Between the Rhine and the Guillotine: The Bas-Rhin in the Year of Revolutionary Government

By Steven Simmons

Faculty Advisor: Dr David Barclay
Department of History

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Introduction

Many historians have credited the French Revolution with the creation of the modern world. Historians have declared that the “long” nineteenth century began in 1789, since the themes that shaped the beginning of that century appeared around this time. Concepts like nationalism, which would have seemed ludicrous in the ancien régime, began here. One of the most influential periods of the revolution occurred from September 1793 to July 1794. Called the year of revolutionary government, the events during this phase of the revolution have had a lasting effect on the history of France. The legacy of the year of revolutionary government, also known as the reign of terror, appeared throughout the fears of right-wing governments throughout the nineteenth century. During the revolutions of 1848, the leaders of the revolutionary government were cast as heroes who defended the poor against the tyranny of the upper classes. The revolutionary government received its populist reputation from the actions of its governing body, the Committee of Public Safety. Under the aegis of the Committee of Public Safety, the French government at the time claimed to represent the wishes of the people. The common people, according to the Committee, belonged to a class named the sans-culottes. The sans-culottes were largely urban artisans, unemployed in the economic downturn that both created and helped destroy the revolution. Championed by the Jacobin club and their greatest spokesperson Robespierre, the sans-culottes of Paris had a large share of influence over the national political scene, due to their tendency to

react violently to any law they viewed unfavorably. This period has received quite a bit of attention due to the fact that many historians have used it to score political points. A historiography of the year of revolutionary government must recognize that nearly every political movement in modern European history has used this period for its own ends. In the nineteenth century, liberals and socialists argued over the economic lessons of the Terror, while nationalists and royalists feuded over the political implications of the movement. After the Russian revolution, a new form of social history about the revolution emerged, arguing that the French Revolution proved a precursor to the Russian one. The next great transformative effect on this topic came after the Second World War. At this time, historians fought over whether the French Revolution belonged to the tradition of Western European history or proved the precursor to the Communist system. By the nineteen-seventies, the field contained several bitterly divided factions of people dedicated solely to advocating for the cause of certain groups of French Revolutionaries. At this time, the field received yet another change, but this one proved more radical. François Furet argued that the study of the French Revolution involved too much immersion into the politics of the period. An example of this comes from the argument over who deserves blame for the radicalism of the Terror. For quite a while, the blame for this action shifted from different factions within the ruling coalition depending on if the historian looking at the subject sympathized more with Marxist, liberal, or conservative thinking. Furet, in a scathing remark about the state of the field, wrote,

"Today the historiography of the Revolution is hampered, even more than by political ideology, by mental laziness and pious rehashing." This refers to the fact that a large number of secondary sources exist about the French Revolution. Therefore, there are not many new additions to a field glutted with several standard interpretations that constantly get published again and again by various historians. However, most of the works that do not add much to the field account solely for the revolution in Paris. The study of the French Revolution in the provinces, the areas of France not surrounding Paris, therefore becomes worthwhile.

While the study of the French Revolution in general exists mainly as a way to project the political views of the one looking at the field, there exist studies that focus on more provincial topics and these create another valuable history of the revolution. While a general survey of the French Revolution will mainly rehash points contended again and again in previous studies, looking at the French Revolution through the regions of France can result in valuable analyses. Through looking at an area that is not Paris, the historian has a chance at creating a new analysis that will actually add something to the field. One of the more neglected regions of France during this time is composed of two départements, a subdivision of France roughly analogous to a county of the United States, on the state's eastern border, the Haut-Rhin and the Bas-Rhin. These two areas are a part of the region of France traditionally known as Alsace. The department to the north, the Bas-Rhin, has more sources and proved more important during the year of revolutionary government. During the Terror, the department had been half-occupied by the armies of Austria and Prussia and even received a visit by a member of the ruling council of

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6 Furet, 10
France, the Committee of Public Safety. However, not much work has been undertaken on Alsace and the French Revolution, something that makes the study of the region fairly valuable. Alsace before the year of revolutionary government in the French Revolution proved rather unusual for France at the time. The peculiarities make the area rather interesting to study for several reasons. The French Revolution proved the very first time that the French attempted to assimilate Alsace. Therefore, the revolution was the beginning of France’s attempt to impose its culture onto Alsace. Understanding the initial attempts by the French government to turn Alsace into a region that identified solely with France proves valuable for understanding the history of the province.

One of the greatest difficulties about writing on the French Revolution comes from the source material. It has been declared by Richard Cobb, one of the most notable historians of the French Revolution, “Those who have left us personal records of their experiences during the Revolution were nearly all victims of the new regime, or at least persons who had little sympathy for the revolutionary aims.” Cobb refers to the general dearth of primary sources written by those who supported revolutionary goals. Part of this came from the fact that the revolutionaries, at least during the year of revolutionary government, sought to exclude professions like priests and doctors from the ranks of officials. The lack of educated revolutionaries meant that those who had professions that necessitated both reading and writing before the fall of the ancien régime were purposely snubbed by the ruling cadre and therefore did not view the revolution very favorably. The lack of objective memoirs applies only to the memoirs of those French people living

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9 Cobb, *The French and Their Revolution*, 11
during the revolution. Unlike memoirs, many government documents date back to the revolution. These tend to provide the perspective of the civil servant who put together these documents. Other sources that tend to illustrate a perspective favorable to the revolution are surviving articles from newspapers. Newspapers tend to prove problematic, since the papers that survived the year of revolutionary government tended to advocate radical politics. The rarity of any sort of newsprint hostile to the revolution makes it easy to conclude that only news written by radicals reached common people.

The issue with the sources about the French Revolution provides yet another reason why the year of revolutionary government in Alsace is a legitimate topic to analyze. One of the main things that appear when looking at Alsace during the year of revolutionary government is indeed the efforts of the French government to assimilate the region culturally. Several causes exist for the imposition of French culture upon Alsace; the most important are the strategic value of the region and Alsace’s Germanic culture. When looking at present-day Alsace, the fact that the area is not completely culturally French illustrates the failure of the revolutionary government to assimilate the region. The assimilation of Alsace was not successful due to the connections between the region and the Rhine, combined with disunity among those attempting to impose French culture on the region, and the ability of staunch supporters of Alsatian culture to flee.
Chapter I: The Bas-Rhin in the Ancien Régime and Early Revolution

The province of Alsace has had a complicated and interesting history. The region has officially existed since the times of the Ancient Romans. Bound by the Vosges mountain range to the west and the Rhine to the east, military leaders have considered the area strategically important since its colonization. During the Middle Ages Alsace became a part of the fledging Holy Roman Empire. Imperial lands stretched across central Europe and, at its height, covered the modern day territories of Austria, Belgium, eastern France, Germany, northern Italy, the Netherlands, most of the Czech Republic, and a part of Poland. The Holy Roman Empire started to lose territory to neighboring states throughout a time period lasting from the Renaissance until the dissolution of the Empire during the Napoleonic Wars. Alsace joined France after the devastating events of the Thirty Years War. The Thirty Years War, caused by the strong role of Protestantism within the Holy Roman Empire, raged from 1618 to 1648. With the Peace of Westphalia and the treaty of Munster in 1648, Alsace remained an entity of the Holy Roman Empire but became a possession of the French crown. 10 This means that Alsace had not been annexed into France though, giving it a status that eventually proved troublesome during the revolution.

After joining the kingdom of France in the mid seventeenth century, Alsace proved itself one of France’s more idiosyncratic provinces. Alsatian culture had proven more German than French due to the region’s long affiliation with Germany. Contemporary observers could read this through the religious and linguistic differences

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between Alsace and the rest of France. Unlike most other provinces in France during the ancien régime, Alsace proved religiously tolerant which resulted in relatively large populations of Jews and Protestants. Furthermore, the language of most Alsatians was a recognizably German dialect. While the French usually tried to culturally assimilate areas that did not speak their language correctly or practice Catholicism, Alsace received no attention from the French crown due to their differences. The king most likely did not attempt a greater assimilative effort because he did not want to anger the German lords who owned lands in the province. These feudal lords usually held titles in other parts of the Holy Roman Empire and therefore enjoyed a sort of dual loyalty. Having German leaders own significant amount of territory in Alsace tied the region to Germany, for despite belonging to the state of France, the Alsatians had a unique culture and many nobles who owed their allegiance to various German lords. However, the French crown had chosen a strategy that proved beneficial to their newly acquired region. The French gave the Alsatians freedoms and privileges that no other French province enjoyed; in return Alsace remained part of the French state and provided a much-desired outlet to the Rhine. In this manner Alsace became a loyal part of the French kingdom.

