

COUNTER-REVOLUTION IN BRITTANY :
THE ROYALIST CONSPIRACY OF THE MARQUIS
DE LA ROUËRIE, 1791-3

By A. GOODWIN, M.A.,

PROFESSOR OF MODERN HISTORY IN THE UNIVERSITY
OF MANCHESTER¹

THE object of this lecture will be threefold—to analyse the origins, character and failure of the conspiracy of the Marquis de la Rouërie between 1791 and 1793, to treat it as a specific and characteristic example of Breton regional politics at the end of the eighteenth century, and to place it in the wider context of the French counter-revolution as a general movement.²

The counter-revolution is in itself a vast and complicated theme, upon which much has been written by French historians.³ As a field of study and research it is still, however, far from being exhausted, and the new interpretations which have already been suggested by specialists have not yet gained general currency. Here, as always, historical revaluation has resulted, partly from fresh ways of looking at the problem, and partly from the examination of new or hitherto only partially explored material. The first general conclusion which modern research seems to suggest is the paradoxical one that the origins of the counter-revolution ante-date the outbreak of the French revolution itself.⁴

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² Much of the original material used by subsequent historians is to be found in A. de Beauchamp, *Histoire de la Guerre de Vendée et des Chouans depuis son origine jusqu'à la Pacification de 1801*, 3 vols. (1806). The most relevant of the modern authorities are C. L. Chassin, *La préparation de la guerre de Vendée, 1789-1793*, vol. ii (Paris, 1892); G. Lenôtre, *Le Marquis de la Rouërie et la conjuration Bretonne, 1790-1793* (Paris, 1910); L. Dubreuil, *Histoire des insurrections de l'ouest*, 2 vols. (1929-30).

³ See, for instance, P. P. de Champrobert, *Le Comte d'Artois et l'Émigration* (1837); H. Forneron, *Histoire Générale des Émigrés pendant la révolution française*, 2 vols. (1884); E. Daudet, *Histoire de l'Émigration*, 3 vols. (1904-7); E. Vingtrinier, *La contre-révolution, 1789-91*, 2 vols. (1924); F. Baldensperger, *Le mouvement des idées dans l'émigration française*, 2 vols. (1925).

⁴ Dr. J. A. Johnson's unpublished London Ph.D. thesis, "Calonne and the Counter-Revolution, 1787-1792", works this suggestion out in detail.

There is, however, much in the history of the emigration of the French aristocracy and of French provincial counter-revolutionary risings after 1789 which can only be properly understood in terms of the political circumstances and the social and economic tendencies under the *Ancien Régime*. One advantage in studying the counter-revolution as, to some extent, a continuation of political and constitutional struggles whose roots ran deeply into French history, is that the divisions and mutual distrust between the *émigré* princes and the French sovereigns, whose interests they were supposed to have in trust, thereby become intelligible. Even the leadership of the *émigré* counter-revolution was in dispute between two former Ministers of the Crown, Calonne, representing the views and interests of the Comte d'Artois, and de Breteuil, the personal representative of Louis XVI. The suspicion and distrust which Marie Antoinette felt for the *émigré* princes is well known, but it is not always appreciated that one reason for this division was the totally opposed views held by the reigning, but captive, monarchs and their exiled representatives as to what should be restored if the counter-revolution was successful.¹ Much of this division and recrimination was the product of the different circumstances in which the French sovereigns and the *émigré* princes found themselves at the time. Both were far from being free agents—the King and Queen being the prisoners of the revolutionaries, and the exiled princes the prisoners of the *émigrés*. But the conflict of views should also be related to the rival court factions, the personal antipathies and the clash of policies between the aristocracy and the monarchy before the summons of the States General. If the counter-revolutionary manifestoes and proclamations of the *émigré* princes are examined closely, due allowance being made for their propagandist character, and in conjunction with the secret policy memoranda of the time, it will be realized that their underlying motive was not merely to reject the new French revolutionary constitution, which Louis XVI had been compelled to accept in

¹ See A. Soderhjelm (ed.), *Marie-Antoinette et Barnave, Correspondance secrète*, 1924; A. Arneth (ed.), *Marie-Antoinette, Joseph II und Leopold II, Ihr Briefwechsel*, 1866; A. Arneth et A. Geffroy (edd.), *Marie-Antoinette, Correspondance secrète entre Marie-Thérèse et le comte de Mercy-Argenteau*, 3 vols. (1874).

September 1791, but also to resume the attack on the kind of Enlightened Despotism, which the king had sponsored, as an alternative to national bankruptcy, in 1787.¹ The objective of the *émigré* princes and of the counter-revolution proper was not, in other words, a simple restoration of monarchical despotism as it had existed before 1789, or even of the social structure of the *Ancien Régime*, but rather the creation of a restricted monarchy, based upon the revival of corporate and provincial privileges.² Hence, on the one hand, the antagonism between the French sovereigns and the *émigré* princes, and, on the other, the appeal of the counter-revolution to the local population of those areas in France, such as Brittany, where the traditions of independent particularism were so strong.

A second general tendency which may be noticed is the greater emphasis now given to the more detailed study of the series of civil wars in France, which form the local background to the counter-revolution.³ This regional approach to the history of the counter-revolution is one which again will well repay further extension, and it is as a minor contribution to this kind of enquiry that the present paper may, perhaps, be justified. Necessarily, however, progress in this direction will depend primarily upon the activities of French local historians and archivists. The matter is in safe hands and we may confidently expect that many new and hitherto unsuspected aspects of the counter-revolution will be revealed.

A final, and perhaps superfluous, remark upon the way in which counter-revolutionary studies may be expected to develop

¹ A. Goodwin, "Calonne, the Assembly of French Notables of 1787 and the origins of the *Révolution Nobiliaire*", *English Historical Review*, lxi (1946), 202-34 and 329-77.

² By a restricted monarchy the counter-revolutionaries meant, not a limited monarchy of the English type, which was favoured by Necker and the party of the *Monarchiens*, but a monarchy bound by the "fundamental laws of the kingdom" as interpreted by the *Parlements*.

³ E.g. S. Brugal, "Les camps de Jalès", *Revue de la Révolution*, vols. 4-7 (1884-5); L. Dubreuil, "L'idée régionaliste sous la Révolution", *Annales Révolutionnaires*, vols. ix-xi (1917-19); C. Riffaterre, *Le mouvement anti-jacobin et anti-Parisien à Lyon et dans le Rhône-et-Loire en 1793* (1912-28); P. Nicolle, "Le mouvement fédéraliste dans l'Orne en 1793", *Annales Historiques de la Révolution française*, xiii (1936), 481-512; xiv (1937), 215-33; xv (1938), 12-53, 289-313, 385-410.

in the future, concerns the opportunities awaiting British historians in this field, if only more systematic use is made of the original sources in this country. One of the most fruitful ways in which British scholars could contribute to the progress of research in the history of the counter-revolution would be to exploit more fully the manuscript and printed treasures of the Public Record Office and British Museum and not least of the great provincial libraries, such as the John Rylands Library and the Sheffield Central Reference Library.¹ Pre-eminent in this respect are the Calonne papers in the Public Record Office, which have now been classified and indexed, so as to make them more readily accessible to students than they formerly were.² I have made a limited use of them for this study and most of what I have to say about the organization of the Breton conspiracy of la Rouërie is derived from a study of these papers, though I have also made use of the police records of the National Convention in the Paris archives.

Despite what has already been said about the way in which the divisions between the counter-revolutionaries sprang, partly, from the factions of the *Ancien Régime*, the essential genesis of the counter-revolution is, naturally, to be found in the opposition to the evolving revolutionary situation of 1789 to 1793. Though the shape and significance of the counter-revolution had been, to some extent, pre-determined by the aristocratic resistance to the radical reform plans of Calonne on the eve of the revolution, the movement itself only gathered force under the direct impact of the events of 1789 and in the widening context of popular support once religious schism had overtaken France in 1791 and after it had become clear, early in 1792, that Austria and Prussia would join the anti-revolutionary crusade proclaimed by both Calonne and Burke as early as 1790. In the first instance, the counter-revolution would not have been more than an aristocratic *fronde*, if the attempt of the French nobility to seize the levers of political

¹ See the recently published *Guide to the Manuscript Collections in the Sheffield City Libraries*. 1956.

