

## 6. Scotland in the Late Eighteenth Century: Integration, Modernization and Opposition

Michael Wagner

In the first half of the eighteenth century, Scotland was the trouble spot of the British Empire. In Scotland, Britain's Continental rivals several times tried to strike a decisive blow at their enemy. Here the exiled Stuarts sought to foment armed insurrections against the Hanoverian regime. A large part of the Scots were thoroughly alienated from the political system which had been established by the Whigs and King George I in 1714/1715. Alienation and discontent were widespread both among the common people and the social élites in the Highlands as well as in the Lowlands. There were Scottish nationalists who had never accepted the Union of Parliaments which, in 1707, ended Scotland's existence as a separate political entity. There were people who originally had supported the Union but who now felt cheated by the London government and its Scottish henchmen. There were Roman Catholics and Episcopalians who opposed the dominant position of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. There were many magnates and gentry who felt threatened by the territorial and political ambitions of clan Campbell, whose leaders, the second and third Dukes of Argyll, were managing Scottish politics on behalf of the Whig government in London. There was a widespread feeling that the Union had only led to higher taxes, economic exploitation, and creeping corruption. These manifold discontents account for the support which Jacobite intrigues in favour of the Stuart pretender found in Scotland, not only among the Highland clans, but also in parts of the Lowlands, especially in the Episcopalian north-east.<sup>1</sup> When Charles Edward Stuart landed in the west of

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<sup>1</sup> D. SZECHI, D. HAYTON, John Bull's other kingdom. The English government of Scotland and Ireland, in: C. JONES (ed.), *Britain in the First Age of Party. Essays presented to Geoffrey Holmes*, London/Roncevert 1987, pp. 243-259; B. P. LENMAN, A client society. Scotland between the '15 and the '45, in: J. BLACK (ed.), *Britain in the Age of Walpole*, Basingstoke 1984, pp. 68-93; IDEM, *The Jacobite Risings in Britain 1689-1746*, London

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Scotland in July 1745, Whig rule north of the Border collapsed like a house of cards. Edinburgh was occupied by the Jacobites, the government forces were beaten at the battle of Preston, and a rebel army was able to invade England, eventually advancing as far as Derby in December 1745. The Hanoverian dynasty and the rule of the Whigs were only saved by the crass military incompetence of the Jacobite leadership, the reluctance of the English Jacobite gentry to rise in arms and risk a bloody civil war, and the failure of the French to mount a fullscale invasion in southern England. 1745 was the most severe crisis of the British state in the eighteenth century. The survival of the Whigs and of their royal master, King George II, was a close call indeed.<sup>2</sup>

Fifty years later, during the war against revolutionary France, Ireland not Scotland was the "soft underbelly" of Britain. While Ireland was engulfed in ferocious sectarian strife, civil war and French invasion attempts, Scotland in the 1790s was stable and loyal.<sup>3</sup> To be sure, there were riots in Edinburgh and several other towns in 1792 when trees of liberty were planted, and Henry Dundas, effectively minister for Scotland in the government of the younger Pitt, was burned in effigy. At the same time in many towns and villages in the Lowlands, radical democrats, inspired by the example of republican France and the ideas of Tom Paine's *Rights of Man*, set about founding clubs and associations to demand the introduction of universal manhood suffrage and annual parliaments. In December 1792, April 1793 and November/December

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1984, pp. 155-230.

<sup>2</sup> J. BLACK, *Culloden and the '45*, Stroud 1990; F. MCLYNN, *Charles Edward Stuart. A Tragedy in many Acts*, London/New York 1988; IDEM, *France and the Jacobite Rising of 1745*, Edinburgh 1981.

<sup>3</sup> T. M. DEVINE, *The failure of radical reform in Scotland in the late eighteenth century: the social and economic context*, in: IDEM (ed.), *Conflict and Stability in Scottish Society 1700-1850* (Proceedings of the Scottish Historical Seminar University of Strathclyde 1988-1989), Edinburgh 1990, 50-64, p. 51: "Indeed, the overwhelming impression of Scotland between 1793 and 1800 is of a society of massive political stability. For Ireland see R. F. FOSTER, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*, London 1988, pp. 259-286, and below chapter 7.

