

EUROPE 1715-1919

FROM
ENLIGHTENMENT
TO WORLD WAR

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The wealthy bourgeoisie looked favorably upon the achievements of the Revolution and anticipated a period of stability. It soon became evident, however, as illustrated by the disturbances at the July 14 celebrations of 1790 and 1791, that no consensus had been reached. By the latter date, resistance to the Revolution by nobles, royalists, and supporters of the refractory clergy led to open confrontations in the South and West and in Alsace.

Revolutionaries demanded more radical changes, particularly in reaction to growing resistance to the Revolution. The lower classes felt themselves hurt by inflation and became more and more vocal and active but did not speak with a single voice, as evidenced by the diversity of political clubs that developed as like-minded deputies formed alliances and distinguished themselves from others. Among the most prominent was the Society of the Friends of the Constitution, known popularly as the Jacobin Club. It took its name from the place where it met, the former monastery of the Dominicans (or Jacobins) on the Rue St. Honoré in Paris. This group wanted to abolish the monarchy and establish a republic based on universal male suffrage. The Jacobin members debated and sought to achieve political results, and before long they had the support of a nationwide network of affiliated discussion groups that numbered around 1,000 by 1791. Although some of its members were tradesmen and artisans, the majority came from the rising professional bourgeoisie. The more moderate supporters of a constitutional monarchy gathered at the Club of the Feuillants, while the Cordeliers Club often challenged the influence of the Jacobins. Political activity was not confined to the clubs but permeated the meetings of the sections as well.

In Paris the strongest supporters of the Revolution were the *sans-culottes*, who were identified not only by their long pants, but also by the red Phrygian caps they wore, decorated with the tricolor cockade. These were distinguishable from the three-cornered hats of the nobility. This group was composed of tradesmen, artisans, small shopkeepers, and workers, whose primary concern was the cost of living, particularly the cost of bread. The *sans-culottes* expected that the popular sovereignty achieved by the Revolution in the first two years would lead to concern for this basic issue, and further economic and social reforms would logically follow.

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

It was in this political atmosphere that new individuals rose to prominence and carried the Revolution forward. Their methods were often at odds.

Moderates like Bailly, now mayor of Paris, Lafayette, commander of the National Guard, and Count Mirabeau, foremost orator of the assembly, shared leadership with republican Jacobins whose support came from the Parisian population. Men like Georges-Jacques Danton (1759–1794), a lawyer and member of the Cordeliers Club, Camille Desmoulins (1760–1794), a journalist and Cordelier, Maximilien Robespierre (1758–1794), an early member of the Jacobins, Jean-Paul Marat (1743–1793), a physician and editor of *L'Ami du Peuple*, were all revolutionaries of a more radical stripe.

These leaders and their supporters played an increasingly significant role as the newly elected Legislative Assembly met on October 1, 1791. All the representatives were new, since the National Constituent Assembly had prohibited the reelection of its members. Although lacking national political experience, many had participated in their local areas in varied elected offices, the Jacobin Clubs, or the National Guard. In the Assembly, the republicans grouped themselves to the left of the president as he faced the deputies, while the monarchists were on the right. Within a few months the power struggle between the two was to favor the former.

Constitutional Monarchy to Republic

Meanwhile, the king had reluctantly ratified the new constitution and now appeared to make a genuine effort to work with the Assembly, but reaction to the Revolution beyond the borders of France contributed to a change of direction within. In Britain, as in parts of western Europe, the educated applauded the abolition of feudalism, the economic reform, the reduced influence of the Catholic Church, and the establishment of a constitutional monarchy. However, in 1790 British writer Edmund Burke, in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, maintained that by destroying the Old Regime, the revolutionaries were undermining the very institutions that allowed the nation to continue its natural and historic evolution. Thomas Paine (1737–1809) soon replied in defense of the Revolution in his pamphlet entitled *The Rights of Man* (1791–92). At the same time, Mary Wollstonecraft, as noted previously, expressed approval of the Revolution in her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). She demanded equal rights for women, but her efforts were condemned as having been influenced by the “pernicious” French Revolution. These controversies contributed to the debate on the need for further political reform in Britain. For many people, the Revolution affirmed the dangers of social upheaval and contributed to a growing British nationalism. Throughout the debate, the British government watched developments warily.