² P.R.O. P.C. 1/123-33. Other rich sources are the Puisaye papers in the British Museum, partly used by Louis Blanc, and the Bouillon papers in the Public Record Office.

power in the States General had succeeded. The failure of that attempt and the triumph of the Third Estate in the vindication of the National Assembly's claim to political sovereignty, caused the Crown and the aristocracy in the summer of 1789 temporarily to sink their differences in a mutual defence pact. Reactionary influences in the royal council and at the court persuaded Louis XVI that the exaggerated claims of the Third Estate could be scotched, if the procedural wrangles between the privileged and unprivileged orders in the States General were settled by royal arbitration and if a programme of royal reforms was imposed from above and, if necessary, by force of arms.¹ The attempt to reach such a solution was made in the so-called royal session of 23 June 1789. The programme of reforms offered by Louis XVI to the Assembly on that occasion is a document of cardinal importance in the history of the counter-revolution.² In effect, it was, in its final form, a bargain between Louis XVI and the reactionary associates of his younger brother, the Comte d'Artois, according to which the privileged orders, in return for the sacrifice of their fiscal immunities, would have been allowed to retain or commute their feudal dues and to preserve their corporate privileges in Church and State.³ Its importance in the subsequent history of the counter-revolution was that it represented the limit of concession beyond which the monarchy was not prepared to advance in the direction of liberal reform, and the basis on which the political differences between the king and the aristocracy might have been resolved. It would have endowed France with the form of a restricted monarchy as understood by the counter-revolutionaries and have preserved the political and social pretensions of the French aristocracy. To this programme, which was still-born because it was rejected by the National Assembly, the *émigré* nobility remained, in the subsequent period,

¹ E. Dard, *La chute de la royauté* (1950), pp. 117-19.

² See C. de Loménie, "Les préliminaires de la Séance Royale du 23 June 1789", *Annales de l'École libre des Sciences Politiques*, vol. 5 (1890), pp. 104-28; A. Brette, "La Séance Royale du 23 Juin 1789", *La Révolution Française*, xxii (1892), 5-44, 120-54, 416-52; xxiii. 55-76; O. Becker, *Der Verfassungspolitik der französischen Regierung vom Ausbruch der grossen Revolution*, *Historische Studien* (Ebering), Heft 86(1909).

³ J. M. Thompson, *French Revolution, Documents, 1789-94*, pp. 46-7.

more attached than did the French monarchy.¹ Just because it also represented the terms upon which the nobility were prepared to accept the revised draft of the reforms previously promoted by Calonne, it provides an explanation for what might otherwise appear inexplicable—why it was that Calonne came to be accepted as the leader of the counter-revolution by the very nobility which had hounded him into exile in England in 1787.

The misfortunes which overtook the French nobility in the subsequent period were, however, largely of their own creation. The attacks on their privileged positions, social distinctions and property rights were provoked by their own early attempts at counter-revolution. The capture of the Bastille was the direct result of the attempt of the reactionaries to isolate and reduce the capital by armed force.² The burning of the provincial *châteaux* and of their feudal records, the violence associated with the Great Panic, which swept across France in July and August 1789 have been rightly attributed to popular fears of the activities of “brigands”, supposed to be in the pay of counter-revolutionaries.³ It was in this way that the panic fears of the peasantry spread to the aristocratic and middle class members of the National Assembly and that the feudal régime was partially dismantled on 4 August 1789, in the effort to avert its total collapse. What was swept away, however, in that famous “St. Bartholomew of privilege” was not so much the feudal system as the corporate organization of the Gallican church and of the separatist provinces.⁴ If, later, the *émigré* nobility had been contending merely for the restoration of its feudal dues and of an unreformed *Ancien Régime*,

¹ In the earlier printed counter-revolutionary manifestoes, this programme could not, however, be publicly avowed owing to its contemporary unpopularity (P.R.O. P.C. 1/126/273 Calonne to Louis XVI, 11 August 1790). It should be noted that Louis XVIII's famous declaration made at St. Ouen on 2 May 1814 is a very close replica of the original programme of 23 June 1789, as drafted by Necker (E. Dard, *La chute de la Royauté* (1950), p. 119).

² P. Caron, “La tentative de contre-révolution, juin-juillet, 1789”, *Revue d'histoire moderne*, viii (1906), 5-34 and 649-78.

³ G. Lefebvre, *La Grande Peur de 1789* (1932), *passim*.

⁴ F. Braesch, *L'Année cruciale, 1789* (1941), pp. 231-2. Etienne Dumont, who was an eye-witness of the occasion, noted that the Breton deputies, whose *cahiers* had instructed them to maintain the constitutional privileges of the province could only promise that they would endeavour to persuade their constituents to ratify their surrender. *Souvenirs*, ed. Bénétruy, p. 100.

it would never have succeeded in obtaining sufficient popular backing to make civil war in France practical politics. The destruction by the revolutionaries of provincial privileges, the uprooting of the Provincial Estates, the abolition of the provincial *Parlements*, however, represented not only an attack on aristocratic influence in the French state, but also the determination on the part of the central government to stamp out provincial separatism.¹ This was so strongly entrenched in various parts of France that its defenders threw in their lot with the counter-revolution.

Nowhere were these particular forms of discontent with the work of the Parisian revolution more keenly felt than in the former province of Brittany. If we are to understand why it was that the counter-revolutionaries were able to command the loyalty and devotion of such large sections of the Breton population after 1790, emphasis must be placed, not only on the dour attachment of the Breton people to their ancient traditions of provincial independence but also on the sincere religious piety of the Breton peasants which was enflamed by the persecution of the Catholic non-juring clergy, and the solidarity of interest, under the *Ancien Régime*, between the Breton nobility and their feudal dependents. It is important to realize that Brittany had never really fully accepted even the hesitant and accommodating centralization imposed upon it by the Bourbon monarchy before 1789. The province had been enabled to resist its complete absorption into the bureaucratic machinery of the monarchy, because it could appeal to the "liberties" guaranteed by the Crown in 1532 in the act of union, which had incorporated the former duchy into the French state. But, in the eighteenth century, the essential bulwarks of Breton constitutional independence had been the Provincial Estates and the local high court of appeal or *Parlement*.² When, at the end of the seventeenth century, Brittany had become the last of the French provinces to be subjected to the administrative control of a royal commissioner, or *intendant*, the magistrates of the *Parle-*

¹ For a defence of the new departmental system see E. Champion, "Provinces et départements", in *La Révolution Française*, lxiv (1913), 302-10.

² See particularly H. Fréville, *L'Intendance de Bretagne (1689-1790)*, iii (Rennes, 1953), 333-5.

ment of Rennes had opposed this innovation and, in the eighteenth century, had repeatedly petitioned the Crown for the restoration of the plenary powers of the Provincial Estates in the local administration. As time passed, however, the authority and prestige of the *intendant* in Brittany, challenged from the beginning by the local judicial magistrates, had been progressively undermined by the expansion of the administrative authority of the Provincial Estates.¹ Although this assembly only met once every two years and was, in its general sessions, not much more than a tumultuous gathering of representatives of the three orders of clergy, nobility and certain privileged towns, it had since 1734 established a joint standing commission, which by the end of the century had wrung from the central government responsibility for the supervision of municipal administration, the construction of canals, road communications and other public works, which in the *pays d'élection* lay within the exclusive jurisdiction of the *intendant*. The proceedings of these local Estates were dominated by the lay and clerical nobility, and even the voting procedure was by order, and not by head. Despite this, the representatives of the Third Estate, until the very eve of the revolution, appear to have been well content to play second fiddle to the privileged orders in the defence of the province's fiscal autonomy and its customary privileges. When the revolution swept away these surviving traces of home-rule in Brittany, the Breton people felt that their traditional independence had at last been destroyed.

