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Chapter 1

Louis XVI of France

Louis XVI (French pronunciation: [lwi sɛːz]; 23 August 1754 – 21 January 1793), born **Louis-Auguste**, also known as **Louis Capet**, was King of France from 1774 until his deposition in 1792, although his formal title after 1791 was King of the French. He was guillotined on 21 January 1793. His father, Louis, Dauphin of France, was the son and heir apparent of Louis XV of France, but his father died in 1765, and Louis succeeded his grandfather as king in 1774.

The first part of Louis' reign was marked by attempts to reform France in accordance with Enlightenment ideas. These included efforts to abolish serfdom, remove the *taille*, and increase tolerance toward non-Catholics. The French nobility reacted to the proposed reforms with hostility, and successfully opposed their implementation. Louis implemented deregulation of the grain market, advocated by his liberal minister Turgot, but it resulted in an increase in bread prices. In period of bad harvests, it would lead to food scarcity which would prompt the masses to revolt. From 1776 Louis XVI actively supported the North American colonists, who were seeking their independence from Great Britain, which was realized in the 1783 Treaty of Paris.

The ensuing debt and financial crisis contributed to the unpopularity of the *Ancien Régime* which culminated at the Estates-General of 1789. Discontent among the members of France's middle and lower classes resulted in strengthened opposition to the French aristocracy and to the absolute monarchy, of which Louis and his wife, queen Marie Antoinette, were viewed as representatives. In 1789, the storming of the Bastille during riots in Paris marked the beginning of the French Revolution.

Louis's indecisiveness and conservatism led some elements of the people of France to view him as a symbol of the perceived tyranny of the *Ancien Régime*, and his popularity deteriorated progressively. His disastrous flight to Varennes in June 1791, four months before the constitutional monarchy was declared, seemed to justify the rumors that the king tied his hopes of political salvation to the prospects of foreign invasion. The credibility of the king was deeply undermined and the abolition of the monarchy and the establishment of a republic became an ever increasing possibility.

In a context of civil and international war, Louis XVI was suspended and arrested at the time of the insurrection of 10 August 1792 one month before the constitutional monarchy was abolished and the First French Republic proclaimed on 21 September 1792. He was tried by the National Convention (self-instituted as a tribunal for the occasion), found guilty of high treason, and executed by guillotine on 21 January 1793, as a desacralized French citizen known as "Citizen Louis Capet", a nickname in reference to Hugh Capet, the founder of the Capetian dynasty – which the revolutionaries interpreted as Louis' family name. Louis XVI was the only King of France ever to be executed, and his death brought an end to more than a thousand years of continuous French monarchy.

1.1 Childhood

Louis-Auguste de France, who was given the title Duc de Berry at birth, was born in the Palace of Versailles. Out of seven children, he was the second son of Louis, the *Dauphin* of France, and thus the grandson of Louis XV of France and of his consort, Maria Leszczyńska. His mother was Marie-Josèphe of Saxony, the daughter of Frederick Augustus II of Saxony, Prince-Elector of Saxony and King of Poland.

Louis-Auguste had a difficult childhood because his parents neglected him in favour of his, said to be, bright and handsome older brother, Louis, duc de Bourgogne, who died at the age of nine in 1761. A strong and healthy boy, but very shy, Louis-Auguste excelled in his studies and had a strong taste for Latin, history, geography, and astronomy, and became fluent in Italian and English. He enjoyed physical activities such as hunting with his grandfather, and rough-playing with his younger brothers, Louis-Stanislas, comte de Provence, and Charles-Philippe, comte d'Artois. From an early age, Louis-Auguste had been encouraged in another of his hobbies: locksmithing, which was seen as a 'useful' pursuit for a child.[1]

Upon the death of his father, who died of tuberculosis on 20 December 1765, the eleven-year-old Louis-Auguste became the new *Dauphin*. His mother never recovered from the loss of her husband, and died on 13 March 1767,

also from tuberculosis.[2] The strict and conservative education he received from the Duc de La Vauguyon, "gouverneur des Enfants de France" (governor of the Children of France), from 1760 until his marriage in 1770, did not prepare him for the throne that he was to inherit in 1774 after the death of his grandfather, Louis XV. Throughout his education, Louis-Auguste received a mixture of studies particular to religion, morality, and humanities.[3] His instructors may have also had a good hand in shaping Louis-Auguste into the indecisive king that he became. Abbé Berthier, his instructor, taught him that timidity was a value in strong monarchs, and Abbé Soldini, his confessor, instructed him not to let people read his mind.[4]

Louis XVI at the age of 20

1.2 Family life

Marie Antoinette Queen of France with her three eldest children, Marie-Thérèse, Louis-Charles and Louis-Joseph. By Marie Louise Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun

Louis-Charles, the dauphin of France and future Louis XVII. By Marie Louise Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun.

On 16 May 1770, at the age of fifteen, Louis-Auguste married the fourteen-year-old Habsburg Archduchess Maria Antonia (better known by the French form of her name, *Marie Antoinette*), his second cousin once removed and the youngest daughter of the Holy Roman Emperor Francis I and his wife, the formidable Empress Maria Theresa.[5]

This marriage was met with hostility by the French public. France's alliance with Austria had pulled the country into the disastrous Seven Years' War, in which it was defeated by the British, both in Europe and in North America. By the time that Louis-Auguste and Marie-Antoinette were married, the French people generally regarded the Austrian alliance with dislike, and Marie-Antoinette was seen as an unwelcome foreigner.[6] For the young couple, the marriage was initially amiable but distant. Louis-Auguste's shyness and, among other factors, the young age and inexperience of the newlyweds, who were near

total strangers to each other - having met only two days prior to their wedding -, meant that the 15-year-old bridegroom failed to consummate the union with his 14-year-old bride. His fear of being manipulated by her for Imperial purposes caused him to behave coldly towards her in public.[7] Over time, the couple became closer, though while their marriage was reportedly consummated in July 1773, it was not in fact really so until 1777.[8]

Since the royal couple failed to produce any children for several years after their wedding, there was a strain upon their marriage,[9] whilst the situation was worsened by the publication of obscene pamphlets (*libelles*) which mocked the infertility of the pair. One questioned, “Can the King do it? Can't the King do it?"[10]

The reasons behind the couple's initial failure to have children were debated at that time, and they have continued to be so since. One suggestion is that Louis-Auguste suffered from a physiological dysfunction,[11] most often thought to be phimosis, a suggestion first made in late 1772 by the royal doctors.[12] Historians adhering to this view suggest that he was circumcised[13] (a common treatment for phimosis) to relieve the condition seven years after their marriage. Louis's doctors were not in favour of the surgery – the operation was delicate and traumatic, and capable of doing “as much harm as good” to an adult male. The argument for phimosis and a resulting operation is mostly seen to originate from Stefan Zweig, who is now known to have given undue prominence to evidence suggesting that Louis had phimosis, and to have suppressed other evidence that contradicted that interpretation. Zweig, a novelist not an historian, was influenced by the theories of his close friend Sigmund Freud, and argued that Marie Antoinette's notorious frivolity and spendthrift ways resulted from her sexual frustration in the first seven years of her marriage[14]

Most modern historians agree that Louis had no surgery[15][16][17] – for instance, as late as 1777, the Prussian envoy, Baron Goltz, reported that the King of France had definitely declined the operation.[18] The fact was that Louis was frequently declared to be perfectly fit for sexual intercourse, confirmed by Joseph II, and during the time he was purported to have had the operation, he went out hunting almost every day, according to his journal. This would not have been possible if he had undergone a circumcision; at the very least, he would have been unable to ride to the hunt for a few weeks thereafter. The couple's consummation problems are now attributed to other factors. Antonia Fraser's biography of the queen discusses Joseph II's letter on the matter to one of his brothers after he visited Versailles in 1777. In the letter, Joseph describes in astonishingly frank detail Louis' inadequate performance in the marriage bed and Antoinette's lack of interest in conjugal activity. Joseph described the couple as “complete fumblers"; however, with his advice, Louis began to apply himself more effectively to his marital duties, and sometime in the third week of March 1777 Marie Antoinette became pregnant.

Eventually, in spite of their earlier difficulties, the royal couple became the parents of four children. Marie Antoinette's lady-in-waiting, Madame Campan, notes a miscarriage the queen suffered after the birth of her first child, an incident dated to July 1779 by a letter to the queen from the empress. Madame Campan states that Louis spent an entire morning consoling his wife at her bedside, and swore to secrecy everyone who knew of the incident. Marie Antoinette suffered a second miscarriage at the beginning of November 1783. The four live-born children were:

- Marie-Thérèse-Charlotte (19 December 1778 – 19 October 1851)
- Louis-Joseph-Xavier-François, the *Dauphin* (22 October 1781 – 4 June 1789)
- Louis-Charles, *Dauphin* after the death of his elder brother, future titular king Louis XVII of France (27 March 1785 – 8 June 1795)
- Sophie-Hélène-Béatrix, died in infancy (9 July 1786 – 19 June 1787)

1.3 Absolute monarch of France, 1774–1789

Louis XVI by Antoine-François Callet, 1786

When Louis XVI succeeded to the throne in 1774, he was nineteen years old. He had an enormous responsibility, as the government was deeply in debt, and resentment of “despotic” monarchy was on the rise. He felt himself woefully unqualified to resolve the situation.

As king, Louis focused primarily on religious freedom and foreign policy. While none doubted Louis's intellectual ability to rule France, it was quite clear that, although raised as the *Dauphin* since 1765, he lacked firmness and decisiveness. His desire to be loved by his people is evident in the prefaces of many of his edicts that would often explain the nature and good intention of his actions as benefiting the people. He aimed to earn the love of his people by reinstating the *parlements*. When questioned about his decision, he said, "It may be considered politically unwise, but it seems to me to be the general wish and I want to be loved."[19] In spite of his indecisiveness, Louis XVI was determined to be a good king, stating that he "must always consult public opinion; it is never wrong."[20] He therefore appointed an experienced advisor, Jean-Frédéric Phélypeaux, comte de Maurepas who, until his death in 1781, would take charge of many important ministerial functions.

"Le Couronnement de Louis XVI" *by Benjamin Duvivier honoring the 11 June 1775 coronation of Louis XVI*

Among the major events of Louis XVI's reign was his signing of the Edict of Versailles, also known as the Edict of Tolerance, on 7 November 1787, which was registered in the parlement on 29 January 1788. This edict effectively nullified the Edict of Fontainebleau that had been law for 102 years, granting non-Roman Catholics – Huguenots and Lutherans, as well as Jews – civil and legal status in France and the legal right to practice their faiths. The Edict of Versailles did not legally proclaim freedom of religion in France – this took two more years, with the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen of 1789 – however, it was an important step in eliminating religious tensions and it officially ended religious persecution within his realm.[21]

Radical financial reforms by Turgot and Malesherbes angered the nobles and were blocked by the *parlements* who insisted that the King did not have the legal right to levy new taxes. So, in 1776, Turgot was dismissed and Malesherbes resigned, to be replaced by Jacques Necker. Necker supported the American Revolution, and he carried out a policy of taking out large international loans instead of raising taxes. He attempted to gain public favor in 1781 when he had published the first ever statement of the French Crown's expenses and accounts, the *Compte rendu au roi.* This allowed the people of France to view the king's accounts in modest surplus.[22] When this policy failed miserably, Louis dismissed him, and then replaced him in 1783 with Charles Alexandre de Calonne, who increased public spending to "buy" the country's way out of debt. Again this failed, so Louis convoked the Assembly of Notables in 1787 to discuss a revolutionary new fiscal reform proposed by Calonne. When the nobles were informed of the extent of the debt, they were shocked into rejecting the plan. This negative turn of events signaled to Louis that he had lost the ability to rule as an absolute monarch, and he fell into depression.[23]

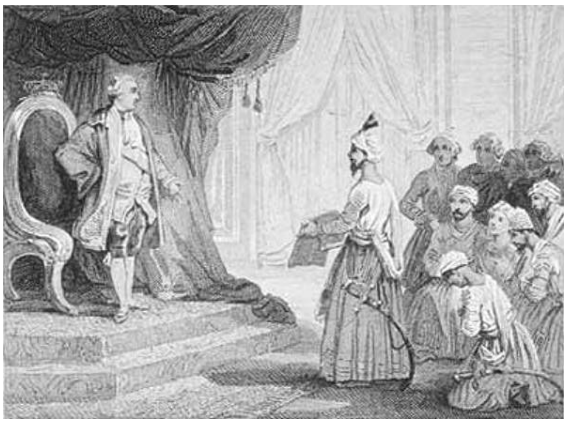
As power drifted from him, there were increasingly loud calls for him to convoke the Estates-General, which had not met since 1614, at the beginning of the reign of Louis XIII. As a last-ditch attempt to get new monetary reforms approved, Louis XVI convoked the Estates-General on 8 August 1788, setting the date of their opening at 1 May 1789. With the convocation of the Estates-General, as in many other instances during his reign, Louis placed his reputation and public image in the hands of those who were perhaps not as sensitive to the desires of the French public as he was. Because it had been so long since the Estates-General had been convened, there was some debate as to which procedures should be followed. Ultimately, the *parlement de Paris* agreed that "all traditional observances should be carefully maintained to avoid the impression that the Estates-General could make things up as it went along." Under this decision, the King agreed to retain many of the divisive customs which had been the norm in 1614, but which were intolerable to a Third Estate buoyed by the recent proclamations of equality. For example, the First and Second Estates proceeded into the assembly wearing their finest garments, while the Third Estate was required to wear plain, oppressively somber black, an act of alienation that Louis would likely have not condoned. He seemed to regard the deputies of the Estates-General with at least respect: in a wave of self-important patriotism, members of the Estates refused to remove their hats in the King's presence, so Louis removed his to them.[24] This convocation was one of the events that transformed the general economic and political *malaise* of the country into the French Revolution. In June 1789, the Third Estate unilaterally declared itself the National Assembly. Louis's attempts to control it resulted in the Tennis Court Oath (*serment du jeu de paume*), on 20 June, the declaration of the National Constituent Assembly on 9 July, and eventually led to the storming of the Bastille on 14 July, which started the French Revolution.(Louis' "diary" entry for 14 July, the single word "rien (nothing)" has been used to show how out of touch with reality he was, but the document was more of a hunting log than a personal journal. When he did not go hunting, he wrote "rien". He did not mean nothing important had happened that day).[25] Within three short months, the majority of the king's executive authority had been transferred to the elected representatives of the people's nation.

