Workshop 1: Competing Conceptions of Democracy in the Practice of Politics
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Post-Revolutionary States

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The construction of the post-revolutionary state is inherently experimental. There are no guarantees of what will work. Those who take part in revolutions are joined by their desire to overthrow the old regime but they are not necessarily of one voice, one opinion on the kind of post-revolutionary regime they would like to construct. Democracy is far from the outcome of all revolutions and where it is advocated for the post-revolutionary state by some they may be defeated, as, for example, in the case of the Iranian revolution (O’Kane, 1991: 230-237). Even where the setting up of a democracy is the shared attraction, views on what democracy entails and ideas on how to set about instituting democracy may differ. With the aim of investigating the differing views of democracy debated and tried out in the practice of politics in the heightened experimental times of post-revolutionary state-construction I have selected three cases – France (after 1789), Germany (after 1918) and Nicaragua (after 1979). These revolutions each played a crucial part in the construction of democracy though, as will become clear, in France this outcome proved a long drawn out affair with further, if lesser, revolutions and coups intervening. In Germany, in contrast to both France and Nicaragua the outcome followed revolution through reform.

Lessons drawn from these cases serve to suggest answers to two questions: why competition proves so central to democracy; and whether or not those who make the choices on the structures and procedures of democracy fit with Geddes’ (1996: 18) claims that they ‘pursue their own individual interests, and that their interests centre on furthering their political careers’. In short, I shall argue that the importance of competition hangs on the difference between views of democracy as ancient or modern and the value that the latter, but not the former, puts on dissent within the political system. In respect of the choices made on the structure and procedures of democracy, I shall argue, in sum, that they hang less on self-interest than on the models and theories of democracy available, which form ideology\(^1\), and the pressures of circumstances both national and international. The models of democracy that win out confirm democratic politics to be the art of the possible with the interests of the bourgeoisie always strongly featured.
Democracy and Democracies

To set out to compare different views of democracy requires a universal concept of democracy which is tight enough to enable us to avoid conceptual stretching and so also avoid its consequences of misleading understanding through destroying the controls essential to the comparative method (Sartori: 1970). Things must not be compared for sameness when they are unalike and for difference when they are alike. For a universal concept, one that is which can be used to compare globally it is necessary not only to identify the characteristics of what democracy is but also of what it is not. Crucial for large cross-national analyses involving differences of degree, this lesson is also very important for historical comparisons, lower down the ladder of abstraction. If meaningful understanding is to be achieved, it is essential, even for historical comparisons, that democracies of different kinds are distinguished from those which differ only by degree.²

Views of democracy have changed over time. For example, the concept of democracy that gave suffrage only to male property-owners, common in the nineteenth century, would be viewed as highly problematic, as democracy, today. Yet in France, universal suffrage was not achieved until 1944 when women finally got the vote, and in Dahl’s sense, therefore, democratization in the form of increasing participation - inclusiveness - continued well into the twentieth century. For Dahl (1971), democratization involves both increasing inclusiveness and expanding ‘public contestation’ – liberalization. Democratization, therefore, can be assessed according to the levels of liberalization and inclusiveness in respect of the institutions of polyarchy - elected officials, free and fair elections, inclusive suffrage, right to run for office, freedom of expression, alternative information, associational autonomy (Dahl, 1989: 221).³ With democracy an ideal, never fully achievable in practice, these institutions are offered as necessary for modern representative democracy (Dahl, 1971: 2).

Conceptualizing democracy through the logic of negation, Sartori (1987: 289-90) contrasts modern representative democracy with ‘ancient democracy’, which is based on ‘unanimity and uniformity’:

‘Above all, modern democracies are related to and conditioned by the discovery that dissent, diversity and “parts” (the parts which become parties) are not incompatible with social order and the well-being of the body politic. It is we, not the Greeks, who
have discovered how to build a political system on a *concordia discors*, on a dissenting consensus.’ (Sartori, 1987: 289)

This move from a view of democracy based on ‘unanimity and uniformity’ to one which is based on ‘dissent and diversity’ has its history, Sartori (1976: 13) argues, in the Reformation where tolerance of difference began but the move to modern democracy required crucial transformations. Parties were at first resisted. For example, in Rousseau there is ‘the horror of disunity’ and in ‘the division of power and the checks-and-balances doctrine’ of Locke and Montesquieu there was no place for parties. He crucially goes on to differentiate between parties as factions - ‘parts against the whole’ - which reject the system, and parties functioning within pluralistic democracy - ‘parts of the whole’ - which compete for government but which accept the rules of the system (ibid.: 14). Modern democracy essentially being based on dissensus, consensus cannot be a necessary condition of democracy but procedural consensus (agreement on the rules, particularly for resolving conflict) is the one area where consensus is required in a modern democracy, as a ‘facilitating condition’ (ibid.: 15).

If study of the practice of politics is to be achieved, understanding of how differing conceptions of democracy proved to be a source or even a justification for, political competition, it is clear that whatever the detail of the structures and institutions adopted it is essential to differentiate between competition between factions as ‘parts against the whole’ and competition between parties ‘as parts of the whole’. Clearly neither elections per se (for they may be used to decide the consensus position of ancient democracy) nor disagreement voiced within parliaments (for they may be factions concerned with rejection of the system) will necessarily guarantee the presence of modern democracy, even in its early stages. It follows, therefore, that not all forms of ‘public contestation’ count as evidence for Dahl’s view of liberalization and therefore of democratization. As the case of France with its contrived suffrage, election annulments and falsified returns will show, Dahl’s other dimension of democratization, inclusiveness, also proves questionable.

**Post-Revolutionary State-Building in France**

When the revolution occurred in France in 1789 there were three models of democracy available for adoption and adaptation: the ancient, direct, democracy of classical times and two forms of representative democracy in modern times, constitutional monarchy
in Britain and a republic headed by a president in America. These examples offered competing views of democracy not only in respect of the extent to which democracy should or should not be direct or indirect through elected representatives but whether or not the system should be a constitutional monarchy or a republic and, therefore, a parliamentary or a presidential system. The competing theories of democracy available, most notably those of Locke, Paine, Rousseau and Montesquieu, reflected on these cases. Constitutional monarchy and a new parliament – the National, or Constituent, Assembly – was the immediate choice and following from the practice chosen for the elections to the Estates General, which calling led to the revolution and the setting up of the National Assembly in its place, the choice was made for legislators and administrators to be elected to reflect the move from absolutism to popular sovereignty (Crook, 1996: 30).

Debates quickly developed over the nature of suffrage with the decision taken for a limited franchise given only to ‘active citizens’ defined as men, of 25 or over, born in France (or naturalised), having lived in the locality (canton) for a year or more who paid annually direct taxation equivalent to the value of three days’ local wages (and who were, therefore, in work or propertied) (Crook, 1996: 31). Further debates were required on religious and racial differences. By September 1791 the vote was agreed for all religions and ‘free men of colour’. Robespierre was the major objector to the taxation qualification arguing that it contradicted The Declaration of the Rights of Man under which all men were equal. Condorcet stood alone in advocating not only votes for all religions and races but also for women (ibid.: 34-5).