Even more resented was the persecution of the Catholic priests, who refused to accept the ecclesiastical reforms of the National Assembly. In an area so remote from the main centres of eighteenth-century civilization, the parochial clergy had for long been the chief channel of communication between the government and the largely illiterate population. The Breton peasants, sincerely Catholic in their religious beliefs, had thus been habitually suspicious of the intrusion into their day-to-day affairs of any lay authority. When, therefore, the National

¹ E. Appolis, "Les états de Languedoc au XVIII^e siècle. Comparaison avec les états de Bretagne", *L'Organisation corporative du Moyen Age à la fin de l'Ancien Régime. Études présentées à la Commission internationale pour l'histoire des Assemblées d'états*, Louvain, vol. 2 (1937), pp. 131-48.

Assembly first dispossessed and later banished the non-juring clergy, the Bretons had an added cause for dissatisfaction with the revolutionary authorities, and were easily persuaded by the agents of the counter-revolutionaries to take up arms in defence of the schismatical clergy.¹

The appeal to arms, in the monarchical interest, however, was made by the lay nobility and the response it evoked in Brittany may be attributed to the peculiarly close relationships which had traditionally existed in the province between the peasantry and its feudal superiors. It would perhaps be incorrect to speak of the existence there of a "clan" system, but certainly the patriarchal control exercised by the Breton nobility over the peasants and farmers in the rural areas was much stricter, though less resented, than elsewhere in France.² The Breton nobility was so impoverished and tended, before 1789, to live in such intimate and continuous contact with its tenantry that its standards of living were often not far removed from those of the peasants themselves.

Perhaps in this respect alone was Charles Armand Tuffin de la Rouërie typical of the Breton nobility.³ Born in April 1750, he was of noble extraction but his family did not belong to the old nobility and could not be considered rich. He lost his father at an early age and was brought up by his mother. He appears to have attended the same educational pension as the Comte de Mirabeau, where he acquired considerable facility in spoken English and a fair command of German. At the age of seventeen, as an ensign in the regiment of French guards, he had plunged into the gay social life of the capital under the protection and

¹ *Archives Nationales*, F 74590 (Plaquette 7) 13. Report by Lalligand-Morillon to Lebrun 22 December 1792. "Je crois qu'il faut porter grande attention sur ces disputes religieuses en Bretagne. Le peuple est sans instruction, il est dans la main des prêtres réfractaires qui s'y trouvent en grand nombre. Le fanatisme est le plus grand fléau de ces contrées. Je crains qu'il ne cause de grands désordres et que les désordres soient très voisins."

² De Tocqueville pointed out as long ago as 1856 that the peasants of La Vendée had supported the aristocratic counter-revolution in the West, not because feudal conditions were better there but because they were worse (*L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution, Œuvres complètes*, ed. J. P. Mayer, ii, 6th edn. (1952), 223).

³ G. Lenôte, *Le Marquis de la Rouërie*, chap. i.

with the guidance of his uncle, Monsieur de la Belinaye. He soon fell into the usual scrapes and he fell in love with, wished to marry, but was prudently rejected by, a singer at the Opera, Mlle. de Beaumesnil, who turned out to be his uncle's mistress. He wounded in a duel, and nearly killed, an intimate friend of Louis XVI—the comte de Bourbon Busset. As a result of these youthful escapades, La Rouërie fell into disgrace at Court, was compelled to resign his commission in the Guards, and, after failing to commit suicide by taking opium, withdrew, in a fit of remorse, to a Trappist monastery.

After the outbreak of the war of American Independence, he was persuaded by his family to emerge from his seclusion and to offer his services as a volunteer in the Colonial armies. He was one of the first of the French to reach America in April 1777, before Lafayette had even left France. He did so by swimming ashore with three of his followers after his ship had been sunk, close inshore, by a British frigate. He obtained permission from Washington to raise, largely at his own expense, a legion of French irregular troops in time to take part in the campaign of 1777. After this legion had been cut to pieces at the battle of Camden, in Carolina, he had returned to France to equip further forces. Back in America he played a distinguished part, as Colonel Armand, in the decisive capture of Yorktown.¹ Though he was decorated by the American Government with the cross of the Order of Cincinnatus, and given the nominal rank of brigadier-general in the American armies, he found himself, on the conclusion of peace, loaded with debt and without any adequate recognition from the French Government. Though he solved his immediate financial problems by marrying a rich widow, he became a widower shortly afterwards and was left, once more, to vegetate on his Breton estates. Partly out of pique at his continued neglect by the government, he threw in his lot with the aristocratic and magisterial opposition to Lamoignon's judicial reforms of May 1788. These reforms would have destroyed the political powers of the local *parlements*

¹ S. Bonsal, *When the French were here* (New York, 1945), p. 242. See also Vicomte de Noailles, *Marins et soldats français en Amérique pendant la guerre de l'indépendance des États-Unis, 1778-1783* (Paris, 1920).

and have severely restricted their judicial competence.¹ In Brittany they were considered to have broken the contractual relations between the Crown and the province. When the Breton Provincial Estates sent a deputation of twelve nobles to Versailles to protest against this invasion of their liberties, La Rouërie was included in the delegation. For this audacity the marquis and his fellows were left to cool their heels in the Bastille from 14 July till the end of August and were only released when the chief Minister, de Brienne, was overthrown and the judicial reforms suspended till the meeting of the States General. Nevertheless, it is significant that when the Third Estate in Brittany revolted against the political predominance of the nobility in the Provincial Estates, and when the Government in December 1788 granted the Third Estate throughout France double representation in the States General, La Rouërie did not associate himself with the recalcitrant attitude then adopted by his fellow nobles.² On the eve of the revolution, therefore, La Rouërie was still a man with a chip on his shoulder, nursing a sense of grievance against the Government, with his military ambitions unsatisfied and, to some extent, out of step with the more powerful leaders of the Breton nobility. He was an isolated, disillusioned figure, torn between his loyalty to the aristocratic traditions of Breton separatism and an increasing inclination to favour the claims and aspirations of the Breton Third Estate. His bitterness grew when, late in April 1789, the Breton nobility refused to elect representatives to the national Assembly, on the ground that all the Breton delegates should be exclusively elected in their Provincial Estates.³ This ruined his chances of representing his order in the States General. The consequence was that La Rouërie cut himself off further from his order by trying to build up a following among the upper ranks of the Breton middle classes and, by refusing, after 1789, to emigrate.

¹ M. Marion, *Le Garde des Sceaux Lamoignon* (1905), *passim*.

² G. Lenôte, *op. cit.* pp. 34-5. A de Beauchamp, however, maintains that La Rouërie "provoked the refusal of the Breton nobility to attend the States General" (*Histoire de la Guerre de Vendée*, ii. 48).

³ J. Egret, "Les origines de la révolution en Bretagne (1788-1789)", *Revue Historique*, ccxiii (1955), 211.

When, however, in the course of 1791, the hostility in Brittany to the administrative and religious policy of the Constituent Assembly declared itself, La Rouërie's very isolation and his previous experience as commander of irregular forces in America marked him out as a potential leader of a separatist revolt. The chance that had evaded him throughout his chequered and inhibited career had at last arrived. It is not easy to discover when La Rouërie began to make active preparations for a revolt; all that can be said is that secret negotiations for support must have been undertaken some time late in 1790 or early in the following year, for early in June 1791 he was ready to submit his proposals to the *émigré* court of the Comte d'Artois at Coblenz. Using the pretext of having some private business of his own to conduct abroad, the marquis obtained a regular passport to London, in order to avoid being suspected of attempting to emigrate. Accompanied by a few of his domestics, and by his inseparable companion and cousin—Therèse de Moëlien—La Rouërie made his way to England, and crossed into Germany via Ostend. He eventually made contact with the Comte d'Artois in the first week of June at Ulm, obtaining from him a commission to form a Breton association of Royalists, on the understanding that this enterprise should be, so far as possible, self-supporting financially.¹ La Rouërie was also authorized to place the association on a military basis, by organizing it as a Legion on the pattern of his American guerilla force. The marquis had already made tentative soundings of Royalist opinion in Brittany and had discovered that potential supporters would be disinclined to commit themselves unless they could be given specific assurances from the *émigré* court—first, as to the precise basis on which monarchical authority would be restored, particularly in relation to Breton provincial liberties, and second, as to what measures would be taken, if they were to support a foreign invasion by civil war, to protect their lives and property in the anarchical conditions before settled order was restored. These points were put to Artois by La Rouërie in the name of the province and it is interesting to note the character of Artois' assurances, which were incorporated in the plenary powers given

