Three

Crisis in National Politics

1792–1793

On August 10, 1792, in a successful version of the aborted June 20 uprising, the drama of the Revolution shifted from the chambers of the Legislative Assembly to the streets of Paris. Headed by the Marseille fédérés and contingents from several other towns, some twenty thousand men assaulted the Tuileries palace, forcing the king to flee to the Assembly, where ultimately he would be suspended from office. The attack climaxed several months of antiroyalist agitation in the forty-eight sections of Paris and heralded the fall of the monarchy in France.1

Albert Soboul has written that the six weeks following August 10 profoundly affected the course of the Revolution.2 The collapse of the monarchy alone would justify such a claim, but three further developments confirm the verity of this statement. First among these was the creation on August 10 of the Insurrectionary Commune in Paris. This semilegal body grew out of the correspondence committee of the forty-eight sections, which had played a prominent role in organizing the assault on the Tuileries and constituted en permanence a central organ of the Paris sections. Moderate deputies in the Legislative Assembly accused the Commune of “dictatorship and the usurpation of power,” but radical deputies came to its defense, lauding the patriotism of the common people. The opposition between the revolutionary

Commune and the Legislative Assembly evolved into Parisian antipathy toward the Girondin deputies in the National Convention and remained a crucial component of national politics over the next nine months.1

The second important development was the August 11 decree of the Legislative Assembly calling for the election of a National Convention. Although the Convention’s principal mandate was to draft a new constitution, it came to exercise powers more extensive than those of the Legislative Assembly. Within four days of its convocation, the Convention had abolished the monarchy and proclaimed a republic. Thereafter, it assumed a legislative, executive, and judicial role and ruled France for three full years, longer than either of its predecessors.

Finally, the September massacres in the prisons of Paris confirmed in the minds of most Frenchmen an unsavory image of the Parisian crowd. The provinces, too, despaired over the failing war effort and experienced the hysterical fear of counterrevolution that inspired the September massacres. In Limoges in mid-July, an angry crowd had beaten to death the Abbé Chabrol just after the declaration of la patrie en danger. Chabrol had refused to relinquish weapons in his possession to army volunteers. Georges Bayeux was murdered in Caen even as the prisons were being attacked in the capital. But the atrocities in Paris defied comprehension, and the September 3 circular sent by the Commune to the departments, allegedly written by Marat in justification of the executions, earned for Parisians the label of anarchistes and for its author a reputation as the leading buveur de sang.4

The nature of the August 10 revolution made the calling of new elections a delicate task for the Legislative Assembly. In the days immediately following August 10, the deputies issued a number of circulars explaining the tumultuous events of that day and outlining recommended procedures for departmental electoral assemblies. These circulars addressed two principal concerns. The first was to maintain the authority of the Assembly during the interim period until the Convention could be opened. The suspension of the king, and the very calling of elections, implicitly called into question the Assembly’s legitimacy. Sovereignty now lay, some said, with the people; and to avoid dissension and potential chaos, the deputies adopted a cautious tone

1. Ibid., 259–60.
2. Rude, The Crowd in the French Revolution, 110. Rude includes the following excerpt from that letter: “et sans doute la nation entière... s’empressera d’adopter ce moyen nécessaire de salut public.”
in their language. Instructions to electoral assemblies took the form of recommendations rather than decrees.

The second concern, more important in the context of this study, was the question of how to describe the events of August 10. Acknowledgment of the predominant role of the Paris Commune would further undermine the authority and leadership of the Legislative Assembly. In addition, such an account might fuel counterrevolutionary sentiments in the country. The first attack on the Tuileries, on June 20, had elicited a wave of protests from departmental administrators, many of whom remained monarchist in their sympathies. Even within the Assembly, there were those who feared and resented the growing militancy of the Paris sections. To credit the Paris Commune with the fall of the monarchy might have deepened the divisions in both the Legislative Assembly and the nation at large. In its Exposition des Motifs, the Assembly therefore focused on the actions of the king, its own determined opposition to his intransigence, and the final provocations that had brought about the spontaneous uprising of the people, including the fédérés. The report never mentioned the Insurrectionary Commune.

Late in August, the Jacobin club of Paris issued a circular of its own. The Tableau comparatif des sept appels nominaux fév.–10 août 1792, a summary of the voting on the most important issues debated in the Legislative Assembly, was intended to inform electoral assemblies of the voting records of those deputies who might be considered for reelection. The suspension of the king, the continuing problem of émigrés and refractory priests, and the lagging war effort all had combined to produce a mood of antiroyalism in much of the country. The Tableau comparatif identified those deputies who had voted in support of the monarchy in the Legislative Assembly and recommended that they not be reelected. The circular reached barely half of the electoral assemblies, and as most of these convened on September 2, it arrived in many cases too late to be considered. Its effect is difficult to measure, but in all of France, only one deputy who had consistently supported the monarchy on the listed votes won reelection. This deputy, interestingly enough, was Pierre François Henry-Larivière, a lawyer from the district of Falaise in Calvados and a future supporter of the Girondins. Alison Patrick attributes his reelection to the fact that officials in Bayeux, the site of the Calvados electoral assembly, deliberately delayed printing and circulating the Tableau.

6. Ibid., 145–48, 170. It is Patrick's contention that Henry-Larivière supported the right
The election of deputies to the Convention proceeded in two stages. Primary assemblies met in late August to choose departmental electors, who in turn elected the deputies. Despite the recent declaration of universal male suffrage by the Legislative Assembly (eliminating the category of “passive” citizen), few voters turned out. Nationwide, as few as 20 percent of eligible voters participated in primary assemblies. Given the existing political climate, it is possible that monarchists chose to stay away from the assemblies; certainly, the exigencies of the harvest reduced participation; and resentment over the constitutional oath may have had an adverse effect. Despite the small turnout, there is little evidence that a republican minority or the popular societies unduly influenced either the primary or the electoral assemblies. Most of the latter met in small towns, not in the departmental chefs-lieux where popular societies exerted their greatest influence.  

Electoral assemblies were held during the first two weeks of September, and the majority were carried out in orderly and expeditious fashion. Some took as little as four days to complete their task. Others turned their attention to local affairs as well and met for two weeks or more. Of the 750 deputies elected, 201 had been members of the Legislative Assembly; only 83 had been representatives to the Constituent Assembly. Outnumbering both these groups combined were the approximately 300 deputies whose only political experience was in local administration. Thus, while electors preferred candidates with some political experience (fewer than 10 percent had none whatsoever), previous national office was not always the best recommendation.  

The men chosen in those elections would guide France for the next eight months, and many would remain in office for three years. The most active among them would function as interpreters of the political climate in the capital for their constituents. Their correspondence constituted an important link between national and local politics during the turbulent period leading up to the revolution of May 31. Indeed, local perceptions of events in Paris strongly influenced provincial responses to the proscription of the Girondin deputies. It is therefore essential to understand the composition and character of the delegations sent to the Convention from Calvados and

in these votes, but the record shows that he was absent for all but two of the votes and voted yes on the impeachment of Lafayette. Still, his record in the Convention puts him clearly in the royalist camp.  

7. Ibid., 152–55.  
8. Ibid., 170–72, 229–30. Patrick and Godechot, in Les Institutions de la France, disagree slightly in their estimates of deputies who had experience in local politics. I have therefore adopted the approximate figure of 300.
the Haute-Vienne, as well as the lines of communication that developed between them and their constituencies. Such understanding brings into clearer focus the process by which the crisis in national politics of winter and spring, 1793, had become a nationwide crisis by the summer of that year.

