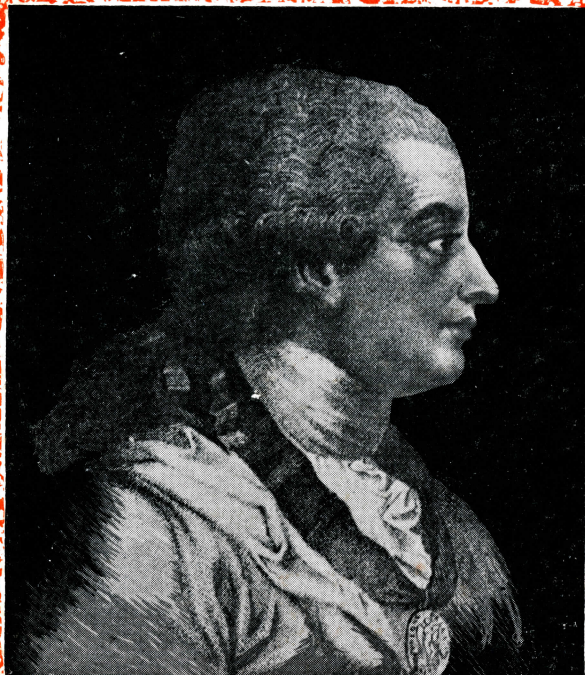


VOICES OF REVOLT



**MAXIMILIEN  
ROBESPIERRE**

INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHERS

**VOICES OF REVOLT**

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**SPEECHES OF  
MAXIMILIEN ROBESPIERRE**

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VOLUME I



*SPEECHES OF*  
MAXIMILIEN  
ROBESPIERRE

*WITH A*  
*BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH*



NEW YORK

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INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHERS

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## CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	9
Robespierre in the Club of the Jacobins . . . . .	18
Robespierre as the Realpolitiker of the Revolution . . . . .	22
Robespierre and the Committee of Public Safety . . . . .	27
The Ninth Thermidor . . . . .	36
THE FLIGHT OF THE KING . . . . .	41
ASKING THE DEATH PENALTY FOR LOUIS XVI . . . . .	46
CONCERNING THE DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN AND OF THE CITIZEN . . . . .	52
IN FAVOR OF AN ARMED PEOPLE, OF A WAR AGAINST THE VENDÉE . . . . .	56
REPORT ON THE PRINCIPLES OF A REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT . . . . .	61
REPORT ON THE PRINCIPLES OF POLITICAL MORALITY . . . . .	72
REPORT ON THE EXTERNAL SITUATION OF THE REPUBLIC . . . . .	82
EXPLANATORY NOTES . . . . .	91

MAXIMILIEN ROBESPIERRE

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## INTRODUCTION

IN the year 1770 a boy knocked at the gate of the Lycée Louis-le-Grand. Mass was just being held, and the youth could still hear the last notes of the organ as he was resting on a bench. He had covered a long distance on his journey: he had come from Arras.

"Praised be Jesus Christ," was the sexton's greeting as he opened the gate. The boy had already been announced, and was at once led to the rector. "So your name is Maximilien Robespierre, my child?" asked the Jesuit who conducted the institution. The young man becomes a scholar, one of the most diligent students of the Lycée Louis-le-Grand.

He is poor; it is only due to the snobbishness of his relatives that Maximilien is permitted to study in the school of the rich. In Arras, even the bourgeoisie has some pretense to culture. The nobles of the province hire philosophizing abbés and private tutors, and send their sons to Versailles. There they learn the best manners, the most aristocratic ways and the most elegant language, a language that was already so generally accepted, that an Italian,

when he wrote the history of his native land in French, in the thirteenth century, justified himself with the statement: "Because the French language has spread all over the world, is least difficult to read, and most pleasant to listen to."<sup>1</sup> The nobles at Versailles learn to be clever merely in order to amuse themselves and their guests. "The taste of the court must be studied. There is no other place in which natural tact and association with the world may be better learned. Here the mind may be trained to far greater acuteness than under any pedants and one may learn to judge things neatly and correctly," says Molière.

The sons of men of affairs learn quite differently, particularly those whose fathers constitute the upper stratum of the state, filling the parliaments and the bureaus, who buy anything, earn everything, own much and talk rebelliously. These young men work as diligently as if they were already certain that they are destined later to guide the state in the stormy days of the Republic, in the glorious era of Napoleon, and in the narrow-minded period of the Restoration.

The Lycée Louis-le-Grand was a model school. The instruction was given by Jesuits and the reader must not think that the pupils of Don Iñigo Lopez de Recalde of the Castle of Loyola did nothing but

<sup>1</sup> Charles Auguste Sainte-Beuve: *Causeries du Lundi* (1851-1857).

pray the paternoster with the sons of the bourgeoisie. Far from it; the Jesuits spoke the jargon of the times; they had been infected with the new pagan Goddess of Reason, and their favorite citation from the unwieldy books of the church, in which everything may be found, was the words of St. Thomas: "There is an order based on reason for the general weal."<sup>2</sup>

The spirit of this school is that of classicism. The current of discontent, the opposition inherited by the sons of the bourgeoisie from their fathers, since the days of Philip of Valois, is handed down in the schools, and the opposition chooses the words and the spirit of classicism. While during the Renaissance the marble treasures of antiquity that had been buried by the Christian barbarians were again dug out and regarded as a revelation, one now sought in the texts of Tacitus, of Lucretius Carus and Cicero for points of contact to unite the ancient republican culture of the Romans with the new culture unfolding under the bourgeois republic. Again ancient Rome arises to give life to a new generation.<sup>3</sup>

The maxim uttered by Racine when a young man becomes the general maxim: "Under a king who is a burgher, all the burghers become kings."

These rich youths do not love Cæsar, "this sole

<sup>2</sup> Albert Sorel: *L'Europe et la révolution française*.

<sup>3</sup> Theodore Mommsen: *History of Rome*, New York, 1895.

creative genius of Rome, the last genius produced by the ancient world, which continued to move in his orbit until its final dissolution." They love Marcus Cato of Utica, who fell upon his sword, the last of all the republicans; they love the narrow-minded and stupid Brutus and idealize his sword, drawn by him against the greatest man of antiquity. These young men do not regard Marcus Cato and Brutus as the hair-brained ideologists of the republic that no longer existed, since the free Roman peasant was no more; they behold only the republican gesture and the struggle against tyranny, which is their dream.

Classicism molded this generation, which was the soil from which the orators of the Revolution sprang. Roman rhetoric is a constituent element of politics and of the rhetoric of the Revolution. One of Robespierre's fellow-students in the Lycée Louis-le-Grand was the brilliant Camille Desmoulins.

When Louis XVI, whose succession to the throne had been hailed throughout the country with jubilation, since it was expected that he would oppose the clergy and the feudal lords, had visited all the churches of the principal cities and reached the chapel of the Lycée Louis-le-Grand, having just left the Church of the Penitent Magdalen, the best student was selected to deliver an oration of welcome, and this best student was Robespierre. He showed the draft of his speech to the rector, who

was terrified, for the speech was the impassioned appeal of a boy to fight the Roman tyranny. This theme of the youthful Maximilien was later to become the great rhetoric of the Revolution, the rhetoric concerning which Saint-Just said subsequently: "The world has been empty since the Romans, and is filled only with their memory, which is now our only prophecy of freedom."

This was the rhetoric later displayed by Robespierre in the Convention. This is characteristic not only of the later Jacobin, but of the entire revolutionary opposition, of the moderate Feuillante, Mme. Roland, of the Rolandistes, of Mirabeau, Vergniaud and the Girondistes, Carnot and all the others. This element of rhetoric was not merely the external, not merely a figure of speech, but went so far as to befog the eyes of the later revolutionaries to the actual facts. They met with disaster because they confused the ancient, realistic, democratic community, which rested on the basis of true slavery, with the modern intellectual, democratic, representative state, based on the emancipated slavery of the bourgeois system.<sup>4</sup>

Maximilien had been a lawyer before the Revolution. He undertook cases for the poor; he defended, in his native city, people of low station, rentiers who had been cheated, old women who had been robbed. Robespierre's entire later policy

<sup>4</sup> Karl Marx: *Die heilige Familie*, 1847.

may be evolved from the modes of thought of Rousseau, whose books were then the rage. For Robespierre, no less than for Rousseau, the basis of democracy is a self-governing community. Maximilien says: the legislator must be bound; likewise, his personal will must be joined to the will of the masses; he must himself again return to the people, become a simple citizen. Elections and re-elections must take place again and again.

Robespierre is not so much of a dogmatist as bourgeois historians would make of him. "The Convention," says Robespierre, "is not a writer of books, not a deviser of metaphysical systems; it is a political body, commissioned to safeguard the rights of the French people." He permitted his system to be corrected by the facts. If we may speak of fanaticism, Maximilien is fanatical only in the sense that he never doubted the outcome of the Revolution. "To despair," he says in one of his speeches, "is equivalent to treason."

The arsenal of Maximilien's power was the Club of the Jacobins. The clubs were then the equivalent of our present political parties; they were formed in various parts of the city; the earliest ones arose at the period of the first session of the Constituent Assembly.

Their destiny reflects the entire history of the French Revolution. At first the clubs were called the "Association of Friends of the Constitution"

and all shades of the National Assembly were represented in them. The later course of the Revolution caused them to split again and again.

The Revolution is not a single act of terror, but a process in which the class struggle unfolds in the form of a struggle for power between the various class strata, a struggle assuming the most accentuated forms. After the bloc of absolutism, anchored and sanctified in centuries of habit, was overthrown by the execution of the king, the parties struggled for power as the representatives of various class interests.

Each party, in accordance with the economic position of its adherents, necessarily demanded a different type of republic. We must here make clear in advance that it is a *bourgeois* revolution of which we speak; the point was the economic emancipation of the large-scale bourgeoisie, of merchant and industrial capital, the first form of capital to develop the tendency to the formation of surplus value. This class, and with it also the exclusively intellectual stratum of the bourgeoisie, is the spiritual source of the French Revolution, if we are justified in regarding the spiritual phalanx which embraces that intellectual movement known as the "bourgeois enlightenment," as the lever of the revolutionary forces, the consciousness and the conscience of the revolution. This spiritual phalanx, however, is only the expression of an immense economic fact;

the economic maturity and superiority of the bourgeoisie which was rich in capital, as opposed to the decaying feudal system, which was in a process of economic and moral dissolution. The most consistent representative of the line of evolution of these economic forces and necessities that had been conjured up by the Revolution, was the party of the Girondistes, the representative of the commercial and trading bourgeoisie, which had sent its leaders Brissot and Roland from Lyons to represent it. They called themselves "The Patriots," "The Virtuous," "The True Revolutionaries," and expressed their indignation when the Revolution set in motion the lower estates, the mass of the Paris artisans and workers, and incited them to bloody riots in the prison and street fights. Revolution for the bourgeoisie, by reason of its class situation, has very definite limits, but the lower classes, the masses of workers and peasants, can only favor and demand a single indivisible republic, and complete freedom. Their leader was Marat, the "Friend of the People." They were the true executors of the Revolution, whose aid was at first necessary to the bourgeoisie, but against whom the bourgeoisie was then obliged to set very definite limits on the Left, and ultimately to proceed with great brutality. Between these two extreme classes were the petty bourgeoisie, represented in the Convention by the petty bourgeois intelligentsia led by Robespierre and Danton. They are



the vacillating figures of the Revolution; they stand between the parties; they have no sharply defined economic strata behind them. Ideologically, they stand close to the Girondistes, but it is their misfortune that, although externally they are more radical than the Girondistes, they cannot, being petty bourgeois and intellectuals, have any economically clear and attainable goal. They constitute the rigid mental phalanx of the Revolution, the revolutionaries on *principle*, having a different motive, therefore, than the Girondistes, the "truly virtuous and pure revolutionaries." And of them Robespierre is the most austere, the most truly virtuous, the disciple of Rousseau, the "Roman," equally radical and inexorable both as regards the Right and the Left, and as regards those ambiguous figures who would endanger and defile this moral principle of the Revolution: "Virtue and Reason." Thus, as an "incorruptible," he proceeds even against his friend Danton, likewise against Hébert, the anarchistic, ultra-Left, representative of the petty bourgeois intellectuals, who, in Robespierre's opinion, was endangering the Revolution by his atheistic radicalism, which antagonized the peasants and the unenlightened in general.