¹ *Archives Nationales*, F⁷ 4590 (Plaquette 7), 21.

to the marquis. In this instrument Artois announced, on the first point, his fixed determination to repudiate all schemes aiming at the restoration of despotism and that "his only object was to enable the king to resume the exercise of an authority tempered by law and to re-establish the true French constitution, which would be quite compatible with reasonable liberty".¹ The Bretons were also assured that any foreign military assistance which might be forthcoming would not be purchased at the price of any surrender of national territory and, finally, that one of the first consequences of the restoration of order would be the summons of the Provincial Estates and the full recognition of Breton constitutional privileges.²

On the second point, Artois replied that the *émigrés* would rely partly on the intimidating effects on the revolutionaries of the news of foreign invasion, and partly on the tranquillizing effects on the general population of the counter-revolutionary manifestoes, which would be published at the moment of the general rising. Apart from that, the Breton association itself could usefully undertake the rôle of a society of *vigilantes* and deal with the local brigands itself. It was clear from all this that the Association would be thrown back very much upon its own resources and that any external assistance would be subsidiary. No doubt La Rouërie felt that the precise guarantees of Breton provincial liberties would afford him the kind of talisman of which he had felt the need.

His next call was on Calonne—the chief minister of the *émigré* court at Coblenz. Detailed plans were discussed, Calonne promised some financial support and it was agreed that contact between the conspirators in the west and Coblenz should be maintained through an *émigré* officer, who had served under La Rouërie's orders in America—Georges de Fontevieux. Fontevieux had a fluent command of English, French and German and could move about Europe freely as an accredited diplomatic agent of the Prince of Zweibrücken. It was arranged that, while La Rouërie made his way back to Brittany via Paris in disguise,

¹ P.R.O. P.C. 1/125/370. Draft dated 5 May 1791.

² Austria was suspected of having designs on Alsace as the price of her military assistance to the *émigré* cause.

Fontevieux should remain with Calonne to await further instructions.¹

The very day that La Rouërie and his companions arrived in Paris, Louis XVI and his family were brought back as captives after their flight had been stopped at Varennes. With this discouraging news, La Rouërie made his way back to Brittany. He set to work at once on the task of secretly organizing his counter-revolutionary association. This work seems to have been undertaken in two stages. The first necessity was to create some kind of administrative structure, to provide it with an intelligence or communications system and to canalize latent loyalist feeling by establishing contact with those who could provide the conspirators with money and manpower. The second stage was to convert the association into a military machine. Most of the remainder of 1791 was spent on the first commitment. La Rouërie resolved to base his organization on the pre-revolutionary system of Breton local government. His plan was to establish in each episcopal town a standing committee or council, consisting of a secretary and six commissioners—two from each of the separate orders of clergy, nobility and third estate. These councils were to receive their instructions direct from La Rouërie himself and transmit them to other committees, similarly constituted, operating in other urban centres. It was hoped, in this way, to cover the whole peninsula with a network of intelligence points which could be turned to a military use later. These councils were also to act as recruiting centres, to keep La Rouërie informed of the progress of their preparations, and to make arrangements for the despatch to a common rendezvous, on twenty-four hours' notice, of any forces at their disposal. La Rouërie also intended that they should persuade members of the local national guard and even regular soldiers to throw in their lot with the association.²

¹ *Revue de la Révolution*, vii (1886), 25. Chévetel's narrative. This account of the conspiracy by the man who betrayed it to Danton, was published in the above review by G. Bord. Internal evidence suggests it was written round about 1807 and it must be used with caution. See Lenôtre, *op. cit.* pp. 152-3.

² P.R.O. P.C. 1/125/380, "Principes d'organisation politique. Association Bretonne", December 1791.

Between mid-October, when he received news that his commission as chief of the association and commander of the Legion had been confirmed by the Comte de Provence, and early December 1791 La Rouërie succeeded in establishing no less than nineteen of these councils in Brittany and two in Normandy.¹ For the most part, he had chosen as his subsidiary centres towns lying either in the coastal districts or on the frontiers of the province—his object being to prepare suitable landing places, where *émigré* or foreign troops could be disembarked, to establish communications with neighbouring provinces, where additional support might be rallied, and also to have operational bases on the circumference of Brittany, from which pressure might be exerted on the interior.

The progress report which La Rouërie despatched to Calonne on 13 December 1791, showed, however, that difficulties were being encountered.² Along the whole coastline, from Lorient in the far west to St. Briec in the north, the local population seemed to be unresponsive or suspicious. Nantes—the chief commercial centre, and Brest, the chief naval base, were noted for their attachment to the revolution. Though some success had attended La Rouërie's efforts to win over the local militia, he found he could make little impression on the loyalty of the line regiments. Another handicap was the continuing emigration of the Breton nobility, which was a serious drain upon the potential military strength of the association. Despite warnings from Calonne about the need for destroying all incriminating documents and signatures, La Rouërie found it necessary, in order to inspire confidence in his local councils, to entrust them with certified copies of his own commissions signed by the *émigré* princes and copies of the formal deed of association, signed by himself. It is remarkable that, in the latter document, which appears to have been drawn up by La Rouërie without prior consultation with Calonne, the general aims of the association and its legality were supported by somewhat casuistical but not wholly ironical appeals to the principles of the revolutionary

¹ P.R.O. P.C. 1/125/374, La Rouërie to Calonne, 13 December 1791.

² *Ibid.*

constitution of 1791!¹ In sending the minister a copy of the compact, La Rouërie explained that, after all, the covenant had to be framed in such a way as to be “adopted and signed in our own times and by men living in the present century”.² It was no doubt very convenient for the Bretons, who considered that they had been deprived of representation in the States General and were suffering from the loss of their ancient constitutional liberties, to invoke the violation of the Rousseauite principle contained in the Declaration of the Rights of Man, that law was the expression of the general will, in the formulation of which all citizens had the right of participating. It was convenient also for counter-revolutionaries to invoke both the right of constitutional amendment and the even more sacred right and duty of insurrection. If the natural and imprescriptible rights of man were defined as “liberty, property, security and resistance to oppression,” then the members of the association, in covenanting together to preserve those rights, could hardly be represented as reactionaries. La Rouërie emphasized, however, in a covering letter to Calonne that the actions of the association, as distinct from its professions, would be bound by the powers conferred on him by the princes and by the engagement of its members, under article 2 of the covenant, to subordinate its policy in all things to that of the restored Provincial Estates.³

By the spring of 1792 it had become a matter of urgency for the association, hitherto a para-military organization, to be given a general staff and a chain of command. Once it had become clear that Austria and Prussia would soon be at war with revolutionary France, La Rouërie obtained from Coblenz a fresh commission placing the military command of the province entirely in his hands and subordinating any foreign troops which might invade Brittany to his direct operation control.⁴ The association then became a Legion organized into divisions, sections and companies—with divisional headquarters in each of

¹ P.R.O. P.C. 1/125/373, “Association simplement défensive des honêtes gens contre attroupement de factieux, brigands ou malfaiteurs”. See Appendix.

² P.R.O. P.C. 1/125/374.

³ P.R.O. P.C. 1/125/373.

⁴ This commission was dated 2 March 1792. *Archives Nationales W. 274*. Printed in Lenôte, *Marquis de La Rouërie* pp. 94-6, which misdates the commission as 12 March.

the nine ecclesiastical dioceses.¹ Commissioned rank was not confined to members of the nobility but was given, on the commander's recommendation, strictly in proportion to the number of recruits raised by the members of the association.² At the higher level of the staff organization a certain representation was conceded to civilians. Non-military directives were to be issued by a peripatetic political council, consisting of one civilian from each diocese, the staff officers and the divisional commanders, presided over by La Rouërie. Operational plans were to be decided by a military council of officers specially summoned by the commander and a few civilians chosen from the political council.

