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Pierre Triomphe, *1815, La Terreur blanche*. Toulouse: Privat, 2017. 475 pp. Tables, maps, notes, bibliography, and index. 21€ (pb). ISBN 978-2-7089-6969-8.

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Given the relative paucity of publication on the subject, it would be faint praise to say that Pierre Triomphe's monograph is now the leading work on the White Terror; while the assertion is obviously true, it is more appropriate to say that the author has deeply enriched understanding of the early years of the Bourbon Restoration, of the revival of royalism, and of the process by which construction of memory of the White Terror contributed to enduring negative stereotypes concerning the Midi.[1]

There is so much to be said about the book that one has to make choices. It is divided into three main parts: the first two consist of detailed description and analysis of what occurred, and the third discusses memory construction up to contemporary times. While I intend to focus on the first two parts, I should say that the three parts work well as an ensemble. The author's discussion of how the terms "terror" and then "white terror" were deployed as part of a long-term partisan struggle between the two Frances (old and new) is highly instructive, though I would add that Restoration liberal discourse was directed as much at ultra-royalism as it was at monarchy.

Triomphe's discussion of memory construction also goes some way towards explaining why he designed his own study in the way he did. The book is highly innovative in several ways. As he acknowledges, there is always something arbitrary in the way one defines a research project.[2] Not every one will agree with the decisions made, and such decisions inevitably preclude other perspectives. The value of situating the White Terror as the final episode in a struggle waged from the decline of the First Empire to early 1816 is, I think, fully demonstrated. Whether that struggle constituted a civil war depends on what one considers essential to the latter. There were no great battles of the sort waged in the 1790s, but the term does serve to underline the depth and durability of antagonisms that made the Midi distinctive, though not unique. A second innovation lies in Triomphe's definition of the Midi as the twenty departments three times delegated by Louis XVIII to provisional governments led by the Duke of Angoulême. Stretching from the Alps to the Pyrenees, and the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, the area comprised about a quarter of French territory and population. There were, of course, other options, and not everyone will concur with such extensive inclusion, but it does flow logically from the author's point that the idea of the Midi was in the early stages of construction during the Restoration, and Triomphe is rigorous in pointing to diversity in character and experience within the space he has delimited. Prior studies have been too inclined to draw general conclusions about the Midi based upon local episodes or departmental case-studies.[3] Because Triomphe casts his research net more broadly, he provides much more depth of information, leavened by insightful analysis, to create a more balanced account.

Another innovation lies in the emphasis the author places on the revival of royalism in the Midi. In part, the force of his analysis derives from chronological telescoping. It is possible to trace royalist societies, leadership, and patronage chains from the Revolution onwards, an approach that tends to emphasize continuities rather than new departures. Where appropriate, Triomphe does cite these long-term elements, but he does not dwell upon them, perhaps because he wishes to break from a line of interpretation that views the White Terror as a final episode of extremism begun during the Revolution. Instead he notes that tensions between patriots and royalists had abated during the years of Imperial victory, prior to discussing the circumstances that provoked gathering opposition during the years of defeat from 1810 onwards. Crucially, he points out that royalists were better placed than republicans to appeal to the discontented; too many republicans had rallied to Napoleon.[4] Much of politics is about seizing opportunities of the moment, and who it is that seizes them.

Triomphe's discussion of mounting tensions and antagonism between "patriots" and royalists during the period between Napoleon's two abdications is multifaceted, absorbing, and convincing. It is far too complex to describe here, and so I will settle for mentioning points that I find particularly illuminating. Early in the First Restoration there was perhaps a chance for broad unanimity in favor of a regime that promised peace and economic revival. The counter-revolutionary demands and pretensions of "exclusive" royalists, nobles and clergymen to the fore but by no means alone, then undermined the prospects of social peace, triggering the Revolutionary Bonapartism of the Hundred Days. Tensions and frustrations were exacerbated by uncertainty about the future, and the hard fact that the government of France would be decided elsewhere. While projects for an independent Midi to be led by Angoulême caused alarm at Paris, they existed only on paper. Royalists did organize volunteer military forces, but they were no match for the Imperial army, which further envenomed relations by deploying the brutal pacification strategies developed during the 1790s in France and then honed abroad.