Robespierre's Reign of Terror, however, was directed in the first place against the Girondistes, who wished to limit the Revolution and the Republic in the sense of the economic interests of the large-

scale bourgeoisie, and who were even suspected of conspiring together with the royalist generals (Lafayette, for instance) because they needed them in order to put through their definitely bourgeois republic against the "common" people. This was treason against the austere principle of the Revolution, which was the object of Robespierre's solicitude, and their heads fell. But the Girondistes did not fail to make use of their strong economic background in the industrial cities of the provinces; the insurrections in La Vendée come to their aid: this is the moment when revolution shifts to counter-revolution, a shift brought about by the most powerful and therefore victorious party, a party guiding the destinies of the Revolution, a party which, after its victory over absolutism, is obliged to limit itself on the Left against a further prosecution of the Revolution by the lower strata.

The fall of Robespierre on 9 Thermidor (July 27, 1794) was equivalent to counter-revolution, a victory of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat. The fall of Robespierre ends the existence of the Club of the Jacobins.

### *Robespierre in the Club of the Jacobins*

Robespierre is at the pinnacle of his power when he is President of the Constituent Assembly, Chairman of the Jacobins, and the most important head

of the Committee of Public Safety. He frequently absented himself from the sessions of the Constituent Assembly, but rarely from those of the Jacobins, where he presided day after day. He never proposed any measures in the Convention, never seconded any motions in the Committee of Public Safety, unless such measures had been previously discussed at the Jacobins. Having attained the culmination of his power, he attempted to guide the Jacobins of the Province Centrale from his stronghold in Paris, and demanded from them their talents, their men.

The Jacobins exercised an illegal control over all the representatives of the Convention. This right was never "constitutionally" provided in any regulation, but exclusion from the Club of the Jacobins was equivalent to a letter of introduction to the guillotine. Without the support of the Club of the Jacobins, Robespierre was a nobody; without it he had no power at all; only in combination with it can we understand his importance. The task of the Jacobins was the creation of a unified French state in the stormy days of the Revolution. They were the veins in the revolutionary body, the blood-vessels. When centrifugal forces threatened to disrupt France altogether, they, a unified state within the state, saved the Revolution. Robespierre's relation to all the other parties of the Convention can best be understood after a study of the transactions of

the Club. It would be ridiculous to believe that Danton was overthrown by Robespierre, or that Robespierre had worked intentionally for the destruction of Danton. The Dantonistes had long lost their power when they were finally overthrown; they had long been excluded from the Club of the Jacobins; only at the very end, when history had already done its work, did Robespierre decide to let Danton fall.

The Club of the Jacobins had its regular cleaning day, *i.e.*, every member had to answer certain questions: what were you before the Revolution? what did you do during the Revolution? what was the size of your fortune before 1789? how much have you now? <sup>5</sup> These were the most formidable and generally feared occasions. When Danton and Camille Desmoulins appeared before the cleaning-up committee, several members took the floor to demand their exclusion. Fabre d'Eglantine even has a voice shout: "To the guillotine with him!" Robespierre then rose to demand that the name of the man who had suggested the guillotine for Danton be stricken from the list of the Jacobins, and defended Danton in the most eloquent words. He said: "No one has the right to speak against Danton without proofs; any one that speaks against Danton must first show us that he has placed as much

<sup>5</sup> Louis Ernest Hamel: *Histoire de Robespierre* (Paris, 1865-67).

courage, as great talents and as much energy in the service of the Revolution as has Danton. I am not identifying myself with him; I am not praising him. . . . How far should we get if every man unknown to the Revolution thus far, every man who has done nothing for the Revolution, may accuse men like Danton? If Danton is accused, I consider myself also as accused." Any one defended by Robespierre in such terms was safe. The affection of the Club of the Jacobins for Maximilien may be judged by the occasion of his illness, during which period no session of the Jacobins was opened without a preliminary report on Robespierre's health. The affection for him may be measured by the thousands of letters which he received daily from the most remote corners of the Republic, and finally, it may be measured by the hatred of allied Europe. Volumes might be filled with quotations that would show the mud, the calumnies and the lies spewed out by the slyster journals of the times, which recounted tales of his fortune amounting to millions, of his orgies; concerning himself, the Incorruptible, who probably worked most and consumed least in the entire Republic, who had no personal needs whatsoever, who lived not at Versailles or in the Tuileries, but in a furnished room not far from the Convention. It is this love for the Incorruptible that caused Coblenz, London and Vienna—in their desire to assail him and wound

him—to speak of the armies of the Republic in no other terms than as the armies of Robespierre, to stamp him the bugbear of the entire continent; and yet, without propaganda, without a press, without friendly parties, to the furthest corner of the colonies—down-trodden humans recognized that the Incorruptible was the man in whose hands their principle was being defended. Is there anything more moving than the fact that the first manifestations of the rise of the colonial peoples evinced themselves under the sign of Robespierre; that the Negroes of Madagascar and Guinea sent letters to Paris addressed to Maximilien and containing the naïve entreaty to liberate them from the rule of their white tyrants?

### *Robespierre as the Realpolitiker of the Revolution*

Danton, Marat and Robespierre were the leaders of the Mountain (the Left). In a certain moment, and for a certain time, each of the three embodied the audacity and energy of the French Revolution. History as conventionally written has succeeded in disseminating the most ingenious fabrications concerning each of these three men. Legend relates that Danton was the good-natured, cheerful man, the Mirabeau of the Paris streets, who was basely and vilely consigned to the scaffold by the ambitious Maximilien. According to the same fairy-tale,

Marat was the diseased dæmonic paralytic, who twice a day would send forth from his cellar the demand that the populace bring him the heads of five hundred aristocrats before evening, and finally, Robespierre is represented as the fanatic and tyrant who dreamed of being an absolute ruler, who had one man after the other murdered off, until the same fate finally overtook him.

Danton alone is somewhat idealized and arouses some sympathy among these pygmy souls. Above all, he is said to have been engaged in a constant struggle with Robespierre, who was like a tiger turned man.

Of course, all three are represented as dreamers, as persons with imaginative leanings, who were caught in the bloody intoxication of politics and revolution.

Yet it is perfectly apparent that no men were ever obliged to govern a country in a more difficult situation, a more terrible plight, and that no leaders ever brought any nation, under such a catastrophe of the most elementary forces, to such real successes in so short a period of time, as did the dictators of the Committee of Public Safety, first under the leadership of Danton, and then under that of Robespierre.

We shall give a few examples of Robespierre's practical policy.

Louis XVI had been obliged to appoint the Giron-

diste Brissot-Roland Ministry. The result of the elections had given this party a majority. The conflict with Europe was now apparent to all eyes. The leaders of the party of the Girondistes, being the representatives of the commercial and industrial cities of France, of the rising third estate in the state, which was waging a struggle of many decades against the forces allied with the king, declared, once they had attained power, that the Revolution was over. But they beheld the violently surging forces of the country, the newly arising problems, and they believed that they might consolidate their rule and the existing stage of the Revolution by resorting to the war against Austria, which was inevitable in any case. It must not be forgotten that the bourgeoisie of the large cities was traditionally opposed to Austria, and that nothing had made Louis XVI so unpopular as a marriage with the Hapsburg princess, Marie Antoinette. The Girondistes allied themselves, for the purpose of bringing on this war, with the romantic, empty-pated troubadour, Lafayette, who regarded the Revolution as an opportunity to perform services for his royal lady and who—with this fidelity to his monarch in his heart—became the leader of an army at the boundary. No doubt the thousands of propagandists and the clubs which then called for war were not speculating or calculating on the fact that the war was a subject of barter. Far from it; the men who were then



demanding war were great and honest revolutionaries who knew that their weapons held the destiny of a world. Louvet, in the National Assembly, called for war, pronouncing on that occasion the magnificent words: "Yes, war, long live war! France shall take to arms at once! You say that the coalition of all the tyrants against us is a fact! So much the better for the world. At once, as quickly as lightning, let the thousands of soldiers who are citizens take arms against all the fortresses of feudalism. Let their victorious advance be terminated only by the end of slavery. We shall surround the palaces with bayonets, but into each lowly hut we shall bring a translation of the Rights of Man!"<sup>6</sup>

In the heat of an impassioned speech, Robespierre on one occasion defined the enthusiasm of the French Revolution in the following terms: "Indeed, gentlemen, it does state this absolute irresistible feeling, this profound aversion to tyranny, this enthusiasm for the oppressed, this great and profound love for mankind, without which no revolution can be anything else than a frightful crime annihilating a previous crime. Yes, indeed, we have the ambition to found the first republic in the world; we have the ambition to produce that which no man has ever produced before."<sup>7</sup>

No doubt the feelings of the Girondiste Louvet

<sup>6</sup> Jean Jaurès: *Histoire Socialiste*.

<sup>7</sup> A. Mathiez: *Pourquoi sommes-nous Robespierristes?*

were those of the Jacobin Robespierre. Yet, Robespierre was right in not desiring a war at this moment. He was the only man to oppose himself to the enthusiastic militant current of the Revolution at that moment. On January 2 and 11, 1792, he delivered two courageous addresses in the Jacobin Club. Robespierre later declared that the Rolandistes had begun the war on instructions from abroad and made against Brissot and Mme. Roland the formidable accusation (M. Roland, the husband and Minister, was only the wife's shadow; she was the leader of an entire party and ended on the guillotine) that they had declared war in order that the Emperor of Austria might be freed from the necessity of declaring war himself, in other words, to give the Emperor the pretext he wanted, thus committing a great crime against the Revolution. Robespierre was wrong in believing that the men of the year 1792 were acting in understanding with the Austrians; we must lay something to the account of rhetorical exaggeration.

