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LIBERTY AND ITS PRICE: UNDERSTANDING THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

COURSE GUIDE



Professor Donald M.G. Sutherland
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Liberty and Its Price: Understanding the French Revolution

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Understanding the French Revolution
Professor Donald M.G. Sutherland



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Understanding the French Revolution**

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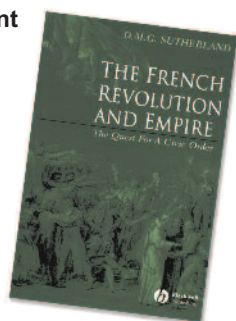
About Your Professor

Donald M.G. Sutherland

Donald M.G. Sutherland is a professor of history at the University of Maryland in College Park, Maryland. His first book, *The Chouans: A Social History of Popular Counterrevolution in Upper Brittany, 1780–1795* (1982), received honorable mention from the Canadian Historical Association. He also shared the Koren Prize awarded by the Society for French Historical Studies for the best article in a given year. He has received a number of other awards and fellowships, such as the Guggenheim Fellowship for 2001–2002.

The following book provides an excellent supplement to the lectures found in this course:

Sutherland, Donald M.G. *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.





An Execution
Pierre Antoine De Machy, ca. 1793

Introduction

The French Revolution wrought wholesale changes in the structure of French government, transforming it from an absolute monarchy that afforded special privileges to the aristocracy and the church to a modern system based on Enlightenment principles of nationalism, citizenship, and human rights. Yet tragically, this unprecedented transformation was accompanied by violent civil strife. This period also sowed the seeds of the Napoleonic Wars and years of political turmoil before modern France finally emerged.

The “Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen” of August 1789 firmly qualifies the French Revolution as modern. The declaration defined civil and political rights such as liberty, freedom of conscience and association, religious toleration, rights of property, and due process of law. This revolutionary treatise effectively defined the principles of the revolution that followed.

The changes of the 1789–1815 period can be dauntingly complex to interpret. France transitioned from an absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy, to democratic then terrorist, then liberal Republic, to dictatorship and Empire, and then to Restoration of the Bourbons.

The first approach to understanding the Revolution is the “classical interpretation”—or class-based approach. This approach defines the Revolution as the triumph of the middle class, or bourgeoisie, making the Revolution the pivot on which Europe transitioned from a feudal to a capitalist order. Then there is “Revisionism,” which has undermined the classical interpretation in a fundamental way, though it fails to replace it with a fully satisfactory alternative.

Ultimately, this fascinating course provides a solid foundation for understanding the French Revolution and its place in European history.

Lecture 1: Definition of Revolution

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Donald M.G. Sutherland's *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order*, introduction and chapter 1, pp. 1–42.



There are just three important questions about the French Revolution: What caused it? What caused the Terror? And what caused a revolution based on liberty and constitutionalism to slide into Napoleon's dictatorship?

But before we can answer these questions, it is necessary to establish some definitions. While it might seem obvious what a Revolution is, the definition of what was revolutionary about the French Revolution can affect the choice of what to talk about and it can affect how we place the Revolution in European history.

An older, now largely outmoded approach defines the Revolution as the triumph of the middle class, or bourgeoisie. This makes the Revolution the pivot on which Europe transitioned from a feudal to a capitalist order, when aristocratic society gave way to the plutocracy, in brief, when an old, decrepit world crumbled before the new.

This class-based interpretation also answers the two remaining questions about the Terror and the Bonapartist dictatorship. The resistance of the old order, particularly the resistance of the aristocracy and the Church, forced the revolutionaries to go beyond the rule of law and institute the Terror. The Reign of Terror was a legitimate act of self-defense, a necessary diversion from the strict rule of law to defend the nation against its foreign and domestic enemies.

Napoleon's dictatorship is explained in similar terms but without the obvious sympathy that the Terror merits. Having crushed their erstwhile supporters, the urban working class or *sans-culottes*, the bourgeoisie had to turn to the providential man whose military dictatorship preserved the new class relations. Once the allies finally defeated Napoleon at Waterloo in June 1815, France could resume its more normal course of a liberal constitutional monarchy.

In other words, beneath the baffling changes of the 1789–1815 period—from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy, to democratic then terrorist, then liberal Republic, to dictatorship and Empire, and then to Restoration of the Bourbons—the underlying logic remained. The thread that held it all together was the importance of the constitutional liberal bourgeois order.

This class-oriented approach is known as the “classical interpretation” of the Revolution. Despite its obvious Marxist overtones, it dominated even liberal and conservative historians' conceptual frameworks from the 1820s until the 1960s. This was because it had a powerful ability to make sense of the causes and course of the bewildering events of the period and to confer an overwhelming significance to them.

Yet the classical interpretation has collapsed because the assumption that the aristocracy was fundamentally different from the bourgeoisie is no longer tenable. Both groups were part of a larger class of landowners, office holders, officials, and so on. In an overwhelmingly agricultural society, the industrial and commercial sectors were just too small to throw up a middle class that could challenge aristocratic dominance. In any case, aristocrats too invested in industry, overseas trade, and banking.

"Revisionism," as this critique is called, has undermined the classical interpretation in a fundamental way but did not replace it with a fully satisfactory alternative. Moreover, revisionism was so thorough that social interpretations of any dimension have been abandoned. Thus, the late François Furet claimed that the social structure of the France of the 1830s was not very different from the France of the Old Regime. Furet therefore downgraded the sociological approach, as did the revisionists whom he admired. All the same, he proffered his own interpretation. He unashamedly insisted on the primacy of politics, indeed a politics driven by ideology. The collapse of 1789 was so complete, said Furet, that nothing remained to reconstitute the social order but a language of extreme utopianism. So the Terror, an attempt to construct paradise on Earth, was a consequence of a utopianism that was implicit in the ideals of 1789. Moreover, far from inaugurating an era of modern pluralistic politics, the Revolution was merely the first in the terrible gulags, cleansings, mass purges, and killing fields of our time.

Furet saw 1789 through the lens of 1917, or even 1936. This flies too high over the material. It dismisses the three questions of the cause of the Revolution, the Terror, and the dictatorship. By assigning such a great importance to ideas and theories, it avoids the necessity to understand people, events, and institutions. An investigation into the nuts and bolts of the human experience of these years shows that there was nothing inevitable about 1789, the Terror, or the dictatorship. There was no hidden, beneath-the-surface engine driving France to catastrophe. Instead, the period is best understood as a lesson in the unfortunate consequences of good intentions.

Contemporaries were aware that drastic changes were necessary in government and society. They summed it up in the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen" in August 1789. The "Declaration of the Rights of Man"

This contemporary rendering of the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen" shows that French revolutionary patriotism borrowed from the familiar iconography of the Ten Commandments.



certainly qualifies the French Revolution as modern. It defines civil and political rights we all take for granted: liberty, freedom of conscience and association, religious toleration, rights of property, due process of law, and so on. Yet it was also revolutionary in its historical context and so it defined the principle of the French Revolution. Thus sovereignty was vested in the nation, not the absolute monarch; the law would treat everyone equally, and so would end the special privileges of the Church, nobility, provinces, and office holders; no one could be imprisoned without trial, thus ending the government's ability to detain at will in the infamous *lettres de cachet*; a national assembly would meet frequently to vote on taxes and the budget, thus ending the monarchy's formal claim it was accountable to no one when it collected taxes. The Declaration did not abolish monarchy in France—that came later—nor did it intend to weaken religion—indeed, religious toleration for the minority Protestants and Jews and ridding the Church of its corrupting wealth were in the eyes of some Catholics a series of necessary steps to regenerate Christianity. In the blissful summer of 1789, no one envisaged the execution of the adored Louis XVI in January 1793, nor the ferocious campaign to eradicate Christianity from the very psyche of the nation a few months later.

But this is to run ahead of the story. One way to ask the question about the causes of the French Revolution so far turns out to be, “Why did the men who drafted the ‘Declaration of the Rights of Man’ embrace the principles of 1789?” Why had absolute monarchy and hereditary privilege become so dangerous that the nation needed to reformulate the polity?

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. How does the class-based interpretation define what was revolutionary about the French Revolution?
2. How has revisionism undermined the classical interpretation of the French Revolution?

Suggested Reading

Sutherland, Donald M.G. *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

Other Books of Interest

Chartier, Roger. *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991.

Doyle, William. *Origins of the French Revolution*. New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1989.

Lecture 2: Revolution of Elites

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Donald M.G. Sutherland's *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order*, introduction and chapter 1, pp. 1–42.



By 1789, when the Revolution broke out, France had been a monarchy for twelve hundred years. Throughout the period, kings had sought the assistance of the Church and the aristocracy in government. This did not make France a despotism, far from it.

The coronation oath the kings had taken at Reims cathedral since time immemorial required them to rule as Christian princes, to protect the Church and extirpate heresy, to respect the liberties and properties of their subjects, to defer to the acquired rights of provinces and corporations like the Church and the guilds, and to dispense justice. The coronation ceremony itself symbolized the unity between monarchy and kingdom and the king himself became the head of the body politic.

Reality was very different than this symbolic harmony idealized. The major theme of the political history of France over the preceding centuries had been the gradual subjection of the Church and the aristocracy to monarchical rule. The Crown acquired the *de facto* right to appoint bishops in 1516, and the Church itself remained loyal to the Gallican Articles of 1682, which limited the pope's temporal and spiritual authority over French Catholics.

For over a century the military nobility, or *noblesse d'épée*, had lost its ability to defy the Crown militarily. Instead, these nobles served loyally in the armed services, where their blue blood qualified them alone to be officers to the exclusion of everyone else. At the same time, the richest among them established themselves at Versailles, where the huge royal bureaucracy was a source of rich patronage. The other branch of the nobility, the *noblesse de robe*, were office holders, men who had bought an office in the royal bureaucracy. A venal office, as it was called, was a property like any other, and the most expensive among them conferred hereditary nobility on their holders and their families. The most prominent of these office-holder nobles were the magistrates in the Parlements. These were regional supreme courts of which the one in Paris was the most important. The Paris Parlement had a quasi-veto over royal legislation and because the censorship did not apply to its "remonstrances," its magistrates had a major role in shaping public opinion.

The fiscal problems of the monarchy required government ministers to negotiate with the various power centers in the realm, despite the pretensions of absolutist theory. The rising cost of warfare in the eighteenth century raised the political stakes. The financial question raised the issue of how far the monarchy could go in financing its wars. These in turn raised constitutional issues of how to limit government powers. For instance, the Parlements were willing to accept the necessity of exceptional taxes during the Seven Years War (1756–63), but balked when the government proposed to continue these taxes into the peace. The Brittany Affair posed the taxation issue clearly.

When the government attempted to conscript ordinary people for compulsory road construction, the Parlement of Brittany protested that this was a violation of the province's ancient rights. This set off a chain reaction that eventually led to the abolition of all the Parlements throughout the kingdom, what is known as the "Maupou Revolution," after one of the ministers who engineered it.

The Maupou Revolution was one of the traumatic events that convinced the "patriots," as they were called, that France had become a despotism. Another element that led in the same direction was the Jansenist quarrel. "Jansenism" was a seventeenth-century heresy that disputed the orthodox doctrine of salvation, but it soon became a vehicle to express hostility to the episcopate, the papacy, and even the Crown. This showed in the story of the miracle cures at the parish church of St. Medard in Paris in the 1730s. The church drew vast numbers seeking help and to watch the religious ecstasies of possessed followers. Fearing disorder, the government closed the church. The Jansenist clergy were also much admired as persecuted men of conscience. When the upper clergy tried to force a recantation on Jansenist clerics as a condition of receiving extreme unction, the Parlements stepped in to support Gallican liberties against the papacy. This dispute continued from the 1740s until the abolition of the Jansenists' arch-enemies, the Jesuits, in 1764. After this, individual Jansenists went in many directions, some even toward secular endeavors, including joining with the patriots. Jansenism had posed the question of the limits on royal power even earlier than the patriots; in their case, they became advocates of freedom of conscience.

The third area that unsettled the harmony of the kingdom was the disastrous decline in respect for the person of the king. When he inherited the throne from his great-grandfather in 1715, Louis XV was immensely popular. The nation swooned when he became deathly ill at the battle front in 1744, but was appalled when he reneged on a deathbed promise to stop his already numerous adulterous liaisons. His most famous mistress, Madame de Pompadour, alienated many in the court, royal family, and Church hierarchy. Many thought her meddling in allying France with Austria in 1756 explained France's disastrous losses in the Seven Years War.

If Louis XV was the king whose personal weakness for numerous women had ruinous consequences for the country, his grandson Louis XVI's apparent sexual impotence made him a laughingstock. His marriage as a teenager to the Austrian princess, Marie-Antoinette, was deeply unpopular among the patriots, and the failure of the royal couple to produce a child, let alone a male heir, for the first seven years of their marriage, sapped popular respect for the monarch. Worse still, pornographers,



Portrait of Louis XVI
(1754–1793)

by Joseph Siffred Duplessis, 1775
(1725–1802)

possibly in the pay of rival courtiers, regaled truly revolting stories about the alleged perverted sexual practices of the Queen.

Alarms that a debauched Queen was an Austrian spy, scorn for the King's awkwardness and indecisiveness, fears that the Maupou Revolution showed France was potentially despotic, that the monarchy had violated certain "constitutional" understandings about freedom of conscience in the Jansenist controversies—all this lay behind the final political crisis of the absolute monarchy. Although Louis XVI had restored the Parlements on his accession in 1774, few believed these courts were any longer secure enough to thwart evil ministers' designs to impose despotism.



Maria Antonia Playing the Spinet
by Franz Xaver Wagenschön, ca. 1769
(1726–1790)

The decision to intervene on the side of the rebels in the American Revolution turned out to be brilliant politically, but disastrous at home. French arms contributed decisively to the weakening of the British Empire, but at enormous financial cost. The Director General of Finances, Jacques Necker, avoided the controversy of the previous war and financed this one through borrowing. He also claimed he left the treasury in surplus when he was forced from office in 1781.

Whether this was true or not matters less than that his successor, Alexandre Calonne, announced to the King in August 1786 that debt service alone was devouring royal finances and that serious reforms, including the abolition of all fiscal immunities, was essential. He recommended bypassing the Parlement of Paris's approval for the reforms. Instead he called an "Assembly of Notables" to discuss his plans. This backfired badly as the Notables demanded to know how Necker's surplus had become Calonne's deficit in just five years. Many also defended the privileges of the Church and aristocracy, although some patriots, like the Marquis de Lafayette, looked further, hoping somehow the crisis could be used to establish a "National Assembly."

