Print News and Panic during the 1799 Insurrection in the Midi *Toulousain*

Charles McMillan Summons

Abstract

Newspapers reveal much more than the facts reported within them. They illustrate revolutionary culture and the climate of ideas which faced readers. Understanding this is crucial to imagining how people experienced the daily reality of living through such times. Newspapers during the Directory period have seldom been studied. This is a particular lacuna given the crisis and unexpected chaos of the summer of 1799. By mid-1799, multiple military fronts as well as internal unrest backgrounded the beginning of the royalist rebellion in the Haute-Garonne. The way in which the press characterised this royalist threat and communicated the crisis discloses much about what editors, and in turn their readership, were afraid of happening. Editors relied on collective memories of the horrors of the Terror to characterise opposing political factions thereby demonstrating fears of repeating the recent past. Contrasting this dire rhetoric and the extreme demonisation of the rebels with actual indifferent government attitude to the insurrection illustrates that this was merely a form of propaganda employed for political ends by the Jacobin, royalist, and republican political movements. In the same vein, the post-rebellion manipulation of the depiction of peasant rebels once again establishes that these words were more motivated by political needs than by reality. This reveals an underlying anxiety from a Directory whose control over France was steadily eroding.

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This took a village.

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Table of Contents

Abbreviation	**Source**
ADHG	Archives Départementale de la Haute-Garonne
La Clef du Cabinet	*La Clef du Cabinet des souverains*
Feuille du Jour	*Feuille du Jour ou Courrier Universel*
Journal des Hommes Libres	*Journal des Hommes Libres de Tous Les Pays ou Le Républicain*
Journal de Toulouse	*Journal de Toulouse ou L'Observateur Républicain ou L'Anti-Royaliste*
L'Anti-Terroriste	*L'Anti-Terroriste ou Journal des Principes suite au Journal du Département de Haute-Garonne*
Le Grondeur	*Le Grondeur ou Le Flambeau*
Le Moniteur	*Gazette Nationale ou Le Moniteur universel*
Le Thé	*Le Thé ou le Contrôleur général*

I: Introduction

Tucked into the corner on the final page of *Le Moniteur*'s 14 August 1799 edition, a small note from the editor casually dismissed news of Toulouse's imminent encirclement by 22,000 chouans, by this time a generic term for insurgents. The report was described as 'no doubt another noise that those with malicious intent enjoy spreading around to worry citizens'.[1] This was wishful thinking in a context of threatening disarray that faced France both abroad and at home. In truth, the royal white standard had flown in Toulouse's hinterlands since 5 August and some 16,000 mostly conscripted peasants and artisans marched to besiege the city.[2] The uprising was scattered a short fifteen days later as the royalist leadership was either captured or fled over the border to Spain having been routed at Montréjeau.

Unanticipated crises both within and without produced a cacophony of fear among French newspapers leading into the summer of 1799. The Haute-Garonne rebellion which then occurred was therefore blown out of proportion and became a political tool despite being a relatively minor threat in comparison to the other perils confronting the Directory. This event was emblematic of 1799 newspaper culture and political propaganda at the end of the revolutionary decade.

The causes for peasants joining the Haute-Garonne rebellion and the nature of its repression have been extensively covered.[3] Howard Brown, the

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[1] All French-to-English translations are my own; revolutionary dates are converted to Gregorian; 'Sans doute encore un des bruits que la malveillance se plaît à semer pour inquiéter les citoyens'; *Le Moniteur*, 14 August 1799, p. 4§3.

[2] J. Godechot, 'La Ville Rose Devient une Ville Rouge', in Philippe Wolff, ed., *Histoire de Toulouse* (Toulouse, 1974), p. 424.

[3] J. Godechot, *La Révolution française dans le Midi toulousain* (Toulouse, 1986), pp. 286–8; J.-C. Meyer, 'L'Opinion Publique et L'Église en Haute-Garonne (1790-1799)', in J. Sentou, ed., *Révolution et Contre-Révolution Dans La France Du Midi* (Toulouse, 1991), pp. 140–1; D. M. G.

current leading historian on this period, touched on newspapers during 1799 though they were not his focus. In making his larger argument, he points to the fastidious reporting of crime in newspapers as fostering a culture of 'galloping chaos' that prompted the Directory to be hard on crime.[4] Nonetheless, the rebellion has not been positioned within broader newspaper culture and Brown noted that a genre study of news reporting in the post-Terror period is lacking.[5]

The incorporation of newspapers into the French Revolution's historiography is a marked departure from the traditional consensus of printed news being a 'subordinate aspect' to revolutionary politics.[6] Writing in 1893, François-Alphonse Aulard dismissed the revolutionary press as artificially manipulated by the committees of the Terror and thus not relevant for broader historical purposes.[7] However, Aulard should be understood in light of his pursuit to professionalise the study of the French Revolution. A paradigmatic shift occurred from the 1970s onwards. Eighteenth-century newspapers, both pre and post-Revolution, became understood as reflecting the attitudes of the public and, importantly, aiding in forming people's understanding of events.[8] Hugh Gough argued that newspapers never solely caused revolutionary events but were one of many closely-weighted factors of causation, like hunger or inflammatory

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Sutherland, *France, 1789-1815: Revolution and Counterrevolution* (London, 1985), pp. 328–9; H. G. Brown, *Ending the French Revolution: Violence, Justice, and Repression from the Terror to Napoleon* (Charlottesville, 2006), pp. 269, 309; H. G. Brown, 'Echoes of the Terror', *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques*, xxix (2003), pp. 529-558 at pp. 530, 544; H. Brown, 'Revolt and Repression in the Midi Toulousain (1799)', *French History*, xix (2005), pp. 234-261 at p. 237; C. Lucas, 'The Problem of the Midi in the French Revolution', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, xxviii (1978), pp. 1-25 at p. 15.

[4] Brown, *Ending*, pp. 217–218.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 217.

[6] J. D. Popkin, 'The Press and the French Revolution after Two Hundred Years', *French Historical Studies*, xvi (1990), pp. 664-683 at p. 668.

[7] F.-A. Aulard, *Études et Leçons sur la Révolution Française* (9 vols, Paris, 1893), iii, pp. 227, 239–40.

[8] B. Harris, *Politics and the rise of the press: Britain and France, 1620-1800* (London, 1996), p. 45; Popkin, 'The Press', pp. 682–3, 672–3.

speeches, which gave them 'shape and purpose'.[9] Likewise, Jeremy Popkin argued there was a two-way cause and effect flow with newspapers as the conduit for propaganda which influenced readers' opinions. In this way, newspapers came to be seen as part of revolutionary culture.[10] In response to these developments, this thesis will treat newspapers not as accurate sources of information on events but as fundamental to understanding the rhetorical climate and as indicative of how newspapers wanted the public to understand events. In essence, the value of the subjective press is distinct to that of primarily archival, and therefore more objective, work on the rebellion done by historians like Brown. The latter cannot reveal the climate of opinion during such a crisis to the same extent as newspapers.

Thus far, the historiography of the press and representations of crisis during the Revolution has been heavily tilted towards the early years of 1789-93.[11] Moreover the focus is most often the Parisian press and not provincial publications, especially in the post-Thermidor period.[12] Surprisingly the Midi, the region of southern France, had its newspaper renaissance 'relatively late' compared to the fecund 1789-93 period. Of the region's publications, 53 per cent were launched between Maximilien Robespierre's downfall and the ascendance of Napoleon Bonaparte.[13] This is a notable lacuna since provincial newspapers

[9] H. Gough, *The Newspaper Press in the French Revolution* (London, 2016), pp. 234–5; see also M. Peters, 'Historians and the Eighteenth-Century English Press: A Review of Possibilities and Problems', *Australian Journal of Politics & History*, xxxiv (March 1988), pp. 37-50 at p. 42.
[10] Popkin, 'The Press', p. 672.
[11] For the press see J. Censer, *Prelude to Power: the Parisian Radical Press, 1789-1791* (Baltimore, 1976); W. J. Murray, *The Right-Wing Press in the French Revolution, 1789-92* (Woodbridge, 1986); J.-P. Bertaud, *Les Amis du Roi : journaux et journalistes royalistes en France de 1789 à 1792* (Paris, 1984); for crisis see S. Blakemore, *Crisis in representation: Thomas Paine, Mary Wollstonecraft, Helen Maria Williams, and the rewriting of the French Revolution* (London, 1997).
[12] See Censer, *Prelude to Power*; Gough, *The Newspaper Press*.
[13] G. Feyel, *La presse départementale en révolution (1789-1799): bibliographie historique et critique* (La Garenne-Colombes, 1992), p. 277.

'played the role of modern political parties' by mobilising people for elections.[14] The historiography has not yet considered how the press communicated ideas in 1799 nor how it reacted to the crisis of the Midi uprising.[15] The importance of this is not limited to France since French news travelled widely across Britain.[16] This thesis, then, will answer the question of how newspapers in 1799 reacted to the uprising in the Midi *toulousain* and communicated this crisis.

In doing so, this thesis provides three novel insights. First, the collective national memory of the Terror, identified by Brown, remained relevant in 1799 and was foundational to how the provincial and Parisian press framed conspiracy. Nevertheless, lived local memories conveyed emotion more viscerally. Secondly, internal revolts consistently came second to military news from abroad within newspapers. This correlated with the Directory's blasé attitude towards the Midi despite the dire rhetoric of their puppet publications and newspapers in general. This suggests conspiracy allegations and the politicisation of the 'brigand' figure were not due to genuine fears but simply for political purchase. Thirdly, the lenient post-insurrection treatment of rebels was pragmatically fit into the banditry discourse thereby demonstrating the extreme lack of conviction behind such words and the malleability of revolutionary newspaper propaganda in 1799, again for political ends.

The newspapers selected for this thesis are long-running. Aside from the Jacobin press, which was frequently targeted by censors, the youngest newspaper

[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 28–9.
[15] Charles de Monseignat cursorily covers the Directory period *Un Chapitre de la Révolution Française ou Histoire des Journaux en France* (Paris, 1878), pp. 222–232.
[16] M. Löffler, *Welsh Responses to the French Revolution: Press and Public Discourse, 1789-1802* (Cardiff, 2012), p. 49; Harris, *Politics and the rise of the press*, p. 71.

studied was *Le Grondeur* – 250 editions.[17] For comparison, *Le Redacteur* (1795-1800) printed its 1350th edition on 28 August and *La Clef du Cabinet* (1797-1805) sold its 940th edition on 17 August. The *Journal de Toulouse* (1793-1800) reached an exceptional seven years of longevity under varying titles not long after the Haute-Garonne crisis.[18] Sustained by a reliable readership, such long-running publications cannot have been wholly ignored by society.[19] Newspaper longevity was rare given that financial viability was seldom achieved, even with patronage.[20] Aside from minor Directory subsidies to keep some pro-government newspapers on life support, there is no evidence of life-giving patronage to the selected papers.[21] *Le Moniteur* was not a normal newspaper but, in effect, a French Hansard for the two Councils and Directory. It therefore sits in a limbo-like state, possessing both archival qualities while still operating as a newspaper, and thus being a product constructed for public consumption.

This thesis considers newspapers narrowly. Instead of demonstrating how events were understood, newspapers are taken as constructed objects for public consumption that show how editors wanted readers to perceive events. What was included in council session accounts was carefully selected and varied between publications.[22] This work represents opinion from the Midi with the eponymous newspapers of Toulouse and Bordeaux. The latter is taken to represent the royalist press in this sliver of time. Insufficient records deprive this thesis of the *Écho du*

[17] *Le Grondeur* was also previously published between 1796-7. *Le Publiciste* (1797-1810) and *Feuille du Jour* (1797-1799) did not number their editions.
[18] G. Feyel, *Dictionnaire de la presse française pendant la Révolution, 1789-1799* (4 vols, Ferney-Voltaire, 2013), iii, p. 417.
[19] Peters makes a similar argument for English newspapers in 'Historians and the Eighteenth-Century English Press', p. 44.
[20] L. Pezavant, 'Être journaliste sous le Directoire' (Master 1 Thesis, Université Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2007), p. 34.
[21] Gough, *The Newspaper Press*, p. 153.
[22] For example 'Corps Legislatif', *Le Moniteur*, 16 August 1799, p. 3; compare 'Corps Legislatif', *Le Moniteur,* 15 August 1799, pp. 2-4; and 'Corps Legislatif', *Journal de Bordeaux*, 19 August 1799, pp. 1-2.