Direct elections on this suffrage of ‘active citizens’ (as opposed to ‘passive citizens’ who were not given the vote) were, however, restricted to the local level. Indirect elections, through electoral colleges, were chosen for the departmental assemblies and National Assembly. The ‘active citizens’, therefore, were divided into those who could only vote, (the three day labour tax), those eligible for municipal office (a tax equivalent to 10 days of wages) and those who could serve as national deputies (annual tax of 50 livres). In all around 15 per cent of the population received the vote (approximately 60 per cent of all adult males (Crook, 1996: 36-7). This was very wide in comparison both to Britain at the time and the new American republic (ibid.: 44). Votes cast were for individual names, not parties, the electors were expected to engage in informed discussion with votes being cast publicly, at times out loud, not through a secret ballot. The burdensome nature of voting
which required first the certificate of taxation, then registration for jury service and then for the National Guard and then the need to spend a whole day waiting to present credentials before voting kept turnout lower than the term ‘active citizens’ might suggest, turnout further lowered by the sheer number of elections. In Toulon between 1790 and 1792, for example, there were 14 elections (ibid.: 71).

In August 1792, in the face of threatening civil and foreign war the king took flight and the Constitutional Monarchy was ended and the First Republic begun. The debate over whether the king should be executed led to the fall of the liberal Girondins and the rise of the radical Jacobins, in March 1793, inspired by Rousseau and the view of direct democracy conjured from ancient times. The move to universal male suffrage for those of 21 or above under the Constitution of 1793 was never implemented, though a referendum was held on the constitution (Crook, 1996: 79). The Jacobin ‘Reign of Terror’ ended with Robespierre’s execution in July 1794. After the fall of the Jacobin dictatorship there followed a period of ‘failed consolidation’ which ended with Napoleon Bonaparte’s coup d'état on 18 Brumaire 1799 (Sutherland, 1985: 325). Following the defeat, in May 1795, of the Parisian sans-culottes’ uprising in demand for ‘bread and the Constitution of 1793’ the Directory introduced a new Constitution. Though it retained the 1793 age qualification of 21 it reintroduced the tax requirement for eligibility and restored the electoral colleges and secondary assemblies of the 1791 Constitution. A referendum was again used for this Constitution of 1795 but though turnout was 20 per cent in 1796, turnout in the elections, held annually, fell, down to 9 per cent in the elections of 1799. Faced with the continuing pressures of foreign war and disorder both in society and in the National Assembly the Directory determined ‘to outlaw schisms’. Their aim to strengthen the middle ground in the Assembly in order to combat the damaging polarization between royalists and Jacobins failed. It was to end this political turmoil that General Napoleon Bonaparte was invited to stage a coup in 1799.

**Ancient or Modern Democracy**

This early experiment in post-revolutionary democracy raises issues of significance for comparative analysis. Clearly there were competing views of democracy, most clearly drawn between those supporting constitutional monarchy and those supporting republicanism and also between competing views of elections and suffrage with direct versus indirect elections and views on the definitions and desirability of ‘active citizens’ critical.
Though elections were a crucial feature of all positions, they all belonged in the classification of ancient, not modern democracy. As Crook (1996: 195) concludes, all of these views of democracy were in ‘the pursuit of unanimity’ the designs chosen for the electoral systems were designed ‘to fabricate a false unity and to exclude any real form of opposition’. This was why the elections were postponed indefinitely in 1793 and after 1795 there were ‘a constant succession of annulments’.  

Electoral competition in the modern sense of representation was not the purpose of the electoral systems chosen. As Hayward (1991: 114) explains, ‘Parties were equated with uncompromisingly divisive factions…Opposition was regarded – as it was in practice – to be by definition disloyal’. This call for uniformity followed from the revolution. As Tombs (1996: 62) explains:

‘The Revolution, with its ideologies of the general will and the sovereignty of the nation, and its own struggles against internal and external enemies, had stressed ‘the One and Indivisible Republic’. Awareness of that unity in reality and the universal fear of renewed conflict, meant that all regimes and parties after the revolution embraced in varying degrees the unitary aspiration. Individual freedom was only legitimate within a framework of common purpose’.

The minority view, a very small minority at that, was argued strongly by the liberal, Benjamin Constant who argued ‘diversity is life, uniformity is death’. Constant’s modern view, based on the English model, was for the right to opposition with a system designed on checks and balances, competitive parties, freedom of speech and freedom of the press with the judiciary (not Montesquieu’s aristocracy) as a countervailing check plus a bi-cameral legislature (Hayward, 1991: 121-122). What liberalism meant in France, Benjamin Constant and this small minority of like-minded apart, was not the same as in Britain where it went hand-in-hand with free trade and utilitarianism. Individualism in France, concentrated on the rights and duties of the citizen to the state and nation. As Constant pointed out, it was the individualism of ancient Athens, a public liberty. A modern view of liberty involved the right to a private existence away from the public gaze, so allowing of the possibility of engaging in free enterprise. (Tombs, 1996: 64). In the light of this dominant view of liberalism in terms of the rights and duties of the citizen to the state and nation, the decision to invite Napoleon Bonaparte to take power becomes intelligible.
The day after Napoleon Bonaparte’s coup d’état on the 18-19th Brumaire year VIII (9-10 November 1799) commissions were appointed for a new constitution. Ready within the year, the Constitution of the Year VIII concentrated executive authority in the ‘First Consul’ (Napoleon) and the constitution introduced elaborate devices to ensure separation of powers between the Council of State, the Senate, the Tribunate and the Legislative Body (Sutherland, 1985, 338). Though not one of these bodies was elected, elections based on universal male suffrage were retained at the local level.

The main drafter of the Constitution, Sieyès, based its design on, ‘Confidence from below, authority from above’. Within each communal arrondissement (newly devised sub-areas of the 83 departments which had been set up in 1790), men elected one tenth of their number to a communal list. These ‘communal notables’ then elected one tenth of their number to a departmental list. In turn these ‘departmental notables’ then elected another tenth of their number to a national list. From this list of 6,000 notables, the First Consul then chose the legislators and officials.\(^8\)

In line with Sieyès dictum and to avoid meddling by the Councils, which were to be replaced, it was decided to put the Constitution to a plebiscite. Rather than achieving a ringing endorsement, however, the result demonstrated the growing apathy of the electorate. Only around 1.5 million participated in the election, though with the vast majority in favour and only 1,500 against. To conceal this, the election results were fiddled to double the totals. Officials added between 8,000 to 14,000 yes votes to every department’s returns. In addition soldiers’ votes were entirely fabricated, as none were actually given the opportunity to vote, and sailors voted in highly questionable circumstances.\(^9\) In any case, the Constitution of Year VIII was implemented before all the results were know, in fact when only those from Paris were ready (Sutherland, 1985: 361). ‘Confidence’ was clearly a manipulation of those in authority.