Such resistance persuaded Louis XVI to sack Calonne and eventually dismiss the Notables. When the Paris Parlement also resisted the same reform package, the King abolished it (May 1788). Unlike 1770–71, resistance this time in the country was very real. Riots in Grenoble and Rennes, along with passive resistance from the judiciary, sapped investor confidence in the Crown. By August, no one would lend money, so Louis XVI was forced to recall Necker to office and to surrender to the clamor for an "Estates-General" for 1789. Since it had not met since 1614, no one knew quite what this body was. It remained to be seen whether it could become a National Assembly.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. What roles were played by the *noblesse d'épée* and the *noblesse de robe*?
2. How did the Jansenist quarrel help to convince patriots that France had become a despotism?

Suggested Reading

Sutherland, Donald M.G. *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

Other Books of Interest

Doyle, William. *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*. New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1990.

Lefebvre, Georges. *The Coming of the French Revolution*. Trans. R.R. Palmer. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Lecture 3: Popular Revolution

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Donald M.G. Sutherland's *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order*, chapters 1–2, pp. 5–80.



By 1789, the broad consensus among the elite, even among nobles and churchmen, was that a liberal constitutional regime was the answer to despotism. If this revolution had been contained to the elite alone, the Revolution might have ended that fateful year.

Popular violence prolonged the Revolution for the rest of the decade. It made counterrevolution a much more real threat than it might have been otherwise. In addition, the popular insurrection that produced the assault on the Bastille saved the elite revolution from a royal counter coup while the dramatic peasant insurrection that began in late July created the pretext from the more extreme patriots to transform the country far beyond what anyone had thought possible a few months before.

The urban popular revolution of 1789 was a result of the politicization of ordinary people's ideas about the moral economy of subsistence in the Old Regime. In effect, people spent as much as 60 percent of their income on bread and in hard times much more. A slight rise in bread prices could produce extensive rioting, so for centuries, Old Regime government had regulated the price of bread, assured quality, fixed who was authorized to buy on the grain and flour markets and at what time of day. Ordinary people took the logic of these regulations to mean that society had an obligation to ensure adequate subsistence at a fair price. People also believed that shortages were man-made, that if they occurred, profiteers were taking advantage to starve them.

Yet the government accepted liberal economists' arguments that laissez-faire or deregulation would stimulate higher production. So when controls were relaxed, coincidentally in hard times, people rioted and attempted to retain controls by fixing prices themselves. By the 1760s, the profiteers expanded to include Louis XV himself and his grasping mistress, Madame du Barry. The "Flour War" rioters of 1775 attributed paternalistic concern to Louis XVI, despite the circulation of broadsheets denouncing the "blood of the Bourbons." The importance of the riots was the rejection of economic liberalism.

The riots of 1789 shared these characteristics but the political crisis transformed them. The harvest of 1788 was exceptionally mediocre and made all the worse by a vast late summer hail storm that cut a swath from Poitou to the Ile-de-France, a storm with stones so big they killed grazing cattle. With prices rising, Finance Minister Necker imposed traditional controls, a step that won him the reputation of being a friend of the people in addition to his ill-deserved reputation as a financial genius.

The breakdown of the political order and the request that people state their grievances in *cahiers de doléances* refocused the traditional notions of moral

economy. Electoral meetings to draft these statements led people to believe that if the King was asking them to complain, he was willing to grant a remedy. Above all, people invested great hope in the Estates-General.

At first, when the Estates-General met at Versailles on May 5, 1789, ordinary folk remained spectators. The three chambers, Church, Nobility, and Third Estate, deadlocked for six weeks over whether the deputies' credentials should be verified with a common committee or by separate committees of each order. Whoever won this struggle would have a precedent for voting in common. The result would be an Estates-General with a single chamber where the Third Estate deputies would combine with liberal nobles and clerics and impose the patriot vision for a rejuvenated France.

The arrival of the Paris delegation in June broke the stalemate. Led for the moment by the abbé Sieyès, already a famous author for his inflammatory pamphlet, *What Is the Third Estate?*, the Third Estate deputies rapidly voted to begin the credentialing process with or without the other two orders: to declare themselves the National Assembly (June 17, 1789); to invite a tax strike if they were dissolved; and, in the "Tennis Court Oath," to swear to provide France with a constitution (June 20, 1789).

Louis XVI's response to this was the "Royal Session" (June 23, 1789), in which he granted a legislature that would have tax and expenditure controls. The patriot leaders defied his order to disperse and meet separately, so the defiance of royal authority was now out in the open. Nonetheless, the King had agreed to become a constitutional monarch, which meant that the counter-revolution did not aim at a restoration of an unchanged Old Regime.



The Tennis Court Oath
Sketch by Jacques-Louis David, 1789

Most nobles accepted liberal constitutionalism and an end to their tax privileges. Where they differed with the leaders of the Third Estate was over the issue of the rights of nobles to monopolize the high positions of state. They claimed the rights of birth; the bourgeoisie, those of merit.

This difference was settled in favor of the bourgeoisie by the end of the summer, thanks to the fall of the Bastille and to the political consequences of the peasant insurrection. The people of Paris attacked the Bastille on July 14, 1789, to get the gunpowder that had been stored in this ancient fortress and state prison. They had earlier looted gun shops and the stores at the Invalides, a veterans' hospital. They were trying to protect themselves from a military assault, which appeared certain after Louis XVI dismissed Necker. Crowds had exploded in rage but the successful storming put the government in the difficult position of contemplating a full-scale assault on Paris. They decided to wait for another day that never came. This decision also saved the National Assembly, which was supposed to be dissolved after Necker was dismissed and the state had accepted a bankruptcy.

This provided the opportunity for the newly named "Constituent Assembly" to remake France. The pretext was the peasant revolution. Several disconnected rebellions against their nobles had broken out in which peasants attacked the castles of their lords, literally tearing them apart, forcing lords or their agents to feed them, forcing them to renounce feudal dues, and so on. In other places, there were demands for a tax system that would redistribute the load to those better able to pay.

This insurrection permitted the patriots to argue that this was the time to abolish noble privileges and distinctions once and for all. On the night of August 4, the Constituent Assembly did indeed abolish feudal rights, but went much further to include things that had nothing to do with the demands of the peasant insurgents: the tithe, the privileges of various provinces, the principle of the venality of office, and so on.

This was the context for the Assembly's passage of the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen" (August 26, 1789): an attempt to define the founding principles of the new regime when so much of the old had been destroyed.

These admirable principles would be far harder to implement than anyone could possibly have imagined.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. How important were rising bread prices in promoting popular revolution?
2. What was “liberal” about the Royal Session of June 23, 1789?

Suggested Reading

Sutherland, Donald M.G. *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

Other Books of Interest

Aftalion, Florin. *The French Revolution: An Economic Interpretation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Andress, David. *The French Revolution and the People*. London: Hambledon & London, 2004.

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Lecture 4: Restructuring and Early Opposition

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Donald M.G. Sutherland's *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order*, chapters 2–4, pp. 43–145.



The Constituent Assembly re-created a new political and administrative order. It was liberal and enlightened but the unintended consequences of many of the reforms provoked endless opposition and even popular counterrevolution.

It would have been hard to foresee this, especially in the constitutional arrangements. A single-chamber legislature, based on the broadest suffrage in Europe, would vote on the budget. The King would be in charge of the armed forces and foreign policy. The King also possessed a “suspensive veto.” That is, legislation could be blocked and only after four years could the legislature override it. This was the fatal flaw in the Constitution, because it made a quick resolution of a national emergency impossible.

The Constituent Assembly redesigned the administration. The 83 Departments became the basic unit. These were territorial units, of roughly equal size, in which all the organs of government, including ecclesiastical ones, were housed. These were subdivided into somewhere between four and nine districts, further subdivided into cantons (used only to mark the territory of justices of the peace and local electoral assemblies), and finally, at the bottom, the communes or municipal governments. The vast majority of the positions in these bodies were chosen by the electorate, which meant that something like a million positions were available. Such positions were unpaid and it is a reflection of popular enthusiasm that there was no difficulty at first in finding men to stand for election.

The Constituent Assembly satisfied the ubiquitous demand in 1789 for equality of taxation. It not only ended privilege for the nobility, but also for the provinces. It also made the system more transparent by reversing the ratio of indirect to direct taxes. The main tax would be based on landed revenues and only slightly on sales taxes. Taking into account the abolition of the tithe and the de facto suppression of seigneurial dues, many citizens must have been disillusioned that they may even have paid more than they had as subjects. Of course, this depends on the region. It is likely urban consumers paid considerably less, but in other regions like Brittany or the West of France, generally, tenant farmers paid much more—an ominous portent for the future. In Provence, or the Southeast, where communities were composed of viticulturalists, olive growers, fruit growers, and so on, the new tax system was a real gain. Such peasants were generally consumers of food they imported from elsewhere and the abolition of taxes on foodstuffs brought a genuine reduction in the cost of living.

The Assembly imposed the greatest transformations on the Church. The end of its monopoly on public worship was a natural consequence of the century's liberalism. Nor was anyone much shocked by the suppression of monastic

vows, although this caused much hardship for many nuns who had far fewer career alternatives than the monks. But the financial arrangements were most drastic. The abolition of the tithe and the decision to seize Church properties and sell them to pay off the national debt left the Church bereft of resources. As men of the Enlightenment, the deputies believed religion contributed to public morality, so they reformed the Church unilaterally. The result was the Civil Constitution of the Clergy passed on July 12, 1790. The state would now pay clerics and above all, voters, not bishops, would elect new priests to their parishes or dioceses.

The Civil Constitution produced a schism in the Church and became a litmus test of loyalty to the Revolution among the laity. When clerical deputies appeared to be stalling in their acceptance of the legislation, the deputies devised an oath of loyalty to the Civil Constitution. Beginning in January 1791, about 60 percent of the lower clergy took the oath. The geographical distribution of the oath across France showed clear patterns of a preexisting debate among the clergy about pastoral roles. Oath-taking regions were those where clerics endorsed an “egalitarian” notion of relations with their flocks. These were “citizen-priests,” opposed by other clerics who endorsed an older view derived from the Counterreformation Council of Trent in the sixteenth century of severe, paternal distance.

But the geography of oath-taking curiously reflected lay opinions too. In areas like the West of France, Flanders, Alsace, and parts of the Massif central, lay opposition was great, sliding even into outright counterrevolution. In other areas, like the Ile-de-France, the Orléanais, Burgundy, Dauphiné, and Provence, popular support for the Revolution was enormous, and in some of



A contemporary caricature showing monks and nuns enjoying their new freedom after the adoption of Civil Constitution of the Clergy in 1790.

these regions, ordinary people spontaneously formed Jacobin clubs. These splits among the laity prefigured the geography of loyalty to the Revolution for a long time, sometimes down to the twentieth century.

Meanwhile, the linchpin of the Constitution, Louis XVI, turned against the Revolution early. After his speech on June 23, 1789, he disowned any acts he might be forced to take. This included his sanction of the "Declaration of the Rights of Man" and the legislation on the suspensive veto. The October Days forced his hand, however. On October 4–5, 1789, huge crowds of men and women marched from Paris to Versailles and forced the King and the royal family to move to the Tuileries Palace in Paris. Women led the march on Versailles, which made royal troops reluctant to fire on them. A few hours later, the Paris National Guard under Lafayette followed them.

From that point on the King considered himself a prisoner and no longer a free agent. He signed the Civil Constitution extremely reluctantly and as plans to bribe sympathetic deputies in the Constituent failed to produce significant results, he acceded to his advisors and the Queen's entreaties to flee.

This was the dramatic episode known as the Flight to Varennes. After elaborate preparations from the Count de Fersen, a Swedish nobleman reputed to be Marie-Antoinette's lover, the royal family escaped the Tuileries on the night of June 20, 1791. Louis's aim was to meet up with General Bouillé, commander of the troops on the eastern frontier, and there perhaps to await events.

Several people recognized the King and his entourage and he was finally stopped at Varennes thanks to the efforts of a local postmaster. The King was escorted back to Paris on June 23, 1791, and suspended temporarily from his constitutional powers.

The Flight to Varennes was a major turning point in the history of the monarchy. Louis had left behind a long document detailing his objections to the work of the Constitutional Assembly. This and the flight itself evoked a huge wave of denunciations from the clubs and officialdom deploring the King's betrayal and his violations of his oaths of loyalty. Overt republicanism was rare, however. It would take another crisis, over the use of vetoes in 1792, to provoke another wave demanding his removal.

The Assembly's decision to merely suspend the King provoked another crisis, this time called the "Massacre of the Champ de Mars." It showed at once the strength and the weakness of the club movement in Paris. At first the Paris Jacobins, under the influence of orators like Robespierre and Petion, protested the King's suspension as unseemly, then went quiet. The radical Cordeliers Club, which had long advocated a direct popular democracy, was much more aggressive. Led by Danton and Marat, the Club organized a giant petition movement demanding Louis be removed, or even that France be declared a republic. On July 17, 1791, the Paris National Guard under the orders of the mayor, Bailly and Lafayette, tried to disperse the petitioners at the Champ de Mars (site of the present-day Eiffel Tower). Shots were fired and perhaps fifty demonstrators were killed.

The massacre suppressed the radicals for a time, but Lafayette's and Bailly's popularity, never very high among the democrats, went into eclipse. Temporarily, however, there was time to entrench the Constitution of 1791. Once again, however, Louis XVI's actions undermined the political settlement.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. How revolutionary was the work of the Constituent Assembly?
2. Why did some clerics and some lay people resist the Civil Constitution of the Clergy?

Suggested Reading

Sutherland, Donald M.G. *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

Other Books of Interest

Andress, David. *The Terror: The Merciless War for Freedom in Revolutionary France*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2006.

Tackett, Timothy. *Religion, Revolution, and Regional Culture in Eighteenth-century France: The Ecclesiastical Oath of 1791*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986.

———. *When the King Took Flight*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Lecture 5: War Revolutionizes the Revolution

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Donald M.G. Sutherland's *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order*, chapters 3–4, pp. 43–145.



After the troubles of the summer of 1791, the new Legislative Assembly promised to be a fresh start. Although it was elected under a very broad franchise of active citizens, turnout was low, as it was in all of the elections of the Revolution, because one had to have fully paid one's taxes before being allowed to vote. Moreover, all of the deputies were newcomers because of the "self-denying ordinance." The old Constituent Assembly had accepted Robespierre's motion excluding its members from standing for election to the Legislative. But the new men of the Legislative did not come out of nowhere. Many were well-known lawyers in their communities and many had had experience over the previous eighteen months battling against opponents to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy.