Commerce from Bordeaux and the *Journal de l'Aveyron*, a strongly Catholic publication whose records omit 1798-1806. The Parisian newspaper ecosystem lacks the Jacobin *Démocrate Français* and monarchist *Quotidienne*.[23] As a consequence, what is available may not reflect the full picture of 1799.

Although literacy is a negligible drawback, the study of newspapers alone cannot reveal their reception, engagement, nor readership depth.[24] Moreover, some thirty different dialects inhabited France and only 15 of 83 departments exclusively spoke French.[25] This thesis rests on the assumption of the content's transposition from French to the local *patois* (dialect). It is a fine balancing act. Newspapers are not direct expressions of public opinion yet excessive scepticism of them is illogical. Newspapers did have an effect on public life. Charles Sapineau, a former Vendéan general, was the subject of rumours circulated in the press of his re-involvement in counterrevolutionary activity in the western departments. He felt worried enough to refute publicly these allegations.[26] This thesis establishes the culture of print – in other words the message sent out by editors – not its impact on public opinion, two separate propositions.[27] As such, conclusions as to the influence of the press on the course of the Revolution cannot be made, unlike in Jack Censer's work in which he accounts for newspaper circulation.[28] What is important to discover is how the press understood turmoil at the end of the revolutionary decade and with what sort of portrayal they tried to infiltrate the minds of their wide readerships.

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[23] 'Paris', *Le Grondeur*, 31 August 1799, p. 1; C. Bellanger, J. Godechot, P. Guiral, and P. Renouvin, *Histoire générale de la presse française* (Paris, 1969), p. 526.
[24] E. Kennedy, *A Cultural History of the French Revolution* (New Haven, 1989), p. 38.
[25] *Ibid.*, pp. 325–6.
[26] 'Paris, le 7 fructidor', *Le Publiciste*, 25 August 1799, p. 3.
[27] Peters, 'Historians and the Eighteenth-Century English Press', p. 43.
[28] Censer, *Prelude to Power*, p. 129.

II: The Spectre of Conspiracy Built on Foundations of Memory

The summer of 1799 sits at a confluence of factors rendering it an interesting case study. It was the last period of notable brigandage before Bonaparte quasi-eradicated such criminality.[29] It was also 'a last brief period of press freedom' before Bonaparte's tight control of the press landscape.[30] Repealing the law of *19 Fructidor V* removed censorship and the *Bureau Politique* which enforced it. This provided Increasing stamp duty and proscribing both editors and publications shortly afterwards failed to impede newspaper proliferation.[31] Lastly, on 18 June 1799, Emmanuel Sieyès became the leading Director in a bloodless political seizure of power. He had relied on support from Jacobin generals and it was within this compromise that the Jacobin press was tolerated. Newspapers thus had some latitude to publish dissenting opinions against the Directory but they did not have a free pass. The *Décade Philosophique* was threatened with proscription for restrained criticism of French diplomatic policy. [32]

A notable Jacobin legislative minority survived the legal coup perpetrated against them in May 1798 following that year's elections. This was a much less thorough purging than that of the newly-elected royalists a year earlier in 1797.[33] The 1799 elections produced the lowest voter turnout on record, a swollen

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[29] L. del Puech, 'L'État en guerre contre le brigandage. Un cas exemplaire : le départment de l'Aveyron de 1799 à 1815', in V. Sottocasa, ed., *Les brigands: criminalité et protestation politique (1750-1850)* (Rennes, 2013), p. 108.
[30] J. D. Popkin, *Revolutionary News: The Press in France 1789-1799* (London, 1990), pp. 174–5.
[31] Bellanger, Godechot, Guiral, and Renouvin, *Histoire générale*, p. 545; É. Wauters, *Une presse de province pendant la Révolution française: journaux et journalistes normands (1785-1800)* (Paris, 1993), p. 250; Gough, *The Newspaper Press*, pp. 146–8; G. Lefebvre, *The Directory*, tran. R. Baldick (London, 1965), p. 184.
[32] P.-L. Ginguené, ed., *La Décade Philosophique, Littéraire et Politique: IVème Trimestre. Messidor, Thermidor, Fructidor* (Paris, 1799), p. 379.
[33] Woronoff, *The Thermidorean Regime*, pp. 177–9, 168, 172.

majority of moderate deputies, an increasing deputation of Jacobins, and a legislature lacking in political experience. Three quarters of those elected in 1799 had only held local administrative positions.[34] Volatility and factionalism reliably followed.[35] Left-wing measures crept into legislation thanks to the growing Jacobin presence. Most significantly, the Law of Hostages, enacted on 12 July, enabled local administrations to arrest or deport nobles, and the relatives of *émigrés* or known rebels.[36] Although seldom officially applied, it justified bourgeois-pandering newspapers to call back to 1792 and the September massacres.[37]

Political clubs also multiplied in this deregulated climate. More than forty opened in Paris, including the neo-Jacobin *Club de Manège* which accrued 3,000 members of whom 250 were active deputies in the councils.[38] The clubs possessed more bark than bite though. They were more locally-minded than centrally coordinated as in the early-1790s.[39] Despite the forced closure of the *Manège* in mid-August, smaller organs like *La Grande Quille* in Bordeaux remained open and new clubs opened elsewhere, such as in Nantes on 16 August 1799.[40] With this club and newspaper revival came the unexpected and frightening rebirth of Jacobin identity politics using foreign and internal crisis as its energy source.[41]

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[34] L. Hunt, D. Lansky, and P. Hanson, 'The Failure of the Liberal Republic in France, 1795-1799: The Road to Brumaire', *The Journal of Modern History*, li (1979), pp. 734-759 at p. 756.
[35] H. G. Brown, *War, Revolution, and the Bureaucratic State: Politics and Army Administration in France, 1791-1799* (Oxford, 1995), p. 247.
[36] Brown, *Ending*, p. 257; for other left-wing measures see D. M. G. Sutherland, *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order* (Oxford, 2003), p. 293; M. Lyons, *Revolution in Toulouse: An Essay on Provincial Terrorism* (Bern, 1978), p. 190.
[37] Brown, 'Revolt and Repression', p. 248; Woronoff, *The Thermidorean Regime*, p. 182.
[38] Lefebvre, *The Directory*, p. 184.
[39] Sutherland, *France, 1789-1815*, p. 310.
[40] Bordeaux', *Journal de Bordeaux*, 26 August 1799, p. 2 ; Sutherland, *The French Revolution and Empire*, p. 294.
[41] Brown, *Ending*, p. 352.

A Climate of Encroaching Enemies

Internal panic was complemented by more alarming crises on France's borders resembling those of 1792. Across an expansive geography of French-controlled Italy, antirevolutionary revolts posed a military threat but also an ideological 'trauma'.[42] A wide spectrum of Italian society including previously antagonistic social groups rose up together locally to rebuke French revolutionary ideals.[43] This represented an ideological challenge to France on par with the Vendée rebellion, partly because it did not require international support.[44] By the time Admiral Nelson's blockade had arrived, Cardinal Ruffo's retaking of Naples was a foregone conclusion.[45] Importantly, these revolts occurred as far west as Piedmont, on France's south-eastern doorstep.

On top of this was an Austro-Russian offensive that pushed General Schérer all the way up the Po valley past the Trebbia river to Genoa between April and June.[46] The same story of a string of French military defeats played out in Switzerland. Major battles were won by the Austrians at Winterthur (27 May) and Zurich (4-7 June) with the tide only turning in mid-August by the time the royalists had begun their rebellion.

In Belgium as in Italy, locals challenged wholesale the validity of French republicanism from November to 30 December 1798.[47] Conscription and anti-

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[42] M. Broers, *The Napoleonic Empire in Italy, 1796-1814: Cultural Imperialism in a European Context?* (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 63, 41.
[43] M. Broers, *The Napoleonic Mediterranean: Enlightenment, Revolution and Empire* (London, 2017), p. 47.
[44] M. Broers, 'The parochial revolution: 1799 and the counter-revolution in Italy', *Renaissance and Modern Studies*, xxxiii (1989), pp. 159-174 at p. 159.
[45] J. A. Davis, *Naples and Napoleon: Southern Italy and the European Revolutions, 1780-1860* (Oxford, 2006), p. 90.
[46] R. Parrish, 'The Military and Diplomatic Career of Jacques Etienne Macdonald' (PhD. thesis, Florida State University, 2005), p. 103.
[47] Lefebvre, *The Directory*, p. 177; P. Verhaegen, *La Belgique sous la domination française, 1792-1814* (5 vols, Bruxelles, 1926), iii, p. 509.

Catholic policies fertilised a new national seditious network that planned a fresh rebellion at the beginning of 1799.[48] This deeply concerned local officials and terrified the Directory.[49] French troops departing the region to combat Austria triggered overt daily resistance from March throughout August.[50] Tranquillity was evidently only maintained through France's military presence, which it increasingly had to apportion elsewhere.

Georges Lefebvre summarised the catastrophe staring down France curtly: 'Italy was lost, Switzerland invaded, Holland threatened.'[51] Additionally, the most professional and coherent iteration of *chouannerie* in its long history of perpetual counterrevolution was occurring in Western Sarthe.[52] Just as in 1795, active *chouannerie* was coupled with the well-publicised menace of English supplies and invasion.[53] *Le Grondeur*, a Parisian newspaper, warned that after England conquered Holland, 'every side of France will be threatened concurrently'.[54] The ominous reality was only made more terrifying by *Le Moniteur*:

> 'From the outside, [the enemies] threaten the territory of the Republic, which they have agreed to impiously divide amongst themselves; from the inside, they agitate, corrupt, divide, and irritate all the vigorous feelings of the people to bring about confusion and disruption.'[55]

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[48] Verhaegen, *La Belgique*, iii, p. 342.
[49] *Ibid.*, pp. 658, 441.
[50] *Ibid.*, pp. 662, 715.
[51] Lefebvre, *The Directory*, iii, p. 179.
[52] Brown, *Ending*, p. 260.
[53] Sutherland, *The French Revolution and Empire*, p. 276; See also Sutherland, *France, 1789-1815*, p. 291; 'Nouvelles', *Journal de Toulouse*, 31 December 1799, p. 1.
[54] 'Toutes les côtes de la France seront en même tems menacées'; 'Nouvelles Extérieures', *Le Grondeur*, 21 August 1799, p. 1.
[55] 'Au-dehors, [les ennemis] menacent le territoire de la république, dont ils se sont promis le partage impie ; au-dedans, ils s'agitent, ils corrompent, ils divisent, ils irritent toutes les passions

An insurrectionary outbreak in Belgium was still on the cards until December.[56] In Switzerland, Oberwald was the tide-turning victory on 14 August, however, news of this was not published in *Le Moniteur* until 24 August.[57] The French had been ousted by local rebels from Italy and pushed all the way to France's eastern doorstep, a defeat only magnified by the loss of the well-known General Joubert at Novi (15 August). Minister of War Joseph Bernadotte likened Joubert to Bonaparte; another account gave him a folkloric end urging his men onwards with his last breaths, 'Keep marching!'.[58] How unexpected these various dangers were only served to worsen the cloud of fear that hung over the country by August. When we talk of the Midi uprising, then, the 'atmosphere of disintegration' that was very much present in people's minds must be intimately connected with it.[59]

Fears of Conspiracy

Since the beginning of the Revolution, the Midi had shown the first signs of popular counterrevolution and from then on only became more rebellious.[60] The region had been the main proponent of federalism against Parisian centralisation in 1792, although Toulouse itself had merely 'flirted with' the idea.[61] Toulon had handed itself over to the English fleet in 1793. Under the Directory, the Haute-Garonne and neighbouring regions, except the Jacobin

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pour opérer la confusion et le bouleversement'; 'Paris, le 16 thermidor', *Le Moniteur*, 4 August 1799, p. 1.
[56] Verhaegen, *La Belgique*, iii, p. 717.
[57] 'République Helvétique', *Le Moniteur*, 24 August 1799, p. 1.
[58] 'Ministere de la Guerre', *Le Moniteur*, 30 August 1799, p. 2; 'Marchez toujours!'; 'Directoire Executif', *Feuille du Jour*, 28 August 1799, p. 3.
[59] A. Soboul, *The French Revolution, 1787-1799: from the storming of the Bastille to Napoleon* (London, 1974), p. 534.
[60] H. C. Johnson, *The Midi in Revolution: A Study of Regional Political Diversity, 1789-1793* (Princeton, 1986), p. 250.
[61] Lyons, *Revolution in Toulouse*, p. 41.

stronghold of Toulouse, had predominantly acted in favour of counterrevolution.[62] Religiously-motivated counterrevolution in the Haute-Garonne was par for the course. It is therefore understandable that rumours of insurrection were not initially heeded.