1.4 Foreign policy

Main articles: Franco-American alliance, Franco-Indian alliances, and French assistance to Nguyễn Ánh

French involvement in the Seven Years' War had left

Surrender of Cornwallis to French (left) and American (right) troops, at the Siege of Yorktown in 1781, by John Trumbull.



Louis XVI receives the ambassadors of Tippu Sultan in 1788, Voyer after Emile Wattier, 19th century.

Louis XVI a disastrous inheritance. Britain's victories had seen them capture most of France's colonial territories. While some were returned to France at the 1763 Treaty of Paris a vast swathe of North America was ceded to the British.

This had led to a strategy amongst the French leadership of seeking to rebuild the French military in order to fight a war of revenge against Britain, in which it was hoped the lost colonies could be recovered. France still maintained a strong influence in the West Indies, and in India maintained five trading posts, leaving opportunities for disputes and power-play with Great Britain.[26]

1.4.1 Concerning the American Revolution and Europe

Main article: France in the American Revolutionary War

In the spring of 1776, Vergennes, the Foreign Secretary, saw an opportunity to humiliate France's long-standing enemy, Great Britain, and to recover territory lost during the Seven Years' War, by supporting the American Revolution. In the same year Louis XVI was persuaded by Pierre Beaumarchais to send supplies, ammunition, and guns to the rebels secretly, then to sign a formal Treaty of Alliance in early 1778, and later that year to go to war with Britain. In deciding in favor of war, despite France's large financial problems, the King was materially influenced by alarmist reports after the Battle of Saratoga which suggested that Britain was preparing to make huge concessions to the thirteen colonies and then, allied with them, to strike at French and Spanish possessions in the West Indies.[27] Spain and the Netherlands soon joined the French in an anti-British coalition. After 1778, Great Britain switched its focus to the West Indies, as defending the sugar islands was considered more important than trying to recover the thirteen colonies. France and Spain planned to invade the British Isles themselves with the Armada of 1779, but the operation never went ahead.

France's initial military assistance to the American rebels was a disappointment, with defeats at Rhode Island and Savannah. In 1780, France sent Rochambeau and Grasse to help the Americans, along with large land and naval forces. The French expeditionary force arrived in North America in July 1780. The appearance of French fleets in the Caribbean was followed by the capture of a number of the sugar islands, including Tobago and Grenada.[28] In October 1781, the French naval blockade was instrumental in forcing a British army under Cornwallis to surrender at the Siege of Yorktown.[29] When news of this reached London in March 1782, the government of Lord North fell and Great Britain immediately sued for peace terms; however, France delayed the end of the war until September 1783 in the hope of overrunning more British colonies in India and the West Indies.

Great Britain recognised the independence of the thirteen colonies as the United States of America, and the French war ministry rebuilt its army. However, the British defeated the main French fleet in 1782 and successfully defended Jamaica and Gibraltar. France gained little from the 1783 Treaty of Paris that ended the war, except the colonies of Tobago and Senegal. Louis XVI was wholly disappointed in his aims of recovering Canada, India, and other islands in the West Indies from Britain, as they were too well defended and the Royal Navy made any invasion attempt impossible. The war cost 1,066 million livres, financed by new loans at high interest (with no new taxes). Necker concealed the crisis from the public by explaining only that ordinary revenues exceeded ordinary expenses, and not mentioning the loans. After he

was forced from office in 1781, new taxes were levied.[30]

This intervention in America was not possible without France adopting a neutral position in European affairs in order not to be drawn into a continental war which would be simply a repetition of the French policy mistakes in the Seven Years' War. Vergennes supported by King Louis refused to go to War to support Austria in the Bavarian Succession crisis in 1778, when Austrian Holy Roman Emperor, Joseph, tried to control parts of Bavaria. Vergennes and Maurepas refused to support the Austrian position, but the intervention of Marie Antoinette in favor of Austria obliged France to adopt a position more favorable to Austria, which in the treaty of Teschen was able to get in compensation a territory whose population numbered around 100,000 persons. However, this intervention was a disaster for the image of the Queen, who was named "*l'Autrichienne*" (a pun in French meaning "Austrian", but the "chienne" suffix can mean "bitch") on account of it.[31]

1.4.2 Concerning Asia

Louis XVI hoped to use the American Revolutionary War as an opportunity to expel the British from India.[26] In 1782, he sealed an alliance with the Peshwa Madhu Rao Narayan. As a consequence, Bussy moved his troops to the Isle de France (now Mauritius) and later contributed to the French effort in India in 1783.[26][32] Suffren became the ally of Hyder Ali in the Second Anglo-Mysore War against British rule in India, in 1782–1783, fighting the British fleet along the coasts of India and Ceylon.[33][34]

Louis XVI giving La Pérouse his instructions

France also intervened in Cochinchina following Mgr Pigneau de Béhaine's intervention to obtain military aid. A France-Cochinchina alliance was signed through the Treaty of Versailles of 1787, between Louis XVI and Prince Nguyễn Ánh.[35]

Louis XVI also encouraged major voyages of exploration. In 1785, he appointed La Pérouse to lead a sailing expedition around the world.

1.5 Revolutionary constitutional reign, 1789–1792

One Louis d'or, 1788, depicting Louis XVI

On 5 October 1789, an angry mob of Parisian working women was incited by revolutionaries and marched on the Palace of Versailles, where the royal family lived. At dawn, they infiltrated the palace and attempted to kill the queen, who was associated with a frivolous lifestyle that symbolized much that was despised about the *Ancien Régime*. After the situation had been defused by Lafayette, head of the *Garde nationale*, the king and his family were brought by the crowd to the Tuileries Palace in Paris, the reasoning being that the king would be more accountable to the people if he lived among them in Paris.

The Revolution's principles of popular sovereignty, though central to democratic principles of later eras, marked a decisive break from the centuries-old principle of divine right that was at the heart of the French monarchy. As a result, the Revolution was opposed by many of the rural people of France and by all the governments of France's neighbors. As the Revolution became more radical and the masses more uncontrollable, several of its leading figures began to doubt its benefits. Some, like Honoré Mirabeau, secretly plotted with the Crown to restore its power in a new constitutional form.

Beginning in 1791, Montmorin, Minister of Foreign Affairs, started to organize covert resistance to the revolutionary forces. Thus, the funds of the *Liste Civile*, voted annually by the National Assembly, were partially assigned to secret expenses in order to preserve the monarchy. Arnault Laporte, who was in charge of the Civil list, collaborated with both Montmorin and Mirabeau. After the sudden death of Mirabeau, Maximilien Radix de Sainte-Foix, a noted financier, took his place. In effect, he headed a secret council of advisers to Louis XVI, which tried to preserve the monarchy; these schemes proved unsuccessful, and were exposed later when the armoire de fer was discovered.

Mirabeau's death on 7 April, and Louis XVI's indecision, fatally weakened negotiations between the Crown and moderate politicians. On one hand, Louis was nowhere near as reactionary as his brothers, the comte de Provence and the comte d'Artois, and he repeatedly sent messages to them requesting a halt to their attempts to launch

Tinted etching of Louis XVI, 1792. The caption refers to the date of the Tennis Court Oath and concludes "The same Louis XVI who bravely waits until his fellow citizens return to their hearths to plan a secret war and exact his revenge."

counter-coups. This was often done through his secretly nominated regent, the Cardinal Loménie de Brienne. On the other hand, Louis was alienated from the new democratic government both by its negative reaction to the traditional role of the monarch and in its treatment of him and his family. He was particularly irked by being kept essentially as a prisoner in the Tuileries, and by the refusal of the new regime to allow him to have confessors and priests of his choice rather than 'constitutional priests' pledged to the state and not the Roman Catholic Church.

1.5.1 Flight to Varennes (1791)

Main article: Flight to Varennes

On 21 June 1791, Louis XVI attempted to flee secretly with his family from Paris to the royalist fortress town of Montmédy on the northeastern border of France, where he would join the *émigrés* and be protected by Austria. While the National Assembly worked painstakingly towards a constitution, Louis and Marie-Antoinette were involved in plans of their own. Louis had appointed Breteuil to act as plenipotentiary, dealing with other foreign heads of state in an attempt to bring about a counter-revolution. Louis himself held reservations against depending on foreign assistance. Like his mother and father, he thought that the Austrians were treacherous and the Prussians were overly ambitious.[36] As tensions in Paris rose and he was pressured to accept measures from the Assembly against his will, Louis XVI and the queen plotted to secretly escape from France. Beyond escape, they hoped to raise an "armed congress" with the help of the *émigrés*, as well as assistance from other nations with which they could return and, in essence, recapture France. This degree of planning reveals Louis' political determination; unfortunately, it was for this determined plot that he was eventually convicted of high treason.[37] He left behind (on his bed) a 16-page written manifesto, *Déclaration du roi, adressée à tous les François, à sa sortie de Paris*,[38] traditionally known as the *Testament politique de Louis XVI* ("Political Testament of Louis XVI"), explaining his rejection of the constitutional system as illegitimate; it was printed in the newspapers. However, his indecision, many delays, and misunderstanding of France were responsible for the failure of the escape. Within 24 hours, the royal family was arrested at Varennes-en-Argonne shortly after Jean-Baptiste Drouet, who recognised the king from his profile on a 50 livres *assignat*[39] (paper money), had given the alert. Louis XVI and his family were taken back to Paris where they arrived on 25 June. Viewed suspiciously as traitors, they were placed under tight house arrest upon their return to the Tuileries.[40]

At the microscopic level, the failure of the escape plans was due to a series of misadventures, delays, misinterpretations, and poor judgments.[41] In a wider perspective, the failure was attributable to the king's indecision—he repeatedly postponed the schedule, allowing for smaller problems to become severe. Furthermore, he totally misunderstood the political situation. He thought only a small number of radicals in Paris were promoting a revolution that the people as a whole rejected. He thought, mistakenly, that he was beloved by the peasants and the common folk.[42] The king's flight in the short term was traumatic for France, inciting a wave of emotions that ranged from anxiety to violence to panic. Everyone realized that war was imminent. The deeper realization, that the king had in fact repudiated the Revolution, was an even greater shock for people who until then had seen him as a good king who governed as a manifestation of God's will. They felt betrayed. Republicanism now burst out of the coffee houses and became a dominating philosophy of the rapidly radicalized French Revolution.[43]

1.5.2 Intervention by foreign powers

The other monarchies of Europe looked with concern upon the developments in France, and considered whether they should intervene, either in support of Louis or to take advantage of the chaos in France. The key figure was Marie Antoinette's brother, the Holy Roman Emperor Leopold II. Initially, he had looked on the Rev-

The return of the royal family to Paris on 25 June 1791, coloured copperplate after a drawing of Jean-Louis Prieur

olution with equanimity. However, he became more and more disturbed as it became more and more radical. Despite this, he still hoped to avoid war.

On 27 August, Leopold and Frederick William II of Prussia, in consultation with *émigrés* French nobles, issued the Declaration of Pillnitz, which declared the interest of the monarchs of Europe in the well-being of Louis and his family, and threatened vague but severe consequences if anything should befall them. Although Leopold saw the Pillnitz Declaration as an easy way to appear concerned about the developments in France without committing any soldiers or finances to change them, the revolutionary leaders in Paris viewed it fearfully as a dangerous foreign attempt to undermine France's sovereignty.

In addition to the ideological differences between France and the monarchical powers of Europe, there were continuing disputes over the status of Austrian estates in Alsace, and the concern of members of the National Constituent Assembly about the agitation of *émigrés* nobles abroad, especially in the Austrian Netherlands and the minor states of Germany.

In the end, the Legislative Assembly, supported by Louis XVI, declared war on Austria ("the King of Bohemia and Hungary") first, voting for war on 20 April 1792, after a long list of grievances was presented to it by the foreign minister, Charles François Dumouriez. Dumouriez prepared an immediate invasion of the Austrian Netherlands, where he expected the local population to rise against Austrian rule. However, the Revolution had thoroughly disorganised the army, and the forces raised were insufficient for the invasion. The soldiers fled at the first sign of battle and, in one case, on 28 April 1792, murdered their general, Irish-born *comte* Théobald de Dillon, whom they accused of treason.[44]

While the revolutionary government frantically raised fresh troops and reorganised its armies, a Prussian-Austrian army under Charles William Ferdinand, Duke

The Storming of the Tuileries Palace, *on 10 August 1792.*

of Brunswick assembled at Coblenz on the Rhine. In July, the invasion began, with Brunswick's army easily taking the fortresses of Longwy and Verdun. The duke then issued on 25 July a proclamation called the Brunswick Manifesto, written by Louis's émigré cousin, the Prince de Condé, declaring the intent of the Austrians and Prussians to restore the king to his full powers and to treat any person or town who opposed them as rebels to be condemned to death by martial law.

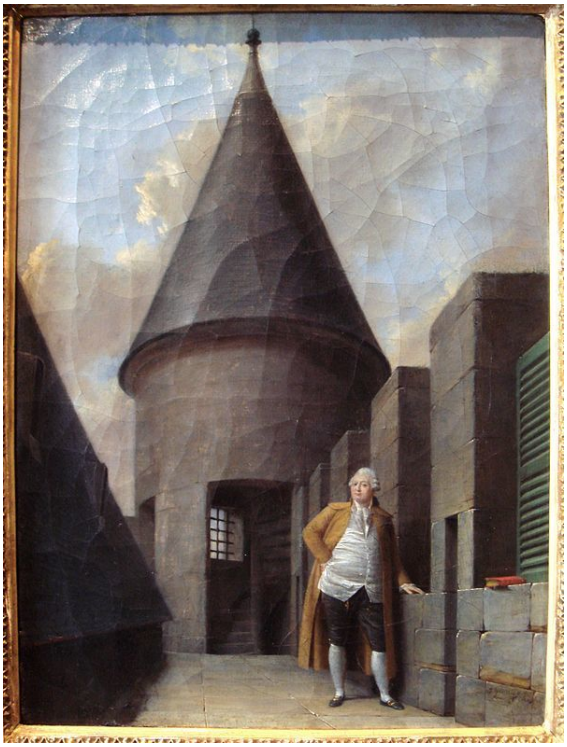
Contrary to its intended purpose of strengthening Louis XVI's position against the revolutionaries, the Brunswick Manifesto had the opposite effect of greatly undermining his already highly tenuous position. It was taken by many to be the final proof of collusion between the king and foreign powers in a conspiracy against his own country. The anger of the populace boiled over on 10 August when an armed mob – with the backing of a new municipal government of Paris that came to be known as the *Insurrectional* Paris Commune – marched upon and invaded the Tuileries Palace. The royal family took shelter with the Legislative Assembly.