Although a majority joined the right-leaning Feuillant Club that had broken from the Jacobin Club over the King's Flight, most deputies were also ardent defenders of the Revolution. They had three related items on the agenda: foreign relations; policy toward the "refractory" clergy, that is, those who refused the oath to the Civil Constitution; and policy toward the émigrés, those who had fled the country, some of whom were forming armies along the Rhine frontier and aimed to effect a counterrevolution.

There were three émigré armies headquartered in Germany, none of them very numerous, all of them short of money and supplies, and all of them riven with rivalries among noble officers for command positions. Nonetheless, German princes were sheltering them, and they were agitating with foreign powers for support in the name of monarchical solidarity. The monarchs themselves, however, were happy to see the arrogant French brought low—George III of Britain was ecstatic, although his ministers thought doing nothing was the best option. Only Catherine II of Russia preached a crusade against Revolutionary France, but only in the hope of embroiling her rivals Prussia and Austria while she gobbled up more of Poland.

The Legislative Assembly saw things differently. It is said that the Assembly fell under the sway of ambitious men, like the journalist Brissot, who promoted war to advance themselves and solve domestic problems. The opposition of Robespierre was, in this version, prescient. At the very least, this is Robespierriest partisanship. In fact, Brissot's speeches on war made a strong case. He argued that the officers in the émigré armies were deserters from the royal army and deserved punishment, that the German princes sheltering them were committing a hostile act, and that the Austrian Emperor's failure to intervene with his nominal vassals was equally hostile. Brissot also argued that Revolutionary France was incompatible with old Europe and that sooner or later a clash was coming. A preemptive war was therefore desirable. Some

of his colleagues in the Assembly and the Jacobin club went further. Louvet, for example, argued that France had a moral responsibility to liberate the rest of Europe and that the slaves and oppressed of Europe would welcome the French with enthusiasm.

Robespierre's arguments against war were not persuasive. His strongest point was the army was too disorganized by the emigration of its officers. Otherwise, he said, the timing was wrong, meaning that going to war with a nonpatriot ministry at the helm was too risky. All that had to be done, therefore, was pressure the King into naming a patriot ministry. Louis conceded on March 23, 1792, with the appointment of Roland, among others.

The counter to this was that the ardor of the soldiers would compensate for the betrayal of their officers. Indeed, the Jacobin club of Paris envisaged a wholesale purge of the officer corps, of traitors everywhere, and claimed the King could not be trusted. For Brissot and his followers, war would be revolutionary, not only for old Europe, but within France as well.

But this war had authoritarian implications for liberal governance in France. One indication was the steps taken to defeat the internal threat. On November 29, 1791, the Assembly demanded an oath of loyalty to the law from the refractory clergy. They could also be held responsible for any religious revolt within their parish. If they failed the new oath or stirred up trouble, they would be suspected of revolt and could be exiled from their residence. On May 27, 1792, the Assembly passed another decree permitting the deportation of refractories if they were denounced by twenty active citizens. Such decrees, which exacted penalties without a hearing or formal appeal, reflected growing hostility to the refractories from provincial clubs and National Guards. These enthusiastic patriots organized expeditions to expel hostile clerics and close down their churches, claiming they duped women and that despite the formal legal texts requiring due process, the safety of the people was the supreme law. Thus, perceived enemies did not deserve the formalities of justice. The gathering crisis thus showed how fragile the settlement of 1789 was.

The question of the war was related to the question of the émigrés. These were individuals who fled France for their own safety. These included members of the high nobility, like the King's two brothers, prominent judges, and senior military officers as well as some quite humble people. Some of them formed the émigré armies, who aimed to restore the Old Regime with or without the support of foreign powers.

Such clearly hostile activity provoked the Legislative Assembly into passing a number of laws against the émigrés: removing the King's brothers from the line of succession, threatening confiscation of property unless they returned within specific timetables, and so on.

Meanwhile, the National Assembly declared war on Austria on April 20, 1792. Prussia soon joined the Austrians. Everyone assumed the war would be short: the allied powers and the émigrés because the army was so disorganized, the Jacobins because a free people was invincible against the armies of tyrants, as America had proved. In fact, the war would last off and on until 1815.

Louis XVI vetoed all the laws against the refractory priests and émigrés. He also vetoed the project to mobilize provincial National Guard units for use as reinforcements for the armies on the frontiers. Public opinion was outraged. The vetoes gave the radicals in Paris an opportunity to regroup after the Massacre of the Champs de Mars and hundreds of provincial clubs flooded the Assembly with protests. More seriously, the vetoes showed the fatal flaw in the Constitution. As many radicals argued, the King could not use his constitutional powers to undermine the Constitution. Consequently, local authorities began to apply the laws the King had already vetoed. They interned refractory priests, began taking inventories of émigrés' property, and started to organize National Guards for the march to the frontiers. France was thus entering the early phase of revolutionary government: the 1789 ideal of the rule of law was crumbling under the pressure of events.



Battle of Valmy, September 20, 1792

by Jean-Baptiste Mauzaisse, 1836,
after a painting by Horace Vernet, 1826

The battle between the French and Prussian armies at Valmy near the present-day border of Belgium, France, and Germany was a tactical draw, but it gave a great boost to French morale. Further, the Prussians, finding that the campaign had been longer and more costly than predicted, decided that the cost and risk of continued fighting was too great and decided to retreat from France to preserve their army. The next day, the French monarchy was formally abolished and the First Republic declared.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. Were the journalist Brissot's arguments in favor of war motivated by personal ambition or by a sincere assessment of the perils facing Revolutionary France?
2. What were the implications of the oath of loyalty to the law from the refractory clergy?

Suggested Reading

Sutherland, Donald M.G. *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

Other Books of Interest

Blanning, T.C.W. *The French Revolutionary Wars, 1787–1802*. New York: A Hodder Arnold Publication, 1996.

Carpenter, Kirsty, and Philip Mansel, eds. *The French Emigres in Europe and the Struggle Against Revolution, 1789–1814*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999.

Lecture 6: Massacres and Republic

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Donald M.G. Sutherland's *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order*, chapter 5, pp. 146–174.



The monarchy fell to an armed assault from Parisian insurgents and provincial National Guards on August 10, 1792. The political class was either hostile or hesitant, so Louis was a victim of genuine popular anger. The Flight to Varennes was crucial in demonstrating the King was untrustworthy and the vetoes showed him to be subverting laws the patriots considered necessary to public safety. He was also incapable of working with the patriots. Just before the war, he acceded to public demands to appoint a patriot ministry but soon sacked them when their spokesman, Interior Minister Roland, protested against the vetoes.

This produced the *journée* of June 20, 1792. Thousands of demonstrators invaded the Tuileries Palace, where the royal family had taken up residence to protest the dismissal of the patriot ministry. To appease the crowd, the King donned the red cap of liberty while Marie-Antoinette hid in fear. In the end, the demonstrators left the palace peacefully after berating the King.

Yet June 20 had important consequences. The King's advisors began to fortify the Palace at Tuileries and hundreds of nobles with military experience flocked to Paris to act as improvised bodyguards. The next assault on the Tuileries was therefore much more likely to be bloody.

The demonstration also provoked Lafayette. He had assumed command of one of the armies in the north, yet the war had not gone well. After some setbacks, French troops shot their general, who was then murdered by a mob in Lille, an early sign of revolutionary opinion's habit of attributing defeat to betrayal. Lafayette's reputation was already damaged by the Champ de Mars Affair, so when he returned to Paris to denounce the Jacobins, patriot opinion denounced him for deserting his army and accused him of planning a coup.



A nineteenth-century depiction of Louis XVI being berated by a mob that invaded the Tuileries Palace. A Phrygian or Liberty Cap was placed on his head and he was made to drink a toast to the health of the nation.

Fears of betrayal from the inside were not entirely figments of the imagination either. Stories of an "Austrian Committee" that secretly directed French policy through Marie-Antoinette, an Austrian princess, and through corrupt ministers, had been around for several years. The war only exacerbated the situation and Brissot's friends in the Jacobin Club accused the Queen of shipping vast sums and betraying military plans to her relatives.

The perils facing the country were thus both internal and external. The Legislative Assembly tried to meet them with declaring *la patrie en danger* on July 11, 1792. This mobilized the entire male population by proposing to arm them with muskets or, failing that, with pikes. In some parts of the country, notably around Marseille, this declaration also encouraged vigilante justice as crowds lynched perceived enemies that authorities refused to arrest. Moreover, the declaration hastened the mobilization of National Guards, known as *fédérés*, who now aimed to deal with the internal traitors in Paris before marching to reinforce the northern armies. Among them were the Guards from Marseille, singing the anthem they made famous.

As the *fédérés* were setting off, the clubs inundated the Assembly with petitions demanding the deposition of the King. The neighborhood clubs in Paris and the Parisian electoral assemblies, or "sections," quickly added their voices. As Brissot had foreseen, the war would revolutionize France itself through a massive mobilization, just as he hoped it would revolutionize Europe.

For the allies too, the war would mean reversing the revolutionary tide. The Brunswick Manifesto, named after the leader of the allied coalition, was proclaimed on August 3. It threatened reprisal against civilian resistance and threatened Paris with a vengeance "forever memorable" if the royal family were harmed.

Such threats inflamed opinion even more, however. On August 10, 1792, a combined force of provincial National Guards and armed Parisians assaulted the Tuileries Palace. After the battle was over, the assailants believed they had been betrayed and slaughtered some six hundred Swiss Guards. This was a genuinely popular, even national revolution, without too much participation from the political elite. Robespierre dithered while Brissot's friends ineptly proposed themselves for ministerial office on the eve of the insurrection.

In fact, the political class lost control of the situation. The Legislative Assembly did suspend the King, ordered the deportation of refractory priests, and called elections, under universal suffrage, for a National Convention to draft a new constitution. But the Paris Commune had as much or more authority, sending out commissioners to direct war efforts in the provinces and to supervise recruitment. But even the Commune, very much a Cordeliers instrument, had no control of the street.

The power vacuum in Paris was the precondition of the "September Massacres." While the Legislative had established a revolutionary tribunal to punish traitors, people preferred to exercise justice themselves. In the end, between September 2 and 7, 1792, crowds invaded the prisons of Paris and murdered about fourteen hundred individuals, many of them priests who had been rounded up a few weeks before, prostitutes, and others.

Some historians have tried to explain the September Massacres as a pre-emptive strike, an attempt to smite internal traitors who would break out of prison with the connivance of corrupt jailers, then to slaughter all the patriots in one night from the rear as the Prussians approached. Such rumors certainly existed, and the military situation was certainly alarming: Verdun, the last fortress protecting Paris, fell to the Prussians on August 20, 1792. Lafayette also tried to turn his troops on Paris to restore constitutional monarchy, but the troops rebelled and he became an Austrian prisoner of war.

Other historians are more skeptical. They argue that the rumor of a simultaneous breakout from several prisons was ridiculous and point out that the majority of victims were incapable of combat. They point instead to the importance of vengeance and incitement. The dozens of similar incidents in the provinces combined these motives, along with extreme democratic notions of the sovereign people dispensing harsh justice, just as the kings of old had done.

The September Massacres divided the National Convention from the start. Two groups competed for the allegiance of a majority of uncommitted deputies: the "Girondins," composed of Brissot's friends, men who had been enthusiastic supporters of the war; and the "Montagnards," Robespierre's friends, originally skeptics on the timing of the war, now positioning themselves as the most loyal defenders of the Revolution, obsessed as treating any disagreement as treason.

Two battles gave the Convention a respite. Valmy, on September 20, 1792, was an artillery duel under Generals Dumouriez and Kellerman that forced a Prussian retreat. Jemappes (near Mons), on November 6, was a victorious infantry assault, again commanded by Dumouriez, that permitted the occupation of the Austrian Netherlands, modern Belgium.

On the same day as Valmy, the Convention declared France a republic. From now on, loyalty to the Republic, one and indivisible, would define the citizen. The Convention would do more than establish liberty and equality. Some of its members would try to remake the human personality.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. How did the King's vetoes mobilize radicals in Paris and the provinces?
2. Were the "September Massacres" more than a crazy frenzy?

Suggested Reading

Sutherland, Donald M.G. *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

Other Books of Interest

Doyle, William. *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*. New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1990.

Lecture 7: Death of a King

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Donald M.G. Sutherland's *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order*, chapter 6, pp. 175–198.



There are many definitions of Terror, an effort at national defense, pitiless chastisement of enemies, religious war, and so on. There are also many definitions of when it began, in September 1793, when Parisian crowds forced the Convention to declare Terror the "order of the day," or on March 10, 1793, when the Convention created the Revolutionary Tribunal. One unconventional possible start date would be January 1793, the King's trial. The trial shared many features with revolutionary justice: no appeal of a capital verdict, and numerous violations of the rights of defendants as listed in the Penal Code.

The trial was also bitterly divisive, not between patriots and royalists, but between Girondins and Montagnards. Robespierre managed to get Brissot expelled from the Jacobin Club of Paris in November while the King's trial became a struggle for political supremacy in the Convention. The deputies lifted the King's immunity from prosecution, accused him of trying to prevent the meeting of the Estates General in 1789, and blamed him for the Champ de Mars Affair. No one ever produced evidence of treason, and the indictment and defense lawyers were kept from him until the last minute. The guilty verdict was a foregone conclusion, but the deputies split on whether the King's fate should be submitted to the will of the people in a referendum. Montagnards argued the King was guilty, despite the lack of evidence, and should be executed forthwith. Girondins said a referendum would be democratic.

Louis XVI was executed at 10:20 a.m. on January 21, 1793. He died with great dignity. Some in the crowd managed to break through the protective cordon, mount the deck of the guillotine, and gather blood in their handkerchiefs as relics. Despite claims at the time that this would be a sacred moment for the Republic, the execution delegitimized the Revolution for millions for another century. No subsequent regime has tried to claim legitimacy from the execution. More immediately, his brother, the Comte de Provence, appointed himself Regent and swore the regicides would be rewarded in kind. This made civil war among royalists and republicans a struggle to the death for the next generation.

The Girondin-Montagnard division affected how the Convention managed the massive crisis of 1793. The Convention declared war on Great Britain, the Netherlands, and Spain in February-March, and since France was now threatened with invasion from all the land and sea frontiers, the Convention proclaimed the levy of 300,000 men. This was the first draft in French history and it was widely resented. In the west of France, it provoked a huge rebellion in Normandy, Brittany, Maine, Anjou, and Poitou. The areas north of the Loire were soon pacified, but south of it, the rebellion solidified into a Royalist

and Catholic counterrevolution, known as the Vendée, the biggest peasant rebellion in French history.