In Calvados, the electoral assembly convened on September 2 in the town of Bayeux. Although this episcopal seat was located less than twenty miles from Caen, the political attitudes of its citizens were more conservative than those in the departmental chef-lieu. Throughout the Revolution, Bayeux remained a royalist and aristocratic stronghold of the department. Claude Fauchet, upon his arrival in Calvados as the newly elected constitutional bishop, found the town to be decidedly inhospitable. In July, 1791, Fauchet, along with his vicar-general, Chaix-d'Estanges, stood as defendants before the Bayeux district tribunal for having allegedly changed two Bayeux street signs from "Louis XVI" and "Place Royale" to "Fauchet" and "Parjure." It is scarcely credible that Fauchet would have committed such a frivolous indiscretion, but the charges do illustrate the chilly reception the new bishop received in Bayeux. In any case, a general amnesty granted by the king on September 15, 1791, reprieved both men.9

It is impossible to assess the effect of the location of the assembly on the election results. Certainly, it did remove the assembly from the direct influence of the Caen Jacobin club; and the reluctance of the Bayeux authorities to publish the Jacobin Tableau comparatif has already been noted. But one can say little more.

Doulcet de Pontécoulant, whom we have already encountered in the affair of the Criminal Tribunal, presided over the assembly. Doulcet, who held the title of count, was born in 1766 into an old noble family, originally of Savoy, which had held the seigneurie of Pontécoulant since the eleventh century. He had risen to the rank of lieutenant in the army and had founded the Jacobin club in the district seat of Vire, near the family estate in Condé-sur-Noireau, south of Caen. In 1792, he served as president of the departmental administration.10

The electoral assembly chose another familiar figure, Bougon-Longrais, then secretary to the departmental council, as its secretary, but illness forced Bougon to cede his place to Louis Jean Taveau, a departmental admin-

9. Lesage (Esnaultr), 65–68; Hufton, Bayeux in the Late Eighteenth Century, 185–86.
10. A. D. Calvados, F208o (Nouvelles Acquisitions).
istrator from Honfleur. Bougon’s absence from the Bayeux assembly, and his presence in Caen, may have fueled the public suspicion regarding his role in the murder of Georges Bayeux, the procurer-général-syndic whose aristocratic jury list had attracted such vehement criticism.

The assembly session itself proceeded uneventfully, with no serious disruptions or disputes. But news of trouble in Caen interrupted the proceedings on September 6. Several Caen municipal officials had been imprisoned temporarily in the Château after ordering the release of Georges Bayeux. The assembly sent a delegation (including Jean Michel Barbot, the future president of the Carabot club) to assist in calming the angry crowd in Caen. They succeeded in securing the release of the municipal officials but could not prevent the death of the unfortunate Bayeux.11

The assembly had already completed the election of deputies to the Convention when this disruption occurred. Table 2 lists the delegates from Calvados, with their occupations, districts, and previous political experience. Several important characteristics of the delegation merit comment. First, none of the Calvados delegates were political novices. All but two, Fauchet and Dubois Dubais, had previous political experience in local administration—eight had served as municipal officials, one as a district administrator, and five on the departmental council. Several had served at more than one level. A second notable feature is the experience of these deputies in national assemblies. Only one of the thirteen Calvados deputies, de Cussy, had been a member of the Constituent Assembly, a proportion corresponding very closely to that in the Convention as a whole. But whereas 27 percent of all deputies to the Convention had been delegates to the Legislative Assembly, six of the Calvados deputies (46 percent of the delegation) had been members of that body. We have seen that one of them, Henry-Larivière, had compiled a voting record that should have assured his rejection by the voters. Finally, the delegation, in its geographic distribution, represented the entire department. All six of the districts were represented, and no district sent more than three deputies. Three of the deputies, Lomont, Bonnet, and de Cussy, had personal experience in Caen municipal affairs. Five others had spent substantial time in the chef-lieu as departmental administrators or, in the case of Fauchet, as bishop and president of the Jacobin club.

11. A. D. Calvados, L10074 (Elections et actifs 1790–92), and L10124 (documents pertaining to repression of the federalist revolt). Barbot’s role in the incident was detailed in a 1793 letter from his wife to Robert Lindet, then on mission to Caen, pleading for the release of her husband.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (in Order of Election)</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Previous Political Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faucher (Claude)</td>
<td>bishop</td>
<td>Bayeux</td>
<td>Legislative Assembly member (1791-1792)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dubois Dubais* (Louis Thibaut)</td>
<td>cavalry captain</td>
<td>Lisieux</td>
<td>Legislative Assembly member (1791-1792)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lomont (Claude Jean Baptiste)</td>
<td>procureur du roi à la monnaie de Caen</td>
<td>Caen</td>
<td>departmental administrator (1790-1791)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry-Larivière (Pierre François)</td>
<td>lawyer</td>
<td>Falaise</td>
<td>Legislative Assembly member (1791-1792) municipal procureur (1790-1791)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonnet de Meautry* (Pierre Louis)</td>
<td>military officer</td>
<td>Caen</td>
<td>Legislative Assembly member (1791-1792) mayor (1791)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vardon (Louis Alexandre Jacques)</td>
<td>lawyer</td>
<td>Falaise</td>
<td>Legislative Assembly member (1791-1792) municipal official (1790)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doulcet de Pontécoulant* (Gustave)</td>
<td>army lieutenant</td>
<td>Vire</td>
<td>departmental administrator (1790-1791)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taveau (Louis Jean)</td>
<td>négociant</td>
<td>Pont l'Evêque</td>
<td>legislative Assembly member (1791-1792) municipal official (1790-1791)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jouenne du Longchamp (Thomas François Ambroise)</td>
<td>doctor</td>
<td>Lisieux</td>
<td>departmental administrator (1791-1792)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumont (Louis Philippe)</td>
<td>lawyer</td>
<td>Vire</td>
<td>district administrator (1790-1791)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de Cussy* (Gabriel)</td>
<td>directeur de la monnaie de Caen</td>
<td>Caen</td>
<td>Constituent Assembly member (1789-1791) municipal official (1791-1792)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to the thirteen deputies, the assembly elected five suppléants to replace any deputies unable to fulfill their duties. The first of these was Pierre Jacques Samuel Chatry l'aîné, a Protestant négociant from Caen. Chatry had been active in municipal politics since 1789, first as a member of the Caen General Committee and then as municipal officer and notable. In November, 1791, he declined election as mayor of Caen, arguing that it would undermine public welfare for a Protestant to serve as mayor at a time of considerable public ferment over religious opinions. One year later, his younger brother, Jean Louis Isaac, declined the same post because of his conflicting position as a departmental administrator. Both held local public office in 1793 and played leading roles in the federalist revolt. Chatry never took a seat in the Convention; but he was elected to the Council of Elders in year VII, moved on to the Legislative Corps the following year, and was eventually named to the Legion of Honor.\(^{12}\)

Little is known about the circumstances in which the Haute-Vienne electoral assembly met. The department was one of only four that did not send a full account of the proceedings to Paris.\(^{13}\) Nor does a procès-verbal from the assembly exist in the departmental archives. The absence of a detailed report suggests that the proceedings were uneventful. The assembly, which met in Dorat, was presided over by Pierre Dumas, an avocat from Limoges and then president of the Haute-Vienne Criminal Tribunal, as well as a departmental administrator. Michel Lacroix, a district official from Bellac, acted

\(^{12}\) A. D. Calvados, L 10074; A. C. Caen, D1 (Délégations du Corps municipal et du Conseil Général de la Commune, 18 février 1790–3 janvier 1792), D2 (4 janvier 1792–11 Germinal an II), K 34 (Mairie 1790–an II).