1.6 Imprisonment and execution, 1792–1793

See also: trial of Louis XVI and execution of Louis XVI

Louis was officially arrested on 13 August 1792, and sent to the Temple, an ancient fortress in Paris that was used as a prison. On 21 September, the National Assembly declared France to be a Republic and abolished the Monarchy. Louis was stripped of all of his titles and honours, and from this date was known as simply *Citoyen Louis Capet.*

The Girondins were partial to keeping the deposed king under arrest, both as a hostage and a guarantee for the future. Members of the Commune and the most radical deputies, who would soon form the group known as the Mountain, argued for Louis's immediate execution. The legal background of many of the deputies made it difficult for a great number of them to accept an execution with-

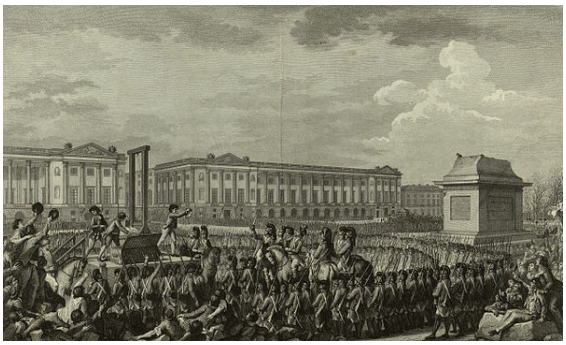


Louis XVI imprisoned at the Tour du Temple, by Jean-François Garneray (1755–1837)

out the due process of law of some sort, and it was voted that the deposed monarch be tried before the National Convention, the organ that housed the representatives of the sovereign people. In many ways, the former king's trial represented the trial of the monarchy by the revolution. It was seen as such, with the death of one came the life of the other. Michelet argued that the death of the former king would lead to the acceptance of violence as a tool for happiness. He said, "If we accept the proposition that one person can be sacrificed for the happiness of the many, it will soon be demonstrated that two or three or more could also be sacrificed for the happiness of the many. Little by little, we will find reasons for sacrificing the many for the happiness of the many, and we will think it was a bargain."[45]

In November 1792, the *armoire de fer* (iron chest) incident took place at the Tuileries Palace, when the existence, in the king's bedroom, of the hidden safe containing compromising documents and correspondence, was revealed by François Gamain, the Versailles locksmith who had installed it, went to Paris on 20 November and told Jean-Marie Roland, Girondinist Minister of the Interior.[46] The resulting scandal served to discredit the king.

On 11 December, among crowded and silent streets, the deposed king was brought from the Temple to stand before the Convention and hear his indictment, an accusation of high treason and crimes against the State. On 26 December, his counsel, Raymond Desèze, delivered Louis' response to the charges, with the assistance of François Tronchet and Malesherbes.



Execution of Louis XVI in the Place de la Révolution. The empty pedestal in front of him had supported a statue of his grandfather, Louis XV, now torn down during the revolution.

On 15 January 1793, the Convention, composed of 721 deputies, voted on the verdict. Given overwhelming evidence of Louis's collusion with the invaders, the verdict was a foregone conclusion – with 693 deputies voting guilty, none for acquittal, with 23 abstaining.[47] The next day, a roll-call vote was carried out to decide upon the fate of the former king, and the result was uncomfortably close for such a dramatic decision. 288 of the deputies voted against death and for some other alternative, mainly some means of imprisonment or exile. 72 of the deputies voted for the death penalty, but subject to a number of delaying conditions and reservations. 361 of the deputies voted for Louis's immediate death. Philippe Égalité, formerly the duke of Orléans and Louis' own cousin, voted for Louis' execution, a cause of much future bitterness among French monarchists; he would himself be guillotined before the end of 1793.[48]

The next day, a motion to grant Louis XVI reprieve from the death sentence was voted down: 310 of the deputies requested mercy, but 380 voted for the immediate execution of the death penalty. This decision would be final. On Monday, 21 January 1793, Louis XVI was beheaded by guillotine on the *Place de la Révolution*. The executioner, Charles Henri Sanson, testified that the former king had bravely met his fate.[49]

As Louis XVI mounted the scaffold, he appeared dignified and resigned. He delivered a short speech in which he pardoned "...those who are the cause of my death.... ".[50] He then declared himself innocent of the crimes of which he was accused, praying that his blood would not fall back on France.[51] Many accounts suggest Louis XVI's desire to say more, but Antoine-Joseph Santerre, a general in the National Guard, halted the speech by ordering a drum roll. The former king was then quickly beheaded.[52] Some accounts of Louis's beheading indicate that the blade did not sever his neck entirely the first time. There are also accounts of a blood-curdling scream issuing from Louis after the blade fell but this is unlikely, since the blade severed Louis's spine. It is agreed that while Louis's blood dripped to the ground many mem-

bers of the crowd ran forward to dip their handkerchiefs in it.[53] This account was proven true in 2012, after a DNA comparison linked blood thought to be from Louis XVI's beheading to DNA taken from tissue samples originating from what was long thought to be the mummified head of Henry IV of France. The blood sample was taken from a squash gourd carved to commemorate the heroes of the French Revolution that had, according to legend, been used to house one of the handkerchiefs dipped in Louis's blood.[54]

1.7 Legacy

Memorial to Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, sculptures by Edme Gaulle and Pierre Petitot in the Basilica of Saint-Denis.

The 19th-century historian Jules Michelet attributed the restoration of the French monarchy to the sympathy that had been engendered by the execution of Louis XVI. Michelet's *Histoire de la Révolution Française* and Alphonse de Lamartine's *Histoire des Girondins*, in particular, showed the marks of the feelings aroused by the revolution's regicide. The two writers did not share the same sociopolitical vision, but they agreed that, even though the monarchy was rightly ended in 1792, the lives of the royal family should have been spared. Lack of compassion at that moment contributed to a radicalization of revolutionary violence and to greater divisiveness among Frenchmen. For the 20th century novelist Albert Camus the execution signaled the end of the role of God in history, for which he mourned. For the 20th century philosopher Jean-François Lyotard the regicide was the starting point of all French thought, the memory of which acts as a reminder that French modernity began under the sign of a crime.[55]

Louis' daughter, Marie-Thérèse-Charlotte, the future Duchess of Angoulême, survived the French Revolution, and she lobbied in Rome energetically for the canonization of her father as a saint of the Catholic Church. Despite his signing of the "Civil Constitution of the Clergy", Louis had been described as a martyr by Pope Pius VI in 1793.[56] In 1820, however, a memorandum of the Congregation of Rites in Rome, declaring the impossibility of proving that Louis had been executed for religious rather than political reasons, put an end to hopes of canonization.

- The *Requiem in C minor* for mixed chorus by Luigi Cherubini was written in 1816, in memory of Louis XVI.
- The city of Louisville, Kentucky, is named for Louis XVI. In 1780, the Virginia General Assembly bestowed this name in honor of the French king, whose soldiers were aiding the American side in the Revolutionary War. The Virginia General Assembly saw the King as a noble man, but many other Continental delegates disagreed. (At that time, Kentucky was a part of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Kentucky became the 15th State of the United States in 1792.)
- There are numerous other places named "Louisville", such as Louisville, Alabama, Louisville, Colorado, Louisville, Georgia, Louisville, Illinois, Louisville, Kansas, Louisville, Nebraska, Louisville, New York, Louisville, Ohio, Louisville, Kentucky, and Louisville, Tennessee, all located in the United States.

1.7.1 In film and literature

King Louis XVI has been portrayed in numerous films. In *Marie Antoinette* (1938), he was played by Robert Morley. Jean-François Balmer portrayed him in the 1989 two-part miniseries *La Révolution française*. More recently, he was depicted in the 2006 film *Marie Antoinette* by Jason Schwartzman. In Sacha Guitry's *Si Versailles m'était conté*, Louis was portrayed by one of the film's producers, Gilbert Bokanowski, using the alias Gilbert Boka. Several portrayals have upheld the image of a bumbling, almost foolish king, such as that by Jacques Morel in the 1956 French film *Marie-Antoinette reine de France* and that by Terence Budd in the *Lady Oscar* live action film. In *Start the Revolution Without Me*, Louis XVI is portrayed by Hugh Griffith as a laughable cuckold. Mel

Brooks played a comic version of Louis XVI in *The History of the World Part 1*, portraying him as a libertine who has such distaste for the peasantry he uses them as targets in skeet shooting. In the 1996 film *Ridicule*; Urbain Cancelier plays Louis.

Louis has been the subject of novels as well, including two of the alternate histories anthologized in *If It Had Happened Otherwise* (1931): "If Drouet's Cart Had Stuck" by Hilaire Belloc and "If Louis XVI Had Had an Atom of Firmness" by André Maurois, which tell very different stories but both imagine Louis surviving and still reigning in the early 19th century. Louis appears in the children's book *Ben and Me* by Robert Lawson but does not appear in the 1953 animated short film based on the same book.

1.8 Ancestors

1.9 Titles, styles, honours and arms

1.9.1 Titles and styles

- **23 August 1754 – 20 December 1765**: *His Royal Highness* The Duke of Berry
- **20 December 1765 – 10 May 1774**: *His Royal Highness* The Dauphin of France
- **10 May 1774 – 21 September 1792**: *His Most Christian Majesty* The King
- **21 September 1792 – 21 January 1793**: Citizen Louis Capet

Louis's formal style before the revolution was "*Louis XVI, par la grâce de Dieu, roi de France et de Navarre*", or "Louis XVI, by the Grace of God, King of France and of Navarre".

1.9.2 Arms

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Chapter 2

Georges Danton

"Danton" redirects here. For other uses, see Danton (disambiguation).

Georges Jacques Danton (French: [ʒɔʁʒ dɑ̃tɔ̃]; 26 October 1759 – 5 April 1794) was a leading figure in the early stages of the French Revolution and the first President of the Committee of Public Safety. Danton's role in the onset of the Revolution has been disputed; many historians describe him as "the chief force in the overthrow of the monarchy and the establishment of the First French Republic".[1] A moderating influence on the Jacobins, he was guillotined by the advocates of revolutionary terror after accusations of venality and leniency to the enemies of the Revolution.

2.1 Early life and the revolution

Danton was born in Arcis-sur-Aube in northeastern France to Jacques Danton and Mary Camus; a respectable, but not wealthy family. After obtaining a good education he became an Advocate in Paris.[2] He married Antoinette Charpentier in 1787; they had three sons. She died 10 February 1793, whereupon Danton married Louise Sébastienne Gély, aged 16, daughter of Marc-Antoine Gély, court usher (huissier-audiencier) at the Parlement de Paris and member of the Club des Cordeliers. She looked after his two surviving sons. As a child, he was attacked by several animals, resulting in the disfigurement and scarring of the skin on his face, also contributed to by smallpox.[3]

Danton's first appearance in the Revolution was as president of the Cordeliers club, whose name derives from the former convent of the Order of Cordeliers, where it held its meetings. One of many clubs important in the early phases of the Revolution, the Cordeliers was a centre for the "popular principle", that France was to be a country of its people under popular sovereignty; they were the earliest to accuse the royal court of being irreconcilably hostile to freedom; and they most vehemently proclaimed the need for radical action.

In June 1791, the King and the Queen made a disastrous attempt to flee from the capital. They were forced to return to the Tuileries Palace, which effectively became their prison. Queen Marie Antoinette opened negotiations with the moderate leaders of the Revolution in an attempt to save the monarchy and to establish a moderate constitutional settlement.[4] The popular reaction was intense, and those who favored a constitutional monarchy, of whom one of the leaders was Lafayette, became excited. A bloody dispersion of a popular gathering, known as the massacre of the Champ de Mars (July 1791), kindled resentment against the court and the constitutional party. Danton was, in part, behind the crowd that gathered, and fearing counter-revolutionary backlash, he fled to England for the rest of the summer.[5]

The National Constituent Assembly completed its work in September 1791. Due to the Self-denying Ordinance none of its members were eligible to its successor, the short-lived Legislative Assembly. Danton's party was able to procure for him a subordinate post in the Paris Commune.

In April 1792, the Girondist government—still functioning as a constitutional monarchy—declared war against Austria. A country in turmoil from the immense civil and political changes of the past two years now faced war with an enemy on its eastern frontier. Parisian distrust for the court turned to open insurrection. On 10 August 1792, the popular forces marched on the Tuileries; the king and queen took refuge with the Legislative Assembly. Danton's role in this uprising is unclear. He may have been one of its leaders; this view is supported because on the morning after the effective fall of the monarchy, Danton became minister of justice. This sudden rise from the subordinate office which he held in the commune is a demonstration of his power within the insurrectionary party.

2.2 Rise

In the provisional executive government that was formed between the king's dethronement and the opening of the National Convention (the formal end of the monarchy), Danton found himself allied with Jean-Marie Roland and other members of the Girondist movement. Their

According to a biographer, "Danton's height was colossal, his make athletic, his features strongly marked, coarse, and displeasing; his voice shook the domes of the halls".[6]

strength was soon put to the test. The alarming successes of the Austrians and the surrender of two important fortresses caused panic in the capital; over a thousand prisoners were murdered. At that time, Danton was accused of directing these September Massacres, but no evidence of this is available from modern research. However, he apparently did nothing to prevent the atrocities, and instead insisted that his colleagues should remain firm at their posts.

The election to the National Convention took place in September 1792; after which the remnant of the Legislative Assembly formally surrendered its authority. The Convention ruled France until October 1795. Danton was a member; resigning as Minister of Justice once it was clear that the invading Austrian and Prussian armies had been turned back, he took a prominent part in the deliberations and proceedings of the Convention.