Even when the military framework of insurrection had thus been created, La Rouërie was still faced by the difficult problems of finance and the co-ordination of strategy. Though the members of the local councils of the association had borne the main administrative costs involved, and though all covenanting members undertook to make voluntary contributions, the purchase of arms and equipment necessitated substantial subsidies.³ The guarantees given by the princes to any loans raised on their behalf in the province did not provide a solution and all that Calonne could offer were the bank notes of the former Discount Bank and forged *assignats*.⁴ The former, however, could only be discounted at a heavy loss, and the latter could only be put into circulation slowly and by persons prepared to risk their lives in doing so. Though financial aid of this kind did reach La Rouërie, it only came through at very irregular intervals and was inadequate to meet the real needs of his association.⁵

¹ P.R.O. P.C. 1/125/372, "Organisation Militaire", March 1792.

² Ensigns were expected to provide twenty recruits, sub-lieutenants thirty, lieutenants forty and captains sixty.

³ See Appendix. Covenant of the Association, Articles 7-9.

⁴ For the forgery of Discount Bank notes see J. Bouchary, *Les Faux-Monnayeurs sous la Révolution Française* (1946), Chapter I.

⁵ Discount Bank notes to the value of 15,000 livres given by Calonne to La Rouërie in June 1791, when discounted lost a third of their value. In December 1791 Fontevieux brought La Rouërie 40,000 livres of similar credit notes, in March 1792 Calonne remitted 200,000 livres through his London agents. (P.R.O. P.C. 1/125/375 and 1/126/504.)

The larger strategical conception behind the conspiracy, which was probably La Rouërie's own, shows nevertheless that it had a leading rôle to play in the plans of the counter-revolutionary coalition. The key to this plan was the intention that the Breton Legion and its adherents should gain control of the department of Ille et Vilaine—the north-eastern section of the former province. Once this objective had been gained the insurgents would have an excellent strategical base of operations at Rennes, and would be in a position to sever the communications between Paris and the Breton peninsula. It was then confidently expected that the population of the extreme west, which had hitherto been lukewarm in its adherence to the counter-revolution, would go over to the rebels. It was also known that disaffection to the revolutionary government was rife both in Normandy and La Vendée and, if these areas revolted in sympathy, the insurgents would have at their disposal two important stretches of the coast-line, in Poitou and from St. Malo to the mouth of the Seine. The back door would thus stand open for the landing of *émigré* forces, which had been gathering in the Channel Islands and powerful diversionary movements in the west of France could be timed to coincide with the invasion of north-eastern France by the Austrian, Prussian and *émigré* armies. Paris would be caught between two forces advancing from the East and West and would be quickly overrun. The time-schedule arranged between Calonne and La Rouërie was that the eastern invasion should occur in September 1792 and that *émigré* landings in St. Malo and a general rising in Brittany should follow early in October.¹

In the summer of 1792 La Rouërie's essential commitments, in accordance with these plans, were to build up the military strength of his Legion, so as to be able to swing his forces into action at the agreed moment, to prevent any premature local risings in the West and, so far as possible, to preserve the secret of the concerted strategy. In none of these tasks was he successful, partly because these aims proved to be incompatible. The recommendation to the local councils of the association to tamper

¹ Claude Basire, *Rapport sur la conjuration de Bretagne, fait au nom du comité de Sûreté-Générale*, 4 October 1793. Bibliothèque Nationale Le, 38491.

with the loyalty of the regular troops in the province was injudicious and resulted in the prosecution before the departmental criminal tribunals of those who attempted to carry it out.¹ All La Rouërie's attempts to put a stop to the emigration of the Breton nobility proved unavailing, and his desperate appeals to Calonne for arms and equipment at this period reveal the inadequacy of the supplies at his disposal.² At the end of May 1792 the military activity at La Rouërie's headquarters near St. Malo attracted the attention of the departmental authorities and the marquis and his staff soon found themselves fugitives from revolutionary justice. Throughout the summer, as the excitement in the West rose, La Rouërie was in hiding, under an assumed name, flitting from one remote country estate to another. The control of the local activities of his supporters from his peripatetic and indeed fugitive headquarters was inevitably incomplete. In this way premature risings occurred at different times at Rennes, Avranches and elsewhere and these were easily stamped out. The revolutionary authorities were alerted and the existence of the conspiracy could no longer be concealed.

Worst of all, and unknown to La Rouërie, his intentions were betrayed to the revolutionary government in Paris, by a boon companion of his youth and his former doctor—a man called Chévetel.³ Though Chévetel had, before the revolution, obtained a post as consultant to the household of the Comte de Provence on La Rouërie's recommendation, he had been converted, after 1789, to advanced democratic views through his friendship with Dr. Marat, who had held a similar appointment to the bodyguard of the Comte d'Artois, and with Danton, who was one of his neighbours in Paris. On his way back to Brittany in June 1791 La Rouërie had incautiously spoken to Chévetel in

¹ F. Enaud, "Le Complot de La Rouërie et ses incidences judiciaires en Ille-et-Vilaine, 1792", *Actes du Soixante-Seizième Congrès des Sociétés Savantes* (Rennes, 1951), pp. 78-93.

² Writing to Calonne on 10 January 1792, La Rouërie noted as causes of the continued emigration rumours that noblemen who did not emigrate would lose their noble status. Wives of Breton nobles were also firmly convinced that their husbands would only be safe under the protection of the princes (P.R.O. P.C. 1/124/170). In June 1792 Fontevieux complained that of 4,000 rifles promised to La Rouërie by Calonne, only 1,000 had been delivered (P.C. 1/125/379).

³ For Chévetel see Lenôtre, *Le Marquis de la Rouërie*, passim.

Paris of his contact with the *émigré* court at Coblenz, but had not revealed his plans for a counter-revolution in the West. Subsequently, however, Fontevieux—La Rouërie's contact man with Coblenz—had consulted Chévetel on ways and means of discounting in Paris the commercial paper of the Discount Bank, which Calonne had placed at the disposal of the conspirators. Knowing that Chévetel was an intimate friend of the marquis, and discovering that he knew of La Rouërie's connections with Calonne, Fontevieux had assumed that Chévetel was already cognizant of their plans and had revealed to him the full extent of the preparations for a Breton rising. Chévetel had kept this secret to himself and had let himself become involved in the conspiracy with the idea of betraying his associates at the right moment.¹

Chévetel appears to have confided this information to Danton some time in the first week of August 1792 just before the overthrow of the monarchy. The rest of the month was spent by the doctor in Brittany in daily contact with the leading conspirators.² He returned to Paris at the beginning of September, just as the prison massacres were starting, and obtained an interview with Danton, who was then a member of the provisional executive council as Minister of Justice, on 3 September. What exactly passed between Chévetel and Danton on that occasion it is impossible to discover. Some of the evidence suggests that Danton did not pass on the information about La Rouërie's plans to his ministerial colleagues until early October.³ Chévetel's own account, which unfortunately is not wholly trustworthy, states categorically that the Breton rising was not discussed.⁴ All that is established is that Chévetel was despatched from Paris the same day as a commissioner of the executive council, armed with full powers to expedite the withdrawal of the regular troops and artillery from Brittany, in order that they could be redeployed against the invading Prussian armies on the north-eastern frontier.⁵ He immediately returned

¹ Chévetel's Narrative, *Revue de la Révolution*, vii (1886), 25-6.

² Narrative of Desilles family, *ibid.* p. 65.

³ Archives Nationales, F⁷ 4590.

⁴ *Revue de la Révolution*, vii. 27.

⁵ *Ibid.*

to La Rouërie's headquarters at the château of La Fosse-Hingant, near St. Malo, but, having been delated by one of the conspirators, he was accused by the marquis of treachery. In reply Chévetel coolly admitted having revealed the conspiracy to Danton, but apparently convinced the Breton leaders that he had won over the minister to the counter-revolution, producing in support of this story an autograph letter of Danton to La Rouërie announcing his general sympathy with his objectives, and exhibiting his commission to transfer the regular troops and artillery to the eastern frontiers.¹ If these powers were used he suggested that the Breton rising would meet with only local resistance and the eastward march of the conspirators would be facilitated. La Rouërie seized on this chance eagerly, and admitted Chévetel into the innermost councils of the association, thereby ensuring his complete betrayal at a later stage.