The arguments used by Robespierre in his attack on the war are the same as those used by Marat. Maximilien denounced the war as a weakening of the Revolution. He called Roland a liar and a demagogue, since the danger of Versailles was even greater than that of Coblenz. He said that it would be impossible to march against all the kings of Europe with a king at the head of one's army; he

demanded the destruction of tyranny within, before a single soldier should be permitted to leave the frontiers of France. We shall see later how Robespierre himself defended France, and how he became the organizer of the offensive and defensive wars of the Revolution. But no doubt it redounds in no little measure to the honor of Robespierre that precisely the representative of the revolutionary democracy in the French Revolution, precisely he who stands for this democracy, this Revolution, and this radicalism, was an advocate of peace to the last extremity.

### *Robespierre and the Committee of Public Safety*

The generation that lived in the year 1789 entered the Revolution without any ready-made plan. The aspirations and desires of the entire country about the middle of the eighteenth century are contained in the Cahiers which were written for use on May 5, 1789, for the convoking of the States General to Versailles, in the various cities and boroughs of France. In none of these thousands of complaints and petitions, which contain numerous plans of reform, does the word "republic" occur as much as even once.<sup>8</sup>

In a general way, the representatives of the third estate desired a legalization of their political rights.

<sup>8</sup> A. Aulard: *Histoire politique de la révolution française*.

Their rebellion and their demands were not in accord with the economic distress, but with their economic ability. Those who were economically weak did not make themselves felt until later; first it was the peasants, then the petty bourgeoisie, the workers, traders and factory helots of Paris. The spark of rebellion was kindled "philosophically" in the conversational salons of the rich patricians. It was "a product of social well-being."

But the bourgeoisie laid the foundation to its rule in the light of the flames of burning feudal castles and to the music of "Ça ira" and "Les aristocrates à la lanterne." In this decade of acute revolution, however, it was possible to accomplish in days what otherwise would have required years, while years performed the work of centuries. In rapid succession, various strata of society seized power by the methods of dictatorship and the rapid success of these methods was often accelerated by use of the death penalty as a means of political struggle.

It is not possible to deny that in this swift stream of events each party, each faction, had its illusion. Nor is it difficult for us to grasp that each event assumed an aspect different from that which its active protagonists had wished. The Feuillants (the moderate monarchists) enthusiastically advocated a peaceful, moderate monarchy; the Girondistes dreamed of a republic of wages; the Left Jacobins

of a sovereignty of the poorest strata of the population; the Hébertistes of a republic safeguarded by an equality of possessions; and each of these factions went to the scaffold with its illusions, embracing death in a complete faith in the "correctness" and "immortality" of its ideas. And yet, the entire significance of the Revolution was achieved after four decades of the most confused and contradictory struggle; a united France, the great nation; the bourgeoisie had consolidated itself. But this is not the only result to be noted on a national or an international scale. It is self-evident that the domination of the Jacobins, as well as the domination of Robespierre, embraced within it the entire illusion of the petty bourgeoisie. But it also bears within it the elements of a new society. The Revolution shot beyond its goal, and that which lay beyond its goal is not mere insanity; this advance is rather the beginning of the new revolutionary principle, namely, it is that which the proletariat has inherited from the French Revolution. Robespierre's demands were taken over by Babeuf in his *Conspiracy of Equals*, it was further disseminated by Buonarroti, it became a constituent part of French socialism; it became the ideological basis of the revolutions of 1830, 1848, 1870.<sup>9</sup> It was critically annexed by Karl Marx; and thus Robespierre and the Jacobins are a part of the tradition of the

<sup>9</sup> P. Buonarroti: *Observations sur M. Robespierre*.

Revolution; as Marx says, they are an element in the new world order.

Revolutionary statesmen may attain, in the study of the French Revolution, a plastic vision of the disintegration of a nation into various parts and the birth of a new unit from the débris. The Committee of Public Safety, this engine of the Revolution, this all-fructifying center of energy, without which there is no doubt that counter-revolution would have come out victorious, is also not the result of a ready-made plan, but, on the contrary, each cog of this machine was fashioned by the events of the day and only later became a portion of a unified organism. When the Committee of Public Safety came into being, two-thirds of France was occupied by enemies, the coast lines were blockaded by the English fleet, the cities in rebellion—and a rebellion led by the Gironde—Toulon and Brest surrendered the keys to these cities to the king, and Danton, who was the head of the first Committee of Safety, was planning to negotiate with the enemy, while Robespierre was of the opinion that negotiation under these circumstances would be equivalent to the beginning of the end; Danton was overthrown in the Convention. Robespierre assumed leadership. It is an error to believe that the Committee of Public Safety tyrannized the Convention, that the Convention led only a shadowy existence. The Committee of Public Safety was appointed by the Convention, regularly

reported to the Convention; it was the executive and the legislative function in one. The members of the Convention governed throughout the provinces as commissaires, levied armies, supervised the generals, and appointed the various committees with dictatorial power.

Within the country, two enemies were crystallizing against the Convention, the Moderates and the Ultra-Revolutionaries, the latter led by Hébert. The Ultra-Revolutionaries sabotaged the Convention and turned their efforts against the Committee of Public Safety. They did not accuse Robespierre directly,<sup>10</sup> but rather the other members of the Convention. Robespierre defended this institution. All the measures of the Convention that led to practical results may be traced back to Robespierre. He attacks particularly the ultra-Lefts for their sabotage against the authority of the Committee of Public Safety and for their anti-religious policy. The fable writers of history have made a sort of super-bonze of Robespierre, a Buddha of the "Goddess of Reason," they have failed to understand his entire ecclesiastical policy. France was a country of peasants, and the exaggerated anti-clerical policy of Hébert, the violent declamations, of the rabid former Prussian citizen Anacharsis Klotz, who de-

<sup>10</sup> Robespierre was not attacked directly either by Danton or by Desmoulins, or by Hébert. The parties to the Right and Left of him declared that they were "defending" Robespierre against the Right or against the Left.

clared himself to be a "personal enemy of Jesus Christ," could do nothing else than throw the peasants into the camp of the counter-revolution. Maximilien said that any one attempting to use force in order to prevent religious worship was a more dangerous fanatic than the priest who carries out a ceremony. He was obliged to fight Hébert, and in those days a fight meant life or death. Hébert and his adherents went to the guillotine.

It had been declared that Sanson, the hangman, was a monarchist. No doubt he had beheaded Louis XVI, but it was only by way of a discharge of the duties of his office, and the chronicles of the times relate that the hangman on the Place de la Révolution went so far as to strike Hébert several times in the face before beheading him. Yet not only Sanson, but also the remaining Feuillants (monarchists), the Girondistes, the Dantonistes, and particularly Desmoulins, intoned songs of triumph when the cart bearing the ultra-revolutionaries was on its way to the guillotine. They recognized that the Hébertistes were revolutionaries and now began to turn their praises to Robespierre, believing that the Committee of Public Safety would now move more and more to the Right. Robespierre understood this and announced to the Dantonistes in several speeches that the necessity of the struggle against Hébert had been a measure of self-defense, and that the Republic would be able to defend itself



against the Right as well as against the Left. When Danton said a few words in favor of Fabre d'Eglantine in the Convention, he was treated to the remark, from the Left, that "Any man who trembles now is guilty."

The Dantonistes became the defenders of all the fatigued. Danton proclaimed that the Revolution must not overstep its own goal. He, the former initiator of the Revolutionary Tribunal; he, at a certain moment the incarnation of the resistance to the foreign foe, now spoke of conciliation and was approaching the faction of the Rights closer and closer. We do not believe that Danton was conspiring against Robespierre; in fact, Danton showed very little activity of any kind during the last few months of his life. But in this most terrible of all moments Danton, the inactive, was a danger for the Committee of Public Safety. His name had a splendid sound; his voice was still the revered and familiar voice; Danton was a moral power behind which all the enemies of the Revolution lay hid.

The Left in the Committee of Public Safety was ceaselessly demanding the heads of Danton and his friends from Robespierre. The Left was opposed to the execution of the Hébertistes; for months they had been putting pressure on Robespierre, and finally Robespierre sacrificed Danton to them.

Danton was handed over to the Revolutionary

Tribunal which in those days was equivalent, without further ado, to a sentence of death.

But in all this bloody litigation it must not be believed that the Terror came from above, except for the terror practiced by certain individual persons. During this period, the Terror was dictated from below. In the winter of 1793, with famine raging in Paris, the masses were ready to see traitors and speculators in every corner. The Convention was besieged day and night by delegations demanding the institution of the Terror, the sending out of armies of requisition, each of which was to be accompanied by a portable guillotine. The Girondistes should be sent to the guillotine and the ten thousand women who had signed the petitions for mercy should be murdered at once. Robespierre was at that time Chairman of the Convention and opposed this madness. He said: "The point for us is not only to murder, but to gain the victory by this means!" Owing to his authority, to the boundless confidence the masses had in him, he succeeded in saving thousands from a certain death. He declared that it was necessary to organize this paroxysm of rage, to mold it into talents and energies to be put into the service of the Revolution. Against the will of the Convention he then saved eighty-three members of the Right side of the house from certain death. The Convention was about to draw up its

indictment, and only Maximilien's speech saved them from the voyage to the guillotine.

In the Committee of Public Safety, Maximilien had not only a Left opposition, but also a Right opposition. The surviving members of the Committee of Public Safety: Carnot, and particularly those who later, under the Empire, and even under the Bourbons, made a success of things for themselves, succeeded in blackguarding Robespierre; as Napoleon says, he is the scapegoat of the Revolution. Carnot particularly maintained that Robespierre had had no great influence on the course of military events. This is untrue; Robespierre received and promoted generals, gave daily directions, performed the same work as Carnot, besides supervising Carnot, and particularly was suspicious of the generals, being suspicious of military power in any case, and, as he declared almost daily, feeling that a victorious army might become a danger to the Republic. He delivered prophetic speeches in which he declared that the present struggle was a struggle of self-defense, and that the Republic as such would prefer peace. No military dictatorship would have been possible while Robespierre was alive. He worked eighteen hours daily; from eight to twelve in the morning there was the session of the Committee of Public Safety; from one to six in the afternoon, the session of the Convention; from seven to twelve in

the evening the session in the Jacobins; the various committees then went on all night.

In the course of this labor, Robespierre succeeded in gathering a host of men about him. The enemies and friends of the Republic recognized that he was its head. If he is accused of seeking the dictatorship, we must point out that he himself best answered this accusation when he asked where was his private army, where were his treasures and his intrigues, and found no one to answer his question; his treasures were the seven francs found in his possession after his death; his army was the devoted battalions of the republicans, and his intrigues were reflected in the fact that he was perhaps the only head of the Revolution who belonged to no clique, to no salon, to no caucus. He could give account of how he had spent each moment of the day, for every moment in his work meant a further step in the advance of the armies at the boundaries against the European coalition.

### *The Ninth Thermidor*

In the session of the Convention held on the day on which Maximilien was overthrown, the cowardice and avarice of the trading elements had joined hands. It was no longer possible for them to bear the glances of the Incorruptible.

To destroy Robespierre was equivalent to annihilating the Republic. The men standing to the Left

of Robespierre did not understand this fact; they desired revenge for Hébert; but Maximilien's grave became their last resting place also.