The massacres and assassinations that became symbolic of the White Terror of 1815 occurred amidst a vacuum of power following Napoleon's second abdication. While they could not determine outcomes at Paris, Midi royalists could seek to seize power at home. Even so, the provisional government established at Toulouse exercised very little control over most of the Midi. Mass lethal violence was localized, erupting only at certain epicenters where political and religious friction was especially intense, although royalist bands did fan out from urban centers, carrying murder, pillage, extortion, and rapine to neighboring rural areas. While statistics are approximate, the number of mortalities (somewhere between 200 and 600) was not high in relation to other violent episodes, and there was only one prison massacre. Thus there was a good deal of exaggeration involved when Restoration liberals sought, successfully, to associate events in the Midi in 1815 with the Jacobin Terror and the September Massacres of the Revolution. That terror was effectively sown, however, could be seen in the numbers, mostly Protestants, who took flight from their homes—somewhere in the tens of thousands. Where they could, many local officials took a pragmatic wait-and-see position and tried to prevent extreme actions, although insult, threat, and non-lethal violence were widespread. Initially matters were further complicated by the attempts of the Bourbon central government to re-establish control; agents of the Angoulême government were more inclined to pursue retribution than officials dispatched from Paris, and they were reluctant to yield authority, furthering confusion and disorder.

In analyzing the nature of the violence that occurred from July through December 1815, the author rejects older contentions that mass violence was orchestrated by royalist elites. Violence was the work of the royalist popular classes acting spontaneously and of their own volition; royalist leaders could not control them and to have attempted to do so would have jeopardized their efforts to gain ascendancy over them. For the latter reason, royalist leaders also subsequently blocked or hindered attempts to prosecute participants in the various atrocities. For its part, the central government sought to regain control initially through strategic compromises based on ignoring past royalist actions, while simultaneously repressing elements associated with the Hundred Days. Compromise also entailed royalist elite domination of administrative positions, while lesser social elements gained remuneration through entry into the newly formed army departmental legions and prestige through (often illegal) entry into national guards. Such arrangements helped to re-establish order and, in the long run, they played a critical role in cementing a durable Midi royalism that combined elite and popular elements.

Triomphe's analysis of popular royalism, particularly as manifest in traditional culture and collective festivities in which the threat of violence often lurked, is highly informative. Royalism lacked a coherent program, which contributed to its appeal at a variety of social levels, although it also led to splintering at the leadership level. At a popular level royalism was expressed in exuberant Catholic religiosity and adulation of the royal family, but at its foundation was the belief that times had been better in the past, and an association of social hierarchy with more equitable economic relations.

That the masses had their own reasons for, and interest in, royalism, is a key component in the author's argument against allegations that elites directed massacre and assassination. His points are well taken and convincing; subsequent liberal claims were exaggerated for partisan purposes and they certainly did not apply throughout much of the Midi. I would however add some nuance to this general conclusion. As Triomphe remarks, it is often difficult to be certain one way or another.[5] Given the lengths royalist leaders went to prevent subsequent investigation, it is not surprising that conclusive evidence is difficult to find. Nevertheless, in certain notorious instances, such as the murder of General Ramel, a degree of elite complicity is apparent. That royalist leaders ordered an assassination appears improbable, and clearly matters spun out of control. It is equally evident however that little effort was made to intervene when there was opportunity to do so, and that the fate of Ramel made intimidation of opponents, moderate or extreme, all the more effective throughout the Haut-Garonne. So, while royalist leaders did not initiate mass violence, in this case they could have done more to limit it, and thereafter they certainly exploited fear of it. Was this instance typical? Even though exceptional, violent White Terror was intimately tied to local power struggles in which exclusive royalists strengthened their positions against "patriots" and moderates alike.[6]

Failure to build a moderate center upon which a stable regime could rest proved lethal for the Restoration, and with this in mind it is instructive to note that the author's fine analysis of revival points to the ascendancy of an extreme variant of royalism in the Midi. In Triomphe's book one encounters many "exclusive" or "pure" royalists during the First Restoration, many ultra-royalists during the Second Restoration, and many legitimists during the July Monarchy. Conversely, individuals who can be identified with moderate royalism seem remarkably thin on the ground, at least at the leadership level. Perhaps the absence or relative weakness of moderate royalism reflects

periodization; 1815 was a year of polarization favorable to extremism rather than accommodation. Triomphe does indicate that demands of a counter-revolutionary nature diminished after the Hundred Days, but he also notes that ongoing ultra-royalist inclination to exclude others from government office and even participation in royalist festivities drove at least some moderates into what would become the Liberal Opposition camp. Fluctuations in the reputation of Angoulême also seem to suggest that the original nature of Restoration royalism in the Midi did not much alter when it came to willingness to compromise. Initially Angoulême was popular among Midi ultra-royalists, but his star then waned as he re-positioned himself as something of a liberal in the royal family. In 1823 prior to intervention in Spain, he again became a heroic warrior in royalist panegyric. Despite actually demonstrating some military aptitude in the “Spanish promenade,” he thereafter again fell out of favor.[7] Was this because he had tried to force compromise upon Ferdinand VII and Spanish ultra-royalists? The result of his failure was, of course, another bloodbath that further tarnished Bourbon monarchy.

