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978-0-521-28917-7 - The Thermidorean Regime and the Directory 1794-1799

Denis Woronoff

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THE FRENCH REVOLUTION 3

The Thermidorean regime and the Directory 1794–1799

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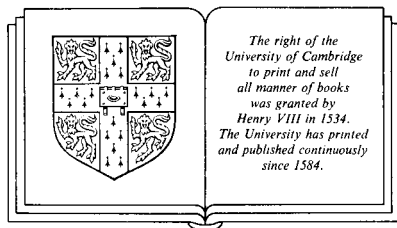
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*The Thermidorean regime
and the Directory*
1794–1799

DENIS WORONOFF

Translated by

JULIAN JACKSON



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Chronology

1794

YEAR II THERMIDOR

13 (31 July)

The Convention renews the committees

14 (1 Aug.)

Arrest of Fouquier-Tinville

FRUCTIDOR

7 (24 Aug.)

Reorganisation of the government into sixteen committees

End August

Puisaye in London

21 (7 Sept.)

The *maximum* is extended2nd *Jour complémentaire*
(18 Sept.)

The Republic ends all subsidy of religion

5th *Jour complémentaire*

(21 Sept.)

Marat's remains taken to the Pantheon

YEAR III VENDÉMIAIRE

3 (24 Sept.)

Promise of amnesty to the rebels of Ille-et-Vilaine

BRUMAIRE

9 (30 Oct.)

Creation of the Ecole Normale

14 (4 Nov.)

Kléber receives the surrender of Maastricht

18 (8 Nov.)

The Army of the North enters Nijmegen

22 (12 Nov.)

Closure of the Jacobin Club

FRIMAIRE

18 (8 Dec.)

Return to the Convention of those excluded on 2 June 1793

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Chronology

NIVÔSE

4 (24 Dec.)

Abolition of the *maximum***1795**

PLUVIÔSE

1 (20 Jan.)

The French occupy Amsterdam

4 (23 Jan.)

The Dutch fleet is captured on the Helder

15 (3 Feb.)

Fall of Rosas

19 (7 Feb.)

Arrest of Babeuf

20 (8 Feb.)

'Depantheonisation' of Marat

29 (17 Feb.)

Treaty of La Jaunaye

VENTÔSE

3 (21 Feb.)

Freedom of worship. Neutrality of the state

12 (2 March)

Arrest and indictment of Barère, Billaud-Varenne and Collot d'Herbois

GERMINAL

10 (30 March)

Commission of the Eleven to work out a new constitution

12 (1 April)

Popular uprising in Paris

13 (2 April)

The uprising is crushed

13-15 (2-4 April)

Incidents in Rouen, Amiens, Saint-Germain

16 (5 April)

Peace of Basle between France and Prussia

21 (10 April)

Law disarming the Terrorists and confining them to their homes

FLORÉAL

15 (4 May)

Massacre of Jacobins imprisoned in Lyons

27 (16 May)

Treaty of alliance between France and Holland

30 (19 May)

The pamphlet *L'Insurrection du Peuple* circulates in Paris

PRAIRIAL

1-4 (20-23 May)

Journées of revolt in Paris

17 (5 June)

Massacre of Jacobins in Marseilles

20 (8 June)

Announcement of the death of Louis XVII

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MESSIDOR

5–9 (23–27 June)

6 (29 June)

Landing of *émigrés* at Quiberon

Verona Manifesto

THERMIDOR

3 (21 July)

Hoche's victory at Quiberon

FRUCTIDOR

5 (22 August)

The text of the constitution is adopted by the Convention

20 (6 Sept.)

Beginning of the constitutional referendum

YEAR IV VENDÉMAIRE

1 (23 Sept.)

Proclamation of the constitution

7 (29 Sept.)

Law regulating worship

9 (1 Oct.)

Annexation of Belgium

13 (5 Oct.)

Royalist uprising against the Convention

29 (21 Oct.)