One of the more intriguing features of Alsace concerns its geography. Since the region’s borders involve mountains on one side and the river on the other, the strategic value of the area is unquestionable. However, mountains and rivers have very different uses in an economic sense. While each geographic feature cannot be crossed without a great deal of effort, rivers connect places via ship. The Rhine therefore connected Alsace to its German neighbors to the north and south, while the Vosges made traffic much more

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difficult between Alsace and France. Alsace's economic dependence on the Rhine meant that the economic problems that the province faced during the revolution resembled those of the Rhineland more than the rest of France. The Rhineland is the region of Germany directly north of Alsace. The Rhine linked Alsace and the Rhineland both culturally and economically. Despite the fact that rabidly Catholic culture of the Rhineland contrasted sharply with the tolerant Alsatian system, the two regions remained culturally similar due to their German languages, fashions, and customs.\(^1\) The greater link between the two areas remains economic though. The Rhineland's economy resembled Alsace's in a number of ways, from the reliance on river trade to the crops grown in each area.\(^2\) The love of river trade was enforced in Alsace by the maintenance of a tariff barrier between Alsace and the rest of France.\(^3\) Taxing trade between Alsace and France irrevocably connected Alsace with both the Rhineland and the other German states on the Rhine. The similarities between the Rhineland and Alsace meant that they both received the same type of negative attention from those trying to spread the culture of the revolution throughout French territory. However, this does not mean that the comparison of Alsace and the Rhineland throughout the French Revolution had no limitations. The Rhineland's status as a conquered region compared to Alsace's position of two unassimilated French départements provides a stark contrast between the two provinces. While some French officials argued that Alsace should receive the same sort of treatment as its northern neighbor, the Alsatians had a strong argument when contending that they had proven

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\(^1\) Palmer, 178-179


\(^3\) Dan Fagan, *La Persecution Religieuse en Haute-Alsace Pendant la Revolution Francaise*, (Kalamazoo: Kalamazoo College, 1980), 4
loyal French citizens. The cultural and economic similarity between the two regions provides the means for a comparison though. Unlike the Rhineland, everyone considered Alsace a part of the French kingdom during the ancien régime. The political connection between Alsace and France meant that the events of Paris influenced Alsace greater than they did the Rhineland.

The central nature of the French state in the ancien régime meant that the revolution must start in the capital. While the pressure for revolution existed throughout the kingdom, action against King Louis XVI could only prove catastrophic for the monarchy if it occurred in Paris. The calling of the Estates General, the traditional legislative body of France, gathered the provincial revolutionaries and troublemakers into one place. Immediately after calling the institution, problems started cropping up. Since the Estates General had last met in the seventeenth century, the way it was organized had proven unacceptably antiquated. The Estates General was composed of three estates, the first being clergymen, the second nobles, and the third wealthy commoners. Voting in the Estates General traditionally occurred by estate instead of by person. Since each Estate had its one vote, this gave a significant advantage to the clergy and nobility of France in the legislative body. In order to create a more fair system of legislation, reformers doubled the numbers of representatives and advocated for voting by head

instead of by order. After refusing to work unless voting occurred per head, the Third Estate declared themselves the National Assembly. On the twentieth of June, finding themselves locked out of their meeting room due to an error made by the cleaning staff, the representatives of the third estate took the Tennis Court Oath, where they declared that they would continue meeting until a constitution was established. Joined by sympathetic members of the other two estates, this assembly defied the king until he gave in and declared the National Assembly the legitimate legislative body. The people of Paris, fired up with revolutionary sentiment against the king’s evil counselors and agitated about the high price of bread, attacked the prison known as the Bastille on July 14th. At this time in Alsace, revolts started occurring in the countryside. On the 21st of July, Strasbourg rioted with many of the smaller towns of the Bas-Rhin joining later in the week. During the weeks following the attack on the Bastille, both the Bas-Rhin and Paris underwent a period of unrest.

The storming of the Bastille proved a turning point within the revolution. The king had withdrawn the soldiers surrounding Paris, therefore losing all authority over the process of reform that infused the National Assembly. Those supporting revolution attacked the ancien régime on all fronts. In Bas-Rhin, like many rural areas in France, the local population took matters into their own hands. Starting with the events of July 21st, Alsatians attacked the estates and castles of their lords, declaring themselves free from all taxes and tithes. Seeing this sort of widespread chaos in the countryside, the National

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17 Breunig and Levinger, 12-15.
19 Doyle, 110-111
20 Lefebvre, 110-111
Assembly passed legislation eliminating the traditional rights of the nobility and clergy on the 4th of August. The reform abolishing privileges of the ancien régime had little effect in Alsace, given that many members of the Alsatian nobility had already eliminated their seigniorial privileges. By the end of October 1789, the National Assembly had completely suppressed the influence of the king in governing France. In 1791 the National Constituent Assembly, the new name of the National Assembly, had finished working on the first constitution of the French Revolution. This established a constitutional monarchy, with the king enjoying little power over the realm. This style of government existed until immediately before the year of revolutionary government. In Alsace, the implementation of this constitution proved vital because it brought the man who dominated the politics of the Bas-Rhin back to Strasbourg.

Out of the representatives sent to Paris, one achieved political supremacy over the newly created département of the Bas-Rhin. A nobleman and friend of the famous French military leader and politician Lafayette, the Baron Philippe-Frédéric de Dietrich advocated for several revolutionary actions. After spending his term of office in Paris, Dietrich returned to Alsace and was elected mayor of Strasbourg. His tenure of office lasted from 1790 to 1792, when the changing political tides caused him to flee to Switzerland. After threatened confiscation of his property for emigration, Dietrich returned to France for a trial. After a couple months in jail the Parisian court found Dietrich guilty of emigration and sentenced him to death. The loss of Dietrich left a political void in the Bas-Rhin that eventually was filled by members of the Jacobin club of the city. Political clubs existed throughout the French Revolution. They provided the

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21 Lefebvre, 110
22 Hartmann, 318
outlet for citizens of France to discuss politics and to voice their opinions about policies. By 1790, members of these clubs became elected in all of France’s governing institutions, making them a strong political force. The most well-known club in France was the Jacobins. Jacobin members of the legislature composed a large group of people on the left of the political spectrum. The Strasbourg Jacobin club proved one of the most radical associations of Jacobins in France, during the early parts of the revolution. The Jacobin club of Strasbourg ended up dominating the political life of the Bas-Rhin during this point of the revolution. From 1789-1795, eighty-three people belonging to Strasbourg’s Jacobin club held political office in the city. The number of Jacobins in office illustrates the amount of political power that this body held within the Bas-Rhin. The fall of Dietrich had unfortunately created some chaos within the region and it took from the end of 1792 to the beginning of the Terror for the political situation of Strasbourg to normalize. The lack of political leadership hurt the Bas-Rhin when the département found itself at war against Austria and Prussia.

The declaration of war against Austria and Prussia in 1792 proved one of the most destabilizing events for both the Bas-Rhin and France during the revolution. One of the causes of the war came from the unique situation of Alsace. During the ancien régime, nobility from many German states owned a large amount of Alsatian territory. These people had no ties to France despite their estates in the region. However, the French government had chosen to abolish all feudal rights and privileges throughout the Kingdom of France. The elimination of these rights presented a delicate situation since

the peasants working the lands of foreign nobility stopped paying taxes and dues, limiting
the income of the landowner. Furthermore, the foreigners declared that the French
government could not impose this reform on their lands because they were not subjects of
the French crown. Other issues, like the émigrés noblemen who loudly called for
counterrevolution sheltering across borders, probably played a greater role in causing
war. The conflict initially between France and Austria and Prussia, joined by Great
Britain in 1793, proved necessary for the radicalization of the revolution. Many
fundamental changes in France occurred as direct or indirect results of this war including
the foundation of the French Republic.

25 Palmer, 178-179
26 Doyle, 202
Chapter II: The Faction of Baudot and Lacoste

The death of Louis XVI proved one of the greater consequences of the war against Prussia and Austria. Despite having declared war, Louis XVI did not think that the French could win. The king of France wished to gain much of his authority back from the French people by the conquest of France by Austria and Prussia and the restoration of absolutism. Not many people outside of France believed that the kingdom could possibly defeat the combined forces of Austria and Prussia, and the initial results seemed encouraging for the enemies of the revolution. The French army tasked with invading Belgium ran at the first sign of battle, leading the allied forces to advance into France. Confident of victory, the Prussian commander wrote an ultimatum threatening the Parisian citizenry with massacre if they harmed the royal family. Unfortunately for the French monarchy, the proclamation caused the Parisian government to arm its citizens, creating an atmosphere of panic in the capital. After an improbable victory at Valmy, a town east of Paris, the National Convention declared a Republic, imprisoning the king. After a long drawn-out trial, the Republic decided to execute Louis XVI, under the name of Citizen Capet, and created the conditions that spawned the year of revolutionary government. With the death of Louis XVI, a new figure was to enter the leadership of the French government.

