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Howard G. Brown. *Ending the French Revolution: Violence, Justice, and Repression from the Terror to Napoleon.* Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 2006. xii + 461 pp. $45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8139-2546-2.

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"... And Called It Peace"

This is a fine, extensive, sharply written, authoritative and ultimately disheartening book. It offers a sobering reflection on "the full impact of prolonged violence and pervasive fear on the fledgling institutions of liberal democracy" (p. ix), a problem which is no less pressing now than it was in the turbulent years after the fall of Maximilien Robespierre documented here. Howard G. Brown has taken as his subject the attempts of republican regimes from 1795 onwards to restore internal peace to a country ravaged by four persistent problems: "Catholicism, war, royalism, and Jacobinism" (p. 46). As he shows repeatedly, the complex context created by these disruptive forces made it almost impossible to close down internal conflicts. Either local problems injected momentum, violence and intractability into the interaction of larger forces, or local quarrels found leverage and longevity in response to external events, and in ideological labels and the unhesitating violence they promoted. Brown draws a rather neat diagram of these wheels within wheels (p. 268) and the frictions that conveyed momentum through and between local, regional and national levels of conflict, though he also cautions elegantly against the risk of "an excess of figurative literalism" in seeing this as a real map of the country.

Brown begins by tackling the well-established paradoxes of the so-called First Directory of 1795-97. Taking office under the Constitution of the Year III, following more than a year of assorted violent reactions to the grim Terror of 1793-94, this regime was doomed by its own ideals. While it abandoned the sans-culottes and other representatives of the common people, who had been the alleged beneficiaries (and real scapegoats) of "terrorism," the Directory failed to appreciate how extensively the new property-owning political class it cultivated had been penetrated by similarly violent sentiments or, at the very least, a willingness to overlook the violence of others in the name of politics. As is demonstrated here, new courts set up under an extremely liberal regime of jury-trials and safeguards for the defense proved entirely unable to support the repression of political violence–while their rates of conviction for crimes against property compared favorably with those of previous decades, convictions for crimes against authority were almost unobtainable.

A wider problem, Brown contends, was that violence itself was changing in character. In an important discussion of the "economy of violence," he argues in considerable detail that the experience of Terror and reaction had cut violence loose from traditional restraints (p. 47). No longer was violence generally "communicative," tied up in rituals of retribution and collective legitimation that made it, in some sense, a call for justice. Increasingly, it was "solipsistic," individualized, destructive of basic social ties (p. 50). Violence became the first, rather than the last, resort of personal or factional quarrels, and violence was carried further–harassment became assault, beatings turned to murders, and criminality and politics merged into an indiscriminate "brigandage" that terrorized whole regions. The fact that political labels continued to be applied to much of this, and served to legitimate it in the eyes of some, at least, only made the overall pattern of violence more terrifying for the general population.

In this context, launching a liberal constitution that was deluged with checks and balances, and which trusted to local elected officials to function as administration and judiciary, was an almost suicidal move. And indeed, as Brown goes on to demonstrate at great length, the democratic aspirations of the Directory perished at its own hands in the years to come, as a "liberal authoritarianism" slowly developed, placing internal order and military security above almost all other values. The National Convention had already prolonged the "terrorist" practice of using military commissions to judge *chouans* by a law of 30 prairial III (pp. 143-147). Under differing names and compositions, and with differing rates of success, the militarization of internal security was to be a

defining feature of policy through to the effective definition of Napoleon's dictatorship with the Life Consulate of 1802.

Brown's immensely detailed studies, centered on four departmental case studies, highlight that this struggle over law and order was always as complex as his wheels-within-wheels diagram suggests. No organ of the state merely dealt out death, and even the most expeditious of "extraordinary military commissions," such as those created to deal with widespread banditry in southern France in early 1801, acquitted nearly half their defendants of the capital charges on which they were arraigned. The 203 sentenced to death were shot by firing-squads, often at the site of their crimes, or where the spectacle would have the greatest intimidatory effect, but 81 walked free, and the remainder were dealt with largely by transfers to regular justice or administrative control (pp. 320-321). At least another 50 had perished in the operations of the "flying columns" which led to these proceedings, but these marked both the absolute commitment of the new order to public security and, in an ironic way, the limited means that were needed to secure tranquillity once the state, and society, had set its mind to it.

At the core of the book is the tortuous process whereby a republican elite that could no longer summon up conventional social loyalties, nor offer Rousseauist unity of will, yielded initiative to military force, and a conception of sovereignty that was far closer to Thomas Hobbes's Leviathan. In a series of chapters which manage to be at once discrete institutional studies and a thematically interwoven narrative, Brown leads the reader through the travails of the Directorial criminal justice system, the peculiarities of the republican jury system, the intrusion of militarized repression, the difficulties of establishing "police" functions (and hence the rising reliance on militarized means), combats against brigandage and counter-revolutionary *chouannerie*, and the steady movement towards a "security state." As he carefully notes, however, this should not simply be interpreted as a slide to dictatorship–though it was also that, as he makes clear (p. 357). Through their policies of "liberal authoritarianism" (also the title of part 3 of the book), the repressive forces of the late Directory and early Consulate also succeeded in bringing large numbers of citizens around to supporting the rule of law–individuals in this later period seem, in Brown's case studies, much more willing than a few years earlier to support the state at risk to themselves, either by testifying against brigand gangs or by taking up arms in the name of order. The movement from "community policing" to "policing communities" (p. 181), ironically, drew people back into a concern for their own collective safety, and into recognizing that the state could be an effective guarantor of that condition.

In a sign of the persistent subtlety of his argument, however, Brown points out that this was not a universal phenomenon, and almost certainly derived from a realignment of sentiments of communal honor, especially in the south, away from ideological activism and towards collective security (pp. 332-338). In discussing the rise of the Napoleonic dictatorship, he points out that it was Directorial leaders' insistence on returning to the "revolutionary" patterns of ideologically inspired measures of exception (including the Brumaire coup itself)–and not their more general pursuit of pacification and order–that paved the way for liberal authoritarianism to lose its qualifying adjective. The alleged "liberalism" of the Directory seemed to scorn the rule of law, or at least its equal application to all. Napoleonic authoritarianism at least made it clear that peace and order would be restored–by any means necessary, but not as a prelude to further ideological persecutions. By supporting the Consulate, the French political class made a "Faustian pact": the elevation of the repressive state apparatus out of local, "organic" control, in return for guarantees of security for lives and property. In so doing, they helped to create the very model of a "modern security state" (p. 358).

It is impossible in a short review to convey all the elegant and multi-leveled ironies of Brown's writing. Whether conveying the tensions of mountain ambushes and courtroom confrontations, or pithily indicating the relevance of a wide range of theoretical readings to his argument, the text is always crisp, confident and persuasive. It tells us, in the end, that giving a country up to dictatorship is not always the worst thing that can happen, even if it is scarcely the best that can be hoped for.

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