

INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION
THE LONG CENTURY
LECTURE 11: THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

"Like the Soviet Union, the monarchy of Louis XVI was an overextended empire, trying to be a global power while failing the elementary test of legitimacy: feeding its people. In a desperate attempt to break with a centralized command economy, liberal governments experimented with deregulation that in the short term made things worse. The regime ultimately collapsed from its ruler's fatal inconsistency in the application of reform and his reluctance to embrace representative institutions that could give these changes a democratic sanction." – Simon Schama

1. STORM CLOUDS

On July 13, 1788, at about 9:00 in the morning, a dreadful darkness spread over the earth in the fertile basin around Paris and issued in a terrible storm. Crops were flattened and farm animals were killed by huge hailstones. The harvest was disastrous and when the autumn and winter arrived there were floods and frosts. Many peasants became vagrants, and some formed themselves into threatening bands that began to terrorize parts of the country as they searched for alms or work or engaged in petty theft. Insecurity and misery spread beyond the ranks of the chronically poor to affect modestly prosperous peasants and artisans as well.

Bread made up three-quarters of the diet for most people in France, so the price of bread was an especially sensitive issue. Even in normal times the poorest wage-earners might spend a third or a half of their incomes on it. And when the price of bread shot up in times of dearth, public opinion, fed by rumor, blamed a conspiracy of greedy hoarders. Meanwhile, as people spent more and more of their incomes on bread, they had less to spend on textiles and other non-essentials. Employment and earnings collapsed at the same time as the cost of living was rising rapidly.

In this situation, the government could not win: if it prepared for emergencies by storing grain many people suspected that the government was part of the conspiracy. If the government experimented with a free market in grain in the hope of increasing supplies and bringing down prices it was accused of being callously indifferent to the suffering of the poor. Louis XVI was incapable of a consistent policy: any minister who attempted serious reforms soon offended one powerful special interest or another and lost his post. The King's policy decisions reflected the influence of a small circle of aristocratic advisers at court who were willing to contemplate only those reforms that did not threaten their own social and political positions.

There were about 200,000 nobles in France (a country of 26 million). They owned between a quarter and a third of the land in the country, and had vestigial "feudal" rights over much of the rest. Many of them had only recently joined the ranks of the nobility through the purchase of "venal" offices: there were about 4,000 such offices in the royal bureaucracy that conferred hereditary nobility on the owner and his family. From the middle of the eighteenth century until 1789, Louis XV and his grandson Louis XVI granted more than 6,500 ennoblements, so that by 1789 between one quarter and one third of all noble families had achieved their status within the last half-century. A great deal of wealth was required to purchase noble status: the average position required payment of more than 50,000 livres, enough to feed, clothe, and house 200 peasant families for a year. All the senior members of the administration, the army, the navy, and the Catholic Church were nobles. But half or more of the nobility were no wealthier than the average bourgeois, or middle class, property-owner, and some were poorer. And only the richest nobles could afford the very expensive life at the Court of Versailles.

2. BLUE WATER, RED INK

For several decades, France had been involved in a struggle with Britain for global primacy. Overseas empire – the sugar plantations of the Caribbean, the textile markets of India, the fur-trade of Canada – was one of the few really dynamic sectors of the eighteenth-century economy. So the French tried to compete with the British in the pursuit of colonial trade, and they lost one war after another. Why? Because as a continental and a global power, France had to support both an army and a navy. The British could concentrate on their navy to project power overseas and siphon wealth from the colonies. The French were overextended.

But there was another source of British strength: the British state had a more efficient fiscal apparatus. Having taken lessons in fiscal discipline from the Dutch Republic (arguably the first modern state), the British government was able to borrow funds at relatively low rates of interest and to sustain a long struggle with the French. By contrast, French finances were notoriously ramshackle: no real budget, no parliamentary oversight, and tax collection in the hands of corrupt private "tax-farmers." Moreover, the landowners who dominated the British Parliament were willing to tax themselves in wartime. In France the aristocrats who dominated the institutions of government were mainly obstructionist, claiming to defend liberty while protecting their own privileges. And most privileges involved exemption from taxation. The result in France was a system in which the burden of taxation fell on those who could least afford to pay it.

Not only did the French lose the great colonial prizes in Canada, the Caribbean, and India to the British, they also accumulated huge a huge burden of debt, the

servicing of which consumed 60% of tax revenues each year. The steady price inflation of the eighteenth century (caused by a population growing faster than the economy) raised the cost of government along with everything else, while the state's inflexible tax system, tied to the country's sluggish agricultural economy rather than its more dynamic mercantile and manufacturing sectors, was incapable of producing enough revenue to meet the king's rising needs.

