

# The Permanent Guillotine

## Writings of the Sans-Culottes

**Editor and translator: Mitchell Abidor**

When the Bastille was stormed on July 14, 1789, it wasn't a crowd of breeches-wearing professionals that attacked the prison, freed the internees, and killed its superintendent, carrying off his head on a pike. It was the working people of Paris, men who didn't wear breeches, the sans-culottes, who carried this out.

In the course of the French Revolution the sans-culottes questioned the economic system, the nature of property, the role and even the existence of religion, and for the first time placed class relations at the heart of a revolutionary upheaval. They did so in an often inchoate fashion, but they were new players on the stage of history, and the French Revolution constituted their learning curve.

*The Permanent Guillotine* is an anthology of figures who expressed the will and wishes of this nascent revolutionary class, in all its rage, directness, and contradictoriness. Taken together, these documents provide a full portrait of the left of the left of the Revolution, of the men whose destruction by Robespierre allowed for Robespierre himself to be destroyed and for all the progressive measures they advocated and he implemented to be rolled back.

The revolution they made was ultimately stolen from them, but their attempt was a fertile one, as their ideas flourished in the actions of generations of French revolutionaries.

### ABOUT THE EDITOR

**Mitchell Abidor** is the principal French translator for the Marxists Internet Archive. PM Press's collections of his translations include *Anarchists Never Surrender* by Victor Serge, *Voices of the Paris Commune*, and *Death to Bourgeois Society*. His other published translations include *The Great Anger: Ultra-Revolutionary Writing in France from the Atheist Priest to the Bonnot Gang*; *Communards: The Paris Commune of 1871 as Told by Those Who Fought for It*; and *A Socialist History of the French Revolution* by Jean Jaurès.

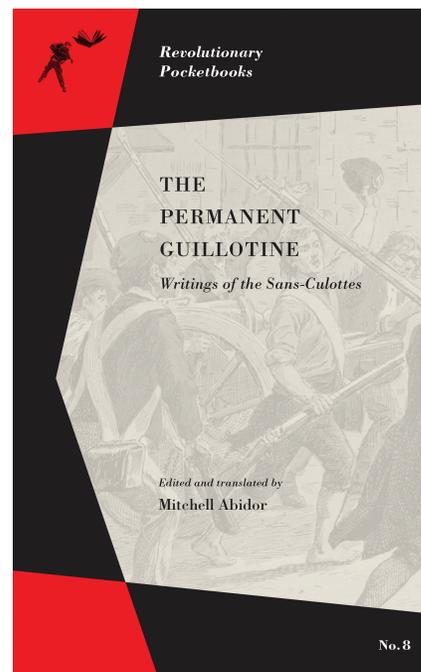
### ACCOLADES

"This valuable collection offers a glimpse of the radical edges of the French Revolution, and of the popular anger and resolve that alone made it possible."

—Peter Hallward, professor of modern European philosophy, Kingston University

"The Great French Revolution was, as Peter Kropotkin put it, 'the source and origin of all the present communist, anarchist, and socialist conceptions,' and the sans culottes were the popular driving force behind all its most radical developments. Mitchell Abidor and PM Press are therefore to be congratulated for making available these inspiring texts in English translation."

—David Berry, author of *A History of the French Anarchist Movement, 1917 to 1945*



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