In the summer of 1793, the group of factions responsible for creating the revolutionary government took power. This occurred due to the actions of a group of

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27 Doyle, 177-178
28 Doyle, 184
29 Breunig and Levinger, 30
30 Doyle, 192-193
31 Doyle, 196
radical Jacobins led by a lawyer turned politician named Maximilian Robespierre. One of the principal leaders of the Jacobins, Robespierre's party became known as the Mountain, due to the location of their seats on the heights of the National Convention. The Mountain idolized, and drew support from a group of zealous working-class revolutionaries known as the sans-culottes. The sans-culottes existed in urban areas, and consisted mainly of underemployed journeymen artisans. The help of this group proved vital in Robespierre's rise to power. A loosely unified faction known as the Girondins opposed the Mountain during this time. Generally more moderate than the Mountain, the Girondins drew their support from rural delegates. The Girondins characterized the Mountain as a group of dangerous radicals while the Mountain declared the Girondins monarchists and traitors to the Republic. While the rhetoric of the Girondins proved popular in several provinces, the Mountain's charges inflamed the sans-culottes of Paris. After a series of riots and the arrest of many Girondin legislators, Robespierre achieved power. Appointed head of the Committee of Public Safety, the group charged with executive power in France, Robespierre took on several crises at the very beginning of his reign. The triumph of Jacobinism had led to several provincial revolts. The revolts in the Vendée had created a civil war throughout the west of France. In these areas, the death of Louis XVI had succeeded in turning the populace against the new government of the Mountain. In some of the major metropolitan areas of France, this revolt occurred

32 Doyle, 192
33 Breunig and Levinger, 33
34 Breunig and Levinger, 33-34
35 Palmer, 32
36 Palmer, 41
due to the radicalism of Jacobin actions before Robespierre had taken power.\footnote{William D. Edmonds, \textit{Jacobinism and revolt of Lyon 1789-1793}, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 3-4} Called the Federalist revolts, these uprisings covered a good portion of France. To make matters worse, the war was not going well. After initially gaining both Belgium and the Rhineland, the French army was in full retreat. Furthermore, the British, Dutch and Spanish had also declared war on France; even Russia issued sanctions against the revolutionary government.\footnote{Breunig and Levinger, 35} Instead of giving up when at war with virtually the rest of Europe, the Republic started a period of radicalization.

The citizens of Paris caused many of the changes that occurred in France during the early years of the revolution. The influence of the mob proved too strong for Louis XVI and the legislators of the French government to resist. By the summer of 1793, the beginning of the year of revolutionary government, the riots of the sans-culottes had toppled the rule of Louis XVI and the political supremacy of the Girondins. Towards the end of the summer of 1793 the sans-culottes feared that the revolution might come to an end. Beset by foreign enemies and having to deal with rebellions within France, the sans-culottes turned to the Mountain to govern France.\footnote{Palmer, 42-43} The year between the summer of 1793 and the summer of 1794 therefore is known as the year of revolutionary government. One of the key ways that the Mountain held onto its power throughout this timeframe comes from the suppression of democratic institutions in order to save the Republic. Many factions appeared in the Mountain during the fall of 1793. The most extreme of the factions in the Mountain followed the lead of Jacques-Rene Hebert, editor of the newspaper Père Duchesne and one of the more popular politicians in Paris. The
Hébertistes took on the most populist tone among the factions within the Mountain. By pandering to the will of the Parisian sans-culottes, the Hébertistes imposed some of the most repressive laws enacted during the entire French Revolution. The policies of the Hébertistes contrasted with those of Georges-Jacques Danton. While Danton and the Dantonistes did not pursue moderate or conservative policies, they proved the least radical of the Mountain. It must be stressed that the Dantonistes were still members of the Mountain and therefore supported most of the actions of the Committee of Public Safety. The group enjoying the most power and influence over the Mountain followed Robespierre. The Robespierristes suggested legislation ideologically between the Hébertistes and the Dantonistes. The majority of revolutionaries in Alsace during this period fit under the category of Hébertiste.40 During the beginning of the year of revolutionary government, the National Convention passed a flurry of laws that impacted Alsace. The two that had the greatest impact on the Bas-Rhin were the Law of the General Maximum in September 29, 1793 and the Law of Suspects in September 17, 1793. The law of the General Maximum put a ceiling on the prices of food and commodities. The Law of Suspects allowed the French government to arrest anyone who displayed treasonous activities, with a loose definition of what constituted a treasonous action.41 One of the less significant actions of the National Convention came from the change in the calendar that they imposed on France. In order to rid France of Christian influences, the Convention ordered the establishment of a new calendar, which followed rational principals. The year now consisted of twelve months of thirty days, named after the characteristics of each month, and a five or six day period extra, known as the sans-

40 Palmer, 181
41 Doyle, 151-152
culottides. The calendar started on the former 22\textsuperscript{nd} of September 1792, now the first of Vendémiaire of year one. The establishment of a new calendar illustrates the lengths that the French government went in order to create a new society. However, the Republic could not implement these laws outside of Paris, leading them to send out men to the various regions of the Republic.

In order to impose their will on the provinces, the National Convention sent representatives to the various départements of France. These men had ultimate authority over the regions where they were sent. Of those sent to the Bas-Rhin during the beginning of the year of revolutionary government, Jean-Baptiste Lacoste had the most influence over the département. Trained in law before the revolution, Lacoste proved a radical revolutionary and showed definite Hébertiste leanings in his policies towards the Alsatians. Lacoste and his fellow representatives on mission expressed themselves and advocated assimilationist polices in the various political clubs of the Bas-Rhin. By promoting radical policies in the Jacobin clubs of the Bas-Rhin Lacoste and his colleagues helped legitimatize the politicians with the most extreme opinions. The motivation of the representatives on mission in supporting these radicals comes from the fear of rebellion that many revolutionaries had during the year of revolutionary government. The most repressive policies against the Alsatians occurred during the first couple months of the year of revolutionary government, before the suppression of Lyon and Marseilles in the middle of October and the defeat of the armies of the Vendée on the 23\textsuperscript{rd} of December 1793. Many representatives on mission felt that Alsace would eventually rebel like the Vendée or else defect to the side of the enemies of the

\footnote{Palmer, 111-112}
revolution. The belief that the Alsatians were not loyal French republicans came solely from the region’s German culture. A nineteenth-century historian wrote, “The worst crime of the Alsatians was their idiom. They spoke the language of the slaves of Austria.”\textsuperscript{43} The quote attributes the actions of the representatives on mission to xenophobia. With this radical paranoia with regard to the Alsatian French citizens, the representatives on mission put several initiatives in place. However the events of October 13\textsuperscript{th} 1793, made the mission of the representatives feel much more urgent.

On October 13\textsuperscript{th} 1793, the allied armies defeated the French and occupied the northern half of the Bas-Rhin. The army of the Rhine had retreated to defensive positions around Strasbourg and across the département. This made the situation of Strasbourg much more desperate than it was at the beginning of the year of revolutionary government. Furthermore, policies similar to the law of suspects had created a situation where the prisons of the Bas-Rhin in Strasbourg had filled past maximum capacity.

According to a nineteenth-century historian:

The hospitals were overflowing with the sick, who couldn’t find a single doctor, the prisons-and every public building was made into a prison-were the foyers of disease. One does not pack together 1800 to 2000 detainees with impunity. The streets were transformed into sewers; one could not find a wagon or a horse to get clear of the uncontrollable trash\textsuperscript{44}

The above quote illustrates how Alsace bore the brunt of the invasion by the Prussians and Austrians. The assimilative efforts of the representatives on mission intensified after the attack of the allies on the French. While the Alsatians bore the brunt of this attack, the representatives on mission chose to assimilate the region at a much quicker pace.

\textsuperscript{44} Mühlenbeck, 19
However, the Committee of Public Safety recalled all of the representatives on mission to Alsace during the beginning of the revolution when the allied armies began their invasion. While Lacoste refused to return to Paris, the remainder of his colleagues did. The fact that Lacoste stayed behind illustrates his desire and commitment towards assimilating Alsace into French culture. Lacoste shared this quality with one of the new representatives on mission sent to replace his recalled associates, Marc Antoine Baudot.

A former doctor, Baudot entered Alsace after serving on mission in other parts of France. Baudot’s resume throughout the French Revolution is very similar to Lacoste’s. Both of these leaders followed a very Hébertiste agenda. While Lacoste worked in the Bas-Rhin, a region only suspected of disloyalty, Baudot’s previous mission occurred in the Midi. The Midi is a region of France that partially rebelled during the year of revolutionary government. While Baudot went to Montauban, an area that did not explicitly rebel, the area remained similar to Alsace in a couple of ways. Like Alsace, the people of Montauban spoke their own regional dialect, Languedoc. Baudot’s experiences in the Midi existed with him attached to one of the armies sent to quell the rebellions. The military successes in the Midi before the 13th of October led Baudot to be recalled to Paris and sent off to the Army of the Rhine.45 One of the ways in which Baudot appeared similar to Lacoste is in their contempt for everything they thought was not culturally French.46 The disdain of these representatives on mission towards the Alsatians led Lacoste, Baudot, and their fellow representatives to give some of the politicians and fervent Jacobins the power to keep Alsace from rebelling.

