

## 10.2 French Revolution: The Reign of Terror

**Historical Background:** After Louis's execution, the national assembly appointed a 12 man Committee of Public Safety to run the country. Robespierre, a great orator dominated the committee and led the army to protect the nations borders. Then he launched a nationwide campaign of repression that became known as the Reign of Terror. During the years 1793-1794 , more than 250,000 thousand people suspected of anti-revolutionary activities or of helping France's enemies were sent to the guillotine. Most of the people rounded up were not aristocrats, but ordinary people. Terror was the order of the day. In the words of Maximilien Robespierre, "Softness to traitors will destroy us all."

**Directions:** Read each source and complete the 6Cs.

**Prompt:** Based on your understanding of the documents, *is a government ever justified in using violence against those it identifies as a hostile threat to the State? Who gets to decide?*

1

**Quote:** Jacobins *In Favor of the Reign*

Following the execution of King Louis XVI, the National Convention argued about how the country should be run and how the war should be fought. Two Groups emerged. The Jacobins in favor of the terror and the Girondins who were against using terror.

*Source: Jacobin quote about the Reign of Terror*

“We must suspend free speech and liberty so we can win the war. Otherwise, there will be nothing left to defend.”

2

**Quote:** Girondins *Against the Reign of the Reign*

Following the execution of King Louis XVI, the National Convention argued about how the country should be run and how the war should be fought. Two Groups emerged. The Jacobins in favor of the terror and the Girondins who were against using terror.

*Source: Girondins quote about the Reign of Terror*

“We must preserve the ideals of free speech and liberty at all costs. Otherwise, the French Revolution is not worth fighting for.”

# 3

## Political Cartoon

Anyone suspected of supporting the king or criticizing the revolution were subject to arrest and execution. People were terrified. Robespierre used their terror to further his goals of creating a republic.

*Source: Guillotine Image*



# 4

## Excerpt: Robespierre Speech

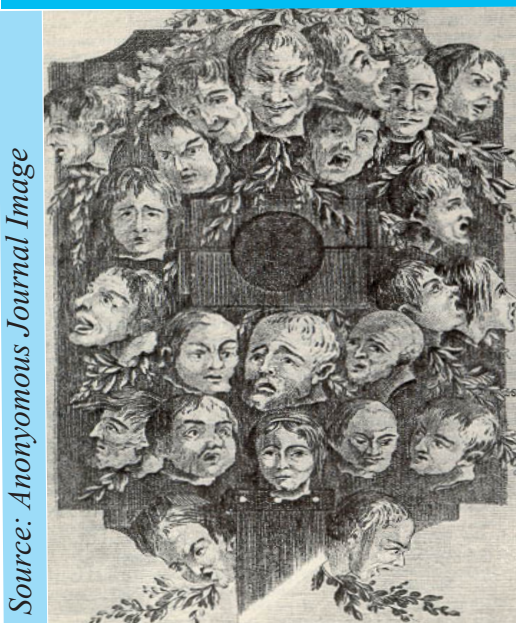
Speech written by Robespierre used as a justification for using terror in order to keep order in France.

*Source: Excerpt from a speech by Robespierre*

“If the spring of popular government in time of peace is virtue, the springs of popular government in revolution are at once virtue and terror: virtue, without which terror is fatal; terror, without which virtue is powerless. Terror is nothing other than justice, prompt, severe, inflexible...It has been said that terror is the principle of despotic government. Does your government therefore resemble despotism? Yes, as the sword that gleams in the hands of the heroes of liberty resembles that with which the henchmen of tyranny are armed.”

# 5

## Political Cartoon: “It is dreadful but necessary”



*Source: Anonymous Journal Image*

Anonymous print, “It is dreadful but necessary”

(“C'est affreux mais nécessaire”),

from the Journal d’Autre Monde, 1794.