\(^{13}\) Patrick, The Men of the First French Republic, 141.
### Table 3 Haute-Vienne Deputies to the National Convention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (in Order of Election)</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Previous Political Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lacroix (Michel)</td>
<td>notary</td>
<td>Bellac</td>
<td>district procureur-syndic (1790–1792)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lestert-Beauvais (Benoist)</td>
<td>lawyer</td>
<td>Dorat</td>
<td>Constituent Assembly member (1789–1791)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bordas (Pardoux)</td>
<td>lawyer</td>
<td>Saint-Yrieix</td>
<td>departmental administrator (1790–1791)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay-Vernon* (Léonard)</td>
<td>bishop</td>
<td>Limoges</td>
<td>Legislative Assembly member (1791–1792)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faye (Gabriel)</td>
<td>doctor</td>
<td>Saint-Yrieix</td>
<td>municipal official (1791)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rivaud du Vignaud (François)</td>
<td>military officer</td>
<td>Dorat</td>
<td>Legislative Assembly member (1791–1792)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soulignac (Jean Baptiste)</td>
<td>avocat au parlement</td>
<td>Limoges</td>
<td>municipal official (1791–1792)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>district procureur-syndic (1790–1792)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a Member of the nobility.

Sources: Alfred Fray-Fournier, *Le Département de la Haute-Vienne, sa formation territoriale, son administration, sa situation politique pendant la Révolution* (Limoges, 1908), I, 132–38; and a variety of biographical and administrative records from the Revolution located in the Haute-Vienne Departmental Archives.

as secretary. The Haute-Vienne elected seven deputies to the Convention, as listed in Table 3.

Some interesting contrasts between the Haute-Vienne delegation and that from Calvados are discernible. The most obvious is in the size of the two delegations—the Haute-Vienne sent seven deputies, while Calvados sent thirteen. Three factors determined this: the size, population, and taxes of each department. Nearly all departments were the same in area, but the “active” population of Calvados nearly doubled that of the Haute-Vienne, and Calvados inhabitants paid nearly three times as much in taxes.14

Like the deputies from Calvados, the Haute-Vienne representatives all had experience in local administration. The difference here lay in the level of administration—the Calvados deputies more often had served as municipal officials, while those from the Haute-Vienne had more experience in district administration. Experience in departmental administration was approximately the same—five deputies (38 percent) from Calvados and two deputies (29 percent) from the Haute-Vienne had been departmental administrators. Experience in national politics was also similar. One Haute-Vienne deputy had sat in the Constituent Assembly, and three (43 percent) of the deputies had been members of the Legislative Assembly, a proportion almost identical to that in Calvados, and significantly above the national average.

The most striking contrast between the two delegations concerns geographic representation. We have seen that the Calvados deputation fairly represented the entire department and that a majority of the deputies had had some contact with Caen affairs as municipal or departmental officials. In the Haute-Vienne delegation, however, two districts—Saint-Léonard and Saint-Junien—sent no deputies to the National Convention. If one considers the three suppléants as well, two of the districts were overrepresented—Dorat, where the electoral assembly met, and Bellac. Five of those elected, fully half, came from this less agitated part of the department. Whereas the district of Limoges was well represented—two deputies and one suppléant—the town of Limoges was not. Two of the deputies had been departmental administrators and had therefore spent some time in Limoges. Jean Baptiste Soulignac had been a district administrator, but only Gay-Vernon had been a municipal official in Limoges. Moreover, Gay-Vernon served on the council of la Cité, the smaller, ecclesiastical section of town that had been absorbed into Limoges only in November, 1791, just as he left for the Legislative Assembly.

Overall, two salient characteristics of these delegations to the Convention should be emphasized. First, the electors in both departments appeared satisfied with the performance of their representatives to the Legislative Assembly. Each department reelected nearly 50 percent of those deputies, and the two delegations reflected no significant change in political attitudes. The majority of each would support the Girondins in 1793. Second, whereas
Caen was well represented among the Calvados deputies to the Convention, the Haute-Vienne delegation included only one deputy who can truly be said to have represented Limoges, the most important constituency in the department.

The deputies who gathered in the National Convention on September 20, 1792, faced an extremely important issue—one that remained largely unresolved over the next eight months. The question of what form the French state would assume loomed in the trial of Louis XVI and even more explicitly in the debate over a new constitution.

From the day of their arrival in Paris until the end of January, the deputies devoted most of their energy to the gathering and evaluation of evidence, the debate over the legitimacy of a trial before the Convention, the actual trial of Louis XVI, and the final vote on his sentence. This period was a painful and difficult one for the deputies, who were only too conscious of the gravity of the judgment that they were called upon to make. They voted not only on the fate of a king but on the fate of the French republic.¹⁵

Even after the execution of the king, however, the Convention was unable to make progress on its primary task. The drafting of a new constitution, necessitated by the fall of the monarchy, had been the explicit reason for the calling of the Convention. Exhaustion from the ordeal of the trial may partially explain the deputies’ inactivity on this project, but another factor must also be considered. The growing divisions within the Convention made agreement on any important issue virtually impossible. Marie Jean Antoine Condorcet presented his proposal for a constitution to the Convention on February 15, but no consensus formed in its support. Sitting with Condorcet on the Constitutional Committee had been Armand Gensonné, Pierre Victurnien Vergniaud, Jacques Pierre Brissot, and Jérôme Pétion, all associated with the Girondin faction, and the constitution proposed by Condorcet reflected their views. It would have increased the power of government ministers, at that time predominantly Girondin, and strengthened the role of departmental administrations. The Mountain attacked the document for its failure to guarantee political equality and for its excessive federalist tendencies. A stalemate developed that lasted until after the proscription of the Girondin deputies.¹⁶

The trial and execution of the king did not produce much reaction in either Calvados or the Haute-Vienne. For an explanation of this, we must look back to the weeks following the unsuccessful June 20 attack on the Tuileries palace. That violent demonstration by the Paris crowd had elicited nearly universal protest from departmental administrations.

The directory of the Calvados administration drafted a letter to the Legislative Assembly on July 2, 1792. In it, the directors lauded the courage of Louis and the dignified character of the legislators but denounced the factious elements in Paris and stressed that “the French Nation is not in one faubourg of the capital, in one town, in one department; she is in the union of all citizens; she is essentially in that honest and good people that loves liberty, searches for peace, and requires order.” The administrators closed their letter with an emotional appeal: “We are taking this opportunity to express to you our feelings. It is finally time that the reign of anarchy cease, that the Revolution end! The Nation has said: I want to be free, and she was; she says today: I want calm and order, and she will obtain them; her will is pronounced.”

This address reveals sentiments that had already appeared in Caen political life and that would continue to characterize the political attitudes of the town and the department throughout the following year: the conviction that the nation was embodied not in the capital but in all French citizens; a denunciation of factious elements; a demand for respect for the law; and finally, a desire for an end to anarchy. The praise of the king, however, and the call for an end to the Revolution were expressions that would become unacceptable after the journée of August 10 and even more so by January, 1793. That so many such addresses reached Paris in July very likely contributed to the Convention’s decision of October 19 calling for the complete renewal of all departmental administrations to purge the royalist element from these councils. Voters in Calvados reelected none of the seven departmental directors who had signed the July letter. The eighth director, Philippe Dumont, was elected to the Convention but felt obliged to defend his reputation in an April 28, 1793, letter to the president of the Calvados administration, in which he denied having supported the July address. Dumont observed that although he and Gustave Doulcet, former president of the department and now also a conventionnel, had been present at the July 2

17. A. D. Calvados, L10025 (documents pertaining to departmental procès-verbaux, 1790–1793)
meeting, they had not signed the letter and had in fact argued against it. The taint of that ill-considered expression of support for the king clearly was not quickly forgotten.