The one war in which the French managed to defeat the British was the American war of the 1770s and early 1780s. The French subsidized the American Revolution and offered weapons, advisers, and naval support. But the result was to bankrupt the French state. So when the economic and social crisis of the late 1780s struck, there was already a financial crisis. And soon there would be a political crisis as well.

The King was caught in a contradiction: rationalization of the tax system, an absolute necessity for a resolution of the state's chronic financial crisis, would require an attack on the privileges and tax exemptions that were inextricably connected with social status in France (not just for nobles, but for clergy and bourgeois as well). But the King himself was the ultimate source and guarantor of those very privileges in a society that made inequality into a principle. William Doyle quotes a revealing "remonstrance" against reform by a noble "parlement" in 1776: "Any system tending under the guise of humanity and benevolence to establish an equality of duties between men, and to destroy those distinctions necessary in a well-ordered monarchy, would soon lead to disorder... The result would be the overthrow of civil society, the harmony of which is maintained only by that hierarchy of powers, authorities, pre-eminences and distinctions which keeps each man in his place and keeps all Estates from confusion. This social order is not only essential to the practice of every sound government, it has its origin in divine law. The infinite and immutable wisdom in the plan of the universe established an unequal distribution of strength and character, necessarily resulting in inequality in the conditions of men within the civil order.... These institutions were not formed by chance, and time cannot change the."

3. THE REVOLUTIONARY BANDWAGON

When his efforts to increase tax receipts met with the usual obstruction, Louis XVI first called an Assembly of Notables to deliberate with him and then decided to revive France's ancient representative assembly, the Estates-General, in the hope of persuading that body to approve a more rational tax structure. The result in the spring of 1789 was perhaps the most democratic election in European history, with the majority of the male population voting for delegates to the Estates-General. Expectations rose at the very moment when the price of bread was reaching its peak.

But how should the Estates-General be organized? And what kind of voting procedures should it adopt? The King and his ministers gave no clear signal on these important procedural matters. In this vacuum, a struggle for power developed between the privileged estates – representatives of the Church and the aristocracy – and the non-nobles, the Third Estate. The delegates of the Third Estate were generally people who had experience in public speaking, handling meetings, and drafting documents – that is why they had been elected. They were often lawyers and/or local office-holders, and now they had the heady experience of bidding for power at the center of the country. They outmaneuvered the representatives of the privileged orders.

In June the Estates-General transformed itself into a National Assembly dominated by members of the Third Estate, claiming sovereignty in the name of the nation, and the mission of preparing a new constitution. But the King was clearly opposed to this development, and there was good reason to fear that he would attempt to suppress it by force. Rumors of troop movements around Paris brought crowds into the streets on July 12th. On the 14th, a crowd searching for arms overwhelmed the Bastille, a royal prison, and murdered its administrators. On July 16th the war minister advised the king that the army could no longer be relied upon. The regime had lost its monopoly of armed force – a key moment in any revolution. The king accepted the appointment of a liberal nobleman, Lafayette, as commander of a new "National Guard."

Meanwhile, rioting had spread to the countryside. Economic distress had become politicized and explosive. Those who were suffering from deteriorating *economic* conditions were now inclined to attribute them to *political* causes. Most nobles had opposed the transformation of the Estates-General into the National Assembly. Could they be trusted now, or were they plotting a counter-revolution? Were they perhaps responsible for the high price of bread? Were they planning to starve the people into submission? Hadn't they always been responsible for the people's misery?

Under these circumstances of anarchy in the countryside, the National Assembly needed to do something dramatic. On August 4, 1789, it voted to end the vestiges of feudal privilege (the landlords' rights to coerce labor and fees of various kinds from the peasantry); on August 14th it abolished the sale of offices; and on August 26th it issued a Declaration of the Rights of Man. The abolition of privilege meant that government – especially in the matter of taxation – should treat people as individual property-owners rather than as members of status groups. People differed quantitatively in the amount of wealth they owned, but not qualitatively according to social rank or estate.

