

# THIERS' MUSES: REDEPICTING THE CRIME OF FEDERALISM IN POST-ROBESPIERRIST REVOLUTIONARY FRANCE

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On June 2, 1793, the French National Convention, forced by armed groups from the Paris sections, proscribed twenty-nine Girondin deputies; the Montagnards emerged victorious from an eight-month political struggle and were to rule France until Thermidor Year II. The ultrademocratic rhetoric claimed that the mobilization of the Parisian crowd had saved the Republic. Nearly fifty departments, however, protested the overthrow of the Girondins and, in some, volunteers were soon recruited and moved against the capital to restore the authority and integrity of the Convention. The civil war - which soon came to be known as the Federalist revolt - ended only in October, when the cities of Bordeaux and Lyon submitted to republican troops: their defeat began the Terror and the crime of Federalism became instrumental in developing dictatorial politics.

The reasons for repression brought a change in the meaning of the term itself. "Federalism" was and remained an attack on the political integrity of France. Yet, before 2 June the term embodied only a misunderstanding of the true meaning of popular rule, because it was used to define all independent action born out of democratic ideology;<sup>1</sup> after the collapse of the revolts, on the contrary, the word took on the meaning of secret counter-revolutionary activity undertaken by those who publicly proclaimed their patriotism.<sup>2</sup> So defined, charge was all the more difficult to refute, so that it was also applied to those whose commitment to the Republic had seemed unimpeachable. In fact, despite the democratic pedigree of many among the prisoners, the Revolutionary Tribunal transformed whom ever was involved in the Federalist revolt into a Royalist and nor was the crime of Federalism separated from the issue of counter-revolution.<sup>3</sup>

The Girondins denounced this approach as serving the polemical purpose of depicting the insurrections as a reactionary offensive. Jean Baptiste Louvet claimed that the urban revolts had instead a revolutionary and democratic nature:

Mais d'ailleurs fédéraliser? que voulez vous dire? Elles étaient donc fédéralistes au 14 juillet les sections de Paris qui ... se fédèrent pour renverser la Bastille? Ils étaient donc fédéralistes,

1. Useful overviews can be found in H.Hintze, *Staatseinheit und Föderalismus in alter Frankreich und in der Revolution*, Berlin 1928, pp. 262-93; see also R.Debbasch, *Le principe d'unité et d'indivisibilité de la République*, Paris, 1988, pp. 138-42.

2. See, e.g., the article by M.Peronnet, "Le crime de fédéralisme", *112e Congrès national des sociétés savantes*, t. III: *Autour des mentalités et des pratiques politiques sous la Révolution française*, Paris, 1987, pp. 37-45.

3. Antoine François Billot, procureur-général of the Doubs, was jailed because he was "prevenu de complicité de projets contre-révolutionnaires ou fédéralistes", while Courandin, the district judge of Angers, justifying signing a declaration in which was emphasized the necessity of popular involvement in overwhelming factionalism, underlined that he never meant "favoriser le fédéralisme, qui n'était pas connu alors". [A]rchives [N]ationales, W 413, dossier 948, pièce 51 and W 346, dossier 682, pièce 9.

le 10 août ce bataillon du Finistère, ce bataillon de Marseille et ces nombreux bataillons de Paris qui se fédèrent contre le chateau? et ces douze cent mille soldats qui ... courent aux frontières et se fédèrent contre l'étranger qu'ils écrasent, ce sont donc des fédéralistes? Enfin, se fédérer c'est donc se fédéraliser? Quel misérable abus de mots!<sup>4</sup>

The other Girondin deputies - Barbaroux, Petion, Buzot, Brissot - who wrote their memoirs during the summer of 1793 all corroborate Louvet's evidence: the rebels took up arms to defend the Republic from dictatorship and *maratisme*.<sup>5</sup>

Yet their arguments never had much impact. Historians have tended to accept the Convention's rhetoric and the Federalists have usually been represented as reactionaries.<sup>6</sup> This perspective, central to all the best histories of the French Revolution, was already adopted by Auguste Mignet and Adolphe Thiers, who first depicted Federalism as a counter-revolutionary movement. Nevertheless, it would be misleading to suggest that the meaning they gave to the 1793 provincial protests relied directly upon Jacobin propaganda. The roots of their interpretation of Federalism can be traced back to the ideas about the departmental insurrection developed by different political groups between Thermidor and the Restoration. Mignet and Thiers transformed those ideas - which always blamed Robespierism and dictatorship - into the well-known theory of circumstances and opened the way to the re-evaluation of the Terror.

This problem never attracted the attention of historians, because the experience of the term Federalism after the fall of Robespierre remains largely unexplored. Yet Thermidor re-opened the doors to a debate on the nature of the provincial uprisings of 1793. The Girondins, soon recalled to the Convention, stressed the political and ideological continuity between the martyred victims of *maratisme* and those who had overthrown Robespierre and proclaimed the democratic aim of the revolts; the neo-Jacobins continued to denounce the counter-revolutionary nature of the protests; as for the right-wing press, the term was anything but a polemical monster. As the Revolution entered the Directorial phase, however, the official accounts of Federalism began to deny the link previously suggested between the Girondin deputies and the rebels. Along the road to Brumaire, the former were always identified as patriots who bravely defied Robespierist dictatorship, whereas the urban uprisings were attributed to the counter-revolutionary seeds spread by the Royalists.

This version of the 1793 Federalist revolt lasted well beyond the fall of the liberal Republic and it also pervades Mignet's and Thiers' analysis, whose judgement on the Girondins is divided between the homage paid to the friends of liberty and the alarming picture of their political short-sightedness.

4. J.B.Louvet de Couvrai, *Mémoires sur la Révolution française*, Paris, 1889, vol. 1, p. 56. For a detailed account of the charges of Federalism set down against the Girondins, see L.Cornu, "Fédéralistes-! et pourquoi?", in F. Furet-M.Ozouf (eds.), *La Gironde et les Girondins*, Paris, 1991, pp. 265-89.

5. For an elaborate justification of the insurrection, see Buzot's words: "Si j'ai vu avec plaisir le mouvement sublime des départements ... c'est que tous ils se portaient au centre, tous ils ... voulaient l'unité de la République que l'attentat du 2 juin tendait à rompre". *Mémoires inédits de Petion et mémoires de Buzot et de Barbaroux*, Paris, 1966, pp. 58-9. See also J.P.Brissot, *Mémoires*, Paris, 1910, 2:337-8.

6. See, e.g., the voices fédéralisme in F. Furet-M.Ozouf (eds.), *Dictionnaire critique de la Révolution française*, Paris, 1988, and fédéralisme et fédérations in A. Soboul (ed.), *Dictionnaire historique de la Révolution française*, Paris, 1989, pp. 437-40. For a vision of Federalism as a moderate movement, A. Forrest, "Federalism", in C.R. Lucas (ed.), *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture. II. The Political Culture of the French Revolution*, London, 1988, pp. 309-25.

From this point of view, it is possible to talk of a continuity between the revolutionary discourse and the liberal interpretation of 1793 which appeared during the Restoration. To comprehend the significance of this relationship one must however analyze the ways in which Mignet's and Thiers' thesis inherited the official definition of federalism: in other words, what is of interest is the nature of the ideological link between the Montagnard discourse and revolutionary historiography. From this point of view, it is important to explore the Directory years. In fact, in repudiating Jacobin dictatorship and embracing the principles of a liberal republic, the anti-terrorist revolutionaries nevertheless fell back upon the same interpretation of the 1793 uprisings previously given by Robespierriism. This means that the background and implications of that particular political season afford a good setting in which to explore the merging, in the terms reshaped by Mignet and Thiers, of different interpretations around the question of Federalism.

The analysis presented here begins by establishing the way in which revolutionary historiography brought together all the previous assertions on the Federalist revolt. Then, through an examination of the debate on Federalism beyond the Terror, we shall attempt to study the impact of the Directorial political legacy on nineteenth-century historiography. Finally, by examining the different meaning of the term during the Thermidorean phase, we shall seek to show the birth of a line of reasoning that led to the repudiation of Federalism as incompatible with representation and therefore subversive of liberty.

Thus, through an examination of the suspicions towards the 1793 provincial insurrections kept alive also after 9 Thermidor, Year II, this article has two objectives. On the one hand, we shall attempt to define Federalism as a political illness rooted in the ideological battleground of popular sovereignty. On the other hand, we shall seek to locate in the Thermidorian phase the origins of the repudiation of Federalism in the terms later depicted by Mignet and Thiers. It follows from what has been said so far that the image of Federalism belongs to the political culture of Year III and not to the Robespierriist discourse.

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Fédéralisme: nom donné aux Girondins, les quels avaient formé le projet de détacher un certain nombre de départements de la métropole, pour en former une république fédérative. Si cette idée eut prévalu, c'en était fait des conquêtes de la révolution. Les principaux chefs de ce schisme national furent Brissot, Vergniaud, Guadet, Buzot, Barbaroux ... La révolution du 31 mai sauva la situation et grâce à la Commune de Paris et au parti de la Montagne le fédéralisme fut tué dans cette journée et ses partisans furent à jamais annihilés.

At the end of 19th century, Jean François Robinet's account<sup>7</sup> would seem to corroborate the view that the Jacobin image of Federalism enjoyed wide credence among historians. The provincial uprisings remained a reactionary challenge to the Republic, while the Parisian insurrection and the fall of the Girondins were in the national interest. Yet, these words only apparently belong to the Jacobin rhetorical tradition,

7. J.F. Robinet, *Dictionnaire historique et biographique de la Révolution française et de l'Empire, 1789-1815*, Paris, 1899, 1:788.

because the counter-revolutionary nature of Federalism is to be ascribed to Mignet and Thiers, who were never loath to criticize Robespierism and the Terror.

Auguste Mignet depicted Federalism as a secessionist movement and located the overthrow of the Girondins among the historical necessities in the interest of national unity.<sup>8</sup> Adolphe Thiers went so far as to rejoice at the defeat of the departmental armies, which seemed to him a victory of the whole French nation and not just of the Montagnard party.<sup>9</sup> This choice in favour of the Convention reflects the model that both employed to analyze 1793: the Girondins and the provincial uprisings were to be sacrificed in line with an interpretation that - through the alleged necessity of Terror - suggested an historical continuity between 1789 and Bonaparte.