The Vendée was unique in its rapid formation of a Catholic and Royalist Army, but its grievances found echoes in other regions: against high taxes, the disruption to traditional religious life, and the demands for sacrifices in men and money from the revolutionary state. Draft-dodging, brigandage, and religious dissidence would make the country almost ungovernable for the rest of the decade.

At almost the same time, the army in Belgium almost collapsed. The Austrians began the spring campaign with a major success against the French at Neerwinden on March 18, 1793. This as well as the constant meddling and corruption of the Convention's agents convinced Dumouriez to make a truce with the Austrians and try to use the army to restore "the sane part of the Convention." Like Lafayette the year before, the attempt failed and Dumouriez eventually fled to England. Nonetheless, with the Vendée and treasonous generals, the lesson was clear: the internal enemy was more dangerous than the foreigner.

The economic problems were even more intractable than the internal and external wars. With the nation refusing to pay its taxes promptly, or at all, the Convention financed the war with an interest-free bond, or *assignat*. This immediately became a paper currency. It was supposed to be based on the value of nationalized Church property, but soon, the number of *assignats* in circulation bore no relation to the collateral. The result was an increasing price inflation, aggravated by the fact that farmers and dealers refused to supply markets if they were paid in deteriorating currency.

People rioted over these pressures as early as November 1791, but the most serious consequence of high prices and reluctant supply was on the army. The Convention tried to meet this problem by decreeing the First Maximum on May 4, 1793. This set a ceiling on grain prices based on 1790 prices. In effect, it dictated what the state would pay army suppliers, or, because Paris was supposed to be treated like an army, what dealers needed to pay for supplies for the capital. Needless to say, these legal controls drove the market underground. Sellers increasingly abandoned public markets.



A nineteenth-century lithograph depicting the execution of King Louis XVI.

Military and judicial measures had a more spectacular effect.

"Representatives on mission," deputies drawn from the Convention itself, traveled all over the country to supervise the levy of 300,000 and to supervise the potentially untrustworthy generals. The Convention also established the Revolutionary Tribunal on March 10, 1793, to deal with treason in high places, following the defeats in Belgium. In response to the risings in the Vendée, the Convention passed the Law of March 19 authorizing military or revolutionary tribunals to try and punish rebels. Such tribunals eliminated many of the procedures of the Penal Code of 1791, the laborious gathering of evidence, the guarantee of legal representation, and the right to appeal. Instead, verdicts were supposed to be carried out within twenty-four hours, while practice eroded the requirement that the prosecution produce witnesses against the accused or even written proofs.

None of this was a smooth process of challenge-response, because radical opinion in Paris sought scapegoats. They blamed anonymous hoarders for food shortages, demanding they be executed. Wild men, or *enragés*, as they were called, like the radical priest Jacques Roux, blamed defeat on conspiracies masterminded in London. Sometimes they blamed those who voted the appeal on the King's fate.

A parallel movement against local Jacobins also gathered increasing momentum in the big cities of the South: Lyon, Marseille, Bordeaux, and Toulon, among others. This was a reaction among the electoral assemblies or sections to the Jacobins' refusal to punish the vigilante justice of the previous year, the local versions of the September Massacres. The Sections also believed, possibly rightly, that the Jacobins would institute a new round of slaughter of the good citizens if given a chance. By early June, anti-Jacobins municipal revolts brought the Sections to power, although Toulon's rebellion came later on July 12, 1793.

These rebellions linked with a much wider rebellion in the country in response to a Parisian insurrection that expelled the Girondins from the Convention on May 31 through June 2, 1793. After several failed attempts to get them recalled by their voters, the Parisian *sans-culottes*, *enragés*, and National Guard threatened the Convention with cannon fire. The Jacobin general staff, Robespierre, Danton, and Marat, among others, accepted the fait accompli. But it provoked a massive protest in the country. Roughly sixty departments promised to form armies to restore an outraged democracy and to punish Parisian domineering. This is known in the literature as "Federalism," a term the Jacobins invented to discredit their opponents by claiming they meant to dismember the country. Although many of these Federalist armies failed to materialize, this rebellion, along with the Vendean revolt, the collapsing economy, and the foreign invasion, threatened to stifle the Revolution itself.

Even worse was the murder of Marat in his medicinal bath in Paris on July 13, 1793. The murderer, a young Norman aristocrat named Charlotte Corday, got into his apartment by feigning to have information about counterrevolutionaries. She thought she was ridding France of a bloodthirsty madman. In fact, Jacobins soon made a martyr of him, the most famous representation of which was Jacques-Louis David's famous painting depicting him as a saint. The Revolution was creating its own religion.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. How did the Montagnards and Girondins differ over how the King's trial should be carried out?
2. How was the army affected by high prices and reluctant supply?

Suggested Reading

Sutherland, Donald M.G. *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

Other Books of Interest

Forrest, Alan I. *Paris, the Provinces, and the French Revolution*. London: Arnold, 2004.

Jordan, David P. *The King's Trial: Louis XVI vs. the French Revolution*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

Price, Munro. *The Road from Versailles: Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette, and the Fall of the French Monarchy*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2004.

Lecture 8: Terror

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Donald M.G. Sutherland's *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order*, chapters 6–7, pp. 175–232.



Even by the summer of 1793, the first steps the Convention had taken to meet the multiple crises facing the country—the various revolutionary tribunals, the price controls, greater supervision of the army—had been ineffective. So long as the internal enemy was on the offensive, there were few prisoners for the revolutionary tribunals to process; price controls were regularly evaded; vetting officers for loyalty was risky in the midst of the campaigning season; and draft evasion soared to astonishing levels.

The high-water mark of internal opposition occurred in mid-summer. With an increasingly solid base, the Vendéans briefly occupied Angers, and sent off emissaries to ask for help from the English. Yet they failed in a siege before the grand prize of Nantes, which would have opened a port for the Royal Navy.

The leaders in the Federalist cities were also organizing armies to liberate the Convention in Paris from the yoke of the Parisian factions, to restore democracy and to protect the rule of law. Several of these departmental armies were larger, in fact, than those of the *fédérés* of the previous year. That of Marseille, for example, was seven times bigger. The difference was that thanks to the supervision of the representatives on mission, the regular army intervened whereas it had remained passive in 1792. Thus cannon fire scattered the Norman Federalists at Pacy-sur-Eure and similar engagements broke the Provençal army before Orange in mid-July. The Bordeaux army disintegrated on its own shortly after setting out.

But Federalism did not retreat everywhere. Lyon remained under siege, a threat to the security of the southeastern frontier and to easy access to the Mediterranean ports. Moreover, when Marseille fell to the Convention's armies on August 25, 1793, many Federalists fled to Toulon, where they stiffened the city's resolve. Worse still was Toulon's treason. Those holed up in Toulon faced certain death under the outlawry decree the Convention passed on July 19, 1793. Rather than surrender, therefore, the Toulon Federalists accepted the offer of British support. The condition Admiral Hood set, however, was to proclaim Louis XVII. This has damned Federalism as crypto-royalist ever since.

The news of the treason at Toulon inflamed an already overheated *sans-culotte* opinion in Paris. Spirits were already soaring thanks to the spectacular celebrations of the first anniversary of the Fall of the Monarchy on August 10, 1793. Extremists from all over the country had joined Jacobins and *enragés* in days of heady oratory. News from Toulon provided the ideal occasion for a demonstration already planned to force the Convention on a more radical path.

On September 4 and 5, 1793, large crowds surrounded the Convention demanding that Terror be made the order of the day, that the politicians establish a revolutionary army, an internal military force composed of the most pure who would arrest suspects and punish food hoarders with death, and that Marie-Antoinette and the Girondins be tried before the Revolutionary Tribunal.

Although the Convention never implemented some demands—that all aristocrats be purged from the army, for example—the demonstration gave an impetus for new measures of Terror. One of these was the Law of Suspects, passed on September 17, 1793. This allowed locally elected revolutionary committees to arrest anyone whom they suspected of being an “enemy of liberty.” This was a system of administrative arrest with no formal mechanism of appeal and no guarantee of a trial.

With the economic situation becoming more dire, the Convention also enacted the General Maximum at the end of the month. This set a ceiling on food prices, but there were many loopholes and no consistent system of requisitions, so the black market flourished as never before.

Despite such setbacks, the Republic slowly began to defeat the internal enemy. After the Vendéans lost an important battle at Cholet on October 17, 1793, most of their leaders decided to cross the Loire to seize a Channel port and so get supplies from the British. Some 100,000 people, not just combatants, crossed the Loire and meandered for the next two months through northern Anjou, Maine, Brittany, and lower Normandy before turning back after they failed to take the small port of Granville. The retreat was a major disaster. The Vendéans suffered bloody defeats at Le Mans, Laval, and finally, on December 23, 1793, at Savenay. Generals talked of bodies being piled high like logs and of trampling women under the hooves of their horses. The great war of the Vendée was over.

So too was Federalism. Lyon fell on October 9, 1793. The Convention decreed the entire destruction of the city, and over the ruins would be erected a monument saying, “Lyon made war on Liberty! Lyon no longer exists!” Meanwhile, the city was renamed to “Liberated City.”

Toulon took longer, but thanks to a plan devised by



The Battle of Cholet, 1793
by Paul-Emile Boutigny, 1890

© Chapt.com/Musée d'art et d'histoire de Cholet

the young Bonaparte, artillery blasted the British and allied ships from the heights surrounding the port, and the foreigners withdrew, carrying thousands of Federalist rebels with them. Immediately upon entering the city, eight hundred people were shot without trial. Far from attempting to cover this atrocity up, the representatives on mission bragged about it.

Terror in Toulon or anywhere else was not defensive. After all, anyone executed by guillotine or firing squad or any other gruesome method was already a prisoner and therefore no threat. Instead, Terror and repression were about punishment, vengeance, setting an example, and most chillingly of all, about purification of a diseased body politic.

Robespierre, for example, emphasized that the Republic was more than a mere political form; it was an emanation of Virtue. Its citizens had to have a special character.

The representatives on mission in Lyon justified repression as civic education for a population mired in torpor. The original plan had been to execute all the Federalist prisoners in a single terrifying blow, but instead two hundred nine were mowed down with cannon fire over two days. The plan for the great blow never materialized, because the army refused to participate in the slaughter any longer.

In Nantes, the representative Carrier was responsible for the *noyades*, the drownings, in which prisoners, who may or may not have had a trial, were roped together in old boats that were then sunk. Carrier exulted in the executions. "What a revolutionary torrent is the Loire!" he reported.

Later, the Committee of Public Safety authorized the "Infernal Columns" in the Vendée in which the army slaughtered the remaining civilian population. One of the justifications for this was to rid France of people who were incorrigibly corrupt.

Repression was part of a larger civic project of cultural transformation, known as dechristianization. This entailed the stripping of all references to Christianity and the feudal past, whether this be street names, holy relics, first and family names, forcing priests to renounce their calling and marry, and redesigning playing cards, and chess pieces. Improvised ceremonies ranged from crude blasphemies inside churches to more formal ceremonies honoring Nature, the Supreme Being, and so on. The Convention even renamed the months of the year to represent the seasons and restarted the years, with the founding of the Republic being Year I.

The Convention and the Committee of Public Safety never endorsed a moderation of Terror. They meant to centralize it, as when they recalled deputies like Fouché who appeared to confuse the religion of nature with atheism. They also meant to centralize executions. They also suppressed most provincial revolutionary tribunals. They also redefined the jurisprudence of Terror

"Terror is only justice: prompt, severe and inflexible; it is then an emanation of virtue; it is less a distinct principle than a natural consequence of the general principle of democracy, applied to the most pressing wants of the country."

~Maximilien Robespierre

via the Law of 22 Prairial, Year II (June 10, 1794). This made “enemies of the people” liable for the death penalty. More people died during the short six-week span of the Law of Prairial than during the previous year of revolutionary executions.

The Law of 22 Prairial was one of several elements that led to the downfall of Robespierre and his clique. After the farcical trial of Danton and the “Indulgents” and after the trial of Hebert and other extremists, many feared that a loosely defined Terror could eventually encompass them. Robespierre presided over the Festival of the Supreme Being on 20 Prairial, a magnificent ceremonial designed by the painter David. Many mocked this attempt to fix the new revolutionary religion. Finally, the Committee of Public Safety had recalled several important representatives on mission after bitter quarrels with local Jacobins over the scope of the Terror. The Committee always sided with extremist locals but the deputies faced the potentially lethal charge of “moderationism.”

The anti-Robespierrist faction was thus acting in self-defense when it engineered a parliamentary coup d'état against the Incorruptible on 9 Thermidor, Year II (July 28, 1794).

Robespierre failed to kill himself. Bleeding and glaring at the mocking crowd that gawked and jeered him on his way to the guillotine, he was executed the next day.

The Terror was over.



Etching by an unknown artist of the Festival of the Supreme Being held on 20 Prairial, Year II (June 8, 1794), in Paris.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. How do the terrorist measures taken in 1793 reflect a fear of conspiracy?
2. How defensive were measures of extreme repression like the march of the "Infernal Columns"?

Suggested Reading

Sutherland, Donald M.G. *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

Other Books of Interest

Arasse, Daniel. *The Guillotine and the Terror*. Trans. Christopher Miller. New York: Penguin, 1991.

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Hardman, John. *Robespierre*. 2nd rev. ed. Essex, UK: Longman, 2000.

Lecture 9: Thermidor or the Failure of Law

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Donald M.G. Sutherland's *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order*, chapters 6, 7, and 8, pp. 175–264.



The conspirators who overthrew Robespierre and his clique on 9 Thermidor (July 27, 1794) had the narrow aim of preempting a strike against themselves. Many were extremists and ultra-revolutionaries. But other, more moderate deputies, known as “Thermidoreans,” soon seized control. Their aims were much broader: to escape from the regime of Terror, restore the rule of law, and punish the worst terrorists. Yet they remained a revolutionary albeit antiterrorist regime, in that they still occasionally truncated due process rights for the accused, promoted extreme anticlerical and antiémigré measures, and extended the severe economic controls they inherited. The Thermidoreans failed because they presided over an acceleration of the collapse of the revolutionary currency, the *assignat*; they could not dampen the fires of popular counterrevolution in the West; and they could not satisfy the thirst for revenge from former Federalists in the Midi who then turned to vigilantism. Their determination to win the war against the foreigner and to transport revolution to the whole of Europe ultimately weakened the government at home. More and more in the period down to 1815, French elites were united on the desirability of an aggressive foreign policy.