With the Constitution in place, the appointments were made. Those made to the Council of State, as for the prefects of the bureaucracy, demonstrated the importance given to expertise, while, in contrast, appointments made to the Senate, Tribunate and Legislative Body were mostly political, rewards given for their support of Bonaparte’s coup (Sutherland,
1985: 347). Debate was built into the system for the purpose of unification not division ('authority from above'). The elaborate system of election in the arrondissement for the list of notables, was in order to develop 'confidence from below'. What the constitution was not intended to do was to direct debate towards division and, worse, towards coalitions of divided opinion and interests - parties. In protest against opponents to a bill in 1801, Bonaparte stated the government’s aim as being ‘to destroy the spirit of faction’ (Sutherland, 1985: 357). ‘I am a national’ he declared (ibid). In 1802, Bonaparte became Consul for Life. On 18 May 1804, Napoleon Bonaparte became Emperor, no longer simply consul for life but a hereditary position, to be passed on to his chosen heirs. He was crowned in December of that year.

**Political Systems after Napoleon I: Monarchy to Universal Male Suffrage**

The fall of Napoleon, in 1814, was brought not by internal collapse but by external events. Following defeat in war, the Senate was asked by the allied forces occupying Paris to form a provisional government. Constitutional monarchy replaced the emperor.

The restoration of the monarchy, in 1815, was based on a constitutional Charter which drew on the two-house model of the parliamentary system of the English constitutional monarchy. A Chamber of Deputies and a Chamber of Peers replaced the previous assemblies. The Chamber of Peers, its members to be appointed by the king replaced the Senate, to which name the Chamber returned in 1851 (Sutherland, 1985: 428). The Chamber of Deputies was elected but the franchise was highly restricted. The law of 1817 gave the vote to men paying 300 francs or more in taxes, a total of just over 110,000. To be eligible to be a deputy the minimum tax payment was 1,000 francs. The Council of State remained, but with 40 per cent of its members purged and 28 of the 87 prefects were similarly dismissed (ibid.: 430).

The highly restricted suffrage was little affected by the 1830 revolution which replaced the Orleanist with a Bourbon monarchy. The Charter was revised, reducing the tax qualification to 200 francs, increasing the electorate to 166,000 (Tombs, 1996: 103). This approximated to the right to vote being held by just 33 out of every 1,000 of the population (ibid). The refusal of both King Louis-Philippe and his chief minister, Guizot, to extend suffrage gave fuel to the 1848 revolution (ibid). Guizot, a Protestant, and the leading liberal
politician in the 1820s and 1830s, who headed the government from 1840 to 1848, held to the elitist view of liberalism, the ‘liberty of the ancients’. The vote was viewed (ibid.: 69) not as the right of the individual private citizen but as a public duty to the state and he supported a narrow suffrage restricted to the educated, property owners. This view was justified in terms of this ‘middle class’ being ideally placed between the prejudices of the privileged nobility and the undemocratic urges of the masses. The view held that those with property gained through their own hard work were uniquely capable of reasoning in a public spirited way.

Through to 1848 uniformity remained the state goal. The debate over the nature of those uniform values provided a source for disagreement and conflict, but what it did not involve, Constant apart, was the questioning of the need for uniform values itself. Conflict over what these values should be involved the issue of human nature, the split, essentially, being between those who held to the view of original sin and those who believed in the perfectability of human beings (Tombs, 1996: 62). In the former view (held by Catholics and conservatives) authoritarian, paternalistic government was required, democracy a dangerous idea for the masses with their mob mentality and the idea of individual freedom an anathema. In the latter view, which included socialists, liberals and Protestants, the best political solution followed either from releasing the masses from oppression which would produce the ideal society (the socialist view) or from careful construction of a system of government which balanced law and order with the freedom of the individual through a system of ‘checks and balances’ (the liberal view).

The introduction of universal male suffrage in 1848, following the revolution of that year, brought a huge increase in the electorate to 9,900,000. The newly enfranchised voters of the Second Republic elected Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte president in December 1848. The franchise reduced again, in May 1850, by 3 million, the Second Republic which replaced the constitutional monarchy lasted only to 1851 when a coup d’état secured Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte in power. The male franchise was fully restored by Louis-Napoleon following his coup, but at the same time the elected chamber (re-named Corps Legislatif) was greatly reduced in importance ‘to a subordinate and silent role’ (Tombs, 1996: 104). In 1852, Louis Napoleon became Emperor Napoleon III over the Second Empire. From the 1860’s onwards, however, the parliament began to be restored to its pre-1851 role, with the right, for example, to question ministers and for details to be published. Between 1851 to
1860 the desires for the ‘ancient democracy’ became more and more frustrated by the need to win elections, which began to seem more attractive. Between 1860 to 1870, when Napoleon III was overthrown as a consequence of defeat in the Franco-Prussian war, increasing opportunities for opposition were developed (ibid.: 102-105).

The Piecemeal Establishment of Modern Democracy

Under the Third Republic, which replaced the Empire, organic laws were introduced, together known as the Constitution of 1875. These laws confirmed the provisional arrangements of 1871-5, which took form against the background of the defeat of the Paris Commune and the penalties of losing the Franco-Prussian war. Having learnt the consequences of kings and emperors the President was to be elected, not by popular election but by an absolute majority of votes of the Senate and Chamber of Deputies, for seven years (Harvey, 1968: 122). The President had considerable powers, including that of dissolving the Chamber of Deputies before the end of its term of four years, though only with the Senate’s agreement (ibid). The Senate consisted of 300 members of which 225 were to be indirectly elected by electoral colleges of notables in each department. The senators served nine-year terms and Senate’s support was required for amendments to the constitution (ibid.: 123). The Chamber of Deputies also had weight, being able to initiate financial bills and ask poignant questions at critical times (interpellation). By such means the Chamber could bring down governments (ibid.; Tombs, 1996: 105).

The Chamber’s new power was put to the test and significantly hardened in 1877 following the Sieze Mai when President MacMahon dismissed the Chief Minister, Simon, and then, having sought and gained the consent of the Senate, dissolved the Deputy of Chambers and ordered new elections but, instead, was then obliged to resign. (Harvey, 1968: 124-5). In 1889, following the very real possibility that General Boulanger along with substantial right wing support might dissolve the Chamber and revise the constitution to re-establish a strong executive, possibly king or an emperor (ibid.: 130-132), the electoral laws were changed to stop candidates standing in more than one district. The Third Republic instituted power in the Chamber of Deputies, the elected parliament, and so the government and parliamentary representatives as a whole became answerable to the electorate.
Mass parties with permanent national organizations did not, however, develop in France before the twentieth century and neither did a means for the peaceful alternation of parties in power.\textsuperscript{14} France failed to develop a system of ‘loyal opposition’, which shared with the government support for the political system but awaited its turn to introduce other policies; rather, they remained ‘disloyal opposition’ which challenged the system as a whole (Tombs, 1996: 105). The factions in parliament were not parties in Sartori’s sense of parts of a whole. Continuing in the pattern since 1814, majorities were too unstable to guarantee the passing of legislation and the average life of a government was only around 8 months (ibid.: 119). Guizot’s government, which lasted for 8 years, was the notable exception. After 1848, only Thiérs’ (1871-73), Ferry’s (1880-85) and Meline’s (1896-1898) governments lasted longer than a year, though from the turn of the century three years became more common.

