

## ROBESPIERRE

### General Positions:

Anti-Slavery

Anti-Foreign War

For limitations of “free trade”

**\*(The “right to life” includes:) Rights to food, education (and probably housing, medical care)**

Pro-wide-power for revolutionary government... (up to and including “terror”)

*Oh also: notice this very-early usage of the term “terror” refers to STATE, not non-state violence...*

### Opposition to a proposed war with Austria (and Prussia) 1792

Foreign war is generally problematic:

- It distracts public opinion—draw its interest away from important issues to... the war
- It quells / hides their well-justified anxieties
- It takes attention away from internal, domestic problems: corruption, potential coups...
- It “lulls the people to sleep”.
- It raises generals, military commanders, and weapons salesman to problematic power
- It allows government to *hide everything under a veil of secrecy...* and, for example, to impose silence on any whistleblowers

### For a limitation on “property rights” and a limitation on “free trade.”

- Many internal food “scarcities” are artificial—they happen because food actually produced domestically is *shipped out...*
- **\*\*Core of the argument:** *food* (and probably we could extend this to include medicine, water, housing)... *is not a standard commodity*. It’s a right.
- The French Declaration of the Rights of Man, like the American Declaration of Independence, begins with the first right: to LIFE.
- In order for this right not be a right in word only, it must be guaranteed. And for life to be guaranteed means that the means of life must be guaranteed.
- Robespierre therefore opposed a blanket law favoring totally “free trade,” because that freedom would allow wealthy food producers to export food even when there’s hunger domestically, and/or to stockpile food without releasing it on the market simply to increase its value.
- Technically Robespierre’s position was that capitalist trade was fine when it took place with surplus and with luxury items, but that the “needs of life” had to be excluded from the market and the pursuit of profit.
- **NO SPECULATING ON MISERY...**
- So first: feed (and house, and give medicine to, and educate) the populace.
- THEN: once that’s done—you can do business for profit.

OKAY, SO... DOESN'T THIS ALL APPLY TO US?

- \*\*What are the effects of our constant foreign wars on internal rights?
  - Does constant foreign war promote political corruption, for example, by facilitating secrecy?
  - Does constant foreign war raise for example defense contractors and the “homeland security” bubble... to disproportionate influence...?
  - What all do the “war on terror” and the “war on drugs” facilitate domestically?
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- Do people have a right to food, water, housing, medical care, and education? Is that right satisfied under our system?
  - Should things necessary for life be “freely” traded on the market?
  - Does such “free trade” actually *inhibit* the circulation of these needed things in the poor domestic population?
  - Do you agree that “property rights” should be limited exactly where they adversely affect others or inhibit the fulfillment of their rights?
  - Does it bother you that there are food surpluses in the very countries where starvation occurs?