The direct object aimed at by Maximilien, the Republic of Virtue, was a Utopia, but just as there may exist in the realm of thought Utopias far more real than the most pregnant thought of the proudest and most self-complacent "Realpolitiker," so history presents cases of Utopians whose domination bequeaths more to those who follow than does the domination of the most consolidated and most carefully calculating "Realpolitiker." Only *this* Republic of Virtue had been able to withstand the allurements of peace, of corruption and compromise.

When the powers of the past, the Royalists, united with the powers of the future, the elements of the bourgeois republic liberated by the Revolution, to overthrow Maximilien in the session of the Convention held on 9 Thermidor, a member of the Convention shouted: "Robespierre, it is Danton's blood that chokes you!" Maximilien did not grow pale and terrified, as is reported by the chroniclers. Instead, he answered, "Where were you when Danton was sentenced, you cowards?" He himself demanded the indictment that meant his death.

All the intimate friends of the Incorruptible, Saint-Just, Le Bas, the younger Robespierre, the lame Couton, arose and demanded that they also be indicted. All were arrested.

The Town Council of Paris declared itself in permanent executive session and came out for Robespierre. Up to the last moment Robespierre did not wish to lead the Town Council in a struggle against the Convention. The Convention had gathered forces from the provinces in Paris. Maximilien hesitated; the insurrection of the Town Council was suppressed; the "decent" bourgeois society, those who had become rich in the Revolution, who had devoured the juiciest morsels for the past four years, the purchasers of the national estates, the profiteers on army contracts, the speculators, etc.,—these were the victors!

Le Bas shot himself; Robespierre was wounded by a gendarme,<sup>11</sup> the younger Robespierre threw himself out of the window of the Town Council and was mortally injured.

On the next day a cart trundled off to the guillotine!

They are wounded and bleeding, masses of flesh rather than men. The hangman has very little to do. This cart on its way to the guillotine is a symbol. The men of the Committee of Public Safety, the friends of Robespierre, died fighting; they accepted death as they had accepted the blows of fate—serious and fighting to the last breath.

All the homes of the wealthy in Paris revealed

<sup>11</sup> The name of the gendarme was Merdat, who was promoted for his deed; he died at the Beresina as one of Napoleon's colonels.—TRANSLATOR.

their wealth on the day of 9 Thermidor. The gilded rabble put in its appearance; the ladies of the good and new society celebrated the death of the fallen men with orgies and surrounded the death-cart with wild gestures of delight, for this cart was bearing to the guillotine the first revolutionary government of the world. It was a generation of youth, which had grown up in the nation's greatest days. Saint-Just, the youngest of these republicans doomed to death, was twenty-seven years old; the oldest was thirty-seven years of age.

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# SPEECHES OF MAXIMILIEN ROBESPIERRE

## THE FLIGHT OF THE KING

The royal family had left Paris in the night between June 20 and 21, 1791. An immense excitement took possession of the population of the city, great masses of people surrounded the Legislative Assembly. The Assembly attempted to take measures to pacify the population. All the clubs in Paris held meetings. On the same evening Robespierre delivered the following speech, which was published in No. 32 of the *Révolutions de France et de Brabant*, which was Desmoulins' newspaper.

CITIZENS! I am not one who would regard the flight of the King as a frightful event. This day might have become the fairest in the annals of the Republic and the saving of the forty millions we have to pay for the support of this royal individual might perhaps be the smallest of our benefactions. But in order to make June 20 a happy day for us, the Legislative Assembly would be obliged to take entirely different measures from any it has thus far adopted. The King has not chosen a bad moment for his decision. The King feared the national veto of the Legislature and chose for his flight that mo-

ment in which the treasonable priests are about to lead all to the attack on the Constitution, the fanatical edicts of the eighty-three departments. He has chosen the moment when the Emperor and the King of Sweden are meeting at Brussels, in which the harvest is being gathered in France, and in which he believes he can make us all starve, with the assistance of a small group of bandits with incendiary torches in their hands. Yet all these are circumstances that do not terrify me. Even if all Europe should unite against us, all Europe will be defeated. What strikes fear into my heart are the very facts that cause every one else to feel confidence. The fact, for instance, that this morning, when his flight became known, all our enemies spoke the same language. The entire world is united, all wear the same countenance, and yet it is evident that when a king with an income of forty millions annually, still in possession of all the resources of the country, bearing the fairest crown of all the world—that when such a king leaves everything in the lurch in this manner, it must be because he feels certain that he will be able to return soon. And this feeling of sympathy cannot be based on the Emperor alone, or on the King of Sweden, or on the Army of the Rhine, the army of our enemy, or on all the brigands of Europe, who are united against us. No, it is right here among us that the King must feel his security, must feel the strength that guarantees

him a victorious return. We cannot explain his flight otherwise. You know that three million armed men would constitute an insurmountable bulwark of liberty; but you refuse to arm the men. There must be a powerful party, there must be great accomplices, powerful intrigues, and all these right here in Paris. I am afraid of this mask of patriotism now being worn by every one. I am not expressing suspicions or insinuations; I am stating facts; and I therefore demand that the speakers who will follow me give their reasons for doubting these facts and advance evidence to disprove them. . . .

You all know the reminiscences left behind by Louis XVI. You remember how he sabotaged the points that were not to his advantage in the Constitution that was passed, and what was his attitude toward those articles in the Constitution that were so fortunate as to please him? Read the King's protest and you will understand the entire plot. In a short time the King will appear at the boundaries, he will be a member of the suite of the Emperor, of the King of Sweden, of the Count of Artois, and of the Prince of Condé, and with him will be all the émigrés, all the deserters and all the brigands that will have been united by the common cause of kings. And then what will these gentlemen do? They will issue a patriotic manifesto and the King will declare, as he has declared a hundred times already, "My people may count on my affection." The advantages

and loveliness of peace will be exalted and even liberty will find favorable comment. A compromise will be proposed with the émigrés; they will promise an eternal peace, amnesty and fraternity, and at the same time the heads of the conspiracy will depict all over France, even in Paris itself, the terrible prospects of a civil war, and they will ask you all why you insist on fighting, why you insist on murdering each other, although we all have the same fraternal object. And Bender and the Prince of Condé will declare themselves to be patriots. What will you do then? You will do nothing. You have made no preparations; you have no army at the border and you will comply with the insinuations of your leaders, for at first you will not be asked to make any but insignificant sacrifices. . . .

Louis XVI has written to the Legislative Assembly to the effect that he is resorting to flight and the Assembly has resorted to cowardice, to a cowardly falsehood in order to misrepresent this situation; it has declared that the King has been abducted and in twenty decrees it regrets the monarch's fate. The Constituent Assembly might speak quite differently, if we had three million bayonets at our disposal. . . .

Do you wish further proofs that the Legislative Assembly has betrayed the interests of the nation? What are the measures it adopted this morning? Let us consider the principal ones:

The Minister of War has continued to remain in

his position; so have all the other ministers. And who is this Minister of War? The Minister of War has thus far persecuted all patriotic soldiers, has personally conducted the massacres among the republican troops, and has given his protection to all the aristocratic officers. And who is the military committee that has been associated with the Minister of War? Among the members of the military committee are the disguised partisans of the *ancien régime* and the aristocracy, who unmask themselves in their deeds. The military committee that has hitherto conducted all the movements of the counter-revolution is the source of all the measures that were directed against freedom. . . .

I have indicted the Legislative Assembly and I now ask the Legislative Assembly to indict me.

—*Speech delivered June 21, 1792, in the Club of the Jacobins.*

## ASKING THE DEATH PENALTY FOR LOUIS XVI

The trial of the King was opened by the Constituent Assembly (the Convention). On December 3, 1792, Robespierre delivered his first address on this subject.

**CITIZENS!** Without its knowledge, the Constituent Assembly has been turned aside from its proper task. The point is not merely that of trying the King. Louis is not the accused. You are not the judges! You are—you cannot be other than statesmen, the representatives of the nation. You have not to give a judgment for or against an individual; on the contrary, you must adopt a measure of public welfare, achieve an act of national wisdom. In a republic, a dethroned king is a source of danger; he will either endanger the safety of the state and attempt to destroy liberty, or he will take steps to consolidate both.

Now, I maintain that your deliberations hitherto directly oppose this end. What, after all, is the attitude prescribed by sound policy in order to strengthen the infant republic? Our object should be to engrave deep in the hearts of men a contempt for royalty, and to terrify all the King's supporters. Now, if you will present his crime to the world as a

problem, his cause as the object of the most imposing, most painstaking, most difficult discussion that could engage the attention of the representatives of the French people, if you will thus place a great, incommensurable distance between what once he was, and the dignity of a plain citizen, you will have discovered the true secret of permitting him to remain a danger to liberty.

Louis was King and the Republic was founded. The question before you is disposed of by these few words alone. Louis was dethroned by his crimes. Louis denounced the French people as counter-revolutionaries; to conquer them he summoned the armies of the tyrants, his brothers. The victory and the masses have decided that it was he who was the rebel. Louis cannot be judged. He is already condemned, or we have no republic. To propose now that we begin to try Louis XVI would be equivalent to retracing our steps to royal or constitutional despotism. This is a counter-revolutionary idea, for it means nothing more nor less than to indict the Revolution itself. In fact, if it is still possible to make Louis the object of a trial, it is also possible he may be acquitted. He may be not guilty, nay, even more: it may be assumed, before the sentence is pronounced, that he has committed no crime. But if Louis may be declared guiltless, if Louis may go free of punishment, what will then become of the Revolution? If Louis is guiltless, all the defenders

of freedom are liars, all those faithful to the King, all the counter-revolutionaries, are friends of truth and the defenders of oppressed innocence, all the manifestoes, pamphlets and intrigues of foreign courts, all these are merely legitimate and proper articles of complaint. In this case, the arrest of Louis was an injustice, an act of oppression, and the people's committees of Paris, all the patriots of France, these are the true guilty ones. . . .

The trial of Louis XVI is an appeal of royalty to the Constituent Assembly. In affording an audience to the lawyer of Louis XVI you are opening the struggle of despotism against liberty, you are organizing the right of calumny and blasphemy against the Republic. For, the right to defend the overthrown despot involves also the right to say anything in his favor that may be desired. You are giving a new lease of life to all the defeated factions; you encourage them, you inspire the defeated monarchism with new energy, you recognize the right to take sides for or against the King without let or hindrance. Nothing is more legitimate, more just, than that now all the defenders of royalty should appear on this platform to state their case. What sort of a republic is that whose very founders themselves summon the enemies of this form of government to defend themselves in the cradle of the Republic itself? . . .

All the bloodthirsty hordes of foreign despotism



are ready to wage war against us in the name of Louis XVI. From the recesses of his prison Louis fights us, and yet we still ask whether he is guilty, we still ask whether he may be treated as an enemy? I do not believe that the Republic is a word that can be trifled with, I do not believe that the Republic exists to be made sport of. The thing that is now being done is the best method of restoring the monarchy.