Elections to the Legislative Body

BRUMAIRE

3 (25 Oct.)

Emigrés' relatives excluded from public office. Daunou's law on education

4 (26 Oct.)

Amnesty except for *émigrés*

9 (31 Oct.)

Election of the executive Directory

25 (16 Nov.)

Opening of the Club du Panthéon

FRIMAIRE

14 (5 Dec.)

Babeuf in hiding

19 (10 Dec.)

Vote of forced loan

1796

PLUVIÔSE

15 (4 Feb.)

Project for a bank of issue

30 (19 Feb.)

End of the *assignats*

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Chronology

VENTÔSE

6 (25 Feb.)

9 (28 Feb.)

12 (2 March)

28 (18 March)

Stofflet shot

Bonaparte closes the Club du Panthéon

Bonaparte appointed General-in-Chief of the Army of Italy

Creation of the *mandats territoriaux*

GERMINAL

9 (29 March)

10 (30 March)

23 (12 April)

24 (13 April)

26 (15 April)

Charette shot

Formation of the 'Insurrectional Committee' of the Equals

Montenotte

Millesimo

Dego

FLORÉAL

2 (21 April)

9 (28 April)

13 (2 May)

21 (10 May)

Mondovi

Franco-Sardinian Armistice of Cherasco

Dismissal of the Paris Police Legion

Lodi. Arrest of Babeuf and his friends

PRAIRIAL

1 (20 May)

4 (23 May)

16 (4 June)

24 (12 June)

Bonaparte pays his soldiers half their wages in metallic currency

Anti-French uprising in the Pavia region

Kléber beats the Austrians at Altenkirchen

French troops invade the Legations

MESSIDOR

5 (23 June)

21 (9 July)

The Pope signs an armistice at Bologna

Moreau victorious at Ettlingen

THERMIDOR

18 (5 Aug.)

Castiglione

FRUCTIDOR

6 (23 Aug.)

Bernadotte beaten at Neumarkt

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7 (24 Aug.)

Moreau beaten at Amberg

22 (8 Sept.)

Bassano

23 (9 Sept.)

Incident at the Grenelle camp

YEAR V VENDÉMIAIRE

14 (5 Oct.)

High court of justice at Vendôme

23 (14 Oct.)

Demonstration at Milan in favour of independence

25 (16 Oct.)

Proclamation in Bologna of the Cispadane Republic

BRUMAIRE

25–27 (15–17 Nov.)

Battle of Arcole

FRIMAIRE

25 (15 Dec.)

French fleet sets off towards Ireland

1797

NIVÔSE

25 (14 Jan.)

Rivoli

26 (15 Jan.)

First Theophilanthropic worship

PLUVIÔSE

11 (30 Jan.)

Arrest of Brottier

14 (2 Feb.)

Mantua falls

16 (4 Feb.)

Official return to metallic currency

VENTÔSE

1 (19 Feb.)

Treaty of Tolentino with the Pope

GERMINAL

1–12 (20–31 March)

Elections to the Legislative Body (renewal of the second third). French offensive towards the Tyrol

28 (17 April)

Anti-French uprising in Verona

29 (18 April)

Preliminaries of Treaty of Leoben

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FLORÉAL

1 (20 April)

Moreau crosses the Rhine

PRAIRIAL

7 (26 May)

Barthélemy elected Director in Letourneur's place. End of the Vendôme trial
Babeuf and Darthé guillotined

8 (27 May)

MESSIDOR

28 (16 July)

Ministerial reshuffle carried out by the triumvirs

THERMIDOR

8 (26 July)

20 (7 Aug.)

Sotin at the Ministry of Police
Augereau in Paris

FRUCTIDOR

18 (4 Sept.)

19 (5 Sept.)

22 (8 Sept.)

Anti-royalist *coup d'état*
Passing of emergency legislation
Merlin de Douai and François de Neufchâteau
elected Directors

YEAR VI VENDÉMAIRE

9 (30 Sept.)

26 (17 Oct.)

