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Aller au sommaire du numéro

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LOWER-CLASS ROYALISM IN TOULOUSE, 1789-1820*

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Popular royalism in the French Revolution is even more difficult to define than that intractable manifestation, popular revolution. Lack of organization, the erratic bursts of hostility to Parisian authority, the briefness of the career of lower-class militants, the secrecy and nervousness of subversives, point to the absence of a continuing and structured royalist movement.

The focus of explanation may be shifted to fear of food shortage, to regional rivalries, to the popular attachment to religion, to loyalty to the practice and theory of feudal dependence, or to popular beliefs about economics. Whichever of these causes of discontent, or combination of them, explains the existence of popular hostility to the partisans of the Revolution, intruders into the baroque federalism of the Old Regime, they can only be understood in the context of the localism which itself prevented royalism from developing a coordinated activity. Royalist and Catholic armies feared marching far from a familiar spire, and usually lacked a High Command.

The detailed social analysis of lower-class royalism, especially in the towns, is at its beginnings. In Paris, the hiding place for large numbers of opponents of the Revolution, little is known about the social configuration of this sympathy. Rudé has pointed out that there is no urban equivalent of the Vendée, save perhaps in Nantes where the conflicts of the countryside intruded *intra muros.* He dismisses the riots of Caen, Bordeaux, Toulon, Lyons, and Marseilles in 1792-1794 as anti-Jacobin rather than pro-royalist. In the same way he sees the Thermidorian White Terror as a reprisal for the Jacobin Terror rather than an attempt to reestablish the monarchy.[1] Yet royalism is a stated motive of much urban discontent even if it never achieved control of a city or produced large urban insurrections. Certainly the revolutionary authorities feared the possibility. In towns with religious dissensions like Nîmes, where companies of the National Guard were Catholic and others Protestant, royalism and Catholicism went in tandem among the popular royalists who were recruited from wage earners, artisans and agricultural labourers, many of them employed by the protestants.[2] Similar cleavages were found in Montauban where religion and eco-

nomics were behind the clashes between partisans of the Revolution and their opponents.[3] In cities where the *parlement* was a major economic factor in employment and a source of local pride as in Pau, Toulouse and Arles, the final abolition of those bodies in September 1790 struck not only the robe oligarchies but the lesser officials, servants, merchants, hoteliers and others who saw prosperity as dependent on that institutional base.[4] The same is true of towns essentially administrative in nature — Auch with its intendancy, or with a lesser judicial function, like Tarbes with its senechalsy, or a religious centre like Saint Bertrand de Comminges with its famous abbey. Local features must be appreciated in an explanation of the variety of popular resentments against the Revolution. Here I propose to look at them in Toulouse, the regional capital of south-western France.

Toulouse had always displayed an independent character in the Old Regime. The regional *parlement,* the large ecclesiastical establishment and the *capitoulat,* or municipal government, were matters of local pride and the providers of much employment. While there were sometimes conflicts between these bodies — both the seneschalsy and the *capitouls* could find themselves in opposition to the *parlement* — the focus of local government was within the city and its local élite. The intendant, distant in Montpellier, or his *sub-délégué,* did not compare in importance with the elaborate world of local concerns of the local markets where grain from the Lauragais was sold, cloth and artisan products changed hands at the annual fairs, or with the discussion of local politics. The sense of localism had a distinct geographical dimension. The city kept its distance from lower Languedoc and the Mediterranean. The north of France with its alien language of swallowed vowels, its sullen climate, its butter cookery and its contempt for the people of the Midi was foreign to the Toulousains. There was also an urban geography of social attitudes. The fullers and dyers were found on the Ile de Tounis in the Garonne where a good water supply was on hand. There were *fénétras,* (festivals of the patron saint of each district), which provided an occasion for singing, dancing the farandoles and brawling, between students of the university and the apprentices. Confraternities, which have recently been described as the most typical form of southern sociability in the eighteenth century, combined devotion to one of the many relics in the city with a trade loyalty, like that of Saint Salvy which was composed of the *portefaix* of the area around the Saint Etienne cathedral, "appelés portefaix du canal parcequ'ils sont employés principalement aux transports des

marchandises et du blé".[5] All these concerns produced a suspicion of strangers for which Toulouse was noted, and fed the meridional civilization of rhetoric, an almost Celtic sense of verbal poetry which was its own truth in a cascade of resonant words and gestures which northerners described, slightingly, as *gasconnades.*