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1793, delegates of the Scottish radical clubs met at Edinburgh to co-ordinate their agitation for a democratic transformation of Scottish - and English - politics. After the government had ruthlessly suppressed open political dissent, some radical democrats went underground. Following the example of the United Irishmen they successfully tried to prepare an armed insurrection in league with France.<sup>4</sup> There was widespread rioting in 1797 when the government attempted to introduce a militia in Scotland; a move which met strong opposition among the lower orders and which had to be enforced by the military.<sup>5</sup>

In spite of these instances of unrest and discontent there was nothing like a revolutionary crisis in Scotland in the 1790s. The London government and its Scottish managers, Henry Dundas and his nephew Robert, the Lord Advocate, were in firm control of the country. The overwhelming majority of the landed classes, the clergy, the merchants, and the lawyers rallied round the government in defence of King, constitution, and property against the onslaught of "levellers" and "atheists" infected by "French Principles". Although some radicals and a lot of frightened conservatives expected a rising of the lower orders, nothing of that kind happened. While in the 1740s Whig rule north of the Tweed had been fragile and vulnerable, fifty years later it was stable and fully able to cope with the few and weak stirrings of protest.<sup>6</sup>

At first glance, this stability is very surprising. The political, social and economic history of Scotland in the late eighteenth century was characterized by developments which might have destabilized the country, thus preparing the ground for a revolutionary crisis. In Scotland the political system was

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<sup>4</sup> H. W. MEIKLE, *Scotland and the French Revolution*, Glasgow 1912, repr. New York 1969, pp. 86-160, 185-193; K. J. LOGUE, *Popular Disturbances in Scotland 1780-1815*, Edinburgh 1979, pp. 133-154; A. GOODWIN, *The Friends of Liberty. The English Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution*, London 1979.

<sup>5</sup> MEIKLE, *Scotland*, pp. 178-184.

<sup>6</sup> The growing isolation of the Scottish revolutionary democrats is convincingly shown by J. BRIMS, *From reformers to "Jacobins": the Scottish Association of the Friends of the People*, in: DEVINE, *Conflict and Stability* (above n. 3), pp. 30-50.

highly oligarchic and much less open to popular participation than south of the Border. Scotland was represented at Westminster by 45 MPs. The 30 county MPs were elected by a tiny electorate of freeholders, the 15 borough MPs by small self-perpetuating urban oligarchies. Bribery, manipulation and the use of fictitious votes were widespread; the electoral influence of the aristocracy was stronger than in England.<sup>7</sup> Since 1775 this system was managed with great skill by Henry Dundas, an expert machine politician, whose task was to make sure that as many of the Scottish MPs as possible supported the London government. Dundas, a close friend and confidant of the younger Pitt and one of the architects of the British colonial empire, was effectively Secretary of State for Scotland, first as Lord Advocate from 1775 to 1783, then as President of the Board of Control for India, Home Secretary and Secretary of State for War in the 1780s and 1790s. His control of government patronage in Scotland, in the East India Company and in the British army enabled him to provide many of his countrymen with profitable offices and sinecures. The judicious use of patronage and alliances with leading aristocrats were the means Dundas employed to control the vast majority of Scottish MPs, 22 in 1784, 32 in 1790, and 36 in 1796.<sup>8</sup>

As earlier under the Dukes of Argyll from 1725 to 1761, Scotland under Dundas was a machine politician's paradise, a political system where ideological and social conflicts could find no expression in the electoral process which was almost totally dominated by government intervention,

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<sup>7</sup> W. FERGUSON, *Scotland. 1689 to the Present*, Edinburgh/London 1968 (*The Edinburgh History of Scotland IV*), pp. 133-137. Electoral politics in England are analyzed by F. O'GORMAN, *Voters, Patrons and Parties. The Unreformed Electorate of Hanoverian England 1734-1832*, Oxford 1989.

<sup>8</sup> H. FURBER, *Henry Dundas; First Viscount Melville 1742-1811. Political Manager of Scotland, Statesman, Administrator of British India*, Oxford 1931, pp. 203-266. For the role of Dundas in the formation of the "Second British Colonial Empire" see M. WAGNER, *Zwischen Kolonialexpansion und gegenrevolutionärer Solidarität: Die englische Intervention auf Saint-Domingue 1793-1798*, in: J. OSTERHAMMEL (ed.), *Britische Übersee-Expansion und Britisches Empire vor 1840*, Bochum 1987, 120-153, pp. 122, 136 f; and C. A. BAILY, *Imperial Meridian. The British Empire and the World 1780-1830*, London/New York 1989.