46 Palmer, 189
Instead of directly assimilating the département themselves, representatives on mission like Lacoste preferred using intermediaries. The politicians chosen by Lacoste and his colleagues proved very amiable to reform Alsace through assimilating the Bas-Rhin. Euloge Schneider proved one of the most influential of the local leaders chosen by the representatives on mission to radicalize the Bas-Rhin. Born and raised in the Rhineland, Schneider immigrated to France due to his affinity to the principals of the revolution. The anti-clerical nature of the revolution proved one of the strongest attractions for Schneider. Schneider's hatred of the Church proves rather interesting given that he was a member of the clergy. Schneider had been forced into his religious vocation at a young age and reportedly had trouble maintaining a religious lifestyle. These issues made him a critic of the ancien régime and a willing supporter of the excesses of the French Revolution. After moving to Alsace, Schneider participated eagerly in the political clubs of the Bas-Rhin. Eventually Schneider began writing his own newspaper, named the Argos. The Argos, published in German to make it accessible to the average citizen of the Bas-Rhin, rivaled the Pere Duchesne of Hebert in its radical nature. Schneider's obvious hostility towards religion and his dedication to the revolutionary government led the representatives on mission headed by Lacoste to put Schneider at the head of the revolutionary army of the Bas-Rhin on the 15th of October 1793. Baudot supported this action and helped organize the army on his arrival, having created his own revolutionary army in the Midi. The revolutionary armies proved one of the greatest tools towards enforcing the will of the representatives on mission over a province.

47 Cobb, The People's Army, 170
48 Cobb, The People's Army, 171
Revolutionary armies proved a major piece of the Hébertiste agenda. Pushed through the National Convention by the fears of the Parisians towards rising crop prices, the revolutionary armies have been decried by many historians and contemporaries for their brutal actions. However within the last fifty years the opinions on these groups have been reexamined, mainly through the efforts of Richard Cobb. Cobb’s *Les armées révolutionnaires: instrument de la Terreur dans les départements, avril 1793-floreal an II*, has become the most respected source about the revolutionary armies. One of the first conclusions that Cobb reaches in his book is that the revolutionary armies were not gangs of brigands. Instead, through looking at the structure and composition of these forces, he justifies many of their actions. Cobb believed that the poor reputation of the revolutionary armies were due more to the reputation of the terror than their own actions. The role of these groups in enforcing the law of the general maximum naturally led the peasantry to dislike these armies. The anti-clerical nature of several armies also provided a reason for many of the denunciations of the revolutionary armies. Enforcing the laws of the revolution in this manner was a goal of the Hébertistes. Therefore, the Hébertiste representatives wanted a man they trusted to control this group in the Bas-Rhin. The importance placed on these organizations by Lacoste and his colleagues meant that they had a great deal of trust in Schneider and his revolutionary qualities.

The revolutionary army and tribunal controlled by Schneider had the same goals as many throughout France. Through his work here Schneider has gained the incredibly negative reputation among historians that he maintains today. In many sources he is

49 Cobb, *The People’s Army*, 5
50 Cobb, *The People’s Army*, 4-5
51 Cobb, *The People’s Army*, 300
characterized as the radical atheist ex-cleric, responsible for everything from atrocities against local churches to expanding the Terror to the Bas-Rhin. However, this point of view remains very simplistic. Schneider, though caricatured by his political enemies as a bloodthirsty villain, did not choose to execute many people. Only 54 people were executed in the Bas-Rhin during the year of revolutionary government, 20 of which were condemned by Schneider. Instead of killing those whom he found guilty of violating the law of suspects, Schneider chose to levy large fines on those guilty. While the fines imposed by Schneider proved impossible for many people to pay, this still appears a kindness when compared to summary execution. Part of the reason Schneider levied these punitive payments comes from the lack of funding that he received to maintain his army. Many revolutionary armies in the provinces had to resort to these actions in order to pay their soldiers’ wages, equipment, and supply them with necessary goods. Making the so-called aristocrats pay for the expenses of the army that threatened their livelihoods energized the revolutionary army by incentivizing the army to arrest as many people as possible in order to get paid. Fining lawbreakers proved common among revolutionary armies at the time. The actions of Schneider towards the Alsatians had the intention of aiding the assimilation of the Bas-Rhin through enforcing the laws of the revolution.

The other local politician who made a large contribution to the political scene of Alsace during the year of revolutionary government was Pierre-François Monet. Monet,

53 Palmer, 189
54 Cobb, *The People’s Armies*, 300
55 Cobb, *The People’s Armies*, 312
like Schneider, did not come from France. Monet came from Savoy, a region of Italy bordering France. Despite not being of French origin, Monet became the president of the Jacobin club of Strasbourg. Through this position, Monet managed to secure the office of mayor of Strasbourg, giving him a lot of power over the capital of the Bas-Rhin. While a rival of Schneider, Monet also had Hébertiste leanings. One of the greatest signs of Monet's extreme views towards Alsace comes from his efforts to forcibly assimilate the region. Unlike Schneider, who disseminated assimilative texts in his newspapers and enforced French laws, Monet wanted to rid Alsace of its German culture in a more forceful manner. In order to show the population of Strasbourg how they should act, and to give himself more supporters in the Jacobin club, Monet invited some of the more fervent Jacobins of neighboring départements into Strasbourg. The sixty or so who arrived in Strasbourg titled themselves the Revolutionary Propaganda. The name of this organization suggests that the purpose of these sans-culottes was to assimilate the Alsatians of Strasbourg into French culture. By all accounts, the Revolutionary Propaganda terrified the population of Alsace. The Revolutionary Propaganda appeared like the stereotypical sans-culottes, with thick mustaches and dressed the same as their Parisian brethren. The appearance of the Revolutionary Propaganda instantly differentiated them from the average Alsatian, who at the time still wore clothes following the German fashion and mainly were clean shaven. The intimidation of the Alsatian populace was a quite deliberate action on the part of Monet. One of the tasks that the Revolutionary Propaganda received was to be visible and willing to present an

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56 For clarity's sake, the word propaganda is not used to describe anything but the group of sans-culottes named the Revolutionary Propaganda. Palmer, 187-188
57 Kennedy, 60
example of true revolutionaries. It seems unlikely that Monet did not realize that his
Revolutionary Propaganda created fear within the populace of Strasbourg. Therefore in
all likelihood, Monet approved of the anxiety that the Revolutionary Propaganda created.
If Monet did not approve of the terror his group created, then he most likely thought that
the other actions of the group were worthwhile. Through opening the mail of others and
punishing those whom the leadership of Strasbourg viewed as violating the law of
suspects, the Revolutionary Propaganda existed as a rival organization to Schneider's
revolutionary army. Where Schneider chose to assimilate the countryside of the Bas-
Rhin, the actions of Monet tended to concentrate on the urban areas. The actions of
Schneider and Monet do not represent all of the ways in which local revolutionaries
attempted to assimilate Alsace during the year of revolutionary government. However,
these two leaders proved the most high profile of their compatriots and received a fair bit
of attention from many historians.
Chapter III: The Role of the Army

The efforts of Lacoste, Baudot, Schneider, Monet and those aligned with them only accounted for half of the people wanting to assimilate Alsace. One of the people who arrived in Alsace in order to maintain the security of France, had different goals and methods of assimilation. Under the efforts of this member of the Committee of Public Safety, the armies stationed in the Bas-Rhin drove out the allies at the end of 1793.

In order to properly analyze the role of the army and its role as a tool of assimilation, historians must look at the greatest proponent of it within the Lower Rhine. Louis Antoine de Saint-Just’s mission to the army of the Rhine radically shifted the political situation of the region, but he and his good friend Philippe-Francois-Joseph Le Bas concerned themselves primarily with the army and the security of France. To attribute the army’s effect on Alsace to solely the actions of Saint-Just and Le Bas greatly oversimplifies the role of the military as a tool of assimilation. Representatives on Mission like Baudot and Lacoste attempted to use the army in order to further their goals for the Alsatian people. Many historians have credited the military presence with keeping the region from open rebellion. While it moderated the political climate in this regard, the presence of a large number of armed men in the heart of the Lower Rhine also helped stir up the resistance to Baudot and Lacoste’s assimilative policies. Therefore, it becomes vital to take the role of the French military into account when analyzing assimilation in Alsace during the year of revolutionary government. One of the major reasons for the importance of this topic comes from the significance that the revolutionaries gave the army. The addition of Saint-Just and Le Bas to Alsace illustrates how seriously the Committee of Public Safety took the military situation in Alsace. Saint-
Just had more power than the average representative on mission, since he belonged to the Committee of Public Safety. While not having authority over every single representative on mission in the Bas-Rhin, being a member of the Committee of Public Safety gave Saint-Just the most influence over the government in Paris. Through concerning himself solely with the plight of the Army of the Rhine, Saint-Just changed the state of Alsatian politics.

Considered one of Robespierre's greatest supporters, Saint-Just came from a humble background. Saint-Just has been described as a person that represented "the most perfect incarnation...of Jacobin faith." Growing up in a well off family in Blérancourt in Picardy, Saint-Just attended the collège of the Oratoriens, named Saint Nicolas de Soissons. During his youth, many people who encountered Saint-Just considered him a troublemaker. However, with the coming of the revolution Saint-Just became a person of respect within the local region. He used this position to fight for the policies espoused by the National Assembly, proving himself a model politician of the French Revolution. After failing to achieve a position within the Legislative Assembly due to his age, Saint-Just was elected to the National Convention as a representative of the département of Aisne. After achieving this goal Saint-Just seems to have flourished within the Jacobin club, becoming known as a leader after giving a speech where he argues for the trial and execution of Louis XVI. After the trial, Saint-Just concerned himself with normal politics within the Convention. As a member of the Mountain, the far left portion of the

60 Curtis, 32.
Jacobin club, Saint-Just battled the faction known as the Girondins. The Girondins supported the policies favored by the people living in the countryside, while the Mountain espoused the radical ideas put forward by the Parisian citizenry. While both sides maneuvered for an advantage over the other, Saint-Just undertook several actions against the Girondins, labeling them as monarchist, and participated in a number of tactics that inflamed the Parisians into rioting against the Girondins and caused the creation of the Committee of Public Safety, which included Saint-Just. On the Committee, Saint-Just became the closest ally of its leading member, Maximilian Robespierre. As a member of the Committee of Public Safety, Saint-Just participated in governing the nation and developing the system of terror espoused by these two politicians for the entire Year of Revolutionary Government. Furthermore, Saint-Just concerned himself with matters that dealt with the external and internal security of France, which led him to be called one of the top three most military minded members of the Committee. Wanting to protect the nation caused Saint-Just to go on a mission to the Army of the Rhine, which had been exposed around Strasbourg.