Although Mignet's and Thiers' histories are a landmark in revolutionary historiography, recent work supports the substance of their analysis as far as the main interpretations of the Jacobin dictatorship are concerned, and one must not forget that both were heavily indebted to the previous political reflexions.<sup>10</sup> In fact, they reflect an outlook widespread among many commentators, which brought together two condemnations: the assault on French interests represented by the urban uprisings (that is the break-up of the Republic in 1793) and the savagery of repression rained down upon the departments after the fiasco of the call for a general insurrection. The co-existence of these two polemical suggestions in the Post-Terror period reflected the ambiguity of an analysis which aimed to repudiate the Robespierist legacy without encouraging any attention towards the first months of the Republic.<sup>11</sup> From this perspective, there was more than a paradox in the anti-Robespierist political writings on the Terror: the right-wing commentators aimed to represent the liberal nature of the Revolution, but unanimously criticized the Girondins; the press openly rejected any attack on the rights of representation and yet endorsed the authoritarian program of the Directorial regime;<sup>12</sup> public opinion was in favour of a moderate political line but in the meantime made its sectarian character evident through the assimilation of any opposition to a counter-revolutionary plot.

By shifting attention from the Jacobin monster to the 1793 national crisis, Mignet and Thiers combined the same elements with a modified version of Federalism. While Benjamin Constant had attributed to the Terror the responsibility for the Vendean insurrection, the struggle at the frontiers and the Federalist uprisings,<sup>13</sup> the two young liberal historians focused on the frantic circumstances of 1793 to locate the origins of dictatorship and to depict it as an historical necessity.

8. "Si le 31 mai avait eu lieu en sens inverse, on aurait probablement vu dès lors ce qui se montra plus tard, le ralentissement de l'action révolutionnaire, les attaques redoublés de l'Europe, la reprise d'armes de la part de tous les partis, les journées de prairial, sans pouvoir repousser la multitude, les journées de vendémiaire, sans pouvoir repousser les royalistes, l'invasion des coalisés et... le morcellement de la France". A. Mignet, *Histoire de la France depuis 1789 jusqu'en 1814*, 10th ed., Paris, 1869, 2:2.

9. "Applaudissons-nous de ce résultat, car dans un moment où la France était attaquée de toutes parts, le plus digne de commander c'était le plus fort. Les fédéralistes vaincus se condamnaient par leurs propres paroles: les honnêtes gent, disaient-ils, n'ont jamais su avoir de l'énergie". A. Thiers, *Histoire de la Révolution française*, Paris, 1823-28, 5:78.

10. A useful overview can be found in J. Walch, *Les maîtres de l'histoire, 1815-1850*, Genève-Paris, 1986, pp. 163-9.

11. See, e.g., C. Lucas, "The First Directory and the Rule of Law", *French Historical Studies*, 8, 1977, pp. 231-60.

12. N. Lambrichs, *La liberté de la presse en l'an IV. Les journaux républicains*, Paris, 1976, pp. 40-8.

13. "La Terreur causa la révolte de Lyon, l'insurrection départementale, la guerre de la Vendée; et pour

Yet this re-evaluation of the Terror was hardly new, because it shared a vision of 1793 widespread among the liberal opposition to Bonaparte. In fact, Madame de Staël's account of federalism stood out from those written by other participants in the distinction she drew between her professed anti-Jacobinism and the charge of a counter-revolution she never ceased to level against the urban uprisings. She interpreted Federalism through a prism that fractioned it into Royalist and Girondin components.<sup>14</sup> Seeing Federalism as one of the worst enemies of revolutionary France, Necker's daughter nonetheless accepted the Girondin justification that the insurrections had the Parisian extremists as their target and she accepted their role as the champions of liberty. At the same time, Staël's analysis of federalism led to a denunciation of the Girondin political action, to which she attributed the responsibility for the democratic shift of the revolution.<sup>15</sup> In Staël's pages, therefore, the refusal of dictatorship does not open the door to a re-evaluation of the Girondins, who advocated the sacred nature of representation too late. It is important to note that, in this way, Madame de Staël combined the polemical argument of both parties: from the Girondin rhetoric she took the image of liberty and from that of the Robespierrists, the struggle in the national interest; she expected to achieve the aims expressed in these themes with in the boundaries of a national, liberal and representative revolution.

Her program had received some suggestions from direct witnesses of the 1793 drama. Paganel's memoirs - published in 1810 and 1815 - foreshadow, for example, Staël's interpretation of Federalism. The former Montagnard deputy advocated the democratic nature of an American style of constitution and he went so far as to suggest that the charge of Federalism was incoherent and without substance.<sup>16</sup> Whilst repudiating Jacobin propaganda and embracing the principles of moderation, Paganel nevertheless claimed that the Girondins were putting national unity at risk. For Paganel, as for many other Montagnards, Terror occurred because Girondin appeals had made some impact and there was no doubt that the resentment which Paris evoked could lead to the end of political stability.<sup>17</sup> His memoirs, therefore, reflect the

soumettre Lyon, pour dissiper la coalition des départements, pour étouffer la Vendée, il fallut la terreur. Mais sans la terreur Lyon ne se fût pas insurgé, les départements ne se seraient pas réunis, la Vendée n'eût pas proclamé Louis XVII". B. Constant, *Des effets de la Terreur*, Paris, 1797, in *Œuvres et discours politiques*, Paris, 1964, 1:104.

14. "Les républicains honnêtes, mêlés à des royalistes résistèrent avec courage au gouvernement conventionnel, à Toulon, à Lyon et dans quelques autres départements. Ce parti fut appelé au nom de fédéralistes; mais je ne crois pas cependant que les Girondins, ou leurs partisans, aient jamais conçu le projet d'établir un gouvernement fédératif en France". M. Me de Staël, *Considérations sur les principaux événements de la Révolution française*, Paris, 1820, 2:127-8.

15. "Les derniers hommes qui, dans ce temps, soient encore dignes d'occuper une place dans l'histoire ce sont les Girondins. Ils éprouvaient sans doute au fond du coeur un vif repentir des moyens qu'ils avaient employés pour renverser le trône; et quand ces mêmes moyens furent dirigés contre eux, quand ils reconnurent leurs propres armes dans les blessures qu'ils recevaient, ils durent sans doute réfléchir à cette justice rapide des révolutions, qui concentre dans quelques instans les événements de plusieurs siècles". *Ibid.*, 2:121.

16. "Qu'on ne pense pas qu'il s'agissait dans l'acte d'accusation d'un système politique, fédéral, applicable à la France; le fédéralisme dénoncé ... n'est autre chose que ce monstre imaginaire, ce fantôme horrible qu'on feignit de voir en même temps sur tous les points de la République, brisant le faisceau de l'unité, livrant les frontières sans défense aux armées ennemies. Tel fut représenté ce fédéralisme qui servit à justifier l'insurrection municipale du 31 mai". P. Paganel, *Essai historique et critique sur la Révolution française*, Paris, 1815, 2:156.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 156-61.

search for the essential relationship between representation - where the public will alone resides - and the restrictions on the deputies' prerogatives as soon as the national interest had constrained their action. From this, we get a political argument that condemned at the same time Robespierism whilst laying obsessive stress on the national struggle at the frontiers during year II. Repudiation of the Terror and comprehension of the reasons which led to the authoritarian conclusion of the political process, were attitudes widespread among commentators on the 1793 shift to the horrors of extremism.

The argument is, for example, reiterated by Toulangeon: he depicts Federalism as a polemical monster just as he rejects any correlation between the Girondins and counter-revolutionary plots.<sup>18</sup> To balance the matter, however, he comes to emphasize the anti-patriotic nature of the upheavals all over the country and in this respect it is important to note that Toulangeon judges the insurrections as destructive of national unity. Even the Lyonnais - who considered themselves to be loyal Republicans - did not distance themselves from the Vendéans, because their struggle against the Convention was supported by the direct involvement of priests and *émigrés*.<sup>19</sup>

The campaign against the provincial insurrections was one of the most prominent features in the accounts of 1793 written in the following years, and all resound with talk of the Parisian struggle for the national interest. Bertrand de Molleville's compliance with the moderate shift of Thermidor did not mean a re-evaluation of the provincial insurrections - in his pages the protests are still rooted in the counter-revolutionary battlefield and he does not abandon the image of the Girondins as ambitious and senseless politicians who identified their cause with that of Royalists.<sup>20</sup> Pierre Lecomte's account too insists on the unpatriotic role of the Girondins and he stresses how, behind the moderate facade of the call for insurrection against Maratism, there lay an excellent opportunity for the Royalists.<sup>21</sup>

In this respect, it is important to note that even the fact that Girondins survived the repression did not contradict the assertion that the Federalist revolt was a serious blow to the unity of the Republic. The transformation of the departmental insurrections from a general mobilization against extremist oppression into an unpatriotic movement may be seen most clearly in the memoirs of the *conventionnel* Dulaure.

18. "Le fédéralisme était un mot dit et le surnom de fédéralisme devint dès lors une dénomination de faction qui n'exista jamais, mais qui suffit pour désigner et accuser". E de Toulangeon, *Histoire de France depuis la Révolution de 1789*, Paris, 1803, 2:21.

19. "Les informations accusèrent ce mouvement de royalisme et cela était vrai quant aux chefs directeurs secrets, les meneurs étant des agents de l'étranger, ils avaient excité les partis opposés et produit le choc, espérant s'emparer du résultat...". *Ibid.*, 240-1.

20. "Il faut signaler ... les noms de ces victimes honorables du 31 mai; car, quoique les députés qui succombèrent fussent loin d'être sans tâche, le courage qu'ils déploierent dans cette affaire et leur supplice reconciliera sans doute la postérité avec leur mémoire". A.F. Bertrand de Molleville, *Histoire de la Révolution de France*, Paris, 1801-1803, 11:280. See also his statement on the provincial uprisings: "Marseille, encouragée par la résistance de Lyon, avait donné sa confiance au Conseil général de ses 32 sections, qui voulait concourir à ramener la France à son ancien ordre de chose". *Ibid.*, 12:122.

21. P.C. Lecomte, *Mémorial ou journal historique impartial et anedoctique de la révolution de France*, Paris, 1801, 1:253-4. See also J.F. Dubroca, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des attentats du gouvernement anglais*, Paris, 1803, p. 69: "... le cabinet de Saint-James avait peuplé les départements méridionaux de ses affidés ... Lyon et Marseille furent les premières villes où éclatèrent les étincelles de l'incendie ... mais Pitt n'avait acheté ces deux communes que pour avoir Toulon".