The Haute-Vienne directory also protested the outrage of June 20 in a letter to the king. There, however, the backlash was more immediate. The Limoges Jacobin club denounced the directory’s letter at a July 16 meeting, and on July 27 the club drafted its own letter to the Legislative Assembly demanding the dismissal of the four directors who had signed the letter to the king. Joseph Durand de Richemont, president of the department and one of the signatories, was one of the founders of the Jacobin club and was generally popular in Limoges, but he only regained favor after a public apology. The departmental administration provisionally replaced the other three, granting them leaves of absence. None of the three won reelection in November.19

The purge of royalist sympathizers from departmental administrations, plus the general shift in political attitudes, guaranteed that there would be few official protests of the king’s trial or fate. In both Caen and Limoges, a solemn mood greeted news of Louis’ execution, though in later years patriotic fetes celebrated the anniversary of the king’s death.

A greater concern in the early months of 1793 was the continuing dissen- sion within the Convention and the growing war crisis, which additionally hampered efforts to draft a constitution. France had been at war with Austria since April, 1792; and on February 1, 1793, only one week after the execution of the king, the Convention declared war on Great Britain. By March 7, France had declared war on Spain as well, thereby sowing the seeds of the First Coalition. Now faced by a more formidable array of enemies, the French armies were also plagued by insufficient provisions and dwindling numbers. Many volunteers returned home after a single campaign, and by February the army had dropped from 400,000 to 228,000 men. A new requisition of 300,000 soldiers, ordered on February 24, did not go smoothly. The crippled French army suffered repeated setbacks in a March campaign into Holland. In Paris, news of the defeats aroused the people’s patriotism and brought the creation of the Revolutionary Tribunal. But at the front, fortunes did not improve. Troops under General Charles François Dumouriez, the architect of the Belgian campaign, suffered decisive

defeats at Neerwinden and Louvain on March 18 and 21. Dumouriez struck a bargain with Frédéric Cobourg, the Austrian commander, agreeing to lead his troops in an attack on Paris and the Convention to restore the monarchy under the constitution of 1791. General Dumouriez arrested four deputies sent by the Convention to dismiss him and turned them over to the Austrians. His troops refused to follow him in his treason, though, and in early April, Dumouriez fled to the safety of the Austrian lines. 30

Compounding the problems of a failing foreign war was the real threat of civil war. The British and Austrians were, of course, eager to aid and promote internal attacks on the new regime. But the conscription of 300,000 men, ordered on February 24, was equally responsible for the troubles that grew in March and April. In the Lozère, the requisition of men revived royalist insurgency behind the leadership of Charrier, a former member of the Constituent Assembly. Panicky officials in a neighboring department wrote to the Convention of “a terrible insurrection” and the “massacre of all public officials.” 31 The most serious revolt, however, occurred in the Vendée. Bands of peasants, led by nobles and refractory priests, coalesced into a force large enough to threaten Nantes. At one point, the counterrevolutionaries crossed the Loire to the north, briefly taking Saumur. The Convention, in response, raised a large army, principally composed of volunteers, to put down this challenge to the Republic. The revolt could not be contained until October, 1793, and then only temporarily. During the intervening months, the Vendéan counterrevolution had a profound effect on other departments in western France.

The conscription of 300,000 men provoked resistance in both Caen and Limoges. On March 3 in Caen, a volatile situation developed on the prairie, located at the western edge of town. The previous evening, the municipality had received a hint of the impending trouble in an unsettling letter from one Louis Bellissent, who claimed he would rather die than join the army. Early on March 3, a group of women marched to the town hall and demanded the aid that had been promised to the wives and children of volunteers who had already been away at the front for months. The news of an additional military requisition did not raise the spirits of these disgruntled women. As they protested before the town hall, another group of people, some reportedly armed, gathered at the prairie to resist the recruitment. Esnault described

the group as "young bachelors" anxious to avoid military service.22 Another contemporary observer, himself arrested in the confusion later that day, described those resisting recruitment as coming from "classes that did not share the principles of the Revolution."23 The Carabots reported this unruly, unpatriotic gathering to the municipal council, which sent several of its members to disperse the crowd. They failed in their efforts and, at 6:00 P.M., gave way to the National Guard, which surrounded the prairie and arrested some 230 people. Most were released after questioning, but some thirty resisters remained in detention until April 10. Bonnet (of Calvados) and Jean Michel DuRoy (of the Eure), representatives on mission, ordered their release, citing their youth, the fact that no arms had been found, and the subsequent fulfillment of the recruitment quota. Similar incidents occurred in other parts of Calvados throughout March, but all were minor. The final recorded episode came late in the month, when the district directory ordered the Caen municipal council to arrest a soldier who had been seen in town wearing a uniform sporting epaulettes made of spinach.24

Trouble arose in Limoges as well. In contrast to the innocuous character of the March 3 troubles in Caen, though, resistance to recruitment in Limoges developed along lines reminiscent of the conflict between the Jacobin club and the Amis de la Paix. Unofficial word of the military requisition arrived on March 5, and a group of 150 young men gathered in the former church of the Augustins. They asked the municipal council to send a commissioner to preside over the meeting but were refused on the grounds that the meeting was unlawful, as it lacked prior authorization. Temporarily befuddled, the delegation to the council left. In the hours that followed, messengers shuttled back and forth between the Augustins and town hall. Those assembled insisted that authorization was not required, while the council cited the disruption of public order in demanding their dispersal. Finally, a report that "aristocrats" were present at the Augustins, trying to prevent young men from volunteering for the army, spurred mayor Déroche and two municipal officials to successfully break up the meeting.

Around three o'clock the next day, however, four members of the Jacobin club reported that a new gathering of young men had formed, composed of "former dragoons, amis de la paix, or individuals who had continually

22. Lesage (Esnault), 103.
24. A. C. Caen, D2 and I29 (Affaire du 3 mars 1793).
manifested uncivic opinions." The sizable group had already disrupted public order. The council ordered two companies of grenadiers and chasseurs to disperse the crowd and arrest the leaders ("les présumés coupables"). Those arrested included Pierre Balezy, a former notable, and Laforest cadet, both associated with the Amis de la Paix, along with a number of servants from some of the prominent Limoges households. There is no evidence that those arrested were ever brought to trial. Balezy, for example, was continually under suspicion during the following summer but suffered only provisional house arrest because he worked as a teinturier dyeing uniforms for the army.

Of greater consequence to the Haute-Vienne than the general military requisition, however, was the call for volunteers and supplies to combat the Vendean rebels. Revolt had erupted early in March, and on the seventeenth of that month a special courier from the Charente arrived in Limoges to inform the departmental administration of insurrection in the Deux-Sèvres, the Vendée, and neighboring departments. Pardoux Bordas (of the Haute-Vienne) and J. Borie (of the Corrèze), representatives on mission, arrived the same day, sent by the Convention to supervise recruitment. Their work in the department proceeded uneventfully, unusual in that elsewhere these early recruitment missions often inspired resentment. Recruitment for the army of the Moselle, the general destination of Haute-Vienne volunteers, went reasonably well, slowed only by the short supply of arms in the department. By March 18, Limoges had already filled its contingent, although some scattered resistance to recruitment persisted in rural cantons.

In addition to its quota of 3,539 men for the regular army, the Haute-Vienne also sent, between March and June, more than 2,000 volunteers to the rebel departments in the west. On March 22, the departmental administration informed the Charente officials that 300 volunteers had left Limoges for Niort on March 18 and that 800 others had probably by then left from other parts of the department. Two hundred twenty-five soldiers from the Corrèze had also passed through Limoges on their way to Niort. Three days later, in a letter to the minister of the interior, the departmental council revised upward to 2,000 its estimate of Haute-Vienne volunteers on their way to the Vendée.