Saint-Just had been sent on mission with a young friend, Le Bas. There has been some debate as to the role of Le Bas, since the Committee dispatched the two as equals, but a number of historians agree that Saint-Just held more power than his fellow representative. Filled with revolutionary zeal, the two young men had the task of reorganizing the Army of the Rhine in order to achieve victory against the Prussian and Austrian armies that threatened the region. To accomplish this Saint-Just and Le Bas did

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61 Curtis, 81.
63 Palmer 180.
not limit themselves to just the structure of the army, but with the entire département of the Bas-Rhin. Saint-Just levied taxes on those whom Saint-Just described as nobility of Strasbourg, to supply the army of everything from food to boots and beds.64 This type of order shows the commitment of the two towards the army that they had responsibility for, coupled with a usual disregard for the wealthy people of the region. Choosing to only attack the rich reflects the tendency of Saint-Just to punish those whom he viewed as noble.65 Levying taxes solely on the wealthy appealed to the sans-culottes and Jacobins in Strasbourg. After the retreat of the German armies from Alsace, and the flight of at least twenty thousand Alsatians across the Rhine, Saint-Just distributed the now vacant lands of “noble émigrés” to those of his faction. Actions such as these illustrate both Saint-Just’s disregard for those whom he viewed as nobility and support for the sans-culottes. With the army camped outside of Strasbourg, Saint-Just and Le Bas worked on the morale of their soldiers in several different ways. In order to do this, Saint-Just put multiple military reforms in place. Officers now slept in tents alongside their men and could not go off to the theater in town.66 While this partially showed the egalitarian streak apparent in Saint-Just’s normal policies, it also seems like an attempt to build morale by applying the terms of the revolution to the rank and file soldiers. Saint-Just believed that soldiers fight better if they saw that their officers had to endure the same conditions as their troops.67 After revolutionizing the structure of the army, Saint-Just and Le Bas helped revolutionize the French military courts, creating a military tribunal from

64 Palmer, 184-185.
66 Forrest, 107.
67 Forrest, 118-119
members nominated by the Strasbourg Jacobin club. 68 These tribunals sought to grant the members of the military the same types of expansion of rights that civilians had received with the coming of the revolution. 69 Through building equality throughout the military system, Saint-Just attempted to create an army with incredibly high morale along with discipline and efficiency unknown to the armies that menaced Alsace. The general consensus of historians suggests that efforts like Saint-Just's succeeded in fanning the zeal of the average French soldier, something that gave the armies of France a critical advantage. They partially achieved this situation through allowing soldiers to allow any soldier to rise to any position. The reforms Saint-Just undertook in the army had a root in the Jacobin ideology of virtue, a concept that claimed that those who worked the hardest and deserved victory the most would succeed. 70 Therefore along with increasing morale by allowing anyone to receive a promotion, the French armies promoted the best officers no matter their social standing. These egalitarian efforts also gave the soldiers something to fight for, since they now owed their better conditions to the revolution. Through these efforts, the French armies drove out the foreign armies by the end of December 1793.

But to achieve victory the two representatives on mission also attempted to build stability by neutralizing the factional disputes within Alsace.

While ostensibly concerning themselves with military objectives, the two firebrands also worked on moderating the influence of the many Hébertiste-inclined factions that had controlled Alsace since the arrest of Dietrich. A good portion of their works involved countering the influence of both Schneider and Monet along with fighting

68 Palmer, 185.
69 Forrest, 56.
70 Higgonet, 112
the remaining partisans of Dietrich. In contrast to Schneider, Monet, and the representatives Baudot and Lacoste, Saint-Just and Le Bas supported only limited secularizing policies. The anticlerical policies in Alsace did not just consist of dechristianization since Alsace had a large proportion of Jewish citizens when compared to the remainder of France. The limited action taken by Saint-Just and Le Bas amounted to supporting vandalizing actions when pertaining to the new Temple of Reason, the former cathedral of Strasbourg. The language used by Saint-Just and Le Bas in doing so had a guarded quality, and has been called a false action by Palmer, who contends that Saint-Just and Le Bas needed some support of the radical faction to effectively run the area. Palmer's point of view owes quite a bit to the moderating position that Saint-Just and Le Bas held when compared to their radical foes. Saint-Just's support of radical views appears as shrewd political maneuvering on his part, of the type that was needed in order to create a situation where they could keep enough popular support in order to counter their rivals. Of course, Palmer's argument could also have its roots in the point of view of Robespierre, since both Saint-Just and Robespierre generally agreed with each other on ideological positions. The alliance between the Robespierristes and the Hébertistes did not last long, due to the hostility between the two factions, and possibly existed to lure the Hébertistes into a false sense of security. But whether or not this action served to cement a shaky position before striking, Saint-Just proved a moderating factor in the region by arresting Schneider. In doing so, Saint-Just and Le Bas joined forces with Monet and his Revolutionary Propaganda. In a speech to the Jacobin club on

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72 Palmer, 190.
the 22nd of December 1793, a member of the Revolutionary Propaganda spoke out in favor of Schneider’s arrest, "Each day the charges against Schneider grow. The one we accuse, we who have been called here from the surrounding départements, that we are the cause for arresting Schneider. I publicly declare that we have not waited a single part. Le Bas and Saint-Just cannot see without indifference the illegal and anti-republican acts of this man, it is necessary that they punish this crime." The attack on Schneider illustrates how the Revolutionary Propaganda existed as members of an anti-Schneider faction, and how Saint-Just and Le Bas were able to unite the local groups in order to defeat their political rivals. Saint-Just proved a master of this factional manipulation, with his role in outmaneuvering the supporters of Louis XVI and the Girondins, and proved vital in the suppression of Hébert and his supporters later on. In a typical turn of events, Saint-Just and Le Bas quickly turned upon the Revolutionary Propaganda, dissolving the base of Monet’s power. By removing Schneider, and through ridding the city of Strasbourg of the Revolutionary Propaganda, Saint-Just and Le Bas exercised their moderating influence over the political environment in Strasbourg. Though leaving Monet in charge, the factional difficulties had been decided in favor of the mayor and the head of the Jacobin club in Strasbourg. The two needed the support of Monet and the Jacobins in order to counteract the influence of their fellow representatives on mission.

The other representatives proved particularly troublesome to Saint-Just and Le Bas. While theoretically equal to Saint-Just and Le Bas, the other representatives on mission had less power than those sitting on the Committee of Public Safety. The difference in influence between Saint-Just and the rest of the representatives on mission

73 Sociétés Politiques, 312.
74 Palmer, 190.
naturally caused resentment by those who saw this action as a usurpation of their authority. Two of the most difficult were Baudot and Lacoste. In order to continue their stabilizing process, Saint-Just and Le Bas asked for the recall of Lacoste and several of these representatives. Unfortunately for Saint-Just, some representatives like Lacoste did not respond to the call of the Committee. Even if they returned to Paris, the representatives lobbied Robespierre to have their policies continued within Alsace. Furthermore, Baudot and Lacoste actively worked to undermine Saint-Just in several manners. The strongest way that Baudot and Lacoste resisted Saint-Just’s influence came when merging the Army of the Rhine with the Army of the Moselle. Saint-Just and the French government wanted to appoint Jean-Charles Pichegru, the leader of the Army of the Rhine, to command the newly formed Army of the East. However, Baudot promoted Louis Lazare Hoche, the leader of the Army of the Moselies. Baudot and Lacoste claimed that poor communications with the Committee of Public Safety meant that they did not know about Pichegru’s impending promotion. After blaming Saint-Just for not keeping them in contact with the Committee of Public Safety, Lacoste and Baudot justified their decision through the victories on the battlefield of Hoche. The continued resistance of representatives like Baudot and Lacoste illustrates the issues faced by Saint-Just in his manipulation of Alsatian policy. Saint-Just’s actions towards Baudot, Lacoste and the rest of the representatives mainly come from his desire to make Alsace more secure, in a military sense. The state of the army of the Rhine when Saint-Just arrived in

75 Palmer, 198.
77 Trimoulier, 44
78 Trimoulier, 44-45
Alsace made him view the representatives on mission negatively.\textsuperscript{79} The ragged nature of the army puts Saint-Just's actions into better light since he frequently opposed the actions of all but one of these men. With the backing of Lémane, the most Robespierriste of all the representatives, Saint-Just had an ally that helped him pursue a policy that benefited the people of Alsace more.