The Revolution intruded dramatically into this world of the people, far more than royal officialdom had ever done in the past. Echoing the fashionable ideas of the time the Third Estate of the Seneschalsy of Toulouse called for an end to exclusive privileges in industry and commerce and applauded the decrees of August 1789. The less efficient masters, those in trades most sensitive to social changes brought by the Revolution, and workers exposed to new competition, were less sympathtic to liberal economics. The lines of opinion in the new situation were confused, of course: the *compagnons* were pleased with the abolition of that milice in which they had been forced to serve as substitutes for the masters while some realized that the abolition of the *maîtrise* was an advantage to them only to the extent that the trade was not flooded with new practioners. Apprentice wigmakers described their former masters as shamelessly living on the abuses of the Old Regime, for the owners of the ninety-two privileged places of wigmaker, established by an edict of 1784 which set their price at 1200 Livres, kept their juniors in a state verging on slavery. Many of these apprentices and *compagnons* were grown men, married, but forced to remain in their subalturn position; now, they exulted, they belonged to the National Guard and were happily free from ten centuries of oppression.[6] At the same time the Revolution was soon to affect adversely the demand for wigs.

A list of men who protested against the religious policy of the Revolution gives us an insight into the linkage of opinion and profession among the artisans and the modestly self-sufficient, although the very lowest echelons of the socio-economic scale were excluded. Small as the sample is it shows that those trades most dependent on the custom of the *ci-devants* — clothing trades, food and catering, building trades and general commerce — were very anxious about the attack on so important a part of the institutional base of the city as the church.[7]

During the first years of the Revolution Toulouse was considered to be lagging in enthusiasm for the new order, although the local

Jacobins moved steadily to the left. The fact that the Jacobins of Toulouse remained in power until the year VIII, long after they had been removed from office elsewhere in France, is deceptive. The history of the Revolution in the city was relatively moderate, the Jacobins were drawn from the upper ranges of the artisans, some shopkeepers, individuals drawn from the lower ranks of the legal profession with few servants and fewer wealthy men, and with almost no nobles. There were no prosperous and able middle-class groups like the rich protestants of Nîmes and Montauban who played an important local role in their revolution. A recent study has shown, in a remarkable demonstration of quantitative history, the distribution of economic resources in the city population.[8] The local nobility had commanded certain privileges and was easily the wealthiest group in local society. There was no significant economic group who could challenge their affluent assurance of mastery. Not merely the institutions of the city but the economics pointed to the past rather than the future.

In May 1790 the *Société des Amis de la Constitution,* formed of artisans, *citoyens actifs,* was convened by a shoemaker. These men provided supporters for the policy of the National Assembly against the "apôtres du fanatisme" and were the forerunners of the *Société Populaire* of 1793. The membership of that group in 1790 was very similar to the lower-class opponents of the religious policy, drawn largely from the lower middle class and the artisans, but rarely from the servants or lowest ranks of society.[9] Neither the Jacobins nor the opponents of the religious policy could be considered to represent a large enough portion of the lower classes of the city for us to generalize, but obviously there were profound divisions of opinion in the same socio-professional categories.

The progress of the Revolution was marked by increasing tension in the city, particularly focussed on the national guard which played an important part in southern France as a centre for political organization. In Toulouse the *Amis de la Constitution* were able to rely on this armed body for support with one exception, the legion for the *parlementaire* district, commanded by the *président* d'Aspe de Meilhan, which could potentially have been the rallying point for a more forceful opposition to the Revolution. D'Aspe came from Auch and had served in the cavalry before taking his seat on the bench; he prided himself on his military flair and ability to organize a company of "ci-devant nobles, avocats et procureurs". The administration was aware that the legion had the support of a clientèle of sedan-chair carriers from the

place St. Etienne, wigmakers, porters and valets. Men like Roucoule, an avocat of a "caractère très altier", or a former *capitoul,* looked for support to conservative elements in the lower-classes. The sedan-chair carriers, for example, a notorious tough and brutal body of men, continued to wear the traditional breeches and pigtails long after such a costume was considered demeaning for an honest *sans-culotte.*[10] City streets were the scene of incidents between these men and those who favoured the Revolution. The rue de la Pomme, for example, was notably Jacobin, and so was a café on the nearby Place St. Georges, the *champ scélérat* of Toulouse, where formerly criminals were broken on the wheel, and where the old-clothes dealers were to be found. In contrast Jacobin intruders to the *place des Carmes* and the *place du Salin,* that is to say the *parlementaire* district, invited trouble.[11]

