War for the Masses
the Sacred Heart of Jesus
You see, O my God! all the wounds which tear my heart, and the depth of the abyss into which I have fallen. … O Jesus-Christ! divine Redeemer of all our iniquities, it is in Your Adorable Heart that I want to deposit the overflowing of my afflicted heart. I call upon the help of the tender Heart of Mary, my majestic protector and my mother, and the assistance of Saint Louis, my most famous patron and ancestor. O adorable Heart, by the so pure hands of my powerful intercessors, receive with kindness the wishes that confidence inspires in me …  
(from the text of Louis XVI’s supposed vow to dedicate “himself, his family, and his kingdom” to the Sacred Heart if he “recovers his throne”, 1790)
Mass Warfare, 1792-1799

The Vendée and total war
Was it genocide?
Why was it so bloody?
The nation in arms
levée en masse [mass draft]
What does it mean for…
civilian-combatant distinction
evaluation of state strength

Example of Heroism against the Brigands of the Vendée, 1793

Church of St. Peter, Les-Lucs-sur-Boulogne, 1902

War for the Masses: lecture structure
The Vendée: Civil War, Counter Revolution, or Genocide?

begins as large scale draft resistance

Vendéen successes in summer 1793 (never included a port through which British aid might have come)

Conclusive Republican military victories in December 1793 (Le Mans; Savenay)

purple=support for “Royal and Catholic Army”
blue=generally supportive of the Convention

winter-autumn 1793

Civil war in the Vendée
The Vendée: Peasants, Religion, and Urbanization

rural western France—particularly dense parish structure pre-1789

urban western France—particularly strong attacks on First Estate

rural western France—small-field agriculture and villages of weavers

support for Revolution strongest: towns and cities; among the literate; many artisans

opposition strongest among peasants

François Flameng, *The Massacre at Machecoul* (1884).
The Vendée: Civil War, Counter Revolution, or Genocide?

“… not those frightful but inevitable acts that occur in the heat of battle in a long and atrocious war, but premeditated, organized, planned massacres, which were committed in cold blood, and were massive and systematic, with the conscious and explicit intention of destroying a well-defined religion and exterminating an entire people, women and children first, in order to eradicate a ‘cursed race’ considered ideologically beyond redemption”


“Generals, representatives of the people, *philosophes*—they may all be motivated by pride or ambition. But here, there is nothing but virtue: virtue, simple and modest as it came from the hands of Nature.”

Bertrand Barère speech to the Convention about the death of Bara, December 1793.

The Vendée: Civil War, Counter Revolution, or Genocide?

“Destroy the Vendée and the Austrians won’t have a chance in Valenciennes; destroy the Vendée and the Prussians will be pushed back from the Rhine. It is the Vendée and only the Vendée that is a cancer eating at the heart of the Republic. It is there that we must strike…”

Barère to the Convention, August 1793.

“You must decide in advance about the fate of the women and children that I will encounter in this rebellious country. If they must all be put to the sword, I cannot carry out such a measure without a decree which relieves me of responsibility.”

General Louis-Marie Turreau to the Convention, January 1794.
Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in the Vendée and the West, 1794-1799

“Wherever we go, we bear fire and death. ...One volunteer killed three women with his own hands. It is atrocious, but the safety of the Republic demands it. What a war!”

“Destroy the watermills, burn the windmills, smash the ovens. Depend on the humanity of the cavalry for them to gather up the children who can still be given a republican education... put everyone else to the sword.”

soldiers’ descriptions, Jan.-Feb. 1794.

“The Vendee has given birth to 200,000 boys; papa Charette [RCA commander] is sending them to Paris to be baptized.” (1793-1794?)

Civil war in the Vendée: was it genocide?
Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in the Vendée and the West, 1794-1799

Turreau’s “Infernal Columns” (winter-spring 1794)
“scorched earth” policy provoked further rebellions
guerilla attacks meant regular army always on edge
breakdown of military discipline

Lazare Hoche (in charge of pacification, 1795)
“wage war to the death” against those who still rebel and
“respect the peaceful inhabitants of the region. This will enable them to distinguish between Republicans..
and detestable individuals”

small flanking forces to prevent ambush
if escorting convoy, should not pursue “the enemy”
maintain discipline; deploy forces in lines
officers responsible for all violations
He who serves his fatherland [patrie] well, has no need of ancestors
Levée en masse, August 1793

From this moment until that in which the enemy shall have been driven from the soil of the Republic, all Frenchmen are in permanent requisition for the service of the armies. The young men shall go to battle; the married men shall forge arms and transport provisions; the women shall make tents and clothing and shall serve in the hospitals; the children shall turn old linen into lint; the old men shall betake themselves to the public places in order to arouse the courage of warriors and to preach the hatred of kings and the unity of the Republic.

Guillaume Guillon, called Lethiere, *The Fatherland in Danger* (1799)

The Nation in Arms
The Advent of “Total War,” 1789-1799?

French forces by mid-1794: 750,000+
munitions workers: 5,000 or more (145,000 guns/year)
military deaths, 1794-1796: 200,000
1793-1794: 84 generals executed
352 generals dismissed

Altar of the Republic, dedicated to the National Convention (Sicard, 1913) in the Panthéon

The Nation in Arms
Total War and the Nation in Arms

great patriotic achievement?

what happens to the idea of “civilians”?

proof of a strong state?
or result of a weak one?

Lazare Carnot, member of the Committee of Public Safety ("Organizer of Victory") on a postage stamp from 1950s