While Saint-Just's policies proved benevolent when compared to those of the other representatives on mission, he still did not enjoy universal popularity in Alsace. During the period in which Saint-Just had control over Alsace, the National Convention and Committee of Public Safety received complaints about his actions. One of these criticized Saint-Just by declaring that his actions and policies seemed to help the Austrians due to the fact that many Alsatians thought Saint-Just's policies forced the average Alsatian to revolt against the French government.\textsuperscript{80} One of the perks of Saint-Just's position meant that it really did not matter if he had the approval of the Alsatians. Under the law of suspects, anyone who dared attempt to protest the actions of any representative on mission could have been prosecuted for treason. However, Saint-Just received some limited accolade from the populace of Alsace for the arrest and trial of Schneider. The unpopularity of Schneider made the ex-priest feel vulnerable. Trying to undercut rumors that he was unscrupulous with women, Schneider got married to the daughter of a wealthy merchant and was arrested when returning with his wife to Strasbourg on December 14\textsuperscript{th}. Saint-Just arrested Schneider for arriving in Strasbourg with the trappings of nobility, with a heavily laden carriage escorted by cavalrymen with sabers drawn. By taking action against obvious Hébertistes, Saint-Just showed that those

\textsuperscript{79} Palmer, 181
\textsuperscript{80} Livre Bleu, 5
trying to subordinate Alsatian regional politics to the grander scheme of things had too many differences between them to effectively move against another culture with enough force to suppress it. The people complaining about the problems of Saint-Just mainly were people who supported the efforts of the previous representatives on mission or the Jacobin clubs. Through forcing out their old leaders, Saint-Just inadvertently set the Bas-Rhin up for the tumultuous local government that appeared after he left. Therefore, while not enjoying much popularity from any corner in the region that wasn’t the army, Saint-Just and Le Bas ended up helping out those interested in preserving Alsace’s unique cultural identity gain more say in their own département.

By attempting solely to improve the position of the army, Saint-Just and Le Bas drastically changed the political situation of the Bas-Rhin. While disagreeing with their fellow representatives on mission on the methods of assimilation, Saint-Just and Le Bas wished to completely assimilate Alsace into mainstream French culture. The decree pronouncing the former cathedral of Strasbourg a temple of reason on November 24 and the announcement of the establishment of French-language schools in every part of Alsace illustrates Saint-Just’s commitment to assimilation. Saint-Just’s main motivation though was to defend France against her enemies. Attempting to defend France’s borders led Saint-Just not only to reform the army of the Rhine and merge it with the army of the Moselle in order to increase his fighting strength, but also to attempt to create the most stability possible in the region. The tactics for doing this proved more similar to those imposed by politicians like Dietrich. Unfortunately, by turning on the Hébertistes, Saint-Just made the same mistake that Robespierre later made. By turning against the only group in the region that could have provided possible allies, Saint-Just provided the type
of disunity among the assimilators that ended up dooming all efforts to force the Bas Rhin into French culture.
Chapter IV: Resistance to French Culture

The destructive policies of the clubbists towards Alsatian culture inspired a great deal of resistance. Historians have identified several forms of regionalist resistance, not all of them active, to the Terror throughout France and the Rhineland. These range from boycotting revolutionary festivals to taking up arms against the Mountain. Bloody rebellions occurred in places like Lyon, but nothing occurred on that scale in Alsace despite the region’s strong cultural identity. In places with a strong military presence, like the Rhineland, resistance took a more passive form in regards to assimilating into Parisian culture. The responses of the Rhinelanders to the assimilative efforts of the representatives on mission appear more similar to those employed by the Alsatians than the Lyonnais. The first method of evading centralization came from flight. Throughout the beginning of the revolution, the noble families of Alsace fled the region for either Germany or Switzerland. After the defeat of the German armies in the north of the province, anywhere between twenty to forty thousand people fled the area with them.\(^81\) Fleeing the region did not constitute the only means of regionalist resistance, though. The persistence of refractory clergymen in the region also existed as a method of resistance to those proposing centralization. The dechristianizing impulses of the Jacobins and their constitutional clergy caused riots and repression throughout the republic. In Alsace, a border region, the clergy tended to stay around and fled into Germany or Switzerland when sought by the authorities. The presence of these priests was blamed for a great deal of the resistance to Robespierre’s cult of reason. The actions of these priests played a large role in the “White Terror” in Alsace. The people who

\(^{81}\) Reuss, vii
fought to preserve Alsace's regional identity struck back at those considered Jacobins in the region during this time. While after the year of revolutionary government, the "White Terror" illustrates the support that the regional supporters enjoyed throughout the Terror. Through looking at these types of opposition to the assimilative efforts of the Parisians, a more complete picture of Alsace appears.

The flight of the Alsatians with the Habsburg and Prussian armies drastically lowered the population of the region. Many historians have debated the cause of this event, but the most common attribution for this event comes from the depredations of Schneider and his armée révolutionnaire.\(^{82}\) It seems logical that other factors came into consideration as well. Given that the army at this point had amalgamated their companies with experienced soldiers and poor volunteers\(^{83}\), and taking into account the state of poor supply that the army had to deal with\(^{84}\), it seems that these people may have also feared looting on the part of the French soldiers. Financing and supplying the army from looting conquered territory certainly existed in the conquest of the Rhineland. Two familiar names appear throughout the accounts of Rhinelanders and French soldiers when looking at the men who encouraged the most pillaging. Baudot and Lacoste, when attached to the army, bragged about the amount that they could loot from the newly acquired German towns.\(^{85}\) Lacoste and Baudot viewed Alsace as similar to the Rhineland, so they probably would not have spared the citizens in the occupied portion of Alsace. Therefore, the Alsatians in the north probably feared the widespread looting that came with the armies of France, providing another reason for emigration. The

\[\text{References:}\]
\(^{82}\) Palmer, 199
\(^{83}\) Forrest, 118-119
\(^{84}\) Blanning, 98
\(^{85}\) Blanning, 73, 117
combination of looting and the fear of persecution from Schneider’s famous revolutionary tribunal worked together to encourage the main portion of the flight from Alsace. However, the citizens who fled from the republican forces were not noble émigrés.

Unlike the initial waves of emigration in the revolution, most of these people belonged to the third estate. Branded aristocrats by the government, these émigrés lost everything that they had left behind in their flight. In a way the fate of the newly vacated lands reflected an earlier proposal of Baudot and Lacoste which advocated settling sans-culottes in areas vacated by Alsatians who either had been forced to move to the interior of the state or else were guillotined. Baudot and Lacoste recognized that the flight across the Rhine had depopulated the region enough to enact the legislative ideas that they had already proposed. However, Saint-Just remained in charge of the region, so that he, in his attempt to create a stable département, allowed loyal Alsatians to acquire these properties. The granting of émigré property to loyal citizens illustrates Saint-Just’s moderating goals. The size of the confiscated lands reflected the general wealth of those fleeing ahead of the French army. The men and women who fled the region had not much personal wealth and had no place to go once they left France. Unfortunately for them, the lords and rulers of the areas that they moved to had no desire to give these displaced people any sort of warm welcome. Attempting to leave Alsace, while a form of resistance, played into the hands of those trying to assimilate the Alsatian population into French mainstream culture. Through moving out of the region the Alsatians, despite

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86 Reuss, 3
87 Palmer, 192-193
88 Palmer, 192
89 Palmer 199
showing their incompatibility with the revolution, gave the Jacobins the ability to confiscate and sell vast amounts of lands.\textsuperscript{90} Doing so created revenue for the French treasury and allowed them to spread out a very condensed population. Therefore, by fleeing, those resistant to French assimilation weakened the ability of their neighbors to combat the influence of organizations bound to do them harm along with doing themselves no favors either. In this manner, the great flight's method of resistance actually proved less helpful for the cause of regional identity than others.

Keeping the army supplied alienated many Alsatians from their government. From the very beginning of the war the revolution did not have the money to support the maintenance of the military forces needed to hold Austria and Prussia at bay.\textsuperscript{91} In order to overcome this obstacle, the Convention supplied the troops with large amounts of assignats, paper money supposedly backed by the sale of confiscated church lands, which they used to pay for their essential supplies. The use of this paper money by the army sparked discontent in a couple of ways. First, the army forced merchants and farmers to take the assignats at face value, when in fact they were worth about 30\% of that.\textsuperscript{92} Second, the troops only bought goods at the prices of the maximum, the law that fixed the prices of grain and other crops deemed essential at a maximum price. On the open market, the scarcity of grain meant that farmer could demand a much higher price than Robespierre dictated.\textsuperscript{93} In this manner, the direct purchasing power of the military proved drastically unpopular. Supplying the army like this proved the only way that the ordinary Alsatians received any compensation for their efforts. With the methods of

\textsuperscript{90} Palmer, 199
\textsuperscript{91} Mühlenbeck, 16
\textsuperscript{92} Hartmann, 341
\textsuperscript{93} Mühlenbeck, 16
legitimate supply deeply unpopular with the common citizenry, then it remains understandable that supporting an army in Alsace for a sustained period of time caused unhappiness. The army also provoked the citizens of major towns and Strasbourg by requisitioning items from their "nobility."\textsuperscript{94} Within a period of a week, Saint-Just requisitioned two thousand beds and fifteen thousand pairs of shoes from nobility of the city of Strasbourg.\textsuperscript{95} It seems rather unlikely that a city of 45,000 people could have enough noblemen to fulfill Saint-Just’s request. Making unrealistic demands did not endear the army to the city and town councils of Alsace. The necessity of keeping the soldiers supplied therefore caused discontent throughout the region. People from both urban and rural settings then had reason to dislike the men ostensibly protecting them from the menacing armies of Austria, Prussia and émigrés that remained in striking position throughout the Terror.