25. A.D. Haute-Vienne, L197 (report of the municipality to the departmental administration).
26. A.D. Haute-Vienne, L849 (list of suspects in Limoges, prepared by the comité de surveillance).
The departmental administration pursued its efforts to assist in the battle against the Vendée rebels with considerable zeal. In mid-March, it ordered, at the urging of Limoges Jacobins, a special tax on rich aristocrats and _hommes suspects_, to be levied according to known or presumed wealth. The tax became a donation after Bordas and Borie ruled that no existing law would justify a compulsory tax.

Over the next two months, four additional pleas for help reached the Haute-Vienne from the Vendée and Deux-Sèvres. On each occasion, the department responded by raising additional forces. Departmental administrators spoke stirringly in public session of the responsibility of all citizens to defend the Republic. On May 13, the administration ordered that all National Guard officers down to the grade of _sous-lieutenant_ prepare to depart for Poitiers, an action that earned an honorable mention for the Haute-Vienne on the floor of the National Convention.27

By the last week of May, reports were so alarming that the administration called a general alert in the department and issued orders for the raising of yet another force to march to Poitiers. When a courier arrived from the Cantal on May 31, reporting news of a serious revolt in the Lozère, the Haute-Vienne could send nothing but gunpowder. The next day, however, good news from Niort allowed the departmental council to countermand the order for additional troops to go to Poitiers. Instead, it instructed volunteers to remain in their district _chefs-lieux_ until further notice.28

The impact of the Vendée revolt on political opinion in the Haute-Vienne must certainly have been considerable. The department had sent both men and supplies to combat the rebels, and reports of this counterrevolutionary challenge to the Republic roused the patriotism of administrators and citizens alike. In the midst of its fourth consecutive year of dearth, the department saw its traditional sources of grain to the west and northwest, the Charente and the Vienne, threatened by the rebel forces. But it would be an exaggeration to say that the Vendée revolt was the decisive factor in turning the Haute-Vienne away from the federalist movement. The department's manpower had been strained but not exhausted; five hundred to eight hundred troops remained at the ready in district _chefs-lieux_ on June 1. In July, the department could muster additional troops to send to the Vendée, and

27. Réimpression de l'Ancien Moniteur, XVI, 352 (session of May 9, 1793).
Limoges could raise a force to repel the advancing Bordeaux federalists. Those troops could have been used in a march on Paris, and we will see that the departmental administration considered that option in early June.

In Paris, the deputies were preoccupied by more than the demands of war at home and abroad. In April, 1793, the Convention easily passed a Girondin-supported proposal for the impeachment of Jean Paul Marat. A Jacobin circular, signed by Marat, “urging the departments to recall their unworthy representatives,” inspired the impeachment motion, but the real reasons for Marat’s indictment lay in his defense of the September massacres, his inflammatory rhetoric, and his continued championing of the Paris crowd.” Marat’s April 24 acquittal before the Revolutionary Tribunal represented a victory for the increasingly militant Paris sections and a further blow to the weakening Girondin majority in the Convention.

A more direct attack on the independence and influence of the Paris Commune followed on the heels of Marat’s acquittal. In the session of May 18, Marguerite Elie Guadet alleged that an insurrection against the Convention was being planned within Paris and proposed the dissolution of the Commune and the transfer of the Convention to Bourges. Taking a more moderate course, the deputies ordered the creation of a Commission of Twelve to investigate the situation in the capital. Girondin deputies and their supporters dominated this committee, which included not a single Montagnard. On May 24, Louis François Sébastien Viger reported to the Convention that the Commission of Twelve had found evidence of a planned insurrection. On that same day, Jacques René Hébert, the procureur of Paris, was arrested for publishing a denunciation of the Girondins in the Pére Duchesne.

Over the next two days, a parade of delegates from the sections appeared before the Convention to protest Hébert’s arrest. Far from modifying its action, however, the Commission ordered additional arrests, and debate in the Convention reached a fever pitch. Late on the night of May 27, after many of the moderate deputies had retired, the Montagnards secured the dissolution of the Commission of Twelve and the release of the prisoners. But the Girondins refused to accept defeat by political maneuver and contested this decision on the following day. In a very close count, with over one hundred abstentions and many Montagnards on mission in the departments, the Convention voted to reinstate the Commission. Three days later, the Paris

sections revolted, shifting the arena of contention from the Convention itself to the streets and thereby assuring the final defeat of the Girondin leaders.\(^\text{30}\)

The trial of Marat and the controversy surrounding the Commission of Twelve highlighted the two fundamental tensions that underlay national politics throughout this period: dissension within the National Convention and apprehension over the excessive political influence of the Paris crowd. These tensions were acutely felt in the capital; but the provinces, too, appreciated the threat that they posed for the young republic. These two issues, more than any other, generated an active correspondence between deputies in Paris and their constituents in the departments.

A division between moderate and radical deputies had already become apparent during the last months of the Legislative Assembly, but the revolution of August 10 produced a renewed commitment among the legislators to work together and overcome their differences for the sake of national unity. This uneasy truce lasted into September but crumbled almost as soon as the Convention met. As early as September 25, Jacques Brissot and Pierre Vergniaud accused Robespierre and other Montagnards of complicity in the September massacres.\(^\text{31}\) In late October, Jean Baptiste Louvet denounced Robespierre in his celebrated speech before the Convention, often described as the opening salvo in the Girondin/Montagnard conflict.\(^\text{32}\) Throughout the next two months, the diatribe continued against Robespierre, Marat, and Danton, who allegedly formed a triumvirate intent on establishing themselves as dictators. These personal attacks solidified the opposition between Montagnards and Girondins. Many provincial Frenchmen associated the Montagnards, and in particular “the triumvirate,” with the excessive political influence of the Paris crowd and the threat of anarchy that it represented.

News of developments in Paris reached the provinces through both official channels and letters from individual deputies to friends and administrators back home. As already noted, Bishop Gay-Vernon of Limoges corresponded regularly with the Jacobin club after his election to the Legislative Assembly and then to the Convention. Claude Jean Baptiste Lomont, one of Calvados’ deputies to the Convention, remained in close contact with his constituency in Caen. Lomont (born Dobiche de Lomont) had been procureur du roi à la monnaie de Caen before the Revolution, a position that


\(^{31}\) Sydenham, The Girondins, 126.

\(^{32}\) Jordan, The King’s Trial, 51–53.
would have acquainted him with Gabriel de Cussy, former *directeur de la monnaie* and another of Caen’s deputies to the Convention. Lomont had been elected to the departmental administration in 1790, had joined the directory, and had presided over the Caen Jacobin club in April, 1791. In the fall of that year, he had been elected to the Legislative Assembly. He appears to have been the deputy to whom the municipal council of Caen most frequently turned for assistance in its dealings with the national government.

Lomont’s earliest letters of record date from the last months of the Legislative Assembly. He addressed many of them to Pierre Jean Lévêque, a doctor in Caen, a prominent municipal official, and a personal friend. The two corresponded frequently over the next ten months, both on personal and official business. This liaison is particularly important because Lévêque would be elected a departmental administrator in September, would eventually become president of the administration, and in June, 1793, would be one of the leaders of the federalist movement in Caen.

Much of the correspondence between Lomont and officials in Caen dealt with routine administrative affairs—requests for public works funds, official appointments, and taxation questions. As the situation in Paris grew more unstable, however, letters focused more often on political matters. On August 7, the municipal council forwarded to Lomont a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly from the Caen sections demanding the suspension of Louis XVI. The deed had been accomplished, of course, before Lomont could deliver the petition.