Among the 382 prisoners detained at the Visitation prison during the Terror of 1793-1794 there were fifty lower-class prisoners accused of royalism and a further twenty of federalism and "moderatism".[12] These men were drawn from a range of professions but especially from those who lost money or prestige as a result of the fall of the Old Regime. They were drawn mostly from the central districts of the city; the sections which had been the most affluent, with noble residents providing employment, and in demographic terms the least young: Daurade, St. Etienne and Taur (third, fifth, sixth and seventh sections). They were more likely to be long established in Toulouse in contrast with the migrant population to be found in the peripheral working-class suburbs, a characteristic equally true of revolutionary activity in Paris, for example. They were older men: more than three quarters of them were over 35 and married, with as many as 9 children. The typical royalist suspect was thus middle-aged, married, with two or three children and engaged in one of the traditional artisan crafts. Only four of those arrested were from government employment. Perhaps it is true that the agitators for the counter-revolution, like the supporters of Revolution in Paris of the nineteenth century, were politically alert, organized, integrated into urban life and not the uprooted or transient.[13]

The political strains of the Thermidorian and Directorial periods at Toulouse produced disorder, although nothing approaching the White Terror of Nîmes, Uzès and Lyons which has been evoked with such vivid historical imagination by Richard Cobb.[14]

Food shortages played a part in the extreme discontent of 1795-1796 with the usual fears that the shipment of grain along the canal

du Midi was the prelude to famine in Toulouse. Women took part in food demonstrations and the related disorders concerned with religion: the funeral ceremonies of a former *cordelier* with a local reputation for great piety produced a large congregation in December 1796 sarcastically described by a neo-Jacobin newspaper, the *Journal de Toulouse,* as an assembly of maids, *poissardes,* fruit-sellers and stall-keepers along with the usual *honnêtes gens.*[15] Slanging-matches at the theatre between the "ganse-jaunes" of the *parterre* and the *aristocrates* of the balconies gave ample scope to the rolling vituperation of the angry Toulousains, and after a performance of 30 nivôse V (19 January 1797) by a royalist actress the second batallion of the *colonne mobile* and municipal police were called out to keep order. Two days later a group of Jacobins made a foray to the Carmes and Place du Salin and roughed up royalists, including the deputy Mazade.[16] There was harassment, especially of men in commerce: the ex-mayor of 1793, the thirty year old Groussac was twice imprisoned and found it impossible to return to his grain dealership because of intimidation. He left for Bordeaux but his reputation travelled with him and he was found murdered in a country ditch in the Bordelais in the summer of 1797. In general however the violence remained in the world of verbal struggle.

The royalist rising of August 1799, usually called the Insurrection of the Year VII, was part of a larger plot envisaged by a royalist secret organization hiding behind the front of a charitable institution called the *Institut Philanthropique.* It was organized on a cell pattern, in the style of the earlier *société des centeniers et dizeniers.* The administration in Toulouse was taken by surprise when the Insurrection actually occurred.

Subsequently it was discovered that the royalists inside Toulouse, under the leadership of a timid local nobleman, du Vaure, whose family had suffered property loss, were to open the gates to allow the insurrectionists outside to enter but at the crucial moment a combination of cowardice, confusion and indecision caused no action to be taken. Nevertheless among the prisoners, "quinze cents malheureux de la lie du peuple" there were at least one hundred and fifty residents of Toulouse, arrested in the field or inside the city.[17] Simultaneously there was a sweep to arrest noble suspects, over three hundred of whom were put in prison, in a way reminiscent of the Jacobin terror, and drawn from the same families. The lawyer charged with defending the prisoners wrote on behalf of this to the Minister:

> "Toulouse, cette ville hospitalière, refuge des sciences et des arts, est transformée en une place de guerre assiégée".

He described the omnipresence of troops, the closure of shops and business, and the disruption of social life.[18] The information about the arrested men throws some light on lower-class royalism in contrast to that earlier in the Revolution.

One third of the inhabitants of Toulouse were engaged in agriculture.

The largest group of the prisoners from Toulouse were drawn from commerce, food, clothing and artisan trades. They included men like the septugenarian Sixte Jullia, a lady's shoe-maker said to have suffered heavy losses in the Revolution, a silk-worker from St. Cyprien across the river, a *colporteur des papiers,* a hatter who called himself a "marchand-pauvre artisan", a man with a lean-to on the Place St. Michel where he carved and sold the wooden soles for *sabots,* and a cooper from the rue Petit Versailles who was for some years a model for the life class at the Academy of Painting and Drawing.

