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Political conspiracy in Napoleonic France: the Malet affair

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POLITICAL CONSPIRACY IN NAPOLEONIC FRANCE:
THE MALET AFFAIR

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

In
The Department of History

by
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ABSTRACT

The French Revolution ushered in a period of political unrest in France which appeared never-ending, even when a seemingly stable government rose to power. After a series of failed Republican governments, Napoleon Bonaparte seized control on 18 Brumaire VIII, promising to uphold the revolutionary ideals that had permeated the nation. As time passed, however, it became clear that he aimed at gathering all political power for himself. With his consular and imperial regimes accepted by French citizens, Napoleon effectively returned the country to autocratic rule.

Needing talented officials to serve in his military, ministries, and prefectures, Napoleon enlisted the services of men whose ideologies ranged from Republican, to monarchist, to imperialists. Relying on officials whose political beliefs conflicted with those of the current regime engendered instability within his new government, making it possible for any enterprising political hopeful to strike a devastating blow against the Empire. Throughout the Napoleonic era, many dissidents attempted to overthrow Bonaparte's regimes, but only one man achieved enough success to unsettle the Emperor's belief that his government was secure.

General Claude-François de Malet was a fervent Republican and despite frequent prison breaks and constant denunciations of Napoleon and his government, few people considered him a serious threat. Opinion would change after the night of 22 October 1812. The event, simply known as the Malet Conspiracy, was the single most successful coup attempted against the Napoleonic regime. During this attempt, Malet successfully deceived several high-ranking military officials, prompting them to place their troops under his control. The readiness with which these men followed Malet's orders without question speaks to the fragility of Napoleon's Empire, even among those he considered his most trustworthy devotees. Fearing that his Empire

was on the verge of collapse, Napoleon chose to return to Paris from Russia only after hearing of the events set into motion by Malet. After the nearly successful attempt, it became clear to Napoleon that running an imperial government required close, personal supervision, especially in the homeland of *liberté, égalité, and fraternité*.

INTRODUCTION

Material written on various aspects of the Napoleonic era has reached nearly unimaginable levels. In fact, “there are actually more published sources on Napoleon than there are days since he died—as of 5 May 1990, the 169th anniversary of his death, there will be 61,685 volumes.”¹ Historians have seemingly addressed every possible topic and every possible piece of legislation or correspondence from every possible angle. Yet, as more historians enter the field new perspectives illuminate old topics. The discovery of new letters, diaries, and other archival sources casts old evidence in a new light. The job of the historian is, therefore, to continue telling the story of the past as it evolves, even if the mountain of books on a particular topic seems sufficient.

Authors of initial accounts about life and events during Napoleon’s reign intended their works to ingratiate themselves with the new monarchical regime of Louis XVIII. Portrayals of the Emperor ranged from Satan incarnate, an opinion held by some even during his reign, to the ultimate enemy of the Revolution. The very people who had benefited most from imperial rule, including Napoleon’s most trusted and high-ranking military and political officials, wrote such accounts. The Emperor was not always unaware of their duplicitous nature. He knew, for example, of the anti-Bonapartist sentiment in the heart of Charles Maurice de Talleyrand. Despite Talleyrand’s less than loyal opinion, Napoleon never revoked his position, even when evidence surfaced that he had been responsible for instigating Czar Alexander’s increasingly negative attitude toward the Emperor. Perhaps the Emperor simply wanted to abide by the ancient Chinese proverb, “keep your friends close, but your enemies closer.”

One enemy Napoleon did not hold close enough was General Claude-François de Malet. In 1808, Malet found himself under arrest for having organized an attempt to overthrow the

imperial government. Even after this failure, he was not yet ready to silence his dissatisfaction with the regime. Nevertheless, despite his frequent prison breaks and constant denunciations of both Napoleon and his government, few people looked upon Malet as a serious threat. Opinion would change after the night of 22 October 1812. On this occasion, Malet not only escaped but also managed to arrest several key political figures. The event, simply known as the Malet Conspiracy, was the single most successful coup attempted against the Napoleonic regime.

To discuss the importance of Malet's conspiracy, an understanding of the key figures involved and the social atmosphere of France at the time is required. A number of French sources provide comprehensive biographical information about high-ranking officials in Napoleon's regime. One such resource is Jean Savant's *Les Ministres de Napoléon* (1959). Of specific interest to Malet's plot are Savant's accounts of Jean-Jacques de Cambacérès, Second Consul during the early years of Napoleon's rule, Henri Clarke, minister of war, Joseph Fouché, minister of general police, and Armand Caulaincourt, Napoleon's last foreign minister. Descriptions of each man include information beyond their political and social significance. For example, Savant describes Cambacérès as an exceptionally gifted and experienced politician, but also as a ridiculous, egotistical freemason.²

Philippe-Joseph-Benjamin Buchez's *Histoire parlementaire de la Révolution française, ou Journal des assemblées nationales, depuis 1789 jusqu'en 1815*, published in 1838, provides additional biographical information on key figures beyond the ministers involved with Malet's conspiracy. The source presents details of the participants' personality traits that go unmentioned in other works. When explaining the events surrounding the arrest and trial of Malet and his alleged accomplices, Buchez comments upon each man's reaction, which ranged from acceptance, to lament, to pride.

Completely abandoning a biographical approach, Louis Bergeron's *France Under Napoleon* (1981) provides a detailed account of daily life in Napoleonic France. Relying heavily on archival documents concerning finances, agriculture, and politics, Bergeron provides a solid foundation for understanding Malet's plot in the context of Paris, as well as in France as a whole. The focus on the daily lives of French citizens illuminates a number of issues with which Frenchmen were unhappy, particularly constant conscription and ever-increasing taxes. Bergeron also explains that French peasants saw themselves in Napoleon and expected—at least, initially—to benefit from the alleged equality of opportunity as the Emperor himself had done. As Napoleon's rule continued, however, the common man began to resent the burdens placed upon him by the conscription and heavy taxes required by Napoleon's continuous military campaigns. While many peasants still supported it, some began to feel that the imperial regime “did not keep the promises which [they] thought it had made.”³ Such disenchantment existed not only in France's rural areas, but in the heart of Paris as well. Bergeron argues, in fact, that had Malet been able to gather civilian support for his plot, he may have succeeded in permanently toppling Napoleon's regime.⁴ Napoleon had known that his constant absences from the capital were less than ideal. Until he learned of Malet's plot, however, he had not seriously considered the gravity of the situation.

After establishing the political and social background of France under Napoleon's rule, it is necessary to evaluate various portrayals of General Malet and to discern his true character and motive for attempting to overthrow the Empire. Many secondary sources that mention the conspiracy only in a sentence or two, as is generally the case in more recent works, do not provide any information or background on who the General was or why he had plotted against Napoleon. Accounts of the conspiracy written during the mid to late nineteenth-century typically

portray Malet either as an ingenious political dissident or as a madman. More recent accounts tend to opt for a more objective view, depicting him as a frustrated anti-Bonapartist, rarely calling his mental health into question.

As one of the few books that deals exclusively with Malet's conspiracy, Max Billard's *La Conspiration de Malet* (1907) is invaluable. Billard's narrow focus allows for a more detailed account of the events of 22 October 1812 than most authors provide. For example, in discussing La Force, the prison in which Malet and several of his cohorts served part of their sentences, Billard not only describes the building, but also gives specific information on its location, even its street address. He also paints an interestingly eccentric portrait of General Malet, a man he clearly finds psychologically disturbed.

Émile Marco de Saint-Hilaire depicts the General, instead, as an enterprising political dissident set on overthrowing what he considered to be an oppressive regime in order to restore the true meaning of the Revolution's ideals to the nation. In the version of Malet's conspiracy provided in his book *Histoire des conspirations et attentats contre le gouvernement et la personne de Napoléon* (1847), Saint-Hilaire argues that the General wanted to rid France of Napoleon as soon as he seized power as First Consul.⁵

Specific details can vary, even among those authors who consider Malet an ardent, though sane, supporter of republican government. In their memoirs, several people portray Malet as a man who did not care on whom he stepped in his pursuit to overthrow Napoleon. The depictions of Malet's alleged accomplices by such authors often exude a sense of sympathy, describing these men as innocent fools tricked into participating in the plot. During his attempt to overthrow the imperial regime, Malet successfully deceived several high-ranking military officials, prompting them to place their troops under his control. The willingness of the common

National Guardsman to follow the orders issued by their superiors is not surprising. The readiness with which their superiors followed Malet's orders without question, however, speaks to the fragility of Napoleon's Empire, even among those he considered his most trustworthy devotees. In his *Napoleon: A Biography* (1997), Frank McLynn forms the opinion that Malet's plot had no particular leader, contradicting the General's own testimony during his trial.⁶ McLynn attributes the plot to a wider conspiracy, rather than a small-scale plan hatched by one man, possibly with the help of several close acquaintances.

Another issue often disputed among those who study Napoleonic France is the Emperor's motivation for returning to Paris from Russia ahead of his troops. In addition to military losses at the hands of Czar Alexander's army, the *Grande Armée* faced starvation, blinding snowstorms, nearly sub-arctic temperatures and devastating Cossack raids. Despite such horrendous conditions, many historians argue that soldiers remained willing to follow and support Napoleon. It was only upon his departure that morale sunk to its lowest point. According to primary sources, including memoirs of advisors and high-ranking military officials with the Emperor in Russia, Malet's plot brought to Napoleon's attention the horrifying fragility of his Empire. Having realized the weak position his government was in, even in his own capital city, he decided to leave his troops and return to Paris as quickly as possible. He believed that if an uprising such as Malet's could take place in the heart of his Empire, the situation may be even graver in conquered territories under his control. Primary sources express that he had no choice but to return to Paris where he could govern more closely, as he was no longer willing to rely solely on ministers whose actions had called into question both their loyalty and their capability. Secondary sources contend, on the other hand, that the attempted coup was simply the final straw for Napoleon in determining his course of action.

In *The Age of Napoleon* (1963), J. Christopher Herold illustrates the Emperor's fear that regions under his control would revolt when they learned of the catastrophic conditions his army was facing in Russia. When the news of Malet's conspiracy reached him in early November, he could no longer deceive himself into thinking that his dynasty was secure. The fact that a single man had managed to dupe several top military officials into allowing and participating in the arrest of some of the highest-ranking political figures without raising any objections alarmed Napoleon. More importantly, in the Emperor's opinion, at least, was the fact that not a single man had looked to his wife, the Empress Marie-Louise, or his son, the King of Rome, to succeed him, had the news of his death been true. Herold does not discuss Malet's conspiracy in any further detail.

Other secondary sources provide more comprehensive information on the ties between Malet's attempted overthrow and Napoleon's departure from Russia. One of the most useful accounts is that provided by Adam Zamoyski in his *Moscow 1812* (2004). The fact that a known political malcontent had tricked his political and military officials into acting against the Empire bothered the Emperor the most. Not a single one among them had looked to Napoleon's son to succeed him had news of his death been accurate. Zamoyski argues that the Emperor realized he had to return to his capital in order to secure the future of his regime. Upon making the difficult decision to abandon his troops, Napoleon remarked to his close advisor, General Armand Caulaincourt, "with the French . . . it is necessary, as with women, to not embark upon very long absences. In truth, one never knows what . . . could happen, if one was without news from me for some time."⁷ While Zamoyski does provide more detail on the unfolding of Malet's conspiracy than many other recent secondary sources, the discussion remains brief.

When choosing topics to write about, historians may make their decisions for any number of reasons. In this particular case, I intend to fill a gap in the literature concerning Napoleonic France. There had not been a work written specifically to deal with Malet's plot in a century, since the publication of Max Billard's *La Conspiration de Malet* (1907). Not only is it time for a historian to bring to light again the most successful conspiracy launched against Napoleon's imperial regime, but it is time for the writing of the first such account in English.

Memoirs of Bonaparte's supporters who witnessed, unwittingly participated in, or lived through Malet's plot often insinuate that the General suffered from psychological deficiencies. I am not convinced. While the fiasco Malet orchestrated at the *Te Deum* at Notre Dame Cathedral in 1808 certainly indicates a degree of instability, it is more likely an honest attempt, though badly timed, and even more poorly executed, by a passionate republican to destroy Napoleon's Empire.

Many historians may deem the conspiracy insignificant; yet accounts contemporary to the events assert otherwise. Fearing that his Empire was on the verge of collapse, Napoleon chose to return to Paris from Russia only after hearing of the events set into motion by Malet on 22 October 1812. Conversations between Napoleon and the officials with him in Russia clearly show that the Emperor was deeply distraught over the level of success that the General's plot managed. Even more disturbing to him was the meekness with which his most trusted officials in Paris had "accepted a change of regime, without even giving a thought to the existence of the empress or the king of Rome."⁸ After the events instigated by Malet, it became clear to Napoleon that running an imperial government required close, personal supervision, especially in the homeland of *liberté, égalité, and fraternité*.

CHAPTER ONE—GENERAL MALET: A BIOGRAPHY

On 22 October 1812, General Claude-François de Malet's expressive and determined reddish-brown eyes gazed onto the rainy streets of Paris from a window in Dr. Jacquelin Dubuisson's rest home. Nearly sixty years old, the tall, thin, but well-proportioned man with hair powdered in an outdated style appeared to be a charming and pleasant grandfather. He was, in fact, a dangerous political malcontent. The city was suffering, he believed, under the oppressive rule of a tyrant. Despite numerous plebiscites validating Napoleon Bonaparte's regime, the current state of affairs, according to some, had not been part of the accepted deal. The Revolutionary qualities that he had pledged to uphold—*liberté, égalité* and *fraternité*—began disappearing as soon as he took power. Many French citizens believed such decline foreshadowed society's return to a system similar to the Bourbon's Old Regime. While some expected peace and stability to accompany such a restoration, others saw Napoleon's infringement on their freedoms as betrayal. Among the most disillusioned Frenchmen was General Malet, a man who was no stranger to disappointment.

His father, Jean de Malet, a minor noble, realized early that his family would never enjoy as much wealth as the higher nobility. Determined to gain recognition and glory instead, he did so through military endeavors. Over the course of his career, he rose steadily through the ranks, ultimately becoming regimental captain in the Beauvilliers Cavalry. At the age of sixty, he led his company to garrison in the Franche-Comté at Dôle. He decided to settle down in the picturesque and peaceful town and, despite his advanced years, took a young, well-off bourgeois woman, Gabrielle Fèvre, as his wife and finally began a family. Together, they produced two sons and a daughter, welcoming their first child, Claude-François, on 28 June 1754.

Wanting to pursue a military career like his father, this young man enlisted in the first company of the King's Musketeers on 26 December 1771. Due in large part to his noble status, he quickly gained admission to the Royal Household Troops, the elite though anachronistic Musketeers, in which each man immediately received an officer's ranking. Made a lieutenant, Malet served dutifully for four years until France's financial difficulties led to the dissolution of the King's personal entourage on 15 December 1775. He found himself, now at the age of 21, unemployed and forced to return to the modest estate of his parents in Dôle. Although other positions were available to him by virtue of his experience and rank, he had a bitter taste in his mouth and little interest in pursuing his military career. Malet, back home in the Franche-Comté, found himself swept up in an increasingly raucous vortex of political debate.

Most members of the nobility and clergy intended to maintain the monarchy, but they did not desire, or approve of, the absolute monarchy established by Louis XIV. Although both groups hoped to regain some of the political and social influence they had lost during and since the Sun King's reign, there had yet to be any serious consideration of instituting a constitution—such as in England—to limit the king's power. The possibility of transitioning to a constitutional monarchy remained primarily a topic for discussion among “enlightened” philosophers. Rebellious against the monarchical loyalties inculcated in his youth, Malet became more and more interested in these budding proposals for a liberal society and government—and made no effort to hide his preference. Adolphe Thiers, a historian before becoming one of the most influential political figures in France during the nineteenth century, attributes Malet's political ideology, however unusual for someone of his position in society, to his having read the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Thiers neglected to elaborate on this theory simply explaining that many men of Malet's time read the *philosophe's* works, though few were so clearly affected.¹

As innovative ideas began to take root in Malet's mind, he found himself in direct opposition to his father and younger brother, Claude-Joseph, who remained fervent royalists like most of the nobles in the Franche-Comté and elsewhere. Nothing in Malet's upbringing explicitly destined him to be a proponent of liberal political beliefs or, ultimately, of republicanism.² Perhaps he saw hope in the new proposals, thinking that with such changes in place, the country would enjoy more stability, not being subject to the haphazard whims of royalty and the privileged classes.

Although the next thirteen years brought France increasingly massive debt and widespread famine in the countryside and led the unwitting nation toward revolution, Malet enjoyed a peaceful and uneventful life at his childhood home, pursuing aimless leisure-time activities. With time, his friends and family would come to realize, through Malet's various schemes, that he was a more unusual person than they had imagined. In addition to his unique political views, his romantic decisions also drew criticism. Denise de Balay, the youngest daughter of Baron Charles-Maximilien-Joseph de Balay and Dame Antoinette-Suzanne de Fabri, had grown up on her parents' estate in Arbois, thirty-five miles from Dôle. During her teenage years, she fell in love with her older neighbor, Claude-François, and expressed to her parents the desire to marry him. They vehemently refused, primarily on political grounds. Balay, a steadfast monarchist, would never dream of allowing his daughter to marry such a flagrant liberal, regardless of his noble status. Resolute to the point of stubbornness and unconcerned with political dispositions, the young girl decided that if her parents could not respect her wishes, she would join the nearby Ursuline convent. Because she was only sixteen years old, her parents initially dismissed both requests as spontaneous whims, characteristic of children who do not yet know what they want from life. Ultimately, Denise headed to the convent, seemingly

determined to disobey her parents' wishes in one way or another: either they would grant her permission to marry the man she wanted, or she would become a nun. News of Denise's decision reached Claude-François, who rushed to the nunnery where he found the young girl already covered in white veils. He ran to her side despite the sacrosanct ceremony in progress and asked for her hand in marriage. Having already taken initial vows, she insisted that he wait one year while she finished her novitiate training. As the year passed, Denise's parents came to accept the union, though they remained skeptical. On 9 January 1788, the seventeen-year-old Denise wedded the thirty-three-year old Malet.

While Malet's personal life progressed worry-free, France lacked both finances and food, two problems which the monarchy could no longer afford to ignore. The weak and indecisive Louis XVI, unable to remedy the situation himself, called together an Assembly of Notables—high-ranking officials, upper nobility, and clergy—in January 1787 to discuss reforms. Each proposal by the controller-general, Charles Alexandre de Calonne, met with fierce opposition. The Notables did not see how his suggestions would help the nation; they simply recognized that they would diminish their own power and influence. Not making any progress, Louis XVI replaced Calonne with Étienne Charles Loménie de Brienne, but the change failed to help the situation. Left with no other recourse, the king called for the Estates-General, an assembly to which each of France's three estates—clergy, nobility, and commons—sent representatives. The *cahiers de doléance*, lists of grievances and suggested reforms gathered throughout the kingdom, decried the nobility and clergy's traditional privileges but did not aim to destroy either social distinction or the monarchy. Some delegates, calling themselves Patriots, proposed the creation of a written constitution limiting the king's power in favor of a representative government.

While many considered their propositions unnecessarily radical, such liberal ideas began to permeate the nation.

A year and a half later, the Revolution was underway, hurling the nation down previously unexplored paths, the end point completely unknown. In response to the fall of the Bastille on 14 July 1789 and to more generalized bursts of nationwide violence, groups of men gathered together forming militias, known as National Guards, to defend local property and maintain order. With the creation of this new military came the need for experienced and qualified officers. Owing to his previous experience and rank as lieutenant, Malet soon found himself serving as battalion commander of his hometown's National Guard. Yet his fervent liberalism placed him in a precarious situation as the majority of the Franche-Comté remained royalist.³

Less than three months after the fall of the Bastille, passions in Paris boiled over again as continuously rising bread prices prompted widespread hunger and insurrection. On 5 October 1789, a group of over 6,000 people marched the roughly fifteen miles from Paris to the royal palace at Versailles. While the rabble's original aim was to obtain bread, its subsequent political demands were more complex. The dissenters demanded that Louis XVI return to Paris and that the decrees passed in August by the liberal members of the Estates-General, now calling themselves the National Assembly—the implementation of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* and the abolition of privilege which effectively destroyed the clear divisions among France's three estates—become law. Late that night, approximately 20,000 National Guardsmen under Gilbert du Motier, marquis de Lafayette, and another unruly mob appeared, making the same demands as the day's initial crowd. Only when the royal couple emerged on their balcony in their nightclothes and promised to meet the demands placed upon them did the day's

bloodshed and destruction end. The following afternoon, the mob escorted the royal family and members of the National Assembly to the capital.

News of the royal family's forced relocation to Paris led many Franche-Comté monarchists to consider the king and queen prisoners in their own capital. Remaining ardent supporters of the monarchy, the troops under Malet's leadership wanted to march to the city and restore royal authority. Originally raised during the summer of 1789, the kingdom's National Guards now risked defying their initial purpose of maintaining order. Despite his liberal passions, Malet was willing to concede that France might not yet be ready for true republicanism, seeing, in the meantime, a compromise in the conception of a constitutional monarchy.⁴ Reconciling himself to the idea that such a government, especially if led by a weak ruler like Louis XVI, could pave the way to a pure republic, Malet latched onto his troops' demand to journey to Paris.⁵ An opportune moment for the men to act never presented itself, however, and the guardsmen remained in Dôle.