In the Convention, according to the 1911 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Eleventh Edition, "He took his seat in the high and remote benches which gave the name of "the Mountain" to the revolutionists who sat there. He found himself side by side with Marat, whose exaggerations he never countenanced; with Maximilien Robespierre, whom he did not regard very highly, but whose immediate aims were in many respects his own; with Camille Desmoulins and Pierre Philippeaux, who were his close friends and constant partisans." As for his foes, the Girondists, they were "eloquent, dazzling, patriotic, but unable to apprehend the fearful nature of the crisis, too full of vanity and exclusive party-spirit, and too fastidious to strike hands with the vigorous and stormy Danton." Dreading the people who had elected Danton, and holding Danton responsible for the September Massacres, they failed to see that his sympathy with the vehemence and energy of the streets positioned him uniquely to harness on behalf of the defense of France that insurrectionary spirit that had removed the monarchy. Danton saw radical Paris as the only force to which the National Convention could look in resisting Austria and its allies on the north-east frontier, and the reactionaries in the interior. "Paris," he said, "is the natural and constituted centre of free France. It is the centre of light. When Paris shall perish there will no longer be a republic."

Danton voted for the death of Louis XVI in January 1793. After the execution had been carried out, he thundered "The kings of Europe would dare challenge us? We throw them the head of a king!" Danton had a conspicuous share in the creation of the Revolutionary Tribunal, which on the one hand took the weapons away from the disorderly popular vengeance of the September Massacres, but which would become the instrument of the institutionalized Terror. When all executive power was conferred upon a Committee of Public Safety (6 April 1793), Danton had been one of the nine original members of that body. He was dispatched on frequent missions from the Convention to the republican armies in Belgium, and wherever he went he infused new energy into the army. He pressed forward the new national system of education, and he was one of the legislative committee charged with the construction of a new system of government. He tried and failed to bridge the hostilities between Girondists and Jacobins. The Girondists were irreconcilable, and the fury of their attacks on Danton and the Mountain was unremitting. 9

2.3 Fall of the Girondists

Although he was—again in the words of the 1911 *Britannica*—"far too robust in character to lose himself in merely personal enmities", by the middle of May 1793 Danton had made up his mind that the Girondists must be politically suppressed. The Convention was wasting time and force in vindictive factional recriminations, while the country was in crisis. Charles François Dumouriez, the senior commander of the Battles of Valmy and Jemappes, had deserted. Danton had defended Dumouriez against attacks in Convention, probably to allow Dumouriez to concentrate on the war, before the General's defection, so it undermined Danton's own position. The French armies were suffering a series of checks and reverses. A royalist rebellion was gaining formidable dimensions in the west. The Girondists were clamoring for the heads of Danton and his colleagues in the Mountain, but they would lose this struggle to the death.

There is no positive evidence that Danton directly instigated the insurrection of 31 May — 2 June 1793, which ended in the purge of the Convention and the proscription of the Girondists. He afterwards spoke of himself as in some sense the author of this revolution, because a little

Danton addressing the National Convention.

while before, stung by some trait of factious perversity in the Girondists, he had openly cried out in the midst of the Convention, that if he could only find a hundred men, they would resist the oppressive authority of the Girondist Commission of Twelve. At any rate, he certainly acquiesced in the violence of the commune, and he publicly gloried in the expulsion of the men who stood obstinately in the way of a vigorous and concentrated exertion of national power.

Danton, unlike the Girondists, "accepted the fury of popular passion as an inevitable incident in the work of deliverance." (1911 *Britannica*) He was not an enthusiast of the Reign of Terror like Billaud-Varenne or Jacques René Hébert; he saw it as a two-edged weapon to be used as little as necessary. The authors of the 1911 *Britannica* see him at this time as wishing "to reconcile France with herself; to restore a society that, while emancipated and renewed in every part, should yet be stable; and above all to secure the independence of his country, both by a resolute defence against the invader, and by such a mixture of vigour with humanity as should reconcile the offended opinion of the rest of Europe."

The position of the Mountain had completely changed. In the Constituent Assembly its members had been a mere 30 out of the 578 of the third estate. In the Legislative Assembly they had not been numerous, and none of their chiefs held a seat. In the first nine months of the Convention they were struggling for their very lives against the Girondists. In June 1793, for the first time, they found themselves in possession of absolute power. Men who had for many months been "nourished on the ideas and stirred to the methods of opposition" [1911 *Britannica*] suddenly had the responsibility of government. Actual power was in the hands of the Committee of Public Safety and the Committee of General Security. Both were chosen out of the body of the Convention. The drama of the nine months between the expulsion of the Girondins and the execution of Danton turns upon the struggle of the committees (especially the former, which would gain ascendancy) to retain power: first, against the insurrectionary municipal government of Paris, the *commune*; and second, against the Convention, from which the committees derived an authority that was regularly renewed on the expiry of each short term.

Danton, immediately after the fall of the Girondins, had thrown himself with extraordinary energy into the work to be done. He was prominent in the task of setting up a strong central authority, taming the anarchical ferment of Paris. It was he who proposed that the Committee of Public Safety be granted dictatorial powers, and that it should have copious funds at its disposal. He was not a member of the resulting committee: in order to keep himself clear of any personal suspicion, he announced his resolution not to belong to the body which he had thus done his best to make supreme in the state and left it in July 1793. His position during the autumn of 1793 was that of a powerful supporter and inspirer from outside the government which he had been foremost in setting up.

2.4 Reign of Terror

The French National Convention during the autumn of 1793 began to assert its authority further throughout France, creating the bloodiest period of the French Revolution in which some historians assert approximately 40,000 people were killed in France.[7] (At least a further 200.000 people perished in the civil war resulting from the provincial revolts, such as the War in the Vendée, coming as a reaction to the revolutionary government.) Following the fall of the Girondins, a group known as the Indulgents would emerge from amongst the Montagnards as the legislative right within the Convention and Danton as their most vocal leader. Having long supported the progressive acts of the Committee of Public Safety, Danton would begin to propose that the Committee retract legislation instituting terror as "the order of the day."[8]

While the Committee of Public Safety was concerned with strengthening the centralist policies of the Convention and its own grip over that body, Danton was in the process of devising a plan that would effectively move popular sentiment among delegates towards a more moderate stance.[9] This meant adopting values popular among the sans-culotte, notably the control of bread

prices that had seen drastic increase with the famine that was being experienced throughout France. Danton also proposed that the Convention begin taking actions towards peace with foreign powers, as the Committee had declared war on the majority of European powers, such as England, Spain, and Portugal.

The Reign of Terror was not a policy that could be easily transformed. Indeed, it would eventually end with the Thermidorian Reaction (July 1794), when the Convention rose against the Committee, executed its leaders, and placed power in the hands of new men with a new policy. But in *Germinal*—that is, in March 1794—feeling was not ripe. The committees were still too strong to be overthrown, and Danton, heedless, instead of striking with vigor in the Convention, waited to be struck. "In these later days," writes the 1911 *Britannica*, "a certain discouragement seems to have come over his spirit". His wife had died during his absence on one of his expeditions to the armies; he had her body exhumed so as to see her again.[10] Despite genuine grief, Danton quickly married again, and, the Britannica continues, "the rumour went that he was allowing domestic happiness to tempt him from the keen incessant vigilance proper to the politician in such a crisis."

Ultimately, Danton himself would become a victim of the Terror. As he attempted to shift the direction of the revolution, by collaborating with Camille Desmoulins through the production of *The Old Cordelier*, a newspaper that called for the end of the official Terror and dechristianization, as well as launching new peace overtures to France's enemies, those who most closely associated themselves with the Committee of Public Safety, among them key figures such as Maximilien Robespierre and Georges Couthon, would search for any reason to indict Danton for counter-revolutionary activities.[11] These actions would lead to an investigation of Danton's revolutionary vigor, and in the end he would be tried and executed for his shady dealings with foreign countries in the interest of filling his own pockets.

2.5 Financial corruption and accusations

Toward the end of the Reign of Terror, Danton was accused of various financial misdeeds, as well as using his position within the Revolution for personal gain. Many of his contemporaries commented on Danton's financial success during the Revolution, certain acquisitions of money that he could not adequately explain.[12] Many of the specific accusations directed against him were based on insubstantial or ambiguous evidence.

Between 1791 and 1793 Danton faced many allegations, including taking bribes during the insurrection of August 1792, helping his secretaries to line their pockets, and forging assignats during his mission to Belgium.[13] Perhaps the most compelling evidence of financial corruption was a letter from Mirabeau to Danton in March 1791 that casually referred to 30,000 livres that Danton had received in payment.[13]

Statue of Danton in Tarbes.

During his tenure on the Committee of Public Safety, Danton organized a peace treaty agreement with Sweden. Although the Swedish government never ratified the treaty, on 28 June 1793 the convention voted to pay 4 million livres to the Swedish Regent for diplomatic negotiations . According to Bertrand Barère, a journalist and member of the Convention, Danton had taken a portion of this money which was intended for the Swedish Regent.[14] Barère's accusation was never supported by any form of evidence.

The most serious accusation, which haunted him during his arrest and formed a chief ground for his execution, was his alleged involvement with a scheme to appropriate the wealth of the French East India Company. During the reign of the Old Regime the original French East India Company went bankrupt. It was later revived in 1785, backed by royal patronage.[15] The Company eventually fell under the notice of the National Convention for profiteering during the war. The Company was soon liquidated while certain members of the Convention tried to push through a decree that would cause the share prices to rise before the liquidation.[16] Discovery of the profits from this insider trading led to the blackmailing of the di-

rectors of the Company to turn over half a million livres to known associates of Danton.[17] While there was no hard evidence that Danton was involved, he was vigorously denounced by François Chabot, and implicated by the fact that Fabre d'Eglantine, a member of the Dantonists, was implicated in the scandal. Danton continued to defend Fabre d'Eglantine even after the latter had been exposed and arrested.

2.6 Arrest, trial, and execution

On 30 March 1794, Danton, Desmoulins and others of the *indulgent* party were suddenly arrested. Danton displayed such vehemence before the revolutionary tribunal that his enemies feared he would gain the crowd's favour. The Convention, in one of its "worst fits of cowardice",[18] assented to a proposal made by Saint-Just during the trial that, if a prisoner showed want of respect for justice, the tribunal might exclude the prisoner from further proceeding and pronounce sentence without him being present.[19]

Danton, Desmoulins, and many other actual or accused Dantonist associates were tried from April 3 through 5th before the Revolutionary Tribunal. The trial was less criminal in nature than political, and as such unfolded in an irregular fashion. The jury had only seven members, despite the law demanding twelve, as it was deemed that only seven jurors could be relied on returning the required verdict. Danton made lengthy and violent attacks on the Committee of Public Safety and the accused demanded the right to have witnesses appear on their behalf; they submitted requests for several, including, in Desmoulins' case, Robespierre. The Court's President, M.J.A. Herman, was unable to control the proceedings until the aforementioned decree was passed by the National Convention, preventing the accused from further defending themselves. These facts, together with confusing and often incidental denunciations (for instance, a report that Danton, while engaged in political work in Brussels, had appropriated a carriage filled with several hundred thousand pounds of table linen)[20] and threats made by prosecutor Antoine Quentin Fouquier-Tinville towards members of the jury, ensured a guilty verdict. Danton and the rest of the defendants were condemned to death, and at once led, in company with fourteen others, including Camille Desmoulins and several other members of the Indulgents, to the guillotine. "I leave it all in a frightful welter," he said; "not a man of them has an idea of government. Robespierre will follow me; he is dragged down by me. Ah, better be a poor fisherman than meddle with the government of men!" The phrase 'a poor fisherman' was almost certainly a reference to Saint Peter, Danton having reconciled to Catholicism.[21]

Of the group of fifteen who were guillotined together on April 5, 1794, including Marie Jean Hérault de Séchelles, Philippe Fabre d'Églantine and Pierre Philippeaux, Desmoulins died third, and Danton last.[22]

The 1911 *Britannica* wrote that Danton stands out as a master of commanding phrase. One of his fierce sayings has become a proverb. Against the Duke of Brunswick and the invaders, "*il nous faut de l'audace, et encore de l'audace, et toujours de l'audace*"—"We need audacity, and yet more audacity, and always audacity!"

2.7 Character disputes

His influence and character during the French Revolution was, and still is, widely disputed amongst many historians, with the stretch of perspectives on him ranging from corrupt and violent to generous and patriotic.[23] Danton did not leave very much in the way of written works, personal or political, and, most information about his actions and personality has thus been derived from secondhand sources.[24]

One view of Danton, presented by the historians Thiers and Mignet,[25] was that he was "a gigantic revolutionary" with extravagant passions, a high level of intelligence, and a tolerance of violence for his goals.

Another perspective of Danton emerges from the work of Lamartine, who called Danton a man "devoid of honor, principles, and morality" who found only excitement and a chance for distinction during the French Revolution. He was merely "a statesman of materialism" who was bought anew every day. Any revolutionary moments were staged for the prospect of glory and more wealth.[26]

Yet another view of Danton is presented by Robinet, whose examination of Danton is more positive and portrays him as a figure worthy of admiration. According to Robinet, Danton was a committed, loving, generous citizen, son, father, and husband. He remained loyal to his friends and the country of France by avoiding "personal ambition" and gave himself wholly to the cause of keeping "the government consolidated" for the Republic. He always had a love for his country and the laboring masses, who he felt deserved "dignity, consolation, and happiness".[27]

2.8 Fictionalized accounts

- Danton, Robespierre and Marat are characters in Victor Hugo's novel, *Ninety-Three* (Quatrevingt-treize), set during the French Revolution.
- Danton was given major credit for sparking the revolution and becoming its tempering agent in the 1921 Lillian Gish film *Orphans of the Storm*.
- Danton is a central character in Romanian playwright Camil Petrescu's play of the same name.