The continental powers in closer proximity to the upheaval were, of course, more threatened by the opposition to monarchical rule. Aware of the danger posed to their own regimes, they reacted much more strongly. The Prussians, although inclined to take advantage of any possible opportunity to weaken Austria's position, made common cause with their recent enemy, and on August 27, 1791, Frederick William of Prussia and Leopold of Austria (brother to Marie Antoinette) issued the Declaration of Pillnitz, which expressed concern for the safety of the French king and queen and stated the desire of the other crowned heads of Europe to see order restored in France. Their action was applauded by the many émigrés who had left France and taken refuge in friendly neighboring countries. They impressed upon the nobility and rulers that spread of revolutionary ideas posed great dangers and that preemptive action was in their own interest. Among these émigrés was the king's brother, the Count of Artois, who had fled to England.

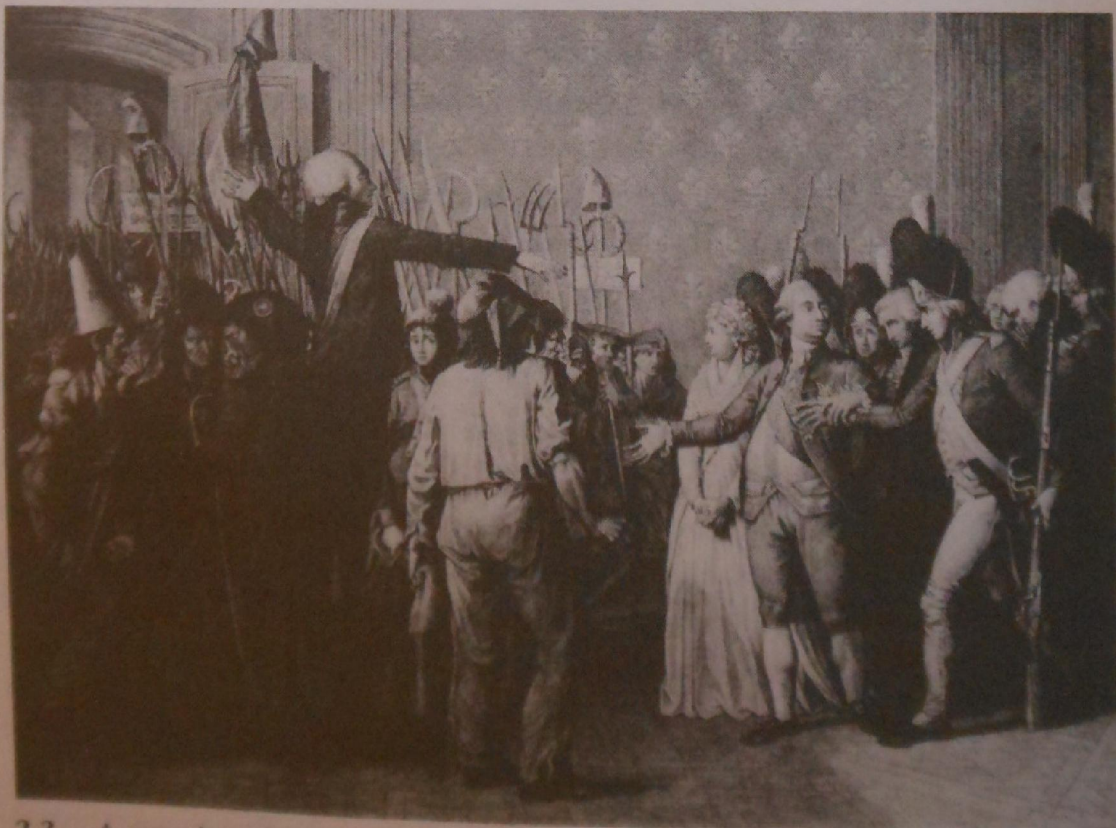
Supporters of the Revolution were suspicious of all the monarchies in Europe. In the Legislative Assembly, the Girondins, originally a faction of the Jacobins, called for a revolutionary war to rid Europe of monarchies and nobilities. Although the Girondins became known as the "war party," others in the



2.3. A crowd confronts Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette in the Tuileries Palace, June 20, 1792. (Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, New York)