The rebellion was made concretely real when, on 7 August, General Launay, a royalist captured in the insurrection's first days, confessed a six-month-long conspiracy to the administrators of the Haute-Garonne department (who operated from Toulouse). Such evidence, however, was not needed for conspiracy to be proclaimed well before this.[63] Eight days prior to news of the rebellion reaching Paris, Pierre-Joseph Briot emphatically bellowed to the Council of Five Hundred: 'I declare to France that a royalist conspiracy exists.'[64] On 13 August an unnamed councilmember spoke of 'schemes intending to destroy liberty' while in the previous day's session deputy Richou proposed a commission to present recommendations on more stringent passport laws to stop royalists congregating.[65]

Minister of Police Joseph Fouché had received intelligence on the Philanthropic Institutes, the front behind which royalist machinations were organised, but this was limited only to knowing what hand gestures they used to communicate.[66] The issue that Emmanuel Bonin identified was that knowledge of the Institute's existence did not mean they could prevent its plans.[67] Intelligence beyond a future royalist insurrection was not evident. Nor was this information

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[62] Godechot, *La Révolution française*, pp. 303–4.
[63] All ADHG sources are Haute-Garonne Executive Committee correspondence unless otherwise stated; Toulouse: ADHG, 1L 260, item 5366: letter to the Executive Committee of Tarn, 7 August 1799.
[64] 'Je declare à la France qu'il existe une conspiration royaliste'; 'Conseil des Cinq-Cents', *Le Publiciste*, 6 August 1799, p.4.
[65] 'Complots liberticides'; 'Conseil des Cinq-Cents', *Le Grondeur*, 14 August 1799, p. 3.
[66] E. Bonin, 'Étude sur la direction et le développement des réseaux royalistes contre-révolutionnaires en France et sous le Directoire (1795-1799): Agences royales et institut philanthropique' (Master thesis, Université Paris I, 1998), p. 203.
[67] Bonin, 'Étude', pp. 203–4.

known to the press. For those outside the central administration in Paris minor incidents in the Haute-Garonne – such as the burning of liberty trees and shots fired at civil servants and *biens nationaux* owners – were the only tangible evidence of resistance since May 1799.[68] But these actions were only marginally more political than the brigandage that had long been occurring under the Directory. In essence, there was little concrete evidence noted by these council deputies of a royalist conspiracy.

After Launay's confession, the conspiracy became more elaborate and based on less and less evidence. Bonnaire in the Five Hundred alleged that the Midi conspiracy extended northward into his own department of Cher. He maintained that well-organised royalist political societies were collecting names of all people who voted for republicans in the previous elections in preparation for a Terror-like slaughter.[69] While the Institute operated in 24 departments stretching from Bordeaux across the Midi to Switzerland, this was not known at the time.[70] Likewise, it was quite common for newspapers to extend the scope of the crisis beyond that being witnessed. *La Clef du Cabinet* was positive that the defeats already suffered by rebels in the Haute-Garonne delayed their 'bloodthirsty plans' for Tarn and Aveyron.[71]

A Departure from the Norm

This lack of reliance on proof when reporting the conspiracy is notable because of how it contrasted with the strained ways editors tried to demonstrate their reliability more generally. Correcting false assertions or errors was common

[68] Godechot, *La Révolution française*, p. 286.
[69] 'Corps Legislatif, *Clef du Cabinet*, 24 August 1799, p. 7.
[70] J. Lacouture, *Le Mouvement Royaliste dans le Sud-Ouest: (1797-1800)* (Hossegor, 1932), p. ii.
[71] 'Projets sanguinaires'; 'République Française', *La Clef du Cabinet*, 31 August 1799, p. 3.

and admitting an inability to comment on a news story's veracity occasional.[72] Where possible, publications tried to note their transparency. For instance, when publishing a letter from an English parliamentarian to councilmember Lucien Bonaparte, the *Décade Philosophique* attached the original English letter before the French translation so that bilingual readers could 'judge the faithfulness of the translation'.[73]

The radical *Journal de Bordeaux* displayed opposite behaviour, going to great lengths, even fabricating accounts, to promote anti-Jacobinism. Kirwan asserted that the third stanza of the people's chant during a protest in Bordeaux was 'down with the Jacobins'. Earlier on the same page, though, the same chant ended with 'down with the bandits'.[74] By and large however, reporting conspiracy without need for evidence bucked the trend of an otherwise relatively sincere press. The cause of such baseless exaggeration was clear: it matched the mood of a French republic under threat from all sides externally and internally.

Conspiracy as a Political Tool

The notion of conspiracy remained largely unchanged from the polymorphous 'aristocratic plot' identified by François Furet.[75] This was a causal heuristic which all at once immediately justified resistance as unpardonable and the crushing of it as purifying. The 'plot' also connoted secrecy which allowed

[72] 'République Française', *Le Moniteur*, 12 August 1799, p. 1; 'Errata', *Le Moniteur*, 1 August 1799, p. 4; 'Paris', *Le Grondeur*, 15 August 1799, p. 2; 'Au rédacteur du Grondeur', *Le Grondeur*, 21 August 1799, p. 3; for the veracity point see 'Paris, le 26 thermidor', *Le Publiciste*, 14 August 1799, p. 2; 'République Française', *Le Moniteur*, 7 August 1799, p. 1.
[73] 'Juger la fidelité de la traduction'; Ginguené, ed., *La Décade Philosophique*, p. 346.
[74] 'À bas les jacobins'; 'à bas les brigands'; 'Bordeaux', *Journal de Bordeaux*, 10 August 1799, p. 3.
[75] F. Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, tran. E. Forster (Cambridge, 1981), p. 53.

accusations to sidestep the need for evidence.[76] This concept originated with the Great Fear but it retained its core characteristics by 1799. The only difference was how crucial of a political device it had become.

The pro-Directory press manipulated descriptions of the royalist conspiracy to justify policy. *Le Moniteur* reported ex-nobles and parents of *émigrés* leading the columns of royalists, which was simply false.[77] *Le Grondeur*, another Parisian paper without the same pro-government agenda, reported that experienced officers and generals led the rebel armies.[78] This was a convenient exaggeration for the Directory to justify the Law of Hostages, a political victory for the Directory that was sorely needed given the civil strife overwhelming France. Description of crisis was manipulated to endorse certain repressive measures and to prove the republican government correct in such a way that crisis sustained the Directory's repressive methods. The government's exaggerated allegation of a conspiracy was an *ex post facto* 'I told you so'.

The Jacobin press was particularly reliant on conspiracy for promoting their politics. The more panic created, the easier it was to criticise Directorial inaction and the more likely 1793-esque powers of societal control would be revived. This was the motivation for flooding their readership with the conspiracy narrative. Of the *Journal de Toulouse*'s archived editions between 8 August and 31 December 1799, 41 per cent contained the term 'conspiration' (conspiracy).[79] To compare with the government press over the same time period, 34 per cent of

[76] *Ibid.*, p. 53; Timothy Tackett, 'Conspiracy Obsession in a Time of Revolution: French Elites and the Origins of the Terror, 1789-1792', *The American Historical Review*, cv (2000), pp. 691-713 at p. 691.
[77] 'Corps Legislatif', *Le Moniteur*, 15 August 1799, p. 3; see also 'Nouvelles Étrangeres', *Le Thé*, 9 August 1799, p. 3.
[78] 'Conseil des Cinq-Cents', *Le Grondeur*, 14 August 1799, p. 4.
[79] Based on 73 editions in the Rosalis database, last accessed 27 May 2019, [https://rosalis.bibliotheque.toulouse.fr/cgi-bin/presseregionale?a=cl&cl=CL2.1799.08&sp=PJOUTOUOBS&e=fr-20--1--txt-------TE--0----].

Le Moniteur's 143 editions contained 'conspiration'.[80] By contrast, only 12 per cent of the predecessor newspaper *L'Anti-Terroriste*'s editions use the term.[81]

Usage of 'conspiration' also spiked at the time of the Midi crisis. Of the times Dufey published the term, 57 per cent occurred in the 27 editions of August and September. By comparison, within the same date ranges as is available for the *Journal de Toulouse*, August and September make up 82 per cent of the times *Le Moniteur* used the word in 1799.[82] Although the two databases from where these data originate are not complete, it makes two discernible points. First, the *Journal de Toulouse*, a Jacobin organ, was much more politically aggressive than the government press. Secondly, there was an observable increase in allegations of conspiracy in August and September.

For the Jacobins to sustain this greater rate, they had to push the envelope further than other newspapers, which meant far-fetched accusations. When announcing the rebellion, the Jacobin *Journal des Hommes Libres* connected a web of violence to expand the royalist conspiracy beyond the Haute-Garonne. *Confédérés* in Bordeaux, rebel deserters in Amiens, conscripts shouting 'long live the King' in Dijon, and undescribed unrest in Saintes and Rochefort were all amalgamated to manufacture a conspiracy.[83] In reality, children were killed in Amiens, not Jacobins, and those killed in Bordeaux were protesting against the Jacobins.[84] The divisive Jacobin mindset made it easy to impute resistance against

[80] Based on 143 editions between 8 August 1799 and 31 December 1799, last accessed 20 June 2019, [https://www.retronews.fr/].
[81] Based on the 277 archived editions between 7 February 1795 and 8 September 1797, last accessed 27 May 2019, [https://rosalis.bibliotheque.toulouse.fr/cgi-bin/presseregionale?a=cl&cl=CL1&sp=PANTITER&e=fr-20--1--txt-------TE--0----].
[82] Based on editions between 8 August 1799 to 31 December 1799, last accessed 20 June 2019, [https://www.retronews.fr/].
[83] 'Vive le Roi'; 'Paris, 26 messidor', *Journal des Hommes Libres*, 14 August 1799, p. 3§2.
[84] *Le Moniteur*, 15 August 1799, p. 1§3.

the state to any *anti*revolutionary criticism of the government.[85] Conspiracy was not a difficult further leap. Poor living conditions sustained antirevolutionary sentiments among the peasantry and workers. Yet these were distinct from the counterrevolutionary aims of the elites and clergy.[86]

The royalist press, represented here by the *Journal de Bordeaux*, similarly switched to a more political footing just prior to the insurrection. This newspaper transformed from an informational publication into a primarily political mouthpiece. The 'Poetry' section shifted from appearing in 31 per cent of the 90 editions publishing prior to 19 June 1799 to 4 per cent of subsequent editions up until 22 September 1799.[87]

Royalist newspapers had to walk a line between producing the opinion their readers wanted and avoiding government censorship. For this reason, it was safer to malign the Jacobins than to promote royalism positively. Jacobin publications were not likewise constrained; they were free to sing the praises of Jacobin patriots who 'formed on their own the first troops who pushed back the bandits'.[88] For different reasons, therefore, allegations coming from the left as well as the right were both scarcely credible.

The editor of the *Journal de Bordeaux*, Edouard Kirwan, had unconfirmed but probable links to the Bordeaux Philanthropic Institute's leadership.[89] As a means of distracting his readership from the disturbance in the Haute-Garonne, he channelled his vehement anti-Jacobinism through the Bordeaux poster scandal.

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[85] For example *Journal de Toulouse*, 8 August 1799, p. 4§1.
[86] J. M. Walshaw, 'The Search for "Subverters of Public Opinion"', in P. R. Campbell, T. E. Kaiser, and M. Linton, eds., *Conspiracy in the French Revolution* (Manchester, 2007), p. 120.
[87] Gilles Feyel, *Dictionnaire de la presse française pendant la Révolution, 1789-1799* (4 vols, Ferney-Voltaire, 2014), iv, p. 285.
[88] 'Ont formé seules les premières troupes qui ont repoussé les brigands'; Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 4-LB42-2415, *Journal de Toulouse*, 9 August 1799, p. 1§2.
[89] Feyel, *Dictionnaire*, iv, p. 276.

