29 August 2012

Faith, Violence, and the Making of Modern France
Faith and Violence in Revolutionary France: Introduction and Lecture Structure

Violence in the Vendée, 1793-1794

rebellion, civil war, or genocide?

French Revolution and modern political culture (review): national sovereignty, revolution, rights

Revolution’s legacy and divisions within French society and culture, 1799-present

Left/Right divisions within National Assemblies (1789-1792): status of Church; role of monarch;

Revolution, Republic, and Religion

Faith and Violence in Revolutionary France: Introduction and Lecture Structure
“Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, or Death”

Is violence conceptually inherent in ideas of “rights” and the nation as formulated by National Assembly?

Or is violence necessary to protect rights from those who would prefer to retain privilege?

“Would that I might die, seeing my country free and its people, happy.”

Georges Couthon, member of National Convention, guillotined July 1794 as a “terrorist.”
First Meeting of the Estates-General in 175 Years

1780s financial crisis

Estates-General: clergy, nobility, commoners

representatives of Third Estate refuse to meet as such; call themselves a “National Assembly”—eventually joined by many representatives of other two estates

Debt, Deficit, and the Costs of Revolution: Nationalization of Church Property

*biens nationaux* (national properties)
10% of property in France estimated to be far greater

Nov. 1789 Church properties put “at disposal” of the nation

spring 1790 first sales of *biens* at auction

“This too great weight can only be bad for you,
We must, gentlemen, we must take it from you”

print (1790?) gallica.bnf.fr
Civil Constitution of the Clergy (decree voted July 12, 1790)

parish priests all paid by the state

State becomes responsible for poor relief, nursing, education

bishops to be elected by all active citizens (including Protestants and Jews)

all members of the clergy have to take oath of loyalty to the Nation

March 1791 condemned by Pope

May 1791 priests who refuse to take oath can still preach, but have to find their own buildings, pay own expenses, etc.

“I swear to uphold the Constitution with all my power”

plate, Musée Carnavelet (Paris) www.photo.rmn.fr
Who Took the Oath?*

52% of parish clergy (26,542)

57% of those in Paris

41% of clergy in towns of 8000-20,000
32% in towns of 20,000-50,000
25% of clergy in provincial towns with populations over 50,000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 1792</td>
<td>Refractory priests (those who did not take the oath) can be deported at the request of twenty active citizens</td>
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<td>August 16, 1792</td>
<td>Paris city government (Commune) prohibits religious processions</td>
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<td>March 1793</td>
<td>“deported” priests still in France subject to execution</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 27, 1793</td>
<td>All refractory priests to be deported</td>
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<td>November 1793</td>
<td>Republican calendar adopted (no more Sundays)</td>
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<td>Dechristianization encouraged by Representatives on Mission</td>
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<td>December 1793</td>
<td>Convention re-affirms freedom of worship</td>
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<td>May 1794</td>
<td>Robespierre attacks atheism; calls for Festival of Supreme Being</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 9, 1794 (20 prairial II)</td>
<td>Festival of Supreme Being</td>
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divisive issues: national church and non-national clergymen
National Assembly votes that King can “suspend” (delay) legislation by veto, but not overturn it

--votes that King cannot declare any “offensive” wars

Paris crowd invades palace at Versailles; demands that royal family live in Paris (October 1789)

My dear brother,

I agree with you: the situation is bad and it is getting worse. …
All around me, it seems they are resigned to accepting a very small role to play, but I do not like to see the power of the throne given up so cheaply. … …

Marie Antoinette to her brother, Emperor Joseph I of Austria (letter, Feb. 26, 1790).

divisive issue: from “divine right” to “constitutional” monarch
Who emigrated?

the King’s brothers and aunts

over half the men elected in 1789 as representatives of the nobility

60% of the officer corps

150,000 total (approx.) of which
25% clergy and 17% noble
less than 20% of émigrés were women

“The Prince de Condé gives the spurs to his ostrich/Austrian mount”
gallica.bnf.fr
The Event: the “Flight to Varennes” (June 20, 1791)

“The King has abandoned not just the nobility, the clergy, and the whole right side of the Assembly to the fury of the mobs, but he has also abandoned his friends, his servants, and his ministers. Such conduct is atrocious.”