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2.3. A crowd confronts Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette in the Tuileries Palace, June 20, 1792. (Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, New York)

assembly agreed with them. Some believed that a war would serve to unite the country under the new government. The most reactionary hoped for a conflict in which a French defeat would open the way for a restoration of the Old Regime. On April 20 the French declared war on Austria. The reason given was the threat of an Austrian invasion of France from the southern Netherlands. The early stages of the conflict did not go well for the French, as their armies were not well prepared for war. Soon, they were facing not only the Austrians, but also the Prussians, and French defeats were not surprising given these circumstances. At least two-thirds of the officers, mostly nobility, had deserted during the Revolution, and the infantry lacked discipline. Then, on the domestic political front in Paris, the unexpected occurred, when the "second," or radical, revolution began in the summer of 1792.

The war had increased tensions in Paris and exacerbated revolutionary activities to levels not seen since the fall of 1789. The economic situation worsened. Bread prices in the city climbed, in part because food was being requisitioned for the army. There was little gold left in the country, as the émigrés had taken most of it with them. This left the *assignats* as almost the sole currency, and these continued to lose value in the face of an uncertain future. The peasants were not faring well either and regarded the Revolution as having benefited primarily the wealthy. At the same time, they feared the restoration of the Old Regime should France be defeated in war. In Paris, the citizens rallied to the cause of the Revolution, even if they did not have confidence in the new government. Demonstrations occurred across the city, and Jacobins gained control of the section governments.

As the foreign wars went against the French, the Prussian commander issued a statement that served, somewhat ironically, to boost French morale. The Brunswick Manifesto of July 25 declared that if the French king and queen were harmed, the Austro-Prussian forces would severely punish the inhabitants upon their arrival in Paris. Within Paris, as popular discontent intensified, the Jacobins controlling the sections demanded that the king be removed. On the night of August 9 and early morning of August 10, a radical committee ousted the municipal authority and established a revolutionary commune to govern the city. *Sans-culottes* from the sections, assisted by members of the National Guard and some *fédérés* (members of provincial National Guard units), stormed the Tuileries Palace. While the royal family sought protection in the Legislative Assembly, the invaders killed the king's Swiss Guards and servants. The assembly, under pressure from the new Paris Commune, deposed the monarch, imprisoned the royal family, and ordered the election, by universal male suffrage, of a new constituent body, which came to be called the National Convention. In the

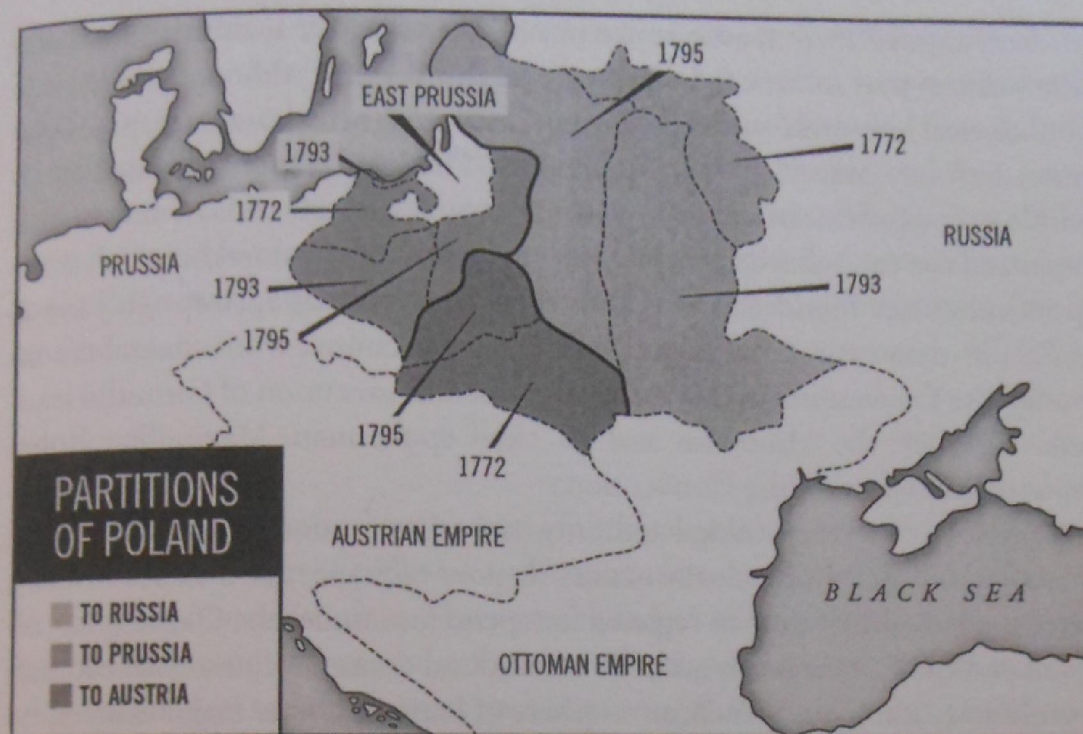
interim, a minority consisting mostly of Girondins and dominated by Georges-Jacques Danton was to run the government.

