

After Robespierre

THE THERMIDORIAN REACTION

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THE THERMIDORIAN REACTION

By ALBERT MATHIEZ

*Translated from the French
by Catherine Alison Phillips*



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PREFACE

So far as order of time is concerned, M. Mathiez's study of the Thermidorian Reaction, of which the present volume is a translation, is a continuation of his history of the French Revolution, of which the English version was published in 1928. In form and character, however, there is a notable difference. In the case of the earlier work the limitations imposed by the publishers excluded all references and foot-notes, and the author had to refer the reader to his other published works for the evidence on which his conclusions were based. In the case of the present book no such limitations have been set, and M. Mathiez has thus been able not only to state his conclusions, but to give the chain of reasoning by which they have been reached. The Thermidorian Reaction is therefore something more than a sequel to The French Revolution, which M. Mathiez, with perhaps undue modesty, has described as a précis having no independent authority; it is not only a work of art, but a weighty contribution to historical science.

In the preface to his French Revolution M. Mathiez drew a distinction between the science and the art of history or, as he put it, between "erudition and history." Erudition, he says, collects and collates the evidence in order to arrive at the truth; history reconstructs and expounds. The former is analysis, the latter is synthesis. In both these functions of the historian M. Mathiez has abundantly proved his excellence. There can be no doubt as to his merits as a scientific historian. His life has been devoted to the intensive study of the French Revolution; with enormous patience and labour he has explored vast fields of material unexploited by earlier historians; and the results of these researches he gave to the world in a long series of erudite monographs before he began the work of reconstructing and expounding the Revolution as a whole. His French Revolution showed that he brought to this work of reconstruction the essential quality of the historian as artist—the power of breathing life into the dry bones of the past. The picture which he draws of the Revolution is clear and living. It is clear because he has mastered his subject. It is living, partly because, though he disclaims any conscious partisan bias, for him the questions at issue during the Revolution are still alive, partly because his researches into the more hidden by-ways of history have enabled him to introduce into the drama, not only the familiar leading characters, but a host of those obscure figures which "moved in their penumbra" and, for all their obscurity, often played an important, if not a determining, part in the development of the plot. M. Mathiez does not make the mistake which the great Renaissance scholar Giralomo Cardano blamed

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in historians: namely, that they are too apt to overlook "the very small things out of which all very great things grow."

To say this is not to give unqualified approval to all the conclusions which M. Mathiez draws from the facts. We may or may not, for instance, be inclined to accept his estimate of Robespierre as "the one great statesman of the Revolution," or to see in him a figure wholly heroic, the embodiment of the ideal of republican virtue. But after reading M. Mathiez's arguments, and the evidence on which they are based, few will care to deny that the traditional view of Robespierre as a "sea-green" hypocrite and a blood-thirsty monster, whose cruelties had no better motive than the pursuit of personal ambition, must be drastically revised. At least it is possible to admit that M. Mathiez displayed the true dramatic instinct in closing the great destructive and constructive period of the Revolution with his hero's fall. For with Robespierre and his friends Revolutionary idealism perished as an effective force in France, and the sequel to Thermidor is of the nature of an anticlimax.

The men who overthrew Robespierre, and grasped the reins of power, were certainly not idealists. Some, like Fouché or Tallien, had been more ruthless terrorists than he, and with meaner motives; and if, step by step, they destroyed the system that had become identified with Robespierre's name, this was due not so much to their own initiative as to the pressure of public opinion. Certainly the history of the Thermidorian reaction is a sordid story—a story without a hero. In reading it one is not surprised that the French people, weary of the endless intrigues of politicians, weary of the ceaseless struggle for power by men who knew not how to use it, weary of the corruption in high places and of hopeless misgovernment, should in the end have had eyes only for the progress of the French arms abroad and been content to exchange the illusion of liberty for the intoxication of glory. The ruthless inquest which M. Mathiez makes into this depressing period of the internal history of France fully explains how it was that Napoleon "sprang armed from the Revolution, like Minerva from the brow of Jove."

It is a period, too, which has its lessons for all time. It marks the break-down of the first great European experiment in representative democracy, and makes the reasons for this break-down clear. In his Party Politics Professor Michels has shown, with a wealth of examples, how democracy always tends to develop into oligarchy, more or less veiled, which is especially true of countries whose peoples have no long experience in the art of self-government. The men in power wrest or violate the provisions of the constitution in order to retain power, and those in opposition, in default of legal means of redress, stir up the discontented elements of the population to revolt. The appeal is then to arms, and the stronger will prevail. It was by

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military intervention that the Convention was saved from the wrath of the Paris populace during the risings of the 12th Germinal and the 1st Prairial, 1795; it was by a military coup d'état that the first Directory maintained itself in power on the 18th Fructidor, 1797, and this set the precedent for the coup d'état of the 18th Brumaire, 1799, which carried Bonaparte to supreme power. It is a precedent which is still being followed in other countries. The history of France between the fall of Robespierre and the rise of Napoleon is full of instruction for those who believe in representative democracy as a universal panacea for the political distempers of mankind.

W. ALISON PHILLIPS

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After Robespierre

THE THERMIDORIAN REACTION

CHAPTER I

The Dictatorship of the Committee of Public Safety Comes to an End

I PROPOSE to set forth in some detail the inner history of the last fifteen months of the National Convention, from the fall of Robespierre, on the 9th Thermidor, year II (July 27, 1794), to the establishment of the Directory, on the 4th Brumaire, year IV (October 26, 1795). These fifteen months have justly been called the Thermidorian reaction (reaction in the sense of a return to a past state, a step backwards), and, as a matter of fact, what we are about to witness is the destruction, one after the other, of the institutions and usages of the preceding period, that of the Terror, simultaneously with the elimination and persecution of all the men who had exercised power or taken part in administration during that period.

Before the 9th Thermidor, power had become more and more concentrated in a few hands under pressure of the political and economic exigencies of the state of war, as a means of defeating the enemy at home and abroad, as well as feeding the cities and armies, which were threatened with a permanent state of famine. Little by little the Committee of Public Safety had absorbed all authority, reducing the Convention to the position of a mere body for recording its decisions. The dictatorship of the Committee was based upon the clubs, now purged of all elements of opposition, and performing both supervisory and administrative functions throughout the whole of France, since most of the government officials belonged to them and played an influential part in them. To induce the masses to put forth the efforts necessary for the achievement of victory, the Committee of Public Safety, under pressure from the clubs, had followed a vigorously democratic policy. It had checked the depreciation of the assignats by imposing fixed prices for commodities—in other words, by establishing the “maximum.” It had increased the grants to the soldiers’ dependants and relief to the indigent, and indirectly subsidized artisans and manual workers by paying them to be regular in their attendance at the assemblies of the sections, or finding them employment in the revolutionary committees or in the many organizations for supplying food or munitions of war. For a whole year sansculottism had been the order of the day, the source both of honours and of profit. Wealth was apologized for, the familiar form of

address "*tu*" (thou), symbolic of equality, became the fashion, knee-breeches were replaced by trousers, the full-dress coat by the short tunic (*carmagnole*), and the three-cornered hat by the red cap.

The man identified with this democratic policy had been Robespierre. It was he who had forced it on the Convention, thanks to his enormous popularity among the artisans. On the eve of his fall, by the aid of his friends Saint-Just and Couthon, he had obtained the sanction of the Committees of Public Safety and General Security (at their sessions of the 4th and 5th Thermidor) for at last carrying into effect the decrees of Ventôse, which had so far been accepted in theory only—the decrees by which Saint-Just had intended to confiscate the property of the suspects (the enemy at home) and distribute it gratis among the poor sansculottes, in order to create outright a new class of men who, owing everything to the Revolution—since they owed it their property—would therefore be its defenders. Thus Robespierre had gone beyond political democracy: he had started on the road towards a social revolution, and this was one of the reasons for his fall.¹

Robespierre and his friends having been overthrown, sent to the scaffold, deprived of office, or imprisoned, the democratic policy which they had represented lost its chief support. It even became suspect, for it was intimately bound up with Robespierreism. The surviving Montagnards in the Convention quailed before the terrible accusation of Robespierreism. They did not put forth their full strength in defence of democratic institutions. They left the impression that in their conflicts with the men of Thermidor they too had their personal interests quite as much in view as the principles to which they still proclaimed their allegiance.

The great days of the Republic were now at an end. Personal rivalries took the place of ideas; the cause of public safety was obscured or concealed by private interests or by personal grudges and passions. Politicians took the place of policy. All the statesmen were dead. Their successors, who contended bitterly for power, had too puny a personality to gather stable majorities round them. Their successes were but momentary. They jostled and competed with one another in the most startling bids for popularity, the most abrupt changes of policy, the basest vacillations of opinion, in order to ensure the success of their own petty enterprises—if necessary, at the expense of the country. There was a sudden outbreak of all those harmful, solvent, and corrupting elements contained in parliamentary

¹ For the decrees of Ventôse and their application see my essay in the *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* for July 1928.

systems when these are not vivified and held in check by the moral discipline of leaders worthy to command, or by the vigilance of well-informed and organized opinion—an outbreak, in short, of calculating selfishness. The Convention became a place of trafficking where men of the type of horse-copers exercised their talents with more or less adroitness. They quarrelled loudly to impress the gallery, but came to terms behind the scenes after closing-time, in order to carry on the old business under a new name. A thing hitherto unknown came into being—parliamentary solidarity. The private and collective interest of the deputies conflicted scandalously with the national interest, thus proving the truth of Montesquieu's saying: "Without virtue—that is to say, devotion to the public weal—the Republic is a cast clout (*dépouille*), and its strength becomes no more than the power of a few citizens and the licence of all. . . ." ² Four months after the execution of Danton, his cynical program triumphed; at last the Dantonists were in power. And all Robespierre's predictions came true.

The baseness of the appetites now let loose is in violent and heart-breaking contrast with the great heroisms and crimes of the preceding period. The romantic historians were not all able to bear the sight. Michelet broke off his history of the Revolution at the 9th Thermidor, as though what came after it was not worth the trouble of relating. Even monarchist and conservative writers, who should, one would have thought, have rejoiced at this bankruptcy, make no secret of their repugnance to venture into the open sewer into which the Convention now plunged. . . .

"In the general histories," writes M. Thureau-Dangin, "once one has passed the 9th Thermidor and arrived at those years which follow one another, colourless and desolate, agitated and sterile, up to the 18th Brumaire, the writers seem to be seized with weariness and disgust. . . . Everything, both events and men, is on a smaller scale. . . . The stage is given over to minor characters, and things have reached such a pass that Tallien, Barras, and their like have become leading characters."³

The historian has no right to pick and choose what is to form the subject of his studies, accepting what he likes and rejecting what is repugnant to him. The whole of the past is before him, importuning and demanding his attention. As a matter of fact, the shadow serves to make the light more conspicuous. Reality is a whole. If only we will follow it up closely, tracing it step by step—almost day by day—the Thermidorian reaction is full of instruction, not only on the break-up of parliamentarism, but also on the

² *Esprit des lois*, III, ch. iii.

³ *Royalistes et républicains* (1888), p. 1.

seamy side of democracy. The moralist may perhaps be allowed to draw lofty and virile lessons from such foul spectacles. The Spartans, in order to cure their children of an inclination for drink, used to show them a Helot drunk.

* * *

The 9th Thermidor was the result of a coalition between the Plain, which had hitherto remained passive, and what survived of the former Dantonist party, in temporary league with the majority of those forming the governing committees. The motive force of this coalition was composed of the former friends of Danton, men such as Tallien, Fréron, Barras, Merlin of Thionville, Courtois of Aube, Guffroy, Reubell, Dubois-Crancé, and Legendre—all those ex-proconsuls, corrupt and stained with crime and rapine, whom Robespierre had recalled from their missions and intended to bring to book. To save their heads these unscrupulous men of affairs had succeeded in carrying the Plain with them, by promising to oppose the application of the laws of Ventôse, which struck at the life and property of all suspects *en masse*. In the end the Plain had abandoned Robespierre through fear of his social policy. But, accustomed as those who formed it were to playing a silent part in the Assembly, it took them some time to see that Robespierre's fall had shaken the revolutionary government, thereby opening up to them a prospect of emerging from their long silence and taking their revenge by actively participating in affairs in their turn. For a month after Thermidor they continued to play a very subordinate part.⁴ It was not so much the 9th Thermidor itself that emancipated them as what followed it—the split between the victorious Montagnards which took place almost immediately afterwards. Essentially this split was the work of the Dantonists, who had already taken the initiative in the attack on Robespierre. Those former members of the governing committees who survived, and had given them a momentary support on the 9th Thermidor, were upbraided by them for their past tergiversations. They knew that several of these—such as Barère, Collot, and Billaud—felt nothing but mistrust and contempt for them, that they had had a hand in recalling them from their missions and had only broken with Robespierre, almost reluctantly, at the eleventh hour. To these men they felt that they owed no gratitude; on the contrary, they had a grudge against them.

In these conditions the alliance between the corrupt deputies, who had escaped punishment for their crimes by a miracle, and the surviving members

⁴ See Durand de Maillane, *Mémoires*, p. 355.

of the Committees could not be a lasting one. These two groups are sometimes known as the Thermidorians of the right and of the left respectively—a somewhat inaccurate designation, which was, at any rate, unknown to their contemporaries. Consisting as they did of the Montagnards with financial interests at heart on the one hand, and those who stood for government and principle on the other, they were united by nothing but a negation: by the necessity of crushing Robespierism and preventing its revival. In all other respects they were at variance. With feverish haste, while eagerly setting their own creatures at liberty, they threw into prison anyone who had had to do with Robespierre and his friends: the whole Duplay family—even the women—Herman, commissary to the commission for civil administration, police, and tribunals, who was denounced by André Dumont (in spite of the fact that he had exculpated himself for his alleged delay in carrying into execution the decrees of outlawry passed against the conspirators); the police officer Héron, an object of hatred to the Dantonists whom he had unmasked; Julien (of Paris), whom Robespierre had entrusted with important missions, and who was denounced simultaneously by Tallien and Courtois, Ève Demaillet, who had been Saint-Just's school-teacher and was on mission at Toulon; the representative of the people Lebon, though Robespierre had had a share in recalling him from his bloody mission to Pas-de-Calais—down to unknown members of the clubs who had probably never had the slightest personal connexion with Robespierre—such as Dosda the merchant and his wife or Trtebas the musician at Metz,⁵ etc. . . . Some officers owing their promotion to Saint-Just returned their commissions, signed with his name, to the Convention or its Committees and asked to exchange them for other credentials on which the accursed name, which only the day before they had adulated, should no longer figure.

It was not, however, in the minds of the members of the government that the punishment of the Robespierrists should involve a change of policy. During the tragic session of the 9th Thermidor, Billaud-Varenne had accused Robespierre of moderantism, while Vadier had censured him for protecting priests, and supported his charge by citing the affair of Catherine Théot. "A partial disturbance (*commotion*), which leaves the government unaffected as regards its political, administrative, and revolutionary operations, whether at home or abroad"—such was the definition of the 9th

⁵ See René Paquet, *Bibliographie de l'histoire de Metz pendant la Révolution*, Vol. II, pp. 937, 951. Dosda was arrested with his wife on the 17th Thermidor at the instance of the club. They were released on the 7th Fructidor, year II, but Trtebas was taken to Paris.

Thermidor given to the Convention of Barère on the 11th Thermidor, with the assent of all his colleagues on the Committees. But Barère was too clever not to guess the thoughts and desires of the Dantonists, his allies of the moment. In order to reassure them he had stated, at the opening of his speech on the 10th Thermidor, that the Convention alone "ought to rule, make laws, make war, administer justice, and inflict punishment on behalf of the nation. It is everything!"—thus adroitly throwing the Committees into the background behind the Convention. But having made these concessions—which he hoped would remain merely verbal—he emphatically proclaimed that revolutionary government would remain untouched: "Strange is the presumption of those who would arrest the majestic, terrible progress of the French Revolution and retard the destiny of the first among nations!" The adversaries of the Terror had only to behave themselves. Barère accused them in advance of plotting against the interests of the nation. The accusation was explicit. "It is there," he continued (that is, in the sections of the faubourg Antoine), "that a few crypto-aristocrats were talking of indulgence, as though the revolutionary government had not gained greater power by the very Revolution of which it had been the object—as though the strength of the revolutionary government had not increased a hundred-fold since, by drawing fresh power from the ultimate source of authority, it had infused a more vigorous spirit into Committees now more thoroughly purged. Indulgence! There is none save for unintentional error, but the manœuvres of the aristocrats are felonies, and their errors are crimes!" This amounted to a declaration that the 9th Thermidor was to add fresh vigour to the Terror. Nobody replied to Barère. The proclamation to the French people which he laid before the Convention in the name of the Committees was adopted without debate. "On May 31 the people made its revolution, on the 9th Thermidor the National Convention made its own; liberty applauded both."

But that very evening the Dantonists rallied. One of them, Lecointre, in pursuance of his promise to the Plain, proposed and carried a motion that the popular commissions set up for sifting the suspects and confiscating their property should be purged before continuing their operations, and that this process should be carried out, not in the accustomed manner, by the Committees alone, but by the Convention itself, which should have the final decision on their proposals. This was a shrewd blow at the laws of Ventôse, which were in fact annulled. The four new popular commissions which it had been decided to create by the ordinance of the 6th Thermidor were never set up. And as for the two old commissions sitting at the Museum,

their two presidents, Trinchard and Subleyras, were immediately arrested as Robespierrists, and no successors to them were ever appointed.⁶

Following Lecointre, Thibault, ex-bishop of Cantal, also a member of the old Dantonist faction, proposed at the same session that the Revolutionary Tribunal of Paris, composed, he said, of creatures of Robespierre and Couthon, should be purged. The Convention referred his proposal to the Committees for examination.

It was symptomatic that at the session of the following day the Committees allowed their lack of harmony to become apparent. On the one hand Élie Lacoste, in presenting the report of the Committee of General Security, went even further than Thibault and proposed on the 11th Thermidor to abolish the Revolutionary Tribunal, replacing it by a provisional commission; while on the other hand Billaud-Varenne, as mouthpiece of the Committee of Public Safety, protested against the suppression of the Revolutionary Tribunal at the very moment when it was on the point of having to try the "impure horde" of Robespierre's accomplices. The Dantonists Bréard and Turreau spoke in favour of suppression, and the Montagnards Malmarmé and Fayau opposed it, while Thuriot and Tallien came forward as mediators, and in the end the suppression, which had already been voted, was called in question again and the matter referred to the Committees.

The Committees interpreted this vote as a sign that the Convention was determined to maintain revolutionary government unimpaired. And that same evening Barère voiced their views in a clever speech—too clever, perhaps, for it came into violent conflict with the truth—accusing Robespierre of having opposed the establishment of revolutionary government and the organization of the executive commissions. Again he warned them against "that fatal moderantism which, with peace and clemency on its lips, at the same time manages to take advantage of every circumstance, even of the most drastic actions. Be it known to the aristocrats that for them there is nothing in this temple of laws but unrelenting vengeance and implacable judges." Barère next pronounced a eulogy upon the Revolutionary Tribunal, "that salutary instrument which destroys the enemies of the Republic and purges the soil which nurtures liberty." It was necessary merely to purge it, not to abolish it. And Barère brought forward a fresh list of judges and jurymen, among which he allowed Fouquier-Tinville's name to appear. In

⁶ On entering Sainte-Pélagie on the 12th Thermidor, Trinchard tried to cut his throat with a piece of glass. He spent long months in prison before he was brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal. See report of the 12th Thermidor to the police board of the Committee of Public Safety (National Archives, Paris, F⁷ 3822).

conclusion Barère proposed to the Convention to supplement the Committee of Public Safety by three new members to take the place of those who had just been guillotined, till the 21st Thermidor, the date of its monthly renewal. In accordance with the law of September 14 he proposed the three new members by name: Bernard of Saintes, who had come violently into conflict with the younger Robespierre during his mission in Franche-Comté; Charles Duval, editor of the *Journal des hommes libres*, a Montagnard who had protested against the indictment of Marat and played an important part on the 9th Thermidor; and the elder Eschasseriaux, Monge's son-in-law, who, though less well known, was a regicide like the other two. Already there were cries of "Put it to the vote! (*Aux voix!*)" For nearly a year past there had never been any discussion of the names put forward by the Committee. But Merlin of Thionville, who had been one of Danton's henchmen, proposed the previous question with regard to the names, and the adjournment of the vote to the following day. He added that the nomination of new members of the Committees ought to take place in the same way as that of the presidents and secretaries of the Assembly—that is to say, without their being previously put forward by the Committee of Public Safety. He concluded by adjuring the Assembly to resume the right of initiative which it had lost. "Brave rather than eloquent,"⁷ Merlin of Thionville but rarely ascended the tribune; it is probable that that day he was prompted by others, who perhaps composed his speech. However that may be, his intervention met with such a response that it is impossible not to admit that it was prearranged.⁸ A member whose name is not mentioned spoke after him, proposing to fill Héroult de Séchelles's place on the Committee, which had remained vacant since his execution; and further that voting should take place not by acclamation as usual, but by a regular ballot. The Dantonist Turreau went still further and proposed an oral vote by roll-call. Exasperated by

⁷ The following is the portrait of him traced by the journalist Dussault: "Energetic rather than adroit, cut out to command a battalion rather than to be at the head of an assembly, terrible to his enemies rather than formidable to sophists, brave rather than eloquent, with a truly martial cast of countenance, famous for the courage which he had shown at the siege of Mainz, Merlin of Thionville was a great resource for the majority. But love of pleasure is hard to reconcile with the trend of character necessary to secure the triumph of a point of view which has to face powerful opposition, and Merlin was a Hercules in whose hands one sometimes found a distaff instead of a club." (From a pamphlet dated the 29th Fructidor, year II: *Fragment pour servir à l'histoire de la Convention nationale depuis le 10 thermidor jusqu'à la dénonciation de Lecointre*, p. 25).

⁸ We know that Merlin of Thionville signed his name to a character-sketch caricaturing Robespierre which was entirely composed by his fellow-townsmen Rœderer and afterwards appeared among Rœderer's collected works.

the unaccustomed mistrust of the Committee of Public Safety which was finding such violent expression, Billaud-Varenne made the mistake of throwing down, as it were, a challenge to his opponents, the Dantonists whom he loathed. He demanded that the proposal for the vote by roll-call should be put to the vote first. "Since opposition has arisen, I insist upon the vote by roll-call. It is by that means that the people has found out its true friends!" This threat to the opposition was no longer timely. Billaud-Varenne no longer had Robespierre's authority to back it up. He next committed an even clumsier error by entering into explanations about Héault de Séchelles, whose place had not been filled: "It has just been said that we had our reasons for not replacing Héault. Yes, we had. We did not want to increase the number of conspirators already sitting on the Committees." At this insult the Assembly grew restive. Violent protests broke out: "President, call Billaud to order, he is insulting the Convention!" The vote by roll-call was adopted. Then Fréron, the debauchee who had shed torrents of blood at Toulon and Marseilles before he was recalled from his mission and joined Danton in demanding the opening of the prisons, Fréron, who on the eve of Thermidor had believed himself to be within an ace of the scaffold, Fréron, the lady's man, ascended the tribune to offer some observations on Billaud's speech and make a point-blank attack upon all that was left of the old Committee: "If the Committee of Public Safety had had its full complement—that is to say, if Héault had been replaced—it would have opposed the tyranny of Robespierre. It is evident that by denouncing the traitor the members of the Committee would have covered themselves with glory, and that, once people's eyes had been opened, the blood-thirsty law which was passed concerning the Revolutionary Tribunal [that is, the law of the 22nd Prairial] would not have been adopted at all." Having pushed home this attack, which must have awakened an echo in the minds of all those who had trembled for their lives, Fréron drew the conclusion that the places of Jeanbon Saint-André and Prieur of Marne, who were both on mission, ought to be filled up, and that in future the Committee should no longer have the right to send out its members as delegates on mission, for it ought always to be at full strength.

In vain did Barère attempt to reply to Fréron: "When we had a majority of five against the conspirators," he said [that is, against Robespierre, Couthon, and Saint-Just], "we did not know whether, if we summoned a new member to the Committee, the reputation which Robespierre had acquired might not have influenced his nomination, and whether we might not be increasing the number of that rogue's partisans, whereas we were sure of ourselves, we understood one another at a glance. . . ." But, pleased

with the impression he had made, Barère was ill-advised enough to pronounce a eulogy on Billaud-Varenne, who was, he said, the first to attack the tyrant. He was interrupted by shouts of: "It was Tallien!"

Next Dubois-Crancé, who had very nearly been handed over to Fouquier-Tinville by the Committees a few days previously, seized the opportunity of gratifying his resentment by supporting Fréron, whose attack he carried further by adding: "You have struck down Robespierre and his accomplices, but may it not happen that the habit of authority may breed new ambitions? When once men have tasted power, they find it hard to return to the level of ordinary citizens. You have vanquished the tyrant; beware of those who constantly identify themselves with the government and maintain that nobody can accuse them without attacking the government itself. I propose that no member of the Committee of Public Safety should be allowed to remain on mission for more than a fortnight. [Several voices: 'Never!'] I add another proposal: We have seen the danger of keeping power in the same hands for too long. I do not propose that the Committee of Public Safety should be renewed every fortnight, but I maintain that three members ought to retire every month and make way for new ones."

Next Cambon, whose measures directed against the holders of government life annuities had previously been criticized by the Committee, Cambon, who was impatient of all dictatorship and, in spite of his financial supremacy, had never got over the fact that he had been turned out of the Committee when it was renewed on July 10, 1793—Cambon did not merely confine himself to supporting Dubois-Crancé; but he expounded to the Assembly a whole new scheme of government organization: whereas each of the twelve executive commissions had hitherto been responsible to the Committee of Public Safety alone, he now proposed to attach each of them to a separate committee. He pointed out that the twelve members of the Committee of Public Safety could not cope with all their work. Lindet, for instance, supervised three or four executive commissions, among them those of commerce and food-supply, and was working day and night: "Anybody who replaced him without possessing either his good health or his activity would be forced either to relax his operations or entrust them to subordinates. What is certain is that little by little all the committees of the Convention are bound either to be left with nothing to do, or to find themselves in competition with the Committee of Public Safety." Henceforward the work would be done in the twelve committees of the Assembly, each of which was to correspond with one of the twelve executive commissions. "From that time onwards," he said, "the Convention would be the centre of government, its

sessions would be made more interesting by the activities of the committees, all the members of the Convention would be occupied in supervising the government and would be doing the work which, in the present state of affairs, might be left to heads of departments." And Cambon took good care to remind them that the Finance Committee, the only one which had never been subordinate to the Committee of Public Safety, insisted upon receiving a daily report from the Commissaries of the Treasury on their operations. The other committees would do likewise with the executive commissions, and the Committee of Public Safety, upon which each of the other committees would be represented by one of their members, would henceforth be no more than an organ of co-ordination between the committees, a sort of mechanism for regulating their work.

Cambon's proposals could not fail to be favourably received by an Assembly weary of inaction and impatient to recover its independence. Content with the effect which he had produced, Cambon did not demand that his proposed measure should be voted immediately. But when certain partisans of the Committees demanded the adjournment of all the proposals, Tallien opposed this in a fiery speech: "We have struck down the triumvirs; we do not want to replace them by decemvirs." He proposed that a fourth part of every committee should be renewed monthly. Tallien's motion met with support. But Bourdon of Oise, who was a friend of Billaud-Varenne and had been largely concerned in Robespierre's fall, opposed it violently: "In the conduct of the debate this evening I recognize the aftermath of Robespierre's infamous plot. [Murmurs.] His secret partisans have spread a rumour within these walls that he and his accomplices were only attacked because someone else was wanted in his place. [This other was Billaud-Varenne, who was credited, as a matter of fact, with the ambition of wanting to succeed Robespierre.⁹] I call upon the Convention not to sully its victory by a precipitancy . . . which cannot but be fatal to the public weal. . . . Let us consider that we have fourteen armies in action and a strong and vigorous government which directs their operations; let us not disorganize them by a hasty decision." These were words of wisdom.

The Dantonist Lecointre was already backing out and actually supported the adjournment of the matter for three days. But Tallien, strong in his newly-found prestige as the vanquisher of Robespierre, sprang to the tribune again: "Will it be any less true tomorrow than today that the same men ought not to exercise power for long if we do not want them to abuse it? We may adjourn consideration of the means of execution, but I

⁹ Thibaudeau, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 82.

maintain that the principle ought to be adopted on the spot." Barère now thought it politic to make a pretence of disinterestedness. He referred to the rest which, he said, the members of the Committee of Public Safety badly needed. He, too, opposed the adjournment, evidently hoping that the Assembly would hesitate when faced with the threat of a sudden renewal of the whole Committee. The manœuvre failed. Merlin of Thionville demanded that the question should at once be put to the vote, and the Assembly decreed that a fourth part of every committee should be renewed monthly. The Dantonist Delmas made the following comment: "What you have just done is to dry up the source of men's ambition. To complete the measure I propose a decree that no member shall re-enter a committee till a month after leaving it." The new proposal was voted without debate amid enthusiastic applause.

Lastly, to wind up this important session of the 11th Thermidor, which upset the whole organization of the revolutionary government in a single moment, the Assembly refused to approve the list of new members of the Revolutionary Tribunal presented to it by Barère in the name of the Committees, so the tribunal was *de facto* suspended. Three days later, on the 14th Thermidor, Lecointre obtained the reversal of the law of the 22nd Prairial almost without debate, amid the most enthusiastic applause. During the same session Fréron, who bore Fouquier-Tinville a grudge for the part he had played in Danton's trial, denounced him and secured a decree ordering his arrest: "I ask that Fouquier-Tinville be sent to expiate in hell the blood that he has shed!"

Nobody undertook to defend Fouquier, not even his friend Lecointre. Nobody pointed out that Fouquier had been Robespierre's adversary and the docile instrument of his enemies on the Committee of General Security. Though the members of the Committees had eulogized the Revolutionary Tribunal two days previously, they kept silence. For on the day before, the 13th Thermidor, they had suffered a new and humiliating defeat in the elections for filling up the vacancies on the Committee of Public Safety. Those elected on the vote by roll-call had been Bréard, the elder Eschasseriaux, Laloï, Thuriot, Treilhard, and Tallien. Only one of these new members, the elder Eschasseriaux, had figured on the list submitted by Barère on the 13th Thermidor for the choice of the Assembly. Bréard had belonged to the original Committee set up in April 1793 and overthrown with Danton on July 10. His connexion with Danton was notorious. Laloï had a brother and a brother-in-law who had been accused by the revolutionary police of "royalist language" ("*des propos royalistes*"). Thuriot had defended Custine and the generals of noble birth. He was so compromised,

both by his constant opposition to revolutionary measures and by his connexion with the "financial deputies (*députés d'affaires*)" of the Chabot clique, that the Jacobins had struck him off their books. Treilhard, a former member of the Constituent Assembly, had voted for the postponement of the King's execution. With him the Plain entered the government. And, lastly, Tallien reaped the reward of the part he had played on the 9th Thermidor, but his reputation was so bad that he was the last to be put on the list.

The Dantonist faction did not stop short at this success. It meant to be represented on the Committee of General Security as well, on which the suicide of Lebas had already left a vacant place. André Dumont, who, while on mission in the department of Somme, had waged a savage war on the priests, simply in order to hide his compromising relations with the aristocrats, and whose brother had been arrested as a suspect—André Dumont, who wanted to enter the Committee of General Security in order to use his functions on it as a shield, denounced "the traitor David" (he was referring to the great painter), who had a seat on the Committee. In vain did David in a dull speech express his repentance for having allowed himself to be deceived by Robespierre; the Convention removed him from the Committee, and ordered an inquiry to be held into his conduct. He was shortly afterwards imprisoned. Two other members of the previous Committee, Lavicomterie and Jagot, were also removed, for having remained neutral on the 9th Thermidor. This left four places vacant for the Thermidorians. They were not satisfied with this and—on what pretext I do not know¹⁰—obtained a decision that six places were to be filled by election. Those elected on the 14th Thermidor as a result of the vote by roll-call were as follows: Legendre of Paris, Danton's most intimate friend; Goupilleau de Fontenay, celebrated for his quarrels with Rossignol in the Vendée and for the opposition role which he played on the old Committee in combination with Bourdon of Oise; Merlin of Thionville, who had shown himself the boldest

¹⁰ M. J. Guillaume, in his essay on the Committee of General Security in *La Révolution française*, Vol. XXXIX, p. 236, explains that the election affected not only the three members who had been deprived of their seats, but also three others who were regarded as retiring in virtue of the decree ordering a fourth part of the Committees to be renewed monthly. But none of those constituting the retiring fourth part was designated by name.

M. Guillaume's explanation does not seem to me well founded, for the decree on the retirement of the fourth of the members was not applied to the Committee of Public Safety; moreover, the two Committees were not due for renewal till the 21st Thermidor. Jean Debry, who was appointed on the 14th Thermidor, resigned, and his place was not filled, so that the Committee of General Security consisted of thirteen members.

in attacking the surviving members; André Dumont, who had already been nominated; Jean Debry, a former Girondin; and, lastly, Bernard of Saintes, whom the Committee of Public Safety, speaking through the mouth of Barère, had put forward in vain on the 11th Thermidor for the Committee of Public Safety. When the name of Jean Debry was read out, those who had formerly constituted the Mountain protested. Fayau recalled the fact that this Girondin had signed Condorcet's protest against the insurrection of May 31: "Like many others," said Debry, "I was the dupe of the men of talent returned to the Convention." But he added that he had always defended the unity and indivisibility of the Republic. Dubois-Crancé was not satisfied with this explanation. In his opinion Debry could not be a member of a committee one of whose essential tasks was the prosecution of federalists. Debry handed in his resignation amidst applause.

The Thermidorians had accepted the votes of the deputies of the Plain and of what had formerly been the right, in order that they might dispute the supreme power with the former members of the Committees. They had not yet made up their minds to share it with their allies. But if they wanted power, it was not so much in order to carry out a program as to protect themselves. Though Robespierre was dead, they were still afraid of him. Bentabole, a man of pleasure, who had formerly adopted the nickname of "Marat junior (*Marat le cadet*)," had not been easy in his mind since marrying Madame de Chabot, who possessed farms, a mill, estates, and a country-house at La Bazoches-Gouët, Eure-et-Loir. Losing no time, on the 13th Thermidor he proposed the adjournment of the decrees of July 12 and October 3, 1793, confirmed on the 22nd Brumaire, year II, which had given the Committees the right to order the arrest of representatives of the people without giving them a previous hearing before the Convention.¹¹ "This decree," he said, "almost ruined the Republic, by stifling liberty of opinion, for, I ask you, what deputy could say what he thought? What deputy could communicate his suspicions? What deputy could oppose the measures that seemed to him contrary to the interest of the Republic, when he was sure of being arrested on the spot without being able to gain a hearing before the Convention?" Bentabole's proposal was voted enthusiastically. From this time onwards the financial deputies were delivered from the embarrassing supervision of the Committees, to which they had now gained access.

From this time onwards the dictatorship of the Committees, built up laboriously a year before during the great dangers and great treasons of the

¹¹ See the chapter on the suspension of parliamentary immunity in my book: *La Conspiration de l'Étranger*.

summer of 1793, was at an end. The Committee of Public Safety had lost its primacy. It no longer drew up the lists of members of the other committees as it chose. Now that parliamentary immunity was fully restored, it no longer had the right to have any deputy arrested or his house searched. This amounted to amnesty for the past and impunity for the future. The ghost of Robespierre was no longer to haunt the dreams of such men as Tallien and Bentabole. Since the committees were now renewable by a fourth every month and the retiring members were no longer re-eligible till after an interval of a month, they no longer possessed any stability. The members passed through them as through a mill. Consistency of government policy would no doubt suffer from this; the new members who followed one upon the other would hardly have time to acquaint themselves with their business, but, just as they had gained a little experience, would have to go. But what did this matter to the Thermidorians? The public weal was their private advantage. The Republic which they wished to set up was what Danton, their master, had called the "Republic of Cockaigne (*Cocagne*)."¹² The governmental anarchy inevitable under such a regime was not likely to be distasteful to them. The best fishing is in troubled waters. It did not matter much to them if the government offices—represented, in this case, by the twelve executive commissions—administered in their stead, provided that they themselves enjoyed the prerogatives and profits of government. They had applauded the scheme submitted to them by Cambon as early as the 11th Thermidor, for depriving the Committee of Public Safety of supreme control over the executive commissions and attaching each of these to a separate committee.¹² But the Assembly still contained members who were more devoted to the public weal than to their private interests. Their resistance lasted for nearly a month, and Cambon's project was not adopted till the 7th Fructidor, and then in a slightly amended form.

Barère, who had swallowed his previous reverses, and whose only thought now was of taking the rest of which he had spoken, attempted on the 14th Thermidor to set up a counter-project, which he persuaded the Committees to adopt in opposition to Cambon's. He now jettisoned some of his past, and condemned "senseless terror," which he proposed to replace by "inflexible

¹² Thibaudeau, in his *Mémoires*, p. 82, has well summed up the calculations of the Thermidorians among whom he played his part: "The leader of the terrorists," he said, "had disappeared, but the party still existed. The Committee of Public Safety had got rid of Robespierre. The Convention was not rid of the Committee of Public Safety. If it had been allowed to do as it pleased, it would not have changed its mode of action. The result of the 9th Thermidor would merely have been that a few less men would have been left."

justice"; he admitted that the Committee of Public Safety ought no longer to submit to the Convention the list of members for the other committees, and ascribed to Robespierre the initiative in and responsibility for this "difficult, painful, and odious" operation, which tended to "degrade the national representative body and prejudice the members of the government in the eyes of their very colleagues." He granted to Cambon that it was "beyond the human strength of the twelve members of the Committee of Public Safety constantly to cope with so many tasks of such different kinds one after the other"; but having gone so far to meet his opponent, Barère proposed that the Committee of Public Safety should retain "the immediate supervision of the twelve executive commissions, in order to preserve unity of administration. Otherwise we should have twelve governments, twelve legislative bodies, and moral federalism instead of republican unity."

In replying to Barère on the 18th Thermidor, Cambon said that direct supervision of administration must be restored to the Convention; that by means of his system all the representatives of the people would be called upon to take part in the government almost in rotation, and that a knowledge of affairs would no longer be concentrated in the hands of a few. "The Convention would know everything, and there would be no further reason to dread private ambitions, the scourge of republics." He therefore proposed to assign to each committee the supervision of the corresponding executive commission, and, in order to show the importance of the reform, to change the title of the Committee of Public Safety, which should henceforth be known as the "Central Committee of the Revolutionary Government," and would in future be no more than a sort of organ of co-ordination between the other committees.

The discussion was resumed on the 23rd and 24th Thermidor. Berlier and Cambacérès expounded counter-projects more or less approximating to that of Cambon. Bourdon of Oise recalled the immense services rendered by the Committee of Public Safety: "With it began our victories, by it the enemies in our midst have been put down with a firm hand, and our enemies abroad forced to defend themselves upon their own territory." Barère made a last effort: "It was revolutionary government that saved us. Rogues and schemers fear none but the revolutionary government. Therefore everything must be established on this one and only foundation, on this government which has given speed to the movements of our armies and preserved the fruits of their victories. Very well! Let us all be of one mind, let us all declare that we want revolutionary government!" All the members rose, waved their hats, and shouted: "Yes, we all want it!" But a few moments later they threw out Barère's proposed measure, which had been revived

by Bourdon of Oise, and at last, on the 7th Fructidor, they voted the essential part of Cambon's scheme—that is, the deposition of the Committee of Public Safety, the end of centralized government, the splitting up and paralysis of authority.

By the terms of the decree the Committee of Public Safety kept the control of diplomacy and military operations, the manufacture of war-supplies, and "the importation, internal circulation, and export of commodities of all kinds." It continued to possess the exclusive right of requisitioning both persons and things. But in future it was no longer to have the right of arrest, except in the case of public officials and civil and military agents who were subject to its supervision. A credit of ten millions was placed at its disposal for secret service. Formerly it had appointed, supervised, dismissed, and superseded all government officials of every kind whatsoever. But now district and departmental bodies, municipal bodies, and courts of law were removed from its sphere of action and transferred to that of the Legislative Committee, which exercised the functions formerly appertaining to the ministries of the Interior and of Justice. When serious situations arose, the Convention now referred them to the three Committees—those of Public Safety and General Security, and the Legislative Committee—and the government was commonly referred to as the "Three Committees."

The authority of the Committee of General Security was strengthened, because it was no longer shared by the Committee of Public Safety. Three hundred thousand livres of secret-service money were allocated to it, and the whole policing of Paris was placed directly under its control. It had power to issue warrants for arrests in all parts of the Republic, but in future the warrants were to bear five signatures. A warrant sending an accused person before the Revolutionary Tribunal had to bear nine.

There were ten more committees (the total number of them was now reduced from twenty to sixteen), each having an executive commission under its supervision: these were the committees of Finance, Public Instruction, Agriculture and Arts, Commerce and Food-supply, Public Works, Transport, Posts and Goods-traffic, Military Affairs, the Navy and Colonies, and Public Relief. Each of them had the right to issue ordinances without consulting the Committee of Public Safety, concerning matters within its competence, the application of which was the function of its corresponding executive commission. Each of them had the power to suspend or discharge the agents of the government department falling under its immediate supervision. In each of them a fourth was to be renewed monthly, but by signed ballot-papers, voting by roll-call being now maintained only in the election

of members of the Committees of Public Safety and General Security. By a final and significant innovation the armed forces of Paris were placed under the immediate supervision of the Military Committee and were no longer under that of the Committee of Public Safety.

This law of the 7th Fructidor, which was to remain in force up to the end of the Convention, served as a constitution for the Thermidorian regime, just as the great law of the previous 14th Frimaire had been that of the terrorist regime. But whereas, in order to put a check on anarchy, the law of the 14th Frimaire had concentrated all authority in the hands of twelve men deliberating in secret, re-eligible for an indefinite period, and armed with formidable powers, which they were able to use even against the members of the Assembly themselves, the law of the 7th Fructidor was the exact reverse. It took distrust of authority as its principle. It split up the central power *ad infinitum* and endeavoured to divide it equally between all the deputies by a sort of rotation, as if all of them had possessed the same talents, love of country, vigilance, and integrity. During its tenure of power the Gironde had enthroned eloquence, the Mountain had replaced this by the dictatorship of a picked collection of statesmen and workers; the Thermidorians, powerless to construct, could do nothing but destroy and disorganize, by placing a jealous parliamentary equality at the service of private appetites and passions. Fortunately for France, the magnificent impetus given by their predecessors to the national defence sufficed to prevent a counter-offensive on the part of monarchical Europe. In spite of all, victory still lasted some time longer. But unfortunately the successive peace treaties which confirmed it had already lost sight of the revolutionary ideal. They were mere truces which solved no problems and bore within them the seeds of fresh wars.

It is possible that, in striking down Robespierre and his friends, all that most members of the Convention desired was to rid themselves of leaders who had become unbearable owing to their exacting arrogance; it is possible that they were sincere when they rose on the 24th Thermidor, at the call of Barère, and acclaimed the prolongation of revolutionary government; but revolutionary government, the dictatorship of the public weal, had received its death-blow with those who had established and controlled it. It was now no more than an empty word, a misleading label, but ill concealing the bankruptcy of a regime.

Besides the Committee of Public Safety, which was attacked less than a month after the execution of the triumvirs, other institutions of the regime of Public Safety were shortly to disappear or suffer change; or, if they continued to exist, in future they only worked in a sense contrary to their

END OF THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

original object. Only yesterday they had been the instruments of order and Public Safety; now they had become agents of confusion and anarchy, the weapon of vengeance and reprisals. Yesterday the red terror had reigned; now came the release of suspects and a partial return of the *émigrés*. And the morrow was to witness the white terror.

CHAPTER II

The New Indulgents

WE have come to the conclusion that, in shattering unity of government by attaching each of the executive commissions to a separate committee, and thereby deposing the Committee of Public Safety from its former supremacy, the Thermidorians had, in effect, dealt a mortal blow to revolutionary government as it had been carried on before Thermidor. But it would be a serious mistake to imagine that they were carrying out any settled plan or premeditated design. Not only did Cambon, who was chiefly responsible for the reform, consider that he had done no prejudice to revolutionary government in any way, but such were his illusions that he imagined he had consolidated it and secured its future. . . . None but statesmen are capable of seeing all the consequences of their actions at the time. Cambon, whose capacity, even as a financier, has been greatly overrated, was a man of impulse who had seen nothing inconsistent in satisfying his rancour by destroying the very keystone of the regime while loudly proclaiming himself its defender.

But perhaps not even Tallien himself, who had seconded Cambon and carried on the struggle at his side, had either foreseen or desired the reaction of which he had become one of the most prominent leaders. Content with having forced a way for himself and his friends into the Committees of Public Safety and General Security, he at once tried to win pardon for this intrusion. At first the new members introduced into the government by the elections of the 13th and 14th Thermidor asked no more of the old ones than that they might share in their power by an amicable understanding—at which, indeed, they seem to have arrived, at least during the early days.

Legendre had closed the Jacobins during the night of the 9th–10th Thermidor and put the key in his pocket; but once he had entered the Committee of General Security, it was he who on the evening of the 14th Thermidor took the initiative of proposing to his colleagues on the two committees that the club should be reopened. It was not the Thermidorians who raised an objection; it was Carnot, who boasted of this afterwards at the session of the 9th Prairial, year III. Legendre was supported by Billaud

his reply to those who told him to wait a few days longer was: "Aristocracy must not triumph!" He carried his point, and went in person to preside at the first session of the reopened Jacobins.¹

The old and new members of the Committee of Public Safety proceeded in perfect harmony to recall or appoint the representatives on mission to the armies or departments. The ordinance of the 13th Thermidor by which Boisset, a man of moderate views, was sent off to the department of Ain, bore the signature of Collot d'Herbois side by side with those of Treilhard and Laloy. That of the same date provisionally suspending the revolutionary commissions of Orange and Nîmes bore the same signatures. The ordinance setting free the mayor of Privas, kept in confinement at Le Puy by order of Borie, the representative on mission, was signed by Amar and Barère. That of the following day, the 14th Thermidor, placing the Sedan terrorists Mogue, Vassant, Durège, and Waroquier under arrest was from the hand of the ex-Hébertist Collot d'Herbois! Again, it was Collot d'Herbois who, on the 15th Thermidor, drew up the ordinance sending Ysabeau to Bordeaux. The order for the release of Hoche and Aubert-Dubayet on the 17th Thermidor was from the hand of Barère; but it was Treilhard, the moderate, who composed that of the 18th Thermidor sending back to Alsace the representative on mission Foussedoire, whom the old committee had recalled as being too extreme. The orders for the release of several generals (Kilmaine, Schauenbourg, Desbrulys, Carteaux, etc.) were signed by Carnot. An ordinance of the Committee of Public Safety dated the 19th Thermidor directed that the usual number of copies of the two most terrorist newspapers—Audouin's *Journal universel* and Vatar's *Journal des hommes libres*—should be sent to the armies during the next quarter. If as early as this Tallien and his friends had been determined to stop the Terror, they would not have tolerated such an ordinance.

Our examination of the debates in the Committee of Public Safety is confirmed by studying the reports of the Convention during the same period.

This was one way of censuring Robespierre for having protected nobles and priests. On the 15th Thermidor, Monmayou, a deputy of the Crest (as the extreme Montagnards were now called), proposed to exclude ex-nobles and priests of all religious denominations from all public offices. The Convention voted for the exclusion, and annulled the article of the law of the

¹ See the account in the *Moniteur* of the sessions of the 12th Vendémiaire, year III (Barère's, Billaud-Varenne's, and Legendre's speeches), and the 9th Prairial, year III (Carnot's speech). The ordinance of the Committee of Public Safety, dated the 14th Thermidor, authorizing Legendre to open the Jacobins is signed by Collot d'Herbois, Treilhard, and Laloy.

26th Germinal which permitted the Committee of Public Safety to "requisition"—that is, to give employment—to nobles, priests, and foreigners. But on the following day Merlin of Thionville obtained the reversal of this imprudent and unjust law by appealing to arguments similar to those which Robespierre had invoked in similar circumstances, and did not provoke the slightest dissent in the Committees and the Assembly.

During the same session a deputation from the section of the faubourg Montmartre came and demanded the release of several citizens who had been kept in confinement as suspects for five months. This gave the Thermidorian Goupilleau de Fontenay, who had entered the Committee of General Security two days before, an opportunity of acquainting the Assembly with that Committee's views on the subject: "You did not expect," he said, "that the events of the 9th Thermidor would give an opening to aristocrats for stifling the revolutionary movement. Their relatives have assembled in the sections, where they have declaimed, not against the members of the revolutionary committees, who may have gone astray and whom we are sure to bring back to the fold, but against the Committees themselves—that salutary institution. This ferment has gone so far as to cause the appointment in a few sections of commissaries whose function is to receive denunciations directed against the revolutionary committees. The Committee of General Security will make it its duty to release all citizens whose patriotism and innocence shall be proved to it. . . ." It was clear that the law of the suspects was still to be applied. The Committees would release only such patriots as were the victims of mistakes and private grudges, or else harmless persons.

Speaking on the following day in the name of the two Committees, Barère said: "We are going to put the decree of the suspects in force again by doing away with all those odious and unjust extensions of it which have been practised with impunity by intrigue, counter-revolutionary methods, and impolitic measures." But immediately afterwards Barère warned them, in almost the same terms as Goupilleau de Fontenay had done, against the moderantism which he showed them lurking at the very gates of the Assembly. "It is not revolutionary institutions," he said, "that are mistaken or vindictive or blameworthy, it is their agents, whose operations and movements must be kept under control. Concede the destruction of a single republican institution to the aristocrats, and tomorrow they will be demanding the suppression of the very word 'republic.'" This was saying in so many words that the revolutionary Committees charged with the application of the law of the suspects were to be maintained. And in order to em-

phasize the policy of the committees by action, Barère proposed to withdraw the Parisian National Guard from the control of the sections. In future it was to be under the command of a board (*bureau*) of the General Staff, composed of members "chosen in rotation from among all the commandants of the National Guard of the sections." This board of the General Staff was to be installed near the Convention, and under its immediate control, and its members were to exercise their functions for ten days only. The decree was passed on the 19th Thermidor. The post of general commandant of the National Guard was abolished. No second Hanriot was to repeat the exploit of the 9th Thermidor. The five members of the board of the General Staff, appointed for five days only, and in rotation, would be under the control of the Committees, who would decide all questions concerning the force in future. Thus the National Guard would escape from the control of the sections. Those of the latter which had threateningly demanded the release of suspects would be unable to set their armed forces in motion. The distrust of Paris which had dictated this decree was just as great among the Thermidorians of the right as among those of the left. On the 17th Thermidor Fréron proposed to raze the Hôtel de Ville, "the Louvre of the tyrant Robespierre." But Léonard Bourdon protested, and the motion went no further. Fréron was unable to treat the Hôtel de Ville as he had done the premises of the sections of Marseilles, which had been demolished by his orders.

The session of the 18th Thermidor showed that harmony still reigned among the victorious adversaries of Robespierre with regard to the release of prisoners. Bourdon of Oise proposed the following measures in the name of the committees: (1) to discharge all persons in custody the reasons for whose arrest did not fall definitely within the categories specified in the law of suspects (law of September 17, 1793); (2) to make it obligatory for the revolutionary committees to state to the relatives of the persons in custody the reasons for their arrest. The decree was adopted, together with a further provision proposed by Bassal to the effect that the representatives on mission, like the revolutionary committees, should be bound to state the reasons for the arrests which they might order. When the Montagnard l'ayau, who had supported the Robespierist policy, tried to obtain the reversal of the vote, he drew down on himself a sharp rejoinder from Tallien: "We regained our liberty during the night of the 9th-10th Thermidor; the people must profit by it." A very curious phrase, showing the anxious desire for popularity which inspired Tallien and was soon to separate him from the former members of the Committees. But for the moment, far from

dreaming of a rupture, Tallien wound up with an ardent appeal for union: "It is necessary that the closest union should reign between the men who struck down the tyrant, lest a new tyranny arise on the ruins of the old!"

At the session of the 22nd Thermidor complete harmony still seemed to reign between Tallien and Barère. Barère complained of the embarrassment caused by the excessive number of petitions from relatives of persons in custody. And, indeed, the police reports for the 19th Thermidor record that a number of persons were assembling at the prison doors to congratulate the citizens discharged; while those for the following day note that the assemblies of the different sections had been disorderly and that the chief subject of dispute had been the case of the prisoners.²

Barère took alarm at these symptoms. He saw in them an obvious manœuvre of the aristocrats, "who were seeking," he said, "to corrupt national justice and rouse the citizens against revolutionary institutions." Now, Tallien, be it noted, supported Barère: "Already," he said, "the aristocrats have tried to raise their heads in several sections; last *décadi* [the tenth day of rest in the Republican calendar] they tried to destroy a revolutionary organ [the vigilance committees], but we shall put a stop to the projects which they would like to hatch." Two days before, a journalist named J. J. Dussault had concluded a violent attack on Barère in his paper with the following exhortation to Fréron: "Remember your former courage; remember, above all, that you have a shade to avenge!"—the allusion being to the shade of his friend Danton.³ Speaking from the tribune of the Assembly, Tallien made a sharp rejoinder to this call for vengeance: "It has been said in the papers that members of this Assembly have the shades of the dead to avenge. Yes, we have indeed; but they are those of our two hundred thousand brothers who have fallen in battle against the enemy, they are those of the patriots massacred by aristocracy and faction!" Fréron kept silence, but Tallien's disclaimer seemed to prove that the understanding among the members of the government was still complete. A deceptive illusion! It was the calm before the storm. But it is true that the tempest arose outside the Committees.

The release of prisoners had proceeded at such a pace in Paris, and the suspects' exit from prison had been accompanied by such demonstrations against the members of the revolutionary Committees who had imprisoned them, and against the clubs in general, that the Montagnard deputy

² Aulard, *Paris sous la réaction thermidorienne*, Vol. I, under these dates.

³ *Correspondance politique de Paris et des départements*, for the 20th Thermidor, year II.

Jean-Pierre Audouin raised a cry of alarm in his *Journal universel* as early as the 20th Thermidor.⁴

The representatives who had returned from their missions, such as Duhem, reported to their colleagues the progress of reaction since the 9th Thermidor. As early as the 23rd Thermidor the Committees had to face a determined attack. On that date, sacred as the anniversary of August 10, Merlin of Douai, speaking in their name, tried to obtain the passage of a law reorganizing the Revolutionary Tribunal, which had ceased its operations since the arrest of Fouquier-Tinville. He met with unexpected resistance. Charlier, Duhem, Élie Lacoste, and Granet pointed to the patriots who were being imprisoned on the pretext of Robespierism, while aristocrats were being released in crowds. Charlier found fault with Merlin's proposed law for abolishing the former provision limiting the length of trials before the Revolutionary Tribunal. The Convention took his side. It shelved Merlin's motion and revived the former provision which had merely been excised from the law of the 22nd Prairial. But Bourdon of Oise at least obtained the addition of a provision that juries were in future to consider the question of intention. Next Granet obtained the passage of a resolution big with menace. The names of the oppressed patriots whom the Convention had restored to liberty were to be printed, and, opposite them, the names of the persons who had acted as guarantee for their patriotism.

No long explanation is needed to show the importance of these two decisions, both of which were due to the initiative of the Mountain, without the advice of the Committees. The reconstituted Revolutionary Tribunal, with Dobsen, one of the leaders of the insurrection of May 31, as its president, would be a Montagnard tribunal, beyond the reach of the faction of the Indulgents. Again, the printing of the list of discharged prisoners, together with their protectors, would necessarily place those members of the Committees who had signed the warrants for their release in an awkward position. Most of these had been signed by Bourdon of Oise and Legendre. Among them was one setting the actors of the Théâtre-

⁴ "I thrill with indignation when, under pretext of patriotism, the aristocrats tell us that the revolutionary government is terrible, that it is time to crush it, that we must have no more popular societies, that we must guillotine this or that republican who has served the country, that we ought to regard even the federalist leaders as patriots. What more can I say? Perhaps we shall soon be told that we must recall the *émigrés*!" (number of the 20th Thermidor). On the following day he described the aristocrats brawling in the popular assemblies and endeavouring imperceptibly to bring about the dissolution of the popular societies, the sapping of the spirit of the people, a "Marshy primacy of weakness (*supériorité marécageuse de la faiblesse*), and the break-up of the strength of the Mountain."

français at liberty in a body. It was known that Legendre took a very particular interest in one of these artists, Louise Contat, who had become his mistress, after being that of the Count of Artois. During the five days between the 18th and the 23rd Thermidor, 478 suspects had been set at liberty in Paris by the Committee of General Security.⁵

don of Oise no longer took the trouble to issue individual warrants; they dealt with batches of from fifty to sixty or more, the interrogatory, which took place in the prisons, consisting in the bare formality of calling over the prisoners' names.⁶

the fortunate indulgence of the representatives of the people. On the 26th Thermidor Tallien had at last obtained the release of his mistress Teresa Cabarrus.⁷ It would soon be officially known from the publication of the lists that he was interested in the divorced wife of an *émigré*, the ex-Marquise de Fontenay, daughter of the chief banker of the King of Spain, with whom France was then at war.

Encouraged by this first success, the Montagnards became still more exacting. On the 26th Thermidor, the very day on which Teresa Cabarrus was released, Bourdon, Taillefer, Vadier, Chasles, Monestier, and Granet once more taxed the Committees with the discharge of aristocrats which they had ordered. Vadier described how the Committee of General Security was besieged and mobbed by petitioners. He pointed out that the former Duc d'Aumont had been set at liberty under the name of Guy, a husbandman at Aumont. The Duc de Valentino had profited by the same indulgence. Monestier obtained the passage of a decree that "no person may send in a claim for release without specifying his profession, his present names, and those which he may have previously borne." Granet was still more severe, proposing to send the discharged suspects back to prison again whenever those who had acted as guarantee for them failed to appear. A violent debate arose over the release of Generals Kellermann and Desbrulys. Carnot, who had signed the warrant, threw the responsibility on his colleague Goupilleau de Fontenay. The Thermidorians thus implicated attacked in turn as a

⁵ This conclusion is drawn from the statistics of prisoners published by M. Aulard, op. cit., Vol. I. On the 18th Thermidor they totalled 7,771, on the 23rd, 7,293. In view of these figures we can understand why J. J. Dussault was able to write: "The prison doors were burst open rather than thrown open. Crowds of innocent persons came out, but a few guilty ones profited by this precipitate measure" (*Fragment pour servir à l'histoire de la Convention*, p. 4, Bibliothèque Nationale, Lb 41 1231).

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Paris, F 7 4428.

⁷ This is the date given in the article on Tallien in Kuscinski's *Dictionnaire des Conventionnels*.

means of defence. "It is time," cried Merlin of Thionville, "and more than time, that no faction should make use of the steps of Robespierre's throne. . . . We should do nothing by halves, and it must be confessed that the Convention has done several things by halves. If there are still tyrants among us, they ought at least to keep silence. . . . We must give no cause for fear that the proposed lists may one day become proscription lists [some murmuring]—yes, proscription lists." Next Tallien solemnly declared: "I regard this session as one of the most important we have had since the tyrant is no more. Yes, yes, at last the Convention must be told the whole truth, it must be told that it is being led to the verge of the precipice; it must be told that there are those who would annihilate it." And Tallien uttered a threat against the "continuators (*continueurs*) of Robespierre." "What we want is that innocence should no longer be oppressed, that the sword of justice should no longer be double-edged . . . I sincerely admit that I had rather see twenty aristocrats set at liberty today and re-arrested tomorrow than see a single patriot left in chains. What! Is the Republic, with its 1,200,000 citizens under arms, to be afraid of a few aristocrats?" He concluded by moving the annulment of the decree ordering the publication of the lists of discharged prisoners. He had laid his finger on the sensitive spot. He had shown the Convention that it would ruin itself in the eyes of the public if it attempted to carry on the Terror. In vain did the Montagnard Bernard of Saintes challenge Tallien to name the men to whom he referred as desiring to follow in the steps of Robespierre. Bentabole, the husband of Madame de Chabot, took Tallien's side and raised the question of confidence in the government: "If the Committee of General Security no longer possesses your confidence, choose another!" Bourdon of Oise took upon himself the role of mediator. He proposed that they should omit from the list the names of those who had come forward as guarantees for the civic loyalty (*civisme*) of the discharged suspects. This compromise was adopted. Tallien's name was no longer to appear opposite that of Teresa, or that of Legendre opposite that of Mlle Contat.

Encouraged, however, by this first success, Tallien wanted still more. He bethought himself of a manœuvre that was clever, and even perfidious: "Since it is desired that the list of those who have been released should be printed, I propose that the names of those at whose instance they were imprisoned should also be indicated. The people ought to know who are its true enemies, those who denounced patriots and caused their imprisonment." The blow was a shrewd one, and it went home. Tallien's motion was carried at first, but an outcry was at once raised against the result of the vote, and there were shouts of "This means civil war!" Upon which

Tallien retorted sarcastically: "I declare that the sole object of my proposal was to show the danger of the decree voted previously." The two contrary decrees, which neutralized each other, were both annulled. No list would be printed. The Montagnards had lost the day. The Dantonists might continue their collusion with aristocrats with impunity. But it meant a breach between the allies of the 9th Thermidor, and the reactionary party took a step further towards the right.⁸

Tallien, Fréron, and their friends no longer thought it necessary to conceal their new program. Feeling that public opinion, weary of the Terror,⁹ was on their side, they plucked up courage, if not to combat the revolutionary government openly, at least to demand its reform. On the 2nd Fructidor the Montagnard Louchet—the very man who had obtained the passage of the decree for the arrest of Robespierre—declared that "union could not be maintained among the members of the Convention if—to suppose the impossible—the leaders of the faction which has so long and so scandalously protected aristocracy in the temple of laws were to find successors there"—the allusion being to the Dantonist faction. He next proposed to send back to prison the ex-nobles, fathers and mothers of *émigrés*, who had already been set free. All this was aimed at Tallien, who now attacked the Terror directly: "The Terror is the work of tyranny. . . . Robespierre too used constantly to say that terror must be made the order of the day. . . . I no longer recognize any castes in the Republic. I see in it none but good or bad citizens. What does it matter to me if a man was of noble birth, provided that he behaves himself? What does the social position of some plebeian matter to me if he is a rogue?" Declarations of this sort were tantamount to justifying the abolition of all emergency legislation, of all the laws arising out of the state of war. But on the 11th Fructidor Tallien went even further. In a long and very carefully prepared speech, he made a deliberate attempt to rally all those who desired to put an end to the Revolution. For this purpose, he said, they must make it loved, not feared. "The Convention should no longer suffer the Republic to be divided into two classes: those who fear and those who are feared—into persecutors and persecuted."

⁸ On the 1st Fructidor the Committee of Public Safety issued an ordinance to the effect that there should be no more government subscriptions to newspapers. This was a reversal of the previous ordinance of the 19th Thermidor, which had continued the government subscription to the *Journal universel* and the *Journal des hommes libres* for another quarter. It is clear that the new ordinance was a triumph for Tallien, who was soon to found a newspaper of his own.

⁹ In his *Journal universel* for the 28th Thermidor the Montagnard deputy Audouin admitted that opinion was growing hostile to his party: "Patriots are reduced to silence, for the aristocrats call them Robespierres."

He adroitly suggested to the Convention the fear lest there might be a revulsion of public opinion if Robespierre's system were prolonged. He proposed that it should preserve no feature of the revolutionary government save its own dictatorship, by continuing to prohibit all elections until the peace; but, in the mean time, he advised it to make justice, not terror, the order of the day. His speech made a deep impression, which was not destroyed by Lefiot's comment that Tallien had taken a greater part than anyone else in the terrorist excesses that he was now condemning; nor by that of Thuriot, who said that since the Convention had divided up the supreme power, the fears of a fresh tyranny expressed by Tallien were baseless. But Tallien did not yet obtain the vote for which he asked.

Tallien, Fréron, and their partisans constituted themselves, as it were; the executors of Danton's testament. Like Danton they appealed to the rich, to property-owners in general, to all those who were suffering from requisitions and fixed prices. Dubois-Crancé, who made common cause with them, endeavoured in a long speech which he made on the third *sans-culottide* (one of the five intercalary days required to complete the republican calendar of 360 days), to show that in order to revive commerce, agriculture, and industry, what was above all necessary was political pacification: "On all sides commerce is annihilated, for any man who set money in circulation was suspected and accused of profiteering. . . . It was no longer the aristocrats who were being persecuted; it was all the rich who were being plundered and massacred under the name of aristocrats, all those whose fortune set in movement the talents and industry of the people. . . . The fortune of one million men in France fosters the industry of twenty-five million others." Though this speech on the "fostering million (*million nourricier*)," made Dubois-Crancé unpopular among the whole body of terrorists, it revived the hopes of the property-owning classes, and threw them into the arms of the "New Indulgents." The appeal to social conservatism now found willing ears in the Convention. As early as the 4th Fructidor, Bourdon of Oise, who had not yet joined forces with Tallien, proposed "to destroy the fatal decree granting forty sous for attendance at the assemblies of the sections, the decree proposed by Danton and other conspirators." Cambon supported the motion, out of a spirit of economy, and it was carried. He did not realize that in future the assemblies of the sections would be deserted by the popular element and that only those in comfortable circumstances would be able to attend them. Cambon was unintentionally playing the game of the Thermidorians.

When Danton had been preparing for the attack on the Committee of Public Safety in the previous year, just at the moment when the scandal

of the Compagnie des Indes, in which he was involved, came to light, he had set on Camille Desmoulins, and Camille had called for unrestricted liberty of the press, in the *Vieux Cordelier*. In this, too, Tallien and Fréron imitated Danton and Desmoulins. Before Thermidor, though the revolutionary government had not ventured to set up a censorship, it had none the less punished offending journalists so severely that those of them who survived no longer dared to hazard the slightest criticism. So soon as Tallien entered the Committee of Public Safety, and Merlin of Thionville and Legendre the Committee of General Security, the journalists plucked up courage, for they were now sure of support. As early as the 15th Thermidor, J. J. Dussault, a highly talented crypto-royalist, who was soon to write the articles signed by Fréron,¹⁰ and edited *La Correspondance politique*, demanded liberty of the press, and, proceeding to take it, began to attack Barère, whom, without naming, he indicated unmistakably, upbraiding him with having sung the praises of Robespierre two days before the 9th Thermidor. On the following days, with fierce persistence, he followed up his double campaign for liberty of the press and against Barère, whom he nicknamed Scapin—though Scapin was still a member of the government! Before Thermidor, Dussault would have paid for his audacity by being sent before the Revolutionary Tribunal; but now he was left in peace.

Up till the split between the Thermidorians and the Mountain on the 26th Thermidor—the split occasioned by the reversal of the decree ordering the publication of the lists of released prisoners—Dussault's was the only voice to demand the liberty of the press. But immediately afterwards his secret protectors, who required this essential liberty in order to defend themselves against their adversaries of the Mountain and attack them, hastened to join their voices—the powerful voices of orators and deputies—to that of the poor little journalist. First they tested opinion at the Jacobins. On the 28th and 29th Thermidor the two Dantonists Réal and Dufourny demanded this precious liberty one after the other from the tribune of the club and described the horrors of the prisons which they had just quitted. Next Tallien himself made a great speech at the club on the same subject, crying: "Liberty of the press or death!" From this time onward the cry was taken up on every occasion by his partisans. On the 9th Fructidor,

¹⁰ For the relations between Dussault and Fréron, see the *Lettre de J. J. Dussault au citoyen Fréron*, dated "Auteuil, 20th Germinal, year IV," in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Ln²⁷ 6946. Dussault, who should not be confused with the deputy Dusaulx, was afterwards on the staff of the *Journal des Débats*, under the directorship of the Bertin brothers.

Fréron repeated the demand from the tribune of the Convention, in an impassioned speech opening with the words: "There is no such thing as liberty of the press unless it is unrestricted." Amar, in a few brief words, obtained the adjournment of the motion: "Unrestricted liberty carries with it the right of saying everything, without any limit. Is it, then, to follow that those who are still clinging today to the party of royalism, to the Vendée, are to be able to promote and publish their counter-revolutionary ideas? Is it to follow that good patriots and upright men may be attacked and calumniated for their private as well as their political acts?" But it was in vain that Amar and Cambon (who supported him) and the majority in the Assembly caused Fréron's motion to be dropped; the liberty of the press already existed *de facto*, and both pamphleteers and journalists availed themselves of it freely and with impunity.

Where liberty was concerned, Fréron and Tallien, like Danton before them, found precious allies in what remained of the former Hébertist faction. The Hébertists, who were convinced partisans of direct government, had never accepted the destruction of the liberty of speech and writing—at least for republicans—any more than they had the abolition of elections. Only a few days before Thermidor, on the anniversary of July 14, one of them, a certain Legray, a leading figure in the section of the Museum (that is, the Louvre), and a member of its revolutionary committee, had already indulged in bitter language against governments which were daily violating the charter of the Rights of Man and setting up new Bastilles. He was denounced and arrested and was only saved from the scaffold by the 9th Thermidor.¹¹ On his release, which then followed, Legray, perhaps at the prompting of others, induced his section, of which he had become president, to vote an address to the Convention demanding two things: on the one hand, the liberty of the press, and, on the other, the revival of elections for choosing administrative and judicial officials of all kinds (30th Thermidor).

¹¹ I have related the case of Legray in an article in the *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* for 1927. But at that time I was not aware of the part which he played in politics immediately after Thermidor. It was Babeuf's *Journal de la liberté de la presse* that brought it to my notice. According to the *Message du soir* for the 12th Fructidor, those responsible for the petition of the Museum section seem to have been there in number: "Legray, a well-known adventurer, Servièrre, a former shoemaker, afterwards a jurymen on the Revolutionary Tribunal and at the same time a member of the revolutionary committee of the section of the Museum, and Chassand, ex-curate of the royal parish church of Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois, first a Feuillant, then a Fayetteist, then a Brissotin, then a Hébertist, then a Robespierriest, and on the whole a decided counter-revolutionary" (Aulard, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 65). Chassand afterwards became one of the leading exponents of Theophilanthropy.

The petition of the Museum section was sent round to all the others, which discussed it. There was profound agitation even in the working-class sections. Indeed, we read in the police report of the 11th Fructidor: "In the faubourg Antoine, citizens are complaining that the National Convention does not leave the people the right of choosing their judicial and administrative officials." Though the section of Montreuil was one of the most sansculotte in character, it adopted the Museum section's petition.¹²

The Hébertist campaign developed on parallel lines with that of the Dantonists, and the two had a number of points in common. Both of them were directed against what remained of the revolutionary government. Both of them held out hope and, what is more, a means of retaliation to the secret enemies of the existing system. The Committees, in which a Montagnard spirit still predominated, took alarm at the agitation in the sections, which was assuming a threatening character. It was particularly vocal against the men of the revolutionary committees, whom the relatives of the discharged suspects never ceased accusing of intrigues and exactions. The Committees said to themselves that they would have to make a partial concession, at the same time depriving the sections of the means of thwarting the policy of the government, which was still determined upon upholding revolutionary institutions. On the 1st Fructidor, accordingly, Goupilleau de Fontenay proposed in their name to do away with all the revolutionary committees of the sections and communes, the partiality and incapacity of which had often been denounced, only leaving one political vigilance committee (*comité de police politique*) in existence for each district, making twelve for the whole area of Paris, instead of forty-eight. "The legislators charged with the task of completing the Revolution will themselves select the elements that are to co-operate with them." In other words, the members of the new revolutionary committees would be chosen by the Convention itself, just as the members of the former ones had been chosen by its committees. They would not be elected. Goupilleau de Fontenay's motion had in no way the relaxation of the Terror as its object; on the contrary, it was directed towards consolidating its mechanism. The district committees, whose authority would extend over a wide area, would be easier to recruit and more powerful than the former committees of the communes or sections. The new committees placed at the head of the twelve *arrondissements* of Paris (for it was on this occasion that the *arrondissements* of the capital were created) would no longer be dependent upon the sections, as the old ones had been. They would be in closer touch with the Committees of the Convention which

¹² Aulard, *Paris sous la Réaction thermidorienne*, Vol. I, under date in question.

appointed them. They would be able to stand out against the popular agitation stirred up by the Dantonists and Hébertists jointly.¹⁸

The debate on Goupilleau's project showed that the Museum section's petition had its partisans even in the Convention. On the 7th Fructidor the Montagnard deputy Chasles, an ex-priest, who had been wounded on the field of battle during his mission to the Army of the North, proposed that the members of the new revolutionary committees should be elected by the people. Cambon's rejoinder was: "I put it to Chasles, who found that there were hardly any patriots in Lille: would he be content for the choice of the members of the revolutionary committees to be left to chance now?" This was an admission that the restoration of elections would expose the existing regime to serious risks. Chasles durst not deny the danger which Cambon pointed out; modifying his proposal, he suggested that the people should draw up a list of proposed candidates, and that the Committees of the Convention should make their selection from among them. Next he pointed out how the representatives on mission in the departments, who had hitherto nominated the local committees, were beset on arrival by aristocrats, Muscadins, and schemers. Charlier replied to Chasles that his project for consulting the electors was no more nor less than "the appeal to the people proposed by Guadet, Vergniaud, and their like." Goupilleau de Fontenay added the following decisive argument: "Is the Revolution a reality? We have 1,200,000 men on our frontiers: why does nobody propose that the armies also should hold meetings and express their will with regard to the composition of the revolutionary committees? . . . If the Convention is to be the centre of the revolutionary government, it should be the Convention that controls it. How many departments are there in which aristocrats and schemers do not still exist? How many departments are there in which these men alone are able to speak in the popular societies and assemblies of the people? Very well! If you were to adopt the method proposed, these persons would control everything!" And Goupilleau de Fontenay cited the case of a commune in the neighbourhood of Paris which had recently come and asked for the release of its former feudal lord.