Before 2 June 1793, Dulaure had voted with the Girondins and in the aftermath of their fall he feared arrest. In order to distinguish his political position he hastened to publish a pamphlet against Federalism, where - in Montagnard terms - he denounced its counter-revolutionary nature.<sup>22</sup> Yet, Dulaure's championship of unity and indivisibility was not considered credible and his notorious links with the Girondins led him to be jailed during the Terror. In his memoirs - written and published in the last years of the Empire - his reading of the 1793 political struggle was again reduced to anti-Robespierrist propaganda characteristics: the charges of federalism rained down on the Girondins were groundless, as at no time did the jailed and executed deputies break with the principles of unity and indivisibility. On the other hand, however, Dulaure largely questioned the patriotic nature of those who called for general insurrection to restore the integrity of the Convention. Based on false accounts and misinformation, Dulaure's account supports the repression of the protests to guard against betrayal by whoever, in democratic terms, plotted in favour of royalism.<sup>23</sup>

Mignet's and Thiers' accounts of the events of June 1793 thus represent a departure from a broader anti-Jacobin interpretation of federalism. Despite differences in approach, used in order to explain the role of the revolts in the authoritarian shift of the Revolution, both adopted positions and problems previously suggested by moderate commentators. In fact, Mignet and Thiers denounced the provincial upheavals for their ambiguous political nature, which merged loyalty to the Republic with secret declarations of Royalist faith and where the call for citizen's constitutional rights was indistinguishable from extreme revolutionary initiatives. In this way, Federalism was a counter-revolutionary movement because it challenged the Republican institutions as much from the right as from the left of the political spectrum. The Convention, by contrast, represented the integrity of the nation, because the assembly had victoriously braved such dangerous challenges to the French interest.

In this respect, it is then important to outline how the denunciations of Federalism reflect the political climate of the Directorial regime, when the moderate republicans addressed their political will to define the boundaries of a liberal framework, where Royalism and Jacobin anarchy would not be tolerated. In consequence, as the Directorial regime was a representative government, anti-aristocratic and anti-popular at the same time, Federalism - as close to Royalism as to anarchy - was among its worst enemies. In this way, as the politicians of the Directory stressed their republican commitment, it was difficult to equate Federalism with a counter-revolutionary movement without embracing the political discourse of 1793.

22. "Je vois dans l'organisation du gouvernement fédératif l'organisation de la guerre civile et dans la division du gouvernement la dissolution de l'état". J.A. Dulaure, *Du fédéralisme en France*, Paris, 1793, p. 7. See also his argument on the political and personal reasons which led him to publish this pamphlet in *Esquisses historiques sur les principaux événements de la Révolution française*, Paris, 1825, pp. 292-3.

23. «J'appris en cette occasion pour la première fois des choses dont je n'avais eu jusqu'alors que de faibles soupçons, et que, pour rendre hommage à la vérité, je me fais un devoir de rapporter. Les discours de ces Lyonnais me convinquirent qu'il existait à Lyon un parti de contre-révolutionnaires bien prononcés; que ce parti profita habilement du mécontentement ..prit les allures et le langage de la masse du peuple .. ne parla, comme elle, que république, que patriotisme ..les patriotes honnêtes ... croyaient se battre pour la république et ils se battaient réellement pour elle ... mais ils étaient dirigés par des aristocrates, qui, sous prétexte de les sauver de la tyrannie de Robespierre, les conduisaient à celle des émigrés et des royalistes". *Ibid.*, pp. 407-8.

From this point of view, it is evident why the repudiation of Federalism could survive the fall of Robespierre and remain deep-rooted in French political culture in terms derived directly from the ideology of 1793 - that is to say, the provincial uprisings and the civil war only confirmed that political parties could not survive the stabilization of the Republican institutions.

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In the Directory years the struggle between Girondins and Montagnards was often assumed to be the main cause for the failure of the democratic Republic. From the viewpoint of the post-Thermidorian political class, in 1793 the two factions, in order to discredit one another, only destroyed the unity of the patriots and opened the way to Terror. This assumption only served to stimulate the opposition of the politicians of the Directory towards multiplicity of parties and, even more relevant for our purpose, seemed largely to justify a critical judgement of previous Girondin political action. Federalism and the 1793 civil war remained, in fact, such controversial topics that they prevented any re-evaluation of Robespierre's traditional enemies; they served to deaden the sounds of the contemporary political debate and, ultimately, to disguise the oxymoron that was a parliamentary Republic unwilling to accept political parties. As is well known, resistance to multiplicity of parties was powerfully reinforced in 1797. There was good reason for this: in quick succession the Directory faced its first electoral test and then the necessity of annulling the results - largely favourable to the right-wing - because they seemed to prove the impossibility of successfully facing the renewal of factions. Political opposition to the Directory was deemed to weaken the Republic and thus the survival of factions proved that political stability in France was still under threat. 1797 seemed recall 1793. This conviction was skillfully emphasized and exploited by the government in its prosecution successively of right-wing and left-wing critics of the Directory. Yet, the emphasis on the parallel between 1793 and 1797 reinforced the political debate about the meaning of the first months of the Republic. It implied a re-evaluation of that period which focused on Federalism, civil war and the Terror.

The best evidence for the development of this quarrel about the nature of 1793 can be found in the published works of Louis-Marie Prudhomme. He was a Jacobin, formerly editor of *Révolutions de Paris*, one of the radical Parisian newspapers in the first years of the Revolution,<sup>24</sup> and politically he always supported the Montagnards.<sup>25</sup> In year II, however, the revolutionary government accused him of being deeply committed to a network of counter-revolutionary intrigue and Prudhomme was obliged to escape to avoid jail. After the fall of Robespierre, he came back to Paris, where he began publishing again, pursuing his left-wing speculations under the cover of Thermidorian rhetoric.<sup>26</sup> By the beginning of 1797, however, Prudhomme and the

24. J.R. Censer, *Prelude to Power. The Parisian Radical Press, 1789-1791*, Baltimore, 1976, pp. 22-6. See also C. Hesse, *Publishing and Cultural Politics in Revolutionary Paris, 1789-1810*, Berkeley, 1991, pp. 220-1.

25. F. Greppo, "Un Lyonnais, imprimeur et journaliste. Le journal *Les Révolutions de Paris*", *Revue du Lyonnais*, 29, 1900, pp. 42-59.

26. See, e.g., H. Lavicomterie [but, according to Barbier, Prudhomme himself], *Les crimes des empereurs turcs, depuis Osman I jusqu'à Selim IV*, Paris, an III, pp. 602-4.



Directory proceeded along separate ways from a common rejection of Robespierrism, as Prudhomme repudiated all the Jacobin political values and carried on a personal battle against 1789, in an ideological amalgam of revolutionary and counter-revolutionary arguments which it is at times quite difficult to understand.

In a compendium of the crimes that followed 1789 (later seized by the Directory's police), he examines the 1793 situation, without making any distinction between the Girondins and the Montagnards. He admits that the events of June 1793 destroyed national representation,<sup>27</sup> whilst emphasizing the Girondins' responsibility for the illiberal laws subsequently promoted by Robespierre.<sup>28</sup> Yet it would be misleading to interpret this view of the Girondins as proto-Terrorists as having nothing more than a counter-revolutionary polemical purpose. Prudhomme's political past would suggest a cautious approach to his own interpretation of 1793, with his refusal of the Jacobin legacy appearing rather in the form of an attempt to draw a firm line between the Directory years and the early republican period. In that context, any silence over the Federalist revolt would have considerable significance. Although it offered excellent material for anti-terrorist and reactionary claims, the revolt is not discussed but disappears into an account of a 1793 dominated by violence and chaos. This silence may be justifiable: for those like Prudhomme who wished to cancel their own political past as Jacobin leaders the departmental revolts only confirmed the strength of a Jacobin political culture, finally suppressed by the Directory.

In opposition to this interpretation of 1793, which touched only superficially on any counter-revolutionary argument, Antoine Fantin-Désodoards, previously close to Mercier and Carra, raised his voice in strong defence of the Girondins. In his work, in fact, the rejection of Federalism as a polemical monster, takes on the same tone as that heard in the words of the banished Girondin deputies upon their readmission.<sup>29</sup> Following the moderate and constitutional precedent created by the surviving Girondins in reopening the debate on Federalism, Fantin supported their polemical

27. "Fatales journées des 31 mai, 1 et 2 juin! Dès cette époque désastreuse, il n'a plus existé de représentation nationale, dès cette époque désastreuse, un déchirement dans le corps politique a brisé tous les liens de la société". L.M. Prudhomme, *Histoire générale et impartiale des erreurs, des fautes et des crimes commis pendant la Révolution française*, Paris, 1797, 1:xiii.

28. *Ibid.*, 5:19-25.

29. "...comme les mots de fédération et de fédérés désignent aussi dans l'usage commun une réunion politique, une association qui a pour objet quelque besoin général et pressant de la patrie, et que d'ailleurs les termes de fédération et de fédérés ont beaucoup de rapport avec celui de fédéralisme; à peine les jacobins virent-ils quelques départements se confédérer ... pour employer leurs efforts communs contre la dévorante anarchie, qu'ils s'écrièrent avec une impudente astuce: voyez-vous comme ils sont confédérés, voyez-vous la fédération, voyez-vous le fédéralisme?". A.E.N. Fantin-Désodoards, *Histoire philosophique de la Révolution de France*, Paris, 1797, p. 205. It is interesting to note that Fantin's argument is exactly like the allegations of the deputies jailed for protesting the overthrow of the Girondins: "...comme les mots de fédération, de fédérés désignent aussi dans l'usage commun tout espèce de réunion politique, toute association qui a pour objet quelque besoin général de la patrie et pressant de la patrie, et que d'ailleurs ces mots de fédérés, de fédération ont beaucoup de rapport avec celui de fédéralisme; à peine a-t-on vu les citoyens se réunir contre les séditeux ... que les oppresseurs se sont écriés avec une impudente astuce: voyez-vous comme ils se sont fédérés, voyez-vous la fédération, voyez-vous le fédéralisme ... Ainsi, par un incroyable renversement d'idées, par une étrange confusion de langage, ceux que l'intérêt national avait réunis ont été accusés d'avoir voulu se diviser...". *Les douze représentants du peuple détenus à Port-Libre à leurs collègues siégeants à la Convention nationale et à tous les citoyens français*, Paris, 16 vendémiaire an III, pp. 14-8.

argument against Robespierism,<sup>30</sup> going so far as to deny that the Girondins endorsed the provincial uprisings simply to gain power.<sup>31</sup> He describes the revolts as spontaneous events, where the role of the outlawed deputies in the insurrection had the merit of directing disordered protests towards the political goal of restoring national representation to its pristine condition. Fantin therefore presents the Girondins as the forerunners of the Directory. He supports the political argument for a close connection between the 1793 departmental protests against anarchy and dictatorship, and the order finally established by the constitution of Year III. In this way, the re-evaluation of the urban uprisings became a useful instrument in promoting the surviving Girondins as political leaders in Directory years.