The rest of my story is an anti-climax. Dumouriez's victory against the Prussians at Valmy on 20 September and the subsequent retreat of the invading armies ruined whatever chances of success the Breton rising had at that point. A further setback was that the British Government, prompted by the fears of the local inhabitants, laid an embargo on the transports in the Channel Islands waiting to land the *émigré* forces and their equipment at St. Malo.² The orders for a rising which had been timed for 10 October had to be countermanded, and the plans for a general insurrection in the West had to be deferred till the spring of 1793, when it was expected that Great Britain would have joined the European anti-revolutionary coalition.

Meanwhile, early in October, after it had become clear that the Prussian retreat was continuing and that the *émigré* armies were breaking up, Danton communicated his knowledge of the Breton conspiracy to the newly established committee of General Security.³ La Rouërie's conspiracy thus became a matter for official counter-espionage, and owing to the activity and resource of Chévetel and Lalligand-Morillon, who were commissioned to

¹ For this letter see Lenôtre, *op. cit.* p. 159.

² *Archives Nationales*, F⁷ 4590 (Plaq. 7). Report of Lalligand-Morillon to Committee of General Security, 19 October 1792.

³ *Archives Nationales*, A.F. II 288.

undertake this work, every move of the conspirators in the winter of 1792 was reported back to Lebrun, the minister of Foreign Affairs.¹ Chévetel played the dual rôle of pseudo-conspirator and government secret agent to perfection. Together with Fontevieux he was entrusted by La Rouërie with the mission of concerting plans for a more general rising in the spring of 1793 with the retreating *émigré* princes.² In late October he even had interviews with Calonne himself in London, and when he returned to Paris in January 1793 from Aix-la-Chapelle, where he had seen the comte d'Artois, he was able to lay the revised and most secret operational plans of the conspirators before the revolutionary government.³ Early in the following month Chévetel and Morillon were given plenary powers by the committee of General Security to arrest La Rouërie and his chief associates and thus to decapitate the conspiracy on the eve of the general rising in the West.⁴ La Rouërie cheated his pursuers by dying at the end of January—overcome by his exertions and prostrated by the news of Louis XVI's execution. By invoking the assistance of the local National Guards and municipal authorities, Chévetel and Morillon were able to round up twenty-six of La Rouërie's leading associates by the first week of March and to bring them, under military escort, to Paris. In June these were brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal and twelve of them, including Fontevieux, and several women, were executed.⁵ The Breton rising, as planned by La Rouërie, had thus proved a fiasco.

¹ Morillon's reports to the committee of General Security and to Lebrun are preserved partly in F⁷ 4590 (Plaq. 7) at the *Archives Nationales* and partly in the French Foreign Office archives.

² Chévetel and Morillon decided not to act against the conspirators at this point partly because they could not depend on the departmental criminal tribunals to condemn them and partly in order to discover their revised plans for a general rising (Morillon to committee of General Security, 19 October 1792, *Archives Nationales*, F⁷ 4590 (Plaq. 7) 3).

³ See Chévetel's narrative, *Revue de la Révolution*, vii. 34-5.

⁴ *Archives Nationales* AF II*. 288, 7 February 1793. In order to guard against Morillon's treachery the committee of General Security commissioned another secret agent, Sicard, to watch his activities and supersede him if necessary (*ibid.*).

⁵ *Archives Nationales*, W 273/59. The *Acte d'accusation* before the Revolutionary Tribunal was dated 31 May 1793. The execution took place on 18 June.

In contrast with its immediate ineffectiveness, however, this conspiracy had far-reaching repercussions on the subsequent history of the counter-revolution. La Rouërie's first achievement was to demonstrate how the traditions of local particularism and provincial economic discontents could be exploited in the interests of reaction. Though he had been unable to arrest the progress of the emigration, he had seen how to make use of the local unemployment, which had been one of its consequences, by drawing into his service, as unobtrusive messengers, those wandering beggars who then infested the Breton countryside.¹ Similarly, he had been quick to recruit into his organization those salt-smugglers and revenue officers, whose livelihood had been destroyed by the Constituent Assembly's suppression of the *gabelle*.² Equally ingenious had been the "protection" which La Rouërie had sold to the more prosperous classes, who were afraid for their lives and property, in return for financial subsidies to his association. Such individuals had then been encouraged to make a show of "revolutionary zeal" and to allow themselves to become elected members of the local revolutionary municipalities, where they had proved extremely useful to the counter-revolutionaries as spies and informers.³

Secondly, contemporary opinion is agreed that *Chouannerie*—that indigenous form of Breton anti-revolutionary guerilla warfare—was the invention, not of the fabulous Jean "Chouan" but of La Rouërie himself.⁴ *Chouannerie* in the subsequent period relied on the familiar tactics of all modern resistance movements—attacks on military convoys, night raids and ambushes by small detachments, the arrest of food supplies to the urban centres, the subversion of the revolutionary armies, the harassing of the local "constituted" authorities and the skilful exploitation of local topographical knowledge.⁵ Such methods,

¹ Crétineau-Joly, *La Vendée Militaire*, i. 59-61.

² Before 1789 Brittany had not been subject to this impost, so that there had grown up a flourishing smuggling trade in "free" salt across its borders into the neighbouring provinces, such as Maine, where the duty was levied. According to Beauchamp, no less than 20,000 Breton families lived in this way at the end of the eighteenth century (*Histoire de la Guerre de Vendée*, III, 11).

³ *Ibid.* ii. 51.

⁴ Puisaye, *Mémoires* (1803), ii. 578-82.

⁵ The best description of these operations is, perhaps, the imaginative reconstruction of them in Balzac's historical novel, *Les Chouans* (1829). Professor

may, of course, have been forced on the Breton association by its lack of adequate military supplies and equipment. It is, however, evident that in devising these tactics La Rouërie had drawn on his experience as a leader of irregular forces in the American war, his profound insight into Breton popular psychology, and his appreciation of the potentialities of the peculiar physical features of the Armorican peninsula. *Chouannerie*, in this form, continued to plague successive revolutionary governments until Bonaparte healed the religious schism and pacified the Catholic west by his Concordat with the Papacy in 1801. Nor is it fanciful to trace the influence of *Chouannerie* in the Royalist conspiracies against Bonaparte's life and régime in 1801 and 1804, for Picot de Limoëlan had been one of La Rouërie's *aides de camp*, while Cadoudal was one of the *Chouan* leaders.

Lastly, La Rouërie seems to have been at least partly responsible for the conversion of Calonne and the *émigré* princes to the idea of regional civil war as the chief strategical conception of the counter-revolution. In 1792 Calonne and the *émigré* leaders had pinned their hopes, not so much on local insurrections in the interior of France, which they had some difficulty in controlling and subsidizing, as on the military forces of Austria and Prussia.¹ After the Prussian retreat and the disbandment of the *émigré* armies in the winter of 1792, Calonne realized that the best chances of a successful counter-revolution lay in the multiplication throughout France of regional revolts on the separatist pattern that had been set by La Rouërie and the Breton Association.² The terrifying progress of the risings in *La Vendée* and the Federalist revolts in central and southern France in the spring and summer of 1793 proved how serious a threat the new strategy was to the very existence of the Republic.

L. J. Austin informs me that Balzac's interest in *Chouannerie* was inspired by his admiration for the novels of James Fenimore Cooper.

¹ "Précis de la situation des affaires des Princes, tant au dehors qu'au dedans", 20 February 1792 (P.R.O. P.C. 1/131/117). They also had to bear in mind the objections of Louis XVI to civil war.

² If the testimony of Chévetel can be accepted, Calonne told him in mid-October 1792: "Il faut que d'un bout de la France à l'autre on suive le plan de M. de la Royrie. Déjà l'on s'en occupe, sur plusieurs points, et les ordres et commissions sont déjà expédiés" (*Revue de la Révolution*, vii. 35).

In this fresh crisis the unity and indivisibility of France was only salvaged by the Jacobin dictatorship in Paris and the new and more terrible form of centralization, forged and controlled by the Committee of Public Safety.

Breton separatism, however, died hard. In the nineteenth century it assumed the less recalcitrant form of mere regionalism, of which the importance was cultural and economic rather than political.¹

APPENDIX

“ Association simplement défensive des honêtes gens, contre attroupelement de factieux, Brigands ou Malfaiteurs.” (Copy initialed by La Rouërie, sent to Calonne 14 December 1791, P.R.O. P.C. 1/125/373.)