[former Marquis de] Ferrieres, letter to his wife, June 1791.

June 20     royal family flees Paris; caught near the border
June 25     royal family returns to Paris; king’s power provisionally suspended
July 16     after days of debate, Assembly decides:
            the person of the king is inviolable
            the royal family had been victims of a plot (they were “abducted”)
            Louis to regain full power when he ratifies the new Constitution
[The King and Emperor intend in marching against France]… To put an end to the anarchy that reigns and stop the attacks on the French throne…

To restore to the King the security and liberty of which he has been deprived and put him in a position to exercise his legitimate authority…

[the German Armies will protect those who do not resist] But those who dare to defend themselves will be punished immediately and their houses destroyed… if the least violence or force be used against the French King or Queen, the Allied monarchs will …deliver the city of Paris over to military rule and to complete ruin…

The Brunswick Manifesto, 25 July 1792.
Monarchy abolished (August 10, 1792)

Republic declared (September 22, 1792)

National Convention (elected by universal male suffrage) meets in Paris to:
- write a constitution for the republic
- govern until that constitution can be put in place

Jacques Louis David, “design for the uniform of a Representative of the People” (1794/Year 2)
www.photo.rmn.fr
Areas of open resistance to the National Convention, 1793-1794

French Revolution and/or French Civil War?
The Vendée: Uprising, Civil War, or Counter Revolution?

200,000-250,000 “civilian” deaths (1793-1794)

begins as large scale draft resistance

massacre of Republican officials at Machecoul

ambush of General Marcé near Chantonnay

civil war in the Vendée
The Royal and Catholic Army of the Vendée

no members of the royal family

no uniforms, few weapons, little discipline

“insurgency” tactics (ambush, night attacks)

Civil war and martyrdom in the Vendée
The Reign of Terror in 1793-1794 (the Year Two)

500,000 people (approx.) jailed in ten months

Death Sentences during the Terror
figures from D. Greer, *The Incidence of the Terror* (1935)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribunal/Commission</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revolutionary Tribunal (Paris)</td>
<td>2,639</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other criminal or revolutionary tribunals</td>
<td>3,124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military commissions (approx. 50 of them)</td>
<td>8,339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil commissions (less than 20)</td>
<td>2,492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>16,594</td>
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Other deaths

- 10,000-12,000 deaths in prison
- 11,000-12,000 executions without trial
- 150,000? in the Vendée

Source: gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France
The Event: September 5, 1793

Paris sections march on Convention, demand that “terror” be made “order of the day”

The Convention does not declare “Terror” but it does:

- pass Law on Suspects—anyone suspected of opposing the Republic can be jailed indefinitely
- send Representatives on Mission from the Convention to the rest of France to combat counter-revolutionaries
- impose General Maximum—wage-and-price limits
- declare government to be “revolutionary” until peace is achieved
French Revolutionary ("republican") Calendar begins Sept. 22—first day of republic and time of harvest. 12 months: 30 days each, divided into three ten-day-long weeks. Months named for natural events (rather than Roman emperors—so thermidor, the "hot month," replaces 22 July-21 August) days dedicated to crops and tools, not saints.

- 1791-1806: Temple of Great Men
- 1806-1821: combined functions
- 1821-1830: Church of Sainte Genevieve
Why did the Paris sections demand that terror be put “on the agenda”?

No one will be able to stand against you. The Lord your God, as he promised you, will put the terror and fear of you on the whole land, wherever you go.

   Deuteronomy 11: 24-26

Strike them with terror, Lord;
let the nations know they are only mortal.

   Psalms 9:20

When justice is done, it brings joy to the righteous but terror to evildoers. Proverbs 21:14-16