Sometime during the night of 6 August, posters were affixed across the city. They carried words 'worthy of Marat's penmanship': 'No more anarchists or death'.[90] In the following day's march, after the posters had been torn down, men in the town hall shot at the unarmed crowd, killing several. The poster was likely the work of the Philanthropic Institute that had one stated aim of removing anarchists from local government.[91] The local administration blamed royalism in a public statement. Kirwan responded by reversing the conspiracy:

> '*No King*, you say, we did not even want one; but what does royalty have in common with murders that were long premeditated in the lair of the Jacobins?...Do you finally agree that the Jacobins are royalists hidden under the disgusting mask of terrorism? You are surrounded by our murderers!!!'.[92]

Blaming the poster scandal on the Jacobins was just the beginning. Conversely to these vague allegations, Kirwan ardently pushed blame for the Haute-Garonne unrest onto the Jacobins despite the white flags hanging in Muret. To him the royalists inspired no fear but the Jacobins were 'in a permanent state of conspiracy'.[93] Repetition was at the centre of Kirwan's assault. The Jacobin 'plans' were frequently implied.[94] Recent experiences of the Jacobin legislative resurgence gave inherent weight to these allegations. This outlandish imputation

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[90] 'Digne de la plume de Marat'; 'Plus d'anarchistes ou la mort'; 'Bordeaux', *Journal de Bordeaux*, 7 August 1799, p. 3.
[91] Bonin, 'Étude', p. 147.
[92] *Point de roi*, dites-vous, nous n'en voulons pas ; mais qu'a de commun la royauté avec les meurtres long-tems prémédité dans les antres des jacobins ?…Conviendrez-vous enfin que les jacobins sont des royalistes cachés sous le masque dégoûtant de la terreur ?…Vous êtes entouré de nos assassins !!!'; 'Bordeaux', *Journal de Bordeaux*, 9 August 1799, p. 2-3.
[93] 'En état permanent de conspiration'; 'République Française', *Journal de Bordeaux*, 30 August 1799, p. 3.
[94] 'Projets'; 'République Française', *Journal de Bordeaux*, 10 August 1799, p. 2; 'Bordeaux, 24 thermidor an 7', *Journal de Bordeaux*, 13 August 1799, p. 3.

foreshadowed Consular politics when the Infernal Machine plot, in reality royalist-planned, was blamed on the Jacobins to exile many of them.

Kirwan was far from alone in slandering the Jacobins. The *Feuille du Jour*, a marginally royalist and much less radical publication, causally blamed the uprising on the Jacobins. The peasants, once a peaceful group of labourers and farmers, joined the rebellion for fear of being in the clutches of the Jacobins once more. The author also insinuates that the 'administration composed of Jacobins' blamed the royalists as pretext to conduct more proscriptions and persecutions.[95]

The 'phraseology of conspiracy' was yet again a required part of the revolutionary discourse.[96] Lynn Hunt identified this when examining the rhetoric of 1789 and the early 1790s. As seen above, usage of the conspiracy trope flooded back into vogue during a time of crisis. Newspapers mediated political combat and the main weapon of choice was allegations of conspiracy. To sustain their repressive measures, the Directory, through *Le Moniteur*, kept up the conspiracy discourse with an only slightly diminished level of alarm after the Haute-Garonne had been subdued and France's fortunes in Italy and Switzerland had turned for the better. In November police in Genoa were said to have thwarted a counterrevolutionary conspiracy intending to destroy all French people and the whole executive arm of government.[97] Similarly, Dufey alleged a permanent royalist conspiracy directing still-at-large royalists in the Midi on an assassination campaign.[98] The Jacobin press was trying to discredit the Directory's role as an effective peacekeeper and push voters towards the left, while their influenced

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[95] 'Administration composée de jacobins'; 'Moyen infaillible et éprouvé d'exciter la guerre civile', *Feuille du Jour*, 29 August 1799, p. 3.
[96] L. Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley, 1984), p. 39.
[97] 'République Française', *Le Moniteur*, 26 November 1799, p. 1.
[98] 'Nouvelles', *Journal de Toulouse*, 1 December 1799, pp. 1-2.

waned from September onwards. This suggests conspiracy allegations were not only a product of a period of total crisis but also the need for political leverage.

Conspiracy Allegations Built on a Legacy of Fear

The effectiveness of conspiracy as a propaganda tool relied on how these allegations resonated with memories. For example, since Jacobins could not be accused of anti-republicanism in the same manner as royalists, when newspapers alleged a Jacobin conspiracy the logical conclusion was a repeat of the Terror's institutionalised violence.[99] The Terror (March 1792-July 1794) was not itself imprinted on the collective memory of France as a coherent period until the Thermidorians constructed that memory through pathos-imbued newspaper articles and engravings expressing and delineating the fear felt by individuals who actually experienced it.[100] This turned 'largely localized experiences of violence and repression into a more intense collective trauma.'[101] The emotional experience of the Terror was carried nationally to people who had not experienced the political violence. For example, 42 of the 83 departments had fewer than twelve citizens executed during the Terror.[102]

Brown correctly identified the effect such a constructed memory infrastructure would have in future. Helping citizens across France feel the visceral fear of the Terror through rhetorical inflation and saturation heightened the sense of trauma in subsequent occurrences of violence.[103] Consequently, fear

[99] Hunt, Lansky, and Hanson, 'Failure of the Liberal Republic', p. 753.
[100] H. G. Brown, *Mass Violence and the Self: From the French Wars of Religion to the Paris Commune* (Ithaca, 2018), pp. 115, 133.
[101] *Ibid.*, p. 158.
[102] *Ibid.*, pp. 116–7.
[103] Brown, *Mass Violence*, p. 158.

of the royalist uprising in 1799 was amplified beyond the actual threat to the republic because of the print media drawing on this constructed sense of shared suffering in their accounts. This is not to say that apprehensions about a return to the Terror did not exist at the time. One reader posed the question of whether or not 'the Terror would be reborn in France'.[104]

Three points must be made about Brown's memory infrastructure as it applies to newspaper culture during the Haute-Garonne insurrection. First, Jacobins were associated in the press firmly to memory of the Terror. Secondly, accusations of conspiracy made against the royalists recalled the pre-Terror era or the worst of the *ancien régime*. Thirdly, local memories of violence were more powerful than the constructed national memories.

The neo-Jacobins of 1799 could not escape the transgressions of their predecessors. Although a rather apolitical literary publication, the *Décade Philosophique*, described the Jacobins as popularly abhorred for the tyranny displayed in 1793.[105] Sieyès similarly denounced the *Club de Manège* in Paris on behalf of the Directory for 're-awakening dangerous memories' – those of guillotines and tribunals.[106] Kirwan in Bordeaux reprinted the words of the exiled Marquis de Bouillé that there had never existed a deeper or more persistent conspiracy than that of the Jacobins: 'What was true in 1791 had not stopped being true in 1799.'[107]

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[104] 'La *terreur* renaîtra-t-il en France ?'; 'Au Redacteur', *Feuille du Jour*, 9 August 1799, p. 3.
[105] Bellanger, Godechot, Guiral, and Renouvin, *Histoire générale*, p. 536; Ginguené, ed., *La Décade Philosophique*, p. 445.
[106] 'Réveiller des souvenirs dangereux'; 'Message au conseil des cinq cents, du 26 thermidor, an 7', *Le Grondeur*, 15 August 1799, p. 3.
[107] 'Ce qui étoit vrai en 91, n'a pas cessé de l'être en l'an 7'; 'République Française', *Journal de Bordeaux*, 7 August 1799, p. 2.

Royalist conspiracy was more complex. Lacking a distinct legacy of fear which overshadowed the Jacobins led the government to associate the royalists with indiscriminate killing, a lacklustre replacement. Bernadotte's concluding report on the uprising presented to the Directory on 22 August emphasised the brutality and irrationality of the royalist killings: 'A republican endlessly refused to shout *long live the King*: the rebels shot him. Another was weak enough to believe he could earn back his life by letting loose this liberty-destroying cry; they shot him no less heartlessly'.[108] This anecdote served more as a stern reminder for government soldiers to stick to their duty. The Directory period's administrative chaos meant that national guardsmen suffered horrible work conditions with pay often in arrears.[109] In turn, a lack of conviction in their cause was common.

The equivalent to association with the Terror's atrocities was the consequence of a royalist conspiracy. They were set forth as a return to privileges, the tithe, the corvée, and seigneurialism – the worst oppression of the *ancien régime* for peasants. General Frégeville delineated this clearly in a threatening proclamation finishing, 'You have asked that your children, talented by nature, can however never achieve a position with society's important duties because they will not have noble blood.'[110] The *Journal des Hommes Libres* labelled royalists the 'coadjutors of Talleyrand', a notable early-supporter of the Revolution arrested in absentia by the Convention in 1792.[111] Dufey in Toulouse gave Antoine de Paulo,

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[108] 'Un républicain a constamment refusé de crier *vive le roi* : les rébelles l'on fusillé. Un autre a eu la faiblesse de croire racheter sa vie, en laissant échapper ce cri liberticide : ils l'ont fusillé non moins impitoyablement'; 'Extrait du rapport au Directoire exécutif', *Clef du Cabinet*, 24 August 1799, p. 6.
[109] Sutherland, *France, 1789-1815*, p. 284.
[110] 'Vous avez demandé que vos enfans, doués de talens par la nature, ne pussent cependant jamais parvenir à des fonctions honorables de la société, parce qu'ils ne seraient pas d'un sang ennobli'; 'Suite de la Proclamation du général Frégeville', *Journal de Toulouse*, 5 September 1799, pp. 1-2.
[111] 'Les coadjuteurs de Talleyrand'; 'Sur le nouvel étendart official de la réaction', *Journal des Hommes Libres*, 16 August 1799, p. 4.

one of the movement's three leaders, the epithet 'parliamentarian', harking back to the *ancien regime*'s inegalitarian *parlements* and corporate society, as well as an 'émigré'.[112]

Lastly, local memories appeared to be more effective than the Thermidorians' national memory infrastructure. Kirwan chose to link a new Jacobin club in Nantes with explicit mention of traumatic memories from the region itself: 'The residents of Nantes, who have not forgotten the drownings of Carrier, testified openly with their shouts, *down with the Jacobins, down with the clubs*, etc. etc. The horror that the Jacobins inspire.'[113] Likewise, he summoned the spirits of terrorists in Lyon in a literal sense when writing about a Jacobin dinner that took place there. The event is portrayed as an arcane ritual led by a mysterious sorcerer-chemist taking place in a laboratory with a blood-coloured curtain. Having told the rebel people of Lyon to tremble or pay up with gold, the spirits of the 'hommes de sang' ('bloodthirsty') Joseph Chalier, Collot d'Herbois, Georges Couthon, and Claude Javogues appeared before being shouted away by those attending the event.[114]

Timothy Tackett described the early 1790s as a 'liminal experience' of destabilising and ideological change for the French. The growing pains, then, were the acute fears of a conspiracy ready to undo such change.[115] It follows that the people living in 1799, after a decade of such fears, were acclimatised – and perhaps fatigued by – news of insurrection, especially in the Midi. Furet's

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[112] 'Parlementaire'; 'Rapport des agens de Calmont et Gibel', *Journal de Toulouse*, 12 August 1799, p. 1.
[113] 'Les Nantais, qui n'ont pas oublié les *Noyades* de Carrier, ont témoigné hautement par leurs cris, *à bas les Jacobins, à bas les clubs*, etc. etc. l'horreur que leur inspirent les *Jacobins*'; 'Bordeaux', *Journal de Bordeaux*, 26 August 1799, p. 2.
[114] 'Fantasmagorie des jacobins de Lyon', *Journal de Bordeaux*, 8 August 1799, p. 2.
[115] Tackett, 'Conspiracy Obsession', p. 712.

‘aristocratic plot’ by 1799 had become a commonly-utilised political tool. It was almost as if overuse had transformed the allegation of a conspiracy into a parody of itself; details and evidence were unnecessary. What was important was who was responsible for the conspiracy. The consequences could then easily be fleshed out by a shortcut: references to the collective national memory of events earlier in the Revolution. The 1799 press harvested the seeds planted by the Thermidorian regime and also latent memories of the *ancien régime* to influence how the Haute-Garonne uprising was understood. Despite this, local experiences of the Terror were of course more visceral and therefore more powerful when connected to a conspiracy accusation.