The campaign of 1794 was a great success for the French. The French victory under Jourdan at the Battle of Fleurus on June 26 forced the Austrians, Dutch, and British to abandon Belgium and led to the French occupation of the southern Netherlands. A winter campaign led to the occupation of the entire Netherlands and to the establishment of the Batavian Republic, the first of the “Sister Republics.” Dutch revolutionaries who collaborated were hardly popular, however, since the French imposed a huge indemnity. Nonetheless, this drove Prussia to sign the Peace of Basel on April 6, which ceded the left bank of the Rhine to France and thus opened the way to more sister republics. Also, French armies crossed both sides of the Pyrenees in Catalonia and near Bilbao. The Spanish made peace on July 10. The huge sacrifices the revolutionaries had called for in the *levée en masse* were paying off.

Yet stability at home was impossible. The assignat continued to spiral down. By April 1795, it was worth less than 10 percent of its face value. Prices, especially food prices, soared, as farmers refused to stock their harvests rather than accept



A ten-assignat bill from a series printed in 1793.

payment in feeble currency. The black market was more active than ever. The poor, especially the urban poor, and many aging widows who had nothing to live on but their annuities suffered enormously.

The Convention's economic policy floundered. In the autumn of 1794, it abolished the General Maximum, only to reinstate controls the following spring. These were more draconian than ever, as cities took rural mayors hostage pending their communes meeting their quotas. The huge shortages produced rioting all over northern France, no more so than in Paris itself in Germinal and Prairial, Year III (April 1–2 and May 20–23, 1795). These were a combination of hunger riots and demands for a democratic regime. They were repressed with military tribunals.

However much the Thermidoreans wanted to restore the rule of law, circumstances made the recourse to revolutionary justice too tempting. Shortly after Thermidor itself, the Convention sent out new, more moderate representatives to supervise government in the provinces. Many of these had voted for the *appel au peuple*, the proposed referendum on Louis XVI's fate. Many were therefore enthusiastic anti-Jacobins and set about purging administrations and closing clubs. Reactions showed the Jacobins were hardly passive. At Marseilles, for example, arrests of Jacobins led to a huge armed demonstration on 17 Vendémiaire. This failed, but more purges followed, along with indictments before newly reestablished revolutionary tribunals in Marseilles itself and before the Paris Revolutionary Tribunal.

The trial of mission representative Jean-Baptiste Carrier had national importance. His trial was supposed to diffuse the growing anti-Jacobin hysteria, but once journalists inflamed public opinion with stories of atrocities like the “republican marriages”—young men and women bound together topless before being tossed into the Loire—demands for vengeance became uncontrollable. Mobs forced the closing of the Jacobin Club; and young toughs called the *jeunesse dorée*, or “gilded youth,” roamed the streets beating up former Jacobins or disrupting theater performances. Later, they forced the removal of Marat's body from the Pantheon, the temple for national heroes.



Jean-Baptiste Carrier
“The Butcher of Nantes”
(1756–1794)

At the same time, the demand for vengeance in the provinces was enormous. In Lyon, public opinion had no faith that regular justice would guarantee sufficient punishment. So on May 4, 1795, mobs broke into the city's prisons and after sparing real criminals, tossed Jacobins from the rooftops. In Aix-en-Provence, crowds were incensed at news that Jacobins had formed a new club in the prison where they were awaiting trial and that its orators threatened that, once the political wheel turned again and they were released, blood would flow knee deep in

the streets. Mobs broke into the prison and killed about sixty people. An unsuccessful pro-Jacobin rising in Toulon provided the occasion for anti-Jacobins to break into prisons at Marseilles, Tarascon, and elsewhere and murder the prisoners in their cells.

This was one aspect of the “White Terror.” Another was the formation of murder gangs, which Jacobins called “Companies of the Sun,” or “Companies of Jesus.” These were usually units of purged National Guards with the complicity of authorities, murdered prisoners, or Jacobins too foolish to have fled to safer grounds. Often indistinguishable from brigands, these gangs plagued the south well into the Empire.

The murder gangs had a vague ideology, but outright royalism was spreading in the West. After the defeat of the Vendéans at Savenay in December 1793, armed royalism adopted guerilla tactics. These soon spread north of the Loire, where the movement was called *chouannerie*. These were peasant bands of young men who killed republicans and constitutional priests, harassed buyers of *biens nationaux* and attacked government outposts. The *chouans* lacked arms, so they were never all that militarily dangerous, but there was a plan to change that. Under the command of the comte de Puisaye, a garrulous former member of the Constituent Assembly, now turned intransigent royalist, the Royal Navy landed mercenary émigré regiments at Quiberon in southern Brittany on June 27, 1795. The goal was to provide the *chouans* with military leadership, reignite the Vendée, and arm the peasantry. Thanks to the rapid response of the young General Hoche, the expedition was driven back into the sea. Over eight hundred émigrés, including an Old Regime bishop, were executed after rapid trials by military tribunals—another reversion to revolutionary justice.

Royalism wore many masks, of course. The 13 Vendémiaire rising in Paris (October 5, 1795) was ostensibly a protest against the new Constitution the Convention was on the verge of implementing. In particular, the demonstrators were protesting the Two-Thirds decree that required the new Legislature to be composed of former members of the Convention and against the complicated arrangement that would have given these deeply unpopular men a great influence until 1798. But the rising also excited royalists as well as apolitical malcontents. No matter, whatever their goal, the demonstrators were blown away in General Bonaparte’s famous “whiff of grapeshot.” The regime would need the military again to assist it against its enemies. More broadly, the hope that the reign of Terror could be replaced by the rule of law was dashed. The Thermidorean regime needed revolutionary methods. So would its successors.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. Did the failure of the Thermidoreans show the country was ungovernable after the Terror?
2. How important was reprisal in the murders of the “White Terror”?

Suggested Reading

Sutherland, Donald M.G. *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

Other Books of Interest

Baczko, Bronislaw. *Ending the Terror: The French Revolution after Robespierre*. Trans. Michael Petheram. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Doyle, William. *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*. New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1990.

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Lecture 10: The Directory and Victory

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Donald M.G. Sutherland's *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order*, chapter 9, pp. 263–301.



The Vendémiaire rising in Paris represented the stormy beginning of a new constitutional era. The Constitution of the Year III was a complicated document, but it was based on a few basic principles. The executive was composed of a five-man Directory, all of them regicides. The directors supervised the ministries and managed military and foreign affairs. Each year, one director rotated off to be replaced by election from the Legislature. This was divided into two chambers, a Council of Elders and a Council of Five Hundred. Apart from the two-thirds rule the expiring Convention adopted, the Council of Five Hundred was elected by nearly universal manhood suffrage, although this was mitigated by a series of indirect stages.

Both in its design and in the political culture in which it operated, the Constitution of the Year III was fatally flawed. The constitution makers believed in a strict separation of powers, but they provided no workable device to solve an urgent clash between the Directory and the Council of Five Hundred. The result was to produce purges of the legislature or an irresistible temptation to fix elections. Furthermore, the electorate was thoroughly fed up with politics. Even outside regions where the civil war or the murder gangs were still operating, electoral turnout was abysmally low, sometimes not even attracting 10 percent of the eligible voters. Finally, voters showed their disgust with the political elite. Few former members of the Convention were ever reelected and fewer still regicides stood a chance at the polls.

The Directory also inherited some intractable problems from its predecessor. The currency continued to deteriorate and it took two tries and another three years for the Directory's monetary policy to begin to succeed. Meanwhile, markets were bare and large cities like Paris had to live off ever-reduced rations.

Politically, the Directory faced a major conspiracy from the left, known as the Babeuf Conspiracy. Organized by François-Noël Babeuf, a former employee in the Paris food administration, this aimed to abolish private property, organize production communally, and



François-Noël Babeuf
(1760–1797)

Also known as “Gracchus” Babeuf (in tribute to the Roman reformers, the Gracchi), and used alongside his self-designation as “Tribune.” He was unapologetic for his activities, for which he had received strong support from the urban working poor.

distribute food equally. The transition from private property to communism would be managed by a temporary dictatorship known as the Equals. As a precursor of things to come, the Conspiracy of the Equals was very significant, but the Directory soon got wind of the plot and Babeuf was eventually guillotined in 1797. Throughout the country, Babeuf's lists of sympathizers allowed the Directory to repress what remained of the Jacobins.

Royalism was always much more threatening to the regime and here the Directory had some success. Thanks to reinforcements from the Spanish front, the Directory was able to reinforce General Hoche's Army of the Coasts of the Ocean that fought the Vendéans and *chouans*. With 100,000 men—more, in other words, than the Directory authorized for General Bonaparte's Army of Italy—Hoche assumed virtually dictatorial powers throughout the West. Since the royalist guerillas were terribly short of arms and powder, Hoche was able to flood the region with his troops. One by one, the royalist leaders were captured, shot, or killed. By June 1796, the first popular royalist rising in the West was over. There would be several others, however, until 1832.

Defeating the royalists was part of a grander scheme to win the war in the 1796 campaign. The device was to invade Germany and eventually occupy Vienna. Bonaparte's role as commander of the Army of Italy was supposed to be secondary, but in the end, it was decisive. Although his army was poorly supplied in everything from boots to cannon, within a month, the combination of Bonaparte's brilliant generalship and his ability to inspire his men had knocked Piedmont out of the war. As a result, France gained Savoy and Nice. Meanwhile, the successful attack on the Austrian rear guard at Lodi (May 10, 1796) allowed the French to occupy Milan. Bonaparte pursued the main Austrian force eastwards, defeating them at Castiglione (August 5, 1796). His defeat of Austrian reinforcements at Arcole (November 15–17, 1796) forced the Austrians into peace talks. Meanwhile, the much larger force under Jourdan had advanced far beyond the Rhine into Bavaria, but Austrian resistance had forced the French to retreat to their starting point.

The First Italian campaign is significant for two reasons. The Austrian agreement to a truce forced the British to rethink their strategy of waging the war. They soon turned to internal subversion of French elections. More spectacularly, the campaign forged the essential elements of the Napoleonic legend. Here was a republican general of extraordinary ability, capable of inspiring not only his deprived troops, but the entire nation. In many respects, this vision, with its populism and its desire to bring liberty to the whole of Europe, was a development of the Girondin vision of revolutionary warfare that had been declared in 1792.

With the royalist armies of the interior defeated and with the loss of their last continental ally, Britain turned to subversion in their war against the French Republic. Sometimes this produced no results. Despite lavish bribes, General Pichegru was a deep disappointment. The Directory suspected he had contacted royalist spies and removed him from his command of the Army of Sambre-et-Meuse in March 1796.

Though their spymaster William Wickham based in Basel, Switzerland, the British also spent lavishly to get royalist candidates elected in the elections of Germinal, Year V (March 1797). Using a front organization called the

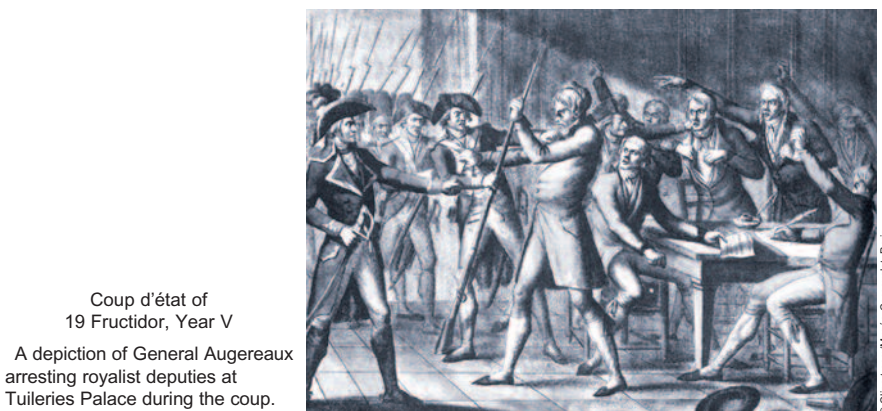
Philanthropic Institutes, agents bribed influential people and conducted defeatist propaganda. The extent to which these large sums explain the royalist victory is hard to calculate, for the few who voted were also tired of the regime's vigorous anticlericalism and seemingly endless war.

Once in the legislature, the three hundred or so quasi-royalist deputies were dangerously divided. A restoration would be very difficult to achieve by parliamentary means so long as "Louis XVIII" stuck to the Declaration of Verona. In effect, when Louis XVI's son died in the Temple prison in Paris in June 1795—of fright, his sister later said—his uncle became the Pretender. He promised an integral restoration of the Old Regime and promised death to all regicides. Such intransigence had to be papered over in the circumstances of 1797, or moderates would never permit a restoration by parliamentary means. Equally damaging for the royalists was that every parliamentary move they made attracted suspicion of ulterior motives. Thus republicans interpreted legislation to ease the penalties on public worship or on the émigrés as the thin edge of the wedge.

The confirmation that the new deputies were more than the moderates they pretended to be came with Bonaparte's capture of trunks full of correspondence that proved the British connection with the spring elections. This was enough to convince three of the Directors to organize a purge with the support of General Hoche's troops.

On 19 Fructidor, Year V (September 4, 1797), the triumvirs purged two of their fellow Directors, annulled elections in forty-nine Departments, purged 365 cantonal municipalities, deported fifty-three deputies from the legislative, and suppressed many newspapers. They adopted a law requiring priests to take a new oath of hatred of royalty or face deportation.

It was the most extensive purge so far and while the number of executions that flowed from the coup was very small, the violation of the Constitution of the Year III was deep and flagrant. Well before Bonaparte's coup two years later, constitutional government was at an end.



Coup d'état of
19 Fructidor, Year V

A depiction of General Augereau
arresting royalist deputies at
Tuileries Palace during the coup.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. In what ways was the Constitution of the Year III flawed?
2. What explains royalist success in the elections of March 1797?

Suggested Reading

Sutherland, Donald M.G. *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

Other Books of Interest

Brown, Howard G. *Ending the French Revolution: Violence, Justice, and Repression from the Terror to Napoleon*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2006.

Lewis, Gwynne, and Colin Lucas. *Beyond the Terror: Essays in French Regional and Social History, 1794–1815*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Lecture 11: The Road to Brumaire

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Donald M.G. Sutherland's *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order*, chapter 9, pp. 263–301.



The coup of Fructidor may have amputated the Constitution of the Year III, but it created opportunities for the Directory to solidify the bases of governance.

The most important of these was the beginning of financial recovery. The Directory repudiated two-thirds of the national debt and began a long program of recovering tax arrears, some of which had been owing since the Old Regime. Those who took a tax holiday in the previous six or seven years now paid a heavy penalty for gambling too long, instead of paying in deteriorating *assignats*.