Here then are two enormous changes. First, there is a shift in the location of sovereignty from the top to the base of society. The crucial idea is that legitimate power belongs to the nation as a whole, not to the King. And second, there is the abolition of privilege, the egalitarian notion that everyone should be treated equally in the distribution of the benefits and burdens of citizenship. The crucial idea here is equality under the law. And note also the important precedent: when the revolution appeared to be in danger, it was the ordinary people of Paris (artisans, small property-owners) who had rushed into the streets to save it. Perhaps the legitimacy of the revolution itself came not only from "the people," but from popular violence.

4. WHY FRANCE?

We've seen that a series of crises – fiscal, economic, social, and political – converged in France in the summer of 1789. The Revolution emerged from the politicization of all classes of the population: first, in the voting for the Estates-General, then in the controversy over how the Estates-General should vote. But in the background there was a mentality that had its source in one of the great movements in European cultural history. France was the center of the European Enlightenment, an agenda for reform and modernization that embraced such principles as religious toleration, economic liberalization, and administrative efficiency. Enlightenment thinkers were critical of the legacy of the past, with its burden of irrational custom, superstition, force and fraud. Their goal was to transfer the methods of the natural sciences to human affairs, and to chart a course of incremental improvements in both justice and efficiency. They proposed to increase the sum of human happiness, or at least diminish the sum of unnecessary human misery, by discarding the belief in original sin and dismantling the barriers to economic growth. Archaic privileges were among those barriers.

One of the most radical and famous of the Enlightenment thinkers, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, advanced the idea of the general will, independent of narrow special interests. The men who made the revolution had read and absorbed the lessons of Rousseau. When they pushed for a National Assembly, they were trying to embody his conception of the general or national will. But if the ideal was so attractive and rational, why did these same men soon begin to distrust each other, to demonize each other, to kill each other?

5. THE CROWD IN THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

By the end of 1789 the French Revolution seemed on the way to producing a liberal constitutional monarchy. Archaic privileges had been abolished, the Rights of Man had been proclaimed, and the political role of a National Assembly had been confirmed. Why did this liberal experiment fail? Why did the democratic moment of 1789 turn into the dictatorship of the 1793-94? Partly

because the King and his circle never really accepted the new arrangements, and tried to undermine them. Partly because the economic situation remained dire, and efforts to deal with it provoked further divisions. But mainly because the Revolution ignited war and civil war, and in these circumstances the coalition between a certain fraction of the political elite and a militant segment of the Parisian crowd became decisive.

"Crowd" of course is a vague term, but it's impossible to understand the French Revolution without understanding the role of crowds of people at crucial moments in public spaces, especially in Paris. And the question of crowds is inseparable from the themes of violence and intimidation. Much of the history of the Revolution, at least until 1795, can be understood in terms of alliances and tensions between always intimidating and often violent urban crowds and bourgeois politicians. Peasant crowds had been important in 1789, when they attacked their landlords' estates and burned their records. But after 1789 peasants tended toward political passivity or active hostility to the Revolution. The coalition that counts, then, is the one between the politicians and the urban crowd. That coalition defeated all attempts to fix the Revolution in a liberal, constitutional mold. Instead of a constitutional monarchy, the goal of almost all the delegates of the Third Estate in 1789, the Jacobin/sans-culotte coalition pushed toward a revolutionary dictatorship. And a popular insurrection of one kind or another accompanied or propelled every major step in this direction.

In October 1789 a crowd of Parisians marched to Versailles and brought the King and his family back to the capital, where they were virtually imprisoned in the Tuileries Palace. On August 10, 1792 the crowd attacked the Tuileries, slaughtered the King's Swiss Guard, and destroyed what was left of the monarchy's authority. In September 1792 a crowd of militants, enraged by the threat of a Prussian invasion, stormed the prisons to extinguish what they believed was a counter-revolutionary plot, killing more than a thousand people (many of them priest who had refused to take a loyalty oath). In June 1793 an insurrection led to the purging of the moderates in the Convention and in September another round of popular protest led to the imposition of price controls on basic necessities.

6. REVISITING THE BASTILLE

The Revolution in Paris, began, as we've seen, at the Palais-Royal, the city's entertainment center. Owned by the Orleans family, cousins of the ruling Bourbon dynasty, it was outside the jurisdiction of the police because of a legal "privilege" granted more than half a century earlier. It was a large rectangle of buildings, colonnaded at the perimeter, with an interior of arcaded galleries, a spacious plaza, and a promenade garden. It was open to the poor who were barred from the Tuileries and Luxembourg palaces and gardens of the Bourbons.