- Danton's last days were made into a play, *Dantons Tod* (*Danton's Death*), by Georg Büchner.
- On the basis of Büchner play, Gottfried von Einem wrote an opera with the same title, on a libretto by himself and Boris Blacher, which premiered on 6 August 1947 at the Salzburger Festspiele.
- Danton appears in the Hungarian play *The Tragedy of Man* as one of Adam's incarnations throughout Lucifers illusion.
- Danton's and Robespierre's quarrels were turned into the 1983 film *Danton* directed by Andrzej Wajda and starring Gérard Depardieu as Danton. The film itself is loosely based on Stanisława Przybyszewska's 1929 play "Sprawa Dantona" ("The Danton Case").
- Danton's and Robespierre's relations were also the subject of an opera by American composer John Eaton, *Danton and Robespierre* (1978).
- Danton is extensively featured in *La Révolution française* (1989),[28] played by Klaus Maria Brandauer.
- In his novel *Locus Solus*, Raymond Roussel tells a story in which Danton makes an arrangement with his executioner for his head to be smuggled into his friend's possession after his execution. The nerves and musculature of the head ultimately end up on display in the private collection of Martial Canterel, reanimated by special electrical currents and showing a deeply entrenched disposition toward oratory.
- Danton, Madame Roland, and Robespierre, among others, are the main characters in Marge Piercy's rendering of the French Revolution, *City of Darkness, City of Light* (1996).
- The relationship between Danton and his wife is a central reference in Francine Prose's novella *Three Pigs in Five Days* (1997)
- The Revolution as experienced by Danton, Robespierre, and Desmoulins is the central focus of Hilary Mantel's novel *A Place of Greater Safety* (1993).
- Danton and Camille Desmoulins are the main characters of Tanith Lee's *The Gods Are Thirsty—A Novel of the French Revolution* (1996).
- Danton appears briefly to initiate a delicate murder investigation in Susanne Alleyn's historical mystery novel *Palace of Justice* (2010).
- Danton and Maximilien Robespierre are referred to in the book *The Scarlet Pimpernel* briefly. Danton and Robespierre both applaud a guard for his work in catching aristocrats.
- In *The Tangled Thread*, Volume 10 of *The Morland Dynasty*, a series of historical novels by author Cynthia Harrod-Eagles, the character Henri-Marie Fitzjames Stuart, bastard offshoot of the fictional Morland family, allies himself with Danton in an attempt to protect his family as the storm clouds of revolution gather over France.
- Rock band Sniff 'n' the Tears assert that Danton's cause fell to the French popular desire for empire in their song *Looking For You*.
- Danton was a pivotal character in *In Search of Honor*, a historical fiction written by Donna Lynn Hess. He directly influences many of the fictional protagonist's actions for the worse.
- Danton appears in *Assassin's Creed: Unity* who is about to be hanged by Robespierre and informs Arno to save his friends by retrieving his papers from Robespierre's room.

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2.10 Further reading

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- David Lawday, *Danton: The Giant of the French Revolution.* London: Jonathan Cape, 2009.
- Marisa Linton, *Choosing Terror: Virtue, Friendship and Authenticity in the French Revolution* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

2.11 External links

- Works by Georges Jacques Danton at Project Gutenberg
- Works by or about Georges Danton at Internet Archive

Chapter 3

Maximilien Robespierre

"Robespierre" redirects here. For other uses, see Robespierre (disambiguation).

Maximilien François Marie Isidore de Robespierre (IPA: [mak.si.mi.ljɛ̃ fʁɑ̃.swa ma.ʁi i.zi.dɔʁ də ʁɔ.bɛs.pjɛʁ]; 6 May 1758 – 28 July 1794) was a French lawyer and politician, and one of the best-known and most influential figures of the French Revolution, the defence of the Republic, and the Reign of Terror.

As a member of the Estates-General, the Constituent Assembly and the Jacobin Club, Robespierre was an outspoken advocate of the poor and of democratic institutions. Early during the revolution Robespierre was against war with Austria, and warned of the possibility of a military coup by the Marquis de Lafayette. Though he was an ardent opponent of the death penalty, Robespierre played an important role in arguing for the execution of King Louis XVI, and the creation of a French Republic. He would campaign for equality of rights and universal male suffrage in France, for price controls on basic food commodities, and successfully advocated for the abolition of slavery in the French colonies.

While France was beset by crises including external and civil war, Robespierre became an important figure during the French Revolution's Reign of Terror. He was named as a member of the powerful Committee of Public Safety launched by his political ally Georges Danton, and exerted his influence to suppress the radical left wing Hébertists. Robespierre later moved against the more moderate Danton, who was accused of corruption. The terror ended a few months after Robespierre's arrest and execution in July 1794, and was followed by a white terror. The political figures of the Thermidorian Reaction who rose to power after Robespierre's downfall accused him of being the "soul" of the Terror.[1] Robespierre's personal responsibility for the excesses of the Terror remains the subject of intense debate among historians of the French Revolution.[2]

Influenced by 18th-century Enlightenment *philosophes* such as Rousseau and Montesquieu, Robespierre was a capable articulator of the beliefs of the left-wing bourgeoisie and a deist. He opposed the dechristianization of France during the French Revolution. His steadfast adherence and defense of the views he expressed earned him the nickname *l'Incorruptible* (The Incorruptible).[3] His reputation has gone through cycles. It peaked in the 1920s when the influential French historian Albert Mathiez argued he was an eloquent spokesman for the poor and oppressed, an enemy of royalist intrigues, a vigilant adversary of dishonest and corrupt politicians, a guardian of the French Republic, an intrepid leader of the French Revolutionary government, and a prophet of a socially responsible state.[4] In more recent times his reputation has suffered as historians associate him with radical purification of politics through the killing of enemies.[5][6][7]

3.1 Early life

Maximilien Robespierre was born in Arras, in the old French province of Artois. His family has been traced back to the 12th century in Picardy; some of his ancestors in the male line worked as notaries in the village of Carvin near Arras from the beginning of the 17th century.[8] It has been suggested that he was of Irish descent, his surname possibly being a corruption of "Robert Speirs".[9] George Henry Lewes, Ernest Hamel, Jules Michelet, Alphonse de Lamartine, and Hilaire Belloc have all cited this theory although there appears to be little supporting evidence.

His paternal grandfather, also named Maximilien de Robespierre, established himself in Arras as a lawyer. His father, François Maximilien Barthélémy de Robespierre, also a lawyer at the *Conseil d'Artois*, married Jacqueline Marguerite Carrault, the daughter of a brewer, on 2 January 1758. Maximilien was the oldest of four children and was conceived out of wedlock; his siblings were Charlotte (born 21 January 1760),[10] Henriette (born 28 December 1761),[11] and Augustin (born 21 January 1763).[12] On 7 July 1764, Madame de Robespierre gave birth to a stillborn son; she died nine days later. Devastated by his wife's death, François de Robespierre subsequently left Arras and traveled throughout Europe, only occasionally living in Arras, until his death in Munich on 6 November 1777; the children were brought up by their paternal aunts Eulalie and Henriette de Robespierre.

Already literate at age 8, Maximilien started attending the *collège* (middle school) of Arras.[13] In October 1769, on the recommendation of the bishop, he received a scholarship at the *Lycée Louis-le-Grand* in Paris. Robespierre studied there until age 23, receiving his training as a lawyer. Upon his graduation, he received a 600-*livre* special prize for twelve years of exemplary academic success and personal good conduct.[14]

In school he learned to admire the idealised Roman Republic and the rhetoric of Cicero, Cato and other classic figures. His fellow pupils included Camille Desmoulins and Stanislas Fréron. He also read Swiss *philosophe* Jean-Jacques Rousseau during this time and adopted many of his principles. Robespierre grew intrigued by the idea of a "virtuous self", a man who stands alone accompanied only by his conscience.[15] His learning the classics made him aspire to Roman virtues. He especially emulated Rousseau.[16]

Shortly after his 1775 coronation, King Louis XVI visited *Louis-le-Grand*. Robespierre, then 17 and a prize-winning student, had been chosen out of five hundred pupils to deliver a speech to welcome the king. Perhaps due to rain, the royal couple remained in their coach throughout the ceremony and promptly left at its completion.[15] However, in his last biography on Robespierre (2014), H. Leuwers demonstrates that this event could not take place in 1775, but either in 1773 or 1779.

3.2 Early politics

As an adult, and possibly even as a young man, the greatest influence on Robespierre's political ideas was Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Robespierre's conception of revolutionary virtue and his program for constructing political sovereignty out of direct democracy came from Rousseau; and, in pursuit of these ideals, he eventually became known during the Jacobin Republic as "the Incorruptible".[17] Robespierre believed that the people of France were fundamentally good and were therefore capable of advancing the public well-being of the nation.[18]

Having completed his law studies, Robespierre was admitted to the Arras bar. The Bishop of Arras, Louis François Marc Hilaire de Conzié, appointed him criminal judge in the Diocese of Arras in March 1782. Although this appointment did not prevent him from practicing at the bar, he soon resigned owing to discomfort in ruling on capital cases arising from his early opposition to the death penalty.[15] He quickly became a successful advocate and chose, on principle, to represent the poor. During court hearings, he was known often to advocate the ideals of the Enlightenment and argue for the rights of man.[19] Later in his career, he read widely, and also became interested in society in general. He became regarded as one of the best writers and most popular young men of Arras.

In December 1783, he was elected a member of the academy of Arras, the meetings of which he attended regularly. In 1784, he was awarded a medal from the academy of Metz for his essay on the question of whether the relatives of a condemned criminal should share his disgrace. He and Pierre Louis de Lacretelle, an advocate and journalist in Paris, divided the prize. Many of his subsequent essays were less successful, but Robespierre was compensated for these failures by his popularity in the literary and musical society at Arras, known as the "Rosatia". In its meetings he became acquainted with Lazare Carnot, who would later become his colleague on the Committee of Public Safety.

In 1788, he took part in a discussion of how the French provincial government should be elected, arguing in his *Addresse à la nation artésienne* that if the former mode of election by the members of the provincial estates were again adopted, the new Estates-General would not represent the people of France. It is possible he addressed this issue so that he could have a chance to take part in the proceedings and thus change the policies of the monarchy. King Louis XVI later announced new elections for all provinces, thus allowing Robespierre to run for the position of deputy for the Third Estate.[15]

Portrait of Robespierre by Boilly, c.1791 (Palais des Beaux-Arts de Lille).

Although the leading members of the corporation were elected, Robespierre, their chief opponent, succeeded in getting elected with them. In the assembly of the *bailliage*, rivalry ran still higher, but Robespierre had begun to make his mark in politics with the *Avis aux habitants de la campagne* (Arras, 1789). With this, he secured the support of the country electors; and, although

only thirty, comparatively poor, and lacking patronage, he was elected fifth deputy of the Third Estate of Artois to the Estates-General. When Robespierre arrived at Versailles, he was relatively unknown, but he soon became part of the representative National Assembly which then transformed into the Constituent Assembly.[15]

While the Constituent Assembly occupied itself with drawing up a constitution, Robespierre turned from the assembly of provincial lawyers and wealthy bourgeois to the people of Paris. He was a frequent speaker in the Constituent Assembly, voicing many ideas for the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Constitutional Provisions, often with great success.[20][15] He was eventually recognized as second only to Pétion de Villeneuve – if second he was – as a leader of the small body of the extreme left; "the thirty voices" as Mirabeau contemptuously called them.

3.3 Jacobin Club

Robespierre soon became involved with the new Society of the Friends of the Constitution, known eventually as the Jacobin Club. This had consisted originally of the deputies from Brittany only. After the Assembly moved to Paris, the Club began to admit various leaders of the Parisian bourgeoisie to its membership. As time went on, many of the more intelligent artisans and small shopkeepers became members of the club.

Among such men, Robespierre found a sympathetic audience. As the wealthier bourgeois of Paris and right-wing deputies seceded from the club of 1789, the influence of the old leaders of the Jacobins, such as Barnave, Duport, Alexandre de Lameth, diminished. When they, alarmed at the progress of the Revolution, founded the club of the Feuillants in 1791, the left, including Robespierre and his friends, dominated the Jacobin Club.

On 15 May 1791, Robespierre proposed and carried the motion that no deputy who sat in the Constituent could sit in the succeeding Assembly.

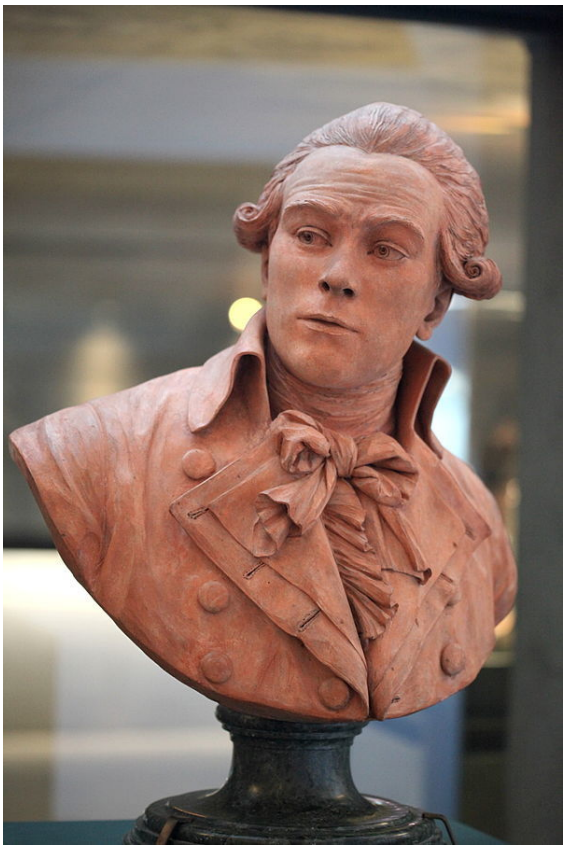
The flight on 20 June, and subsequent arrest at Varennes of Louis XVI and his family resulted in Robespierre declaring himself at the Jacobin Club to be "ni monarchiste ni républicain" ("neither monarchist nor republican"). But this stance was not unusual; very few at this point were avowed republicans.

In 1790 he lived at rue de Saintonge, No. 9; at the time it was a remote area of the Tuileries. However, after the massacre on the Champ de Mars on 17 July 1791, fearing for his safety and in order to be nearer to the Assembly and the Jacobins, he moved to live in the house of Maurice Duplay, a cabinetmaker residing in the Rue Saint-Honoré and an ardent admirer of Robespierre. Robespierre lived there (with two short intervals excepted) until his death. In fact, according to his doctor, Souberbielle, Vilate, a juror on the Revolutionary Tribunal, and his host's youngest daughter (who would later marry Philippe Le Bas of the Committee of General Security), he became engaged to the eldest daughter of his host, Éléonore Duplay.[21] The sister of Maximilien claims that the wife of Maurice Duplay wished to marry her daughter to the Incorruptible, but this hope was never realized.