An address is given for about half of the prisoners who lived in Toulouse and this gives us grounds to suggest a tentative urban geography. Once again we find the traditionally conservative areas surrounding the cathedral, and not far from the *parlementaire* district and that in which the nobles had been concentrated before the Revolution were most heavily represented. In Toulouse as in so many French cities there was a tension between peripheral districts and those at the centre; during the Thermidorian period the ill-intentioned were blamed for "des bruits tendans â diviser les jeunes gens des faubourgs d'avec ceux de la ville".[19]

The St. Michel District, by contrast, an area outside the walls of the city and the poorest section, thought to be a centre for crime and prostitution and a refuge for economic casualties of the Revolution, also provided six of those arrested, among whom were the former servant Jean Aragon who:

> ". . . par le renouvellement des choses se trouvant sans place n'a pu que vivre bien mal à son aize, n'ayant aucune ressource qu'en se rendant utille au peuble pour pouvoir s'allimenter."

Thus, among those imprisoned, it is the conservative and established trades and those dependent on the Old Regime for economic security who provide the militants of popular royalism.

During the Empire memories of the Old Regime were fading among the common people, although the police said it was difficult to introduce the decimal system at the market since the people preferred the old measures.[20] There appears to have been no working class focus of royalist sympathy.

However, the enthusiastic welcome accorded to Wellington upon his victorious entry into Toulouse in 1814 was a product of the general wish of the population to end war, conscription, requisition, and to find peace. It was significant that the banners of the Corporations figured in that procession as a sign of nostalgia for the former economic system which was supposed to have brought prosperity to the city. The events of 1814 were marked more by relief at the end of the Empire than popular enthusiasm for the reestablishment of the monarchy. However the Hundred Days which followed Napoleon's "Flight of the Eagle" from Elba back to Paris in March 1815 did produce some evidence of royalist militancy among the lower-classes, both as a result of jealousy against the members of the Napoleonic para-military formation called the *fédérés,* and of the efforts of the noblemen who were members of the royalist secret organization called the *chevaliers de la foi,* which was active in Toulouse as it was in a number of French cities.[21]

Lower-class royalism centered on the *verdets,* as the opponents of the *fédérés* were called. Most of the members of this organization who are known to us were noblemen but there were artisans involved in the organization, and particularly in the brutal murder of the general commanding the Tenth Military district of France, General Ramel. The investigation of this murder, partial and intimidated as it was, provides a glimpse if not a full picture of lower-class royalists.[22] They came from professions which were very responsive to the economy of patronage deriving from the nobility. At the same time they were marginal, finding an opportunity for excitement in the confused situation of the White Terror. Political atitudes were not to prove consistent. This was seen by a local historian who wrote in 1834:

> ". . . les verdets étaient fanatiques comme de vrais espagnols, et n'en valaient cependant pas mieux, ni pour leur moralité ni pour leur conduite. Il n'était pas rare de voir un fédéré se fair verdet, et réciproquement; ce changement dépendait d'une querelle, du plus léger intérêt froissé, d'une mauvaise parole; l'amour propre jouait un grand rôle dans ces divisions de bas étage. Des haines se formaient entre les quartiers; celui de Saint-Barthelémi était Saint-Michel; au dela de la porte de ce nom c'était une nouvelle nuance. L'intérieur de la ville contenait les populations riches et tranquilles; elles voulaient le calme et l'ordre."[23]

The end of the White Terror saw the decline of royalism, although rumours of *verdet* formations in the city were reported until the 1820's. Royalism in any event had been a form in which hostility to the existant government could be stated, far more than it was a programme for the future. The Bourbons could not satisfy the ideal aspirations of the traditionalist population any more than had the Revolution or the Empire. Popular royalism had no clear socio-professional affiliations: the same social groups were to be found among its partisans as were to be found among the partisans of the revolution. However the royalists were especially dependent on the traditional economy and patronage of the city, and thus on the nobles who made up the main strength of the royalist movement. In an urban situation like that of Toulouse with its stagnant economy, lacking clear economic alternatives to the traditional order, it was hard to polarise people away from the established loyalties.

The manifestations of lower-class conservatism in town and country in France since 1789 have been little studied by historians, too often dismissed as the aberration of a distasteful *lumpenproletariat.* This is to ignore an integral part of the social and political history of the French lower classes in the nineteenth century.

NOTES

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The following abbreviations have been used in the footnotes:
AN — Archives Nationales de France, Paris.
ADHG — Archives departementales de la Haute-Garonne, Toulouse.
AMT — Archives municipales de Toulouse.
AG — Archives de la Guerre, Vincennes.

1 G. Rudé, *The crowd in history; a study of popular disturbances in France and England 1730-1848,* N.Y., 1964.

2 Adolphe de Pontécoulant, *Histoire des révolutions des villes de Nîmes et d'Uzès, suivie de toutes les pièces justicatives,* Nîmes, 1820. J. Sentou, "Révolution et contre-révolution" *in* P. Wolff, (ed.), *Histoire du Languedoc,* Toulouse, 1967, 437-492.