Nevertheless, the Chamber of Deputies from 1879 proved a forum in which politicians practised the art of oratory within the constraints of the possible. With deputies able, through \textit{interpellation}, to topple a government but at the same time be aware of their own incapacity in the next government to be assured of party obedience, elections became the means through which crises could be weathered, even solved (Tombs, 1996: 105). Against the history of revolutions, restorations and dictatorships, the view of elections as the means to express (or rather, in reality, ratify) the general will was changed. Elections became accepted as the means to avoid further revolutionary upheaval by settling immediate crises and offering a fresh start (ibid.).

To become a liberal democracy in which elections were fought on the basis of competition between parties in Sartori’s sense of ‘parts of the whole’, not factions challenging the system, and where genuine alteration in office could be achieved with elections a means to achieve representation through competition, the system had to move from one based on unity and uniformity (ancient democracy) to one based on diversity and dissent (modern democracy). Part of the explanation for why this happened follows from the practical demonstrations, over time, of the inferiority of alternatives: absolutism, constitutional monarchy, dictatorship, disorderly assemblies, but the reason why the move was resisted and for so long raises the issue of the nature of the revolution of 1789 and the interests which it served.
In Whose Interests?

In the decade after the 1789 revolution the post-revolutionary state represented the interests of the notables. As Crook (196: 196) concludes:

‘The ‘invisible aristocracy’ of the departmental assemblies points to the hidden agenda which elections were designed to serve: the legitimisation of a new political class. The emergence of the notables, the association of property and power, had been presaged under the ancien regime and was eventually consolidated under Napoleon.’

The end of the feudal system brought by the revolution, 1789, and the sale of land confiscated in the revolution led to a hugely increased number of people (including large numbers of peasants) becoming landowners, land rather than industry seeming the safest investment. In contrast to Britain where rapid industrialization entailed rapid urbanization with the consequent upheaval of population, in France the growth of cities was less marked than the expansion of small towns. Small-scale enterprises being the norm in both country and town, labour-intensive methods remained the norm, bringing lesser disruption to patterns of life than the large factories of Britain, and with traditional methods retained. France tended to the production of luxury hand-finished goods: silks, clocks, jewellery, furniture, books, clothing. In agriculture, the fallow system of feudalism was replaced by the modern method of crop rotation but on the small farms self-employment was far more common than employment of workers for wages. Wage-earning for many in the rural areas was in the form of supplementary income in rural industry.

In France, it was the petit-bourgeoisie which grew most strikingly following the revolution - people buying farms, including peasants buying the land on which they worked, workers who were self-employed, entrepreneurs of small-scale enterprises. In Weber’s (1964: 426) terminology, rather than Marx’s, in France of the nineteenth century, it was the acquisition classes, the middle classes, which grew after the revolution, those between the owners of large properties - landowners, industrialists, rentiers - and those without properties - the proletariat. And the state protected the interests of the acquisition classes. As Tombs (1996: 162) comments, reflecting on the years 1814-1914:

‘Owning a plot of land, however modest, was an incentive and a means for small farmers, artisans, industrial workers and traders to resist economic change. Their numbers meant that governments worrying about elections (especially after the
introduction of manhood suffrage in 1848), public order and even revolutions, dared not ignore demands for protection of *les intérêts acquis* (vested interests).

This fits with Marx’s assessment of the election of Louis Bonaparte following the 1848 revolution as serving the interests of the (conservative) peasants (Spencer, 172-83; Marx, 1942: 73-5). With the continuing pressures from below and the presence of increased numbers of those with vested interests, universal male suffrage could no longer be resisted. Personal interests in power and protection of property rights were combined with class interests. In line with Marx’s analysis, social and political disorder threaten the political and economic interests of the propertied classes.

**Post-Revolutionary State-Building in Germany**

Germany in 1918 differed greatly from France in 1789. Germany was industrialized rather than agricultural. Germany also had a parliamentary system of government with multiple parties, though with a king who had the power of veto and a three-tier franchise with male suffrage (Balfour, 1992: 40). Not only were there many examples of working liberal democracies, models not available for France in 1789, and of socialist parties active in parliaments but a Socialist had actually entered the government in France in 1899 (Tombs, 1996: 292). The radical revolutionary ideas of the day were also no longer those of Rousseau but of Marx whose revolutionary theory had developed, in part, in reflection on revolutionary events in France, 1789, 1848 and the Paris Commune of 1870.

In practice, the German Revolution differed fundamentally from the French revolution. As violent revolution – 1918-20 – it failed. The Red Ruhr Army was defeated and the workers’ strikes and demonstrations were crushed by the Freikorps (Moore, 1978: 313). In November 1918, however, in the face of strikes and mutinies and certain defeat in the war, the king abdicated and power was handed to Friedrich Ebert, the leader of the Social Democratic Party, SPD, which had become the largest party in the *Reichstag* in 1912 (ibid.: 292; Nettl, 1969: 144). What occurred in Germany was a ‘revolution through reform’, a socialist (social democratic, that is) government installed in power through election to make radical social and economic changes in the interest of a new social class – the proletariat – and, therefore, without violent revolution to reorganize the system in the interests not of the owners of production – the bourgeoisie – but the workers.
Social Democracy: Liberal democracy or Mass Democracy

In Germany, social democracy was in line with the interpretation of Marx theorised by the Social Democrats, Bernstein and Kautsky. Kautsky, in *What a Social Revolution Is* (Mills, 1963: 171), specifically compared Germany, in 1902, with France in 1789:

‘The struggle is no longer, as in 1789, a battle of unorganized mobs with no political form....It is a battle of organized intelligent masses, full of stability and prudence, which do not follow every impulse, or explode over every insult, or collapse under every misfortune.’

German workers had the benefit, in Kautsky’s, and Bernstein’s view, of both education and elections with parties seeking worker’s votes and including parties representing workers’ interests. The advantages of elections in social democrats’ eyes lay in their value for resolving conflicts of view. Quite in line with the discovery made in France, Kautsky (ibid.) argued,

‘Elections are a means to count ourselves and the enemy, and they grant thereby a clear view of the relative strength of the classes and parties, their advance and their retreat. They prevent premature outbreaks and they guard against defeats. They also grant the possibility that the opponents will themselves recognize the untenability of many positions and freely.’

As explained, the reformist social democrats, however, were not concerned only with the advantages of liberal democracy. Elections were also viewed as having the benefits of providing the means for educating the proletariat in the workings of the democratic political system and, of course, in creating governments with a programme for the improvement of workers’ social and economic conditions.