Over the months following their impromptu relocation, the National Assembly brought hope to a violence-torn nation by passing several well-received reforms. In December 1789, adult males meeting certain tax requirements gained the right to vote, electing members to a newly established one-house legislature. The king saw all significant political power shift to an elected assembly: his own authority greatly reduced, with only the right to suspend legislation for no more than six years—three sessions of the assembly. The new reforms combined with the one-year anniversary of the fall of the Bastille, *la fête de la fédération*, dispelled the National Guard's desire to storm into Paris and save the royal family. At the festivities, the King generated a feeling of optimism throughout the nation by proclaiming, "I, King of the French, swear to employ the power delegated to me in maintaining the constitution decreed by the

National Assembly and accepted by me.”⁶ For the present time, a constitutional monarchy under Louis XVI's rule seemed plausible. Malet believed that such a government would bring his dreams of a republic one step closer. He continued to hope and long for a full-fledged republic but acknowledged that France was not yet ready for such a government. In a letter to Minister of War Louis Marie, Count of Narbonne-Lara on 13 December 1791, Malet explained his thinking: “I would prefer a Republic, but I am convinced that it would not suit us at this particular time. We are still experiencing too many effects from the corruption of the old regime, and the Republic can only exist with and by the virtues that, unfortunately, we do not yet possess and that only experience can give us.”⁷

Malet's political ideology continually put him at odds with royalist sympathizers, especially in his private life. His father went so far as to disown him, thereby hoping to scare his son into rejoining the monarchist cause. Not to be left out of the family endeavors, Malet's younger brother, Claude-Joseph, tried numerous times to buy his allegiance, offering him large amounts of money to abandon republican ideals. Malet resolutely defended his political principles, refusing to sacrifice them for the sake of a more stable financial situation. He and Denise lived on his meager salary during the initial disorderly years of the Revolution. As he began to make a name for himself, however, various opportunities and promotions brought more money to the couple, though they never became wealthy by any means. Malet's reputation as a brilliant, and even more important, liberal-minded military commander allowed him to cultivate numerous relationships among Paris's revolutionary elite during his sojourns there.

Among his comrades were the Lameth brothers, Counts Charles and Alexandre, who, having served across the Atlantic for several years during the American Revolution, were eager to participate in their own country's transformation. Alexandre briefly served as president of the

National Assembly in fall 1790. Despite membership in the Jacobin club, Alexandre came to believe that this group of radical reformers was moving too far too fast and began seeking to reconcile himself with the royal court, a sentiment which continued to intensify over the following months. He lashed out at the Jacobin party, especially Maximilien Robespierre, for its platform of inciting violence and insubordination throughout the country. Charles became president of the National Assembly less than a year later, serving briefly during the chaotic time immediately following Louis XVI's failed attempt to flee France on 20 June 1791. Using his power as head of the Assembly, he spoke passionately about the possibility of establishing a constitutional monarchy in France. Given Louis' recent attempt to flee, Charles acknowledged the difficulties his proposal would entail but insisted that the attempt was necessary for the overall good of the nation.

Playing on the mutual desire to see a constitution established for France, Malet carefully cultivated his relationship with the Lameth brothers, using their military and political connections to enhance his own standing. On 30 June 1791, Alexandre suggested him for a position as aide-de-camp and also for promotion to the rank of captain. Within a month, Malet received the position, though nothing came of the recommendation for captain. Later, in December 1791, Adjutant General Victor, Prince de Broglie, personally requested Malet's transfer to his command. Broglie soon led his troops through Strasbourg, where a significant republican society had formed with the blessing of the town's mayor. The group drew to it a number of well-known political figures, including Malet's cousin and author of *La Marseillaise*, Claude Joseph Rouget de Lisle. Malet's numerous connections within the government and military hierarchies may have afforded him some benefits, but they were unable to provide a smooth route for his career to follow.

Only after a second recommendation for captain by Alexandre de Lameth, accompanied by support from Prince de Broglie, did Malet receive his long-sought promotion. On 25 March 1792, he saw himself appointed to Captain of the 50th line. The promotion came just in time for Malet to prove himself: France declared war on Austria less than a month later. Malet constantly sent letters to his wife, each increasingly excited about the events underway. Not a single situation confounded him. He had an answer for every question and a plan for handling every scenario.⁸ Either he never shared his insights with his superiors or they simply never listened. A momentous outbreak on 10 August 1792 sealed the fate of France's royal family, catapulting the nation toward a republican government at breakneck speed.

What began as calls for the king's abdication by several hundred Jacobins at the Champ de Mars quickly became a force of over 20,000 armed Frenchmen intent on storming the Tuileries palace. Defense of the royal family rested in the hands of less than 3,000 men, Swiss Guards and National Guards, a group whose loyalty to the monarchy Louis knew was questionable at best. As the mob grew rowdier, the king realized the situation was spiraling out of control, prompting him to beg the National Assembly to send help. His plea went unanswered. Several of his ministers urged him to throw himself upon the mercy of the Assembly by fleeing to its meeting place at the Manège.

Upon arrival, the king announced that he hoped by being there he would help prevent bloodshed. Only then did he admit not knowing any other recourse to take than to join them. Although the royal couple's position was perilous, their situation was significantly better than that of the people who had stayed behind at the Tuileries palace. The Swiss troops, having quickly run out of ammunition, surrendered, but the besiegers had no intention of being merciful. They destroyed or stole everything in sight and maimed or murdered anyone they encountered,

whether military or civilian. The carnage was immense, nearly one thousand bodies left to rot in the August heat. Afraid that such violence might await them if they did not take drastic measures, the National Assembly ended the power of the monarchy and imprisoned the royal family. Clearly, there was no longer any hope for a return to the past or for the success of a constitutional monarchy. Although he had been willing to accept a constitutional monarchy as an educational tool on the road toward a republic, its abolition had always been his ultimate desire. The official declaration of France as a Republic on 21 September 1792, he believed, would end the political discord and hostility, but not many were as pleased or as optimistic.

Refusing to accept the Assembly's actions, Victor de Broglie tendered his resignation from the military. His successor, General Alexandre de Beauharnais, provided Malet yet another useful political connection. The general was a powerful member of the Jacobin party and was especially active in Strasbourg. As his aide-de-camp, Malet had a firsthand view into this world, strengthening his already fervent republican opinions. His rapport with the general helped not only to intensify his political sentiments but also to further his military career. After seven months of working under Beauharnais, he received two promotions nearly back to back, a welcome change from the difficulties he experienced during his quest to become captain: elevation to head of brigade on 16 March 1793 and then to colonel only two months later. Despite the prosperous and fluid military career that finally seemed to be in the making, Malet's past would once again haunt him.

A decree issued on 21 September 1793 removed all former members of the royal household troops from active duty in France's military. Preparing for his trip back to Dôle, he received numerous letters praising his military abilities and dedication to the Revolutionary cause. Despite the praise as a loyal republican and capable commander, the Committee of Public

Safety's recent decree swept Malet out of the military for the second time in his career. Less than five months after his return to Dôle, the very people dismissed from the military due to their previous service for the monarchy became the ones the government specifically invited to reenlist. Malet did so, reporting to Neustadt on 8 January 1794. Only five months later, the need for troops to face foreign invaders lessened, and the French military found itself with a top-heavy hierarchy. Yet again, Malet's brilliant reputation could not save him from another career interruption. In June 1795, he faced, for a third time, dismissal from the military with only letters of fulsome praise to show for his service.

Despite his discharge from service, Malet remained in Paris this time rather than return to Dôle as he had in the past. The Revolution continued along its twisting and turning path. The Constitution of the Year III became law on 22 August 1795, setting the foundation for a new government, the Directory, with a bi-cameral legislature, to replace the current Convention. The Council of Five Hundred, whose members had to be at least thirty years of age, possessed the right to initiate legislation and the responsibility of electing the government's executive power, the five-man Directory. Two hundred and fifty men, married or widowed and over the age of forty, made up the Council of Ancients and held authority to approve or veto proposals made by the Five Hundred. On 13 Vendémiaire IV (5 October 1795), right-wing opponents of the Convention, backed by thousands of National Guardsmen, squared off against the regime, intending to ensure that its members did not establish a chokehold on the new governing body. Quickly massing together a defensive force, the Convention freed roughly 1,500 working class prisoners to serve as protection. Whether currently serving or not, numerous republican military officials, including Malet, volunteered to help coordinate the defense of the assembly's gathering place.⁹ The unruly and rebellious group approached the palace, outnumbering its defenders

25,000 to 6,000. Despite their strength of numbers, many of the rebels were unprepared for battle, expecting little or no resistance from the much smaller force. Having the advantage of tried and true leadership from the various volunteer officers, the defenders quashed the rebellion.

Although delighted to have participated in the defense of the Convention, and thus having furthered the republican cause, Malet had also acted out of purely personal motivations. As soon as the Convention's victory became clear, he approached General Henri Clarke about the possibility of readmission to the military. With the general's backing, the military welcomed Malet back on 14 April 1796, placing him at Besançon as colonel of the 6th division.¹⁰

Successful suppression of the insurrection of 13 Vendémiaire had achieved several things. Among them were two that Malet had anticipated: advancing those men who represented his political beliefs and gaining readmission to the military; a third, he had no way of knowing at the time. The very event in which he was so proud of having participated served not only his own purposes but also those of an up-and-coming military genius, the man who would soon become his arch-nemesis: Napoleon Bonaparte.

Malet enjoyed a period of uninterrupted military duty, seeing battle in Piedmont (Italy) as France expanded its borders. His loyal and competent service earned him promotion to brigadier general almost three years to the day of his reinstatement in the army. Contentedly serving a republican government, he was at the high point of his life. On 15 August 1799, France's Army of Italy suffered defeat at the Battle of Novi, prompting a thorough reorganization. Malet bore no responsibility for Novi, but he found himself pushed from the forefront, sent back to garrison duty in the Franche-Comté. Although several uneventful months passed with little to no action in his assigned area, the nation was heading toward another turn. A new regime would take hold on 18 Brumaire VIII (9 November 1799).

Napoleon Bonaparte had returned to Paris from military endeavors in Egypt on 13 September 1799. Although the capital's general public hailed him as a victorious war hero, many Councilors and military men considered him nothing more than an outlaw who had abandoned his assignment and his men by returning to France without permission. Despite the conflicting characterizations, the revolutionary cleric abbé Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès approached Bonaparte about the possibility of overthrowing the Directory, France's current republican regime. Willing to participate, though more anxious and power-hungry than Sieyès had desired, Napoleon began scheming alongside the abbé and Roger Ducos. First and foremost, the trio needed to ensure that certain high-ranking government officials would back their plan. Joseph Fouché, the recently appointed Minister of Police, made it clear that he would neither inform the Convention nor allow his subordinates to put down the plot. Such duplicitous actions had been and would remain part of the Minister's ingenious repertoire. He often ignored schemes, even those that aimed at overthrowing the government, when he felt that their success would benefit him. As such, "French historians, no matter whether royalist, republican, or Bonapartist—one and all spit venom as soon as his name comes up for discussion."¹¹

Support for the coup was even easier to gain from the President of the Council of Five Hundred, as Napoleon's younger brother, Lucien, held the position. Gaining the cooperation of the members of this body required more work. They would not only resist relinquishing power in general but would be even less willing to bestow it upon a man whom many mistrusted and disliked. While Sieyès knew that he had the support of the majority of the Ancients, he could not risk the plan's going awry. To secure the necessary outcome, he, Ducos, and Bonaparte developed an elaborate story centered on a fictional plot. Upon hearing that Jacobin dissenters were prepared to "strike their daggers against the representatives of the nation," the Council of

Ancients passed two frantic decrees.¹² First, both Councils would relocate all future gatherings to a more secure and defensible meeting place at the palace of Saint-Cloud just outside the capital. Second, and more important for the conspiring trio, control of the military troops garrisoned in Paris would be placed in Bonaparte's hands. The stage was set.

The following day, Napoleon directed his troops as they provided "protection" for the Convention's move to Saint-Cloud. By the time the Councilors realized that the supposed Jacobin plot was a sham, they found themselves surrounded by a force of over 6,000 under the leadership of a man who they knew was a co-author of their present circumstance. Once settled in separate meeting rooms, the Five Hundred undertook to swear allegiance to the Constitution, while the Ancients suggested the appointment of a new Directory. Upon overhearing the Ancients' proposal that afternoon, an impatient Napoleon took matters into his own hands. He burst upon them and began bungling his way through what was arguably the worst speech of his life. How dare the Councilors oppose him, he cried, "remember that I walk accompanied by the god of war and the god of luck!"¹³ Growing confused and flustered, Napoleon retreated to the order and safety of his troops outside. He had little time to pull himself back together, however, as an urgent note from Fouché and Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord alerted him that the moment to strike a deathblow to the current regime was now or never. Paris had become aware of the hostilities harbored toward him by the Directorial government, and several Jacobin generals were trying to break the loyalty of Bonaparte's troops outside the palace. Composing himself as much as possible, he made his way to the Orangerie to try his hand at addressing the Council of Five Hundred. While the Ancients had damaged his ego, the Five Hundred seemed determined to damage him physically. Councilors went mad, threw chairs at the intruder and his guards, and called for their deaths. With everything deviating disastrously from plan, Lucien

stepped in to salvage his elder brother's botched efforts. He announced to the troops his version of the situation in the meeting room: "The majority of the council is being threatened by the Terror [Jacobins], some even wielding daggers . . . and threatening to outlaw the general who has been charged with executing the council's decree. You must expel the rebels from the Orangerie. Those brigands are no longer the representatives of the people, but of the dagger."¹⁴ After initial hesitation, the soldiers rushed in, causing the Councilors to flee in fear. Finally, the conspirators could initiate the plan for their new regime. The Ancients, under the direction of Sieyès and Ducos, announced the establishment of a provisional government headed by the three conspirators. Soon, Bonaparte proved more ambitious than his fellow plotters had anticipated, and it became clear that his was the only name that would truly matter in the running of France's new regime.

Initially, two committees of twenty-five men each replaced the legislative bodies of the Directory. As the new assemblies began writing yet another new constitution for France, Sieyès, Ducos and Bonaparte guided the representatives, ensuring their own desired outcome. The Constitution of the Year VIII, adopted in December 1799, placed executive power in the hands of three Consuls, Napoleon Bonaparte, Jean-Jacques de Cambacérès and Charles-François Lebrun, respectively. Theoretically, keeping the system in check were four assemblies that separately held no power and combined held very little. The First Consul proposed legislation to the Council of State, a thirty-to-forty member assembly, who then wrote up the bill. Next, the Tribune's one hundred representatives discussed it but did not have the right to vote on the proposal. The bill then moved to the three hundred men of the Legislature, who voted on it but had to do so without the benefit of discussion. If the proposal passed both assemblies, it fell to the sixty members of Senate to ensure its constitutionality. This last council also had the ability

to publish decrees called *senatus-consultes*. Although technically only written opinions, these pronouncements wielded significant power because they had presumably passed through each level of the consular system. Guaranteeing that First Consul Bonaparte could ultimately have any legislation enacted that he wanted, despite the apparent system of checks and balances, Article 42 of the Constitution clearly explained that the regime's Second and Third Consuls played merely consultative roles. When presented with legislation, "they [would] sign the register of these acts to confirm their presence; if they wish, they may record their opinions; after which the decision of the First Consul suffices."¹⁵ Although the Consular government presented a republican façade, Bonaparte clearly intended to consolidate all real political power in himself.

One of the first outward signs of Napoleon's desire to rule alone was a proclamation he issued to the French people on 15 December 1799, announcing a vote on the proposed Constitution. It stated that the new system was "based on true principles of representative government, upon the sacred rights of property, of equality, and of liberty."¹⁶ Two of the three traditionally accepted gains of the Revolution were now being placed *after* the principle of property. Reminiscent of French values under the monarchy, the idea that property would hold the same—or more—importance as equality and liberty was an insult to Malet's republicanism. Napoleon succeeded in using the Constitution to strengthen his own position while preserving a republican pretense and was clearly its primary author. He had been in power for only a month but was already hoarding power for himself. While citizens still played a role in the government, a new electoral system significantly reduced their direct influence. Although they maintained the right to vote, citizens no longer directly elected representatives to the four assemblies. Instead, an elaborate system of elections ultimately created a list of men from which the Senate chose the ones to serve in the Tribune and Legislature. Bonaparte was drawing not only political power

to himself but also the intense hatred of Malet. Ever the political activist, he recognized in the Constitution of the Year VIII a step away from the true republic for which he longed. As Napoleon consolidated his authority, his republican opponents believed him more and more dangerous: a man working against the liberties gained during the chaos of the Revolution, a man intent upon destroying the citizens' right to participate in government, a man who wanted to return to the past by making himself France's supreme ruler.

To keep his officers from gaining too much influence and thereby threatening his regime, Napoleon made it a point to prevent them from serving in regions where they had a history. Stationed for two years in Besançon, less than thirty-five miles northeast of Dôle, Malet enjoyed the close proximity to his hometown. Little did he know that Napoleon was in the process of ordering his reassignment. The move, which Malet considered a personal attack, was simply a matter of policy to the First Consul. On 9 August 1801, he received the order to relocate to the 9th territorial division in Montpellier, nearly 345 miles away, on the Mediterranean coast of France. As soon as Malet arrived at this new post Bonaparte moved him again, this time to Bordeaux in the southwest with the 11th division. The distance from home, roughly 455 miles, and the cost of relocating twice greatly annoyed Malet. From this point on, his fellow officers and friends begin describing him as a completely different person, cold, bitter, and openly hostile.

Although his political opinions often put him at odds with the regime in power, Malet had served loyally regardless of whose orders he received. After his move to Bordeaux, he seemed to go out of his way to find, or make, trouble. His fierce republicanism put him into constant conflict with the town's officials and sundered within eight months any of his helpful ties in the city. Although his republican ideals included denunciation of the privileges and elevated status

enjoyed by the nobility prior to 1789, he acted as if he were an exception. Whether he expected people to honor his requests—or more accurately, his demands—because of his noble birth or simply because of his current military status is unclear. Regardless of the specific cause, Malet's apparent expectation that his desires be satisfied without question infringed upon the idea of equality introduced by the Revolution which he so passionately claimed to follow.¹⁷ The constant hostilities prompted Malet to insist upon a transfer. On 24 April 1802, he reported to a new post in nearby Périgueux. Not yet satisfied, he immediately demanded, and received, a two-month leave of absence at full pay.

Napoleon proved dissatisfied with his own current position, seeking to draw more political power to himself, much to the chagrin of his partners from 18 Brumaire, Sieyès and Ducos. Given the Revolution's violent aversion to monarchical rule—or to any form of government under a single person—he took gradual, though obvious, steps in that direction. The Peace of Amiens, signed on 25 March 1802 by France and the United Kingdom, brought much-needed relief to the people of both nations and to mention Europe as a whole, which had endured a decade of nearly non-stop warfare. In addition to inaugurating peace between the two countries, the treaty announced the return of prisoners and hostages taken by both sides and dictated that the United Kingdom return colonies previously belonging to nations involved in the peace—Britain maintained only Trinidad and Ceylon. France was to evacuate its positions in Naples and the Roman states, though the nation did gain acknowledgement of its natural boundaries, along the Alps and the Rhine River. For French citizens, the treaty also brought as a bonus lower taxes and conscription demands. With his reputation soaring to an all-time high, Napoleon knew the time to strengthen his hold on power had come. Taking advantage of the Senators' offer in summer 1802 to extend his term as Consul to ten years, he cleverly suggested a

plebiscite asking the nation whether he should serve in this position for life. Although they accepted the idea, many politicians were alarmed, considering “the impression of the revolution . . . still too fresh and this transition too abrupt.”¹⁸ The French people as a whole were less concerned with Napoleon’s attempt to retain all political power for himself. In him they saw their salvation from war and the constant chaos of the Revolution. While the voting process was free from direct tampering, voters certainly felt pressured to approve the proposed change. The typical adult male might have feared retaliation for casting a no vote, as they were required to sign their names in a register before voting. Not wanting to leave room for doubt, some military officials threatened their men. One general, gathering his men outside the voting center, stated blatantly: “You are free to hold your own opinion; nevertheless, I must warn you that the first man not to vote for the Consulate for life will be shot in front of the regiment.”¹⁹ The Senate ratified the Constitution of the Year X, including Napoleon's new title, before knowing the vote's outcome. The Senators' premature action ultimately corresponded to the desires of French citizens, who voted overwhelmingly in favor of the Life Consulate, 3,568,855 in favor, a mere 8,374 opposed, including Malet. With the new Constitution and a resounding victory granted to him by the people, Napoleon had successfully gathered all political power to himself, while leaving to the other Consuls and Senators just enough to maintain a republican façade.

The sham of a republic did not fool everyone. Malet saw France returning to the past as citizens voted away the gains of the revolution by placing all authority in the hands of one man. Skeptical of Napoleon’s objectives since 18 Brumaire, Malet grew incensed as the Consul gathered power unto himself. Upon hearing the news of the change in term as Consul, he immediately swore a vehement hatred of the leader, a sentiment that proved lifelong.²⁰ Initially, he took no direct action and instead wrapped himself in his career, serving faithfully and

admirably. Stationed far from any especially republican crowds, Malet tired of the Napoleonic acolytes surrounding him. He demanded transfer to Angoulême, a city more overtly republican. Upon arrival, he began meeting with republicans and plotting alongside them. Opting to avoid violent forms of protest, Malet simply sent letters to various officials revealing his frustrations. He sent one such report, for example, to Minister of War Louis-Alexandre Berthier on 19 fructidor XI (6 September 1803) denouncing *émigrés* and expressing his disgust with several ministers.²¹ Eventually increasing the gravity of his actions, he refused to allow his men to serve at a number of political functions within the city. No truly disciplinary repercussions followed these spiteful acts because he coupled them with letters sent directly to Napoleon reminding the First Consul of the invaluable services he had performed in his name. Expecting his respectable military career to counteract any minor disturbances he created, Malet feared no punitive action. Despite the general's disobedience, Prefect of Charente Felix Bonnaire had no objection to Malet's maintaining his position in the military, but he preferred that he do it somewhere else. Demanding the troublemaker's transfer to the Vendée, he wrote that "the most important thing for this region is that he has a change of residence."²² Although never reaching the point of violence, Malet's increasingly mischievous behavior had labeled him a political malcontent.