The Constitution is invoked in defense of Louis. I shall not take up all the arguments; let me simply say: to be sure, the Constitution forbids everything you have done so far. Be sure of that, in fact, you have no right to hold the King a prisoner; on the other hand, he has the right to demand his immediate liberation, not to mention compensation. The Constitution condemns you! Act accordingly, gentlemen; prostrate yourselves before Louis XVI and crave his mercy!

I, for my part, would be ashamed to trifle with these hairsplitting distinctions; I should leave this mode of treatment to the courts in London, Vienna and Berlin. Such distinctions are a scandal.

It is said this trial is a tremendous business, one requiring judicious and thoughtful treatment. But it is you who are giving it this great importance. In fact, it is you who have made a big thing of it, only you! What is so important about it? Are there any difficulties? No! Is it the personality

involved? In the eyes of freedom there is no smaller individual. In the eyes of humanity there is none more reprehensible. This man can inspire only those with respect who stand even lower than he. Is it the necessity of the result, the fear of the result? Very well then, we should have only one more reason to accelerate the result. After all, what is the reason for these eternal discussions, and for your doubts? Are you afraid of injuring the feelings of the people? Know then, that the people fear nothing else than the cowardice and ambition of their representatives! The people are not a horde of slaves who are stupidly chained to the tyrant whom they themselves have overthrown. You urge that we consider public opinion, the general opinion? If this public opinion is mistaken, it is for you to correct it. Do you fear the kings allied against you? If you wish them to defeat you, you have only to give them the impression that you fear them. To be sure of suffering defeat, you need only to show some respect to the accomplices, the allies, of the fallen kings! Are you perhaps afraid of the foreign nations? If so, you are merely giving evidence of your belief in the existence of an innate affection for tyranny. What is the cause of your ambition to liberate mankind? How can you explain the contradiction involved in your belief that the nations who were not horrified at the proclamation of the Rights of Man would be shocked by the punishment of one of the greatest

criminals? And do you perhaps fear the judgment of posterity? No doubt, posterity will marvel. But posterity will marvel at our weakness, at our prejudices, and at our indecision. . . .

Louis must die in order that the nation may live. In more peaceful times, once we have secured respect and have consolidated ourselves within and without, it might be possible for us to consider generous proposals. But to-day, when we are refused our freedom; to-day, when, after so many bloody struggles, the severity of the law as yet assails only the unhappy; to-day, when it is still possible for the crimes of tyranny to be made a subject of discussion; on such a day there can be no thought of mercy; at such a moment the people cries for vengeance. I request you to come to a decision at once concerning the fate of Louis. His wife will be handed over to the courts, together with all persons in any way connected with her. His son will remain under surveillance in the Temple until foreign and domestic peace has been assured. Louis XVI must at once be proclaimed by the National Assembly a traitor to the nation, a criminal against mankind, and the judgment must be carried out on the same square on which the great martyrs of freedom died on August 10.

—*Speech delivered December 3, 1792.*

## CONCERNING THE DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN AND OF THE CITIZEN

This speech by Robespierre identifies him with the French socialism of the 19th Century. It was reprinted countless times and became the charter of the left petit bourgeois republicans in 1830, 1848, and 1870.

IN the last session, I took the floor in order to make a few important additions to the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. It was my intention to expand your declarations of the "theory of property" by the addition of a few articles. Let the word "property" frighten no one! Filthy souls who value only your money, I will not violate your treasures, even though I know how unclean the source from which they come. . . . So let us establish the principles of law in good faith on property! We are obliged to do this the more, since the conception of property is enveloped in a dense mist by reason of the prejudices and the vices of men.

Ask any one of these traders in human flesh what is property; he will show you the long coffin called a ship, in which men are packed together and chained, men who seem yet alive, and he will tell you: "Look at my property; I have bought it head for head." Question this nobleman who has goods and subjects,

and who believes that the world will come to an end now that he no longer possesses them, and he will expound similar ideas on property to you.

Question the members of the Capetian dynasty, and they will tell you that the most sacred property is the right of inheritance, that they have the ancient right of oppressing the twenty-five million persons now populating the territory of France, of destroying them, of treating them—legally and monarchically—according to their own royal whim.

Property has no moral principle in the eyes of all these persons. Why does your Declaration of the Rights of Man suffer from the same defect? In your defense of liberty . . . you have stated—and rightly so—that it is limited by the rights of one's neighbor; why have you not applied the same principle to property, which after all is a social institution? . . . You have increased the number of articles in order to afford the largest possible latitude to the right to one's property, and yet you have not added a word in limitation of this right, with the result that your Declaration of the Rights of Man might make the impression of having been created not for the poor, but for the rich, the speculators, for the stock exchange jobbers. To remedy these defects, I propose the following additions:

1. Property is that right held by each citizen to dispose freely of that portion of the general goods guaranteed him by the laws.

2. The right to property, like all other rights, is limited by the obligation to regard the rights of others.

3. Property may not cause any detriment to our security or to our liberty or existence, or to the property of our neighbor.

4. Every act of possession, every transaction, violating these principles, is invalid and immoral.

Furthermore, in your discussion of taxes you entirely forget to lay a basis for progressive taxation. But there is, in the subject of taxation in general no principle so well-founded in justice as that which causes the citizen to participate, in the measure of his possessions, in the expenditures of the state, *i.e.*, according to the advantages accruing to each from society. I propose that you adopt the following articles:

1. Those citizens whose incomes are not sufficient to assure their subsistence are freed from taxation. Other citizens shall bear these burdens in the progressive measure of the size of their fortunes.

Further, the Committee has entirely forgotten to call attention to the duties of the fraternal obligations which unite all men and all nations in their rights and in their duty of mutual aid. Your Committee seems to have forgotten the bases of the eternal alliance of nations against the tyrants. One might think that your declarations had been framed for a small herd of human cattle in a remote corner

of the globe, and not for the boundless family which nature has scattered over the entire earth as its habitation.

I propose that you remedy these defects by inserting several articles. These articles cannot fail to win for you the respect of nations, and they may also involve the difficulty of setting you at odds with kings forever. I admit this difficulty is not horrifying to me. Surely we—now that we have no desire to compound with kings—cannot be terrified by such a prospect. The four articles I propose are these:

1. The men of all lands are brothers and the various nations must aid each other in the same manner as must also the citizens of one and the same state.

2. Any man oppressing a nation thereby declares himself to be an enemy of all the nations.

3. Those who fall upon a nation with an army in order to prevent the advances of liberty and to destroy the rights of man must be combated by all the other nations, not as ordinary foes, but as murderers and rebellious brigands.

4. Kings, aristocrats and tyrants, whatever be the nation to which they belong, are slaves in rebellion against the sovereign of the earth, the human race, and against the Legislator of the Universe of Nature. . . .

—*Speech delivered April 24, 1793.*

## IN FAVOR OF AN ARMED PEOPLE, OF A WAR AGAINST THE VENDÉE

THE armies of the Vendée, the armies of Brittany and of Coblenz are marching against Paris.

Parisians! The feudal masters are arming themselves because you are the vanguard of humanity. All the great powers of Europe are equipping themselves against you and all the base and depraved persons in France support them.

We now know the entire plan of our enemies, and have means for our defense in our hands. I am not stating secrets to you, I am merely repeating the speech I delivered this morning in the Convention. I declared this morning in the Convention that the Parisians will march to La Vendée, and that on all the roads and in all the cities on our journey we shall gather friends and brothers, and that we must extinguish in a single blow all of them, all the rebels. All the friends of the Republic must rise in order to annihilate all the aristocrats in La Vendée.

This morning in the Convention I said that the rascals in La Vendée have allies in the very heart of Paris, and I demanded emphatically that the Parisian fighters who have borne the terrible burden of the Revolution for five years, a portion of whom



will now take the field—that these republicans must not lose their wives and children during their absence, at the murderous hands of the counter-revolution. And no one to-day dared in the Convention to dispute the necessity of these measures.

Parisians! Let us hasten to meet the bandits of La Vendée!

Do you know why La Vendée is becoming a danger to us? La Vendée is a danger because great precautions have been taken to disarm a section of the population. But we shall create new republican legions and we shall not hand over our wives and children to the daggers of the counter-revolution.

This morning, in the Convention, I demanded the destruction of the rebels from La Vendée, and I also demanded that all aristocrats and moderates should at once be excluded from the Paris sections, and I also demanded that these suspected persons should be jailed.

We do not regard a person as a suspect merely because he was once a nobleman, a farmer general or a trader. Those persons are suspects who have not proved their quality as citizens, and they shall remain in our prisons until such time as the war may be terminated victoriously.

I asked money this morning in the Convention for the *sans-culottes*, for we must deliberate in the sections, and the workingman cannot deliberate and work at home at the same time. But he must receive

pay for his task of guarding the city. I have asked millions for the *sans-culottes* of Paris. . . . I have asked that people cease calumniating in the Convention the people of Paris and that the newspaper writers who desire to contaminate public opinion have their mouths stopped for them.

I demanded this morning in the Convention, and I demand it here again—and neither in the Convention nor here do I hear any contrary voices—that an army be held in readiness in Paris, an army not like that of Dumouriez, but an army consisting of *sans-culottes* and workingmen. And this army must investigate Paris, must keep the moderates in check, must occupy all posts and inspire all enemies with terror.

I asked in the Convention that the forges in all public squares be set to work in order to forge weapons, weapons, and again weapons, and I asked that the Council of Ministers should supervise this production of arms.

The tyrants of this earth have made their plans. The defenders of the Republic are to be their sacrifices. Very well—in this most grave of all moments, we shall save freedom by the severest measures, we shall not consent to be murdered one by one.

Citizens! Certain representatives of the people have attempted to play off the Parisians against the Departments, the Departments against Paris, the Convention against the provinces, and the people in

the galleries against the masses of the Parisians. They will not succeed. I have informed these gentlemen to this effect, and if the entire people of France could hear me, the entire people of France would be on my side.

Citizens! Do not be dismayed. We are told of immeasurably large foreign armies, of their connections with La Vendée, of their connections with Paris. Very well! What will all their efforts avail them against millions of *sans-culottes*?

We have an immense people of strong *sans-culottes* at our disposal, who cannot be permitted to drop their work. Let the rich pay! We have a Convention; perhaps not all its members are poor and resolute, but the corrupt section will for all that not be able to prevent us from fighting. Do you believe that the Mountain has not enough forces to defeat the adherents of Dumouriez, Orléans and Coburg combined? Parisians, the fate of all France, of all Europe, and all humanity is in your hands. The Mountain needs the People. The people needs the Mountain. And I brand the reports that the provinces are turning their arms against the Jacobins as fabrications on the part of our enemies.

In conclusion, I demand what I demanded in the Convention this morning, namely, that the Parisians shall be the revolutionary nucleus of the army, strong enough to drag the *sans-culottes* with them, that an army should remain in Paris in order to

keep our enemies in check, that all enemies who are caught shall be placed under arrest, and that money must be confiscated from the rich in order to enable the poor to continue the struggle.

