

Spring and Summer 1794

Robespierre lost Support in 3 Key areas:

1. Catholics
2. Sons Culottes
3. CPS and CGS.

1. Catholics

- Robespierre believed in God and had genuine faith.

He led the dechristianisation Campaign - in principle and action.

- He wanted to unite all Frenchmen under new religion

'Cult of the Supreme being'

- Accepted by Convention decree in May 1794

- June Robespierre organised a 'Festival of the Supreme being' in Paris.

* New religion pleased no one. Catholics hated the lack of Catholic doctrine and Anti-clerical thought it was an attempt by Robespierre to establish himself as head of a new faith.

2. San Culottes

losing support for a number of reasons:

1. Execution of Herbertists
2. dissolution of Popular Societies
3. End of direct democracy
4. Raising of the maximum (march)
5. Imposing the maximum on wages.

Overtown of Robespierre

- Wages fell by almost half + led to discontent.

- The Great Terror sickened ordinary people. Enemies had been dealt with - why did it need to continue.

3. CPS + CGS

- They were unchallengeable - until they fell out with themselves.

- April 1794 - ~~Herbertist~~

~~Billard + Collot~~ CPS set up its own Police Bureau - with Robespierre

in charge.

The CGS - resented this step as their role of internal security.

- 2 Committees became rivals.

- There were also conflict within the CPS

- Some disliked the

Law of Ventose

- Confiscation of Property - made sure it was not put in place.

2 members of CPS - Billard + Collot had been close to Herbert and grew critical of Robespierre.

- Robespierre was very critical of Collot + conflict grew.

- After Cult of Supreme being Robespierre was losing support.

The Coup of Thermidor

- During the divisions Robespierre took a month off.
- He made no speeches
- attended the CPS only 2-3 times + Gave up his work at the Bureau of Police.
- When he did reappear it was to address

The Convention not the CPS.

- 26 July (8 Thermidor) Robespierre made a speech against colleagues who were plotting against the Gov. - He refused to name them.
- Had he done so it would have meant death for people like Carnot + Collot - they were very threatened -

- Believing that Robespierre was about to name them they conspired to plot against him before he could order their arrest.
- on 9 Thermidor Robespierre attempted to speak at the Convention - He was shouted down.
- The Convention voted for his arrest along with Couthon, Saint Just + Hanriot - Commander of Paris Guard.

Thermidor Confusion

- 27th July - Commune ordered Parisians not to accept Robespierre
- He still had their support.
- But their power had been weakened.
- Hanriot escaped and tried to encourage an insurrection at the Convention.
- Robespierre refused to act.
- Robespierre was found at the Hotel du ville - he had tried to shoot himself - he was rearrested and executed on 28 July with 21 others.
- over next few days 100 others followed Robespierre.
- Coup of Thermidor meant the end of the terror.

The Thermidorian Reaction?

- In the end the Jacobin dictatorship had defeated the internal + external enemies of the Revolution.
- Created a Citizens Army
- But....
- massive loss of life and devastation in the Vendee + other areas of federal revolt.
- Catholics + Bourgeoisie were alienated.
- Sans Culottes became disillusioned with extreme policies
- Huge hatred towards terror

Reactionaries

- Great relief at execution of Robespierre.
- In Paris joy and frenzy at the news.
- Those who overthrew Robespierre were known as Thermidorians - mixed group - members of CPS and CGS, ex-terrorists + deputies of the Plain.
- The Plain emerged as leaders
- They did not want a return to monarchy.
- disliked the Jacobins for giving too much power to the Sans-Culottes.

- Thermidorians set about dismantling the machine of the Terror.

July 1794 - May 1795

- Abolished Revolutionary Tribunal
- Released all suspects from prison
- Repealed Law of Prairial
- Closed Jacobin Club.

Thermidorians wanted to end price controls + support a free market.

December 1794 - Price Control ended.

- This led to a fall in the value of assignat and massive inflation.

- Gov had to buy war materials at market prices.

- Printed more money to pay for it

May 1795 assignat was 4% of its 1790 value.

They found no support and dispersed when National Guard.

- Spring 1795 - disillusionment with Convention's ability to solve economic crisis.

Prairial - May 1795

more serious affair

- women, workers + National Guard marched at Convention to demand bread.

- in chaos a deputy was killed + crowd grew hostile.

- loyal forces came to confront the crowd.

- No one was prepared to fire + it ended when the Convention accepted a petition and agreed to set up a food commission.

- on following day the Convention went on offensive.

Thermidorian Reaction

- Poor harvest in 1794 made things worse.

- Winter 1794-5 was one of

Starvation - famine and misery

Germinal - April 1st 1795

Protest at the economic crisis against the Convention.

10,000 people (unarmed) marched on the Convention.

They demanded:

Bread

Constitution 1793

Release of former CPS members.

They were determined to gain control of institutions that made Terror possible.

CPS + CGS - 25% of members had to be changed each month.

August 1794 - 16 Committees were set up to take over work of CPS/CGS

CPS/CGS - left to run war + diplomacy

- The Paris Commune was abolished

- Power in local Gov Passed to moderates

Religion - Separated Church and state

Restored freedom of worship

ended repression of clergy

Ended the cult of Supreme being

First state to declare itself neutral in matters of Religion.