¹⁸ One has only to glance through such minute-books of these committees as still survive, to be convinced that they possessed no initiative. See the following of them, now in the National Archives: F⁷ 2491 (revolutionary vigilance committee for the sixth *arrondissement*, set up on the 4th intercalary day, year II, on the premises of the former revolutionary committee of the section of Les Gravilliers); F⁷ 2523 (committee of the twelfth *arrondissement*); F⁷ 2513 (committee of the eleventh *arrondissement*); F⁷ 2476 (committee of the first *arrondissement*); F⁷ 2498 (committee of the seventh *arrondissement*), etc. Up to the present no study of these committees has been published.

Chasles's proposal met with no support and was not even put to the vote; but a deputy named Ruelle called the attention of the Assembly to the serious consequences which would result from the suppression of thousands of revolutionary committees in the communes and sections: "By the new organization of the revolutionary committees you deprive more than five hundred thousand persons of their employment. Those members of the revolutionary committees ought to be placed under the special protection of the nation. If you do not take measures to do so, these citizens will become the object of private passion, vengeance, and hatred [murmurs]. It argues a very small knowledge of the human heart not to realize that those who have had their fathers, relatives, or friends thrown into dungeons or sent to the scaffold on the denunciation of a revolutionary committee will cherish a hatred for the members of these committees and seek a signal revenge, unless you do something to curb their resentment. . . . I propose a decree to the effect that the new revolutionary committees shall have no power to issue warrants for the arrest of members of the former committees for anything occurring prior to the cessation of their functions." This obscure member of the Convention was speaking words of wisdom, and his fears were prophetic. The sight of the agitation already stirred up by the relatives of suspects in certain of the Parisian sections against those who had caused their arrest ought to have prepared the Assembly to listen to the warning thus uttered. But it murmured and refused to listen. An unknown member protested against the immunity which it was proposed to confer upon the members of the former revolutionary committees, and Barère appealed to the sacred principles of equality, which must not be attacked. Ruelle's proposal was dropped, and free course was left to individual vengeance and persecution of the brave men who, at a time of great peril, had accepted the formidable mission of defending the Republic and the fatherland by applying the revolutionary laws. Inconsistently enough, during the very same session at which it threw out the imprudent suggestions of the Hébertist Chasles and attempted to resist the agitation in the sections, stirred up or encouraged by the New Indulgents, the Convention refused to consider the consequences of its actions and to realize that all those who had taken part in the Terror were inevitably united by an indissoluble bond. But the Convention no longer had any leaders. Its policy was improvised from day to day.

The object of Fréron, Tallien, and the New Indulgents in demanding unrestricted liberty of the press with such insistence was not merely to propitiate the former Hébertists, but to make use of this liberty as soon as possible to attack their principal adversaries. Fréron remained faithful to

the tactics which he had employed against the royalists and the Fayetteists in his original *Orateur du peuple*. Being devoid of all ideas, he substituted abuse for arguments. But with their own terrorist record he and Tallien needed uncommon audacity to round on their opponents with the accusation of "terrorism." It was Robespierre who served as a cloak for this manœuvre. Under that accursed name the New Indulgents summed up every crime, real or imaginary. Tallien had at his disposal a hireling journalist, Méhée, the ex-Chevalier de la Touche, who had been his colleague at the registry of the Commune on August 10 and, like him, was compromised in the September massacres. Méhée had been imprisoned during the Terror and no doubt owed his release to Tallien. On the 9th Fructidor he brought out a virulent pamphlet, caustic and witty in the manner of Camille Desmoulins, *La Queue de Robespierre, ou les dangers de la liberté de la presse* (*Robespierre's Tail, or the Dangers of the Liberty of the Press*), directed against those to whom Tallien had referred on the 26th Fructidor as "continuators of Robespierre."¹⁴ In it he railed against Billaud-Varenne, Collot d'Herbois, and, above all, Barère. If the members of the old Committees would have none of the liberty of the press, he said, the reason was that they were afraid that their crimes and complicity with Robespierre might be laid bare. Méhée next recalled the wholesale shootings (*mitraillades*) at Lyons ordered by Collot d'Herbois and found no difficulty in turning Barère's tergiversations and Billaud-Varenne's mildness into ridicule. But what he had particularly at heart was to point out that they had all been Robespierre's accomplices, and that they were endeavouring to maintain the Terror and revolutionary government only in order to find a cloak for their own responsibility.

The pamphlet met with such a great success that a number of imitations appeared, all directed against the members of the old Committees. The expression "Robespierre's tail" came into general use to designate them and their partisans. This was the moment chosen by the deputy Lecointre (of Versailles) to pronounce from the tribune of the Convention a regular indictment of seven members of the old Committees: four of the Committee of General Security—Vadier, Amar, Voulland, and David—and three of the Committee of Public Safety—Barère, Billaud-Varenne, and Collot d'Herbois—all of whom were obviously accomplices of Robespierre, since they had co-operated in the terrorist measures, the law of the 22nd Prairial, and the so-called "verdicts" of the Revolutionary Tribunal. But the

¹⁴ The pamphlet was signed Fethemesi, for Felhémési, an anagram of *Méhée fils*. It was issued from Rougyff's (that is, Guffroy's) printing-press, 35 rue Honoré. Fouché denounced this "disgusting libel" at the session of the Jacobins on the 15th Fructidor.

denunciation missed fire. The Assembly not only remained unmoved, but passed a vote of censure on the denouncer.

In order to understand the reason for this reception, it should be remembered that Lecointre's denunciation followed upon others which had taken place on the preceding days, all directed against Montagnard deputies notorious for their resistance to the policy of Fréron and Tallien. As early as the 15th Thermidor the vile Rovère had tried to revenge himself on the representative of the people Maignet, who, when on mission in Vaucluse, had shown up Rovère's corrupt dealings in national property with the "black bands" and caused the arrest and punishment of such agents of his as the notorious Jourdan,¹⁵ known as "Coupe-tête." Rovère succeeded in obtaining the recall of Maignet and in having his place in Vaucluse taken by one of his own friends, Goupilleau de Montaigu (a cousin of Goupilleau de Fontenay), who acted as the instrument of his vengeance. A whole deputation of patriots from Avignon, which had come to Paris to defend Maignet, was denounced by Rovère, who boasts of this in his letter to Goupilleau on the 6th Fructidor, and arrested *en masse* before gaining a hearing from the Convention. Two days later, Rovère had two of his creatures brought to the bar of the Assembly, who once again accused Maignet of being an accomplice of Robespierre and the butcher of the south. In vain did Bourdon of Oise recall the existence of a decree voted on the previous day ordering that nobody should be received at the bar, but that individual denunciations should be referred to the Committees, so as to prevent the Convention from being degraded in the person of its members; a deputy of the Plain, Durand de Maillane, supported the denunciation in the words: "To instruct the Convention is not to degrade it"; and Rovère, backed up by Fréron, described how the southern departments were threatened by the daggers of the assassins—the "continuators of Robespierre." Bourdon of Oise, who no doubt had his own opinion of Rovère's disinterestedness in this affair, reduced him to silence, amid the applause of the Convention, by saying: "A representative of the people is being denounced today; the same tactics will be pursued tomorrow and the day after; and the upshot of it will be to disgust the people with the Revolution and induce

¹⁵ The correspondence between Rovère and Goupilleau de Montaigu during their mission was published at Nîmes in 1908 by MM. Michel Jouve and Giraud-Mangin. The commentary with which these gentlemen accompany their publication can and should be ignored. It would be difficult for M. Jouve to be impartial, for he is connected with the family of Jourdan Coupe-tête. But the letters themselves are intensely interesting. For Maignet's mission in Vaucluse, see the two articles by M. P. Vailland in the *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, March-April and May-June 1926.

them to demand a change of representatives." It was rare for an appeal to the corporate sentiment of the Convention to fail. Besides, many of its members had been sent on missions. They had had to apply the revolutionary laws, with the result that they had made enemies. Nothing would be easier than to stir people up to denounce them. And denunciations followed one upon the other, all supported or incited by the Indulgents. On the 7th Fructidor the representative of the people Mallarmé was taken to task before the Committees for having ordered the deportation of priests who had said mass after renouncing their functions and handing in their letters of ordination. On the 10th Fructidor it was the turn of the representative Forestier, who was denounced by petitioners from Nantes as a terrorist and agent of Robespierre. Amid the applause of his colleagues Forestier defended himself by pointing out that his denunciators had been prosecuted by him for their exactions while he was on mission. Fouché recognized in one of the petitioners a man whom he had dismissed from the revolutionary commission of Lyons. On the whole the moral record of the denunciators was not brilliant. The person who appeared at the bar of the Convention to denounce Joseph Lebon on the 3rd Vendémiaire had been sent before the Revolutionary Tribunal by the representatives of the people Duhem and Duquesnoy for peculation in connexion with the supply of forage to the army.¹⁶

We can see the state of the atmosphere in which Lecointre's denunciation precipitated an explosion. Moreover, it had been preceded the day before by Tallien's great speech against the Terror and in favour of the liberty of the press. It looked as though Lecointre and Tallien were acting in collusion. Those who were ostensibly opposed to the Terror had no indulgence save for the enemies of the Republic. It was those who had defended it against the most terrible dangers whom they wished to send to the scaffold!

In grave, sad terms the young representative of the people Goujon, who had recently returned from his mission to the Army of the Rhine, voiced his own sentiments and those of the great majority of the Assembly: "My heart swells with indignation when I see with what cold impassiveness the seed of division has just been sown among us, when I see with what imperturbable calm the ruin of the country is proposed. . . . Evidence has been submitted to us today inculpatory men who have served the Revolution well. . . . Most of the censure levelled at them reflects upon the

¹⁶ See the account of the session of the 3rd Vendémiaire, year III, in the *Moniteur*.

Convention too. . . . As Jean Debry said just now: 'It is the aristocrats who command, who are doing all this!' " A few voices added: "And the thieves!" By way of justification Billaud-Varenne recalled the part he had played in the fall of Robespierre, whose accomplice he was accused of being. He next turned upon the Dantonists: "The name of Danton has been mentioned. Ah! who can fail to see that it is desired to sacrifice the best patriots on the tomb of this conspirator [a few voices: 'Yes! Yes!']! If the execution of Danton is a crime, I assume the responsibility for it, for I was the first to denounce him. I said that if that man continued to live, he would form a rallying-point for all the counter-revolutionaries . . . I declare that if the Indulgents and thieves succeeded in gaining the upper hand, I should commit suicide!" Bourdon of Oise, who was a friend of Billaud, interrupted him by saying: "The word has been spoken; we must have proof." "I undertake to prove it in one case!" shouted Duhem, and other voices were heard to say: "And I in another!" Thus encouraged, Billaud concluded with a personal attack on his denunciator. Lecointre, the tradesman, he said, had gained fifty thousand livres by the Revolution. He had failed to make a declaration of the goods in his possession; "he came and told us as much at the Committee, and we were so tender-hearted as to spare a representative of the people the infamy of being stigmatized as a profiteer!" Billaud was speaking the truth. Lecointre had shortly to admit that he had been prosecuted for a breach of the law against food-speculation. Billaud further accused him of obtaining the reversal of the decree indicting Beaumarchais—"yet he accuses us of having caused the emigration of Beaumarchais!" After Cambon had observed that a new crime had been created out of the word "Robespierre," and Vadier had ascended the tribune pistol in hand, Thuriot obtained the adoption, without opposition, of a vote of censure on Lecointre, whose denunciation was declared to be calumnious.

Such a session left undying resentment in the hearts of those who had joined forces on the 9th Thermidor, and henceforth they were openly at variance. The Indulgents had been branded as thieves from the tribune and had suffered a severe reverse in the person of their spokesman, Lecointre, and their humiliation was all the more stinging in that their discomfited champion was a person of a grotesque cast of countenance and a ridiculous exterior.¹⁷ But though beaten in the Convention, they did not despair of revenge, for public opinion, which they were stirring up, was increasingly hostile to their opponents, to all those who had formed the

¹⁷ J. J. Dussault depicts him as such in his *Fragment pour servir à l'histoire de la Convention*, p. 27.

government in the year II. On the very evening of this session of the Convention, "the Tuileries, the Carrousel, the former Palais-Royal, the Place de la Bastille, and the boulevards were filled with excited groups. People complained that such a grave denunciation should have been treated so lightly. Every incident was raked up that might be disadvantageous to the accused members. Men recalled that Barère had proposed Fouquier-Tinville as public prosecutor to the reconstituted tribunal. They went so far as to say that they would find a way of forcing the Convention to make an end of this business."¹⁸ As was to be expected, "it was the women among the groups who made the noise."¹⁹

At the opening of the following day's session the deputy Roux alluded to this public agitation and demanded that the debate on Lecointre's denunciation should be reopened, in order to give the accused deputies a means of destroying the unfavourable impression that had been created upon public opinion. Tallien and Legendre at once hastened to dissociate themselves from Lecointre. It was a slander, they said, to suggest that it was they who had prompted the denunciation. Both of them opposed the reopening of the debate. "Do you not see," said Thuriot, "that the campaign of calumny which has been going on for some time past is of a piece with the proposal to summon the primary and electoral assemblies?" He, too, tried to prevent the debate. But Billaud-Varenne demanded that the documents on which Lecointre's charges were based should be read out, and Thibaudeau said that the Convention was suspect in the eyes of the nation. "This state of anxiety must stop; the people must know that the national representatives are worthy to represent them."

Lecointre was therefore forced to re-read his indictment of the deputies. At every paragraph he was greeted with cries of: "Proofs! We want the evidence!" His reply was: "It is to be found in the records of the general police board"; or "The facts are notorious." When Cambon asked why he had only accused seven members of the Committees and not all of them, he made no reply. When he quoted a document obtained from Fouquier-Tinville, Louchet interrupted him by saying that Lecointre had dined with Fouquier-Tinville before his arrest, and was his accomplice. By way of

¹⁸ See Dussault's *Fragment*, p. 28, confirmed by the police report for the 13th Fructidor, published by Aulard, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 66-7.

¹⁹ See the police report mentioned above. At the session of the following day Billaud-Varenne declared that among the groups round the Convention he had heard "men who had been outlawed, ex-marquises, ex-counts, preaching royalism [a few voices: 'It is true!']." Billaud mentioned the ex-Marquis de Tilly, once the leader of the Knights of the Dagger (see the *Moniteur*).

excuse Lecointre revealed the fact that Merlin of Thionville had also been at the dinner. Another time Lecointre appealed to the testimony of Fabricius, registrar-in-chief of the Revolutionary Tribunal. Duhem interrupted with the words: "He was a great friend of Danton"; and Carrier added: "protected by Tallien." So generally execrated was Danton's reputation that his very name, introduced into the debate by the Montagnards, was like a slap in the face to Fréron's adherents.²⁰

When Lecointre had finished, after appealing for pardon in the words: "Be indulgent towards my errors," Goupilleau de Fontenay pointed the moral: "What they want is to sow division among you by scrutinizing the conduct of those who organized the victories of our arms and never ceased to serve the common weal." It was not, he said, the seven members whom they were trying to indict, but the whole Convention. And Goupilleau de Fontenay expressed his indignation that the very men—that is, Tallien and Fréron—who only two days before had spoken with horror of the system of Terror, were trying to revive it again, but against the republicans. Once more the Convention decreed that Lecointre's denunciation was calumnious.

This time Fréron's clique were crushed. They durst not protest as they had done on the previous day. They were certainly having a run of bad luck. On the 14th Fructidor, the day after Lecointre's second discomfiture, the powder-factory at Grenelle blew up. Four hundred dead were removed to the École Militaire, and the number of wounded was even greater. The sensation was profound: "Citizens on the scene of the explosion were saying: 'This is the result of discharging the prisoners.'" Delmas and Carrier echoed these popular accusations at the session of the Convention, saying that it was the "released suspects, the Knights of the Dagger, who had done the deed." Carrier tried to implicate Tallien, who had foretold at the Jacobins a conspiracy for the 10th Fructidor. "We shall see," he concluded in a tone of challenge, "on which side the 'continuators of Robespierre' really are, and where is Robespierre's tail!" Bourdon of Oise went even further than Carrier. "Some have even risen to propose in honeyed terms that nobody should be treated as a suspect or judged by anything but his actions—as if to say, for instance, that if a man had been suspected yesterday of intending to set fire to the powder-magazines, he ought not to have been arrested till today, instead of yesterday. This is what Tallien said! . . . I cannot see without indignation that friends of Danton have been set at

²⁰ In the pamphlet quoted above, which is very favourable to Tallien and Fréron (he was acting as the latter's secretary when he composed it), Dussault expresses himself as follows with regard to Danton, in the portrait which he drew of Legendre: "This pupil of Danton, *whose dupe he had been* . . ." (*Fragment*, pp. 22-3).

liberty—such a man as Fabricius, his creature and agent!" There was but little response from the Indulgents. Merlin of Thionville alone tried to defend Aubert-Dubayet, whose discharge he had procured and whom Bourdon of Oise had accused of having handed over Mainz to the enemy.

On the following day, when the usual quota of the Committee of General Security and of Public Safety was due for renewal, Tallien handed in his resignation, Barère was chosen by lot to retire from the Committee of Public Safety, and Billaud-Varenne and Collot d'Herbois followed Tallien's example and also resigned. The new members nominated by the Assembly were all Montagnards, and all four of them regicides: Delmas, Merlin of Douai, Cochon, and Fourcroy for the Committee of Public Safety; and Bourdon of Oise, Collombel, Méaulle, Clauzel, Mathieu, Monmayou, and Lesage-Senault for the Committee of General Security; the latter were also regicides and very hostile to Tallien, with the exception, perhaps, of Clauzel.

The Jacobins, whom the New Indulgents had hoped to carry with them, had already pronounced against them, even before the Convention had done so. As early as the 8th Fructidor, they sent a deputation to it, headed by Raison, to protest against the release of aristocrats and demand that the list of them should be printed. "Crime alone can fear the printing of this list!" Raison said; and he wound up by demanding that steps should be taken against rogues and corrupt persons, the enemies of the people. But the Convention refused to go back upon its vote. The Jacobins complained bitterly at the refusal. "Since yesterday," said the deputy Maure from the tribune of the club, "the Marsh has come to life again." In order to withstand the double onslaught of the Hébertists, who were calling for an election, and the Fréronists, who wanted unrestricted liberty of the press, they organized a widespread propaganda, not only in Paris, but throughout the whole of France. In Paris several sections voted against the Museum section's petition.²¹ Petitions in favour of the revolutionary government poured into Paris from the departments. On the day after Lecointre's denunciation of the seven members of the Committees, Carrier, who was afterwards to pay dearly for his attack, accused Tallien of having instigated Lecointre, and moved that he should be struck off the books of the club. Carrier was supported by the deputy Duhem ("cantankerous, bitter, caustic, insolent, and garrulous," to use the words of his adversary Dussault), who was playing an increasingly influential part and becoming the leader of the most extreme Montagnards (known as the "Crest," *la Crête*): "In

²¹ The address of the Museum was rejected by the following: the sections of the Fontaine de Grenelle, the Piques, Bonnet Rouge, Mucius Scévola, the Halle au Blé, and Les Arcis (Proceedings of the Convention, session of the 11th Fructidor).

the Convention today I said that Tallien, Fréron, and Dubois-Crancé were the men who had instigated Lecointre to draw up the indictment which he laid before the Assembly, and I denounced this fact because I had it from their own lips." Dubois-Crancé and Dufourny attempted to reply to Duhem and Carrier. The club did not arrive at any decision that day. But the attitude of the Convention and the feeling aroused by the explosion at the Grenelle powder-factory encouraged the Jacobins in general, who had so far been rather timid. On the 17th Fructidor, Fayau again took up Duhem's proposal to strike Tallien, Lecointre, and Fréron off the books of the club. Tallien, he said, had proposed a virtual amnesty for aristocrats. He had said, in the very club itself, "that what was wanted was a 10th Fructidor, and that in order to bring it about he would make use of assassins." Fréron had asked for unrestricted liberty of the press, which was the way to encourage aristocrats to demand the restoration of royalty. Levasseur of Sarthe challenged Tallien, who was present, and demanded an account of his associates: "Let him tell us how matters stand between him and the wife of an *émigré*, who happens to be the daughter of the King of Spain's treasurer!" Tallien and Fréron attempted to justify themselves. Tallien denied that he had instigated Lecointre, and dared to allege that he had tried to dissuade him from making his denunciation. He ventured even further: in reply to Carrier he affirmed that he had been one of the first to complain of the release of aristocrats! Fréron was contemptuous and showed more firmness. All three of them, Tallien, Fréron, and Lecointre, were struck off the books.

Charles Duval's comment on this event in the *Journal des hommes libres* for the following day (the 18th Fructidor) was as follows: "I repeat, let every man tremble who has been corrupted by the base lure of gold, office, power, and debauchery! The end of their infamy is approaching; with the aristocrats they will disappear from before the people, who will cast out all that is impure!"

This was the second time that Tallien had been struck off the books of the Jacobins. The first time, on the 24th Prairial, a month and a half before Thermidor, he had taken a step towards the right in order to effect a *rapprochement* with the Plain, which he succeeded in carrying with him against Robespierre. Five weeks after Thermidor he was once more struck off the books by his allies of a day, whom he now called the heirs (*continu-ateurs*) of Robespierre. Branded as a debauchee, a thief, and a renegade, and involved in the vote of censure against his friend Lecointre passed almost unanimously by the Convention, how could he do otherwise than take another step towards the right in order to seek support and prepare to

retaliate? Since the very Plain itself had abandoned him, he would look for support even to the former Girondins—even to the Feuillants. Moreover, was he not backed by a faithful band of henchmen, in the shape of the suspects, "defeatists," and speculators whom he and his most worthy adherents had caused to be released in thousands, and who had attached themselves inseparably to his cause; since, if he went under, they would once more see the prison doors open to receive them? Besides, he had now gone too far to draw back. His desire for reaction—which he had let loose almost in spite of himself—was based on no principle, for he was thinking only of his private interests, and would perhaps have continued to be on good terms with Barère, had not the Mountain, by insisting on the publication of the lists of discharged prisoners, laid him under the necessity of elaborating a general theory of indulgence as a justification for his own little private schemes. Reaction had been forced upon him as a means of defence, and it now carried him further and further—to lengths that he had not foreseen. Hitherto he had fought against the revolutionary regime from within, from the Convention and the Jacobins: now that he no longer had a seat on the Committee, he was to fight it from without, from the salons and the street, by the press and by direct action. He and Fréron set to work to rouse the "*jeunesse dorée*"—the "gilded youth" of the well-to-do classes.

CHAPTER III

The Trial of Carrier and the Closing of the Jacobins

ON the 17th Fructidor of the year II, four days after the Convention had passed a vote of censure on them, Tallien, Fréron, and Lecointre were struck off the books of the Jacobins on the motion of Carrier. Two months later, on the 23rd Brumaire, year III, the Jacobin Club was closed by decree, and Carrier, whose arrest had already been decreed two days previously, was shortly to render an account of his actions before the Revolutionary Tribunal. The mere statement of these two sets of facts suffices to show how promptly the Thermidorians managed to reverse a state of affairs which had at first been very critical for them.

In his letters to his friend Goupilleau de Montaigu,¹ whom he had sent on mission to Vaucluse, Rovère-Glacière,² ex-Marquis de Fontvielle, who had just married the Marquise d'Agoult, frankly admitted his perplexities and apprehensions on the morrow of the fiasco in which Lecointre's great denunciation of the members of the old Committees had ended. Robespierre's tail was hard to skin, he wrote on the 18th Fructidor. On the 22nd Fructidor he added the detail that the deputies who had voted with Tallien and Fréron were no more than a hundred and fifty in number. But they had resolute leaders in Rovère, Tallien, Fréron, and Merlin of Thionville: "It is absolutely necessary, my friend, to display strength and energy, or else Robespierre's tail will cut off our heads." And this was no mere figure of speech.

Indeed, the Montagnards meant to make the most of their success. They were roused to action by petitions from the Jacobins in the provinces. One of these, from the popular society at Dijon, demanded the publication of the list of discharged suspects, the strict application of the law of September 17, the expulsion of nobles and priests from all employments, and the suspension of the liberty of the press for the duration of the war. It even demanded the reversal of the provisions by which the Revolutionary Tri-

¹ *Correspondance intime* of Rovère, member of the Convention, with Goupilleau de Montaigu, during the latter's mission in the south after the Terror, published by Michel Jouve and Giraud-Mangin, Nîmes, 1908. The introduction is full of information about Rovère and his new wife, whose first husband had emigrated.

² This nickname had been given to him to recall the part he had played in the horrible massacre of the aristocrats imprisoned in the ice-house (*glacière*) at Avignon.

bunal was allowed to pronounce an acquittal on grounds of intention. The Dijon address was applauded when it was read out by Louchet at the session of the Convention on the 29th Fructidor, and many other clubs approved or imitated it—even several of the Parisian sections.⁸

In order to recover their popularity with the working-classes, the Montagnards revived for their own credit the projected reforms which had been in abeyance since the 9th Thermidor. While still abusing the Robespierrists, they stole their ideas. Thus, on the 21st Fructidor, Barère made a great speech on the necessity of at last organizing *republican institutions*, the task of reporting on which had been entrusted to Saint-Just, "one of those tyrants who, before the 9th Thermidor, carried all the principles of democracy to extremes and had elaborated a scheme of institutions in order to overthrow the Republic more surely. But with what a fatal gift that conspirator would have presented us!" Barère desired to have a special commission of three members set up, to prepare by the 15th Brumaire a plan for those republican institutions without which, he said, citizens would be unable to lose their monarchical habits. Goujon supported Barère, but Reubell had the project referred to the Committee of Public Instruction, as M. J. Chénier had proposed, and nothing more was heard of it.

On the following day, the 22nd Fructidor, the Montagnard Duquesnoy denounced a case of peculation in connexion with national property at Béthune, and proposed that the Legislative Committee should elaborate a plan for reserving the national property to the poor and preventing the rich from obtaining a monopoly of it. In due course Fayau read out a scheme which he had drawn up on the subject. Like Saint-Just, he wanted to do away with destitution. "No longer should a few individuals be able to enjoy the fruits of others' work without themselves working. . . . Where there is no happiness, liberty is insecure." But the national property, having been sold by auction, had benefited none but the rich. "What does it matter to the needy toiler whether it is the superior of the Benedictines or some profiteer in his neighbourhood who orders him to water his appointed field with his sweat? . . . Is not the same individual still working to gratify the pride and caprice of the idle?" Fayau therefore proposed to do away

⁸ The Dijon address was approved by the other popular societies of Côte-d'Or, notably by those of Beaune and Semur. Similar addresses reached the Convention from Aix-en-Provence (20th Fructidor), the department of Bouches-du-Rhône (22nd Fructidor), Toulouse, Manosque, Clamecy, Cette, Toulon (24th Fructidor), Montpellier and Grenoble (25th Fructidor), Auxerre (26th Fructidor), Rennes (first intercalary day), Thonon (second intercalary day), Montagne-sur-Aisne (third intercalary day), etc.

with sale by auction and distribute the national property among poor citizens. The distribution would not be entirely gratis, as it had been in the decrees of Ventôse, which had been passed on the motion of Saint-Just. The person profiting by the distribution was to "pay a twentieth part of the capital value of the property annually, to be fixed by previous valuation." Foreseeing the objection: "But what becomes of the security for the assignats?" Fayau replied that they would be secured firstly on the instalments payable by the purchasers, and then on the whole of the French soil—that is, on all landed estates, even those in private ownership. Anxious to conciliate the army, which was indispensable if reaction was to be resisted, he proposed that the defenders of the fatherland should be placed in immediate possession of that part of the national property which had been promised them.⁴ And he concluded triumphantly: "Up to this moment, let us frankly admit, happiness has not yet existed except in the future; let us make haste to place it within the reach of the people. What power will conspirators have over public opinion when once every citizen has felt the benefits of the Revolution?"⁵

Barère warmly supported Fayau's scheme. "It is horrible to see," he said, "that while the emigration of traitors and the punishment of conspirators have destroyed enormous fortunes and enabled liberty to benefit by them, bankers, speculators, and army-contractors are rising up, trying to build up new and enormous fortunes again with the funds stolen from the people." Barère wanted a maximum limit to be fixed to the amount of land acquired. It was not enough to take none but the sansculottes of the country districts into account, and create a new class of property-owners for their benefit: "In short," he said, "we must set up workshops and shops and establish needy workmen in them." But Tallien had no intention of being outdone in popularity. He, too, fulminated against army-contractors. Possibly at that time he was not concerned in the Ouen company, which had obtained large contracts for army-supplies.⁶ Fayau's and Barère's proposal was referred to the four committees of national property (*domaines*), agriculture, finance, and public relief, with instructions to draft a measure embodying them within a week.

Encouraged by this, the Jacobins resolved on the 19th Fructidor to ask the Convention to put in force the decree of the previous 24th Brumaire, enacting that Marat's remains should be transferred to the Panthéon, the

⁴ By the decree of June 28, 1793, six hundred millions' worth of national property had been set apart for distribution to the soldiers.

⁵ Fayau's speech and scheme are in the *Moniteur* (reissue), Vol. XXI, p. 746.

⁶ See Joseph Turquan, *La Citoyenne Tallien* (1898), p. 192.

execution of which had, they said, been delayed by Robespierre's jealousy. To revive the memory of Marat and honour him by such an apotheosis would be an indirect justification of the Terror. On the 26th Fructidor the Convention complied with the request of the Jacobins without a debate, on the motion of Léonard Bourdon, spokesman of the Committee of Public Instruction; and on the fifth complementary day of the year II all the deputies appeared at the head of the procession which bore Marat to the temple of great men, from which Mirabeau was to be expelled.⁷

Meanwhile, on the 23rd Fructidor, the Jacobins had fulminated against embezzlers and thieves and resolved to denounce them to the Convention. Billaud-Varenne uttered threats against "those who preach the dissolution of the Republic. These are the former ministers [that is, the former pro-consuls], who have millions at their disposal, and dread the hour—which will be a momentous one for them—when they have to render an account of them." Tallien's band could not fail to realize that Billaud-Varenne was on the eve of arraigning them and, as Merlin of Thionville said afterwards, putting the knife to their throats.

But two events now happened which were providential for them—though it is possible to assist Providence!—by giving them a breathing-space, and enabling them not only abruptly to check the Montagnard offensive, but also to turn the tables and appear in turn as victims and accusers, thus recovering all the ground they had lost since Lecointre's ill-fated denunciation. These two events, which mark a turning-point in our story, were, on the one hand, the attempted assassination of Tallien, and, on the other hand, the trial of the federalists of Nantes before the Revolutionary Tribunal.

About midnight on the night of the 23rd–24th Fructidor, as Tallien was returning—touching detail!—from his mother's house, he was attacked, so he said, in the rue des Quatre-fils by a person who first shot him in the shoulder with a pistol and then stabbed him in the breast. The assassin was never found, nor was the bullet, which, according to the surgeons, did not enter the flesh, but slipped between the waistcoat and the shirt and merely grazed the skin, leaving a mark about an inch long and half an inch wide.⁸ But the martyr of liberty took to his bed. A lucky scar! It enabled Merlin

⁷ A timid attempt was made on the 29th Fructidor to obtain the adjournment of the Marat commemoration and substitute for it a commemoration of Jean-Jacques Rousseau on the fifth complementary day. But Collot d'Herbois persuaded the Convention to abide by the date already fixed. The Jean-Jacques Rousseau celebration took place on the 20th Vendémiaire.

⁸ See the medical certificate in Buchez and Roux, Vol. XXVI, p. 75.

of Thionville to create a pathetic diversion from the tribune of the Convention on the following day, before the doctors' report and the exact circumstances of the attack were yet known. "The reign of assassins must cease!" cried Merlin. For, without a doubt, it was the Jacobins who had dealt the blow. And he proposed that the "brigands' den" should be closed. There could be no doubt that the "Knights of the Guillotine" (another of his phrases) meant to overthrow the Convention. As proof of this he adduced their meeting on the previous day, at which they had denounced certain representatives of the people. "But I declare," he said, "that I will stab myself to the heart here on the tribune rather than see them ever oppress the people!"

Bentabole, the husband of Madame de Chabot, spoke after Merlin and accused the Jacobins, whom he had once overwhelmed with the basest flatteries, of setting up an independent body attempting to rival the Convention. It was for the Convention to shake off this tutelage. "It seems to me that the revolutionary government, which has succeeded in suspending the execution of one part of the constitution, has also the right to prevent this society from being dominated by intriguers. It has the right to prevent them from following Robespierre's example and having all those whose opinions are in contradiction with their own struck off the books."

Durand de Maillane, a deputy of the Marsh, who had kept silence during the whole of the Terror, found his voice in order to denounce the Jacobins, as a corporation dangerous to liberty, with their forty-four thousand affiliated societies.⁹

The Montagnards only put up a feeble resistance, as though this sudden and violent attack had taken them aback and deprived them of their wits. Duhem pleaded extenuating circumstances. The previous day's proceedings at the Jacobins, he said, had been misrepresented. It was Garnier of Aube, a friend of Danton's, who had given Merlin a false account of it and misled him. Duhem durst not cast doubts upon the attempted murder of Tallien: "I am sure that, as soon as Tallien's assassin is known, we shall find that he is a recently discharged prisoner."

Barère was more adroit than this. He tried to counteract the skilful manœuvre by which Fréron's clique were attempting to sow division between the Convention and the Jacobins and set them against each other. He pointed out that the aristocrats were raising their heads again in the theatres and on all sides, and drew the conclusion that it was necessary

⁹ As a matter of fact, the clubs numbered no more than from 2,500 to 3,000. See M. de Cardenal's article in the *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* for 1927 and M. Chobaut's supplementary note in the same issue.

to maintain union between the popular societies and the Convention at all costs. "It is these two unyielding phalanxes on which the schemes of Coburg and the allied monarchs were broken, but which the aristocrats are seeking to divide, because they feel that so long as these bodies are united, they themselves will be crushed by them."

Barère's warning was of no effect. The poison of distrust was doing its work. The majority of the Convention remembered that, thanks to the pressure of the Jacobins, Robespierre had wrung from them measures which they regretted. Their pride was at stake. In order to regain their popularity they would show everybody that they took counsel of none but themselves. When, on the 25th Fructidor, the Jacobins came and asked the protection of the Assembly for the patriots who were crowding the prisons in place of the aristocrats, Bernard of Saintes, who was the president, put them off with pleasant speeches and the honours of the session. But when the Montagnard Méaulle embodied their petition in a motion and proposed a decree stopping the proceedings already started by certain tribunals against the members of the old revolutionary committees, he was met with a stubborn resistance. Even Merlin of Douai, who was responsible for the law of the suspects, had become a friend of Merlin of Thionville, and now also wanted to put an end to the Revolution, so as to enjoy his immense fortune in peace. "Merlin-Suspect," as he was called, obtained the rejection of Méaulle's motion by hair-splitting arguments worthy of a crafty attorney. All the democratic measures advocated by the Montagnards met with the same fate. Fayau and Barère's proposed law on the distribution of national property to the soldiers and the poor was thrown out on the 27th Fructidor by the moving of the previous question. Lozeau, Bourdon of Oise, and Cambon—men, that is to say, who had hitherto been on the side of the Montagnards—had come to an understanding with the Fréronists to oppose them. Lozeau found fault with the proposed law as weakening the security for the assignats. Bourdon of Oise declared that the swindling by speculators in connexion with the national property was a fable: "There is a sense of decency which will always restrain the rich and prevent them from depriving the poor man of the possessions intended for him"—a phrase with a certain piquancy, for we know that Bourdon himself actually amassed a considerable fortune by speculating in national property. Cambon laid stress on the point that they must not make those who had bought national lands nervous.

A few days had sufficed to sow discord among the majority, although it had spoken out so vigorously against Lecointre's denunciation. There were now three parties in the Convention: a right wing consisting of a hundred and fifty members, including part of what had been the Plain, the

remains of the old right, and those who had deserted from the Mountain. Tallien, "the most eloquent member of the new majority," to quote Dussault, was its leader; he had left the Mountain to sit on the right wing. There was nothing, however, "in his face devoid of character, his expressionless declamation, and his style lacking in vigour, to reveal the man born to exercise the sway of oratory" (Dussault), but he understood the handling of affairs and the tactics of managing an assembly.

Opposite, on the extreme left, there was what remained of the old Mountain, now known as the Crest, grouped round Duhem, Goujon, Fayau, and those members of the old Committees who had been denounced as the "continuators of Robespierre." But these last, the most eloquent among whom were Collot and Barère, ventured less and less often to ascend the tribune. The numbers of the Crest were to be thinned by daily defections. It would soon require courage to sit on the benches over which hovered the shadow of Robespierre.¹⁰

And, lastly, between these two was a vaguely defined centre, which increased or diminished according to events; those who sat in it for preference were the upholders of the happy mean, sincere but timid republicans, those who favoured conciliation on principle, who wished to put an end to the Revolution on the most reasonable terms, without sacrificing too much to reactionary fury or dealing too hardly with terrorists. They lent a willing ear to Thuriot, who tried from the very first to set up as arbiter between the parties, with what Dussault describes as his flow of words, musical and fluent, but nerveless, tiresome, and lacking in fervour, and his facile but obscure intelligence. They were also ready to listen to Bourdon of Oise, known as "Bourdon the Red" or "the Drunkard," who had remained on the Mountain hitherto through friendship for Billaud-Varenne and a horror of Dantonism, but was now starting on his evolution towards the right. Quite unlike Thuriot, Bourdon was impetuous, ardent, and obstinate. He possessed strong lungs and expressed himself, so Dussault tells us, clearly, with warmth, and often with energy; and he threw considerable weight into the balance. Others belonging to the centre were the men who did the work of the Committees, jurists like Merlin of Douai and Cambacérès, who had kept silence during the Terror, and now felt that amid the general mediocrity their hour had come. It was from among them that Bonaparte was to recruit his leading officials.

At the outset these men of the centre, prudent, well-to-do men of af-

¹⁰ So Soubrany notes in his letters, published by M. H. Doniol.

fairs, believed themselves strong enough to dominate the two parties of the right and the left. When a brawl took place on the third complementary day at the Palais-Égalité, formerly the Palais-Royal, between Muscadins and Jacobins, Bourdon of Oise treated them with equal severity: "I repeat what I said to the Committee: the noisy element on both sides must be put down." Merlin of Douai spoke after him, proposing in the name of the Committees that all new arrivals who had not been in residence in Paris before the 1st Messidor should be made to leave the city. The measure was passed on the following day. It removed from Paris a number of democrats from the departments, who had come up to protest to the Convention and its Committees against the persecutions of which they had been the victims since the 9th Thermidor. It deprived the Jacobins of a considerable source of support and overawed the timid.¹¹

The new policy of the Committees, which, though apparently removed from either extreme, tended, as a matter of fact, more and more towards the right, was laid down on the fourth complementary day by Robert Lindet, who was chosen to read the joint report of the two Committees. Lindet, who, as a member of the old Committee of Public Safety, had always preached moderation, endeavoured to hold the balance between both sides, in such a way as to displease nobody. He promised the popular societies and the members of the old revolutionary Committees protection against the vengeance of the discharged suspects, but he uttered threats against those who desired "a displacement of fortunes." This might have been meant for Fayau, or even for Barère. Lindet enjoyed what was in his day a comfortable competence.¹² He declared that the Convention ought to control the whole revolutionary movement. This was a hint to the Jacobins to set some bounds to their right of criticism. He announced further discharges of prisoners: "Restore liberty to all who have been useful and are capable of being so"; the formula was infinitely elastic, and his next words were equally significant: "Prove, by the application of principles and by your conduct, that all men are equal. Do not inquire into the illusions which

¹¹ The following is Rovère's view of the decree expelling the new arrivals from Paris: "We took forcible measures yesterday when we decreed that all those men, thirsting for murder, who had come to Paris since the 1st Messidor were to leave within twenty-four hours. It has been justly observed that warrants were out for the arrest of most of them, and that they were fleeing from the punishment which they had deserved time and again for their horrible crimes" (letter of the fourth complementary day, year II, to Goupilleau de Montaigu).

¹² I have published his declaration of the amount of his fortune in the *Annales révolutionnaires* for 1920, Vol. XII, p. 66.

surrounded their cradles, or to what class or professional prejudices they did homage under the rule of despotism." Or, to put it plainly: "Cease to distrust as a matter of course those who have been priests or belonged to the privileged orders, or whose relatives are *émigrés*." He further extended his protection to traders, manufacturers, and farmers, threatened those who had taken advantage of the Revolution to profiteer and had tried to band themselves together after the fall of the tyrant; and he pointedly hinted that these profiteers had led astray many popular societies.

Lindet himself informs us, in a manuscript apology, which was only published a long time after his death, that he had toned down his speech at the request of the Committees. He boasts of having proposed to them the immediate release "of all citizens imprisoned or prosecuted on grounds of federalism," "the modification or more exact interpretation of the decree of September 17 on suspects"; also that public officials should in future be instructed to abstain from attending the meetings of popular societies. "I laid before them," he says, "a draft decree forbidding all associations or affiliation between societies." In other words, in his original speech Lindet endeavoured to meet the desire expressed by Merlin of Thionville and Bentabole on the morrow of the attempted murder of Tallien; in other words, he wanted to deal the clubs at this early date the blow that was not struck till a month and a half later. The Committees had not yet made up their mind to go so far on the way towards reaction as this former member of Robespierre's committee. "It was considered that I was pledging myself too far, and they stopped me."¹³

It is a curious thing that at the moment nobody in the Convention criticized Lindet's report. Duhem kept silence, and the Jacobins said not a word. Were they afraid to make their case worse by any reservations? Did they still cherish the hope of winning over the Committees by careful handling? The great argument of the Indulgents was that the Jacobins were trying to set up in rivalry with the Convention, and even to overthrow it. Faithful to their tactics, the Muscadins made a point of shouting: "Long live the Convention!" It became seditious to shout: "Long live the Jacobins!" The Crest no doubt thought that they were avoiding Tallien's trap by voting unanimously in favour of Lindet's report, which was in substance a repudiation of them and a threat. This may be so; for politicians excel at masking their tergiversations by subtle arguments. But only the least of

¹³ The most important extracts from Robert Lindet's apology, entitled *Conduite de Robert Lindet depuis la Révolution*, have been published in A. Montier's work *Robert Lindet*, pp. 257-8.

the Crest's tactical mistakes was that it bewildered its partisans, who were left all adrift, and encouraged retrograde tendencies within the Committees. The eulogies with which Fréron greeted Lindet's report in his paper ought to have enlightened it.¹⁴

On the fifth complementary day, year II, the very day of the apotheosis of Marat—which was more like a funeral than a day of rejoicing, to quote Dyzès,¹⁵ a member of the Convention, so sparse and indifferent did the public remain along the route of the official procession—the Montagnards had an opportunity of measuring how much influence they had lost since Tallien's sham assassination. On that day Treilhard, a deputy of moderate views, read out to the Convention, as the spokesman of the Committee of Public Safety, a letter from Serres and Auguis, the representatives on mission at Marseilles. They described how they had ordered the arrest of one Reynier, who was stirring up the popular society and trying to bring about another 2nd of September; but he had been rescued at some distance from Marseilles by a troop of about a hundred armed men. In order to enforce respect for their orders, they summoned troops from Toulon, searched the papers of the club, and ordered it to be purged. On Treilhard's motion Reynier was declared an outlaw on the spot, without an inquiry. This gave Merlin of Thionville an opening for pronouncing a fresh philippic against the Jacobins of Paris, who were evidently, he said, the accomplices of those of Marseilles; he further proposed that their papers should be placed under seal, and that, pending their dissolution, the process of purging should be started upon, as was being done by Auguis and Serres for the Jacobins of Marseilles. In spite of Bassal, who made a timid attempt to gain time, Thuriot, the conciliator, opposed all inquiry or adjournment. "Do you mean," he said, "to abandon

¹⁴ See the *Orateur du peuple*, no. 6, 1st Vendémiaire, year III. At the meeting of the sections on the 10th Vendémiaire, a few courageous Montagnards tried to prevent the reading of Lindet's address. They were denounced to the Convention two days later and placed under arrest (see the session of the 12th Vendémiaire of the Convention). Among those arrested were Chrétien, an ex-juryman of the Revolutionary Tribunal, denounced by Dubois-Crancé as guilty of having stirred up the section of Le Peletier; Clémence and Marchand, formerly agents of the Committee of Public Safety, denounced by Clauzel for stirring up the section of Mont-Blanc; Riqueur, a former member of the revolutionary committee of the section of Guillaume Tell, denounced by Merlin of Thionville, etc. On the following day, 11th Vendémiaire, several sections sent deputations to the Jacobins to encourage them: Les Piques, Le Peletier, La République, Bonne-Nouvelle, Poissonnière, and Montagne.

¹⁵ See his letter of the 20th Vendémiaire ("*Lettres de Dyzès*," published by MM. C. Vergniol and R. Larquier in the *Revue de France* for November and December 1926).

Marseilles to the domination of those infamous men who are so effectively serving the cause of the allied powers?" In short, Thuriot placed the Jacobins in the same category as the agents of the enemy.¹⁶

The disturbances at Marseilles were almost as lucky for the Indulgents as the attempt on Tallien's life. On the 1st Vendémiaire one of their leaders who was most violent against the Jacobins—André Dumont, whose brother had been arrested during the Terror—was elected president of the Convention on a vote by roll-call, by 160 votes out of 230. The fact that so few voted is a sign of the ravages already caused by fear among the members of the Convention. They were not yet prepared to vote for such a man as André Dumont, who received none but the votes of the reactionary "phalanx" mentioned by Rovère in his letters to Goupilleau de Montaigu. But they abstained from voting, and this was enough to enable Rovère, Dumont, and their like to control the government. On the 15th Vendémiaire, moreover, these two scored an even more important victory on the vote for the renewal of the due quota of the Committees. Though they failed to prevent the return of Carnot and Prieur of Côte-d'Or to the Committee of Public Safety, they associated with them Robert Lindet, who at that date might pass for an ally of theirs; but, what was more, they obtained control of the Committee of General Security, to which they secured the return of four of their nominees: Laporte, Reubell, Bentabole, and Reverchon, in the place of three of their opponents, Bernard of Saintes, Dubarran, and Amar, so

¹⁶ Serres and Auguis had about twenty members of the popular society arrested. In his despair, Carles, president of the society, threw himself down from a fourth storey and was killed (see letter of 5th Vendémiaire from the representatives on mission in Aulard's collection, Vol. XVII). In their letter of the following day, the representatives gave a dramatic account of an altercation which they had had with the gendarmes. We can see that their animosity against the republicans of Marseilles was due to the cries of "Long live the Mountain! Long live the Jacobins!" which had greeted them on their first visit to the club. They exaggerated the altercation of the 5th Vendémiaire into a riot and set up a military commission to try the culprits; and the commission condemned five of them to death on the spot (see the representatives' letter of 8th Vendémiaire). Let us further note the attitude of Jeanbon Saint-André, who was then on mission at Toulon. Not only did he approve the action of Serres and Auguis and send without protest the troops for which they asked, but he denounced General Dumerbion to the Committee of Public Safety as a partisan of the Jacobins and roundly advised the Committee to close the Jacobin Club of Paris, which according to him was "the source of the evil." (See his letter of the 12th Vendémiaire in the above-mentioned collection.) This former member of the Committee of the year II had changed considerably since the time when he was the friend of the most violent Hébertists, such as Proli and Desfieux. He now shouted with the advocates of reaction, no doubt with the object of making people forget the flatteries which he had lavished on Robespierre.

that they now had a sure majority in the Committee.¹⁷ This was a very considerable success, upon which Rovère congratulated himself in a letter of the 17th Vendémiaire to Goupilleau de Montaigu. The Committee of General Security, he had written to his correspondent on the 10th Vendémiaire, is "the centre of home government"—a view which we should bear in mind. It was no longer the Committee of Public Safety that governed; it was the police. Rovère's hopes were not disappointed. The new Committee of General Security began by striking with all its might at the Jacobin agitators still surviving in the Parisian sections. Two former agents of the Committee of Public Safety, Clémence and Marchand, besides Chrétien, a former jurymen on the Revolutionary Tribunal, and Riqueur, a former member of the revolutionary committee of the section Guillaume Tell, had already been arrested by decree of the Convention, as early as the 12th Vendémiaire, for daring to criticize Lindet's address. Other and less well-known persons followed them to prison. In his letter of the 21st Vendémiaire to Goupilleau, Rovère congratulated himself that the Committee of General Security was "going on well." He had just had forty or fifty rogues arrested, he said, who had been planning a disturbance for the day before, the date of the commemoration of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose remains had been transferred from Émile—that is, Montmorency—to the Panthéon.

It was from the middle of Vendémiaire onwards that the Montagnards definitely lost control of the Parisian sections. The arrest of the principal agitators on warrants issued by the Committee of General Security had been sufficient to alter the majority in them.¹⁸ But the Committee of General

¹⁷ The following were members of the Committee of General Security on the 15th Vendémiaire: *Bentabole*, *Reubell*, *Laporte*, *Reverchon*, Collombel, Méaulle, *Clauzel*, Mathieu, Monmayou, Lesage-Senault, Bourdon of Oise, *Guffroy*, *Legendre* of Paris, Goupilleau de Fontenay, *Merlin* of Thionville, *André Dumont*. The names italicized are those of the reactionary group, making nine out of sixteen.

¹⁸ I have looked through one of the few surviving minute-books of the general assemblies of the Paris sections, that of the Fontaine de Grenelle (National Archives, F⁷ 2509). It was on the 20th Vendémiaire of the year III precisely that the Montagnards ceased to have the majority on it. Before that date they had obtained the refusal of a certificate of "civism" to the *député suppléant* (substitute deputy) Jean Rousseau, who was declared to be unworthy, as a federalist, of a seat in the Convention (sessions of the 25th and 30th Thermidor); they had carried a vote hostile to the petition of the Museum with regard to the election of officials (10th Fructidor), a vote in favour of the Dijon petition about the suspects (20th Fructidor), a vote hostile to the petition of the Electoral Club to the same effect as that of the Museum (20th Vendémiaire). After the 20th Vendémiaire the wind was in a different quarter: they interested themselves in Bonnacarrère, a former agent of Dumouriez, and a spy of the Court, who was afterwards released; they reversed the vote approving the Dijon

Security naturally issued more warrants for the release of prisoners than for arrests. By the 16th Vendémiaire the number of those in prison had fallen to 4,678 (as compared with 7,293 on the 23rd Thermidor, a difference of 2,615 less). On the 28th Vendémiaire, Rovère announced to his correspondent that he had just released from three to four hundred prisoners of every age and sex. From Paris the movement spread to the provinces. Now was the time when the representatives on mission granted the greatest number of discharges and renewed all official bodies, often appointing to them prisoners who had just been discharged in the place of those who had had them imprisoned.¹⁹

If the New Indulgents succeeded in bringing about this great change in the political situation so rapidly and managed to dislodge the Montagnards from all important positions in the government and administration within a month, this was due not only to the fact that the sensation aroused in the Convention by the attempt on Tallien's life, followed by the news of the disturbances in Marseilles, facilitated their task, but also, and chiefly, to the fact that the revelation of the atrocities committed by Carrier at Nantes enabled them to gain definite control of public opinion, upon which they based their policy of reaction, which can be summed up in a few words: clemency and amnesty for all who had struggled against the regime up to that moment and had suffered from the revolutionary laws; severity and repression for all who had applied those laws, in the belief that, by so doing, they were defending the Republic. The Terror did not cease, it merely changed sides.

The first great trial before the Revolutionary Tribunal, reorganized on the 23rd Thermidor with Dobsen, a creature of Thuriot's, as its president, was that of the federalists of Nantes who had been arrested and brought to Paris during Carrier's mission. Of the original number, a hundred and thirty-two, many had died in prison, where they had spent long months since the 16th Nivôse (January 5, 1794) without being brought to judg-

petition (30th Vendémiaire); on the 30th Brumaire they congratulated the Convention on the closing of the Jacobins. In the mean time the Montagnard agitator Raison, a former member of the food-supply commission (Commission des Subsistances) of the year II, was imprisoned by the Committee of General Security. On the 10th Frimaire, Rousseau obtained his certificate of civism. The evidence of these minutes shows that, up to the renewal of the Committee of General Security on the 15th Vendémiaire, the Montagnard group, led by Raison, dominated the section, after which there was a struggle lasting till the closing of the Jacobins; after the arrest of Raison, the struggle ended in the triumph of the reactionary party.

¹⁹ For the mission of Goupilleau de Montaigu in Vaucluse, see the essay of M. P. Vailland in the *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* for March-April 1928.

ment; and when, on the 22nd Fructidor, they at last appeared before the tribunal, there were only ninety-four of them left. The chief defendant, Phélippe, known as Tronjolly, who had formerly been president of the criminal tribunal of Loire-Inférieure, admitted that he and his fellow-defendants had taken part in the federalist movement, but said that they had all been misled. They had afterwards rallied to the Mountain, and even before they had seen their mistake, they had never ceased to combat the Vendéans. But Phélippe was not content with this line of defence only, he attacked the members of the revolutionary committee of Nantes, who had steeped themselves in crime. These members of the revolutionary committee had already been arrested for embezzlement and sent up to the Revolutionary Tribunal on the 5th Thermidor by the representative Bô, a friend of Robespierre's.²⁰ They gave evidence in the trial of the federalists of Nantes as witnesses for the prosecution. Accused by Phélippe, who disclosed the wholesale drownings (*noyades*) in the responsibility for which they had shared, they did not deny the charge; in the end some of them admitted it—for instance, Grandmaison. But one of them, named Goulin, sheltered himself behind the orders which he had received from the representative Carrier. On being called as a witness, Carrier declared that while on mission he had only been concerned with obtaining supplies, and very little with the maintenance of order, and that he had had nothing to do with the arrest of the defendants. He even spoke in praise of some of them—for instance, Sotin, afterwards a minister under the Directory, and Villenave, the famous lawyer, who was afterwards to defend Charette at the time of his trial. Carrier no doubt hoped to disarm his accusers by these tactics, but he did not succeed. Phélippe maintained that Carrier knew all about it and that nothing had been done without his orders. The prisoners from Nantes were acquitted amid pathetic scenes after a trial lasting seven days.

This dramatic affair was a stroke of luck for Tallien, Fréron, and all their band. It was Carrier who had attacked them most fiercely both at the Jacobin Club and in the Convention and had had them struck off the books of the club. Revenge was now within their grasp. The trial of the prisoners from Nantes was not yet over when, on the 24th Fructidor, the very day after the attempt on Tallien's life, Merlin of Thionville, who often played the part of a fire-brand, kindled a conflagration in the Convention. He accused the Montagnards and Carrier of having brought about the imprisonment, be-

²⁰ For his ordinance see Buchez and Roux, *Histoire parlementaire*, Vol. XXXIV, p. 137. The letters which Bô wrote from Nantes to the Committee of Public Safety to warn it of Fouché's intrigues before Thermidor prove that he was a sincere Robespierist.

fore Thermidor, of his friend R  al, who was to have defended the prisoners from Nantes, in order to prevent him from tracing the real culprits. At the same time public opinion was stirred by a skilful and violent campaign of pamphlets and articles in the press. On the 7th Vend  miaire,²¹ M  h  e, the tool of Tallien, who had already led the way in the attack on "Robespierre's tail," brought out a pamphlet, *Les Noyades, ou Carrier au tribunal r  volutionnaire*. Gracchus Babeuf, who owed his release from prison to the Thermidorians, and was then carrying on a campaign against the revolutionary government and the Terror simultaneously with theirs, went even further than M  h  e. In a pamphlet entitled *Du syst  me de d  population, ou la vie et les crimes de Carrier* (*On the System of Depopulation, or the Life and Crimes of Carrier*),²² he made the sensational discovery that, since the object of Robespierre and his government had been to secure to every Frenchman a source of livelihood for himself and his family, the only means which they could devise for practising it was to decrease the population by means of the guillotine and wholesale shootings and drownings. Thus Carrier now seemed to be no more than an instrument in the hands of the former government, to which was ascribed a systematic plan of extermination. M  h  e, Babeuf, and a whole swarm of pamphleteers and journalists²³ added fresh counts to Lecointre's denunciation, which they now provided with a solid and grim foundation—Carrier's *noyades*. Their tactics were to lump together with Carrier all those formerly at the head of the revolutionary government and the whole body of the Jacobins, in order to excite such horror against them that the club might be closed without difficulty. The journal *Le Messager du soir* was right when it wrote, in its number dated the second complementary day, that the trial of the Nantes federalists had done the Jacobins terrible harm in the eyes of the public.

²¹ See the police report of this date in M. Aulard's collection, *Paris sous la r  action thermidorienne*, Vol. I.

²² Biblioth  que Nationale, Lb⁴¹ 1527. Since Babeuf quotes Vilatte's *Causes secr  tes* in his pamphlet, it cannot have appeared before the 13th Brumaire, the date upon which the latter is noted in M. Aulard's work, quoted above, as having just appeared. Babeuf approved the object pursued by Robespierre, which he considered praiseworthy, but denied that the soil of France was insufficient to offer a livelihood to all her inhabitants, and expressed his indignation at the odious procedure of revolutionizing fortunes by the guillotine.

²³ On the 29th Fructidor a pamphlet, *Les Jacobins d  masqu  s* (*The Jacobins Unmasked*), was cried in the streets and sold in vast numbers, and on the following days *Les Jacobins convaincus d'imposture, D  nonciation contre les jacobins*, etc. *Les Jacobins hors la loi* (*Outlaw the Jacobins*); by the royalist Martinville, was cried in the streets on the 26th Vend  miaire.

Memories of the whole problem of the repression in the west were raked up in connexion with Carrier on the 8th Vendémiaire. The atrocities of the infernal columns were revealed by Laignelot, a partisan of Tallien's. Once again the old Committee was implicated in the responsibility for them. Carnot attempted to throw it all on Robespierre alone. Billaud-Varenne basely abandoned his subordinates—General Turreau, for example, who was placed under arrest on his motion!

During the dramatic session of the 12th-Vendémiaire the New Indulgents renewed their attack upon the leaders of the former government, apropos of the arrest of the members of the revolutionary committee of the section of Bonnet Rouge for falsifying their records.²⁴ Merlin of Thionville first succeeded in securing the passage of a decree setting up a commission of inquiry to examine into the conduct of those denounced by Lecointre. But Barère, Billaud, and Collot pleaded the solidarity of the government and called upon Carnot and Prieur of Côte-d'Or for an explanation with regard to the charges against them. After some pressure they complied, shielding those of their colleagues who had been denounced. The Convention reversed its vote, and for the moment the commission of inquiry was shelved.²⁵

Carrier was still the real object of attack. On the 22nd Vendémiaire it was, as usual, Merlin of Thionville who returned to the charge.²⁶ He denounced to the Convention one Lefèvre, an adjutant-general (not the husband of Madame Sans-Gêne), for having on the previous 6th Ventôse ordered some forty Vendéans, including women and children, to be drowned in the bay of Bourgneuf, to the south of the Loire. A decree was passed that this "cannibal" and his accomplices should be arrested and sent before the Revolutionary Tribunal.²⁷ Upon this, André Dumont expressed his indignation that the members of the revolutionary committee of Nantes, who were just as guilty as Lefèvre, had not yet been brought to judgment. "There is no

²⁴ They were sent before the criminal tribunal of the department of Paris, where ten out of twelve of them were condemned to twenty years' hard labour, after being stood in the pillory. Of the two who were acquitted, one was the son of the musician Piccini (see the extracts from the newspapers of the 8th Frimaire, year III, in M. Aulard's collection, Vol. I, p. 281).

²⁵ Though, as we have seen, three days later, when the Committees were renewed, the Thermidorians gained control of the majority on the Committee of General Security.

²⁶ For Merlin's speech and the documents which he read out, see the *Moniteur*, reissue, Vol. XXII, pp. 226-8.

²⁷ Lefèvre was tried at the same time as Carrier, but acquitted on the grounds of intention.

blinking the fact, citizens, that these crimes would not have been committed had not a higher authority ordered them." This was turning the attack against Carrier and his protectors. The Convention decreed without debate that the members of the revolutionary committee of Nantes and their accomplices should at once be sent before the Revolutionary Tribunal. The decree was carried into effect, and the terrible trial began.²⁸

A good many of the witnesses for the prosecution, who were numerous, were drawn from among the federalists of Nantes who had been acquitted only a month earlier. The defendants—that is, the members of the revolutionary committee of Nantes—adopted as their counsel the very same man—Réal, the friend of Danton—who had originally accepted the task of defending their victims, the Nantes federalists. There was an accumulation of crushing charges against Carrier and the prisoners, based on monstrous facts. If they were to save themselves, the sole resource of the members of the revolutionary committee was to accuse Carrier too. On the 28th Vendémiaire one of them, named Naud, disclosed the decree by which Carrier had instituted the famous "Compagnie Marat," the forty members of which—forty ruffians, most of whom were habitual criminals—had been given the right of making domiciliary visits both by day and by night, of calling in military aid, and of making summary arrests. On the 1st Brumaire, Goulin, another of the defendants, asked in a pathetic harangue that Carrier should be summoned. "Let the man by whose magetism we were controlled, who guided our movements, dictated our opinions, and directed our actions . . . let Carrier appear before the tribunal! . . . We were but the passive instruments of his orders and his fury. . . . It was Carrier who forced the president of the tribunal to send to the guillotine forty Vendéans taken in arms. It was Carrier who forced the Military Commission to shoot by process of law three thousand brigands who infested the city. . . . It was Carrier who gave the right of life and death over the rebels to Lambertye and Fouquet [the leaders of the Compagnie Marat], who abused their power to slaughter even women with child, and children. . . . It was Carrier who ordered the drowning of a hundred and forty-four persons, the sacrifice of whose lives was, he thought, necessary to the tranquillity of the prison and the city. . . . Let Carrier appear, let him come and vindicate his unfortunate agents, or let him have the nobility to admit that he alone is guilty!"

But Carrier was shielded by his parliamentary immunity. At the instance of the public prosecutor the tribunal resolved to send the request of

²⁸ It will be found in the *Moniteur*, reissue, Vol. XXII, pp. 317 et seq. See also Buchez and Roux, *Histoire parlementaire*, Vol. XXXV, pp. 148 et seq.

Goulin and the defendants to the Committee of General Security then and there. And now the inevitable was accomplished.

On the very day before, the 29th Vendémiaire, André Dumont had induced the Convention to pass a decree that the committees should hold an inquiry on such representatives of the people as might be involved in any legal proceedings. By the 2nd Brumaire, Merlin of Douai reported on the proposed measure as spokesman of the Committees. The debate was long and embittered. The Mountain knew that it was being struck at through Carrier. Duhem laid it down as the basis of his argument that there was not a single representative of the people who had not been denounced. On the 6th Brumaire he proposed that before a deputy's parliamentary immunity was suspended, the moral record of those denouncing him should be examined, and punishment meted out to slanderers. Even Thuriot uttered a warning against the danger of handing representatives of the people over to the tender mercies of rogues and crypto-royalists. Notwithstanding, the decree regulating the procedure for the suspension of parliamentary immunity was voted on the 7th Brumaire. In future the denunciation of any representative of the people was to be referred to the three Committees—the Legislative Committee and those of Public Safety and General Security—which were to decide whether there was any case for submitting to the Assembly. If so, the Assembly was to select by lot a special commission of twenty-one members to examine into the matter, and on the basis of their report the Convention should decide by roll-call whether immunity was to be suspended. On the very next day the decree was applied to Carrier. The commission of twenty-one members chose Romme to report on its decision. He confined himself to giving an analysis of the evidence, and on the 21st Brumaire, Carrier was placed under arrest. On the 3rd Frimaire he was unanimously sent for trial²⁹ and associated with the members of the revolutionary committee of Nantes, whose trial now proceeded. He at first tried to deny everything in

²⁹ The reasons for this unanimity were entirely political and are stated in Audouin's *Journal universel* (number for the 8th Frimaire, year III): "The aristocrats are sorry that the decree sending Carrier for trial was voted unanimously, for they were counting upon sowing dissension in the fatherland by stigmatizing the minority which might have been in his favour as 'Carrier's tail' (*la queue de Carrier*), but the commission was not required to decide on the question of intention; it was only asked its opinion on the matter of fact. Whatever may be said, Carrier would have excited sympathy if he had frankly admitted everything and not cast all the responsibility on the revolutionary committee [of Nantes]." We may note the phrase "It was not required to decide on the question of intention," remembering that the new law on the Revolutionary Tribunal (that of the 23rd Thermidor, year II) authorized acquittal on grounds of intention. Audouin, then, hoped for an acquittal on these grounds.

the teeth of the evidence, but ended by confessing his crimes. He asked the tribunal to acquit his fellow-defendants, who had been merely his instruments. The tribunal condemned him to death, together with two of his accomplices, Pinard and Grandmaison, and acquitted all the rest. Carrier died bravely.

The Thermidorians protested furiously against the acquittal of the other defendants. On the 28th Frimaire, Lecointre, speaking on behalf of the Thermidorians, obtained the passage of a decree that the other defendants should again be arrested and tried before the criminal tribunal of their department, on the pretext that the Revolutionary Tribunal only had power to acquit them on the counts falling under public law, but that the counts falling under the common law still stood. So this was how the Thermidorians respected the judgments of the courts, though justice and humanity were always on their lips! On the same occasion and at the same session they obtained the passage of a decree quashing the Revolutionary Tribunal, which had been guilty of thwarting their fury, and decided that it should be renewed.

The Jacobin Club of Paris had already been closed for more than a month past, for an outburst of popular indignation, skilfully fomented by the Thermidorian press, had involved it in Carrier's fall. Such an end to the Jacobins, who had played a great and glorious part in the Revolution, is a lamentable affair. The Indulgents accused them of vying with the power of the Convention. Instead of admitting the charge and appealing to their right of criticism and to the services they had rendered, they stammered excuses. They accepted the principle laid down by their opponents—namely, that the Convention was infallible, and that it was an error, or even a crime, to criticize its policy and try to obtain a revision of its decrees. Their opponents demanded the unrestricted liberty of speech and of the press and made use of it. For their part, they remained faithful to the fiction of revolutionary government, which implied the dictatorship of the Convention—with the result that they were the dupes of their own principles, which the Fréronists skilfully turned against them, while acting on principles which were entirely opposed to them. The reason was that the Jacobins had for too long been associated with the government. For a whole year they had entrenched themselves in it and formed one body with it. It was no longer they who determined the acts of the government, but the government which determined theirs. They had become a nursery for officials and placemen. In the hour of great peril they were no longer capable of the bold initiative which alone would have saved them.

They only raised a feeble opposition when, on the 25th Vendémiaire,

Delmas, a member of the club who had left it shortly before,³⁰ obtained, as spokesman of the three Committees, the passage of a decree exactly like the one drafted by the Feuillants at the end of the Constituent Assembly, forbidding affiliation, or even correspondence, between the popular societies, or the sending in of collective petitions. The fire-eaters of the Mountain kept silence, leaving Lejeune, Crassous, and Dubarran the credit for raising a theoretical protest. That very evening at the club, Maure came forward and advised them to take the decree in good part. Even Lejeune gave the same advice, no doubt in the simple-minded hope of disarming the Thermidorians by a prompt acquiescence. But Lejeune at last relieved his conscience. He expressed his regret that the Montagnards who were in the habit of speaking from the tribune had remained silent through the debate. "I say it frankly, citizens: this discussion has been marked by cowardice. . . . If men of talent are not prepared to enlighten us, what rallying-point can there be for the friends of liberty? . . . I repeat: I am astonished at the silence maintained for two months past by the very men who, a little while ago, occupied the tribune of the Convention and the Jacobins every day. At that time, Billaud and Collot, you used to talk about the rights of the people. Why are you silent now, when it is a question of defending them? . . ." Billaud explained that he had vowed himself to silence since he had been accused of trying to dominate the Convention and the Jacobins. Collot complained quite piteously of the calumnies of the pamphleteers. "When I proposed that the Festival of Marat should not be postponed, people insinuated in print that there was sure to be a massacre at this celebration." Robespierre's conquerors were afraid. This was playing the game of the Fréronists, who redoubled their attacks and demanded more loudly than ever the closing of the "den of murderers," as they called the club now that they no longer dominated it.

Finally the Jacobins committed a crowning blunder: they fell out about the case of Carrier. The more energetic of them, such as Duhem, would have liked to prevent his trial. On the 12th Brumaire, Duhem denounced in the Convention the plot against all those who had tried to save the national

³⁰ On the first complementary day Delmas, who was presiding over the club, gave the following reply to the section of Finistère: "The Jacobins have always been the grenadiers of the Revolution and its firmest supporters. The tyrants of Europe wage furious war on them, the apostates of liberty indulge in a delirium of calumny against them." He next said in reply to the section of Bonconseil: "Moderantism simply acts as cover for royalty, the liberty of the press is the impious weapon by which they hope to obtain it, but the blasphemy uttered by the conspirators in demanding the annihilation of the popular societies is the death-warrant of that impious faction" (*Moniteur*).

cause in the Vendée by carrying out the decrees: ". . . If we must perish, let us be attacked in a body; let the Revolution be put on trial. . . . It is not the Convention that has granted Fréron an express commission to demand a fresh head every day. . . ." But Duhem was not followed by all his party. Far from it! When on the following day Crassous tried to take up his argument again at the Jacobins, pointing out that the trial of the revolutionary committee of Nantes was the lever of the Indulgents against the Mountain, Bouin recalled the fact that those who were attacking Carrier were "the very men who had flattered him and imitated him, and had not become his enemies till they had been turned out of the clubs." Billaud-Varenne at last shook off his torpor, realizing rather late in the day that, after Carrier, it would be his turn next, and exclaimed: "The lion is not dead when he slumbers, and when he wakes he exterminates all his enemies!" But he only succeeded in alarming the New Indulgents and providing them with fresh weapons. The habitués of the club deserted him, and at the next session, on the 15th Brumaire, we learn from the minutes that the tribune remained vacant for a few moments. The lion was decidedly dead. It was impossible to wake him up.

Billaud-Varenne's imprudent and belated challenge was taken up by the Thermidorians, who reproached him with trying to stir up popular disorder so as to save Carrier. Upon which he basely abandoned Carrier. One after the other Bentabole, Tallien, Bourdon of Oise, Legendre, Goupilleau de Fontenay, and Clauzel joined in the campaign against the Jacobins: "Cause the factious conspirators to tremble!" said Bentabole. "Know that the conquered Powers are only waiting the proper moment to ask for peace. But do you think that they will ever treat with the Convention when they see a party in it egging on the people to revolt and trying to subvert everything—a party which wants to massacre those members who are opposed to it?" This was an adroit manœuvre for persuading the war-weary people that the closing of the Jacobins would bring them peace.

A few days later, on the 19th Brumaire, as the result of a false rumour that Carrier's impeachment would be decided that very day, a crowd gathered round the Convention. The Muscadins, headed by the adventurer Saint-Huruge, led the crowd off to the hall of the convent where the Jacobins were in session. The women present at the meeting were whipped and the windows broken, to shouts of "Long live the Convention!" Similar scenes of violence took place two days later. Once more the Jacobins were besieged and roughly handled. This time the governing Committees, which had taken no serious measures to protect the members of the club, obtained a decree closing the hall in the rue Saint-Honoré and provisionally suspending the

meetings of the club. The decree applied only to the parent society. The Thermidorians spared the clubs in the sections and departments, no doubt because most of these had already been purged by the representatives on mission and had gone over to their side (22nd Brumaire).