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aristocratic control, and personal networks. In the 1780s parts of the gentry and the urban middle classes started a campaign in favour of a reform of the county and borough franchise. Furthermore, they intended to broaden the oligarchic structure of municipal government. There were signs that the aristocratic domination of Scottish politics in the interest of the London government was coming under attack by strata which had been excluded from political influence and which were no longer willing to accept their subordinate position.<sup>9</sup>

The Church of Scotland, too, was rent by serious internal conflicts. On the one hand, there was the so-called Moderate faction, the adherents of an enlightened, tolerant church closely allied with the landowning classes and the government. The Moderates were in favour of lay patronage, the nomination of ministers by laymen, for example, by the King or the landowners. Lay patronage had been abolished in 1690, in the heyday of radical Presbyterianism in the aftermath of the Revolution of 1688-1689. It had been re-introduced in 1712. Lay patronage was strongly opposed by the "Popular Party", traditionalist Presbyterians who longed for a return of the good old days of clerical domination. While the Moderates were staunch supporters of the government, the "Popular Party" had shown sympathy for the rebel colonists during the American War of Independence. The Popular Party opposed the integration of the Church in the spoils system of government patronage, knowing full well that it was lay patronage which made possible the dominant position of the Moderates, who were a minority among the clergy.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> MEIKLE, Scotland (above n. 4), pp. 10-24; B. P. LENMAN, *Integration, Enlightenment, and Industrialization. Scotland 1746-1832*, London 1981 (The New History of Scotland VI), pp. 74-76.

<sup>10</sup> I. B. COWAN, *Church and state reformed? The revolution of 1688-89 in Scotland*, in: J. J. ISRAEL (ed.), *The Anglo-Dutch Moment. Essays on the Glorious Revolution and its World Impact*, Cambridge 1991, pp. 163-183; MEIKLE, Scotland (above n. 4), pp. 34-40; LENMAN, *Integration*, pp. 68 f. A third group, the "Seceders", had left the established church and formed an independent church of their own.

Potentially still more dangerous for political stability were the economic and social transformations Scotland underwent in the second half of the eighteenth century. At the end of the seventeenth century, Scotland had been one of the most backward and crisis-ridden regions of Western Europe. One hundred years later she was in the vanguard of economic progress. The Union had opened the English colonies for the Scottish export trade and had established free trade with England. After 1707 the Scottish landed classes increasingly turned to economic improvement and modernization in order to earn the money they needed to compete with their English counterparts - and rivals - in London. Since about 1740 economic development gathered speed.<sup>11</sup> Population rose by one quarter in the second half of the century. In 1750 at most one Scot in eight lived in a settlement of over 4,000 inhabitants; by 1820 one Scot in three lived in an urban community. The population of Glasgow, for example, rose from 32,000 in 1755 to 84,000 in 1801, that of Paisley from 7,000 to 31,000, and that of Dundee from 12,000 to 27,000.<sup>12</sup> The export of cattle and sheep to England and of coarse linen to the colonies increased markedly. Glasgow became the centre of the transatlantic tobacco trade, providing Britain and Continental Europe with ever larger amounts of Virginia and Maryland tobacco. By 1741 Glasgow merchants were importing 8 million pounds of tobacco, in 1755 it was about 15 million, in 1771 it peaked at the total of 47.3 million. Since the 1780s the cotton industry gained a strong foothold in the Glasgow area. There was one cotton spinning mill in 1778. By 1787 there were 19 mills; by 1795 there were 137. Imports of raw cotton went up from 137,000 pounds in 1775 to more than 11 million pounds in 1812.<sup>13</sup> At the same time Scottish agriculture was profoundly transformed. In the Lowlands large-scale, marked-oriented, capitalist farming, the eviction of sub-

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<sup>11</sup> T. M. DEVINE, *The Union of 1707 and Scottish economic development*, in: *Scottish Economic and Social History*, V, 1985, pp. 23-40; R. MITCHISON, *A History of Scotland*, London 1970, pp. 327-329, 345-350.

<sup>12</sup> T. C. SMOUT, *A History of the Scottish People 1560-1830*, London 1969, pp. 242f.

<sup>13</sup> M. LYNCH, *Scotland. A New History*, London 1991, pp. 380-383.