In the following months, tension soared as the events of the war combined with political turmoil to lead to new explosions of popular violence. On September 2, 1792, a Prussian army captured the eastern fortress town of Verdun, thus occupying French territory. The voices of Marat and Danton combined to fuel the sense of outrage, betrayal, and panic within Paris. Many people had already been imprisoned on suspicion of plotting against the Revolution; a large number of them were suspects on the basis of their pre-revolutionary social status as members of the aristocracy and clergy. When rumors began to circulate accusing these prisoners of planning an escape and undermining military efforts, mobs attacked them, helpless in their cells, and slaughtered them. About 1,200 presumed traitors were killed in the September Massacres.

The foreign military advance was effectively stalled near Valmy on September 20, 1792. For the moment, the Revolution had been saved. This occurred on the same day that the newly elected National Convention began its sessions. Although its task was to draft a new constitution, it also became the ruling body of the French nation for the next three years. Delegates to the National Convention included a few artisans, but the majority, as in the previous assemblies, comprised lawyers, professionals, and property owners. However, most were younger, had some revolutionary political experience, and disapproved of the monarchy. They were determined to make a fresh start, abolishing the monarchy and establishing a republic on September 21, 1792. Political agreement beyond this point was difficult to achieve, as the next few months were characterized by factional disputes and power struggles.

The Girondins no longer represented the most revolutionary views in the Jacobin-dominated Convention. A new group, whose members sat in the highest seats in the Assembly, earning the label "the Mountain," was now the more radical. The Girondins, however, still represented mostly provincial interests, whereas the Mountain owed their political strength to the support of popular elements in Paris. The immediate issue was the fate of the deposed king. While the members of the Convention found him guilty of treason, the Girondins were in favor of keeping him alive. The question of penalty was voted upon twice, and the second vote determined the fate of the king. He was condemned to death and executed on January 21, 1793.

Meanwhile, the foreign war raged on as French forces followed up their success at Valmy by pushing across the Rhine and occupying the Austrian Netherlands. On November 19, 1792, the National Convention offered



assistance to all people fighting for liberty. In occupied or annexed territories, such as Savoy, Nice, Belgium, and much of the Rhineland, the Convention abolished remaining feudal dues and tithes. French successes were in part related to developments in the East. From 1787 to 1792, Russia remained at war with the Ottoman Empire, gaining additional territory on the northern shore of the Black Sea. Russia and Prussia banded together in the course of suppressing a revolt in Poland to arrange a further partition of that country. Austria was excluded from the Second Partition of Poland in January 1793 and, suspicious of its eastern neighbors, did not commit the bulk of its forces to the West. However, French actions now threatened the interests of Britain and the Dutch Republic, on which France declared war on February 1, 1793. When Spain and the kingdoms of Piedmont-Sardinia and Naples joined this First Coalition, France was at war with all the major European powers. In March, the French suffered a series of military reverses, and in April, General Dumouriez, who had led the revolutionary forces to victory, defected to Austria. With allied forces on the left bank of the Rhine, the Revolution was once again threatened from without. Revolutionaries felt betrayed as prices continued to rise, food became scarcer, and the value of currency fell further. The Paris Commune, with the support of the city's *sans-culottes*, put constant pressure on the National Convention to implement more radical measures to safeguard the nation and extend reform.