Nous soussignés, citoyens de la Province de Bretagne, croyons devoir donner les motifs de notre présente association, déclarons, d'abord unanimement que le voeu le plus cher à notre coeur est celui de vivre libre ou mourir, qu'exprimait, par son organisation, notre ancien gouvernement Breton et que prescrit, d'ailleurs, l'article 6 de la section 5 du chapitre 1^{er} de la constitution française du 3 Septembre 1791, et que notre intention n'est que de propager aucuns principes, ni de nous permettre aucuns actes qui puissent être pris pour une violation même indirect de ce serment.

Nous déclarons, de plus, qu'il doit être bien entendu qu'il n'exclut de notre part l'obéissance et la fidélité que nous devons au Roi, notre légitime souverain, et que nous regarderons au contraire comme nos ennemis déclarés tous ceux qui abusent de ses bienfaits et de sa tendre sollicitude pour son peuple, cherchent à affaiblir son autorité tutélaire, à diminuer ses prérogatives et à anéantir son trône par l'insinuation criminelle d'idées républicaines, à la propagation desquelles il est de notre devoir, en bons et fidèles sujets, de nous opposer de toutes nos forces.

Nous déclarons, enfin, que nous adoptons sans restriction ce principe élémentaire de la constitution actuelle, et qui se trouve consigné dans l'article 6 de la Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen, que la loi est l'expression de la volonté générale, et que tous les citoyens ont droit de concourir personnellement à sa formation. Et, à ce sujet, nous observons que le principe des malheurs publics qui affligent, à ce moment, le Royaume, et en particulier la province de Bretagne, ne provient que de ce que dans la pratique on a trop méconnu cette théorie de législation, sans laquelle il n'y a plus de vraie liberté publique, que de là sont nées successivement ces factions dangereuses qui divisent le Royaume et que l'on connaît sous les dénominations de factions républicaines, royalistes, monarchiennes et autres ; que par là encore le respect dû à la Loi, s'est naturellement affaibli, dès que, d'un côté la naissance de toutes ces factions, et de l'autre, les murmures du peuple, n'ont que trop clairement manifesté qu'elle n'avait

¹ G. Pariset, “ Histoire du Régionalisme Français ”, *Études d'Histoire Révolutionnaire et contemporaine* (1929), pp. 287-313.

pas pour elle cette expression de la volonté générale, qui seule forme son plus imposant caractère.

Nous observons, de plus, que c'est surtout la Province de Bretagne qui peut plus que tout autre encore, se plaindre qu'on ait violé envers elle ce principe de la déclaration des droits que nulle loi ne peut être regardée comme telle, si elle n'est l'expression de la volonté générale, puisqu'elle n'a été convoquée, ni représentée régulièrement aux Etats Généraux de 1789, et puisqu'elle n'en a pas moins perdu son antique constitution et ses droits, franchises et libertés, contre le voeu formel de ses trois ordres, et même les dispositions précises de la grande majorité des cahiers des assemblées partielles de sénéchaussées, formées pour éluder et suppléer alors la convocation constitutionnelle du tiers comme ordre politique et indivisible.¹

Nous observons, enfin, que c'est encore la violation du même principe et le défaut d'assentiment général qui a déterminé et détermine encore journellement cette émigration désastreuse pour le peuple, non seulement des princes du sang, des grands du Royaume, des évêques, des anciens magistrats, des nobles, des riches propriétaires ; mais encore des artistes et des ouvriers en tout genre ; et qu'inutilement a-t-on eu et a-t-on recours pour suppléer cette expression de la volonté générale requise par la déclaration des droits, à des serments prêtés dans le désordre de la crainte, ou le tumulte de l'anarchie, puisqu'ils ne peuvent donner aux lois qu'un caractère de despotisme, loin de leur en imprimer un de convention franche, libre et volontaire entre tous les citoyens qu'elles doivent régir.

Nous déclarons, en outre, que nous adoptons encore, sans restriction, cette disposition de l'article 1^{er}, section 3^e du chapitre 3 de la nouvelle constitution, qui consacre le droit indispensable au caractère de la monarchie qu'a le Roi de concourir à la formation de la loi, en lui reconnaissant celui d'y refuser son consentement ; nous faisons même profession de croire que ce droit ancien de la monarchie française est l'un des plus fermes remparts de la liberté publique, qui sans l'exercice libre de ce droit, pourrait bientôt se trouver compromise par la première faction assez audacieuse pour la vouloir enchaîner ou la subordonner aux projets de son ambition ou de ses vengeances.

Mais nous observons, encore, que la déclaration du Roi du 23 juin 1789 ; que le mémoire d'observation par lui adressé à l'Assemblée Nationale sur les arrêtés de cette assemblée des 4 août et jours suivants, et que sa protestation solennelle du 20 juin 1791, sont autant d'actes qui absolument contraires à l'acceptation qu'il a faite de la constitution, ne sont propres conséquemment qu'à fortifier les soupçons assez généralement répandus sur le défaut de liberté de cette acceptation.²

¹ According to an electoral regulation of 16 March 1789, Necker had laid it down that, whereas the Breton privileged orders should meet at St. Briec to draw up their *cahiers* and elect deputies, the representatives of the third estate should be elected, as elsewhere in France, in the assemblies of the *sénéchaussées* (A. Brette, *Recueil de documents relatifs à la convocation des Etats généraux de 1789*, i. 259-62). In protest the privileged orders had refused to elect representatives to the States General (J. Egret, "Les origines de la Révolution en Bretagne", *Revue Historique*, ccxiii (1955), 211).

² For the Royal Proclamation of 20 June 1791 see J. M. Thompson, *French Revolution Documents, 1789-94* (1933), pp. 86-92. According to Etienne Dumont

Nous observons de plus que ces mêmes soupçons s'accroissent de l'outrageante captivité où sa Majesté était retenue à l'époque où cette constitution lui a été présentée, et surtout, de cette circonstance majeure que le défaut d'acceptation de sa part importait contre lui la perte de son trône et de sa couronne, surtout au milieu de la fermentation et de l'effervescence dont il était environné.

Instruits et certains par les déclarations des Princes, frères du Roi, qu'en proposant d'entrer en France avec une force suffisante, ils n'ont d'autre objet que d'assurer d'un côté la liberté dans laquelle le Roi doit enfin exprimer ses véritables intentions, et de l'autre, de donner au peuple, en le mettant à l'abri de tout despotisme, le droit de manifester aussi sans contrainte, son vœu sur la législation et sur le régime qui a multiplié ses charges en anéantissant son commerce et ses ressources.

Considérant que l'objet unique de leur entrée n'est conséquemment que de mettre la nation à lieu de reconnaître si les nouvelles lois qui la régissent, ont les deux caractères qui seuls les peuvent constituer, celui d'être l'expression de la volonté du peuple, et celui d'avoir été librement consenties par le Monarque, et que c'est par conséquent rendre hommage à la constitution elle-même, que de concourir avec eux à imposer silence aux factions et à prévenir les intrigues qui pourraient gêner l'expression de ce double vœu.

Considérant, d'ailleurs, que la Constitution elle-même reconnaît, article 1^{er} du titre 7, que la Nation a le droit imprescriptible de changer quand il lui plaît, les lois constitutionnelles, d'où résulte que protéger le libre exercice d'un semblable droit en faveur de la nation, ce n'est que se permettre un acte autorisé et permis par la constitution actuelle.¹

Considérant, en outre, qu'on ne peut pas se dissimuler que le mécontentement du peuple se propage de plus en plus ; que l'éloignement général qu'il témoigne pour les prêtres constitutionnels, que la désertion également générale de leurs églises n'annoncent que trop clairement que le vœu de la grande majorité du peuple est contraire aux lois, qui ont divisé l'ancienne église, et anéanti le clergé français, sans aucuns motifs d'utilité publique.

Considérant qu'on ne peut pas se dissimuler davantage que la misère publique s'aggrave de jour en jour, que le commerce languit de plus en plus ; que les anciennes ressources du peuple s'anéantissent ; et que cependant il voit, en murmurant, ses charges s'accroître, et jusqu'à la religion devenir pour lui la matière d'un nouvel impôt.