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tenants and the proliferation of new consolidated farms run by a single tenant were all parts of a drawn-out process of economic change which had started after the Restoration in 1660 and which had gathered momentum since about 1740. In a more attenuated and gradual fashion the Highlands, too, were transformed by the forces of agrarian capitalism.<sup>14</sup>

These changes - population growth, urbanization, the advance of capitalist farming, large-scale commerce, and industrial manufacture - should have led, one would think, to severe political and social dislocations. This, however, was only true to a very small extent. In the 1760s and 1770s, there were strong misgivings among parts of the gentry and the Edinburgh intellectuals about the social consequences of rapid economic change. They feared that the spread of a commercial spirit and of "luxury" and "corruption" would destroy traditional social values and endanger the dominant position of the landed classes. They were concerned that Glasgow merchants, government contractors and Indian nabobs were gaining too much influence in the counties where they were buying up landed estates.<sup>15</sup> During the Seven Years' War and the American War of Independence, there was a campaign in favour of the foundation of a Scottish militia which, it was hoped, would strengthen the social position of the landed classes and instill a feeling of subordination among the common people.<sup>16</sup> The agitation for a reform of the county and borough franchise was partly due to a middle class whose economic and social weight had increased in the preceding decades and which now demanded a say in politics. The democratic radicalism of the 1790s was fuelled by the anxieties of craftsmen, artisans and small shopkeepers who felt threatened by the forces of economic change. On the whole, however, the economic and

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<sup>14</sup> M. GRAY, The social impact of agrarian change in the rural Lowlands, in: T. M. DEVINE, R. MITCHISON (eds.), *People and Society in Scotland*, vol. I, 1760-1830, Edinburgh 1988, pp. 53-69.

<sup>15</sup> J. DWYER, A. MURDOCH, *Paradigms and politics: manners, morals and the rise of Henry Dundas, 1770-1784*, in: J. DWYER et al. (eds.), *New Perspectives on the Politics and Culture of Early Modern Scotland*, Edinburgh 1982, pp. 210-248.

<sup>16</sup> J. ROBERTSON, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the Militia Issue*, Edinburgh 1985.

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social transformation of Scotland since 1740 did not lead to a profound destabilization of the political and social system. Protest and opposition were weak and intermittent; they were rather easily dealt with by the London government and its Scottish allies. Opposition was not only far weaker than in Ireland, but also less serious than the movements of political and social protest which shook England between 1792 and 1801.

One reason for this stability was the demise of Jacobitism. Even in 1745 active, militant support for the dynastic claims of the Stuarts had been far weaker than during the Jacobite rising of 1715. What caused the breakdown of the Whig regime in Scotland in 1745 was less the strength of its opponents than the widespread indifference and apathy of the people and the military ineptitude of the government forces. The crushing defeat of the Jacobite army at Culloden in April 1746, the ferocious "pacification" of the Highlands by the Duke of Cumberland, and the abolition of the feudal military and judicial prerogatives of the clan chieftains after the rising broke the backbone of Scottish Jacobitism. Since 1746, there was no longer a viable political and dynastic rallying point for Scottish opponents of Hanoverian rule. The only course open to them was either exile or accommodation with the winners. Most of the Jacobites chose the second alternative, a process which was facilitated by the efforts of George III since 1760 to win over the Tory and Jacobite opposition both in England and in Scotland.<sup>17</sup>

After 1746, the Scottish landowning and professional classes opted for a strategy of economic modernization. "Improvement" was widely seen as the only means to preserve some kind of Scottish national identity. Scotland was to shed its "barbarous", faction-ridden, violent past. She was to become a modern, law-abiding, economically advanced country which had caught up with the headstart England had achieved in the seventeenth century. At the same time, many Scots eagerly made use of the job opportunities which were provided by the government apparatus of the British Empire and the thriving

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<sup>17</sup> W. A. SPECK, *The Butcher. The Duke of Cumberland and the Suppression of the 45*, Oxford 1981, pp. 147-203; LENMAN, *Jacobite Risings* (above n. 1), pp. 261-282.