Napoleon's hold on power depended greatly on loyalty, a commodity he was willing to purchase when needed. Despite the Revolution's promise of equality, he knew that people enjoyed striving to rise above others. Running the risk of criticism for stepping back to practices of the Old Regime, he proposed the creation of the Legion of Honor in spring 1802. Admission depended on ability, talent, and faithful service, whether military or civilian. The suggestion faced significant disapproval on the ground that the organization would serve no purpose other than distributing useless honorific trinkets and promoting inequality. To such claims, Napoleon

retorted, “it is by baubles alone that men are led.”²³ Pure and complete equality was not something that the Consul believed Frenchmen truly wanted. He saw it as something “they would gladly renounce . . . if everyone could entertain the hope of rising to the top.”²⁴ The Legion would have five levels, each providing a different amount of prestige and money. Only one man held the highest rank, that of Grand Chancellor, at any given time. At the next level were Grand Officers, who received an annual salary of 5,000 francs, followed by Commandants, earning 2,000 francs, Officers, 1,000 francs, and Legionnaires, 250 francs.²⁵ Although the Legion of Honor was open to civilians, an overwhelming majority of its members were military men. Among the roughly 4,000 civilians—compared to nearly 32,000 soldiers—welcomed into the fold between 1802 and 1814, most of them were high-ranking government officials. Bonaparte, realizing the power behind man’s desire for honor and recognition, used the Legion not only to reward the faithful but also to buy the loyalty of the unfaithful.

Had the Legion of Honor existed earlier, Malet’s initial years of loyalty to the Revolution might well have earned him admission. Now, not his military service but his open hostility caught Napoleon’s attention. On 12 December 1803, in a blatant effort to purchase Malet’s devotion to the Consulate, the Legion welcomed him with the rank of Commander. He promptly responded in a letter humbly acknowledging the distinction and declaring his unshakable “love of country and liberty.”²⁶ Bonaparte would learn soon enough that he had merely succeeded in renting, not buying, Malet’s loyalty.

In May 1804, the Senate, under obvious pressure, suggested that Napoleon take the title of Emperor, rendering the regime hereditary and supposedly more stable. Although the suggestion disheartened some members, only one Senator actively spoke against the proposal and voted no. On 18 May, the Senators approved the transition. Still wanting to preserve the

façade of a republican government, Napoleon ordered a plebiscite, stating that he would not accept the position if it were not the will of the people. Six months later, French citizens voted whether they supported his accession to Emperor, a hereditary position that would pass, if he had no legitimate children of his own, to a brother, Joseph or Louis Bonaparte. The result, announced on 6 November 1804, was a victory for Napoleon: 3,572,329 to 2,569. Such an outcome was—and is—a “virtual statistical impossibility,” implying that 99.9993 percent of Frenchmen voted in favor of the proposition.²⁷ Whether or not someone distorted the numbers, Napoleon’s coronation took place on 2 December 1804 at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris.

Perhaps hoping that a certain level of camaraderie existed between them, Malet wrote Napoleon a short letter after his coronation implying warm feelings. He did, however, try to convince the Emperor to avoid a tyrannical reign, beseeching him not to turn his back on the people who had granted this new station: “use all the power that your magisterial title grants you to ensure that this new form of government functions to save the nation from the incapacity or tyranny of your successors, and that, having ceded to you some of our precious liberty, we will not one day be reproached by our children for having ceded theirs.”²⁸ While the tone of the letter was surprisingly positive and hopeful, Malet had in no way turned from his republican principles. His passive resistance and insubordinate behavior in Angoulême had brought him unfavorable attention several years ago. Surely, he did not actually expect Napoleon to heed his advice on how to run the nation.

After the imperial coronation, Malet’s campaign of libel against local officials intensified, as he wrote more and more letters denouncing simple civil servants and senators. By the end of 1805, he was serving with the Army of Italy in Rome. Even out of the country his attitude did not change and so drew him into incessant conflict with superior officers and

government officials. Tired of dealing with the complaints about Malet, Minister of War Alexandre Berthier took decisive steps. Not trusting insubordination to be sufficient charge to dismiss him from military service, Berthier concocted additional allegations. He charged Malet with showing favoritism to French soldiers after a profitable confiscation of goods, thereby creating hostility and insurrection among the accompanying Roman militia. The indictment was serious enough that a board of inquiry immediately summoned him to Paris to answer for his conduct.

Malet and Denise moved to the capital city on 15 July 1807, taking up residency at n^o 75, rue des Saints-Pères. During the investigation, which lasted nearly a year, he continued to receive the same salary as when on active duty. Aside from the humiliation of having his life scrutinized for transgressions he had not committed, the respite seemed nothing more than a paid vacation. With the exception of periodically appearing before the board's judges to defend himself, Malet had nothing to do. Taking advantage of his free time, he fell in with an underground group of liberal activists. The club comprised mostly well-off members of society, including doctors and high-ranking military and political officials. Upon Malet's admission to the group, he learned of a plot formulated by General Joseph Servan de Gerbey, briefly Minister of War in 1792, to overthrow Napoleon's regime. Here was an idea that Malet could support.

Servan proposed replacing the Imperial regime with a provisional government, though he planned to work out its specific details only as the need arose. If once in power the new regime found itself unable to continue, it would extend an invitation to the Bourbon family, offering to allow their return to the monarchy. Servan was not willing, however, to sacrifice the gains achieved by the French Revolution. The Bourbons would only be welcome under the conditions of the Constitution of 1791—real authority resting in a unicameral legislature, with the king

maintaining solely the right to postpone legislation—with some modifications.²⁹ Before he could risk putting his plan into motion, he needed to ensure that the plot had support from key figures within the city. Servan won several senators to his cause by promising them positions in the provisional government which would replace the Imperial setup they despised. They had lacked any true political power since Bonaparte's takeover on 18 Brumaire: he simply kept the Senate around to ensure that his regime continued to appear republican, at least on the surface. Should Servan succeed in reinstating the Constitution of 1791, the senators would enjoy more authority than they currently possessed. Even more important, Servan had to ensure Minister of Police Fouché's allegiance, a task deemed easy enough given his passivity on 18 Brumaire. Fouché was the type of man who served whoever or whatever regime happened to be in power at the time, looking out only for himself. His position in the government made him privy to a limitless information about criminals, general malcontents, and political dissidents. His men constantly reported news of subversive endeavors in the making. Some they thwarted in infancy, some they fabricated to justify the arrest of otherwise innocent citizens, and some they simply let happen. Fouché had no intention of interfering in Servan's plan, should he ever manage to get it off the ground. As in the past, he was content to serve the victor of the situation. Should Servan's plan succeed, Fouché's would offer his services to the new regime. Should it fail, he would devotedly perform the duties of his office and arrest the conspirators. He seemed to have no true loyalty. In fact, he once stated, "I don't care for any particular form of government over another. All that means nothing . . ."³⁰ Napoleon was aware of Fouché's deceitful nature, but he valued his services because no one else had his skill at penetrating every social organ. The Emperor appreciated the minister's results but suspected his motives. In order to keep Fouché in check, Napoleon maintained two distinct police forces, one under Fouché and one under Prefect

of Police Louis-Nicolas Dubois. To check the possibility of independent action from Fouché, he increased the number of police under Dubois's supervision.

The Emperor failed to consider the precarious position in which he left his nation when on military campaign. To savvy politicians, however, the dangerous circumstances were clear. It was bad enough that the Emperor was placing himself in danger by accompanying the military to battle, but the fact that he left behind no direct heir complicated the situation. While the same documents which made him Emperor also stipulated that one of his brothers, either Joseph or Louis, would succeed him if he had no legitimate children of his own, this prospect was hardly reassuring. If death found Napoleon on the battlefield, his nation would once again find itself catapulted into civil chaos. Republicans and royalists would clash, rekindling the Revolutionary fire. Here was precisely the situation that General Servan dreamed of every night. In early 1807 it seemed as if his dreams might come true.

The joint force of Prussia and Russia that Napoleon faced on 7 February 1807 in the town of Eylau, less than thirty miles south of Königsberg, easily outnumbered his own troops. His infantry was dwarfed 67,000 to 45,000, and his artillery pieces fell short 260 to 200. Casualties on the first day of fighting totaled roughly 4,000. The number of wounded quickly became the number of dead as most of the injured men, exposed to the excruciatingly cold temperature and heavy snowfall, did not survive the night. The second day of battle saw blinding blizzard conditions that rendered the bit of light provided by daybreak virtually useless. As the Russians began making inroads on the French lines, Napoleon ordered a corps under Marshal Pierre Augereau to contain the Russian left flank. Delusional with fever and barely able to stand, Augereau was hardly in prime commanding condition. Growing increasingly disoriented as he crossed the marshy, pond-laden terrain, he unwittingly led his soldiers straight into the center of

the Russian artillery line. With no difficulty or hesitation, the Russian gunners obliterated the Frenchmen. Of the nearly 15,000 soldiers who had obediently and confidently followed Augereau on the battlefield, only 2,000 would live to see another day.

While the annihilation of this corps dealt a devastating blow to French numbers and morale, the Russians nearly struck one even more catastrophic blow that could have easily destroyed any hope for the survival of Napoleon's Empire. As the Emperor watched the battle unfold from a bell tower within Eylau, nearly 6,000 Russian troops headed straight for him. His own troops were all on the battlefield, leaving him with only his personal escort for protection. If the Russians could manage to capture—though they were more likely to kill—the illustrious Napoleon Bonaparte, not only would the battle be over but so would his reign. His guards would rather die than let that happen. And die they did. The Russians mercilessly mowed down the French, who sacrificed themselves as human shields. Their heroic efforts succeeded in slowing the enemy long enough to allow the arrival of two French battalions which repelled the attack completely.

As streams of blood oozed across the frozen battlefield, Napoleon knew that he faced a desperate problem. The loss of life was devastating, though he could hide that fact easily enough. To the nation, rather than reporting the real figure estimated around 25,000, he admitted suffering fewer than 8,000 dead and wounded, a baldfaced lie when considering that Augereau's corps alone lost nearly 13,000. On the other hand, his troops had experienced the fighting for themselves and knew the truth. Haunted by a battle deemed a victory only because they survived, their morale was crashing, further aggravated by rough terrain, bad weather and hostile peasantry in the countryside. They asked themselves whether they would ever see France again.

Back in Paris, General Servan and his supporters, knowing more accurate details of the battle than the general public, saw their chance of acting against the Imperial regime. They began considering how the provisional government they intended to create would function. They discussed how the regime would work, who would have what positions, and how they would handle various hypothetical scenarios. By the time they managed to work the details out to everyone's liking, the opportune moment to act had passed. News of Napoleon's decisive victory at the Battle of Friedland on 14 June 1807 had reached Paris. If Servan tried to put his plan into action, he would have no chance of success. Discouraged, he tried to assure his followers that another opportunity would arise. Although he may have been right, he would not live long enough to make use of it.

Servan died in Paris on 10 May 1808 at the age of sixty-seven. To some, the hopes of overthrowing Napoleon's regime passed along with him. Others saw their aspirations continuing in Malet, who had commenced conspiring even before Servan's death. Thirteen men, each as eccentric as their leader, initially united with the general in his attempt to overthrow Napoleon's empire. Several of them, sharing Malet's political proclivities, had held positions in France's previous republican governments. Pierre-Alexandre Lemare, former president of the administrative commission in the Jura, found himself swept out of office on 18 Brumaire, instantly instilling in him a deep hatred of the nation's new leader. Antoine-François Ève, called Demaillot, and Blanchet represented Robespierre's Jacobin club, while Jean-François Ricord, a lawyer and poet, had served in the Convention. Other politically minded men, Gariot, Rigomer Bazin and Liébaud, previously held positions in various local governments and administrations but lacked strong ties to any specific Revolutionary regime. Providing the group with some of their most important connections was former legislator Florent-Guyot, who had good rapport

with a number of Senators. The plot drew men from not only political spheres, but other careers as well. Baude, an ex-commissioner of police, and Malet's own former aide de camp, Jacob Poilpré, supported the general's conspiratorial efforts. Another schemer was Philippe Corneille, a "gentle dreamer [who was] hardly dangerous."³¹ He had previously served in the Royal Army but preferred spending his time writing both poetry and prose. The group's final two members came from the medical profession, Doctors Gindre and Saiffert. Once assembled, the eclectic dissidents began meeting on the rue Bourg-l'Abbé in the 3e arrondissement to plot the Emperor's downfall.

Although the basis was similar to that of Servan's, Malet intended to amend the plan's ultimate goal. After all, if it failed, Malet would bear the harshest punishment. He could not risk leaving his wife and son without provision or subject himself to imprisonment or execution for a plan with which he was not completely satisfied. Servan had been content with returning the Bourbons to the throne under a constitutional monarchy, but Malet had another idea. Rather than reinstating any previous constitution, he proposed a new regime which he would call—dangerously enough—the Dictatorship.

Bonaparte had turned his military focus to Spain in spring 1808, intending to depose Charles IV and install his own elder brother Joseph on the Spanish throne. He set out with his troops from Paris on 2 April, heading to Bayonne, nearly 480 miles southwest, near the Spanish border. Despite being closer to the capital than during previous campaigns, the Emperor's attempts at communication were no easier—there were no semaphore stations established toward the Pyrenees, and if Paris needed to get word to its leader, or vice versa, the only option was courier. The time required by such communication worked perfectly for Malet's plot. Once

Napoleon arrived in Bayonne, he could hope for no faster communication with his capital than two days in each direction.

Four days was more than plenty, Malet believed. After all, his plan was no more elaborate than the one that had brought Napoleon to power in the first place. His fellow conspirators agreed, and they launched phase two. Philippe Corneille, an author of both poetry and prose, assumed that his writing experience would allow him to create believable political documents which would prove the legality of the Dictatorship. Although the idea seemed good at the time, the assumption was wrong. In fact, his ineptitude proved more of a hindrance than a help.

The first document, considered a necessity by all of the conspirators, was a forged *senatus-consulte* declaring Napoleon an outlaw and announcing the framework for a new government. The Dictatorship would consist of nine men, Malet included, and would have the task of ruling France while also drafting a new constitution on which the people would vote after its completion.³² Bazin and Corneille, charged with the task of creating the faux Senatorial decree, ultimately produced a mediocre and problematic text. They faced three decisions, muddling them all. First, the name chosen for the proposed government was a problem. Bazin and Corneille understood that using the word "dictatorship" in their *senatus-consulte* would alarm the printer, who then might alert authorities. Wanting to avoid use of the term, they opted to have it spelled "diotatorship."³³ With the copies in hand, they planned to erase the connection in the "o," making it resemble a "c." Second, they dated the document 20 April 1808, though Malet did not intend to execute the plot until late May. If anyone asked about the discrepancy, they planned to explain that the Senate had debated the idea of ending Napoleon's regime in secret, publishing the document but choosing not to circulate it until later. Third, rather than

concluding with a list of approving senator's names, they simply left "Signatures to Follow," thereby casting doubt on the authenticity of the *senatus-consulte*, the very document intended to legitimize the Dictatorship.³⁴

In addition to the senatorial decree, Bazin and Corneille produced three more proclamations to implement should they succeed in overthrowing the imperial regime. One, simply titled "Decree of 29 May 1808," outlined the Dictatorship's initial twelve orders of business. The two opening articles addressed the military, announcing the immediate withdrawal of French troops from foreign lands, the abolition of conscription, and an amnesty for anyone who had dodged the draft or deserted. Malet and his conspirators considered recalling French forces a necessary step to ensure lasting peace under the supervision of the new government. Previous regimes had come and gone, all the time struggling with the challenge of either maintaining war or ending hostilities on satisfactory grounds. Malet expected the withdrawal of troops to appease not only France's European opponents but also French citizens, helping to ensure their loyalty to the Dictatorship and the government that would eventually take its place. The article promising both an end to obligatory military service and a general reprieve for those who had eluded it served a similar purpose. Several other clauses declared the abolition of the death penalty except, ironically, for cases of rebellion, and extended an official pardon to anyone exiled, imprisoned, or executed for political beliefs. A final stipulation placed the nation's military under Malet's control.³⁵

If the Dictatorship came to fruition, the general's new position would bring with it the responsibility for providing Parisian troops with their daily commands. Malet's first decree, dated 30 May 1808, would reorder the organization of current officers, ensuring that the men holding those positions were loyal to him. He declared that commands from anyone not

specified in that group or in future “Orders of the Day” null and void and also banned the wearing of any imperial decorations, including the ones bestowed upon members of the Legion of Honor. Troops with such commendations would receive medals deemed appropriate by the Dictatorship at a future date, assuming the regime proved lasting.³⁶

The publication of the *senatus-consulte* and the two subsequent decrees would only inform government and military officials currently stationed in Paris about the demise of Napoleon's empire. To spread the word among the general public and French troops abroad, Malet ordered the printing of 12,000 proclamations titled “Dictatorship,” remarkable considering the group’s simultaneous effort to avoid using that very term. The document assumed that French citizens had tired of warfare and longed to regain the fullness of the liberties they had won during the French Revolution. Should his plot succeed, Malet wanted to take an early opportunity to assure Frenchmen that tyranny would not pervade the new government as it had with Napoleon’s rise to power. The final paragraph of the first section promised that the members of the Dictatorship had only France’s best interest in mind: “Citizens and soldiers, in attacking tyranny, we took pride in aspiring to true glory, that of creating in France a liberal administration. This result obtained, we will immediately rejoin your ranks. The blessings of happy citizens are the only goal of our ambition, the sole treasure with which we want to enrich ourselves.”³⁷ To the soldiers, Malet wrote that they had not been “Bonaparte’s troops,” that such possession was impossible.³⁸ They owed the Emperor nothing, for their only true loyalty had to lie with France and the wishes of her people. The general promised that his provisional government would be careful to uphold the liberties of the French people. That is, if he and his co-conspirators were successful.

While some of the group's ideas may seem eccentric, none was more so than a suggestion made by Lemare concerning their weapon of choice. To avoid drawing attention by purchasing weapons, several of the plotters offered the use of guns already in their possession. Something quieter, Lemare argued, something more befitting the situation. A dagger, he explained "is the proper weapon of conspirators, a clever choice that can serve two purposes. If need be we can use it against ourselves to prevent being taken alive by the hands of the tyrant or his devotees."³⁹ The group accepted the proposal, putting him in charge of acquiring enough knives to arm not only themselves but also those they expected to draw to their cause along the way. Now the question became how to obtain the desired 1,200 daggers without raising suspicions. Wandering through Paris, Lemare purchased the handles from one shop and the blades from another. With weapons acquired, the conspirators turned their attention to last minute details.

Four days before the date set for the overthrow, the group decided to confide in General Pierre Guillet and General Guillaume for additional help while the plot unfolded. After Malet read aloud the false *senatus-consulte*, Guillaume asked question after question about nearly every aspect of the plan. The level of anxiety among the conspirators increased with each additional inquiry. Perhaps his questions arose from genuine curiosity and interest, or perhaps they portended a disastrous ending. As the group adjourned for the night, Malet suddenly declared that Minister of Police Fouché had somehow learned of their plan and that, to ensure their safety, they should postpone taking any action. Although Fouché had, in fact, heard rumors of a republican plot circulating for several weeks, it is unlikely that Malet knew. He intended his exclamation to startle the two newcomers into not participating, at which point the original conspirators could reschedule their plans.

As the baffled men headed home from the meeting, Guillaume and Demailot discussed the night's events, each growing increasingly hostile toward the other. Finally, Demailot could take no more and launched into a screaming fit, blaming Guillaume for the plan's sudden reversal. Unfortunately for the two, the shouting match took place just outside of the Palais-Royal where General Lemoyne happened to be within earshot. Seeking readmission to active duty—the military had forced him to retire against his will in 1794 at the age of fifty-three—he saw his opportunity, knowing that his assistance in thwarting a conspiracy would not go unrewarded. He immediately made his way to Dubois's prefecture of police, in the 4^e arrondissement, to report what he had heard: that Guillaume and Demailot were busy plotting against the imperial regime. Although the information was inaccurate, Prefect Dubois acted quickly, unlike his counterpart, Fouché, who had long known that a conspiracy was brewing but had taken no action—perhaps waiting for more details, but more likely, as in the past, never having any intention of interfering. Within a week, Dubois ordered the arrest of the two alleged schemers.

Despite remaining silent in accordance with Malet's final words at the last meeting—though the documents that they had spent so much time on expired in the meantime—the conspirators were about to face trouble. On the morning of 8 June 1808, Demailot and Guillaume each woke to a knock on his door. Greeting them were several of Dubois's men waiting to take them into custody. After escorting them to separate interrogation rooms at the prefecture, Inspector Veyrat, one of Dubois's best men, grilled them about the details of the conspiracy. The meeting was not the first for Demailot and the inspector. Prior to joining the police, Veyrat had made a living counterfeiting, a way of life cut short when Demailot testified against him. Facing charges of his own, however, Demailot remained silent during questioning.

Guillaume, on the other hand, crumpled under the pressure. During his first round of interrogation, he rambled on and on, implicating the other prisoner as the mastermind behind the conspiracy but only hinting at Malet's involvement. Having attended only one of the plotters' meetings, he knew little of the actual plan. Not satisfied with the information they had obtained thus far and making no progress with Demaillot, the police questioned Guillaume again later that same day. This time he denounced every person whose name he could remember, though it was hardly a complete list: Corneille, Guillet, and Gariot. With this information, Dubois and his men began searching for the rest of the plotters.