‘But it is not alone the relief of the proletariat from its misery that makes the activity of the proletariat in Parliament and the operation of the proletarian organizations indispensable. They are also of value as a means of practically familiarizing the proletariat with the problems and methods of national and municipal government and of great industries, as well as the attainment of that intellectual maturity which the proletariat needs if it is to supplant the bourgeoisie as ruling class.’ (Kautsky, *What a Social Revolution Is*, in Mills, 1963: 172)

Rosa Luxemburg, in *Reform or Revolution?*, however, rejected the idea of revolution through reform, arguing that Bernstein, and Kautsky, confused the mode of production, central to Marx’s analysis with the mode of distribution (Mills, 1962: 195-6). In Marx’s analysis the state represented the interests of the owners of the means of production. In a
capitalist system, the state, therefore, represented the interests of the owners of capital – the bourgeoisie – and introduction of reforms to bring fairer socio-economic distribution would not alter this fact. To achieve a genuine proletarian revolution the political system itself would have to be changed, restructured in the interests of the proletariat, not the bourgeoisie. In Lenin’s terms, the state would have to be ‘smashed’. But Germany was not Russia, which before the revolution in 1917, like France before 1789, was ruled by an absolute monarch. In Germany before 1918, though the king had the right of veto, the parliament had competing parties, including a socialist party – the Social Democratic Party, SPD - which regularly stood for election and, in addition, in 1917, the Independent Social Democratic Party, USPD, formed from the SDP. Ebert, not only sought democratic socialism through elections but also chose to rely on the existing state coercive forces.¹⁸

Rosa Luxemburg, leader, along with Karl Liebknecht, of the Spartacists, the radical section of the SPD and then USPD, while arguing for a revolutionary change in the political system, retained, in contrast to Lenin, a firm conviction in the value of elections, condemning the Bolsheviks’ dissolution of the Constituent Assembly in November 1917. Luxemburg (1967: 62) argued strongly for the inherent value of elections - ‘the living fluid of the popular mood flows around the representative bodies’ - and argued that Lenin should have continued elections within a new political system with new rules and a new representative body. ‘The more democratic the institutions, the livelier and stronger the pulse-beat of the political life of the masses, the more direct and complete in their influence’ (ibid.). She also makes it clear that not only is a parliament and universal suffrage essential but also ‘the most important democratic guarantees of a healthy public life and of the political activity of the labouring masses: freedom of the press (and) the rights of association and assembly’ and, in addition, universal education (ibid.: 68). This for Luxemburg was true social democracy, mass democracy. For the Spartacists, however, violent revolution was required first in order to destroy the old political system and, most importantly, its coercive forces.

 Having been handed power by the Imperial Chancellor, Friedrich Ebert, head of the SPD shared power with the USPD in the provisional government and the Council of People’s Representatives and this Council was confirmed by the Circus Busch meeting (Moore : 1978: 293). Women were given the vote straightaway and Germany, therefore, achieved universal suffrage nearly three decades before France. Four days after Luxemburg
and Liebknecht were brutally killed by the army in January 1919, elections were held for the National Assembly, which was to draft the Weimar Constitution. The outcome of these elections was SPD, 40 seats, USPD 15 seats and 40 seats for the bourgeois parties (Moore, 1978: 309-10).

This election result clearly demonstrated both lack of support for the hard left position as demonstrated in the low USPD support, and the problem of socialist revolution through reform in the light of the strong bourgeois opposition. Rather, on Moore’s (1978: 310) assessment ‘the popular message to each political party was that it could not rule, at least not on its own.’

The Weimar Republic

The political system adopted by the Weimar Republic was what Sartori (1997: 121) terms ‘semi-presidentialism’, a popularly elected president in dual power with the prime minister reliant on parliamentary support. Both Presidential and parliamentary elections were to be based on universal suffrage and parliamentary elections were to be through a ‘pure’ system of proportional representation, having a single national constituency (ibid. 128). The president was to be popularly elected rather than elected by and in parliament as a device for the parliamentary system to be counterbalanced by a strong presidency (ibid.: 127). The power of the president was strengthened through four devices: the capacity to rule through decree in times of emergency (article 48); the right to appoint and dismiss the prime minister, individual cabinet ministers, and to form governments; the power to dissolve parliament; and authority to refer any law passed in the parliament to popular referendum (ibid.: 128). At the same time, to achieve a balance, the parliament had the power to bring governments down by a vote of no confidence and force individual ministers to resign. The bulk of legislation was also to be carried out through parliament.

The Weimar Constitution has generally been accepted as one of the most democratic ever written. Its outcome is also well known. Article 48 in the special circumstances which followed the 1929 Great Crash proved functional in securing Hitler in power. The operation of the ‘pure’ system of PR led to the spawning of large numbers of parties (Sartori, 1997: 128-9) and clear coalitions of opposition failed to emerge which consequently weakened the party system (Lepsius 1978: 42-43). Highly unstable governments were produced with
frequent government alterations and the need for expenditure of enormous efforts to manage tensions.

Not only were there twenty cabinets from the first parliamentary government of the Weimar Republic, 13 February 1919, to Hitler’s appointment as chancellor, 30 January 1933, but also that only during about half of this time did the governments have a parliamentary majority (Lepsius, 1978: 43-4). Firm coalitions did not exist for any designated length of time, but rather had to be coalesced for each issue as it arose. This had the effect of separating government from parliament, with government constituted around a few leading personalities dependent on the president, the vitality of parliamentary democracy sapped. In Lepsius’s (1978: 45) view, had the Weimar system of proportional representation been adapted in a modest way to deny parties polling less than five per cent of the votes then the parliamentary system would have been significantly strengthened. As it was, following the 1928 election, 88 seats were held by parties which polled less than 5 per cent of total votes cast. The suggested modification would have excluded 18 per cent of the members. Sartori (1997: 129) also draws attention to the weakness which additionally emanated from the fact that the president was elected by plurality which hindered the development of a race between just two presidential candidates which could have aided ‘bi-polar moulding’ to help solidify opposing coalitions.

Whose Interests?

There are competing explanations for why this highly democratic but also fractionalizing competitive system was chosen. As in France after the revolution, lessons learnt from democratic systems elsewhere played an important part and by 1918 there were more examples than in 1789. The lessons drawn from the French Third Republic, with its president elected by the parliament and its disorderly assemblies, led to the view that parliamentary government needed a strong president (Sartori, 1997: 128). The context in which the constitution was written also had a strong bearing. As explained, from 1918-20, the attempt to succeed in violent revolution continued in Germany with battles between the Freikorps and workers and armed revolutionary groups, including the Red Army, a regular feature, particularly in the Ruhr but also in other large cities such as Hamburg. The constitution was framed, therefore, to be attractive to the proletariat in order to sap their support for violent demonstrations. As consideration of Luxemburg’s position has made
clear, even the most radical left valued elections and parliament. A new highly democratic constitution could do the trick. In the light of events in Bolshevik Russia at the time it was also crucial that the Social Democrats displayed their support for representative democracy and ensured that the parties had equal advantages. This was especially important for the bourgeois parties which had, after all, shown that they carried the support of 40 per cent of the electorate. Social Democratic support for representative democracy was, however, quite clearly genuine. As highlighted, they believed that representative government could produce a socialist government and thereby achieve the social and economic conditions of ordinary people and at the same time provide the experience gained in parliament for achieving the political education of the proletariat for the day when they would eventually become the new working class.