In March 1793, domestic resistance erupted into full-scale insurrection in the western part of France in and around the Vendée. Although aristocratic and clerical interests formed the basis of the resistance, peasants opposed the new draft law passed by the Convention. The insurrection escalated to include major provincial cities, such as Lyon and Marseille, whose inhabitants opposed the centralized authority. The insecurity and vulnerability felt at the political center found expression in the events of May 31 through June 2, 1793, in demonstrations organized by the commune, whose members invaded the Convention and forced the arrest and execution of Girondin leaders. This left the Mountain and its chief spokesman, Maximilien Robespierre, in control of the Convention.

Regardless of who wielded authority in the Convention, the central government did not effectively rule the nation. Regions of France, for instance Brittany, accustomed as they were to regional independence under the Old Regime, repudiated the Convention's authority and found common cause with counter-revolutionaries. In the volatile atmosphere of Paris and other major centers, extreme militants known as *enragés* posed a threat to the Convention. The *enragés* included political leaders and groups who wanted a more direct form of democracy. Among these were the followers and supporters of Jacques René Hébert (1755–1794), who engaged in violent collective action aimed at replacing the Convention with the commune as the governing body. To address these crises at home and simultaneously mobilize the nation to win the war, the Convention gave emergency broad powers to an executive committee called the Committee of Public Safety. From April 1793 to July 1794, first nine and then twelve members were reelected to administer the government of France. Initially dominated by Danton, the committee soon came under the leadership of Robespierre. To meet the foreign crisis, the Committee decreed a national mobilization, which drafted all bachelors and widowers between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five in the *levée en masse* imposed on August 23, 1793. This was a total mobilization of all the resources of France. The forces were democratized so that citizens from the lower classes gained entrance to the officer corps on the basis of merit. In addition, discipline was now maintained, and the morale of the forces improved dramatically. Scientists, including prominent figures such as Lamarck and Lavoisier, were enlisted to work on improvements to armaments and munitions. Married men were called upon to assist in the forging of arms, transportation of supplies, and preparation of food. Women were engaged in the making of clothing, tents, and bandages and in tending to the soldiers. Children were assigned to help wherever possible. In addition, the whole nation was to become involved in the recovery of saltpeter for gunpowder by scraping it from

cellars and stables. These efforts resulted in the best-equipped land force seen in Europe up to that time. Some historians regard this effort as integral to the development of modern nationalism, since previous conflicts had focused on dynastic and territorial disputes fought with professional local forces or mercenary troops. The near universal involvement of French citizens in this war effort made it a "people's war" that lacked the restraints of eighteenth-century warfare and in this way appears to have foreshadowed the "total war" of the twentieth century.

The Terror

These measures inspired patriotism, but also generated shortages. There was need for a range of political and economic actions that would address the resulting domestic crisis. The constitution of 1793, which was approved in June and provided for universal male suffrage, was set aside, and the Committee continued to function in a "revolutionary" emergency manner. To assist in conducting the government in the midst of the crises, the Convention's "representatives on mission" in the provinces with the armies were given dictatorial powers to maintain order. They played a key role in government in the outlying regions. Bulletins of Laws were issued to ensure that all citizens were aware of the law and understood the role of local revolutionary committees and tribunals, all of which were staffed by Jacobins. Gradually, local and personal authority were centralized in an administrative network controlled by the Committee.

For military purposes and to address the demands and needs of its supporters among the working class, the Committee instituted a series of economic controls. In an effort to stabilize purchasing power, gold exports were regulated and foreign currency confiscated with reimbursements made using *assignats*. The value of the latter stopped declining. The withholding of goods by producers and hoarding by the general population were forbidden. The distribution of food and supplies for armies and town dwellers was rationed and apportioned. The Law of the Maximum (September 29, 1793) was implemented, which set a limit on wages and prices. In the countryside any remaining feudal levies or compensation payments were abolished, and other reforms made it easier for peasants to purchase land. The measures were not universally popular, and a national administrative machinery that could enforce them did not exist.