As soon as he learned of the arrests, Malet fled his home to seek safety elsewhere. After spending the night at the Hôtel d'Orient in the 7^e arrondissement, he rushed to his next hideout—clearly an illogical choice—the house of fellow conspirator Poilpré. Wanting to let Denise know that her husband was safe, Poilpré headed to her home, though his friendly deed severely compromised his own security, not to mention that of Malet. Dubois's police, knowing the former soldier's connection to Malet, waited for him outside the general's residence and took him into custody when he arrived. His arrest quickly led to that of Malet. Not at all denying involvement in the conspiracy, the general, even before the interrogation began, divulged every detail of the plot that the police could possibly have wanted, though he added his own twist. Rather than admit that he was the author of the plot, he denounced Florent-Guyot and Jacquemont as the ringleaders.⁴⁰ No longer confident that he would receive leniency from Bonaparte, he sought to hide behind the names of two well-known and influential politicians. By mid-July, Dubois's men had arrested each conspirator.⁴¹ Napoleon's regime seemed safe.

When Napoleon received Dubois's first account of the thwarted takeover, he replied calmly that he wanted the "shady business" stopped quickly and quietly.⁴² In each of his

subsequent reports, the prefect passionately insisted that the men under arrest posed a real threat to the Empire. He portrayed them as serious insurgents who would stop at nothing to destroy the Imperial regime as long as they freely roamed the nation. In his own daily reports to the Emperor, however, Minister of Police Fouché consistently downplayed the danger of the conspiracy, referring to the interrogations still underway as “conversations without real value.”⁴³ In response to Fouché, Napoleon explained that he knew of at least one earlier conspiracy in which Malet, the “wicked subject [and] cowardly thief,” had involved himself.⁴⁴ Although not convinced that the conspirators posed as serious a threat as Dubois depicted, Napoleon eventually wrote to Fouché telling him that he did not expect, nor approve of, the discrepancies between the two men’s accounts. Growing angry at the determination of the minister of police to disregard the seriousness of the situation, Napoleon wrote to Arch-Chancellor Cambacérès on 17 July, “Fouché is spoiled, favoring crackpots whom he hopes to use to his own advantage and wanting nothing more than to discourage those people who anticipate deadly and extraordinary events.”⁴⁵ Although annoyed at him, the Emperor knew of no other man as qualified to lead the Ministry of Police as Fouché and ultimately took no punitive measures against him. Napoleon had a history of successfully employing the very people who opposed him, even if they did so violently. While he recognized Fouché as an extremely talented official, he saw no such value in General Malet. The Emperor’s wrath fell upon Malet and his co-conspirators, and by mid-July they found themselves prisoners of state incarcerated in Paris at the La Force prison in the 4e arrondissement.

Imprisonment only heightened Malet’s hatred of Napoleon and his allegedly tyrannical regime. Similarly, his stunt in June 1808 had increased, at least temporarily, the Emperor’s interest in him. Napoleon had his police keep him up to date on the conspirator’s actions,

wanting to know who his visitors were and to whom he spoke within the prison. Writing himself to Napoleon on 23 October 1808, Malet sought to justify the plot he had hatched over the spring. His actions, he argued, stemmed from a true desire to protect the long-term prosperity of France, something he argued the current Imperial regime endangered. “What will happen to us if we lose our Emperor?” he asked.⁴⁶ As long as Napoleon continued to insist upon being at the head of his troops amid the perils of war, his government was tragically fragile. The Emperor had no obvious reaction to Malet’s explanation, but surely he recognized the validity of the general’s argument. Whereas he had pardoned, and subsequently used to his own advantage, numerous plotters and malcontents in the past, he believed that the services Malet could offer were not worth the effort.⁴⁷ Bribery would not work on the general, as Napoleon had discovered upon admitting him to the Legion of Honor. The only chance of preventing future conspiracies by the dissatisfied Malet was to lock him in prison indefinitely. Or so the Emperor thought.

Prison was not enough to quell Malet’s insubordination. On 29 June 1809, a *Te Deum* celebrating the capture of Vienna took place in Notre Dame. At La Force, just under a mile from the cathedral, the general was aware of the event and knew that all important officials would be in attendance. Although his means remain unknown, Malet managed to escape from his cell unnoticed, making his way toward Notre Dame, where he hid among the crowd. After the ceremony, the troops were the first to leave. As they filed out, leaving the majority of politicians and high-ranking military officers inside, he slammed the main doors, momentarily trapping them. Climbing to the highest point possible outside the building, he began shouting: “Bonaparte is dead! Down with Corsicans! Down with the police! Long live liberty!”⁴⁸ Following his already ludicrous claims, he announced an end to the Empire and the creation of a republic. He rattled off a list of names and their new positions within the government. His

outburst was a fast-paced version of the plot which had led to his arrest the previous year. The outcome was only slightly different this time. He faced not only recapture but also the hysterical laughter of his fellow soldiers.

Rather than return him to La Force, which was obviously not a strict enough regime to hold him, the police sent him to the prison of Saint-Pélagie in the 5e arrondissement. Only two months after his arrival, he wrote to Fouché requesting release far from Paris, swearing on his honor “not to return there until His Majesty believes it proper.”⁴⁹ How he justified such a request a mere two months after escaping from prison and attempting again to overthrow the Imperial regime is a mystery. Regardless of his rationalization, the request went unanswered. Undeterred, he followed up with a similar letter to Police Chief Jean Marie Savary, Duke of Rovigo, on 9 October. Again, he received only silence in response. Perhaps realizing the irrationality behind his request, he altered his appeal in January 1810. Rather than plead for freedom, which he now knew better than to expect, he asked Prefect Dubois and the warden of Saint-Pélagie about the possibility of a transfer to the rest home of Doctor Jacquelin Dubuisson at n° 333, rue du Faubourg-Saint-Antoine in eastern Paris. He claimed he suffered from an illness contracted at La Force and looked forward to a healthier, more comfortable environment where he could continue serving his sentence “until the moment that the Emperor deigns to extend his justice” to him.⁵⁰ On 12 January, Malet finally received a response to his constant supplications for transfer: “Accepted, however, he remains under surveillance.”⁵¹ The judgment behind moving Malet to a less scrutinizing location is questionable, as he had already escaped from one of Paris’s most notorious prisons. Perhaps Prefect Dubois hoped that while the general had most likely not disavowed his republican beliefs, he could buy his good behavior by granting the wish to relocate. Attempts to purchase loyalty from malcontents had worked in the past, but

surely Dubois realized that such efforts had never had any success with Malet. Whatever the reasoning had been, the Prefect would ultimately realize his mistake.

CHAPTER TWO—HOPES AND DISAPPOINTMENTS IN NAPOLEONIC FRANCE

Malet understood the need for perfect timing if he hoped to achieve what he—and others—had failed to do in the past: to overthrow Napoleon. To recognize the right opportunity when it presented itself, he needed to understand the political and social atmosphere of France, an easy enough task, he thought. He also needed to keep abreast of military events, another straightforward undertaking, given his background and rapport with other high-ranking officers. By October 1812, Malet believed that French society was ready—and eager—for a change of regime. Loyalty to Napoleon constantly wavered, even among his closest advisors. Economic conditions in France had faltered, and military endeavors in Russia were going poorly. Malet began hatching his next plot to destroy the imperial government, anticipating support from high-ranking officials and soldiers, as well as the common citizens, all of whom he believed were disillusioned with Napoleon's reign.

The political upheavals, which had persisted throughout the Revolution, had disappointed the peasants and working class of French society, by far the great majority of the population. They were content with none of the governments that gained power. Initially, the common people anticipated improved conditions brought about by the liberal governments taking hold after the fall of Louis XVI. Each passing year brought new political actors to the forefront, new governments taking control, and new promises of peace and prosperity. Unfortunately, no one was able to deliver the benefits expected by the peasants and working class. They were still without sufficient work, and more dangerously, without sufficient food. Conditions improved occasionally, but fleetingly. The common people wanted stability, peace, work, and food; they cared not whether authority rested in the hands of a legislative assembly or of one man.

Napoleon personified the hopes of the peasants and workers, and he enjoyed their support from the moment he seized power on 18 Brumaire (9 November 1799). Here was a man who had risen through the ranks due to his abilities, rather than any form of privilege extended to him because of noble birth. Coming himself from humble beginnings, he would surely have the best interests of the common people in mind. He was also a capable military commander who could put to rest—through victory—the constant fighting both within the nation and against other European powers. Although the peasants and working class immediately began hailing him as a hero, not everyone was convinced.

General Malet was among those who considered the optimism premature. Napoleon had overthrown a Republican government, and though the regime he created was technically Republican as well, some citizens began to claim that he would bring about the death of the liberties ushered in by the Revolution. Such assertions began in earnest with the plebiscite introducing the Constitution of the Year VIII in December 1799, less than a month after 18 Brumaire. A saying that foreshadowed events to come echoed throughout Paris: “What is there in the Constitution?—There is Bonaparte.”¹ Although all male citizens over the age of twenty-one had the right to vote on the Constitution, Malet and his fellow Republicans saw it as an unfair and imbalanced process. Each commune had a register in which citizens simply signed their names, followed by a yes or no. Some Frenchmen refused to vote, afraid of possible repercussions in the future should they show support for the wrong issue. Such fear existed not merely because Napoleon stood to benefit from the plebiscite’s outcome, but because the political chaos of the last decade had been replete with retaliatory executions for not sharing the ideology of the faction in power at any given time. Officials calmed the citizens’ fears and persuaded them to participate by promising to burn the registers after the counting of the votes.

The plebiscite's official outcome was 3,011,007 votes to 1,562 in favor of the Constitution. The new system retained a legislative branch, but it was clear that true authority would rest in the hands of the executive branch composed of three Consuls: Napoleon, Cambacérès, and Lebrun. Even among the Consuls, the partitioning of power was uneven. Napoleon, as First Consul, held all true power with the other two Consuls playing solely advisory roles. Regardless of motivation—fear or a sincere desire to see Napoleon lead the nation—France had effectively voted itself into an autocracy with a slight Republican veneer.

His power legitimized through the Republican ballot, Napoleon took as his first task making overtures of peace to hostile European monarchs. Napoleon was skilled at hiding his true actions and intentions under the guise of what he perceived or expected to be society's values and desires. While generally portrayed as a power-hungry warmonger, Napoleon did at least pretend to entertain diplomatic means to ending aggressions. On Christmas Day 1799, he wrote to both King George III of England and Austrian Emperor Francis I announcing his new political position and seeking a cessation of hostilities. Despite declaring to Francis I that his primary interest was “to prevent the shedding of blood,” Napoleon had prepared that same day his proclamation to the French people announcing that war would continue.² Such double action allowed him to take the moral high ground, or at least to appear as if he had. Here he was, a newly elected leader, trying to bring peace to his nation only to see his efforts thwarted by vain and selfish monarchs. Frenchmen flocked to support the war effort, expecting Napoleon to stay on task and put a permanent end to the fighting as soon as possible. By making overtures toward peace, Napoleon was well on his way to securing a stable foundation—peasants and the working class—for his regime, regardless of what form it actually took.

Napoleon immediately began pulling the Republican veil a bit further from his true political intentions. The very day after overthrowing the Directory, he expressed his intention of censoring the press. He explained, “If I give free reign to the press, I will not remain in power three months.”³ Within two months of becoming First Consul, Napoleon imposed harsh regulations on publications, reducing Paris' seventy-three newspapers to thirteen. A month later, the law of 28 Pluviôse VIII (17 February 1800) finalized the removal of any true political power from the French people, drawing it to himself. The legislation effectively ended the independence of local administrations, the collegiate voting process, and the right to elect officials. Although such a step did not seriously detract from the support Napoleon enjoyed from the general public, it did strengthen the belief held by General Malet and his fellow Republicans that France was heading back to autocracy. While such a prospect prompted fears among Republicans that Napoleon would completely negate the gains of the Revolution, it gave monarchists a slight glimmer of hope that their own goal could come to fruition.

Recognizing Napoleon's efforts to consolidate political power in himself, monarchists believed that citizens would begin to reject the idea of a Republican system and reacclimatize to rule by one individual. They enjoyed a brief moment of hope that he would willingly support and allow a Bourbon restoration. The future Louis XVIII, optimistic about the possibility of such a transition, wrote himself to the First Consul on 20 February 1800. Not intending to surrender power to the would-be monarch—or to anyone else for that matter—Napoleon replied: “You must not hope for your return to France; you would have to walk over one hundred thousand corpses. Sacrifice your interest to the peace and happiness of France; history will not overlook you.”⁴ Whereas the general public believed that he had crushed the Bourbon's hope to reclaim the nation, Napoleon had not done so out of any Republican proclivities. Had a member

from any of the previous Republican regimes presented him with a similar request, he would have responded in the same fashion. The response had simply been in his own best interest.

Planning to lead the nation down a new governmental path without regard to any political faction, Napoleon simultaneously encouraged and disheartened politically minded men of all ideologies. He feared having to share power with anyone else, something he considered an inevitable outcome should he associate himself with any particular group. The events of the French Revolution had also proved to him that warring factions ultimately undermined whatever regime happened to be in power at the time. Wanting to create a government above factions, Napoleon explained to his brother Joseph: “I have composed my Council of State of ex-members of the Constituent Assembly, of moderates, Feuillants, Royalists, Jacobins. I am national: I like honest men of all colours.”⁵ The key to his success, he believed, rested with the general public, people who tended to put aside their ideologies as long as the current regime was able to meet their daily needs. Although the people would be the foundation of his regime, he recognized that if he wanted to ensure its permanence, he would need the support of experienced and talented officials, men who would be less willing, however, to set aside their political beliefs unconditionally. The situation forced Napoleon to find a way to buy the loyalty of the most talented political and military officials while not favoring either Republicans or monarchists more. Napoleon believed that with time these men would devote themselves sincerely to his regime, leaving behind the hatred and hostilities of the Revolutionary past. Either he was mistaken or the process took longer than he had anticipated. The consular and imperial regimes were never without opponents attacking from all sides.

Napoleon, returning to his talent for playing double games, believed that he could further strengthen his image among the peasants and working class by seeking a truce with Pope Pius

VII. Not only that, but by settling with the papacy he could placate the predominantly Catholic nations of Europe, winning himself some allies or at least beginning to do so. On 5 June 1800, just days before his victory at the Battle of Marengo, Napoleon declared to the clergy gathered in Milan, “I hope to have the happiness of removing every obstacle which will hinder complete reconciliation between France and the head of the Church.”⁶ He expected some resistance to reconciliation with the Catholic Church, but also believed that the popularity brought to him from his military victories thus far—especially with peace approaching—would be enough to protect his regime from any backlash. Monarchists believed that an understanding between the First Consul and the papacy would gravely affect their cause. They would lose one of their strongest and most powerful supporters if Napoleon won Pope Pius VII to his side. Much to their chagrin, negotiations began between the two leaders almost immediately. They needed to act and to do so quickly.

Having failed in their attempt to place Louis XVIII on the throne of France through diplomatic means shortly after Napoleon came to power and expecting to lose the Pope as an ally, royalists resorted to less peaceable, though quicker, means. On Christmas Eve 1800, they hatched a plot against the First Consul while on his way to the Opera to see a performance of Haydn’s *La Création*. Three men dressed as workers pulled a wooden cart laden with two large barrels and stones down the Rue St.-Niçaise where they expected Napoleon’s carriage to travel. As the carriage came into sight, the men set fire to some straw on the cart before rushing to safety. Barely missing the First Consul’s entourage, the wagon exploded, killing and maiming dozens of innocent bystanders including a young girl the men had hired to watch the cart while they were away. Napoleon had cheated death by only a few seconds.⁷

Both Fouché and Dubois—Minister of Police and Prefect of Police, respectively—had a hard time concluding who was responsible for the “infernal machine”, as the bomb became known. Not satisfied with having to wait for their official findings, Napoleon hastily concluded that the attempt had been the work of Republican fanatics. Even as contradictory evidence surfaced, the First Consul held to his initial assumption. He produced a list containing over 130 names of alleged conspirators, each of whom ultimately found himself deported to the Seychelles or Cayenne.

Ultimately, Dubois and Fouché were able to convince Napoleon that the plot had, in fact, originated in the royalist camp. They pinned primary responsibility on General Georges Cadoudal, a known monarchist in the pay of England. Still abroad, he was out of reach, though several of his contacts within Paris found themselves arrested and summarily executed. Scholarship has brought to light Cadoudal’s actual intentions, and they did not include assassinating the First Consul. His plan had actually involved kidnapping Napoleon, not killing him. The man he had hired to carry out the plot, Pierre Robinault de Saint-Réjant, known as Pierrot, added the violent flourish. Whether or not they intended to kill or simply kidnap Napoleon, the royalists had failed in their first attempt against the First Consul.

Despite the plot against his life, Napoleon continued negotiations with the Vatican, though progress was slow as neither side was willing to compromise. Eventually Pope Pius VII accepted the grim reality that if he hoped to restore the Catholic faith in France, he had no choice but bow to Napoleon’s wishes. Napoleon categorically refused to return lands confiscated from the Church during the Revolution or to pay restitution for them. Instead, he agreed to pay the salaries of French clergymen, but with a stipulation attached: the Pope could only appoint clerical officials from a list of candidates prepared by the First Consul. One of Pius’ greatest

desires in negotiating was to restore the Catholic faith as the official religion of France.

Napoleon had no intention of allowing such appellation. He would acknowledge Catholicism as the *majority* religion of France, but not as *the* religion as it had been under the Old Regime.

Pope Pius VII found the final terms of the Concordat unfavorable, though he deemed a truce with Napoleon's France necessary. The two officially established a peace—more political than religious—between them on 15 August 1801.

Throughout the nation, news of the settlement roused both support and opposition. The negotiations reassured peasants and members of the middle class who had purchased Church lands that they would retain their new property. Catholics expressed a general sense of relief that they could openly practice their religious beliefs without fear of reproach or persecution for the first time since the institution of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy over a decade earlier.

Although believers throughout the nation welcomed the chance to return to worship, devout Catholics were disgusted that while permitting the religion's existence within France, Napoleon dared to place restrictions upon the papacy. The agreement also aggravated monarchists' sentiments as it forced them to accept the loss of one of their most fervent and powerful allies, the Pope. Openly expressing disgust over the agreement were Republicans and military men alike, among both of whom Malet counted himself, who saw the Concordat as a betrayal of one of the Revolution's greatest victories. A comment made by a fiercely Republican general after the churches reopened for Easter services in 1802 illustrates the frustration of the military: "It was a beautiful speech. All that was missing were the 100,000 men who died to destroy what you have revived today."⁸ Despite his openly hostile attitude, the general had attended the service.

The Concordat did produce some disillusionment, but a majority of the population remained more satisfied under Napoleon's regime than under any government installed since the Revolution began. The ratification of the Peace of Amiens between England and France on 25 March 1802 added to the First Consul's level of support. The British hoped, though in vain, that Napoleon would cease his efforts to expand French territory, satisfying himself with the borders he had already achieved. Although the government was reluctant, the British people demanded peace. French citizens too had longed for an end to a decade of nearly non-stop fighting. With their allies out of commission—the Dutch fleet suffered a devastating defeat in April 1801, and Russian czar Paul I was assassinated the following month—Napoleon and his troops were in no position to launch an attack on England, an event about which he had fantasized since seizing power. While there was a calm atmosphere within the nation and peace established on the continent, Napoleon had his hands in military efforts elsewhere. His never-ending quest for military glory would not permit his troops to enjoy the Peace of Amiens. Turning his focus to the island of Saint Domingue (present day Haiti and the Dominican Republic) where Toussaint L'Ouverture was leading a slave revolt in spring 1802, Napoleon made arrangements to send forces to quash the rebellion.

Having looked forward to peace even more than the general public, Marshal Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte and General Édouard Simon were discouraged to learn that they and their troops were heading to the Caribbean. Both staunch Republicans, the officers allowed their political inclinations to interfere with their military duties. Relying on the belief that their troops would support any action that would bring about peace, the two officers concocted a plan, known as the pots of butter plot, to rouse opposition to Napoleon among the soldiers then stationed in Rennes. They hired a local printer to produce copies of announcements that General Simon had

prepared for the troops. The letters decried a peace in which the troops could not participate and pointed to that same situation to illustrate the idea that their beloved French Republic was dead. He declared that Napoleon was no more than a tyrant who had seized power and destroyed the Republic. Wanting to create as much hostility among the troops as possible, he insisted that the glory they had won was being claimed by Napoleon for himself alone. Refusal to act against the First Consul would cost, he warned, “your liberty, your existence, and your honor.”⁹ Although they felt it necessary to act in some manner, neither Bernadotte nor Simon was willing to be the one to hang or distribute the letters. Instead, they hid them in pots of butter, shipping them to various commanders throughout the region and expecting their fellow officers to share their perspective and to rally their own troops to the cause.

Unfortunately for the two military conspirators, their fellow officers either did not share their opinion or did not want to risk their livelihoods—or even their lives—by participating in anything that even resembled a plot against the First Consul. After all, it was to him that they owed their rapid rise through the ranks. As Alexis de Tocqueville would explain, “it was only the army whose every member without exception had profited from the Revolution and had a personal interest in it.”¹⁰ Napoleon had recently established peace—at least temporarily—on the continent and if he could do the same in the Caribbean, surely France’s fighting days would be over. Ultimately, someone betrayed the plot, and within weeks, all the details of the plot had been uncovered and seven men arrested, including Bernadotte and Simon. Napoleon refused to believe that the conspiracy had posed him any serious threat, a sentiment which illustrates itself in the punishments doled out to the men involved. Of the seven, the fate of two is unknown, two served time in prison before being allowed to resume their lives under surveillance, one spent time in prison before being exiled to the island of Oleron, and two immediately received official

pardons. Despite being one of the two instigators, Marshal Bernadotte received a reprieve—he was after all, Joseph Bonaparte’s brother-in-law. Peace held on the continent as troops ultimately made their way to the Caribbean. Republicans had failed to capitalize on one of their first attempts at raising opposition to Napoleon’s regime, as the majority of military men—especially those of lower rank—and the general public supported the First Consul, regardless of how much power he held for himself.