Of course, it can be argued, as Geddes (1996: 18) does, that the Weimar Constitution was chosen because it suited their self-interests of those involved. Served to further, that is, their political careers. As she goes on to explain in defence of her argument:

‘I do not deny that political leaders represent the interests of constituents and prefer some policies to others. But for politicians considering institutional changes, interest in furthering their careers usually converges with interest in achieving the policy goals of the constituents. The same institutions that will improve their chances of winning elections will also improve their chances of achieving policy goals, since the greater the likelihood that they and their party allies will be elected, the greater the chance of passing the legislation they favour.’ (Geddes, 1996: 18)

To deny that some politicians, at least, seek political changes primarily for furthering ideals is, however, to display an undue cynicism. The highly democratic nature of the Weimar Constitution followed from the democratic ideals of social democracy itself and, in fact, as history showed, its highly competitive nature did not build in guarantees for a (near permanent) social democratic majority which, say, the 5 per cent rule might have helped in developing stronger coalitions and therefore stronger governments. To build in the advantages for strong coalitions would have been particularly advantageous given that the USPD had chosen to work with, not against, the SPD at the Circus Busch meeting and the February 1919 votes gave them, together, a majority while the Bourgeois parties at 40 per cent were a coalition of more parties.
The choices made in the Weimar Constitution were strongly influenced by the fact that, as Moore (1978: 285) concludes, ‘the Reformist Revolution of 1918-20 was a bitter duel for the allegiance of the industrial working classes and control over them’. Serving the interests of the proletariat within the practical constraints of the day and the lessons drawn from real examples (such as the French Third Republic) were central to explaining it just as the ‘political class’ of property and power were central to an understanding of the ancient democracy in France and the ‘vested interests’ of the acquisition classes were central to an understanding of France’s turn to modern democracy. Genuine conviction in the importance of social democracy as an ideal played an important part.

Post-Revolutionary State-Building in Nicaragua

When the Nicaraguan Revolution occurred there were not only plentiful models and theories of liberal democracy available but also of social democracy, as in Scandinavia though not in Latin America where, Costa Rica aside, even liberal democracies had not been sustained. Social democracy, following the reformist Marxist ideal, is based on social and economic well-being for all with education the bedrock of participation, an experience gained through the opportunity provided by political organizations (and the more the better). Marx’s theory as violent revolution led by the Communist Party had also been tried outside of Russia and been adapted, through practice. In the revolutions in China and Vietnam, the vanguard of the proletariat was a communist guerrilla army based on peasants, not proletariat, and fought from rural rather than urban bases. In Cuba a rural-based guerrilla movement overthrew a dictatorship that included members of the Communist Party in its government, established a Marxist government that raised education and health to western standards, but which did not re-establish promised elections.

The practice of failed attempts to overthrow Somoza ruled out alternatives. The Maoist strategy of rural guerrilla warfare, based on peasants, employed by the Sandinista national Liberation Front, FSLN, in its early years, failed in the 1960s. Urban guerrilla warfare combined with worker strikes, based on the proletariat, failed in the early seventies. The Third Way, proposed by the Terceristas, was an alignment with the bourgeoisie through, in particular, the Group of 12 and the Broad Opposition Front, FAO. All classes were brought together in opposition to the Somoza regime and the FSLN fought the National
Guard in full-scale action through the support given by, among others, the United People’s Movement, MPU.\(^{19}\)

**Social Democracy: Mass democracy or Liberal democracy**

After the FSLN victory in July 1979 a Basic Statute was introduced followed, in August, by a Statute on Rights and Guarantees. The Statute on Rights and Guarantees carried the promise of democratic freedoms including the rights to form political organizations, to vote, and to stand for election. The Basic Statute of July, dissolved the Congress and created a Council of State to draft a new constitution and take on the role of government until elections could be held under the new constitution, in an estimated 3-4 years time. In accordance with the promise made by the FSLN in June, the membership of the Council of State was to constitute a government of ‘national unity’. The Council included representatives of all the groups that had supported the overthrow of Somoza. The leadership of the Council of State, the Junta, was made up of representatives from these various groups: Ramirez (Group of 12), Robelo (FAO, and also head of his own political party the National Democratic Movement, MDN), Daniel Ortega (FSLN-Terceristas), Hassan (United People’s Movement, MPU), plus Violeta Chamorro, the widow of the assassinated editor of La Prensa.\(^{20}\) The August Statute on Rights and Guarantees for the Citizens of Nicaragua which prohibited torture and confirmed the abolition of the death penalty announced in July, set out strict guidelines for the administration of justice. Freedom of expression and information were also guaranteed, as was the right to strike and the right to hold private property.\(^{21}\)

Though political parties were represented in the Council of State they received only 12 out of the 47 seats (Williams, 1994: 177). This reflected both the pluralist nature of the revolution in the large number of groups that had played a part in achieving the overthrow and the nature of the Sandinista’s view of democracy. According to an FSLN pronouncement in 1980, ‘for a Sandinista, for a revolutionary’ democracy means ‘PARTICIPATION of the people’ and the broader the participation, and not just at election time, the more democracy (Gilbert, 1988: 35). Furthermore, ‘true democracy’ for the Sandinistas was to be built on improving social and economic conditions and increasing social and economic equality (ibid.). Improving education was absolutely central to their view of active citizenship. As Williams (1994, 173) explains for the FSLN, ‘Democracy
meant social transformation, a fundamental restructuring of property and power relations, as well as increased popular participation in the country’s political, economic, social and cultural affairs’. As Smith (1993: 147) comments, in respect of the FSLN’s encouragement of grass roots organizations,

‘The FSLN possessed a vision of participatory democracy which would include a wider enfranchisement than simply giving the adult population a vote at election time every four years or five years. The mass organizations, through their channels into the decision-making apparatus at local, regional, and national levels in the Council of State, and as advisers to the ministries, would have a direct say in developing and implementing policy.’

As Daniel Ortega made clear, however,

‘The people have won the right to elections with their blood, but it is necessary for the people to go through a process of consolidation and transformation and popular democracy, which means that the workers will choose their representatives in democratic assemblies ’ (Ortega, quoted in Gilbert, 1988: 35.)

These are views very much in line with the social democracy of Bernstein and Kautsky and also of Luxemburg. In view of the social and economic devastation brought by the revolutionary civil war and the social and economic injustices under Somoza which had underlain the revolutionary impulse (not least those following the consequences of the 1972 earthquake) general elections were not, therefore, an immediate priority, but mass representation was. Though never theorised in these terms, the Sandinistas sided with Luxemburg and developed a practical interpretation of the post-revolutionary social democratic state as mass democracy, which she failed to provide. Between 1979-84 grass-roots democratization took place through the development of plural voluntary organizations, essentially based on those which had participated in the revolutionary overthrow, and the development of social and economic advantages to aid participation, not least of which were the literacy and health programmes. In 1980, grass-roots organizations, linked to the Sandinistas, held 16 of the 47 seats on the Council of State (Williams, 1994: 173). As such they played a direct role in forming legislation. New ways of developing wide participation also occurred through popular debates – consultas populares – on important policies, such as education, in which 50,000 Nicaraguans participated (ibid.: 175).

