

15 Dec 75 ✓

Robespierre
forces
How Succession Laws differ in effect on Old Regime wealth & Modern.

[Re Aron, Lois succes. Rev., 482: Robespierre in Apr 91 debate]

When Robespierre says that equality is the sources of all political good and inequalities of fortunes the source of political evil, he thought that forced-equality succession would break up fortunes quickly and ~~thus~~ thus end the rule of the very rich. But this is true only in a society based on great landed estates, or real property in natural sense of the term, not of fortunes that are based on money. For the latter can grow very rapidly, ~~and~~ and would do so during the industrial revolution of the 19th century, so that no ~~enforcement~~ enforcing of equal succession rights would fractionalize great fortunes. Indeed, it might just divide up the single fortune into two ^{for each} or three of sufficient size/to become as great as the original one during the ensuing generation.

Put another way, Robespierre, not to mention all the other anti-inegalité orators, only saw property as a perpetual family holding that had not grown much but had not declined much either because the laws decreed the preservation of estates intact. Equal division would ruin this integrity within a generation or two, and so all great fortunes would disappear. The reverse, of course, happened, since the possibilities for making great fortunes in a lifetime increased so greatly that new fortunes made old fortunes look puny. And the laws of inheritance did not affect his at all--at least for the very rich.