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economy of late eighteenth-century England: the royal court, the London judiciary, the East India Company, the army, the diplomatic service, the press, the bar etc. In 1789, for example, the British ambassadors at Vienna, Naples, Copenhagen and Constantinople were Scots. Half a century earlier, under Walpole, there had hardly been any Scot in the British diplomatic service.<sup>18</sup>

At the beginning of the war against revolutionary France, the Scottish ruling classes had successfully been integrated into the government structure of imperial Britain. The patronage strategies employed by Dundas had decisively furthered this process. The Scottish landed classes, moreover, were the beneficiaries of a booming agriculture and of rising rent rolls. They were strongly engaged in canal building, urban development, and rural industry. Their misgivings about the monied men mentioned above had been allayed. There were, on the whole, no reasons why the landed classes should have been restless and discontented. The same held true for the greater part of bourgeois society. The political domination of the aristocracy did not obstruct economic development. The booming economy and government patronage provided the middle classes with jobs in commerce, the professions, and the administration, both in Scotland and in England and the colonies. When the challenge of the radical democrats rose in 1792/1793, the landed and middle classes closed ranks in defence of property and order. Hardly anyone of the county and burgh reformers of the 1790s was prepared to ally with lower-class democrats and the handful of radical intellectuals like Thomas Muir who were fighting for a transformation of Scotland along egalitarian lines inspired by the French Revolution.<sup>19</sup>

Since the middle of the century, Scotland had become one of the centres of the European Enlightenment. Scottish philosophers and historians like David Hume, Alan Ferguson, William Robertson, and Adam Smith were thinkers of

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<sup>18</sup> LENMAN, *Integration* (above n. 9), p. 40.

<sup>19</sup> R. H. CAMPBELL, *The landed classes*, in: DEVINE, MITCHISON, *People* (above n. 14), pp. 91-108; S. NENADIC, *The rise of the urban middle class*, in: DEVINE, MITCHISON, *People* (above n. 14), pp. 109-126.

a European stature, whose ideas were not only discussed in Edinburgh or London, but in Paris, Göttingen or Berlin. Contrary to the French enlightened intellectuals who increasingly turned against the political and social system of their country, their Scottish counterparts were staunch defenders of the Union, the Whig regime, economic "improvement", and the rule of the landed classes. Their main interest was in the modernization of Scotland and in the development of a civilized, polite, stable, commercial society free from clerical intolerance, warring aristocrats and violent popular mobs. Many of them - for example Ferguson, Robertson, Hugh Blair and Alexander Carlyle - were members of the Moderate wing of the Church of Scotland and as such closely involved in the system of government patronage. During the 1770s, they upheld the rights of the British government to rule the American colonies. During the 1790s, some of the enlightened Scottish intellectuals - Thomas Christie, James Mackintosh, John Miller -were sympathetic to the French Revolution and in favour of moderate reform at home. They all, however, shrank from the egalitarianism and the democratic radicalism of the Scottish and English "Jacobin" clubs in 1792/1793.<sup>20</sup> In the Church, the two rival factions, the Moderates and the "Popular Party", closed ranks against French atheism and democracy. The government eased the legal position of the Roman Catholics and the Episcopalians. Catholic priests and seminaries, moreover, got financial support from the government secret service fund.<sup>21</sup>

Opposition and protest in Scotland were further weakened by the fact that hardly anyone was in favour of a separate Scottish state. Unlike Ireland, Scotland saw no movement of republican nationalism. The overwhelming majority of the Scottish radicals were anti-aristocratic democrats who were fighting for an egalitarian transformation of Britain in league with their

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<sup>20</sup> N. STEVENSON, *The Scottish Enlightenment*, in: R. PORTER, M. TEICH (eds.), *The Enlightenment in National Context*, Cambridge 1981, pp. 19-40; I. HONT, M. IGNATIEFF (eds.), *Wealth and Virtue. The Shaping of the Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment*, Cambridge 1983; N. PHILIPSON, *Hume*, London 1989; LYNCH, *Scotland* (above n. 13), pp. 346-354.

<sup>21</sup> MEIKLE, *Scotland* (above n. 4), pp. 194-213.

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English political friends. In November 1793 delegates of Scottish and English radical clubs met at Edinburgh to form a "British Convention" with the aim "to organize popular resistance in the event of any attempt to destroy British liberty".<sup>22</sup> For most of the Scottish "Jacobins" the constitutional relationship between Scotland and England was a matter of secondary importance. "The great majority . . . were neither Scottish nationalists nor unionists. They were Scottish democrats whose object was to destroy the old Regime and transfer political power to ordinary Scottish people, and whose choice of strategy and tactics was largely influenced . . . by the political circumstances they found themselves in."<sup>23</sup> For the landed and professional classes, on the other hand, "patriotism" was synonymous with the economic, social, and cultural modernization of Scotland within the confines of the British Empire. There was a growing interest in the history and culture of ancient and medieval Scotland and in the cultural traditions - real or imagined - of the Highlands. These pre-romantic cultural interests, however, were not accompanied by political demands for home rule or national independence. Both Scottish radicals and conservatives were operating in a British political context.<sup>24</sup>

The economic and social transformation of the country, moreover, was less rapid and traumatizing than might have been supposed. With the exception of cotton, Scottish industry was still overwhelmingly a world of craftsmen and artisans and not of factory workers. The large-scale eviction of the peasantry in the Highlands, the so-called "clearances", had only just begun. The production of kelp, for example, the collecting and burning of seaweed to produce potash for use in the chemical industry, in the Highlands and Western

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<sup>22</sup> Quoted in BRIMS, *Reformers* (above n. 6), p. 46.