On September 11, in the wake of troubles in both Paris and Caen, Lomont wrote directly to Lévêque. He graciously acknowledged his election to the Convention and requested clarification of the circumstances of the murder of Georges Bayeux. He made reference to the massacres in Paris and commented that “the people of Paris and Versailles have bestowed an air of justice to the vengeance that they exercised upon the prisoners: there is a sort of Court Martial which pronounces a preliminary verdict, but in Caen nothing at all like that, people say.” This was clearly a mild appraisal of the September massacres; but only one month later, Lomont showed more emotion in describing the dissension that had quickly developed in the Convention. In another letter to Lévêque, he wrote: “The enemies of order have long been uniting to sow and support suspicions of the best patriots. Buzot, Brissot, Fauchet, Guadet, Vergniaud, etc., whose patriotism equals their talents, are

33. A. C. Caen, D1.
34. A. D. Calvados, L10276 (Lévêque correspondence).
each day slandered by a handful of men who are as spiteful as they are despicable. And their efforts will be futile: Marat, their writer, is currently loathed, even though the Jacobins of Paris (I speak only of thirty or so leaders) never cease praising him."

Gabriel de Cussy seconded Lomont's opinion in a letter to the municipal council on October 31. He requested that the council read in a public meeting Jean Baptiste Louvet's recent discourse to the Convention denouncing Robespierre. De Cussy assured the people of Caen that the majority of Parisians were good citizens but noted the presence in the Convention of a handful of scoundrels. He suggested that a departmental guard, sent to Paris, might be necessary to expel them.

De Cussy’s letter is an interesting one, raising both the idea of expelling a small group of troublemakers from the Convention (a fate that he himself would suffer ten months later) and the possibility that a departmental guard might assist in that task. The Calvados administration had already supported the latter proposal in a letter addressed to the Convention two weeks earlier, perhaps the first call from the departments for the creation of such a guard. On October 21, Philippe Dumont informed the departmental administrators that their letter had been well received by many deputies but that debate had resulted in a tabling of the question. In the following two months, factionalism persisted in Paris, and talk of raising a departmental guard to protect the Convention continued. Finally, on January 2, 1793, the departmental administration wrote to the Convention offering to send a force from Calvados. The most important passage declared:

You are described as exposed under the axe of the executioner; Paris, the cradle of Liberty, is full of conceited and bloodthirsty agitators: they want to interfere with your opinions: cruel and cowardly men are preaching carnage. Well! the citizens of Calvados are roused. Impatient, they are eager to sign their names in the civic registers; they want to depart, to avenge your threatened Liberty, the debased Sovereignty of the People, and to render Paris worthy of her glory; they will support the work of their Representatives, OR THEY WILL DIE! The fire that inflames them will spread to all Departments, and the French Senate will soon enjoy, despite those who defile its meeting place, the calm necessary for the formation of good laws.

35. Ibid., letter of October 5, 1792.
36. A. C. Caen, 133 (Affaire de la garde départementale de la Convention, lettre de Cussy).
37. B. M. Caen, Fr. Br. 981; Paul Delasalle, Documents inédits sur le fédéralisme en Normandie (Le Mans, 1844).
38. A. D. Calvados, 1.10021 (documents pertaining to deliberations of constituted authorities).
The council attached to this letter a previous order regulating the formation of the proposed departmental force and calling on volunteers with valid *certificats de civisme* to enroll at the secretariats of their district directories.

A January 4 letter from the Calvados delegation to the departmental council confirmed the administrators’ fears. Signed by all thirteen Calvados deputies to the Convention, the letter spoke of a “parti désorganisateur” in Paris and of threats of anarchy and claimed that “Pache himself, the Minister of War, is very suspect to the true friends of the Republic.” Despite these misgivings, the deputies expressed confidence that the patriotic majority of the Convention would continue to predominate.49

Sentiments similar to those in Calvados prevailed in the Limousin. On January 17, following the example of the nearby Corrèze, the Haute-Vienne administration voted to announce to the Convention that the entire departmental force was prepared to march to Paris to ensure the integrity and security of the Convention. The administration ordered all national guardsmen to make ready, with each soldier to receive thirty *sols* per day while on duty. The decree invited individual citizens to go to Paris as well. Two days later, the departmental council wrote to the Convention denouncing the factions and anarchy that threatened the deputies and informing them of the Haute-Vienne’s actions:

> At the cry of danger that surrounds you, all of the Citizens of the departments are roused and, from all points of the Empire, their innumerable legions await but the signal of the law to throng to your meeting place; because you must finally be free, and such is the formidable crisis into which events have drawn you that you cannot be so without surrounding yourselves with a departmental force powerful enough to assure the success of your labors, to annihilate the factions and dispel the anxiety of your constituents. Hasten therefore to organize that tutelary force that should save Liberty; all of the Citizens of our department, anxious to cooperate in its formation, fervently appeal for the order to come to your defense.46

At subsequent meetings, the departmental council received numerous addresses from other departments asserting the need for departmental guards in Paris to protect the Convention. On February 11, the administration ordered all public officials to swear an oath, recently sworn and circulated by the council of the Haute-Loire, declaring anathema all “Kings . . . Tyrants . . . Dictators . . . triumvirs” and promising to defend the liberty,

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equality, and sovereignty of the people, as well as the unity and indivisibility of the Republic.41

Although neither Calvados nor the Haute-Vienne sent a departmental guard to Paris, other departments did. Both Finistère and the Bouches-du-Rhône, at the unauthorized bidding of their deputies A. B. F. Kervélégan and Charles Jean Marie Barbaroux, sent forces that had arrived in the capital by December, 1792.42 By February, as many as twelve thousand soldiers had gathered in Paris. The Convention hotly debated the question of calling troops to the capital and on January 13, 1793, adopted a plan for a formal provincial force to protect its meeting place. But Jean Baptiste Boyer-Fonfrède raised questions about the efficacy of such a plan, and the deputies ultimately rejected it. On March 5, the Convention went one step further and ordered the troops already in Paris to return to the defense of their departments.43 Departmental forces did not therefore remain in Paris. The debate of the question in the Convention and the de facto presence of troops in the capital for at least three months, however, established an important precedent for the following summer.

Correspondence between the capital and the provinces increased during April and May as the trial of Marat and the formation of the Commission of Twelve raised tensions in Paris to a critical level. As early as April 1, Gabriel de Cussy complained to the Caen municipal council of the insults and threats that he and his colleagues endured and expressed his hope that "abominable traitors" masquerading as patriots would soon be expelled from the Convention.

De Cussy wrote again the next day, describing the treason of Dumouriez, the agitation of the Paris sections, and his own fearlessness before death. He denounced Danton and Marat by name. Less than two weeks later, he exultantly reported the decree of accusation against Marat and reviled those who defended that "cruel and cowardly instigator of pillage and assassinations." Once again, he castigated the insolent and insulting Parisian crowd, which had taunted him and three others as they left the assembly hall that day.44

41. A. D. Haute-Vienne, I, 57.
44. A. C. Caen, I, 34 (Lettres des députés du Calvados). The crucial paragraph in de Cussy's first letter reads, "Les gens de bien depuis longtemps abreuves d'amerume, exposes sans cesse aux injures du peuple, exposés même à la mort vont être vengés. La république va reconnaître des traitres abominables qui n'avaient que le masque du patriotisme. J'espère que la séance ne sera pas levée sans que des membres de la Convention soient décrétés d'accusation et arrêtés."
Alarmed by these reports of factionalism and anarchy in Paris, the Calvados departmental and Caen district administrations met together on April 19 to petition the Convention: “Save yourselves, and you can save us! Such is the cry of France; will it not have been heard? Representatives of the People, we will tell you the truth: your divisions create all of our misfortunes. It is a Marat, a Robespierre, a Danton, who always occupy and agitate you, and you forget that an entire People suffers, worries, and awaits the solace of Laws.” They went on to speak of the glory of France, of the one, great family that the nation should be, of the need to ignore disorganizing factions; and they closed with the following paragraph:

Elected of the people, you know it, France is not in Paris; she is formed by eighty-four Departments; if in one you are insulted, in another you will be respected, obeyed; there you will find a shelter from the furor and the plots of rascals; there you will enjoy your rights and Liberty; there you will live among the French, Republicans, brothers who will know how to ward off from you daggers and assassins. But before leaving the first cradle of Liberty, make a final effort; brave the storms; spurn the rumors of a few careerists; punish the conspirators; work to give sage Laws to a great People; save your country; obtain happiness for your fellow-citizens; above all, make yourselves respected; and if a few scoundrels again lift their blasphemous voices, think of us, speak, and you shall be avenged.45

In this address, one hears echoes of earlier messages to the Convention: the complaint against dissension; the denunciation of Marat, Robespierre, and Danton; a plea for the “solace of Laws.” There remains hope that the Convention can rise above its disagreements to carry on its work, but there is the hint, again, that the Convention should be moved elsewhere and the promise to avenge the deputies if they should be attacked. Seven of the Calvados deputies wrote to the department lauding the letter and requesting additional copies to meet the enormous demand from other departments and popular societies. They reported a slight improvement in the situation in Paris.46

The amelioration of affairs in Paris proved illusory, however. In early May, Jean Baptiste Lomont wrote twice to his friend Léveque, first on May 3 and again on May 10. He reiterated the praise of the Calvados delegation for the department’s letter of April 19, but he also wrote of “the atrocious calumnies that people continuously heap upon the best deputies,” of the threats that continued to hang over their heads, and of his fear that the Re-

45. A. D. Calvados, I.10024 (Procès-verbaux du Conseil Général du département).
46. A. D. Calvados, I.10125 (documents pertaining to federalism; letter of May 6, 1793, signed by Dumont, Philippe-Delleville, Lomont, Legot, Vardon, and Fauchet).
public might break into a thousand pieces. He remarked that he had en-
countered several of his “concitoyens” from Calvados in Paris. Bougon-
Longrais, the procureur-général-syndic of the department, visited the capital
in May; and Jean Adrien Lasseret, then a notable of Caen, had visited in late
April, carrying a message from the municipal council to the Convention.
While cautioning that circumstances might change quickly, Lomont closed
his May 10 letter with an expression of guarded optimism.47

In subsequent letters, Lomont grew more pessimistic. On May 13, he
railed against Bougon, with whom he said he had been “intimately tied . . .
since the dawn of the revolution.” Bougon, upon his arrival in Paris, had
been accused by DuRoy (a Montagnard deputy who had been on mission to
Caen in March) of having authored the Calvados letter of April 19. Bougon
denied all knowledge of the letter and, after having read it, went so far as to
say that he did not support it. This greatly dismayed the Calvados deputies.
Although Lomont charitably blamed the incident on Bougon’s youth and
inexperience, he could not help but question his principles. He assured
Lévêque that the entire Calvados delegation, except for the Montagnard
Bonnet, continued to struggle for the principles of the Revolution and would
die, if need be, for the liberty of France.48

Lomont next wrote to Lévêque on May 15, after the Convention had re-
ceived a May 10 letter from the departmental administration. The admin-
istrators had denounced, without blaming either Montagnards or Girondins,
the continued factionalism within the Convention and had once again im-
plored the deputies to put aside their differences and get on with the busi-
ness of drafting a constitution. Lomont was clearly disappointed in this
letter. He wrote: “It seems, my dear fellow-citizen, that the more audacity
the rascals show, the more the Calvados administration controls its ven-
geance and minces its words. I am a frank and plainspoken republican; I do
not know, myself, how to speak with Economy. Your last address did not
compare with the one before. Your last address speaks redundantly of pas-
sions, of rivalries, of the hatreds that trouble the peace amongst us, or
speaks incessantly of our divisions, etc.” This, said Lomont, was not accep-
table; it was not precise. Factions did not exist within the Convention. One
faction alone troubled the peace, and this was the Mountain. Lomont sug-

47. A. D. Calvados, L.10276 (Lévêque correspondence).
48. A. D. Calvados, L.10134 (documents pertaining to federalism); Grall, “La très courte
carrière d’un procureur général syndic,” 338.
gested more verve, a bolder tone in future letters and referred to the previous day’s letter from Bordeaux as a model: “You will see, dear comrade, the address of Bordeaux—compare it. Simply compare your two addresses and decide for yourself. If I am wrong tell me your opinions as frankly as I tell you mine. Above all believe that my sincere devotion will end only with the life of your friend.” Here, Lomont was virtually instructing Lévêque and the Calvados administration on the proper manner in which to write an effective letter to the Convention.49

Lomont sent his final letter of record, dated May 21, from Buges, where he was on mission to supervise the production of assignats. He expressed longing to return to Paris, where he could better defend the Republic with his life, and insisted that the attacks on individual deputies amounted to no less than attacks on the national sovereignty.

News of the Convention’s tumultuous session of May 27 produced one final protest from Calvados before the drama in Paris reached its climax. This letter surely proved more pleasing to Lomont than did the address of May 10. The administrators reported the outrage of the people of Caen at reports of the disorderly May 27 session of the Convention and promised a departmental force to protect the national representatives. They concluded the address with a stern warning: “All the Departments, we have no doubt, will follow this example, and soon you will be surrounded by an imposing Army that will know how to make you respected. We declare a war to the death against Anarchists, Proscribes, and Factionists, and we will not put down our arms until we have returned them to oblivion.”50

The months of April and May in the Haute-Vienne did not bring the flurry of correspondence that marked this period in Calvados. On March 19, the department had sent to the Convention a message in which it pledged its efforts against the Vendean rebels and expressed its confidence in the Convention. Its one veiled criticism lay in calling for the rapid completion of a constitution that would unify the country.51 Efforts to ready men and supplies to send to Niort and Poitiers occupied the next eight weeks. There is no

49. A. D. Calvados, L10276. This message is strikingly similar to two letters sent to the Bordeaux Popular Society on May 4 and 5 by Pierre Vergniaud, who implored his constituents to protest to the Convention and to come to the aid of their legislators. Lomont’s counsel to Lévêque suggests that Vergniaud’s entreaty was successful. For Vergniaud’s letters, see F. A. Aulard, Recueil des Actes du Comité de Salut Public avec la Correspondance officielle des représentants en mission (Paris, 1891), IV, 196.
50. A. C. Caen, 134 (Adresses et députations à la Convention).
51. A. D. Haute-Vienne, L57.
record of further correspondence to or from the capital until the last week in May, when the situation in the Convention was becoming critical.

An explanation for the relative silence of the Haute-Vienne administrators during this period lies not only in their preoccupation with the Vendée revolt but also in the evolution of the attitudes of Limoges Jacobins during the first few months of 1793. Whereas the Caen club had broken its affiliation with the Paris Jacobins, the Limoges Jacobin club maintained its ties. But relations between the clubs in Limoges and Paris were marred by some stormy periods. On January 16, 1793, the Limoges club voted to draft a letter to the Convention in support of the Rodez club’s petition requesting the expulsion of Marat from the Assembly. One week later, the club sent another address denouncing the factions in the Convention. It also voiced support for the Girondin minister Jean Marie Roland. On February 24, a letter arrived from the Paris Jacobins announcing the impending arrival in Limoges of Xavier Audouin, a native son who had recently relocated in Paris. The letter chided the Limoges club for not writing more regularly. Audouin—who had just married the daughter of Jean Nicolas Pache, the former minister of war and recently elected mayor of Paris—arrived in Limoges the next day. Club members questioned the recent behavior of the Paris Jacobins, particularly their attacks on Condorcet, but Audouin defended the Paris club and the people of Paris and offered to act as a special intermediary between the citizens of Limoges and higher administrative authorities. The club voted to reestablish correspondence with the Paris club and in subsequent months received regular letters from Audouin as well.