Dyzès, a sincerely republican member of the Plain, made the following comment on the events on the next day in a letter to an intimate friend, dated the 23rd Brumaire: "The aristocrats are beside themselves with joy. I venture to predict that it will be of brief duration. Otherwise the commonwealth will be in the greatest danger." Though Dyzès may have been a bad prophet, because he mistook what he desired for reality, and though the Jacobins remained closed for good, it was a fact that before long the Republic was in danger. But the danger arose not only from the closing of the club, which had for so long been the prime mover in the Revolution, but also from another and far graver quarter. The trial of Carrier, which began at the very moment when the Jacobins disappeared, was to identify the revolutionary government in the mind of the masses with sanguinary excesses and scenes of shame and horror. To the indiscriminating intelligence of the people, all the Jacobins without exception were so many Carriers. And thus the red spectre, the memory of which was so often to check the march of progress, begins to loom up in our story.

Possibly minds with some faculty for philosophic reflection realized that the reaction was not solely the work of Tallien, Fréron, Rovère, Merlin of Thionville, and Bентаbole, with the aid of the *jeunesse dorée*, but of all those, without distinction, who took part in the 9th Thermidor. Robespierre had intended to punish such men as Carrier. With a view to reconciling opinion to his system of government, he had wanted to represent their punishment as an impartial and inexorable act of revolutionary justice, which was equal for all men. That was the reason of his fall. Had Carrier been tried on the initiative of the Montagnards, his crimes would have done no harm to the Republic. But tried, as he was, at the request of the *jeunesse dorée*, and defended—more or less openly, it is true, but defended none the less—by the surviving Montagnards, Carrier became a symbol. He turned democracy into a gorgon's head. So true it is that political and moral errors alike carry with them their own punishment. As Gambetta used to say: "All things have their recompense, and there is such a thing as immanent justice."

CHAPTER IV

Babeuf, Tallien, Fréron, and his "*Jeunesse*"

ONCE the Jacobins had been closed by the cudgels of Fréron's "*jeunesse dorée*," the Convention was no longer, to all appearance, faced with any power capable of causing it uneasiness. Whether directly or through its Committees, it appointed all the organs of government in the Republic. As a body it exercised an unlimited dictatorship. The Paris Commune no longer existed, nearly all of its members having been guillotined with Robespierre. The Assembly might have reconstituted it to its own taste, by filling it with its own creatures. It preferred to suppress it altogether, thus placing Paris outside the ordinary law. On the 29th Thermidor, Clauzel, one of the Thermidorians, obtained the passage of a decree that, the commune having ceased to exist, the certificates of civism and of domicile issued by the committees of the sections should henceforth be subject to the visa of the departmental administration. But since, though composed of government officials, the departmental administration might show signs of insubordination, the deputy Gossein, speaking on the 14th Vendémiaire in the name of the Military Committee, obtained a decision to the effect that it should no longer have the right to make use of the gendarmerie without a written permit from that committee. As we have seen, the General Staff of the National Guard had already been directly attached to the Committees of the Convention, and had its membership changed every five days by an ingenious system of rotation. The general assemblies of the sections were now only held once in every ten days. The poor were now excluded from them, for the allowance of forty sous which they had previously received as remuneration for their attendance had been suppressed. These assemblies therefore gave no further cause for alarm—if only because of the difficulty they found in agreeing upon any resolution in common. The revolutionary committees had been reduced from forty-eight to twelve, one for each *arrondissement*, and no longer did anything without first consulting the Committee of General Security. And, as though any independence on their part were still feared, Cambon, who had always been very distrustful of Paris, obtained a decision on the 28th Vendémiaire that the twelve revolutionary committees should be renewed every three months. Thus the Thermidorian Convention

administered the capital directly and left it without the slightest shadow of self-government. Was it altogether a coincidence that on the 14th Fructidor, the very day of the explosion at the Grenelle powder-factory, Merlin of Douai obtained the creation, in place of the commune, of two commissions composed of government officials: one called the commission of administrative police,¹ and the other the commission of taxes (*des contributions*), both of which were directly attached to the Committees of the Convention? On the 25th Brumaire, after the closing of the Jacobin Club, Louis, deputy for the department of Bas-Rhin, obtained a decree that the companies of gunners belonging to the Paris sections, whose democratic spirit gave cause for alarm, should be placed at the disposal of the Committee of Public Safety, which might send them to the front—an ingenious way of removing them if they caused the slightest uneasiness.

In spite of all these precautions the minds of the Thermidorians were not at rest. On the 10th Ventôse one of them, Rovère, declared that the Committee of General Security had been obliged to institute a secret counter-police, side by side with the official police, "since the agents of the latter talked of nothing in their reports but Muscadins and royalists, without a word about the schemes of the cut-throats (*égorgeurs*) and Robespierrists."² This admission should be borne in mind, for it enables us to point straight to the reality behind the Convention's theoretical omnipotence.

It had escaped from the so-called tyranny of the Jacobins only to fall under a more tangible one—that of their conquerors, of those who had closed the club by stone-throwing and cudgels—I mean those who constituted Fréron's *jeunesse*, also known as the "*jeunesse dorée*."

This Fréron, son of the editor of *L'Année littéraire*, who had been the adversary of Voltaire and the *philosophes*, was a godson of Stanislas Leszczyński, ex-King of Poland, afterwards Duke of Lorraine. The *ancien régime* had showered gifts and favours on him, but this did not prevent him from becoming a violent partisan of the revolutionaries and a leading light in the Cordeliers Club, side by side with Marat, Danton, and Fabre d'Églantine. After the flight to Varennes his rabid newspaper, *L'Orateur du peuple*, demanded that Louis XVI should be sent to the scaffold and that the torture of Brunhild should be revived for Marie Antoinette—that is,

¹ This commission, which took the place of the board of police commissioners (*bureau des administrateurs de police*) of the old commune, all of whom were municipal officers, was the parent of the central board of three members which was in operation under the Directory, and did not disappear till the old "lieutenant of police" was revived under the Consulate, with the title of "prefect of police."

² *Moniteur*, Vol. XXIII, p. 579.

THE THERMIDORIAN REACTION

that she should be dragged through the streets of Paris at a horse's tail. During his proconsulship at Toulon and Marseilles under the Terror, he steeped himself in blood and rapine. Hundreds of citizens of Toulon who had been taken prisoner were shot by his orders without trial; and he had continued these executions at Marseilles. Robespierre in disgust obtained his recall and that of Barras, his accomplice, and on their return refused to see them, though Fréron had been a school-fellow of his at the Collège Louis-le-Grand. Cambon and Ramel, who as members of the Finance Committee had been charged to examine the accounts of their mission, "found that they had extorted a sum of eight hundred thousand livres on their own account, and insisted on the restitution of this sum. But Fréron and Barras produced a sham memorandum from some mayor, stating that on the way home their carriage had been upset in a pond, and the portfolio containing the assignats lost. Cambon referred the matter to the Committee of Public Safety, which insisted that Fréron and Barras should produce their accounts. The representatives of the people asked for an adjournment to enable them to produce their proofs, but the 9th Thermidor dispensed them from the necessity of so doing." ³ Such was the man who, even more than Tallien, was to organize the opposition to the Jacobins and victoriously dispute with them the mastery of the streets of Paris.

At first—that is, in Fructidor, when Tallien and Fréron were struck off the books of the club—they accepted help of any kind whatever in the struggle against their adversaries. Their first partisans consisted not only of Muscadins—that is, young men of the middle classes who had escaped or obtained a postponement of their military service, or been granted leave—but also of Hébertists and former Cordeliers, personal friends of Fréron in earlier days, the Fréron who had admired Marat and proclaimed himself his confidant.

On the 25th Fructidor, immediately after he was struck off the books of the Jacobins, Fréron started a new issue of his *Orateur du peuple*, prefacing his first number with a high-flown invocation of Marat: "O Marat! Thou who didst so often address me as thy disciple, thy chosen successor, thou whose fearless pages I used so often to compose when thou wast crushed beneath a load of work; come, thou immortal shade, surround me with thy power, inflame me with thine ardour! Help me to save the fatherland, to strike down royalism, moderantism, and aristocracy, which are assuming new forms, to enlighten the people and animate them with zeal for the defence and

³ A. Kuscinski, *Dictionnaire des Conventionnels*, s.v. "Fréron."

maintenance of their rights, and to smite this new faction, the hope and instrument of the foreigner, who desires once more to place the nation in chains and dissolve the National Convention; for, though the tyrant's ashes are still smoking, his system of terror and repression is more than ever the order of the day; there are those who burn to seize his heritage. . . ." This enables us to grasp the fellow's demagogical tactics: he summons to his side all those who have suffered from the Terror, all those hit by the law of the suspects, and all those discharged from prison, who would return there if the "continuators of Robespierre" regained their power. He carried on a savage and often disingenuous campaign against the members of the old Committees (who had called for his accounts!)—against Barère, Billaud-Varenne, and their partisans at the Jacobins. The following is an example: Maure, deputy for Yonne, a good revolutionary and a highly honourable if rather simple-minded man, in congratulating the inhabitants of Pau upon having sent up a consignment of their local hams and fat bacon to the famine-stricken Parisians, made use of the words: "This fat bacon will grease the works, and then we shall get on famously (*ça ira*)."

In Fréron's paper these words became: "This will do to grease the works of the guillotine in winter."⁴

Sheathed as he was in his armour of cynicism, the memory of his sanguinary exploits at Toulon and Marseilles did not in the least restrain him from branding Carrier and Joseph Lebon with infamy for their crimes, and calling for their heads. "Let the Jacobin leaders of the 9th Thermidor," he exclaimed in his paper on the 9th Vendémiaire, "refer to me as the head of a new faction. Yes! I do belong to a formidable faction—that of principles, that of the rights of man . . . I will strike terror to posterity by drawing a picture of all these crimes committed in its name! . . ." And he kept his word. His paper was always full of denunciations. He did not spare even women, especially when they were virtuous—for instance, Madame Crassous,⁵ wife of the Montagnard deputy for Martinique, whom he heaped with insults and instigated his gangs to whip because she assiduously attended the galleries of the Convention, and supported the Crest by her applause.

But the important thing to note is that for more than a month the last of the Hébertists, those who had formerly been Cordeliers, supported Fréron, joined forces with his *jeunesse*, and fought side by side with him against the

⁴ See *L'Orateur du peuple*, no. 11, and Maure's protest at the Jacobins, session of the 13th Vendémiaire, year III.

⁵ See *L'Orateur du peuple*, no. 21, 6th Brumaire, year III.

"continuators of Robespierre" and of the Jacobins. They met in a hall in what had been the Archevêché (archiepiscopal palace), near Notre-Dame, on the banks of the Seine, a hall which had long served as a meeting-place for the electoral assembly of Paris; hence the name "Club of the Electoral Hall" or "Electoral Club (*club électoral*)," given to their club. In the forefront of it were to be seen Varlet, a young post-office clerk who in the summer before had played an important part, together with Jacques Roux and Théophile Leclerc, in the agitation against food-speculators and in favour of the laws on food-control; Varlet, who had signed the order to sound the tocsin on May 31 in the name of the insurgent committee, of which he was one of the heads. Full of anger and resentment at having been sent to prison for a few weeks in the autumn of 1793, to cool his demagogical zeal, Varlet had applauded the 9th Thermidor. On the 13th Fructidor, the day after Lecointre's denunciation of the members of the old Committee of Public Safety, he spoke boldly from the tribune of the Electoral Club in praise of Lecointre, "a good fellow whose strength and courage he admired."⁶

At that date the Committees were still in the hands of the Montagnards. Varlet was at once arrested for this speech and sent to Le Plessis, where he remained till the end of the Convention, for though he had served the policy of the Fréronists, they considered him too dangerous to set at liberty. While in prison, he issued several pamphlets against the Montagnards and the revolutionary government. One of them, entitled *L'Explosion*,⁷ bore the motto: "Parish revolutionary government rather than a principle!" A great admirer of Marat, like Fréron, he combated revolutionary government in the name of the Declaration of the Rights of Man, calling it "a government destructive to the nation (*nationicide*), a social monstrosity, a masterpiece of Machiavellianism." "To any reasoning being," he said, "Government and Revolution are incompatible terms." This rabid individualist and anarchist heaped anathemas on the Terror in terms as violent as those of

⁶ From a police report, unsigned and undated, in Varlet's dossier at the National Archives (F⁷ 4775/40). We can also see in this dossier that the section of the Rights of Man laid claim to Varlet, maintaining that he was "the first to denounce Robespierre, Collot, Billaud, and his clique." For the part played by Varlet in 1793, see my book *La Vie chère et le mouvement social sous la Terreur*.

⁷ There are two pamphlets of this name. One, entitled *L'Explosion*, is dated the 10th Vendémiaire, year III of the French Republic. The other, entitled *Gare à l'Explosion (Ware explosion!)* is dated the 15th Vendémiaire, year III. The first is in the Bibliothèque Nationale with the press-mark Lb⁴¹ 4090, the second with the press-mark Lb⁴¹ 1330. The latter seems to be an amplification of the former. It had the honour of being read out at the Electoral Club. The police agent who reported the incident declares that Varlet was the first writer who had dared to display such audacity!

Fréron himself.⁸ His railings and insults against Billaud-Varenne, Barère, Vadier, Collot, Amar, Bourdon of Oise, Montaut, and Carrier are worthy of Merlin of Thionville. In a single sentence he applied to Barère the epithets Janus, an eel, a chameleon, Proteus, a triple-faced courtier,⁹ and others which I will not quote! It was a stroke of luck for Fréron and Tallien, in their quarrel with the Jacobins and Montagnards, to have on their side from the outset men like Varlet, who had been among the promoters of May 31 and habitual agitators in the sections.

Another man to be seen at the Electoral Club was Bodson, the engraver, a judge on the tribunal of the first *arrondissement*, who drew up in the name of the club the petition presented to the Convention on the 20th Fructidor, demanding unrestricted liberty of the press and the restoration of elections. Bodson was a friend of Varlet and Babeuf, with whom he afterwards conspired against the Directory. It was Babeuf who undertook his defence when he was arrested in consequence of this petition.

Babeuf had become the real inspiration of the Electoral Club. Having once been a feudal commissary in charge of land-registers (*commissaire à terrier*), he had seen the abuses of feudalism close at hand and had been conspicuous for the violence of his opinions in his native region of Montdidier, Roye, and Péronne at the beginning of the Revolution. He had been concerned in riots against the collection of the old taxes, especially the indirect taxes, and even as early as that was the terror of middle-class property-owners.¹⁰ Elected a member of the district assembly of Montdidier, and as

⁸ "Under cover of night, in silence, in secret, with no formalities, arbitrary power and individual hatred throw citizens by thousands into their bastilles. Revolutionary kings cannot reign without corruption; they must make money. The sword of justice becomes a dagger, sanguinary laws are made retrospective, the greatest property-owners are accused of alleged conspiracy and appear before a homicidal, accusing, pitiless tribunal, deaf to all the resources of defence; the reprobate conscience of the jurymen is always convinced in advance, the only cry that strikes the ear is: 'Death! Death!' The temple of justice is like a den of cannibals, and it is there that these monsters speak of humanity" (*Gare à l'Explosion*, p. 9). We may recall that Jacques Roux, the other leader of the Enragés, had condemned the Terror at the very time when it was instituted, in September 1793 (see Mathiez, *Révolution française*, III, 118-19; English translation, *The French Revolution*, pp. 427-8).

⁹ This phrase also occurs in another of Varlet's pamphlets, entitled: *Du Plessis, Le malheur, quelle école! Ce que j'écris la nuit, à la lueur obscure d'une lampe de prison en est peut-être une preuve. Tyrans et ambitieux, lisez! (From Le Plessis: "What a school is misfortune! This, which I am writing by night, by the dim light of a prison lamp, is perhaps a proof. Tyrants and ambitious men, read this!")* (Bibliothèque Nationale, Ln²⁷ 20066, 8vo, 5pp.).

¹⁰ See in the National Archives, D XXIX 68, the dossier concerning the disturbances at Roye in March 1790. They had broken out on the occasion of the levying

such charged with drawing up the transfer deeds in connexion with the sales of national property, he had consented, at the request of Devillers, the president of the assembly, to make a correction in a transfer deed to which Devillers was a party. His enemies denounced him to the courts and accused him of forgery. Political passion became mixed up in the affair, and on August 23, 1793 Babeuf was condemned by default to twenty years' imprisonment in irons by the criminal tribunal of Amiens, while his alleged "corruptor," Devillers, the president of the district assembly, at whose request he had committed the action, was acquitted. He fled to Paris, where the Hébertist Sylvain Maréchal found him a small post in the offices of the commune, but in the end he was discovered. He spent a few months in prison, first at the Abbaye and afterwards at Sainte-Pélagie. But he had friends among the Montagnards. As the result of a report by Merlin of Douai, rendered possible by the decree of the 24th Floréal, year II, his case was sent before the Court of Cassation, which quashed his sentence on the grounds that the case was "outside the competence of the criminal tribunal, which had exceeded its powers." This judgment, given on the 21st Prairial, year II, sent him before the criminal tribunal of Aisne, and he was discharged on bail on the 30th Messidor. After the 9th Thermidor he returned to Paris, full of bitter resentment against the Terror, which reminded him of his imprisonment and sufferings.¹¹

With a wife and three children to support, he had fallen into utter destitution, as he himself admits.¹² But his poverty did not prevent him from founding a paper, the *Journal de la liberté de la presse*, the first number of which, curiously enough, appeared on the 17th Fructidor—that is, on the very day when Fréron and Tallien were struck off the books of the Jacobins.

If we note that this first number bore as its motto a phrase from Fréron's speech of the 9th Fructidor: "There is no such thing as liberty of the press unless it is unlimited," and if we add that Babeuf's paper was printed by the deputy Guffroy, who owned a printing-press at No. 35 rue Honoré, in the court of the former Capuchin monastery, and that this Guffroy, who had belonged to Danton's clique, had been one of the leaders in the plot against

of *aides* on beverages. On this occasion Babeuf drew up an important memorandum to the municipality of Roye. The municipality hastened to denounce Babeuf to the Reports Committee (*Comité des Rapports*) of the Constituent Assembly, sending it this document as evidence against him. The committee approved the action of the municipality. Meanwhile, on March 15, 1790, Babeuf had a violent poster attacking the *aides* placarded up. For this reason he was denounced as a seditious agitator.

¹¹ See the pages on Babeuf by M. Gabriel Deville in Jaurès's *Histoire socialiste* (*Directoire*, pp. 10-38). See also M. Dommanget's *Babeuf*.

¹² *Tribun du peuple*, no. 27.

Robespierre, we shall have an idea where the money came from which enabled Babeuf to found a newspaper. Moreover, he can only have been advanced a very small sum. He confesses this indirectly in a letter which he wrote to the Electoral Club, where it was read out at the meeting of the 22nd Vendémiaire. "I sacrificed my post ¹³ and devoted myself to the defence of the rights of the people alone. My wife and my son, aged nine years, both of whom are as republican and zealous as their husband and father, undertake to second me with all their might. They are making the same sacrifices. They are engaged day and night at Guffroy's, my printer's, in folding, distributing, and sending out the paper. Our home is deserted. Two other young children, one of them only three years of age, have been left shut up at home all day for a month past. . . . There is no food to cook at home; ever since the paper has gone on, we have lived on bread, grapes, and nuts." ¹⁴ This candid picture of a journalist's home is clear proof that, even if the Thermidorians advanced money to Babeuf, the sum must have been a very small one.

We know that Babeuf had professed the communist creed as early as the days of the Constituent Assembly. M. Alfred Espinas, in his *Philosophie sociale au XVIII^e siècle*, has published a letter written by him to his friend Coupé, the deputy for Oise, which leaves no doubt on this question.¹⁵ In lending his support to Fréron and Tallien in their struggle against the Terror and terrorists Babeuf did not feel that he was abjuring his opinions. Even in his pamphlet against Carrier, in which he unmasked the alleged system of depopulation which he attributed to Robespierre, he was careful to state that he approved the social aims pursued by the latter. He signed the first number of his *Journal de la liberté de la presse* with his new name, Gracchus, explaining a little while later ¹⁶ that, if he had repudiated the name Camille, which he had originally chosen at the opening of the Revolution in place of his baptismal names, Joseph Toussaint Nicaise, this was because his "democracy had become purer and more austere" since the Constituent Assembly. He had become better acquainted with his first patron saint, the Roman dictator Camillus, and now repudiated him: "I did not like the Temple of Concord built by and for Camillus, which was no more

¹³ I do not know what the post in question was. Had he been restored to the one which he had occupied before his arrest at the bureau of the food-control authorities of the City of Paris?

¹⁴ *Tribun du peuple*, no. 27.

¹⁵ *La Philosophie sociale au XVIII^e siècle et la Révolution*, p. 410. Babeuf's letter is dated September 10, 1791.

¹⁶ *Tribun du peuple*, no. 23.

than a monument in commemoration of a compromise, by which he, a true and devoted advocate of the senatorial and patrician caste, while insidiously pretending to advocate that of the plebeians, negotiated mutual concessions between the two parties which, but for him, might have been more entirely advantageous to the people." Innocent Babeuf! He did not see that when he allowed himself to be taken in tow by Fréron, he was following, not a Gracchus, but a Camillus, "insidiously pretending to be the advocate of the people." But until he discovered his error, he continued, like Varlet, to smite the Montagnards with redoubled energy at the very moment when, through the agency of Fayau and Barère, they were reviving the social program of Saint-Just and Robespierre; he also protested against the striking of Tallien and Fréron off the books of the Jacobins, declared himself ready to welcome the two expelled members into his battalion of defenders of the press (no. 4), expressed indignation at the attempt on Tallien's life, congratulated Merlin of Thionville upon having denounced the bloodthirsty government, and exclaimed in his fifth number: "We must have principles, but no more Terror; revolutionary laws—they are necessary—but no more revolutionary government, no more of the rule of decemvirs." How could he fail to defend Fréron, who had placed himself beneath the ægis of Marat? For his own part, Babeuf was a regular visitor at the house of the Friend of the People's sister, where he was to find a refuge in time of persecution. He hailed Fréron as his "fellow-paladin (*co-atblète*)," declared boldly in his twelfth number that he was in league with him, and in fact attacked with the same vigour as he did all those who had been in the government before Thermidor, Barère, Billaud, and Collot. It is not surprising that the Jacobins reviled him as much as they did Fréron, and, as we learn from his twelfth number, attacked the venders of his paper with their cudgels just as they did those who cried the *Orateur du peuple* in the street. Why should they distinguish between them? Babeuf condemned "the horrible insurrection at Marseilles" and called upon the Convention to smite the Jacobins who, according to him, had organized it and were plotting the murder of the whole Convention (no. 15).¹⁷ He repeated that the Jacobins were not so formidable as they might appear. "I maintain that the time is not far distant when it will be an insult to say to anybody: 'You are a Jacobin'!" He boasted of being nicknamed the Attila of the Robespierrists (no. 17). He expressed his indignation that neither the Parisian sections nor the popular societies took

¹⁷ The title of this number 15 of the *Journal de la liberté de la presse*, dated the 3rd Vendémiaire, year III, runs as follows: "Incontrovertible proofs of the organization by the Jacobins of the horrible insurrection at Marseilles, and the project of the leaders for the assassination of the whole Convention."

any interest in the attempt on Tallien's life, nor sent him any of those deputations which they had lavished on Collot d'Herbois in Prairial (no. 21)!

But it was not long before Babeuf saw that his friends and partisans of the Electoral Club were at variance with him and were moving further towards the right than he was. Having been expelled from the hall of the Archevêché,¹⁸ they were offered hospitality by the section of the Museum, where their president, the Hébertist Legray, lived. On the 10th Vendémiaire they presented a petition to the Convention which disquieted Babeuf, for in it they indulged in a long denunciation of the right of requisition and called for the suppression of the law on food-speculation, a law "which has been the death of industry, from the husbandman up to the richest merchant," and for that of the maximum, which would lead to the restoration of freedom of trade.¹⁹ Such a petition must have delighted Tallien and Fréron. It saddened Babeuf, who was a partisan of liberty in the domain of politics only. "We give our entire approbation," he wrote, "to that part of the address only which has reference to the declaration of all the rights of sovereignty. The question of trade is worthy of the most thorough examination; there is much to be said about food-speculation, and for a long time to come we shall still require laws against greed." It is curious that in his following number, after this incident, Babeuf altered the title and motto of his paper. From no. 23, dated the 14th Vendémiaire, onwards, the title became: *Le*

¹⁸ On the motion of Roger Ducos, who spoke as follows at the meeting of the 22nd Fructidor: "The Electoral Club holds its meetings in one of the halls of the former Archevêché, which the Convention expressly reserved by decree for a great almshouse of humanity (*Hospice de l'Humanité*); I move that that building should be used solely for the purpose for which it was intended, and that this club be no longer permitted to hold its meetings there." The decree was passed without debate (*Moniteur*). In his no. 22 (10th Vendémiaire, year III) Babeuf afterwards described how, on the 8th Vendémiaire, an architect, followed by two hundred workmen, started demolishing the seats in the hall of the Archevêché. These two hundred "Erostrates" (*sic*) worked without stopping till half past two in the following morning. It was not a demolition, said Babeuf, it was a scene of havoc. "They rent and tore the costly carpets and all the symmetrically arranged benches of this, once the meeting-place of the Constituent Assembly. . . . The superb stove was shattered." He held Amar, Bourdon of Palestine (*sic*), and Moysé Bayle responsible for this demolition.

¹⁹ The text of this petition will be found both in the report of the session of the Convention in the *Moniteur* and in no. 22 of Babeuf's *Journal*. It was signed by the president, Legray, and the secretary, Allard. According to Babeuf, in his no. 23, the petition was adopted at an open-air meeting held on the 10th Vendémiaire by the club near its old premises, in the "Place du Temple de la Raison"—that is, in front of Notre-Dame—and then taken to the Convention. At the head of the procession was carried the table of the Rights of Man.

Tribun du peuple ou le Défenseur des droits de l'homme, en continuité du journal de la liberté de la presse (The Tribune of the People, or the Defender of the Rights of Man, in continuation of the Journal of the Liberty of the Press); and the motto was changed to: "The object of society is the common happiness." There was also a change in the point of view. He now calls the attention of his readers for preference to the calamities caused by the food-shortage, and the failure of the social policy of the Revolution. The hour of his quarrel with Fréron and Tallien was drawing near.

Babeuf had been simple enough to believe that his "fellow-paladin," Fréron, shared his own desire for the total destruction of revolutionary government, the revival of elections, and the end of the oligarchical dictatorship (to use Babeuf's expression) wielded by the members of the Convention. But since Fréron had succeeded in advancing his friend André Dumont to the presidentship of the Convention, he no longer seemed in any hurry to put the Constitution of 1793 into effect.

In no. 10 of the *Orateur du peuple*, dated the 9th Vendémiaire, he justified the dictatorship of the Convention by the argument that it was the "miniature (*mignature*)" of the people. The remark was commented upon by Babeuf in his no. 26 and began to open his eyes. He demanded full sovereignty for the people. One last incident now occurred which precipitated the rupture. The patriot Legray, president of the Electoral Club, which now held its meetings on the premises of the section of the Museum, was arrested and thrown into prison by order of the Committee of General Security for having, as Bourdon of Oise said, discussed "the annihilation of the Convention"—the reference being, no doubt, to the enforcement of the Constitution.²⁰ This time the violation of individual liberty could not be ascribed to the Robespierrists, as had happened when Bodson had met with the same fate a month before. In his no. 27 (dated the 22nd Vendémiaire)

²⁰ See Bourdon of Oise's speech at the session of the 18th Vendémiaire in the *Moniteur*. The police report of the 18th Vendémiaire specifies that the speakers on the evening before at the Electoral Club maintained that there would be no peace so long as revolutionary government lasted (Aulard, *Paris sous la réaction thermidorienne*, Vol. I, under the date mentioned). The Electoral Club continued to hold its meetings at the section of the Museum up to the beginning of Frimaire. We read in no. 36 of *L'Ami des citoyens* (6th Frimaire, year III): "The section of the Museum has passed a resolution that it will no longer lend its hall to the Electoral Club, into which several fire-brands had made their way, who found a strong attraction in the disorders of anarchy and the germs of civil war." The Electoral Club, its numbers swelled by part of the Jacobins expelled from the rue Saint-Honoré, next met at the old premises of the Cordeliers in the Musée, rue de Thionville (formerly rue Dauphine), where galleries were fitted up (see the *Vedette* for the 30th Brumaire).

Babeuf published a letter to Fréron, composed by himself, but signed by Albertine Marat, in which he requested him to set Legray at liberty. "And you [Fréron], who call yourself the apostle of Marat and have just promised to follow in his footsteps, remember that he never remained silent when a patriot was oppressed; remember that he never entered into an alliance with political brigands or the oppressors of the people; remember, too, that he was never false to the sacred name which he assumed [the name of 'Friend of the People']." Babeuf appended remarks to Albertine Marat's letter, showing that he had already lost confidence in Tallien and Fréron. "He [Fréron] never spoke at the Electoral Club. He let things take their course and kept silence, whatever happened. Neither Billaud's invectives against the club's petitioners at the bar of the Convention . . . nor the violation of the right of petition and of all social decency by the scandalous arrest, in his court and during the exercise of his functions, of the judge Bodson, a member of that club, for drawing up the petition of the 20th Thermidor; nor the decree depriving the same society of its premises in the Évêché, nor the horrible damage which resulted from the revolting devastation, nor the impertinent and anti-republican (*républicide*) reply of Dumont, the president, to another petition, that of the 7th Vendémiaire . . . not all this could fire the accents of the *Orateur du peuple*!" Babeuf wound up this attempt to force the issue by a sort of indictment: "If Fréron remains for two days without replying [to Albertine Marat's letter], his silence will solve to his discredit the problem for the solution of which the public is anxiously waiting—that of knowing whether Fréron's fifteen numbers (which, while revealing a total indifference to the great questions of the rights of the people, are nurtured on nothing but an inveterate animosity for four tyrants [Barère, Collot, Carrier, and Billaud]—execrable, indeed, though these be) are a sufficient motive for the suspicion that the solicitude of the *Orateur du peuple* stops short at a desire to take their place, and not to excite our enthusiasm for anything but the choice of tyrants. . . . I do not yet accuse Fréron, but I have a suspicion amounting to a belief that he is actually the chief support of those who would usurp the sovereignty." This was not only a quarrel, but a rupture. In his capacity as a member of the Committee of General Security, Babeuf's printer, the deputy Guffroy, a friend of Fréron's, had signed the warrant for the arrest of Legray. He now cut off supplies and refused to print Babeuf's next number,²¹ which only

²¹ The letter in which Guffroy intimated to Babeuf his refusal to print his paper has been published in *La Révolution française* for January–May 1929. The letter, dated the 21st Vendémiaire, year III, reproaches Babeuf with his campaign against the revolutionary government.

appeared thanks to a subscription raised by the Electoral Club.²² From that time onwards the *Tribun du peuple* only appeared sporadically. On the 3rd Brumaire the Committee of General Security had Babeuf arrested for a seditious speech which he had made at the Electoral Club. Merlin of Thionville, the very man upon whom Babeuf had lavished his praises, justified his arrest.²³ But the Thermidorians released him almost at once. They had only wanted to give him a warning. They might have spared their pains. Babeuf now turned and rent those whom he had adored. He had declaimed against the Jacobins; but when the club was shut, he protested on principle, in a pamphlet entitled *Les Battus paient l'amende* (*The Losing Side Pays the Fine*). When he next issued the *Tribun du peuple*, a month later, on the 28th Frimaire, it was to denounce the "alarming retrograde movement" which was taking place: "All the vices and rottenness of the old regime are boldly showing themselves again and blot out the men and principles of the Republic. On all sides nothing is to be met with but degradation, depravation of morals, prostitution, and corruption." The workers were dying of hunger. Evil tongues were saying that the Convention had only closed the Jacobins in order to open the Temple.²⁴ All his blows were now to be aimed at his former friends Fréron and Tallien.

²² No. 27 ends with the following lines in italics: "*At its session of the 27th Vendémiaire the popular society known as the Electorale stopped the printing of no. 27 of the Tribun du peuple and of the letter here appended.*" The letter was a tissue of recriminations against Guffroy: "Guffroy betrayed my confidence. The traitor! When I started my paper I did not leave him in ignorance of the principles on which I proposed to carry it on. . . . Guffroy is robbing me outrageously. He reaps all the fruit of my work. My first numbers ran into two editions; he sold an immense number and received the whole profit; he received all the subscriptions, I never got a sou. . . . Guffroy is robbing the best of the patriots who subscribed to my paper. . . . In fact, Guffroy is striking at (*assassine*) the very existence of the country by quenching the torch of truth. . . . The fact that the measures taken against Legray, that excellent defender of the people, occurred at the same time, and that the moment at which they were carried out both in his case and in mine, was identical, gave me, I consider, just cause to think that we were regarded as common conspirators. . . . I went and poured out my feelings of horror in the Friend of the People's family, which was my refuge."

²³ To justify the arrest of Babeuf, as well as of the president and secretary of the Electoral Club, Merlin of Thionville appealed to the recent law forbidding collective petitions. The papers of the club were placed under seal, but it was not closed. . . . Méhée, a creature of Tallien's, protested against the triple arrest of Babeuf, Bodson, and Varlet in no. 4 of the *Ami des citoyens*, on the 4th Brumaire. Fréron kept silence.

²⁴ No. 28 of the *Tribun du peuple*. It bears the address: "From Franklin's printing-press, No. 75 rue de Cléry." For printing this number Franklin had a warrant for his apprehension issued by the Committee of General Security. On the following eve-

Tallien soon accused Fouché of being the instigator of the anarchist who was rousing the people to insurrection. "This fellow," he said on the 10th Pluviôse, "is a mere man of straw; there is a person here who has spoken to him, who has had the proof of one of Babeuf's works corrected by his hand. [Cries of 'Name him!'] It is Fouché." Fouché admitted it: "A republican owes no account of his connexions to anybody but the law; I am ready to disclose them when the law orders me to do so; I have none that are not honourable to me. Plenty of others have dealings with fortune and power. It is not yet prohibited to have any with the unfortunate and oppressed. Yes, I have had to do with Babeuf." But Fouché next claimed to have dissuaded the *Tribun du peuple* from publishing a pamphlet opposing the reinstatement of the Girondins in the Convention. Two days before Tallien's denunciation the Muscadins had read and burnt at the Café de Chartres the number of the *Tribun* in which Babeuf rated them soundly and made cruel and well-founded charges against their leaders, Merlin, Fréron, Tallien, Bentabole, and Legendre.²⁵ But let us not forget that, before he roused the working-class faubourgs against the *jeunesse dorée*, Babeuf had actually been one of their first leaders.

* * *

Among Fréron's *jeunesse* were to be found elements of a most varied nature: journalists, women both in high society and in a society which was less reputable, Muscadins of every age and origin, all linked together by hatred of the previous regime and common grudges, besides a number of former suspects, who felt that the safest way of escaping a return to prison was to send those who had imprisoned them there in turn.

First, for the journalists and pamphleteers. Besides Fréron and Dussault, who acted as his secretary while still continuing to write in his old paper, the *Correspondance politique*, there were Méhée and Tallien. Why did Tallien once more take up his pen as a journalist on the 1st Brumaire, year III, and bring out his old newspaper of 1792, *L'Ami des citoyens*, with the addition of a significant sub-title, *Journal du commerce et des arts*? It is difficult to answer this question, but we may suspect that he was only half-satisfied with Fréron's *Orateur du peuple*, for he was not always in agreement with the man who, in the eyes of the public, acted as his right-hand man. Tallien

ning, for the second time in three months, a warrant was issued for the arrest of Babeuf. He evaded it, and his wife was subjected to an interrogatory lasting a whole day. See the *Tribun*, no. 29. The warrant issued against Babeuf was dated the 12th Nivôse, year III.

²⁵ No. 29 of the *Tribun* is dated the 1st-19th Nivôse, year III; no. 30, the 4th Pluviôse; no. 31, the 9th Pluviôse. The latter are extremely virulent. A warrant for the arrest of Babeuf was again issued on the 17th Pluviôse, year III.

chose as his editor-in-chief the younger M  h  e, formerly registrar to the commune after August 10, who always signed with his anagram, Felh  m  si. M  h  e now started a violent attack on Cambon and his financial policy. These "Cambonnades," as he called them, must have delighted the mercantile and industrial public to which the paper set out to appeal. The idea was to bring about the fall of the "Robespierre of property"—by which epithet he stigmatized Cambon—and with it of all the laws restricting the freedom of trade. When Lindet attempted to defend the interventionist policy for which he had stood on the Committee of Public Safety, he was rounded on in turn. But Tallien affected to take up a position further towards the left than Fr  ron. When M  h  e published a note in his paper recommending that the little Dauphin should be treated with consideration, Tallien dissociated his name from the paper in a letter to M  h  e, in which he said: "In withdrawing my name . . . my friend, my sole motive was to deprive the malevolent of the means which they were doubtless preparing for calumniating the defenders of the principles of justice and liberty again." M  h  e explained that his note on the son of Capet was meant ironically.²⁶ From this day, the 13th Frimaire, onwards, the paper appeared under the name of the younger M  h  e alone. But he did not modify his attitude, and it does not appear that there was any cooling of friendship between him and Tallien. As before, the *Ami des citoyens* made it its endeavour to dissociate itself from the slightest suspicion of royalism and aristocracy. It took Fr  ron to task on the 18th Frimaire: "We will tell him frankly and openly that many patriots are whispering among themselves; we will tell him that people were surprised to see the *Orateur du peuple* given up to the aristocratic speculations and the disgusting stock-jobbing of Maret, the bookseller. Besides, what patriot would ever choose to visit the *Orateur du peuple* at Maret's house? Who would venture to brave the insulting gang of aristocrats who throng his shop and seem to say to the republicans: 'Only wait! When we have punished the cut-throats (*  gorgeurs*), it will be your turn next!'"²⁷

This was not the only attack that M  h  e made on Fr  ron. When the latter called for the re-establishment of liberty of worship, M  h  e expressed his astonishment that such a suggestion should originate with a disciple of Marat.²⁸ And, later still, he went so far as to write that Fr  ron was "not the only editor of the paper, and that if he wanted to prevent royalist articles from appearing in it, he would have to give up the hundred and

²⁶ *Ami des citoyens*, no. 43, 13th Frimaire.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 48.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 101, 11th Pluvi  se, year III.

fifty livres that Maret paid him every other day. We do not demand this effort of him, but why should those who are not lost to all shame follow Fréron's example?"²⁹ Dussault, writing in Fréron's name, made the spirited reply: "This is the fourth or fifth time that I have been attacked in your paper. This does not prevent me from reading it with pleasure, and feeling astonished that it has met with so little success. . . . To call me a royalist without knowing me is to treat me like the unfortunate people who were massacred on September 2 without a trial. You will receive no letters from them; but, for my part, I have at least the consolation of writing to you." This stinging allusion to the part played by Méhée during the September days shows what a pitch controversy had reached. From that time onwards Méhée never alluded to Fréron except as *l'homme au cinquante écus* ("the fifty-crown man," in allusion to Maret's hundred and fifty livres), or to his journal except as *L'Opérateur du peuple* ("the operator on the people"). But Dussault had spoken the truth. Méhée's paper did not sell well and disappeared on the 16th Germinal.³⁰

The gradual movement of Fréron's *jeunesse dorée* towards the right had first eliminated Babeuf and the former Hébertists from its ranks. Next Fréron and Réal (who had joined forces with Fréron's paper) were in turn eliminated, three months later.

There still remained grouped around Fréron—or rather Dussault, who wrote his articles—certain journalists who were republicans in name only and openly went over to the royalist side under the Directory, so soon as they thought they could do so without danger. One of them, Charles de Lacretelle, or Lacretelle junior (to distinguish him from his elder brother, who was also a journalist), has left us some interesting memoirs which bear the stamp of sincerity.³¹ He informs us that he had belonged to the Feuillants Club, fought side by side with André Chénier in the *Journal de Paris*, and afterwards been secretary to the Duke of La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, a great friend of Lafayette, bewailing with him the fall of monarchy. During the struggle between the Girondins and the Montagnards, Lacretelle placed his pen at the service of the former, but without signing his articles,

²⁹ Number of the 30th Ventôse, year III, of the *Spectateur français ou l'ami des citoyens*, the new title of Méhée's paper after the 1st Ventôse, when it was amalgamated with Réal's *Journal de l'opposition*.

³⁰ Méhée explains that, the number of his subscribers having fallen to 550, he could no longer continue to publish it.

³¹ Though composed later, in 1841, Charles de Lacretelle's *Dix Années d'épreuves* are an important source for the study of the Thermidorian reaction. They can, moreover, be checked by reference to the files of the newspaper *Le Républicain français*, in which he wrote, under his own name, from the 4th Pluviôse, year III, onwards.

for his name would have been compromising to his allies. Under the Terror he enlisted in a dragoon regiment so as to escape the investigations of the police. But after Thermidor, when Tallien had entered the government, he easily obtained leave to return to Paris. He almost immediately joined the staff of the *Républicain français*—a title which was a decided misnomer. He waged such fierce war on terrorists—in which term he included all those who had worked for the Revolution—that Méhée at last denounced his audacity and accused him of royalism.³² Lacretelle's articles met with such success that Madame Tallien wished to see him, to congratulate him and give him advice: "She would often indicate to me," he says, "the most skilful means of achieving the end which formed her secret ambition,"³³ a phrase which would lead us to believe that Madame Tallien was pursuing the same object as Lacretelle himself. One day, as a reward, she permitted him to kiss an arm worthy of the Capitoline Venus.³⁴ The journalists of the right wing who followed Lacretelle's example in supporting the policy of Fréron—and they became more and more numerous, for people always rally to success—soon conceived the idea of meeting once a week at a restaurant in the Place du Louvre, near the Assembly, to concert what line they were to follow. These meetings were attended by the two brothers Bertin, of the *Journal des Débats et décrets*, "both," says Lacretelle, "wonderfully gifted with political sagacity, fiery writers, professing the religion of friendship in sincerity of heart and without ostentation"; Dussault, of the *Correspondance politique* and the *Orateur du peuple*; Lagarde, who edited the *Journal de Perlet*; Michaud, of the *Quotidienne*; Richer de Sérizy, of the *Accusateur public*; Lacretelle and Charles His, of the *Républicain*.³⁵ Those who had been republicans from the first were carefully kept at arms' length by this set. They were all young men who drank a good deal of champagne and were fond of gaiety. But the resolutions at which they arrived were wise and even a trifle hypocritical. Their settled tactics were to refrain from giving umbrage to the Convention, to keep silence about the mistakes of those of

³² See the *Spectateur français* for the 13th Germinal, year III, in which Méhée denounces a M. Lacretelle junior, a republican of recent date who writes affectingly of the misfortunes of the Princess of Monaco and wants her property to be restored to her.

³³ *Dix Années d'épreuves*, pp. 196-7.

³⁴ "Her relations with me," he says of Mme Tallien, "had rather a charming tinge of friendship; I remained at the stage of being fascinated by her, and never ventured so far as to love her" (*Dix Années d'épreuves*, p. 243).

³⁵ To this list, given by Lacretelle, should be added Hyde de Neuville, afterwards Louis XVIII's agent, and Fiévée. Hyde de Neuville was by far the youngest of the three (*Mémoires et souvenirs* of Baron Hyde de Neuville, I, p. 122).

its members who had mended their ways, but pitilessly to lash those who persisted in the old groove. The Bertin brothers, who commanded a hearing, advocated an attack on all the revolutionary laws, one after the other. At times Michaud, who was "deeply attached both by feeling and by principle to the exiled dynasty," grew impatient at this policy, which was too slow for his liking, but "he yielded to the counsels of prudence." Richer de Sérizy alone, who had once been a very intimate friend and boon-companion of Camille Desmoulins, caused some anxiety to the Bertins and Lacretelle. He had been imprisoned during the Terror and had become an uncompromising royalist. He had to be kept quiet. "He was older than we were," says Lacretelle, "and seemed to have lived more for dissipation and pleasure; his blanched face and almost lustreless eyes and the extreme looseness of his social relations did not suggest an ardent soul, but his pen darted fire; he had an irregular vein of inspiration, rather like that of Camille Desmoulins, but in an entirely contrary sense."³⁶ While the other journalists of this set spared the Thermidorians, the pitiless Sérizy gave rein to his vigorous and often cruel style against Røederer, Merlin of Thionville,³⁷ and Sieys alike. He drew no distinctions between the revolutionaries. To him all were equally odious. In his eyes the Revolution was nothing but "five years of murders, plagues, and misfortunes hitherto unknown to humankind."³⁸ This uncompromising spirit endeared him to the fashionable world, of which he was the idol. But he was an exception in his own party.

Let us bear in mind that while the press of the left wing made a scattered attack, that of the right wing concerted its moves and possessed a plan and tactics. We may add that the Thermidorians had managed to place their own men even on the staffs of their opponents' papers. There was no newspaper, not even Audouin's *Journal universel* or Charles Duval's *Journal des hommes libres*, that stood out against reaction more stoutly than the *Ami du peuple*, the first numbers of which, appearing from the 29th Fructidor onwards, were edited by Chasles, a member of the Convention, who not only professed to be a disciple of Marat, but was one. Long before Babeuf, he made a determined attack on the middle-class aristocracy. Well,

³⁶ *Dix Années d'épreuves*, p. 206.

³⁷ He showed base ingratitude towards Merlin of Thionville, to whom he owed his release after Thermidor. See the letter which he wrote Merlin on the 19th Thermidor, year II, published in the *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* for July-August 1928.

³⁸ *L'Accusateur public*, nos. 6-7-8, p. 43. The numbers are not dated and did not appear regularly. Under the Consulate, Richer de Sérizy was entrusted by the Pretender, the Count of Provence, who had now assumed the title of Louis XVIII, with a mission to Madrid. He died in England in 1803.

when Chasles fell out with his printer, Lebois, the paper, while still maintaining its sansculotte character, was edited by Ange Pitou, a royalist who had been a pupil of Chasles at the time when the latter had worn the cassock. Chasles had introduced him to the paper, and he stayed there after Chasles had left. In a letter to his friend Simon, dated the 25th Nivôse, year IV, Babeuf alleged that Ange Pitou played the part of an *agent provocateur* on the *Ami du peuple*, and gave as his proof that Pitou printed an apology for the September massacres in his paper at the very time when the fury of Fréron's young men was most violent, evidently with the intention of raising public opinion to the highest pitch of bitterness, and instigating the wholesale slaughters (*hécatombistes*) to the most savage vengeance.³⁹

M. Fernand Engerand, from whom I borrow these interesting revelations, further informs us that, while editing *L'Ami du peuple*, Ange Pitou also had the task of reporting the sessions of the Convention in another great paper of the left, the *Annales patriotiques*, which had as its editor-in-chief Salaville, an independent and clear-sighted republican, who had stood out against Méhée and Fréron and carefully reported the last sessions of the Jacobins, the closing of which he had blamed. Salaville was dismissed from the paper after the Convention had reinstated the former Girondin deputies.⁴⁰ One of them, Sébastien Mercier, proprietor of the *Annales patriotiques*, resumed the editorship and gave the paper quite a different tendency, approximating to that of Fréron.

* * *

While the influence of the press on the Thermidorian reaction was considerable, it is essential also to take into account the influence simultaneously exerted by the salons and by women. Under the government of the Montagnards the salons had been closed. None of the members of the great Committee of Public Safety had had time to indulge in the passions of love. They were quite absorbed in their patriotic task. The Thermidorians were men of another stamp. When Babeuf quarrelled with them, he wrote in his number 29: "The Pompadours, the Dubarris, the Antoinettes are coming to life again, and it is they who govern, it is to them that you owe a large proportion of the calamities which beset you, and the deplorable backward

³⁹ Fernand Engerand, *Ange Pitou*, p. 85. M. Engerand adds that Ange Pitou's articles on the September massacres appeared in *L'Ami du peuple* from the 17th Pluviôse to the 19th Ventôse, year III.

⁴⁰ Babeuf protested in his number 29, dated the 1st-19th Nivôse, against the dismissal of the "good and wise Salaville." We learn from him that Salaville had previously been summoned before the Committee of General Security to give an explanation of his last articles.

movement which is killing our Revolution. . . . Why conceal the fact any longer that Tallien, Fréron, and Bentabole decide the destiny of men while reclining indolently on eider-down and roses, at the side of princesses? . . . Those who have become their better halves (*moitiés*) were under arrest about the time of the 9th Thermidor; these men went and said to them: 'Do you want to escape the guillotine? Then accept the offer of my hand.' The high and mighty ladies replied: 'It is better to marry than to be be-headed'—and here they are making our laws!" Babeuf was scarcely exaggerating. The majority of the reactionary group, the repentant terrorists, had in fact married ex-noblewomen, for the most part very rich ones, who in order to preserve their fortunes had not accompanied their husbands when they emigrated. Such was Teresa Cabarrus, who in 1788, at the age of fifteen and a half, had married M. de Fontenay, who had taken the title of marquis. He was the son of a president of the Cour des Comptes and was afflicted with a fortune of a million in real estate. Teresa had obtained a divorce on April 5, 1793 and had become intimate with Tallien at Bordeaux, in succession to many others, among them the Lameth brothers, the Duc d'Aiguillon, and Félix Le Peletier, brother of the "martyr of liberty." She did not marry Tallien immediately after her release from prison, in spite of the services which he had rendered her. A marriage with Tallien was a *mésalliance* for her, for Tallien was the son of a servant, a porter or valet to the Marquis de Bercy, and had himself occupied quite subordinate posts for a long time, as clerk, first to a lawyer, then to a merchant, and afterwards in a bank. The marriage, which was purely a civil one, was celebrated the day after Christmas 1794.⁴¹ The lady who in future could be known as

⁴¹ In reply to the attacks on "la Cabarrus" by Cambon and Duhem at the session of the 9th Nivôse, year III, Tallien announced his marriage in the Convention two days later: "A woman has been mentioned in this Assembly. . . . I should not have thought that she ought to be a subject of debate in the National Convention. The daughter of Carbarrus has been named. Very good! I declare, before the listening people, that this woman is my wife. [Several rounds of applause.] . . . I have known her for eighteen months, I made her acquaintance at Bordeaux. Her misfortunes, her virtues, cause me to esteem and cherish her. Arriving in Paris at a time of tyranny and oppression, she was persecuted and cast into prison. An emissary of the tyrant was sent to her and said: 'Write that you have known Tallien to be a bad citizen, and you shall be given your liberty and a passport for a foreign country.' She rejected this vile expedient and did not leave prison till the 12th Thermidor [M. Kuscinski, who has consulted the original documents in the Archives, says in his *Dictionnaire des Conventionnels* that Teresa was not released till the 26th Thermidor], and among the tyrant's papers has been found a note to send her to the scaffold. This, citizens, this is she who is my wife [repeated applause]" (*Moniteur*, reissue, Vol. XXIII, pp. 91, 101-2).

Madame Tallien left her apartment in the Chaussée d'Antin and went to live at the Chaumière, on the Cours la Reine, a splendid residence built by one of the greatest actresses of the day, Mlle Raucourt. Madame Tallien was only twenty-one years old at that time and in the full splendour of her radiant beauty: tall and lissom, with beautiful shoulders and splendid arms, jet-black hair, tiny feet, and a musical voice. It was she who, in the depths of winter—the hardest winter of the century—started the fashion of wearing Greek robes, with bare arms, transparent tunics, and bare feet shod with sandals. Victor de Broglie saw her arrive at Ranelagh "in the costume of Diana, with the bust half-naked, wearing buskins, and dressed, if one may use the term, in a tunic which did not come below the knee." ⁴² It was also the fashion to wear a fair wig, whatever the natural colour of the hair might be. ⁴³

The Chaumière was the meeting-place of the loveliest of Thermidorian ladies, the *Merveilleuses*, among whom was Madame Rovère, formerly Angélique Belmont, Marquise d'Agoult. She is well described by the following words: "Twenty-seven years of age, with fair hair, blue eyes, a very pretty nose, and a pleasing mouth, set in an oval face." ⁴⁴ She, too, had divorced her husband, who was an *émigré*. Her new husband, Rovère, had taken the name of Marquis de Fontvielle before 1789; he was really of noble birth and had served in the King's Musketeers, though this had not prevented him from throwing himself violently into the anti-papal revolution in the Venaissin. Some responsibility was ascribed to him in the horrible massacre of the Glacière at Avignon, in which a number of aristocrats met their death. He, too, had divorced his first wife, Élisabeth de Chaix de Claret. He did not marry the Marquise d'Agoult till after Fructidor. She brought him the château of Belmont in Dauphiné, several forests and estates, and a house at Grenoble, worth quite a million in all.

⁴² Victor de Broglie, *Souvenirs*, Vol. I, p. 23. *Le Courrier républicain* for the 18th Nivôse gives the following description of the popularity of Mme Tallien, who had just married: "Does she enter? There are transports of applause, as though to have a face of a Roman or Spanish type, a superb complexion, fine eyes, a noble gait, a smile in which patronage is tempered by kindness, a Greek costume, and bare arms were to save the French Republic" (Aulard, *Paris sous la réaction thermidorienne*, Vol. I, p. 372).

⁴³ Picard wrote a comedy on *La Perruque blonde* (*The Fair Wig*): "Out of a hundred women with fair wigs, the majority are kept women. . . . Nowadays, when vice walks abroad barefaced, setting even virtue at defiance, there are few women who fear to be taken for prostitutes. . . ." (*Le Courrier de Paris ou la Chronique du jour*, for the 18th Messidor, year III).

⁴⁴ According to Michel Jouve and Giraud-Mangin, in their introduction to Rovère's correspondence with Goupilleau de Montaigu, p. 18.

We already know that Bentabole had also married a divorced woman, a former Rohan-Chabot, with a fine fortune. Laharpe, the fashionable man of letters, who had once been a great Voltairian, had been converted in prison by the beautiful and virtuous widow of Count Stanislas de Clermont-Tonnerre.⁴⁵ In the same society were also to be met Joséphine de Beauharnais, Madame de Navailles, Madame de Châteaurenault, the wife of the contractor Hamelin, and later, too, the Baroness de Staël, and the wife of Récamier, the banker.

Merlin of Thionville contented himself with the charming Mlle Solier of the Opéra, and Legendre consoled his widowed state with Mlle Contat of the Théâtre-français.

The freedom of manners was such that actresses and great ladies frequented the same salons and attended the same receptions on an equal footing. The whole of this society no doubt found plenty of amusement. There was dancing everywhere. At the Bal des Zéphyrus, established in the former cemetery of Saint-Sulpice, dancing took place on the tombstones, which they had not even taken the trouble to remove. A little beyond this, in the rue de Vaugirard, there was dancing in the garden of the Carmelites, where the priests had been massacred in September 1792. It was known as the Bal des Tilleuls (lime-trees).

In fashionable society there were balls for privileged persons, the Bal des Victimes being reserved for families a member of which had been guillotined. The guests saluted each other *à la victime*—that is, with a movement of the head like that of the condemned person at the moment when he was tipped up on the plank to put his head through the lunette. This was the origin of dressing the hair *à la Titus*, for men. The hair was cut close on the nape of the neck just as the executioner cut the condemned man's hair before tipping him up. Men of fashion did up their hair on the top of their heads with a comb, or plaited it in little braids falling down over the ears or the temples; they wore frock-coats with black collars, knee-breeches, earrings, and broad green neckcloths. They carried thick cudgels in their hands, which they called their "justice of the peace" or "executive council."

Within a few months a complete revolution took place in dress, manners, and even speech. The "Incoyables" and "Méveilleuses," as they were called, suppressed their *r's*, which required an effort to pronounce.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Lacretelle, *Dix Années d'épreuves*, p. 269.

⁴⁶ In the *Journal de Paris* for the 23rd Messidor, year III, appeared an amusing article in which a lifelike picture was drawn of these young men of fashion. The article had as its title: "On a new juvenile malady called the *Semsa* or *Sexa* (an abbreviation of the words: *qu'est-ce que c'est que cela*)." The symptoms of the malady are "a

But this was no harmless revolution. As the salons reopened, they were occupied not only with pleasure, but with business and politics.

The first salons to open their doors, we learn from Thibaudeau, who frequented them,⁴⁷ were those of the bankers and army-contractors who invited deputies to their houses in order to gain protection for their enterprises. Next came the salons of the nobles who had not emigrated. These, too, had need of the deputies in order to recover their sequestered property or get their relatives and friends struck off the list of *émigrés*. The deputies had become masters for the time being and were flattered as the former masters had been. In their pleasure at seeing doors open wide before them which had long been shut to them, they made no attempt to stop this. "They were only fêted, however," says Thibaudeau, "by those who desired to obtain services of them or corrupt their minds. They were overwhelmed with every sort of seduction to their faces, but laughed at behind their backs. This was natural. But there were many of them who did not see it. They thought that by frequenting the society of the *ancien régime* they were advancing in im-

complete relaxation of the optic nerve, obliging the sufferer always to wear spectacles, a loss of natural warmth which is hard to overcome without a very tightly buttoned coat and a neckcloth folded round six times in which the chin disappears, and which threatens before long to mask all the face up to the nose." "But the most characteristic symptom is the paralysis of the organs of speech. The hapless young men afflicted with it avoid consonants with the greatest care, and are, as it were, reduced to the necessity of deossifying the language. A clear articulation, vigorous pronunciation, those accentuated inflexions which constitute the charm of the voice, are forbidden them. The lips scarcely seem to move, and from the slight friction produced between them arises a confused buzz not unlike the 'Pz, pz, pz!' with which one calls to a lady's lap-dog. Nothing could be more unintelligible than the conversation of these invalids. The only words that one can distinguish in this series of vowels are *ma paole supême* for *ma parole suprême* (my last word), *incoyable* for *incroyable* (incredible), *hoible* for *horrible*, and other words mangled in the same fashion."

⁴⁷ *Mémoires de Thibaudeau sur la Convention* (1824), Vol. I, pp. 131-9. Thibaudeau frequented in particular the salon of Mme de Vaines, wife of a friend of Turgot, who had been receiver-general of finance (*receveur-général*), and that of Mme Le Hoc, wife of the diplomatist who had represented the Republic at Hamburg. Mme de Vaines "execrated the Revolution, but had resigned herself to it, and her drawing-room was full of ex-members of the Constituent Assembly and members of the Convention. . . . She managed perfectly well to reconcile friends of more than twenty years' date, such as Suard and the Abbé Morellet, with those who were quite recent, such as Boissy d'Anglas, Siméon, and me." Mme de Hoc's salon was frequented by General Menou, Admiral Truguet, the Baron de Staël (consul-general for Sweden), Signeul, Maret (afterwards Duke of Bassano), Bourgoing (formerly ambassador at Madrid), General Faucher, and later, on his return from the United States, Talleyrand, his friend Sainte-Foy, "and other persons of that clique, well-bred people, in the best society, who exploited the Revolution for their own benefit."

portance and reputation, and allowed themselves to be caught by this deceptive bait. What if a few jests about the Revolution were ventured upon in their presence? How could they take offence? It was a pretty woman who took this liberty. Their republicanism could not hold out against the dread of failing to please or appearing ridiculous. Once familiarized with ideas by raillery, they were imperceptibly led on to despise institutions. . . . It was thus that the republican party suffered many defections, some making concessions and others selling themselves entirely to royalism." Thibaudeau is of opinion that it would be hard to exaggerate the influence of the salons of the rich and great after Thermidor. When we think of his conduct under the reaction, this passage in his memoirs almost assumes the value of a confession.⁴⁸

Left to themselves, such men as Tallien, Fréron, Bentabole, Reubell, Merlin of Thionville, Barras, and Rovère would have been content with making their fortunes. They would not have been bent upon destroying those revolutionary institutions which they had helped to work and even founded. Perhaps they would not have given free course to personal vengeance. But they were urged on by their wives—whether legal or otherwise. The Revolution had destroyed these women's pleasures, diminished or threatened their fortunes, and changed their habits. How could they fail to loathe it? Madame Tallien was the accredited protectress of all the ex-nobles, who in her own salon called her Our Lady of Thermidor or Our Lady of Succour (*de Bon Secours*), but, behind her back, Our Lady of September.

⁴⁸ Exactly a month after the fall of Robespierre, on the 10th Fructidor, the Montagnards denounced the presence at the Convention of fashionably dressed women who sat inside the hall in which the sessions took place. Bourdon of Oise obtained a decree that none but the deputies should have access to the seats intended for them. On the 25th Fructidor, Collot d'Herbois exclaimed: "It is in the vilest places that we are conspired against—in the impure boudoirs of courtesans, in the houses of the *émigré* leaders' widows, and amid the most revolting orgies that the great destinies of the Republic are held in the balance" (*Moniteur*).

CHAPTER V

The Reinstatement of the Girondins and the Removal of Marat from the Panthéon

THIS chapter might with equal reason be called "The Apotheosis and Decline of Marat." On the fifth intercalary day of the year II—that is, on September 21, 1794—the "Friend of the People" was borne by the whole Convention in full official state to the Panthéon. Four months and a half later, on the 20th Pluviôse, year III—that is, on February 8, 1795—he was turned out of it by the very same Convention. His expulsion took place at a time when almost the whole work with which his name was bound up—those terrorist laws, intended to establish the "despotism of liberty," which he had been the first to demand—had already fallen bit by bit into ruin.

During the interval measures of clemency and reparation for the victims of the Terror had alternated with measures of reprisals and retaliation against the terrorists. It was a curious series of swings of the pendulum. On the 11th Brumaire, for instance, the sequestration of the property of suspects was raised, thus completing the definitive abolition of the Robespierist laws of Ventôse.¹ On the 22nd Brumaire the Jacobin Club was closed, and on the 4th Frimaire the impeachment of Carrier was decided upon. Immediately upon the indictment of Carrier there followed, on the 12th Frimaire, a decree granting an amnesty to those of the Vendéans and Chouans who should lay down their arms within a month. This amnesty was at once followed by a second, when, on the 18th Frimaire, those who were left of the seventy-six Girondin deputies excluded from the Assembly and imprisoned for their protest against the insurrection of May 31, 1793 were reinstated in their seats in the Convention.

Simultaneously, on the 15th Frimaire, Lecointre repeated his denunciation of the members of the former government, whom he accused of being accomplices of Carrier and "continuators of Robespierre."

On the 7th Nivôse the Convention appointed a commission of inquiry, consisting of twenty-one members, to examine into the responsibility of the members of the former government denounced by Lecointre. And on the

¹ See my study of the laws of Ventôse in the *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* for May–June 1928.

12th Ventôse the Girondin Saladin reported in the name of the commission in favour of their impeachment. On the 3rd Nivôse the maximum was abolished and liberty of trade restored.

But almost immediately afterwards, on the 19th Nivôse, the Thermidorians, in order to place themselves above all suspicion of royalism, induced the Assembly to institute a national festival commemorating the execution of Louis XVI, and this was celebrated on the 2nd Pluviôse, the anniversary of January 21.

On the 18th Ventôse, about a month after the expulsion of Marat from the Panthéon, the outlawed Girondins—that is, those who had escaped trial by flight, or had taken an active part in the federalist risings—were in their turn recalled to their seats in the Convention.

Conversely, a decree of the 5th Ventôse confined to their houses and placed under observation all public officials, military or civil, who had been dismissed or suspended from their posts since the 10th Thermidor—that is, the agents of the terrorist government in turn fell under official suspicion.

Thus the peculiarity of Thermidorian clemency was its one-sidedness. It applied only to those who, in the previous year, had been the opponents of the Republic and had a reputation for "defeatism," for which reason they had been regarded as dangerous. On the other hand, this clemency was accompanied by a growing severity against those who had defended the Republic and the fatherland. Like Janus, it had two faces.

Events developed as though in accordance with a premeditated plan. But in this respect appearances were deceitful. However poor our opinion of the Thermidorians may be, if we were to try to establish any harmony between their deeds and their words, we should have to credit them with such a refinement of hypocrisy, such depths of Machiavellianism, that any such supposition becomes improbable.

The Genevan Mallet du Pan, an intelligent royalist observer who wrote for the benefit of the Austrian government a daily account of what went on, justly discerned that the Convention, though all-powerful in theory, had lost control of the political machine, which no longer responded to its direction, but dragged the Convention in its train. "France," he wrote in a letter of February 18, 1795, "is led by events and not by men. The latter are carried away by the force of circumstances and hardly ever think them out in advance. . . . The Convention has fallen into entire dependence upon public opinion . . . and proceeds by making use of it, while unable to withstand its progress. In this lies the whole secret of the advantage gained by the moderates and federalists. Thus the power of the Assembly lies

outside itself."² The situation could not be better summed up. The new majority which was persecuting the Jacobins could only hold out against them by the aid of Fréron's *jeunesse*, which came more and more to consist of those who had been Fayettists, Feuillants, and moderates of a more or less royalist and conservative tinge. Thus the Thermidorians were the prisoners of their own forces. If they had been statesmen, they would quickly have seen whither these improvised expedients were leading them. But they were only men of mediocre ability, filled with passion and resentment, and more anxious to gratify their vengeance than to sacrifice it to the public weal.

To gain an insight into the concatenation of circumstances which was carrying the Convention away in its train, nothing can be more illuminating than to tell the story of the recall of the Girondin deputies, placing it in its due perspective. Sixty-seven of them, who had signed the protest against the Montagnard *coup d'état* of May 31, 1793, were still in the Paris prisons at the time of Robespierre's fall. The fact that they had survived at all was due to Robespierre. Three times he had saved them from the scaffold, to which the Hébertists, allied for the nonce with the Dantonists, clamoured to send them.³ Just after the Festival of the Supreme Being on the 20th

² See the *Correspondance inédite de Mallet du Pan avec la cour de Vienne*, published by André Michel (1884), Vol. I, pp. 118-19.

³ See Claude Perroud, *La Proscription des Girondins* (Paris, 1917), chapter x, "La Protection de Robespierre." It was on November 13 and December 22, 1793 and on February 7, 1794 that Robespierre prevented the sixty-seven Girondins from being sent before the Revolutionary Tribunal. The impeachment of the Girondin deputies had been demanded by the Dantonist Osselin on November 9, 1793, and on the following day by Basire and Chabot, also Dantonists; and again by Hébert at the Jacobins on November 11, and by Dufourny, speaking in the name of the club at the Convention on November 13. On December 21, after the arrest of Vincent and Ronsin, the Cordeliers once more demanded of the Convention that the sixty-seven should be handed over to the Revolutionary Tribunal. The Jacobins joined in the cry the same evening. Their proposal was thrown out on the following day. There was a fresh onslaught in February and March 1794, which was likewise repelled by Robespierre.

Méhée the younger, replying in no. 52 of *L'Ami des citoyens* to the apologia which Billaud-Varenne had placarded up, stated that, "on the day when federalism was crushed"—that is, on October 3, 1793—Robespierre only asked for the heads of six Girondins. It was Billaud who insisted on twenty-two. Robespierre wanted a decree that the Girondin deputies should be sent to a single commune, where they should be kept under observation. It was Billaud who secured the decision that they should be imprisoned. It was Billaud who kept the guillotine working at full speed during Robespierre's absence from the Committee.

Prairial, those of them in confinement at La Force wrote a most cordial letter to Robespierre thanking him for his protection. We can see now why such men as Tallien and Fouché had great difficulty in carrying the Plain with them against Robespierre on the 9th Thermidor. They only succeeded by promising to alleviate the position of the imprisoned Girondin deputies. But they gave no sort of promise to set them at liberty, still less to reinstate them in the Convention, where their *suppléants* (substitutes) had been sitting for a long time.

After Thermidor all that they did was to distribute them among better-ventilated prisons, allow them to have meals sent in from outside, or transfer those of them who were ill to nursing-homes, and no more. On the 14th Thermidor, when the deputy Jean Debry, who was suspected of being their accomplice, was nominated to the Committee of General Security, he had to resign. There is no doubt that, in dedicating his newspaper to the memory of Marat, Fréron intended to intimate to the federalists that to him they were still enemies, for Marat had been the irreconcilable enemy of the Girondins and was mainly responsible for May 31.

The imprisoned Girondins waited for two long months, till September 29, 1794 (8th Vendémiaire, year III), before attempting to bring their fate to the notice of the Assembly. It was at this juncture that the attempt on Tallien's life, the disturbances at Marseilles, and the trial of the revolutionary committee at Nantes were beginning to divide the Montagnards, while Fréron's pamphleteers were attacking the Jacobins with red-hot zeal. In a letter which they published immediately afterwards, the Girondin deputies imprisoned in the former Couvent des Écossais insisted on the point that they had been deprived of their liberty and seats for signing a protest which was still a secret, the public being still unacquainted with it at the time when they wrote.⁴ They requested that this protest should at last be printed and that they should be granted a trial. André Dumont, one of the most reactionary of the Thermidorians, was president of the Convention.

⁴ See the pamphlet *Les Représentants du peuple détenus à la maison d'arrêt des Écossais, en exécution du décret de la Convention nationale du 3 octobre 1793 (v. s.), à leurs collègues les représentants du peuple siégeant à la Convention nationale et au peuple français* (*The Representatives of the People in Confinement at the House of Detention of Les Écossais, in Execution of the Decree of the National Convention of October 3, 1793 (Old Style), to their Colleagues the Representatives of the People Sitting at the National Convention, and to the French people*). Printed by F. Porte, 8vo, 28 pp. The pamphlet is dated the last complementary day—i. e., September 27, 1794. It is signed by Blaux, Faure, Varlet, Dubusc, V. C. Corbel, Chastellain, Lebreton, and Saladin.

He did not even allow their letter to be read out; it was simply referred to the Committee.⁵

But on the very next day their cause was ventilated before both the Convention and public opinion—and by whom? By Cambon—that is, by a strong opponent of the Thermidorians. At the great session of the 12th Vendémiaire all the Dantonist stalwarts—Thuriot, Clauzel, Merlin of Thionville, Fréron, Bentabole, and Legendre—under the stimulus of numerous deputations from the sections, revived Lecointre's accusations against the "continuators of Robespierre," and in particular against Barère, Billaud, and Collot. Cambon, who had been a colleague of Barère's on the first Committee of Public Safety, thought he would be doing him a good turn by revealing the fact that Barère, like himself, had tried to oppose the insurrection of May 31, which, he said, had been engineered by Robespierre and Danton in secret conclave with Pache at Charenton.⁶ According to him, Barère, together with the majority of members of the Committee of Public Safety at the time—that is, Guyton, Lindet, Bréard, Delmas, and himself, Cambon—had denounced Danton's plots in a secret memorandum, which they had all signed. The hot-headed Cambon imagined that he had done something wonderful by making this revelation, and won Barère the sympathies of the centre and the right, besides overawing the Dantonists by recalling the part played by their late leader, to whose hated memory they durst not appeal. For that day the "accomplices of Robespierre" escaped the commission of inquiry demanded by Merlin of Thionville. The resolution that had already been passed was discussed over again, and the inquiry was dropped. For a few weeks Billaud, Barère, and Collot breathed again. But the imprudent Cambon had provided the Girondins with an excellent weapon, which they knew how to use. In his report of this dramatic session for the *Orateur du peuple*, Fréron censured Cambon for bringing the events of May 31 into discredit in order to shelter Barère.⁷

The imprisoned Girondins at once seized the pretext offered by Cambon's revelations to petition the Convention for their release. How could it

⁵ See Claude Perroud, *op. cit.*, p. 228, which follows the official report of the Convention.

⁶ In his collection of documents dealing with the Acts of the Committee of Public Safety, Vol. V, p. 200, M. Aulard has published under the wrong date, July 7, 1793, an *Avis d'un rassemblement de conspirateurs à Charenton* (Information with regard to a meeting of conspirators at Charenton). Opposite this document one can read in the minute-book a marginal note running as follows: "Ordinance which is in the bundle of minutes and not entered, not having been handed to the secretariate till Fructidor, year II."

⁷ No. 12, dated the 14th Vendémiaire, year III.

be refused, when Cambon had just assured them that the insurrection on May 31 had been a counter-revolutionary movement,⁸ and that the majority of the Committee of Public Safety had been on their side?