The Directors also cracked down on brigandage. Criminality of this sort was not new. Some brigand gangs had operated in the heart of the country at the height of the Old Regime. But with thousands of troops available, the government arrested hundreds of members of the notorious *bande d'Orgères*, which had plagued the region south of Paris for a generation.

More generally, the Directors suspended the rule of law over many regions of the country. They reinstituted military tribunals to try brigands, *chouans*, and highway robbers. Although they had powers similar to their counterparts during the Terror, these tribunals used their authority in a much more targeted manner and passed death sentences on fewer than three hundred people. Furthermore, the Directors extended military rule to vast areas of the country. Hundreds of cities and towns were put under a state of siege, meaning military rule, or had their status as being under military control confirmed. These included Lyon, Marseilles, and Nice.

Although the pacification was far from complete, the beginning of financial recovery and the defeat of the Austrians allowed the French to pursue a more aggressive foreign policy abroad. Just after the Fructidor coup, the government sanctioned the Treaty of Campo Formio (October 17, 1797), a treaty that Bonaparte had negotiated on France's behalf. Austria thus recognized the French annexation of Belgium and the left bank of the Rhine, and the establishment of two other sister republics in Italy, the Ligurian based on Genoa, and the Cisalpine based on Milan. Austria received Venice in compensation, the end of the thousand-year history of Venice as an independent republic.

The annexation of Belgium was bound to keep British enmity alive and, in any case, the Directors broke off peace negotiations with the British at Lille once they discovered the extent of Wickham's meddling in the March 1797 elections.

With no continental enemy, the Directory intervened in Swiss quarrels and established the Helvetic Republic.

But the war with Britain remained. This was the origin of the Egyptian expedition. Its aim was to have Bonaparte occupy Egypt to cut British commercial access to the Orient and to encourage the restive Indian princes to revolt. The immediate success of the Battle of the Pyramids (2 Thermidor VI–July 21) permitted the occupation of Cairo, but as in Europe, the French imposed the costs of the occupation on the local population and the result was the same: a guerilla resistance followed by a full-scale revolt in Cairo in October. The reprisals were savage, with cannons firing in the streets and at mosques.

The scientific contributions of the Expedition to Egypt founded modern Egyptian studies. The large teams of academics and intellectuals that accompanied Bonaparte discovered the Rosetta Stone and later published the twenty-volume *Description of Egypt*. This was a compendium of ancient history, political sociology, and natural history.

Yet, the expedition was imperilled early on, not only by the revolt of the Egyptians, but by the British. Three weeks after the French landed, the Royal Navy ships of the line under Nelson trapped the French battle fleet at Aboukir. Over two days, August 1–2, 1798, Nelson destroyed or captured all but two French ships of the line, inflicted seventeen hundred deaths, and captured three thousand sailors. The Battle of the Nile effectively cut off Bonaparte's Army of Egypt.

The Expedition to Egypt also brought about the formation of the Second Coalition against France. Ottoman Turkey declared war because of the invasion of Egypt; Tsar Paul of Russia declared war because Bonaparte had seized Malta (the tsar was the commander of the Knights of Malta); and the Kingdom of Naples saw a chance to seize territory further north. For allowing the Russians transit rights, the Directory declared war on Austria. Within a few short months, France faced the same potential dangers she had in 1793.

Political instability at home weakened the regime as well. The first source of weakness was a direct consequence of the Fructidor coup. Because so many deputies had been purged in that coup, an unusual number of seats was open for the annual elections in the Year VI. Since royalists were no longer electorally active, the elections returned a large number of neo-Jacobins, a thoroughly "bad result," as one of the Directory's apologists put it.

Consequently, the Directory had the Five Hundred annul the elections of over one hundred neo-Jacobins (Law of 22 Floréal, Year VI [May 11, 1798]).

Despite its best effort, the Directory could not control the electorate. Despite closing down a dozen conservative newspapers, despite enforcing the laws against émigrés and refractory priests, and despite instituting another version of the civic religion called the *culte décadaire*, the elections of the Year VII did not go well. Turnout hit appalling lows, while Jacobins enjoyed an electoral resurgence. The revival of the Club in Paris also excited contemporaries.

The Jacobins continued a noisy campaign against corruption in army contracting and as the military situation deteriorated, demanded a revival of revolutionary measures against traitors. This campaign resulted in placing Sièyes at the head of the Directory and the removal of two other Directors. The Legislature also passed a Law of Hostages (24 Messidor, Year VII–July 15, 1799) and a forced loan on the rich. Neither was very effective against

counterrevolutionaries or the rich, but the Jacobin resurgence was enough to alarm moderates.

Meanwhile, the allies enjoyed a temporary success. Austro-Russian attacks in northern Italy forced the French to abandon Naples, Milan, and Turin. At the First Battle of Zurich (June 4, 1799), the Russians defeated General Masséna, but the failure of the Austrians to support their advance in Italy led to the Russians withdrawing and marching their troops to Switzerland. At the Second Battle of Zurich (September 25, 1799), Masséna defeated the Russians. This convinced Tsar Paul to abandon the Austrians to their own devices. Two weeks later, General Brune, in command of French and Dutch forces, defeated the Anglo-Russian expedition to Holland and compelled them to withdraw in return for an exchange of prisoners. The Russians then withdrew from the coalition.

Meanwhile, royalist insurrections broke out in the interior. One of them, in the southwest around Toulouse, played on the anti-Protestant feelings of the peasantry. At the same time, a second *chouannerie* erupted in the West. Although neither of these insurrections was particularly threatening, they distracted attention from the war on the frontiers.

There was no direct link between the coup that overthrew the Directory in November and these internal and external crises. The constant political instability of the Directory convinced politicians like Sièyes that the fundamental problem lay in the Constitution of the Year III. They were determined to replace it with a more authoritarian form of government. The crisis of 1799 provided the pretext.

The conspirators needed a general as a figurehead. Bonaparte was actually the third choice. He had arrived conveniently in Paris on October 14, 1799. On 18 Brumaire, Year VIII (November 9, 1799), with the help of some soldiers and his politician brothers vouching that he was no enemy of liberty, Bonaparte dissolved the Council of Five Hundred. The coup marked the beginning of the end of the French Revolution.

18 Brumaire
by François Bouchot, 1840

Napoleon Bonaparte (pictured in the lower center of this painting) at the Council of Ancients the day after he agreed to protect them from a supposed Jacobin plot. He entered the hall with a small force of grenadiers, thereby effecting a "coup-within-a-coup" that soon after led to his being named First Consul.



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FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. What factors allowed France to pursue a more aggressive foreign policy?
2. What were the consequences for elections and governance of the coup of Fructidor, Year V?

Suggested Reading

Sutherland, Donald M.G. *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

Other Books of Interest

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Lecture 12: Formation of a Dictatorship

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Donald M.G. Sutherland's *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order*, chapter 10–11, pp. 302–355.



In itself, the coup of 18 Brumaire solved little. The regime showed its anti-Jacobin character by annulling the Law of Hostages and the forced loan. It also adopted a conciliatory attitude toward the émigrés and recommended a de facto religious toleration as an olive branch to royalists in the West. Many problems remained and the coup created new ones. Many officials in the provinces adopted a wait and see attitude, but some even attempted to organize resistance. In the West and South, ordinary folk interpreted the coup as presaging freedom of worship and so they defied the restrictions on assembly and outdoor worship. Although the anti-Protestant rising around Toulouse was put down quickly, *chouannerie* was spreading throughout the West. On the frontiers, the victories at the end of the campaigning season held off the enemy, but the Austrians were still in control of most of Italy.

On the positive side, the regime's greatest asset was Bonaparte himself. Restless, imaginative, enormously energetic, capable of immense feats of memory and self-discipline, he had long ago shed his Jacobin prejudices. Now, he had few fixed ideas but shared many assumptions with his contemporaries—distrust of the masses, enlightenment for the few, religion for the many, the incapacity of women, the desirability of an aggressive and expansive foreign policy. Where he differed was in the brilliance of how he expressed these ideas and the ruthlessness he was willing to employ to implement them. Unlike modern dictators, he was not a violent man; his use of violence was opportunistic, not sadistic.

He outmaneuvered the primary conspirator in the coup, Sièyes, to emerge as First Consul. The subsequent Constitution of the Year VIII gave Bonaparte enormous powers of appointment. Despite the existence of two other consuls, the word of the First was decisive. The Constitution also created an unwieldy tri-cameral legislature. One chamber, the



First Consul Bonaparte
Detail of the painting by Antoine-Jean Gros, ca. 1802

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Tribunate, discussed legislation, but did not vote on it; instead, it reported its deliberations to a Legislative Body, which then voted, but could not discuss. Membership in these bodies would be determined by an indirect and multi-layered system of elections. An appointed Senate was supposed to pronounce on the constitutionality of all laws. Never once in its entire history did the Senate do this; instead, it facilitated the formation of the dictatorship. The most important body was the resurrection of the Council of State, a body of legal experts that still exists that prepared legislation.

The Constitution of the Year VIII was referred to the electorate in a referendum. For over one hundred fifty years, the fact that Bonaparte's brother Lucien, as Minister of the Interior, published fraudulent results was unknown. He simply added nonexistent "yes" votes to the departmental totals. The regime did not receive an enthusiastic endorsement from the electorate, which generally stayed home as they had in the elections of the Year VII.

The spectacular success against the internal and external enemy in 1800 solidified the regime more than any constitution could have. Bonaparte himself authorized the most drastic measures against the *chouans*, including burning villages and violating truces. Later, the government passed a law creating special courts against brigandage that eliminated juries and appeals—a return to revolutionary practices.

Bonaparte also took personal charge of the campaign in Italy, slipping the army through the Saint Bernard pass (immortalized in David's famous painting). With the last-minute arrival of reinforcements from General Desaix, who was killed in the battle, Bonaparte emerged victorious at the Battle of Marengo (June 14, 1800). This restored most of the losses of the previous year and with the victories of General Brune the next year restored France to its dominance in Italy. Meanwhile, General Moreau surrounded the Austrian and Bavarian armies at Hohenlinden, near Munich, on December 3, 1800, and in a heavy snowstorm, not only defeated the enemy, but captured most of the Austrian general staff.

These battles ended the Second Coalition. At the Peace of Lunéville (February 3, 1801), Austria accepted roughly the same terms as the Treaty of Campo Formio—recognition of the sister republics of Batavia, of Helvetia, and in Italy; and annexation of Belgium and the west bank of the Rhine.

This left the English. With the fall of the younger Pitt's government, a Whig government representing a public opinion tired of war nego-



Napoleon Crossing the Alps
by Jacques-Louis David, 1801

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tiated the Peace of Amiens (March 27, 1802) with France, Spain, and the Batavian Republic. Britain recognized French gains on the continent, retained Ceylon, but restored the Cape of Good Hope to the Dutch, while everyone recognized the independence of Malta. The French also agreed to evacuate Rome and Naples.

These immense triumphs paved the way for the dictatorship. They contributed enormously to Bonaparte's prestige, but with the defeat of the royalist guerillas, the *chouans* turned to assassination. On 3 Nivôse, Year IX (December 24, 1800), a bomb planted in a carriage on the Rue Nicaise exploded while the First Consul was on his way to the opera. The fuse was lit too late, however, except to kill a few nearby innocents. Bonaparte was convinced this outrage was the work of Jacobin militants. Even when his police minister, Joseph Fouché, the scourge of Lyon in the Year II, proved those responsible were royalists, Bonaparte insisted on making an example. With the sanction of the Senate, which declared the action constitutional, the government deported one hundred thirty Jacobins without a hearing or a trial. They were guilty, Bonaparte said, not for the explosion of the "infernal machine," but for the September Massacres, for Babeuf.

While the establishment of the dictatorship was ongoing, this was also the most creative period of the era. The government continued with the Directory's financial recovery, especially with the collection of tax arrears. By the Year X, the country was fully paid up and, even at the disasters of 1814 and 1815, taxpayers paid on time. In January 1800, the Bank of France was created, followed by the *franc*, a denomination fixed on the price of gold, not land, as the *assignats* had been.

Local government was also centralized. The revolutionaries had enacted a system of election for local administration, but this had failed. The new system, inaugurated by the Law of 28 Pluviôse, Year IX (February 17, 1800), inaugurated the position of prefect. These men represented the central government and administered the Departments on its behalf. All local administration down to the mayors of the smallest communes was in the hands of men appointed by the prefects. Elected local assemblies had a purely consultative role. Within a year, the new prefects, often drawn from the ranks of revolutionary politicians, had a major impact on restoring authority in taxation and conscription.

The Consulate and later Empire confirmed the revolutionaries' commitment to equality before the law. Bonaparte took a personal interest in the Civil Code that standardized the property law of France. Instead of the dozens of property codes of the Old Regime, the Civil Code introduced a simple and cheap method of transferring property between and among generations. Equally important, the Criminal Code of 1810 granted juries in criminal cases a wide latitude to decide guilt while recognizing substantial due process rights to the accused.

The Concordat with the Catholic Church of 1801 was the most controversial step of all. Although his advisors and the army were almost unanimously against it, Bonaparte was convinced the only route to defeating the popular counterrevolution, and the only way to have the masses respect the social hierarchy, was to accommodate the Church. The Papacy gave up a great

deal in its eagerness to restore Catholicism. There would be no monopolies on public worship, the sales of ecclesiastical property were accepted as final, the government would appoint bishops after which they received canonical investiture, and the boundaries of dioceses established in 1790 would be retained. Yet despite these concessions, the Church now had a foothold to begin the re-Catholicization of France, a process that had considerable success in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Resistance to the Concordat among Bonaparte's senior advisors and among the generals gave an already worried liberal opposition a pretext. They were anxious about the erosion of process rights in the anti-brigandage laws, and they criticized the newly established Legion of Honor for restoring an imitation of the chivalric orders of the Old Regime. Their criticism manifested itself in the Tribunate. Bonaparte retaliated by purging one-fifth of the Tribunes and appointing loyalists.

The purge allowed the promulgation of the Constitution of the Year X. It extended Bonaparte's position as Consul from ten years to life. He also acquired the right to name an unlimited number of senators. This was the legal basis for the dictatorship—the ability to pack the Senate, which decided on the constitutionality of legislation with as many toadies as he wanted. So great was his dominance over institutions, and so great was his acceptance among the political elite, it was a power he never had to use.

Another plebiscite, this time administered honestly, endorsed the Life Consulate. The turnout and the support was among the highest of the epoch. Bonaparte had given the French their religious liberty, the only liberty so many had cared about over the previous decade. They surrendered the others with little regret.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. What was the relation between military victory and the establishment of the Napoleonic dictatorship?
2. Were the reforms of the Consulate authoritarian?