—*Speech delivered May 8. 1793, in the Club of the Jacobins.*

## REPORT ON THE PRINCIPLES OF A REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT

On 19 Vendémiaire (October 10, 1793), Saint-Just demanded, in the name of the Committee of Public Safety, that the Convention proclaim the Government of the Republic as the revolutionary government up to the conclusion of peace. The following speech was delivered in motivation of this innovation, with which Robespierre was commissioned by the Committee of Public Safety. This speech was then posted publicly in all parishes by the Convention and by the Club of the Jacobins, and was brought to the attention of the Army of the Republic at home and at the front.

CITIZENS, members of the Convention! Success induces the weak to sleep, but fills the strong with even more powers of resistance.

Let us leave to Europe and to history the task of lauding the marvels of Toulon, and let us arm for new victories of liberty!

The defenders of the Republic will be guided by Cæsar's maxim, and believe that nothing has been accomplished so long as anything remains to be accomplished.

To judge by the power and the will of our republican soldiers, it will be easy to defeat the English

and the traitors. But we have another task of no less importance, but unfortunately of greater difficulty. This task is the task of frustrating, by an uninterrupted excess of energy, the eternal intrigues of all enemies of freedom within the country, and of paving the way for the victory of the principles on which the general weal depends.

These are the big tasks that you have imposed upon your Committee of Public Safety.

Let us first demonstrate the principles and the necessity of a revolutionary government, after which we shall describe those factors that aim to paralyze the birth of such a government.

The theory of the revolutionary government is as new as the Revolution itself, from which this government was born. This theory may not be found in the books of the political writers who were unable to predict the Revolution, nor in the law books of the tyrants. The revolutionary government is the cause of the fear of the aristocracy, or the pretext for its calumnies. For the tyrants this government is a scandal, for most people it is a miracle. It must be explained to all, so that at least all good citizens may be rallied around the principles of the general weal. . . .

The goal of a constitutional government is the protection of the Republic; that of a revolutionary government is the establishment of the Republic.

The Revolution is the war waged by liberty against

its foes—but the Constitution is the régime of victorious and peaceful freedom.

The Revolutionary Government will need to put forth extraordinary activity, because it is at war. It is subject to no constant laws, since the circumstances under which it prevails are those of a storm, and change with every moment. This government is obliged unceasingly to disclose new sources of energy to oppose the rapidly changing face of danger.

Under constitutional rule, it is sufficient to protect individuals against the encroachments of the state power. Under a revolutionary régime, the state power itself must protect itself against all that attack it.

The revolutionary government owes a national protection to good citizens; to its foes it owes only death. . . .

Is the revolutionary government, by reason of the greater rapidity of its course and the greater freedom of its movements than are characteristic of an ordinary government, therefore less just and less legitimate? No, it is based on the most sacred of all laws, on the general weal and on the ironclad law of necessity!

This government has nothing in common with anarchy or with disorder; on the contrary, its goal requires the destruction of anarchy and disorder in order to realize a dominion of law. It has nothing in

common with autocracy, for it is not inspired by personal passions.

The measure of its strength is the stubbornness and perfidy of its enemies; the more cruelly it proceeds against its enemies, the closer is its intimacy with the republicans; the greater the severities required from it by circumstances, the more must it recoil from unnecessary violations of private interests, unless the latter are demanded by the public necessity. . . .

If we were permitted a choice between an excess of patriotism and a base deficiency in public spirit, or even a morass of moderation, our choice should soon be made. A healthy body, tormented by an excess of strength, has better prospects than a corpse.

Let us beware of slaying patriotism in the delusion that we are healing and moderating it.

By its very nature, patriotism is energetic and enthusiastic. Who can love his country coldly and moderately? Patriotism is the quality of common men who are not always capable of measuring the consequences of all their acts, and where is the patriot to be found who is so enlightened as never to err? If we admit the existence of moderates and cowards who act in good faith, why should there not also exist patriots in good faith, who sometimes err by excess of zeal? If, therefore, we are to regard all those as criminals who have exceeded the limits of caution in the revolutionary movement, we should



be obliged to condemn equally the bad citizens, the enemies of the republic, as well as its enthusiastic friends, and should thus destroy the stoutest props of the Republic. There could be no other outcome than that the emissaries of tyranny would be our public prosecutors.

In indicating the duties of the revolutionary government we have also pointed out the spots in which it is endangered. But the greater its power, the freer and swifter its actions, the more must they be subjected to the test of good faith. The day on which such a government falls into unclean and perfidious hands is the day of the death of the Republic. Its name will become the pretext, the excuse of counter-revolution; its strength will be the strength of venom.

The establishment of the French Revolution was no child's play; it cannot be the work of caprice and carelessness, nor can it be the accidental product of the coalition of all the individual demands and of the revolutionary elements. Wisdom and power created the universe. In assigning to men from your own midst the terrible task of watching over the destinies of our country, you have placed at their disposal your abilities and your confidence. If the revolutionary government is not supported by the intelligence and the patriotism and by the benevolence of all the representatives of the people, where else should it draw the strength enabling it to

face the efforts of a united Europe on an equal plane? The authority of the Constituent Assembly must be respected by all Europe. The tyrants are exhausting the resources of their politics, and sacrificing their treasures, in order to degrade this authority and destroy it. The National Assembly, however, prefers its government to the cabinets of London and all the other courts of Europe. Either we shall rule, or the tyrants will rule us. What are the resources of our enemies in this war of treachery and corruption waged by them against the Republic? All the vices fight for them; the Republic has all the virtues on its side. The virtues are simple, poor, often ignorant, sometimes brutal. They are the heritage of the unhappy, the possession of the people. Vice is surrounded by all the treasures, armed with all the charms of voluptuousness, with all the enticements of perfidy; it is escorted by all the dangerous talents that have placed their services at the disposal of crime.

Great skill is shown by the tyrants in turning against us—not to mention our passions and our weaknesses—even our patriotism! No doubt the germs of disunion which they sow among us would be capable of rapid dissemination if we should not hasten to stifle them.

By virtue of five years of treason, by virtue of feeble precautions, and by virtue of our gullibility, Austria, England, Russia and Italy have had time to

set up, as it were, a secret government in France, a government that competes with the French government. They have their secret committees, their treasures, their agents, they absorb men from us and appropriate them to themselves, they have the unity that we lack, they have the policy that we have often neglected, they have the consistency which we have so often failed to show.

Foreign courts have for some time been spewing out on French soil their well-paid criminals. Their agents still infect our armies, as even our victory at Toulon will show. All the bravery of our soldiers, all the devotion of our generals, and all the heroism of the members of this Assembly had to be put forth to defeat treason. These gentlemen still speak in our administrative bodies, in the various sections; they secure admission to the clubs; they sometimes may be found sitting among us; they lead the counter-revolution; they lurk about us, they eavesdrop on our secrets; they flatter our passions and seek even to influence our opinions and to turn our own decisions against us. When you are weak, they praise our caution. When you are cautious, they accuse us of weakness. Your courage they designate as audacity, your justice as cruelty. If we spare them, they will conspire publicly; if we threaten them, they will conspire secretly or under the mask of patriotism. Yesterday they murdered the defenders of liberty; to-day they mingle in the

procession of mourners and weep for their own victims. Blood has flowed all over the country on their account, but we need this blood in the struggle against the tyrants of Europe. The foreigners have set themselves up as the arbitrators of public peace; they have sought to do their work with money; at their behest, the people found bread; when they willed it otherwise, the bread was not available; they succeeded in inaugurating gatherings in front of the bakeshops and in securing the leadership of bands of famished men. We are surrounded by their hired assassins and their spies. We know this, we witness it ourselves, and yet they live! The perfidious emissaries who address us, who flatter us—these are the brothers, the accomplices, the bodyguard of those who destroy our crops, who threaten our cities, massacre our brothers, cut down our prisoners. They are all looking for a leader, even among us. Their chief interest is to incite us to enmity among ourselves. If they succeed in this, this will mean a new lease of life for the aristocracy, the hour of the rebirth of the Federalist plans. They would punish the faction of the Girondistes for the obstacles that have been placed in their way. They would avenge themselves on the Mountain for its splendid spirit of self-sacrifice, for their attacks are aimed at the Convention. We shall continue to make war, war against England, against the Austrians, against all their allies. Our only possible answer to their pam-

phlets and lies is to destroy them. And we shall know how to hate the enemies of our country.

It is not in the hearts of the poor and the patriots that the fear of terror must dwell, but there in the midst of the camp of the foreign brigands, who would bargain for our skin, who would drink the blood of the French people.

The Committee of Public Safety has recognized that the law does not punish the great criminals with the necessary swiftness. Foreigners, well-known agents of the allied kings, generals besmirched with the blood of Frenchmen, former accomplices of Dumouriez and Custine and Lamarlières have long been in custody and are yet not executed.

The conspirators are very numerous. It is far less necessary to punish a hundred unknown, obscure wretches, than to seize and put to death a single leader of the conspirators.

The members of the Revolutionary Tribunal, whose patriotism and rectitude can for the most part only be praised, have called the attention even of the members of the Committee of Public Safety to the deficiencies in the laws. We propose to you that the Committee of Public Safety be entrusted with the task of introducing a number of innovations in this connection, with the purpose of strengthening and accelerating the hand of justice in its procedure against intrigues. You have already

commissioned the Committee, in a decree, to this effect. We propose that you create the means by which its judgments may be accelerated against foreigners and against generals conspiring with the tyrants.

It is not enough to terrify the enemies of our country; we must also aid its defenders.

We ask that favorable conditions be created for the soldiers who are fighting and dying for liberty.

The French army is not only a terror to the tyrants, it is the glory of humanity and of the nation. In their march to victory, our victorious warriors shout, "Long live the Republic!" They die under the swords of the foe, with the shout, "Long live the Republic!" on their lips; their last words are pæans to liberty, their last gasps are exclamations of homage to their country. If the leaders of the army were as valiant as our soldiers, Europe would have been defeated long ago.

Any measure adopted in favor of the army is an act of national gratitude.

What we have done thus far for the defenders of our country and for their families seems far too little. We should increase the allowances one-third. The immense resources of the Republic permit it; our country demands it. We have also ascertained that the invalids, as well as the widows and children of those who have died for their country, are often injured by the formalities of the law, and by the

indifference and ill-favor of subaltern officers. We demand that they be aided by official advocates, who will assist them in attaining their rights. For all these reasons, I ask that the Convention adopt the following measures:

I. The public prosecutor assigned to the revolutionary tribunal shall at once draw up articles of indictment against Dietrich Custine, the son of the general condemned by law, Desbrullis, Biron, Barthélemy, and all the other generals and officers who were connected with Dumouriez, Custine, Lamarlières and Houchard. The public prosecutor shall also indict foreigners, bankers, and all other individuals having any communications with the kings allied against the Republic.

II. The Committee of Public Safety shall report at the earliest possible moment on the appropriate means for securing an improvement in the organization of the Revolutionary Tribunal.

III. Allowances and aids, as paid hitherto to veterans or their dependents, shall be increased one-third.

IV. A commission shall be appointed entrusted with the task of defending the rights of veterans and their dependents.

V. The members of this Commission shall be appointed by the Convention and shall be nominated by the Committee of Public Safety.