<sup>23</sup> J. D. BRIMS, "The Scottish 'Jacobins', Scottish nationalism and the British union," in: R. A. MASON (ed.), *Scotland and England, 1286-1815*, Edinburgh 1987, 247-265, p. 262.

<sup>24</sup> T. C. SMOUT, "Problems of nationalism, identity and improvement in later eighteenth-century Scotland," in: T. M. DEVINE (ed.), *Improvement and Enlightenment. Proceedings of the Scottish Historical Seminar University of Strathclyde 1987-1988*, Edinburgh 1989, pp. 1-21.

Isles provided employment for a large labour-force, thus cushioning the impact of agricultural modernization. In the Lowlands, economic expansion was mainly dependent on labour-intensive methods. It produced a large increase in the number of handloom weavers and farm servants. Population growth, which was slower than in Ireland and England, could still be accommodated by the economic system. There was as yet no "Malthusian crisis".<sup>25</sup> There was no dramatic breakdown in the standard of living. Living standards seem to have improved in the 1780s and early 1790s; after the outbreak of war in 1793, real wages more or less maintained their previous level.<sup>26</sup> The impact of the subsistence crises of 1792, 1795, and 1799-1800 was alleviated by the poor law and the distribution of subsidized grain; the Justices of Peace and the Court of Session intervened to adjust wages to take account of rising prices.<sup>27</sup> Of course, there were grain riots and some agrarian disturbances. There was, however, nothing like the interpenetration of political and social protest which had destabilized France in 1789 and which was causing havoc in Ireland in the 1790s.

To sum up: In the course of the eighteenth century Scotland lost her identity as a separate political entity. This process was facilitated and accelerated by the successful integration of the Scottish upper classes into the political, cultural, and economic spheres of Britain with her transatlantic and Indian colonial Empire. The Scottish landed, commercial and professional élites became partners of their English counterparts in the running and exploitation of the Empire. They were among the chief exponents of the ideology of property, order, economic improvement and colonial expansion which made up the mental universe of the British ruling classes. For them, economic

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<sup>25</sup> DEVINE, *Radical Reform* (above n. 3), p. 57; LYNCH, *Scotland* (above n. 13), pp. 367-371.

<sup>26</sup> J. H. TREBLE, *The standard of living in the working classes*, in: DEVINE, MITCHISON, *People* (above n. 14), pp. 186-226. The development of the standard of living south of the Border during the French Wars is analyzed by J. RULE, *Albion's People. English Society 1714-1815*, London/New York 1992, pp. 176-186.

<sup>27</sup> DEVINE, *Radical Reform* (above n. 3), pp. 61 f.

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development and political conservatism, the rise of a commercial, capitalist economy and the rule of the landed classes were no contradictions. Even more than in England, the expansion of the economy seems to have strengthened the dominant position of the landed classes and their main allies, the lawyers of Edinburgh and the Moderate clergy of the Church of Scotland. The challenge of the French Revolution helped them to defuse middle-class protest against the oligarchic character of the political system. Since 1792 the men of property closed ranks against a revolutionary threat which was to prove far less serious than had been expected.

In the first half of the century, the Scottish élites had been divided among themselves; a large part of them had been alienated from the London government to such an extent that they had been willing to resort to armed revolt. At the end of the century, the Scottish élites were united in a broad consensus in favour of the political and social status quo. "In 1745 disaffected Scots aristocrats had been the plague of the Westminster establishment. By 1789 their place as the bugbear of the metropolitan élites of the British world had been taken by disobliging aristocratic Irishmen."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> B. P. LENMAN, *Scotland and Ireland 1742-1789*, in: J. BLACK (ed.), *British Politics and Society from Walpole to Pitt 1742-1789*, Basingstoke 1990, 81-100, p. 100.