Suggested Reading

Sutherland, Donald M.G. *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

Other Books of Interest

Chandler, David G. *The Campaigns of Napoleon*. New York: Macmillan, 1966.

Crook, Malcolm. *Napoleon Comes to Power: Democracy and Dictatorship in Revolutionary France 1795–1804*. Cardiff, Wales: University of Wales Press, 2007.

Wolloch, Isser. *Napoleon and His Collaborators: The Making of a Dictatorship*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2001.

Lecture 13: Empire

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Donald M.G. Sutherland's *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order*, chapter 11–12, pp. 326–381.



Institutionally, the restoration of monarchy in 1804 changed very little except to make the dictatorship hereditary. Bonaparte may have been intending to claim it for himself for some time, but more likely, he seized an opportunity that presented itself. That opportunity was another assassination or kidnapping attempt, masterminded by the Breton *chouan* Georges Cadoudal. The police lost Cadoudal for nearly six months as he plotted in Paris, but eventually one of his associates confessed under torture.

Cadoudal and his pals were quickly guillotined, but the affair had more consequences than this. Had the plot been successful, the next step would have been to have a Bourbon prince lead the royalists in France. No one knew which prince, but Bonaparte decided it was the duc d'Enghien, a grandson of the Prince de Condé. So Bonaparte had him kidnapped from Baden in Germany and shot after a farcical trial at the fortress of Vincennes, just outside Paris. This shocked European opinion, but the brutality achieved its purpose. There were no more royalist assassination attempts. Moreover, Bonaparte made the political class his accomplices because the Enghien case was widely discussed within the government and no one resigned.

In addition, for some, the Cadoudal plot showed how only Bonaparte stood between the nation and chaos. Fouché especially promoted the case that heredity would deter royalist assassins. One after another, the organs of government in Paris and the provinces chimed in, arguing that monarchy was compatible with revolutionary principles.

Bonaparte was crowned Napoleon I on December 2, 1804, with the pope presiding. The reference to another coronation in another December just



Napoleon on His Imperial Throne
by Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, 1806

over one thousand years before was obvious, even though this time Napoleon crowned himself. No other European monarch was present, however, since he had spilled royal blood and was a newcomer anyway. Afterwards, Napoleon established a court with preposterous medieval-sounding titles. There was also a referendum, but after the event, since the Constitution of the Year XII had already been implemented.

More serious was the explosion of the War of the Third Coalition. The peace lasted barely a year. Napoleon signaled his colonial ambitions by sending an expedition to Saint-Domingue (present-day Haiti). France's most lucrative slave colony had revolted in 1791. Napoleon reestablished slavery after the Convention had abolished it in 1794, and he sent a large expedition to regain control. When this failed disastrously, he cut his losses in the Caribbean and sold Louisiana to the Americans.

But this was not the only sign that Napoleon intended to continue an aggressive foreign policy. Through various intrigues and threats, he became "Mediator" of the Helvetic Confederation. He annexed Piedmont and failed to evacuate French troops from the Batavian Republic. He also protested bitterly at his mocking treatment in the British press. For their part, the British were deeply disappointed that the French retained their high tariff barriers, and so, despite a specific clause in the Treaty of Amiens, they refused to evacuate Malta.

Amiens broke down in the spring of 1803, but it would be two years before Britain got the needed continental allies. Austria and Prussia were hostile to the French forward policy in Germany and Switzerland, and Prussia especially wanted the French to evacuate Hanover. Austria also resented several annexations in Italy, culminating with that of Genoa in June 1805. Finally, Russia intervened to prevent French hegemony over the continent.

This was the War of the Third Coalition (1805–07), which inaugurated Napoleon's most spectacular victories, which in turn led to the formation of the Grand Empire. There were five major battles that established it and all five had the same pattern. The aim was to entice the enemy to commit his troops and then attack the flanks or rear with fresh or reserve troops. Where Napoleon did this successfully, he inflicted casualties three times greater than he suffered, along with the capture of vast amounts of equipment and prisoners. French soldiers were also different than their enemies. They traveled light with a week's rations at most, unlike other continental armies with their huge baggage trains. French soldiers were also citizens, and as events proved, devoted to the Emperor to the end and beyond. On the other hand, Continental armies recruited some soldiers from serfs, criminals, and prisoners of war. Nonetheless, where these soldiers could see the French as irreligious—the Russians, the Spanish, and earlier, the Muslims and the Italians in 1799 would fit—they could be powerfully motivated too.

Napoleon assembled a huge invasion fleet using ports from Holland to Le Havre to invade England. But so long as a Channel crossing was unsafe, he could not cross. The plan unravelled with the naval Battle of Cape Finisterre off Spain on July 22, 1805, in which the Royal Navy defeated the French and Spanish navies. This prevented Admiral Villeneuve from breaking the blockade at Brest and so defended the Channel from the French. So in August

1805, Napoleon wheeled the Army of England east, to fight England, as he said, in Germany. In a dazzling march to the Rhine and Upper Danube, he inflicted a devastating defeat on the Austrians at Ulm (October 20, 1805). The Grand Army drove east into Poland, where on December 2, 1805, Bonaparte won his greatest victory over an Austro-Russian army at Austerlitz.

Napoleon had kept Prussia out of the war with promises and finally rewarded her with Hanover (February 1806). Yet the Prussians knew that Napoleon intended to return Hanover to George III at any settlement with Britain, and, whipped up by a francophobe party at court, they declared war on France. On October 14, 1806, at the battles of Jena and Auerstadt, Napoleon and Davout crushed the famed Prussian army.

The result of these victories was the Grand Empire, a shifting, work-in-progress reconstruction of continental boundaries and governments.

The determination to defeat England in Germany was wildly successful if that phrase meant the aim was to deprive England of continental allies. On the other hand, it was moot thanks to Nelson's decisive victory at Trafalgar, off south-western Spain on October 21, 1805. Nelson counted on the superior gunnery and seamanship of British crews to launch an unorthodox frontal attack on the Franco-Spanish line of ships. This split the line and allowed the British ships to attack the enemy rear. The defeat cost the French and Spanish two-thirds of their ships of the line. It also made an invasion of the British Isles impossible.

The response was the Berlin Decree (November 21, 1806), which inaugurated the Continental System. Since military means both at sea and on land had been inadequate, all British manufactured products were banned from the continent. The idea was to provoke shortages, inflation, and a run on the pound, and at the same time prevent the British from acquiring and subsidizing allies. The Continental System was a partial success in that British textile exports fell. In some years high indirect taxes and harvest shortages pushed living standards down, which in turn produced considerable discontent but little more.

French industries along the Rhine axis benefitted, as did the big farms of the north, which developed the sugar beet industry, but most importantly, Napoleon's policy until 1814 was dominated by the logic of the Continental System. This meant bringing allies like Russia, Prussia, or Sweden into the system or forcing them to do so by invasion (Portugal or Sicily). Since the amount of smuggling was huge, the system could not contain the natural flow of goods.

Meanwhile, the campaign on the eastern front continued. At the Battle of Eylau in eastern Prussia on February 7–8, 1807, Napoleon defeated a combined Prussian-Russian force, but at great cost. A miscalculation in the blinding snow inadvertently exposed General Augereau's flank to Russian artillery. Only an enormous cavalry charge from General Murat drove the Russians off. It was one of the bloodiest battles to date and the French were too exhausted to pursue the Russians, who retreated in good order.

Napoleon waited for better weather. On a hot day, June 14, 1807, he split the Russian lines at Friedland, the artillery raked the Russian squares in rapid fire, Ney cut off the retreat, and General Lannes overwhelmed the

Russian right. The Russians lost twelve thousand men, with an additional ten thousand captured.

Since each side feared attacks from third parties—Napoleon from Austria, Russia from the Turks—they agreed to make peace. In personal negotiations with Napoleon, Tsar Alexander I agreed in the Treaty of Tilsit (July 7, 1807) to join the Continental System. A secret clause permitted Russia to carve up the Ottoman Empire. Prussia, whose king, Frederick-William III, was made to wait outside the two emperors' tent, was dismembered. Much of Prussia's territory became the Grand Duchy of Warsaw.

It was the high-water mark of Napoleon's Empire. France now consisted of 130 Departments stretching from Hamburg through Amsterdam to Rome. The Empire itself with allied states and satellites extended from Spain to Russia. But Tilsit itself contained the seeds of the Empire's destruction.



FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. What purpose was achieved by Bonaparte's trial and execution of the duc d'Enghien?
2. What was the relationship between Napoleon's grand military strategy and the Continental System?

Suggested Reading

Sutherland, Donald M.G. *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

Other Books of Interest

Ellis, Jeffrey James. *The Napoleonic Empire*. 2nd ed. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Lyons, Martyn. *Napoleon Bonaparte and the Legacy of the French Revolution*. New York: St. Martin's, 1994.

Lecture 14: The Disaster

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Donald M.G. Sutherland's *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order*, chapter 11–12, pp. 326–381.



The strategy of the counterrevolutionaries of the 1790s was to provoke a vast national insurrection against the Revolution, based on religion and anti-Protestantism, that would persuade the foreign powers to intervene. Napoleon's Empire crashed in quite different ways. The Empire was remarkably stable until the end. There were fewer than three hundred political prisoners in 1812, a clear sign of how good the police were in isolating opposition. One of the worst harvests in a century in 1811 produced almost no disturbances. While royalist conspiracies existed, they were ineffective, and even in 1814, the resistance to higher taxes and to conscription did not contribute much to the collapse of the regime.

Napoleon provoked his own downfall. After Tilsit, the only implacable enemy committed to regime change was Britain. The other continental powers were subdued, and as late as the spring of 1814, they were not unified on a successor regime.

Napoleon's attempt to extend the Continental System stimulated resistance. Portugal refused to join the System, and so after securing transit rights through Spain, the French invaded. The British spirited the royal family to Brazil, and General Junot occupied Lisbon without firing a shot on November 30, 1807. The temptation to meddle with Spain was too good to miss, however, and Napoleon intimidated the Spanish Bourbons into surrendering their crown to his brother Joseph. This eventually sparked the anti-French rising of May 1808. Napoleon denounced the Spanish as an army of "monks" and "brigands," but the rebellion spread rapidly. As with almost all the earlier anti-French rebellions, including Luxembourg, Cairo, Naples, and the Tyrol, religion played a big role in motivating the insurgents.

Although the Portuguese also rose against the French occupiers, the rebels could not expel the invaders because they often worked at cross purposes. Nonetheless, a British expeditionary force in action in Portugal from August 1808 onward gave the rebels a base. By October, the British had liberated Lisbon and soon the whole of Portugal. Napoleon's commitment to the Iberian peninsula was costly. Losses averaged about forty thousand men a year, more than each of the major battles before 1812. Even Napoleon himself could not solve the problem when he briefly took charge.

Napoleon did buy some time with a second meeting with Tsar Alexander at Erfurt in September, but the Russians were vexed for not being given a free hand to dismantle Turkey. Consequently, they did nothing to stop the Austrians from rearming. Napoleon defeated the Austrians at the costly battle of Wagram on July 5–6, 1809, but reassigning Austrian territory to Russia, Bavaria, and the Grand Duchy of Warsaw bought little good will. Russia

wanted more and Alexander was miffed when Napoleon chose an Austrian princess, Marie-Louise, to replace Josephine.

The birth of the long-desired King of Rome on March 20, 1811, did not even consolidate the Empire at home, let alone abroad. When Napoleon was stuck in Russia in 1812, conspirators under the disgruntled half-mad General Malet announced that the Emperor had been killed in battle. No one in Paris thought to proclaim “Napoleon II,” the theoretical heir.

Meanwhile, the Russian economy was suffering from lack of access to British markets. In December 1810, Alexander opened his ports to British shipping and slapped heavy tariffs on French luxury goods. Napoleon had to retaliate. The purpose of the invasion of Russia, therefore, was to bring the Russians back into the Continental System and, by extension, to punish the challenge to French hegemony.

It took a year to prepare for the invasion. When Napoleon crossed the Nieman River in June 1812, he brought the largest army Europeans had mustered in modern times—six hundred thousand—composed of as many nationalities as the armies of the Crusaders. The Grand Army also brought a huge amount of supplies, because the French would not be able to count on foraging supplies as they usually did in more prosperous parts of Europe. Interestingly, the countries Napoleon could not defeat were the poorest—Russia and Spain.

It is customary to blame the winter for the disaster of the Russian campaign, but a combination of weather and poor preparation from the start made the usual rapid victory impossible. Perhaps with the experience of Friedland in mind, the Russian commanders refused to be drawn into impulsive attacks. As the French advanced, soldiers suffered in the tremendous summer heat, heavy rains slowed the carts, and horses died of green fodder.

The French were thus too exhausted to execute General Davout's plan of encircling the Russian left at the Battle of Borodino on September 7. Their straight-ahead drive failed to break the Russian line, so that after an immense battering, the Russians withdrew in good order. Napoleon did enter a burning Moscow on September 14. He dallied in the Kremlin for a month waiting for Alexander's surrender, which never came. In fact, the Russians were undergoing a vast national mobilization against the irreligious invader, and partisan forces inflicted grave damage on French stragglers during the retreat.

Napoleon had to abandon all hope of wintering at Smolensk as the supply situation and the weather deteriorated terribly. From early November, snow prevented horses from grazing and temperatures dropped. The lowest temperature occurred west of Minsk, -37.5°C , on December 6. Men and horses froze to death or starved. Animals, carts, and artillery had to be abandoned. The column was fifty miles long, easily visible from the plumes of smoke of destroyed equipment. The weak or wounded fell off carts, only to be crushed under the wheels and hooves. Since Napoleon decided to return by the same route he had come, he limited even further what could be foraged. The soldiers also passed the horrors of the site of Borodino, with submerged equipment and horses, corpses of comrades half eaten by wolves. The Russians nearly trapped the Grand Army with the swampy river Berezina at

its back, but it escaped with a loss of forty-five thousand men. When it staggered over the frozen Nieman River into Poland and Prussia in January, it had lost five-hundred seventy thousand men. The commanders of the Austrian and Prussian contingents signed a separate peace with the Russians.

The losses were staggering, but amazingly, the French nearly recovered. The Army had lost two hundred thou-

sand trained horses and over 80 percent of their artillery. This was the most difficult to make up. Since France was the most populous country in Europe, with the most efficient conscription bureaucracy, three hundred thousand new men were ready to take the field by spring. However haphazard their training had been, they helped the Emperor defeat the Prussians and Russians at Dresden on August 26–27, 1813. The Battle of Leipzig on October 18–19 was a draw, but the allies were able to muster more reinforcements. This forced a retreat to the Rhine, made all the more ignominious in that Napoleon's Bavarian ally defected to the Coalition, as did his brother-in-law, Murat, King of Naples, while his only German ally remaining—the king of Saxony—was captured. At the same time, Wellington's forces were advancing on the Pyrénées.