While the Sandinistas’ view of democracy was that of social democracy (‘mass democracy’ / ‘Participatory democracy’), this was not, however the only view of democracy.
Liberal democracy in which general elections are the central feature was the model supported by some and most notably by the bourgeois supporters of the revolution. Robelo, leader of the MDN party, resigned from the Junta in April 1980 in protest over policies and worries about earlier changes in both the cabinet and the Council of State which gave greater representation to the mass organizations, thus undermining the power of the business groups and increasing the powers of the National Directorate.  Following a rally held by the MDN, in November 1980, at which they were greatly outnumbered by Sandinista supporters who attacked the MDN offices, eleven representatives of conservative organizations, including COSEP (High Council of Private Enterprise) and MDN resigned from the Council of State. In March 1981, the Nicaraguan government reduced the ruling Junta to three, leaving Daniel Ortega and Ramirez but also the lawyer-businessman, Córdova (Dunkerley, 1988: 273-275).

Debates between views of democracy essentially developed over the wish of the bourgeois groups to hold general elections sooner rather than later and over the weight to be given to parties, and opposition parties especially, in the Council of State. Though the Council of State was a forum in which parties and organizations could act as genuine opposition to government policies and have an effect on them, they were outnumbered by the grass-roots non-party organizations (Williams, 1994: 177). There were in addition to this competition of views of democracy three extra problems: the external threat and then outbreak of war with the US-backed contras\(^\text{23}\); the factionalism of the opposition parties and the right-wing alliance Coordinadora Democrática Nicaragüense employing the tactic of withdrawing from the Council of State (ibid.: 177); and the complexity of politics in the bargaining between the views on policies expressed by so many groups. Mass organizations expanded dramatically in number. For example the 133 trade unions in 1979 grew to 1130 by 1983 (Smith, 1993: 147).

From 1982 to November 1984 when general elections were held, even though Nicaragua was by then involved in the Contra War, procedures were negotiated between the FSLN and opposition parties for the development of stronger opposition parties and the electoral law. In essence liberal democracy won out. As William (1994: 178) comments, ‘The November 1984 elections signalled the formal adoption of the liberal democratic institutions and increased emphasis on political parties’. The system chosen was presidential with an electoral system based on proportional representation within geographical areas, not
the ‘pure’ single constituency as in Weimar. Following the elections the new National Assembly was composed of elected representatives from political parties only, the grass roots organizations no longer having formal representation. In the elections the FSLN won with 66.9 per cent of votes cast on a 75.4 per cent turnout for its presidential candidate, Daniel Ortega, and 61 out of the 96 seats in the National Assembly (Coraggio, 1986: 86). With the US government the crucial exception, these elections have generally been accepted as fair.24

Elections were again held in February 1990 which were won by the opposition coalition, UNO, with 55 per cent of the votes to 41 per cent for the FSLN, and Violeta Chamorro the new president.25 Though the capacity for elections to produce alteration of government is the clearest indication of democracy, US funding to UNO which ensured a united opposition illustrates that evidence of alteration is not certain proof. In any event the 1990 election signalled the triumph of the view of democracy as liberal democracy. The tension between mass democracy and liberal democracy, however, continued and the right wing of UNO, in practice, revealed itself as an opposition to the system, in Sartori’s terms a part against the whole rather than a part of the whole. As a consequence the FSLN ‘opposition’ played an important consensus role in aiding the new government when faced by demands both from highly organized civil society and threats from right-wingers (Williams, 1994: 179-181). In 1997, the FSLN again lost the election.

Whose Interests?

The move from a democracy based on mass participation in 1979 to a liberal democracy in 1984 cannot be explained in terms of the over-riding self-interest of politicians. Modern politics is the art of the possible. As Germany had shown and Nicaragua quickly showed again, mass democracy leads to a proliferation of political organizations. The art is to balance participation, valued as a means for achieving political education and active citizenship, with outcome, the social and economic improvements for ordinary people. The art in Nicaragua was also to balance the ideal of participatory democracy with the realities of power both inside and outside Nicaragua. Pressures from the United States and the realities of Nicaragua’s weak international position weighed in favour of moving to liberal democracy and proportional representation carried the promise of true representation. The pluralistic society of grass-roots organizations could continue to feed
local democracy. The revolution had, in any case, been fought on the basis of the Third Way, and alliance between the FSLN and the bourgeois organizations as well as the grassroots organizations. In a democracy, as Ebert knew, the bourgeois organizations must be allowed to play their part even if it means adopting a system in which the social democrats eventually lose out.

**Conclusion**

In explaining democracy in the practice of politics the three post-revolutionary democracies have demonstrated that the models and theories of democracy available at the time, which form ideologies, and the pressures of circumstances faced, both national and international, had significant bearing on the choices made. The claim that self-interest is of over-riding importance is not supported. In France after the revolution of 1789, the initial choices were for varieties of ancient not modern democracy. Competition was not central to these ideas of democracy, indeed quite the opposite for the whole basis of these conceptions of democracy was unanimity and uniformity. While the 1789 revolution had opened out new possibilities for state design, the 1848 revolution proved the break needed for the shift, stumblingly, to modern liberal democracy. The revolutionary situation in Germany also provided a necessary break with the past and by 1918 there were more examples of working democracies to consider, including lessons to be drawn from the French example. In Germany, in addition to the ideas of liberal democracy there were also the ideas of social democracy. In the case of post-revolutionary Nicaragua, there were yet more examples of both liberal and social democracies and of radical ideas in practice available. Having had the violent revolution, which Germany lacked, the more radical view of social democracy could be tried. In all three cases, however, international pressures and the bourgeoisie at home strongly influenced the move taken to modern, pluralistic, democracy. Self-interests were not of primary importance for all of those involved.

Consideration of social democracy in its various guises as ‘mass democracy’ and ‘participatory democracy’ again highlights the importance of conceptualizing democracy. The ideals of direct democracy in post-revolutionary France differed fundamentally from the ideas of mass democracy in Germany and Nicaragua. In France, though elections played a crucial part there was no conception of party competition and elections were an expression of the general will rather than the means to resolve issues of disagreement through agreed
procedures for the resolution of conflict and for alteration in government. In Germany and Nicaragua, mass democracy was social democracy, ‘participatory democracy’. This raises the issue of ‘democracy with adjectives’ (Collier and Levitsky, 1997). Sometimes different expressions are, simply, used to mean the same thing. Terminology, like history, changes over time. Social democracy in its various forms adds social and economic equality to liberal democracy and puts strong emphasis on local democracy and active participation but liberal democracy and social democracy share the institutions of polyarchy.\textsuperscript{26} Ancient forms of democracy do not, and mass democracy in France in the first half of the nineteenth century belonged to the classification of ancient democracy. As I hope I have succeeded in showing, if meaningful understanding is to be achieved, it is essential, even for historical comparisons, that democracies that differ in kind – ancient versus modern - are distinguished from those which differ only by degree – social democracy and liberal democracy – which are forms of modern democracy, which is pluralist.
Notes

1 Lijphart (1991: 75-76) argues for the importance, historically, of models available, particularly the British parliamentary system and the US presidential system but does not extend this to consider theories of democracy, which may be developed from first principles and in rejection of existing models.

2 For expansion of these arguments see Sartori, 1970; 1984; 1991. For a practical demonstration of the importance of conceptual logic and the problem of conceptual stretching producing seriously misleading findings, see O’Kane, 1993.