It goes without saying that Prudhomme's and Fantin's arguments represented the two poles of the contemporary political debate. This aspect appears quite evident in their contrasting interpretation of the Thermidorian period. The former saw a political break with the preceding revolutionary years and promoted an interpretation of the Directory as being in opposition to 1793, whereas the latter preferred to preserve a line of continuity in the republican age, emphasizing the Girondin tradition as the main political culture of the early revolutionary years.

However, the political debate centered above all on the attempt to draw away from the heritage of 1793, condemning the Montagnards without accepting the Girondin polemical claims. An example is to be found in the works of Georges Vasselin, a 1789 politician swept away by the democratic revolution who attempted to resume a political role only after the fall of Robespierre. In his reflections he would appear to take up Fantin's suggestions, since he exalts the provincial uprisings against *maratisme* and since he emphasizes popular revolt as the only way of bringing the Montagnards down.<sup>32</sup> However, one could only support the departmental insurrection by delegitimizing both parties, which Vasselin openly rebukes, as both would have equally favoured the tendency to popular control over the Assembly. In fact, his endorsement for the Girondin political action is only apparent: in identifying the protest as a spontaneous uprising to avoid the dissolution of the Republic, Vasselin denounces all the 1793 political groups which, blinded by factionalism, directly promoted the progress of anarchy.<sup>33</sup> His initial eulogy of the Girondins vanishes in the remark that they could not escape many of the accusations levelled solely against the Montagnards, whereas the departmental uprisings appear to have been an

30. "Toutes les fois que les tyrans ont voulu épouvanter la terre par des proscriptions ... on les a vu recourir à certaines dénominations oiseuses qui, répétées sans cesse et jamais expliquées, semblaient désigner des grands crimes et n'étaient réellement que le prétexte des assassinats médités". Fantin-Désodoards, p. 203.

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 206-10.

32. "Il en est tout autrement des villes du second ordre, éloignées du siège du gouvernement. Tout le monde s'y connaît; l'opinion publique y prend son essor, dégagée de toute contrainte et de toute influence; on pense par soi-même; on se prononce avec franchise; on agit avec sûreté ... Aussi nos tyrans révolutionnaires savaient-ils bien qu'ils n'auraient d'obstacles à éprouver que de la part des villes de ce genre: telles que Lyon, Nantes, Toulon, Rennes, Bordeaux, Marseille...". G.V. Vasselin, *Mémorial révolutionnaire de la Convention ou histoire des révolutions de France depuis le 20 septembre 1792*, Paris, 1797, 2:245-6.

33. "Ainsi se termina cette lutte orangeuse qui doit apprendre à tous les hommes de parti que la populace, une fois demuclée, ne saurait plus recevoir aucun frein". *Ibid.*, p. 195.

insurrection to save the social order rather than an action stemming from the revolutionary political tradition.

In this context, it is important to remember Lachapelle's work, which is one of the most violent attacks on the Girondins. In his pages, they are accused of following a clumsy and confused political line right from the first meetings of the Convention, of adopting an authoritarian and evasive attitude, of initially participating in the acts of violence, of supporting the illiberal measures which were to be further developed by Robespierism.<sup>34</sup> According to Lachapelle, in fact, talent, generosity, courage in the face of death - all qualities which might hide the real responsibilities of the Girondins - did not in any way absolve them from critical judgement of their political role. They had been leaders and protagonists in 1793 and their claims in Year III to represent the liberal and constitutional aspect of the Revolution simply indicated a tactical reversal at the last moment.<sup>35</sup> Even after June 1793, according to Lachapelle, the Girondins confirmed the link between their political action and the Jacobin ideology. During the federalist insurrection, they emphasized the general mobilization of the departments as a democratic expression of popular sovereignty and largely relied upon the Jacobin propaganda to call the provincial towns to arms.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, Lachapelle argues, the Girondins fell victims to Montagnard provocation and indirectly reinforced the Robespierist polemical discourse which called on patriots to rally around the Convention and to save the Republic from the assault of Royalists in arms. In fact, according to Lachapelle's arguments, during the civil war even the republicans who previously expressed their opposition to the coup de main on June 2 were forced to make a choice and they preferred, albeit reluctantly, the Montagnards to an open collusion with the royalists. Forerunners of the Directorial political élites, they could not avoid the Terror, but they were at least able to prevent civil war. In contrast to those dismayed at the failure of the departmental revolts, (here, he seems to be alluding to the group for which Fantin was spokesman), the author puts forward an image of the revolutionary energy of the nation, which, although devoid of any real political direction, was nevertheless capable of breaking down the royalist threat and of assuring victory at the frontiers.<sup>37</sup>

Lachapelle's work is therefore very close to the portrait of the Federalist revolt in historical terms, later to be taken up by Thiers. The hope, if not the exact plan, for a purely representative regime is retained as part of the Girondin political heritage, whilst at the same time, features clearly belonging to direct democracy and reflecting the insurrectional tradition are deleted as impractical utopian ideals. This perspective came within the political boundaries of the Directory. It is true that the Girondins represented the best intellectual movement produced by the Revolution, yet the spirit

34. J. Lachapelle, *Considerations philosophiques sur la Révolution française*, Paris, 1797, pp. 114-33.

35. "En succombant au 31 mai, les députés proscrits obtinrent les regrets de tous les gens du bien; leurs fautes furent oubliées...". *Ibid.*, p. 126.

36. "La plupart des proscrits ... provoquant contre Paris les départements voisins de la Vendée jetèrent une grande défaveur sur leur cause". *Ibid.*, p. 127.

37. "... il fallait s'emparer de la crise ne pouvant la combattre, et tâcher par le mélange d'éléments purs de neutraliser, d'arrêter au moins la plus dangereuse activité des éléments désorganisateur; c'est ce qui est arrivé. Le succès de cette détermination n'a pu empêcher de grands maux; elle a du moins prévenu la guerre civile, maintenu l'unité du corps social et la prépondérance des sentiments républicains". *Ibid.*, p. 128.

of faction hindered them from bringing the revolutionary process into a constitutional framework. Political ambiguity, wavering between the call for legality and recourse to the mobilization of the crowd, strongly impeded their claims to carry the revolution to term. This was done later, in the Thermidorian period, when a completely different leading group, unimpeded by short-sighted factiousness, was able to win over the doubts surrounding representation and place French politics within a new Republican constitution.

In the meantime, the emphasis on the political innovation stemming from the Directory served to encourage a critical reconsideration of the Girondins. The features linking them to the *journées* were emphasized, whereas any argument of moderation was passed over. Yet, paradoxically, this imbalance proved to favour a re-evaluation of the revolutionary government, which had at least thwarted the civil war so senselessly pursued by the Girondins. In effect, if it was true that they called for insurrection just as much as the Montagnards had, then credit was due to the Terror for having stemmed any popular movement to overturn the government. This opinion, which largely pervades Lachapelle's work, was central to the first public clash over the meaning of the Terror. The protagonists here were the young Adrien Lezay de Marnézia, former leader of the *jeunesse dorée*, and Benjamin Constant, who was very close to the Girondin deputy Louvet.<sup>38</sup>

The former was to deny the traditional argument against Jacobinism through a precise re-evaluation of Robespierism. According to the former *muscadin*, by preventing the dissolution of society when it was threatened in 1793 by the ravages of Royalism, Federalism and anarchy, the revolutionary government had planted a solid basis upon which the return of the order subsequently sanctioned in the Constitution of Year III was built. This argument was supported by a closer attention to the federalist revolt. Lezay did not deny the Girondins' justifications for their actions - the so-called Third Revolution was simply a coup de main against Representation. The fact that in the departments, the mobilization rapidly became a popular protest without any attention to legality was for him yet another example of the kind of political insubordination to which France had been subjected since 1789. From this point of view, the role played by the political drive behind Terrorist dictatorship was expanded. In fact, for the first time, an act of repression had safeguarded the executive power from popular interference and had assured the realignment of political society under the Convention. The Girondin protests against June 1793 were therefore a noble, but insignificant, political claim. In contrast, the Convention's victory over the departments had at least allowed the political process to break free from popular oppression.<sup>39</sup>

38. On this subject, see the instructive articles by François Furet, "Une polémique thermidorienne sur la Terreur", *Passé-Present*, 2, 1983, 44-55 and "La Terreur sous le Directoire", in F. Furet-M. Ozouf (eds.), *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture. III: The Political Culture of the French Revolution*, Oxford, 1989, pp. 173-86.

39. "Le premier effet de la Terreur fut donc de mettre le gouvernement en repos du côté du peuple, en reprimant subitement la fougue populaire et l'inquiétude des mécontents; et le second de tirer de gouvernement de 700 mains où il flottait pour le faire passer tout puissant dans celles de quelques chefs. Alors, il n'y eut plus qu'une règle pour tous: obéir ou mourir. Vingt-un membres du corps législatif voulurent s'élever contre la tyrannie naissante; ils moururent. Quelques départements s'armèrent en leur faveur, ils furent saccagés, Lyon et Toulon bombardés, une partie de leurs maisons rasées, de leurs habitants fusillés, le reste se contint". A. Lezay-Marnézia, *Des causes de la Révolution et de ses résultats*, Paris, 1797, p. 32.

Lezay's ultimate objective was to deny the main argument of those who, like the outlawed deputies restored to political life in Year III, had never hidden their belief that the reaffirmation of the parliamentary system was the main political legacy of the Girondins. By returning Federalism to its earlier significance as a movement opposed to government stability, Lezay stripped the last Girondins of their claim, the right to lead France once more.