With peace among the European nations and economic conditions better than in previous years, Napoleon recognized that the opportunity had presented itself for him to solidify his regime even more. Manipulating the Senate’s offer to extend his term as Consul to ten years, he persuaded them to offer him the position for life. Politicians hesitated, hoping to prevent the First Consul from completing his quest to draw all power to himself, but the French people as a whole did not oppose. Napoleon had brought them good times, and whether political power rested in the hands of a legislative body or in one man was of no real concern to them. The nation voted overwhelmingly in favor of the Constitution of the Year X, which initiated Napoleon’s new title as Consul for Life in August 1802. Although he was not yet ready to unveil his true imperial intentions, he had already succeeded in claiming all real power, maintaining the Senate and two other Consuls solely to keep up the charade of Republicanism. His ruse did not convince everyone. True Republicans were growing more and more agitated by the Consul’s consolidation of authority, and royalists remained determined to see the Bourbons restored to the same throne of France that Napoleon was trying to claim for himself.

General Cadoudal, the very man who had orchestrated the “infernal machine” plot in December 1800, had not yet given up hope of destroying the Consulate. He had gone so far, in fact, as to obtain the personal blessing of the Bourbon family, provided by the Count of Artois,

the future Charles X. Despite the royal sanction, Cadoudal would enjoy less success this time than previously: his plan never even fully materialized. Unfortunately for the conspirator, one of his collaborators, Jean-Pierre Querelle, denounced the plans to police officials while making his way to the firing squad for other charges. During the impromptu interrogation, he explained that the plot's purpose was "the reestablishment of the Bourbons . . . a movement in Paris supported by the presence of a prince . . . [and] an attack against the First Consul by main force."¹¹

Reacting in much the same fashion as after Cadoudal's initial attempt, Napoleon rashly reached his own conclusions without waiting for evidence to support or refute them. Alarmed that the royal family itself had supported the effort, the First Consul immediately began searching for the prince who would supposedly lead a movement against the regime in Paris. Although Cadoudal and his co-conspirators were all in custody by early March 1804, they refused to divulge any details of their plot, leaving the police to do detective work with few leads. Under the guidance of Fouché and Foreign Minister Talleyrand—both of whom later denied any involvement—Napoleon demanded the seizure of Louis de Bourbon Condé, Duke of Enghien, from Ettenheim, a small German town near the border with France.

Enghien was brought to the Vincennes Château in Paris on 20 March 1804 to defend himself before a hastily formed military commission that had already determined a verdict of guilty even before his apprehension. The tribunal announced that he faced six charges: bearing arms against the French people, offering his services to the English, an enemy of France, harboring British agents and helping them to spy in France, trying to spark rebellions in Strasbourg, leading a corps of émigrés on the French border, and spearheading a plot to overthrow the Consular government. Admitting to having taken up arms against Revolutionary

France, he was audacious enough to explain that had he not done so, he would not have been able to face himself. He found the other charges positively ludicrous and vehemently denied being involved in any such activities. He repeatedly demanded a personal meeting with Napoleon but found each request denied. Predictably, the commission found him guilty, sentencing him to an immediate death. With no means of appealing the decision and no chance of speaking with the First Consul personally, he was lost. Taken to the courtyard where a firing squad and freshly dug grave were waiting, Enghien, having had no ties to Cadoudal or his plot, met with an unjustifiable death. Napoleon felt neither guilt nor remorse for his actions concerning him. When asked about the decision to execute Enghien, he replied, “Under similar circumstances today, I would do the same thing all over again. After all, am I simply some miserable dog one can kill in the street with impunity, while my assassins are held sacrosanct? When they attack my person, I return blow for blow.”¹²

Although the police had had Cadoudal and his accomplices in custody since early March, their trial did not begin until two months after the Duke of Enghien’s execution, providing enough time for one of the men to hang himself in his cell rather than face charges of conspiracy. The others faced punishments of stunning variety. Any aristocrat associated with the plot received an official pardon from the First Consul, as did Marshal Bernadotte—again. One of Napoleon’s most intense rivals, General Jean Victor Moreau, the lone Republican in the conspiracy, got two years in prison followed by expulsion from France. Twelve other men, including Cadoudal, received death sentences. None of these fates and not the execution of the Duke of Enghien roused the French public against Napoleon or his regime. They concerned themselves more with life needs such as work and food than with who was in power, or what type of regime he might be leading.

Napoleon correctly understood that the stability of his regime depended not solely on the military victories he could earn, but also on the level of prosperity and comfort of the peasants and working class. Within two months of the Consulate's creation, their situation had vastly improved over the conditions experienced during the Revolution. Noting the progress, the Marquis de Lafayette remarked, "you know how many beggars there were We see no more of them. The peasants are richer, the land better tilled, the women better clad."¹³ Events of the Revolution had shown Napoleon the power wielded by the lower classes. Bread riots could easily get out of control, allowing any nearby political dissident to seize the opportunity of raising support for his cause. Although the mediocre harvest of 1799 had caused the First Consul some alarm, a decrease in bread prices conveniently coincided with his victory at the battle of Marengo in June 1800. Grateful for such a fantastic victory and lowered bread prices, the public adored their new leader. Napoleon was aware, however, that he could lose the people's devotion just as easily as he had gained it. He needed to continue winning on the battlefield and improving conditions at home, realizing that neither task was sufficient alone to maintain his regime.

Spring 1801 brought with it the economic conditions that Napoleon so dreaded. Bread prices throughout the nation rose above a worker's budget, reaching 18 *sous* for four pounds in Paris by late summer. Having been in power for less than two years and doubting whether his regime could survive widespread bread riots, Napoleon ordered the opening of soup kitchens throughout the capital to help feed the poor. His most impressive effort to relieve the situation was his command to purchase all the grain available from Dutch and English ports for immediate shipment to Le Havre. The promptness with which Napoleon acted successfully calmed French fears within three weeks. Having long since proven his abilities on the battlefield, the First

Consul now displayed similar talent in economic affairs. Despite only 167,000 francs in the nation's coffers when he seized control of the government, he managed to balance the nation's budget at 500 million francs by 1802. He began repaying government bonds in cash, thereby immediately improving his popularity among the bourgeoisie. Illustrating the stability of France's economy under Napoleon's regime is the "Germinal franc," worth .322 grams of gold. The value of the Germinal franc held firm from its creation in March 1803 until the eve of World War I in 1914.

In addition to the popularity achieved from his military talent and improvement of the economy, Napoleon enjoyed a burst of support in response to the attempt on his life hatched earlier in 1804. Addressing the Senate about the anger and fear that Cadoudal's plot had provoked in the public, Napoleon explained that such attempts caused him no personal fear. His only worry concerned "the situation in which this great people would have found itself today had the recent attempt succeeded."¹⁴ To solve the issue, Senators began calling for the regime to become hereditary and speaking about transforming the Consulate into an imperial government. Napoleon accepted the offer of becoming Emperor of the French, but only with the people's consent. Although the public supported the change overwhelmingly—as the results of a plebiscite would show on 6 November 1804—the prospect enraged anyone of dissimilar political ideologies, including the monarchs of other European nations.

Ever the fervent royalist, General Cadoudal, still awaiting trial when the Senate announced its decision to name Napoleon emperor, dejectedly remarked, "we have done more than we hoped to do; we meant to give France a King, and we have given her an Emperor."¹⁵ Sharing his desire to see a Bourbon restored to the throne of France, Europe's monarchs had never accepted the French Republic or the Consulate as legitimate governments. They

considered Napoleon's latest accomplishment an affront to ideological sensibilities, a sentiment expressed by their participation in military efforts and various intrigues against him: he was a usurper. No monarch personally attended the coronation held at Notre Dame on 2 December 1804, and most refused even to send a representative.

One leader that the Emperor could not afford to have decline his invitation was Pope Pius VII. Napoleon believed that the papacy's participation in the ceremony would give his regime an undeniable legitimacy. When his requests for the Pope's attendance went unanswered, the Emperor resorted to begging and even to threatening the Church. Although he eventually agreed to participate, he did so reluctantly. After crowning himself Emperor and his wife, Josephine, Empress, Napoleon received yet another symbol of his power, this time from the Pope. Pius VII explained that the imperial ring was "the sign of the Holy Faith, the proof of the strength and solidity of your empire, by means of which, as a result of its triumphant power, you will conquer your enemies and destroy heresies, on this imperial throne which Jesus the Christ, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords in his eternal kingdom, affirms your reign with him."¹⁶ Both Napoleon and his opponents recognized the legitimacy granted to the imperial regime through the Church's blessing, but their opinions regarding it differed. Rejoicing in his accomplishment, the new Emperor referred to himself as the "crowned representative of the Revolution triumphant," while royalists and other adversaries lamented the occasion as "the Revolution legitimized and even sanctified."¹⁷

The former First Consul had finally removed the thin Republican veil under which he had hidden his intentions for so long, revealing a throne with laurel leaves and a golden "N". With the Emperor's true political aims realized, Republicans had no choice but to acknowledge that if they wanted to restore their preferred form of government, violence was the only answer.

Wasting no time, a young student rushed through the celebrating crowd and headed toward Napoleon. His shouts of “Freedom or death!” quickly drew the attention of the Imperial Guard who captured him without incident.¹⁸ Napoleon believed that anyone who hoped to assassinate him or otherwise overthrow his government would need a more well thought out plan than simply shouting like a madman and brandishing a weapon. He explained to one of his aides that because his daily schedule changed constantly it was nearly impossible to pinpoint his location at any given moment. Beyond the impromptu effort on the day of the coronation, the initial years of Napoleon's reign as Emperor saw no significant attempts against his life, allowing him to focus on social aspects of his realm, in addition to his ever-present military endeavors.

Napoleon believed that the chaotic course of the Revolution had so inundated the nation with various ideologies and social values, that it was impossible for citizens to know which path was correct. He explained that as “long as one does not learn from childhood whether to be republican or monarchist, Catholic or nonreligious, etc., the State will not form a nation; it will rest on a vague and uncertain base; it will be constantly exposed to changes and disorders.”¹⁹ If no one took the time to explain the just and proper ways of society and politics, hostility and confusion would continue to plague the nation. Young women would obtain the training they required from their mothers. Recognizing that orphan girls would not have this opportunity, he did establish a handful of schools dedicated to their education. The curriculum centered primarily on religion, though it also covered reading, writing, and arithmetic necessary for household management. Napoleon's personal focus was ensuring the education of an elite group of boys who would serve his regime in some official capacity.

Wanting to establish conformity among the impressionable minds of the youth who would eventually become his military and government officials, he replaced the Directory's

secondary schools with his own more centralized ones—*lycées*—in May 1802. He would exercise direct control over the schools' curriculum until 1808, when members of his Imperial University took over the task. Students studied basic subjects such as reading, history, and Latin until the age of twelve, when they separated into two categories: those who would pursue military careers and those destined for civilian careers. In either case, all students wore uniforms and participated in drills and physical training, illustrating the importance of military affairs in Napoleonic France. By 1805, the Emperor had founded 39 *lycées* and 1,083 secondary schools, far surpassing the number established by any previous regime.²⁰ Given his belief in providing opportunities based on merit rather than upbringing or heritage, Napoleon created 2,500 scholarships to assist boys of lesser means obtain the education more readily available to others. Guaranteeing a certain level of competency among those who completed their education, Napoleon established the baccalaureate examination in 1809, a system still in place today. His education system would produce noticeable results, raising literacy from 37 percent to 54 percent among men and from 27 percent to over 35 percent among women.²¹

In addition to improving the education system, Napoleon brought the nation more economic stability than it had enjoyed during the Revolutionary era. Hardships did occur, but the Emperor's prompt responses prevented such situations from reaching the crisis level as they had in the past. Despite decreasing liberties and nearly constant warfare—peace had lasted only fourteen months during the Consulate—the masses supported their leader. They continued to praise him as the “Savior of the Revolution,” even after taking the title of Emperor. An imperial official remarked, “they were among his warmest partisans, because he reassured them against the return of tithes, feudal rights, the restitution of property to émigrés, and the oppression of the lords.”²² Republicans continuously denounced Napoleon as the executioner of Revolutionary

gains, but they could not legitimately deny that many of his policies were remnants of their own legislation.

Although the working class never fully complied, the Chapelier Law of 1791, which banned *coalitions ouvrières* (guilds and unions) and forbade striking, remained in effect during the Consulate and Empire. Workers still banded together and refused to work, but their protests never took on a political character. The introduction of machinery made workers fear their expendability and prompted several incidents including one in Lille in 1805. In an attempt to prevent the lengthening of their workday, stonemasons employed at the Louvre went on strike that same year. One of the most violent episodes, which resulted from an accident at the Arc de Triomphe in March 1810, required armed forces to quell the revolt. While the Chapelier Law was a holdover from the Revolution, Napoleon did enact some measures of his own concerning employment. The Law of 22 Germinal X (12 April 1803) required all workers to present their employers with their *livret*, a type of identification card documenting their name and address. Employers kept the cards until the worker left the job for other employment or military service. Such a process allowed police forces to track an individual's movement, to monitor the possible existence of dangerous gatherings, and to ensure that workers could not avoid military service when conscripted.

In addition to the loss of personal liberties, Republicans mourned the creation of new hierarchies within society. They took issue with the establishment of the Legion of Honor in May 1802, decrying its ranking system despite a membership based on talent and merit rather than wealth or heritage. The honorary titles granted to its members notwithstanding, the Legion did not, in fact, constitute a true elite. But the opposite was true when Napoleon created an imperial aristocracy in 1808 which, disregarding any titles that had existed prior to the

Revolution, depended instead on loyalty to the Emperor—or at least the appearance thereof—and financial affluence. Men who hoped to join the new nobility needed a personal fortune of between 50,000 and 4 million francs, depending on the rank they sought. Over the next six years, Napoleon appointed 3,263 noblemen ranging from chevalier to prince. Although he reestablished an aristocracy, its composition differed greatly from its predecessor: only 22 percent of its members had held titles under the Old Regime, while 58 percent were modest bourgeois lawyers, doctors and industrialists, and 20 percent were from other levels of society. The imperial nobility did not contradict the peasants' concept of Revolutionary gains because the new system did not restore the rights and privileges of the old nobility. As positive police reports continued and assassination attempts ceased, Napoleon's confidence continued to grow. Years of ruling without any significant attempts on his life and favorable daily police reports announcing that "the multitude . . . loves the Emperor" eventually bolstered Napoleon's confidence in the stability of his regime.²³ In 1808, he explained to one of his officials that "we have acquired the right to think no man will make an attempt on Our life until Providence so wills it."²⁴

The following fall brought the destruction of the Emperor's serenity. On 12 October 1809, an eighteen-year-old Saxon named Frédéric Staaps attended a parade in Schönbrunn with the intention of assassinating Napoleon. Wielding a large kitchen knife, he made his way toward the Emperor but found his efforts thwarted by several imperial guards before Napoleon even noticed his presence. Given the man's age, Napoleon was curious about his motive and interrogated him personally. The young man claimed, "The voice of God told me that the death of a single man would pacify everything."²⁵ Four days after his arrest, he heard continuous cannon fire outside the prison and asked the reason. Told that the commotion was in celebration

of the peace just signed between France and Austria two days earlier, he threw his hands in the air and looked to the ceiling, proclaiming, “Oh God, how I thank you! Peace is made, and I am not an assassin!”²⁶ His joy was short lived, however, as he faced the firing squad less than two hours later.

The attempt caused Napoleon no physical harm but significantly damaged his belief in the stability of his regime. Recognizing the possibility that news of the young man's effort could spark more attempts against his life, he wrote immediately to Minister of Police Fouché back in Paris explaining that while the incident had not been serious, the news was to be withheld. Should the attempt become common knowledge, Napoleon declared, “it would be necessary to have the fellow certified as insane,” thus reducing the gravity of his actions in the public’s mind.²⁷ The situation also made more important a concern that Napoleon had held for some years: there was no hope that his marriage to Josephine would produce an heir. He did not want to see his empire divided among his brothers, an event he expected to occur should he die without an heir of his own. Regardless of the support he might receive from the French masses, his regime would never be the permanent institution he hoped it to be unless he had a son.

In addition to threats from malcontents of dubious sanity, the Empire faced trouble within its own ranks as well, for several of Napoleon’s own officials began plotting against him. Talleyrand had held secret meetings with representatives from hostile nations, especially England, while one of Fouché’s highest-ranking subordinates was in communication with Austrian Minister of State Klemens von Metternich. Fouché’s own efforts in the fall 1809 were even more questionable. Professing to fear an invasion of Belgium by English and Austrian forces, he levied a large body of National Guardsmen in Paris and several other departments to repel the expected attack. Because he acted without Napoleon’s permission—in his *Mémoires*

Fouché would claim he had authorization—the potentially dangerous gathering quickly drew the attention of Minister of War Henri Clarke, who then denounced Fouché as a Jacobin traitor intent on overthrowing the Empire and claiming power for himself.²⁸ Upon his return to the capital city, Napoleon immediately met with the Minister of Police, asking him threateningly, “Are you aware, Monsieur Fouché, that I could have you executed?”²⁹ Instead, the Emperor simply removed him from his position, replacing him with Marie Savary.

Having returned to Paris and addressed the issues of internal strife among his officials, Napoleon turned his focus to the unpleasant task of informing Josephine of their impending divorce. Despite the numerous infidelities committed on both sides, the two had truly cared for one another. After a strained and quiet dinner, the Emperor bluntly—if not cruelly—explained his reasoning: “I need a womb.”³⁰ The Empress was not surprised, devastated though she was. Her fear of such a fate had grown alongside Napoleon’s power. She recognized that he could never achieve his ultimate goal of creating a dynasty as long as their marriage continued. On 15 December 1809, the imperial couple announced their divorce to a room full of courtiers. The occasion was emotional for both. Having thanked Josephine for their time together, he sat, in tears, on his throne. Before her own emotions forced her to stop, the Empress declared that she was proud of having the opportunity to make such a sacrifice on behalf of France. Arch-Chancellor Cambacérès then announced the Senate’s decree that the divorce was complete and bestowed upon Josephine a pension of two million francs.

Now officially divorced, Napoleon turned his attention to finding Josephine’s successor. He perceived two especially advantageous candidates: Czar Alexander I’s sister and Austrian Emperor Francis I’s daughter. He pursued the Russian option first, but Alexander replied that his sister, not yet sixteen years old, was simply too young to wed. Perhaps after a few years had

passed, the Czar suggested, the proposition might be reconsidered. Napoleon was unwilling to wait. Two and a half months after suggesting a marriage alliance with Russia, he proposed the same to Austria. Emperor Francis approved the union but not from any sincere desire to ally with France. As State Minister Metternich explained, the marriage was a necessary maneuver in order “to avoid all military action and to flatter . . . until the day of deliverance.”³¹ Obediently, the nineteen-year-old Marie-Louise traveled to France, becoming Napoleon’s second wife on 11 March 1810.

Although the fact that his new bride was young and healthy enough to bear him children satisfied Napoleon, the French people did not share his sentiment. Less than two decades earlier, they had declared their violent hatred and distrust of another Austrian bride by beheading Marie-Antoinette. Now they found her niece as their new empress. Rumors spread after the marriage that anyone who had voted in favor of the deaths of Louis XVI and his queen would face exile. The divorce also disappointed Revolutionaries because Josephine was one of their own, having spent time in prison after petitioning for the release of her estranged Jacobin husband. Napoleon incorrectly believed that the union would earn him respect and acceptance among Europe’s other monarchs. Yet no matter whom he took for his wife, the European monarchs vowed never to accept a Bonaparte among their ranks. The Emperor was also under the mistaken impression that with a marriage alliance in place Austria would support his aspirations, allowing him to continue expanding his territory and power. Although no one but Napoleon himself truly approved of the union, its value became apparent when the couple announced Marie-Louise’s pregnancy a few months later.

Napoleon rejoiced at the possibility, but his opponents recognized that their goal of overthrowing the Empire would become more difficult once the Emperor finally had a male heir.

Embarking upon a solo mission to liberate Europe from Napoleonic tyranny, an eighteen-year-old Prussian nobleman, Baron Dominique de la Sahla, planned to assassinate both the Emperor and his unborn child in February 1811. Unfortunately for him, rumor of his intentions reached Prefect of Police Étienne-Denis Pasquier before he could act. Upon his arrest, he willingly led police to his hotel room where they discovered twelve pistols, a veritable arsenal. During his interrogation, he readily and unapologetically explained that he had intended to murder Napoleon, expecting the loss to overwhelm the Empress causing her to suffer a miscarriage. He added smugly that he had twice, unnoticed, shot at the Emperor. Despite the gravity of his attempt, la Sahla did not receive the death penalty that many other would-be assassins had. Minister of Police Savary succeeded in convincing Napoleon to imprison the teenager indefinitely rather than execute him. His fellow inmates referred to him as “the obstetrician of Marie-Louise.”³² Upon his release in March 1814, brought about as the result of Napoleon’s impending abdication, he returned to Prussia and lived peacefully. When news a year later of the Emperor’s escape from Elba and triumphant return to Paris reached him, la Sahla took up his sinister cause once more. Carrying a small packet of explosive powder by which he intended to assassinate Napoleon, the young man accidentally frustrated his own plan. He took a carriage to the meeting place of the legislative body where the Emperor was spending the day. As he stepped down from the carriage into the rain, he slipped, and in falling to the ground caused the powder to detonate. After a short stay in the hospital, he was returned to prison until he was freed again upon Napoleon’s defeat at Waterloo. He seemed to believe that his life had only one purpose, that of killing Bonaparte. Realizing that Napoleon’s exile on Saint Helena destroyed any chance of success, he threw himself into the Seine two months after his release from prison. He died shortly thereafter of a resulting illness.