It included about two dozen cafés (many of them subterranean), luxury boutiques, gambling dens, a booming trade in erotic engravings and literature, and facilities for every variety of prostitution. The cafés became the headquarters for political clubs, journalists, pamphleteers and orators in 1789. One of them, Camille Desmoulins, made a rousing speech on July 12th, at the height of the controversy over the transformation of the Estates-General into a National Assembly, urging the citizens of Paris to protest against the dismissal of Necker, a popular minister. He also warned of a possible massacre of the people of Paris by royal troops. Hence the call to arms.

The crowd surged into the streets and broke into gun-shops. It burned the customs posts that assessed dues on goods coming into the city. It sacked a monastery in search of grain, and forced open the doors of several prisons. In response to these events, the city's bourgeois leaders formed an executive committee and set up a militia, intended both as a means of defending the city from royal troops and maintaining order. But this militia needed more arms. On the 14th a delegation followed by a crowd of demonstrators seized a huge supply of muskets from a government depot, the Hôtel des Invalides. But the muskets needed power, which was stored in the Bastille, an ancient military fortress with thick walls, moats, and drawbridges.

Nearly a hundred men died in the assault on the Bastille. In the end the defenders, a group of semi-retired veterans, let down the drawbridge. Once inside, the crowd freed the few prisoners there – four counterfeiters and three lunatics – and seized the barrels of gunpowder. They shot, stabbed, and beheaded the commandant of the fortress and another official who had been reluctant to arm the militia, and paraded their heads on pikes.

Why do the French continue to celebrate this gruesome episode as the birthday of modern liberty? Because publicists soon succeeded in identifying the old fortress with "despotism," and presenting its seizure by the crowd as a sublime instance of the people expressing their sovereign will. The King withdrew his troops, cancelled the dismissal of Necker, accepted the formation of the new civic militia and municipal authority, and capitulated to the National Assembly. Proclamations of support poured in from the provinces. There seemed to be no obstacle now to the Assembly's mission of providing France with a new constitution. Within ten days, the storming of the Bastille had been enshrined in popular consciousness as a revolution in the modern sense: a rising of the sovereign people whose legitimate use of force had transformed the political system of the nation.

7. THE JACOBINS

Most of the delegates of the Third Estate were provincials. After arriving in Paris they did what many recent immigrants to a big city do: they formed clubs to socialize with each other and to formulate their political agendas. The Jacobins were originally The Society of Friends of the Constitution or Breton Club; they met in a Jacobin (Dominican) convent with the purpose of drafting and preparing arguments in favor of proposed provisions of the Constitution. Soon they had a national network of provincial affiliates, with whom they communicated by correspondence and pamphlets—a major source of strength as they competed with other groups for political power at the center of the country.

Virtue was a key word in their vocabulary. Jacques-Louis David's idealization of the stern republicans of antiquity appealed to their sensibility. They regarded the Old Regime as corrupt and effeminate. In their view the regeneration of the nation required stern measures. And unanimous ones—Rousseau was their master, and Rousseau's notion of a general will precluded any doubts or divisions. They were always inclined to regard disagreement as evidence of treason. But this Rousseauist notion of the general will provided a bridge to the popular movement. The Jacobins claimed to represent the national interest and the people's will. They would ally themselves with the people of the capital, who would enable them to outflank and intimidate their political opponents. This is the coalition that would produce dictatorship and terror in the year 1793-94.

8. THE SANS-CULOTTES

Sans-culottes are, literally, men who wear trousers rather than knee-breeches. The term embraces urban craftsmen, small shopkeepers, petty traders, journeymen, laborers, and the poor. These were people who favored small property, small business, small employers, and small workshops. The one economic factor that played the largest role in their thinking was the price of bread. Hunger, or fear thereof, could galvanize them into political action. The price of bread colored all their politics, motivating their demands for price controls, and for government campaigns against speculation and hoarding. The Jacobins, unlike their competitors, were willing to meet these demands under the pressure of war.

Like the Jacobins, the sans-culottes believed in virtue: they disliked gambling, fancy dress, billiards, cards, prostitutes, carnivals, and dancing, though they approved of alcohol. They were suspicious of representative democracy, preferring the "direct democracy" they practiced in their own organizations, the 48 "sections" of the Paris municipal government. These sections were not only political clubs, they were administrative bodies with policing and surveillance powers. They issued certificates of civic virtue, arrested "suspects," monitored price controls, and coordinated their initiatives and their policing efforts with each other. In theory open to all citizens of Paris, the sections were in fact

dominated by a minority of militants who had the time and energy to attend them on a daily basis.