Benjamin Constant, who was close to Louvet's entourage, immediately tried to exorcise Lezay's argument by a systematic re-evaluation of the political tendencies within the federalist revolt, with a view to strengthening the political career of the former Girondin. Constant believed that he could silence Lezay as a crypto-Terrorist politician by separating the role of the Norman departments from that of Lyons, by contrasting the republican purity of the former with the Royalism of the latter, and by demonstrating how protest was firmly led by deputies in the former whereas it developed in a disorderly and chaotic fashion in the other. To the contrary, however, these distinctions gave Lezay an advantage. Constant had admitted that, in the departments, the political process was divided between a practice of loyalty towards legality and representation and several other factors tending to the destruction of any political regulation. Even if Constant was careful to exalt the former and dismiss the latter,<sup>40</sup> his remark constituted a partial admission of the counter-revolutionary nature of Federalism's provincial uprisings. Conceived as a direct and unequivocal condemnation of any rebirth of interest in the Robespierriest experience, Constant's argument in fact, reflected the weaknesses of any moderate interpretation of the provincial uprisings, since in reinforcing the respect of legality in the movement's characters, he left the Girondins open to the accusation of having been in collusion with Royalism all along.

Historians were quick to take note of this distinction, although they acknowledged that Federalism's constitutional aspects palliated its destructiveness. Constant himself was obliged to admit Lezay's victory. Republishing his own essay in 1829, he again contested that dangerous doctrine, complaining about the fact that a revolutionary government that was none the less Terrorist for having assured the survival of the Republic could still inform the political debate thirty years after its rejection.<sup>41</sup> In effect, the image of Federalism portrayed by Thiers appears to be largely influenced by the political debate during the Directory years and would seem composed of features some of which were defined first by Lachapelle, then Lezay, and finally Toulangeon. In fact, Thiers combined the rejection of the provincial insurrections - as the departmental armies moving on Paris whilst France was menaced at the frontiers could only open the way to Royalism - with the justifications that the Directory willingly conceded to the Girondins, in order to overcome the political fragility of the

40. "L'on ne pensera pas, j'espère, que je confonde avec la révolte de Lyon et la rébellion de la Vendée, l'insurrection départementale. Le royalisme s'empara bientôt du mouvement de Lyon. Le fanatisme fut toujours le mobile des Vendéens. La coalition départementale, au contraire, ne fut jamais souillée par aucune alliance avec des ennemis de la République. Cette tentative de la vertu contre le crime, des amis de l'ordre contre les scélérats, fut pure dans son origine et resta pure jusqu'à sa chute". Constant, 1:104.

41. "Justifier le régime de 1793, peindre des forfaits et du délire comme une nécessité qui pèse sur les peuples toutes les fois qu'ils essaient d'être libres, c'est nuire à une cause sacrée plus que ne lui nuiraient les attaques de ses ennemis les plus déclarés". *Ibid.*, 1:228.

new republican regime. Who could oppose - according to Thiers (but to the Directorials too) - rising up with the Girondins against murder and bloodshed, even when the dangers to which France was exposed made violence necessary and any proposal of moderation impossible?<sup>42</sup> The co-existence in Thiers' words of the rhetorical image of Liberty as portrayed by the Girondin propaganda with the open rejection of the provincial uprisings make his meaning of Federalism the historical synthesis of the political interpretation of the departmental revolts put forward in the Directory years.

From this point of view, it is important to note that Thiers' interpretation, which clearly reflects all the contradictions between political options and historiographical assessment, is a direct testimony to the weight of rhetoric accumulated through the polemics of the revolutionary years - a discourse which succeeded in transmitting to future generations both the rejection of the Terror and the repudiation of the Girondins, whose counter-revolutionary aims became clear from the compromise with Royalists accepted during the Federalist revolt. This message was to survive the Brumaire coup d'état and continued to exert its influence over the image of the provincial protests in the subsequent period. The role of the departmental insurrections was soon reduced to a counter-revolutionary challenge and hence they became suffused with the characteristics we have noted. Disguised Royalism drew advantage, therefore, from the democratic nature of the insurrection: the call to popular sovereignty veiled anti-patriotism and egoism, whilst the march of the departmental volunteers was in effect the offensive of a royalist army. The shift of provincial protests from a revolutionary and democratic framework to the opposite pole was therefore a tendency favoured by the political debate following the Terror, when the rejection of any reference to direct democracy and to popular control over the executive power largely reduced provincial uprisings, born in the name of popular sovereignty, to a purely counter-revolutionary movement.

It seems useful, therefore, to underline how the Directory gave shape to a myth of Federalism,<sup>43</sup> for the transformation of departmental protests into a reactionary offensive was in keeping with a political line that dismissed any manifestations of dissent as crypto-royalist dissent. Of greater interest are then the consequences induced by a regime whose repeated calls to order made it suspect to historians. Largely sacrificed in the principal histories, where they are often reduced to a simple prelude to Bonapartism, the Directory years take their own historical revenge since, through the intermediary of Thiers' and Mignet's works their particular meditation on the French Revolution has become an indirect, but unavoidable point of reference for historians.

42. "Ne comprenant ni l'humanité, ni ses vices, ni les moyens de la conduire dans une révolution, ils s'indignèrent de ce qu'elle ne voulait pas être meilleure et se firent dévorer par elle en s'obstinant à la contrarier. Respect à leur mémoire! Jamais tant de vertus, de talents, ne brillèrent dans les guerres civiles; et, il faut le dire à leur gloire, s'ils ne comprirent pas la nécessité des moyens violents pour sauver la cause de la France, la plupart de leurs adversaires préférèrent ces moyens, se décidèrent par passion plutôt que par génie". Thiers, 5:406-7.

43. From this point of view Baczko's assessment that "Thermidor, c'est l'époque de la réhabilitation de la Gironde, le début de sa légende, le moment où, a posteriori, s'affirme son identité collective. Les Girondins jouent un rôle politique important au-delà même de la Convention, notamment pendant le Directoire" seems somewhat sketchy. See. B. Baczko, "Les Girondins en Thermidor", in Furet-Ozouf, *La Gironde*, p. 68.

The outcome of the public debate between Lezay and Constant placed the provincial uprisings among the counter-revolutionary assaults on the Republic and cut short the moderate assertion that Federalism was only a groundless and polemical argument.

This claim had appeared during the aftermath of Thermidor and at that time was taken up mainly by reactionary journalists.<sup>44</sup> The government did not try to impede this polemical initiative since, by denouncing the Terror, it might broaden consensus for an anti-Robespierrist political line. For this reason, many deputies who had distinguished themselves in the repression of the provincial revolts, initially recognized that any denunciation of Federalism was senseless, and they included among Robespierism's crimes the semantic manipulation which had transformed the defenders of legality into counter-revolutionary agents.<sup>45</sup> This meaning did not, however, last long. It took shape in the first weeks of Thermidor and over the question of the recall of the Girondins. Subsequently, the denunciation of Federalism as political hypocrisy was quickly abandoned and became solely a theme of the reactionary press.

Among members of the Convention, on the contrary, this accusation survived as an instrument of political struggle with which to annihilate any further opposition. It could not have been otherwise. Since the early Thermidorian period was marked by the objective of reducing any terrorist exaggeration to a political line which saved France from Royalism and military invasion, it was difficult to relinquish such an excellently proven polemical instrument. In the months between Thermidor and the Prairial insurrection this attitude appeared whenever significant political choices were to be made. Just after Thermidor 9th, it was the view that considered Robespierism to be yet another federalist plot which permitted Barère to retain the new parliamentary majority within the framework of Jacobin political culture.<sup>46</sup>

44. See, e.g., Jean Pierre Gallais' statement on the crime of Federalism: "Chimère atroce, imaginée par Robespierre, et qui a fait égorger 30 représentants et 6000 français. Il faut bien que le génie de Robespierre ne soit pas mort, même parmi ses ennemis; puisque certaines gens se battent encore périodiquement les flancs pour nous persuader la réalité de cette prétendue faction". Pilpay [J.P.Gallais], *Dialogue des morts de la Révolution*, Paris, an III, pp. 99-100.

45. See, e.g., Freron's statement on the recall of the banished Girondin deputies: "Opprimés par une faction, ils ont fait leur devoir; ils ont appelés au départements, c'est-à-dire au peuple lui-même; un grand nombre de départements se sont confédérés en faveur de la représentation opprimée; c'était peut-être la seule garantie de la liberté contre les fureurs des partis! La faction a dénaturé aussitôt le mot et la chose. Cette fédération s'est appelée fédéralisme, expression inventée par Barère, et par laquelle on voulait faire entendre que ceux qui avaient provoqué cette fédération avaient cherché à diviser la France en petites républiques confédérées à l'exemple des Etats-Unis. Cette opinion s'est accréditée parmi le peuple qui s'est justement irrité contre un pareil projet qu'il croyait vrai ...". *Orateur du peuple*, 21 ventôse an III, n. 89, 714.

46. On Barère's political role in the Assembly just after the fall of Robespierre, see L. Gershoy, *Bertrand Barère. A Reluctant Terrorist*, Princeton, 1962, pp. 260-6. His report on the conspiracy of Robespierre underlined how "... tout était disposé: ce n'était pas comme du temps de Brissot, de Guadet, de Buzot et de Barbaroux, qui n'avaient de rattachement et de contre-révolution organisée que dans les départements méridionaux et dans le Calvados. Ici l'on avait compté dominer par la force le centre de la République; on avait ensuite repandu dans divers départements le projet contre-révolutionnaire". *Moniteur*, 14 thermidor an II, 21:358-9. See also (ivi, 441) deputy Roux's allegations against the Robespierrists; he reminded the Assembly that "la Commune de Paris également composée par eux de fédéralistes et d'étrangers ... était le point d'appui sur lequel ils fondaient leurs espérances".