Conspiracy allegations, however, were only one trope of constructing the panic surrounding the royalist rebels. The other strand complementing this was the bandit figure. Combining the two, newspapers portrayed the Haute-Garonne uprising as a fatal threat to France.

III: The Fatal Threat and How It Was Handled

Le Thé, writing that 'France cannot escape total destruction', expanded the royalist threat to be national:

> 'Once the English reach our shores, they intend to return us to the rule of Louis XVIII. At this moment, 100,000 men disseminated all across France in secrecy will fire a cannon shot in each commune; this will be the rallying signal of all the royalists and the discontented.'[116]

An official proclamation from 8 August announcing the Midi to be in rebellion pronounced, 'The Republic is in imminent danger'.[117] The stakes were high: should Toulouse fall, the Midi would be easily taken, and then the 'safety of the Republic' would be at risk.[118] These are just two examples from the Haute-Garonne administrators. Godechot likewise needlessly inflated the importance of Toulouse despite the evidently loose organisation of the royalists elsewhere in France preventing this insurrection becoming a Midi-wide or nation-wide movement.[119] Nevertheless, totalising terminology clothed the insurrection. To the press, the royalists were not a local threat but a national crisis.

This was not just a few melodramatic administrators; the Directory proffered the same portrayal. Sieyès described to the Five Hundred royalist agents

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[116] 'La France ne peut échapper à une destruction totale'; 'À l'arrivée des Anglais sur nos côtes, ils proposeront la rentrée de Louis XVIII. À l'instant, cent mille hommes épars dans la France et qui sont dans le secret, tireront un coup de canon dans chaque commune; ce sera le signal du ralliement de tout les royalistes et mécontens'; 'Nouvelles Étrangeres', *Le Thé*, 9 August 1799, p. 3.

[117] 'La République est en péril imminent'; Toulouse: ADHG, 1L 444, item 12: proclamation from the Haute-Garonne Central Administration, 8 August 1799.

[118] 'Salut de la République'; Toulouse: ADHG, 1L 260, item 5366: letter to the Executive Committee of Tarn, 7 August 1799.

[119] Godechot, *La Révolution française*, p. 304.

wearing all kinds of disguises, speaking all languages, and being found throughout the country.[120] The insurrectionary plans were meticulous, organised down to the weapons to be used to kill each proscribed republican.[121] Toulouse claimed nearly all the rebels were on horseback and well-armed although, in reality, most were poorly armed peasants on foot.[122] The Toulouse administrators were also said to have saved the republic by uncovering the royalist plans for insurrection across the country.[123] They, in turn, adopted this view. In a letter to the Haute-Garonne deputation to the Council of Five Hundred, they stated their belief that the rebels in the Midi were a stringed mannequin controlled by royalists in Paris, implying a much larger conspiratorial network.[124] Captured royalists did originate from outside the Haute-Garonne but fears of a national uprising were certainly embellished.[125] The same language continued after the revolt. The *Journal de Toulouse* described the Midi's royalism as undermining the moral foundations and principles of the Revolution and, therefore, the past 10 years of rebuilding France.[126]

The Politically-Minded Bandit Warrior

Why, then, was rhetoric about the royalist revolt so dire? Crisis was a political tool that justified the Directory's most repressive measure, the Law of Hostages. The word 'brigand' ('bandit') operated as key to this characterisation since, as Brown notes, 'brigandage was a near-universal scourge'.[127] It attributed

[120] 'Message au conseil des cinq cents, du 26 thermidor, an 7', *Le Grondeur*, 15 August 1799, p. 2.
[121] 'Toulouse', *Journal de Toulouse*, 15 September 1799, p. 3.
[122] 'Corps Legislatif', *Le Moniteur*, 15 August 1799, p. 3; Jacques Godechot, *La contre-révolution: doctrine et action, 1789-1804* (Paris, 1961), p. 373.
[123] 'République Française', *Le Moniteur*, 19 August 1799, p. 1.
[124] 'Corps Legislatif', *Le Moniteur*, 22 August 1799, p. 3.
[125] Toulouse: ADHG, 1L 260, item 5366: letter to the Executive Committee of Tarn, 7 August 1799.
[126] 'Nouvelles', *Journal de Toulouse*, 1 December 1799, p. 2.
[127] Brown, *Ending*, p. 221.

to the royalists a brutal outlaw character. Politicised usage spiked around the Midi crisis then receded under Bonaparte. In that latter era ‘brigand’ was used of guerrilla warfare that was considered dishonourable to justify reprisals against such criminals.[128] In the national sphere, with the press firmly under Consular control, bandits were depoliticised and dismissed as mere outlaw criminals harmful to local populations. This denied them any chance of legitimacy under a national or popular movement.[129] Such a fluctuating meaning suggests that the political climate elicited a panic response by newspapers covering events which was expressed through transposing the woodland criminal character onto political enemies.

A dehumanising word, ‘brigand’ operated to remove the object of abuse from the French nation.[130] Jean-Clément Martin downplays the importance of the term ‘brigand’ as so imprecise as to be meaningless without placing each usage in its exact context.[131] He is correct in identifying the malleability of this term, especially after the revolutionary decade. Under the Restoration the Vendéan ‘royalist brigands’ went from vermin to perpetrators of acts of glory.[132] However, his argument is not universally true as he himself recognises: men like Robespierre and Saint-Just could never be considered bandits.[133] This label was used consistently enough with the same meaning that we can recognise that it would never apply to the political class. Martin did not define the boundaries within which ‘brigand’ is used and what this can tell us.

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[128] A. Forest, ‘The Ubiquitous Brigand’, in C. J. Esdaile, ed., *Popular resistance in the French wars : patriots, partisans and land pirates* (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 32–5; ‘République Ligurienne’, *Le Moniteur*, 28 October 1799, p. 1.
[129] Forest, ‘Ubiquitous Brigand’, p. 32.
[130] *Ibid.*, p. 37.
[131] J.-C. Martin, ‘Le Brigandage, l’État, et l’Historien’, in V. Sottocasa, ed., *Les brigands: criminalité et protestation politique (1750-1850)* (Rennes, 2013), p. 226.
[132] *Ibid.*, p. 226.
[133] *Ibid.*, p. 231.

The definition of 'brigand' in *L'Éncyclopédie* (published 1751) was modelled on the bandit soldier, often a mercenary, who took advantage of being armed in a foreign land to plunder.[134] But the countryside robber association was at least a seventeenth-century idea.[135] In this apolitical state pre-Revolution, a bandit was a common, opportunistic criminal purely seeking money, motivated by personal circumstances, not a political credo.[136] Forest elucidated that 'brigand' shifted from the apolitical state described in the *Éncyclopédie* to being associated with political violence.[137] As bandits aligned themselves with counterrevolutionary movements like the *chouans* during 1793, the word became politicised. It appeared in the same breath as 'vermin' and 'beast' and other such anthropomorphic pejorative expressions.[138] Nevertheless, for Valérie Sottocasa, the bandit's core image remained built around such savage vocabulary despite their frequent political activism in the early 1790s.[139] Politicised usage slowed as the threat of the Vendée receded. Under the Directory, administrators were quick to attribute the rampant highway banditry of the south-west to royalist troupes like the Companies of the Sun without cause. Yet beyond a small number of fearful municipal administrators, a 'brigand' remained a common criminal.[140] During the crisis of August 1799, aside from the peasant rebels being 'trained in the woods', newspapers abandoned this image.[141]

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[134] D. Diderot and J. d'Alembert, eds., *L'Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (17 vols, Paris, 1751), ii, p. 420.
[135] 'Brigand' in *Dictionnaires d'Autrefois Public Access Collection*, https://artflsrv03.uchicago.edu/philologic4/publicdicos/navigate/1/2435/ (last accessed 3 June 2019).
[136] Forest, 'Ubiquitous Brigand', p. 30.
[137] *Ibid.*, p. 29, 37.
[138] *Ibid.*, p. 39.
[139] V. Sottocasa, 'Les « brigands » des montagnes du Languedoc pendant la Révolution française', in V. Sottocasa, ed., *Les brigands: criminalité et protestation politique (1750-1850)* (Rennes, 2013), pp. 166–7.
[140] A. Forrest, *The Revolution in Provincial France: Aquitaine, 1789-1799* (Oxford, 1996), p. 337.
[141] 'Traîné dans un bois'; 'Corps Legislatif', *Le Moniteur*, 15 August 1799, p. 3.

Laurent del Puech noted a blurring of the meaning of 'brigand' in the south of France due to over-attribution by the revolutionary administration but his focus is on the prevalence of brigandage so he goes no further in his analysis.[142] It is true that overuse probably accelerated the process of politicisation but it was not the sole cause. Most commonly newspapers associated bandits with the political context of the royalist movement and attached conspiracy.[143] This characterisation was achieved in three ways. First, the bandits of the Midi were linked to behaviour associated with political activism. The bandits were portrayed shouting 'down with the tricolour, long live the white cockade, long live the king!'.[144] This recalled antirevolutionary chants seen in Lyon in 1793 – 'long live Louis XVII…down with the Convention' – and the *sans-culottes* during the Prairial uprising of 1795: 'Long live the Convention, down with the Jacobins, down with the terrorists'.[145]

Secondly, bandits were linked to political figures. Barbier Gentil, member of the Semme in the Council of Five Hundred, described the bandits as Louis XVIII's 'sycophants'.[146] Conversely, political figures were also labelled bandits. Paulo, one of the well-known triumvirate of military leaders of the rebellion, was denigrated multiple times as 'Paulo the bandit', most notably in the report of his supposed death.[147]

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[142] del Puech, 'L'État en guerre contre le brigandage. Un cas exemplaire : le départment de l'Aveyron de 1799 à 1815', p. 135.
[143] See for example 'Seysses', *Journal de Toulouse*, 8 August 1799, p. 2.
[144] 'À bas la cocarde tricolore, vive la cocarde blanche, vive le roi'; 'Toulouse', *Journal de Toulouse*, 8 August 1799, p. 2.
[145] 'Vive Louis XVII…à bas la convention'; 'Convention Nationale', *Journal universel et affiches de Toulouse et de Languedoc*, 31 August 1793, p. 1; 'Vive la convention, à bas les Jacobins, à bas les Terroristes'; 'Convention Nationale', *Anti-Terroriste*, 30 May 1795, p. 1.
[146] 'Satellites'; 'Conseil des Cinq Cents', *Journal des Hommes Libres*, 18 August 1799, p.1.
[147] 'Brigand Paulo'; 'Toulouse', *Journal de Toulouse*, 12 August 1799, p. 1; 'Extrait d'une lettre de C. T****', *Journal de Toulouse*, 18 August 1799, p. 3.

Thirdly, the word 'brigand' was intermixed with terms connoting a professional army as well as refractory priests, who were political enemies of the republic. Communes were said to have been occupied by 'the Royal Army, bandit leaders, and priests'.[148] The same appeared in *Le Publiciste*.[149]

The *Journal de Toulouse* was vehement in its politicisation of the bandits since it was closer to the uprising itself. Of the *Journal de Toulouse*'s 73 archived editions in 1799, 54 per cent mention 'royalist bandits' ('brigands royaux').[150] For context, only 23 per cent of the 83 editions between January and August 1800 mention 'brigands royaux'.[151] This phraseology infected republican leadership: it was the first description of the rebels in a publicly-published letter from Bernadotte to the Haute-Garonne administration.[152]

Writing of *chouannerie*, Sutherland identified that the line between genuine common criminals, who flaunted the language of royalism simply for unification purposes, and real fighters for the royalist cause was 'not easy' to distinguish because of the tendency of administrators to label any ambush against French troops as brigandage.[153] This line was completely erased in the turmoil of August 1799 and the following months. The press of all ideologies politicised 'brigand' by attaching instances of rural or urban criminality in the south to some national conspiracy. *La Clef du Cabinet* did disparage the royalist uprising by likening them to outlaws from Aveyron, which contained rugged mountain areas

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[148] 'L'armée royale, et des chefs brigands, des prêtres, etc.'; 'The Royal Army, bandit leaders, and priests'; 'Toulouse', *Journal de Toulouse*, 26 August 1799, p. 3.
[149] 'Conseil des Anciens', *Le Publiciste*, 29 August 1799, p. 4.
[150] Based on data between 8 August and 31 December 1799, last accessed 27 May 2019, [https://rosalis.bibliotheque.toulouse.fr/cgi-bin/presseregionale?a=cl&cl=CL2.1799.08&sp=PJOUTOUOBS&e=fr-20--1--txt-------TE--0----].
[151] Based on data between 2 January and 11 August 1800, last accessed 27 May 2019, [https://rosalis.bibliotheque.toulouse.fr/cgi-bin/presseregionale?a=cl&cl=CL2.1799.08&sp=PJOUTOUOBS&e=fr-20--1--txt-------TE--0----].
[152] Toulouse: ADHG, 1L 444, item 13: letter from Bernadotte, 18 August 1799.
[153] Sutherland, *France, 1789-1815*, p. 287.

where bandits frequently hid.[154] But woodland allusions were in the distinct minority.