Bankruptcy of the 'Two-Thirds'
Peace of Campoformio

FRIMAIRE

8 (28 Nov.)

Congress of Rastatt

1798

NIVÔSE

22 (11 Jan.)

Berthier marches on Rome

PLUVIÔSE

3 (22 Jan.)

Coup d'état in The Hague

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9 (28 Jan.)	Mulhouse annexed to France
23 (11 Feb.)	Berthier enters Rome
27 (15 Feb.)	Roman Republic
GERMINAL	
20 (9 April)	Meeting of primary assemblies
FLORÉAL	
22 (11 May)	Large-scale invalidation of newly elected left-wing deputies
26 (15 May)	Treilhard elected Director
30 (19 May)	The French fleet leaves Toulon for Egypt
PRAIRIAL	
29 (17 June)	François de Neufchâteau appointed Minister of the Interior
MESSIDOR	
13 (1 July)	The French disembark in Alexandria
THERMIDOR	
3 (21 July)	Battle of the Pyramids
14 (1 Aug.)	The French fleet destroyed at Aboukir
FRUCTIDOR	
19 (5 Sept.)	Jourdan's law on conscription
23 (9 Sept.)	Law on the <i>décadi</i> and the festivals
YEAR VII VENDÉMAIRE	
21 (12 Oct.)	Beginning of the 'War of the Peasants' in Belgium
24 (15 Oct.)	First national exhibition organised by François de Neufchâteau
30 (21 Oct.)	Anti-French uprising in Cairo

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FRIMAIRE

3 (23 Nov.)

Law on land tax

4 (24 Nov.)

Imposition of the tax on doors and windows

1799

PLUVIÔSE

4 (23 Jan.)

Championnet enters Naples

7 (26 Jan.)

Neapolitan Republic

27 (15 Feb.)

Battle of El'Arîsh

VENTÔSE

17 (7 March)

Capture of Jaffa

29 (19 March)

Siege of Acre

GERMINAL

1–30 (21 March–19 April)

Elections to the Legislative Body

5 (25 March)

Jourdan beaten at Stokach

16 (5 April)

Schérer defeated at Magnano

21 (10 April)

Pius VI brought to France

FLORÉAL

9 (28 April)

Assassinations of Bonnier and Roberjot on their departure from Rastatt

10 (29 April)

Suvorov in Milan

27 (16 May)

Sieyès replaces Reubell on the Directory

28 (17 May)

Bonaparte raises the siege of Acre

PRAIRIAL

16 (4 June)

First Battle of Zurich

28 (16 June)

The Councils call on the Directory to give an explanation of the situation

29 (17 June)

The election of Treillard is annulled. Gohier is elected to the Directory

30 (18 June)

The Councils force La Révellière and Merlin to resign

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MESSIDOR

- 1 (19 June) Macdonald beaten at La Trebbia. Roger-Ducos on the Directory
- 2 (20 June) Moulin on the Directory
- 18 (6 July) Foundation of the Jacobin Club at the Manège

THERMIDOR

- 7 (25 July) French victory of Aboukir over a Turkish army
- 18 (5 Aug.) Royalist uprising in the south-west
- 28 (15 Aug.) Joubert killed at Novi

FRUCTIDOR

- 6 (23 Aug.) Bonaparte leaves Egypt
- 10 (27 Aug.) English landing on the Helder
- 3rd *Jour complémentaire*
(19 Sept.) Brune victorious at Bergen

YEAR VIII VENDÉMAIRE

- 3–5 (25–27 Sept.) Battle of Zurich
- 17 (9 Oct.) Bonaparte lands at Fréjus
- 24 (16 Oct.) Bonaparte in Paris

BRUMAIRE

- 1 (23 Oct.) Lucien President of the Five Hundred
- 18 (9 Nov.) The Councils are transferred to Saint-Cloud. Sieyès, Roger-Ducos, Barras resign
- 19 (10 Nov.) The Councils give in to force. They designate three provisional consuls – Bonaparte, Sieyès, Roger-Ducos – and two commissions to prepare a new constitution