A regional study naturally invites consideration of how it changes our understanding not just of the area in question, but also of the hexagon more generally. In a recent survey, Francis Démier depicts much of France as being on the brink of civil war early in the Second Restoration. Certainly there existed similar tension, uncertainty, antagonism, jostling for power, and polarization everywhere. Royalist volunteer armies could be found in the West, and ultra-royalist organizations using denunciation in the hope of securing a monopoly of government posts were almost ubiquitous. So why did civil war break out only in the Midi? Démier points to the importance of allied occupation forces as a source of restraint, and Triomphe also discusses steps by which Allied forces contributed to the restoration of civil order in parts of the Midi.[8] To this variable, we can now add the distinctive combination of features that Triomphe excels in identifying—the strength of popular royalism, circumstances resultant from the delegations of government to Angoulême, the ascendancy of a particular variant of royalism, and the depth of long-standing antagonism between Catholics and Protestants in parts of the Midi.

A second consideration concerns the term “legal White Terror,” over which the author seems to express some reservation.[9] As Triomphe ably demonstrates, the term White Terror was itself a product of partisan memory construction fraught with exaggeration and dubious association. Ending analysis of the White Terror at the start of 1816, when mass violence had largely ceased, also makes sense if we exclude the legal component of political reaction. Yet it can be argued that differentiation between legal and illegal White Terror serves to clear away at least some of the deliberate confusion of mass violence with legal repression, and that discussing the two in combination serves to underline a widely-shared range of bitter experiences that, as the author vividly illustrates, would long be remembered. Moreover, Triomphe’s analysis of the compromises the state made with Midi royalists points to the close relation of violence to the advantages ultra-royalists gained through administrative purge, legal repression, and intimidation of men whom they wanted to exclude from power. It seems to me there are two principal benefits to retaining legal repression as part of what we consider the White Terror. Firstly, while in the long run the legal White Terror did enable the central government to reassert its authority, the compromises made with ultra-royalism severely tarnished the Monarchy. Secondly, if we include the legal component, especially the ways the laws were applied at the local level, then we find patterns of repression, intimidation, victimization, and resistance that linked all of France well into 1816.[10] Viewed from that perspective, there is some sense in interpreting the decision of Louis XVIII to

dissolve the *Chambre Introuvable* as marking the end of the White Terror. Left-wing discursive strategies certainly played a major role in the declining fortunes of royalism and an “othering” of the Midi, but they were potent due to fears born of harsh experience throughout France.

NOTES

[1] The most recent books specifically on the White Terror are: Daniel Resnick, *The White Terror and the Political Reaction after Waterloo* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1966) and René de Castries, *La Terreur Blanche, l'épuration de 1815* (Paris: Perrin, 1981). Triomphe has also drawn upon an extensive array of more recent journal articles and monographs that touch upon the subject in some regard.

[2] See pp. 13-18.

[3] See his comments regarding the exceptional nature of the Gard and the Haute-Garonne, p. 167, note 34.

[4] The point concerning opposition options is made on p. 28.

[5] On p. 168.

[6] On Ramel, see Triomphe's observations on pp. 168-9, 172-4, 230-1, and 255, and my account in *Re-Writing the French Revolutionary Tradition: Liberal Opposition and the Fall of the Bourbon Monarchy* (Cambridge: University Press, 2003), pp. 45-7.

[7] See pp. 280-5.

[8] See Francis Démier, *La France de la Restauration (1814 - 1830): L'impossible retour du passé* (Paris: Gallimard, 2012), pp. 153-241. Triomphe discusses the role of the Austrians on pp. 226-7.

[9] On p. 220, but see also his remarks on Castries on p. 368 note 29.

[10] This is an approach apparent in the title of Henry Dumolard's *La Terreur Blanche dans l'Isère: Jean-Paul Didier et la conspiration de Grenoble* (Grenoble: Allier père et fils, 1928).

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