The specific case of 'brigand' is illustrative but only symptomatic. Even government literature called Louis XVIII a 'ridiculous rogue'.[155] 'Chouan' was already a politicised word although its usage was highly local, referring to the persistent rebels in the western departments. In 1799, however, it also referred to dissidents beyond that region. When citizen Rivière was gunned down by a police patrol one night in Bordeaux, the assailants shouted: 'Stop there, chouan'.[156] Indeed, defeated outlaws and rebels from Vitré, Laval, Angers, and all across the Midi, who were fighting for distinct causes, were all subsumed under the single epithet 'chouans'.[157] Again editors drew on the collective memory infrastructure.

Interestingly, the royalists were most attached to the idea of banditry whereas the Jacobins were a political menace. The *Décade Philosophique* described the Jacobins as an entirely political threat – a 'political party' ('parti') – whereas the 'armed royalists' ('royalistes armés'), although also referred to as a 'parti', were treated as a barbarous military foe.[158] The royalists were most remembered for the Vendée and *chouannerie* despite the recent Fructidor coup of 1797 conducted to extract them from the legislature. Violence was far more memorable. In contrast, the Jacobins were remembered for coming to prominence politically in the Convention. Any links to the violence of the sans-culottes were forgotten. Consequently, the Jacobins were a danger to be somewhat stomached whereas the royalists were a fatal peril. The latter operated through violence,

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[154] 'République Française', *La Clef du Cabinet*, 31 August 1799, p. 1.
[155] 'Ridicule aventurier'; Toulouse: ADHG, 1L 446, item 13: Haute-Garonne Administration decree, 25 August 1799.
[156] 'Arrête-là chouan'; 'Bordeaux', *Journal de Bordeaux*, 10 August 1799, p. 4.
[157] 'Paris, le 1ère fructidor', *Le Publiciste*, 19 August 1799, p. 2.
[158] Ginguené, ed., *La Décade Philosophique*, pp. 445–6.

beyond societal bounds while the former was constrained within the political system. This meant they could be halted by government intervention such as that of mid-1798.

The Primacy of Military Matters

The intricacies of this portrayal are important because it differs vastly with the crisis' treatment in reality. The Haute-Garonne was not a priority for the Directory, as the *Journal des Hommes Libres* was keen to point out in their articles lambasting Sieyès and his colleagues.[159] The *Journal de Toulouse* described the Directory as obstinately maintaining 'the most astonishing immobility' in the face of the counterrevolutionary menace.[160] On 16 August, the Directory promoted General Frégeville to tackle the uprising but he arrived after the rebellion had been scattered.[161] Sutherland posited that the Midi so little occupied the attention of the Directory in practice because the royalists were not able to accomplish any significant military achievements. This is in stark contrast to the Vendéans and *chouans* who had the possibility of receiving British supplies and armaments.[162] The government had good reason to underestimate the royalists. They were untrained and underarmed peasants facing regular soldiers.[163] This indifference, when contrasted with the panic whipped in newspaper rhetoric, again suggests the contrived nature of such panic. But more than that, civil conflicts were not feared to the same extent as foreign invasion.

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[159] 'Sur le nouvel étendart officiel de la réaction', *Journal des Hommes Libres*, 16 August 1799, p. 4.
[160] 'La plus étonnante immobilité'; 'Extrait d'une lettre du C. T****', *Journal de Toulouse*, 18 August 1799, p. 4.
[161] Toulouse: ADHG, 1L 444, item 13: letter from Bernadotte, 18 August 1799.
[162] Sutherland, *France, 1789-1815*, p. 291.
[163] Higgs, *Ultraroyalism*, p. 47.

Judging by the totality of the 1799 French national and Midi press, military matters were considered as more important than local unrest. Any mention of the Midi uprising in the national press was either left to Council session accounts or simply hidden in miscellaneous news under the title 'French Republic' ('République Française'). Foreign military news nearly universally held pride of place across the French press. Perhaps editors relied on a formulaic and generic structure to fill their papers and keep up with a hectic daily or every-other-day publishing schedule. However, it is telling that military news was reported first with near uniformity.

The republican government was not alone in dismissing the Haute-Garonne uprising in practice. Local administrators in Toulouse were not too concerned with their fate at the hands of the massing royalist armies to authorise blanket weapons requisitioning. They built compromise into their request for weapons seizure in three cantons. Indemnities were a given and the owners would be exempt if they could prove immediate need for theirs.[164] Both Louis XVIII himself and the English also pinned most of their hopes on victory in Switzerland after the failures at Quiberon four years earlier.[165]

The reason why military affairs featured more prominently in national newspapers and preoccupied more of the Directory's attention was succinctly summarised by Jean Baptiste Salaville, a philosopher and friend to the editors of the *Décade Philosophique*, in a letter reprinted by *Le Moniteur*. He affirmed that the Second Coalition, and William Pitt in particular, was more feared than the royalist threat from within France because of the consequences of either one's

[164] Toulouse: ADHG, 1L 260, item 5360: letter to Muret and Rieumes, 7 August 1799.
[165] E. Daudet, *Histoire de l'émigration: d'après des documents inédits: Les Bourbons et la Russie pendant la Révolution Française.* (Paris, 1886), p. 115.

victory. The royalists might re-establish the monarchy but the foreigners would carve up the country and the French would cease to be French.[166]

This perception bled into practice. Even the most sycophantic publications could not hide the Councils' inactivity. Both showed an odd propensity for advisory commissions rather than action.[167] When Destrem initially tried to announce the Midi uprising to the Five Hundred, he was melodramatically interrupted by Joseph Eschassériaux's meandering declaration of a nearing civil war and need for action which took up nearly half a page of *Le Moniteur*. The irony was that he proposed a commission – which was approved by an immense majority – to advise the Council on what legislative measures to take to reanimate public spirit.[168] Likewise, the Five Hundred waited until a report from Fouché to apply the Law of Hostages to the Haute-Garonne.[169] Some representatives detested such procrastination. Pierre-Joseph Briot firmly preferred legislative action to thwart the royalist conspiracy rather than the unceasing deliberations.[170] This culture was perhaps fertilised by the Constitution of Year V's too sparsely separated powers.

Inaction, by contrast, was not a problem for the Toulouse administrators, who were far more instrumental in republican victory. They convened a military council from 2am onwards on 8 August and at least claimed to be in permanent session from the beginning of the rebellion to as late as 15 August.[171] Conditional weapons requisitioning, domiciliary visits, and constant requests for information

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[166] 'De la Révolution française comparée à celle d'Angleterre', *Le Moniteur*, 1 August 1799, p. 2.
[167] 'Conseil des Cinq-Cents', *Le Moniteur*, 22 August 1799, p. 3; 'Corps Legislatif', *Le Publiciste*, 14 August 1799, p. 3.
[168] 'Corps Legislatif', *Le Moniteur*, 15 August 1799, p. 3.
[169] 'Corps Legislatif', *Le Publiciste*, 20 August 1799, p. 4.
[170] 'Conseil des Cinq-Cents', *Le Publiciste*, 6 August 1799, p.4.
[171] Toulouse: ADHG, 1L 445, item 2: register of decrees from the Military Committee, 8 August 1799; 'Toulouse', *Journal de Toulouse*, 16 August 1799, p. 1.

from cantons of the Haute-Garonne were very quickly ordered.[172] To Paris, the Haute-Garonne, despite the rhetoric of disaster, was another drop in an ocean of crisis but for *les toulousains* it was the tsunami bearing down upon them. Defeat in Switzerland was a minor worry for Dufey's readership by mid-August.

Making Victories Count

As the tide of the revolt turned, then, the docile pro-Directory press sought to follow through their military victories with effective propaganda. First, battle reports highlighted royalists as incompetent by portraying a numerically large conspiracy being consistently defeated by a smaller republican force. The bandits were said to be multiplying 'to infinity' and threatened to crush the republican armies with their numerical superiority.[173] This exaggeration appeared important to convey even though it undercut the Directory by suggesting an enormous groundswell of popular support among the local peasantry.

Examples are manifold. At the rebellion's outset, the Haute-Garonne administrators promised 'a resistance worthy of Republicans' despite their apparent total lack of troops against the 20,000 of the royalists. A second letter sent the next day estimated 2,000 to 4,000 fewer rebels.[174] Further, they were not defenceless; they had dispatched a column of republicans led by General Aubugeois with a blank cheque for munitions on 6 August.[175] Similarly, in a show of republican zeal and patriotism, Galache, the head of the canton of Calmont, was prepared to defend his town with 45 to 50 firearms against Paulo's 500

[172] Toulouse: ADHG, 1L 446, item 11: extract from the registers of the Haute-Garonne Central Administration; 1L 260, item 5360: letter to Muret and Rieumes, 7 August 1799; item 5379: letter to Montech, 12 August 1799.
[173] 'À l'infini'; 'République Française', *Le Moniteur*, 17 August 1799, p. 1.
[174] 'Corps Legislatif', *Le Moniteur*, 15 August 1799, p. 3.
[175] 'Paris, le 29 Thermidor', *Le Redacteur*, 17 August 1799, p. 2; Toulouse: ADHG, 1L 224, item 580: letter to General Aubugeois, 6 August 1799.

rebels. Calmont's surrender supposedly only came after Paulo had promised a pardon but reneged then executed the leader.[176] In the rebellion's deciding combat at Saint-Gaudens, General Maibeau led 1,500 republicans against 4,000 bandits. Of the enemy 2,000 were killed and another 1,000 imprisoned.[177] According to Brown, Maibeau and Vicose's two columns contained 2,400. Further, closer to 700-800 rebels were captured.[178] Nevertheless, inflated figures were made official through frequent reporting by the press and entry into official records.[179] Naturally, republican victories were also never recorded with any casualties for the government side.[180] Any defeats, if reported, were referenced euphemistically. Administrative files recorded defeats of republican troops at Castanet and Caraman on 8 August as successfully conducted 'resistance'.[181] On 7 August, Republicans were said to have lost 'few men' ('peu de monde') and killed 100 royalists but had to leave behind a cannon. This is redeemed by the fact that its axletree was broken.[182]

Secondly, to complement this strategy of emphasising numerical disadvantage for republican troops in the Haute-Garonne, the anti-royalist press and Haute-Garonne administrators constructed a feeling of popular, unquestioning, and unanimous support for the republican government. Consequently, they expected the rural population to believe that the rebellion was hopeless and therefore to follow the crowd and choose the path which would most

[176] 'Rapport des agens de Calmont et Gibel', *Journal de Toulouse*, 12 August 1799, p. 1.
[177] 'Corps Legislatif', *Le Publiciste*, 26 August 1799, p. 4.
[178] Brown, 'Revolt and Repression', p. 244.
[179] For example 'Corps Legislatif', *Le Rédacteur*, 26 August 1799, p. 4; 'Conseil des Cinq-Cents', *Feuille du Jour*, 26 August 1799, p. 4; Toulouse: ADHG, 1L 260, item 5377: letter to Verdun-sur-Garonne, 11 August 1799.
[180] See 'République Française', *Le Propagateur*, 22 August 1799, p. 2; 'Toulouse, le 29 thermidor', *Le Moniteur*, 27 August 1799, p. 2; 'République Française', *Le Publiciste*, 19 August 1799, p. 1.
[181] 'Résistance'; Toulouse: ADHG, 1L 445, item 2: register of decrees from the Military Committee, 8 August 1799.
[182] 'République Française', *Le Moniteur*, 17 August 1799, p. 1.