This period in the history of the Revolution, known as the Reign of Terror, was marked by the dictatorial characteristics of a regime that enforced

decrees and repressed counterrevolutionary activities. The organizational institutions, the Committee of General Security, and the revolutionary tribunals had existed in some form since 1789. In 1793 the police, security, and judicial instruments responsible to the Committee of Public Safety were given sweeping powers to take action against internal enemies. Between August 30 and September 5, 1793, terror was declared to be official policy and became part of the daily agenda, with punishment and coercion constituting the sole policy of the government toward its enemies. On September 17, the Law of Suspects was promulgated, defining crimes against the Revolution in extremely broad terms. As much as rivalries, hostilities, and intrigues had been part of the revolutionary environment since the initial uprisings in 1789, the inception of the Terror brought new fear with *lettres de cachet* and late-night arrests. These resulted in sham trials and the bloodletting of the guillotine.

The revolutionary program consisted of more than destroying the Old Regime and responding to threats, internal and external, to the new order. Some elements of change were of a practical nature and gained acceptance quite readily. A uniform system of weights and measures (metric) was adopted in August of 1793. A series of pamphlets was distributed with the objective of helping farmers improve their agricultural techniques and instructing young people in the trades; also, a military school was established that was open to all social classes. Universal elementary education was one of the intentions of the regime, but this was never implemented.

There were other aspects of the revolutionary initiative that perpetuated controversy and contributed to further resistance. The attempt to create a new order reached an extreme in the policy of de-Christianization. An integral part of this was the adoption of a new republican calendar that eliminated all of the Christian references that had ordered the lives of the French. To emphasize the anti-Christian intent of the new calendar, the names of the months of the year were based in nature and derived from the seasons, seasonal agricultural activities, or prevailing weather patterns. The seven-day week of the Christian calendar, which concluded with a day of rest, was replaced with a ten-day week with one day of rest (*décadie*). This proudly revolutionary calendar, declared retroactive to September 22, 1792, boldly asserted that the Year I was the beginning of a new era, and it remained in place until 1806 (see appendix, Document IX).

The calendar was just the beginning of the break with old habits and the creation of new citizens not bound by the constraints of the old order. By the end of 1793, a Cult of Reason was introduced, and Notre Dame Cathedral

in Paris became the Temple of Reason. In November, the Hébertist-controlled Commune devised a ceremony in which an actress impersonated Reason. This was too extreme even for Robespierre, who persuaded the Convention to introduce worship of the Supreme Being. In June 1794, in a festival over which he presided, Robespierre set fire to pasteboard figures of Vice, Folly, and Atheism, and a statue of Wisdom rose from their ashes. The spectators were more derisive than enthusiastic.

On that occasion, as on many others while addressing the Convention or the public, Robespierre emphasized the importance of virtue. Like the philosophes, he spoke of a natural personal integrity and unblemished life. This would find expression in an unselfish dedication to duty and civic responsibility in a "republic of virtue." This democratic republic Robespierre described as embodying "the tranquil enjoyment of liberty and equality" and ensuring the reign of eternal justice, "the laws of which are graven, not in marble or stone, but in the hearts of men."

Revolutionary rhetoric was certainly concretely manifested in the many policies that displaced practices of the Old Regime. Despite the cost in human life, the boundaries of equality were pushed outward to include greater numbers of citizens. Early in 1794 the abolition of slavery was decreed in the French colonies in the Caribbean, where a rebellion had actually achieved this three years earlier. Although the practice of slavery was reestablished under Napoleon Bonaparte, the principle of equality in terms of civil rights was extended for a brief period to blacks within the empire.

Women, despite remarkable participation in major revolutionary events, always stood outside the arena of citizenship. Bread riots had been their traditional method of protest, but as the Revolution advanced, their activities demonstrated a high degree of political understanding, much of which had been gained through the club movement where much political education was passed on. Until 1793 the women continued to make their demands and views known to members of revolutionary clubs, officials of the Paris Commune, and deputies of the National Convention. By October 1793 the women were being perceived as a threat and were denounced in the Convention. On October 30, a decree outlawed women's associations, citing public safety as its justification; however, the words of Jean-Baptiste Amar, a deputy speaking for the Committee of General Security, expressed the traditional prejudices against women. He maintained that women had neither the moral nor physical strength for public office and that they should stay with "the more important cares to which nature calls them." The private sphere was the domain of women.