Prairial (May 22) - Contd.

Rebel suburbs were surrounded by 20,000 troops of Regular army who forced them to give up their arms.

Repression was severe:

40 Montagnards were arrested + 6 executed

36 Gunners from protest were executed

6000 Militants were disarmed and arrested.

* Prairial ended the Sans Culottes as a political and military force.

Defeat of popular movement marked the end of the Radical phase.

No longer would Sans Culottes be able to threaten an elected Assembly.

1795-1796 - economic conditions were just as bad but there was no rising.

Prairial failed because...

- Sans Culottes were divided
- National Guard remained loyal
- No Commune to co-ordinate
- Politically inexperienced
- Lost support of Radical Bourgeoisie.

- The regular Army was used for the first time against the people since 1789.
- Intervention was decisive + showed that new Gov was reliant on the Army.
- This would be important later.

White Terror

→ An attack on ex-terrorists from the Terror by those who had

Thermidorian Reaction

suffered from it.

- White - Bourbon Colour but not all were Royalists.

- Some were returning Emigres + Non-Juring priests.

- Not all were Terrorists - many were just people who wanted vengeance on those who committed the Terror.

- Victims of Revolutionary Tribunal

The White Terror did not occur across all of France -

Paris - Jeunesse dorée

'Gilded Youth' - Young men dressed extravagantly - they formed gangs and beat up Jacobins + Sans Culottes.

Vendee | White Terror

Much more violent in North West & South East. Violence was revived in 1794.

Chouan + Guenilla groups

roamed the area

1794-1796 - attacked grain convoys - murdering officials of local Govs.

→ Chouan groups controlled

Brittany - gained support from Britain when Emigres from Channel Islands landed to support them.

- Rebel force numbered 22,000.

- General Hoche and the French forces had to clear the area with a

huge force of 140,000

- Wiped out the Chouan and Vendee rebels.

- 1796 - they had restored Gov authority to this part of France.

White Terror in the South

- Murder gangs in South were not considered a huge threat.
- They were left to grow and spread.
 - In Lyon and Rhone Valley Gangs at Yantus killed as many as 2000 in South East in 1795. - killing carried on into 1796 and beyond.

Constitution - Features

- All men over 21 (direct tax payers)
- Could vote for electors.
- Electors chose the deputies
- Electors had to pay taxes equivalent to 150-200 days labour
- so high that only the very rich could qualify.
- legislature was separated from the executive to prevent dictatorship

Executive

- A directory of 5 selected by the Ancients from a list drawn up by the Council of five Hundred.
- 5 deputies would hold office for 5 years
 - one chosen by lot would retire each year.
 - Powers were limited
 - Could not initiate or veto laws
 - Could not declare war
 - no control over Treasury.
 - Role: In charge of diplomacy, military affairs + law enforcement.
 - Gov ministers were responsible to Directors + Gov Commissioners who saw Gov policy implemented in the provinces.

Constitution at Year III

Thermidorian Reaction

1795. Thermidorians wanted a new Constitution that would guarantee main features of 1789 revolution:

- Abolition of privilege
- Freedom of the individual
- Elected Assembly
- ensure a dictatorship like CPS could not happen
- No return to monarchy or popular sovereignty like Sans Culottes.

August 1795 A new Constitution was agreed.

Legislature
2 chambers

Council of Five Hundred
over the age of 30
initiate legislation and pass to Council of Ancients

Council of Ancients
250 men over the age of 40 - approve or reject bills but could not introduce them or change them.

* No property qualification - elections would take place annually to replace 1/3

Weaknesses of the New Constitution

In spite of checks and balances designed to prevent dictatorship new Constitution had several weaknesses.

- Yearly elections promoted instability.
- No means of solving conflict between legislative and executive.
- Councils could paralyse Directory by refusing to pass laws.
- Directors could not dissolve the Councils or veto laws.
- Legislature could not impact Directory by only replacing one Director each year to replace retired Director.
- Enforced separation of powers
- A hostile legislature could paralyse the Directory.
- Directory had to rely on cancelling election returns or calling in the Army to solve disputes.

once the Constitution was drawn up - they feared that free elections would result in a Royalist majority.

- To avoid this it decreed 2/3 of deputies to new Councils must come from existing deputies of the Convention.

New Constitution of Year III was agreed on 22 Aug 1795

- It was submitted to a plebiscite for approval
1,057,390 in favour
49,978 against
4 million did not vote

2/3 decree was narrowly accepted.

Thermidorian Reaction

Verona Declaration

As discussions on Constitution drew to a close - Constitutional monarchists attempted to gain support for a return to 1791 Constitutional monarchy by putting Louis XVI - Louis XVIII on the throne but he died in 1795.

Louis brother (in Italy) declared himself King Louis XVIII + issued the Verona Declaration. → This declared a return to the Ancien Regime + lost the cause support

→ 2/3 decree snooked many who thought they would get rid of Convention + ended chance of a Royalist revival.

Vendemiaire uprising

1795
5 Oct (Vendemiaire) a large Royalist crowd (250,000) marched on the Convention. Outnumbered the French forces led by Napoleon but they were better equipped - ended in a huge massacre over the throne. Killed. Not all Royalists - more of a general revolt