This objective was not, however, easy to attain. In order to dismantle the terrorist system without opening the way to the return of reaction, it was necessary to continue with the previously polemical language and therefore to continue to exclude the Girondins. The debate over the freedom of the press illustrates very well this difficult political route in which the condemnation of Robespierism was not to lead to a reappraisal of the Girondins.<sup>47</sup> The denunciation of the Girondin Jean-Marie Roland, previously Minister of the Interior (who would have been the first to attack in the press), facilitated the interpretation of the Terror as a monster born of political divisions, thus making Robespierism appear to be the final result of a spirit of faction which the Girondins had first favoured and then tried to exploit.<sup>48</sup>

Developed by the few Montagnards who were swift at rallying to the new Thermidorian majority, this process of identifying Robespierism with the Girondins through the common denominator of their federalist nature, was soon taken up by the Assembly as a whole. This accusation, in fact, provided it with the opportunity of setting itself apart from the preceding revolutionary period whilst simultaneously embarking on a process of normalising political life.<sup>49</sup> This purpose quickly became the platform for common accord among deputies; all complied with the necessity of safeguarding the Assembly from undue external pressure and popular control and they often resorted to the accusation of Federalism against any political opposition.

In Vendémiaire Year III, the parliamentary debate led the Convention to prohibit correspondence between popular societies and to deny the right of collective petitioning to the Assembly.<sup>50</sup> This is a clear example of the meaning attributed to the accusations of Federalism in the Thermidorian period. The Convention was convinced that its own power depended on its capacity to nullify the pressure of any political group which had survived the Terror, and it always stood by the necessity of eliminating those opposed to the only political body representing popular sovereignty. This point is illustrated by the words of the former deputy to the Constituent Assembly, Reubell, who never hesitated to draw on the anti-federalist political arsenal in his

47. Useful suggestions on this subject can be found in K.D. Tonnesson, *La défaite des sans-culottes. Mouvement populaire et réaction bourgeoise en l'an III*, Paris-Oslo, 1959, pp. 65-7; F. Gendron, *La jeunesse dorée. Episodes de la Révolution française*, Quebec, 1979, pp. 34-42; H. Gough, *The Newspaper Press in the French Revolution*, London, 1988, pp. 118-21.

48. It is interesting to note that, in the first months after the fall of Robespierre, the refusal of the Girondin political tradition remains overwhelming and includes both montagnards and antijacobin leaders. The montagnard deputy Monestier, for ex., denounced Roland as forerunner of terrorist dictatorship: "Roland a fait le plus grand mal à la France en accaparant les journaux. C'est ainsi que ce perfide ministre est parvenu à diriger et à maîtriser l'opinion. Cette faculté laissée au gouvernement est en effet bien dangereuse, puisqu'elle ne peut servir qu'à tuer la liberté". F.A. Aulard (ed.), *La Société des Jacobins*, Paris, 1889-97, 6:360. On the other side of the political scenario, the antijacobin pamphlets insisted too on the Girondin responsibilities in opening the way to factionalism and Terror. See, e.g., Alexandre, *Toute la vérité, ou histoire impartiale de toutes les factions sorties des Jacobins depuis Lafayette jusqu'à Carrier*, Paris, an III, p. 9: "... Guadet, Barbaroux, Pétion et Brissot se présentèrent sur la scène investis d'une confiance illimitée; le dernier, surtout ... était supposé devoir soutenir les droits du peuple; mais il les trahit et la vengeance nationale le frappa, ainsi que ses complices. La France allait être devisée, les départements se soulevaient; mais la sagesse du peuple répara tout et la République fut sauvée. Un système atroce succéda à celui qui devait amener la guerre civile...".

49. F. Brunel, "Sur l'historiographie de la réaction thermidorienne. Pour une analyse politique de l'échec de la voie jacobine", *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, 51, 1979, 469-74.

50. B. Baczko, *Comment sortir de la Terreur*, Paris, 1989, pp. 158-64.



accusations against the Jacobin clubs. This argument proved quite accurate and it reflects all the contradictions in the democratic political culture. According to Reubell, the predominance of individual objectives always threatened the Republic with disintegration.

The sovereign people had had to intervene for the first time against the Girondins in June 1793; then, during the summer, the repression of the federalist riots had prevented the French sections and departments from joining forces against the collective will. Quick to profit from this victory, however, was Robespierism, which was another form of Federalism, since in the latter the giddy dissolution of the balance between the legislative and the executive power bore the semblance of the Terror. The fall of the tyrant Robespierre would not end the tendency towards factiousness for the Jacobin clubs had immediately taken up the federalist torch, exerting undue influence over the Assembly under the apparently innocuous facade of a correspondence originating all over France. Thus Federalism, according to Reubell, becomes the political framework in which one can situate all the weaknesses of democratic political culture<sup>51</sup>

The Girondins, forerunners of the factions; the departments, which moved against the Convention whilst France was suffering invasion; and Robespierism, which had attempted to reduce the Assembly to an arena of commanded consensus, all thus become elements which make up the crime of Federalism.

After Thermidor, the struggle against Robespierism arose therefore from the same political framework in which previously the Terror had grounded its own fortune. The accusation of Federalism, in fact, became useful for the Assembly's resumption of its status as the only political body able to conduct revolutionary politics. Nevertheless, this perspective contained an element of instability, shifting the accent onto the necessity of healing the earlier wounds to Representation. In this respect, the attacks on Robespierism were insufficient, since the objective of arriving at a Representation freed of any divisions required the adoption of a new political address. It was in the pursuit of this aim that the indictment of the *clubiste* Carrier<sup>52</sup> and the recall of the deputies who had protested against the proscription of the Girondins<sup>53</sup> took shape. These two episodes have long appeared to be links in the chain that would eventually strangle revolutionary democracy. However, this argument is superficial, for the deputies demanding the death of Carrier hoped only to curb the influence of the Jacobin club within the Convention and to destroy thus an intermediate power between the people and the Assembly. From this point of view it is important to note that those who called for the readmission of the Girondins paralleled them.

51. "Peuple, de quel oeil peux-tu voir des gens qui veulent ... encore communiquer comme corporation? Peuple, c'est l'abus de ces corporations qui a fait tous tes malheurs: tu as abattu le monstre du fédéralisme; tu n'a pas voulu que les sections, les départements communiquassent entre eux: abats cette correspondance execrable qui fait le malheur de la République, cette correspondance qui a substitué au fédéralisme des départements le gouvernement de Robespierre et qui voudrait substituer au gouvernement de Robespierre le fédéralisme des sociétés populaires". *Jacobins*, 6:575-7.

52. Baczko, *Comment sortir*, pp. 228-49.

53. M. Ozouf, "Thermidor ou le travail de l'oubli", in *L'école de la France. Essais sur la Révolution, l'utopie et l'enseignement*, Paris, 1984, pp. 96-102 to whose work on the reinstatement of the Girondins the considerations raised in these pages owe a great deal.

In fact, the reintegration of the proscribed deputies entailed healing the wound inflicted upon Representation by the Parisian mob. It was closely connected with Carrier's execution in that it posited the innocence of the Convention with regard to Robespierriest dictatorship. It goes without saying that both initiatives were put forward with the purpose of reinforcing the Convention without re-opening the old quarrels among the members of the Assembly.<sup>54</sup> As is well known, however, public opinion was divided with regard to the Girondin reinstatement, with one group wishing to overcome the divisions among the republicans, and another refusing to relinquish their defence of the immunity of the 1793 June Parisian upheaval. The latter were particularly impressed by the pamphlet printed by a certain Baralère<sup>55</sup> - probably the same publicist who, under the name of Baraly, had previously denounced the Jacobins as Federalists.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, Babeuf hastened to reply in the columns of his own newspaper to what he immediately called a daylight attack on the Constitution of 1793 and even on the legitimacy of the Convention itself.<sup>57</sup> The pamphlet does indeed constitute an attack clearly pervaded by Jacobinism and yet once again it draws on the ideological weaponry of the democratic movement during the Year III. The author, in fact, begins his own arguments by reminding his readers that his only desire is to restore unity among republicans and - in common with the proscribed deputies - he distances himself from any suggestion of revenge over responsibility for the 31 May and 2 June Parisian *journées*. Yet, Baralère immediately underlines how the proscription of the Girondins casts a shadow over the Convention's legitimacy.<sup>58</sup> Many departments were not represented at the Assembly and according to Baralère it was beyond dispute that individual electoral sections alone had the right to revoke their deputies. As to the objection that this argument would directly lead to a denunciation of the Terrorist nature of the 31 May journée, Baralère was still apparently careful to distance himself from such a serious logical deduction. The Parisian uprising remained in itself a revolutionary act, but it had opened the way to Robespierriest

54. In these terms, in fact, some Girondin deputies accepted the agreement and publicly recognized before their recall the legitimacy of the revolutionary government: "... ce gouvernement dont l'action prompte et vigoureuse était réclamée et l'est encore par la nécessité des circonstances, prenait chaque jour les formes les plus contraires à son objet ... ce n'était point là le gouvernement révolutionnaire que la Convention avait voulu, ce n'est point celui dont elle veut aujourd'hui le maintien...". *Douze représentants*, p. 22.

55. Baralère, *Rappelez vos collègues*, Paris, an III; for an overview of the numerous pamphlets hastening the reinstatement of the Girondins, see C. Perroud, *La proscription des Girondins, 1793-1795*, Toulouse-Paris, 1917, pp. 241-5.

56. "Que les sociétés populaires soient ce qu'elles doivent être, des associations pour surveiller les administrations et éclairer les administrés, tous les amis de la patrie se feront gloire d'en être; mais puisqu'elles sont dégénérées de leur institution, qu'elles sont des foyers de discorde, le receptacle des conspirateurs, des traîtres, des fédéralistes, il est urgent de les interdire". Baraly, *Les jacobins aristocrates, fédéralistes et contre-révolutionnaires*, Paris, an III, p. 8.

57. "Baralère ... prouve l'avantage du fédéralisme sur le gouvernement de l'unité et de l'indivisibilité ... Aussi le but n'est plus equivoque. Notre constitution est un squelette informe ... Il n'est plus sûr que tous les actes de la Conventio faits depuis le 31 mai soient des lois...". *Journal de la liberté de la presse*, 28 frimaire an III, n.28, p.247.