3 These 7 institutions of polyarchy are reduced from the 8 ‘requirements for a democracy’ in Dahl (1971: 3) where ‘elected officials’ are two requirements: the right of leaders to compete for votes and support, and institutions for making policies depend on votes.

4 In September 1791 the qualification for municipal office was changed to a property owning qualification and the 50 livres qualification for serving as national deputies was removed. These changes were not put into practice at the time but they were incorporated into the Constitution of 1795 (Crook, 1996: 47-8).

5 Crook, 1996: 189; and for the above see pp. 117-118 and.124. Before voting electors had to hear The Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Citizens read out and then have discussion!

6 Crook, 1996: 195. In Aix-en Provence not one election in 4 years was allowed to stand.

7 Hayward, 1991: 121. This famous quotation was written in 1831 but his views on diversity were consistent throughout and he was politically most active under the Directory (ibid.: 101-2).

8 For the above see Sutherland, 1985: 338-339. A new bureaucratic system was also created through which authority was centralized in the ministries, in Paris, from whence instructions descended to the prefects, in their newly created posts, who held individual control over each of the 83 departments (Tombs, 1996: 98). The prefect, though combining both administrative and political roles in the departments, was an appointed official, who was paid a salary. Under the law of 28 Pluviôse, year VIII (7 February 1800), each prefect was to be appointed by the First Consul (Napoleon) and was directly responsible to the Minister of the Interior (Sutherland, 1985: 345).

The prefect system replaced the collapsing local government system, which had begun in 1790 and which had involved, for the first time, locally elected citizens. Now outside of the control of local citizens the prefect, accountable only to the Minister of the Interior supervised all local affairs and they also made by-laws. Below the prefects came the sub-prefects, in charge of the arrondissements. In place of the municipal cantons put in place by the Directory, the communes, which had first been introduced in 1790, were reinstalled. Each of the communes, 36,000 in all was administered by a mayor who, similarly, was now an appointee of the prefect in communes of fewer than 5,000 people and of the central government if larger. The mayors in the communes were not subject to
election until 1882. The councils in the communes, however, were elected, but they were similarly constrained to ensure their subordination to the central administration. (For the above see Tombs, 1996: 98-100; Sutherland, 1985: 345-6.)

9 For the above Sutherland (1985: 399-340). Sutherland adds (p.340), ‘Until very recently, both contemporaries and historians believed the officially announced results: 3,011,007 yes, 1562 no.’ This is confirmed by Harvey (1968: 62) reporting exactly these figures.

10 A plebiscite was again employed, at the instigation of the Council of State, which, unsurprisingly, he won overwhelmingly (Sutherland, 1985: 259). The Concordat of 1801, together with the Organic Articles of 1802, regulated the Catholic church, making it subordinate to the state and permitted freedom of worship. (The Legislative Assembly accepted both in 1802.) In spite of the search for uniform values religious toleration followed from the logic of the “Declaration of the Rights of Man” which ruled out the possibility of excluding groups from society. See Eisenberg Vichniac (1998: 179) for the benefits this brought to Jews.

11 Tombs, 1996: 102. These were mainly landowners and the total was reduced to 98,000 by tax rebates. The law of 1825 gave a second vote to large taxpayers.

12 The scrutin de liste gave way to scrutin de arrondissement under which voters could choose only one candidate.

13 Elections were not fully free and fair, however, until 1914 when the ballot became genuinely secret. Before then, in addition to the continued use of bribery, sometimes intimidation and shifting of polling stations and constituency boundaries, voting returns were falsified, particularly during the Third Republic. Electoral expenses were not limited and barrels of wine at polling stations and rounds of drink for weeks before were not uncommon. As late as 1902 in one election voters were said to have averaged 500 glasses of free wine (Tombs, 1996: 109).

14 Until 1901 all associations of over 20 people were under legal restrictions (Tombs, 1996: 115). These restrictions were removed by the Law of Associations of 1901 from which point permanent nationally organized parties were set up. Before this time, organization existed only at election times, formed around ad hoc local committees set up to choose a candidate, raise money for election leaflets, drinks and so forth. From the turn of the century, groups within parliament began to correspond to party organization outside parliament, but before then deputies formed clubs, coalescing around individual politicians or broad differences and usually deputies belonged to more than one group and the groups within the senate differed again. (See Tombs, 1996: 114-115.)

15 In Britain the number of workers employed in manufacturing exceeded those working in agriculture in 1840, more than a century earlier than reached in France. In Germany and Belgium the figure was exceeded around the turn of the century. (Tombs: 1996: 150)

16 For the above see Tombs, 1996: 148-152.
As late as 1900, 40 per cent of the industrial workforce were self-employed. This compares with Germany where the figure was 16 per cent and England where it was only 9 per cent (Tombs, 1996: 162).

Immediately after the Circus Busch meeting Ebert accepted General Groener’s guarantee to support the new government and also accepted the bargain that went with it, to fight Bolshevism (Moore, 1978: 294-5).

For the above see O’Kane, 1991: 169-173. Composed of three factions (the Proletarian Tendency, TP, the Prolonged Popular War, GPP, and The Third Way, Terceristas), the FSLN-Terceristas advocated a broad opposition movement and in late 1977 had formed the Group of Twelve, a group of highly respectable business, professional and church figures who supported the inclusion of FSLN representation in a provisional government. (Gilbert, 1988: 9).


Violeta Chamorro also resigned from the Junta at the same time for reasons of health. She and Robelo were replaced by two businessmen, Cruz and Córdova. A compromise was reached over the effect of economic reforms on private enterprise through guarantees in law, thus retaining business representatives in the Junta (Gilbert, 1988: 110-113). Both Robelo and Cruz were later to play an important role in the armed counter-revolutionary opposition abroad.

Eden Pastora, the deputy Minister of Defence and the head of the militias, resigned in July 1981 and left for Costa Rica, forming the Sandinista Revolutionary Front, FRS. In September 1981, a counterrevolutionary army, the Nicaraguan Democratic Front, FDN, was formed by Somoza supporters based on National Guards in Honduras. Battles began in earnest on the Honduran-Nicaraguan border in March 1982. In June 1982, Robelo left Nicaragua and, in September 1982, joined forces with Eden Pastora’s FRS to form the Revolutionary Democratic Alliance, ARDE, later moving his forces to join with the FDN, the major ‘contra’ group, based in Honduras and backed by the CIA. In February 1982, US$ 19 million were given to the CIA to back covert action in Nicaragua. For the above see Gilbert, 1988: 89-92; O’Kane 1991: 180-184.


UNO represented a coalition of 14 parties, including both communist and conservative, the newly elected President, Violeta Chamorro, a member of the first Junta (Smith, 1993: 9). Smith (pp.15-16) stresses the effect of the war in reducing support for the Sandinistas.

See, for example, the different uses of the terms ‘social democracy’ and ‘participatory democracy’ in Huber et al (1997), where liberal democracy becomes ‘formal democracy’ and Morlino and Montero (1995) where ‘participatory democracy’ but not social democracy is mentioned and ‘populist democracy’ may be better classified under ancient democracy. See also Diamond (1996) where, in his terms, the ‘electoral democracy’ as found in France in the first half of the nineteenth century would be better counted as ‘pseudodemocracy’.
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