likely lead to their own survival, that of supporting the Republic. This corresponds with what Robert Cialdini termed 'social proof'. This is the concept hardwired to our brain that what we determine to be correct is very much based on what other people find correct.[183] Republican administrators and press therefore attempted to paint the appearance of masses of republican support. A four-page proclamation from 14 August posted publicly in every commune in the Haute-Garonne urged rural citizens to return to their daily work, just as the people of Toulouse and 12 other towns had done already.[184] Similarly, a deputy in the Five Hundred for Tarn reassured his colleagues that 6,000 republicans – a doubling of the more likely figure – had voluntarily taken up arms to fight for Toulouse.[185] Unsurprisingly, the national guardsmen from the seven cantons in the Ariège who refused to fight against the royalists were not publicised.[186] In the Haute-Garonne, republican columns were welcomed to Lanta by tearful women offering eggs to soldiers in those trying times. This suggested that popular support was behind the Directory and not the bandit royalists who, it was insinuated, harmed the local population and left behind them a 'vast loneliness'.[187]

The royalist press likewise relied on social proof to imitate popular support for royalism since newspapers were still constrained by loosened yet still existing censorship. The effect of social proof made partial or fabricated evidence an effective tool of persuasion. Letters were frequently published from locals containing dubiously convenient support for the views Kirwan wove into his accounts of the Bordeaux poster scandal. One came from Lercaro the Elder who

[183] R. B. Cialdini, *Influence: Science and Practice* (Harlow, 2014), p. 109.
[184] Toulouse: ADHG, 1L 446, item 10: Haute-Garonne Administration proclamation, 14 August 1799.
[185] 'Corps Legislatif', *Le Moniteur*, 23 August 1799, p. 3; Brown, 'Revolt and Repression', pp. 241–2.
[186] Brown, 'Revolt and Repression', p. 243.
[187] 'Vaste solitude'; 'Toulouse, 29 thermidor', *Feuille du Jour*, 25 August 1799, p. 1.

stated that all of Bordeaux and France did not believe the Bordeaux administration's lie that the shooting in the city was a royalist murderer and that the Haute-Garonne uprising was perpetrated by royalists.[188] Another came from a prisoner who alleged he was falsely imprisoned for the poster scandal shootings and had 30 citizens who would testify to his innocence.[189]

Social proof is most influential under two conditions: uncertainty and how well people can see themselves as similar to the crowd.[190] First, by conjuring a crowd of supporters for his ideas, Kirwan was trying to redirect people's uncertainty about the events occurring in the Haute-Garonne and Bordeaux towards his royalist-leaning views. Secondly, people wanted to avoid violence and simply move along with their own lives. The manner in which Kirwan described the death of citizen Rivière, the first dancer of Bordeaux' theatre, gave the impression that any local might be killed by the police in such times. He was leaving a house where he had given a dancing lesson when he was shot and then police chief Umblemann walked 'PEACEFULLY ON HIS WAY'.[191]

An Administrative Victory

Following the rebels' defeat, depiction and action were separated by a cavernous gap. Administration, not the soldiers themselves, were congratulated for the successful repudiation of the royalists. At least the Five Hundred in Paris was somewhat accordant with reality when they elevated the local administrators of Toulouse as the catalyst for victory.[192] Likewise, after defeating the rebels at Saint-Gaudens, adjutant general Vicose summarised the insurrection: 'The

[188] 'Le 4 thermidor an 7', *Journal de Bordeaux*, 23 August 1799, p. 3.
[189] 'Au rédacteur du journal', *Journal de Bordeaux*, 25 August 1799, p. 3.
[190] Cialdini, *Influence*, p. 149.
[191] 'PAISIBLEMENT SON CHEMIN'; 'Bordeaux', *Journal de Bordeaux*, 10 August 1799, p. 4.
[192] 'Corps Legislatif', *Le Publiciste*, 26 August 1799, p. 4.

campaign proved that anything was possible for patriots when they are assisted by republican administrators.'[193] Dufey was most direct. He put victory down to a sole cause: 'The royalists lost singularly because of the house searches conducted on 29 July'.[194] This emphasis placed on local administrators was indicative of the Directory's growing insecurity at the steadily burgeoning influence of the army in the months prior to 18 Brumaire. By autumn of 1799, the press publicised the general's every move and his triumphal return from Egypt was greatly celebrated.[195]

Equally, this emphasis was a sign of things to come under the Consulate. The Directory had been trying to build the foundations of power through the personnel of local government powerholders who were consistently property owners even through the various stages of the Revolution since 1789.[196] The Directory congratulating such personnel after the Midi *toulousain* uprising is indicative of a continued effort to persuade local administrators to cooperate with the national government.[197] The Brumaire coup received widespread support among the provincial administrators.[198] The Consuls had to rely on such support given that the French army was both stretched thin across multiple fronts and exhausted from its long retreat along the Po valley. Thus, Bonaparte retained the main core of the Directory's bureaucracy.[199]

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[193] 'La campagne…a prouvé que tout était possible à des patriotes secondés par des administrateurs républicains.'; 'République Française', *La Clef du Cabinet*, 26 August 1799, p. 2.
[194] 'Les royalistes on singulièrement perdu par l'effet des visites domiciliaires du 11 thermidor'; 'Toulouse', *Journal de Toulouse*, 3 September 1799, p. 2.
[195] W. Hanley, *The Genesis of Napoleonic Propaganda, 1796 to 1799* (New York, 2005), pp. 173, 185–7.
[196] C. Lucas, 'The First Directory and the Rule of Law', *French Historical Studies*, x (1977), pp. 231-260 at p. 258.
[197] *Ibid.*, p. 259.
[198] Hunt, Lansky, and Hanson, 'Failure of the Liberal Republic', p. 758.
[199] *Ibid.*, p. 735.

Co-opting Brown's phrasing, in the climate of 'galloping chaos', crisis was declared through newspapers as an almost involuntary impulse. This new crisis was coloured by the politicised bandit figure which appeared once more in a time of civil crisis then receded. This was not the rhetorical excesses of a few loud voices but a press-wide characterisation. The insurrection provided a means of proving the government's worth. Even with the foothills of the Pyrenees to conceal themselves in, the Haute-Garonne lacked the possibility of direct British support from the sea so a drawn-out insurrection was unlikely in reality. In the end, victory was proclaimed and the restoration of order was attributed to the government, not the republican soldiers themselves, many of whom volunteered. This is despite the fact that military matters remained the fundamental concern in national newspapers. Italy and Switzerland held an ever-present place in newspapers and thus in the public consciousness while news from the south was buried. This reflects the Directory's larger indifference to the Midi insurrection. Aid given was token and slow. Not only was there a discrepancy between how dire the rebellion was portrayed and how much of a priority it was for the government, there was also an interesting inconsistency between administrative action and to whom victory was attributed.

IV: A Soft Aftermath

Writing to the canton of Verdun, northwest of Toulouse, on 14 August, the Haute-Garonne central committee expressed great relief after the rebels had been ousted from Muret, their previous headquarters: 'Victory, my dear colleague, victory, the royalist bandits are on the run everywhere you look'[200]

On 20 August the royalist armies were finally scattered at Montréjeau. Some fled over the nearby border to Spain. Vicose, whose battle assessment was distributed across the country by the press as fact, believed Paulo dead.[201] This acted as a convenient flourish to put a nail in the coffin of the rebellion. Paulo, and his compatriot Rougé, in fact escaped across the border to Spain, eventually returning to France in 1802.[202] Newspapers only publicised that he was alive a week later.[203]

Surprising Leniency

Of those who did not flee over the border to Spain, few were severely punished. The highest estimates ran at ten executions, two deportations, and six imprisonments by mid-October.[204] Those captured could petition the authorities for freedom based on their social status.[205] As Brown comments, this was extraordinary given the ferocious legislative powers vested in the military tribunals set up for the insurgent prisoners. By the Directory's orders, military courts treated thousands of the captured rebels as coerced or misled so as not to

[200] 'Victoire, citoyen collègue, Victoire, les brigands royaux sont enfuites sur tous les points'; Toulouse: ADHG, 1L 260, item 5389: letter to Verdun-sur-Garonne, 14 August 1799.
[201] 'Corps Legislatif', *Le Moniteur*, 30 August 1799, p. 3; see also *Journal de Toulouse*, 26 August 1799, p. 4§2.
[202] Godechot, *La Révolution française*, p. 297.
[203] *Journal de Toulouse*, 5 September 1799, p. 4§1.
[204] Higgs, *Ultraroyalism*, p. 47; Lyons, *Revolution in Toulouse*, p. 192; Brown finds marginally more lenient convictions 'Revolt and Repression', p. 253.
[205] Brown, 'Revolt and Repression', p. 250.

incite further insurrections nor risk the possibility of affording more power to the Jacobins.[206] The administration in Toulouse promised to absolve all misled participants if they returned to their homes and gave up their weapons in order 'to avoid running through again the recent extremes'.[207] Further, Brown posited that the selection of Frégeville, a centrist, was as much as political decision to promote a non-Jacobin soft repression as a military one.[208]

The punishment of participants was light, Sutherland put forward, because many were farmers and labourers who inhabited bourgeois land holdings in the Haute-Garonne and surrounds.[209] Naturally executing hundreds went against the landowner interests and many in the Jacobin administration in Toulouse would have held such interests. The *Midi toulousain* had one of the highest proportions of bourgeois *biens nationaux* ownership in all of France which lends credence to this hypothesis. To compare, over 93 per cent of the *biens nationaux* around Toulouse was bourgeois-owned while Western Sarthe, where the *chouans* aggravated the Directory, boasted a much lower 51.5 per cent.[210] The peasant land ownership rate was one of the lowest in France despite being a highly productive area for cereal.[211] Moreover, Toulouse's strong Jacobin tendencies originated in a class divide between the urban middle-class professionals and wealthy property-owners within the city and the Catholic peasantry surrounding it. The former acted out their urban identity through leadership of Toulouse's Jacobin chapter

[206] Brown, *Ending*, p. 338; Godechot, 'La Ville Rose', p. 425.
[207] 'Pour éviter de recourir aux dernieres extrémités'; 'Arrêté de l'administration centrale de la Haute-Garonne', *Journal de Toulouse*, 27 September 1799, p. 3.
[208] Brown, 'Revolt and Repression', p. 258.
[209] Sutherland, *The French Revolution*, p. 296.
[210] Lyons, *Revolution in Toulouse*, p. 188; Paul Bois, *Paysans de l'ouest: des structures économiques et sociales aux options politiques depuis l'époque révolutionnaire dans la Sarthe* (Paris, 1971), p. 347.
[211] Brown, 'Revolt and Repression', p. 237.

and in local government.[212] But it was not purely a class divide as some landowners sheltered rebels and afterwards mostly escaped persecution beyond being detained as hostages.[213]

The impetus for clemency came from Bernadotte. A letter to the administrators on 18 August hinted that, when judging the rebels, they should 'make the distinction between crime and being misguided'.[214] On 25 August, Toulouse informed the Five Hundred that it had established a military commission to try the rebellion's leaders but not its 'misled farmers'.[215] Bernadotte again supported this in a later letter to the administrators: 'I share and approve the humane feelings that you expressed in your last letter. No doubt a large number of those among the rebels were misled.'[216]

The *Journal de Toulouse* covered the trials in the following months in detail all while pushing the familiar republican narrative summarised by Brown: 'the insurrection was the terrible manifestation of a plot hatched by the court in exile, nurtured by the Philanthropic Institute, and brought to maturity by local nobles and perfidious officials.'[217] This effaced any responsibility from the peasant fighters. Evidently the same narrative both presaged the light punishment of the peasant participants and continued on during the convictions.

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[212] Lyons, *Revolution in Toulouse*, p. 186, p. 189.
[213] *Ibid.*, p. 192.
[214] 'Faire la distinction du crime et de l'égarement'; 'Copie de la lettre du ministre de la guerre', *La Clef du Cabinet*, 19 August 1799, p. 6§1.
[215] 'Agriculteurs égarés'; 'Corps Legislatif', *Le Rédacteur*, 26 August 1799, p. 4.
[216] 'Je partage et j'approuve les sentiments d'humanité que vous exprimez dans votre lettre. Point de doute qu'un grand nombre de ceux qui sont parmi les rebelles ne soient égarés'; 'Ministère de la Geurre', *Le Rédacteur*, 28 August 1799, p. 2.
[217] See for example, '1ère Conseil de Guerre', *Journal de Toulouse*, 13 October 1799, p. 3; Brown, 'Revolt and Repression', p. 254.