This time it was difficult to hush the matter up. On the 22nd Vendémiaire the Convention decreed, without a debate, that a report should be made by the Committee as soon as possible. Without waiting for the report, some unknown member requested on the 29th Vendémiaire that the deputies in confinement should be released and reinstated in the Convention. This time there was a debate, and it is significant that it was Merlin of Thionville, a Thermidorian who had not been in Paris on May 31, but had been shut up in Mainz at the time, who protested against undue haste. They ought first, he said, to be acquainted with the text of this protest signed by the Girondins. Amar explained that it was in the files of the Revolutionary Tribunal. Bentabole obtained the passage of a motion that it should be printed without delay.

The attitude of the Thermidorians is significant. They saw that Cambon had intended to implicate them with Danton, and that an attack on May 31 might develop into an arraignment both of Danton and of themselves. They were naturally in no hurry to obtain the rehabilitation of the Girondins. This impression is confirmed by the session of the following day. Pénieres, a friend of the Girondins, returned to the charge in favour of the

⁸ Those in confinement at the Prison des Écossais drew up their petition on the very day after this session at the Convention—i. e., on the 13th Vendémiaire—and had it printed under the title *Cambon plaidant la cause de ses 73 collègues détenus ou la Vérité sur les événements du 31 mai* (Cambon Pleads the Cause of his 73 Imprisoned Colleagues; or The Truth about the Events of May 31). Printed by F. Porte, 8 pp., signed: Blaux, Faure, Varlet (this Varlet, deputy for Pas-de Calais, has nothing to do with the anarchist agitator dealt with in the preceding chapter), Dubusc, V. C. Corbel, Chastellain, Lebreton, and Saladin. Three days later, on the 16th Vendémiaire, the twelve Girondins confined at Port-Libre followed their example in a pamphlet: *Les Douze Représentants du peuple détenus à Port-Libre à leurs collègues siégeant à la Convention nationale et à tous les citoyens français* (The Twelve Representatives of the People in Prison at Port-Libre to their Colleagues in Session at the National Convention and to all French citizens), 28 pp. Signed: Dusaulx, Marbos, Mercier, Casenave, Dugué-Dassé, Derazey, Maisse, Blaviel, Serre, Guiter, Peyre, and Daunou. At some date unknown, those at the Carmelites also sent in their petition: *Les Représentants du peuple mis en arrestation par décret de 3 octobre 1793, vieux style, détenus dans la maison d'arrêt des Carmes à la Convention nationale et au peuple français* (The Representatives of the People Placed under Arrest by the Decree of October 3, 1793 (Old Style), in Confinement in the House of Detention of the Carmelites, to the National Convention and the French People), 23 pp. Signed Hecquet, Blad, Bohan, Queinnec, Obelin, Dubray, Henri Fleury, Laurence, Vincent, Ruault.

sixty-seven deputies. Again the Dantonists opposed him. The Dantonist Thuriot insisted on the gravity of the question with which they were confronted. Was the intention to call in question the Revolution of May 31? "We had long been repressed when the Revolution of May 31 saved France!" The debate became heated. Tallien joined in on the same side as Thuriot. He blamed Cambon for revealing the fact that the old Committee of Public Safety had made a protest against that day's proceedings. "His speech was extremely imprudent," said Tallien, and he concluded with the words: "In times of revolution, men ought not to look behind them!" Bентаbole next made a crafty attempt to show that Cambon and Delmas, one of his colleagues on the old Committee of Public Safety, were contradicting each other about the secret protest whose existence he had revealed. Guyton, who was also a member of the old Committee, confirmed Cambon's assertion and made it more definite. Cambon once more threw the responsibility on Danton: "I have said that the first petition asking for the twenty-two members was presented by Danton. I saw it, but I alone."⁹ Then, growing more and more excited, he accused the Dantonists of having been the first to establish the system of terror. "We must tear down the veil!" he exclaimed, and he accused the Dantonists of having intended to place the Duke of Orleans on the throne after August 10, and of having organized the September massacres in order to strike terror into the Legislative Assembly. He directly implicated Tallien by recalling that on August 31, 1792, at six o'clock in the evening, Tallien had come down to the Assembly to announce the arrest of the priests, saying that "the soil of liberty would soon be purged of them." Tallien denied this, asseverating that he had had nothing to do with the massacres and had saved the deputy Jouneau, who had been imprisoned in the Abbaye, from the hands of the murderers. When Duhem gave him the lie, Tallien changed his tactics and took the offensive: "Since you desire to distract public attention from your crimes, since you want to turn it

⁹ The petition of April 15, 1793 was presented to the Convention by Alexandre Rousselin. The account for the printing of this petition, found by M. Tuetey, was paid by Paré, Minister of the Interior, formerly a clerk of Danton's. See my study on the fall of Danton in the *Annales révolutionnaires*, Vol. VI (1913), p. 214.

In Cambon's speech, printed at his own instance, we read: "Another and no less important fact, to which, in reality, I recognize no witness but myself, is that on the evening when you received the first petition, the gist of which was to demand the impeachment of twenty-two members of the Convention, I was passing through one of the Committee's rooms when I saw Danton hand it to the speaker who was to read it out" (speech made by Cambon at the session of the 1st Brumaire, year III, p. 3, Bibliothèque Nationale, Le 38/1009). We know that Rousselin de Saint-Albin, who shortly afterwards became secretary to Barras, had been a friend of Danton's.

away from the banks of the Loire to the banks of the Seine, I, too, direct it to this spot. Since you accuse me of the massacre of the refractory priests, I call attention of the people to the thousands of victims whom you slaughtered in the south, and with whom you choked the Loire!" This was a declaration of war to the knife upon Carrier and those who had protected him. In this duel, in which corpses were the weapons of the combatants, the fate of the Girondins counted as no more than a wager laid on the result, or a handicap to one side or the other. The session ended with a lengthy speech from Robert Lindet, who declared that May 31 had been a "great, a fortunate, a useful, and a necessary" day, and once more arraigned the Girondins. He was interrupted several times, and the debate ended inconclusively. But at the same session the left scored one of its last successes by obtaining the election of Prieur of Marne as president of the Assembly, and Guimberteau, Goujon, and Crassous, all Montagnards, to the secretariate.

Union had been restored between the centre and the Mountain, as against the Girondin right, in order to adjourn the report on the petition of the sixty-seven imprisoned deputies. The adjournment lasted for more than six weeks.¹⁰ The Convention was not yet prepared to allow the Revolution which had led to the dictatorship of the Mountain to be called in question, though it reprobated it in certain respects. But it could not remain in this false position for long. The closing of the Jacobins and the trial of Carrier made a profound impression. Everything connected with the Terror was execrated. As Mallet du Pan says, the Convention was simply obliged to bow to public opinion, and concession followed concession—piecemeal concessions, which, as it supposed, would render a final repudiation of their principles unnecessary, but which were leading surely towards it, however unconscious the Convention might be of the fact.

Pending a report on the petition of the sixty-seven imprisoned Girondins—a report which they would gladly have shirked—the Committees began to release them one by one and allow them to return home. To preserve the forms of legality, they were regarded as under arrest in their domiciles, a pure fiction, for their guards were withdrawn.¹¹

¹⁰ The deputy Dyzès commented as follows upon the session of the 1st Brumaire in a letter to a friend: "Yesterday we had a most curious session; the point at issue was the release of the sixty deputies. . . . The mediating party, those who want to level the Rock without upsetting it, to raise the Plain without allowing it to become dominant—in a word, who wish to establish a balance between the two sides—left no doubt as to its existence and intentions. On this occasion it threw its weight on the side of the Rock; on others it makes advances to the Plain. It is a fine part, but a difficult one to play" (*Revue de France* for December 15, 1926).

¹¹ Claude Perroud, *La Proscription des Girondins*, pp. 236-40.

On the 11th Brumaire Oudot, as spokesman of the Legislative Committee, obtained a considerable alleviation of the laws on the suspects of Ventôse, year II, and September 1793. He divided the suspects into three classes: (1) Those who had incurred the penalty of deportation; these were to be tried and their property to share the fate of that of the *émigrés*. They were very few in number. (2) Those who had merely been led astray; these were to be kept in confinement until the peace, as a precautionary measure. (3) Lastly, those who had been the victims of personal hatred and excess of zeal; these were to be released. This class included the great majority. The prisons now emptied even faster than before. Numbers of partisans of the Girondins whose names were on the lists of suspects were to benefit by this measure of reparation passed on the 11th Brumaire.

The towns which had taken part in the federalist revolt had been placed under martial law. This now ceased, first at Lyons¹² and at Lons-le-Saunier, on the plea that the state of martial law was obstructing trade, and afterwards in the other cities which had been declared suspect.

These concessions could not but encourage the Girondin deputies to resume their campaign for reinstatement. Rœderer, an old member of the Constituent Assembly, who had acted as intermediary between their leaders and the Court on the eve of August 10, placed his pen at their service, and, assuming the role of legal counsel, wrote a pamphlet, which he did not yet dare to sign, in which he decided in their favour. His pamphlet met with a great success.¹³ Those who knew by what intimate ties Rœderer was con-

¹² As the result of a speech by Villers in the name of the Committees of Public Safety, Finance, and Commerce, on the 16th Vendémiaire, year III. It was first decided to restore to "Commune-Affranchie" its ancient name of Lyon. The cessation of martial law at Lons-le-Saunier was proposed by Bassal and seconded by Lejeune at the same session.

¹³ Rœderer's pamphlet, signed Jacques, is entitled: *De l'intérêt des Comités de la Convention nationale et de la nation dans l'affaire des 71 députés détenus* (*On the Interest which the Committees of the National Convention and the Nation have in the Affair of the 71 Deputies in Custody*), 17th Brumaire, year III, 8vo, 28 pp.

Among the other pamphlets advocating the recall of the Girondins, Claude Perroud cites: *Le Procès du 31 mai, 1er et 2 juin ou la défense des 71 représentants* (*An Arraignment of May 31, June 1 and 2, or the Defence of the 71 Representatives of the People*), by Michel Edme Petit, a member of the Convention; *Lettre à Thuriot au sujet de ses 71 collègues* (*Letter to Thuriot on the subject of his 71 Colleagues*), 6th Brumaire, signed Vêridique; *Réponse aux objections proposées contre la demande de mise en liberté des 71 députés détenus dans la séance du 2 brumaire* (*Reply to the Objections raised to the Petition of the 71 Deputies in Confinement for Release at the Session of the 2nd Brumaire*), by I. R. Loyseau, 27th Brumaire; *Observations du citoyen Dupuis à ses collègues* (*Citizen Dupuis's Observations to his Colleagues*). Dupuis was a member of the Convention and the author of *L'Origine de tous les cultes*.

nected with Merlin of Thionville, his fellow-townsmen from Metz,¹⁴ could already guess, from reading the pamphlet, that the Dantonist Thermidorians had progressed a step further and were about to drop their objections to the arraignment of the insurrection of May 31 and the reinstatement of the sixty-seven. They had no further doubt of it when Rœderer's pamphlet was followed by another by one Baralère, whose real name was Jollivet, and who was known to be one of Fréron's men.¹⁵ And when, on the 18th Frimaire, Merlin of Douai at last read his report, which had been held over for two months, proposing the reinstatement in the Convention of the Girondins who had been excluded from it since October 3, 1793, there was in fact no debate. For the rest, Merlin's report had been reduced to three vague phrases, and his draft decree lopped of its preamble. The few deputies who spoke on the subject merely proposed further reinstatements, which were likewise voted without debate.

Monestier of Puy-de-Dôme obtained the addition of his colleague Dulaure to the list, Guyomard that of Coupé of Côtes-du-Nord, Bréard that of Despinassy, André Dumont that of Devérité, Thibaudeau that of Thomas Paine.¹⁶ Everything would seem to suggest that the result of the session had been prearranged by means of an exchange of pledges behind the scenes between the Committees and the heads of the different parties, in order to avoid a fresh debate on the responsibility for May 31. Cambon had

¹⁴ Rœderer himself tells us in his *Œuvres complètes* that he composed the satirical character-sketch of Robespierre which appeared after Thermidor under the signature of Merlin of Thionville. The fact was known at the time, for in no. V of the *Accusateur public*, in which Richer de Sérizy brings Merlin of Thionville and Rœderer upon the scenes, he represents the former as a mere instrument of the latter, who makes him assume the responsibility for his writings. See Buchez and Roux, *Histoire parlementaire*, Vol. XXXVI, p. 199.

¹⁵ This pamphlet is entitled *Rappelez vos collègues* (*Recall your Colleagues*), 30 pp. In no. 24 of his *Orateur du peuple*, dated the 11th Brumaire, Fréron had warmly recommended people to read *L'Ami de la Convention*, a periodical edited by Citizen Baralère. The latter wrote a number of pamphlets against the Jacobins, catalogued by Tourneux in his *Bibliographie*.

¹⁶ Dulaure, a decree for whose arrest had been voted on October 21, 1793, had fled to Switzerland. It was therefore an *émigré* who was now being reinstated in his functions (see C. Perroud, op. cit., pp. 289-91). The decree for Devérité's arrest had been issued on July 8, 1793, as the result of a denunciation by André Dumont, the same who was now asking for his recall. Paine was compromised by his correspondence with Danton and by the fact that he was a foreigner, and had been imprisoned in the Luxembourg Palace on December 28, 1793. His recall was tantamount to an abrogation of the law of the 27th Germinal against foreigners. And this law was in fact expressly abrogated at this same session on the motion of Bourdon of Oise, who presented the report on it.

pronounced the most violent philippic against Danton and Tallien on the 12th Vendémiaire, but this time he was silent, for reasons that are not hard to guess. The Jacobin Club was closed; seven members of the old Committees—Barère, Billaud, Collot, Vadier, Amar, Voulland, and David, denounced by Lecointre—were on their defence, and Cambon wanted to save them. Indeed, on the 15th Frimaire—that is, three days previously—as the trial of Carrier was drawing towards its close, the Dantonists thought the moment propitious for resuming their everlasting attack on Robespierre's accomplices. Goupilleau de Montaigu, the friend of the vile Rovère, had returned from his mission in Vaucluse and now revived the memory of the burning of Bédoin, while his crony André Dumont demanded an inquiry into the conduct of Maignet, who had been responsible for it. Thereupon Legendre, who had, no doubt, only been waiting for this opening, delivered an indictment of the whole of the old Committee of Public Safety, which must, he said, have been cognizant of all these atrocities—those of Carrier, Lebon, and Maignet—which it had neither prevented nor punished. "What! There were these drownings at Nantes, these shootings at a hundred and twenty leagues from Paris [that is, at Lyons], and the Committee knew nothing about them!" Legendre recalled the fact that Lebon, proconsul at Arras, had been defended by Barère. "I declare that the Convention should be no respecter of persons. Citizens, put the guilty men on trial, or posterity will arraign you all!" Rovère now reverted to Maignet, a personal enemy of his, and recalled how Maignet had been a friend of the conspirator Couthon; upon which Lecointre announced that he had had the documents printed on which his indictment of the seven members of the old Committees was based. This indictment had already been twice thrown out by the Convention and declared to be slanderous. But Carrier's trial had produced such a change in the atmosphere that this time the Convention agreed without debate to refer the evidence collected by Lecointre to the Committees for examination. Thus did the Dantonists avenge themselves for their reverse of the 12th Vendémiaire. They held a terrible threat over the heads of their opponents, the Montagnard leaders—even Cambon, who kept silence—and the threat produced the desired effect. The approaching trial of the members of the old Committees and their accomplices now cast its shadow over the Convention, dominated its debates, and, as a matter of fact, dictated their course. Even when it was not mentioned, it was constantly in men's minds, and the fate of Carrier haunted all their imaginations.

The Dantonists had turned the tables on their opponents. On the 12th Vendémiaire, by his reference to the Girondins, the blundering Cambon had raised the problem of the responsibility of Danton and Tallien for the

insurrection of May 31. On that occasion Tallien had opposed the reinstatement of the Girondins and taken the same tone as Lindet. But since then he had turned completely round.¹⁷ Fréron's partisans, whose support he required, consisted of former Girondins, and even Feuillants, who favoured the petition of the sixty-seven. Fréron and he came to an understanding behind the scenes with the sixty-seven, who had already been set at liberty, and pledged themselves to obtain their reinstatement on condition that they themselves should no longer be exposed to the humiliation of listening to a public repudiation of their declarations on the subject of May 31. Hence their silence. Moreover, they had need of the reinstated federalists to strengthen their own party against the possibility of renewed attacks from the partisans of the Mountain. As for the Montagnards, the reasons for their silence were different, but of a similar nature, being likewise due to personal interest. They felt that since Tallien's and Fréron's abrupt change of front, and since the defection of the centre, which had become definitive on the closing of the Jacobins, they were now no more than a small minority in the Assembly. What could they gain by provoking a debate which would only embitter the Girondin deputies, whose reinstatement they were powerless to prevent? By keeping silence, by joining in a unanimous vote in favour of the Girondins, they might at least gain credit for a generous action; for now they stood in need of their former opponents, and it was their own turn to be on the defensive.

On the very next day, the 19th Frimaire, the reinstated deputies took possession of their seats. In returning thanks in their name, the venerable Dusaulx, the senior among them and a member of the old Académie des Inscriptions, promised that none of them would indulge in reprisals: "Far from us be any sort of resentment; we have left all that in the depths of our dungeons!" But before the session was at an end, it could be seen how this solemn promise was likely to be kept. One of the sixty-seven, Philippe Dumont, of Calvados, proposed the revision of "all the laws made by Robespierre, most of which," he said, "are nothing but instruments of tyranny." He instanced the law of the 23rd Ventôse. It is significant that Tallien supported his proposal and carried it still further. He proposed the suppression of the revolutionary committees, from motives of economy and in order to restore to agriculture and commerce the thousands of workers of which, he

¹⁷ In no. 5, dated the 15th Frimaire, of *L'Ami des citoyens*—that is, on the very day when the Convention, reversing its own judgment, was to vote for the inquiry into the former members of the Committees—Méhée signed a high-flown article in favour of the return of the Girondins, which, he said, was demanded by the whole of France.

said, they ought never to have been deprived. Thuriot supported Tallien's proposal, but for other reasons. He mentioned the acts of vengeance committed by the revolutionary committees—the allusion being to the arrests of terrorists ordered since Thermidor. The Thermidorian Clauzel at once retorted that the proposal was a perfidious one, and André Dumont, Bourdon of Oise, and Bentabole sang the praises of the new revolutionary committees, which were putting down the "bloodthirsty ruffians (*buveurs de sang*)." Tallien only succeeded in obtaining the suppression of the postal censorship and the restoration of privacy of correspondence. But the proposal made by Philippe Dumont, that all the legislation of the preceding years should be revised, was considered and referred to the Committees. On the following day, the 20th Frimaire, a Girondin denounced Pache and Bouchotte, who had been mayor and Minister for War respectively in the year II, as responsible for May 31, and proposed that the Committee of Public Safety should be instructed to send them for trial.¹⁸ This motion was adopted without debate. So this was the way in which Dusaulx's promises were kept!

But the Girondins did not consider that full justice had been done to them. It remained to reinstate those of their colleagues who had not, like the sixty-seven, been content with a protest—and a secret one at that—against the Revolution of May 31, but had proceeded to act, by taking an active part in the federalist movement or evading the warrants issued for their arrest. They had been outlawed and judgment had been passed on them by default. There were still twenty-three of them. If May 31 had been a *coup d'état*, an odious act of oppression and violence, why should these men, who had been braver than the sixty-seven, in that they had taken up arms to defend the right—why should they be left outside the scope of the measures of reparation, and still suffer the terrible penalty of outlawry? Like Lanjuinais, they were already writing fine, eloquent letters to the Convention from their hiding-places to ask for justice.¹⁹ Already a number of the Parisian sections were holding processions past the Assembly

¹⁸ For the trial of Pache, see the work by Adrien Sée in the series issued by the Société de l'histoire de la Révolution.

¹⁹ On the 17th Frimaire, Porcher had already proposed that Pierre Sers, formerly president of the departmental assembly of Gironde, should no longer be outlawed. Saint-André pronounced a eulogy on him. On the motion of Porcher and Boudin, the Convention decided that the outlawry should be suspended for all those subject to it without distinction. On the 19th Frimaire the Abbé Grégoire pronounced a eulogy on the Catholic Lanjuinais, who had been outlawed. On the 23rd Frimaire letters were read out to the Convention from Defermon and Larivière, who asked that the decree affecting them should be annulled, etc.

to celebrate the heroism of the Girondins. That of the Montagne, which on this occasion resumed its former name of the Butte des Moulins, demanded that justice should be done to its former commandant, Raffet, who had been Hanriot's unfortunate rival.²⁰

But if the Girondins were the unhappy victims of terrorism, they were not the only ones. Was nothing to be done for the rest? On the 20th Frimaire, the very day of the return of the sixty-seven Girondins, a deputation consisting of wives and daughters of those who had been guillotined came to appeal to the pity of the Assembly. Might not the personal property at least, which had been sequestered and put up for sale, be restored to them? The Convention decided that the question was worthy of consideration, and, without waiting for the Committees to report, it decided that the sale of the condemned persons' goods should be stopped for the time being. Thus a precedent was created which opened up the way to a revision of all criminal verdicts pronounced for more than a year past, throughout the whole of France, by the exceptional judicial bodies, the revolutionary tribunals or commissions. On reflection the Assembly took fright at what would result from its action. The man who voiced its alarm was Lecointre, the very same who, ever since Thermidor, had never ceased to pursue the members of the former government with his bitter accusations.

Lecointre was a merchant and knew how to calculate. He was quite ready to punish certain of the leaders of terrorism, especially those who had caused him to tremble, but on no account did he want a thoroughgoing revision of the verdicts in political trials, which would have forced the revolutionary government to make restitution of the property which it had seized. The property of those condemned by the tribunals was security for the assignats, just as much as that of the Church or the *émigrés*. If those who had bought it were given cause for uneasiness, what would become of the finances of the Republic? Lecointre, however, had already been on the alert for some days past. On the 9th Frimaire he had denounced with the liveliest indignation the abuse of his powers indulged in by Ysabeau, the representative on mission sent to Bordeaux after Thermidor. Ysabeau had used his full powers to set up, on the 23rd Fructidor, a commission for revising the judgments of the old revolutionary commission. This revising commission had already rehabilitated several condemned persons and ordered that their property should be restored to their heirs. Not a voice was raised in favour of Ysabeau when Bourdon of Oise came to the support of Lecointre; and the Convention quashed Ysabeau's proceedings and the judgments

²⁰ See the session of the Convention for the 21st Frimaire.

given by his revising commission, besides ordering the recall of the proconsul who was acting so prematurely.

Lecointre was therefore quite consistent when, on the 22nd Frimaire, he proposed to the Convention to reverse its decision of two days before, suspending the sale of the condemned persons' goods. "This suspension," he said, ". . . has caused the greatest uneasiness to all minds sincerely attached to the Revolution. It even tends to inspire a fear lest the decree may be extended to include property which has already been sold. The uneasiness goes still further, and applies to all property acquired as the result of a judgment of the courts, confiscated and sold for the benefit of the Republic. I put it to you, here and now, colleagues, if you take a single step backwards in this matter, what will become of confidence in the public credit? What will become of your finance? . . . Since the suspension of the sale of national property would inevitably entail its restitution to the natural heirs, this measure would necessarily lead you on to reinstate these heirs in possession of property that had already been sold. . . ." Lecointre conceded, however, that compensation and relief should be granted "to the heirs of the unhappy victims of the last of our tyrants."

Clauzel, one of the most resolute of the Thermidorians, supported Lecointre. He laid down the principle that there had not yet been many unjust condemnations. Few of the defendants had been innocent. It would be possible to grant relief to their families. But "if you reinstate them in possession of their property, you strike a fatal blow at the Republic." All those who spoke were of the same opinion. Clauzel added the detail that since the suspension the assignats had fallen fifteen per cent in value. The decree voted two days before was annulled, and Clauzel further obtained the passage of a new decree stipulating that the Convention should not entertain "any request for the revision of criminal judgments involving confiscation of property that had been given and executed during the Revolution."

The fact that the Convention should have felt obliged to bind itself by such a pledge, limiting its liberty of action for the future, meant that it cannot have been quite certain of its ability to stand out for long against the pressure of public opinion; and if the Girondins were a party to this pledge—if only through their silence—this silence must have been greatly to their interest. It is easy to guess the reason. The Committee had been instructed to report upon the petitions for reinstatement sent in by the outlawed Girondins. Those who had already been reinstated did not want to risk alienating the Committees on the eve of this report.

As was their regrettable custom, the Committees were content with a half-measure, of which their spokesman, Merlin of Douai ("Merlin-Suspect," as he was called, from the part which he played in the passage of the law of the suspects), informed the other Merlin ("Merlin-Mayence," of Thionville, who was then on mission to the Army of the Rhine) in the following terms, in a letter which he wrote him on the 26th Frimaire, after the debate on the subject: "You know that Lanjuinais, Isnard, Louvet, etc., are trying to re-enter the ranks of the National Convention. I was tonight charged to propose a decree that they are not to be reinstated, but will be safe from any proceedings. I want this measure of compromise passed without a fuss. A dispute on these questions may lead to the most deplorable results."²¹

On the following day (the 27th Frimaire), when Merlin of Douai briefly proposed this measure of compromise, the Girondins who had already been reinstated manifested their disappointment by a terrible uproar. The president, Reubell, was forced to put on his hat three times. An exchange of abuse took place between the centre and the right. The Girondins demanded that their friends should be put on trial. Legendre recalled the fact that they had "gone through the departments dagger in hand." An interruption from Merlin of Douai revealed the thought at the back of the minds of those on the Committees: "Do you want to turn public opinion into a direction subversive of the Revolution? Do you want to give ill-natured persons a chance to say that you have only closed the doors of the Jacobins in order to open those of the Temple?" This hint at the collusion of certain of the outlawed Girondins with royalism merely increased the uproar. The Girondin Pénisères rushed to the president's tribune and tried to snatch his bell from him. Amid protests and demands for a vote by roll-call, Reubell adjourned the session after announcing the adoption of the decree. All that the Convention had conceded to the outlawed Girondins was a contemptuous amnesty, just as it had done after Carnot's speech on the 12th Frimaire for the Vendéans and Chouans who were ready to make submission. What the Girondins wanted was a signal reparation and complete rehabilitation; but for this they had to wait another three months.

The Montagnards had made a bad bargain in consenting to burke the discussion on the events of May 31. The Girondins alone commanded a hearing in the newspapers and pamphlets. Babeuf, who had written a

²¹ Published by M. Aulard in his collection on the *Actes du Comité de Salut public*, Vol. XVIII.

pamphlet in reply to them, in justification of May 31, could not find a printer. The crafty Fouché, who was his protector at the time, advised him not to publish it. Why did the Montagnards keep silence? Obviously because the trial of the former members of the Committees, which was then a subject of inquiry, was a sword of Damocles suspended over their heads by the governing Committees. The members of the Committees, many of whom had been their colleagues on the government at the time of the Terror, asked them to keep quiet and made them illusory promises. Parliamentary *camaraderie* sapped their resolution, and the Mountain became more and more out of touch with public opinion, from which it had drawn its strength and in which it was soon to find its ruin. The reinstated Girondins and the Fréronists, whom the fact that they shared the same interests was driving more and more into alliance, were aware of this situation and took advantage of it.

The members of the Committees managed to drag out the inquiry into the case of the seven decemvirs denounced by Lecointre, with which they had been charged on the 15th Frimaire. On the 6th Nivôse, after three weeks of suspense, the Dantonist Clauzel, seizing the pretext of some alleged meetings of the Jacobins in the rue Contrescarpe by night, delivered a violent philippic against the decemvirs who had escaped scot-free and were still tormenting France. "How can you expect," he exclaimed incidentally, "that the European powers should venture to ask for peace or an alliance so long as you leave in the Senate the heads of the faction which is rending the Republic?" A curious argument, to which we shall return below. He wound up by challenging the Committees to produce their report at last. The Convention decreed that the report should be presented at the following day's session. The Committees bowed to its decision, and Merlin of Douai, who did all the dirty work under the new regime, as he had done under the old, rose on the 7th Nivôse and proposed in their name that three out of the seven decemvirs denounced—David, Voulland, and Amar—should be exonerated, but that proceedings should be started for the impeachment of the remaining four—Barère, Billaud, Collot, and Vadier. The commission of twenty-one members which was to examine the accused deputies and draw up the indictment was chosen by lot then and there. The Revolutionary Tribunal had been suspended during the trial of Carrier, but a tribunal was none the less necessary to condemn the four decemvirs; so, on the next day, Merlin of Douai, the general factotum, obtained the passage of the necessary decree for the restoration of the tribunal, which, according to the terms of the new law, was henceforth to be renewed every three months. During the next few days the Convention nominated as presi-

dent of this Revolutionary Tribunal a lawyer, named Agier,²² the national commissary attached to the tribunal of the fifth *arrondissement* of Paris, and known for his pious Jansenist opinions. The judges and jurymen, who did not enter upon their functions until the 20th Pluviôse, were all moderates who were henceforward to acquit undoubted royalists.²³ If the decemvirs were sent before this tribunal, they would have but little hope of escape. To complete their bad luck, the commission of twenty-one chosen by lot was not favourably inclined to them. This commission appointed as its spokesman (*rapporteur*) Saladin, a vindictive reinstated Girondin who was firmly resolved to press the inquiry energetically.²⁴ He was unable, however, to go quite so far as he would have liked to go. The other committees made it their business to put the brake on his ardour and obstruct his inquiry, and it was not till two months later, on the 12th Ventôse, that he was able to make his report.

Meanwhile, the deputies of the Crest had bethought themselves of a diversion in the hope of saving their four members who were the subject of the inquiry. On the 8th Nivôse, through the mouth of Duhem, they denounced a pamphlet of royalist tendencies, entitled *Le Spectateur français pendant le gouvernement révolutionnaire* (*The French Spectator under the Revolutionary Government*), signed by Jacques Vincent Lacroix, a professor of law of some reputation. Duhem read out copious extracts from this pamphlet, which produced a profound impression. Boissy d'Anglas, a deputy of the Marsh, pointed out that the royalists were using the shortage of food as a means of stirring up the people of Paris. Lequinio proposed that the little Dauphin should be expelled from France, Laignelot that Lacroix should be sent before the Revolutionary Tribunal. Cambon reminded them that the royalists had always tried to sow division and opposition among the republicans. "Citizens, the word 'republican' is not, as they would have us think, synonymous with 'bloodthirsty ruffian (*buveur de sang*).'" And Cambon launched a violent attack on Tallien, Fréron, and their like. The Convention decreed that Lacroix should be arrested and sent for trial.²⁵

²² Agier was nominated on the 19th Nivôse, in place of Mouricault, who declined the appointment.

²³ See the acquittals of the 29th Pluviôse, the 3rd, 5th, 11th, 12th, 16th, 19th, 22nd, 24th Ventôse, and the 1st Germinal (acquittal of a defendant accused of being in communication with the Spaniards).

²⁴ As early as the 13th Nivôse he complained that the commission had not yet received the documents for which it had asked the Committee of Public Safety.

²⁵ He was unanimously acquitted by the new Revolutionary Tribunal, amid applause, on the 2nd Ventôse.

In spite of the progress of reaction, the suspicion of royalism was still so dangerous that Tallien and Fréron hastened to shield themselves by out-doing their opponents. They passed the word to their young adherents to treat royalism and terrorism alike, and the sections devoted to their interest presented addresses to the Convention in this sense. On the 19th Nivôse, Barras, who was one of their band, proposed to make a national festival of January 21, the anniversary of Louis XVI's death, which fell that year on the 2nd Pluviôse. The decree was voted unanimously, and the Girondin Pénier obtained the passage of an amendment adding that the new festival was to be celebrated annually. On the 26th Nivôse, a few days after this unanimous vote, Boudin, deputy for Indre, who had voted for the postponement of the King's trial and the appeal to the people, made an attempt to prevent the trial of the four members and to win over the Convention to the idea of a general amnesty. "No, citizens, we will not offer our prostrate enemies the delightful spectacle of fresh butcheries of deputies. It shall not be true that, as they are so fond of saying, we shall be cut down section by section, whatever we may be, until nothing is left here but the president's bell."²⁶ Boudin pointed out that the Jacobins would become dangerous only if they were driven to despair by indefinite reprisals. "What will you gain by holding the prospect of execution incessantly before their eyes? You will make them all the stronger to escape it. . . . There is no reason why you should stop at seven or ten or twelve persons." The only exceptions made by Boudin to the general amnesty which he proposed were those who had actually left the country. His eloquent and sincere speech produced an impression. But the Dantonist Legendre made a brutal impromptu speech demanding that the proceedings against the four should be continued. "Are we still beneath the rule of despotism, when amnesties were only granted if the object was to save great criminals? There was never any talk of pardon for a few obscure citizens, for those who had not risen to public office or abused their powers. . . . It is only against the leaders that you should take proceedings, not against those whom they have misled. The only guilty ones are those who were at the head of the government. I draw no distinction between them and Robespierre, for to me Collot, Billaud, and Robespierre are synonymous. . . ." Amid applause the ex-butcher moved that they should proceed "majestically" to the order of the day. A few days later, on the 29th Nivôse, the Girondin Bail-

²⁶ In this expression Boudin was parodying a phrase used by Carrier in his defence before the Convention.

leul formally proposed that all terrorists, without exception, should be deported from France. He was defeated, but returned to the charge several times.

As Legendre said, the Fréronists would no doubt have been satisfied with the execution of the four members of the Committees. But they had to satisfy their henchmen, who had been sulking since the royalist Lacroix had been sent before the Revolutionary Tribunal, and Barras had obtained the establishment of the festival commemorating the anniversary of January 21. On the 23rd Nivôse, Barras had had to insert a stirring appeal in his newspaper "to rouse the young men from their sleepy lethargy," as he said, and his appeal was repeated in the affiliated press.²⁷ But the Muscadins wanted something more than phrases. They burnt the number of Fréron's paper which contained some remarks in censure of themselves.²⁸ As early as the middle of Nivôse they had hatched a plan to raze the funeral monument to Marat in the Tuileries Gardens.²⁹ On the 26th Nivôse, with the object of calming them and preventing them from putting this into action, the Fréronist Clauzel bethought himself of ascribing to the Jacobins a plan for insulting the bust of Marat in the theatres, with the Machiavellian object of attributing this insult to the partisans of the Convention. But the manœuvre failed. Boissieu, a moderate, replied to Clauzel: "I ask for liberty of worship for these saints as well as for others." Some other expedient had to be devised. To induce the Muscadins to accept the commemoration of the anniversary of January 21 it was transformed into a celebration aimed against terrorism far more than against royalism. Two days before the festival, on the 30th Nivôse, at the general assembly of the section Guillaume Tell, Gaveaux, the singer and composer, sang for the first time the savage stanzas of the *Réveil du peuple* (*Awakening of the People*), which at once became the *Marseillaise* of the Muscadins:

²⁷ See, for instance, in the *Republicain français* of the 25th Nivôse a violent article against the "men of blood," winding up with an appeal to the young men to be vigilant. The article was probably by the younger Lacroix.

²⁸ See in Aulard, *Réaction thermidorienne*, I, p. 347, the police report of the 27th Nivôse. The number of the *Orateur du peuple* which was burnt was no. 59.

²⁹ See in Aulard, *op. cit.*, I, p. 372, the report of the 19th Nivôse: "At the Café des Cannoniers (formerly Café de Chartres) people were declaiming against Marat and exalting Corday . . . the habitués of this café were professing their intention of going off to the Place de la Réunion with pickaxes and tools to demolish the monument raised to him." The report of the 26th Nivôse asserts that a plan had been formed for throwing down the busts of Marat and Le Peletier in the theatres.

*Quelle est cette lenteur barbare?
Hâte-toi, peuple souverain,
De rendre aux monstres du Ténare
Tous ces buveurs de sang humain!
Guerre à tous les agents du crime!
Poursuivons-les jusqu'au trépas;
Partage l'horreur qui m'anime!
Ils ne nous échapperont pas.*

*Voyez déjà comme ils frémissent.
Ils n'osent fuir, les scélérats!
Les traces du sang qu'ils vomissent
Décèleraient bientôt leurs pas.
Oui, nous jurons sur votre tombe,
Par notre pays malheureux,
De ne faire qu'une hecatombe
De ce cannibales affreux!*³⁰

(What barbarous delay is this? Hasten, sovereign people, to send all these drinkers of human blood to rejoin the monsters of Tænarum. War on all the agents of crime! Let us pursue them to the death; share in the horror which inspires me! They shall not escape us.

See how they already tremble. The rogues dare not take to flight! The traces of the blood that they disgorge would soon reveal their path. Yes, we swear upon your tomb, by our unhappy country, to make but a single hecatomb of these hideous cannibals!)

On the eve of the festival, deputations marched down to the Convention from the sections and demanded the death of the terrorists. The Assembly docilely resolved that within three days the Committees should present their report on the impeachment of Joseph Lebon. On the same day he was replaced as president by the sinister Rovère.

The celebration on the following day, which took place in the hall of the Convention, amounted to no more than a concert given by the Institut de Musique. It opened with a sweet and melodious piece which made

³⁰ The words of the *Réveil du peuple* are by Souriguière, the music by Gaveaux. The *Messenger du soir* published the new song in its number dated the 1st Pluviôse, on the very eve of the anniversary celebrations of January 21. Gaveaux sang his verses at the Café de Chartres on the same day (see Constant Pierre, *Les Hymnes et chansons de la Révolution* (Paris, 1904), p. 716 et seq.).

the Mountain ask angrily whether the Institut de Musique wanted to mourn the death of the tyrant. Gossec defended himself by explaining that the air to which exception had been taken expressed the sweet emotions aroused in tender souls by the happiness of being delivered from a tyrant. When the concert was at an end, the deputy Olivier G rente, one of the reinstated Girondins, made a violent speech against terrorism: "On this day when royalism expired, terrorism ought likewise to expire. Those who have corrupted public morality, raised murder to the rank of a profession, and destroyed whole communes must disappear from the globe." Pending the extermination of terrorists, he insisted on the institution of a festival commemorating the 9th Thermidor, evidently to serve as an antidote to that of January 21. In spite of Legendre's opposition to the motion as giving too much importance to Robespierre, who was no more than "the apprentice of crime (*l' colier du crime*)," the festival was established, after Tallien had extolled the day in which he had played the leading part.

The Muscadins celebrated the anniversary of January 21 in their own fashion, by bearing a blood-stained figure representing a Jacobin in procession to the Palais-Royal and through the neighbouring streets. They wound up by burning it and throwing its ashes into the sewer at Montmartre, after collecting them in a chamber utensil.

On the following days they forced the patriot actors Trial, Fusil, Grammont, etc., to sing the bloodthirsty *R veil du peuple* and do public penance for their sins as terrorists. Next, following the example of Martinville, they set to work to upset and finally to smash the busts of Marat wherever they could lay hands on them. In vain did the Committee of General Security order the police to set up again the busts that had been thrown down.³¹ In vain did Fr ron in person beseech his readers to respect the laws of the National Convention.³² Sure of impunity, the Muscadins refused to stop.

³¹ On the 13th Pluvi se, Laignelot, speaking in the name of the Committee of General Security, described how some young men, led astray by royalists or terrorists, had thrown down the bust of Marat the evening before at the theatre in the rue Feydeau. "The Committee of General Security saw in Marat a representative of the people whose memory has been solemnly celebrated, and consequently regarded this deed as an attack on the nation. . . . The image will be set up again. . . . The Committee, loyal to its true principles, has not overthrown the Jacobin Club only to look on at the rise of anarchy beside it. . . ." The deputy Laurent exclaimed: "Let public opinion judge those who were regarded as great men in a moment of enthusiasm" (loud applause), and Coup  of C tes-du-Nord, a Girondin, added: "Mirabeau, too, was taken to the Panth on. But he came out again!"

³² In his no. 70, of the 15th Pluvi se, Fr ron implored his readers not to lay hands on the images of Marat and Le Peletier. "Mark well that the aristocrats have

The working-class faubourgs, in which Marat had remained very popular, took alarm. There were brawls and protests in the few popular societies that still survived, and processions at the head of which was carried the "Friend of the People's" bust. The Committee of General Security seized the pretext of this Jacobin agitation to make haste and give satisfaction to the Muscadins. On the one hand it had Babeuf arrested on account of an issue of his paper,³³ and closed the clubs of Lazowski in the faubourg Marceau and the Quinze-Vingts in the faubourg Antoine; while on the other it gave orders that the effigy of Marat should be removed from the theatres. The Thermidorian majority approved this measure on the 20th Pluviôse and resolved, on the motion of André Dumont, that in future the honours of the Panthéon should no longer be granted to anybody less than ten years after his death.

This measure was made retrospective, and the remains of Marat, Le Peletier, Dampierre, Bara, and Viala were accordingly withdrawn from the Panthéon and reinterred in the common grave. The monument set up to Marat on the Place du Carrousel was demolished. The two pictures painted by David in memory of the martyrs Marat and Le Peletier were removed from the hall of the Convention. A pamphlet entitled *Les Crimes*

a grudge not so much against Marat as against liberty, the National Convention, and the government. . . . They have set up Marat's bust as a shield between you and themselves, and call you the gilded youth. . . . You are no idolaters, you say? . . . But respect for the laws of the Convention is not idolatry, it is your duty and ought to be your rule." In his no. 71, dated the 17th Pluviôse, he replied to the charge brought against him by the young men, that of praising Marat, in the following apologia: "It seemed to us futile to smash the busts of a dead man while so many rogues are still alive and insult the Convention, the French people, and all humanity by their shameless existence."

The *Ami des citoyens* for the 8th Pluviôse (no. 98) disapproved of the humiliation inflicted on the actor Fusil. The number of the 15th Pluviôse (no. 105) declared that by passing to the order of the day on the 13th Pluviôse, on the motion of Laignelot, the Convention had encouraged the young men: "Surely a plaster Marat was not doing much harm! . . . Is not our assembly of young men, among whom there are some who have grown a beard for quite a long time, already allowing itself to be driven beyond its self-imposed limits? Will not the National Convention become too easily accustomed to seeing its decrees disregarded?" Méhée explained after the event that the excesses of the young men, their disturbances in the theatres, and the evident progress of royalism had strengthened the terrorist party. "People try to persuade us that there is no such thing as royalism, yet I can see it. . . . If people were to go about the streets shouting that Jacobins are to be killed, I give you warning, and I admit that I should look upon myself as threatened and should prepare to defend myself" (no. 112, 22nd Pluviôse, year III).

³³ See Mathieu's speech at the session of the 20th Pluviôse.

*de Jean-Paul Marat*³⁴ was sold in the streets. The section Marat resumed its old name of "section of the Théâtre-français." About the same time the red cap of liberty began to be attacked and was replaced by the tricolour cap. The word "death" was obliterated from the famous inscription "Liberty or death" on the front of every house. On the 2nd Ventôse the royalist Lacroix was acquitted by the Revolutionary Tribunal. On the 12th Ventôse, amid applause from the galleries, the Girondin Saladin at last read his report, which decided against the four members of the former Committees; and, on the motion of Legendre, even before the report had been discussed, the four were placed under arrest in their own homes under guard of a gendarme.

It now only remained to reinstate the outlawed Girondins, and this was proposed by Marie-Joseph Chénier on the 18th Ventôse. Sieys, who, a few days before, had issued a pamphlet containing an apologia for his conduct,³⁵ thought the time was now ripe once more to ascend the tribune which he had deserted for nearly two years. He pronounced an indictment of May 31. Merlin of Douai, the "general factotum," spoke after him, voicing the assent of the Committees to the measure which he had opposed three months earlier. He explained that if full justice had not been done at once to the proscribed Girondins, this was because the Jacobins were too strong at the time, and it had been thought dangerous to place weapons in their hands. But now that there was no longer anything to fear from factious persons, the Convention could "in the fullness of its strength consummate its justice." Only one deputy, the younger Goujon,³⁶ voted against the reinstatement of the outlawed Girondins. On the following day André Dumont carried a measure abolishing the anniversary festival of May 31. The Girondin deputy Pémartin at once proposed that proceedings should be taken against those responsible for the events of that day. Louvet, another Girondin, proposed that they should at least decree that citizens who had taken up arms in defence of the Convention after June 2 had deserved well of the country. Even Tallien considered that this was going too far: "Nor ought we to turn the persecuted into persecutors, and sow fresh divisions in the Republic!" The Assembly proceeded to the order of the day. But even now it was not at the end of its troubles. The sudden reaction which had

³⁴ See the *Moniteur* for the 25th Pluviôse.

³⁵ *Notice sur la vie de Sieys* (anonymous), announced in the *Moniteur* of the 27th Pluviôse.

³⁶ It is true that on the following day Lecointre, who was now alarmed by the reaction which he had encouraged, proposed without success that the decree reinstating the proscribed deputies should be annulled.

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been forced upon it, which had carried it away almost in spite of itself, and of which it was now the prisoner, was not finished. These young men of Fréron's, whom it thought it had enrolled as its allies against the Jacobins, had become its masters. It tried to trick them, but it obeyed them. As Mallet du Pan said, it was indeed public opinion that governed, but it was the opinion of the class which, once vanquished, was now triumphant and gave itself up to the joy of reprisals.

CHAPTER VI

The Amnesty to the Vendéans and Chouans

THE closing of the Jacobins and the trial of Carrier had as their epilogue, not only the reinstatement of the Girondins and the removal of Marat from the Panthéon, but also a comprehensive amnesty recklessly granted to the rebels in the west, and, as a result of this, the cessation of the anti-clerical conflict and the reopening of the churches, which had been closed for more than a year, since the autumn of 1793.

About midsummer of the year 1794, before the 9th Thermidor, the rebels in the west were divided into two distinct and very different groups, separated by the Loire; to the south of the river were the Vendéans properly so called, to the north were the Chouans.

The Vendéans conducted their operations in a region from which the republicans—the “Blues”—had entirely disappeared, having been driven from the country towns and villages, not only by fear of the royalists, but by the express ordinances of Hentz and Francastel, the representatives on mission, which removed them to a distance of twenty leagues from the scene of hostilities.¹ Consequently, in the wide quadrilateral lying between Nantes and Les Sables on the west, and Niort and Cholet on the east, the Blues were represented only by mobile columns which were constantly on the move about the devastated country-side, in pursuit of Charette's armed bands in the Breton Marais, of Sapinaud in the central region, in the Bocage, and of Stofflet in the east, in upper Vendée and Les Mauges. Moreover, these three rival leaders were jealous of one another and acted anything but in concert. Charette, who was very absolute in his ideas, had never meant to go outside the Marais and the islands. He had taken no part in the great expedition across the Loire attempted the year before, and it was fortunate for him that he had not. Though on the sea-coast, in a favourable position for receiving English help, he was not fond of the island

¹ Ordinances of Hentz and Francastel of February 20, 1794. According to the republican Joseph Clemeanceau, forty thousand Vendéans of the Blue party were affected by this ordinance, which forced them to move very far from their native region (Joseph Clemeanceau, *Histoire de la guerre de la Vendée*, published by the Abbé F. Uzureau, Paris, 1909, p. 263).

people, and also distrusted the *émigrés*. Sapinaud and Stofflet had collected the broken remains of the defeated "grand army," which had succeeded in crossing to the south of the Loire after the disaster at Le Mans. And these bands had been swelled by the unexpected reinforcements caused by General Turreau's brutal conduct. In the spring of the year II, Turreau, with his twelve "infernal columns," had carried fire and sword through the country, burning houses, sparing nobody, driving off the cattle, killing recalcitrant property-owners, and thus forcing the most peaceably disposed to defend themselves and go over to the royalists. The Committee of Public Safety censured Turreau, deprived him of his command, on May 17, 1794, and recalled his subordinates as soon as it was informed of their ravages.² But irreparable harm had been done. More than twenty-five thousand peasants, full of rankling fury, had swelled the bands of Charette, Sapinaud, and Stofflet. The second war of the Vendée had begun, more cruel and pitiless than the first. In vain did the Committee of Public Safety try to reassure the Vendean peasants and induce them to return to their fields. They turned a deaf ear to the promises of pardon offered them at its command by the agents of the Commission of Agriculture sent to those parts³ at harvest time, and believed that a trap was being set for them. "You want to make us return to our homes?" was the reply of the Vendean leaders of Loire-Inférieure to the Blues. "Where shall we find them? You have burnt our houses and massacred our wives and children. Now you want our crops and our arms. We declare, on behalf of ourselves and all the soldiers in our army, that we cannot recognize you so long as you talk of a republic. We are still royalists and shall always remain so. To live and die for our religion and our king—that is our motto. You may take that as certain."⁴

The Chouan movement (*chouannerie*) had already made its appear-

² According to the estimate of Chassin in his *La Vendée patriote*, Vol. IV, Turreau was suspended on the 14th Floréal, together with most of the generals under his orders. The ordinance of the 2nd Prairial issued by the Committee of Public Safety put an end to the system of extermination, and substituted for it one by which the inhabitants were forced to declare the number of persons in their families and the quantity of crops in their possession.

³ The text of the proclamation issued to the Vendéans on June 21, 1794 by the agents of the Commission of Agriculture and Arts will be found in M. F. Uzureau's book: *Les Amnisties proposées aux Vendéens et aux Chouans* (*The Amnesties offered to the Vendéans and Chouans*) (1794), in the *Mémoires de la Société d'agriculture, sciences et arts d'Angers* (1915). M. Uzureau also gives the text of General Vimeux's proclamation, issued in confirmation of the former. Both of them promised pardon to those Vendéans who should lay down their arms.

⁴ This reply of the Vendean leaders is published by M. Uzureau, *op. cit.*

ance north of the Loire. Unlike the Vendéans, who were masters of the country in which they were operating, the Chouans were a minority consisting of opponents of the existing government, who were reduced to lying hidden by day and conducting their operations by night only, in the form of sudden attacks upon the property and person of patriots, constitutional priests, officials of the Republic, purchasers of national property, stage-coaches, tax-collectors' cash-boxes, etc. The republicans therefore called them brigands, and many of them deserved the name. As a matter of fact, the Chouan movement was made up of three different elements: in the first place, there was a permanent nucleus formed of Vendéans who had escaped from the disasters of Le Mans and Savenay during the rout of the Grand Catholic and Royal Army in December 1793. It was they who as a rule furnished the organization and leaders. Most of them were men of good birth—for instance, Joseph Defay, de Geslin, and Auguste de Béjarry, who were in hiding in Morbihan and were in touch with certain Breton gentlemen such as De Silz, Collas du Reste, La Bourdonnaye, de Lantivy, and de Leissègues.⁵ The regions of Château-Gontier and Segré, on the borders of Maine and Anjou, were exceptional in that the leaders were local people, whose original object had been to escape compulsory military service, and who had become implicated with the Vendéans when the "grand army" passed by. In these parts it was the famous Coquereau, nicknamed Jean Chouan, who raised the first bands, with the aid of Pimousse and Mothais and the advice of the priests Fayau and Jaunay.⁶

The second element was composed of recruits evading compulsory service at the front. The recruits did not move very far from their villages and found in their relatives and friends accomplices who gave them information, shelter, and protection.

Finally, there was a third element formed of royalists and the local "fanatics" (pious Catholics), who regretted the old regime and were more or less compromised by their resistance to the republican laws. At their head were the refractory priests who had escaped deportation. Certain of these priests did not shrink from becoming leaders of bands—for instance,

⁵ See the essay by Dr. de Closmadeuc in "*Les Débuts de la Chouannerie dans le Morbihan*" ("The Beginnings of the Chouan Movement in Morbihan") in *La Révolution française*, Vol. XL, pp. 330 et seq.

⁶ See the very interesting "*Mémoire historique sur la guerre des Chouans*" ("Historical Study of the Chouan War in the district of Château-Gontier"), published by J. Pallu du Bellay, in the *Revue historique et archéologique du Maine*, Vol. LXIX (1911). This anonymous study is the work of a Blue directly concerned in the events which he describes.

one Métayer in the forests of Le Perche, or Le Moine, both of whom were company commanders.⁷

All of them, whether gentlemen, priests, or conscripts, wore the peasant costume, consisting of full breeches of coarse linen stuff, round hats, and a short jacket, for this enabled them to elude the republican police more easily.

Before the 9th Thermidor the Chouans did not muster in great force, and their deeds of violence were fairly infrequent. The Revolutionary Tribunal worked at full speed, and the terrorist police was efficient. Fear of repression reduced the number of accomplices on whom they could count in in the country districts.

The first gatherings in Morbihan did not take place till Pluviôse of the year II, and for a long time they achieved no successes. They failed in the attack on Vannes in Ventôse. In Germinal, Béjarry, Defay, and Geslin were hunted down, hard pressed, and reduced to a wretched existence. On June 11, 1794 Defay was captured, and, after being tried by the revolutionary tribunal of Morbihan, was shot on the 16th Thermidor, year II.

In Mayenne Coquereau's band hardly possessed a regular organization till Prairial of the year II, after the levy of conscripts on the first requisition. About five o'clock in the morning of the 10th Messidor it massacred seven patriot fathers of families in the country town of Daon, Coquereau's birth-place, but the volunteers of the third battalion of Nièvre dispersed the band.

In the Craon region, on the borders of Anjou and Maine, the situation seems to have been more serious. Here, in the former marches of Brittany, lived a tough population of ex-smugglers, especially salt-smugglers, who had carried on a guerrilla warfare against the revenue officers and collectors of the salt-tax before the Revolution. As early as May 1794 there were alarming reports from the patriot Bancelin, the leading resident of the district of Segré, in his double capacity of tax-collector and president of the directory. He describes the republicans of the three cantons of Candé, Pouancé, and Bouace-Méard as constantly under arms and on the alert: "Trade and agriculture---everything is destroyed in these centres, the roads are no longer safe, the municipal officers are in hiding or have taken refuge [in the towns]." ⁸ The brigands, three hundred in number, were well armed, and supplied with cartridges, and provided themselves with food by nightly raids upon patriots, whom they sometimes even massacred.

⁷ See the letter written to the Committee of Public Safety of Laval on the 13th Ventôse, year III, by the representative on mission Baudran.

⁸ Report of May 29, 1794, published by M. Uzureau in his study on the Chouans in the Craon region (*Mémoires de la Société d'agriculture, sciences et arts d'Angers*, 1907).

Nevertheless, before the 9th Thermidor the Chouan movement was still kept within bounds and localized. It did not spread further, and the Committee of Public Safety was so far reassured that it withdrew a number of men from the west to reinforce the armies fighting on the frontiers.

The royalists at once saw how they might profit by the fall of Robespierre, the split in the government, and the rapid disorganization of revolutionary institutions. One of their leaders, the Comte Joseph de Puisaye, an enterprising and ambitious man and a great landowner in Normandy and Le Perche, had been deputy for the nobility of his *bailliage* in the States General of 1789, sitting among the liberal minority who followed Lafayette; he next became a Girondin and was actually second in command of the little federalist army which concentrated at Caen for the march on Paris. After the Girondin disaster a price was set on his head, and to save his life he fled to the Vendée. He was an experienced politician and his instinct now told him that his opportunity had come. Hitherto the Chouans had acted without co-ordination, each leader in his own narrow region. Puisaye now brought them together in a central royalist committee, on which appeared, among others, the Comte de La Bourdonnaye, the Comte de Boulainvillier, MM. de Bellevue and de Chantreau, the Chevaliers de Boishardy and de Boisguy, etc., representing the various parts of Brittany and the neighbouring regions. Having started his organization, Puisaye, who had not emigrated before, boldly crossed over to England to open negotiations with the Count of Artois and with Pitt. On his departure he handed over the command, together with the title of major-general, to a trusty friend, well able to understand and second him, Pierre Marie Félicité Dezoteux, who called himself Baron de Cormatin, from an estate owned by his wife, Madame de Sercy, in Saône-et-Loire. Like Puisaye, Cormatin had first served the Revolution. For a long time he had been a follower of the Lameth brothers. At the time of the revolt of Châteaueux's Swiss regiment at Nancy, under the Constituent Assembly, he had been Bouillé's adjutant-general, and after Varennes he followed his chief into emigration; but he was not well received at Coblenz, and returned to France almost immediately to take again on the King's constitutional guard with the rank of lieutenant-general. He was an astute man, not overburdened with scruples.

In England, Puisaye acted with resolution. He proposed to Pitt to organize regiments of French *émigrés* in Jersey, and from thence to throw them into Brittany, where they would reinforce the Chouans and drive out the republicans. As for the financing of the expedition, nothing could be simpler. It would not cost the British Treasury a penny. Puisaye had arranged everything in advance. Calonne's brother, the Abbé de Calonne,

was to set up a royalist plant for fabricating assignats, which would be a perfect imitation of the republican ones. Pitt advanced a little capital from time to time for developing the plant on a large scale, for it was at that time nothing but a small workshop.⁹ Puisaye had the same success with the Count of Artois as he had had with Pitt. He lent him some money to meet a few pressing debts, and the frivolous prince conferred on him the title of general-in-chief of the Catholic and Royal Army of Brittany—an army still to be created, for as yet it consisted of no more than a few bands of Chouans, which, however, Calonne's assignats and the Thermidorian reaction were quickly to swell. Now that Cormatin had whole barrels of Calonne's assignats at his disposal, he paid his Chouans at the rate of forty sous a day.

Curiously enough, the Committee of Public Safety obtained information about Puisaye's plans and resources almost at once. On the 23rd Thermidor, Picot, one of his agents, who had already been implicated in La Rouarie's conspiracy, crossed from England and landed near Saint-Brieuc, where he fell into the hands of the republicans, who found on him Puisaye's dispatches addressed to the chief Chouan leaders. Two days later the representative on mission Alquier sent all these documents to Paris, together with Picot's interrogatory.¹⁰ Alquier had no doubt that the recrudescence of the Chouan movement that had made itself felt was the result of the help obtained from England by Puisaye, and the uniform organization which he had given to the bands before his departure.¹¹ There is no doubt that the news of the 9th Thermidor had a stimulating effect upon the Chouans. This was expressly recognized by the representative on mission Laignelot in his letter of the 3rd Fructidor asking the Committee of Public Safety for reinforcements.¹²

⁹ The ordinance organizing the plant for fabricating assignats was dated September 30, 1794. See Chassin, *Les Pacifications de l'Ouest*, Vol. I, p. 17.

¹⁰ See Aulard's collection, Vol. XVI, for Alquier's important letter from Rennes, dated 25th Thermidor, year II.

¹¹ According to a letter from the representative on mission Brüe, written from Vannes to the Committee of Public Safety on the 8th Pluviôse, year III, the Chouans had started organizing as early as July 12, 1794, "shortly before the time," he said, "when an insurrection broke out at Saint-Jean de Brévelay which necessitated the employment of republican troops." According to Dr. de Closmadeuc, Puisaye did not appear on the scene till after the 9th Thermidor, but he acted with feverish energy.

¹² Laignelot expressed his fear that the Chouans might abuse the happy event which had taken place in Paris (on the 9th Thermidor) and try to turn it to their own advantage. "They are spreading a rumour among the people," he said, "that many of the representatives of the people in the department belonged to Robespierre's faction."

From this time onward, the character of the Chouan movement underwent a change. It was not confined to isolated attacks and deeds of violence that were not followed up. The royalist bands were strengthened and encouraged by the almost universal impunity enjoyed by the counter-revolutionaries now that the Thermidorian representatives on mission had purged the local authorities and rendered them more and more moderate; and their bands now pursued uniform tactics of a peculiarly dangerous kind. They aimed at starving out the towns and large villages in which the patriots had taken refuge. In order to prevent the farmers from fulfilling the requisitions and bringing their goods to market, the Chouans broke the shafts and axles of their carts, took off the wheels and made them unfit for use, cut the highways and roads, and threatened reprisals upon any carters who should infringe their orders not to provide transport for the Republic. The blockaded towns were in a constant state of alarm and could now obtain food only by armed raids on the surrounding villages. The peasants, terrorized by the royalists and inefficiently protected by the republicans, were obliged to make common cause with the insurgents. "The evil is spreading to an incalculable degree," wrote Bancelin, president of the district directory of Segré, on October 14, 1794. "The country-side is being deserted. In many parts the harvest has not been got in, and in others the fields are no longer being sown. The banks of the Loire are badly guarded, the Vendéans are constantly crossing to and fro into our unhappy land. . . . No provisions can reach the towns, for the brigands occupy all the roads."¹³

The Thermidorian members of the government, who had declaimed so much against the horrors of repression, saw but one way of safety: that is, to offer a general pardon to the rebels, in order, if possible, to detach them from their royalist leaders. As soon as the Committee of Public Safety was in possession of Puisaye's papers, which had been captured on Picot, it removed most of the generals conducting the operations in the west from their commands—Huché, Dutrey, Grignon, Blamont, etc.—and on the same day, the 29th Thermidor, Carnot sent instructions, both military and political, to their successors and the representatives on mission in its name, to pave the way for the pacification which the Committee was anxious to effect before

¹³ See the report of Bancelin, president of the district directory of Segré, dated September 18, 1794, in the Abbé Uzureau's study, quoted above, on the Chouans in the Craon region (*Mémoires de la Société d'agriculture . . . d'Angers*, 1907). "The brigands," Bancelin said, "have decreed that any *métayer* furnishing transport for the Republic shall be shot, and this decree is enforced. Two *métayers* mune of Saint-Sauveur were massacred yesterday on their return from carting [wood] for the navy. Another, who was driving wheat into Candé, had his pole cut . . . etc."

the descent of the English and the Jersey *émigrés* had had time to be carried out.¹⁴ The troops, said Carnot, were to be quartered in camps, at a distance from the towns and villages. Communication between the soldiers and the people was forbidden, in order to prevent desertions. The hedges and broom-bushes growing beside the roads were to be cut down. "A few companies of guides, composed of picked men, may be formed and armed, but no arms are to be distributed to citizens who do not form part of the paid troops." The measures of clemency were as follows: "All the leaders of the brigands, all those who have accepted the rank of officer among them, will be punished by death. Those who have merely been led astray or carried away by violence will be pardoned." In order to carry out these measures the Committee appointed Hoche to the command of the army of the coasts of Cherbourg, and shortly afterwards placed the army of the coasts of Brest under his command too. Canclaux was appointed to the command of the army of the west—that is, in the Vendée. Both Hoche and Canclaux had suffered from the Terror. Hoche was barely out of prison. The Committee hoped that their names would commend them to the rebels, and in Hoche's first proclamation, dated September 15, 1794, he did not fail to base a claim to sympathy upon his imprisonment: "Let them lay down their arms, and, resuming their ordinary occupations, return peacefully home. . . . To those who stay quietly at home and keep the peace, I guarantee tranquillity, union, security, protection, liberty, fraternity, and the safe enjoyment of their property. We shall observe all possible good faith. I too have been unfortunate! I neither can nor will deceive those who are the same!"¹⁵

The representatives on mission and the generals placed the most liberal interpretation upon the Committee of Public Safety's instructions as stated by Carnot. As early as September 8, 1794 the representatives on mission Dornier and Guyardin released the Vendean suspects interned at Niort and Fontenay-le-Comte.¹⁶ On the 3rd Vendémiaire—that is, September 24—by an ordinance dated from Nantes, the representatives Boursault and Bollet granted a full pardon to rebels who should lay down their arms and take an oath to abandon the brigands. The leaders alone were excluded from this amnesty, which embraced the whole of the country given over to the Chouan movement.

¹⁴ See Carnot's ordinance and instructions in M. Aulard's collection, under date of the 29th Thermidor.

¹⁵ Proclamation quoted by M. F. Uzureau in his study on *Les Amnisties proposées aux Vendéens et aux Chouans* (Angers, 1916).

¹⁶ These ordinances and those of which I shall give the gist below are to be found in M. Uzureau's study quoted above.

Three weeks later, on the 26th Vendémiaire (October 17), Boursault, in a proclamation dated from Rennes, extended this preliminary amnesty to all refractory conscripts, promising compensation to the amount of twenty livres to all who should give up their guns and, above all, render homage to the Supreme Being, "whom we ought all to adore and bless at every moment of our lives."

But on the very day when Boursault issued this new ordinance, which went beyond the instructions of the Committee of Public Safety, one of the an leaders in command in Morbihan, Le Deist de Botidoux, who had been a member of the Constituent Assembly and, like Puisaye, had taken part in the federalist revolt before going over to royalism, wrote to the representative Boursault asking for a safe-conduct and offering him information about certain "depraved schemes."¹⁷ By this he meant the collusion of the Chouans with the English, and Puisaye's plans. Boursault had been a theatrical manager and a company promoter and was devoid of all prejudices. He willingly received Botidoux and made use of him, not only to obtain information, but also to distribute his proclamations among the Chouans and induce some of their leaders to submit. The instructions of the Committee of Public Safety laid down, however, that the representatives were to give no quarter to the leaders; and several of Boursault's colleagues—for instance, Leyris and Bouret—wrote to the Committee that the pardon repeatedly promised to the insurgents had had no result save to make them more daring, since they were convinced that the amnesty was a proof of the weakness of the Republic.¹⁸ Boursault felt it necessary to obtain approbation for the steps which he had taken on his own initiative, which were viewed with suspicion by several of his colleagues on mission in the west. In two successive letters, dated the 21st and 22nd Brumaire, he informed the Committee of his negotiations with Botidoux and asked, a little belatedly, for their approval. In his first letter he undertook to pacify the west by mild and humane measures and promises of

¹⁷ See Chassin, *Les Pacifications de l'Ouest*, Vol. I, pp. 47–50.

¹⁸ See Aulard's collection, Vol. XVIII, for Leyris's and Bouret's letters, dated the 18th and 20th Brumaire. These two representatives had just issued an ordinance that in every commune in Morbihan a list of the inhabitants of every house should be posted up in a prominent position at the entrance. A fine of ten thousand livres was to be imposed on every commune that should not hunt down the assassins, and the inhabitants were to be held jointly responsible for payment of the fine. A bonus of a thousand crowns was promised to anybody who should give assistance leading to the seizure of a brigand; five hundred livres for every refractory priest, one hundred for every deserter, etc.

pardon. In the second he raised a more delicate question: "The two Boisguys," said Boursault, "both of them very dangerous leaders, are asking for their own and their mother's lives, and their example will be followed by many others. What is to be done?" Many persons against whom judgment had been given by default were asking for pardon. "Would it not be possible, when our overseas expeditions take place, to make use of them by transporting them to the islands? . . . Ought I to spare the lives of the leaders only, and grant a full pardon to the rest, on condition of making them serve at sea?" A few days later Boursault expounded to the Committee a plan for organizing the companies of "counter-Chouans" (Carnot's guides), in which he wished to enroll the patriots from the disturbed departments, paying them five livres a day.

Boursault's plans laid down the lines of a totally new policy. The idea was no longer, as it had been before, to try to detach the Chouans from their leaders. On the contrary, it was to treat directly with the leaders and take advantage of their influence over the troops to effect a pacification. But a full amnesty would naturally have to be granted to the leaders. The transition was difficult to effect. In a letter from Rennes to the Committee, dated the 11th Frimaire, the representative Bollet frankly expressed his disapproval of Boursault's negotiations with Botidoux and not only condemned his projects for a complete amnesty in advance, but also his previous ordinance of the 26th Vendémiaire: "The next thing will be that all the leaders of the brigands, without exception, who have committed or incited to murders and assassinations, will be able to come home and sit quietly by their own firesides, near the widow whose husband they have assassinated and the children whose father they have massacred. There is also a fear that, thanks to this proclamation of Boursault, all the *émigrés* in the island of Jersey may return home, saying that they have come to abjure their errors. In the hope of obtaining his pardon as a result of Boursault's proclamation, a refractory priest has returned to France and has just been arrested at his old home, two leagues from Rennes. . . ." The representative Brüe was of the same mind as Bollet. He even condemned the organization of the companies of counter-Chouans (*contre-Chouans*). According to him, it was dangerous to arm the inhabitants, even those of them who professed to be patriots.

But at the very time when Bollet was writing his letter at Rennes, the Committee of Public Safety had decided to accept Boursault's proposals and ask the Convention to approve his plan for a general amnesty. Carrier's trial was drawing to a close, and the Parisian sections were filing past the Assembly asking that justice should be meted out to the terrorists. The

Mountain was crushed and kept silence. On the 11th Frimaire (December 1, 1794) Carnot made a brief speech in the name of the Committees, saying that if they were to inspire confidence in the Chouans and Vendéans and make them inclined to submit, something more was wanted than the ordinances of the representatives on mission, whom the insurgents did not trust: they must have a formal decree of the Assembly. He spoke in praise of Boursault and read out the proposed terms of the decree. The deputies from the west proposed that the voting should be adjourned till the next day, so that they might consult together and inform the Committees of their wishes. A few hours later they handed Carnot a sort of joint memorandum signed by nine of them (none of whom was a regicide)—that is, by a minority. They supported the policy of clemency advocated by Boursault with all their might. "We know of only two courses to be followed if we are to put an end to the war in the Vendée: one is to exterminate the population of these regions down to the last man [a curious statement, for there were still some patriots in the departments under the influence of the Chouans]; but in order to wipe out the remaining population of 200,000 [there were certainly not 200,000 Chouans in arms, perhaps a tenth of that number] it will be necessary to sacrifice at least 80,000 republicans. Nobody would suggest such a proceeding, and the Convention has never had any such intention.—The other is to listen to the promptings of humanity, to try a policy of indulgence, and conquer these departments by persuasion rather than by arms." The nine representatives had failed to achieve their object, because they drew a distinction between the leaders and the rank and file. Nothing but a decree of the Convention admitting of no exceptions would put an end to the rebels' wavering. If the Convention passed this decree, Stofflet and Charette would be deserted by their men, for on their own admission the trial of Carrier had already deprived them of some partisans.¹⁹ A fine piece of optimism which was soon to be belied by the events.

The Convention docilely ratified on the spot the proposals of the Girondin deputies of the west, adopted by the Committee of Public Safety. The decree of the 12th Frimaire, year III, granted a full amnesty to all rebels,

¹⁹ This document, published by M. Aulard in his collection, Vol. XVIII, p. 452, is signed by Delaunay the younger, Menuau, Lofficial, Gaudin, Jard-Panvillier, Morisson, Talot, J. E. Girard, Dandenac the elder. None of these nine deputies was a regicide. Delaunay, Lofficial, Gaudin, Jard-Panvillier, Girard, and the elder Dandenac had voted for the postponement of Louis XVI's execution, and Morisson had defended the King during his trial. As for Menuau and Talot, they had only taken their seats in September 1793, in their capacity of *suppléants* (substitutes).

without exception, who should make submission within a month. The vote was unanimous, but the Mountain made certain reservations. Gaston proposed without success that precautions should be taken to prevent *émigrés* from profiting by the amnesty to return to France and pass themselves off as Vendéans.

When Hoche heard that the decree had been voted, he could not restrain himself from informing the representatives Boursault and Bollet of what he feared: "Myself a victim of the system of Terror, I will do nothing to bring about its return. None the less, I think I ought to make plain to you that a misplaced indulgence might provoke counter-revolution in those departments where men's hearts have become hardened. Representatives, I see it every day: the brigands are laughing at our credulity, and it looks as though reading the proclamations which we shower upon them were encouraging them to crime. . . ." ²⁰ As for Boursault, who should have rejoiced in his victory, since the policy which he had advocated was triumphing, he began, on the contrary, to express his doubts and fears to the Committee. He had organized his companies of counter-Chouans, to which had been given the name of territorial guards, and was expecting wonders of them. General Rey, disguised as a Chouan, with a hundred and fifty men from the battalion of Ain, similarly disguised, had started out along the coasts from Lamballe to Dinan and was questioning the villagers. As a result of information given by a refractory priest, whose life he had promised to spare, the general had seized at Saint-Brieuc a Chouan leader named Prigent, who had just landed from England with 418,000 livres in forged assignats, and letters which gave much food for thought. ²¹ When Boursault had read this correspondence, his confidence in the sincerity of the Chouan leaders who were asking to make submission was shaken. Three days after the arrest of Prigent one of them, Boishardy, had written to Boursault offering to submit on certain conditions. Without waiting for Boursault's reply, General Humbert, General Rey's superior officer, had had an interview with the Chouan leader ten days later. Another Chouan leader, Cormatin himself, Puisaye's second in command, presented himself before representative Bollet and had no difficulty in winning him over. He handed him an order of the royalist military council commanding a cessation of hostilities in Côtes-du-Nord. Bollet was delighted to play the part of peacemaker and charged General Humbert to accompany Cormatin into the insurgent departments and arrange with him for pacification. He wrote to the Committee from Rennes

²⁰ Letter quoted by Chassin, *Les Pacifications de l'Ouest*, Vol. I, p. 54.