3 D. Ligou, *Montauban à la fin de l'Ancien régime et aux débuts de la Révolution, 1787-1794,* Paris, 1959.

4 F. Rivarès, *Pau et les Basses-Pyrénées pendant la Révolution,* Pau, 1875. P. Véran, "La Révolution dans Arles", in *Bull. Soc. Amis d'Arles,* 1912, 2-30; 1913, 35-74, 97-137, 162-237. A. Duboul, *La fin du parlement de Toulouse,* Toulouse, 1890.

[5] *Echo du Midi,* 13 septembre 1827. M. Agulhon, *La sociabilité méridionale, confréries et associations dans la vie collective en Provence oriental à la fin du XVIII siècle. . .* Aix, 1966, 2 vols.

[6] *Les garçons perruquiers de la ville de Toulouse . . . à MM. le maire et officiers municipaux, 8 avril 1790,* Toulouse, 1790.

[7] *Procès-verbal de l'assemblée des citoyens actifs de la ville de Toulouse réunis au nombre de plus de cent cinquante, après en avoir donné avis à MM. les maire et officiers municipaux les 18, 19, 20 avril 1790 . . .* Toulouse, 1790. pp. 24-40.

Registre des rétractions en désavoeu des signatures surprises aux citoyens de Toulouse au bas d'un écrit intitulé *Réclamation des citoyens actifs* par lequel, en prenant pour prétexte de l'intérêt de notre sainte religion, les personnes mal-intentionnées ont cherché à exciter des soulèvements contre les décrêts de l'assemblée nationale, sanctionnés par le Roi concernant les ordres religieux et les biens du clergé. *AMT* 2 I 31.

[8] J. Sentou, *Fortunes et groupes sociaux à Toulouse sous la Révolution: essai d'histoire statistique,* Toulouse, 1969.

[9] M-T. Lagasquié, "Etude sur les origines sociales des terroristes toulousains, questions annexe de D.E.S.", Toulouse, 1962, typescript.

[10] *Révolutions de Paris,* 90, (26 mars-2 avril 1791). Rességuier, *Op. cit.* 284.

[11] *ADHG* L 268. *AN* Dxxix bis 11, 119; — bis 21, 224. *Nouvelles tentatives des aristocrates de Toulouse,* Bordeaux, 1791.

[12] R. de Bouglon, *Les reclus de Toulouse sous la Terreur.* Registres officiels. Toulouse, 1893-1912. 3 fasicules.

[13] See discussion by C. Tilly, "A travers le chaos des vivantes cités" *in* P Meadows, (ed.), *Urbanism, urbanization and change: comparative perspectives,* Reading, Mass., 1970, 379-394.

[14] R. Cobb, *The police and the people; French popular protest 1789-1820,* Oxford, 1970.

[15] J. Gros, "L'esprit public à Toulouse aprés la terreur", *Mémoires de l'Académie des sciences, inscriptions et belles-lettres de Toulouse,* XI sér., t. viii, Toulouse, 1920, 65-83. *Journal de Toulouse,* 10 nivôse V.

[16] G. Martin, "Le théatre et la politique à Toulouse en l'an V", *Révolution française,* LXXX, (1927) 203-211.

[17] *ADHG* L 2277 "Tableau des individus de toutes les classes exprimées dans l'article ii de la loi du 24 messidor an VII de la République, en exécution de l'article vii de la même loi, relative à la répression du brigandage et des assassinats dans l'intérieur, et de la loi du 3 fructidor suivant, qui applique cette loi au département de la Haute-Garonne, canton de Toulouse." *AN* F[7]7602. "Etat nominatif des individus détenus dans les prisons de justice et la maison d'arrêt de Toulouse, dressé en execution de la lettre du Ministre de la Police Générale, du 2 pluviôse an VIII."

[18] *AN* F[7]7602: Lieussac, 5 complémentaire VII.

[19] *Anti-Terroriste . . .* 1 prairial III.

[20] Pierre-François Dantigny, (ed.), *Annuaire administratif et statistique du département de la Haute-Garonne pour l'an 1811 . . .* Toulouse, s.d., 135.

[21] G. de Bertier de Sauvigny, *Le comte Ferdinand de Bertier (1782-1864) et l'énigme de la Congrégation,* Paris, 1948.

[22] *ADHG* wU620. See also: 4 M 35-36; 223U5. *AG* D[3]20.

[23] J-B Auguste d'Aldéguier, *Histoire de Toulouse,* Toulouse, 1834-5, IV, 642.