La Sahla's plan having failed, Marie-Louise gave birth to a son, known as the King of Rome, on 20 March 1811. Napoleon rejoiced at the news, believing that he had succeeded in making his imperial regime permanent through a hereditary succession. The masses shared Napoleon's hope that European monarchs would finally acknowledge the regime's legitimacy. They were excited at the prospect of peace: now that the Emperor had a son, he would put war aside to supervise the child's upbringing. Minister of Police Savary wrote, the "people sincerely anticipated a period of profound peace; the idea of war and occupations of that sort were no longer entertained as being realistic."³³ But if Europe still considered Napoleon a usurper, was any long-term peace possible?

Economic hardships beginning in 1811 brought a second anxiety. The high cost and shortage of bread resulting from a mediocre harvest in 1810 became more burdensome after an even less successful crop the following year. By March 1812, bread prices in Paris had reached 18 sous per loaf—officials considered 20 sous per loaf a critical situation. Napoleon recognized that prices were more unreasonable in rural areas but focused primarily on keeping food available to the capital city for fear that bread riots in Paris could quickly transform into large-scale revolts. The situation required immediate attention because "the government is there, and soldiers do not like to shoot at women with babies on their backs who come screaming to the bakeries."³⁴ No significant revolting occurred within the capital, allowing the Emperor to enact legislation to relieve the situation throughout the rest of the nation. He returned to the idea of soup kitchens which had proved effective early in his reign. Serving Rumford soup—a concoction that required no flour and was allegedly as nutritious as bread—these establishments provided the sole means of survival for nearly one-third of the population in some of the more rural sections of France. With deteriorating conditions at home, would the masses continue to

support the renewal of war if they saw the fighting less to guarantee Revolutionary gains and more to satisfy the Emperor's personal ambition?

While his regime made extensive use of the process, forced military service was not one of Napoleon's own inventions. Enacted under the Directory, the Jourdan Law of 19 fructidor VI (5 September 1798) required all eighteen-year-old males to register for the draft, though they would not serve until they reached ages twenty to twenty-five. Registration did not necessarily mean that military service was inevitable. Men could legally avoid service if they were the head of a household, married, or the only son in their family. Members of certain professions, such as clergymen and doctors, also enjoyed exemption. A lottery system determined which citizens would serve and those selected underwent physical examinations to exclude anyone unfit, including men under five feet tall. Until 1808, 90 percent of those citizens deemed capable of military service reported for duty. Despite the magnitude of the Napoleonic wars, employment in the military rarely accounted for more than 3 percent of the population.³⁵ Between 1800 and 1814, two million Frenchmen—approximately 7 percent of the nation's entire population—found themselves drafted.³⁶ Citizens became truly alarmed and defiant only when levies began calling for more than one million individuals after the catastrophic fiasco in Russia in 1812.

Although he eventually chose to pursue it, Napoleon did recognize the difficulties that invading Russia would entail. His political and military officials consistently advised against such an action, pointing to the failure of numerous leaders in the past, such as Charles XII of Sweden. Initially, Napoleon appeared to accept their counsel, assuring Russian diplomats that he had neither the desire nor the intention to declare war on their nation: "It would be a crime on my part, for I would be making war without a purpose, and I have not yet, thanks to God, lost my head; I am not mad."³⁷ As alternatives to aggression became less feasible, however, he began

making arrogant declarations that his troops could never lose to those of Czar Alexander. He guaranteed his advisors that he understood when and how to embark on an invasion of Russia and that the endeavor was not as hopeless or foolhardy as they insisted. His overconfidence was obvious in every statement he made concerning the impending assault. He had everything under control and all would go according to his plan.

CHAPTER THREE—GENERAL MALET’S FINAL ATTEMPT, 22 OCTOBER 1812

On the night before Napoleon was to lead his *Grande Armée* into Russia, Prefect of Police Étienne Pasquier found himself fearing the possibility of the Emperor’s enemies trying to capitalize on his lengthy absence. If such circumstances arose, there would be no one in Paris with sufficient authority to quash the attempt. Having considered the prefect’s concerns, Napoleon paced around the room and replied, “Yes, there is certainly some truth in what you say . . . but one must accomplish what has been undertaken.”¹ With that, the Emperor dismissed the subject and bid Pasquier a goodnight.

Sharing a similar philosophy, General Malet had never ceased plotting against the Empire despite the time he spent in prison and at the private rest home of Doctor Dubuisson after the failure of his previous attempts. Confident that his plan of May 1808—replicated government documents and co-conspirators among high-ranking officials—offered the best hope of success, he had begun revising it almost immediately after its failure. He accepted no responsibility for the disappointing outcome of that effort; instead, he blamed two of his cohorts who had been unable to keep their temperaments under control. Initially, he had taken to the extreme his desire to limit his accomplices, leading to a hastily fabricated one-man attempt to overthrow the government at the *Te Deum* of 29 June 1809. After this embarrassing failure, he acknowledged the futility of acting alone and began seeking out trustworthy confidants.

His unsuccessful attempts at overthrowing Napoleon’s Empire had cost Malet less than two years in prison. Despite escaping from La Force—one of Paris’ most notorious prisons—Malet found his request for transfer from Saint-Pélagie to the private rest home of Doctor Dubuisson granted by Prefect of Police Dubois in January 1810. Always trying to manipulate situations to serve his own interests, Malet most likely applied for the change of residence not

out of genuine concern for his health, as he claimed, but out of a perceived opportunity to strike against the Emperor yet again. Whether Dubois had hoped to purchase Malet's loyalty by granting the relocation or whether he simply believed that the General, now in his mid-fifties, would have finally abandoned his treacherous ways is unknown. Whatever his reasoning had been, he unwittingly provided the determined dissident a dangerous opportunity, one that Malet quickly seized.

Doctor Dubuisson's rest home in no way provided the security measures in place at either La Force or Saint-Pélagie. The residence more closely resembled a retirement center for criminals than a facility intended to keep them within the law and under surveillance. Pasquier, who had replaced Dubois as Prefect of Police in 1810, explained that "any one confined in a private hospital was simply looked upon as a prisoner on parole, and nothing was easier for him than to escape, as in those places there were neither guard, wicket, railing, or bolt. The proprietor of the establishment was alone responsible for those entrusted to his care...."² The small and relaxed environment allowed Malet's friends and family to visit as they pleased, often with no supervision. Using such visits to obtain information about the public opinion of Parisians and about Napoleon's latest military endeavors, Malet closely monitored events in preparation for a new attempt at ridding France of its allegedly tyrannical leader.

The relaxed security at Dubuisson's also allowed him to converse freely with fellow prisoner Abbé Jean Lafon, a dedicated royalist, who ultimately convinced him that a successful strike against the Empire would require the joint effort all anti-Bonapartist camps.³ United in their belief that a conspiracy involving too many people would be doomed from its outset, the two men further continued revising Malet's original plot, taking into consideration their desire to inform as few people as possible of their intentions.⁴ Although security was nearly non-existent

at the rest home, they acknowledged the need for accomplices on the outside who could handle various preparatory details. Turning to men with whom they were already acquainted, they confided in three additional men: Abbé José de Caâmano, a Spanish cleric whom Lafon had met while both men were serving time at La Force, Alexandre Boutreux, a law student and political dissident whom Malet most likely met through the clandestine group known as the *Philadelphes*, and Jean Rateau, a distiller turned career military man.⁵

Despite various revisions—fewer people aware of the plot and no accomplices already installed in the government—the plot closely resembled Malet's plan of 1808, using the announcement of Napoleon's death as grounds for the changes explained in a forged *senatus-consulte* and in orders to the troops stationed in Paris. To convince military officials that the orders he would deliver were valid, Malet planned to wear his own military decorations, clearly marking him as a general. He also wanted his accomplices to exude legitimacy and entrusted the acquisition of several additional uniforms and weapons to his wife and Rateau. On the chosen date for the plot, Malet and Lafon would escape from Dubuisson's rest home and meet their co-conspirators at Abbé Caâmano's home. After changing into their uniforms and arming themselves, the men would head to the nearby Popincourt barracks and present the forged orders to the officers in charge. Once in control of several military units, Malet would lead the troops to various strategically important locations throughout the city, arresting high-ranking political officials—and anyone else who might dare to stand in his way—and replacing them with men he deemed worthy as the plot unfolded. His initial accomplices—Lafon, Caâmano, Boutreux and Rateau—would not receive positions in the new government but, presumably, would collect other forms of reward once the plot succeeded.

To achieve the individual tasks which would culminate in the creation of Malet's

provisional government, the conspirators relied on both speed and the element of surprise. Malet believed that he would be able to persuade military and government officials to follow him simply by presenting authentic-looking orders and by explaining that the Senate had had to act immediately on learning of the Emperor's death. He wanted his actions seen as the result of the deliberate and legal decisions made by the Senate, not as a revolution. Success would be his, Malet thought, once his accomplices had replaced all critical political positions and his provisional government had met at the Hôtel de Ville. Adhering to Lafon's idea that a successful overthrow would need to placate monarchists as well as republicans, Malet chose men from both political camps to serve in his provisional government.⁶ Once assembled, he would announce to the new regime the abolition of the imperial government and make three crucial declarations: that Napoleon was an outlaw, a seemingly unnecessary step if, in fact, the Emperor had died, that his marriage to Marie-Louise was annulled and that the King of Rome was illegitimate to prevent the possibility of him inheriting his father's throne.⁷ After such announcements, Malet believed he would finally have succeeded in overthrowing Napoleon's regime.

The difficult question of what exactly to do with Marie-Louise and the King of Rome should his plan succeed remained for Malet to decide. Allegedly, he planned to remove the two imperial family members from the country. The *London Times* reported that the Empress had received a letter from Malet, which she was supposed to believe came from her father, the Emperor of Austria. The letter supposedly informed her of Napoleon's death and urged her to join his Ambassador in fleeing to Strasbourg and so avoid any fallout from her husband's demise. Instead of delivering her toward the Austrian border, however, the carriage would take her to Dieppe, where she and her son would board a ship for England. Other reports of the supposed plot against Marie-Louise state that she would return to Austria, because of her "illustrious

birth."⁸ Whatever their actual destination, it is likely that Malet intended no physical harm to either of the imperial figures. He needed to keep them safe in order to assure that Austria would support, or at least tolerate, the existence of his regime. With the plans finalized, all that remained was waiting for the perfect opportunity to put the plot into action.

In October 1812, several weeks would pass without any news reaching Paris from the Emperor and his *Grande Armée*. The lack of information quickly prompted rumors and speculation as to what might be happening in Russia. Already aware that the campaign had not gone well, Parisians were increasingly nervous as each day passed. Thinking the city rife with inquietude and disillusionment, Malet believed that the latest opportunity for him to strike against Napoleon had presented itself. With the Emperor in Russia and no imperial bulletins forthcoming, he knew that verification of the imperial death would be a slow and difficult undertaking. Given the recent lack of information received from the army, Malet did not expect such an announcement to meet much, if any, disbelief, especially if seemingly-official government documents seconded the claim. The nation's current situation caused him to think "that the downfall of Napoleon not only might be brought about, but was bound to occur immediately. He persuaded himself that it could readily be compassed with very slight action, especially if such action was taken in Paris."⁹ Confident that the time to act had come, Malet advised his four accomplices that they would implement their plot on the night of 11 October. Again, he would see his plans foiled through no fault of his own. Whereas uncontrolled temperaments had prevented success in 1808, Malet's new efforts would be impeded by delays, both preventable and not.

On the chosen night, Malet and Lafon successfully escaped from the rest home and arrived at Abbé Caâmano's residence without difficulty. Once there, they settled several last

minute details such as dating the forged *senatus-consulte* and the orders to various military units stationed throughout the city. Rateau was to provide the conspirators' uniforms and weapons, the final necessary step before initiating the plot itself. As the designated meeting time passed, however, Rateau was still missing. When he finally did arrive toward morning, his fellow conspirators feared that the most opportune moment had passed.¹⁰ As the group disbanded for the night, Malet and Lafon returned to Dubuisson's. Although they had escaped undetected, their effort to break back into the rest home drew the attention of their overseer. He reprimanded them for having left the facility without permission and warned that he intended to advise Minister of Police, René Savary, Duke of Rovigo, of their flight. Whether or not he ever filed such a report is unknown, but regardless of what action he took—or failed to take—the two prisoners had not yet resigned themselves to failure. Despite the setback and the now incorrect date on their counterfeit documents, they decided to reschedule their plot for 22 October, a date by which they hoped Dubuisson would again have relaxed his watch over them.

Dubuisson locked the residence at 11:00 pm each night after ensuring that his three charges were in their rooms.¹¹ Having successfully slipped out of the rest home eleven nights earlier, Malet and Lafon had no worries about doing it again. With Dubuisson aware that they were in their rooms, the two conspirators climbed out of their windows into the courtyard and retraced their steps back to Abbé Caâmano's residence. Unlike their prior attempt, everyone arrived without delay. Considering the torrential rain falling outside, the group decided to postpone taking immediate action, choosing instead to drink punch while waiting for a break in the weather.¹² According to Ernest Hamel, this initial delay brought about the failure of Malet's plot. In his opinion, "if things had been executed during the night, not a single civil or military authority would have had the time to recognize [what was happening], and the conspiracy would

probably have enjoyed complete success.”¹³

Finally, the group acknowledged that any action that night would have to take place in the rain. As Malet reached the door to leave, Abbé Lafon stopped him. He seemed to have lost confidence and begged the General not to attempt the overthrow. “Stay,” he pleaded, “the guillotine is at the door.”¹⁴ Dismissing his accomplice’s fears and still determined to restore the French Republic, he set out with Rateau and Boutreux around 3:30 a.m.¹⁵ The two clergymen remained behind as Caâmano’s task of providing a meeting place was complete and Lafon was too nervous for any further active participation.

By 4:00 a.m., the trio of conspirators had made their way through Paris' rainy streets to the Popincourt barracks, where Malet planned to obtain the military force with which he would overthrow the Empire.¹⁶ Upon reaching the garrison's entrance, Malet provided the morning's password and gained immediate access. The day’s key word—ironically, “*conspiration*” (conspiracy)—had been delivered to the General that afternoon by a soldier stationed at Popincourt.¹⁷ He quickly sought out Colonel Gabriel Soulier, the man in charge of the National Guardsmen stationed at the barracks. Initially, Soulier seemed of little use to Malet for he was asleep, suffering from fever and influenza, but the illness was a lucky accident for the conspirator. Fuzzy minded, Soulier neglected to inspect the forged *senatus-consulte* and Orders of the day intended for the Guardsmen carried by Malet and paid little attention to the personal letter summarizing the actions to be undertaken.¹⁸ Had he thoroughly reviewed the documents, he would have noticed several questionable aspects that may have brought the conspiracy to an end before it began. Instead, he relied solely on Malet's summary of the fraudulent documents. Malet explained to Soulier that “the Senate is assembled. The Emperor died on the 7th of this present month before Moscow; and we come to give you information of a *Senatus Consultum*

given this night, with an Order of the day, and a letter addressed to you, concerning the service with which you are charged under these circumstances; and in which you will act in concert with M. Frochot, Prefect of the Seine."¹⁹ Soulier also learned that he was to receive a promotion to general and was also to cash an order for 100,000 francs, signed by Malet. He was to distribute the funds among the men at Popincourt as a sign that they would receive their pay on time under the pending regime. Ordinary Guardsmen would receive higher than normal recompense and officers twice their normal rate.²⁰

Soulier was to read the announcement of Napoleon's death to the Guardsmen before arming his troops and leading them to the Place de Grève and Hotel de Ville, where he was to make arrangements for a room in which the provisional government could meet later that morning. He was also to station a detachment at the bell tower of Saint-Jean. When the time came, the tocsin would sound, calling everyone in Paris to action.²¹ Explaining that his sorrow over the news of the Emperor's death had exacerbated his illness, Soulier opted to remain in bed for awhile longer, appointing Adjutant-Major Piqueret to inform the Guardsmen of the recent developments. By lamplight in the pouring rain, the troops learned that the Emperor had died in Russia and that the nation would immediately return to a Republic. General Malet, now in charge of the government, promised them "promotions, rewards, and vacations."²² Recorded in various memoirs, the reaction to the news varies depending upon the source. Some describe "cries of *Vive la nation*," while others report that "there was not a cry, not a word, nothing but a great stupor."²³ Whatever the actual response, Soulier pulled himself from bed to undertake his orders while Malet personally led 1,200 men to La Force prison.²⁴

By 6:30 a.m., Malet and his troops arrived at the prison where he planned to free several prisoners whom he believed would help further his plot. He immediately ordered the release of

General Joseph Guidal and General Victor Lahorie—two men with whom he had previously served—and a Corsican, Joseph Boccheiampe, a seemingly random choice. The order met with no resistance. When the door of his cell opened with orders to follow the guard, Guidal believed that the time for his transfer to Marseille for trial had come.²⁵ Lahorie could conjure no explanation for his impromptu release and, therefore, "was slow in making his appearance; he was abed when called, and he took some time to get ready."²⁶ Finally appearing before his liberators, he recognized Malet as a fellow soldier, though he thought he had been a prisoner for some time. Although both men were aware of Malet's status as a known political malcontent, they had no more misgivings about the announcement of a provisional government than those unfamiliar with his past. Convinced that the news of Napoleon's death was legitimate, the three men brought the plot closer to reestablishing the French Republic.²⁷

Malet gave copies of his forged *senatus-consulte* to his three newly-released accomplices. He ordered them to seize the offices or personal apartments of several key political figures throughout the city, to arrest these men, and then to take their place in power. Boccheiampe made his way to the Prefecture of the Seine where he encountered no resistance in establishing himself as Prefect because Count Nicolas Frochot, who currently held the position, had not yet arrived at the office.²⁸ Lahorie and Guidal went immediately to the home of Minister of Police Savary. They found him still in bed and had little trouble placing him under arrest.²⁹ With Savary on his way to La Force prison, Lahorie took control of this key ministry. Although he had not actively resisted the news of his arrest and replacement, Savary's life was in danger. Malet had authorized each man assisting him to use any method of coercion or intimidation—including unrestricted violence—to achieve the plot's goal.³⁰ Only Lahorie's intervention kept Savary safe from the wrath of Guidal, a gratuitously violent man. As the former Minister was

led to prison, Lahorie told him, "Fear not...for you have fallen into the hands of a generous enemy, and you shall not be put to death."³¹ Abiding by the promise given by his comrade, Guidal did not harm Savary, though he constantly threatened to do so.

Shortly after 7 a.m., having installed Savary at La Force, Guidal led Boutreux and a detachment of Guardsmen to the personal apartments belonging to Prefect of Police Pasquier.³² Pasquier examined the order calling for his arrest and the forged *senatus-consulte* that Guidal presented to him, immediately concluding that each document was fraudulent. In his memoirs, Pasquier noted, "it was an easy matter for me to see at a glance that these documents were apocryphal, and concocted by men who were ignorant of the form in which they were usually couched."³³ Placed in a carriage destined for La Force prison, Pasquier—whose position Boutreux seized—attempted to convince his escort that "he was the dupe of a gross imposture, that he was doubtless not aware of the consequences of his participating in a most guilty enterprise, and that it might cost him his life."³⁴ The explanation went unheeded.

Colonel Soulier had pulled himself from bed and arrived at the Hotel de Ville by 7:30 a.m.³⁵ Count Frochot, the Prefect of the Seine, had received a sloppily scrawled note earlier that morning stating that the Emperor was dead. Rushing to his office to seek details, he arrived shortly after Soulier and his Guardsmen. Soulier presented Frochot with copies of Malet's forged *senatus-consulte* and Orders of the Day which, unlike himself, Frochot carefully examined. Finding discrepancies in these documents, he began questioning Soulier about the situation: "I immediately looked for the signature, and finding it to be Malet, demanded to know why it was not signed by General Hulin, and who was this General Malet? The Commandant replied, 'my General is wounded, and General Malet is Chief, or one of the Chiefs of the General Staff.'³⁶ Whereas the orders to Lahorie and Guidal had been to arrest various government officials,

Soulier was simply to inform Frochot of the change in regime and to have him make arrangements for the provisional government's meeting later that day. Wanting to have everything ready when Malet and the other members of the new regime arrived—and seemingly unconcerned about having been replaced as Prefect by Boccheiampe—Frochot delegated various tasks to other officials at the Hôtel de Ville.³⁷ Despite his nearly unquestioning compliance, Frochot later maintained that he had not been convinced of the legitimacy of the orders he received. In self-defense, he asserted, "[I] fled to my own house, leaving the two Officers behind, telling them that I was going to change my boots; but deliberating in my own mind on what was to be done, and on the means of having an interview with the Prince Arch-Chancellor."³⁸ Whether he intended to or not, Frochot failed to reach Arch-Chancellor Cambacérès until late that afternoon, and by then, arrangements for the first meeting of Malet's new Republican government were in place.