²¹ Chassin gives the date of Prigent's arrest as December 13, 1794 (op. cit., p. 56).

on the 24th Nivôse (January 13, 1795) that the Chouans were weary of the life they were leading, that they were abandoned even by the English, and that "their only desire was to put an end to this war and co-operate in making peace." On being informed of this step Boursault took no action, but disowned all responsibility in a letter which he in turn wrote to the Government on the same day: "At the present moment everything fills me with dread, and I have no faith in these suspensions of hostilities, or in the sincerity of the change in those who on January 3 were concerting their movements and giving orders for massacres"; and he added, with a perspicacity which events were to confirm: "They have seen that since the English cannot effect a landing till after the spring tides, at the beginning of April, it is politic to lull us to sleep on a powder-magazine, to organize their insurrection in silence, and not to alarm the republicans till that moment. Daily massacres would bring fresh republican forces to the spot, and the leaders find it prudent to prevent this."²² Possibly Boursault did not know how wisely he was speaking. At the very time when Boishardy and Cormatin were writing to the representatives to offer their submission, they were telling Puisaye, who was then in London, that all they intended was to keep the republicans in play: "We will never surrender. We want money! We could spend all the wealth of Peru!"²³

The Chouan leaders kept the republicans in play for a long time, and the game was a paying one for themselves. Eleven of the representatives sent on mission to the disturbed departments met at Nantes on the 15th Nivôse, year III, after holding a conference with Cormatin and a few of the other Chouan leaders about the bases of the pacification. Before pursuing the negotiations already opened, they resolved to put a series of questions to the Committee of Public Safety, on matters which it was important to clear up: Was there to be a suspension of hostilities during the interval of a month allowed to the rebels for making their submission?—Would it not be politic to win over the Vendéans by paying them back what they had spent on their arms?—Would they be granted compensation for the property seized and sold by the Republic?—Would the heirs of the rebels who had been executed recover their parents' property?—What means were to be taken to distinguish between *émigrés* and rebels?—Was it proposed to annul the decree promising the property of the Vendean royalists to the republican soldiers?—Would the returned *émigrés* and refractory priests

²² Letter of the 24th Nivôse, year III, in M. Aulard's collection, Vol. XIX.

²³ Letter from Cormatin to Puisaye, dated December 31, 1794, in Chassin, *Les Pacifications de l'Ouest*, Vol. I, p. 61.

still be handed over to the tribunals?—Were municipal bodies to be set up in every commune in the pacified regions, or only a municipal commission in every canton?—Would arrears of taxes be remitted?²⁴

In order to expedite the reply to all these difficult questions, four representatives on mission, Dornier, Ruelle, Bezard, and Delaunay, went to Paris. On the 27th Nivôse their spokesman, Ruelle, a former partisan of Marat and a regicide, who had now quite changed his views, informed the Convention that the decree of amnesty of the 12th Frimaire had been greeted with delight, that even before serious negotiations had been held with the rebels, they had handed over the republican prisoners whom they had taken since the 12th Frimaire, that the outposts of the two armies had fraternized and joined in shouts of "Long live the Republic!" "In one of our cantonments," he added, "we were short of forage, and the rebels provided us with some without being asked."²⁵ The hall rocked with applause. Clauzel and Bourdon of Oise obtained the passage of a decree expressly granting unlimited powers to the representatives on mission in the west to negotiate a peace with the rebels. Ruelle was given a free hand.

But Ruelle had misled the Convention. It was not true that no negotiations had been entered into with the rebels. The Committee of Public Safety knew from Boursault and Bollet's letters that there had been negotiations with Botidoux, Boishardy, and Cormatin. It knew from Bezard's letters that he had negotiated with the Chouans in Maine through the wife of one of the leaders, Madame Turpin de Crissé, whom he had set at liberty. It knew that Ruelle himself had negotiated with Charette through the agency of his sister, who had been in concealment at Nantes and had left her hiding-place for this purpose. The Committee knew that Charette had responded to the advances of the representatives on mission and had sent two of his subordinate officers to Nantes, De Bruc and Béjarry, who had arrived in the town on Sunday, the 8th Nivôse (December 28, 1794). The entry of the Chouans into Nantes had scandalized the inhabitants. The Committee had been informed of this, and requested an explanation, to which Boursault replied on the 27th Nivôse: "The facts are only too true: brigands appeared at the theatre and in the public places of Nantes, flaunting the royal colours of revolt and crime. An ordinance issued by my colleagues put a stop to this scandal, but this does not prevent the fact that they had insulted the Republic, at the very moment when, in its clemency, it was welcoming them back to its bosom. Nothing seems to me more uncertain than the return of

²⁴ Document published by Chassin, *op. cit.* pp. 126-7.

²⁵ *Moniteur*.

these erring men. A few of the leaders will profit by the amnesty, but what is to be expected of forty thousand persons whose morale has been thoroughly upset, by whom all civil order has been destroyed for the last two years, whose rallying-cry is murder and pillage, who live among wine, blood, and debauch—in fact, who no longer have any reason, patriotism (*patrie*), or morals!"²⁶

So the Committee knew what to think. But not only did it keep silence and omit to correct Ruelle's rash statements: by a letter from Carnot it empowered the representative on mission at Nantes to grant a suspension of hostilities to the rebels in the west.²⁷ The republicans were to remain in their present positions and only to take action if attacked. As a precautionary measure, however, the Committee withdrew twelve thousand men, under the command of General Duhesme, from the north-eastern front and sent them to the west.

How was the suspension of hostilities observed by the Chouans? The correspondence of the representatives on mission enlightens us on this point. On the 26th Nivôse, Legot announced that the Chouans were murdering a few municipal officials every night. On the same day Brüe wrote from Vannes: "So far the measures of indulgence have produced very little effect, except to give the brigands time to organize, strengthen their positions, obtain arms and munitions, and destroy the few communications still existing between the country districts and the towns. . . . The rebels seem to be increasing daily in numbers and in strength. . . ." On the 4th Pluviôse, Boursault wrote in similar terms from Rennes: "I consider that the war we are waging here is one of sheep against tigers. There is every reason to fear that this so-called truce is nothing but a step towards fresh crimes. . . ." On the 10th Pluviôse, Brüe sent word from Vannes that the Chouans had just seized the country town of Guéméné: "So this is the result of these negotiations, these conferences that have been started with the rebels, which I have always suspected of hiding some trap, some perfidious design on the part of their leaders."²⁸

But Ruelle and the representatives who shared his views refused to

²⁶ Aulard, op. cit., under this date.

²⁷ Letter from Carnot dated the 23rd Nivôse, in Chassin, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 128.

²⁸ All these letters are in M. Aulard's collection. We may also note the following: On the 15th Nivôse, Genissieu wrote from Alençon: "If we except the chief towns of the districts, the whole of the department of Sarthe is in the most appalling state. There is no limit to the robberies and massacres committed. Four hundred patriots have already been massacred, most of them public officials. The amnesty seems to have been a sign to the rebels that we were not in a position to conquer them!"

listen. They had an interview lasting four days (February 12–15, 1795; 24th–29th Pluviôse) with Charette and the chief leaders of the lower Vendée and the Bocage, in the presence of Cormatin, in a tent at La Jaunaie, near a manor-house five kilometres south-east of Nantes.²⁹ The upshot of these conferences was a regular treaty of peace, disguised under the form of three ordinances granting a pardon, issued by the representatives of the people on the 29th Pluviôse.³⁰

The rebels and their leaders, without distinction, were protected against all inquiry into the past. Relief and compensation were granted to the Vendéans by the Republic to help them rebuild their houses, and restore their agriculture, commerce, and industries. All Vendéans, whether they were patriot refugees or insurgents who had returned to the bosom of the Republic, had an equal right to this relief and compensation. The insurgents *ipso facto* regained possession of all their rights and property, whether real or personal estate. The sequestration by which this property had been placed in the possession of the Republic was raised, even if the former owners had been entered on the list of *émigrés*. The heirs of insurgent Vendéans who had been condemned by the courts were to regain possession of their property or receive compensation for what had already been sold. Further, the Vendéans, to the number of two thousand in Charette's country, were to be organized as territorial guards (*gardes territoriaux*) and paid out of the public treasury. They were to be formed into companies stationed exclusively in the Vendée. The young men were to be exempted from compulsory military service. Other provisions, which were not embodied in the ordinances, stipulated for entire liberty of worship, even for the refractory priests. The royal bonds issued by the insurgents for the purpose of making war on the Republic were to be redeemed by the latter up to the amount of two million livres out of the total credit of twenty millions placed at the disposal of the representatives on mission, who also distributed considerable sums to the principal leaders in assignats and coin.

Ruelle handed over two hundred thousand livres to Charette.³¹ Trochuin received fifty thousand livres in coin and forty-four thousand in assignats, De La Ville of Baugé sixty-nine thousand livres in assignats, Henri and J. B. Martin fifty-eight thousand livres in assignats, Gibert forty-four thousand

²⁹ There is a lively account of the conference of La Jaunaie in Vol. IV of M. Pierre de La Gorce's *Histoire religieuse de la Révolution*, pp. 39–44.

³⁰ For the text of these three ordinances of February 17, 1795, see F. Uzureau, *Les Amnisties proposées aux Vendéens et aux Chouans* (Angers, 1916), p. 47.

³¹ Chassin, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 208.

livres in assignats, Renou ninety-four thousand livres, etc.³² The Vendéans had done a magnificent stroke of business. "In short," as one of them said—Béjarry, Charette's confidential agent, who was present at the conference of La Jaunaie—"hardly any sacrifices were imposed upon us. . . . The republicans proved very compliant. The essential concession had been granted: the Vendéans had been left in possession of their arms. Under the name of the territorial guard, every leader had the right to maintain close at hand, ready organized, a corps varying in number according to his importance. Nearly all of them had surrounded themselves with picked men; it was easy to add to the numbers in case of a resumption of hostilities: formed so many nuclei for the formation of new bodies."

stand why the Vendean leaders joyfully set their signatures to a proclamation announcing their submission, after which they betook themselves with the representatives to Nantes, where they were received by the popular society with a profusion of speech-making, the evening ending with a public ball.

The negotiations for a peace with the Chouans dragged on for another two months. The conferences, which were really carried on by Cormatin and Ruelle, took place near Rennes, at the château of La Prévalaye, which was kindly placed at the disposal of the Chouans. After some pressure the latter at last accepted the pacification of La Mabilais, which practically reproduced the same conditions as that of La Jaunaie (April 20, 1795; 15th Germinal, year III).

Stofflet in the upper Vendée was the last to submit. His adviser, the Abbé Bernier, had started by issuing a manifesto in his name denouncing the treason of Charette, who, he said, had let himself be bought by the republicans. But, abandoned one after another by his subordinate officers—Trotouin,³⁴ Bruc, Couëdic, and Bousseau—almost surrounded by Canclaux,

³² Chassin, *op. cit.*, pp. 188 et seq., has published a list of those receiving money, which he checked by the registers of the paymaster at Angers. Another list, different from the above, is to be found in a letter from the representatives on mission in the west to the Committee of Public Safety, dated the 30th Ventôse (Aulard, *op. cit.*, Vol. XXI, p. 224).

³³ From the *Souvenirs vendéens*, published by Béjarry's son, quoted by Chassin, Vol. I, p. 155.

³⁴ Trotouin notified Stofflet of his submission in a letter which ran as follows: "The people of the Vendée took up arms for two reasons: firstly, their religion, which is being left to them; secondly, to escape drawing lots for the militia—and they are being left quietly at home. They never rose in insurrection for the sake of a king. . . . The peasant is fonder of his ox than of his king, his wife, or his children" (Chassin, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 169).

and reduced to desperation, he finally submitted in his turn on May 2, 1795.

The Thermidorians might boast that they had pacified the west by mild measures—and by money. But it was a purely theoretical pacification, which, moreover, lasted barely two months. The republicans of the west were still molested and even massacred piecemeal. The patriot Vendéans were unable to return to their homes. Charette, Sapinaud, and Stofflet remained absolute masters of the former insurgent regions. The Chouans did not keep their pledges any better than the Vendéans. They profited by the inaction of the republican troops to extend their operations to regions hitherto unaffected, such as the departments of Sarthe, Eure, Manche, and Calvados. The representative Du Bois du Bais, writing from Chartres on the 24th Germinal, accused Hoche of being responsible for the spread of the ravages: "Is Hoche," he wrote to the Committee, "always to possess your confidence, which he does not deserve? . . . One would think that he was acting in the interest of the Chouans rather than in that of the Republic, for he spares no pains to encourage their enterprises and add to their audacity."⁸⁵ This is no isolated accusation made by a disgusted representative on mission. Nearly all the representatives sent on mission to the departments of Maine, Anjou, and Normandy pass the same severe and unjust judgment on General Hoche about this time; for instance, Baudran, who wrote to the Committee of Public Safety from Laval on the same day as Du Bois du Bais. It was not Hoche's fault that, after this so-called pacification, the republican soldiers were tampered with by the Chouans, who seduced them, influenced them, bought their arms, and in the end even won them over to their own side by making it easy for them to desert.

Though formerly a Girondin, Delaunay the younger, a representative on mission who belonged to those parts (he came from Angers), admitted the mistake that had been made in a long and very outspoken letter which he wrote to the Committee from Saumur on the 29th Floréal: "Since this pacification the morale of the army has been weakened, and desertion has reached an alarming pitch; the legally constituted authorities are disheartened. . . . Stofflet, with two others, was roving the woods, without horses, without transport (for it had fallen into our hands), having abandoned his last piece of artillery in his flight. . . . Stofflet has been given a political importance which he did not possess. We have not insisted upon his leaving the Vendée, though he had promised under the walls of Mortagne to do so; and, lastly, he has been granted a territorial guard of two thousand men, in contravention of the agreement at Nantes. These two thousand

⁸⁵ This letter is published in M. Aulard's collection.

men strike dismay into the hearts of the inhabitants in the districts of Vihiers, Cholet, and Mont-Glône. The latter justly dread such a territorial guard, which will serve as the nucleus of fresh troops for the Chouans and royalists, who are one and the same thing. . . . Ruelle's report on the Vendée is mere romancing. I will prove to you that you have been deceived!" Delaunay forgot only one thing—namely, that he himself had been mistaken, for he had supported Ruelle on the 24th Ventôse from the tribune of the Convention and had helped to lull the suspicions of the Convention.³⁶

When open hostilities broke out again, which happened before long, both the Jacobins and the insurgents were at one in maintaining that the representatives who signed the pacifications had intended to prepare the way for a restoration of the monarchy. They pointed to the existence of alleged secret articles, which, if they were to be believed, contained a promise to this effect.³⁷ A royalist agent, Duverne de Praile, got hold of this legend and in order to give it a foundation produced two forged documents to substantiate it. But Béjarry, Charette's second in command, denied the existence of the supposed secret articles, and M. de La Sicotière has recently disposed for good of this theory fabricated after the events.

No, Ruelle and the representatives on mission who signed the articles of La Jaunaie and La Mabilais were not secretly aiming at the restoration of the throne. But their ill-advised actions did much to strengthen the royalist party. In order to pacify the Vendée they were bound to restore freedom of worship and grant an amnesty to the refractory priests, and this amnesty could not be confined to the west; it was logically bound to be extended to the whole of France. It was a fresh religious revolution by which royalism could not fail to benefit. At a time when the Vendean rebels were having their property restored to them and receiving compensation for such of their property as had already been sold, it was impossible to maintain in the rest of France the revolutionary laws which had confiscated the property of those condemned by the revolutionary courts. was bound to be general.³⁸ And so they were led on to repudiate and brand

³⁶ See his speech in the *Moniteur*.

³⁷ The Babouvist pamphlet *La Vérité au peuple (The Truth for the People)* accuses the Thermidorians in so many words of having promised the Vendéans and Chouans, "by secret provisions, the restoration of the altar and the throne" (see the appendices to *La Conspiration de l'Égalité dite de Babeuf*, by Buonarroti, Vol. II, p. 97).

³⁸ On the 30th Ventôse, as the result of a great speech by Boissy d'Anglas, the Convention suspended the sale of the property of those condemned by the Revolutionary Tribunal. On the 26th Germinal, after a report by Johannot, the Convention

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with infamy all that had been done by the revolutionary government before Thermidor. This policy was not long in leading to the White Terror, the counterpart of the Red Terror, but without the same excuses; and the royalist awakening was so strong when it came that it was on the point of sweeping away the Republic.

decreed that the property of condemned persons should be restored to them, and the value of that which had been sold reimbursed to their heirs.

CHAPTER VII

The Reopening of the Churches

NOBODY could have foreseen that, though not till eight months later, the 9th Thermidor would be followed by a veritable religious revolution, marked by the reopening of the churches and the disappearance of the civic ceremonies of the republican Sunday or *décadi*.

In the sphere of religion Robespierre's conquerors took up a position further to the left than he had done. During the actual session of the 9th Thermidor old Vadier had taken Robespierre to task for the protection he had extended to Catherine Théot, a harmless old visionary, whom Vadier and the Committee of General Security had sent before the Revolutionary Tribunal by an express decree of the 27th Prairial. Robespierre had opposed the execution of the decree, and this had been one of the reasons for his withdrawal into inactivity a month before the 9th Thermidor.

It was a commonplace among the Thermidorians to represent the tyrant as a sort of pontiff who, like a new Mahomet, aspired to be the founder of a new cult; though, inconsistently enough, they at the same time represented him as covertly protecting Catholicism.¹

As a matter of fact, Robespierre had condemned the de-christianizing movement as a grave mistake, involving the risk of alienating the people from the Republic. He had tried to oppose the institution of the revolutionary calendar.² Not that he was a Christian, or even a deist, for he identified the Supreme Being with Nature. But he was a statesman. He knew that none but the chosen few, the educated middle classes who had studied the *philosophes*, were capable of dispensing with a creed and a

¹ To give an idea of their writings on the subject we need only quote the following lines from the report of the meeting of the Jacobins on the 11th Thermidor: Robespierre, "aspiring at once to the sceptre and the censer, devoured by the ambition of the impostor Mahomet, while not possessing his genius, still less his courage, at once pontiff and despot, he had assumed the pose of bringing back the French nation to the cult of the Supreme Being, as if it had ever renounced it. . . . The protection which he extended to priests had increased the number of his adorers tenfold. . . ."

² See the critical edition of his Note-book which I have given in my *Robespierre terroriste*.

form of worship. At that time, when the masses were illiterate and pious, a policy, if it was to be really popular, could not at the same time be anti-religious. Irreligion was a luxury, the prerogative of a superior education. But Robespierre was democratic to the core and respected everything about the people, down to their prejudices. Having failed to prevent the dechristianizing process, he endeavoured to make it less dangerous by animating the civic festivals with a spiritual creed which should make them acceptable to the crowd. The success of his Festival of the Supreme Being showed how just his views had been. At the time of his fall the religious agitation had ceased. Most of the churches had been closed, or rather transformed into temples of Liberty, and almost everywhere the republican *décadi* was supplanting the old Catholic Sunday. Numbers of Catholic priests had abjured their functions and handed in their letters of ordination; many had married and found employment in the army or in one of the government departments. As for the refractory priests, with the exception of those in the Vendée, those who had not been deported had been forced to go into hiding and celebrate the rites of religion in secret. Those who were over the age of sixty or infirm and could therefore not be deported were as a rule interned. Others were on the list of suspects, as were also some of the constitutional priests. With a view to extirpating the old religion for good, Saint-Just was drawing up a scheme of republican institutions, which did not see the light till long after his death.³

None of Robespierre's conquerors dreamt of calling in question what was by now an accomplished fact. Nobody proposed the abolition of the famous decree of the 18th Floréal instituting the decadary ceremonies and the national festivals. Not a voice was raised in favour of the religion which had been in effect abolished. Far from it!

Robespierre was blamed in more than one quarter for having chosen his party from among the former constitutional priests; and, as a matter of fact, they occupied quite a number of posts in the public departments. Florent Guiot, a member of the Convention on mission in the department of Nord, wrote to the Committee of Public Safety on the 17th Thermidor expressing his indignation that, "while the people were being oppressed on the pretext of their superstitious ideas, all the priests were being given posts in the administration, the revolutionary committees, and the other public services." Two days before this letter was written, the deputy Monmayou had persuaded the Convention to pass a decree that ex-priests and

³ It was published in 1800 by the deputy Briot, under the title of *Fragments d'institutions républicaines*.

ex-nobles were to be excluded from all public functions, both civil and military. It is true that this drastic measure, which had been demanded in vain by the Hébertists of the Paris Commune a year earlier, was annulled on the following day, the 16th Thermidor, on the motion of Merlin of Thionville; but the Thermidorians and their partisans none the less continued to be animated by a spirit of distrust and hostility towards the ex-priests who had abdicated their functions.

We may give a few examples. On the 20th Thermidor the representative on mission Boisset arrived at Bourg, the chief town in the department of Ain. In his first proclamation he promised to put a stop to acts of oppression and watch over the defence of patriots, but he added immediately afterwards: "Let nobles, priests, schemers, and agitators be removed from all public functions! . . ." as though Monmayou's decree were in force, and as though priests and agitators were one and the same thing. Now, this representative on mission, who was releasing federalists and imprisoning terrorists, was certainly more anticlerical than the most ardent of the Montagnards. He urged on the closing and spoliation of the last of the churches still remaining open. And this confirms what I said just now: that it was the party of the rich middle classes which displayed the greatest anticlerical and anti-religious fury. At the end of his mission, on the fourth complementary day, year II, Boisset issued a proclamation in favour of the celebration of *décadi* and against that of Sunday; and he kept the priests in prison.⁴

After Thermidor there was a general reaction against the ex-priests. At Beaune, chief town of a district in the department of Côte-d'Or, a general assembly of the citizens of the commune was held on the 4th and 5th Fructidor, at which two ex-priests, Dubois and Monnot, who were members of the district administration, were the object of violent denunciations which led to their resignation. In their address to the Convention the people of Beaune asked for "the total exclusion of ex-nobles and priests from all public functions."⁵ There can be no doubt that the constitutional priests who had abdicated their functions and devoted themselves entirely to the Republic were an object of general suspicion to the Thermidorians, which often went the lengths of persecution.

On the second complementary day, year II—that is, September 18, 1794—Cambon, who had always been prominent for his anti-religious intolerance, obtained a decree that, from that day onwards, the Republic should cease to pay for the salaries or upkeep of any form of religion. Many

⁴ See Philibert Le Duc, *Histoire de la Révolution dans l'Ain*, Vol. V, pp. 257–331.

⁵ See dossier D^{III} 51 (Legislative Committee) in the National Archives.

historians date the regime of the separation between Church and State and that of religious liberty from this decree. If they had carefully read the speech made by Cambon before the passage of the decree, and referred back to the decrees previous to September 1793, which Cambon expressly mentioned, they would have seen their mistake; for they would have noticed that the "decree of the second *sans-culottide*" introduced no innovations, but merely perpetuated an existing state of affairs and confirmed legislation which had already been in force for the past year—in fact, that it was the end and not the starting-point of a process. "I rise to address you on the subject of the priests," said Cambon, "in the name of your Finance Committee. You will no doubt ask what connexion there can possibly be between the finances of the French Republic and priests. The nation, you will say, has already shown its objection to all religious prejudices strongly and universally enough. Can there still be any question about the expenses of worship and the stipends of priests? It is true that such claims have been raised by a few interested persons; but do not imagine that your Finance Committee has come here to declare itself unofficially the defender of a system which might revive religious prejudices. It has only come to lay before you a draft decree having as its object to expedite the payment of the relief granted to former ministers of religion, since this has been delayed in many places by the false interpretations which some have attempted to place upon the decree of the 18th Thermidor [ordering the payment without delay of pensions which were in arrears]." Cambon next recalled the history of the legislation on the subject of clerical pensions. He recalled the law of the September 18, 1793, of which he had obtained the passage, for reducing the sums paid to bishops and episcopal vicars. Since this decree these sums were no longer regarded as stipends, but as provisional relief—"pensions contingent upon service (*à charge de service*)," to use his own words. "The terms," he said, "in which this law is drafted, leave no doubt of your opinion at the time of passing it, which was that no ministers of religion of any kind were to receive salaries. Since, however, the question has not been the subject of an express decision, and the words still allow a loop-hole for misinterpretation, the theologians have argued and claimed to prove that they were public officials."

Nothing could be clearer. In Cambon's eyes, the separation had been an accomplished fact for a year past, since the law of September 18, 1793, which deprived the priests of their character of public officials and left them nothing but relief, pensions contingent upon service, instead of salaries. Cambon congratulated himself upon this. He declared that the decree of the 2nd Frimaire, which granted compensation to priests who should cease to

exercise their functions, had had the happiest effect, for it had greatly facilitated the closing of the churches. What he desired was, not so much separation, as the total suppression of Catholic worship. Since the 1st Germinal ecclesiastical pensions, like all others, had ceased to be paid. In vain did the few priests who had not abdicated their functions claim their former salaries, which had not been expressly abolished by any law; most of the local administrative bodies refused to admit their claims. They were not prepared to pay salaries to priests who had been left with nothing to do since the closing of the churches. The law of the 18th Thermidor, ordering that pensions should once more be paid, revived the hopes of the priests who had not abdicated their functions. Cambon wanted their claim to be rejected. "If the bishops, parish priests, etc., who have not abdicated their functions claim to be still in occupation of their posts, they cannot receive payment in virtue of the law of the 18th Thermidor; for the text of that law only mentions the *ex-ministers of religion*." And Cambon congratulated the administrative bodies, "almost all of which have repelled, with the weapons of truth and justice, the pretensions of those who would like to revive a salaried form of worship." It was not to be tolerated that priests who were not willing to abdicate their functions, but had none the less failed to discharge any, should be paid at a higher rate than those who had rallied to the side of Reason and the Revolution. On the other hand, it would be too hard to give them nothing at all. In order to settle all obscure points or objections Cambon proposed to make a solemn declaration that the Republic no longer paid the salaries or expenses of any form of worship and to place the priests who had not abdicated their functions on the same footing as the rest, by allotting the same pensions to them all.

Thus the decree of the second complementary day in no way inaugurated the era of the separation of Church and State. It merely regularized a previously existing situation by further defining legal provisions which might be interpreted in more ways than one. There was no question of instituting the regime of liberty for all forms of worship. These had been, and remained, suppressed. The decree of the 18th Thermidor now referred to priests only as "*ex-ministers of religion (ci-devant ministres du culte)*." Cambon's distrust of and hostility to any kind of religious worship was so great that in this same speech he raised his voice against the possible creation of a revolutionary clergy, a "*decadary clergy (clergé décadaire)*," who should take the place of the old constitutional clergy. "Your Finance Committee," he said, "has already received a variety of petitions requesting the Convention to fix the salaries of the ministers celebrating worship in the so-called temples of Reason or Philosophy, or in those dedicated to the Supreme

Being. Thus do schemers use the name of the people to obtain salaries and reduce it to servitude! You have received several petitions directed towards obtaining funds for building and repairing places of worship for these new cults, and many contributions have been levied for the same purpose, causing annoyance to good citizens. Proclaim a religious principle, and places of worship will at once become necessary; and these will have to be taken care of by persons who will claim to be their ministers and ask for stipends or endowments. . . ." Thus Cambon definitely pronounced in favour, not of the separation of the Churches from the State, but of the suppression of all Churches, even the philosophic or civic ones.

It would, however, be a serious error to think that Cambon proposed to close the places of worship known as temples of Reason or of the Supreme Being, which had everywhere been opened in the secularized churches. No, he considered that the civic ceremonies of *décadi*, which had taken the place of the abolished Catholic mass, were useful and even necessary for the formation of a republican spirit. What he did not want was that these ceremonies should become the preserve of a new clergy. The civic ceremonies must remain in the hands of the public authorities representing the new State, which would not mean the creation of a clergy, since their offices were elective, and hence only temporary. Like all his contemporaries, Cambon was a partisan of the idea of the unitary State. He considered that any clergy, whether the new or the old, might imperil the State which was being built up. He reserved to the State the sole control of civic propaganda, by means of the decadary ceremonies. These would become dangerous in the hands of a Church. They were beneficent when the State alone controlled them. Through them the State gained power over men's minds and shaped them so as to obtain that moral unity which he held to be indispensable to the maintenance—or, rather, the foundation—of the Republic. Cambon was poles removed from our conception of the State as neutral. He was convinced that Catholicism was the worst enemy of the Republic. His intention was to suppress it, but, out of humanity, he consented to grant an eleemosynary pension to its former ministers.⁶ At that time the great majority of the Convention shared Cambon's purpose, and proved this by carrying his proposed law unanimously.

With very few exceptions, then, the representatives on mission continued to wage war on "fanaticism," as they called Catholicism. In the

⁶ I returned to these points and went into them more thoroughly in a paper read before the last Congress on the History of Christianity which met at the Collège de France during the Easter vacation of 1927. The text will be found in the official publication of the Congress and in the *Grande Revue* for May 1928.

department of Doubs more priests began to abdicate their functions after Thermidor. On September 11, 1794 only one constitutional priest continued to exercise his functions in the district of Besançon—Boffy, the parish priest of Auxon-Dessus. In the district of Baume-les-Dames there were still twenty priests exercising their functions on the 9th Thermidor, fourteen of whom abdicated during the following weeks.⁷ By an ordinance of the 30th Brumaire, year III, the representatives on mission Pelletier and Besson gave directions for the arrest of priests who continued to celebrate religious worship, and for the closing of all churches still remaining open. Their ordinance was extended to the neighbouring department of Haute-Saône. They ordered some arrests of recalcitrant priests. It was at this time that the Lutheran ministers in the region of Montbéliard also abdicated their functions under the threat of arrest. The Jews of Besançon closed their synagogue in October 1794.

Calès, one of the Thermidorians most fiercely hostile to the terrorists, and representative on mission in the neighbouring department of Côte-d'Or, gave orders to take down the last of the bells, to close the churches remaining open, and to hand over their sacred vessels to the authorities.⁸

In Haute-Garonne and Tarn the representatives Mallarmé and Bouillierot by an ordinance of the 14th Vendémiaire, year III, kept all priests, even those who had abdicated their functions, under observation in the chief town of their district, with the sole exception of those who had married.⁹ Mallarmé even ordered the arrest of ordinary laymen who did not work on Sunday.

In Gard, Aveyron, and Hérault the representative on mission Perrin of Vosges, who was taking drastic measures against the terrorists (he ordered the arrest of Courbis, mayor of Nîmes), deported a number of ex-priests to a distance of twenty leagues from their residences and deprived those "who offered opposition to the good which he was trying to do" of their liberty.¹⁰

In the department of Orne, Lefessier, the constitutional bishop, who had abdicated his see, approached the representative Genissieu with a request

⁷ Sauzay, from whom I quote these facts, has drawn up a list of forty-seven constitutional priests who abdicated their functions after Thermidor (*Histoire de la persécution révolutionnaire dans le département du Doubs*, Vol. VI, pp. 376-642).

⁸ See the letter from Calès to the Committee of Public Safety, dated the 1st Nivôse, year III, in Aulard's collection, Vol. XIX.

⁹ See La Gorce, *Histoire religieuse de la Révolution*, Vol. IV, p. 11, and Grégoire, *Histoire des sectes*, p. 243.

¹⁰ See in the *Moniteur*, Vol. XXII, p. 609, the speech in which he rendered an account of his mission on the 6th Frimaire, year III.

that he would authorize him to celebrate the rites of religion again; but he was placed under arrest for this and no other reason and spent seven weeks in prison.¹¹

In the department of Eure the district administrative body of Bernay issued an ordinance on the 2nd Nivôse, year III, forbidding the celebration of mass.¹²

The Thermidorian Convention was convinced that the reopening of the churches would be most dangerous to the Republic. On the 18th Frimaire, year III, Boissy d'Anglas, one of the orators of the Plain who was most willingly listened to, denounced the intrigues of the constitutional priests in his department of Ardèche, where, he said, they were going about the country-side leading the inhabitants astray, some even carrying their audacity so far as to retract the oath which they had taken to the Civil Constitution and formally announce their retraction to the district assembly of Mezenc. But the district administrative body had taken measures to secure the punishment of these miscreants and had given orders for their arrest. The Convention approved the action of the district administration and awarded it an honourable mention.¹³

To stimulate the zeal of the local administrative bodies the Committee of General Security issued the following ordinance on the 12th Nivôse, year III: "The Committee of General Security resolves that the members of the district administrations, the national agents attached to the said administrations, and the revolutionary committees are required, as part of their responsibilities, to prevent any fanatical or royalist assemblies, to cause the arrest of all the speakers and ringleaders in such assemblies, and likewise at once to bring them to the notice of the Committee of General Security."¹⁴ We may rest assured that this ordinance did not remain a dead letter.

In his *Histoire religieuse de la Révolution* M. de La Gorce notes that for a long time after Thermidor the terrible laws against deported priests who had come back were still applied. Six priests were sent to the scaffold in Haute-Loire, four in Doubs, two in Dordogne, two in Maine-et-Loire, two

¹¹ See La Gorce, Vol. IV, p. 13.

¹² Grégoire, *Histoire des sectes*, p. 255.

¹³ *Moniteur*, Vol. XXII, p. 701.

¹⁴ Signed by Mathieu, Reverchon, Lomont, P. Barras, Monmayou, Legendre, Bourdon of Oise, Reubell, and Boudin. This ordinance was published in the *Décadaire du Haut-Rhin*. The *Décadaire*, "a periodical paper devoted to the instruction of the country inhabitants in the department of the Upper Rhine," first appeared at Colmar on the 4th Germinal, year II, and came out regularly till the 29th Ventôse, year III. I have consulted the complete issue in M. Augustin Gazier's library.

in Loire-Inférieure, one in Côtes-du-Nord, five in Morbihan, one in Var, eight in Paris, etc.¹⁵

Not content with enforcing the suppression of the old religion for many long months, the Thermidorians also endeavoured to maintain and infuse life into the new republican cult which found expression in the civic decadary festivals. In spite of their hatred of Robespierre, they never annulled the decree of the 18th Floréal legalizing these celebrations.

The temples of the Supreme Being remained open, and the popular societies, representatives on mission, and local authorities celebrated the Republic and the nation in them regularly with hymns, speeches, and readings. There were even some towns, such as Lille, in which the decadary cult gained, as it were, a new lease of life. On the fifth complementary day of the year II, the very day upon which the Convention escorted the mortal remains of Marat to the Panthéon in a body, a "Temple to the Eternal" was inaugurated there, the decoration of which was particularly elaborate. There, as in some Elysian abode, were to be seen lakes, groves, grottoes, distant hills, pyramids and tombs to the memory of the leading friends of liberty. In the centre was a statue of Liberty on a rock, and next it a tomb of Rousseau, surrounded, as at Ermenonville, by poplars and willows, besides monuments in honour of Barra, Viala, Le Peletier, and Marat.¹⁶

Wherever the victorious French armies occupied conquered countries, they set up republican temples. A Temple of Reason was inaugurated at Antwerp on the 25th Frimaire, year III, another at Mons on the 2nd Pluviôse, year III,¹⁷ another at Aix-la-Chapelle on the 30th Frimaire, year III. Here the temple was dedicated to the Supreme Being, and Portiez of Oise, a former member of the Convention, pronounced the inaugural oration.

Décadi continued to be celebrated as a regular festival in the old and

¹⁵ Vol. IV, p. 14.

¹⁶ See the description on p. 12 of the pamphlet entitled: *Discours prononcé au nom du Conseil général de la commune de Lille par le citoyen Corbet, l'un de ses membres, à l'ouverture du Temple à l'Éternel, le 5^e jour sans-culottide, 2^e année républicaine* (Speech by Citizen Corbet, one of its members, pronounced in the name of the General Council of the Commune of Lille, at the Opening of the Temple of the Eternal, on the 5th complementary day of the 2nd year of the Republican Calendar). In the Gazier Library.

¹⁷ See the speech made by Citizen Lengrand, a member of the administration of the *arrondissement* of Hainau (*sic*) at Mons on the 2nd Pluviôse, year III, "to inaugurate the Temple of Reason, and at the same time to celebrate the anniversary of the death of the last tyrant of France" (Bibliothèque Nationale, Lb⁴¹ 4228). See also the report of a similar celebration (2nd Pluviôse, year III) at Brussels, and the speech made by the representative Roberjot (Lb⁴¹ 4227), etc.

new temples alike, at least by the authorities and schoolchildren. The shops were shut on *décadi* on pain of a fine, even in Alsace.¹⁸ Mallarmé, the representative on mission in Haute-Garonne and Tarn, ordered the arrest of all those who should cease work on Sunday.¹⁹

Many manuals of civic ritual continued to appear.²⁰ On September 12 the municipality of Besançon bought for four hundred livres a carriage to be used as a triumphal car at public festivals. On November 21 the representative Pelletier, on his way through Pontarlier, issued an ordinance for the construction of a theatre, at the expense of the district, for use on decadary festivals.²¹ Goddesses of Liberty again made their appearance, and *autos-da-fé* of religious books and emblems continued to take place. On the 5th Fructidor, year II, the national agent in the district of Dieuze suggested to the communes under his jurisdiction that they should replace "the idols of the priests" by the busts of Marat and Le Peletier in the temples of Reason.

In short, it may be said that the 9th Thermidor made no change in the religious situation. The only difference that can be noted is that after that date a few demonstrations took place at the republican festivals which, if not atheistical, were at any rate "naturalist" or pantheist. At the celebration of the anniversary of August 10, on the 30th Thermidor, year II, Citizen Simon, mayor of Colmar, made a speech in which Nature alone was mentioned, without a single word about the Supreme Being.²² About this time there appeared at Strassburg a periodical entitled *La Religion de la Nature et de la Raison* (*The Religion of Nature and Reason*). In his *Essai sur la Morale calculée* (*Essay on Rational Morality*), a speech made on the 17th Vendémiaire, year III, Lavicomterie, a member of the Convention, developed a scheme for a kind of civic sermon, which, if not atheist, is strongly pantheist in tone.²³ But these are isolated phenomena, with which the Con-

¹⁸ On the 8th Nivôse, year III, the municipality of Strassburg ordered merchants to close their shops on *décadi* (Grégoire, *Histoire des sectes*, p. 305).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 243.

²⁰ *Essai d'un rite de célébration des décadis et des fêtes nationales* (*A Proposed Ritual for the Celebration of Decadi and National Festivals*), by Just Rameau of Côte-d'Or, Nivôse, year III (Bibl. Nat., Le³⁸ 1141).—*Fête à la pudeur proposée comme modèle pour les autres fêtes décadaïres* (*A festival of Modesty, proposed as a model for other decadary festivals*), by Opoix, representative of the people, Nivôse, year III (Bibl. Nat., Le³⁸ 1140); etc.

²¹ Sauzay, *Histoire de la persécution révolutionnaire dans le Doubs*, Vol. VI, p. 361.

²² See the *Décadaire du Haut-Rhin*, in the Gazier Library.

²³ National Archives, AD, XVII, 22.

vention had nothing to do, and which it even disapproved. Deism remained the official creed. Even when the Thermidorians attacked Robespierre and styled him "pontiff," they were careful to state that this new Mahomet had no monopoly of belief in God.

For several months the Convention persisted in its efforts to infuse life into the civic cult by completing the organization outlined by Robespierre. Three times—on the 21st Fructidor and the fourth complementary day, year II, and the 10th Frimaire, year III—the Committee of Public Instruction received orders to draft a law on the subject within the shortest possible time. The Committee produced no result beyond a report by Marie-Joseph Chénier, which led to nothing.²⁴ On the 9th Nivôse, year III, the Convention next made up its mind to invite all its members to express their views on the establishment of national festivals in which men of every religion might join. A number of members took up the pen and sketched out schemes on paper for a republican religion, which was generally deist in tendency. Their memoranda have been printed and fill several volumes.²⁵ All these great efforts were so much waste of energy. The Convention failed in its double object, on the one hand of giving uniformity and a ritual to the patriotic religion, and on the other of making it the only valid one by abolishing Catholicism.

The reasons for this failure can easily be guessed, and it is hardly necessary to indicate them. The suppression of Catholicism was bound up with the revolutionary system of government. But revolutionary government was falling to pieces under pressure of public opinion. The liberty of the press was reviving. Catholics were founding newspapers and bringing out pamphlets demanding "that liberty of worship, which had never ceased to be provided by law" (that of the 18th Frimaire, year II), should be put into practice.

On the other hand, the Thermidorian Convention was closing the clubs which had been the centre of the civic religion. It was opening the prisons, from which the constitutional priests were issuing one by one. The reaction against the men and ideas of the year II was becoming more violent and irresistible every day.

²⁴ Report of the 1st Nivôse, year III, Bibl. Nat., Le³⁸ 1108. Another report, also by M. J. Chénier, of the 14th Nivôse, year III, Bibl. Nat., Le³⁸ 1128.

²⁵ These memoranda, signed by Collot d'Herbois, Lequinio, Baraillon, Lanthenas, Picqué, Bonguiot, P. J. D. G. Faure, Fayolle, Durand de Maillane, Joseph Terral, Mathieu, Athanase Veau, etc., are to be found for the most part in the series Le³⁸ at the Bibliothèque Nationale, or else in a collection of miscellaneous works bound up together in the Le Peletier de Saint-Fargeau Library, under the press-mark 12272.

And, lastly, the patriotic creed which had given life to the decadary ceremonies was growing weak to the point of extinction. The republican cult was now a mere body without a soul. The hopes that had been set on political institutions as a source of regeneration and social happiness were now but a far-off dream. With the fall of the assignat and the abolition of the maximum the distress in the towns was growing daily. How was it possible to believe in the magic virtue of the Republic when it could no longer guarantee its children their daily bread?

But the greatest weakness of the republican cult was that it did not draw its life from the soul of the people, but reflected the aspirations, customs, and fads of the middle classes, which had endeavoured to substitute it for Catholicism. It was full of reminiscences of Greece and Rome. Its symbolism, which was quite artificial, was borrowed from classical mythology. Hence it was almost incomprehensible to the masses who had not attended secondary schools. So true was this that the workmen, even those employed in the republican workshops, always refused to celebrate *décadi* and remained faithful to the old Sunday. They considered the ten-day week too long and persisted in stopping work on the old Christian feast-days. They were bored with the stilted sermons of the civic orators, and besides, by refusing to attend them, they gave expression to their discontent with their masters of the day.

We may add that the fratricidal struggles of the revolutionaries, and the crimes of the Terror, had left men morally adrift and made them callous. There was no longer any room in their minds for the enthusiasms which are the foundation of new religions. The republican cult was essentially an official religion, and its popularity depended on that of the government; but the government's popularity was daily sinking in the estimation of the republicans, who could alone have put life into the cult.

A reaction towards Catholicism actually showed itself in the Convention during the discussion of Chénier's proposed law on the decadary festivals in Nivôse, year III. In replying to Chénier on the 1st Nivôse, Grégoire, constitutional bishop of Blois, and a stalwart republican, dared to demand the free exercise of the constitutional cult. "Liberty of worship," he said, "exists in Turkey; it does not exist in France, where the people are deprived of a right which they enjoy in despotic states, even under the regencies of Morocco and Algiers." ²⁶ Grégoire delivered a panegyric on the patriot clergy,

²⁶ Grégoire's speech was printed separately, with additions. Bibl. Nat., Le³⁸ 1109. In his preface Grégoire explains that "the howls of a part of the Assembly" prevented him from reading the whole of his speech. For the real tenor of the session, see the *Moniteur*.

who had suffered both for their faith and for their republican opinions. He was at pains to prove that republican institutions were not incompatible with Catholicism, quoting in proof of this the United States, Switzerland, and his own example. He declaimed against persecution, which its results showed to be impolitic, compared the position of the Catholics in France in the year III to that of the Protestants under Louis XIV, and mentioned the *dragonnades*. The Convention had already shown its impatience by interruptions and now broke into an uproar. Grégoire withdrew from his position, declared himself a partisan of the decadary festivals, and promised that constitutional Catholics "would always manage to reconcile their religious duties with their social duties," and that, after praying to their God, they would join the rest of the citizens "round the statue of Liberty for the civil and political festivals." He even went so far as to move that the Convention should pass simultaneously the law proposed by Chénier on the decadary festivals, and the one which he had himself proposed for sanctioning the public exercise of the constitutional Church.²⁷ But this concession did not calm the Assembly. Legendre voiced its feelings as follows: "I thought we were sufficiently advanced in revolution to concern ourselves no further with religion. If we reopen these debates, we shall bring back the days when priests cramped the public intelligence and would not suffer the people to have any reason but theirs. To be a good husband, a good son, a good father, and a good citizen: that is the only religion for a republican!" He concluded by saying that Grégoire's speech might do a great deal of harm, and the Assembly contemptuously passed to the order of the day.

It really seems as though it was this speech of Grégoire's which sounded the reveille of Catholicism. Till then Fréron's *jeunesse* had shown themselves quite indifferent to religion, and they had never been very ardent in the cause of the priests. But piety had lived on among the lower and the lower middle classes. Grégoire's speech went through several editions. Many newspapers printed extracts from it. Grégoire found imitators. Joseph Terral, deputy for Tarn, rallied to his side in his *Réflexions sur les fêtes décadaires* (*Reflections on the Decadary Festivals*), voicing the opinion that the national festivals ought not to become "a new, national, dominant" and exclusive cult. His colleague Durand de Maillane was even bolder, in his *Opinion sur les fêtes décadaires*. He questioned the utility of these festivals,

²⁷ This was not mere oratorical adroitness on the part of Grégoire. On the 24th Messidor, year III, he proposed the institution of civic festivals which would, he said, "draw closer the ties of amity between the members of the great family and identify the people with the Constitution and the laws that are to make its happiness" (*Moniteur*).

protested against the forced cessation of work on *décadi*, came forward openly as a defender of the holy religion, and ended with a sort of challenge to the de-christianizing party: "What is more, let all hope be abandoned of destroying this religion [Catholicism], which in spite of all its trials has lasted for eighteen centuries; if all priests were banished or burnt, others would arise from their ashes, unless the faith of the gentiles is at its last gasp. We live in a country where seven-eighths of the vast population know no other religion and desire no other. . . . The French nation would cover itself with infamy if it were to establish a government without religion, or, rather, if it were to destroy all religion in order to establish one."²⁸

In an anonymous pamphlet, *Réflexions sur la Festomanie (Reflections on Festival Mania)*, another member of the Convention, Didier Boissieu, who declared himself a deist, not a Catholic, poured ridicule upon the schemes for decadary festivals drawn up by his colleagues. He pointed out their emptiness, their lack of interest or coherence; and lastly he stigmatized them as "a legacy of Robespierre, Chaumette, Pache, Payan, Saint-Just, Hébert, and other philosophers of the same kidney."

These pamphlets and others, such as one by Baudin of Ardennes: *Du fanatisme et des cultes (On Fanaticism and Forms of Worship)*, or one by Bishop Audrein: *Un Mot à Legendre (A Word to Legendre)*, which came out shortly after each other, broke the spell which had bound Catholics up to this time, keeping them as a whole in a state of silence and resignation.

In certain departments ordinary citizens and former constitutional priests were already reopening the churches with the more or less overt connivance of the new authorities. As early as Nivôse, Grégoire's vicars-general restored religious worship in Loir-et-Cher.²⁹ In the frontier departments the position was even more serious. The former refractory priests were venturing home again. As early as December 1794 there were a number of them in the department of Doubs, and Pelletier, the representative on mission, gave orders for domiciliary visits for the purpose of apprehending them. But these measures of repression failed of their object. The authorities whom he had himself appointed in the place of the former ones were, for the most part, accomplices of the refractory priests. The municipality of the little commune of Voillans refused to accept the school-teacher who was sent to it, because it would have had to house him in the presbytery and by so doing would have lost all hope of having a priest again.³⁰ In this commune the

²⁸ Durand de Maillane's *Opinion*, like Grégoire's speech, was reprinted several times.

²⁹ See Augustin Gazier, *Études sur l'histoire religieuse de la Révolution*.

³⁰ See Sauzay, *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 376.

church remained open on a Sunday, and a "blind" mass was celebrated—that is, a mass with no priest and no sacrifice. A number of blind masses were celebrated in this way throughout the whole of France. But so many priests had already returned that the Convention took fright. On the 18th Nivôse, year III, after an animated debate on the subject of the *émigrés* of Bas-Rhin, who had followed Wurmser's Austrian army on its retreat, and whose return to France one section of the Assembly wanted to sanction, Merlin of Douai denounced the clerical peril: "I move," he said, "that the public prosecutors attached to the criminal tribunals, members of administrative bodies, and all constituted authorities be charged to take proceedings without delay, and with all the rigour of the law of the 14th Frimaire, against *émigrés* and deported priests who have returned to French territory." Merlin's motion was seconded by Barras and Legendre and carried by a large majority amid shouts of "Long live the Republic!" But it was easier to pass laws than to ensure their execution. Not many of the refractory priests can have been forced to return into exile.

The Convention itself was at the end of its tether. Its policy of granting an amnesty in the west rendered the continuation of its anticlerical policy impossible. The representatives on mission in those departments in which the Chouan movement was rife kept warning it that peace was impossible without the restoration of religious liberty. Two of them, named Guezno and Guermeur, the scene of whose activities was Morbihan, issued an ordinance dated the 24th Nivôse, year III (January 13, 1795), abrogating all the previous severe measures and restoring liberty of worship for all priests, refractory and constitutional alike.³¹ The Committees durst not repudiate their action. After long hesitation they decided to accept the situation. On the 19th Pluviôse, Cambacérès informed the representatives on mission in the west,³² in their name, that they were about to submit to the Convention the question of the restoration of Catholic worship in the whole of France; for, again, how could they deprive Catholics in the interior of the country of the benefits granted to the insurgent royalists?

Accordingly, on the 3rd Ventôse, year III (February 21, 1795), four days after the pacification of La Jaunaie, Boissy d'Anglas, a deputy of the Plain, one of the most ardent opponents of Catholicism, proposed, in the name of the Committees, the anticipated decree on the regulation of public worship. After reminding them, in contemptuous terms, that Catholicism

³¹ Guezno's and Guermeur's ordinance is printed in M. F. Uzureau's study, *Les Amnisties*, etc. (*Mémoires de la Société d'agriculture d'Angers*, 1916, p. 41).

³² The letter of Cambacérès to the representative on mission Legot is published by M. Aulard in his collection.

was "servile in its nature . . . in its essence an auxiliary of despotism . . . intolerant and eager for predominance, brutalizing to the human race, and the accomplice of all the crimes of kings," Boissy, who was not an extreme terrorist, laid down the principle that a religion carried on clandestinely is more dangerous to the liberty of the State than a religion under public supervision. "Keep a watch upon what you cannot prevent; regularize what you cannot forbid. It is in the gloomy and deserted spots to which religious men retire to escape persecution that their souls are thrown open to those dismal influences which plunge them into a stupor of madness and ferocity known as fanaticism. . . . Martyrs are as necessary to religion as obstacles are to love. The priest who exposes himself to danger in the exercise of his ministry reaps the reward of his courage. In the eyes of the credulous who cherish him, he appears as a being preserved by God Himself." It was, then, out of a sort of politic resignation that Boissy consented to let the churches be reopened. They were not, however, to be handed over to the Catholics in full proprietorship: they would continue to belong to the communes, which could still use them for the decadary ceremonies, which were maintained, or even for electoral meetings. All the outward signs of religion were prohibited on the public highway. Priests were forbidden to wear their cassocks out of doors, and it was also forbidden to hold processions, to carry the cross outside the churches, to indicate places of worship by an inscription, and to call the faithful together by ringing bells or any other form of announcement; the communes were forbidden to subsidize religious worship, the priests to form a corporation—that is, an association—and private individuals were forbidden to give donations to religious establishments, etc.

The treatment meted out to Catholics was very severe. They had to provide their own premises and pay their priests. They were not given real liberty. Toleration was thrown to them like an alms.

Yet, in spite of all these restrictions, the decree of the 3rd Ventôse was hailed with shouts of joy throughout the whole of Catholic France. I say the whole of Catholic France, because liberty was restored, not only to the constitutional priests, but also to all those refractory priests who had taken the oath of Liberty and Equality after August 10, 1792, to avoid deportation.³³

The Catholic restoration was rapid. The constitutional bishops still left in Paris gathered round Grégoire and on March 15, 1795 issued a cir-

³³ This is plain from the debate: "OUDOT: It is as well to say that by this law you had no intention of reversing the one applying to the men who have not taken the oath to Equality. . . . SEVERAL VOICES: No! No!" Thus the only priests excluded from the benefits of this law were the refractory priests affected by the law of August 26, 1792—that is, the refractory priests subject to deportation.

cular letter, an "encyclical,"³⁴ to their colleagues in the departments, enjoining upon them to resume their functions and reorganize their dioceses. In Germinal, year III, Grégoire founded the Society of Christian Philosophy and the paper *Les Annales de la religion*, the first number of which appeared on May 1, 1795. The priests who had abdicated their functions demanded that the administrative bodies should restore to them their letters of ordination, which, they said, had been taken from them by violence. Their requests were complied with and the constitutional clergy was gradually reconstituted.

For their part, the refractory bishops—Bausset, bishop of Alais; Couet de Lorry, bishop of Angers; Du Tillet, bishop of Orange; Maillé de La Tour Landry, bishop of Saint-Papoul; etc.—who had escaped the deportation laws, whether on account of their age, or because, owing to the suppression of their sees, they had not been forced to take the oath to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, or, again, because they had taken the oath of August 10, 1792, now issued from retirement, sought out their priests, and reorganized the Roman cult. In many places their flock was swelled by former constitutional priests, who had been disillusioned and now retracted their errors.³⁵ In opposition to the *Annales de la religion* the refractory priests soon brought out the *Annales religieuses, politiques et littéraires*, edited by the Abbés Jauffret and Sicard.

Shut out from the official buildings, the constitutional and Roman forms of worship obtained possession of secularized churches, or old convents which they leased or bid for at auction. In many cases, especially in the country districts, they obtained access to the official churches, in spite of the law and with the connivance of the local authorities. A number of deported refractory priests returned to France and opened oratories more or less clandestinely. When they were arrested, the new tribunals refused to sentence them. The competition and rivalry between the two bodies of Catholic clergy became as acute as in 1791 and 1792.

The decadary cult was in its death-throes. The ceremonies, attended by none but the authorities, were now a mere formality. The Thermidorian authorities now ordered reactionary songs—even the *Réveil du peuple*—to be sung in the republican temples.³⁶

³⁴ By Floréal thirty constitutional bishops had signed this encyclical. See A. Gazier, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

³⁵ Panisset, constitutional bishop of Mont-Blanc, retracted with almost all his clergy.

³⁶ Thus at Limoges, at the ceremony of the 20th Prairial, year III, the Temple of the Supreme Being was opened to the strains of the *Réveil du peuple*, "that hymn

To give colour to his retreat and that of his whole party Boissy d'Anglas had asserted that the public exercise of religion would be less dangerous to the Republic than one which was clandestine and prohibited. I do not know whether he was really under any illusion. But the events gave the lie to his story in the most striking manner. The refractory priests started rebaptizing and remarrying the faithful who had already been baptized or married by the constitutional clergy; they reconsecrated the churches, demanded the exhumation of constitutional priests who had been buried in the cemeteries, and preached a return to the old regime. "Their return," wrote the district assembly of Baume as early as February 21, 1795, is causing such a reaction that those who do not take part in their assemblies are publicly insulted. . . ." ³⁷

The religious pacification, which followed after and resulted from the royalist pacification of the west, was, like it, to be no more than a sham. The Thermidorian Convention had thought to disarm its adversaries by being false to itself. But it merely gave them new strength. In vain did the Committee of General Security, as early as the 4th Germinal, stimulate the zeal of the national agents and call upon them not to slacken their surveillance over the refractory priests.³⁸ Its circular produced no effect whatever.

Though the churches were being returned to them—it is true, with a bad grace—the refractory priests, for all that, had not rallied to the Republic. They had suffered, they had braved terrible dangers; how could they fail to be animated by a spirit of proselytism and retaliation? The Thermidorians, whom they despised, remained, in their eyes, adversaries, or, rather,

beloved of Frenchmen, now delivered from the tyranny of men of blood." The representative on mission Charrier made a speech previous to the distribution of relief to needy persons in the country districts. See the printed account in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Lb⁴¹ 4390.

³⁷ Sauzay, *op. cit.*, p. 641.

³⁸ "Since it is of importance for the public peace to avert the disorders which fanaticism, superstition, and malice are seeking to revive, all non-juring priests who have been set at liberty must remain under the constant supervision of the communes in which they reside; their actions must not be allowed to remain in obscurity and they must be prevented from abusing the credulity of weak minds and so leading them into error and impairing their due respect for the laws and the attachment which the Republic has a right to expect from every good citizen. In this connexion we count upon your zeal and care. It is by the proofs of these that you give that you will show yourselves truly worthy of the functions entrusted to you . . ." (circular letter of the 4th Germinal, year III, signed Clauzel, Monmayou, Auguis, Guffroy, Pémartin, Legendre, Boudin, Lomont, and Perrin). I have published this circular *in extenso* and another of the 7th Prairial, year III, in the *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* for September–October 1925.

enemies. Concessions on the part of such men seemed to them deserving of no further gratitude, for the priests knew that they had only yielded under pressure. And their first success emboldened them to seek others.

In his reports to the Austrian government at this time, Mallet du Pan joyfully noted the progressive debasement of the Assembly: "It had no scheme more at heart," he wrote on February 28, 1795, "than the institution of decadary festivals, by the aid of which it had reckoned upon sounding the death-knell of all dogmatic religions, all worship, and all priests. Public opinion has forced them to go back upon this. . . . The Assembly had given orders that the *émigrés* and returned priests were to be expelled within a fortnight. Not one has moved, nobody has yet put the decree in force, the proscribed men are showing themselves everywhere, even in the very galleries of the Convention. . . ." ³⁹

By attacking the terrorists with all its might—that is, the republicans who had carried on the government amid the great perils of the last year—the Thermidorians had failed to rally to their side the old parties who were thirsting for vengeance. But what is more, they were exposing themselves to a counter-attack from these same terrorists, whom they were forcing into desperate revolt. The insurrection of the 12th Germinal was not far off.

³⁹ Mallet du Pan also summed up the law of the 3rd Ventôse as follows: "By re-creating Catholics it [the Convention] is re-creating royalists. Whoever attends mass is an enemy of the Republic. There is not a priest who does not represent attachment to this regime as a case of conscience to his flock; religious sentiment, oppressed for three years past, is about to spread in an exalted form" (letter of March 17, 1795, in André Michel, op. cit.).

CHAPTER VIII

The First Hunger Insurrection (12th Germinal, Year III)

ON the 12th Germinal, year III (April 1, 1795), a crowd composed chiefly of women and residents in the working-class faubourgs invaded the Convention demanding "bread and the Constitution of 1793!" In the end the mob left the hall without any untoward incidents. But the disorders served the Thermidorians as a pretext for decreeing without debate, regular formalities, or inquiry the deportation of the four "decemvirs" whose impeachment was impending at the very moment of the disturbance, and the arrest of sixteen Montagnard deputies, who were interned in fortresses such as the castle of Ham. Thus the 12th Germinal is a sort of reversal of May 31. On May 31 the rioters had demanded and obtained the arrest of the principal Girondin leaders. On the 12th Germinal it was the opposite which happened. The rising provided the party of reaction with a pretext for ridding themselves of embarrassing political opponents by proscribing the leading Montagnards, thus violating their own law of the 8th Brumaire, year III, which had guaranteed parliamentary immunity.

The insurrection, or, rather, the demonstration of the 12th Germinal—for there was no fighting—arose from causes both economic and political, as is shown by its rallying-cry of: "Bread and the Constitution of 1793!" Let us state them both as briefly as possible.

The extremity of destitution which led to the rising of the faubourgs and was general in all the towns of France was the inevitable result of the financial and economic policy of the Thermidorian Convention, a blind policy, with no coherence, in which class-feeling constituted the sole unity. It was this policy which destroyed piecemeal the whole of the structure patiently built up by the great Committee of Public Safety, and substituted nothing for it.

In order to feed the towns and armies, and at the same time to support the assignat, the great Committee, by an ingenious system of requisitioning, had gained control over the whole of French production, which it distributed through the agency of a central commission. By exercising its rights of pre-emption and requisition this Central Commission of Supply in effect

dictated prices, which it fixed by means of the law of the maximum. The fixing of prices prevented the fall of the assignat or an excessive increase in public expenditure. The system was not perfect. It encountered the mutual but conflicting selfishness of the holders of goods, on the one hand, and the wage-earners on the other, both of whom would have liked to control their own prices. In order to carry out the requisitioning and ensure the observance of the maximum, strong measures of control and vigorous means of enforcing the law were necessary. The economic terror rested upon the political terror. But, in spite of all its faults and the vast bureaucracy which it necessitated, it held its own, worked, and to a large extent attained its object. Disorders had ceased. Rationing, carried out by the card system, enabled the poor to obtain a small but sure supply of food.

The Thermidorians, divided into rival groups struggling among themselves for the supreme power, destroyed the economic system which the war had imposed upon their predecessors. As a rule they relied upon the support of the property-owning classes, who were interested in the restoration of commercial liberty. They expelled the lower classes from all posts and replaced them by people in comfortable circumstances. They put an end to the Terror, or, rather, they turned it against their adversaries. The first result was that the economic laws of the Revolution lost their power. They could only be put in force by compulsion, because they were injurious to all private interests, and there was no longer any compulsion. The peasants, who had always distrusted paper money, and only complied with the requisitioning unwillingly, now regained their freedom. They displayed increasing reluctance to give up their crops or would only exchange them for something of solid value, especially coin. Thus the supply of food was bound to be prejudicially affected.¹ At the same time, industrialists and traders wanted to regain freedom to dispose of their goods, upon which the Commission of Commerce and Supplies had laid an embargo. They could justly denounce the ineptitude of the Commission's agents and the failure of the existing system since the progressive destruction of revolutionary government had paralysed its enforcement. The manual labourers, for their part, were simple

¹ In a letter to the Committee of Public Safety dated the 25th Frimaire, year III, Pérard, a member of the Convention, ascribed the dearth of corn to the selfishness of the farmers, to a more or less genuine shortage of labour, to the greed of the agricultural labourers, who found they could earn more by other work, to the fear of the country people that they might be short of bread in a few months' time, to the weakness of the authorities and the government's lack of energy. Oil, tallow candles, soap, sugar, brandy, iron, and copper are scarce and dear. The maximum is openly evaded. And Pérard ended with the words: "Existence has become almost impossible for the poor." See his letter in M. Aulard's collection, Vol. XVIII.

enough to imagine that by regaining their economic liberty they would be enabled to increase their wages, for they failed to realize that this increase would be more than made up for by the immediate and disproportionate rise in all prices as soon as the maximum was abolished. Thus, after Thermidor we see the Hébertists of the Electoral Club joining in the campaign of the trading and industrial classes for liberty of trade. Babeuf alone was more clear-sighted and had some idea of the abyss into which the poor would now be plunged.

At the outset the Convention and its Committees had a vague feeling that an exceptional economic system was demanded by the war, and that they would do well to maintain it till the peace.² But the government had by now lost all control and was drifting helplessly.

A series of piecemeal measures, following one another haphazard, resulted in the paralysis of those which preceded them before they were formally abrogated. Thus, as the result of a speech by Eschasseriaux on the 8th Fructidor, a decree was passed authorizing the purchase of corn and forage otherwise than in the markets—thereby rendering fraud in connexion with the prices possible, and removing supplies from the control of the commission's agents. The same decree established lighter penalties for such offences. On the 26th Fructidor another decree, proposed by Isoré, allowed farmers to keep a supply of seed corn! This was a fresh infraction of the system of requisitioning the whole crop. On the 8th Vendémiaire, year III, as a result of a speech by Oudot, goods transported by the road transport department were exempted from declaration. Here was another channel through which requisitioned commodities might leak away. Every day the central commission's powers of supervision and control over the national wealth were weakened. The consequence was that the supply of food became more difficult. To remedy this a palliative was resorted to which only increased the evil. It was decided to increase the maximum price for cereals, making it two-thirds as much again as the price in 1790, whereas previously it had only been a third as much again.³ Official prices having thus risen, the result was that more assignats were required to pay them, inflation increased by leaps and bounds, and the real value of paper money decreased in proportion.

² See the report by Villars on the 21st Fructidor, year II. While declaring that the Committee of Commerce, of which he was the spokesman, would like to propose the abolition of the maximum, Villars had it prolonged for a year, till the 1st Vendémiaire, year III, giving as his reason that they must wait till peace was signed before doing away with it.

³ This new maximum, established by the law of the 19th Brumaire, year III, was in force for barely a month and a half.

To check the rise of prices and the fall of the assignat the Republic should at least have refused to abandon what security it possessed. But in order to satisfy the trading classes whose support they were courting, the Thermidorians were daily diminishing the value of the security upon which the assignat depended. On the 16th Vendémiaire, the 12th Brumaire, etc., they raised the embargo on goods sent to the rebel cities of Lyons, Bordeaux, etc., during the federalist revolt; on the 12th Brumaire, as the result of a speech by Oudot, they raised the sequestration of the property of suspects, and shortly afterwards, on the 15th Nivôse, they raised that of the property of enemy subjects resident in France, without receiving any *quid pro quo*.⁴ While depriving the Republic of part of its property, they continued to paralyse the Commission of Commerce and Supplies. On the 26th Vendémiaire they withdrew from it the right of requisitioning raw materials imported from abroad and destined for the factories. The decree of the 19th Brumaire henceforward prohibited unrestricted requisitioning—that is, in future the commission could no longer control the market in any commodity. Tallien, Legendre, Dubois-Crancé, Thibaudeau, Merlin of Thionville—all the “Thermidorians of prey”—started the most violent campaign against the officials in charge of the machinery of supply and against the law of the maximum. “I regard it,” said Thibaudeau on the 17th Brumaire, “as the one and only source of all the misfortunes that we have experienced; it has opened up brilliant prospects to rogues of all sorts; it has covered France with a horde of smugglers, and ruined honest men who have respected your laws.”

But neither Thibaudeau nor the others dared to say openly that the chief crime of these officials was that they continued to be Jacobins. By turning them out of the Government they would be not only gratifying the industrial and trading classes, whom the Thermidorians were covering with flattery, but also depriving the Montagnards of an appreciable source of support.

The maximum had already been in effect abolished as regards transactions between individuals when it was completely suppressed as the result of a speech by Giraud, on the 4th Nivôse, year III. From this time onward the last barrier still defending the interests of the Treasury and protecting the assignat broke down. The immense purchases for equipping the army and feeding the towns now ceased to be made at the tariff fixed once and for all by law and applied by the Commission of Commerce and Supply. In future the State had to pay the prices demanded by the owners. When we

⁴ As an exception, the sequestration of the goods of the Spanish Bank of San Carlos was alone maintained, for the director was Cabarrus, the father of Mme Tallien; this exception was due to a wish to attack Tallien through his wife.

remember that the war was still going on, that access by sea was closed and stocks exhausted as a result of the war, which was now in its third year, we may estimate the consequences inevitably bound to result from the abolition of the maximum.

The increase in the State expenditure was alarming. During the month of Frimaire, immediately before the suppression of the maximum and the restoration of commercial liberty, the Treasury had spent roughly 268 millions, as opposed to receipts of 49 millions. In Nivôse the expenditure was 428 millions, and receipts rose to 57 millions. In Pluviôse receipts amounted to 68 millions, while expenses reached the figure of 503 millions. The discrepancy grew larger and larger. At the same time the assignat rapidly collapsed. In Thermidor, before the execution of the Robespierrists, 100 livres in assignats were still worth 34 livres in metal currency; in Brumaire, after the closing of the Jacobins, they were only worth 24; in Nivôse 20, in Pluviôse 17, in Ventôse 14, and at the beginning of Germinal 8. Since the Thermidorians had been in power the assignat had lost more than three-quarters of what it had been worth in Thermidor. The presses for printing notes were overwhelmed. So as to conceal the extent of the issues from the people, these were now no longer decided upon by decrees passed in public session, but by mere ordinances of the Finance Committee.

The members of the Finance Committee and Cambon, who was still its president, improvised hasty schemes for checking inflation by withdrawing as many assignats as possible from circulation. There were even some who talked in secret of demonetizing the republican paper currency. On the 13th Nivôse, Cambon obtained a decree that the Republic would not go bankrupt, and that the assignat should not be demonetized. On the 3rd Pluviôse he proposed to withdraw the assignats from circulation by organizing a lottery, granting a premium to buyers of national property who should pay their instalments before they were due, by expediting the sale of the *émigrés'* personal property, and by insisting on payments at more frequent intervals from the new purchasers. Most of the proposals were voted on the 6th and 8th of Ventôse. But apart from the fact that they were very belated, these measures were mere expedients which would only produce an effect after a long time. What ought to have been done was at the same time to check expenditure. But since the abolition of the maximum this was impossible. There was indeed an attempt to reduce the number of government functionaries, and several thousand of them were turned adrift. For instance, the revolutionary committees were suppressed in towns of less than fifty thousand inhabitants. Decrees were also passed suppressing the

departmental and district councils and reducing the number of members of the departmental directories to five instead of eight (decree of the 1st Ventôse, year III). These paltry economies produced no real effect and only served to increase discontent.

This affectation of economizing at the expense of the officials was counterbalanced by an alarming increase of expenditure under colour of compensation to the victims of the Terror. The reinstated Girondins showed themselves more and more exacting in this respect, and the Thermidorians complied with their demands because the Girondins now formed part of their own majority. There was a long list of these "measures of reparation," and they were to cost the public Treasury dear.

On the 21st Nivôse the *émigrés* of May 31—that is, those who had emigrated at the time of the federalist insurrection or after—received the compensation for which they had been clamouring unsuccessfully for two months past. All of them who could plead a manual or agricultural employment were to have the right to return to France. Such of their property as had not been sold was restored to them, and they received compensation at the expense of the Treasury for the value of what had been sold by auction. They returned in thousands to the north and east, and above all to Provence. Considerable sums had to be paid out as compensation to them, and woe to those purchasers of national property who had bought their family possessions!

On the 8th Pluviôse a fresh decree restored to those whose husband or wife had been condemned by the Revolutionary Tribunal the personal property and effects which had belonged to them. On the 11th Pluviôse the Legislative Committee received power to remit fines which had not been paid, to raise sequestrations and confiscations ordered as the result of sentences which had not been carried out, and, when the property had been sold, to hand over the price paid for it to the rightful owner.⁵

Lastly, on the 30th Ventôse, after a virulent harangue by Boissy d'Anglas, the sale of the property of condemned persons was suspended. It was after this speech that the assignat for a hundred livres fell to eight livres.

Thus the resources of the State were constantly decreasing, the security for the assignats was shrinking like Balzac's *peau de chagrin*, and expenses were increasing inordinately. The more frequent the issues of assignats, the higher prices rose, while the rise in prices led to fresh issues.

Since government officials could no longer live and were deserting their

⁵ The definitive law ordering the restitution of the property that had been sold was not voted till the 21st Prairial.

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communes are threatened with all the horrors of famine. Even Paris, the object of our chief solicitude in this connexion, is not free from peril, and its state is becoming even more alarming in this respect, because open revolts have already broken out in many communes for the purpose of stopping and seizing the corn intended for its food-supply. . . ." And the letter ended as follows: "You will see from this account how important it is that we should treat with Spain, and that, in order to do so speedily, we should take advantage of the state of distress to which it has been reduced by our victories." ⁷ Goupilleau de Fontenay had no need of this letter to show him how matters stood, for even the armies were suffering from the food-shortage, and desertions were becoming more and more frequent.⁸

From Rouen, Amiens, Verneuil, Chartres, Nantes, Le Mans, Agen, and Montpellier—from all parts the same heart-rending cry went up. On the 2nd Germinal the representative on mission at Agen, Paganel, wrote to the Committee of Public Safety: "A dreary silence reigns in every commune. What is happening in some places proves that the silence borders on despair. I have listened to heart-rending accents and threatening complaints. Speculation has reached such lengths that in the end property will no longer be respected. Excess of suffering makes men desperate. Black bread is generally sold at fifty sous a pound, in some places at three livres a pound, and everything else is in proportion. A sack of wheat costs thirty livres in coin or four hundred livres in assignats as the purchaser prefers. The country districts are bursting with wheat. The owners are cruel and inhuman. They want anything in exchange for their surplus except the national currency."⁹ At Nantes, "if they would prolong their lives, citizens are obliged to compromise with their stomachs."¹⁰ At Amiens, wrote the representative on mission Blaux on the 7th Germinal, "the manual labourers are no longer strong enough to work; all the citizens are worn out." A few days later, serious disorders broke out in this very town. Blaux was himself struck down and trampled underfoot amid shouts of "Long live the King!" On his way to Rouen, where serious disorders broke out at almost the same time as in Amiens and Paris, the deputy Duport saw two citizens die of starvation, and a widow with six

⁷ This letter, which will be found under the appropriate date in M. Aulard's collection, was written by Merlin of Douai.