The Origins of Clemency Based on Perception of the Peasants

The idea that the Revolution had been rejected from below, as it was by the Italians and Belgians in 1798-99, was inconceivable. Jill Walshaw found that the Jacobins could not rid themselves of the perception of the rural population as 'le bon peuple' ('the good people').[218] This is distinct from the Jacobin perception of the sans-culottes as the good revolutionary people.[219] Peasants were believed by those above them to be sincere and uncritical believers in the social contract and the 'masterpiece' of the Revolution. Consequently, any counterrevolutionary sentiment must have wormed its way into France from abroad via a conspiratorial network.[220] Such an idea had remained roughly intact since the sixteenth century. Yves-Marie Bercé wrote of anti-tax riots being viewed from above as pitiable where a seditious minority had hijacked a 'brainsick populace'.[221]

The administrators of Toulouse expressed these sentiments when reporting to their Council of Five Hundred representatives what was occurring in their department: 'The bandits go to the houses of the most noteworthy patriots in the town, they cut their throats or take them prisoner, and they force the rest to follow then and to act in a hostile way with them'[222] Bernadotte agreed. He was sure that the royalists compelled peasants to join their ranks through fear and that most of the insurgents were led into iniquity.[223] Agency in the rebellion was accorded to the recruiters and not the recruitees – the latter were merely misled. News from Albi described four *émigrés* returning from Spain to recruit for the royalist

[218] Walshaw, 'The Search', p. 121.
[219] Tackett, 'Conspiracy Obsession', p. 705.
[220] Walshaw, 'The Search', p. 121.
[221] Yves-Marie Bercé, *History of peasant revolts: the social origins of rebellion in early modern France* (Ithaca, 1990), p. 306.
[222] '[Les brigands] se portent chez les patriotes les plus marquans, ils égorgent ou font prisonniers, et forcent les autres à les suivre et à agir hostilement avec eux'; 'Corps Legislatif', *Le Moniteur*, 22 August 1799, p. 3.
[223] 'Ministère de la Guerre', *Feuille du Jour*, 28 August 1799, p. 3.

army.[224] This clearly placed blame on the movement's leaders. Further these *émigrés* were denigrated as bandits by the insinuation that they came from Spain specifically to Aveyron for its concealing wilderness.

This was very much a paternalistic attitude. A decree published on 25 August even referred to the 'paternal clemency' that the Haute-Garonne department would accord to the 'simple and wide-eyed farmers' who had been tricked by the royalists.[225] This same decree called the farmers 'slaves of a wraith called *King*'.[226] Another letter to the canton of Verdun from 14 August described the 'dishonourable' ('infâmes') leaders of the rebellion abandoning the 'unfortunate farmers' ('malheureux cultivateurs') at Montréjeau to the vengeance of the Republican forces.[227]

This perception of the peasantry was the root of the first resort leap to conspiracy to explain dissidence. What Walshaw sees as a burgeoning critical public opinion from below, the Jacobin administrators in Toulouse could only rationalise as foreign interference or corruption by those unsavoury elements of the Revolution already deemed toxic such as non-juring priests and ex-nobles.[228] Indeed, few priests were captured by the end of August and the only one executed was in fact juring.[229] Even small indications of foreign subterfuge, which did indeed exist, were latched onto. Just as in Italy and Belgium, spies were feared to be a part of the royalist conspiracy.[230] Before the revolt commenced, the commander at Lyon, apprehensive of spies, ordered the expulsion of all foreigners

[224] 'République Française', *La Clef du Cabinet*, 31 August 1799, p. 3.
[225] 'Clémence paternelle'; 'cultivateurs simples & crédules'; Toulouse: ADHG, 1L 446, item 13: Haute-Garonne Administration decree, 25 August 1799.
[226] 'Esclaves d'un fantôme appelé *roi*'.
[227] Toulouse: ADHG, 1L 260, item 5389: letter to Verdun-sur-Garonne, 14 August 1799.
[228] Walshaw, 'The Search', p. 122.
[229] Godechot, *La Révolution française*, p. 298.
[230] Verhaegen, *La Belgique*, iii, p. 441.

who could not prove a compelling reason for residence.[231] Royal emissaries were said to be spreading 'royalist lies' around Paris concerning the French army in Rastadt.[232] English emissaries were said to be spread all across the department of Seine-Inférieur assisting the *chouans*.[233] The Philanthropic Institutes were 'greatly financed' by England but it was nevertheless not a significant causal factor of the August insurrection.[234] Even in 1799, the idea of foreign spies having a hand in all civil unrest pervaded the public imagination.

Kirwan also played into the perception of peasants as passive in an effort to mask his royalist tendencies. Before news of the rebellion had travelled to Bordeaux, he expressed concern about how writings from Prince Charles and Louis XVIII distributed in the Doubs and Jura might influence the 'carefree' citizens there.[235] This perception spilled over from the peasantry and was applied to urban dissidents in Bordeaux as well. The official line coming from the Bordeaux central committee was that the protestors in the streets during the poster scandal were 'insolent and misled people'.[236] This was a way of denying the faults evident in revolutionary progress. This uncompromising rhetoric was reminiscent of the Terror but, fortunately, the consequences were vastly milder.

Justifying Absolution

Demonising rhetoric was targeted at the royalist bandits in the Midi in much the same way as in the Vendée. However, very few executions and no grand atrocities were committed against the captured enemy in this case despite both

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[231] 'Paris, le 16 thermidor', *Le Publiciste*, 4 August 1799, p. 3.
[232] 'Fabrication royales'; 'Rapport au Directoire exécutif, fait par le ministre de la guerre, le 26 thermidor an 7', *Le Redacteur*, 18 August 1799, p. 1.
[233] 'Paris, le 24 thermidor', *Le Publiciste*, 12 August 1799, p. 4.
[234] Bonin, 'Étude', p. 201.
[235] 'Insouciant'; 'République Française', *Journal de Bordeaux*, 5 August 1799, p. 1.
[236] 'Impudens égarés'; 'Bordeaux', *Journal de Bordeaux*, 10 August 1799, p. 3.

sets of rebels making a firm choice to overthrow the republic. This again suggests that such invective was a reactionary response learned through experience of the previous crises of the 1790s. When the curtain was pulled back after Montréjeau and the truth of the rebellion was revealed, there was no grand royalist beast ready to consume the French Republic from within. The rhetoric of the royalist bandits had been a product of crisis, panic, and a desire for political leverage. It possessed more bark than bite. In contrast, the Belgian rebels suffered Vendée-esque suppression and their media treatment could hardly have been harsher than for the Midi royalists.[237]

But how was indulgence reconciled with such denigrating rhetoric? The Haute-Garonne central administration distinguished decidedly between the leaders of the rebellion and the farmers and other labourers who were the 'passive instruments' of the royalists.[238] Addressing the national guardsmen of the Haute-Garonne, Joseph-Victor-Alexandre Lamagdelaine made the difference distinct but unclear: 'Would that the disgraced leaders of these royalist gangs go safely to foreign shores…But would that the misled men, the farmers who were seduced…not supplicate in vain for clemency'.[239] Similarly, absolution by the Directory did not contravene the absolute demonisation of the royalist bandits for the farmers involved were a separate group. The royalist bandits were still brutal outlaws but they were different from the peasant insurgents who were led astray. The imprecise meaning of the insult allowed for a distinction to be inserted after the rebellion. This distinction, then, enabled the press to continue publishing the

[237] Brown, *Ending*, p. 231.
[238] 'Instrumens passifs'; Toulouse: ADHG, 1L 446, item 13: Haute-Garonne Administration decree, 25 August 1799.
[239] 'Que les chefs déshonorés de ces bandes royales aillent prudemment porter sur des plages étrangeres…Mais que les hommes égarés, que les cultivateurs séduits…n'implôrent pas en vain cette clémence'; 'V. Lamagdelaine', *Journal de Toulouse*, 3 September 1799, p. 4.

same political characterisation of the royalist bandits without being undercut by the startlingly low conviction rate. *Émigrés* and refractory priests could still be royalist bandits because of their known political opposition to the Revolution. The press could then comfortably absolve peasants as not politically minded and merely passive actors caught up in a movement beyond their comprehension. The fact that newspaper editors came from an educated background also helped. This meant that they stuck to more political conspiracies, with peasants as passive instruments, rather than the choice plots of the 1792 sans-culottes.[240] Much later, on 25 September, Bernadotte publicly thanked the Haute-Garonne administrators for defeating the 'royalist bandits' which shows that the term as a rhetorical tool was more important than its accuracy.[241]

Of course clemency as well as this rhetorical distinction was ad hoc pragmatism. The Directory knew from experience with the *chouans* that repression was not by itself an effective way to nullify an ideological movement; it only crushed it militarily until a later date. Although the local elite administrators had a vested interest in seeing the peasant insurgents walk free, this was an example of the Directorial adaptation. They were beginning to learn that repression was not enough to maintain long-term control over France.

[240] Tackett, 'Conspiracy Obsession', p. 710.
[241] 'Brigands royaux'; 'Paris, le 2 vendemiaire', *Le Moniteur*, 25 September 1799, p. 2.

V: Conclusion

Newspapers in August 1799 were already looking backwards to periodise the Revolution up to that point. *Le Thé* divided the revolutionary decade thus: 'from the taking of the Bastille…from the Storming of the Tuileries…from the arrest of Robespierre…from the Fructidor coup of 1797…from the 18 June 1799 coup.'[242] Hindsight was clearly a compelling force for editors.

After the rebellion, hindsight made it immediately clear that alarm over its success was misplaced. For all the commotion pronounced by the press, the government, and the Haute-Garonne administrators, no republican blood was spilt inside the city walls of Toulouse.[243] The western departments constituted a more serious threat to the republic. But a climate of dramatic fear and unanticipated chaos naturally cultivated such embellishment of crisis. This should not be a surprise. Before the tide turned after mid-August, the French army was stretched thin across multiple losing fronts. These circumstances meant that things could go wrong at any moment within France and that there was no military backup should another crisis occur. Conspiracy allegations were a natural response when military or internal crisis collided with a whiff of sedition. When discussing crime reporting under the Directory, Brown identified a 'national climate of insecurity'.[244] The climate during the crisis in the Haute-Garonne remained national despite the limited extent of the royalist threat. But the threat of a unified movement opened the door to allegations of grand conspiracy more so than

[242] 'Du 14 juillet 1789…du 10 août 1792…du 9 thermidor an 2…du 18 fructidor an 5…du 30 prairial an 7'; 'Variétes', *Le Thé*, 11 August 1799, p. 1.
[243] Higgs, *Ultraroyalism*, p. 48.
[244] Brown, *Ending*, p. 217.

reports of outlaw behaviour or isolated murders. For the summer of 1799, the climate of insecurity became a climate of panic.

The French press of all political persuasions inundated the French public with simultaneous fear of foreign invasion and internal murders. Just as quickly as newspapers alleged conspiracy, they followed the tune of Bernadotte and absolved the peasant rebels. It is interesting to note that this less hyperbolic approach foreshadowed Consular discourse on crisis. What is striking about the Midi insurrection is that it illuminates a very gradual change of direction for French comprehension of crisis. It is a liminal period between the hyperbole and mass panic reminiscent of the Terror period and the more restrained Consular press climate where hysteria was suppressed and crises merely dealt with. Bernadotte's recognition of administrative swiftness in dealing with the insurrection also prefigured the Consulate. From Brumaire until the Peace of Amiens, the Consuls had to rely on provincial administrators as their foundation of national control rather than the debilitated armed forces they had inherited.

In a sense Aulard was correct in 1893 about the accuracy of newspapers as a historical source. They present an unreliable account of events. Nevertheless, discounting them wholesale means that the way newspapers subjectively reported the rebellion, which was the daily reality people lived through, is forgotten. The significance of the press in this sliver of time is what it reveals about what people were afraid could happen. Both provincial and Parisian newspapers relied on the collective national memory of the Terror to mediate panic and fear, thereby confirming the effectiveness of the Thermidorians' propaganda campaign and Brown's work. The one stipulation is that local memories remained more visceral experiences and thus were preferred over the national memory by editors.

Newspapers gazed backwards in time fearing a repeat of the last decade's excesses.

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