On 30 September, on the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, the people of Paris named Pétion and Robespierre as the two incorruptible patriots in an attempt to honor their purity of principles, their modest ways of living, and their refusal of bribes and offers.[19]

With the dissolution of the Assembly, he returned to Arras for a short visit, where he met with a triumphant reception. In November, he returned to Paris to take the position of public prosecutor of Paris.[22]

3.4 Opposition to war with Austria



Terracotta bust of Robespierre by Deseine, 1792 (Château de Vizille)

In February 1792, Jacques Pierre Brissot, one of the leaders of the Girondist party in the Legislative Assembly, urged that France should declare war against Austria. Jean-Paul Marat and Robespierre opposed him, because they feared the influence of militarism, which might be turned to the advantage of the reactionary forces. Robespierre was also convinced that the internal stability of

the country was more important; this opposition from expected allies irritated the Girondists, and the war became a major point of contention between the factions. Robespierre countered, “A revolutionary war must be waged to free subjects and slaves from unjust tyranny, not for the traditional reasons of defending dynasties and expanding frontiers...” Indeed, argued Robespierre, such a war could only favor the forces of counter-revolution, since it would play into the hands of those who opposed the sovereignty of the people. The risks of Caesarism were clear, for in wartime the powers of the generals would grow at the expense of ordinary soldiers, and the power of the king and court at the expense of the Assembly. These dangers should not be overlooked, he reminded his listeners, "...in troubled periods of history, generals often became the arbiters of the fate of their countries.”[23]

Robespierre warned against the threat of dictatorship, stemming from war, in the following terms (1791):

> If they are Caesars or Cromwells, they seize power for themselves. If they are spineless courtiers, uninterested in doing good yet dangerous when they seek to do harm, they go back to lay their power at their master’s feet, and help him to resume arbitrary power on condition they become his chief servants.[24]

Robespierre also argued that force was not an effective or proper way of spreading the ideals of the Revolution (1792):

> The most extravagant idea that can arise in a politician’s head is to believe that it is enough for a people to invade a foreign country to make it adopt their laws and their constitution. No one loves armed missionaries... The Declaration of the Rights of Man... is not a lightning bolt which strikes every throne at the same time... I am far from claiming that our Revolution will not eventually influence the fate of the world... But I say that it will not be today.[25]

In April 1792, Robespierre resigned the post of public prosecutor of Versailles, which he had officially held, but never practiced, since February, and started a journal, *Le Défenseur de la Constitution.* The journal served multiple purposes: countering the influence of the royal court in public policy, defending Robespierre from the accusations of Girondist leaders, and also giving voice to the economic interests of the broader masses in Paris and beyond.[26]

3.5 The National Convention

Main article: National Convention

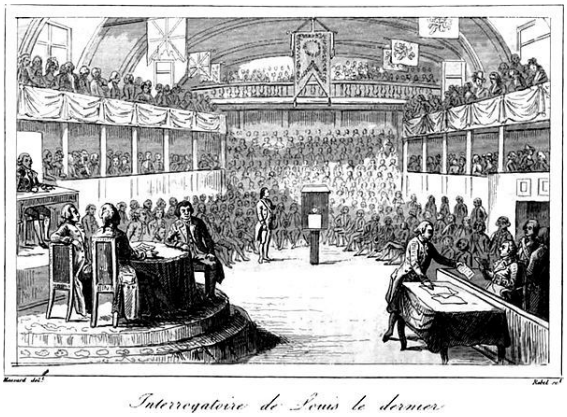
When the Legislative Assembly declared war against Austria on 20 April 1792, Robespierre responded by working to reduce the political influence of the officer class, the generals and the king. While arguing for the welfare of common soldiers, Robespierre urged new promotions to mitigate domination of the officer class by the aristocratic École Militaire; along with other Jacobins he also urged the creation of popular militias to defend France.[27] This sentiment reflected the perspective of more radical Jacobins including those of the Marseille Club, who in May and June 1792 wrote to Pétion and the people of Paris, “Here and at Toulon we have debated the possibility of forming a column of 100,000 men to sweep away our enemies... Paris may have need of help. Call on us!"[28]

Because French forces had suffered disastrous defeats and a series of defections at the onset of the war, Robespierre and Danton feared the possibility of a military coup d'état[29] above all led by the Marquis de Lafayette, who in June advocated the suppression of the Jacobin Club. Robespierre publicly attacked him in scathing terms: “General, while from the midst of your camp you declared war upon me, which you had thus far spared for the enemies of our state, while you denounced me as an enemy of liberty to the army, national guard and Nation in letters published by your purchased papers, I had thought myself only disputing with a general... but not yet the dictator of France, arbitrator of the state.”[30]

In early June Robespierre proposed an end to the Monarchy and the subordination of the Assembly to the popular will.[31] Following the King’s veto of the Legislative Assembly’s efforts to raise a militia and suppress non-juring priests, the Monarchy faced an abortive insurrection on 20 June, exactly three years after the Tennis Court Oath.[32] Revolutionary militia (French: *fédérés*) entered Paris without the King’s approval, and on 10 August 1792, insurrectionary National Guard of Paris, *fédérés* and sans-culottes led a successful assault upon the Tuileries Palace with the intention of overthrowing the Monarchy.[33]

On 16 August, Robespierre presented the petition of the Commune to the Legislative Assembly, demanding the establishment of a revolutionary tribunal and the summoning of a Convention chosen by universal suffrage.[34] Dismissed from his command of the French Northern Army, Lafayette fled France along with other sympathetic officers.

In September, Robespierre was elected first deputy for Paris to the National Convention. Robespierre and his allies took the benches high at the back of the hall, giving them the label 'the Montagnards', or 'the Mountain'; below them were the 'Manège' of the Girondists and then 'the Plain' of the independents. The Girondists at the Convention accused Robespierre of failing to stop the September Massacres. On 26 September, the Girondist Marc-David Lasource accused Robespierre of wanting to



The interrogation of Louis XVI at the National Convention.

form a dictatorship. Rumours spread that Robespierre, Marat and Danton were plotting to establish a triumvirate. On 29 October, Louvet de Couvrai attacked Robespierre in a speech, possibly written by Madame Roland. On 5 November, Robespierre defended himself, the Jacobin Club and his supporters in and beyond Paris:

> Upon the Jacobins I exercise, if we are to believe my accusers, a despotism of opinion, which can be regarded as nothing other than the forerunner of dictatorship. Firstly, I do not know what a dictatorship of opinion is, above all in a society of free men... unless this describes nothing more than the natural compulsion of principles. In fact, this compulsion hardly belongs to the man who enunciates them; it belongs to universal reason and to all men who wish to listen to its voice. It belongs to my colleagues of the Constituent Assembly, to the patriots of the Legislative Assembly, to all citizens who will invariably defend the cause of liberty. Experience has proven, despite Louis XVI and his allies, that the opinion of the Jacobins and of the popular clubs were those of the French Nation; no citizen has made them, and I did nothing other than share in them.[35]

Turning the accusations upon his accusers, Robespierre delivered one of the most famous lines of the French Revolution to the Assembly:

> I will not remind you that the sole object of contention dividing us is that you have instinctively defended all acts of new ministers, and we, of principles; that you seemed to prefer power, and we equality... Why don't you prosecute the Commune, the Legislative Assembly, the Sections of Paris, the Assemblies of the Cantons and all who imitated us? For all these things have been illegal, as illegal as the Revolution, as the fall of the Monarchy and of the Bastille, as illegal as liberty itself... Citizens, do you want a revolution without a revolution? What is this spirit of persecution which has directed itself against those who freed us from chains?[36]

Robespierre's speech marked a profound political break between the Montagnards and the Girondins, strengthening the former in the context of an increasingly revolutionary situation punctuated by the fall of Louis XVI, the invasion of France and the September Massacres in Paris.[37] It also heralded increased involvement and intervention by the sans-culottes in revolutionary politics.[38]

3.6 Execution of Louis XVI

The Convention's unanimous declaration of a French Republic on 21 September 1792 left open the fate of the King; a commission was therefore established to examine evidence against him while the Convention's Legislation Committee considered legal aspects of any future trial. Most Montagnards favored judgement and execution, while the Girondins were divided concerning Louis's fate, with some arguing for royal inviolability, others for clemency, and some advocating lesser punishment or death.[39] On 20 November, opinion turned sharply against Louis following the discovery of a secret cache of 726 documents consisting of Louis's personal communications.[40]

Robespierre had been taken ill in November and had done little other than support Saint-Just in his argument against the King's inviolability; Robespierre wrote in his *Defenseur de la Constitution* that a Constitution which Louis had violated himself, and which declared his inviolability, could not now be used in his defense.[41] Now, with the question of the King's fate occupying public discourse, Robespierre on 3 December delivered a speech that would define the rhetoric and course of Louis's trial.[42] Robespierre argued that the King, now dethroned, could function only as a threat to liberty and national peace, and that the members of the Assembly were not fair judges, but rather statesmen with responsibility for public safety:

> Louis was a king, and our republic is established; the critical question concerning you must be decided by these words alone. Louis was dethroned by his crimes; Louis denounced the French people as rebels; he appealed to chains, to the armies of tyrants who are his brothers; the victory of the people established that Louis alone was a rebel; Louis cannot therefore be judged; he already is judged. He is condemned, or the republic cannot be absolved. To propose to have a trial of Louis

> XVI, in whatever manner one may, is to retrogress to royal despotism and constitutionality; it is a counter-revolutionary idea because it places the revolution itself in litigation. In effect, if Louis may still be given a trial, he may be absolved, and innocent. What am I to say? He is presumed to be so until he is judged. But if Louis is absolved, if he may be presumed innocent, what becomes of the revolution? If Louis is innocent, all the defenders of liberty become slanderers. Our enemies have been friends of the people and of truth and defenders of innocence oppressed; all the declarations of foreign courts are nothing more than the legitimate claims against an illegal faction. Even the detention that Louis has endured is, then, an unjust vexation; the fédérés, the people of Paris, all the patriots of the French Empire are guilty; and this great trial in the court of nature judging between crime and virtue, liberty and tyranny, is at last decided in favor of crime and tyranny. Citizens, take warning; you are being fooled by false notions; you confuse positive, civil rights with the principles of the rights of mankind; you confuse the relationships of citizens amongst themselves with the connections between nations and an enemy that conspires against it; you confuse the situation of a people in revolution with that of a people whose government is affirmed; you confuse a nation that punishes a public functionary to conserve its form of government, and one that destroys the government itself. We are falling back upon ideas familiar to us, in an extraordinary case that depends upon principles we have never yet applied.[43]

In arguing for a judgment by the elected Convention without trial, Robespierre supported the recommendations of Jean-Baptiste Mailhe, who headed the commission reporting on legal aspects of Louis's trial or judgment. Unlike some Girondins, Robespierre would specifically oppose judgment by primary assemblies or a referendum, believing that this could cause civil war.[44] While he called for a trial of queen Marie Antoinette and the imprisonment of the Dauphin, Robespierre argued for the death penalty in the case of the king:

> As for myself, I abhor the death penalty administered by your laws, and for Louis I have neither love, nor hate; I hate only his crimes. I have demanded the abolition of the death penalty at your Constituent Assembly, and am not to blame if the first principles of reason appeared to you moral and political heresies. But if you will never reclaim these principles in favor of so much evil, the crimes of which belong less to you and more to the government, by what fatal error would you remember yourselves and plead for the greatest of criminals? You ask an exception to the death penalty for him alone who could legitimize it? Yes, the death penalty is in general a crime, unjustifiable by the indestructible principles of nature, except in cases protecting the safety of individuals or the society altogether. Ordinary misdemeanors have never threatened public safety because society may always protect itself by other means, making those culpable powerless to harm it. But for a king dethroned in the bosom of a revolution, which is as yet cemented only by laws; a king whose name attracts the scourge of war upon a troubled nation; neither prison, nor exile can render his existence inconsequential to public happiness; this cruel exception to the ordinary laws avowed by justice can be imputed only to the nature of his crimes. With regret I pronounce this fatal truth: Louis must die so that the nation may live.[45]

On 15 January 1793, Louis XVI was voted guilty of conspiracy and attacks upon public safety by 691 of 749 deputies; none voted for his innocence. Four days later, 387 deputies voted for death as penalty, 334 voted for detention or a conditional death penalty, and 28 abstained or were absent. Louis was executed two days later in the *Place de la Révolution*.

3.7 Destruction of the Girondists

Journées des 31 Mai 1er et 2 Juin 1793.

After the King's execution, the influence of Robespierre, Danton and the pragmatic politicians increased at the expense of the Girondists. The Girondists refused to have anything more to do with Danton and because of this the government became more divided. In May 1793, Desmoulins, at the behest of Robespierre and Danton, published his *Histoire des Brissotins*, an elaboration on the

earlier article *Jean-Pierre Brissot, démasqué*, a scathing attack on Brissot and the Girondists.

