proceedings of the British Academy)

Julian Swann, Joël Félix

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For generations of historians, 1789 was a defining moment in world history and it has been said to mark, amongst other things, the triumph of the bourgeoisie, the birth of modernity, the rise of nationalism or even the invention of ideology. To explain an event of such magnitude it was understandable that historians should seek no less portentous explanations of its origins and that factors such as the rise of capitalism, class struggle or the impact of the Enlightenment were cited as the long-term causes of Revolution.

In recent years, however, there has been a preoccupation with the actual course of the Revolution. The prevailing concern with political culture and gender as analytical tools has illuminated developments in Paris and in the French provinces, and has brought to prominence many themes inadequately explored during earlier scholarly generations. Rather less attention is given currently to how France was plunged into revolutionary turmoil, which is now taken largely as a 'given'. The present collection, by contrast, focuses once again upon the origins of the dramatic events within and beyond France which transformed later eighteenth-century Europe so comprehensively and established the terms of political and social struggle for the next two centuries. It presents a series of up-to-date essays which, collectively, provide a new interpretation of the origins of the Revolution. Uniquely among recent contributions to the field, this volume transcends national historiographical traditions and includes contributions by leading experts from France, Britain and the United States, giving it a breadth of approach which previous scholarship has lacked.

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