Almost all of the mass demonstrations of the 1790s emerged from the sections. One after another, they would declare themselves "in insurrection," march into the streets carrying pikes and muskets, converge on the city hall or the Convention, and remind the politicians of their power. Every insurrection was in some sense a repetition of the original insurrectionary event of July 1789, a re-taking of the Bastille, another chapter in the people's struggle against the conspirators who, they believed, threatened their sovereignty and their survival.

In the years after 1789 the French lurched from one crisis to another. To deal with the state's financial crisis, the revolutionaries had nationalized the lands of the Church and sold perhaps 10% of the national real estate. The government issued paper notes, the *assignats*, for which the sale of church lands provided security. But these notes quickly lost value to inflation, and meanwhile large numbers of clergy and peasants had been alienated from the regime when it forced the clergy to become salaried employees of the state and to take an oath of loyalty. Nor could the King accept what appeared to be an attack on his Church: hence his collusion with foreign powers who were wary of France's Revolution. And the King's disaffection made him a convenient scapegoat for the failures of the new regime.

To force the King and other traitors to reveal their true colors, the revolutionaries, led by a faction known as the Gironde, declared war on Austria and Prussia. But the war did not go well at first, and the invasion of French territory caused panic and despair in Paris. The King became a target of popular fury once again. Overthrown in August 1792, he was executed in 1793. But the politicians of the Gironde also became the targets of the sans-culottes' anger by opposing price controls in a period of galloping inflation. Having created an emergency by starting a war, they refused to enact emergency measures to prosecute it. Peasants were increasingly unwilling to part with their produce for paper money and the system of food distribution broke down. In June 1793 armed sans-culottes besieged the Convention and demanded the arrest and execution of its leading Girondin members. The crowd had been inspired in part by a radical journalist: Jean Paul Marat (1743-1793), an implacable enemy of the Girondins

9. DEAD MAN IN A TUB

Marat had been a doctor – a specialist on diseases of the eye with an appointment at court – and a scientist whose experiments on electricity were admired by Benjamin Franklin. But his failure to secure recognition from the Royal Academy of Science for his theories about electricity embittered him and ruined his newfangled practice in electrotherapy. Switching his career to political

journalism, he developed a mocking, aggressive style and attacked his enemies as traitors, conspirators, and tyrants. He pressed for the execution of the King in his paper the *Ami du peuple* [Friend of the People] and on the floor of the Convention. He justified lethal popular violence not only as the means of destroying tyranny, but also the only guarantee an insidious counter-revolution. He reveled in the role of outcast—the champion of the freedom of the press who had rejected the fashionable world for the imperatives of truth and virtue. But by the time of his assassination in 1793 he was already probably near death from the debilitating skin disease he had contracted by hiding in cellars and sewers. Toward the end he spent most of his time in a bathing tub wrapped in towels; his disease had reduced him almost to a state of putrefaction.

His assassin, Charlotte Corday (1768-1793), was a young woman from Caen in Normandy, where many of the Girondins had retreated after their downfall in Paris. A refractory priest who had given the last rites to her mother had been hunted down by dogs and guillotined. From a noble family of modest means, she was a direct descendant of the playwright Corneille, and she was determined now to play the noble role of avenger. She wrote to Marat: "Citizen, I have just arrived from Caen. Your love for your native place doubtless makes you desirous of learning the events which have occurred in that part of the republic. I shall call at your residence in about an hour; have the goodness to receive me and to give me a brief interview. I will put you in a condition to render great service to France."

David's painting of Marat draws on the Christian iconography of martyrdom. Simon Schama describes the painting in his account of the French Revolution, *Citizens*: "the blood of the martyr is there in abundance, rendered with shocking clarity, set off by dead white. Near Marat's hand are set the unanswerable documents of his saintliness, juxtaposed with the murderess's hypocritical letter. Beside an *assignat* David has a note in Marat's hand bearing instructions for it to be given to a widow with five children whose 'husband has died for the *patrie*.' At the moral heart of the painting, then, there is a death within a death, lit by the cold steady light of immolation."