Another area where the Rhineland and Alsace require comparison comes from the policies of resistance in each region. In Alsace, the highest political authority belonged to the representatives on mission. They then delegated power to their favorite Jacobin. While few of these Jacobins in high places came from Alsace, the clubs still enjoyed support from the rank-and-file Jacobins, the majority of whom came from Alsace. In the Rhineland some of the very same representatives on mission who appointed Jacobins into power in Alsace, notably Baudot and Lacoste, did not empower the local Jacobins. While the clubbists had existed throughout the revolution in the Rhineland, Baudot and Lacoste thought them unable to perform the duties necessary to govern the region.

\textsuperscript{94} Palmer, 184  
\textsuperscript{95} Palmer, 184
Instead they chose older men who came from outside the region. While granting political power to outsiders seems similar to Alsace, the outsiders given office in Alsace were young radicals while those in the Rhineland were old and quite frequently corrupt. The representatives on mission excluded the Jacobins from political office by not allowing elections to take place. Disenfranchising the Rhinelanders occurred due to initial elections that were seen to have unsatisfactory results. Simply choosing members of the government clashes with the situation in the Bas-Rhin; since the département was French, the elected officials rarely faced disapproval from the representatives of the committee. The Alsatian politicians who angered the agents of France’s central government were usually sent to jail. The ability of representatives on mission to suspend democracy in both Alsace and the Rhineland made the election of officials who wanted to resist cultural assimilations unlikely.

The most powerful resistance to Jacobin rule and influence came from those dedicated to Alsatian culture or their religion. While the culture of the Rhine proved very potent and inextinguishable, the representatives on mission considered opposition from clergymen much more of a potent problem than Alsace’s Germanic language and culture. The hostility towards the clergy shows that at this point, secularization had become a larger priority than suppressing the region’s cultural identity. Part of this came from the priest’s role in promoting and sustaining the Germanic culture, but the rest comes from the problems that the revolutionaries faced throughout the republic from Catholics. The religious diversity of Alsace had set it apart from the rest of France. The

96 Blanning, 258-259.
97 Blanning, 203
98 Blanning, 189
presence of a large protestant minority differentiated Alsace from the rest of the republic. One of the more eccentric qualities of Alsace, when compared to other areas of Europe, was its official recognition of the Jewish religion. At the beginning of the revolution, the legislative body of the period made Judaism an official religion of France. The result of this action created a situation where all of the religions in Alsace proved officially sanctioned by the Republic. Unofficially, however, the Jacobins and those attempting to assimilate the region into the culture of the French were prejudiced against all religion. The secularization efforts of Monet and Schneider also took advantage of the prevailing prejudices to target the Jews with the Christians. The persecution of religion led the religiously inclined to dislike and distrust the revolution and those involved in spreading it throughout Alsace.

The Rhineland and Alsace both had populations very devoted to their religion. While the Rhinelanders practiced Catholicism with fervor nearly unheard of in the north of Germany, the Alsatians practiced their model of religious tolerance. However, this did not lessen the commitment of an ordinary Alsatian to his/her personal religion. People of both areas probably continued trusting the priests that they had respected throughout the ancien régime. In doing so, they incensed men like Baudot, Lacoste, and Monet. These important revolutionaries spent much of their time in Alsace combating what they viewed as religious extremism. Oddly enough, the laws persecuting the refractory clergy also attacked their constitutional compatriots. Attacking both the constitutional and refractory clergy meant that Schneider had to deal with laws limiting his power over the Bas-Rhin. On November 19th 1793, the revolutionary government

99 Blanning, 30 Palmer, 178
100 Société Politique, 264, 296
passed a law stating that clergymen could no longer hold office in France.\textsuperscript{101} The very next day, during an anti-Catholic celebration known as the Feast of Reason, Schneider abdicated his priesthood.\textsuperscript{102} The priests unwilling to conform to a new, secularized, religious community provided the resistance to these centralizers. The refractory priests provided a great deal of counter-revolutionary sentiment. The hostility of the centralizing forces and their attempts to limit religious influence through defiling their places of worship and by requiring an oath to the constitution antagonized many Catholic clergymen to the point where they refused to support the revolution. Many revolutionaries suspected that the priests passed on this dislike of the revolution to ordinary people via mass. While it remained illegal for refractory clergymen to remain in France, the Jacobins and rulers of the region allowed many to stay. Religion became the scapegoat of the republic, with every sort of rebellious activity in the region attributed to them.\textsuperscript{103} Choosing to identify the clergy with rebellion occurred throughout France during the year of revolutionary government, the rebels in the Vendée had named themselves the Catholic and Royal Army\textsuperscript{104} and priests were blamed for trouble throughout the Rhineland after the fall of the region.\textsuperscript{105} Unfortunately, the major accusations claiming that the refractory clergymen caused all sorts of rebellious activity only come from French officials. Therefore, it becomes hard to determine if the refractory clergymen indeed participated actively to bring down the Terrorist government. However, the very fact that the priests were blamed meant that the common people had a symbol to rally

\textsuperscript{101} Abbé L. Winterer, \textit{La persecution religieuse en Alsace pendant la grande révolution, de 1789 à 1801}, trans. Steven Simmons (Rixheim: A. Sutter, 1876), 148
\textsuperscript{102} Palmer, 188
\textsuperscript{103} Hartmann, 399
\textsuperscript{104} Doyle, 243
\textsuperscript{105} Blanning, 189
behind; meaning that even if no priest had actively encouraged resistance to the revolutionary cause people would still rally behind their religion in order to find the strength to resist cultural assimilation.

While having such angry rhetoric against the refractory clergy, the actual amount of clergymen caught in Alsace during the year of revolutionary government remained low. Out of the twenty-nine people sentenced to death by the tribunal révolutionnaire de Strasbourg, only one was a clergyman and he was not sentenced for being a refractory clergyman.\textsuperscript{106} Since the members of the revolutionary government blamed the refractory clergy for many of their problems, the lack of executions within the Bas-Rhin suggests that these clergymen did not get caught. Several explanations exist about the lack of executions of refractory clergy in Alsace during the year of revolutionary government. The most likely of these explanations suggests that not many refractory clergymen remained within Alsace during this period. A policy of the French government between the crisis of the civil constitution of the clergy and the year of revolutionary government emphasized deporting refractory clergymen.\textsuperscript{107} Only right before the year of revolutionary government, March 18\textsuperscript{th} 1793, did the French government decide to impose a death penalty on the refractory clergymen remaining in France.\textsuperscript{108} This system of exile for the clergymen deemed disloyal to the revolution led many Alsatian priests to flee the Bas-Rhin, something that accounts for the lack of refractory clergymen found in Alsace during the year of revolutionary government. A second possibility for the lack of refractory clergy executed during the year of revolutionary government could be the one

\textsuperscript{106} Greer, 150, 161  
\textsuperscript{107} Winterer, 120-123  
\textsuperscript{108} Winterer, 145
proposed by the assimilationists. The people imposing French culture upon Alsace perceived a conspiracy where the Alsatians hid refractory clergymen from the revolutionary forces. It seems unlikely that this occurred in the Bas-Rhin though. While it remains easy to hide religious artifacts from the French assimilationists, the concealment of people would have proved difficult. The revolutionary armies of the Bas-Rhin and the Revolutionary Propaganda worked very hard to dechristianize the département. The efforts of these assimilationist institutions would have made it very hard to keep a large population of refractory clergy safe from the justice of the revolutionary government. The improbability of hiding clergymen from the revolutionary tribunals means that the lack of executions of refractory clergy in the Bas-Rhin most likely occurred due to the large scale deportations and emigration of refractory clergy before the year of revolutionary government.