The Law of Suspects, passed by the National Convention on September 17, 1793, provided the most extreme aspects of revolutionary justice. Apprehension, imprisonment, and execution constituted the fate of those who had shown themselves to be "enemies" of the Revolution. This law greatly enhanced the powers and importance of revolutionary committees and tribunals by widening the definition of a suspect to include "enemies of liberty" and "supporters of tyranny." Such broad terms allowed for the arrest of individuals for a wide variety of activities perceived as hostile to the nation. The popular societies, offshoots of the Jacobin Club, received powers of surveillance and policing, and religious terror was added to political terror. All priests, juring or refractory, were suspect. It became relatively easy to be regarded as a traitor to the country.

The Committee of Public Safety found it increasingly difficult to maintain revolutionary ideals and at the same time control the activities of the most enthusiastic revolutionary supporters. The number and speed of executions increased throughout the autumn of 1793, and by the spring of 1794, members of both the left and right were targeted. On the left, leading *enragés* and Hébertists were arrested and executed in March 1794, thus curbing the power and activities of the Paris Commune. The Terror did not end there but continued at fever pitch as Robespierre grew more and more unstable and became more and more determined to wipe out any opposition to the regime. Those who dared suggest that the Terror was no longer necessary were the next targets. On the right, Georges Danton and Camille Desmoulins and their followers, called the Indulgents, were condemned and guillotined in April 1794. Voices from any position in the political spectrum that questioned the policies of the Committee of Public Safety were effectively and rapidly silenced.

At the same time, the now formidable French forces experienced further military success against the less motivated and ineffectively coordinated coalition forces. In June 1794 the French defeated the Austrians at Fleurus and occupied Belgium. On June 10, the law of the 22 Prairial removed the safeguards of prisoners and in so doing simplified the proceedings of the revolutionary tribunal. During that month alone, there were 2,000 executions in Paris. However, military success served to undermine support for the harsh policies of the Committee of Public Safety. The need for dictatorial rule and economic constraints was questioned, although the moderates in the Convention still feared Robespierre's capacity to act. In July, after Robespierre had threatened his colleagues in the Convention, an anti-Robespierre coalition emerged with enough votes for his condemnation. He was apprehended on July 27 (9 Thermidor) and executed the next day. This resulted in control of the state by moderate elements and the end of the Terror.



2.4. Robespierre and Saint Just are taken to the guillotine, July 28, 1794. (Giraudon/Art Resource, New York)

Estimates of the number of victims of the Terror vary, but it is most commonly thought that about 17,000 executions took place. Approximately 500,000 people were imprisoned, and another 300,000 were placed under house arrest. The terror cut across all classes of French society, and the most commonly used estimates indicate that 2 percent of the victims were clergy,

8 percent were nobility, 25 percent were bourgeoisie, and 60 to 65 percent were peasants and artisans.¹

The Return of the Moderates

The reorganization of the Committee of Public Safety and its abolition, the dismantling of the Paris Commune, and the closure of the Jacobin clubs by the National Convention took time. These actions were not accompanied by the immediate cessation of violence. In Paris, but particularly in some areas of the South and West, a "white terror," so called after the color that symbolized the Bourbon dynasty, was unleashed by secret groups against the Jacobins. Political order was difficult to restore, and economic stability proved equally elusive. The abolition of the Law of the Maximum in December 1794 marked the end of economic regulation in favor of laissez-faire policies and brought an end to cheap foodstuffs. The prices of basic necessities proceeded to climb steadily, a problem compounded by the further issuance and devaluation of the *assignat*, which many merchants now refused to accept. During the course of a particularly harsh winter, the condition of the poor rapidly deteriorated, and many people around Paris were reduced to scavenging for food. One result was sporadic uprisings in the working-class districts of Paris. In May 1795, the Convention itself felt threatened, and for the first time since 1789, the government called troops into the city to disperse the insurgents.

The people of property, who were now once more wielding political power, also set a new social and cultural tone. In reaction to the idealism associated with Robespierre's republic of virtue, there was a return to high society and a loosening of moral strictures. An era of partying and dancing began with women wearing flowing robes with plunging necklines and young men adopting fancy clothes with square collars and elaborate decorations. The symbols associated with the dominant role of the *sans-culottes* disappeared, as did the familiar republican forms of address, which were replaced by the more formal expressions characteristic of the Old Regime. The celebratory and theatrical events favored by the Jacobins were closed, and noisier, more ostentatious social events marked a change in the style of living. This period, which followed on the heels of the hardships of the Revolution and which was almost frenzied in its gaiety, was known as the Thermidorean Reaction. The Thermidoreans were not about to abandon the Revolution in total. Their quarrel was with the extremes and with the terror perpetrated by the Jacobins. By August 1795

the government had produced France's third constitution since 1791. The constitution of 1793 had been suspended before taking effect, so this was to be France's first formally constituted and functioning republic. While still maintaining the principle of individual legal rights, the constitution of the Year III hoped to ensure stability with a more conservative republicanism.