Considérant que son expérience actuelle, accélérée par le sentiment de ses propres souffrances et par l'inutilité de tous ses sacrifices passés, lui fait assez généralement désirer une prompte révision du régime auquel on l'a assujéti, en l'égarant par la promesse d'un Bonheur, dont il est fort éloigné de jouir, et qu'il ne peut trouver dans le nouveau système.

the royal memorandum against the decrees of 4 August had been composed by Necker and was badly received by the Assembly (*Souvenirs sur Mirabeau et sur les deux premières Assemblées Législatives*, ed. J. Bénétruy (1950), p. 106).

¹ No mention is here made of the restrictions placed on the right of constitutional amendment in Articles II to VII of Titre VII of the Constitution. See J. M. Thompson, op. cit. pp. 145-6.

Considérant, que s'est ici, plus que jamais, le cas de reconnaître et la nécessité de consulter la volonté générale, et celle d'avouer la souveraineté si vantée de la nation dans l'article 1^{er} du titre 3 de la constitution.

Considérant, que si l'assemblée constituante a professé publiquement le principe que l'insurrection était le plus saint des devoirs de la part du peuple ; quand lassé d'un régime quelconque, il voulait en adopter un autre plus utile et plus conforme à ses vrais intérêts, personne ne peut, à plus forte raison, blâmer une association paisible faite pour prévenir des dangers de l'insurrection en assurant au peuple le droit de manifester sa volonté d'une manière moins désastreuse.

Considérant, que cette volonté du peuple n'est actuellement étouffée et enchaînée que par son défaut de réunion en masse, résultant du démembrement des provinces, que par la défense qui lui a été faite de se permettre aucunes délibérations sur les matières publiques dans ses assemblées primaires ou électorales,¹ que par la privation prononcée contre lui du droit de manifester son vœu d'une manière impérative dans ses pouvoirs à ceux qu'on dit être ses représentants,² et que l'expression libre de cette même volonté générale est de plus comprimée par le grand nombre d'individus nouveaux qui doivent leur état et leurs fonctions publics à la révolution actuelle ; par ceux qui, par l'exaltation de leurs principes et de leurs idées, s'y sont rendus coupables, sinon d'excès, au moins de procédés répréhensibles, et plus encore par tous ceux, qui surchargés des bienfaits du Monarque, se sont par les plus coupables des ingratitude, rendus criminels envers lui du crime de Lèze-Majesté et qui, pour se dérober aux peines capitales qu'ils ont encourues, multiplient aujourd'hui toutes les intrigues pour entretenir l'égarement du peuple, ou retarder l'émission de son vœu sur le régime auquel ils l'ont assujéti et dont ils maîtrissent et dirigent les ressorts.

Considérant, que cet état de choses est d'ailleurs infiniment ruineux pour la France, par la notoire dilapidation des finances employées tant au dehors qu'intérieurement, par les agents principaux de la révolution actuelle, à séduire et à corrompre tous ceux qu'on croit nécessaires ou à la maintenir ou à en compléter les résultats ; ce qui, avec la Banqueroute de l'état, présage au peuple une longue surcharge d'impositions excessives et extraordinaires.

Considérant, enfin, que la prompte rentrée en France des Princes, des Grands, des Nobles, des riches propriétaires, et des capitalistes émigrés, peut seul rendre aux manufactures du royaume leur activité ; au commerce son aisance, aux ouvriers leurs travaux, aux échanges ordinaires de la vie le numéraire qui seul en est le signe le plus réellement représentatif.

Sur tous ces motifs, uniquement animés de l'amour du bien public, ne désirant nous associer que pour, aux termes de l'article 2 de la déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen, nous assurer respectivement liberté, propriété, sûreté, et résistance à l'oppression, un événement que lors de l'entrée des princes français dans le Royaume, des mal intentionnés leur prêtant calomnieusement contre leur patrie des vues hostiles qu'ils n'ont pas, les forces qui les accompagneront n'étant destinées qu'à réprimer les factions, et à protéger, tout à la fois, la liberté du Roi dans l'expression de son vœu, et la liberté du peuple dans

¹ See Titre III, chap. 1, section IV, Art. 1 of the constitution (J. M. Thompson, *French Revolution, Documents, 1789-94* (1933), p. 119).

² See Titre III, chap. 1, section III, Art. 7 (ibid).

la proclamation du sien, les mêmes mal intentionnés ne se portent eux-mêmes à des actes d'hostilité, de dévastation des propriétés ou d'insurrection contre les personnes dont l'opinion particulière ne seconderait pas leurs vues séditeuses et intéressées, nous en conséquence sommes convenus et avons promis, sous notre parole d'hommes, d'exécuter et nous conformer aux clauses qui suivent ;
Article 1^{er}

Nous déclarons nous associer pour lors de l'entrée de Monsieur et de Mgr. Comte d'Artois en France, concourir par les moyens qui nous seront indiqués, tant par Mr le Marquis de la Rouërie, chef de la présente association et son correspondant général, qu'en conséquence de ses instructions par les comités, dont il sera ci-après parlé, à maintenir dans l'intérieur de la province, l'ordre, la tranquillité et la paix, protéger le rassemblement de ses états, sur la convocation desquels nous avons lieu de compter, et nous défendre respectivement envers et contre tous en cas d'insurrection contre les biens ou les personnes, promettant au reste de ne nous porter jamais à aucune agression et nous soumettre, dans le résultat, au voeu librement et spontanément émis par nos états régulièrement convoqués et assemblés.

Art^e. 2.

Comme il serait difficile de déterminer les divers cas où il nous sera utile d'agir, nous promettons le faire conformément aux plans et instructions qui seront communiqués et donnés par notre dit Sieur de la Rouërie, et intermédiairement, par le comité établi dans la ville de notre résidence.

Art^e. 3.

Dans chaque ville de la province ce comité sera composé de six membres, dont deux gentilshommes, deux ecclésiastiques et deux membres du tiers ; et en outre d'un secrétaire. Les fonctions de ces comités seront de correspondre tant avec le chef de l'association, ci-dessus nommé, qu'entre eux et partout où besoin sera, et d'instruire le corps de l'association des diverses mesures qu'il lui conviendra de prendre suivant les circonstances pour le maintien de la paix et le bien-être de la Province.

Art^e. 4.

L'association, en cas de guerre-civile, ou invasion dangereuse, s'armera seulement pour la protection et la défense des personnes et des biens des citoyens attaqués à raison de leurs opinions politiques ou religieuses. Les membres armés seront indemnisés lorsqu'ils seront en activité de service.

Art^e. 5.

Chaque comité travaillera incessamment à l'organisation de tous les partis (?) qui doivent donner à l'association l'activité nécessaire.

Art^e. 6.

Conformément aux intentions et promesses des Princes, les citoyens qui auront rendu le plus de services importants dans les divers objets de la présente association, leur seront indiqués pour être par le Roi promus aux places et emplois, qui servant de récompense à leurs services, les mettront à lieu de se rendre de plus en plus utiles à la chose publique, d'une manière plus générale et moins oragense.

Art^e. 7.

Chaque associé fournira un contingent, dont lui seul arbitrera le montant et dont le produit sera employé aux dépenses de l'association ; il lui en sera délivré quittance par le comité du lieu de sa résidence. Le compte de l'emploi sera toujours communiqué à première réquisition à M. de la Rouërie, chef de l'association, qui déclare ici s'obliger au nom des princes et aux fins de leur autorisation, de rembourser la dite avance, toutefois que d'après la même autorisation, il en aura dirigé ou approuvé l'emploi.

Art^e. 8.

La signature de chaque associé au pied du présent servira d'obligation pour cette contribution civique.

Art^e. 9.

Les frais de bureaux et correspondance et autres des comités ne seront point à la charge de l'association, mais seulement aux frais des seuls commissaires qui les composent.

Art^e. 10.

Chaque associé ne pourra contredire ni débattre les plans arrêtés et prescrits dans les comités. Chacun se promet ici union fraternelle, confiance, courage, assistance et protection.

Fait et arrêté en Bretagne.