⁸ See the *Annales révolutionnaires*, Vol. VI, pp. 506, 643, for M. François Vermale's important study on desertion in the army of the Alps after the 9th Thermidor, based on the note-books and papers of the representative on mission Réal.

⁹ See Aulard, *Actes du Comité de Salut public*, Vol. XX, under this date.

¹⁰ See the letter of Chaillou and Lofficial, dated the 1st Nivôse, year III, quoted by M. Marcel Marion, *Histoire financière*, Vol. III, p. 279.

children, "naked as if in a state of nature," who were also at the point of death from undernourishment.¹¹

What were the Thermidorians to do to deal with this appalling crisis which they had provoked by their disingenuous measures, all inspired by the narrowest class-feeling and by a fierce hatred of all that had been done under the great Committee of Public Safety?

They of course accused the Terrorists of having caused all the harm, though they did not support their savage insults by the slightest proofs. But they were none the less obliged to go back on their program and revive measures of compulsion against which they had fulminated when they were demanding the abolition of the maximum.

They had promised a complete restoration of commercial liberty, but they were unable to keep their promises. They had abolished the Commission of Commerce and Supply, but they were obliged to revive it immediately afterwards under another name. They had boasted that liberty of trade would yield abundant provisions for the cities and armies; but they were obliged to maintain requisitioning, without the necessary power for making it effective. Boissy d'Anglas, one of those moderates of the Plain who became rabid when their class interests were at stake, was placed by them at the head of the food-supply service instead of Robert Lindet, who was removed on the plea that he was a terrorist. On the 3rd Pluviôse, Boissy d'Anglas was obliged to admit that if the provisioning of Paris was imperilled, this was because of the ill will of the farmers, who were emptying their barns and selling their wheat surreptitiously rather than comply with the requisitioning. He obtained the passage of a decree restoring the former penalties for delinquents (prison, fines, requisitions paid for at the current rate for the date when they ought to have been carried out, etc.). But who was to secure the application of the decree now that all the governing bodies had been purged and the "terrorists" replaced by fraudulent traders or their accomplices? This was only a beginning. As a measure of economy Boissy had already had an enormous proportion of bran added to the army bread.¹² On the 19th Pluviôse he requisitioned both barley and winter barley for adding to the bread. On the 4th Ventôse he wrote to the deputy Froger, who was responsible for provisioning Paris, telling him to make use of mounted troops to coerce those

¹¹ Serious disorders were to break out at Bordeaux on the 14th Germinal. See the letter from the representative on mission Boussion, dated the 21st Germinal.

¹² Decree of the 28th Nivôse, year III, which ordered that the corn should again be twice milled: once, the "national milling" for civilians, with very little bran left in it, the second time for the soldiers, with ten pounds of bran per quintal, which Boissy praised as being more nourishing and wholesome than the other!

recalcitrant farmers who refused to thresh their wheat, so that they should have no grain to deliver. It was no use. Boissy could not command obedience as Robert Lindet had done. On the 5th Germinal he issued an ordinance prescribing that the flour for the army bread should not be bolted—that is, that all the bran should be left in it. The bread made of this flour was so soft and sticky that it stuck to the wall when thrown at it! On the previous day Boissy had been obliged to admit to the Convention that seven hundred thousand quintals of requisitioned flour for provisioning Paris had not arrived in time, and in desperation he had to issue a despairing ordinance that grain and flour should be borrowed to make up the deficiency in what was supplied by requisition, thus admitting his powerlessness to obtain the execution of his previous ordinances. On the following day he wrote to Froger: "About nineteen hundred sacks of flour are required for daily consumption. This evening we have only a hundred and fifteen and a half . . . the spectacle will make you shudder. . . . The fate of the country is in your hands. . . ." He tried to make up for the deficiency of bread by a distribution of rice and ordered a detailed return to be made of the stocks held by the wholesale and retail traders. Three ounces of rice and six ounces of biscuit were to take the place of half a pound of bread. But the women of Paris, among whom the rice was distributed, replied: "How do you expect us to cook this rice of yours? We have neither wood nor coal. Can we cook it in the sun?"¹³

There can be no doubt that it was this famine which provoked the riot on the following days. But in the petitions of the demonstrators the complaints about food which formed their main substance were further mixed up with a whole series of political grievances. Whilst asking for bread they at the same time wanted the Constitution put in force—that is, they desired the dissolution of the Convention, which no longer possessed their confidence, and in addition not only the election of a new assembly, but also the restoration of election to all public bodies, including those of the sections, communes, and departments as well, together with the election of both judges and administrative officials. The Constitution of 1793! These words which they had posted up on their placards were tantamount to saying: "Clear out, deputies, and your creatures with you—those whom you have installed everywhere in the place of the officials we elected, and who are oppressing us!" They further demanded the release of the patriots imprisoned since Thermidor, the recognition of the right to hold meetings—that is, the opening of the clubs—and the punishment of Fréron's *jeunesse*.

¹³ See the police report of the 8th Germinal in Aulard, *Paris sous la réaction thermidorienne*, Vol. I.

The Thermidorians tried to make out that the secret object of the rising was to prevent the impeachment of the four decemvirs (Vadier, Billaud, Barère, and Amar) from being voted. It is remarkable that no allusion is to be found to the four, in either the petitions formally handed in or the anonymous posters with which Paris was placarded.¹⁴ I am inclined to think that the demonstrators paid little regard to the deputies in general—even the Montagnards, though these were less odious to them than the rest, and their intervention was sometimes solicited. The starving people had small confidence in anybody but themselves. They wanted to regain the sovereignty which had been promised them only to be taken away again. The movement was inspired by those theories on direct government which were familiar to the Hébertists and had been revived by Babeuf and the Electoral Club.

Since the closing of the Jacobins, agitation had been almost incessant among the manual workers, especially in the arms factories. Again and again, in Brumaire, Frimaire, and Nivôse, threatening delegations of workmen had gone to the Convention demanding increased wages.¹⁵ When for reasons of economy Boissy d'Anglas, by an ordinance of the 16th Frimaire, prescribed that piece-work rates should be substituted for a daily wage, the agitation spread to Versailles and the provinces. On the 24th Nivôse, Benta-bole, Richou, Clauzel, Merlin of Thionville, and others denounced an alleged terrorist plot against the lives of the Thermidorian leaders. On the 14th Pluviôse, at the time when the busts of Marat were being thrown down, Merlin of Douai had written to Merlin of Thionville, who was at that time with the army of the Rhine, to return at once to Paris, where his presence was necessary: "The rogues are stirring, and we are assured that they are preparing an insurrection." But the agitation had seemed to settle down on the arrest of Babeuf and the closing of the clubs in the faubourg Antoine and the faubourg Saint-Marceau at the end of Pluviôse. This, however, was only apparent. The parties were watching each other pending a fresh attack.

At that very time, on the 6th Germinal, year III, Dyzès, a deputy of the Plain and, though a rich pottery-manufacturer of the Landes, a con-

¹⁴ The petitions were presented by the working-class sections on the 12th Germinal and the previous days. They will be found in the *Moniteur*. As for the posters, they have been analysed and reproduced in Mathieu's speech of the 23rd Ventôse, and in the reports of the police spies ("observers") published in M. Aulard's collection.

¹⁵ See the sessions of the Convention of the 27th, 28th, 29th, and 30th Brumaire, the 4th, 19th, 22nd, and 23rd Frimaire, the 6th and 7th Nivôse, etc.

vinced republican, wrote a confidential letter¹⁶ to a friend in which he said that the governing Committees wanted the revolt: "I am absolutely certain that if the governing Committees really wanted it, the most profound calm would prevail in this great city.

powers, it does not require very great art to carry on everything strictly in order; but, on what policy I do not know, they prefer to keep up an underground ferment and partial insurrections." In his memoirs the Montagnard Choudieu, who was to be one of the victims of the riot, expressly accuses the Thermidorians in power of having wanted an insurrection (*a journée*) in order to have a pretext for putting an end to the opposition once and for all.¹⁷

One thing is certain: in spite of the support lent them by the ninety Girondin deputies recently reinstated in the Convention by their aid, the Thermidorians, though absolute masters of the government,¹⁸ saw themselves faced with the rise of an increasingly solid and spirited opposition. The return of the outlawed Girondins, the reopening of the churches, the so-called pacification granted to the Vendéans and Chouans, which was really nothing but a disguised capitulation on the part of the Republic, had alarmed even such ardent anti-terrorists as Lecointre, who now regretted having drawn up the indictment of the members of the old Committees and was even trying to save them. Next, on the 11th Ventôse, Fréron unmasked his batteries, and, while insisting on an exemplary punishment for "the chief culprits" ("*les grands coupables*")—that is, for the four members of the old Committees upon whom the inquiry was being held—proposed that a special commission should be nominated to frame the organic laws for the Constitution of 1793. The last remaining democrats sitting on the benches of the Assembly realized that, under pretext of organic laws, a revision of the Constitution of 1793 was on foot. Possibly they would have accepted this revision if it had been accompanied by a general amnesty, the amnesty which had already been demanded in vain by Boudin, a deputy of the Plain. But

¹⁶ Letter published by MM. R. Larquier and Camille Vergniol in the *Revue de France* for December 15, 1926.

¹⁷ Choudieu, *Mémoires*, published by M. Barrucand, pp. 302-15.

¹⁸ On the 5th Ventôse the Thermidorians had secured the passage of a decree that there were to be no more *suppléants* (substitutes) on the Committees of the Assembly; that is, that the minority was no longer to be represented on them, for the *suppléants* were necessarily the deputies who had obtained the largest number of votes after those elected. On the 16th Ventôse the reactionary Thibaudeau, one of the most persistent opponents of the terrorists, was appointed president of the Assembly.

the interests of self-preservation urged them to resistance. They knew that repression would not stop at the four "chief culprits" whose heads Fréron was demanding. In a great speech on the 22nd Pluviôse the Girondin Bailleul had endeavoured to prove that there had been tyranny in the government before Thermidor, and that the only way to prevent a return of this tyranny was to strike down at a single blow not only the four chief culprits, but all the terrorists of the Republic, their accomplices, for whom he did not hesitate to propose deportation *en masse*.¹⁹ All the members of the Convention who were alarmed at these collective reprisals had effected a *rapprochement* with the deputies of the Crest, who now turned and faced the Thermidorians boldly. The sessions became more and more stormy. Some who had been Thermidorians, such as Thuriot, Bentabole, Élie Lacoste, Goupilleau de Fontenay, and Lecointre, definitely fell away from Fréron and Tallien and joined the Crest in resisting the demands of the new majority.²⁰ Bentabole induced the Assembly to shelve Bailleul's motion on the deportation *en masse* of all the terrorists and tried to oppose the reinstatement of the outlawed Girondins. Thuriot was at work behind the scenes, trying to save the four "chief culprits," while Méhée, Tallien's creature, showered abuse on him in the *Ami des citoyens* and called him "Sartine Thuriot."²¹ On the 27th Ventôse, Lecointre violently opposed the restitution of the property of condemned persons, and on the 28th he spoke in defence of the terrorists who had been deprived of their property and placed under observation.

When at last, on the 2nd Germinal, the debate opened in the Convention on Saladin's speech reporting on the impeachment of the four "chief culprits," it was evident that the strength of the opposition had increased so much that it was doubtful whether their impeachment would be voted. With a decision and a unanimity that they had not displayed till now, the

¹⁹ "The consequence of this declaration (that there had been tyranny before Thermidor) would have been that it was necessary speedily to purge the soil of liberty of the presence of tyrants" (*Moniteur*).

²⁰ That close observer Mallet du Pan was well aware of this split which had appeared in the old Thermidorian party since the removal of Marat from the Panthéon. He justly notes in his letter of April 1, 1795 that Bentabole, Thuriot, Élie Lacoste, Lecointre of Versailles, and Goupilleau de Fontenay had deserted the moderate group and become independents. He notes that their attacks on the Jacobins lacked vigour, and that they only voted with the moderates and Girondins now out of policy and obstructed their action with all their might. Mallet even understates the truth, for those whom he calls the independents openly opposed the extreme measures proposed by the reinstated Girondins.

²¹ See the *Ami des citoyens* for the 16th Ventôse, year III.

former members of the Committees under the Terror—Carnot, Robert Lindet, Cambon, the two Prieurs, and Moïse Bayle—made common cause with their accused colleagues and offered an apologia for their conduct; and their voices found an echo on the benches of the centre.

This tumultuous debate, which went on till the very eve of the rising, coincided with a recrudescence of famine and agitation which was already rousing the eastern sections of the capital and found expression either in anonymous placards or threatening petitions to the Convention. From the first the only idea of the members of the governing Committees, who felt the insurrection coming and perhaps desired it, was to prepare for repression. Boissy d'Anglas, the leader of the Plain, far from attempting to calm the starving demonstrators, met them with open scorn and challenge, as though to drive them to extremes. In a long and highly provocative speech on the 21st Ventôse, he accused his opponents of having promised the people "equality of fortunes" in order to stir up disorder. "People of France, open your eyes, observe these men, wild-eyed, pallid, and breathing forth wrath, who are rousing you to resentment and trying to move you to vengeance against a part of yourselves, whom they perfidiously call 'the gilded million,' in order to catch your ear and mislead your hearts! These words, which first echoed through the hall of the Jacobins in revolt against the Convention, these words, which have been too often repeated from this tribune, are the magic formula which contains the whole secret of the tyranny of the past and is the basis of all the hopes of that which it is desired to re-establish: it is the rallying-cry, it is the rampart behind which they think to conceal their overweening ambition, to deceive public opinion and defy the just severity of the laws; it is the signal for pillage, proscription, disorder, and crime, it is the signal for war!" And with fierce class-feeling, Boissy pointed out to the workers that the Convention had fed them by giving them work in the war factories. Such a speech at the very moment when the workers were looking in vain for food must have seemed to them bitterly ironical.

During the days which followed, Aubry, a Girondin full of rancour, the most prominent personality on the Military Committee, obtained a decree, on the 28th Ventôse, abolishing the system of substitutes on the Parisian National Guard, thus forcing the middle classes to serve in person, for fear of placing arms in the hands of the poor. Next Sieys, speaking on the 1st Germinal in the name of the three Committees (the Committees of Public Safety and of General Security and the Legislative Committee), amid protests from the Mountain, which abstained from voting, obtained the passage of a law known as the "special police law (*loi de grande police*)," for safeguarding the national representative body. Seditious cries, and

insults to the representatives of the people in the discharge of their functions, were declared to be criminal, and punishable by trial before the Revolutionary Tribunal. In case of disorderly assemblies in the neighbourhood of the Convention the tocsin was to be sounded from the Pavillon de l'Unité to summon armed forces. If the Convention were broken into, the surviving members were to meet at Châlons-sur-Marne, and the representatives on mission to the armies were at once to detach mobile columns to restore order. Those guilty of seditious cries were to be punished by deportation: "If it is found that these cries and threats were concerted in advance, the defendants will be liable to the death penalty" (Section II, Article 16). The Thermidorians had prepared their weapons of repression on the very day when the first collisions took place between the Muscadins and the men of the faubourge. While Sieys was reading his speech, the Tuileries were ringing with hostile shouts, and the workmen from the faubourgs were giving the Muscadins a ducking in the lake in the garden.

The Thermidorians strengthened their special guard, Fréron's *jeunesse*, at that time controlled by Fréron's secretary, Julian—who ultimately found a place, first in Fouché's police and afterwards in that of the Restoration—and by Méchain, who was to be one of Bonaparte's prefects. But they had no great confidence in the young men enrolled by two such recruiting-sergeants. As a precautionary measure the two committees (the Military Committee and the Committee of General Security) gave orders on the 30th Ventôse for the removal of the cannon from the Pont-Neuf. On the 6th Germinal they made the revolutionary committees of the twelve *arrondissements*, of which they had nominated the members, distribute a certain number of muskets "to citizens recognized as capable and worthy to be trusted with them" (Minute-book of the committee of the first *arrondissement*).²² On the 8th Germinal they ordered the arrest of the leaders of one of the last surviving clubs, that of Le Vert-Bois, in Les Gravilliers, one of the most turbulent sections, at which the partisans of the Montagnard deputy Léonard Bourdon met.²³ Thus they were armed against any contingency.

²² The register of the committee of revolutionary surveillance of the first *arrondissement* is in the National Archives, under the press-mark F⁷ 2476.

²³ The order of the Committee of General Security dated the 8th Germinal arrived at the revolutionary committee of the sixth *arrondissement* during the night of the 8th-9th. It dealt particularly with Citizen Barbot, a haberdasher, ex-president of the club of the rue du Vert-Bois, and gave orders to seize the books of the club and his papers (National Archives, F⁷ 2491). As early as the 26th Ventôse, crowds, chiefly of women, had begun to collect in this section.

Yet at the last moment the Thermidorians hesitated. They were no heroes, for all their swashbuckling airs. They were afraid. The crowds collecting in the labouring and artisan sections were growing larger. On the 8th Germinal the women refused the minute ration of bread which was offered them. The impeachment of the four "chief culprits" threatened to turn out badly in the Convention. During the last few days—on the 3rd Germinal—Carnot had produced a great impression by expressing indignation at the proposal to send republicans to the scaffold while they were granting an amnesty to Charette. Suddenly the two Merlins, "Merlin-Suspect" and "Merlin-Mayence," came to an understanding and proposed a compromise. On the 8th Germinal, Merlin of Thionville declared that there was only one way to put an end to disorder; namely, to put the Constitution into force on the spot and adjourn the trial of the four "chief culprits" to the next Assembly. "Witnesses and accusers cannot be judges in the same cause." He wanted the electors to be summoned for the 10th Floréal—that is, in a month's time. Merlin of Douai at once supported the proposal amid the applause of the Montagnards, who were quite surprised to see Merlin of Thionville taking their side. The motion was adopted in principle and referred to the Committees; but during the night the Committees thought better of it and raised objections. On the 10th Germinal, Louvet, the Girondin, pointed out that a sudden dissolution of the Convention would delay peace. The Convention, he said, had not finished its work. M. J. Chénier added: "Are bloodthirsty terrorism, vengeful royalism, and fanaticism, the precursor of royalism, yet crushed?" The Convention would be committing an act of cowardice if it abandoned its post before the threat of insurrection. "Stay at your posts, since there is still danger." Cambacérès in turn maintained that the Constitution would not work as it stood, and that organic laws cannot be improvised. And lastly Cambon, whose inspirations were always unhappy, spoke to the same effect as Chénier and Louvet. "Never," he said, "will foreign Powers consent to make peace with an Assembly that is to dissolve in forty days' time!" In vain did Merlin of Douai defend his proposal. The Convention, he said, was too divided to be still fit to do useful work. He proposed an amnesty for all that had been done during the Revolution. He pointed out that the trial of the four would sow discord in the Republic. But he was not listened to. The Convention resolved to nominate a commission to frame the organic laws—that is, the new Constitution which Fréron had been the first to demand. At the same time it decided to proceed with the trial of the four. The die was now cast.

The very day upon which the Convention rejected the amnesty was a *décadi*—that is, the day upon which the assemblies of the sections held

their meetings. The working-class sections voted threatening petitions, while the middle-class ones protested their loyalty to the Convention and called upon it to punish the "chief culprits" and to remain at its post.

There is no doubt that certain deputies of the Mountain acted in concert with those of their partisans upon whom they could still rely. Léonard Bourdon carried with him the section of Les Gravilliers, which was devoted to him, and on the 12th Germinal it was Van Eck, a creature of Thuriot's, and a friend of Dobsen—also a creature of Thuriot's—who headed the contingent which marched on the Convention from the section of the Cité. Cambon indulged in threatening speeches against the Thermidorians in the presence of the clerks at the Treasury. But neither Léonard Bourdon nor Thuriot nor Cambon nor the other Montagnards, who possibly seconded their action, wanted violent measures, a new May 31, directed against the Convention. There was no question of dispersing or purging the Assembly, but simply of overawing it so as to induce it to reverse its vote of two days before, and force it to accept the proposals of the two Merlins concerning the amnesty and the summoning of the primary assemblies. This is clearly proved by the attitude of the demonstrators, their leaders, the Montagnard deputies, and Thuriot himself. When the hall of the Assembly was rushed and the contingents from the faubourgs filed in a body past the bar and presented their demands, with Van Eck as their spokesman, while Merlin of Thionville, whose popularity had been revived by his recent proposal, mingled with the crowd, talked with the workmen, and embraced them, it was Gaston, a Montagnard, who persuaded the demonstrators to march past quickly and leave the hall, by saying that the atmosphere was stifling. And a little later, when Pelet, the president of the Assembly, heard the tocsin, which the Committees had started ringing in the Pavillon de l'Unité, and, plucking up his courage, began to threaten the petitioners and call them assassins, it was again a Montagnard, Choudieu, who calmed their wrath: "I declare to the worthy citizens who are listening to me that those who would keep them here are leading them into a trap. What these people want is to be able to say that the Convention is not a free agent, and they want to sound the tocsin so as to cause it to leave Paris" (and put in force Siey's law of the 1st Germinal). Choudieu had read the thoughts of the government aright. They had told off quite an insufficient force to defend the premises of the Convention. They had left the demonstrators a practically clear field. They doubtless hoped that the Montagnards would commit themselves in some way; but the Montagnards avoided the trap, though this did not save them. After a few hours the Committees called out the National Guards of the sections, who were devoted to their interests, and handed over

the command of the armed force to General Pichegru, the conqueror of Holland, who happened to be temporarily in Paris. One of their partisans, Auguis, had been molested in the section of the Panthéon; the Assembly had been broken into. No further excuse was needed for ridding themselves of their opponents. While Pichegru spent the night clearing the approaches to the Assembly, and the following day in completing the process in the faubourg Antoine,²⁴ the Thermidorians were wreaking their vengeance. The contemptible André Dumont started by denouncing Choudieu, a personal enemy of his, with whom he had carried on a controversy by poster during the last few days. With Choudieu he coupled Chasles, who had recalled in his newspaper the terrorist excesses in which Dumont had indulged in 1793 during his mission to the department of Somme. He also denounced his colleague Foussedoire, and concluded with the words: "I move that the three brigands who have dealt a death-blow to their country [by which he meant Collot, Billaud, and Barère, for Vadier had fled] be deported tonight." There was nothing to show that the three brigands, as he called them, were in the slightest degree responsible for the disorders; but the Assembly decreed without debate that they should be deported to Guiana without trial. The work of summary reprisals went on under the eye of the Muscadins, who now filled the galleries and egged on their friends. Choudieu, Chasles, Foussedoire, and Huguet (the last-named being also denounced by André Dumont), Léonard Bourdon (denounced by Fréron), Ruamps (denounced by the indefatigable André Dumont), Duhem (denounced by Delecloy), Amar (denounced by Merlin of Thionville, who no longer dreamt of an amnesty), and Cambon (denounced by Saladin) were placed under arrest and sent to the castle of Ham or other fortresses. The carriages in which the three "chief culprits" were being driven to Rochefort to embark for Guiana were stopped by the people for a time at the barrier of the Champs-Élysées, on which occasion Raffet, a moderate, who was commandant of the National Guard of the section Butte des Moulins, was grazed by a pistol-shot,²⁵ but

²⁴ On the 13th Germinal a number of demonstrators took refuge in what had been the cathedral. A few of them scattered about the sections Cité and Quinze-Vingts (see a letter from the deputy Battelier to his colleague Albert dated the 21st Germinal, year III, in *La Révolution française* for January-March 1922). Battelier adds that Léonard Bourdon, who had "led astray (*égaré*)" the section of Les Gravilliers, was arrested on the 13th Germinal by some citizens of that section, who took him to the Committee of Public Safety "bound hand and foot."

²⁵ For the notes in which Raffet described the part which he played on the 12th Germinal and 1st Prairial, see the article by Henri Monin in *La Révolution française* (1893), Vol. II. Raffet was appointed second in command to Pichegru by an ordinance of the Committee of General Security dated the 13th Germinal. On that day he was

order was quickly restored. Pichegru came up to the expectations of his protectors.

None the less, reprisals continued on the following days. Hentz (denounced by Merlin of Thionville), Lecointre himself (denounced by Bourdon of Oise), and yet others: Granet, Maignet, Levasseur of Sarthe, and Crassous, were placed under arrest. Most of them had taken no part whatever in the demonstration. They were not even charged with having used imprudent language on that day. They were the leaders of the opposition, and that was enough. On the 12th Germinal the Dantonist Garnier of Aube, in moving the arrest of all the members of the old governing Committees in a body, frankly admitted this: "When it is a question of getting rid of tyranny, we ought not to stand upon formalities. Did we observe any on the 9th Thermidor?" And, indeed, all they had done was to outlaw the Robespierrists.

It is quite a probable supposition of Choudieu's that the Thermidorians, who controlled the Committee of General Security, had purposely allowed the insurrection to run its course unchecked, so as to find a pretext for outlawing all the leaders of the Crest.²⁶ Had not Fréron cried during the session on the evening of the 12th Germinal: "The revolution of the 9th Thermidor shall have its sequel"? In his memoirs Thibaudeau, who was troubled by as few scruples as Fréron and Garnier of Aube, laughed after the event at the irresolution and lack of boldness of the Montagnard deputies during the insurrection.²⁷ As a matter of fact, it is certain that Choudieu and his friends calmed the demonstrators. Thus the 12th Germinal was no more than another June 20th and met with no more success. Just as the demonstrators of June 20, 1792 failed to overawe Louis XVI and force him to recall the Girondin ministers, so the demonstrators of the 12th Germinal, left without leadership by the Montagnard deputies, failed to overawe the Thermidorians and extort from them an amnesty and the putting in force of the Constitution of 1793, the principle of which they had voted four days earlier. But on June 20 Louis XVI had won the day by his self-possession alone and by the prestige still exerted by the monarchical idea. On the 12th Germinal the Thermidorians possessed no prestige. They were thoroughly

at the head of the detachment told off as escort to the deputies condemned to deportation. "Between five and six o'clock in the evening I was wounded by a pistol-shot, the bullet passing through my coat, tunic, and shirt and entering the abdomen just above the navel. I took out the bullet on the very spot where I was wounded, and put it in my pocket." (It was at the barrier of Neuilly.)

²⁶ Choudieu, *Mémoires*, pp. 304 et seq.

²⁷ Thibaudeau, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 153.

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discredited. All that they had left to save them was the audacity so strongly recommended by their former leader Danton, and to this audacity they added the appeal to military force. M. Louis Barthou saw this and expressed it very well in his article "The Morrow of Thermidor":²⁸ "The strength of the Thermidorian party consisted not so much in the tumultuous violence of Fréron's *jeunesse dorée* as in the battalions grouped about Pichegru. . . . Pichegru prepared the way for Bonaparte, whom he foreshadowed." He prepared the way for him from a distance only, but meanwhile he hastened the hour of the White Terror, while at the same time he was making ready for his own treason.

²⁸ "Le Lendemain de Thermidor" in the *Revue de Paris*, October 15, 1926.

CHAPTER IX

The White Terror

THE White Terror—by which is to be understood the whole series of reprisals, acts of violence, and massacres carried out against the agents of the former government—lasted for more than a year, quite as long, that is, as the Red Terror. It continued to go on sporadically during the early years of the Directory and had not entirely disappeared even under the Consulate. It flamed up again suddenly after the second return of the Bourbons in 1815.

Louis Blanc says that "it surpassed in horror even the September massacres, even Collot d'Herbois's wholesale shootings, even Carrier's drownings."

As a matter of fact, the abominations of the Red Terror had at least some excuse. They were caused by the invasion, the approach or victory of the enemy at home or abroad. The artisans and National Guards of Paris, who, immediately after the capture of Longwy and Verdun, broke into the prisons before setting out for Châlons and massacred the aristocrats whom they contained, were not pursuing a private vengeance. They had no acquaintance with the prisoners and saw in them nothing but traitors who were helping the enemy and rejoicing at his successes.

The White Terror, on the other hand, broke out when the armies of France were everywhere victorious, when they had conquered Holland and won the Rhine frontier and were pouring down into Spain and Italy. Not only were the perpetrators of the massacres, who were known as "Companions of Jesus" or "Companions of the Sun," in no way conscious of performing a patriotic task: most of them could not even put forward as a colourable pretext that they were working for the return of royalty or the defence of religion. Not all of them were royalists or believing Christians—besides, the churches had just been reopened. Most of them were pursuing a personal revenge; they knew the unarmed enemy whom they struck down without mercy. The White Terror belonged rather to the category of private wars, such as were familiar in the Middle Ages, than to that of civil war. It was a butchery inspired by no ideal.

The Red Terror had almost always proceeded in due form of law;

repression had been carried on in the full light of day, before tribunals or military commissions analogous to our modern councils of war. The White Terror, on the other hand, violated all rules and flouted the law; it was a series of assassinations, no more nor less, often perpetrated by night, in the victims' own houses or in the prisons of which the doors had been forced. Even those responsible for the September massacres had set up the semblance of a tribunal, presided over by Maillard, which did acquit some of the prisoners. But nothing of the sort was done during the White Terror. The killing was carried out without formalities or phrases.

To add to the infamy, the Companions of Jesus had words of humanity and moderation on their lips. In striking down the disarmed "*blood-drinkers (buveurs de sang)*" it was to morality that they appealed.

The agents of the Red Terror were gloomy fanatics, who considered themselves to be acting legitimately in their own defence. They carried out their operations openly. They were often men of the people.

Those of the White Terror often took the precaution of masking themselves before setting about their base task. There were men of good social position among them, men with fine manners, who, having done the deed, went and related their exploits in the salons of the Merveilleuses, who approved them and gave them their reward.

This explains why, though the Red Terror has occasionally found apologists, I know of none for the White Terror.

The reprisals against the men of the Montagnard party did not break out all of a sudden. They went on hand in hand with the reactionary tendencies in the government. Though it is correct to state, as I have just done, that they were essentially a matter of private vengeance, it would not be fair to stop short at this statement, ignoring the more or less direct part played in them by the Thermidorian legislation. Not only did the public authorities, who were responsible for order, let events take their course for a very long time: they also played an active part, if not in directly organizing the drama, at least in preparing for it. Louis Blanc, the only great historian of the Revolution who has treated the subject in any detail, has not given sufficient prominence to this aspect of the question.

A distinction must first be drawn between the various times and places.

Firstly, the times: bloody reprisals hardly started before Pluviôse, after the law of the 21st Nivôse had authorized the return of those who had emigrated after May 31, those who had taken part in the federalist insurrections of the south and the revolt of Lyons and Toulon or had been compromised by their dealings with the Austrians and Prussians on the northern frontier or on that of Alsace at the time of the invasion. It was this

return *en masse* of the so-called Girondin *émigrés* that was to provide the White Terror with its leaders and agents, as well as its motives of action. The law of the 3rd Ventôse on freedom of worship was next to lead to the return of a number of deported priests. Reprisals were henceforward carried out not only upon the representatives of the former revolutionary government and the purchasers of national property, who were a special object of attack to the former possessors of the property that had been sold, but also upon the constitutional clergy as a whole.

The law of the 5th Ventôse, passed on the motion of Merlin of Douai, for keeping all members of district or departmental administrations, municipalities, revolutionary committees, tribunals, etc.—in fact, all public officials in general, whether civil or military—who had been deprived of office or suspended since the 10th Thermidor under observation in their native communes, on pain of six months' imprisonment, was a sort of law of the suspects in the reverse sense and did much to precipitate the outbreak of the White Terror, for it singled out for public contempt and reprisals all those who had played any part in the revolutionary government.

The decrees of the 21st and 22nd Germinal, which formed an epilogue to the hunger insurrection of the 12th Germinal, did even more than Merlin's law to make the fate of the terrorists worse and hand them over to the attacks of their personal enemies. The first of these decrees, passed as the result of a speech by M. J. Chénier, ordered that terrorists—that is, "men known in their sections to have had a share in the horrors committed under the tyranny which preceded the 9th Thermidor"—should be disarmed. In Paris this disarmament was to be carried out under the supervision of the Committee of General Security: in the departments, under that of the representatives on mission, or, in default of them, the district directories. This decree, which crowded the prisons as soon as it was put in force, was to do much to facilitate the task of the murderers.

Lastly, the decree of the 22nd Germinal, voted as the result of a speech by the Girondin Saladin, opened wide to the *émigrés* of May 31 a means of entry into France which had been only partially opened to them by that of the 22nd Nivôse. The decree of the 22nd Nivôse applied only to *émigrés* working with their hands and continued to exclude those who had been the leaders of the federalist insurrection and, as such, had been outlawed. Saladin's decree annulled all sentences of outlawry. All the *émigrés* of May 31, without exception, were authorized to return and reinstated in possession of their property and political rights—that is, the representatives on mission could entrust them with positions of public authority. During the debate

the Montagnard Gaston asked whether Précý, the royalist leader of the insurgents of Lyons, would benefit by this decree, and whether all those in a like position, who had taken up arms against their country, were to be reinstated. The reply of the Girondin Henri Larivière was: "Those who opposed what was done on May 31 deserved well of the country!" Thus not only were the republicans disarmed after the White Terror had already broken out, but experienced leaders were provided for the Companies of Jesus. It is remarkable that the man who inspired this last-mentioned law of the 22nd Germinal—he boasts in his memoirs¹ of having actuated Saladin—was the pious Durand de Maillane; it is still more remarkable that its application in the south was entrusted to Durand de Maillane in the course of a mission which he himself solicited. He took as his secretary a returned *émigré* and applied the law to some *émigrés* of Toulon who had been deeply compromised by their dealings with the English and Spaniards. Eight of them had signed the "convention for a loan of a million piastres made in the name of Louis XVII, under the guarantee of Their Excellencies Admirals Hood and Langara, and secured on the port, magazines, and arsenals of Toulon and the whole of the English squadron."² On his own admission Durand de Maillane appointed a number of *émigrés* to posts of all sorts. He facilitated the recovery of their property by these *émigrés*, even when it had been sold; and allowed them to bring actions before the courts against those who had bought it. He had the sales annulled by mere administrative ordinances. It happened more than once that, out of fear, the purchasers made restitution of the property which they had bought and paid for. Durand de Maillane encouraged these transactions and is shameless enough to abuse the buyers who refused to consent to them.³

¹ Durand de Maillane, *Mémoires*, p. 262.

² Quoted by Louis Blanc, *Histoire de la Révolution française* (ed. Docks de la Librairie), Vol. II, p. 627, following Fréron's famous *Mémoire historique sur la réaction royale et les massacres du Midi* (*Historical Memorandum on the Royalist Reaction and the Massacres in the South*).

³ This is how he expresses himself in his reply to Fréron, entitled: *Dernier État du Midi ou Rapport de Durand de Maillane au retour de sa mission* (*The Most Recent Condition of the South, or Report by Durand de Maillane on his Return from his Mission*), 12th Frimaire, year IV: "[The fugitives who have returned in virtue of the law of the 22nd Germinal], having learnt that their property had been invaded, rather than sold according to the forms prescribed by law, laid complaints [evidently to Durand] and appealed against these sales through legal channels before the constitutional authorities or judicial bodies. Many of the holders [he dare not say 'purchasers'] gave up their property to them, others came to a settlement with them; but most of them resorted to calumny. They revived their old revolu-

It is evident that we cannot understand the White Terror properly unless we take into account the successive decrees by which the Convention organized a sort of legal system of repression against the terrorists. If we examine matters carefully, the responsibility of the Convention and its representatives on mission, though indirect and general, is plainly visible. And its decrees enable us to mark certain stages in the work of vengeance. Before the 21st Nivôse the reprisals were in general mild and were not as yet carried out by *émigrés*. After the 22nd Nivôse and, above all, after the 5th Ventôse the *émigrés* appeared upon the scene. But they were not yet in a position to give rein to their passions, for although the terrorists were kept under observation in their respective communes, they were still provided with arms. But as soon as the laws of the 21st and 22nd Germinal were put in force, unbridled violence was let loose. This time it was under the direction of men who had not only borne arms against the Republic, but found refuge and support with the enemy. The White Terror reached its height in Floréal and Prairial. This was the period of the great massacres. And, finally, a fresh phase opened when the Convention tardily decided upon organized repression at the moment of the Quiberon expedition and the renewal of the war in the west.

We have distinguished between the periods; we must now distinguish between places and regions. To the honour of France be it said the White Terror was not general, any more than the massacre of Protestants had been after St. Bartholomew's Day. Its exploits were confined, as a rule, to the departments which had sided with the Gironde and offered open resistance to the Convention during the summer of 1793—that is, to Provence and Languedoc, the valleys of the Rhône and Saône, and the adjacent regions: in all, about ten departments. Elsewhere, in the rest of France, where federalism had not degenerated into revolt, and where there had consequently been no emigration after May 31, the reprisals were in general confined to the application of the laws of the 5th Ventôse and the 21st Germinal. If there were deeds of violence, they were isolated. The authorities and the tribunals, even when purged by the Thermidorians, sometimes managed to resist the passions which had been let loose. In Côte-d'Or, Marne, Cher, and Aube the terrorists against whom proceedings were taken were almost all acquitted. Here repression went no further than the disarming or imprisonment of a larger or smaller number of persons for longer or shorter periods.

tionary cries against the returning *émigrés*, and the refractory priests who turned Chouan (*chouannaient*). Various members of the Convention listened to them and believed them. . . ."

This geographical distribution of the White Terror enables us to understand its essential character. The acts of violence and massacres were the work of returned *émigrés* who wanted to regain possession of their property and avenged themselves on those who had taken it from them or were in possession of it. This will be seen more clearly from a rapid review of the phases which we have indicated.

During the first phase, which began immediately after the 9th Thermidor, all that was done was to place under arrest the terrorists who were supposed to be accomplices or partisans of Robespierre. Of course passion played its part in this, and some were arrested as Robespierrists who had never had any connexion with Robespierre.

It was the Thermidorians sent as representatives on mission to the departments who proceeded to arrest people and deprive them of office. Thus Charles Delacroix, who was sent to the department of Ardennes at the end of Thermidor, took action against all the leading members of the club at Sedan: Vassant, Varoquier, etc. Méaulle, who was sent to Drôme, pursued implacably the relatives and friends of the brothers Payan, one of whom had been guillotined at the same time as Robespierre. Florent Guiot in the department of Nord, Perrin of Vosges in Gard, Serres and Auguis in Marseilles, Goupilleau de Montaigu in Vaucluse, Pocholle and Charlier in Lyons, no longer contented themselves with attacking the Robespierrists; during Fructidor and Vendémiaire they deprived of office and imprisoned all revolutionaries who refused to follow the Convention in its retrograde course, while at the same time they released suspects by the hundred. In places where the clubs were still powerful, as at Marseilles, the representatives on mission, while still condemning the Terror, did not hesitate to adopt the most terrorist measures against the members of the clubs. After a Jacobin demonstration at Marseilles, Serres and Auguis, considering themselves to have been insulted, set up a military commission at the beginning of Vendémiaire, which summarily pronounced five sentences of death.⁴ This was the first blood shed in the south since Thermidor, and it took place by order of representatives of the people. "Since that time [that is, since the closing of the club at Marseilles]," wrote Goupilleau de Montaigu to Rovère, "one sees nothing but fugitives from the Marseilles Club, whom the revolutionary committees are everywhere treating with extreme rigour."⁵

⁴ Letter from the representatives on mission Serres and Auguis, dated the 8th Vendémiaire, year III. Of the five sentenced, four were gendarmes.

⁵ Letter of the 20th Vendémiaire, year III, in the *Correspondance* published by Michel Jouve and Giraud-Mangin.

But attempts at private vengeance were already being made nearly everywhere. The discharged suspects tried to find out who had denounced them and obtain the punishment of those by whose orders they had been imprisoned. Thus on the 16th Brumaire a citizen named Langlois requested the revolutionary committee of the sixth *arrondissement* of Paris to give him access to the papers concerning his case. The committee refused his request and was approved by the Committee of General Security,⁶ which on the 15th Frimaire forbade "the disclosure to discharged prisoners of the reason for their arrest, or the return of any arms, save to those recognized as good citizens." But even in Paris it was not long before the Committee of General Security was carried away. After the removal of Marat from the Panthéon, the Thermidorian sections held a general assembly at the end of Pluviôse and the beginning of Ventôse, at which it was decided to appoint special commissions of inquiry to examine such reports, minute-books, and papers as should give information about the arbitrary acts committed by the former members of the revolutionary committees.⁷ Encouraged by the Committee of General Security, the committees of the *arrondissements* at first tried to resist. But after the 12th Germinal they had to give in. The Committee of General Security itself called upon the sections to draw up the list of terrorists to be disarmed.⁸ Certain of the sections had already set to work on this task before being asked—for instance, that of Fontaine de Grenelle, which had done so as early as the 20th Pluviôse, its example being followed by those of Thermes and Butte des Moulins,⁹ Picpus, Réunion, Amis de la Patrie, etc. At Fontaine de Grenelle a resolution had been passed to write up in red letters on a board, to be hung over the president's desk, the list of sixteen terrorists drawn up by the section after a discussion in which all sorts of personal grudges had found free expression. After Germinal the list of terrorists was constantly being added to. This time they were disarmed. After the insurrection of Prairial they were arrested and their names

⁶ See the Minute-books of the committee of the sixth *arrondissement* in the National Archives, F^r 2491.

⁷ See Minute-book F^r 2509 (National Archives), containing the minutes of the debates of the section Fontaine de Grenelle.

⁸ On the 23rd Germinal, year III, the Committee of General Security demanded their list of terrorists from the committee of the sixth *arrondissement* (National Archives, F^r 2491).

⁹ See National Archives, F^r 2476, the Minute-book of the revolutionary committee of the first *arrondissement*, under date of the 6th Ventôse. The commission of inquiry of the section Les Piques, composed of eight members, sat at the Hôtel de Villequier. See also the Minute-book of the section Fontaine de Grenelle. F^r 2509, under dates 30th Ventôse and 10th Germinal.

posted up, not inside the hall this time, but at the entrance. On this occasion the books of the popular society and even those of the fraternal society were searched, for it was intended that women terrorists should be entered on the lists as well as men. The Committee of General Security took alarm at this flood of reprisals. In order to stop them, it ordered the sections to finish their lists within a stated time, and then released certain of those arrested. The sections protested. That of Fontaine de Grenelle resolved on the 30th Prairial to make representations to the Committee and request it not to release any prisoners without previously referring to the section and asking its opinion. It is evident that the Committee of General Security met with only a grudging obedience. But, in Paris at least, there were no massacres.

In the departments that had remained republican the disarming of the terrorists was not carried out without resistance. In Rouen, for instance, the sections were met by a firm stand on the part of the municipality. The sections had entered two hundred and thirteen names upon their red list, of which the municipality kept only forty-three. By the intervention of the representative on mission Casenave these were increased to sixty-six. But the municipality was obdurate, and in the end no more than thirty-seven terrorists were disarmed.¹⁰

In the department of Cher, Laurenceot, the representative on mission, a Girondin who had been one of the seventy-five, failed to inspire the local authorities with his own animus. The district of Sancerre averred that it knew nobody who had taken part in the horrors of the time of tyranny. In vain did he renew all the official bodies by the aid of the representative on mission Cherrier, who now joined him; all he was able to effect was the drawing up of a list of thirty-three names at Bourges. By a special ordinance he forbade those included in this list to meet more than three at a time. But the moral effect of his mission was such that royalism, hitherto crushed, now revived, trees of liberty began to be cut down in the country districts and shouts were raised of "Long live Louis XVII! Long live religion!"¹¹

In the departments of Aube and Marne the representative on mission Albert, a nephew of Reubell's, divided the terrorists into two classes: the leaders and those who had been misled. At Troyes there were forty-three

¹⁰ See Clérémbray, *La Terreur à Rouen*, pp. 491-520.

¹¹ See Th. Lemas, "*La Mission de Cherrier et Laurenceot dans le Cher après thermidor*," in *La Révolution française* for 1893.—In some departments it happened that avowed royalists, only recently released, were given the task of disarming the terrorists. In the department of Nièvre, the scene of the representative on mission Guilleumardet's activities, this was so. "I myself," says the royalist agent Hyde de Neuville, "had a part in this salutary measure" (*Souvenirs*, Vol. I, p. 114).

of the former and thirty-one of the latter. Albert tried to have the chief ones prosecuted before the criminal tribunal, on the pretext of offences against the ordinary law: at Troyes, for instance, some were prosecuted who had caused the outward marks of feudalism and fanaticism in the churches to be destroyed. Most of them were acquitted by the jury.¹² In Marne, Albert was even less fortunate than in Aube. At Reims the municipality opened a register by his orders, in which denunciations were to be entered. But the only denunciators were those who had private grievances to satisfy. There were, moreover, very few of them. In spite of a thoroughgoing inquiry made at his behest by the judges of the peace, nothing of importance was discovered. The jury acquitted most of those who had been sent before it on the charge of participating in the September massacres. There were only two death-sentences in all. The most deeply implicated among these *septembriseurs* was Bezanson-Guillaume, an ancestor of Hippolyte Taine on his mother's side, who committed suicide in prison.¹³

It is superfluous to multiply examples. We now know what the repression was like when it preserved the forms of law. We must, however, emphasize one aspect of the subject which is generally neglected. Quite frequently the suspects imprisoned before Thermidor brought civil actions against the members of the old revolutionary committees who had signed the warrant for their arrest, and claimed compensation and damages from them before the courts. I can quote at least two examples of this kind, the first at Rouen and the second in the department of Ain. At Rouen an ex-procurator (what would nowadays be called an *avoué* or solicitor) named Malandin started proceedings against the terrorist Lambert, who had caused his imprisonment. On the 5th Prairial the jury decided that there were grounds for proceedings. Lambert was arrested and subsequently sentenced by the criminal tribunal of Seine-Inférieure, on the 19th Messidor, to six years' hard labour and twenty thousand livres' damages, to be paid to Malandin. But the judgment was not carried out. Lambert petitioned the Convention to quash it. The wind was in a different quarter now: it was after Quiberon. The Con-

¹² See Albert Babeau, *Histoire de Troyes*, Vol. II, pp. 362 et seq.

¹³ See S. Blum, "La Mission d'Albert dans la Marne en l'an III," in *La Révolution française*, Vols. XLIII and XLIV; and Gustave Laurent, "Deux ancêtres maternels de Taine, le maire jacobin Hurtaux-Pinchard et le septembriseur Bezanson-Guillaume (Two of Taine's Ancestors on the Mother's Side, the Jacobin Mayor Hurtaux-Pinchard, and Bezanson-Guillaume, who took part in the September Massacres)," in *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* for September-October 1927.

vention acceded to his request, and the judgment was quashed. M. Félix Clérembray, the historian of the Terror at Rouen, from whom I quote these facts, adds that there were other cases of the same sort in Seine-Inférieure, and notes a point of capital importance: that is, that among the judges of the terrorists prosecuted at the instance of private individuals, ex-suspects were often included whose imprisonment these very terrorists had formerly caused.¹⁴

In the department of Ain a lawyer named Joseph Buynand, who had been imprisoned before Thermidor and released on payment of a revolutionary levy of four thousand livres, started proceedings before the tribunal of Ambérieu against one Montagnat, the member of the revolutionary committee who had signed the warrant for his arrest. In addition to the restitution of the four thousand livres which he had paid into the district treasury, he claimed twenty-five thousand livres' damages. But the case was dismissed.

On the other hand, it sometimes happened that terrorists who had been disarmed on the denunciation of private individuals took action before the courts against those who had denounced them. I know of at least one example: that of Citizen Pasquier, of the section of the Louvre, who obtained a verdict for a thousand livres' damages, to be used for the benefit of the poor, against those who had denounced him after the insurrection of Prairial and had him arrested and disarmed.¹⁵

But I am in a hurry to arrive at the White Terror properly so called, which went on outside the sphere of the law in those southern departments of France which had revolted against the Convention before, in 1793, and took the form of acts of violence, assassination, and massacre.

As might have been feared, the assassinations started at Lyons. This city had held out for several months against the troops of the Convention which had besieged it. The wholesale shootings ordered by Collot d'Herbois and Fouché had left an indelible hatred in the minds of the inhabitants. When the decree of the 21st Nivôse enabled the royalists who had followed Précý in his flight to Switzerland to return home, their one thought was revenge. They formed themselves into a secret society, the Company of Jesus, about whose origin and working our information is defective, but which we may judge by its deeds. According to the speech of M. J. Chénier on the 6th Messidor, year III, this Company of Jesus, as its name implies, mingled—

¹⁴ Félix Clérembray, *La Terreur à Rouen*, pp. 506–20.

¹⁵ Minute-book of the general assemblies of the section Fontaine de Grenelle, under the date 30th Thermidor, year III (National Archives, F⁷ 2509).

to quote his words—religious ideas with massacres.¹⁶ It is said to have had a seal engraved on which the names of Précý and Louis XVII were coupled together. Chénier maintained that it recruited its braves, not only from the royalists of the siege, but also from the ex-terrorists, who obtained their pardon by this means. The Committees had made the mistake of sending to Lyons as representative on mission Hyacinthe Richaud, a weak man who could do nothing but flatter the people and give posts to all who had taken part in the siege. On the pretext of reconciling all parties he caused a great festival to be celebrated in honour of the decree of the 13th Pluviôse which had put an end to the state of siege at Lyons. During the festival “the fatal lists which might perpetuate division,” as he called them, were burnt. But immediately after the festival the republicans, known locally as *Mathevons*, were insulted, roughly handled in the streets, knocked down, and thrown into the Rhône.¹⁷ Richaud ought to have been forewarned and on his guard, for as early as the 13th Pluviôse, three weeks before the famous festival of reconciliation, the municipality of Lyons, moderate though it was, had issued the following ordinance: “Whereas the most reprehensible brawls and excesses are becoming more frequent, and whereas their authors no longer confine themselves to attacking their victims in the streets, but actually seek them out in their homes and in public places; and whereas several citizens have already been mutilated, and others lost their lives: the municipality forbids the carrying of heavy cudgels, sword-sticks, and all other weapons of offence.” This ordinance was never put in force. The patriot Fernex, formerly a member of the revolutionary commission at Orange, was killed by the Companions of Jesus in the very midst of the escort which was taking him to prison—an escort of eight gendarmes, twenty hussars, and twenty infantrymen. His corpse was thrown into the Rhône.¹⁸ Next it was the turn of the patriot Sautemouche, who was torn limb from limb and thrown into the Saône; ¹⁹ and then of the patriots Lafage, Bergeret, Robas, etc. For

¹⁶ The name “Companions of Jehu” was absolutely unknown at the time. It is an invention of Charles Nodier’s, which unfortunately met with a great success among the romantic historians (see Louis Blanc, *Histoire de la Révolution*, ed. Docks de la Librairie, Vol. II, p. 618).

¹⁷ Letter from Richaud, dated the 4th Ventôse, year III, in M. Aulard’s collection.

¹⁸ See the report of the trial of Joseph Fernex, under the date 26th Pluviôse, year III, in the notes and documents published by Albert Metzger under the title of *Lyon en 1795*, p. 11. (This work has been revised by Joseph Vaesen.) The ordinance of the municipality, dated the 13th Pluviôse, is to be found in the same work, p. 7.

¹⁹ See Bouchez and Roux, *Histoire parlementaire de la Révolution*, Vol. XXXVI, pp. 412–13.

several months some *Mathevon* was killed every day.²⁰ The authorities and the representatives on mission did nothing, or at most issued an appeal for calm from time to time. They did not have any of the murderers arrested, though the latter were perfectly well known. But the massacres did not stop at men: they spared neither women nor girls. Having failed to find Richaud, the picture-dealer, at his house, the Companions of Jesus seized his seventeen-year-old daughter, took her off to prison, and murdered her.²¹ They blew out the brains of a woman named Roux in front of her shop. They beat three women named Taveau, Jouve, and Jacob to death. They even killed a woman seventy years of age and threw her into the Rhône for making fun of the costume of the Muscadins. The bodies were tied to the first vehicle that passed by, dragged through the street, and thrown into the river. The Companions of Jesus had been careful to publish a folio list in two columns, one containing the terrorists, the other the victims of the siege.²² No steps were taken to discover those responsible for this public incitement to murder.

These isolated assassinations culminated in a great massacre which took place in the prisons on the 16th Floréal. On the 15th Floréal the tribunal condemned the merchant Étienne Bonnaud, a former member of the revolutionary committee of Vaise, to hard labour, upon which the crowd protested and demanded his death. On the following day, the 16th Floréal, the Companions of Jesus split up into three bands, each having one of the prisons as its destination. They forced an entrance and massacred the political prisoners, who defended themselves desperately. There were ninety-nine victims, six of whom were women. Boisset, the representative on mission, who had taken Richaud's place, did not appear upon the scene till everything was over and one of the prisons was in flames. In his letter to the Convention he made excuses for the assassins and drew the conclusion that, to prevent a recurrence of such scenes, the terrorists ought to be punished promptly: "If you do not adopt general measures for the punishment of the oppressors, if you do not turn your attention to the fate of those who were oppressed, incalculable evils will arise." He underestimated the number of victims, stating it at sixty or seventy. He took no serious steps to punish the leaders

²⁰ "It is to be noted," says Albert Metzger, "that during the two past months [that is, previous to the great massacre of the 15th and 16th Floréal] hardly a day passed that was not sullied by some act of private vengeance, and the authorities did but little to prevent this" (op. cit., p. 46).

²¹ See Buchez and Roux, op. cit., Vol. XXXVI, p. 413.

²² Ibid., Vol. XXXVI, p. 412.

of the murderers.²³ Some fifteen young men were sent before the tribunal of Roanne, but they were acquitted and on their return to Lyons were borne in triumph and crowned with flowers.

The Committee of Public Safety was aware of the position of affairs at Lyons, for two days before the massacre it had given orders to the representative Cadroy to go there—a curious choice! “The due order of things there,” it wrote to Cadroy, “is strangely upset; royalists and *émigrés*, partisans or accomplices of Précý, occupy both civil and military posts.” Cadroy arrived in Lyons at the end of Floréal. Instead of organizing repression he acted as mouthpiece for the demands and desires of the Companions of Jesus. “The young men,” he wrote to the Committee on the 29th Floréal, “think it an astonishing thing that the same favour is not shown to them as to the Vendéans”—they were surprised, that is, that anyone should try to send them to the front. But Cadroy asked for a special decree exempting them from military service. He added, in a tone of rejoicing, that “people are vowing death to the terrorists.” “The people of Lyons will not allow them to rend their country; but we are sorry to see that in this commune little is done to search for the *émigrés*. We may even say that they are not without protection here. There is no longer any honest prosecution of deserters, and these two classes of men seem to associate themselves with the young men subject to the levy.” Cadroy did nothing. He left Lyons for Marseilles, where he was to distinguish himself by his shameful conduct. The one idea of his colleague Boisset, whom the Committee of Public Safety had been weak enough to leave in Lyons, was to punish the terrorists. On hearing of the insurrection of the 1st Prairial in Paris, he sent for ten thousand muskets from Saint-Étienne and distributed them among the National Guard of Lyons, which was entirely formed of Companions of Jesus and their partisans. In his letter of the 8th Prairial he announced that several terrorists had been massacred at Montbrison and Lyons, and that he foresaw that the prisons would shortly be broken into again.²⁴

²³ Boisset's letter of the 16th Floréal will be found in M. Aulard's collection. For the massacre, see also Albert Metzger, *op. cit.*, p. 48, and Buchez and Roux, *op. cit.*, Vol. XXXVI, pp. 413-14, with the list of victims.

²⁴ A deputation of patriots from the department of Loire described the state of their part of the country to the Convention on the 29th Vendémiaire, year IV. In the district of Montbrison six thousand patriot families had taken refuge in the woods to avoid massacre. In the district of Saint-Étienne two thousand workmen had been obliged to leave the factories, which had passed into the hands of five thousand Chouans, organized by Précý's aides-de-camp. At Saint-Étienne twenty-eight prisoners who were being transferred to the Place du Breuil were shot amid shouts of “Long live the Republic!” after which fourteen more were massacred like

Encouraged by impunity, the White Terror spread to the neighbouring departments, Ain, Jura, and Loire. The terrorists of Ain, arrested by Boisset, were to have been tried at Lons-le-Saunier. When the wagons containing them drove out of Bourg on the 30th Germinal, a crowd attacked them with stones, sticks, sabres, and pistols. Since they had previously been chained by the neck and wrists to the sides of the wagons, they were unable to defend themselves and were massacred on the spot, their escort making no serious effort to protect them. A few weeks later, during the night of the 6th–7th Prairial, some fifty Companions of Jesus broke into the prison at Lons-le-Saunier and massacred the terrorists. Lhoste, the commandant of the National Guard, took part in this affair and shouted: "Fire! Shoot!" The assassins had taken as their rallying-cry "8½ plus 8½"—which signified Louis XVII. The municipality did nothing to protect the prisoners or prosecute the murderers. The latter accordingly returned on the next night to complete their work, which they had left unfinished the night before. A few days later again, on the 13th Prairial, a convoy of political prisoners who were being driven to Bourg was stopped a league from the town by a band of masked men. Nine terrorists were killed that day. In his letter relating these facts the mayor of Bourg declared that the murderers moved in the very best society. None of them were prosecuted. They boasted of their crimes and were applauded in the salons and at the theatre. Among them were a nobleman and the secretary-general of the departmental administration. Those of them who were afterwards prosecuted were acquitted by the jury on the 3rd Thermidor, year IV. M. Philibert Leduc, the royalist historian of the Revolution in the department of Ain, informs us that after the first massacres of Bourg and Lons-le-Saunier the surviving prisoners—those of Nantua, for example—left their prison at nightfall with the jailer's permission and took refuge in the woods, returning to the prison after sunrise. He quotes a report of the gendarmerie recording this fact.²⁵

Lyons was the headquarters of the royalists of the south-east. Bonnet, the representative on mission, described it to the Committee as a city absolutely lost to the Republic. "On the 1st Messidor," he said, "I saw a whole

the others. At Montbrison girls and women had been bound naked to the tree of liberty and flogged with ox-hide thongs, etc. (see the *Moniteur*). For the White Terror in the department of Loire see Galley, *Saint-Étienne et son district*, Vol. III, and R. Palluat de Besset, *Les Compagnons de Jésus dans le district de Montbrison* (1927). Those guilty of the massacres in the department of Loire, like those of Rhône, enjoyed complete impunity. The proceedings against them ended in acquittal.

²⁵ For all these facts, see Philibert Leduc, *Histoire de la Révolution dans l'Ain*, Vol. VI, pp. 36–212.

royalist city shouting 'Long live the Convention!' 'Long live Précý!' " He described how the Lyons *émigrés* were in command of the National Guard in the neighbouring departments, notably in that of Loire. In this department, which he was visiting at the moment of writing this letter (the 1st Messidor): "The terrorists are being put to flight and killed. But, as in Lyons, it is the royalists who are killing them. . . . A legion of six hundred priests has come and taken possession of the country-side of Haute-Loire; from four to five hundred young men who escaped the first levy have assembled between Le Puy and Yssingaux. . . . At the present time Lyons would find more forces in the neighbouring departments ready to come to her aid than could be found to march against her at the time of the siege. . . . The *émigrés* in Lyons, the priests in all parts, are as free as if they had returned in the train of a king. . . . The massacres are still going on." The prisons had been broken into at Saint-Étienne and Montbrison, as at Lyons and Lons-le-Saunier. The royalists at Lyons were organizing desertion in the regular troops, even those at the front. The representative Réal, who was on mission with the army of the Alps, adds the characteristic detail that on the day when the news of "young Capet's" death was heard in Lyons, all the theatres were closed, and many persons wore mourning or a crape band round the arm for several days.²⁶

Yet, numerous and disciplined as the Companies of Jesus were, when the Convention made a serious attempt to put a stop to their exploits, it succeeded without too much trouble. At the beginning of Messidor the Committees resolved to take away from the National Guard of Lyons the ten thousand muskets distributed among them by Boisset at the beginning of Prairial. All they had to do was to send a few troops to Trévoux under the command of the representatives on mission Poullain-Grandprey and Ferroux, and the people of Lyons allowed themselves to be disarmed without resistance! These measures were very tardy, and the harm was already done. But the ease with which the disarmament was carried out shows that if the Convention had liked, if it had taken the necessary measures from the outset, there would have been no massacres.²⁷

In the valley of the Rhône, Languedoc, and Provence, even more than

²⁶ See M. Aulard's collection for Réal's letter, dated Grenoble, the 5th Messidor, and Chambon's letter, dated Marseilles, the 2nd Messidor.

²⁷ See the two speeches of M. J. Chénier on the 6th and 25th Messidor, that of Delaunay on the 24th Messidor, and the correspondence of the deputies Poullain-Grandprey and Despinassy, notably their letter of the 13th Messidor, in M. Aulard's collection.

at Lyons, the White Terror was facilitated—I might almost say encouraged—by the Thermidorian representatives on mission in whose hands authority was vested. At Lyons the republicans had always been few in number, but at Marseilles, Toulon, Arles, Nîmes, and in many towns they would have been capable of defending themselves, had they not been the object of systematic attacks which benefited their adversaries.

The massacres did not start in this part of the country till after the arrival of the representatives on mission Girod-Pouzol, Cadroy, Mariette, and Chambon. The Committee of General Security had, however, been careful to recommend them not to give posts "either to terrorists or ultra-revolutionaries, or to those who at the time of the revolt of the sections were in rebellion and in coalition with Marseilles."²⁸ They entirely disregarded this warning, perhaps for the reason that in the south the third party, upon whose support it was suggested that they should rely, did not exist or was quite insignificant. Since they had made up their minds to punish the terrorists, they could only succeed in doing so by making use of their enemies.

On arriving in Marseilles, Cadroy started by complaining of his colleague Expert, who had suspended the proceedings started before the criminal tribunal against the members of the club at Marseilles concerned in the demonstration at the beginning of Vendémiaire. Expert, who was a native of those parts, was well aware that if a policy of repression were pressed, civil war would inevitably break out. He had, moreover, acted in compliance with a republican petition bearing a large number of signatures. The Committee sided with Cadroy, though recommending him to be moderate, and recalled Expert.²⁹ From that time onward Cadroy and his colleagues and accomplices had a free hand. They started by transferring the criminal tribunal to Aix, where it resumed its inquiry into the charges against the Marseilles representatives. Next, on the 5th Ventôse, they proclaimed martial law in the Jacobin city of Arles. They disarmed first the whole district of Arles and then the neighbouring districts. They closed the last popular societies still remaining open, and reconstituted the National Guard out of their own partisans only.³⁰ If they did not themselves organize the "Companies of the Sun," which did their dirty work for them, it is certain that

²⁸ Letter from the Committee to Cadroy, dated the 27th Pluviôse, in M. Aulard's collection.

²⁹ See Clauzel's speech of the 7th Pluviôse and the letter from Cadroy which he read out.

³⁰ See Mariette and Chambon's letter dated Marseilles, the 5th Ventôse, in M. Aulard's collection.

they encouraged and armed them.³¹ As early as the month of Nivôse a number of republican soldiers or ex-officers of the previous government had already been removed by assassination.³²

The massacres started at the beginning of Ventôse, when, profiting by the law of the 21st Nivôse, the *émigrés* of May 31 had returned in large numbers. One of the earliest took place at Nîmes on the 5th Ventôse. Four political prisoners, who were being transferred from the prisons of the Palais de Justice to that of the Port, were murdered beneath the windows of the representative on mission Girod-Pouzol and in the presence of several municipal officers.³³ Yet they were escorted by a detachment of gendarmerie and three hundred of the National Guard. In his account of the affair, the tone of which is perfectly detached, Girod-Pouzol does not say whether he took the slightest steps to trace the culprits.³⁴ Provence was stained with blood by individual outrages, the work of returned *émigrés*, yet the representatives on mission did not lift a finger to stop them. On the 15th Ventôse, Cadroy's colleague Mariette went to Toulon, a Jacobin city, where the sailors, the Corsican refugees, and the workmen in the arsenal, already infuriated at the cost of living, were murmuring against the progress of reaction. Thinking to overawe them, Mariette suppressed the revolutionary committee and during the next few days dismissed the municipality, the justices of the peace, and their assistants. He ordered the expulsion of all strangers to the city who were not employed in the service of the navy—that is, the workmen who had come in search of work and a refuge. The discontent came to a head on the 20th Ventôse.³⁵ On that day seven *émigrés*, who had returned

³¹ Fréron published as an appendix to his famous memorandum on the reaction in the south an ordinance of the representative on mission Chambon, to the effect that 110 "*briquets*" (sabres) were to be handed over to the Company of the Sun at Marseilles. A proclamation issued by Durand de Maillane, which appears among the documents appended to the same memorandum, proves that the Company of the Sun at Brignoles, Var, was founded by the representative on mission Isnard under the name of a "free company (*compagnie franche*)" and kept up by Durand de Maillane, who assigned it the duty of supporting in case of need the authorities established for the maintenance of order. (See Buchez and Roux, op. cit. Vol. XXXVII, p. 425.)

³² An incomplete list of these is given in Buchez and Roux, op. cit., Vol. XXXVI, pp. 416-18.

³³ See the account of the massacre in *L'Ami des lois* for the 23rd Ventôse, year III.

³⁴ Letter from Girod-Pouzol to the Committee of Public Safety, dated the 7th Ventôse, in Aulard.

³⁵ See Cadroy's and Chambon's letters of the 29th Ventôse in M. Aulard's collection.

contrary to the law; were arrested at Hyères and brought to Toulon. The mob massacred them and accused the representative on mission of having wanted to save them and set them at liberty—which is quite probable. This gave Mariette and Cadroy an opportunity to increase the severity of the repressive measures. Although the Marseilles terrorists had had nothing to do with the disorders at Toulon, Cadroy had the chief of them arrested, and ordered a general disarmament, only to distribute the arms thus collected to those whom he called "the true friends of the country" a few days later.³⁶ As soon as the latter were organized—that is, as soon as the Companions of the Sun were enrolled and armed—Mariette and Chambon proclaimed martial law at Marseilles, in succession to Arles.³⁷ Finally, to crown their measures, they set up a military tribunal, against which their colleague Poultier protested.³⁸ Everything was ready for massacres on a large scale, on the model of those at Lyons. On the 21st Floréal the Companies of the Sun marched on Aix, where the political prisoners were in custody. On the following day they trained cannon on the prisons, broke into them, killed the prisoners, and burnt the building.³⁹ Chambon, the representative on mission, took no steps to disperse the riotous crowd on the march or to guard the prisons. The representative on mission Goupilleau, who had just been sent back to Vaucluse, was alarmed at what he saw, though it was in part his own doing. "The massacres at Lyons," he wrote on the 25th Floréal to his friend Rovère, ". . . have just been repeated near here. At Nîmes three prisoners have been murdered, among them Courbis [ex-mayor of Nîmes]. We learnt last night that they had massacred fifty or sixty at Aix; we have heard no details, but we are assured that women and children have not been spared any more than men. . . ." ⁴⁰ In one of his later letters Goupilleau de Montaignu accused his colleague Girod-Pouzol of having "unintentionally caused the death of thirteen persons who, though no doubt guilty, ought to have been punished by the law." ⁴¹ The allusion is to the thirteen patriots massacred while they were being transferred to the prisons at Orange. He was naïvely alarmed at the sights he saw, and could not recognize it for the same country as that

³⁶ See M. Frédéric Masson's pamphlet *La Révolte de Toulon en prairial an III* (Paris, 1885). This study is very biased and in part erroneous.

³⁷ See Mariette's and Chambon's letter of the 17th Germinal.

³⁸ See Poultier's letter of the 12th Floréal, year III.

³⁹ See the report of the municipality of Aix relating the facts, in Buchez and Roux, *op. cit.*, Vol. XXXVI, pp. 419 et seq.

⁴⁰ Correspondence of Goupilleau de Montaignu with Rovère, letter dated the 25th Floréal, from Avignon.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, letter dated Orange, the 12th Prairial.

to which he had rendered such services during his first mission. "The people who owe me their life and liberty say that I have done only what I ought. . . . I see the immortal patriots of '89, those who fought at your side [Rovère's] to shake off the yoke of the Pope and unite with France and have neither errors nor crimes to reproach themselves with, now being persecuted, put to flight, arrested, and imprisoned by the very men whose chains they helped me to break. . . ." ⁴² He concluded sadly: "Only lately they were fulminating against the satellites of Robespierre who had stained the whole of France with blood; now those who denounced them to all Europe as cut-throats have become still worse cut-throats than they were. . . ." ⁴³ And again: "Nowadays anyone who is attached to the principles of the Revolution is called a terrorist, and for my part, you might not think it, but I have the reputation of being one of the greatest terrorists in the Republic. Like you, I saw the beginnings of the insurrection in the Vendée. That war had no such alarming symptoms as I have observed in Lozère and Vaucluse. . . ." ⁴⁴

Goupilleau expressed this opinion after the last great massacres in the south, those at Marseilles and Tarascon. Both of these, moreover, were a result of the revolt at Toulon. The republicans of Provence saw the returned *émigrés* insulting and ill-treating patriots and driving out the purchasers of national property by violence.⁴⁵ On the 28th Floréal some three hundred natives of Toulon proceeded to the village of Solliès to help the patriots in their struggle with the *émigrés*. They arrested eleven of the latter, seven of whom wore on their hats a small white cockade with the words: "Long live Louis XVII!" The representative on mission Brunel, who was in Toulon, wanted these eleven *émigrés* transferred to Fort Lamalgue, to prevent them from sharing the fate of those massacred on the previous 20th Ventôse. The men of Toulon objected, and declared to Brunel: "We will not have the *émigrés* making the law. Those whom we have just fetched here wanted to kill the patriots in the commune of Solliès, and we rushed to defend them." In his letter of the 28th Floréal, in which he quoted this reply, Brunel added: "It is claimed that most of the established authorities in these departments are composed of persons of that sort"—that is, of returned *émigrés*. The conflict between the representative on mission and the workmen at the arsenal became more and more bitter. The workmen obtained arms from the arsenal. Brunel committed suicide in despair when the patriots in custody were set

⁴² Ibid., letter dated Orange, the 12th Prairial.

⁴³ Ibid., letter dated Avignon, the 14th Prairial.

⁴⁴ Ibid., letter dated Montpellier, the 29th Prairial.

⁴⁵ See the letter from the municipal commission of Toulon, read to the Convention at the session of the 25th Floréal.

free by the rebels, who demanded the Constitution of 1793. The fleet sympathized with them. On the 4th Prairial, hearing that the patriots in the prisons of Marseilles were in danger, they chose themselves a leader, named Portal, and marched on Marseilles to help them. But the representatives on mission at Marseilles, Cadroy, Isnard, and Chambon, had got together some regular troops under the command of General Pactod. Pactod easily dispersed the Toulon rabble at Le Bausset, killing forty or fifty of them and taking three hundred prisoners. A military commission pronounced forty-seven death-sentences to start with, followed by many others. The inhabitants of Toulon were disarmed, and four thousand five hundred sailors deserted in order to save their lives.⁴⁶

The revolt at Toulon, which almost coincided with the great insurrection of the 1st Prairial in Paris, caused a redoublement of the White Terror.

The Companies of the Sun organized themselves on a war footing. At Nîmes, property-owners formed themselves into a battalion ready to march on Toulon.⁴⁷ At Aix, on the first news of the disorders, Isnard, the representative on mission, harangued the crowd as follows: "If you have no arms, if you have no muskets, very well! Dig up the bones of your fathers and use them to exterminate all these brigands!" He raised a detachment to march on Toulon.⁴⁸ A few days later, during the night of the 5th-6th Prairial, some Companions of the Sun made their way into the fort at Tarascon without difficulty and massacred twenty-four political prisoners, whose bodies were thrown into the Rhône. On the following day they were dancing the *farandole* amid the applause of the town.⁴⁹

Eleven days later, on the 17th Prairial, took place the horrible massacre of the Fort Saint-Jean at Marseilles, which was carefully prearranged,

⁴⁶ See Buchez and Roux, op. cit., Vol. XXXVIII, p. 428. For the revolt at Toulon, see, besides Frédéric Masson's pamphlet, quoted above, the letters of the representatives on mission to the Committee of Public Safety and the two speeches of Doucet de Pontécoulant to the Convention, on the 8th and 17th Prairial, year III.

⁴⁷ See the session of the Convention for the 17th Prairial.

⁴⁸ Buchez and Roux, op. cit., Vol. XXXVI, p. 428.