The economic situation was rapidly deteriorating and Paris populace became restless. Sectional activists demanded "maximum" on basic foodstuff. Rioting persisted and a commission of inquiry of twelve members was set up, on which only Girondins sat. Popular militants were arrested. On 25 May the Commune demanded that arrested patriots be released and sections drew the list of 22 prominent Girondists to be removed from the Convention. Maximin Isnard declared that Paris would be destroyed if it came out against the provincial deputies. Robespierre preached a moral "insurrection against the corrupt deputies" at the Jacobin Club. The Jacobins declared themselves in state of insurrection. On the 29 May the delegates representing thirty-three of the Paris sections formed an insurrectionary committee.[46]

Main article: Insurrection of 31 May — 2 June

On 2 June 80,000 armed *sans-culottes* surrounded the Convention. After an attempt of deputies to exit collided with guns, the deputies resigned themselves to declare the arrest of 29 leading Girondins. During the insurrection Robespierre had scrawled a note in his memorandum-book:

> What we need is a single will (*il faut une volonté une*). It must be either republican or royalist. If it is to be republican, we must have republican ministers, republican papers, republican deputies, a republican government. The internal dangers come from the middle classes; in order to defeat the middle classes we must rally the people... The people must ally itself with the Convention, and the Convention must make use of the people.[47][48]

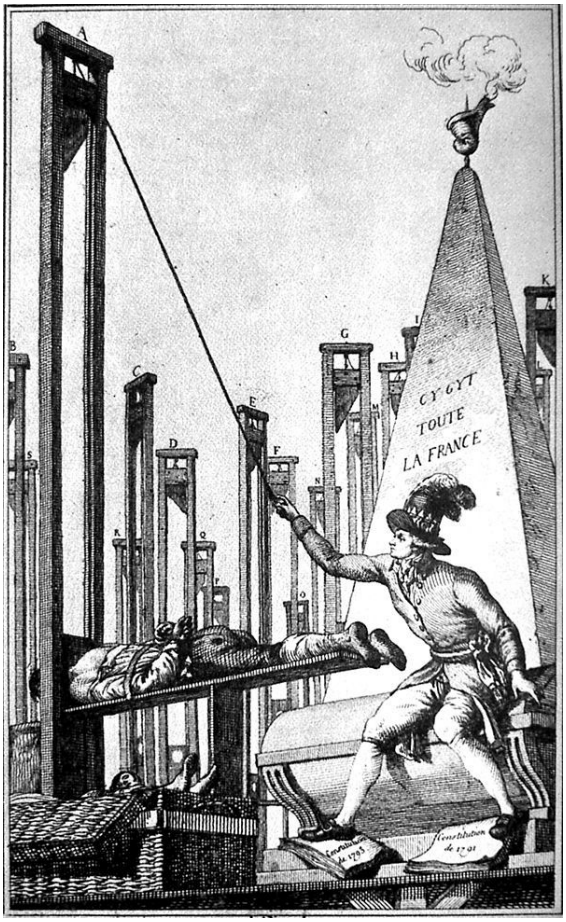
3.8 Reign of Terror

Main article: Reign of Terror

"To punish the oppressors of humanity is clemency; to forgive them is barbarity."

— Maximilien Robespierre, 1794[49]

After the fall of the monarchy, the revolutionary French government faced serious internal and external challenges including the War of the First Coalition and civil War in the Vendée. French revolutionary politicians believed a stable government was needed to quell the chaos.[19] On 11 March 1793, a Revolutionary Tribunal was established by Jacobins in the Convention.[50] On 6 April Maximin Isnard and Georges Danton spearheaded the creation of a nine-member Committee of Public Safety to replace the larger Committee of General Defense. On 27 July 1793,



Cartoon showing Robespierre guillotining the executioner after having guillotined everyone else in France.

Robespierre was elected to the Committee, although he had not sought the position.[51]

The Committee of General Security began to manage the country's internal police. Terror was formally instituted as a legal policy by the Convention on 5 September 1793, in a proclamation which read, "It is time that equality bore its scythe above all heads. It is time to horrify all the conspirators. So legislators, place Terror on the order of the day! Let us be in revolution, because everywhere counter-revolution is being woven by our enemies. The blade of the law should hover over all the guilty."[51]

In the winter of 1793–94, a majority of the Committee decided that the Hébertist party would have to perish or its opposition within the Committee would overshadow the other factions due to its influence in the Commune of Paris. Robespierre also had personal reasons for disliking the Hébertists for their "atheism" and "bloodthirstiness", which he associated with the old aristocracy.[22]

In early 1794, he finally broke with Danton, who had angered many other members of the Committee of Public Safety with his more moderate views on the Terror, but whom Robespierre had, until this point, persisted in defending. Subsequently, he joined in attacks on the Dantonists and the Hébertists.[15] Robespierre charged his op-

ponents with complicity with foreign powers.

In a 5 February 1794 *Report on the Principles of Political Morality* Robespierre praised the revolutionary government and argued that terror and virtue were necessary:

> If virtue be the spring of a popular government in times of peace, the spring of that government during a revolution is virtue combined with terror: virtue, without which terror is destructive; terror, without which virtue is impotent. Terror is only justice prompt, severe and inflexible; it is then an emanation of virtue; it is less a distinct principle than a natural consequence of the general principle of democracy, applied to the most pressing wants of the country ... The government in a revolution is the despotism of liberty against tyranny.[52]

From 13 February to 13 March 1794, Robespierre withdrew from active business on the Committee due to illness. On 15 March, he reappeared in the Convention. Hébert and nineteen of his followers were arrested on 19 March and guillotined on 24 March. Danton, Desmoulins and their friends were arrested on 30 March and guillotined on 5 April.

Georges Couthon, his ally on the Committee, introduced and carried on 10 June the drastic Law of 22 Prairial. Under this law, the Tribunal became a simple court of condemnation without need of witnesses. Historians frequently debate the reasons behind Robespierre's support of the Law of 22 Prairial: some consider it an attempt to extend his influence into a dictatorship, while others argue it was adopted to expedite the passage of the reformist, land-redistributive Ventôse Decrees.

Though nominally all members of the committee were equal, Robespierre would later be presented during the Thermidorian Reaction by the surviving protagonists of the Terror, especially Bertrand Barère, as prominent. They may have exaggerated his role to downplay their own contribution and used him as a scapegoat after his death.[53]

Historian William Doyle writes, "It is not violent fulminations that characterise Robespierre's speeches on the Terror. It is the language of unmasking, unveiling, revealing, discovering, exposing the enemy within, the enemy hidden behind patriotic posturings, the language of suspicion."[54] Doyle argues that Robespierre was never a dictator nor meant to become one, but that his own paranoia, in the face of plots and assassination attempts, drove him into mortal conflict with his political opponents in the Revolution.[55]

Robespierre saw no room for mercy in his Terror, stating that "slowness of judgments is equal to impunity" and "uncertainty of punishment encourages all the guilty". Throughout his *Report on the Principles of Political Morality*, Robespierre assailed any stalling of action in defense of the Republic. The report was a tract that urged the furtherance of the Revolution at all costs. In his thinking, there was not enough that could be done fast enough in defence against enemies at home and abroad. A staunch believer in the teachings of Rousseau, Robespierre believed that it was his duty as a public servant to push the Revolution forward, and that the only rational way to do that was to defend it on all fronts. The *Report* did not merely call for blood but also expounded many of the original ideas of the 1789 Revolution, such as political equality, suffrage and abolition of privileges.[56]

3.9 Abolition of slavery

Throughout the course of the Revolution Robespierre both ambivalently and outspokenly opposed slavery on French soil or in French territories, and played an important role in eventually abolishing it.

In May of 1791 Robespierre argued passionately in the National Assembly against the Colonial Committee, dominated by slaveholders in the Caribbean.[57] The colonial lobby declared that political rights for blacks would cause France to lose her colonies. Robespierre responded, "We should not compromise the interests humanity holds most dear, the sacred rights of a significant number of our fellow citizens," later shouting, "Death to the colonies!"[57] Robespierre was furious that the assembly gave "constitutional sanction to slavery in the colonies," and argued for equal political rights regardless of skin color.[55] Robespierre did not argue for slavery's immediate abolition. Nevertheless, pro-slavery advocates in France regarded Robespierre as a "bloodthirsty innovator" and as a traitor plotting to give French colonies to England.[57] Only months later, hundreds of thousands of slaves in St Domingue led a revolution against slavery and colonial rule.[57]

In the following years the slaves of St. Domingue effectively liberated themselves and formed an army to oppose re-enslavement. Robespierre denounced the slave trade in a speech before the Convention in April 1793.[58] The radical 1793 constitution supported by Robespierre and the Montaignards, and ratified by a national referendum, granted universal suffrage to French men and explicitly condemned slavery. But the constitution was never implemented.[58] In November 1793, increasingly in conflict with the Girondins, Robespierre gave his support to a proposal to investigate the colonial general Léger-Félicité Sonthonax, a Girondist who had freed slaves in the colonies.[58] At the same time Robespierre denounced the French minister to the newly formed United States, Edmond Genet, who had sided with Sonthonax.[58]

By 1794 French debates concerning slavery reached their apogee. In late January, delegations representing both former slaveholders and former slaves arrived in France, to petition for slavery or its abolition.[58] Briefly impris-

oned, the delegation opposing slavery was freed on the orders of the Committee of Public Safety, on which Robespierre sat. Receiving the delegation on their release, the National Convention passed a decree banning slavery on February 4.[58] Robespierre and the Committee of Public Safety, at the same time, heard a petition from the slaveholders, which they did not act upon. On the day after the emancipation decree, Robespierre delivered a speech to the National Convention in which he praised the French as the first to "summon all men to equality and liberty, and their full rights as citizens," using the word slavery twice but without specifically mentioning the French colonies.[58] Despite petitions from the slaveholding delegation, Robespierre and the Committee decided to endorse the decree in full.[58]

Several weeks later, in a speech before the committee of public safety, Robespierre linked the cruelty of slavery with serfdom:

> Ask a merchant of human flesh what is property; he will answer by showing you that long coffin he calls a ship... Ask a gentleman [the same] who has lands and vassals... and he will give you almost the identical ideas.
> — Robespierre, "The Principles of Property", 24 April 1794.[57][59]

In June Robespierre attended a Society of People of Color meeting, where it passed a motion opposing slavery. He attended a meeting of the Jacobin club that month, supporting a decree ending slavery, and later signed orders to ratify it.[57] The decree led to a surge in popularity for the Republic among blacks in St-Domingue, most of whom had already freed themselves and were seeking military alliances to guarantee their freedom.[55]

3.10 Cult of the Supreme Being

Main article: Cult of the Supreme Being

Robespierre's desire for revolutionary change was not limited to the political realm. He opposed the power of the Catholic Church and the Pope, and especially was opposed to its celibacy policies.[60] Having denounced the excesses of dechristianization, he sought to instill a spiritual resurgence in the French nation based on Deist beliefs. Accordingly, on 7 May 1794, Robespierre supported a decree passed by the Convention that established an official religion, known historically as the Cult of the Supreme Being. The notion of the Supreme Being was based on ideas that Jean-Jacques Rousseau had outlined in *The Social Contract*. A nationwide "Festival of the Supreme Being" was held on 8 June (which was also the Christian holiday of Pentecost). The festivities in Paris were held in the Champ de Mars, which was renamed the *Champ de la Réunion* ("Field of Reunion") for that day. This was most likely in honor of the Champ de Mars Massacre where the Republicans first rallied against the power of the Crown.[61] Robespierre, who happened to be President of the Convention that week, walked first in the festival procession and delivered a speech in which he emphasised his concept of a Supreme Being:

> Is it not He whose immortal hand, engraving on the heart of man the code of justice and equality, has written there the death sentence of tyrants? Is it not He who, from the beginning of time, decreed for all the ages and for all peoples liberty, good faith, and justice? He did not create kings to devour the human race. He did not create priests to harness us, like vile animals, to the chariots of kings and to give to the world examples of baseness, pride, perfidy, avarice, debauchery and falsehood. He created the universe to proclaim His power. He created men to help each other, to love each other mutually, and to attain to happiness by the way of virtue.[62]

The Festival of the Supreme Being, *by Pierre-Antoine Demachy (1794).*

Throughout the "Festival of the Supreme Being", Robespierre was beaming with joy; not even the negativity of his colleagues could disrupt his delight. He was able to speak of the things about which he was truly passionate, including *Virtue* and *Nature*, typical deist beliefs, and, of course, his disagreements with atheism. Everything was arranged to the exact specifications that had been previously set before the ceremony; the ominous and symbolic guillotine had been moved to the original standing place of the Bastille, all of the people were placed in the appropriate area designated to them, and everyone was dressed accordingly.[63] Not only was everything going smoothly, but the Festival was also Robespierre's first appearance in the public eye as an actual leader for the people, and also as President of the Convention, to which he had been elected only four days earlier.[63]

While for some it was an excitement to see him at his finest, many other leaders involved in the Festival agreed

that Robespierre had taken things a bit too far. Multiple sources state that Robespierre came down the mountain in a way that resembled Moses as the leader of the people,[64] and one of his colleagues, Jacques-Alexis Thuriot, was heard saying, “Look at the bugger; it’s not enough for him to be master, he has to be God”.[64]

Marc-Guillaume Alexis Vadier used a report to the Convention on Catherine Théot as an opportunity to attack Robespierre and his beliefs.[65] Théot was a seventy-eight-year-old, self-declared “prophetess” who had, at one point, been imprisoned in the Bastille.[65] By stating that Robespierre was the “herald of the Last Days, prophet of the New Dawn”,[66] (because his festival had fallen on the Pentecost, traditionally a day revealing “divine manifestation”), Catherine Théot made it seem that Robespierre had made these claims himself, to her. Many of her followers were also supporters or friends of Robespierre, which made it seem as if he were attempting to create a new religion, with himself as its god. Although Robespierre had nothing to do with Catherine Théot or her followers, many assumed that he was on a path to dictatorship, and it sent a current of fear throughout the Convention, contributing to his downfall the following July.