58. "Ce défaut absolu de représentants d'un département et la disproportion de celle de plusieurs autres les empêchent ... de concourir ... à la formation des décrets; donc leurs vœux ne sont point suffisamment exprimés dans ces décrets; donc ils ne sont point l'expression de la volonté générale, donc ... conséquence terrible qui vient arrêter ma plume". Baralère, *Rappelez*, p. 9.

and for that whoever had exploited the popular protest should be condemned. The Parisian sections thus cleared of any suspicion and the Jacobins denounced as Terrorists, Baralère was able to justify the provincial uprisings as a revolt against Robespierriest oppression showing no signs of Federalism. In fact, in his view, if this term implied a sort of federation among various individuals with the purpose of endangering the stability of the Republic, then the accusation should be directed against the Jacobins, who, through their network of clubs, had constructed a myriad of small local powers, each related to the other in the common aim of silencing any political opposition. According to Baralère, the roles were reversed: the pro-vincial towns, which had taken up arms against the dictatorship of the Jacobin clubs, could not be accused of the crime of Federalism against which they had in fact fought in the first place. Contesting Louis Dufourny, who had repeated the accusations of Federalism against the Girondins in an earlier brochure,<sup>59</sup> Baralère denied that the proscribed deputies had ever conceived of a system of government along American lines; but even if they *had*, he affirmed that this political program was certainly not counter-revolutionary. In fact, according to Baralère, between Provence and Flanders there were differences which could better be taken into account by a federal Republic.<sup>60</sup>

This argument, for which he was rebuked by Babeuf, underlines how Baralère's polemical thrust combined the rejection of Robespierriest with the homage to popular sovereignty and further confirms the merging in Year III of democratic and moderate political positions. In this context, it becomes important to outline how the Constitution of Year III does not entirely reflect the post-Robespierriest period, when democratic ideas were still deep-rooted in the political framework opened by Thermidor. The resumption of a practical democracy is emphasized in the reassertion of popular rule, which forced deputies to take account of citizens' rights<sup>61</sup> and in the necessity of direct popular involvement<sup>62</sup> through the participation of the sections in the Assembly's work.<sup>63</sup> Taking into account that in post-Robespierriest revolutionary France the idea of direct democracy still played a vitally important role, the recall of the Girondins takes on a completely different meaning, because their re-admission should not be - as his historiography often suggestes - directly intended as aimed at annihilating what remained of the democratic movement.<sup>64</sup> That view loses any credibility when

59. L.P. Dufourny, *Sentinelles, prends garde à toi!*, Paris, an III.

60. "Je vais plus loin. Quand il serait démontré jusqu'à l'évidence qu'ils eussent proposé de former de la France une république fédérative, on ne peut leur en faire un crime; car ce gouvernement n'est point contraire à la liberté". Baralère, *Rappelez*, pp. 24-5.

61. "Représentants! est-ce pour anéantir ses droits que le peuple vous a délégués ses pouvoirs, ou n'est-ce pas pour lui en montrer toute l'étendue et lui en assurer l'exercice?" *Insurrection en faveur des droits de l'homme par un soldat de la patrie*, Paris, an III, n. 1, p. 6.

62. "Quoi qu'il en soit, quand je parle d'assemblées civiques, je ne parle d'aucune société particulière ... Quand je parle d'assemblées de citoyens, j'entends des assemblées où soient admis tous les membres des assemblées primaires ... Que la Convention nationale étende à toute la République cette institution". *Les vices des anciennes sociétés populaires*, Paris, an III, pp. 11-2.

63. "Il est certain que les assemblées générales des grandes villes, telle que Paris, Bordeaux, Marseille, Lyon ... composées de ce que chaque section et canton auraient pu fournir de mieux discuté, approfondi et pesé, aiderait singulièrement le législateur à se prononcer sur les matières les plus épineuses et que la législation avancerait alors dans sa marche avec autant plus de succès que le législateur saurait comme par avance le voeu de ses commettants ...". *Le voeu du démocrate, ou préservatif contre le fédéralisme des sociétés dites populaires*, Paris, an III, pp. 15-7.

64. "Consultez les sections de Paris ... vous entendrez la voix du peuple qui les compose, et non celle

one considers the left-wing political leaders' open agreement with the recall of the proscribed deputies. In the month of Frimaire, in fact, Babeuf supported their re-admission<sup>65</sup> and in Pluviose the future *babouist* Antonelle also hoped that the recall of the Girondins would make the experience of the revolutionary government a thing of the past.<sup>66</sup> It is largely in the same terms that we must understand the Convention's general agreement to recall the deputies jailed for having protested against the 2 June Parisian *journée*. Upon his return to the Convention, one of them - Dusaulx - invited the Assembly to abolish the term Federalism from political language, as this accusation was nothing more than an invention to ruin the true patriots.<sup>67</sup> Yet, this seemed to be the only proposal for revenge from the proscribed deputies; for the rest, again according to Dusaulx, they all reinstalled themselves without any feeling of acrimony and with the political future of the Convention foremost in mind.<sup>68</sup> The terms of the agreement are clear: the deputies close to the Girondins, acquitted of all accusation of federalism, were fully restored to favour by the Assembly, whilst they, in turn, gave credit to the Convention for having saved France from Robespierism and for having preserved Representation from any attack. As a result, the sealing of the agreement confirmed that all the deputies were in favor of abolishing any distinction inside the Assembly in order to overcome the last obstacles along the road to the representative political system.

However, the difficult political situation did not make it easy simply to dismiss the revolutionary government. This explains why, in order to reinforce parliamentarism, some deputies were quick to demand the re-examination of the verdict on those Girondin deputies who had escaped from Paris in June 1793 and had organised the provincial uprisings. The Convention was still far from an established consensus on this matter, as the return of the last Girondins risked nullifying the political results gained by the re-admission of the first group. The advocates of a general recall underlined how the return of the outlawed deputies would be useful in strengthening the Convention, since the readmission of the last Girondins would heal the wounds of the civil war. Against this, it was stressed that the proposal would implicitly be an indictment of the whole Convention and many deputies protested at this attack on the 1793 Parisian *journées*.<sup>69</sup>

The development of the debate clearly indicated that Federalism remained a political taboo. In the following days, Jean Baptiste Louvet openly requested that those who had taken up arms against the Parisian mob be given the approval of the

de quelques intrigants fauteurs de despotisme; vous verrez que ces cris se réuniront à ceux de tous les départements pour vous engager à marcher dans le chemin de la justice; la nation attend de vous un grand pas. Législateurs, assurez la prospérité générale". *Baralère*, p. 20.

65. "Je désirais que la promesse contenue dans la déclaration par le vieux Dussault à la rentrée des 71 fût exécutable; qu'il fût possible qu'avec l'abjuration de tous les ressentiments, la réinstallation n'eût d'autre suite que le concours fraternel des réintégrés aux grands travaux de la Convention". *Journal de la liberté de la presse*, 28 frimaire an III, n. 28, p. 244.

66. "Le mieux est donc de se taire sur tout ce qui nous divisa, de nous réconcilier sincèrement, de nous mieux entendre à l'avenir...". P.A. Antonelle, *Motion d'ordre à l'occasion de la brochure de Louvet*, Paris, an III, pp.25-6.

67. *Moniteur*, 22:720.

68. Ozouf, pp. 99-101.

69. Perroud, pp. 253-71.

Convention and this appeal caused a sensation.<sup>70</sup> In fact, it was no longer a case of simply forgiving the conduct of those who had opposed the so-called Third Revolution, but of transforming it into a shining example of fidelity to the Republic. All the same, his arguments were difficult to contest.<sup>71</sup> The provincial republican armies did not march on Paris, or oppose the Convention, because the former had been a victim of the armed groups from the sections and the latter - as the recall of the Girondins proved - had been forced to accept the *fait accompli*. On the contrary, the departmental volunteers had moved against the capital to free Paris from the monster of anarchy and the Convention from the violence of a Maratized mob. According to Louvet, the action of the provincial armies, therefore, did not represent any secession. It was not an act of Federalism - which the Convention in any case had recognised as never having existed - but rather a patriotic example of opposition to a violation of popular rule. It goes without saying, therefore, that what the deputies had managed to dare to do only with the revolution of Thermidor, the republicans of the provincial towns had attempted long before. If they had turned to attack Paris and had been defeated, this did not mean they had been wrong, because the right of resistance to oppression had been recognized since 1789 by the Declaration of the Rights of Man. Thus, by marching on the capital, the provincial armies had wished only to preserve the authority and the integrity of the Convention and to reclaim their own role as guardians of the Revolution.

Benjamin Constant later blamed those Girondins who were recalled to the Assembly after Thermidor, for their feelings of resentment and therefore for thwarting the formation of any unitary political process in the Assembly.<sup>72</sup> However, this assertion does not touch the main subversive element in Louvet's request. In fact, the resumption of parliamentary conflict could only push the Convention to support the Right-wing requests against the Left deputies whilst maintaining the political line at the centre. Instead, Louvet's suggestions posed a threat, since he seemed to ignore the Convention's efforts to prevail over forms of direct democracy. It is interesting to note that, according to Louvet, recognizing the arguments behind the provincial insurrections would imply reintroducing a political contradiction into the political line developed by the post-Robespierriest Convention and intended to reinforce the representative assembly. Indeed, Louvet's proposal<sup>73</sup> did increase the ambiguity between delegation and representation and did not resolve the political contradictions of the democratic movement: his words threatened both the stability of the Convention and the efforts of the Assembly towards freedom from popular control.

It was Tallien who intervened to neutralize the effects of Louvet's request. He

70. An overview can be found in J. Rivers, *Louvet: Revolutionist and Romance-Writer*, New York, 1911, pp. 330-1.

71. "La déclaration des droits de l'homme porte que, lorsqu'il y a oppression, l'insurrection est le plus sacré et le plus indispensable de tous les devoirs; decretez donc, représentants, que tous les représentants des départements et de Paris qui se sont armés après le 2 juin pour notre défense ont bien mérité de la patrie". *Moniteur*, 23:670-1.

72. Constant, 1:6. See also the future Director Larevellière-Lépeaux statement: «Les députés qui avaient été proscrits ... amenèrent dans la Convention une réaction à laquelle je ne pus donner mon assentement". M. L. La Revellière-Lépeaux, *Mémoires*, Paris, 1895, 1:202-3.

73. *Moniteur*, 23:671.

suggested that divisions be put aside in order to strengthen the unity of the Convention in the common cause of ensuring a constitutional future to the Republic. Although the Convention accepted his motion and rejected Louvet's proposal, hostilities were soon resumed and in the days just preceding the insurrection of Germinal the parliamentary debate seemed to re-echo the clash between the Girondins and the Montagnards. The strenuous struggle between the survivors of both parties put an end to Thermidor's illusion of a parliamentary revolution which could develop a political line without engendering factions.