10. THE COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC SAFETY

In September 1793, after a new wave of military disasters, the murder of Marat, and the surrender to the British of the French fleet at Toulon, enraged sans-culottes invaded the Convention again. This time the legislature saved itself from a purge by yielding completely to the demands of the populace for a nation-wide system of price controls, for a more vigorous pursuit of the war, and for ruthless action against internal enemies. The instrument that was to fulfill this last demand was already in existence, having been established in April, after the defection of General Dumouriez, under the name of the Committee of Public

Safety. The twelve Jacobin members of this committee would rule France from September 1793 to July 1794 as a war cabinet. One of its members, Lazare Carnot, was a superb organizer whose *levée en masse* (total mobilization) turned the tide of the war. Meanwhile his colleagues set up a subsistence committee to develop and elaborate a system of price controls, requisitions, and currency regulation, backed by police power. The committee restored order to rebellious areas by sending its members on missions with instructions for ruthless repression. It tamed the Paris sections to some extent by placing their leaders on the payroll. But it also alienated some of the sans-culottes by resisting full implementation of their demands for public employment and attacks on large businesses. Effective organization in the national interest required economic planning that was more sophisticated than the sans-culottes' mentality allowed.

11. ROBESPIERRE

Maximilien Robespierre (1758-1794), the leading figure in the Committee, was a provincial lawyer, unmarried, chaste, puritanical, self-righteous, and introverted. He was a man of the Enlightenment, convinced that social problems could easily be corrected, eager for a society in which there would be no cruelty or discrimination. He was also a Rousseauist, his view of the world split between the public interest, self-evident and beyond question for upright men, and private interests, which were selfish, sinister, and illegitimate. For Robespierre, terror was the other side of the coin of virtue: "If the mainspring of popular government in time of peace is virtue, the mainspring of popular government in time of revolution is both virtue and terror; virtue, without which terror is evil; terror, without which virtue is helpless. Terror is nothing but justice, prompt, severe, and inflexible; it is therefore an emanation of virtue."

The problem of the self-righteous in politics is that they tend to attribute setbacks and resistance to the malice or selfishness of their enemies. In other words, the politics of virtue can easily become a paranoid politics. And here is the linkage between the worldview of Robespierre and that of the sans-culottes whose support he depended upon: both of them attributed difficulties to conspiracies of treacherous enemies. To be sure, Robespierre tried to limit the excesses of his colleagues and supporters. And the guillotine, with its clean and instantaneous executions, was an improvement on lynching or the horrors of the September Massacres. But Robespierre's notion of virtue not only justified terror as the Revolution's self-defense against its enemies; it made it the crucible of the new society. And that was a recipe for legalized murder.

12. TERROR

The Terror began in the spring of 1793 in the atmosphere produced by the defection of Dumouriez, internal rebellions, and the invasion of France by foreign powers. In a classic book, *Twelve Who Ruled*, R.R. Palmer described the

atmosphere: "Anarchy within, invasion from without. A country cracking from outside pressure, disintegrating from internal strain.... And the horrible knowledge, for the men in power, that if they failed they would die as criminals, murderers of the king. And the dread that all the gains of the Revolution would be lost. And the faith that if they won they would bring Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity into the World."

It began as an attempt to ferret out friends of the enemy in time of war. But the category of suspects soon expanded to include those who were merely moderate or insufficiently enthusiastic. It was all too easy to see opponents or rivals as enemies of the state, to denounce them and to execute them. You could be a suspect not because of what you did but because of who you were. What is novel about the Terror is not so much the number of executions as the invention of categories of enemies of the people: the aristocrat, the counter-revolutionary. The speed-up of the judicial process was also crucial: death or acquittal, and no witnesses for the defense.

Perhaps 35 to 40 thousand presumed enemies of the Revolution were executed or died in prison during the Terror, which was further intensified by widespread imprisonment (half a million people, 3% of the adult population). To impose its policies on grain procurement and prices, the government had to rely largely on local organizations of militants with their largely sans-culotte membership. Many middle class supporters of the Revolution began to fear for their property, while many deputies in the Convention began to fear that they too might be arrested. The Terror had been acceptable to them only as an expedient. The military victories of June-July 1794 ended the immediate threat of invasion and made revolutionary terror much less tolerable. Most of them found increasingly abhorrent Robespierre's apparent willingness to turn terror into a means of creating a new moral order. If Robespierre was incorruptible, some of them were not, and they had made money from the shady deals that supplied the armies. Robespierre's obsession with virtue could be lethal for them. At the end of July 1794 they turned on Robespierre and his colleagues and executed them. They restored the authority of the Convention, ended economic controls, purged Jacobins from the administration and National Guard, released prisoners, and recalled the surviving Girondins. The Revolution had been saved, but it had lost the support of much of the population. And where would it go from here?