3.11 Downfall

Main article: Thermidorian Reaction

On 23 May 1794, only one day after the attempted assassination of Collot d'Herbois, Robespierre’s life was also in danger: a young woman by the name of Cécile Renault was arrested after having approached his place of residence with two small knives; she was executed one month later. At this point, the decree of 22 Prairial (also known as law of 22 Prairial) was introduced to the public without the consultation from the Committee of General Security, which, in turn, doubled the number of executions permitted by the Committee of Public Safety.[67]

This law permitted the execution of citizens thought to be counter-revolutionaries, even under simple suspicion and without extensive trials. When the Committee of Public Safety allowed this law to be passed, the Convention began to question them, out of fear that Robespierre and his allies might come after certain members of the Convention and even the Committee itself due to the excesses carried out by its on-mission representatives such as Joseph Fouché, Jean-Baptiste Carrier, Jean-Lambert Tallien, and several others.[68] This was part of the beginning of Robespierre’s downfall.[69]

Reports were coming into Paris about excesses committed by the envoys sent en-mission to the provinces, particularly Jean-Lambert Tallien in Bordeaux and Joseph Fouché in Lyon. Robespierre tirelessly worked almost alone — having been opposed by other leading political figures and accused of being a counterrevolutionary for his relative moderation — to curb their excesses, having them recalled to Paris to account for their actions and then expelling them from the Jacobin Club. They, however, evaded arrest. Fouché spent the evenings moving house to house, warning members of the Convention that Robespierre was after them, whilst organising a coup d'état.[70]

Robespierre appeared at the Convention on 26 July (8th Thermidor, year II, according to the Revolutionary calendar), and delivered a two-hour-long speech. He defended himself against charges of dictatorship and tyranny, and then proceeded to warn of a conspiracy against the Republic. Specifically, he railed against the bloody excesses he had observed during the Terror. He also implied that members of the Convention were a part of this conspiracy, though when pressed he refused to provide any names. The speech, however, alarmed members, particularly given Fouché's warnings. These members who felt that Robespierre was alluding to them tried to prevent the speech from being printed, and a bitter debate ensued until Barère forced an end to it. Later that evening, Robespierre delivered the same speech again at the Jacobin Club, where it was very well received.[71]

The following day, Saint-Just began to give a speech in support of Robespierre. However, those who had seen him working on his speech the night before expected accusations to arise from it. Saint-Just had time to give only a small part of his speech before Jean-Lambert Tallien interrupted him. While the accusations began to pile up, Saint-Just remained uncharacteristically silent. Robespierre then attempted to secure the tribune to speak, but his voice was shouted down. Robespierre soon found himself at a loss for words after one deputy called for his arrest; another deputy, Marc-Guillaume Alexis Vadier, gave a mocking impression of him. When one deputy realised Robespierre’s inability to respond, the man shouted, “The blood of Danton chokes him!"[72] Robespierre then finally regained his voice to reply with his one recorded statement of the morning, demanding to know why he was now being blamed for the other man’s death: “Is it Danton you regret? ... Cowards! Why didn't you defend him?"[73]

3.11.1 Arrest

The Convention ordered the arrest of Robespierre, his brother Augustin, Couthon, Saint-Just, François Hanriot, and Le Bas. Troops from the Commune, under General Coffinhal, arrived to free the prisoners and then marched against the Convention itself. The Convention responded by ordering troops of its own under Barras to be called out. When the Commune’s troops heard the news of this, order began to break down, and Hanriot ordered his remaining troops to withdraw to the *Hôtel de Ville*, where Robespierre and his supporters also gathered. The Convention declared them to be outlaws, meaning that upon verification the fugitives could be executed within twenty-four hours without a trial. As the night went on, the

forces of the Commune deserted the *Hôtel de Ville* and, at around two in the morning, those of the Convention under the command of Barras arrived there. In order to avoid capture, Augustin Robespierre threw himself out of a window, only to break both of his legs; Couthon was found lying at the bottom of a staircase; Le Bas committed suicide by shooting himself in the head; Hanriot jumped from another window and landed in an open sewer.

Painting of Charles-André Merda shooting Robespierre.

Valery Jacobi's painting "Ninth Thermidor" showing the wounded Robespierre

Robespierre tried to kill himself with a pistol but managed only to shatter his lower jaw,[74] although some eyewitnesses[75] claimed that Robespierre was shot by Charles-André Merda.

3.11.2 Execution

For the remainder of the night, Robespierre was laid on a pool table in the room of the Committee of Public Safety where he awaited execution. He lay on the table bleeding profusely until a doctor was brought in to attempt to staunch the bleeding from his jaw. Robespierre's last

The execution of Robespierre. N.B.: The beheaded man is not Robespierre, but Couthon; the body of La Bas is shown lying on the ground; Robespierre {#10} is shown sitting on the cart closest to the scaffold, holding a handkerchief to his mouth.

recorded words were "Merci, monsieur" ("Thank you, sir"), to a man who had given him a handkerchief for the blood on his face and clothing.[76] Later, Robespierre was placed in the same cell where Marie Antoinette, the wife of King Louis XVI, had been held.

The same day, 28 July 1794, in the afternoon, Robespierre was guillotined without trial in the Place de la Révolution. His brother Augustin, Couthon, Saint-Just, Hanriot, and twelve other followers, among them the cobbler Antoine Simon, the jailor of Louis-Charles, Dauphin of France, were also executed. When clearing Robespierre's neck, the executioner tore off the bandage that was holding his shattered jaw in place, causing Robespierre to produce an agonized scream until the fall of the blade silenced him.[77] Together with those executed with him, he was buried in a common grave at the newly opened Errancis Cemetery (*cimetière des Errancis*) (March 1794 – April 1797)[78] (near what is now the *Place Prosper-Goubaux*). A plaque indicating the former site of the Cimetière des Errancis is located at 97 rue de Monceau, Paris 75008. Between 1844 and 1859 (probably in 1848), the remains of all those buried there were moved to the Catacombs of Paris.

3.12 Legacy and memory

'The Incorruptible', correct to the last, had left no debts. His property was sold by auction in the Palais Royal, early in 1796, and fetched 38,601 livres — something over £100.[79]

Robespierre remains controversial to this day. Apart from one Metro station in Montreuil (a Paris suburb) and several streets named after him in about twenty towns, there are no memorials or monuments to him in France.

Le Place Robespierre in Marseille with inscription: «Lawyer, born in Arras in 1758, guillotined without trial on 27 July 1794. Nicknamed The Incorruptible. Defender of the people. Author of our republican motto: **Liberté Égalité Fraternité**»

By making himself the embodiment of virtue and of total commitment, he took control of the Revolution in its most radical and bloody phase – the Jacobin republic. His goal in the Terror was to use the guillotine to create what he called a 'republic of virtue', wherein terror and virtue, his principles, would be imposed. He argued, "Terror is nothing more than speedy, severe and inflexible justice; it is thus an emanation of virtue; it is less a principle in itself, than a consequence of the general principle of democracy, applied to the most pressing needs of the *patrie*."[80]

Terror was thus a tool to accomplish his overarching goals for democracy. Historian Ruth Scurr wrote that, as for Robespierre's vision for France, he wanted a "democracy for the people, who are intrinsically good and pure of heart; a democracy in which poverty is honorable, power innocuous, and the vulnerable safe from oppression; a democracy that worships nature—not nature as it really is, cruel and disgusting, but nature sanitized, majestic, and, above all, good."[81]

In terms of historiography, he has several defenders. Marxist historian Albert Soboul viewed most of the measures of the Committee for Public Safety as necessary for the defense of the Revolution and mainly regretted the destruction of the Hébertists and other *enragés*.

> Robespierre's main ideal was to ensure the virtue and sovereignty of the people. He disapproved of any acts which could be seen as exposing the nation to counter-revolutionaries and traitors, and became increasingly fearful of the defeat of the Revolution. He instigated the Terror and the deaths of his peers as a measure of ensuring a Republic of Virtue; but his ideals went beyond the needs and wants of the people of France. He became a threat to what he had wanted to ensure and the result was his downfall.[15]

Soboul, according to Ishay, argues that he and Saint-Just "were too preoccupied in defeating the interest of the bourgeoisie to give their total support to the sans-culottes, and yet too attentive to the needs of the sans-culottes to get support from the middle class."[82] For Marxists like Soboul, Robespierre's petit-bourgeois class interests were fatal to his mission.[83]

Jonathan Israel is sharply critical of Robespierre for repudiating the true values of the radical Enlightenment. He argues, "Jacobin ideology and culture under Robespierre was an obsessive Rousseauste moral Puritanism steeped in authoritarianism, anti-intellectualism, and xenophobia," and it repudiated free expression, basic human rights, and democracy."[84]

Robespierre has continued to fascinate biographers. Notable recent books in English include Colin Haydon and William Doyle's *Robespierre* (1999), John Hardman's *Robespierre* (1999), Ruth Scurr's *Fatal Purity: Robespierre and the French Revolution*, Otto J. Scott's *Robespierre: The Voice of Virtue* (2011), and most recently *Robespierre: A Revolutionary Life* by Peter McPhee (2012).

During the October Revolution and Red Terror, Robespierre found ample praise in the Soviet Union, resulting for example in the construction of two statues of him – one in Saint Petersburg, and another in Moscow. Due to the poor construction of the latter (it was made of tubes and common concrete), it crumbled within three days of its unveiling and was never replaced.

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[7] There are two ways of totally misunderstanding Robespierre as historical figure: one is to detest the man, the other is to make too much of him. It is absurd, of course, to see the lawyer from Arras as a monstrous usurper, the recluse as a demagogue, the moderate as bloodthirsty tyrant, the democrat as a dictator. On the other hand, what is explained about his destiny once it is proved that he really was the Incorruptible? The misconception common to both schools arises from the fact that they attribute to the psychological traits of the man the historical role into which he was thrust by events and the language he borrowed from them. Robespierre is an immortal figure not because he reigned supreme over the Revolution for a few months, but because he was the mouthpiece of its purest and most tragic discourse.
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[10] Born *Marie Marguerite Charlotte de Robespierre*, at the time of her brother's glory she was betrothed to Joseph Fouché, who broke the engagement after the events of Thermidor. Charlotte became unmarriageable due to her name; she remained single until her death on 1 August 1834, aged 74.

[11] Born *Henriette Eulalie Françoise de Robespierre*, she became a nun and entered in the *couvent des Manarres* on 4 June 1773. She died on 5 March 1780 aged 18.

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[15] Scurr, Ruth (2006). *Fatal Purity*.

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[18] Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), 73.

[19] *Robespierre: Portrait of a Revolutionary Democrat*. 1975.

[20] The first to have made motto *"Liberté, égalité, fraternité"* was Maximilien Robespierre in his speech *"On the organization of the National Guard"* (French: *Discours sur l'organisation des gardes nationales*) on 5 December 1790, article XVI, and disseminated widely throughout France by the popular Societies.
Discours sur l'organisation des gardes nationales
Article XVI.
On their souls engraved these words: FRENCH PEOPLE, & below: FREEDOM, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY. The same words are inscribed on flags which bear the three colors of the nation.
(French: *XVI. Elles porteront sur leur poitrine ces mots gravés : LE PEUPLE FRANÇAIS, & au-dessous : LIBERTÉ, ÉGALITÉ, FRATERNITÉ. Les mêmes mots seront inscrits sur leurs dra-peaux, qui porteront les trois couleurs de la na-tion.*)
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«Il faut une volonté une. Il faut qu'elle soit républicaine ou royaliste. Pour qu'elle soit républicaine, il faut des ministres républicains, des papiers républicains, des députés républicains, un gouvernement républicain. La guerre étrangère est une maladie mortelle (fléau mortel), tandis que le corps politique est malade de la révolution et de la division des volontés. Les dangers intérieurs viennent des bourgeois, pour vaincre les bourgeois il faut y rallier le peuple... insurrection actuelle continue, jusqu'à ce que les mesures nécessaires pour sauver la République aient été prises. Il faut que le peuple salue à la Convention et que la Convention se serve du peuple...»
Courtois, Edme-Bonaventure (1828). *Papiers inédits trouvés chez Robespierre, Saint-Just etc*. Paris: Bouduin Preres. p. 15.
Interesting to note the usage of the term «*bourgeois*» in the original and «*the middle classes*» in translation in view of ongoing debate on the issue over «*bourgeois Revolution*»

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3.15 External links

- Works by Maximilien Robespierre at Project Gutenberg
- Works by or about Maximilien Robespierre at Internet Archive
- Maximilien Robespierre Internet Archive on Marxists.org
- Maximilien Robespierre, 1758–1794
- The French Revolution, Robespierre
- Family tree (back to the 18th generation) (also here)
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- A.M.R.I.D (Association Maximilien Robespierre pour l'Idéal Démocratique)(in French)

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Wang, Jabrwock, Durova, Chris the speller, TheDarkArchon, Keegan, Jm307, Agateller, Persian Poet Gal, Wellspring, Lollerskates, Hibernian, DHN-bot~enwiki, Colonies Chris, Locriani, Darth Panda, Yanksox, GoodDay, Lenin and McCarthy, Can't sleep, clown will eat me, Weriov, Tamfang, OOODDD, Blankfrackis, EOZyo, Rrburke, Lesnail, RedHillian, Stevenmitchell, Downwards, J1729, Nakon, EVula, FireAarro, Andrew c, WhiteEcho, DMacks, Bdiscoe, Le baron, Risssa, Kukini, Ged UK, Ceoil, Ohconfucius, Ser Amantio di Nicolao, Khazar, John, Kitty the Random, Microchip08, Buchanan-Hermit, Primula, Mathiasrex, SilkTork, Gobonobo, JohnI, Linnell, Kransky, Majorclanger, IronGargoyle, Melody Concerto, RandomCritic, Jaiwills, Beetstra, Optimale, Alethiophile, Lethiere, Czar Yah, Neddyseagoon, Renrenren, Citicat, Dl2000, Bjart, Fan-1967, Iridescent, Grblomerth, J Di, Igoldste, MJO, Courcelles, Adam sk, Radiant chains, Pjbflynn, Tawkerbot2, Dlohcierekim, 1122334455, Will Pittenger, SkyWalker, JForget, Filiep, Ezadarque, CmdrObot, WhatDidIDoNow, Picaroon, RoboCafaz, AidanBC, Michaelsanders, Charvex, Miles Hughes, Outriggr (2006-2009), RobPursley, The Indigo Lemon, James5555, Bigdan15, Chicheley, Cydebot, Kanags, Treybien, Parslad, Daphodyl, Frostiblack, SyntaxError55, Gogo Dodo, Bellerophon5685, Red Director, Corpx, Aristeo, A Softer Answer, Studerby, Tkynerd, Fabiom, DumbBOT, JoshHolloway, Garik, Gimmetrow, SummonerMarc, Thijs!bot, Epbr123, Cocoma, SeNeKa, N5iln, Wompa99, Headbomb, Marek69, Brian421, John254, Kathovo, MainlyTwelve, Top.Squark, Dr Benway, Dfrg.msc, Therequiembellishere, Iulius, Escarbot, Mentifisto, Hmrox, Thadius856, AntiVandalBot, Sfern, Majorly, Luna Santin, Aldebaran69, Seaphoto, QuiteUnusual, Jayron32, Rmsuperstar99, Manushand, Snarkivist, Bukharin, Gökhan, JAnDbot, Husond, Armando12, MER-C, Janejellyroll, Arch dude, Plm209, Leolaursen, TAnthony, PhilKnight, Acroterion, Magioladitis, Sgb235, The Dark One, WolfmanSF, Bongwarrior, VoABot II, JamesBWatson, Rami R, Jim 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