Unlike his previous attempts to overthrow Napoleon's regime, which saw themselves frustrated from the outset by eavesdroppers, lack of real planning, and tardiness, the plot of 22 October was already Malet's most successful, having been underway for three and a half hours. By 7:00 a.m., men loyal to Malet's provisional government had subjugated both the Ministry of Police and Prefecture of Police without resistance.³⁹ Thus far, the plot had unfolded perfectly, but Malet was not deluded enough to expect that it would continue so smoothly. Having maintained under his command 150 of the Guardsmen he had obtained earlier that morning, he set out to achieve what he believed would be one of the most difficult individual tasks of the entire enterprise, neutralizing the threat posed by Count General Pierre Hulin.⁴⁰ Hulin was a determined man who could not be seduced or intimidated into acting against his will. If anyone were going to thwart the plan, Malet expected it to be Hulin and, therefore, kept for himself the

task of subduing him.⁴¹

Arriving at Hulin's apartment in the Place Vendôme, Malet barged into the bedroom to find him still sleeping in bed next to his wife.⁴² Malet immediately launched into the explanation that Napoleon had died in Moscow and that the Senate had abolished the imperial government, replacing it with a Republic. Malet had two more announcements for Hulin: that he was under arrest, and that he, Malet, would replace him in his position as governor of Paris.⁴³ Seeing her husband baffled into silence, Countess Hulin intervened, hoping to bring her husband back to his senses. She advised him that if the news delivered were true, Malet would have corresponding written orders.⁴⁴ Rousing himself, Hulin asked to see such orders, to which Malet calmly replied in the affirmative: "Let's go into your office, I will show it to you," Malet told him. Once in the adjoining room, Malet revealed not the orders he claimed to possess but a pistol.⁴⁵ Without further elaboration, he shot Hulin in the face. The bullet entered his jaw, but the injury did not prove fatal.⁴⁶

Malet next led his troops to the home of Adjutant-General Pierre Doucet, from whom he expected to acquire authority over more troops. And here, everything began to go wrong. Prior to setting his plot in motion, Malet had written Doucet a personal letter, an action he thought would have won the Adjutant-General's allegiance to his cause.⁴⁷ But upon reviewing the *senatus-consulte*, Doucet questioned the validity of the document presented to him.⁴⁸ Further complicating the situation was the unforeseeable visit of Alexandre de Laborde, a police inspector, to Doucet's apartments that morning. His very presence caused a change in Malet's attitude. His composure dissolved as Laborde, recognizing him as a political malcontent who was supposed to be locked away in Doctor Dubuisson's rest home, declared, "Monsieur Mallet [sic], you do not have permission to leave your home unless I come looking for you."⁴⁹

Believing himself in another situation where only violence would assure the plot's success, Malet reached for his pistol. Before he could fire, Laborde and Doucet, wrestled him to the ground and placed him under arrest.⁵⁰ Rateau, who had accompanied Malet, vainly cited the *senatus-consulte* as authorization for the actions taken over the last several hours.⁵¹ He drew his sword in hopes of rescuing the General, but quickly found himself under arrest.⁵²

At roughly 9:45 a.m., Laborde and Doucet brought the two conquered conspirators in bonds before the soldiers Malet had led to the house. "The Emperor is not dead!" Doucet exclaimed. "Your father lives still! These men are imposters!"⁵³ Chants of "*Vive l'Empereur!*" immediately filled the air, after which the troops returned to their barracks as if nothing out of the ordinary had occurred, a sign that Malet believed signaled the official end of his plot.⁵⁴ Not only was he, the conspiracy's mastermind, in custody, but he had failed to achieve the true allegiance of the men who had aided his cause thus far. Although the situation was coming under control, Doucet and Laborde knew that Paris and the imperial regime were not safe until each of Malet's co-conspirators—both the deliberate and the unwitting—were under arrest. In fact, had his accomplices been more proactive in their duties, the plot might yet have succeeded despite Malet's arrest.⁵⁵

Having replaced the Duke of Rovigo as Minister of Police, Lahorie busied himself not with the duties of his new position but with finding a tailor to fit him clothing appropriate to his new position.⁵⁶ When Inspector Laborde and a detachment of troops arrived at the Ministry, he announced to Lahorie that he was under arrest for having conspired with General Malet to overthrow Napoleon's imperial regime. Upon hearing that he had been part of an illegal bid for political power, he proclaimed his innocence, swearing that he had no knowledge of the illegitimacy of Malet's claims. He simply believed that he was taking part in yet another

government change—"I believed I was seeing another 18 Brumaire, and I followed General Malet, the same way that twelve years ago I had followed Bonaparte"—ushered in by the chaos of the revolutionary spirit that had pervaded France for more than two decades.⁵⁷ When Laborde asked how so sloppy an imitation as the *senatus-consulte* issued by Malet could deceived him, Lahorie confessed that he had not read a single line of the document, believing Malet's explanation of the situation as proof enough of the circumstances facing the nation. Upon closely inspecting the forgery, Lahorie dejectedly allowed his own arrest, avowing, "It has never been said that I lacked either intelligence or judgment, and it would be necessary to look upon me as the most obtuse of men, to pretend that I willingly took part in an imposture so rashly concocted. No, I was the first dupe of General Malet, and I am his wretched victim."⁵⁸

The Corsican Boccheiampe was the only one of Malet's unwitting conspirators to take his position in the government seriously. As soon as he had installed himself as Prefect of the Seine, he set to work signing the day's paperwork as if his promotion from prisoner to prefect was nothing out of the ordinary. When Malet's plot began to unravel, however, he was quick to abandon his post in hope of fleeing the police searching for him. On 24 October, authorities arrested him when they found him hiding in a nearby residence.⁵⁹ Unlike Lahorie and Boccheiampe, who spent at least a brief time in their new offices, Guidal had abandoned his post immediately after replacing Henri Clarke, Duke of Feltre, as Minister of War. Rather than undertake the position's duties, he left for a restaurant to have lunch. A detachment of troops found him, "fork in hand," quickly placed him under arrest, and returned him to prison.⁶⁰

With each of the conspirators under arrest, the rightful government officials went about reinstalling themselves in their offices and returning the city to the status quo, a task that was complete by noon that same day.⁶¹ The ruse had been so convincing, however, that Prefect of

Police Pasquier had a difficult time in re-entering his office, when troops refused to allow him to enter without an order signed by Malet.⁶² Prefect of the Seine Frochot, who had given orders for the preparation of a meeting room for the new provisional government, had no trouble in retaking his post. He immediately tried to set everything right, hoping to prevent anyone from suspecting him as a conspirator. Only then did he make his way to Arch-Chancellor Cambacérés to explain to him what had happened.⁶³

Although the conspiracy enjoyed several hours of success, the Parisian populace was unaware of the events until the authorities had restored order.⁶⁴ Malet had hoped that the citizens would rally to his cause upon hearing that he wanted to return the nation to a Republic and free them from "tyrannical" Napoleon. His hopes might not have been completely misplaced. Minister of Police Savary described France as "a country so susceptible to the contagion of example," seeming to validate Malet's expectation that the nation would rally to support him.⁶⁵ There was no uprising or any sympathetic sentiment, however, when a brief written statement by the Minister of Police announcing the plot's unfolding and subsequent failure, appeared in *Le Moniteur* on the morning of 24 October.⁶⁶ The information provided by Savary was vague, providing only the names of the plot's masterminds—Malet, Lahorie, and Guidal—and the assertion that the disturbances they caused had been minor. In fact, the *Journal de Paris* reported enthusiastic cries of *Vive l'Empereur!* from citizens of all classes when the statement was read aloud.⁶⁷ People in the city discussed Malet's plot "as a piece of outrageous folly," if they bothered to speak of it at all.⁶⁸ The newspaper emphasized Parisians' positive reaction for several days after the conspiracy had taken place. "We insist on this point," an article from 31 October explained, "because it honors the character of the habitants of Paris, and proves that they know their true interests, which cannot be separated from respect for the law and love of the

sovereign.”⁶⁹

Wanting to maintain the tranquility that had persisted throughout Paris during Malet’s attempt “to trouble the public order and to substitute legitimate authority with the horrors of anarchy” and to put the ordeal in the past as quickly as possible, a commission of seven military officers had been organized on 23 October by Arch-Chancellor Cambacérès and Minister of War Henri Clarke.⁷⁰ The trial of twenty-four alleged conspirators, including Malet, began four days later.⁷¹ During the trial, several issues hampered the accused men's ability to defend themselves successfully. Boccheiampe, a Corsican, pointed out that his knowledge of French was inadequate and might prevent him from understanding the questions the commission presented. Likewise, they might find his responses difficult to follow. One of the judges quickly replied, "we will understand you enough."⁷² None of the defendants were offered legal counsel, and when Colonel Soulier complained at the outset of the trial, a judge assured him, sarcastically, that they would have the opportunity to write to lawyers that evening, sniping that "all lawyers do not go to bed at eight o'clock."⁷³ Malet was quick to reply that by then the "jailers are in bed and the prisoners are locked down, without light."⁷⁴ Ultimately, only one of the defendants managed to obtain the services of a defense counsel, who generously offered to say a few words on behalf of the other defendants as well.⁷⁵

Perhaps the most damning aspect of the trial was the judges' preconceived notion of the men's guilt. Several of the men adopted as their defense the claim that they were simply unwitting dupes of Malet's deceitful plan, having been wrought with emotion upon hearing of Napoleon’s untimely death. Jean-François Rabbe, one of the accused, justified himself by stating that "in losing the Emperor, he lost his protector; he burst into tears and did not think [about the fact] that in a monarchy the son succeeds the father."⁷⁶ Colonel Soulier also sought to

defend his actions in this manner, citing his "twenty-five years of service [and] fourteen injuries" as evidence against the idea that he would knowingly act against the legitimate French government.⁷⁷ He testified, "on account of the illness with which I was afflicted, and the emotion which the false report of his Majesty's death caused in me, I totally lost my senses."⁷⁸ Following this explanation, one of the judges snapped at him, declaring that during a crisis when someone unknown to him declares that the Emperor is dead is precisely the moment when military and civil officers need to keep their wits about them and handle the situation appropriately.⁷⁹ While the military commission failed to accept the validity of such a defense, Prefect of Police Pasquier believed in the men's innocence. In his memoirs, he sympathized with the accused: "The officers of their command sought refuge in the obedience which they considered they owed to their superiors in rank. It is a fact that among them all, not one was to be found who could be called intentionally guilty."⁸⁰

Each man, excepting Malet, professed his innocence throughout the trial. Some hoped to save their lives while others had already resigned themselves to the idea of facing the firing squad. One of the most vocal in proclaiming his virtue, Colonel Soulier, continuously begged for his life, reminding the panel of judges that he had "a wife and four children."⁸¹ General Lahorie's performance at the hearing was stoic. When given the opportunity to address the panel of judges, he explained, "At all events . . . I am aware of the doom that awaits me; I do not speak for the purpose of saving my life, but to establish the truth, and to defend my memory from the odious charges with which it might be sought to dishonor it."⁸² Malet made no effort to defend his actions to the commission, declaring that "the man who has constituted himself the defender of his country has no need of any defense: he triumphs, or goes to his death."⁸³

The questioning of Colonel Soulier was unforgiving. As a commanding officer used to

reviewing official documents he could easily have determined that the ones delivered by General Malet were forgeries. For example, the order given to him for 100,000 francs had no date and came from an alleged senatorial meeting on 11 October 1812. When reminded that these discrepancies—and the fact that Malet had ordered him "to sound the tocsin whenever such a step might become necessary"—should have confirmed in his mind the illegitimacy of the events underway, Soulier reiterated that he had been too ill and emotionally distraught to act as he normally would have.⁸⁴ The military commission countered by accusing him of supporting Malet's efforts because of the promotion to General of Brigade and the promised 100,000 francs. Soulier could only reply, "It was neither one nor the other."⁸⁵

While the judges did not seem to believe that high-ranking officials could possibly be as gullible as they claimed, Malet defended each of his alleged accomplices, arguing that they were simply following the orders of a superior officer, exactly what their training taught them to do. He added that had any of them not conformed to his wishes, he would have forced them to do so.⁸⁶ Clearly, his threat was true, given his shooting of General Hulin. Malet maintained that "alone he had done everything, trusting for the success of his enterprise to a spontaneous outburst of the feelings of hatred and indignation experienced by all classes, and which could not fail to respond to the first given signal."⁸⁷ During the interrogation, one of the judges asked Malet directly who his accomplices had been. Again, he explained that he had acted alone, but added that if his plan had succeeded, he would have been joined by "all of France, even yourself."⁸⁸ His willingness "to take upon himself the entire responsibility . . . revealed the nobility of his character," according to Prefect of Police Pasquier.⁸⁹ Refusing to accept Malet's testimony that he was the plot's mastermind, historian Frank McLynn attributes the plot to a wider conspiracy, in which Malet simply happened to be the first actor in "an *ad hoc* pact

between royalists and extreme Republicans.”⁹⁰

After an unusually brief hearing—a mere three days—the military commission reached its decision concerning the fate of each of the accused, handing down its judgment on 29 October 1812.⁹¹ The *Journal de Paris* promptly printed it the following day. Although the panel determined "that the entire conspiracy had been the personal work of Malet, and that his followers were the victims of a lamentable credulity," fourteen men were sentenced to death for their roles in the plot.⁹² Twelve of the defendants—including Malet, Lahorie, Guidal, Soulier, and Rateau—were unanimously condemned to death, while Boccheiampe received the same sentence by a vote of five to two, and Rabbe by a vote of six to one.⁹³ The remaining ten were acquitted of any wrongdoing, nine unanimously, and one by a “sufficient majority” of three to four votes.⁹⁴ Before 3:00 p.m. on 30 October, when the condemned men made their way to the Plaine de Grenelle to face the firing squad, Rateau and Rabbe benefited from a last-minute decision to spare their lives, leading to suspicion that they had confessed to the police crucial information such as the participants and the working details of Malet’s plot.⁹⁵ Prefect of Police Pasquier found Rateau's reprieve especially bewildering. He pointed to Rateau's having been one of Malet's initial accomplices, "present at the first meeting" when the plot was being devised.⁹⁶

The theatrical qualities of the entire ordeal and discrepancies in protocol did not end with the issuance of the death sentences. Transported to the Plaine de Grenelle in a number of carriages, the doomed men continued to play the same roles as they had during the trial. Lahorie remained composed, Soulier constantly mumbled, “my poor children, my poor family,” and Guidal shouted slurs against Napoleon.⁹⁷ Eight others traveled in stupefied silence, awestruck that they had not only been found guilty of participating in a political plot against Napoleon’s

imperial regime but were to pay for having done so with their lives.⁹⁸ The loudest performance was that of General Malet himself. Leaning out the window of his carriage, he yelled to anyone within hearing distance, "recall the 23rd of October!" and "I fall, but I am not the last of the Romans."⁹⁹ He regretted his machinations only because his failure would leave his wife and son impoverished and at the mercy of his political opponents.¹⁰⁰

At the Plaine de Grenelle, the condemned were lined up against a wall, facing the twenty-five man firing squad. Contrary to protocol, Malet himself led the execution. He told his accomplices to prepare themselves for the volley. The squad fired. Once the smoke had cleared, Malet could be seen, standing unharmed before the wall, his hand over his heart. The first volley of bullets had failed to kill two others as well, though it had, at least, knocked them to the ground. Bordérieux cried out "*Vive l'Empereur!*" before addressing Malet, "Go, poor soldier, your emperor received, like you, a mortal strike."¹⁰¹ Staring at his ineffective executioners, Malet shouted, "Fire again, already!"¹⁰² Lahorie, lying on the ground still alive, amended, "me too, for God's sake!"¹⁰³ A second volley silenced Bordérieux and Lahorie. Malet, using his last breath to profess his political ideology, muttered "*Vive la liberté*" before falling face first to the ground.¹⁰⁴

Napoleon learned of Malet's failed plan against him on 6 November 1812, when he arrived in Mikhailovka, Russia.¹⁰⁵ A waiting messenger described the people involved, outlined the basic events of the plot, and informed him of the execution of the conspirators. The willingness with which his high-ranking political and military officials embraced the idea of a provisional government replacing his own struck him immediately. The security of his empire—which he thought he had achieved with the birth of his son, the King of Rome—was clearly in question. Stupefied that a political prisoner could so easily threaten all he had created, Napoleon

exclaimed to his secretary, Louis de Bourrienne, "It would appear that my crown is not fixed very firmly on my head if in my own capital the bold stroke of three adventurers can shake it."¹⁰⁶ His anger grew as reports from various ministers in Paris arrived. Each man related information concerning the plot in such a manner as to minimize the role he had played in Malet's success. The officials "were ever eager to magnify their own importance at the expense of others."¹⁰⁷

Knowing that news of the catastrophic conditions facing the *Grande Armée* in Russia was making its way to Paris, Napoleon worried that public opinion would be even further damaged given the recent attempt to overthrow his government. He feared that other political opponents, especially those outside Paris and in conquered territories, would seize the opportunity to act against him as well. Wanting to manage any ramifications caused by either—or both—situations, he explained to his advisers who had accompanied him on the Russian campaign that his presence was required back in his capital city. "In the current state of things," he told them, "I can only impose on Europe from the Tuileries palace."¹⁰⁸ Although the Emperor's statements show that Malet's conspiracy played a significant role in his decision to leave Russia and return to Paris, at least one of his close advisers seemed to think otherwise. Foreign Minister Armand Caulaincourt recorded in his memoirs that "the Emperor . . . thought that this event [Malet's plot], the enterprise of a madman, would have few—if any—ramifications."¹⁰⁹

Napoleon returned to the Tuileries palace in Paris during the middle of the night on 18 December 1812.¹¹⁰ Over the next several days, he met with the Senate, each member of which was anxious to impress upon him his undying loyalty. Just as in the ministerial reports he read in Russia, the senators sought to reduce the significance of the events, seeking to assure the Emperor that his reign enjoyed solid support. Senator Louis-Philippe, Count of Ségur swore allegiance—his own, and that of the Senate as a whole—to Napoleon and the dynasty that would

follow him: “In your absence a detestable plot was framed; some madman attempted to shake what genius and courage had founded. . . . We are ready to sacrifice every thing for your sacred person, for the perpetuation of your dynasty. Deign to receive this new oath: we will remain faithful to it till death.”¹¹¹ Despite promises of loyalty from high-ranking military and political officials, Napoleon’s regime never enjoyed the stability that pre-Revolutionary dynasties had.

CONCLUSION

The French Revolution ushered in a period of political unrest and constant upheaval in France which appeared never-ending, even when a seemingly stable government rose to power. After a series of failed Republican governments, Napoleon Bonaparte seized control on 18 Brumaire VIII (9 November 1799), promising to uphold the revolutionary ideals—*liberté*, *égalité*, and *fraternité*—that had permeated the nation. As time passed, however, it became clear that the new leader aimed at gathering all political power for himself. With his consular and imperial regimes accepted and even welcomed by French citizens, Napoleon effectively returned the country to autocratic rule.

The First Consul-turned-Emperor understood that he needed the support of French citizens from all ranks of society to ensure the stability of his rule. The peasants and working class had championed him since his initial political conquest because they felt that he personified the hopes of the common Frenchman: having risen through the ranks because of his talent and ability, not through any perceived right or privilege afforded by a noble birth. They expected the brilliant military commander not only to deliver constant military victories but also to keep their best interests in mind. Although the political allegiance of the lower classes seemed secure, Napoleon understood that guaranteeing the permanence of his Empire would also depend on the support of capable and experienced officials, men whose faithfulness was more questionable.

Needing talented officials to serve in his military, ministries, and prefectures, Napoleon was forced to enlist the services of men whose ideologies ranged from Republican, to monarchist, to imperialists. Shortly after having seized power, Napoleon, as First Consul, wrote to his brother Joseph, "I have composed my Council of State of ex-members of the Constituent Assembly, of moderates, Feuillants, Royalists, Jacobins. I am national: I like honest men of all

colours."¹ Relying on officials whose political beliefs conflicted with those of their fellow co-workers and with the current regime engendered instability within his new government.

Napoleon did not fear the potentially dangerous situation, believing instead that with time the hostilities generated during the Revolutionary past would fade and allow his officials to dedicate themselves sincerely to his regime. These men did profess their loyalty to him, though their sincerity was constantly in doubt. Many of them were simply willing to suppress their ideologies in order to maintain their positions in the government, an attitude that Napoleon accepted, believing that it would eventually transition into true allegiance.

Joseph Fouché was a known Jacobin supporter who found himself appointed Minister of Police during Napoleon's various regimes. After Napoleon's initial abdication in 1814, Fouché warned the newly-installed King Louis XVIII that the Emperor might try to return to France and retake political control. Simultaneously, he worked—albeit, in vain—with Bonapartists to declare a Regency for the King of Rome, Napoleon II. As Fouché predicted, Napoleon returned and led the nation for a brief period known as the Hundred Days—the length of time Louis XVIII would be forced to flee from Paris. Once again he chose Fouché to be Minister of Police—because he was the most experienced, talented, and capable man available for the position. Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo prompted the politically fickle Fouché to seek the Emperor's second abdication and to restore Louis XVIII. This assistance to the Bourbon family earned him the right to maintain his position as Minister of Police under the new regime. Further evidence of Fouché's willingness to serve his own best interest was the document he provided Louis XVIII listing the people—his close friends and co-workers included—who had compromised their integrity by serving Napoleon during the Hundred Days, though his own name should have appeared on this list as well.²

Napoleon's expectation of stability despite his officials' conflicting, and often insincere, political opinions—the danger of which he seems to have underestimated—never came to fruition. Both his consular and imperial regimes frequently faced adversarial malcontents determined to destroy what he had established. The disjointedness of his officials' ideologies weakened the structure of government, making it possible for any enterprising political hopeful to strike a devastating blow against the Empire and even potentially to topple it completely. Not fully recognizing the fragility within his bureaucracy, Napoleon believed that though the allegiance of his highest-ranking political and military officials was perpetually in question, the relative prosperity and comfort enjoyed by the peasants and working class, coupled with his many victories on the battlefield, would provide sufficient stability to preserve his rule.

Ultimately, even these aspects, which he had previously provided so easily, began to fail the Emperor. In the later years of his regime, Napoleon's military triumphs lessened, and the nation's enemies drew closer to Paris. As his hold on popular opinion diminished, he faced increasing danger from his officials and the weakness caused by their conflicting political ideologies. The very men who had, at least outwardly, sworn allegiance to the imperial government forced their sovereign to abdicate on 6 April 1814. The end of the Napoleonic Empire was a long-sought victory for the Bourbon supporters vanquished by the chaos of the Revolution. Having replaced the Emperor with royal pretender Louis XVIII, monarchists hoped to return France to a pre-Revolutionary state, or at the very least to a constitutional monarchy. Because the imperial interlude had not subdued the unrest ushered in by the Revolution, the newly reestablished Bourbon monarchy was destined to face upheaval.