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Preface

Recalling 9 Thermidor in his *Mémoires*, Thibaudeau quoted the remark of an émigré: ‘there are no longer men in France, there are only events’. This harsh judgement is one that many people would apply to the period which separates the fall of Robespierre from the rise of Bonaparte, a period in which history seems to have unfolded in a minor key. From these five years emerges an impression of confused mediocrity, of an interregnum lacking brilliance. And whether they have been discredited or neglected, the closing stages of the Revolution have hardly won the favour of historians.

But this drab interlude between two epic periods is crucial for an understanding of the origins of contemporary France. Behind the incoherence, the spectacle and the scandals, one can trace the extraordinary tenacity with which the republican bourgeoisie maintained its hold on power. ‘Respectable’ citizens searched ceaselessly for ‘the means of terminating the Revolution’¹ to their own benefit. They hoped to define, in a set of institutions, in a society, in an ideology, a system which would consolidate and sum up their conquests. That this regime of ‘*notables*’ was, in its original form, only able to survive by means of expedients in no way detracts from the interest and modernity of what was being attempted. The great figures had fallen silent. But would it be too much to claim that after the sound and the fury it becomes easier to distinguish a different form of discourse? Not the language of popular protest, which, outside moments of explosion, reaches us in an increasingly distorted and muffled form, but the language of moderate politicians – of whom Thibaudeau and La Révellière-Lépeaux could be taken as the spokesmen – whose demands, contradictions and indeed very ordinariness were representative of the new dominant classes. One must also be aware of provincial voices.

¹ To take up the title of the law of 5 Fructidor Year III (22 August 1795) which proposed a new constitution to the French people for their ratification.

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Preface

But it remains difficult to know what these were in spite of extensive research which has perhaps concentrated too narrowly on the northern half of the country. Paris retained the initiative and the last word. But as well as similarities of attitude one ought also to pick out time-lags, even discrepancies, which varied depending on the region and the problem. For the relaxation of revolutionary constraints seems to have released powerful centrifugal forces: in many cases the right to make autonomous decisions had been achieved at the local level. As Richard Cobb has written, the country became 'communalised' in Year III; a remark generally valid for the whole of our period. More than ever, diversity was the hallmark of France. Finally, the political upheavals, the 'events' at home and abroad, must not obscure a more secret, because silent, history – that of the underlying forces in society. The Directory was perhaps a period of weakness, but it was also a period rich in political and cultural potential, in transformations, in social tensions. In short, not everything can be reduced to mere spectacle in a period which has been characterised as frivolous in order, perhaps, to evade proper assessment.

Although some uncertainties remain, there are no serious gaps in our knowledge of the political history of the years from 9 Thermidor to 18 Brumaire. On the other hand little progress has been made concerning more 'structural' problems, where areas of darkness persist. For example, the working of the Councils and the Directory is much better known than that of the ministries, let alone that of the administration of the *départements*. Yet the proliferation of bureaucracy seems to have been a characteristic of the regime. In the economic field there are a myriad unresolved questions. As to the evolution of the economic situation, regional variations have barely been examined – though such variations are all the greater because the political crisis reinforced the compartmentalisation of markets. So too variations according to sector, which would allow us to plot disparities of development. The cultural history of the Directory has long been restricted to laments about religious persecution and about the frivolity of Parisian society. Recent research has helped to produce other perspectives, but popular culture remains almost unknown. Finally, beyond the narrative of battles and the naming of military units, there is a need for an analysis of a military society: of the development of an *esprit de corps*, of the changes in hierarchical relationships, of the wealth of the generals – areas of enquiry that would illuminate the

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Preface

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Thermidorean Convention and the Directory. This still virgin territory has sometimes stimulated highly original work. But such research is very isolated compared to the dominant historiographical tradition which allows us to describe the origins, establishment and triumphs of the regime.