—*Speech delivered December 25, 1793.*

## REPORT ON THE PRINCIPLES OF POLITICAL MORALITY

Robespierre, on the instructions of the Committee of Public Safety, delivered the following speech in the Convention, which was an attack both on the Right and on the Left.

SOME time ago we analyzed the principles of our external policy; to-day we shall take up the internal policy. . . .

Having for some time been led often enough by accidents, the representatives of the French people are now beginning to aspire to a political consistency permeated with a strong revolutionary character. Thus far we have been led rather by the storms of circumstances, by our love of the good, by our feeling for the needs of the fatherland, than by any precise theory.

What is the purpose, what is the goal for which we strive? We wish a peaceful enjoyment of freedom and equality, the rule of that eternal justice whose laws are graven not in marble or in stone, but in the hearts of all men. We wish a social order that shall hold in check all base and cruel passions, which shall awaken to life all benevolent and noble impulses, that shall make the noblest ambition that of



being useful to our country, that shall draw its honorable distinctions only from equality, in which the generality shall safeguard the welfare of the individual, and in which all hearts may be moved by any evidence of republican spirit. . . . We want morality in the place of egotism, principles in the place of mere habit, the rule of reason in the place of the slavery of tradition, contempt for vice in the place of contempt for misfortune, the love of glory in the place of avarice. Honest men instead of "good society," truth instead of empty show, manly greatness instead of the depravity of the great, a sublime, powerful, victorious and happy people!

The splendor of the goal pursued by our Revolution is simultaneously the source of our strength and our weakness. It is the source of our weakness, because it unites all the perfidious and vicious individuals, all the advocates of tyranny who think of plunder, who think to find in the Revolution a trade and in the Republic a booty. Thus we may explain the disaffection of many persons who began the struggle together with us, but who have left us when our path was but half accomplished, because they did not pursue the objects we were pursuing. . . .

You are surrounded beyond the boundaries; at home, all the friends of the tyrants conspire, and will continue to conspire, so long as treason still has a hope. We must stifle the domestic and foreign enemies of the Republic, or we must be de-

stroyed with the Republic. And therefore, under the present circumstances, the principle of our Republic is this: to influence the people by the use of reason, to influence our enemies by the use of terror.

In times of peace, virtue is the source from which the government of the people takes its power. During the Revolution, the sources of this power are virtue and terror: virtue, without which terror will be a disaster; and terror, without which virtue is powerless. But terror is nothing more nor less than swift, severe and indomitable justice. . . .

It has been said that terror is the means by which a despotic government rules. Has your rule anything in common with such a government? Yes, indeed, but only in the sense that the sword in the hands of the protagonists of liberty resembles the sword in the hands of the champion of tyranny. When despots rule because their subjects are terrified, the despots are justified—as despots. You put down all the enemies of freedom by means of terror, and you are justified—as founders of the Republic. The government of the Revolution is the despotism of liberty against tyranny. Must might be used only in order to protect crime? . . .

If tyranny prevails for but a single day, all the patriots will have been wiped out by the next morning. And yet some persons dare declare that

despotism is justice and that the justice of the people is despotism and rebellion. . . .

Either we or our enemies must succumb. "Show consideration for the Royalists!" shout some persons; "have compassion with the criminal!" "No, I tell you; have compassion with innocence, compassion with the weak, and compassion with humanity! . . ."

The whole task of protecting the Republic is for the advantage of the loyal citizen. In the Republic, only republicans may be citizens. The Royalists and conspirators are foreigners to us, enemies. Is not the terrible war in which we now are involved a single indissoluble struggle? Are the enemies within not the allies of those who attack us from without? The murderers who rend the flesh of their country at home; the intriguers who seek to purchase the conscience of the representatives of the people; the traitors who sell themselves; the pamphleteers who besmirch us and are preparing for a political counter-revolution by means of a moral counter-revolution;—are all these individuals any less dangerous than the tyrants whom they serve? All those who would intervene between these criminals and the sword of justice are like unto those who would throw themselves between the bayonets of our soldiers and the troops of the enemy, and the enthusiasm of their false feelings amounts in my eyes only to sighs directed toward England and Austria!

. . . For whom does the heart of these gentlemen beat so gently? Does it beat for the two hundred thousand heroes who have already perished by the sword of our enemies? Alas, these slain were only plebeians, patriots! To be worthy of our sympathy, of our compassion, the object of these feelings must be at least the widow of some general who has betrayed his country no less than twenty times. To be worthy of the compassion of these gentlemen one must be able to show that one has murdered at least ten thousand Frenchmen. They preserve their indifference when faced with the reports of the terrible blood-baths to which our heroes are subjected, or of the crimes perpetrated against their mothers and children, and yet, the punishment of a new traitor is called a savage massacre. The wretchedness of our citizens in the cities, their painful wounds, is borne with equanimity, but the wives of the conspirators move them to eloquence. These persons may defeat the ends of justice and law; they are permitted to defend the cause of their accomplices; they may even organize as a privileged body. . . .

We should commit an unpardonable act of levity if we should regard a few victories as the end of all our dangers. Just cast your eyes on our actual situation, and you will feel that caution and energy were never more necessary than now. A disguised ill-will sabotages the measures of the government at every step. For such is the fatal influence of the

foreign courts, and because this influence is a hidden one, it is nonetheless active and nonetheless dangerous. The intimidated criminals are concealing their steps with greater cleverness.

The internal enemies of the nation have divided into two camps, the camp of the Moderates and the camp of the Counter-Revolutionaries. They are marching on "opposite" paths and under different colors, but they are aiming at the same goal. One of these factions would mislead us into weakness, the other into excess. The one would make of liberty a bacchante, the other a prostitute. The ones have been called "Moderates." The designation of "Ultra-Revolutionaries" perhaps is more brilliant than true. This designation, perhaps appropriate when used of men who, acting in good faith, and ignorant of the facts, have sometimes neglected to practice due caution in the revolutionary policy, is by no means applicable to those perfidious individuals who would compromise us, who would make the principles of the Revolution a plaything to trifle with. The poor revolutionary moves to and fro, straddles, sometimes on either side of the fence. To-day he is a moderate and to-morrow he becomes a fanatic, each time with as little reason. Whenever he discovers anything it is sure to be a plot unveiled long ago; he will tear the mask from the face of traitors who were unmasked long ago, but he will defend the living traitors. He is ever at an effort

to adapt himself to the opinions of the moment and never undertakes to oppose them; he is always ready to adopt violent decisions, but he must always be assured in advance that these decisions cannot possibly be carried out; he calumniates those measures that might be fruitful of results, and even if he should approve of them, he will modify them with proposed amendments which would nullify any possible success in advance. Above all, he is very sparing in his use of the truth and resorts to it only as a means to enable him to lie the more shamelessly. High-sounding resolutions find him all fire and flame, but only so long as these resolutions have no real significance. Above all, he is indifferent on any subject that is of importance at the moment; he dotes on the forms of patriotism, the cult of patriotism, and he would rather wear out a hundred red caps than carry out a single revolutionary action.

What is the difference between these people and the Moderate? Both are servants of the same master, servants who maintain that they are hostile to each other, but only in order the better to conceal their misdeeds. Do not judge them by their different language; judge them by the identity of their results. Is he who attacks the Convention publicly in inflammatory speeches any different from him who seeks to deceive and compromise us? Are not these two persons acting in an understanding with each other? . . .

Even the aristocracy is now attempting to make itself popular. It conceals its counter-revolutionary pride, it hides its dagger under its rags and filth. Royalism is trying to overcome the victories of the Republic. The nobility, having learned from past experience, is ready to clasp liberty in a sweet embrace, in order to stifle it in the act. Tyranny strews flowers on the graves of the defenders of liberty. Their hearts have remained the same; only their masks have changed! How many traitors are attempting to ruin us by conducting our affairs?

But they should be put to the test. Instead of oaths and declamations, let us require them to deliver services and sacrifices!

Action is required—they talk. Deliberation is necessary—they declare we must act at once. In times of peace, they are opposed to all necessary reforms. In times of commotion, they will promise to introduce any innovation, any transformation. When you are planning to punish traitors, they will be at hand immediately, to remind you of Cæsar's leniency. They discover that this man or that was once a nobleman, although he is now defending the Republic, and they will forget these antecedents only in cases in which this man or that among the nobles is betraying the Republic. When peace is necessary, why, they will promise you victory. When war is necessary, rest assured that they will laud the delights of peace. If it behooves us to defend

our territory—no doubt they will be found talking of the necessity of proceeding to the offensive against the tyrants beyond all the seas and mountains. If our fortresses should be recovered, they will propose that we mob the churches and wage war against Heaven. They will forget the Austrians in order to antagonize the faithful. Or, if we need allies on whose fidelity we can depend—in such cases, they will shout vehemently against all the governments of all the world and demand that we brand the Great Mogul a criminal. If the people are eager to celebrate victory at the Capitol, they will intone hymns of gloom and remind us of our adversities in the past. They sow disaffection among us. And when we proceed to clothe the people's sovereignty in the concrete form of a powerful and respected government, they discover that the principles of this government are a violation of the sovereignty of the people. They wish to disorganize us, they wish to paralyze the acts of the republican government.

It is in this way that these gentlemen serve the Revolution! They have found an excellent means of supporting the efforts of the Republican government: to disorganize us, degrade us, indeed make war upon those who support us. If you are seeking means for provisioning the army, or if you are engaged in forcing from the hands of avarice and fear the foodstuffs necessary for our warriors—they will shed patriotic tears over the general woe and pre-



dict a sure famine. Their alleged desire to avoid the evil is always sufficient reason for them to increase the evil. In the north, they put chickens to death under the pretext that they were consuming the barley. In the south, they destroyed silk worms under the pretext that silk was an article of luxury, and cut down the orange trees under the pretext that oranges were not a necessity.

It is impossible for you to conceive of all the devious ways pursued by all these sowers of discord, these spreaders of false rumors, who disseminate every possible kind of false report, which is not unprofitable in a country in which, as in ours, superstition is still so widespread. . . .

The domestic situation of our country demands your entire attention. Remember that it is our duty simultaneously to make war against the tyrants of all Europe, to keep fed and equipped an army of 1,200,000 men, and that the government is obliged ceaselessly to keep down with due energy and caution all our internal foes, as well as to repair all our defects. . . .

—*Speech delivered February 5, 1794.*

## REPORT ON THE EXTERNAL SITUATION OF THE REPUBLIC

Robespierre became a member of the Committee of Public Safety on July 26, 1793. A few months later he was instructed to report to the Convention on the external situation of the Republic. This speech was translated as a manifesto into almost every European language, was distributed in great quantities and read aloud in all the communes of France, as well as to the army. In this speech, Robespierre maintained that the Girondiste cabinet had intentionally involved France in a war with all of Europe for the purpose of destroying the Republic. There was no doubt that Robespierre was wrong in this opinion. The Gironde has many sins and mistakes on its conscience; many of its members were outright traitors; but to speak of a desire on the part of the Gironde to sell France would not be a mere exaggeration but an absolute untruth. Robespierre was in the opposition to war at first, and denounced the war, but later, precisely at the time when he delivered this speech, he was the soul of the national resistance against the foreign enemy, and the real deliverer of France, the Republic, and the Revolution.