The deputy Desvars intervened to save a situation that was already near breaking - point, making every effort to keep alive the memory of factiousness and popular oppression of the Assembly. Making the Convention into a victim - and thus underlining that this argument could partially justify the weakness previously shown by the deputies in the face of the mob<sup>74</sup> - he also made a concentrated effort to demonstrate that all the crimes of the Terror had been committed by the Robespierrists. Not even this proposition, which remained the only point of compromise facilitating the attempt to find unity among the deputies, was sufficient to smoothe the troubled waters. Indeed, it became possible to obtain unanimity around the inviolability of representation only after the Germinal days, when the abortive Parisian popular insurrection obliged the deputies to overcome all political dissension. The previous parliamentary debate on the indictment of four former representatives of the revolutionary government (Barère, Billaud, Collot and Vadier) had, in fact, knocked off-balance the precarious Thermidorian equilibrium of the Convention. The discussion had re-opened the wounds of the 1793 Parisian popular uprisings, igniting a dramatic debate on the federalist revolt; demonstrating that the Convention was not unanimous about the meaning of the insurrection and suggesting that the Right-wing and the Left-wing of the assembly would resume their fight once again, with the political experience of 1793 as their point of reference.

The failure of the Germinal riot, thus, appeared to save the Convention from an awkward situation, as the Assembly was unable to conduct the political process unanimously outside the framework of the Terror. In Germinal, as is well known, the Parisian crowd moved against the Convention to protest once again in the political model of earlier *journées*. In the face of this challenge, the majority of the Convention took the opportunity to settle accounts once and for all with the experience of the revolutionary Government. The four Terrorist deputies, accused of plotting against the Republic, were immediately deported and several other Montagnards arrested, among whom were Duhem and Amar, previously very close to the Montagnards.

Nevertheless, the blow dealt to the Left-wing of the assembly did not bring the political conflict to a close, because the first purge against the Terrorists encouraged those who did nothing to hide their support for a full restoration of the Girondins. In the parliamentary session of 22 Germinal, Larivière supported the decree that granted complete amnesty to those who had taken up arms in the departments. Like Louvet, he maintained that the political leaders of the provincial insurrection had fought against anarchy and Terror and had thus served the Republic. Despite the fact that

74. "Comment nous justifierons-nous aux yeux du peuple français de tous les crimes qui ont été commis si nous n'avions pas été opprimés?" *Ivi*, p. 83.

the Montagnard opposition had been reduced to almost nothing, the deputy Gaston however protested against the proposed immunity for those who had moved against the Convention<sup>75</sup> and the dispute forced the majority of the Assembly into a compromise. Amnesty would be accorded, but the leaders of the departmental insurrection would not be accorded political honors.

In the following weeks, the failure of the Prairial insurrection in Paris eliminated the final obstacle to political normalization and freed the Convention from control by sans-culotterie. After the collapse of the last popular uprising, there seemed to be nothing else to prevent the revolutionary dynamic from taking an exclusively parliamentary direction. Representation had prevailed over direct democracy and the disquisitions on pure democracy were beginning to take on the appearance of confused sophisms under the shadow of anarchy.

This was what deputy Chénier tried to emphasize to his colleagues. Formally, his words were directed towards the people of Paris, but in reality he was addressing those who had never faltered in their flattery towards the crowd, leading the mob to believe that popular sovereignty could belong to the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. His speech marked the end of a political epoch; but it was not only the Robespierriest orphans who were forced to accept that the *journées* were no longer significant as revolutionary political process. Along with them, those who had never ceased to demand that the departmental insurrections be restored to the revolutionary roll of honor were also forced to live with the thought that the popular violence shown during the Prairial insurrection could have been followed by the arrival of the departmental armies, had they ever succeeded in reaching Paris.

This dilemma induced several political groups, once favorable to the Girondins, to reinterpret the departmental insurrections as generating significant divisions. In the days following the Germinal uprising, an article appearing in the *Feuille Villageoise* - a newspaper close to Louvet<sup>76</sup> - evoked once more Federalism. Compared with its meticulous description of the insurrection in Normandy, where the volunteers had taken up arms to help the Convention against Maratisme, it remained obstinately silent on the other provincial towns in revolt against the Convention. Lyon was accused of royalism, Marseille - once at the forefront of the revolution - was ignored and there was not a word about Bordeaux.<sup>77</sup> The reasons for these distinctions go without saying: separating the Norman insurrection, led throughout by its own deputies, from the other federalist towns, where the rebels had instead mostly dismissed the local government, was tantamount to confirming the superiority of the representative political system, while at the same time refusing any protest without the guidance of a legal authority.

This tendency was immediately reinforced after the Prairial insurrection. Louvet himself, in the columns of the *Sentinelle*, apparently abandoned his previous stance and joined the political debate to tackle the sacredness of the right to insurrection:

75. Gaston: "Entend-on comprendre ceux qui ont porté les armes contre leur patrie?". \*\*\*: "Ceux qui se sont armés lors du 31 mai n'ont eu d'autre intention que de délivrer la Convention de l'oppression; Gaston: "Ceux-là n'ont été qu'égarés!". \*\*\*: "Non, non, non!"; Larivière: "Ceux qui se sont opposés au 31 mai ont bien mérité de la patrie". *Ivi*, p. 192.

76. M.A. Edelstein, *La "Feuille villageoise". Communication et modernisation dans les régions rurales pendant la Révolution française*, Paris, 1977, pp. 49-62.

77. *La feuille villageoise*, 25 germinal an III, n. 40, p. 51.

Dans le rapide examen que nous nous proposons de faire de la Constitution de 93, nous ne nous arrêterons qu'à un seul article de la déclaration des droits: c'est celui où une portion du peuple est appelée à l'insurrection toutes les fois qu'il arrivera au gouvernement de lui déplaire. Si la souveraineté est indivisible, s'il n'y a qu'un peuple, si son pouvoir suprême est incommunicable, si les droits de la société entière ne peuvent être transportés dans un rassemblement séditieux, si enfin nul gouvernement n'est possible là où quelques poignées d'hommes égarés ou malveillans se croiraient autorisés à le renverser, il n'est sans doute aucun moyen de justifier une maxime qui servirait infailliblement de texte à toutes les prédications des agitateurs, qui serait la devise éternelle de tous les promoteurs et le sanglant étendard de toutes les factions.<sup>78</sup>

Above all, he was certainly anxious to eliminate any possible alibi for the promoters of 1793 Parisian insurrections. However, in his attempt to weed out the factions, a large part of the patriotic tradition was lost. The rejection of the right to insurrection, to which Louvet had repeatedly turned in order to keep the 1793 revolt within the revolutionary framework, destroyed any surviving illusions of those who had hoped that the Thermidorian period could revitalize democracy. Instead of heralding a new phase in the relationship between people and authority, the removal of the authoritarian model introduced by the Robespierrist dictatorship served only to highlight the fracture between the Convention and all other political groups outside the Assembly. Furthermore, the violence of Prairial showed how political stabilization needed a representative system if it was to succeed in containing popular pressure even through repression.

The choice involved the renunciation of any kind of balance between representation and direct democracy and the sacrifice of all ideological implications which had traditionally allowed the civil society to control its own elected. Adrien Lézay, joining the constitutional debate, did not try to conceal his belief that the Convention had to tackle and eventually repress any form of dissent towards representation.

L'insurrection est un droit positif, j'en conviens; mais, tant qu'on n'aura pas trouvé une garantie solide en faveur de l'insurrection légitime, il faudra n'user d'elle que comme on use d'un diamant de grand prix, dont à la vérité l'on est propriétaire mais qu'on laisse précieusement enfermé dans son étui .. il n'est point de majorité innée; l'incendie naît de l'étincelle, et ce qui est devenu la volonté de tous ne fut d'abord que la pensée d'un seul. Qui vous dit que ce qui est minorité aujourd'hui, ne sera pas demain majorité? Et si vous étouffez l'insurrection dans son berceau comment acquerra-t-elle cette majorité gigantesque que la caractérise légitime? Si vous aviez laissé le peuple maître de se déclarer quand Lyon s'insurgeait contre la violation commise sur la représentation nationale; si vous aviez laissé Bordeaux, Nantes, Toulon, Marseille, l'Ain, le Jura, le Morbihan, l'Eure et le Calvados, s'unir à cette insurrection trop légitime et qui sans concert éclata dans toutes les parties de la France; est-il bien sur que la majorité vous fut restée? et pour tout dire en un seul mot: quelle insurrection vous semblera donc légitime que celle qui s'opérait en faveur de vos propres droits, vous a semblé coupable? Quelle insurrection pourra se flatter du succès, quand celle qui fut aussi générale a été si facilement réprimée?<sup>79</sup>

In the words of Lézay, the interpretation of Federalism in Year III therefore comes full circle. Initially seen as an expression of revolutionary vitality in French politics, that is an example of patriotism and democracy, the departmental revolts are obliged to give way to the strengthening of representation and shattered into a counter-

78. *La sentinelle*, 8 messidor an III, n. 3, p. 2.

79. A. Lézay, *Qu'est-ce que la Constitution de 1793? Constitution de Massa-chussett*, Paris, an III, pp. 9-10.



revolutionary movement. We can find here all the assumptions towards which the Directory years - as illustrated in the preceding pages - were to successfully lead historians of the insurrection in the departments. In the Themidorian period, in fact, the distance between revolution and counter-revolution appears, albeit temporarily, to be eliminated, since the federalist logic, patriotic when it comes to denouncing the horrors of Robespierism, becomes inevitably reactionary when an attempt is made to contest the political weakness of Representation. All the prerequisites for Federalism's passage from the political to the historiographical dimension are thus present in the political events of Year III. After Robespierre, the accusation of Federalism would at first be maintained and then rejected as a senseless polemical argument, finally emerging again on the occasion of any political tension which caused divisions in the Assembly. Therefore, during the Directory years, having assumed the likeness of a two-headed monster - one revolutionary, one counter-revolutionary - Federalism became a nightmare that could not easily be forgotten upon awakening from the Robespierist sleep. Subsumed in this terrifying figure, with its two contrasting natures, is the incoherence of all the revolution's politics which, born out of political divisions, thought nonetheless to survive without taking account of them.