⁴⁹ Buchez and Roux, op. cit., Vol. XXXVI, pp. 429-33, which prints the official documents. According to the accounts given by the patriots from the south before the Convention on the 17th Vendémiaire, year IV, sixty-five republicans were thrown from the tower at Tarascon into the river, while an audience seated on chairs along the road from Tarascon to Beaucaire enjoyed the sight and applauded it: "Every corpse which they next threw into the Rhône had a wooden ticket fixed to it by a dagger, on which were the words: 'It is forbidden to bury this body on pain of death.' And so the sheep-dogs of the Crau [Crau] found food on the banks of the Rhône for three months" (see the *Moniteur*).

for, several days previously, the prisoners were deprived of their knives, chairs, stools, and even plates. Those who took part in the massacre used cannon to break into the doors of the cells. There were a number of them, and they spent till ten o'clock at night slaughtering some hundred prisoners. The representative on mission Cadroy received notice of what was happening from Lecesne, the commandant of the grenadiers, but forebade him to sound the call to arms to summon his men and go to the aid of the prisoners. He let several hours go by before going up to the fort with the grenadiers. The latter had arrested some ten of the murderers, but Cadroy had them released. Some of the grenadiers said in their depositions that Cadroy found fault with the murderers for being so long about their work, which was, in fact, not quite complete, for there were still a few prisoners alive: "Cowards! You have not yet finished avenging your fathers and relatives. Yet you have had all the time you needed!"⁵⁰ Blanc, deputy for Bouches-du-Rhône, was afterwards to reproach Cadroy in public for having admitted several of the cut-throats to his table and taken one of them, Rolland, the leader of the Aix massacres, for a drive in his carriage.⁵¹

One great final massacre closed the bloody series. The fort at Tarascon, which had again been filled, was emptied for the second time on the 2nd Messidor. The bodies of twenty-three prisoners, two of whom were women, were thrown into the Rhône. There was not a single country town of Provence and the Venaissin without its victims, owing, for the most part, as much to private hatreds as to political and religious passion. "They killed the patriots," said Durand de Maillane, whose testimony can be trusted, "as they kill thrushes in the fields—wherever they came across them."⁵²

Such was the White Terror, the Chouan movement of the south, as horrible as that of the west. There were some ghastly atrocities. One old man eighty years of age had his head crushed with stones; another citizen was cut in pieces, his blood being given to the dogs to drink and his brain thrown to the pigs (Louis Blanc). At Saint-Étienne one of the victims was crucified; another, who had two sons in the army, was buried alive.

The Chouans at least did not as a rule reckon upon the co-operation and protection of the authorities. The White Terror, on the other hand, almost

⁵⁰ See the depositions of Commandant Lecesne and the grenadiers in Buchez and Roux, op. cit., Vol. XXXVI, pp. 434–63. The princes of the House of Orleans, the Duc de Montpensier and the Comte de Beaujolais, who were imprisoned in the Fort Saint-Jean, were not molested.

⁵¹ See Louis Blanc, *Histoire de la Révolution* (ed. Docks de la Librairie), Vol. II, p. 626.

⁵² Durand de Maillane, *Mémoires*, p. 277.

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always profited by the favour or the neutrality of the new authorities appointed by the Thermidorians and in more cases than one enjoyed the more or less open co-operation of certain representatives on mission. And, lastly, the Chouans did not kill unarmed persons in prison. On the whole, the civil war in the south was even more horrible than that in the west. It ended by making even the Thermidorians ashamed.

CHAPTER X

The Insurrection of Prairial, Year III

AT the very time when the workmen of Toulon were in revolt against the White Terror, the manual workers and artisans of Paris made a last effort to check reaction and regain possession of power. There was an interval of two days between the two risings; that of Toulon breaking out on the 28th Floréal (May 18, 1795) and that of Paris on the 1st Prairial (May 20, 1795). But whatever may have been alleged, there was no previous arrangement between the leaders of the two. Like causes spontaneously produced like results.

The Assembly saw its unpopularity with all classes of the population growing daily. Incessantly haunted, as the Directory was to be afterwards, by two opposite perils at which it trembled: the royalist peril and the terrorist peril, it drifted helplessly, adopting contradictory measures. It could only have stopped the depreciation of the assignats and combated the rise in the cost of living effectively by frankly taking a step backwards, restoring the maximum and communizing food-supplies—in other words, by surrendering to the terrorists, who were everywhere disarmed, imprisoned, or massacred. But if, on the other hand, it allowed the White Terror to spread, it would be surrendering to the royalists. For the Thermidorians, many of whom were regicides, the return of the king meant certain punishment, the loss of their lives or, at the very least, of their liberty and wealth. In these straits they adopted none but empirical measures, which led to no solution. They inaugurated the seesaw policy which was to be that of their successors under the Directory—among whom, moreover, they still found a place.

The demonstration on the 12th Germinal should have been a warning to them. They spent several sessions listening to and debating contradictory speeches on various schemes for withdrawing the assignats from circulation: There was Johannot's scheme, laid before them on the 26th Germinal, by which purchasers of national property and taxpayers—all the debtors of the State—would be obliged to pay the sums due from them in assignats at the current rate, and not, as before, at their nominal value, the assignats being replaced by mortgage bonds (*cédules hypothécaires*) which should no longer circulate as currency. There was a counter scheme of Dubois-Crancé's

for levying taxes in kind (16th Floréal). The Assembly could decide upon none but piecemeal measures, which increased the gravity of the crisis. It established a lottery, in which the houses and personal property of the *émigrés* were to be the prizes (28th Germinal). It decided to reopen the Bourse, or, in other words, gave fresh facilities for speculation. It put the metal currency into legal circulation again, thereby officially recognizing the depreciation of the assignat (6th Floréal), by a stroke of the pen it demonetized all assignats bearing the King's portrait, which were in future only to be accepted as payment for national domains and lottery tickets, and that only for the next three months (27th Floréal). This was equivalent to a partial bankruptcy, which aroused extreme discontent among the lower classes, who were now almost the only people in possession of the royal assignats still in circulation (these were for small amounts, from five to fifty livres).¹

The collapse of the assignat, poorly supported now that Cambon was in prison, was bound to be rapid. At the beginning of Floréal the louis was worth 200 francs in paper money; by the middle of Floréal it was worth 325 francs, and by the end of the month 400. The value of the paper franc was now only six centimes. Prices soared to giddy heights. All those who possessed any money became tradesmen for the nonce. Buying and selling went on even in the most aristocratic drawing-rooms! Bread was so scarce that guests took their own with them when asked out to dinner, and nothing pleased a hostess more than to receive a present of fancy bread and cakes, rice, or chocolate sent in advance by her guests.² The destitution among the lower classes became appalling.

The Committee of Public Safety, which was charged with the task of procuring provisions, had entrusted Barras with the mission of guarding the food-convoys. Barras had a body of 3,500 cavalry at his disposal, whom he posted along the roads round Abbeville, Amiens, Compiègne, Reims, Orleans, and Fontainebleau. Roux, deputy for Haute-Marne, had taken the place of Boissy d'Anglas as head of the food-supply department. In spite of the troops, the peasants continued their resistance. The quantity of flour distributed to the bakers of Paris became more and more inadequate. Roux was full of lamentations. On the 25th Germinal he explained the reasons for the difficulties with which he was faced: "Since the 15th Germinal there has been constant pillaging of food-stores at Saint-Brice, Bonneuil, La

¹ The higher denominations of the royal assignats had already been demonetized, on the motion of Chabot, in the summer of 1793.

² The younger Lacretelle, *Dix Années d'épreuves*, p. 211.

Chapelle, Vernon, Évreux, Dreux, and Chantilly. At Provins the farmers refused to thresh any corn during Easter week; at Montdidier and in the neighbouring communes the tocsin was sounded on the approach of food-convoys so that they might be stopped. Everything found on the farms is carried off, and there is an organized system of pillage everywhere." Barras was given two more deputies as assistants, Rouyer and Féraud,³ but they met with no more success. The bread ration in Paris fell to two ounces, and even these were only forthcoming irregularly. The working-class sections murmured. In the whole city nothing was to be heard but insults and threats to the Convention for starving the people. The days of Robespierre or the monarchy were openly regretted.⁴

In spite of the disarming of the terrorists and the restitution of the property of those condemned by the Revolutionary Tribunal, in spite of the opening of the Bourse and other measures of the same sort, the rich—those in easy circumstances, who had formed the Feuillant and Fayetteist party before August 10—were not satisfied, though up to this time they had shouted: "Long live the Convention!" till they were hoarse.

Although the Muscadins had replaced the terrorists in almost all posts, and notably in the offices of the Committees and executive commissions, they were upset at the arrest of the journalist Lefortier, director of the *Correspondance politique*, by order of the Committee of General Security, for having published in his number of the 21st Germinal what purported to be a translation from a German newspaper, saying that the French had murdered a king who was the best of men.⁵ Were the Thermidorians going to interfere with the liberty of the press after all? The Muscadins claimed the right to carry on their royalist propaganda freely. They were amazed when, on the 12th Floréal, M. J. Chénier and Louvet, whom they had hitherto regarded as being on their own side, were both heard to pronounce philippics against the progress of royalism and the White Terror and, in spite of Tallien's protests, obtained the passage of a decree which provided that *émigrés* who had returned under false pretences should be tried, that deported priests should be given a month to leave the country again; and, lastly, ordered the arrest of all who, "by their seditious writings or speeches, shall attempt to

³ Rouyer was appointed assistant to Barras by the decree of the 25th Germinal; Féraud a little later, by the decree of the 19th Floréal.

⁴ See the police reports published by M. Aulard, an abstract of which is given by M. F. Dieudonné in his essay "*Les Préliminaires et les causes des journées de prairial an III* (Preliminaries and Causes of the Insurrection of Prairial, Year III)," in *La Révolution française*, Vol. XLIII, pp. 442 et seq.

⁵ See the *Messager du soir* for the 24th Germinal, year III.

degrade the national representative body or bring about the return of the monarchy." The penalty for the last of these offences was banishment for life! The reactionary sections at once protested against this infringement of the liberty of the press—for instance, that of Mont-Blanc, with Talma as its spokesman.⁶

Feeling that their unpopularity was increasing with both the right and the left, the Thermidorians prepared to defend themselves. They strove to arrange matters so that force should be on their side. First they attempted to reorganize the government. Since each of the thirteen committees had been issuing ordinances which were put in force by the executive commission subordinate to it, there was no longer any unity in the work of government, which was paralysed by contradictory decisions. On the 7th Floréal, Thibaudeau, a Thermidorian who had preserved some sense of authority, and was afterwards an energetic prefect in the time of Napoleon, criticized the splitting up of the central authority as follows: "There are, as it were, thirteen governments, which can neither act harmoniously nor get on with one another, but are pulling in all directions and hampering the progress of affairs instead of expediting it." Thibaudeau boldly proposed that the Committee of Public Safety should be restored to its former primacy and even that the representatives on mission, whose unlimited powers hampered administrative action, should be done away with. The Girondins—Lanjuinais, Lesage, Louvet—refused to regard Thibaudeau's project as anything more or less than an indirect revival of the Terror. Cambacérès came forward with a proposal for a compromise, which was voted on the 21st Floréal. The representatives on mission were maintained, but the Committee of Public Safety received increased powers. It regained almost entire control over the executive commissions.⁷

⁶ See the *Moniteur*, session of the 21st Floréal, year III, for the text of the petition from the section Mont-Blanc. Talma, who presented it, took exception to the following expression in the text of the law: "Those who, by their writings or speeches, should attempt to degrade the national representative body or work in favour of (*provoqueraient*) monarchy." "These are vague expressions," he said, "of which it is impossible to define the sense and make a just application, and which served as the formulary for the judicial murders committed by Robespierre's tribunal. It is owing to this meaningless language, these vague terms of a previously existing law, that thousands of innocent persons have been dragged to the scaffold." The actor Talma had long been among the admirers of Lafayette.

⁷ Article 2 of the decree ran as follows: "The Committee of Public Safety alone shall frame ordinances with regard to executive measures concerning all matters at present within its competence; the Committees formerly charged with this shall preserve the right of proposing laws on the same subjects." Article 3: "All expenditure

In order to curb the insurrection which was felt to be coming, and supplement what had formerly been Fréron's *jeunesse*, whose fidelity was considered rather doubtful, recourse was had to military measures. The law forbidding the government to bring troops inside a given radius round Paris, known as the constitutional radius, was a great embarrassment. On the 28th Germinal it was suspended, on the pretext of securing the arrival of the food-convoys. The Committee could therefore call in the regular army. A few days later, on the 3rd Floréal, another law placed the command of the 17th army division and that of the Parisian National Guard, which had hitherto been separate, in the hands of a single officer. Many of the officers and generals were still Jacobins. Certain of the armies—for instance, that of the eastern Pyrenees—had signed petitions in favour of the Constitution of 1793, or against the Muscadins and the White Terror. On the 3rd Floréal, under the pretext of economy, full powers to purge the general staffs were granted to the Military Committee—that is, in effect, to the reactionary Aubry, who was its prime mover. He actually purged it of Bonaparte. The reorganization of the Parisian National Guard was voted, again on the motion of Aubry. In future there was to be a mounted guard of twenty-four hundred men, who were to find their own equipment. By a law of the 28th Germinal, companies of grenadiers and *chasseurs* were re-established, as in the days of Lafayette. But this law provoked such an outcry among the people⁸ that no haste was made to put it in force. Besides, it was feared that this measure might recoil upon the Convention, since the loyalty of the rich could no longer be relied upon. When the insurrection broke out, the law had only been carried into effect in a few of the western sections—for instance, that of the Champs-Élysées.

The Thermidorians kept on strengthening the nucleus of regular troops, especially cavalry, which they had distributed round Paris in order to protect the arrival of the food-convoys. On the 24th Floréal they sent for fresh battalions, which were stationed at Rambouillet, Chartres, and Long-

shall be prescribed by ordinance of the Committee of Public Safety and the Finance Committee in joint session of three members of each Committee." Article 4: "The Committee of Public Safety shall be divided into sections, each of which shall have under its control the correspondence and surveillance of the executive commission, in all cases in which the powers of the Committee authorize it to frame executive ordinances. . . ."

⁸ The officials who promulgated the law on the National Guard were insulted and threatened in the working-class sections of the city. In the section of Mucius Scévola they were unable to finish reading it (see the police report of the 29th Germinal, in Aulard, *Paris sous la réaction thermidorienne*).

jumeau. On the 25th Floréal they gave orders for the withdrawal of four thousand infantry from the armies of the north and of Sambre and Meuse, who were to be quartered in the suburbs of the capital. The summoning of the troops, which aroused much comment among the people, was sufficient proof of the government's uneasiness.

The Committee of General Security was haunted by the idea of plots. As early as the 28th Germinal, Rovère, speaking in its name, disclosed the fact that his police had discovered "a note in a piece of cheese sent to Crépin, one of the leaders of the revolt of the 12th Germinal, now in confinement at Le Plessis, in which one Chevalier warned him that on the day when he should send him eggs which were half white and half red, the political prisoners were to go to bed fully dressed and hold themselves in readiness, for deliverance was at hand." The signal was to be a card bearing the words: "Long live the Mountain!" The conspirators, said Rovère, meant to insist that the Convention should put in force the Constitution of 1793, arrest the seventy-five reinstated Girondin deputies, dissolve the governing Committees, deport Fréron and Tallien, arrest Barras, Dubois-Crancé, Rovère, and Legendre, the Montagnard deputies already under arrest, and quash the sentence of the four "chief culprits." Thuriot, Cambon, and Maribon-Montaut were mentioned as the leaders in the plot. Thuriot and Cambon were already under arrest. Without further inquiry it was resolved to arrest Maribon-Montaut in spite of his disclaimers.

It is not certain whether this prison conspiracy, the "conspiracy of the red eggs," as it was jestingly called, had any real existence save in the imagination of Rovère's police agents; but what is certain is that, in the prison at Rennes, where he had been in confinement for several months past, Brutus Magniez, ex-president of the military commission which had been active in that town under the revolutionary government, a young man twenty-five years of age and an admirer of Robespierre, had made use of his enforced leisure to compose a manuscript newspaper, "*Le Démocrate français, ou le journal de Midi* (The French Democritus, or the Journal of Mid-day)," in which he outlined every detail of the plan followed by the insurrection in the cause of liberty which was his dream and that of all the terrorists. But this newspaper was written between the 24th Pluviôse and the 23rd Ventôse—that is, three weeks before the insurrection of the 12th Germinal. In a letter full of violent abuse which he wrote to the "Committee of General Devastation" (as he called the Committee of General Security) on the 4th Prairial, Brutus Magniez boasted that he had been the author of the plan carried out by the insurgents on the 1st Prairial, but it is not certain

whether his manuscript newspaper succeeded in making its way into Paris.⁹

Moreover, Brutus Magniez retracted this statement when he appeared before his judges, who spared his life. It is still less certain that Brutus Magniez had at that time any connexion with the Montagnard deputy Peyssard, who was fortunate enough to escape the measures of repression.¹⁰ The case of the Robespierrist Magniez merely proves that the idea of the insurrection was in the air long before it actually broke out.

The decrease in the bread ration, the demonetization of the royal assignats, the arrival of the troops, the rumour which was going round that the salaries of deputies had been secretly raised to eighty-four francs a day, ended in stirring the populace, among whom agitation had been visibly increasing for a month past, to revolt. People gathered in the streets were heard to say: "It is time that we should rise *en masse* if we do not want to be assassinated and perish of starvation. The workers must come out into the open against the tradesmen and profiteers and the selfish."¹¹ On the evening of the 30th Floréal and the morning of the 1st Prairial an anonymous manifesto was openly distributed in the streets, entitled *Insurrection du peuple pour obtenir du pain et reconquérir ses droits* (*Insurrection of the People to Obtain Bread and Regain its Rights*). It demanded bread, protested against arbitrary arrests and massacres in the prisons, and appealed to the article of the Declaration of the Rights of Man, which recognized the people's right to revolt when oppressed. It asked for the abolition of revolutionary government—that is, the end of the dictatorship of the Convention, "which," as it justly said, "every faction has abused in turn in order to ruin, starve, and enslave the people." It therefore demanded that the Constitution of 1793 should be put in force, or, in other words, it demanded new elections for the 25th Prairial. It further called for the dissolution of the existing government, the arrest of its members, and the release of political prisoners. Lastly, the manifesto invited the troops to rally to the cause of the people and called upon the sections to close the barriers, which nobody was to pass but the agents of the food-supply commission, duly provided with a permit from an

⁹ For this curious person see Jules Claretie's work on *Les Derniers Montagnards*.

¹⁰ On the 4th Prairial, Peyssard was condemned by the military commission to be deported; he became mayor of Bergerac in the year IV. Brutus Magniez, who, like Peyssard, had profited by the amnesty of the 3rd Brumaire, year IV, asked him to find him work. Peyssard received him well and found him a small post. But Peyssard stated that he did not know Brutus Magniez before the 1st Prairial and had become friendly with him in prison. See M. Gustave Hermann's article in *La Révolution française*, Vol. I.

¹¹ Remarks reported in the *Messenger du soir* of the 24th Floréal.

assembly of forty-eight delegates from the sections. But this assembly was never formed. The insurrection lacked leaders.

On the morning of the 1st Prairial drums and trumpets sounded the call to arms, after which the tocsin was sounded in the working-class sections of eastern Paris, first in the faubourg Antoine and then in the faubourg Marceau, the movement spreading very rapidly to the sections of the centre, Les Gravilliers, Cité, Observatoire, and Panthéon. In almost all the sections the women, closely followed by the men, forced an entry into the premises of the sections, just as they had already broken into the bell-towers. In the section of Finistère,¹² which was inhabited by manual labourers, the doors of the guard-rooms were broken in, and arms were seized and distributed. Once more the terrorists were armed. In the section of the Panthéon, and throughout the whole of the twelfth *arrondissement*, the mobs seized the premises of the sections. In the faubourg Saint-Antoine, which was the first to start out on the march, the women insisted on the closing of the shops and forced the people in them to accompany them. The men who possessed arms formed themselves into companies and started for the Convention, under the command of Pierre Lime, the engraver,¹³ preceded by their cannon.

In order to overawe the insurgents, the Committees obtained the passage of a decree outlawing the "leaders of the riotous assembly (*attroupement*);" who were defined as the first twenty persons who should be arrested marching at the head of it. But the galleries were already occupied by the women. They greeted the decree with sardonic laughter and shouts of "Bread! Bread!" Curiously enough, the Muscadins had disappeared as if by magic. There were very few to guard the Committees, which induced the Convention to approve a proclamation to the people of Paris, casting the responsibility for the disorders on the Jacobins, and summoning to its aid "good citizens, the friends of the laws, liberty, and peace, and attached on principle to the maintenance of property." It also told off eleven of its members to stimulate the flagging zeal of the defenders of order. This may have been about half past two. Larger and larger bodies of insurgents, with

¹² See the Minute-books of the revolutionary committee of the twelfth *arrondissement* (National Archives F⁷ 2523). I have also used those of the committees of the sixth, eleventh, and first *arrondissements* (F⁷ 2591, 2513, and 2476). I have profited greatly by the chapter in which M. Raymond Guyot describes the insurrection of the 1st Prairial (L. Thénard and R. Guyot, *Le Conventionnel Goujon*, Paris, 1908). The plan with which M. Guyot accompanies his chapter is very clear and makes it easier to understand what happened.

¹³ When interrogated on the 8th Prairial, Pierre Lime, who was twenty-five years of age, admitted that the insurgents of the section of Montreuil had forced him to accept the command (papers of the Military Commission, National Archives, W 546).

tickets on their hats bearing the words: "Bread and the Constitution of 1793," were already filling the courtyards and gardens of the Tuileries, finding their way into the lobbies of the Convention, and setting to work to force an entry, for the doors were only poorly defended. André Dumont had succeeded the Girondin Vernier as president of the Assembly; seeing a brigadier-general named Fox at the bar, he obtained his appointment as general commandant of the armed forces of Paris and ordered him to clear the galleries, in which a deafening clamour was going on. Fox carried out the order with a few soldiers armed with whips, which drove out the women—but not for long. The demonstrators, who had rushed the lobbies, seized a bench, with which they battered at the door of the hall in which the Assembly was in session.¹⁴ At last it gave way and they swarmed into the amphitheatre. But some gendarmes, followed by a few of the National Guards collected by the representative Auguis, entered by the door on the opposite side. A fight started in the hall, in which the insurgents at first had the worst of it. They were driven back into the Salon de la Liberté, to the right of the president's chair. There was a momentary lull, during which the Convention passed a decree entrusting the control of the armed forces of Paris to the deputy Delmas. But the insurgents returned in force, not only from the direction of the Salon de la Liberté, but also from the opposite side, on which the defenders of the Convention had entered on the first occasion. A new fight began, even more violent than the first, and some shots were fired. Both doors were broken in. The deputy Féraud, who had fought at the head of the defenders of order, lay across the left-hand door, and the insurgents passed over his body. He got up and went to the aid of the president, Boissy d'Anglas, who had replaced Dumont in the president's chair. While ascending the tribune, Féraud was struck by a pistol-shot. The mob seized him, dragged him out of the hall, dispatched him, and stuck his head on a pike. There was a story afterwards that Féraud had been mistaken for Fréron. This is a fable. There was no resemblance between the two. But Féraud was hated by the people of Paris because, with Barras and Rouyer, he was charged with the

¹⁴ The wool-scourer Pierre Dorisse, aged thirty-five, of the section of the Museum, was condemned by the Military Commission to deportation: (1) for having "marched at the head of the women who went to the National Convention; (2) for having on the same day, between half past three and four in the afternoon, seized a bench about eight feet along in the Salon de la Liberté, with which he battered violently and repeatedly at the door of the assembly-hall and managed to break it in, thus facilitating the entry of the factious persons who violated the sanctuary of the laws." Dorisse denied this and alleged that the witnesses were taking him for somebody else (papers of the Military Commission, National Archives, W 546).

provisioning of the city. For more than an hour he had withstood the insurgents and fought against them. Féraud, who was still a young man—he was thirty-one years of age—was a hot-headed fanatic. In a letter of the 25th Frimaire, year III, Merlin of Thionville had complained to Merlin of Douai of the appalling annoyances with which he was surrounded, “having the maddest colleague you ever saw—I mean the deputy Féraud, the laughing-stock of the whole army.” It should be added that on the 6th Germinal a violent attack on Féraud had appeared in Méhée’s paper, *Le Spectateur français*, accusing him of arbitrary and “more than royal” acts. He had dismissed from the army an adjutant-general who had been regularly acquitted by the military tribunal. It was scarcely possible to confuse Féraud with Fréron; they were equally well known. And, lastly, if such a confusion had arisen, how is it that Fréron never breathed a word about it—in his paper, at least—and that all the newspapers of the day imitated his silence?

Had the insurgents possessed any leaders, once masters of the Convention, they would have hastened to secure the passage of decrees carrying out the program outlined in their manifesto. But they spent more than two hours after the murder of Féraud in raising all sorts of cries amid a wild tumult. The extraordinary thing is that the president of the Assembly, Vernier, who had succeeded Boissy d’Anglas, did not adjourn the session. Boissy d’Anglas remained at his side.¹⁵ The Montagnard deputies seemed bewildered and did not know what to do. Amid shouts, abuse, and the roll of drums two insurgents, Étienne Chabrier, a former member of the revolutionary committee of the section of the Arsenal, and Pierre François Duval, a bootmaker from the same section, ascended the tribune and took it in turns to read out the Declaration of the Rights of Man, laying stress on the right to revolt. Duval, turning to Boissy d’Anglas, who was again in the chair, said that the only way to save the Republic was to nominate a tribune of the people.¹⁶ Other insurgents demanded the arrest of all the deputies. There were shouts of “Let us form a Convention ourselves!” Others called for a house-to-house search for food, the release of patriots, and the nomination of a new commune for Paris. The deputy Romme twice tried to obtain a hearing, but had to give up the attempt. By this time it was seven o’clock in the evening. The lamps were being lit. Vernier, the president, seemed to wake up. He sent up word to the deputies, most of whom had taken refuge

¹⁵ See the extremely important document in which Vernier described the part which he played on the 1st Prairial (published by M. R. Bonnet in *La Révolution française* for July–September 1926).

¹⁶ See the depositions of Duval and Boissy d’Anglas, before the Military Commission. Duval and Chabrier were both condemned to death.

on the upper benches of the amphitheatre, to come down and gather round the tribune. He persuaded the insurgents near at hand to help him clear the approach to the tribune and the lower benches, so that the debate could be resumed. The insurgents complied, and the deputies gathered round the president.

The Montagnard deputies, thus called upon by Vernier to continue the debate, made up their minds. Laignelot and Thirion were nominated as secretaries. Romme moved that all the patriots in prison should be released. The deputies voted the motion by removing their hats—that being the mode suggested by the president, Vernier. Du Roy obtained a vote by the same means in favour of releasing the deputies in confinement since the 12th Germinal. Romme obtained the re-establishment of a uniform quality of bread for all—the “equality bread (*pain de l'Égalité*)” of the year 11—the pastry-cooks were forbidden to make cakes, and house-to-house visits were ordered to search for flour. On each occasion Vernier, the president, took the vote by making the deputies raise their hats and then announced that the decree had been passed. The indefatigable Romme obtained a vote in favour of renewing the civil committees of all the sections by election. Goujon next pointed out that it was not enough to pass good decrees, they must also take measures for their execution. “We do not know what the governing Committees are doing; they are not deliberating, they are at a standstill. I move that the Convention appoint an extraordinary commission to put in force the decree that it has just passed.” If the extraordinary commission demanded by Goujon had been nominated on the spot, possibly the insurrection would have triumphed; at any rate, it would have had a head. But Goujon himself complicated his motion by proposing at the same time the recall of all the representatives on mission. Certain of his Montagnard colleagues—Du Roy, for instance—raised objections. They were unwilling to dismiss the governing Committees without a hearing. Forestier moved that the Committees should not be changed till they had been called upon for an explanation. Albitte raised a question of form. The secretariate of the Assembly, he said, was not regularly constituted. Bourbotte wandered away from the point at issue by proposing the arrest of the Thermidorian journalists. Another deputy wanted the death-penalty abolished. After these digressions Duquesnoy returned to the point. He proposed that the Committee of General Security should be quashed on the spot and four deputies immediately appointed who should form the extraordinary commission demanded by Goujon. These four members would have as their first task to take possession of the papers and premises of the Committee of General Security. He added prophetically: “If we do not adopt this measure today, the same

thing will happen tomorrow as happened during the night of the 12th Germinal." Duquesnoy, Prieur of Marne, Bourbotte, and Du Roy were then nominated to form the extraordinary commission.

The critical moment had come. Vernier left the chair and was replaced by Boissy d'Anglas. It was after eleven o'clock. A number of the insurgents, lulled into false security, had left the spot and gone home.¹⁷ The members of the governing Committees had profited by the insurgents' irresolution and delay. They had been in session since the morning at the premises of the Committee of General Security and for a long time had had nobody to protect them but a few soldiers and the faithful section of the Butte des Moulins (Palais-Royal), led by Raffet, a former Fayetteist, who had distinguished himself before, on the 12th Germinal. Had the insurgents wanted to seize the members of the government, nothing would have been easier. But they let the opportunity slip, as they had done before, on the 9th Thermidor. The Thermidorians afterwards recognized¹⁸ that they had been in the greatest danger. But they did not lose their heads. They charged Raffet to collect as many trustworthy battalions as he could, and invested him with the command-in-chief of the National Guard, so that he might be able, in this capacity, to give orders to the armed forces of the doubtful and hostile sections, which they recommended him to post in the most distant places.¹⁹ Towards half past eight at night, the battalion of the Butte des Moulins was reinforced by that of the section Le Peletier. The Committees had already summoned three hundred cavalry to their assistance. They had stationed guards to protect the telegraph, the prisons, and the police commission—the latter being drawn from the faithful battalion of the section Contrat Social. Bayard, the commandant of this battalion, had received instructions to prevent the cutting of the communications between the Committee of General Security, which sat in the Pavillon de Marsan, and the president of the Assembly; and uninterrupted communication was secured, as a matter of fact, by a police spy, Ignace Eck. Orders had been dispatched to the troops stationed round Paris, as far afield as the departments of Somme

¹⁷ For instance, the commandant chosen by the insurgents of the section of the Arsenal, Pierre Lime, took his cannon back to the section at half past seven in the evening (National Archives, W 546, papers concerning Lime).

¹⁸ See Rovère's letters to Goupilleau de Montaigu, 4th and 7th Prairial. In his funeral oration on Féraud, delivered on the 14th Prairial, Louvet admitted that "if only a third of that impious troop had presented itself to dissolve the governing Committees, this would have been done!"

¹⁹ See the text of the order given to Raffet in M. Henri Monin's essay: "*Notes sur la famille de Raffet*" in *La Révolution française* for 1893, Vol. II.

and Aisne, to concentrate with all speed on the plain of Les Sablons. Two deputies, Defermon and Doulcet de Pontécoulant, were sent to meet the cavalry squadrons.²⁰ We know from the testimony of several eyewitnesses—notably the deputies Cassanyès and Dyzès—that by the end of the day, after the murder of Féraud, the Committees had sufficient troops at their disposal and already stationed in the courtyards of the Tuileries to clear the building and free the Assembly. “I declare in all sincerity,” says Cassanyès, “that had I been at the head of fifty hussars or dragoons, or a hundred infantry, I should have routed that troop of bandits and put them to flight in less than a quarter of an hour. All that was wanted was the Government’s consent and orders.”²¹ Dyzès declares that it was a puzzle to him why the government allowed the movement to take its course freely.²²

The solution of the puzzle becomes clear when we read the explanation of his conduct given by Vernier, the president, twelve years later: ²³ “Since it had been secretly arranged that we were to gain as much time as possible, so as to allow those outside time to deliver the Convention, I acted solely with this object in view. I omit here all the means to which I resorted to delay their plans [those of the Montagnards]. Suffice it to say that, all of a sudden, the Convention was delivered.” But Vernier does not tell us everything. On his own admission, he suppresses something. But he says enough to make us realize that his behaviour in the presidential chair was a piece of play-acting, arranged in concert with the governing Committees, with which he kept in touch through the spy Ignace Eck. At half past nine at night Lecourt-Villers, commandant of the battalion of the section Le Peletier, received orders to lead half his men into the Salon de la Liberté—that is, into the lobby to the right of the president’s chair, through which the mass of the insurgents had made their way into the hall of the Assembly.²⁴ From this moment the insurgents were trapped. Lecourt-Villers next received “most precise orders,” as he says, “to let those leaving the hall of the Assembly pass freely.” He found difficulty in restraining the impatience of his men, who were burning to clear the hall without more delay. This deposition enables us to see the full significance of the president Vernier’s statement. It was entirely in accordance with the plans of the governing Committees that the

²⁰ See the ordinances, dated the 1st Prairial, in Aulard, Vol. XXIII.

²¹ Cassanyès’s notes published in *La Révolution française* for September 1890.

²² Letter of Dyzès dated the 23rd Prairial, year III, in the *Revue de France* for December 15, 1926.

²³ See *La Révolution française* for July–September 1926.

²⁴ See Lecourt-Villers’s deposition before the extraordinary commission (National Archives, W 547).

insurgents were left in possession of the hall for eight whole hours and that the presidents, Vernier and Boissy d'Anglas, did not leave the chair, but directed the debate and announced the decrees as they were passed. The important point for them was thoroughly to implicate the remaining Montagnard deputies in the insurrection, in order to have a pretext for further measures of repression, which this time were to be decisive.

When, towards midnight, the Committees heard that the Convention had just quashed them and replaced them by an extraordinary commission of four members, they at last decided to act. Legendre, accompanied by Delecloy, entered the hall in which the Convention was sitting, and called upon the insurgents to disperse and vacate the place.²⁵ Legendre and Delecloy retired amid derisive shouts, but reappeared again a few moments later at the head of columns advancing at the double with fixed bayonets. After a moment's hesitation the insurgents, finding themselves trapped, fled through the Salon de la Liberté, which had purposely been left empty.

At once the acts of vengeance began which had been demanded by Legendre, Defermon, Pierret, Bourdon of Oise, Delahaye, Tallien, and Lehardy. By half past three in the morning, when the Assembly adjourned, it had ordered the arrest of Du Roy, Duquesnoy, Bourbotte, Prieur of Marne, Romme, Soubrany, Goujon, the elder Albitte, Peyssard, Le Carpentier, Pinet, Borie, and Fayau, all well-known Montagnards, several of whom had taken no action during the session which had just closed. That very morning the deputies under arrest were put into carriages and driven to the château of Le Taureau, near Morlaix.

Yet all was not over. The insurrection went far deeper than that of the 12th Germinal. At eight o'clock on the following morning (the 2nd Prairial) the tocsin was again sounded in the Jacobin sections, which took up arms. Those of the faubourg Antoine (Montreuil, Popincourt, and Quinze-Vingts), were led by a coloured man, Guillaume Delorme, captain of the gunners in the section of Popincourt. A disorderly crowd gathered in the great hall of the Hôtel de Ville, styled itself the National Convention, and nominated Cambon mayor of Paris, and Thuriot procurator to the commune; but it dispersed almost immediately on hearing that the Assembly had outlawed it. In the afternoon the sections started out and marched on the Convention; but it had adopted measures of defence, which Rovère described as follows in a letter to his friend Goupilleau: "Never has the Convention been in such danger. . . . We owe our safety to nothing but the energy of the good

²⁵ See Aulard, Vol. XXIII, for the ordinance of the Committee entrusting this mission to Legendre and Delecloy.

citizens picked out individually from all the sections. Had we not eliminated the rabble, we should have been lost. This would have happened without a doubt if we had called out those sections *en masse* in which the ruffianly element had the upper hand, because honest men blushed to mix with it. Fortunately we saw to this. We gave the alarm to the honest men, the good citizens who had some property to preserve. We summoned them from every section, and, all of a sudden, we had an army of fifty thousand men, who, together with the cavalry which we had sent for, saved us, and, with us, the common weal.”²⁶ This admission, which is, moreover, confirmed by the *Journal de Paris*, should be borne in mind. The defenders of the Convention were carefully selected. This time the *jeunesse dorée*, which had been conspicuous by its absence on the previous evening, assembled again. Since the defence of property was at stake, they forgot their grievances against the Convention for hampering royalist propaganda. But the working-class faubourgs, supported by the sections of the centre, arrived in force. The commandant of the Convention’s cavalry, General Dubois, admits that at half past three in the afternoon he had to fall back before more than twenty thousand men who hurled abuse at his detachment and forced it to dismount. He says that he was in the greatest danger.²⁷ At five o’clock working-class Paris—“the rabble,” as Rovère calls them—and leisured Paris—the “honest men”—were face to face. All the streets leading to the Tuileries were full of armed citizens; almost the whole length of the rue Saint-Honoré, the Place des Piques (Place Vendôme) and the adjacent streets, the rue des Bons-Enfants, and the rue des Petits-Champs, those leading into the Place des Victoires as far back as the rue Montmartre, and the quays and Pont-Royal. “Such a thing has never been seen,” said the *Courrier républicain*, “since this great city has existed; not July 14, not August 10, nor May 31 saw such extraordinary military preparations. . . . At seven o’clock or thereabouts, the sections from the faubourgs tried to make their way to the National Convention, the others, which occupied the commanding positions, being determined to prevent this. The troops were at once set in motion. Cavalry hastened to post themselves on both flanks. A deep hush fell. The match was at the touch-hole of the cannon, and sixty thousand men were almost on the point of slaughtering one another without knowing why (*sic*).” At a quarter past seven, as the gunners of the faubourgs were setting about loading their

²⁶ The *Journal de Paris* for the 4th Prairial confirms Rovère’s admission: “Twenty thousand men chosen from among the good citizens in the sections were armed, organized, and assembled during the night without beating the drum.”

²⁷ Letter from General Alexis Dubois to the deputy Gillet, dated the 17th Prairial, year III, in *La Révolution française*, Vol. XLVII.

cannon, those of the sections on the side of the Convention suddenly turned their guns and ranged themselves on the side of the insurgents. It was a critical moment, and Legendre and the Committees were in dismay. But the Thermidorians were men of resource. They had already spent the whole day in efforts to disarm the anger of the insurgents by making marked advances to them. They had obtained the reversal of the decree of the 6th Floréal, which had authorized dealings in metal currency. These dealings were again forbidden, as in the days of Robespierre. This was nothing but a deceptive promise which they did not dream of keeping and hastened to revoke after the insurrection. Another decree ordered a general census of flour and bread. Next the Committees spread a rumour that peace had just been signed with Holland. The people felt that the cessation of the war would put an end to all their sufferings. When the Committees heard of the defection of the gunners, they made a desperate move. They approached the working-class sections with a view to fraternization. They promised to give satisfaction to the men of the people, protested their good intentions, and invited the insurgents to send a delegation to the Assembly. The delegation was received by Vernier, the president, with friendly but vague speeches and fraternal embraces. The insurgents fell into the trap. They returned to their faubourgs without striking a blow, having obtained nothing but sterile decrees, lying promises, and hypocritical embraces.

On the 3rd Prairial measures were taken to surround the faubourg Antoine. Three hundred cavalry had arrived during the previous night. One of the detachments was under the command of Joachim Murat, who had long called himself Joachim Marat. The *jeunesse dorée* were summoned to the Tuileries; during the night arms had been distributed to them by General Kilmaine, after which they advanced on the faubourg. They marched in gaily, but were overwhelmed with abuse. As their retreat was cut off by barricades, they were forced to humiliate themselves and ask to be let out. The inhabitants of the faubourg were generous enough to consent, though they made the Muscadins go out one by one through a hole in one of the barricades. But they were in a state of delight because they had just rescued from the hands of the police a journeyman locksmith named Tinel, who had been accused of being responsible for the murder of Féraud and had already been taken to the scaffold.

The 4th Prairial was the last day of the insurrection. The Committees obtained the passage of a decree ordering the three sections of the faubourg Antoine to hand over the murderer of Féraud to the arm of the law on the spot and to give up their cannon and other arms at the same time. A whole army, under the command of General Menou, assembled at the entry to the

faubourg and threatened to deprive it of bread unless it submitted unconditionally. The threat produced its effect. The faubourg yielded without a struggle, threw down the barricades, and handed over its cannon and other arms.

On the same day the Convention set up a military commission to carry out summary reprisals under the form of law. This military commission gave judgment without the ordinary forms of trial. The five judges of which it was composed, all of whom were nominated by Rovère, did what was expected of them. They pronounced a number of death-sentences for reasons which were often trifling. The most distinguished victims were the ex-deputies Romme, Duquesnoy, Du Roy, Bourbotte, Soubrany, and Goujon, who were condemned to death "for having conspired against the Republic"—to quote the judgment—"tried to bring about (*provoqué*) the dissolution of the National Convention and the assassination of its members, attempted by every means to organize revolt and civil war and revive all the excesses and horrors of the tyranny which preceded Thermidor." "I desire," said Soubrany, on hearing the verdict, "that my blood should be the last innocent blood to be shed. May it consolidate the Republic!" As he descended the steps of the court-house, Bourbotte stabbed himself, saying: "You shall see how a man of courage can die!" Goujon did the same and fell without a groan. Romme snatched the knife from Goujon's wound and stabbed himself in turn. Duquesnoy, who had nothing but the blade of a pair of scissors, plunged it into his heart. Soubrany stabbed himself with Bourbotte's knife. Du Roy also tried to kill himself. Three died on the spot. The other three were carried bleeding to the guillotine. Soubrany was dead by the time he reached it—in spite of which, they guillotined his dead body.

The tragic suicide of these six Montagnards implicated in the insurrection, all of them straightforward, honest men who had borne themselves splendidly at the front, filled all the republicans with sorrow and distress, and even the Thermidorians themselves regretted having woven the martyr's crown for their adversaries.

But this did not check the work of vengeance. The *Gazette française* for the 9th Prairial estimates the numbers of the Parisian republicans placed on the proscription lists at ten thousand. First came what remained of the former members of the Committee of the year II: Robert Lindet, Voulland, Jeanbon Saint-André, Jagot, Élie Lacoste, Lavicomterie, David, Prieur of Côte-d'Or, Dubarran, and Bernard of Saintes. Carnot himself was denounced by the Girondin Henri Larivière on the 9th Prairial and was very nearly included in the batch. "To fail to prevent crime," said Larivière, "is to commit it." Though Carnot had shown courage in the defence of Barère, Billaud,

and Collot, this time he collapsed. He made a feeble defence, declared that in signing the decrees of the Committee he had merely acquiesced in the decisions of those whom he trusted—in short, he pleaded extenuating circumstances. It was only the famous *mot* of an obscure deputy that saved him: "He was the organizer of victory!"

After the Montagnards who had been members of the governing Committees, it was the turn of those who had been sent on mission and were the object of denunciations. Massieu, Dartigoyte, Pinet, J. B. Lacoste, Baudot, Esnue Lavallée, Allard, Lejeune, Javogues, Pautrizel, Sergent, Panis, Thirion, Laignelot, Charbonnier, Escudier, Salicetti, and Ricord were placed under arrest. Honest Maure blew out his brains on being interrogated, as Rühl, the old Alsatian, had done before him when sent before the Military Commission. By this means, at least sixty deputies of the Mountain were excluded from the Assembly.²⁸

This time the democratic party was crushed. Why was it defeated? On the 1st and 2nd Prairial, as we have seen, it was within an ace of regaining the supreme power. It failed because the Montagnard deputies who should have been its leaders preserved a sort of scared or uneasy neutrality up to the last moment. The Parisian workmen drifted helplessly at the mercy of events, because those to whom they looked for leadership failed them. The Montagnard deputies were incapable of assuming responsibility boldly and in time, either on the 12th Germinal or on the 1st Prairial. They sheltered themselves behind the forms of legality. They were paralysed by the accusation of conspiracy. Thus, as often happens, the democratic forces were worth more than their leaders. What a difference between the conduct of these artisans, starved for months past, who revolted openly, dashing themselves against the police and the armies of order; and, on the other hand, the deputies who from the very outset repudiated the slightest imputation of having any part in the insurrection! In spite of their sincerely popular sympathies, the Montagnard deputies belonged, after all, to a different class from the people. They were all of middle-class origin. They could only understand the people by a mental effort. They were not on the same level as the manual workers, from whom they were separated by education, fortune, and inborn prejudice. In this lies the basic reason why the Montagnard deputies were

²⁸ On the 5th Prairial, Bourdon of Oise had already obtained a decree for the impeachment of Pache, Bouchotte, Marchand, Daubigni, Héron, and Xavier Audouin (Pache's son-in-law). Boursault had ex-General Rossignol added to the list. Clémence, Hassenfratz, and Jourdeuil swelled the number of those who had been high officials under the revolutionary government. All of them were sent before the criminal tribunal of Eure-et-Loir. They were saved by the amnesty of the 3rd Brumaire.

THE THERMIDORIAN REACTION

not leaders in the full sense of the word—that is, leaders who can take the initiative and never dream of evading responsibility—leaders who know how to command and make themselves obeyed. As yet, the people had no representatives sprung from its own ranks. The Montagnards defended it, as it were, by proxy. But nearly a century was to elapse before the people won the capacity for managing its own affairs—before it learnt to read.

CHAPTER XI

Quiberon

THE Thermidorians had only succeeded in triumphing over the last Jacobin risings in Prairial by making one more appeal to property-owners and defenders of order, and even by effecting a reconciliation with the Muscadins. After the victory the exigencies of their seesaw policy of conciliating both parties in turn forced them to make concessions to their temporary allies. Though still very hostile to the clergy in general, and in particular to the former refractory clergy, which formed the irreconcilable nucleus of the royalist party in the country districts, they thought that they might win over part of the more peaceable Catholics to their side and that of the Republic by granting them further facilities for the practice of their religion. Perhaps, indeed, they could not have done otherwise, for their law of the 3rd Ventôse permitting the celebration of the rites of religion once more, after an interval of eighteen months, was violated in every part of France.

This law, as we may remember, did not restore the churches to the faithful. It merely authorized them to celebrate worship in premises provided by themselves. But, with the almost universal connivance of the newly-appointed authorities, they had resumed possession of the old buildings. By an open violation of the law certain communes had even granted a salary or endowment to the refractory priests who were returning home on all sides. Thus on the 26th Ventôse, year III, the commune of Venise, in the department of Doubs, had made a curious bargain with the Capuchin Dessirier, who had returned from abroad, granting him a lease of fifty *ouvrées* (area that can be worked by one man in one day) of vineyards belonging to the commune, in return for a sum of three hundred livres payable at Martinmas (November 11). The Capuchin would not have to find this sum, it was to be raised for him by a special rate levied on all the inhabitants of the commune. The bargain, or contract, is signed by the mayor, the national agent, and the municipal officers.¹ This cannot have been an isolated instance.

On the 11th Prairial, therefore, when the repressive measures against

¹ Sauzay, *Histoire de la persécution révolutionnaire dans le Doubs*, Vol. VII, p. 187.

the terrorists and the White Terror were both at their height, Lanjuinais, a former Girondin and a very devout Catholic, obtained the passage of a new law restoring to the faithful without payment those churches which had not been disposed of, on the sole condition that they should place them at the disposal of the authorities "for the assemblies prescribed by law"—that is, for electoral assemblies and the reading of the laws every *décadi*. As Boissy had done at the time when the previous law of the 3rd Ventôse had been passed, Lanjuinais, who was, moreover, a Breton, laid stress upon the necessity for applying to the whole of France the privileged regime already granted to the western departments by the conventions of La Mabilais (April 18, 1795) and Saint-Florent (May 2), which had been signed with Cormatin and Stofflet. "Is it consistent," he said, "with equality and justice, to treat the departments and communes which have always remained faithful to us with greater severity than these?" But unlike Boissy d'Anglas, who had displayed his contempt for Catholicism, and expressed his regret that circumstances would not allow its suppression to continue, Lanjuinais deplored the closing of the churches as a tyrannical abuse. Worship carried on in public seemed to him less dangerous than that carried on privately, since it was more easily kept under supervision. He therefore made the restitution of the churches dependent upon the signature by the ministers of worship of a document promising submission to the laws of the Republic. Lanjuinais was a Gallican and a friend of Grégoire. By this act of submission he reckoned upon favouring the constitutional priests and eliminating the more uncompromising refractory priests. The decree which he proposed was passed almost without discussion.² The anticlericals tried to insert some amendments. Génissieu proposed to extend the right to celebrate worship, even in private, to priests who should not subscribe to the act of submission. But the amendment was rejected as the result of Lanjuinais's comment that it was useless, and that they must refrain from violating the asylum of citizens.³ A circular letter of the Legislative Committee, dated the 29th Prairial (June 17, 1795), laid down that the authorities were to apply the decree in the most liberal spirit and that most favourable to Catholicism: "Observe well that this submission [to the laws] required of the declarant [that is, the priest asking for the use of a church] in no way applies to the past. Thus there must be no question of any inquiry or examination into the conduct or

² "There was an animated debate," says M. Aulard in his *Histoire politique de la Révolution*, p. 540. I have been unable to find any trace of one in the reports which I have read.

³ For the precise significance of this legislation and the way in which it was applied, see my book *La Révolution et l'Église*, especially the last chapter.

political opinions of the declarant; in this respect the law requires of him one thing only: that he should ask, to sign an act of submission to the laws of the republic . . . it would be superfluous to remind you that the Civil Constitution of the Clergy is no longer a law of the Republic, had not claims been put forward in connexion with it which cannot henceforth be sanctioned." These words clearly signify that the refractory priests were included within the scope of the law. But is this true of all refractory priests? It would be a mistake to think so.⁴ The laws on the deportation of priests had not been abrogated. But all these refractory priests who had legal sanction for remaining in France might enter into competition with those who had been constitutional priests, in trying to obtain churches. The simultaneous exercise of both forms of worship, which had already prevailed in 1791 and 1792, was re-established, but with this difference, that the use of the churches was shared not only by the different confessions, but also by the decadary ceremonies, which were maintained in theory.

By this decree the Convention had thought to rally part of the Catholics to the Republic. As a matter of fact, though the refractory priests were divided among themselves, some accepting the signature of the act of submission to the laws in order to dispute the regular use of the churches with the constitutional priests, the others, who were perhaps more numerous, refused to make the required declaration, because it would have meant abjuring their fidelity to the king. All the evidence shows that the decree of the 11th Prairial, far from striking a blow at royalist propaganda, stimulated it and gave it fresh impetus. Sauzay, the royalist historian of religious persecution in the department of Doubs, is obliged to admit that the refractory priests, who were very numerous in that frontier department, were so many royalist agents. They made rapid progress, especially in the country districts. Many parishes refused to take back their former constitutional priests on the ground that they had degraded themselves by abdicating their functions.⁵ It was worse in the west. In spite of the pacification, the lives of the republican priests were not safe: "There is a price on our heads," wrote Le Coz, Bishop of Rennes, to Grégoire on the 5th Thermidor.⁶ Nor can there be any doubt that the decree of the 11th Prairial increased the audacity of the

⁴ M. Aulard has made this mistake, or, at least, has drawn no distinction (*Histoire politique de la Révolution*, p. 540).

⁵ In this connexion see the admissions of Flavigny, ex-Bishop of Haute-Saône, in a letter to Grégoire, dated the 25th Ventôse. (Flavigny's correspondence has been published by M. Georges Gazier in the *Proceedings* of the Société d'Émulation of Doubs, 1906.)

⁶ Correspondence of Le Coz, published by Père Roussel, Vol. I, pp. 127, 134.

counter-revolutionaries in the south. The Companions of Jesus redoubled their exploits.

During the fever of reaction which followed the failure of the insurrection of Prairial the Convention did not confine itself to granting substantial concessions to the Catholics. While it was dealing rigorously with the former agents of the revolutionary government—the terrorists, of whom at least thirty thousand were put in prison⁷—it could not refuse to listen to the complaints of the victims of terrorism—that is, the families of those condemned for “defeatism,” communications with the enemy, and plotting against the government during the great perils of the year II. In principle, the restitution of condemned persons’ property had already been sanctioned by the vote of the 14th Floréal. But it remained to pass the law proposed by Boissy d’Anglas on the 17th Prairial in the name of the Committees. The revision of their trials having been judged to be impossible, the procedure suggested was a general process of restitution by means of grants in compensation for the value of the property already sold. The law only admitted of three exceptions: the Bourbons, the family of Madame Dubarry, and the Robespierrists outlawed on the 9th Thermidor were to receive nothing. The Dantonists and the knaves who were sentenced with them—even the inhabitants of Toulon who had taken refuge on board the English fleet—were included in the benefits of this restitution.⁸ The restitution of condemned persons’ property opened up the way for that of the *émigrés*’ property and for their recall. The boldness of their partisans had increased so much that they started a campaign to this end in the press and by pamphlets. The old Abbé Raynal, whose philosophic works had enjoyed an immense vogue before 1789, opened fire with a pamphlet entitled *Des assassinats et des vols politiques ou des proscriptions et des confiscations* (*On Political Assassination and Robbery; or, On Proscription and Confiscation*).⁹ You

⁷ This is the figure given by Bentabole at the session of the 2nd Thermidor, year III (*Moniteur*).

⁸ The Dantonists were not mentioned during the debate. But Guyomard, though a moderate, protested against the restitution of their property to the family of Custine, who, he said, had surrendered Mainz, and to the inhabitants of Toulon, “guiltier,” in his eyes, “than the *émigrés*.” Boissy’s and Pierret’s reply was that if exceptions were to be made, this would necessitate a revision of the trials, which was impossible. Yet if the confiscation of the property of Madame Dubarry or the Robespierrists was to be maintained, the argument was no longer valid. Besides, the Robespierrists had never been tried. Merlin of Thionville’s reply to Guyomard was that Custine had not surrendered Mainz. The property of the Dantonist Basire was actually restored to his widow. See Mathiez, *Autour de Danton*, chapter i.

⁹ Issued by Buisson, bookseller, London and Paris, 94 pp.

are punishing assassins and embezzlers, he said to the Thermidorians, yet you leave their work of spoliation untouched. "Do you want the present generation and all posterity to say that you hate only the person of these ruffians, while cherishing their injustice—that you punished them as your personal enemies, while maintaining their laws, which are the enemies of the human race, since they are the enemies of justice, which is its safeguard?"

Raynal's campaign was seconded by the ex-Abbé Poncelin's *Courrier républicain*. He drew a distinction between two classes of *émigrés*: firstly, those who had not taken arms against France and had only left the country to avoid the assassin's ax; and, secondly, all the rest. In his opinion the former class ought to be placed on the same footing in all respects as the Girondin *émigrés* and treated in the same way.¹⁰ The *Gazette universelle* gave a long analysis of a pamphlet entitled *Dernière Réclamation des Bourbons à la loyauté de la nation française* (*Last Appeal of the Bourbon Family to the Loyalty of the French Nation*), summing up in favour of the restitution of their property to the royal family.¹¹ The Spanish refugee Marchena, who had been an intimate friend of Brissot and a protégé of Tallien, wrote a *Reponse à Legendre au sujet des fugitifs* (*Reply to Legendre on the Subject of the Fugitives*), in which he called for the return of all *émigrés* who had left France since September 2, 1792. He represented them as victims and protested that it was not for them to receive pardon at the hands of their executioners, but rather for them to grant pardon to those executioners. "If the criminal tribunals," added Marchena, "dare not take action against the *émigrés*, this is because they feel the full atrocity, the full iniquity, of the laws passed against them. The least of the drawbacks of bloody laws is failure to apply them." The *Courrier républicain* gave long extracts from Marchena's pamphlet and spoke in praise of it.¹²

The Thermidorians could not but take alarm at such a campaign. The return of the *émigrés* would have been the prelude to that of the king and their own ruin. They replied to Raynal by the pen of Trouvé, one of their unofficial journalists, afterwards a baron under the Empire, who was at that time editor of the *Moniteur*. "If we were to admit a single one of your principles," said Trouvé to Raynal, "we should have to recall the ex-princes and King Louis XVIII and his brother, who has become Monsieur [the title of the king's eldest brother] while waiting to become a great man. We should

¹⁰ *Courrier républicain* for the 16th Messidor, year III.

¹¹ The article of the *Gazette universelle* was mentioned with approval in the *Courrier républicain* for the 18th Messidor.

¹² In his number of the 16th Fructidor, year III, Richer de Sérizy also quoted Marchena's pamphlet and praised it in his *Accusateur public* (nos. IX–XI, p. 77).

then have to restore to them the domains which formed their royal apanages! We should have to reinstate the bishops and the abbots in possession of their rich benefices, of which the will of the nation has succeeded in depriving them, and which can never compensate for the ills which they have inflicted on their country!"¹³ Such words must have gone straight to the hearts of the whole class of purchasers of national property, the profiteers of the Revolution, with whom the Thermidorians were becoming more and more identified.

The time has come to take a glance at the royalist party, its strength and its weakness. The Thermidorians were afraid of royalism, and they had their reasons for this. "The wildest hopes," wrote their journalist Trouvé on the 18th Prairial, "are finding expression on all sides. People are vying with one another in throwing off the mask as quickly and as openly as possible; to read what is being published and to listen to the conversation of those who think they are behind the scenes, one would think that all is up with the Republic. Because the Convention, supported and even animated by the zeal and energy of good citizens, has won a great victory over the terrorists, the successors of Robespierre, it would appear that nothing remains for it but to proclaim the monarchy. . . . No! The national representatives cannot share in these criminal intentions, these discreditable projects! No! The commission of eleven [charged with preparing the new constitution] will not betray the confidence of virtuous citizens, who detest equally the arbitrary, perfidious, and deceitful government of a single man, and the bloody anarchy of an unreasoning, unenlightened, and unbridled mob." A curious and most revealing article. The journalist admits that he is afraid of the royalist campaign, and in order to crush it he appeals, on the one hand, to the Thermidorian majority; and, on the other, to his readers, the purchasers of national property. This was an admission that he could no longer reckon upon the mass of the people.

How could it have been otherwise? The most vigorous of the republicans, who had assumed power and responsibility amid the great perils of 1793 and 1794, had been imprisoned and massacred in thousands. Those who had taken their place were discredited not only by their dubious past, their tergiversations and abominable reputation as men of affairs,¹⁴ but also by

¹³ *Moniteur* of the 11th Fructidor, year III, reissue, Vol. XXV, p. 577.

¹⁴ Robert Lindet stigmatizes the speculations of the deputies forming the majority as follows in his report of the 2nd Brumaire, year IV: "It ought not to be that every deputy should become a purchaser, and that the offices of the government and Treasury should become the counting-houses of merchants and bankers.

the results of their policy. They were not even capable of maintaining order. Every day they were attacking the most elementary liberties. They had recourse to courts material (revolutionary commissions) and arbitrary imprisonment to rid themselves of their opponents, and they remained impotent before the White Terror, in which some of them were even secretly co-operating. The destitution had never been more appalling. How could the Jacobin populace of the towns, which the Robespierrists had at least fed, love a Republic ruled by such men? As for the mass of the country-people, who had not purchased national property and longed for the end of a war which took away their children and crushed them by requisitions for the army, such a Republic seemed hateful to them, even when it restored their priests, who at once set to work to trouble their pious consciences. Here was a wonderful and almost un hoped-for opening for royalist propaganda.

As Trouvé said, there were swarms of royalist papers. The *Journal de Perlet* professed to have twenty-one thousand subscribers. The Jacobin papers were disappearing one by one. But for the support of the secret-service funds the Thermidorian papers could not have existed.¹⁸ For a long

I have set no such scandalous example. I have enriched nobody and caused the enrichment of nobody" (quoted by A. Montier, *Robert Lindet*, p. 319).

¹⁸ Babeuf's paper, which had appeared intermittently, disappeared on his arrest (20th Pluviôse). Méhée's *Ami des citoyens*, in spite of its change of title to *Le Spectateur français*, had disappeared on the 16th Germinal. Audouin's *Journal universel* on the 14th Prairial, Lebois's *L'Ami du peuple* on the 16th Germinal. Fréron's *L'Orateur du peuple* stopped publication in its turn on the 25th Thermidor.

The papers which were to wage war on the royalists and Muscadins were founded at the beginning of Messidor, at the very moment when the government was turning its attention to the struggle with its former allies. Louvet's *La Sentinelle* appeared on the 6th Messidor, Réal's *Journal des patriotes de 89* on the 1st Fructidor, Lemaire's *Journal du Bonhomme Richard* on the 1st Messidor, etc. The new papers were generally believed to be subsidized out of the secret-service funds, and this is quite probable: "Let us see," wrote Poncelet's *Courrier républicain* on the 4th Thermidor, "what public journals the government has taken into its pay: *La Sentinelle*, by Louvet, *Le Bonhomme Richard*, Galetti; this paper is edited by Piccini, a member of the revolutionary committee of the section Bonnet Rouge, one of those who have been before the criminal tribunal for theft, peculation, tyranny—in fact, all the atrocities that human perversity can devise. . . . Such are the men charged by the ministers with the moulding of public opinion." It was Galetti who printed the *Journal des lois*. In his number of the 6th Fructidor, year III, Poncelet announced the appearance of the *Ami des lois*: "The latter is as silly as one might expect and quite fit to take its place beside its worthy colleagues. For the edification of those who are finding the money, thirty thousand copies have been printed of the first number, which appeared today." The opening numbers of the *Ami des lois*, edited by Poul-tier, an ex-monk and member of the Convention, are not in the Bibliothèque Nationale.

time the royalist journalists had been timid, but now they were becoming bolder and bolder. They had begun by attacking all the republican laws in turn, describing them indiscriminately as terrorist. Now their grievance was against the whole government. They did not yet come out openly as royalists, for they feared arrest. But they insinuated royalist sentiments by every means which prudence and adroitness could suggest. They were sapping the foundations of the Republic, so that it might suddenly and noiselessly collapse.

The success of the royalist emblems and songs which were distributed in profusion is yet another sign of the change of opinion. Thus the *Gazette française* announced to its subscribers on the 17th Thermidor the distribution of an engraving with a hidden meaning, "very cleverly executed," as it said, of which it gave a description. "At first sight it represents a funerary urn, covered by the drooping branches of a cypress. However closely you examine this little caricature, you can see nothing but this; but when you have been initiated into the mystery, you distinctly see four figures, which are said to be perfect likenesses. One of them is Louis XVI, another Marie Antoinette, and the remaining two their children. It is the outlines of the urn which form the silhouettes of these four faces." According to the paper, more than fifty thousand copies of this "trifle (*babiole*)" would be issued.¹⁶

The songs met with no less success than these pictures with a hidden meaning. Ange Pitou's verses were the rage. And, with his biographer M. Fernand Engerand, perhaps we should note that Ange Pitou, having given up the editorship of Sébastien Mercier's *Annales patriotiques*, was now in the pay of Louis XVIII and was smuggling arms and raising loans for the Vendéans.

But the royalist restoration, which seemed by no means improbable in Prairial of the year III, failed for three reasons: in the first place, because of the loyalty of the army and its leaders to the Republic; secondly, because of the divisions among the royalists; and, lastly, because of the death of the Dauphin, the son of Louis XVI.

Badly fed though it was, the army remained the chief stronghold of the old Jacobin spirit. Its officers and generals had risen from the ranks and owed everything to the Republic. They detested the nobles, whom they had replaced in the higher ranks; and they despised religion. Their brilliant victories over the enemy had filled them with a sort of mysticism in which personal pride blended with their convictions. Their men, formed in the

¹⁶ *Gazette française* for the 17th Thermidor, in Aulard, *Paris sous la réaction thermidorienne*, Vol. II, p. 136.

same school, loved them because the officers shared in their own life and exposed themselves to the same dangers, in the same sansculotte spirit of fraternity. Far from having been out of touch with the nation in the year II, the army had shared in its exaltation. But even when the republican spirit died down at home after the closing of the clubs, it remained very much alive and easily aroused at the front. Besides, the combatant soldiers hated the Muscadins as shirkers who had left the ranks for the sake of their own safety. The army was the impregnable rock upon which the Republic was based.

To all appearance, royalism was very strong. It had conquered the whole of the west and almost all the cities and reigned supreme in the south and in the valley of the Rhône. It was admitted even by the representatives on mission that Lyons was entirely royalist! The country districts in the departments of Loire, Haute-Loire, Lozère, and Aveyron were fanatically Catholic. Disaffection towards the existing system was increasing even in the departments of the north-east. Disorders, partly royalist and partly due to the food-crisis, had broken out at Amiens, Rouen, and other towns. But there were deep-rooted divisions among the royalists. Those who had emigrated, those gathered about the former Count of Provence—"Monsieur," the King's younger brother—at Verona, desired the establishment of the *ancien régime* pure and simple. All compromise with the Revolution was condemned by them as treason. D'Antraigues, who controlled the secret agents of royalism in France from Verona, placed members of the Constituent Assembly and Montagnards in the same category in the memoranda which he distributed among his adherents. Those responsible for the oath of the Tennis-court were in his eyes "guiltier than the Jacobins and unworthy of pardon." Mallet du Pan quotes the following remark of his: "Montlosier calls me implacable. He is right. I will be the Marat of the counter-revolution, I will cause a hundred thousand heads to fall, and his shall be the first."¹⁷

¹⁷ According to Paul Thureau-Dangin, *Royalistes et Républicains*, p. 55, Galonne, in a witty and sensible pamphlet entitled *Tableau de l'Europe en novembre 1795 et pensées sur ce qu'on a fait et ce qu'on aurait dû faire et ce qu'on n'a pas fait* (*View of Europe in November 1795, and Thoughts on what was done, and what ought to have been done, and what has not been done*), made fun of the *émigrés* who demanded a return to the old constitution of the monarchy pure and simple, "which means the return of the old abuses"; whereupon he was sharply repudiated by the Count of Artois and fell into disgrace. His pamphlet was refuted by several *émigrés*: by d'Oultremont in *Le Nouveau Siècle et la France encore monarchiste* (*The New Century and France Still Monarchist*), by De Blaire in *La France pendant des siècles ou preuves de la Constitution de la monarchie française contre le livre intitulé Tableau de l'Europe* (*France throughout the Ages, or Proofs of the Constitution of the French Monarchy, in answer to the book entitled "View of Europe"*). The Count of

On the other hand, the royalists in France itself were nearly all former Feuillants and Fayettists, with an admixture of repentant Girondins. The monarchy which they desired was a constitutional monarchy, which should preserve the essential work of the Revolution in every particular. They had a horror of despotism and were still liberals. Their ideal was still the Constitution of 1791, a nominal king on the English model, in whose name the wealthy classes should govern. Almost all of them had compromised themselves in the early days of the Revolution. For them the triumphant return of the *émigrés* and the restoration of the king now at Verona would be a calamity to be dreaded. But they were confident, because they hoped that this eventuality would be avoided. The king whom they wanted was the little Dauphin, then in the Temple, a king who would still be a minor, with a regent who would in reality be no more than a president of the Republic.

They tried to make the former revolutionaries share their hopes. The younger Lacretelle, a royalist, became the confidant of Boissy d'Anglas, with whom he tells us that he was in conference nearly every day.¹⁸ Boissy d'Anglas, who was at that time one of the most important people in the government, had Lacretelle appointed general secretary to the board of agriculture and commerce, "whose powers almost equalled those of a modern ministry." La Révellière-Lépeaux was sure that Boissy d'Anglas had held out hopes to the constitutional royalists, or even perhaps given them pledges, and to this he ascribes his delays in opening the debates on the Constitution of the year III.¹⁹ Boissy d'Anglas was not the only one who turned a questioning glance towards the Temple. "I know," wrote Mallet du Pan with reference to Cambacérès in his letter of April 16, 1793, "that his secret desires and opinions are royalist." Aubry, who was all-powerful in the Military Committee, Henri Larivière, Cadroy, and Chambon, the latter of whom were the protectors of the Companions of Jesus, were open to the same suspicion. The constitutional royalists even believed that they could reckon upon Tallien himself. Louis Blanc maintains that through his father-in-law, Cabarrus, who had remained in Madrid, where he was director of the Bank of

Artois wrote on July 20, 1796 to his confidant Vaudreuil that Calonne would only recover his place in the opinion of right-thinking people by making a public recantation. See the *Correspondance de Vaudreuil avec le comte d'Artois pendant l'émigration*, published by L. Pingaud, Vol. II, pp. 255-60.

¹⁸ The younger Lacretelle, *Dix Années d'épreuves*, p. 213.

¹⁹ La Révellière, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, pp. 233-5.

San Carlos, Tallien had opened secret negotiations with Spain to induce her to make peace, a little kingdom being set up for the Dauphin in Navarre.²⁰ Tallien's name occurs two or three times in the correspondence of the royalist agent Lemaître, but even if it is proved that the royalists believed Tallien to be venal and thought of bribing him, there is nothing to show that he accepted their proposals. Far from it! He was to be the most stalwart opponent of the Restoration.

But a chance event occurred which threw a flood of light on the deep-seated divisions among the royalists and struck a death-blow at their hopes. The Dauphin died on the 20th Prairial (June 8, 1795) of scrofula and tuberculosis, the diseases which had already caused the death of his elder brother. Henceforward the "King" meant Louis XVIII, the king of Verona and Coblenz. Lest anyone should mistake his intentions, as early as June 24 he hastened to issue a manifesto to his people announcing his accession. He declared his firm intention of avenging the death of his brother by punishing the regicides without mercy, of restoring the three Estates of the Realm as before 1789, re-establishing Catholicism as the State religion, and reinstating the Parlements in their ancient rights.²¹ Louis XVIII had followed to the letter the advice of the *émigrés* by whom he was surrounded.²² Count Ferrand, who was to become a minister under the first Restoration, had requested that on his return he would sanction a mere forty-four thousand executions, one for every municipality. Count d'Oultremont wanted him to "hang all that was left of the Constituent Assembly." Others added that the purchasers of Church property ought to be shot.

This event meant an irreparable breach between the two branches of the royalist party, and the postponement of the Restoration for twenty years. The Dauphin's death filled the old "Constitutional" party of 1791 with consternation by ruining at a single blow the tactics of encirclement which they had been pursuing skilfully since Thermidor. They had dreamt of a national dynasty with the young Dauphin, who would have passed from the Temple to the Tuileries, bringing no *émigrés* or foreigners with him. They wanted to take up the march of history again in 1792, not in 1788. And now

²⁰ There was also a rumour that the Dauphin was going to be proclaimed king of Poland. Beauchesne says that Sébastien Mercier, director of the *Annales patriotiques*, repeated this rumour in his paper (Beauchesne, *Louis XVII*, p. 308).

²¹ See the analysis of this proclamation and the instructions accompanying it in Louis Blanc, ed. *Docks de la Librairie*, Vol. II, pp. 719-20, and Trouvé's article in the *Moniteur* for the 19th Fructidor, year III.

²² Ernest Daudet, *Histoire de l'émigration*, pp. 285-7.

his death had delivered them into the hands of the king of the *émigrés*. How was it possible now to rally to the constitutional monarchy men like Boissy d'Anglas, Legendre, Doulcet de Pontécoulant,²³ and Tallien, regicides who were trembling for their heads? Mallet du Pan tells us that they were dismayed, and he was no less so himself.²⁴ They had no need to wait for the royal manifesto to know what to expect. Immediately after the Dauphin's death they showed their chagrin by the rumours which they put into circulation—for instance, that the Dauphin had not died a natural death, but had been poisoned, like Desault, the doctor attending him, who had died four days previously. Some maintained that the Dauphin was not dead, but that a supposititious child had been substituted for him, etc. Thus a legend grew up on the spot which has no foundation, but which in later days impostors succeeded in exploiting by passing themselves off as the Dauphin who had escaped from the Temple—a legend which commercially-minded writers are still exploiting in their pseudo-historical romances.²⁵

Another consequence of the Dauphin's death was to accentuate the divisions already existing between the *émigrés* grouped about Louis XVIII and the Austrian and English governments which subsidized them. These two governments refused to recognize Louis XVIII, because they were well aware that to do so would prevent them from finding any basis upon which they could treat with France. They wanted to keep open an avenue towards peace. For a long time past—since the events at Toulon—Louis XVIII had distrusted the English. He accepted their subsidies, but with a bad grace. In the secret instructions which he sent to his agents in France, he accused England of wanting to dismember France, and perhaps he was right. Wickham, the British minister in Switzerland, who had been pouring out large sums of money since Thermidor in order to foment disorder in the interior

²³ In his speech on the 13th Messidor about the naval engagement of the 5th Messidor which preceded the landing of the *émigrés*, Doulcet inserted the following phrase: "Republicans, Anglomaniacs of '89, Constitutionals of '91, the same fate awaits you, the same flag must unite you; march, all of you, march together to exterminate the executioners whose one desire is vengeance" (*Moniteur*).