It is now time to tell all those so weak in intellect that they will not understand, and all the simpletons who pretend to be ignorant of the facts, that the French Republic is a fact and that the victories and the nations of despotism are only temporary phenomena. It is also time for our allies to feel

confidence in our caution and in our fate, and it is time that all our enemies may no longer have any doubts as to our might or our courage.

The French Revolution has shaken the world; the soaring flight to liberty of a great people was naturally displeasing to the kings who live about us. But to proceed from such displeasure to a declaration of war, to an establishment of the monstrous alliance of powers hostile to us, this was indeed a long journey.

Those fighting against us have no common interest and only the policy of two powerful countries, only an alliance with the French King himself, has rendered possible the creation of this federation. The treason of many conspirators in our own country was necessary before this alliance so full of contradictions could come to life. . . .

It is now known to all the world that the policy of the London Cabinet gave a mighty impulse to our Revolution. London's plans were extensive, the English Cabinet desired to lead a ruined and mutilated France through the political storms into the meshes of the English monarchy. It desired to set a Duke of York on the throne of Louis XVI.

The English plans were bold. But genius consists not in the outlining of great plans, but rather in the ability to adapt those means that are available to the realization of these plans. . . .

And Pitt was crudely mistaken as to our Revolution. He was as much mistaken as Louis XVI and

the French aristocracy. And they all made their mistakes, because they felt nothing but contempt for the masses of the French people. Being too immoral to believe in the virtues of the Revolution, too backward to venture a step into the future, the English King's minister was far behind his century. All the facts of the situation have hitherto jeopardized his plans. He has learned that all the forces thus far sent against us by him and his allies have been annihilated. He has seen the destruction of Necker, of the Orléans, of Lafayette, of Lameth, of Dumouriez, of Custine, of Brissot, and of all the other little pygmies of the Gironde, one after the other. The French people has thus far been able to dispose of all these intrigues.

Every crisis of our Revolution, contrary to the calculation of our enemies, has enabled the Revolution to advance beyond the initial point of this crisis. Toward the end of 1792 our enemies believed that the downfall of the Capetian King might be neutralized by the act of proclaiming his son to be king of the French. But then came August 10 and the Republic was proclaimed. . . .

On May 31 the people destroyed all the intrigues, the demon of civil war, the hydra of Federalism, and the monster of aristocracy. The Convention is now at the height of the situation. A new social compact is proclaimed and consolidated by the will of the Frenchmen.

Since the year 1791, the English faction and all the enemies of freedom have been brought to recognize that there exists a Republican party in France which will not negotiate with tyranny, and that this party is the people itself. The various massacres carried out against Republicans, the mass murder at Nancy, and the mass murder on the Champ de Mars will not suffice to destroy the Republic. Our enemies therefore determined to make war on the Republic and there followed the monstrous alliance between Austria and Prussia, and later the alliance of all the allies now united against us. But it would be an exaggeration to see nothing behind this mighty alliance than the babble and the machinations of the émigrés, who have wandered from country to country in the course of their intrigues against us. Not even the credit of the French court was sufficient to lay firm foundations for the alliance against us.

This alliance was produced above all by the labor, the support of certain factions which ruled France itself and which were afraid of the further evolution of things within the country.

In order to lead all the kings into this audacious enterprise against us, it was not enough to convince them that—with the exception of a small band of Republicans—the entire nation secretly hates the new régime, and that the entire nation would welcome them, the foreigners, as deliverers. It was not

enough to convince them that all the leaders of the armies would at once pass over to their side. To justify this enterprise in the eyes of their subjects themselves, they had to be relieved of the responsibility of declaring war on us, and therefore war was declared on them from Paris. You know with what monstrous levity war was declared; you know that you were then without arms, that our forts had no munitions, that our army was in the hands of traitors, and that they nevertheless talked of carrying the tricolor up to the ends of the earth. These orators and gossips who were our leaders at the time were insulting the tyrants only in order to do their bidding. . . .

The true friends of the Republic had different intentions. Before bursting the chains of the universe they wished first to consolidate liberty in their own country. Before undertaking to wage war on foreign tyrants, they wished first to annihilate the tyrants at home, who were daily betraying them. They did not wish to march against other kings while they were led by a king themselves. . . .

Those who planned at the end of the year 1791 to overthrow all the thrones of the world, are the same as those who in August 1792 wish to ward off with all their might the blow against their own King. The chariot of the Revolution was advancing over stony soil. They wished it to travel on a smooth and easy road and therefore they guided it into dangerous

paths and sought to demolish the chariot before it had attained its goal. . . . Let us now picture to ourselves the present countenance of Europe. We must clearly estimate the forces which are at work for us and against us. From the very moment that the plan of the alliance against France had been drawn up, it was attempted to interest the various powers in the struggle against us by a prospective division of France. And the plans for this division are now in our hands; they are proved not only by the outcome, but we have also the necessary documents and papers. At the moment when the Committee of Public Safety was established, the plan of the English cabinet had already been elaborated for the division of France, and we of the Committee were acquainted with this plan. At the time, we assigned no particular importance to it, since we did not trust the confidantes, but the facts have since confirmed the entire situation. Now, citizens of the Convention! England did not forget its share in this general division. Dunkirk, Toulon, the colonies, and even the coveting of the French crown itself—these were to be the British share. England found it easy to draw the Lieutenant Governor of Holland into the alliance. And we have already discussed the plan of alliance of the Prussian King with the head of the House of Hapsburg. Like two brigands who make peace with each other after a long period of disunion, Prussia and Austria again come to terms.

For a moment they forget their struggle in order to devote themselves to the immediate business of plundering France. And yet, this alliance is destined to fall to pieces. Austria will again find itself the deceived deceiver.

Together with the King of Prussia, the Empress of Russia has divided Poland, while the House of Hapsburg has been promised, as an indemnity, concessions in France, *i.e.*, Alsace-Lorraine and French Flanders. Even the King of Sardinia has been promised a share in our dominions. But what was it possible to give to the Italian powers? Nothing! And the latter therefore resisted all entreaties and requests and yielded only at the end, or rather, they submitted to England's orders, and these orders were supported by the English fleet.

Among all the impostors who adorn themselves with the title of Emperor, King, or Minister, we consider Catherine of Russia and her Minister to be the most cunning. . . .

Russia's policy is categorically determined by the very nature of her situation. In this country, the characteristics of savage, barbarous hordes are fused into a single whole with the vices of civilized nations. The rulers of Russia have great power and great wealth; surrounded by barbarism, they yet have acquired the tastes and the ideas of Western Europe; they would love to be served and flattered



by the Athenians, but their subjects are only Tartars. . . .

The Court of St. Petersburg has long been attempting to overwhelm Europe, Turkey and Poland. . . . It has aided much in the construction of the league of kings now united against us, and this court—not its allies—has drawn many advantages from the alliance. While the allies of the Russian Empress are exhausting their strength in the struggle against us, this lady of St. Petersburg is husbanding all her resources and casting her glances on Turkish, Polish and German domains. She believes the hour to be near at hand in which she can dictate to Europe.

—*Speech delivered November 18, 1793.*

THE END

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## EXPLANATORY NOTES

**August 10 (1793):** Anniversary of the storming of the Bastille and the provisional dethronement of Louis XVI.

**Capet:** The name of an ancient dynasty of kings in France (the "Capetian Line"), of which Louis XVI was a descendent.

**Catherine II (1729-1796):** Empress of Russia (1762-1796).

**Coblentz:** A city on the west bank of the Rhine, at the confluence with the Moselle, in which many emigré noblemen gathered and intrigued after the Revolution.

**Danton, Georges Jacques (1759-1794):** A French revolutionary leader, member of the Convention; he was tried by the Revolutionary Tribunal, and guillotined May 4, 1794; a volume of this series is devoted to his speeches.

**Desmoulin, Benoit Camille (1760-1794):** French revolutionist and writer; author of the *Histoire des Brissotins*; guillotined May 4, 1794, together with Danton.

**Don Inigo Lopez de Recalde; Ignatius Loyola:** Founder of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuit Order).

**Feuillants:** A political club established at Paris during the Revolution. It was first called the Club of 1789, receiving its later name from the convent of the Feuillants, where it held its meetings.

**Girond:** The moderate Republican Party during the First French Revolution (1792); so called from the department whence its earliest members were sent up as representatives.

**Jacobins:** A French revolutionary club, so called from the meeting in a hall of the former Jacobin convent in the Rue St. Honoré, Paris. It called itself "The Society of Friends of the Constitution." Its twelve hundred branch societies, led by Robespierre, Danton and Marat, had an enormous influence. It controlled the Legislative Assembly after 1791, and organized the Reign of Terror and the agitation against the king. It was overthrown in November, 1794, but not dissolved until 1799.

**Lafayette, Marquis de (1757-1834):** Lafayette is particularly known for his participation in the American War of Independence. During the French Revolution he played a reactionary rôle. In May, 1790, he founded the "Society of 1789," which afterwards became the Feuillant Club. He retired to private life in 1791.

**Louis XVI (1754-1793):** King of France (1774-1792), guillotined January 21, 1793.

**Louvet de Couvray Jean Baptiste (1760-1797):** A deputy to the Convention in 1792; author of the lubricious novel, *Les amours du chevalier de Faublas* (1787-1789).

**Lucretius Carus:** Roman philosophical poet (96 B.C.-55 B.C.); his didactic poem, *De rerum natura*, treats physics, psychology and ethics from the Epicurean point of view. Committed suicide, perhaps in a moment of insanity.

**Marat, Jean Paul (1743-1793):** Physician and revolutionary leader; stabbed to death by Charlotte Corday; a volume of this series is devoted to his writings.

**Marie Antoinette (1755-1793):** Queen of France, wife of Louis XVI, daughter of Emperor Francis I of Austria and Maria Theresa; guillotined October 16, 1793, nine months after Louis XVI.

**Mirabeau, Comte de (1749-1791):** A French statesman and writer; called the French Demosthenes; a member of the Constituent Assembly.

**Mountain:** The most revolutionary section of the Convention (The Jacobins) was called the "Mountain," because its occupied the highest benches, farthest removed from the speakers' rostrum.

**Racine, Louis (1692-1763):** French poet, son of the more famous poetic dramatist, Jean Baptiste Racine (1639-1699).

**Saint Just, Louis Antoine Jean de (1767-1794):** One of the triumvirate of the Reign of Terror; a volume of this series is devoted to him.

**Saint Thomas; Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274):** The father of Catholic philosophy (scholasticism).

**Tacitus, Cornelius (ca 55 A.D.-117 A.D.):** Roman Historian.

**Vendée (La):** A department in central western France; scene of the revolt of local peasants and Royalists against the French Republic in 1793-1795.

**Vergniaud, Pierre Victurnien (1753-1793):** Orator, revolutionist, president of the National Convention which sentenced Louis XVI to death, guillotined November 31, 1793.

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