A bicameral legislative assembly and a five-member executive were designed to build adequate checks and balances into the system, thus ensuring that there would be no repetition of previous mistakes, particularly the episode of the Terror. Active citizens, male taxpayers twenty-one years of age and over, could vote (about two million out of seven million of voting age) in the selection of electors, who, in turn, chose the members of both chambers. The electors had to own or rent property worth at least 100 days' labor. This kept the number of those eligible to vote to 30,000. The lower house, the Council of Five Hundred, initiated legislation, which the Council of Elders (Ancients) with 250 members, could accept or reject. Members of the Upper Chamber, married or widowed forty years of age or over, also selected the executive (the Directory) from a list prepared by the Council of Five Hundred. Continuity from the old order to the new system was to be ensured by requiring that two-thirds of the new assembly be chosen from the ranks of the National Convention. The Directory, by restricting the social base of participation and instituting indirect election, favored the wealthy, a group composed of the prerevolutionary bourgeoisie, former aristocrats, and those who had been able to take advantage of revolutionary and wartime opportunities to obtain property.

Opposition to the new regime came from both the left and the right. The brother of Louis XVI, the Count of Provence, presented himself as Louis XVIII following the death of Louis's son in June 1795. The Count waged a propaganda campaign from Italy, promising an uncompromising restoration of the Old Regime. Although this attitude limited the support for a return to the monarchy, royalists attempted an insurrection in Paris on October 5, 1795. At the request of the Directory, the counterrevolutionaries were dispersed by artillery action under the direction of Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821). The young Corsican general had provided the promised "whiff of grapeshot" to defeat the insurgents. This became the first link in the new government's increasing dependence on military support.

On the left, opposition to the regime came not only from the working class, but from all those who continued to favor democratic revolutionary

ideals and looked to the government as an instrument to address economic problems. In the spring, a group of radicals led by François-Noël Babeuf (1760–1797), known as Gracchus after the ancient Roman proletarian leader, plotted to overthrow the Directory. The goal was to impose a dictatorial government that would abolish private property and implement economic equality. This “conspiracy of equals” had limited support, and the plot was uncovered. Babeuf and another leader were guillotined a year later, and the occasion was used by the Directory to continue the suppression of suspected Jacobins.

While instability within the Directory was rooted in political and economic domestic circumstances, an additional factor was associated with foreign policy. The constitution of 1795 had been written to apply to Belgium as well as to France; however, neither Austria nor Britain accepted French occupation of the Austrian Netherlands as final. The Directory was thus committed to pursuing a policy of territorial expansion. It was both beneficiary and victim of the success of its own capable military commanders, of whom Napoleon Bonaparte was the most prominent.

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE

Born in Corsica in 1769, shortly after the island’s annexation to France, Napoleon Bonaparte had studied in French military schools, been commissioned during the Old Regime, and risen to the rank of brigadier-general under the Convention. The Directory, acknowledging his military contributions and talents, had given him command of an army. In March 1796, he married Josephine de Beauharnais, whose husband, Alexander, had been executed during the Terror. As a result of his brilliant military campaigns against the Austrians in northern Italy and the inability of the Directory to control him, Napoleon pursued his own foreign policy. The Austrians negotiated with Napoleon, and his ideas formed the basis of the Treaty of Campo Formio, which was approved by the Directory in October 1797. Through this treaty, Austria retained most of Venetia, but the majority of the Italian peninsula was reorganized as a series of republics dependent on France. In Switzerland, republicans cooperated with the French to create a new Helvetic republic, and the treaty also recognized French control of Belgium and the left bank of the Rhine.

Peace prevailed between France and her neighbors as Prussia also recognized French hegemony on the Rhine. The Third Partition of Poland had