On March 18, Pardoux Bordas, an Haute-Vienne deputy to the Convention, passed through Limoges on a recruitment mission. He, too, talked with club members and stressed that though the Convention might occasionally appear divided, the great majority of deputies worked for the public good and were united in their votes on important matters.52

Reassured by these two visitors about the patriotism of the Paris club and the spirit of the Convention, the Limoges Jacobin club grew more radical in the weeks that followed. On April 1, still receiving the moderate Gorsas journal despite having canceled its subscription, the club voted to burn the most recent issue and send the ashes to Gorsas (who had once been a corresponding member of the Limoges club). On April 10, after some debate, the

52. Fray-Fournier, Le Club des Jacobins, 112.
members voted to support the Paris Jacobin club’s proposal for the recall of those deputies who had voted for the “appel au peuple” in the king’s trial. Finally, in early May, the Limoges Jacobins congratulated Marat on his recent acquittal—a reversal of the attitude expressed in its January letter condemning Marat.53

The shift in attitude among the Limoges Jacobins could not have failed to restrain the actions of departmental officials. By late May, however, the situation in Paris had deteriorated, and on May 23, the Haute-Vienne administration sent another address to the Convention. Yet it conveyed neither the urgency nor the vehemence of the Calvados letters. The council expressed its profound appreciation for the honorable mention given the Haute-Vienne for its recent recruiting efforts. The administrators asked in recompense that the Convention forget its divisions, proceed quickly to the drafting of a constitution, and bring an end to factions and anarchy. In closing, they described the department’s need for both arms and bread, which they implored the Convention to send.54

The following day, before this letter could have reached Paris, the majority of the Haute-Vienne delegation to the Convention reported to their constituents, in rather measured words, the confusion and disaccord in the capital, the difficult circumstances under which they debated, and the plots being uncovered by the Commission of Twelve. Only in their final paragraph did the deputies assume a more strident tone:

Citizens! Paris is outraged by conspirators; it will avenge its glory. Respectful toward the national representation, sole rallying point of Frenchmen, friend of laws, it wants a constitution, the preservation of property and personal safety, order, peace, unity, the death of anarchy and all despotism. Under whatever form it appears this cry of all Good Frenchmen has struck it: Marseille, Bordeaux, Calvados and the Orne have made it ring out. It rings from all points of the Republic; would that it could be heard in our department. Paris has served its country well, and that which is in the hearts of its inhabitants is ready to be spoken. The country can only find help outside the abyss into which one would push it.55

Despite what he termed the “good intentions” of his fellow deputies, Gay-Vernon refused to sign this letter to the Haute-Vienne administration. He drafted a separate message, in which he played down the threat to the Con-

53. Ibid., 99–124.
55. A.D. Haute-Vienne, L174 (correspondence from Haute-Vienne deputies to the Convention to the departmental administration).
vention: “Paris is excellent and the intriguers and malcontents will lose themselves in the crowd.” He did not deny the existence of conspirators but expressed confidence that good citizens would be vigilant. He concluded, “I applaud the zeal of the deputation, but I do not share its opinion of the present circumstances. The diversity of sentiments proves that with the same desires one can employ different means in order to arrive at the same goal.”

The Limoges Jacobins, heeding the words of Gay-Vernon, issued a denunciation of the letter from the rest of the delegation. But despite the arrival of an additional note from Bordas (who had also signed the earlier address), which dismissed “les menaces exagérées” and advised calm and restraint, the departmental administration, on May 30, drafted its strongest protest of the factions and dissension within the Convention. The administrators stated their hope that the Convention would finally have “vanquished the monster of disorganization, of anarchy, and of civil war.” They denounced the scoundrels who talked of proscribing deputies, asserting that they spoke for all the people of the Haute-Vienne.

Although the Haute-Vienne council did not go so far as to pledge a “war to the death,” as administrators in Calvados had done, its May 30 message constituted a strong condemnation of the divisions and legislative paralysis that had developed in Paris in the previous months. Similar protests came from departments all over France. Indeed, the federalist revolt in June could be seen as the culmination of this long-term concern—as a simple, and final, reaction to the proscription of the Girondin deputies. On the other hand, many of the departments that sent protests to the Convention between January and June, like the Haute-Vienne, acquiesced in the revolution in Paris that confirmed the supremacy of the Montagnards.

The divergence of departments’ reactions to the June revolt can be attributed in part to the composition of departmental delegations to the Convention and to the communication networks that developed between the deputies and their constituents. The delegations of Calvados and the Haute-Vienne both overwhelmingly supported the Girondins in 1793. But whereas in Calvados the sole Montagnard deputy was the disreputable former noble Bonnet de Meautry, who wrote only occasionally to his constituents in

56. Ibid.
58. A. D. Haute-Vienne, 1391 (Adresses à la Convention).
Caen, the Haute-Vienne Montagnards Gay-Vernon and Bordas maintained regular contact with Limoges (almost incessant contact, in the case of Gay-Vernon) and consistently downplayed the divisions in Paris. By contrast, Lomont and de Cussy grew increasingly adamant in their denunciations of the factious Montagnards in April and May and exhorted the people of Caen to prepare for action.

The mediating role of the Limoges Jacobins also must be stressed, particularly in contrast to the negligible role of the Caen club. In Calvados, nearly all correspondence from deputies in Paris went to local administrations or to personal friends, such as Lévéque, who were also officials. The Caen Jacobin club had broken its ties with the Paris club and in 1793 fell into decline. The Limoges club, though, despite some temporary disillusionment with the mother society, maintained an active correspondence both with the Paris Jacobins and with Gay-Vernon and Xavier Audouin. This introduced to Limoges, and to the Haute-Vienne, a point of view to which Caen was little exposed. The people of Caen heard from their trusted deputies nothing but woeful reports and urgent alarms. Gay-Vernon counseled the Limoges Jacobins to ignore the well-intentioned, but exaggerated, reports of the other Haute-Vienne deputies, and the club faithfully carried that message to the local administrations.

It is important to note, however, that influence flowed not only from Paris to the departments but in the other direction as well. The departmental alignment in June, 1793, was not determined by instructions from deputies in Paris. The strength of the Jacobin club in Limoges gave Gay-Vernon a hearing in that town that he might not otherwise have enjoyed. Bonnet de Meautry had no comparable base of support in Caen, and this limited his influence. Gabriel de Cussy grew virulent in his denunciations of the “scoundrels” within the Convention and his calls for retribution, but he was encouraged in his statements by the strong expressions of concern and protest issued by authorities in Caen. The call for a departmental guard for the Convention came first from the Calvados administration and then from de Cussy.

A clear and consistent pattern emerges from the various protests and petitions registered by authorities in Calvados over this period. As early as July, 1792, the Calvados administration had denounced anarchy and factionalism, called for respect for the law, and particularly insisted that the nation resided not only in Paris but in all the departments of France. These themes
were reiterated in all of the letters and protests sent from Caen to Paris over the next ten months: in October, in January, in April, and again in May. Calvados denounced factionalism and the excessive influence of Paris more frequently and consistently than any other department. In April, that aggressive posture earned the praise of moderate deputies in the National Convention. In June, it would lure to Caen many of the proscribed Girondins, anxious to find a secure haven from which to continue their struggle with the Montagnards.