The allies continued their march on France while Napoleon tried to revive the spirit of the *levee en masse* of 1793. But an exhausted nation, overwhelmed with special war taxes and demands for men, responded poorly. At the same time, the allies were careful not to endorse a counterrevolution as they had in 1792–93. They had not even settled upon a postwar frontier, and while they agreed Napoleon had to go, Austria was trying to promote a regency under Marie-Louise, the same strategy Vienna had pursued in the Old Regime with Marie-Antoinette, the empress's aunt. The British, on the other hand, supported Louis XVIII, the brother of Louis XVI.

However well Napoleon led his troops, the allies kept pouring over the Rhine and the Pyrenees. On March 31, 1814, Paris surrendered. For the capital's commander this was a military decision that the city could not defend itself. It was ominous, however, that many soldiers in the garrison wanted to fight on. So did Napoleon, but in a celebrated encounter at Fontainebleau, Ney, speaking for the other four marshals present, told the Emperor the situation was hopeless. Napoleon abdicated on April 14.

The First Restoration was governed by a charter that resembled the Constitution of 1791. Louis XVIII accepted it at the last minute and so had to abandon the policy of the Declaration of Verona of 1795, which promised a return to the Old Regime and death to the regicides of the Convention. Yet the return of the Bourbons was not popular in the country as a whole, nor in



The French Retreat from Moscow in 1812
by January Suchodolski, 1844

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the rank and file of the army. Exiled to the island of Elba off the Italian coast, Napoleon followed events in France eagerly. The allies had failed in several of their promises to him. He also knew that the allies at the Congress of Vienna were discussing whether to exile him further, perhaps to St. Helena. Knowing this was his last chance, he evaded British patrols and landed near Antibes on the coast of Provence on March 1, 1815.

By March 20, he was in Paris. As the writer Chateaubriand said, he had conquered his kingdom without firing a shot. The "Hundred Days" was more than a spectacular end to an amazing career. Its most significant aspect was his reception on his march through the Alps, Grenoble, Lyon, Autun, and Paris. Everywhere people welcomed him as a defense against a return to aristocratic government, and the restoration of the tithe and feudal dues. Despite the Emperor's misgivings at the radicalism of this reception, for many of the French, he was once again the man of 1792, the defender of French liberty who would bring liberty to Europe once again.

The Battle of Waterloo occurred on June 18, 1815.

The great adventure was over.



Napoleon Bonaparte Abdicates in Fontainebleau
by Paul Delaroche, 1845

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FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. What was the purpose behind the invasion of Russia?
2. Which explains the failure of the Russian campaign better, strategic errors, or the weather?

Suggested Reading

Sutherland, Donald M.G. *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

Other Books of Interest

Ellis, Jeffrey James. *The Napoleonic Empire*. 2nd ed. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Hazaareesingh, Sudhir. *The Legend of Napoleon*. London: Granta Books, 2005.

THE FRENCH REPUBLICAN CALENDAR

France used the Republican Calendar from 1792 until 1805. The names of all the days, months, and years were renamed with the years beginning at the foundation of the Republic in "An I" (Year I). The Republican calendar year began at the autumn equinox; therefore, it started on different days.

French Republican Calendar Years and Equivalent Gregorian Calendar Years			
Republican	Gregorian	Republican	Gregorian
An I	1792–1793	An VIII	1799–1800
An II	1793–1794	An IX	1800–1801
An III	1794–1795	An X	1801–1802
An IV	1795–1796	An XI	1802–1803
An V	1796–1797	An XII	1803–1804
An VI	1797–1798	An XIII	1804–1805
An VII	1798–1799	An XIV	1805

All months had thirty days except the twelfth month, which had thirty-five or thirty-six days in a leap year. The four seasons were indicated in the month names by their common endings. The months were given names based on nature. The table below shows the language, and root word and meaning, from which the names were derived.

French Republican Month Names and Equivalent Gregorian Calendar Periods			
SEASON	Republican Name	Language/ Root Word and Meaning	Gregorian Period
Automne (Autumn)	Vendémiaire	(from Latin <i>vindemia</i> , "grape harvest")	22 September to 21 October
	Brumaire	(from French <i>brume</i> , "fog")	22 August to 20 November
	Frimaire	(from French <i>frimas</i> , "frost")	21 November to 20 December
Hiver (Winter)	Nivôse	(from Latin <i>nivosus</i> , "snow")	21 December to 19 January
	Pluviôse	(from Latin <i>pluviosus</i> , "rain")	20 January to 18 February
	Ventôse	(from Latin <i>ventosus</i> , "wind")	19 February to 20 March
Printemps (Spring)	Germinal	(from Latin <i>germen</i> , "germination")	21 March to 19 April
	Floréal	(from Latin <i>flos</i> , "flowering")	20 April to 19 May
	Prairial	(from French <i>prairie</i> , "pasture")	20 May to 18 June
Été (Summer)	Messidor	(from Latin <i>messis</i> , "harvest")	19 June to 18 July
	Thermidor	(from Greek <i>thermos</i> , "heat")	19 July to 17 August
	Fructidor	(from Latin <i>fructus</i> , "fruit")	18 August to 21 September

THE FRENCH REPUBLICAN CALENDAR

Each month of the Republican Calendar was divided into three *décades* (somewhat equivalent to our “weeks”) of ten days each. The days were named simply, again based on Latin or French root words. In addition, instead of most days being named for a saint, as in the Roman Catholic calendar of saints, each day of the year was named for an animal (days ending in the number 5), a tool (days ending in a zero), or were named for a plant or mineral (all other days).

French Republican Calendar Day Names			
primidi	(first day)	sextidi	(sixth day)
duodi	(second day)	septidi	(seventh day)
tridi	(third day)	octidi	(eighth day)
quartidi	(fourth day)	nonidi	(ninth day)
quintidi	(fifth day)	décadi	(tenth day)

Décades were abandoned in Floréal, An X (April 1802).

The five “extra” days (six in leap years) that resulted from the creation of the Republican Calendar were made national holidays at the end of every year. These were originally known as *les sans-culottides* (after *sans-culottes*), but after An III (1795) were called *les jours complémentaires* (the complementary days).

French Republican Calendar Complementary Days	
First Complementary Day:	<i>La Fête de la Vertu</i> “Celebration of Virtue” September 17 or 18
Second Complementary Day:	<i>La Fête du Génie</i> “Celebration of Talent” September 18 or 19
Third Complementary Day:	<i>La Fête du Travail</i> “Celebration of Labor” September 19 or 20
Fourth Complementary Day:	<i>La Fête de l'Opinion</i> “Celebration of Convictions” September 20 or 21
Fifth Complementary Day:	<i>La Fête des Récompenses</i> “Celebration of Honors (Awards)” September 21 or 22
Revolution Day:	<i>La Fête de la Révolution</i> “Celebration of the Revolution” September 22 or 23 (in Leap Years)

PRINCIPAL EVENTS AND TIMELINE OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

First Phase

June–July 1788:	Insurrection at Grenoble.
August 8, 1788:	Louis XVI convokes <i>État-général</i> on suggestion of former finance minister Jacques Necker to hear grievances.
May 5, 1789:	Opening of the <i>État-général</i> at Versailles.
June 17, 1789:	Representatives of the <i>tiers état</i> form a National Assembly.
June 20, 1789:	The “Tennis Court Oath”: National Assembly representatives swear not to leave until a new constitution is established.
June 23, 1789:	King rejects Resolutions of the <i>tiers état</i> .
July 9, 1789:	National Assembly declares itself the Constituent Assembly.
July 12, 1789:	Necker is dismissed. Fifty thousand citizens arm themselves with pikes and form the National Guard.
July 14, 1789:	Armed citizens storm and capture the Bastille.
July 15, 1789:	Lafayette appointed Commander of the National Guard.
July 17, 1789:	“Great Fear” begins as peasants revolt across France.
August 5–11, 1789:	National Assembly decrees abolition of feudalism.
August 26, 1789:	National Assembly decrees the “Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen.”
October 5, 1789:	Women lead a delegation to demand bread from Louis XVI in Versailles. After scuffles, they are ignored by the King.
October 6, 1789:	King Louis XVI returns to Paris.
November 2, 1789:	Constituent Assembly decrees expropriation of Church property.
February 13, 1790:	Suppression of religious orders and vows.
July 14, 1790:	Civil Constitution, subordinating the Church to the civil government, inaugurated by Louis XVI.
August 18, 1790:	First counterrevolutionary assembly at Jalès.
May 15, 1791:	Black citizens of French colonies granted equal rights.
June 21, 1791:	Louis XVI attempts to flee to Varennes, but is recognized and forcibly returned to Paris.
July 15, 1791:	Assembly declares king inviolable and restores his prerogatives.
July 17, 1791:	National Guard fires on crowd protesting against restoration of the King.
September 13, 1791:	Louis XVI formally accepts the Constitution.
October 1, 1791:	Legislative Assembly commences.
November 9, 1791:	Civil marriage and divorce instituted. Assembly orders all émigrés to return under pain of death.
November 11, 1791:	King vetoes Assembly’s ruling on émigrés.
January–March 1791:	Food riots across Paris.
February 9, 1791:	Property of émigrés forfeited.
April 20, 1792:	France declares war on Austria, but French army flees at sight of the enemy.
June 20, 1792:	Jacobin Insurrection again thwarted by the king. Jacobins continue to defy the Assembly.

PRINCIPAL EVENTS AND TIMELINE OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

July 25, 1792:	Brunswick Manifesto: Duke of Brunswick publishes call for allied attack on France.
August 10, 1792:	Jacobin masses storm the Tuileries Palace, massacring the Swiss Guard. Louis XVI is imprisoned.
August 19, 1792:	Lafayette flees to Austria.
August 22, 1792:	Royalist riots in the Vendée. Armies suffer setbacks at Langwy and Verdun.

Second Phase

September 1, 1792:	General mobilization: Citizens sent to the front.
September 2, 1792:	Danton instigates the massacre of about 1,200 Royalists held in Parisian prisons.
September 20, 1792:	French forces defeat the invading force at Valmy. The Revolution achieves victory in its military conflicts.
September 21, 1792:	The Convention elected by the Legislative Assembly abolishes the monarchy. Day One of the Republican Calendar.
November 19, 1792:	"Edict of Fraternity" offers aid to "subject peoples."
December 11, 1792:	Trial of Louis XVI begins.
January 21, 1793:	Louis XVI executed.
February 1, 1793:	France declares war on Britain and Holland.
February 25, 1793:	Food riots in Paris.
April 6, 1793:	Committee of Public Safety established.
April 24, 1793:	Marat put on trial for complicity in September Massacre, but is acquitted.
May 4, 1793:	Maximum price of bread imposed.
May 27, 1793:	Uprising of Paris Commune against the Convention.
June 2, 1793:	Expulsion of the Girondists (the party of compromise) from all offices. The Commune of Paris becomes the center of power.
June 24, 1793:	Jacobin Constitution accepted by the Convention.
July 13, 1793:	Marat murdered by Charlotte Corday.
July 17, 1793:	Corday executed amid public outrage.
August 1, 1793:	Metric system of measures adopted.
August 23, 1793:	<i>Levée en masse</i> (conscription) decreed.
September 4–5, 1793:	Riots in Paris.
September 17, 1793:	"Law of Suspects" initiates the Terror.
October 14, 1793:	Marie-Antoinette tried and executed (October 16).
October 24, 1793:	Twenty-two Girondists tried and executed.
November 10, 1793:	Festival of Liberty and Reason.
March 24, 1794:	Robespierre, the Committee of Public Safety, and the Jacobin Club denounce the Hébertists and Dantonists on trumped-up charges and execute all the popular leaders. Robespierre becomes virtual dictator.
June 10, 1794:	22 Prairial (The Terror): Procedures for mass trials and executions implemented. Victims go to the guillotine in groups of fifty

PRINCIPAL EVENTS AND TIMELINE OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

or more at a time. An estimated two to three thousand (mostly poor citizens) are executed.

- May 18, 1794: Robespierre decrees the new religion of the Supreme Being.
 July 27, 1794: 9 Thermidor: Convention calls for the arrest of Robespierre. Robespierre attempts an insurrection, which fails. He is arrested and executed (July 28). After his supporters are executed, the Terror ends.

Third Phase

- November 12, 1794: Jacobin Club is suppressed by the Convention.
 January 1, 1795: Churches reopen for Christian worship.
 May–June 1795: White Terror instituted in the South.
 June 8, 1795: The Dauphin dies in prison. The Comte de Provence assumes the title of Louis XVIII.
 August 22, 1795: Constitution of Year III approved, establishing the Directory.
 October 5, 1795: Royalists attempt a coup. Napoleon Bonaparte makes his name suppressing the move with “a whiff of grapeshot.” The popular party gains strength with “Gracchus” Babeuf as its spokesperson.
 October 26, 1795: The Convention dissolves itself in favor of a dictatorship by the Directorate.
 February 2, 1796: Napoleon assumes command of the French army in Italy.
 May 10, 1796: Leaders of Babeuf’s “Conspiracy of Equals” arrested.
 September 7, 1796: Hundreds of supporters of Babeuf attack the palace of the Directorate, but are routed.
 May 27, 1797: Babeuf and his supporters are convicted, but take their own lives.
 May 1797: Elections produce a Royalist majority. Elections in 1798 and 1799 produce a more radical result and are annulled by the Directorate.
 June 18, 1799: The Directorate resigns.
 November 9, 1799: 18 Brumaire: Napoleon Bonaparte named “First Consul,” now the effective dictator.
 December 2, 1804: Napoleon consecrated as Emperor. Continental wars continue and expand (the “Napoleonic Wars”).
 1810–1811: The French Empire reaches its greatest extent (from the Atlantic coast to central Russia).
 March 31, 1814: Paris surrenders to the overwhelming forces of the Allies.
 April 14, 1814: Napoleon abdicates and is exiled to the island of Elba. He escapes (February 26, 1815).
 March 20, 1815: The “Hundred Days” begin as Napoleon enters Paris and gathers a force of 200,000 men.
 June 18, 1815: The Battle of Waterloo: Napoleon is defeated.
 October 15, 1815: Napoleon exiled by the British to the island of Saint Helena. He dies there on May 5, 1821.

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These books are available online through www.modernscholar.com or by calling Recorded Books at 1-800-636-3399.