²⁴ "The death of the young king Louis XVII is the most disastrous event at the present moment. It has dismayed and discouraged the monarchists, consolidated the triumph of the Republicans, and ensured the success of the new rigmarole (*galimatias*) which they are about to pass under the name of a constitution" (Mallet du Pan, letter of June 21, 1795).

²⁵ For the rumours in circulation, see the documents collected by M. Aulard in his *Paris sous la réaction thermidorienne*, Vol. II, and in particular the article in the *Gazette française* for the 26th Prairial. The newspaper expresses regret for the death and foretells its unfortunate consequences.

of France and was already trying to bribe Pichegru,²⁶ had rapidly come to the conclusion that the restoration of absolute monarchy was impossible, for it was in conflict with the feelings of the vast majority of the population, even of the royalists in France themselves. Wickham informed Pitt of this and found no difficulty in converting him to his opinion. The agents whom Louis XVIII maintained in Paris, and who were in correspondence with D'Antraigues, warned their partisans against the schemes of the English and sometimes thwarted Wickham's proceedings.

Thugut, the Austrian chancellor, distrusted Louis XVIII quite as much as Pitt did. When Louis XVIII asked him as a favour that he might be allowed to place himself at the head of the corps of *émigrés* with which the Prince of Condé was preparing to invade Franche-Comté at the very time when the English were preparing for the Quiberon expedition, Thugut refused his sanction.²⁷ Thugut's view of French affairs was a clear-sighted one, as is shown by the following passage from a letter which he wrote to L. Cobenzl on August 15, 1795: "It is only too true that the princes are neither loved nor respected in France, and that, in spite of the almost universal discontent with the government and the existing state of affairs, it is far from being the case that Monsieur and Monsieur le Comte d'Artois can count upon a party possessing any sort of coherence."²⁸

The royalist party was now irreparably divided at home, and weakened abroad by the disagreement between the princes and the allied powers, who made use of them, but distrusted them; yet it was in such conditions as these that the Vendéans and Chouans once again took up arms, this being shortly afterwards followed by the expedition of the English and the *émigrés* to the coast of Brittany.

For the Vendéans and Chouans the so-called pacifications of La Jaunaie and La Mabilais had been no more than an adroit way of lulling the suspicions of the republicans and enabling Puisaye and the English to put the finishing touch to the expedition which they were preparing. Cormatin,

²⁶ On June 8, 1795 Grenville wrote to Wickham that Hardenberg, who had negotiated the treaty of Basel between Prussia and the French Republic, had told a minister of a German prince that Merlin of Thionville and Pichegru had formed a plan in May 1795 for proclaiming Louis XVII king, and that he was going to Berlin to persuade the King of Prussia to look favourably upon this project (Caudrillier, *La Trahison de Pichegru*, p. 24).

²⁷ Louis XVIII returned to the charge twice, on June 14 and July 8, 1795. See his letters in Vivenot, *Quellen zur Geschichte der deutschen Kaiserpolitik*, etc. Vol. IV, pp. 241 et seq.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 329.

Sapinaud, Stofflet, Charette, and their subordinates had pocketed the twenty million livres of secret-service funds which the simple-minded republicans had distributed among them to purchase their submission. Not for a moment had they disbanded their troops—which, indeed, an article in the pacification permitted them to maintain ready to hand. Not for a moment had they interrupted their correspondence with the English. They continued to starve out the towns and murder isolated republicans, especially the former constitutional priests. None but money bearing the effigy of Louis XVI was accepted in the country districts. The patriot refugees had been unable to return home or resume the enjoyment of their property, which remained in the power of the Chouan leaders. It had been impossible to reconstitute the village municipalities. Nobody was safe outside the towns who did not wear the white cockade. Jarry, a representative on mission, wrote from Nantes to the Committee on the 13th Prairial: "The Chouans are behaving worse than ever. It is no longer possible to have any illusion about the object of their organization; every parish has an armed leader who enrolls the inhabitants and makes them promise to march as soon as they receive the signal. This parish commander is subordinate to a divisional commander who controls the canton. Several cantons are grouped under a superior commander, and the whole organization obeys a commander-in-chief who controls a wide stretch of country. It appears that De Scépeaux is commander-in-chief of the whole right bank of the Loire." Hoche never ceased to point out to the Committee of Public Safety that the terms of the conventions were not being carried out. He described how Cormatin governed the whole of Brittany from his château of La Prevalaye, near Rennes, giving orders and distributing passports in the name of Louis XVII, and promoting desertion in the ranks of the starving republican troops.²⁹ "Cormatin's behaviour is abominable, his language is that of a madman, he has in fact lost his senses and believes himself to be dictator of Brittany."³⁰

A few days later, on the 4th Prairial, the representatives on mission at Vannes, Guezno, Guermeur, and Brûe intercepted some letters from Cormatin to the Comte de Silz, the leader of the Chouans of Morbihan. The dispatches which were seized left no doubt of the double-dealing of the Chouans and their preparations for resuming the war. "Send me a signed document in blank so that I may raise a loan on my own authority," wrote

²⁹ See Chassin's great work, and Vol. V of A. Duchatellier's *Histoire de la Révolution en Bretagne*. The latter work, though quite an old one (1836), is still very valuable for the documents which it provides, and which Louis Blanc has done no more than summarize.

³⁰ Letter quoted by Duchatellier, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 35.

Cormatin. "There are four signatures: Boishardy, you, Chantreau, and myself. You can trust us to fill it up." The representatives on mission sent on the documents to their colleagues at Rennes, Grenot and Bollet, who, without losing any time, arrested Cormatin, Solilhac, Jarry, and a few other Chouan leaders and at the same time posted up on the walls copies of the principal incriminating documents (6th Prairial).

The Chouans of Morbihan at once took up arms again and were soon followed by those in the whole of Brittany. In the Vendée, Charette, who, like Stofflet, had just been appointed by the regent lieutenant-general of the Catholic and Royal armies, did not at once resume the campaign. On the contrary, he tried to keep the republicans still in play and had a new conference with the representatives on mission at La Jaunaie on June 8. He was waiting till the *émigrés'* expedition, which had embarked on board Admiral Warren's squadron, had been sighted from the coasts of Brittany. When this happened, he violated the pacification by suddenly falling upon and massacring a republican detachment. Next he explained in a proclamation to the Vendéans that the republicans had poisoned the Dauphin so as not to have to keep the promise to replace him on the throne, which they had given him at the time he had made submission.

Two days before this sudden attack by Charette the English fleet, under Admiral Warren, had defeated the French fleet, under Admiral Villaret-Joyeuse, off Audierne, thus clearing the way for a convoy of fifty transports bearing the promised reinforcements to the Vendéans and Chouans. Fortunately for the republicans, the two leaders of the expedition, Puisaye and D'Hervilly, were at loggerheads. Their powers were ill defined. Puisaye was Pitt's man while D'Hervilly distrusted the English. They landed four thousand five hundred *émigrés* and soldiers without hindrance in the bay of Carnac. The Chouans had received warning, and several thousands of them hastened to the spot to fetch powder and arms. Auray was seized without difficulty. The Bishop of Dol, whom the Pope had appointed vicar-apostolic for the whole of Brittany, accompanied the expedition. But the Blues were not taken unawares. On the same day Hoche reached Vannes and summoned all available reinforcements from the towns of Brittany. Three thousand men had already been rapidly thrown into Belle-Isle, which had been placed in a state of defence. Sailors were landed from the fleet. The English and the *émigrés*, with the Chouans, failed to take Vannes. They had to fall back into the peninsula of Quiberon, after seizing Fort Penthhièvre, which commands the narrow neck of the isthmus connecting it with the mainland. Hoche left them no breathing-space, but retook Auray as early as the 12th Messidor. When he saw the enemy thrown back into the peninsula, he

quickly decided on his line of action. Opposite Fort Penthièvre, on the cliff commanding the sea-shore, he constructed a trench five hundred metres long, flanked by redoubts, and in this were mounted cannon so as to deprive the *émigrés* of all chance of escape. The *émigrés* were waiting for the second part of the expedition, which had left England after them, under the command of the Comte de Sombreuil. Sombreuil arrived with two thousand men on the 27th Messidor, and on the following day D'Hervilly and Puisaye gave orders for an offensive against the French lines, at the same time landing detachments to create a diversion on both wings. Hoche allowed them to advance till they were well within range, then unmasked his batteries, which overwhelmed them with grape-shot. D'Hervilly was badly wounded. The retreat became a rout, and the republicans pursued them almost as far as Fort Penthièvre.

On the day after this successful engagement the two deputies Blad and Tallien arrived in Hoche's camp. Before leaving England the *émigrés* had made the mistake of increasing their numbers by enrolling in their ranks three thousand French prisoners who had found in this a welcome opportunity of escaping from the hulks. But most of these republican prisoners meant to give the slip to their enforced companions. On arriving at Quiberon they deserted one by one. Through them Hoche gained information about the defences of Fort Penthièvre. One stormy night of heavy skies and high seas, which kept the English gunboats from approaching the shore, he sent a detachment led by two deserters to attack the fort. Approaching noiselessly by a hidden path which brought them out on the parapet, the detachment was received with open arms by the ex-prisoners of war who were on guard at this part of the ramparts. They took the fort almost without striking a blow. On that very morning, the 3rd Thermidor, the whole of Hoche's army advanced and took the *émigrés* by surprise, driving them back almost to the end of the peninsula under a storm of grape-shot. Part of them escaped with Puisaye to the English fleet. Sombreuil, who called Puisaye a coward, was taken prisoner with the rest and with the Chouans. Besides the vast stores for equipping an army of forty thousand men—20,000 guns, 150,000 pairs of boots, tons of flour, biscuit, rum, and cheese—there had fallen into the hands of the victors at least 8,000 combatants including about 1,000 *émigrés*, mostly men of good birth and former naval officers, 3,600 Chouans, 3,000 prisoners enlisted in England, etc.⁸¹ Before

⁸¹ Letter from the departmental administrative body of Morbihan, dated the 5th Thermidor, in Closmadeuc, *Quiberon*, p. 75. Tallien gives different figures in his speech before the Convention on the 9th Thermidor: 1,500 *émigrés*, 1,500 Chouans,

hurrying back to the Convention to receive the victor's crown, Tallien set three thousand wives and children of Chouans at liberty. His colleague Blad remained on the spot and set up military commissions to try the *émigrés* according to the law.

The military commission sitting at Auray wrote to Blad on the 10th Thermidor, after its second session: "Almost all the *émigré* prisoners whom we have just examined plead the terms of their capitulation; they reply that they only surrendered because several officers and men in the republican army assured them that their lives would be spared if they laid down their arms, and that, trusting to this verbal promise, they surrendered to avoid bloodshed on both sides. They were so convinced of this that one of their men swam out to announce this capitulation to the corvette or frigate whose fire was harassing our troops, so that it stopped on the spot, and this officer returned on shore. We do not know whether this capitulation really exists; if it does, our proceedings are at a standstill. We therefore request you to inform us how matters really stand, and indicate how we ought to proceed in the painful task which we are discharging. Judgment had already been given, it is true, in the case of Sombreuil, La Landelle, and Petit-Guyot, but Sombreuil was the commander, and the other two said nothing about a capitulation."³² Blad replied that there had been no such capitulation, and at once dissolved the military commission, replacing it by another. On the same day he explained to the Committee that he had taken this step because "there was a risk that these unseasonable delays might disturb the peace of this region, in which the majority of the inhabitants were only too much inclined to rise in insurrection on behalf of the enemy prisoners at Auray." This measure, he further added, "seemed to me all the more indispensable because the English fleet is still threatening our shores, the Chouans inland still continue their brigandage, and, in spite of all the precautions we have taken up to the present, the prisoners and their accomplices are at once informed of all that may concern any of them, so that the slightest incident may send the enemies of the Republic back to their crimes, and turn the most brilliant victories to our disadvantage." Blad was not exaggerating. At Auray the republicans were encamped in enemy country. Many of the prisoners escaped through the complicity of ladies in the town. Parties of Chouans were still carrying on guerrilla warfare in the neighbourhood. If Blad insisted on applying all the rigour of the law, this was because

and 6,000 prisoners (enlisted on their side). Closmadeuc, in arriving at his conclusions, has brought together other figures.

³² Quoted by Closmadeuc in his excellent book *Quiberon*, p. 179.

he thought an example was necessary to strike terror to the insurgents and their partisans. On the 14th Thermidor he had a proclamation posted up in which he denied the existence of any capitulation, or any promise to the *émigrés*.³³ Two days later Hoche confirmed Blad's proclamation: "I was at the head of the seven hundred grenadiers who captured M. de Sombreuil and his division. Not a soldier shouted out that the *émigrés* would be treated as prisoners of war, and I should have contradicted it on the spot."³⁴

The military commissions were at work from the 9th Thermidor, year III, to the 9th Germinal, year IV; they acquitted 2,918 French prisoners and 1,200 Chouans and condemned to death 751 *émigrés*, of whom 748 were shot.

Charette and the English tried to avenge the disaster of Quiberon. By way of reprisals Charette had all the republican prisoners, numbering several hundred, shot without mercy. The English fitted out a second expedition, which landed guns and munitions for Charette on the coast of the Vendée in August 1795. This time the Count of Artois took a personal share in the expedition. He sailed on an English vessel. Admiral Warren seized the island of Yeu on September 30, 1795 and landed a thousand or so *émigrés* and two thousand English soldiers. Charette hoped that this army-corp would come and join him, with the prince. But he waited in vain. Finding that Hoche was guarding every point along the coast, the English and the prince left the Isle of Yeu for England in November.

The failure of these two expeditions consolidated the Republic and was the sign for a decisive change in the policy of the Thermidorians. The constitutional royalists who led the Parisian press had blamed the *émigrés'* expedition to Quiberon, just as they had blamed the ultra-royalist and clerical manifesto of Louis XVIII.³⁵ But they were revolted by the execution of the prisoners, the flower of the "red-coats" of the old royal naval corps. They began to despise and hate Tallien, who had been their idol. They affected to believe that there had been a capitulation, and that Tallien alone had ordered that the law should take its course. The younger Lacretelle tells us that he went to see Madame Tallien and expressed his grief to her. Ac-

³³ Closmadeuc, p. 206.

³⁴ See Hoche's letter in Closmadeuc, p. 81.

³⁵ See the younger Lacretelle, *Dix Années d'épreuves*, pp. 235 et seq.: "All writers who were capable of any moderation and forethought were in dismay when they heard of the landing of the *émigrés* at Quiberon, but they were even more so on hearing of the disaster, at which the English looked on from their vessels without moving." The younger Lacretelle compares the Quiberon adventure with that of the Duchess of Berri in the Vendée after 1830.

cording to him, she shed floods of tears and regretted that she had not been present at Quiberon. A rumour was shortly put about that she was going to apply for a divorce.³⁶ Tallien and his friends became the object of violent attacks from the very persons who had once extolled them to the skies.³⁷ But the Thermidorians had made their choice. By a fresh manœuvre towards the left they summoned to their aid those very terrorists whom they had imprisoned, but now released, dubbing them the "patriots of '89"; above all, they based themselves more and more upon the support of the army, whose fidelity to the Republic they had put to the test at Quiberon. Henceforward the connexions between them and the *jeunesse dorée* were broken. Fréron himself made a complete change of front and prepared to combat the White Terror. The closing months of the Convention were dominated by fear of the Restoration and of the return of the *émigrés*. The Assembly now made haste to vote the Constitution—a Constitution which should shield its members at once from royalist vengeance and Jacobin reprisals.

³⁶ Tallien referred to this in his speech of the 19th Fructidor, year III: "It is in vain that they have spies in the very houses of the representatives of the people," he said, speaking of the royalists, "in vain that they wish to break the most sacred bonds—those uniting two people who have always had their misfortunes in common."

³⁷ The Muscadins found it particularly easy to score off Tallien. Collot d'Herbois had already recalled how at the Festival of Reason in Bordeaux on the 28th Frimaire, year II, Tallien had had five banners carried before him, on which were inscribed the "immortal" dates of July 14, October 5 and 6, August 10, September 2, and May 31 (Collot to his colleagues). See Kuscinski, *Dictionnaire des Conventionnels*, s. v. "Tallien."

CHAPTER XII

Vendémiaire

NOTHING could be sorer than the end of the Convention. This assembly, which had been great when it stood for the defence of the nation and the Revolution, had no thought in its last moments for anything but the private interests of its members, who sought to perpetuate their power in opposition to the almost unanimous desire of the nation.

It was by now as unpopular with the right as with the left and only maintained its position by prodigies of balancing and thanks to the army which defended it—without conviction, it is true, but as the least among a choice of evils. The Constitution which it voted before its dissolution did not set up a true Republic, but a sort of oligarchy of politicians, the republic of a clique, which called itself the Directory.

This Constitution was a long time in preparation by a commission of eleven members, each more conservative than the rest, with a single exception—namely, Berlier—of whom three at least were suspected of royalist leanings.¹ The Constitution was not submitted to the Convention till the 5th Messidor, at the very time when the English and *émigrés* were appearing on the coasts of Brittany, a fortnight after the death of the Dauphin, when it was no longer possible to think of putting the monarchical Constitution of 1791 in force again. Boissy d'Anglas, who drew up the report of the commission, had not wanted to preserve any features of the Constitution of 1793—"that scrawled rather than written by Robespierre," as Fréron had called early as the 9th Pluviôse.² Boissy found fault with

¹ The eleven members were Thibaudeau, La Révellière-Lépeaux, Lesage of Eure-et-Loir, Boissy d'Anglas, Creuzé-Latouche, Louvet, Berlier, Daunou, Lanjuinais, Baudin of Ardennes, and Durand de Maillane. Berlier was the only one of democratic tendencies. Thibaudeau wrote in his *Mémoires* (p. 179) that Lesage of Eure-et-Loir, Boissy d'Anglas, and Lanjuinais belonged to the monarchical party, but, "for all that, they were no partisans of the Bourbons," which would seem rather enigmatic if we did not remember that on several occasions, with a view to obtaining peace, there had been an idea of offering the crown to a prince of the reigning houses of Russia, England, or even Austria. Creuzé-Latouch, Baudin, La Révellière, Daunou, Lanjuinais, and Louvet were former Girondins, who were very often in agreement with one another. Boissy d'Anglas and Durand de Maillane had belonged to the Plain.

² In the *Orateur du peuple* for that date.

that Constitution as organizing anarchy, authorizing partial insurrections, "placing the sceptre in the hands of the popular societies and factions," "turning France into an eternal debating-society," etc. With no attempt at disguise he laid down the following principles: "Civil equality—that is all that a reasonable man can demand. . . . We ought to be governed by the best elements among us. The best are the most educated and those most interested in the maintenance of the laws. Now, with very few exceptions, you only find such men among those possessing property, who are attached to the country containing it, the laws which protect it, and the peace which preserves it; and who owe to this property and the comfortable circumstances which it provides, the education which has made them capable of discussing with sagacity and judgment the advantages and drawbacks of the laws which determine their country's fate. . . . A country governed by property-owners belongs to the social order, one governed by those without property is in a state of nature." In other words, democracy was to be replaced by plutocracy.

All the rest followed from this. The commission had borrowed from the Constitution of 1791 the distinction between active and passive citizens, which it revived in practice. The Convention added departmental electoral assemblies—that is, indirect suffrage in two degrees in place of the direct suffrage of the Montagnard Constitution—and it stipulated that the electors should only be chosen among those who paid the highest taxes.³ Condorcet's old draft Constitution contributed the abolition of the district assemblies—with a view to destroying the predominance of the country towns over the surrounding country-side—and the fusion of the communes in cantonal municipalities;⁴ to this was now added the dividing up of the large towns into *arrondissements*, in order to prevent the resurrection of the "communes" which had given cause for alarm. From Condorcet was also borrowed the division of the national representative body into two chambers,⁵ the An-

³ Only Frenchmen paying direct taxes were allowed to vote in the primary assemblies. Only those could be chosen as electors who were the owners, usufructuaries, or tenants of a property valued at the local equivalent of 200 days' work, or the tenants of a house of a rental value of 150 days' work in towns of more than six thousand inhabitants, etc. Further, the electors were to receive no pay for their attendance at the chief town of the department in the exercise of their functions. Soldiers were exempted from the property qualification so that they might take part in the primary assemblies.

⁴ In communes with a population of less than five thousand, there were only a municipal agent and an assistant. The municipality of the canton was formed by an assembly of these municipal agents (Articles 179 and 180).

⁵ Condorcet only expounded this scheme in the form of an amendment sur-

cients (*Anciens*), two hundred and fifty in number, and the Five Hundred (*Cinq Cents*), the former having the power of sanctioning legislation, but not of initiating it. Out of distrust of the suffrage, even with a property qualification, it was stipulated that a third of these two assemblies should be renewed every year. The Ancients were given the exclusive right of choosing the seat of the legislative body, as a means of removing it from the influence of Paris in case of need. There were to be two chambers in order to prevent a return to terrorist tyranny, favoured by the existence of a single assembly, which had allowed itself to be dominated by Robespierre. For the same reason, there was to be no president of the Republic. He might degenerate into a dictator. According to Thibaudeau, Louvet's comment upon this was that if the president were elected by the people, as in America, they might well choose a Bourbon!

In his plan for a constitution Condorcet had proposed to have the executive council chosen by the people, by means of a complicated system of nomination lists. But even when thus "filtered," the people was now suspect. The executive power was to be entrusted to five directors, chosen by the Council of Ancients out of a list proposed by the Council of Five Hundred, containing ten names for every vacancy—that is, the Directory would be a Committee of Public Safety reduced in number and nominated by the assemblies for a longer period, a fifth of it to be renewable annually. Just as the Committee of Public Safety did not execute its own ordinances, but provided for their execution by executive commissions, the Directory was to confine itself to deliberative functions, its decisions being executed by the six ministers whom it was to appoint and who would be responsible to it alone. "Why has the commission of eleven set up a Directory of five members and six ministers? Because five and six make eleven," said Lezay-Marnésia. The journalist's remark seemed so plausible that Baudin of Ardennes, a member of the commission, thought it his duty to protest from the tribune on the 2nd Fructidor against this malicious imputation.⁶

The Directory inherited the powers and functions of the Committee of Public Safety, with certain additions.⁷ On the principle of the separation of

repeatedly introduced while his report was being printed. See A. Mathiez, "*La Constitution de 1793*," in the *Revue de Paris* for July 15, 1928.

⁶ Lezay-Marnésia's pamphlet is entitled *Qu'est-ce que la Constitution de 1795?* (*What is the Constitution of 1795?*).

⁷ "The Directory," said Boissy d'Anglas in his report of the 5th Messidor, "will possess the same extensive powers as those with which your Committee of Public Safety is at present invested. We think that it ought to have the same initiative in declaring war as that possessed by the executive power in the Constitution of 1791."

powers, it was refused the right of initiating laws.⁸ The Committee of Public Safety had never had control of finance, which was entrusted to a special committee. This separation was maintained. The Treasury, also composed of five members appointed by the same system as the five directors, was an independent power. In refusing the Directory the control of the purse-strings the idea was to prevent it from becoming a tyranny. It was hoped that, having its origin in the Councils, and deprived of the power of initiating legislation, it would be a docile instrument for executing the will of the governing oligarchy. But this proved a serious miscalculation.

The poison of democracy was carefully expurgated from the Declaration of the Rights of Man. Even the famous article of the Declaration of '89: "Men are born and remain free and equal in their rights," was omitted on the second reading. Lanjuinais explained that this article was no longer of any use, having been inserted by him and Petion in the Declaration of '89 as a weapon for preventing the return of nobility; to which Gamon replied that it would be none the less useful for preventing the restoration of slavery.⁹ But anything that recalled the regime of equality was displeasing to the Assembly.

The commission had at first preserved the formula in the Declaration of 1793: "The object of society is the common happiness." Lanjuinais made fun of this. "As much as two thousand years ago," he said, "two hundred and eighty-eight sorts of happiness were reckoned to exist." The article was omitted.¹⁰

Jean Debry would have liked to preserve the right to work. Lanjuinais declared that it would be a formidable weapon in the hands of the factions. It would amount to deliberately "rekindling the torches of anarchy." Thibault, who was a bishop, had already said: "Tomorrow they will be coming and asking us for bread again!"

The liberty of the press was dangerous in their eyes. If it were unrestricted, said the Girondin Bailleul, it would become "the most terrible weapon that could be placed in the hands of those desiring to sap the foundations of social order." An additional article was inserted in the Constitution allowing the liberty of the press to be suspended for a period not exceeding a year.¹¹

As for the right of holding meetings, it was hedged round with such

⁸ But it had the right of communicating with the Five Hundred by messages in which it indicated points to be taken into consideration (Article 163).

⁹ See the sessions of the 17th Messidor and 26th Thermidor, year III.

¹⁰ See the session of the 16th Messidor, year III.

¹¹ Article 355. Freedom of trade might be suspended on the same conditions.

restrictions that as a matter of fact it ceased to exist: no assembly of citizens was allowed to call itself a popular society, no political society might correspond with another, no society might impose conditions for admission and eligibility or take upon itself the right to expel its members or hold public meetings in which a distinction was drawn between those belonging to the society and others. Clubs had become the nightmare of the Thermidorians.

Although their declaration of the rights of man had been reduced almost to nothing, it seemed to them necessary to accompany it by a declaration of duties, a sort of catechism, intended to surround their work with a respect which it failed to command in itself. In it was stated that "nobody is an honest man who does not frankly and religiously observe the laws"; that "every citizen owes his services to his country and to the maintenance of liberty, equality, and property, so often as the law shall call upon him to defend them," etc.

Not for a moment did the idea occur to the Assembly that it ought to disappear entirely once the Constitution was put in force, and at last allow the people to be heard—or, rather, the property-owning middle classes to whom it had reduced the electorate. By a careful calculation it had included in the Constitution the annual renewal of both Assemblies by a third, and fixed the number of members of these Assemblies at seven hundred and fifty. The Convention consisted of seven hundred and fifty members. A third of them only would retire when the Constitution was put in force, and this third would still have the hope of re-election by the electoral colleges in the departments. At any rate, two-thirds of the members of the Assembly would continue to sit in the new Councils. There was already a chapter of the Constitution, entitled "Of the guarantee of the members of the Legislative Body," which turned the deputies into an oligarchy beyond the reach of the ordinary tribunals. They were no longer to be subject to the criminal jurisdiction of these courts. Even in cases of flagrant crime the prosecution would not be able to take its course unless the Council of Five Hundred proposed the trial, and the Ancients ordered it. In any case, the deputy in question could be tried only by the High Court of Justice, composed of five judges, two "national prosecutors" drawn from the Court of Cassation, and eight jurymen nominated by the electoral bodies of the departments.¹² The deputies literally formed a new nobility, placed by the Constitution outside the common law. The privilege of being tried by the High Court

¹² See Articles 110-23.

alone for criminal offences revived, as it were, for their benefit the ancient right of *Committimus* enjoyed by the king's entourage.

The Thermidorians had taken good care not to reveal their secret object so long as the debates on the Constitution lasted—which was for a long time. But on the 1st Fructidor, after the Constitution had been voted, Baudin of Ardennes declared, in the name of the commission, that the election of an entirely new legislature would mean the certain overthrow of the Constitution before six months were out. "The interests of the nation and the Constitution alike make it our duty to retain two-thirds of the Convention in the legislative body." But how were the third of the members retiring to be selected? Was this task to be entrusted to the Convention itself? This would mean a revival of the Jacobin method of purgation! Were the electoral assemblies to be asked to perform this process? Baudin was equally opposed to this method. Every electoral assembly, he said, would set itself up as a court of censors and provide aristocracy with as many triumphs as there were vacancies created. He proposed a special jury, to be chosen from among the Convention, whose mission would be to receive in secret or, when necessary, to secure the voluntary resignation of those deputies who were tired or discredited, up to the number of two hundred and fifty. But this confidential jury (*jury de confiance*) of nine members met with opposition from both the right and the left, who united to obtain its rejection. Baudin had to admit that the confidential jury which he had proposed had been devised in order to find an honourable means of removing those deputies who had been "overwhelmed with vile calumnies," as he said—that is, the Montagnard deputies who had been denounced as a result of their missions in the year II. Both right and left united in demanding that the selection should be made by the electors, and so it was decided, on the 4th Fructidor, after the method of drawing lots had been rejected. The electoral assemblies were to choose from among the members of the Convention two-thirds of those who were to form an obligatory part of the new assemblies.

But as though it was feared that the electoral assemblies might arrive at an understanding to nominate only a small number—less than two-thirds—of the existing members of the Convention, a new decree was passed on the 13th Fructidor, ordering that they were first to choose those members of the Convention who were to compose the two-thirds to be preserved, and next to draw up a list of substitutes, three for each vacancy—also chosen from among the members of the Convention. "In case the result of the ballot of all the electoral assemblies be insufficient for the re-election of five hundred members of the Convention, this number shall be completed by those

who shall have been re-elected within itself to form the two-thirds of the legislative body (*Corps législatif*).” In other words, the Convention would in the last resort make up for any abstention of the electors by forming itself into an electoral assembly—which is precisely what happened.

Nobody has pointed out that by a final manœuvre the Convention had by implication declared all those of its members ineligible who were impeached or under arrest—that is, almost all of those formerly composing the Mountain. And in fact the decree of the 13th Fructidor gave orders for a list of “acting members” of the Convention to be drawn up.¹³ This list was to be sent to the electoral assemblies, which could choose from it alone the two-thirds of the deputies to be preserved. Now, there were at least sixty Montagnard deputies who were no longer “acting”—that is, who had fled or were in prison.¹⁴ Besides those for whose arrest warrants had been issued after the insurrections of Germinal and Prairial, there were others upon whom the Legislative Committee had reported as a result of individual denunciations. Thus on the 21st and 22nd Thermidor, while the Constitution was actually being voted upon, warrants had been issued for the arrest of ten Montagnard deputies, who had thus ceased to be “acting” deputies. These were Lequinio, Lanot, Lefiot, Dupin, Bô, Piorry, Massieu, Chaudron-Rousseau, Laplanche, and Fouché.

It was the intention of the Thermidorians to close the new assemblies to the royalists as much as to the terrorists. What they feared most were the priests and *émigrés*. The priests were excluded from the primary assemblies by Article 12 of the Constitution: “The exercise of the rights of a citizen is lost . . . (2) by affiliation with any foreign corporation presupposing distinctions of birth or requiring religious vows. . . .” They were indirectly excluded from the Council of Ancients by the provision allowing none but married men or widowers to be eligible for this assembly (Article 83). A subsequent law, that of the 20th Fructidor, revived all the old laws against the refractory priests and gave a fortnight’s notice to those who had incurred the penalty of deportation in which to leave the territory of the Republic, on pain of being treated as *émigrés*. The same law forbade the

¹³ Article 2 of the decree of the 13th Fructidor. As early as the 4th Fructidor Garnier of Arles had moved that those who had been placed under arrest or impeached since the 1st Germinal should not be included among the “acting” members.

¹⁴ In its number of the 19th Fructidor, year III, the *Sentinelle* published a letter from a reader which ran as follows: “Since there are some who affect to say that the Convention will not be purged if no more than a third of the deputies are re-appointed, you may perhaps think fit to point out that the number of Montagnards removed from the Convention during the past year amounts to ninety-eight.”

celebration of the rites of the Church, even in private, to all priests who had not signed the declaration of submission to the laws of the Republic, and ordered their arrest. Simultaneously a series of more and more rigorous measures had been passed against the returned *émigrés*. Those of them who were petitioning to be struck off the list of *émigrés* were forced by the law of the 1st Fructidor to leave Paris, where their presence was considered dangerous. At the same time they were deprived of the rights of citizenship till they should be struck off the list definitively. On the 13th Fructidor a new decree suspended the removal of names from the list of *émigrés*. On the 19th Fructidor, Fréron obtained the exclusion of those who had taken part in the revolt at Toulon from the benefits of the law on the fugitives of May 31. In order to reassure purchasers of national property an article was added to the Constitution proclaiming that the property of the *émigrés* had irretrievably passed into the possession of the Republic, and forbidding the new assemblies to create any fresh exception to the laws against the *émigrés* (Article 373).

But it was easier to pass laws against the priests and *émigrés* than to have this legislation put in force.

This is how the Convention prepared the way for a plebiscite on the Constitution and the re-election of its own members. As early as the 2nd Fructidor its Committee of Public Safety sent out a circular letter to the representatives on mission with the armies, requesting them to bring about the immediate acceptance of the Constitution by the troops: "We repeat, *prompt acceptance* [these words are underlined in the original], for on this promptness depends the magnitude of the effect that will be produced here by the measure proposed by the commission of eleven [that is, the nomination of the two-thirds]. It is above all essential that you should send off the reports of this acceptance so that they arrive in time to be brought to the knowledge of the primary assemblies when they meet—that is, by the 20th Fructidor."¹⁵ The intention is obvious. The idea was to bring pressure to bear on the civilian vote by announcing the result of the voting in the army, which it was taken for granted would be favourable. And in fact the government were at pains to publish the results of the voting in the armies as they came in. But their expectations were not entirely realized. Though there were at least 500,000 men under arms, no more than 71,000 voted, 25,000 in the army of the west, 20,000 in the army of the north. The garrison at Tours rejected the decrees on the re-election of the two-

¹⁵ Circular letter published in M. Aulard's collection on the *Actes du Comité de Salut public*, under this date.

thirds of the members of the Convention. In the home army, stationed round Paris, there was a comparatively high percentage of adverse votes.¹⁶

The Thermidorians endeavoured to rally the moderate royalists, the former Feuillants, to their support by the guarantees offered to wealth in their Constitution and by playing on their fear of civil war. At the same time they endeavoured to rally the democrats by playing on their fear of the *émigrés* and by promising an amnesty to those of the terrorists who could not be taxed with offences against the common law. Their unofficial press—Louvet's *Sentinelle*,¹⁷ Méhée's and Réal's *Journal des Patriotes de 89*, Lemaire's *Journal du Bonhomme Richard*, and Trouvé's *Moniteur*—carried on a campaign directed towards this object. They set to work to effect a coalition of the groups of the centre. "Patriots of '89," said Réal's paper on the 7th Fructidor, "monarchists, Constitutionalists, Jacobins . . . moderates, extremists (*exagérés*), democrats, republicans, all of you, in fact, who made the Revolution or allowed it to be made, open your eyes, for nothing is left to you but liberty or death!" On the 8th Fructidor it called upon "all those who have nothing but mistakes to reproach themselves with" to unite. On the 13th it issued a special appeal to the moderates who "had taken the oath to the monarchical Constitution of 1791" and called upon them to rally to the new Constitution, which so closely resembled it. "Let all that is mere opinion, from royalism to the exaggerations of the Jacobins, be for ever forgotten!"¹⁸ And Louvet said in his *Sentinelle* of the 4th Fructidor that all parties could rally to this new Constitution, "since each and every one of the parties into which France has been divided will find in it all its wisest demands."¹⁹

It is not surprising that these appeals for union, coming from men whose primary object was to establish themselves in power for good, and who were

¹⁶ A. Lajusan, "*Le Plébiscite de l'an III*," in *La Révolution française*, Vol. LX, p. 129.

¹⁷ M. H. Zivy has published the essential parts of the ordinance issued by the Committee of General Security placing at the disposal of Louvet's *Sentinelle* premises in the Law Agency (*Agence des Lois*), in addition to four presses with type and other accessories for printing his paper (*Le 13 Vendémiaire*, p. 34, note). It should not be forgotten that this same Louvet had been placed at the head of the "*bureau d'esprit public*" (civic propaganda department) established by Roland at the Ministry of the Interior after August 10, 1792.

¹⁸ These quotations are taken from M. Lajusan's study, quoted above.

¹⁹ In replying to the delegations of the sections on the 23rd Thermidor, the anniversary of July 14, Daunou, as president of the Convention, had already made an appeal for union: "The foundation-stone of the altar of clemency ought to be laid on this day" (*Moniteur*).

already being nicknamed the "Perpetuals," were received with a certain scepticism. Yet the former Jacobins were more accessible to them than the former constitutional royalists, because those in power had backed up their overtures by measures of reparation and protection passed in their favour.

In order to make the repression of the White Terror effective, a law of the 4th Messidor had reduced from ten to seven the majority on juries necessary to secure a condemnation, and had further abolished the right of appeal to the Court of Cassation. Before this the criminal tribunals and juries had regularly acquitted the Companions of Jesus. The representatives on mission implicated in the massacres had been recalled. A decree of the 28th Messidor had ordered the *Marseillaise* to be played at the changing of the guard, and forbidden military bands to play the *Réveil du peuple*. And this decree, which annoyed the Muscadins, provoked serious disorders, which lasted for two days in Paris. There were sixty arrests on the 29th Messidor.²⁰

At the beginning of Thermidor the Committees had proposed to release part of the thirty thousand terrorists in confinement, by sending those from the departments before the tribunals, and those in Paris before a special commission. On the 3rd Thermidor, Bentabole objected to their being sent before the tribunals, all of which, he said, were composed of royalists and *émigrés*. "I have here a list of jurymen for my department, eight of whom are *émigrés*. I accordingly move that the prisoners should not be tried by men who will be both judges and parties to the suit." On the 6th Thermidor the Convention had ordered the formation of a special commission of twelve members to weed out the prisoners and set them at liberty. But on the 19th Thermidor the right, led by Larivière and Lanjuinais, had induced the Assembly to annul this decree. Meanwhile the Committees released a number of prisoners in Paris, thus arousing the fury of the sections. And finally, on the 12th Fructidor, Larivière obtained a decree that none but political prisoners recognized by the examining jury (*jury d'accusation*) to be guilty of offences against the ordinary law should be sent before the tribunals. They were given the choice between their departmental tribunals or two of the nearest courts. The terrorists, who had benefited by these measures of reparation, were bound to some extent to rally to the Convention.

The former constitutional royalists, Feuillants and Fayetteists, had certainly little fault to find with the new Constitution—at any rate, they did not make many difficulties about approving it. They were interested in none but the *émigrés* of their own party, who had only left France at the eleventh hour, after the fall of the monarchy. The journalist Marchena had

²⁰ See Delaunay's speech of the 1st Thermidor, year III (*Moniteur*).

voiced their demand for an amnesty for all those who had not emigrated till after September 2, 1792. They were for the most part free-thinkers and were not greatly interested in the fate of the refractory priests. Their social conservatism had received all the satisfaction for which they could wish. The Committees had even allowed certain of their former leaders, such as Talleyrand and Montesquiou, to return to France, and struck them off the list of *émigrés*.²¹

Thus there seems to me to be no doubt that the former Feuillants would have offered no opposition had the Constitution been put in force at once as a whole. The main cause of their dissatisfaction and revolt was the decree maintaining two-thirds of the Convention in their functions. They had made use of the Thermidorians, but they despised them. They could not forget their regicide past and the share which many of them had had in the bloody scenes of the Terror. The Quiberon executions had just revived these memories. They had bided their time so long as they could hope for general elections that should make a clean sweep of them. Most of them—journalists of talent or former members of administrative bodies or assemblies under the constitutional monarchy—were ambitious of reappearing or making a first appearance upon the political scene. They thought they would be deputies and govern France in their turn. But here were the old discredited gang of revolutionary parvenus—brutally blocking their way. They were seized with a frenzy of rage against the “Perpetuals,” and overwhelmed them with violent attacks both in their press and in pamphlets.

They raked up the September massacres against Tallien, the death of his brother against Marie-Joseph Chénier, whom they called Cain, the wholesale shootings at Toulon and Marseilles against Fréron; they called Louvet a paid hack, they broke the windows of his bookseller's shop, regardless of Lodoïska, who held her court there, they included almost the whole of the Convention in their insults, representing it as a rabble of speculators and profiteers who were clinging to power in order to continue their robbery. The Perpetuals retaliated by calling those who were abusing them Chouans, Companions of Jesus, agents of Pitt, shirkers, and royalists.

²¹ See the sessions of the Convention on the 17th and 18th Fructidor, year III. The *Courrier républicain* of the 7th Fructidor announces the return of Mathieu de Montmorency and a few more *émigrés* who had appealed to the decree on those who had fled after May 31. “They have been received by their friends,” said the paper, “with the intense interest inspired by misfortune and persecution.” Mathieu de Montmorency frequented the salon of Mme de Staël. It was alleged that the moderates on the Councils which were about to be set up intended to include Montesquiou and Talleyrand in the Directory.

There was a perfect storm of abuse and epigrams.²² Even women were not spared. Legendre accused Madame de Staël of conspiring with the royalist pamphleteers in her salon and of being in correspondence with the *émigrés*.²³ "Is it true," wrote Langlois's *Messenger du soir*, "that three women are governing us today, and that Lodoïska [Louvét's mistress] has embraced Madame Gabarrus [*sic*], so that the two of them may bring about Madame de Staël's downfall?"²⁴ The opponents of the Convention naturally accused their adversaries of wanting to revive the Terror, while the members of the Convention replied that those opposed to them evidently desired counter-revolution and the fall of the Republic. This abuse was for the benefit of the gallery. The question of the form of government was not the point at issue. The real cause of the quarrel was the rivalry of the two sides as to which of them was to obtain the mandate of the electors.

Every kind of royalism was represented among the opponents of the Convention.²⁵ But there were also some terrorists who remained deaf to the blandishments of Fréron, Tallien, Louvet, and their like. There was nobody, or hardly anybody, of any shade of opinion who dared to defend the decrees on the re-election of the two-thirds.

²² Among the pamphlets we may mention the *Lettre de J. J. Dussault à J. B. Louvet*, dated the 21st Messidor, year III; the *Réponse de Lacretelle jeune à Tallien*, the *Réponse de Marchena à Legendre*, etc.

²³ See the session of the 1st Fructidor, year III, at the Convention. According to Thibaudeau's *Mémoires*, p. 236, after Vendémiaire the Committees passed an ordinance exiling Mme de Staël from France, but her husband, Baron de Staël, the Swedish ambassador, succeeded in obtaining its annulment. It is certain that Mme de Staël welcomed in her salon many who were opposed to the Convention. Yet, if Lacretelle is to be believed—and he was one of the habitués—Mme de Staël advised them not to attack the Convention. It was at a great dinner at which he was present. "This is a debate," said Mme de Staël, "that can only be ended by arms. You want to put an end to the Revolution, and that will mean street-fighting in Paris. The Convention, which owed its origin to August 10, will consolidate its position by another August 10." When La Harpe replied that opinion was against the Convention, Mme de Staël retorted: "I ask M. de La Harpe what is the calibre of the cannons of public opinion . . ." (*Dix Années d'épreuves*, p. 251).

²⁴ Number of the 16th Fructidor, year III.

²⁵ The younger Lacretelle relates how, a few days before the 13th Vendémiaire, he had a conversation with Richer-Sérizy, the intransigent editor of *L'Accusateur public*. Sérizy told him that the result of victory would be the restoration of the Bourbons. "If the nation so wishes; but it will only recall them conditionally," replied Lacretelle. "I understand you," said Richer, "you are a crusted old Feuillant! . . . So we are only united," went on Richer, "for four or five days." "Politically, at least, we shall not, to all appearance, be united any longer," concluded Lacretelle. (*Dix Années d'épreuves*, pp. 255-6.)

In order to conciliate the peaceably disposed, the leaders of the anti-Conventional party took good care not to raise the question definitely of monarchy versus a republic. They gave the word to their partisans to accept the Constitution and to reject only the decrees of the 4th and 13th Fructidor on the two-thirds. They posed as the defenders of the sovereignty of the people, which had been grossly violated. They appealed to revolutionary principles in order to combat the Convention.

Anticipating disorder, the Committees had strengthened the organization of the Paris police, placing it under the direction of a commission of three members by a decree of the 24th Thermidor, passed on the motion of Delaunay.²⁶ They tried to remove the Muscadins from Paris by voting the law of the 10th Thermidor, cancelling all exceptions from military service, except those granted by the Committee of Public Safety.²⁷ They also recalled more troops from the front: four battalions of infantry and two of cavalry, which were camping at the Trou d'Enfer at Marly.²⁸ The approach of the troops excited the protests of the sections, whose spokesmen at the bar did not fail to recall memories of July 14, 1789. "On July 14 the people broke the bayonets of the despots; the oaths of free men shall not be in vain . . ." said the spokesman of the section of the Mail. "Has the National Guard deteriorated, that it should be surrounded with troops?" The younger Lacretelle, who spoke in the name of the section of the Champs-Élysées at the same session (11th Fructidor), went still further: "The insignia of Terror must not be allowed to appear amid the debates in which the people is about to put its liberty to use."

But the sections of the year III were not so bold as the revolutionaries of '89. Nor did the Convention allow itself to be treated like Louis XVI. On the 14th Fructidor it issued an address to the French people justifying the decrees on the retention of the two-thirds. There was no violation of the rights of the people, it said, for the decrees, like the Constitution itself, were

²⁶ This was the origin of the central board which administered the Paris police under the Directory.

²⁷ The same law granted an amnesty to deserters who should rejoin their corps within ten days.

²⁸ It looks as though the Police Legion, for the formation of which a decree had been passed on the 9th Messidor, cannot have been organized in time. It appears that the troops from the camp at Marly were to have formed part of the Legion, which was intended to consist of two demi-brigades of infantry and a regiment of dragoons, making in all 4,800 infantry and 1,916 mounted men. See Zivy, *Le 31 Vendémiaire an IV*, p. 20, note. I shall make frequent quotations from this excellent monograph.

submitted for the sanction of the citizens. If the legislative body were composed entirely of new men, "a fresh system of revolution would be established, and all the supporters of the Republic, all the patriots of 1789, all those who have exercised public functions since the Revolution . . . all the purchasers of national property, will be relentlessly persecuted; the brave defenders of the country would above all excite the full fury of these new revolutionaries."²⁹ This was an implicit admission that, if the elections were free, the members of the old Convention would be in a minority. In order to rebut the charge that it was composed of speculators who had grown rich on the public misery, the Assembly decreed on the 14th Vendémiaire, year IV, that all its members should be forced to make a declaration of their fortune before and after the Revolution. Any portion not declared was to be confiscated for the benefit of the Republic.

But it was in vain for the Perpetuals to try to stem the current. The primary assemblies of all the Paris sections except one, that of the Quinze-Vingts, pronounced against the decrees for the re-election of two-thirds of the Convention. In violation of an express decree of the Convention,³⁰ a large number of them refused to allow the disarmed terrorists to vote. Their tribunes—for they were sitting night and day—rang with impassioned speeches. All the former leaders of the *jeunesse dorée*, all the journalists and writers with any ambition, took a personal share in the doings of these lawful and inviolable clubs:³¹ the younger Lacretelle at the section of the Champs-Élysées; the advocate Chauveau-Lagarde, who had defended the Queen, and the journalist Bertin at that of Unité; Dussault at the Tuileries; Laharpe, Beaulieu, and Lezay-Marnésia at the Butte des Moulins; Ladevèze at the section of Le Peletier; Michaud, Nicole, Fiévée, and Richer-Sérizy at that of Théâtre-français; Lebrun at the section of Brutus; Brousse des Faucherets at the Arsenal; Chéron at Le Roule,³² etc. But the section Le Peletier, that of the bankers, which had defended the King on August 10, at once placed itself at the head of the movement. It voted an act of guarantee, by which it placed all citizens "under the safe-guard of their respective primary assemblies and of the forty-seven other primary assemblies

²⁹ This address was composed by La Révellière-Lépeaux, afterwards one of the Directors and once a Girondin.

³⁰ Decree of the 15th Fructidor, passed as the result of a speech by Roger Ducos.

³¹ The primary assemblies kept order for themselves and sat as long as they thought fit for the purpose of nominating the electors to choose the deputies at the chief towns of the departments. The candidature of these electors was publicly discussed in the assembly.

³² See the *Courrier républicain* for the 30th Fructidor, year III.

of this city," and this act of guarantee was immediately adopted by the other sections. It did more; it tried to form a central committee, on which the delegates (or commissaries) of the other sections should meet. In vain did the Convention annul this ordinance and forbid the governing assemblies, by a decree passed that same evening (the 21st Fructidor), to keep in communication by means of commissaries and form central committees: the sections took no notice of the prohibition.³³ They sent deputation after deputation to the soldiers at the camp of Marly to win them over to their cause. It seems, indeed, as though their leaders had sent out uniform instructions throughout the whole of France: to vote the Constitution, reject the decrees, and remain in permanent session till the new legislative body had been elected.³⁴ At any rate, in a number of towns in the neighbourhood of Paris the sections followed the example of Paris³⁵ and declared themselves in permanent session—as they also did at Tours, Blois, Nîmes, Châlons, Troyes, Melun, etc.

The results of the plebiscite were a striking demonstration of the unpopularity of the Perpetuals. In 1793 the Montagnard Constitution had been adopted by 1,801,918 votes to 17,610. In the year III only 1,107,378 voted, of whom 1,057,390 accepted the Constitution and 49,978 rejected it.

³³ This appears from the minutes of the primary assembly of Fontaine de Grenelle (National Archives, F^r 2509). On the 22nd Fructidor the secretary of the primary assembly of this section read out the decree of the previous day and called on the assembly to respect it and in consequence to annul the vote by which it had sent a commissary as its delegate to the central committee the evening before. After a very animated debate the assembly decided to uphold its previous ordinance, on the ground that "an ordinance passed on the 21st cannot become culpable by the promulgation on the 22nd of a decree subsequent to this ordinance." On the 23rd Fructidor the assembly of Fontaine de Grenelle declared itself "in permanent session" until the installation of the new legislative body and the organization of the government. The sections of Unité, Nord, Fidélité, the Halle au Blé, Bondy, Invalides, and Les Arcis, did likewise on the same day, followed on the 24th Fructidor by the faubourg Montmartre, Théâtre-français, Jardin des Plantes, Bonne-Nouvelle, Arsenal, and Tuileries. The section Place Vendôme declared the decrees of the 5th complementary day, year III, depriving the relations of *émigrés* of their political rights, to be a violation of the rights of man (minutes of Fontaine de Grenelle for the 2nd Vendémiaire). Fontaine de Grenelle also protested against the disqualification of one class of citizens and against the arbitrary limitations imposed upon the choice of electors. The deputy Lecomte, of Seine-Inférieure, declared to the Convention on the 5th Vendémiaire: "I have material proofs of the formation of the central committee in Paris" (*Moniteur*).

³⁴ See the printed program sent to the commission of Beauvais, which was read out at the session of the Convention on the 19th Fructidor.

³⁵ See Lajusan, "*Le plébiscite de l'an III*," in *La Révolution française*, Vol. LX.

As for the decrees concerning the re-election of two-thirds of the old Convention, they were accepted by only 205,498 voters and rejected by 108,784. Among the abstentions were many republicans—for instance, in Vaucluse, where the White Terror kept them away from the primary assemblies. But amongst those who opposed them, there were both democratic republicans and royalists of every shade. Among these the partisans of the refractory priests seem to have been the most numerous.³⁶ In many parts—for instance, in Paris—nobles, those who had been suspects during the Terror, rich and respected citizens, were chosen as electors and afterwards nominated as deputies. Nineteen departments rejected the decrees. There could be no doubt as to the popular feeling. In spite of the official pressure brought to bear by their creatures, who occupied all posts of influence,³⁷ the Perpetuals had only been able to get together two hundred thousand votes in favour of the decrees on the two-thirds, out of five million active citizens! It was pitiful.

When the results of the plebiscite on the Constitution and the decrees on re-election were announced, on the 1st Vendémiaire, year IV, the Parisian sections refused to recognize their validity.

The section Halle au Blé came to the bar of the Assembly on the 4th Vendémiaire and demanded that the reports of the elections should be examined into by commissaries appointed by the primary assemblies. It stressed the point that a large number of primary assemblies had said nothing about the decrees on the retention of the two-thirds. "If silence is equivalent to a formal rejection of the decrees, as many people consider, this is an opinion opposed to that of your Committee, which interprets this silence in your favour. . . . The commune of Paris contains seventy-five thousand voters, who have rejected the decrees almost unanimously. After this how can it be said that in the whole Republic there were only ninety-five thousand opponents of the decrees? This requires an explanation."³⁸ A

³⁶ According to M. Lajusan, eight primary assemblies protested against the laws restricting the liberty of worship or even asked for the re-establishment of Catholicism as the only dominant religion. In the department of Doubs many primary assemblies were controlled by the refractory priests (see Sauzay, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, pp. 653-67).

³⁷ In the department of Doubs the members of the departmental administration went round all the cantons canvassing before the vote on the Constitution.

³⁸ *Moniteur*. Eighteen sections sent commissaries as delegates to the Committee of Decrees of the Assembly to check the counting of the votes given in Paris. The commissaries found that the votes of only fifteen sections had appeared in the results announced, because these sections had given the number of voters. The thirty-three remaining sections, which had unanimously rejected the decrees, had not been included; because they had not indicated the details of the voting in their returns.

number of sections refused to accept the plebiscite or allow it to be announced, including those of Le Peletier, Luxembourg, Les Arcis, Droits de l'Homme, Mail, Mont-Blanc, Amis de la Patrie, Cité, Arsenal, Réunion, Pont-Neuf, Théâtre-français, and Fontaine de Grenelle.

Violence was already being resorted to. On the evening of the 2nd Vendémiaire there was an attack at the Palais-Royal on some of the grenadiers forming the guard of the legislative body. Shots were fired and one grenadier was wounded. The provinces had acted even more promptly than the capital. As early as the 27th Fructidor the primary assembly of Châteauneuf in Eure-et-Loir seized the public funds. Chartres rose in insurrection and forced Tellier, the representative on mission, to fix the prices of food. Tellier in despair committed suicide on the 4th complementary day. In the district of Saint-Hippolyte an insurrection broke out on the 23rd Fructidor while the primary assemblies were sitting, with the object of releasing the refractory priests.³⁹

The Convention was alarmed and sat till half past three in the morning on the night of the 3rd-4th Vendémiaire. During this long session, on the motion of Lesage of Eure-et-Loir, it passed a decree that if any violence were done to their liberty, the new legislative body and the Directory were to meet at Châlons-sur-Marne. On the following day, on the motion of Merlin of Douai, it passed a decree forbidding the sections and primary assemblies of Paris to call out the National Guard or the armed forces. Merlin also warned the Assembly that in several sections the National Guard was being mobilized in order to arrest republicans. It passed a decree that the porters at the police stations were not to admit citizens arrested in this illegal fashion. And, lastly, a final decree proposed by Mariette declared that "any president or secretary of a primary assembly who should put to the vote or sign ordinances unconnected with the object for which they were summoned" should be held guilty of an offence against the safety of the State. At the same time the committees sent orders to General Landremont, who was in command of the camp at Saint-Omer, to send them reinforcements of three thousand men.

The events which induced the anti-Conventional party to take up arms occurred outside Paris. On the 9th Vendémiaire news arrived that a serious revolt had broken out at Dreux and Nonancourt. There had been a battle between the troops of Fleury, the representative on mission, and the opponents of the decrees, in which the latter had lost ten killed and thirty

³⁹ Sauzay, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, ch. lxx.

wounded. The republicans had one soldier killed.⁴⁰ The section **Le Peletier** at once sent commissaries to the other sections requesting them to **protest** against this massacre, which, they said, heralded a return of the **Terror**: "Are we to see a revival of those days of horror and carnage through which we have passed? Are scaffolds to be set up again and the fires of **Bédoin** rekindled? Are we once more to see old men and children engulfed in the waters? Are we again to hear Collot's fusillades? . . ." ⁴¹ Without delay the section **Le Peletier** summoned all the electors of Paris to an emergency meeting on the following day—the 11th Vendémiaire—in the auditorium of the Théâtre-français, now the Odéon. The meeting was an illegal one, for the Convention had fixed the 20th Vendémiaire as the date for the meeting of the electoral assemblies which were to nominate the deputies to the legislative body.

But the enthusiasm had already subsided considerably. Many middle-class citizens hesitated to commit a breach of the law and expose themselves to the reprisals of the Convention. Only some fifteen of the sections were represented by about a hundred electors at the meeting in the Odéon, under the protection of a few National Guards, and the presidency of the old Duc de Nivernais, who had only accepted this ungrateful task in fear and trembling. "You are leading me to my death," he said to those who took him there.⁴² Speeches were made by Fiévée, Lacretelle, and Lebois. Towards evening, agents of the Convention tried to read out in the Place de l'Odéon a decree which it had just passed ordering the electors to disperse. They were greeted with hooting and shouts of "Down with the deputies! Down with the

⁴⁰ See the session of the Convention of the 9th Vendémiaire, year IV. According to the report of Fleury, the representative on mission at Dreux, the insurgents at Nonancourt had formed up behind a blue and white flag bearing the fleur-de-lis. Fleury exhibited this flag before the Convention on the 16th Vendémiaire, year IV (*Moniteur*).

The agitation was general in the whole of France. Cassanyès, the representative on mission sent to Savoy in Fructidor, had to send out regular expeditions against the refractory priests and conscripts who had deserted, two companies of whom had assembled. When he arrived in Annecy on the 11th Vendémiaire, seditious songs were sung beneath his windows. Placards were posted up with the words: "Death to the members of the Convention and restoration of the monarchy!" He sent for two battalions and had two cannon trained on the town. (See memoirs of Cassanyès, published by M. P. Vidal in *La Révolution française*, 1890, Vol. II, pp. 240-50.)

⁴¹ Quoted by H. Zivy, op. cit., p. 44, from the Minute-book of the section Les Arcis.

⁴² According to Thibaudeau's *Mémoires*, p. 208.

two-thirds!" But that was all. When a detachment of troops arrived during the night to clear the hall, they found it empty.

That very evening the Convention had set up an extraordinary commission of five members⁴³ and proclaimed itself in permanent session. At the same time the Committees appealed to the revolutionaries of the faubourg Saint-Antoine and the republican officers dismissed by Aubry, of whom there were a great number in Paris at that time. The Committees armed them and formed them into three battalions, under the command of old General Berruyer, giving them the name "Patriots of '89" for the occasion. There were about fifteen hundred of them, who were at once posted round the Tuileries. On the very next day, in order to swell the numbers of its defenders, the Convention annulled the law of the 21st Germinal ordering the disarmament of the terrorists, so it was possible to arm them again.

The rearming of the terrorists revived the agitation which was dying down. The section Le Peletier had the news cried through the whole of the city to the beat of the drum, and called upon the sections to arm themselves against their bloodthirsty opponents. In the wealthy sections the shops were closed. Anger and fear brought the aid which had been refused the day before. The drums beat the call to arms, weapons were distributed, such terrorists as could be found were sent back to prison, and promises of mutual assistance were exchanged.⁴⁴

The Commission of Five tried to disperse the section Le Peletier, which it justly regarded as the centre of the revolt. It gave orders to General Menou, the officer commanding the troops, to take three columns and surround it. But Menou, who had put down the revolt of Prairial, was at heart on the side of the sections. At two o'clock in the afternoon he had protested before the Committees against the arming of the battalion of terrorists: "I am informed," he said, "that all the bandits are being armed. I formally notify you that I do not want a pack of ruffians and assassins, organized as a battalion of patriots of '89, either under my orders or in my army, nor do I want to march with them."⁴⁵ Instead of at once depriving him of his command the Commission of Five gave way to him and placed the patriots

⁴³ The Commission of Five consisted of Merlin of Douai, Le Tourneur, Daunou, Barras, and Collombel.

⁴⁴ According to Merlin of Douai, speaking on the 14th Vendémiaire, the sections Le Peletier, Butte des Moulins, Contrat Social, Théâtre-français, Luxembourg, Brutus, the Temple, and a few others which he did not specify, rose in open rebellion as early as the evening of the 11th Vendémiaire and announced their decrees "with the most audacious solemnity."

⁴⁵ See Barras's speech at the session of the 30th Vendémiaire, year IV.

under the sole authority of General Berruyer. Menou once more declared that he did not want the patriots of '89 to accompany him on his expedition to the section of Le Peletier. They again gave way to him, and the patriots were confined to the Tuileries. Menou announced this order to Raffet, commandant of the Parisian National Guard, who was heart and soul with the reactionaries. The letter was read out at the meeting of the section Butte des Moulins, which inserted it in its minutes. Rather than march against the sections, one of Menou's subordinate officers, General Desperrières, took to his bed. All these incidents delayed the departure of the columns for the defence of the Convention. It was not till towards half past nine in the evening that the order to march was at last carried out. The section Le Peletier, which held its meetings in the former Convent of the Filles Saint-Thomas (on the site of what is now the Bourse), had taken up arms. Menou went on ahead of his columns and parleyed with the president of the section, young Delalot. It was mutually agreed that the armed inhabitants of the section should withdraw and disperse, and that the troops should return to their quarters; and, without waiting for the forces of the sections to abandon their positions, Menou gave the order to withdraw.

When the Convention, which was sitting night and day, learnt of this pitiful retreat, there were shouts of indignation. Menou was deprived of his command and placed under arrest, and Barras was appointed to direct the defence in his place. In feverish haste Barras summoned to his aid during the night young General Bonaparte, whom the reactionary Aubry had deprived of his command and who had been hanging round him for some months past, and made him chief of the General Staff. The situation was critical. The sections, encouraged by the retreat of Menou, were crowding to the aid of the section Le Peletier. There was a risk that the Tuileries might be surrounded. Food and munitions had to be brought in, and, above all, cannon. The artillery had been left at the camp of Les Sablons. Bonaparte gave orders to Murat, major (*chef d'escadron*) of the 21st Chasseurs, to bring them up as quickly as possible. By six o'clock in the morning the cannon were at the Tuileries. The palace and the whole group of buildings and narrow streets surrounding it, from the old Louvre to the gardens, were transformed into an entrenched camp. Guards were posted and cannon stationed at the end of every alley on the side towards the rue Saint-Honoré and at the end of the bridges across the Seine (the Pont-Neuf and the Pont-Royal). General Carteaux—also a victim of Aubry's—was in command on the river-front. General Brune, an old friend of Tallien's, was in command of the approaches to the Palais-Royal. The outlets leading straight from the Convention towards the Church of St. Roch were guarded by General

Berruyer's patriots of '89. Finally, a considerable force was stationed in reserve on the Place de la Concorde to guard the approaches to the Tuileries Gardens, and the 21st Chasseurs were in readiness to cover the retreat to Saint-Cloud in case of disaster. Towards ten o'clock in the morning all preparations were complete.

For their part, the troops of the sections, who had been arming all night, had set up a central commission, presided over by the most royalist of them, Richer de Sérizy. They appointed a general-in-chief, General Danican, an ex-Hébertist who had been converted to royalism and had suddenly resigned his command at Rouen as a protest against the decrees on the "two-thirds." Danican assembled the contingents from the left bank and occupied the Pont-Neuf. The *émigré* Lafond was in command of the contingents from the right bank which assembled in the section Le Peletier. The troops of the sections numbered from twenty-four to twenty-five thousand, four times as many as the defenders of the Convention, but they had no cannon. After the insurrection of Prairial the section Le Peletier had set the example of offering its artillery to the Convention, and all the others had done the same.

Danican passed the word to his troops to fraternize with the soldiers on guard at the Tuileries. On his side, Barras had recommended his men not to shoot first. About half past three in the afternoon the troops of the sections filled the quays on the left bank and the whole width of the rue Saint-Honoré. The Convention was surrounded, and fraternization began. The men of the sections approached the outposts of the Convention with ported arms. It was a critical moment. Barras, who was afraid that his men might let themselves be seduced, called upon the men of the sections to withdraw. The command was received with jeers and threats and shortly afterwards with shots.⁴⁶ Who fired the first shot? The younger Lacretelle says that it was the deputy Dubois-Crancé, who was stationed at the Restaurant Venua and seems to have fired from a window at a group of men from the sections in front of the Church of St. Roch.⁴⁷ However that may be, the shots put an end to the fraternization which was so dangerous to the Convention. The cannon now joined in. The troops of the sections fell back—not only those in front of St. Roch, but those advancing on all sides. Carteaux discharged some grape-shot at Danican's column, which was marching along the Quai Voltaire, and it failed to reach the Pont-Royal. When night fell, the troops of the Convention took the offensive in turn and cleared the streets in the

⁴⁶ Speech of Barras on the 30th Vendémiaire, year IV.

⁴⁷ *Dix Années d'épreuves*, p. 261. Lacretelle was among the troops from the sections who occupied the Church of St. Roch.

neighbourhood of the Palais-Royal. By the following morning the insurgents had melted away. Those most deeply implicated had fled and gone into hiding. On either side there had been two or three hundred dead and wounded.

The measures against the insurgents of Prairial had been pitiless. Far greater mildness was shown to those of Vendémiaire. The three military councils set up on the 15th Vendémiaire hardly had anybody to judge except those condemned by default, for whom they showed no eagerness to search. Only two death-sentences were actually carried out, those on the ex-judge Lebois and the *émigré* Lafond. The deputy Thibaudeau gave witness in defence of Menou, who was acquitted. Castellane, who was condemned to death by default, walked the streets openly without being molested. Lezay-Marnésia took refuge with Madame de Staël in the park of Saint-Gratien. The younger Lacretelle, protected by his former chief, Boissy d'Anglas, was content not to show himself.⁴⁸

The terrorists, on the other hand, who had defended the Convention received certain rewards. As early as the 17th Vendémiaire, Barras obtained the annulment of the decree of the 12th Fructidor sending some of them before the tribunals.⁴⁹ In the end, on the 3rd Brumaire, they became the object of a general amnesty, which, however, was not extended to the rebels of Vendémiaire the *émigrés*, or the refractory priests. Yet the appearance of the patriots of '89 in the Tuileries Gardens had not been to the taste of all the members of the Convention. More than one of them was afraid of these disquieting allies. As early as the 15th Vendémiaire their three battalions were hastily disbanded.

But the result of the elections to the Councils was a crushing blow to the Thermidorians who had led the resistance, and especially to Tallien, Barras, Bourdon of Oise, Dubois-Crancé, Legendre, and all those with a Montagnard and regicide past. In spite of the minute precautions which they had taken in their decrees of the 5th and 13th Fructidor to secure the re-election of two-thirds of the existing members of the Convention, in spite of their expedient of the supplementary lists, only 379 deputies were re-elected, 124 by the aid of the supplementary lists. The 379 were obliged to make up the prescribed number, 500, by co-opting 104 of their colleagues,

⁴⁸ *Dix Années d'épreuves*, pp. 266-70.

⁴⁹ A law passed on the 21st Vendémiaire forbade the judges to pronounce sentence of death against the members of the old revolutionary committees, municipalities, or administrative bodies on the ground of any arrests that they might have ordered in discharge of their functions. The same law annulled all such sentences passed contrary to this principle. The law of the 22nd Vendémiaire ordered the release of all terrorists who should not be charged with offences against the common law.

who were thus saved from the wreck (*repêchés*). The deputies re-elected by the electors were the most moderate members of the Assembly: Boissy d'Anglas, Henri Larivière, Lanjuinais, Defermon, Cambacérès, Durand de Maillane, Pelet of Lozère, Saladin, etc. Fréron was neither elected nor even co-opted (*repêché*). The new third was almost entirely composed of more or less disguised royalists, most of whom were fervent partisans of Catholicism. Paris had nominated Lafond-Ladébat, Muraire, Gilbert Desmolières, Dambray, Portalis, Lecoulteux de Canteleu, etc., all of whom had lamented the fall of the monarchy on August 10.

The left wing of the Thermidorian party, especially the regicides, would have liked to take advantage of their victory to quash the elections. It would not have scrupled to use a little violence more or less. But the former Girondins, such as Chénier, Louvet, La Révellière, and Daunou, who had hitherto fought side by side with them, refused to follow them.⁵⁰ On the 23rd Vendémiaire, Tallien, who had left the right and was once more sitting with the Mountain, moved that there should be a secret session (a general committee, as it was called), in order to denounce several of his colleagues—Lanjuinais, Boissy d'Anglas, Lesage, and Larivière—as accomplices of the insurgents. He supported his denunciation by reference to the documents seized at the house of the royalist agent Lemaître. On the following day Legendre supported his denunciation and implicated Rovère, whom Louvet overwhelmed with denunciations. Warrants were issued for the arrest of Rovère and Saladin and a little later for that of their colleagues Lomont, Aubry, and Gau. On the 30th Vendémiaire, Bentaïble proposed that the Convention should at once form itself into two chambers, in order to elect the Directory without waiting for the arrival of the new third. Barras and

⁵⁰ The Thermidorian leaders met the former Girondins at the table of one Formalaguez, who entertained them at dinner twice a week. Formalaguez had been licensed as a stockbroker by the Committee of Public Safety after the reopening of the Bourse. Thibaudeau says that he had "business connexions" with Lafond-Ladébat, a banker of Bordeaux who had been a deputy in the Legislative Assembly. Miranda and Servan, and, before his rupture with Legendre, Marchena frequented the same society. On the 19th Vendémiaire, Formalaguez gave a dinner at which Boissy, Lanjuinais, Larivière, Lesage, Legendre, Tallien, and Thibaudeau were present. Legendre reproached the first four with having kept silence during the revolt of the sections and with the praises lavished on them by the men of the sections. The discussion became heated. Lanjuinais alluded to the "massacre" of the 13th Vendémiaire. At this expression Tallien flew into a rage and started accusing Lanjuinais and his colleagues on the right of complicity with the sections. He called them conspirators, and Formalaguez a spy. Thibaudeau describes the scene in his *Mémoires*, p. 220. See also pp. 197-9.

Tallien spoke after him and moved that the extraordinary commission of five should be revived, to adopt measures of public safety. The commission was appointed and composed entirely of Montagnards who were in favour of extreme measures: Tallien, Dubois-Crancé, Florent Guyot, Roux of Haute-Marne, and Pons of Verdun.

But during the night the moderates concerted their measures. On the 1st Brumaire, Thibaudeau, as their representative, delivered a violent arraignment of Tallien. "By what right does Tallien, the apologist of the September massacres, come and accuse his colleagues of royalism [murmurs from the left]? But you who are murmuring have likewise denounced him for protecting royalism, and you will be obliged to admit that if there was a royalist reaction after the 9th Thermidor, this is to be attributed to Tallien more than to anybody else. . . . There is a letter from Monsieur, the Pretender, at the Committee of Public Safety, in which he says that he counts largely upon Tallien for the restoration of the monarchy.⁵¹ . . . Tallien is prompted by ambition, his motive is nothing but the chagrin which he feels at not having been one of the first to be nominated to the Legislative Assembly. . . . A few days before the general committee someone said to Tallien: 'The Mountain is recovering.' 'Nonsense!' he said, 'it is the faction of jaw (*des mâchoires*). They have not got a single orator'; yet immediately afterwards he himself became their spokesman! . . ." Tallien flinched before this attack, though he was well supported by the Mountain. He did not venture to propose that the elections should be quashed. The arrival of the new third was therefore awaited before the Assembly proceeded to nominate the Directory.

Need we point the moral? The profound unpopularity of the Convention in its latter days, which was also to weigh upon the government which followed it, was well deserved. Since the 9th Thermidor the men who had overthrown Robespierre had identified themselves and their private interests with the Republic. They had constantly violated the principles of

⁵¹ This letter from Monsieur to the Duc d'Harcourt had been seized among others on the 24th Ventôse, year III, on board the English packet *Princess Royal* on the way from Hamburg to London. In it occurred the phrase: "I cannot doubt that Tallien has leanings towards the monarchy, but I find it hard to believe that it is the true monarchy." For the whole letter see Thibaudeau, *Mémoires*, p. 229. Thibaudeau declares that "this letter alone would have been enough to ruin any deputy but Tallien." It is permissible to hold an entirely opposite opinion. Thibaudeau also quotes some diplomatic reports which implicated Tallien and adds, lastly, that Bentabole and Sieys on their return from Holland said that they had collected some valuable evidence against Tallien and Fréron. None of this seems to us worthy of serious attention.

THE THERMIDORIAN REACTION

democracy. They had been even more arbitrary than the government whose place they had taken. Their policy had neither cohesion nor consistency, and, being inspired by nothing but the needs of the moment, alienated every party in turn—both the Jacobins, whom they had imprisoned and allowed to be massacred, and the constitutional royalists, whose road to power they had finally barred by their decrees on the two-thirds. The great majority of Frenchmen despised these men who had made politics a profession and a source of profit. The Perpetuals had nobody behind them but the purchasers of national property and the army-contractors, a narrow phalanx, but bold and well disciplined. This, with the aid of the army, sufficed to enable them to maintain themselves in power in opposition to the wishes of the great majority. But it was a serious matter that the regime of parliamentary government which was now inaugurated should be vitiated from the outset at its source and in its activities, and that so early as this the representatives of the people no longer represented anyone but themselves. This was an undoubted sign that the Republic which they exploited as though it were their property would not last long!

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