After the fall of the Committee of Public Safety on the 9th of Thermidor, the 27th of July 1794, the government of Robespierre and Saint-Just had officially ended. But that did not end the violence throughout France. In fact, with the fall of Robespierre and the Jacobins a backlash developed where those dissatisfied with the events of the past year chose to dress up like aristocrats and beat up those who had tormented them earlier. The aggressive actions against those associated with Robespierre became known as the “White Terror” and existed throughout France. The White Terror occurred in Alsace as well, proving that a substantial number of Alsatians felt serious discontent with the rule of the representatives on mission, Schneider, and Monet. The fact that the White Terror occurred, despite the permanent flight of over thirty thousand people who had little in common with the revolution, shows two things. The first is that in order for such a large
movement to gain traction in Alsace many people must have secretly hated the revolutionary government. The second is the idea that many of the resistance measures taken did not get dealt with in a harsh manner. If this were the case, then fewer people would have been able to get revenge on the former Jacobins. Two other explanations for this situation exist. One could entail the return of several of the embittered fugitives who were wanted by various criminal courts for crimes that no longer existed. These men and women could have served as rallying points in an attempt to get revenge on the government that had treated them so poorly. The White Terror of Alsace did intensify immediately after the law of 20 Nivôse Year III, January 10\(^{th}\) 1795. The law allowed the people who participated in the Great Flight of 1793 to return. The refractory clergymen were allowed to return on February 24\(^{th}\) 1795, meaning that a good deal of people who disliked the revolutionary government now could enter France legally.\(^{109}\) The escalation of the White Terror in Alsace in 1795 illustrates the effect of the returning émigrés. However, given that the White Terror started before 1795, the return of émigrés cannot fully account for the situation. Another possible justification for the strength of the White Terror could have come from the sheer number of attacks the centralizers made on several pre-revolutionary institutions. For this situation to occur, the representatives on mission, Schneider, and Monet needed to have overreached themselves. Through putting so much importance on institutions that were not necessarily opposed to the revolution they would have created a rallying point for those who were unhappy with the Terrorists. In any case, the success of the White Terror shows that the regional resistance remained strong throughout the year of revolutionary government and ultimately met with success.

Thanks to the new government, the Alsatians managed to express themselves in a way that they had not been able to do throughout the terror, vindicating those who fought to keep Alsace’s regional identity alive.

Resistance to the revolutionary government’s assimilative polices in Alsace existed throughout the Terror. Resistance to the French government never reached the point of aggression, due to the large military force, the revolutionary army, and the relative lack of executions due to the presence of the Rhine. The dissatisfaction came not only from the efforts to make Alsace more culturally French but also from the necessity of supplying the troops that defended the region. While a good portion of the Army of the East left Alsace in 1794, the concerns remained due to the maintenance of certain repressive Terrorist policies in the départements. The resistance remained, partially due to the resilient presence of the refractory clergymen. Many of the agents of assimilation made denouncing the refractory clergymen their top priority. The presence of clergymen preaching against the revolution did help to create and maintain resistance. All of the provinces that had rebelled had a large population of refractory priests. The fact that traveling across the Rhine was easy made the efforts of the Jacobins and representatives on mission to suppress these priests fail. The cultural differences between the French and Alsatians provided another reason for counter-revolution, though the other two factors had more of an impact on the regionalist support. One of the largest causes of discontent with the French regime came from the economic issues created by forcing the region to supply an army and by the severe limiting of trade throughout the Rhine. All of these actions came from the threats on Alsatian regionalism by the representatives on mission, the army, and the efforts of smaller scale political figures. The events of the White
Terror illustrate the unpopularity of the reforms put into place by those attempting to assimilate Alsace. While the reforms were unpopular, Alsace proved different from many areas of France by not engaging in armed rebellion. The geographical position of the Rhine played a huge role in keeping Alsatian population from revolution by allowing those dissatisfied with the revolutionary government a way to escape.
Conclusion

The strategic value of the Rhine and the Germanic culture of Alsace caused the revolutionary government to attempt to assimilate the Bas-Rhin. Assimilation of the Alsatian culture into the French government failed due to the strong economic link to Germany provided by the Rhine, the ability for staunch supporters of the Alsatian culture to flee, and the disunity between those trying to assimilate the département. The representatives sent by the Committee of Public Safety, motivated by their desire to maintain the revolution, took every measure that they believed necessary to keep Alsace French. The policies implemented alienated the average Alsatian and frequently contradicted each other. The arrival of Saint-Just made this problem much worse for those governing the Bas-Rhin. Instead of having one chaotic group of rulers, the Bas-Rhin now had two factions vying for control of the département. The more established group, led by the representatives Baudot and Lacoste advocated policies proposed by the most radical faction within the Mountain. The Hébertiste nature of Baudot and Lacoste’s actions allowed characters like Schneider and Monet to gain political office and to establish control over assimilationist organizations like the revolutionary army of the Bas-Rhin and the Revolutionary Propaganda. The extremist nature of these men inspired the group of policy-makers led by Saint-Just to attempt to moderate the politics in the département. The methods of assimilation advocated by Saint-Just involved an emphasis on peaceful de-Christianization and the teaching of French culture in schools. The peaceful assimilative measures of Saint-Just contrasted sharply with the violent actions aimed at forcing the Alsatians to follow French customs implemented by Schneider and Monet. The average Alsatian did not approve of any of the representatives on mission,
Schneider, and Monet. Unhappiness with the agents of assimilation when combined with the factional strife between Saint-Just and the combination of Baudot and Lacoste caused the fall of Schneider and the protest of Saint-Just’s actions to the National Convention.\textsuperscript{110} The victory of the Army of the East in December 1793 caused Saint-Just to leave the Bas-Rhin, creating a power vacuum within Alsace. Monet was the only assimilator who remained in political office in the Bas-Rhin. Due to the lack of politicians advocating strict measures of assimilation and the military successes that secured Alsace from invasion by the allied powers, the process of assimilation started slowing down after Saint-Just left the département.

With the military successes of the French army came a major success for the representatives on mission. The success of the French army led to the Great Flight of 1793, involving anywhere between twenty and fifty thousand Alsatians, meant that a great many of the people who identified strongly with Alsatian culture had left the northern part of the Bas-Rhin.\textsuperscript{111} The loss of so many people steeped in Alsatian culture created a space in the northern region of the département where French culture could be introduced. However, the Great Flight illustrates how certain members of the Alsatian people identified more with Germany than France. The combination of a cultural affinity with Germany and the atrocities of the revolutionary government created this Great Flight. The number of people leaving showed a widespread dislike and fear of the revolutionary government. It seems unlikely that only the northern half of the Bas-Rhin had a large portion of its population who disliked the revolutionary government’s policies in Alsace. The large proportion of people living in the region who fled the advance of the

\textsuperscript{110} Palmer, 190-191 Livre Bleu, vi-vii
\textsuperscript{111} Palmer, 198-199
French army probably existed throughout the département. Unlike the northern portion of the Bas-Rhin, the allied armies had not occupied the south of the département. Without the impetus to flee the Bas-Rhin, the Alsatian population not acclimatized to French culture remained in the département. The failure of assimilation in the Bas-Rhin can be seen in the statements made by départemantal officials. As late as the beginning of July 1794, one month before the fall of the revolutionary government, French politicians within the Bas-Rhin declared that the département needed to be assimilated.

The experience has convinced us of the urgent need to Gallicize our citizens, to eradicate their idiom of the slave, which alienates them from their French brothers and appears to give them the means to have easy relations with the satellites of despotism. We are particularly convinced again of the necessity of extinguishing in Alsace the ancien privileges of Germanism and to restore a true love of France, by identifying with the French language.112

This statement, made by the newly appointed administrators of the Bas-Rhin, illustrates the failure of all the assimilationists throughout the year of revolutionary government. Despite all of the efforts of the representatives on mission, the people running the revolutionary government after the repulsion of the allied armies still felt that the Bas-Rhin had not been assimilated. The persistence of the need to eradicate the Alsatian dialect showed exactly how much the revolutionary government had failed to impose French culture on Alsace. The reasons for which the French chose to impose its culture on Alsace surpass the xenophobia of different assimilationist efforts. The attacks on the Alsatian culture had a fervor that suggests that the reasoning behind assimilation involved the beginning of a concept that helped shape the nineteenth century.

One of the ways that this year in Alsatian history foreshadowed the century that followed involved the beginning of concepts that dominated nineteenth century political

112 Hartmann, 390-391
life. For instance, all of the proposals of the representatives on mission contained ideas that had traces of nationalism. Both xenophobia and an early form of nationalism appear in Baudot’s and Lacoste’s view of Alsace as a region. The mistrust of an area solely because it has a different culture, despite not showing any form of rebellious behavior previously, seems nationalistic and xenophobic. The complaints of the Alsatians insisting that their language and culture did not make them more likely to rebel, while pointing out that all of the rebellious areas during this time period had the stereotypical French qualities that the representatives wanted Alsace to have, can be taken as a rebuttal for the concept that a nation-state is the best form of government.\textsuperscript{113} While declaring that the start of nationalistic thought occurred at some point in the French Revolution does not remain a novel concept, the failure of it to take hold of an entire region proves interesting. Whereas the actions of Baudot and Lacoste throughout the French Revolution only make sense in the context of nationalism, the Alsatian people rejected the concept immediately. Never did those working for Alsatian regional identity argue that the culture of Alsace was superior to the French culture being imposed on them. Instead they complained that the forcing of French culture on loyal citizens was trampling their newly gained rights as citizens.\textsuperscript{114} The quest of the French government towards assimilating Alsace did not diminish over the next century. In fact, the attempts to impose French culture on Alsace only stopped when the region was conquered by Germany in 1871. However, the German government started its attempt to culturally assimilate Alsace almost immediately after the conquest. Therefore, throughout the modern period of history

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\textsuperscript{113}Livre Bleu, xvii
\textsuperscript{114}Livre bleu, xvii
Alsace has been culturally not-quite French or German. It therefore becomes valuable to look at the first attempt by a government to impose its culture on the Bas-Rhin.
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