Napoleon returned to France from his exile on the island of Elba and retook political control of the nation. The past and now present Emperor announced to French citizens that his

own rule had been deposed through the treachery of some of his military and political officials. Such declarations vilified the monarchy, allowing Napoleon to gather support for the Empire again. His second attempt at ruling the nation would not enjoy long-term success, however, as his most vehement opponents—other European leaders—had been meeting at the Congress of Vienna since 1 November 1814 to establish a lasting European peace settlement out of the disorder caused first by the Restoration and then by Napoleon's reign. Assisting the leaders in an advisory position was Talleyrand, a man who had, at times, aided the Emperor's cause while simultaneously actively seeking to destroy it. After suffering defeat at Waterloo on 18 June 1815, Napoleon offered to abdicate in favor of his young son, now just over four years old. The European powers rejected the proposal and restored Louis XVIII to the throne—again.

Louis XVIII reigned until his death in 1824, at which point his brother, Charles X succeeded him. This succession was the only regular transfer of political power in France during the nineteenth century. Although rule had successfully passed from one king to another in traditional style, the monarchical system was by no means secure. After a six year rule, a new revolution in 1830 forced Charles X to abdicate in favor of his grandson, the Count of Chambord. Instead, the liberal-minded Chamber of Deputies elected as France's next monarch, Louis-Philippe, Duke of Orléans, from the cadet branch of the Bourbon family, thereby creating the July Monarchy. Even three consecutive royal leaders could not, however, ensure the continuation of the monarchy.

Just as he had gained power through revolution, Louis-Philippe would lose it in the same manner. The Revolutions of 1848—a Europe-wide phenomenon—brought France a Republic, the moment General Malet had always desired. On 10 December 1848, universal manhood suffrage elected Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, Napoleon's eldest nephew, as the so-called Second

Republic's President, the first time such a position existed in France. Despite Republican beginnings, his political aspirations echoed those of his uncle, and the Second Republic soon came to an end. On 2 December 1852, France entered into the Second Empire, led by Emperor Napoleon III—Napoleon's son, the King of Rome, was granted the name Napoleon II though he never ruled. Napoleon III was not only the nation's first President but also its last monarch. At the battle of Sedan (2 September 1870) during the Franco-Prussian War, the Emperor was taken prisoner. When the news arrived in Paris two days later, his imperial regime was deposed by Republicans, declaring the Third Republic. Although France's Republics have changed over time—the nation is currently in its fifth—the system has endured. Revolutionary and Republican ideals finally found their place in French politics, but not until long after the name of General Claude-François de Malet had faded from memory.

NOTES

Introduction

1. Roger Dufraisse, *Napoleon*, translated by Steven Englund under same title (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1992), vii.
2. Jean Savant, *Les Ministres de Napoléon* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1959), 26.
3. Louis Bergeron, *L'épisode napoléonien, aspects intérieurs: 1799-1815* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972), translated by R. R. Palmer as *France Under Napoleon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 106.
4. Bergeron, *France Under Napoleon*, 97.
5. Émile Marco de Saint-Hilaire, *Histoire des conspirations et attentats contre le gouvernement et la personne de Napoléon* (Paris: Charles Fellens, 1847), 332.
6. Frank McLynn, *Napoleon: A Biography* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2002), 540.
7. Armand Augustin Louis de Caulaincourt, *Mémoires du Général de Caulaincourt, duc de Vicence, Grand Écuyer de l'Empereur*, introduction and notes by Jean Hanoteau, 3 vols. (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1933), 2:126.
8. J. Christopher Herold, *The Age of Napoleon* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1963), 370.

Chapter One

1. Adolphe Thiers, *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire*, 21 vols. (Paris: Paulin, 1845-1874), 14: 524.
2. Édouard Guillon mentions the fact that Malet was the only one in his immediate family to embrace the Revolution's ideas, but gives no theory as to why. Similarly, Albert Duruy insists that it is impossible to know the cause of the difference of political opinion for sure. Édouard Guillon, *Les Complots militaires sous le Consulat et l'Empire: d'après les documents inédits des Archives* (Paris: E. Plon, Nourrit & Co., 1894), 170. Albert Duruy, "La Conspiration du général Malet d'après des documents inédits." *Revue des deux mondes* 31 (January-June 1931): 633.
3. Stéphane Claude Gigon, *Le Général Malet: d'après les documents inédits des Archives Nationales et des Archives de la Guerre avec un plan de Paris en 1812 pour l'intelligence de la deuxième conspiration* (Paris: Henri Charles-Lavauzelle, 1913), 8.
4. Frédéric Masson, *La Vie et les conspirations du Général Malet, 1754-1812*, (3rd ed.; Paris: Librairie Paul Ollendorff, 1920), 17.
5. Gigon, *Le Général Malet*, 8-9.

6. Christopher Hibbert, *Days of the French Revolution* (New York: Perennial, 2002), 114.
7. Masson, *La Vie et les conspirations*, 17.
8. Louis Garros, *Le Général Malet: Conspirateur* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1936), 23.
9. Malet was on hand at the uprising, despite his present unemployment. Whether he actively participated in the fighting and what his role may have been is unclear. Men previously dismissed from the military for various reasons received warm welcomes back to service after aiding in the victory of the Convention. Garros, *Le Général Malet*, 25-26.
10. Garros, *Le Général Malet*, 26.
11. Stefan Zweig, *Joseph Fouché: The Portrait of a Politician* (New York: Viking Press, 1930), xiii.
12. Hibbert, *The Days of the French Revolution*, 302.
13. Frank McLynn, *Napoleon: A Biography* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2002), 217.
14. Alan Schom, *Napoleon Bonaparte* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1998), 219.
15. John Eldred Howard, ed., *Letters and Documents of Napoleon* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), 320.
16. Albert H. Z. Carr, *Napoleon Speaks*, documents translated by Julia van Huele (New York: The Viking Press, 1941), 152-153.
17. Malet was not alone in advocating a type of unequal equality. In 1795, Antoine Boissy d'Anglas presented the Constitution of the Year III to the Convention, explaining in his introduction that citizens with a personal interest in maintaining order and stability must lead France. He argued that "with very few exceptions, you will find such men only among those who own some property." Hibbert, *Days of the French Revolution*, 282.
18. Peter M. Jones, *The French Revolution: 1787-1804* (London: Longman, 2003), 85.
19. McLynn, *Napoleon*, 254.
20. Comte de Lort de Sérignan, *Un conspirateur militaire sous le premier empire: Le Général Malet* (Paris: Payot, 1925), 22.
21. Masson, *La Vie et les conspirations*, 55.
22. Masson, *La Vie et les conspirations*, 58.
23. McLynn, *Napoleon*, 260.

24. Felix Markham, *Napoleon* (New York: Signet, 1963), 95.
25. The pay rate of the highest position, Grand Chancellor, is unknown at the time of the Legion's creation. The titles of today's Legion did not come into use until the Restoration.
26. Émile Marco de Saint-Hilaire, *Histoire des conspirations et attentats contre le gouvernement et la personne de Napoléon* (Paris: Charles Fellens, 1847), 332.
27. Schom, *Napoleon Bonaparte*, 333.
28. Saint-Hilaire, *Histoire des conspirations*, 333.
29. Exactly what constitutional revisions Servan wanted to incorporate if France returned to a monarchy are unknown. Given his desire to overthrow a government led by one man, it seems doubtful that he would want to increase the king's power.
30. Jean Savant, *Les Ministres de Napoléon* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1959), 210.
31. Garros, *Le Général Malet*, 72.
32. Of the fourteen conspirators involved in the plot, only four would serve in the Dictatorship if it came to fruition: Malet, Lemare, Bazin, and Florent-Guyot. The government's other five members would be General Jean Victor Marie Moreau, Admiral Truguet, and Senators Destutt-Tracy, Garat and Lambrechts. Masson, *La Vie et les conspirations*, 99.
33. Garros, *Le Général Malet*, 78.
34. Masson, *La Vie et les conspirations*, 100.
35. Masson, *La Vie et les conspirations*, 102.
36. Masson, *La Vie et les conspirations*, 103.
37. Masson, *La Vie et les conspirations*, 106.
38. Masson, *La Vie et les conspirations*, 106.
39. Masson, *La Vie et les conspirations*, 109-110.
40. Sources only mention Jacquemont in this particular instance, giving no information about him except that he had a political background of some variety. In fact, even Napoleon himself admitted, "I have never heard of him." Garros, *Le Général Malet*, 87.
41. Louis Garros lists the dates on which Dubois and his men arrested each man. He also includes the names of other people taken into custody, presumably guilty of having had some tie

to one or more of the conspirators, though he gives no details. Of the sixteen conspirators—including Guillet and Guillaume—only Lemare managed to escape the Prefect's police, fleeing to Montpellier where he became a surgeon using the alias Jacquet. The prefect and his men arrested the conspirators as follows: 8 June, Demaillet and Guillaume; 9 June, Corneille, Guillet, Gariot, Malet, and Poilpré; 12 June: Florent-Guyot; 23 June, Bazin, Ricord; 24 June, Liébaud and Baude; 4 July, Saiffert; 7 July: Blanchet; 14 July: Gindre. *Le Général Malet*, 84-86. Masson, *La Vie et les conspirations*, 119.

42. Garros, *Le Général Malet*, 86.

43. Garros, *Le Général Malet*, 88.

44. Garros, *Le Général Malet*, 86.

45. Garros, *Le Général Malet*, 90.

46. Masson, *La Vie et les conspirations*, 155.

47. Masson, *La Vie et les conspirations*, 157.

48. Billard, Max. *La Conspiration de Malet: Un interrègne de quelques heures, la nuit du 23 octobre 1812* (Paris: Perrin & Co., 1907), 15.

49. Masson, *La Vie et les conspirations*, 165.

50. Masson, *La Vie et les conspirations*, 165.

51. Masson, *La Vie et les conspirations*, 166.

Chapter Two

1. Jean Tulard, *Napoléon: Ou, le mythe du sauveur* (Paris: Fayard, 1977), translated by Teresa Waugh as *Napoleon: The Myth of the Saviour* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984), 81.

2. John Eldred Howard, ed., *Letters and Documents of Napoleon* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), 327.

3 Ernest D'Hauterive, *Napoléon et sa police* (Paris: Flammarion, 1943), 143.

4. Martyn Lyons, *Napoleon Bonaparte and the Legacy of the French Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 131.

5. Jocelyn Hunt, *The French Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1998), 112.

6. Felix Markam, *Napoleon* (New York: Signet, 1963), 93.

7. Different reasons are given for the plot's failure. Felix Markham provides an explanation popular shortly after the incident, that Napoleon had not employed his usual coachman that night. Instead, he chose a driver "who was usually drunk and always drove too fast," simply because he had served under him during his victory at Marengo. *Napoleon*, 100. Alan Schom explains that the carriage, regardless of the driver, simply took a path different than usual. *Napoleon Bonaparte* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1998), 274.
8. Édouard Guillon, *Les Complots militaires sous le Consulat et l'Empire: D'après les documents inédits des Archives* (Paris: E. Plon, Nourrit & Co., 1894), 8.
9. Guillon, *Les Complots militaires*, 31.
10. Tulard, *Napoleon*, 116-117.
11. Tulard, *Napoleon*, 125.
12. Schom, *Napoleon*, 346.
13. Albert H. Z. Carr, *Napoleon Speaks*, documents translated by Julia van Huele (New York: The Viking Press, 1941), 158.
14. Tulard, *Napoleon*, 127.
15. Markham, *Napoleon*, 113.
16. Schom, *Napoleon*, 348.
17. Tulard, *Napoleon*, 130; Markham, *Napoleon*, 113.
18. Schom, *Napoleon*, 350.
19. Louis Bergeron, *L'épisode napoléonien, aspects intérieurs: 1799-1815* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972), translated by R. R. Palmer as *France Under Napoleon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 33.
20. Susan P. Conner, *The Age of Napoleon* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004), 59.
21. Donald M. G. Sutherland, *France 1789-1815: Revolution and Counterrevolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 369.
22. Tulard, *Napoleon*, 188.
23. Conner, *Age of Napoleon*, 85.
24. Schom, *Napoleon*, 282.

25. Pierre-Marie Desmarest, *Témoignages historiques, de quinze ans de haute police sous Napoléon* (Paris: Alphonse Levavasseur, 1833), 245.
26. Desmarest, *Témoignages historiques*, 248.
27. Carr, *Napoleon Speaks*, 263.
28. Joseph Fouché, *Mémoires de Joseph Fouché, duc d'Otrante, Ministre de la police générale*, 2 vols. (Paris: Chez Le Rouge, 1824), 1: 392.
29. Guillon, *Les Complots militaires*, 168.
30. Schom, *Napoleon*, 543.
31. Frank McLynn, *Napoleon: A Biography* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2002), 467.
32. Desmarest, *Témoignages historiques*, 283.
33. Adam Zamoyski, *Moscow 1812: Napoleon's Fatal March* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), 10.
34. McLynn, *Napoleon*, 490-491.
35. Conner, *Age of Napoleon*, 83.
36. Sutherland, *France 1789-1815*, 378.
37. Zamoyski, *Moscow 1812*, 72.

Chapter Three

1. Adam Zamoyski, *Moscow 1812: Napoleon's Fatal March* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), 108.
2. Étienne-Dénis Pasquier, *Mémoires du chancelier Pasquier: Histoire de mon temps*, 6 vols. (Paris: E. Plon, Nourrit & Co., 1893-1895), edited by Duke d'Audiffret-Pasquier, translated by Charles E. Roche as *A History of My Time: Memoirs of Chancellor Pasquier*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893-1894), 2: 14.
3. Louis Garros, *Le Général Malet: Conspirateur* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1936), 106. Édouard Guillon, *Les Complots militaires sous le Consulat et l'Empire: d'après les documents inédits des Archives* (Paris: E. Plon, Nourrit & Co., 1894), 175.
4. Pasquier, *History of My Time*, 17.
5. Comte Louis de Gobineau, *Les Mémoires du Comte Louis de Gobineau*, edited by Jean Puraye (Brussels: Éditions Érasme, 1955), 13. Pasquier, *History of My Time*, 19. The only

source that provides a first name for Boutreux is the *Times* (London), which addresses him as Alexandre-Andre Boutereu. *Times* (London), 13 January 1813.

6. Jacques-Barthélemy Salgues, *Mémoire pour servir à l'histoire de France sous le gouvernement de Napoléon Buonaparte et pendant l'absence de la maison de Bourbon*, 9 vols. (Paris: Librairie de J. G. Dentu, 1826), 9: 208.

7. Pasquier, *History of My Time*, 33.

8. Jean Sarrazin, *Histoire des guerres civiles des française, de 1789 à 1815* (Brussels: Jean Sarrazin, 1842), 483.

9. Pasquier, *History of My Time*, 16.

10. Pasquier, *History of My Time*, 19.

11. Gobineau, *Les Mémoires*, 13.

12. Albert Duruy, "La Conspiration du général Malet d'après des documents inédits." *Revue des deux mondes* 31 (January-June 1931): 643.

13. Duruy, "La Conspiration," 643.

14. Henri Durille, *Histoire de la conspiration du Général Malet* (Paris: Bureau de l'histoire de France, 1840), 39.

15. Duruy, "La Conspiration," 643.

16. *Times* (London), 5 Jan 1813.

17. Max Billard, *La Conspiration de Malet: Un interrègne de quelques heures, la nuit du 23 octobre 1812* (Paris: Perrin & Co., 1907), 44.

18. *Times* (London), 5 Jan 1813.

19. *Times* (London), 5 Jan 1813.

20. Pasquier, *History of My Time*, 19.

21. Durille, *Histoire de la conspiration*, 42.

22. Durille, *Histoire de la conspiration*, 44.

23. Durille, *Histoire de la conspiration*, 44. Duruy, "La Conspiration," 644.

24. Louis Antoine Fauvelet de Bourrienne, *Mémoires de M. de Bourrienne, ministre d'état, sur Napoléon, le directoire, le consulat, l'empire, et la restauration*, 10 vols. (Paris: Ladvocat, 1829-1830), edited by R. W. Phipps, translated as *Memoirs of Napoleon Bonaparte, to Which Are Added an Account of the Important Events of the Hundred Days, of Napoleon's Surrender to the English, and of His Residence and Death at St. Helena, with Anecdotes and Illustrative Extracts from All the Most Authentic Sources*, 4 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), 3: 313.
25. Dourille, *Histoire de la conspiration*, 45.
26. Pasquier, *History of My Time*, 21.
27. Jean Marie Savary, *Mémoires du Duc de Rovigo pour servir à l'histoire de l'Empereur Napoléon*, 8 vols. (Paris: A. Bossange, 1828), 6: 28.
28. Philippe-Joseph-Benjamin Buchez, *Histoire parlementaire de la Révolution française, ou Journal des assemblées nationales, depuis 1789 jusqu'en 1815*, 40 vols. (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paulin, 1838), 39: 385. *Times* (London), 4 Jan 1813.
29. Duruy, "La Conspiration," 645.
30. Pasquier, *History of My Time*, 23.
31. Pasquier, *History of My Time*, 23-24.
32. Duruy, "La Conspiration," 645.
33. Pasquier, *History of My Time*, 24.
34. Pasquier, *History of My Time*, 24, 88.
35. Pasquier, *History of My Time*, 31.
36. *Times* (London), 4 Jan 1813.
37. *Times* (London), 4 Jan 1813.
38. *Times* (London), 4 Jan 1813.
39. Duruy, "La Conspiration," 645.
40. Duruy, "La Conspiration," 646.
41. Duruy, "La Conspiration," 646.
42. Duruy, "La Conspiration," 646.

43. Duruy, "La Conspiration," 646. Gobineau, *Les Mémoires*, 15.
44. Duruy, "La Conspiration," 646.
45. Savary, *Mémoires du Duc de Rovigo*, 34.
46. Bourrienne, *Memoirs of Napoleon Bonaparte*, 314.
47. Guillon does not go into the details of the letter written by Malet to Doucet. He simply states that because such an anticipatory action had been taken, Malet expected to encounter no resistance from him. Guillon, *Les Complots militaires*, 183.
48. Pasquier, *History of My Time*, 27.
49. Savary, *Mémoires du Duc de Rovigo*, 33.
50. Savary, *Mémoires du Duc de Rovigo*, 34.
51. Guillon, *Les Complots militaires*, 183.
52. Dourille, *Histoire de la conspiration*, 54.
53. Dourille, *Histoire de la conspiration*, 54.
54. Duruy, "La Conspiration," 647.
55. Guillon, *Les Complots militaires*, 184.
56. Gobineau, *Les Mémoires*, 17.
57. Émile Marco de Saint-Hilaire, *Histoire des conspirations et attentats contre le gouvernement et la personne de Napoléon* (Paris: Charles Fellens, 1847), 395.
58. Pasquier, *History of My Time*, 35.
59. Pasquier, *History of My Time*, 33.
60. Duruy, "La Conspiration," 647.
61. Adolphe Thiers, *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire*, 21 vols. (Paris: Paulin, 1845-1874), 14: 531.
62. Guillon, *Les Complots militaires*, 184.
63. Duruy, "La Conspiration," 647.

64. Salgues, *Mémoire*, 207.
65. Savary, *Mémoires du Duc de Rovigo*, 39.
66. Salgues, *Mémoire*, 207.
67. *Journal de Paris*, 24 October 1812.
68. Pasquier, *History of My Time*, 27.
69. *Journal de Paris*, 31 October 1812.
70. *Journal de Paris*, 30-31 October 1812. The military commission was composed of General Dejean, General Deriot, General Henri, Colonel Gével, Colonel Moncey, Major Thibaut, and Captain Delon. Billard, *La Conspiration de Malet*, 141.
71. Those men placed on trial with Malet were: Lahorie, Soulier, Gomont (called Saint-Charles), Antoine Piquere, Louis-Charles Fessart, Louis-Joseph Lefebvre, Nicolas-Josue Steenhouwer, Louis-Marie Regnier, Joachim-Alexandre Lebis, Boccheiampe, Pierre-Charles Limozin, Jean-Charles-François Gogard, Hilaire Beaumont, Jean-Joseph Julien, Pierre Bordérieux, Jean-Henri Caron, George Rouff, Jean-François Rabbe, Amable-Aimé Provost, Joseph-Antoine Viallevielhe, Jean-Baptiste Caumette, and Rateau. Boutreux and Caâmano also faced trial, though not until after the original hearing. Boutreux (reported as Alexandre-Andre Boutereu) was condemned to death and ultimately executed on 30 January 1813. Caâmano remained in prison until his acquittal on 29 January 1813. Abbé Lafon escaped prosecution, having fled to Louhans using an alias until after the Bourbon Restoration. Billard, *La Conspiration de Malet*, 141. *Journal de Paris*, 30 October 1812. *Times* (London), 13 Jan 1813. Guillon, *Les Complots militaires*, 175, 191. Gobineau, *Les Mémoires*, 13.
72. Duruy, "La Conspiration," 648.
73. Duruy, "La Conspiration," 648.
74. Duruy, "La Conspiration," 648.
75. Duruy, "La Conspiration," 648.
76. Gobineau, *Les Mémoires*, 14.
77. Dourille, *Histoire de la conspiration*, 66.
78. *Times* (London), 5 Jan 1813.
79. Duruy, "La Conspiration," 648.

80. Pasquier, *History of My Time*, 40-41.
81. Dourille, *Histoire de la conspiration*, 66.
82. Pasquier, *History of My Time*, 40.
83. Pasquier, *History of My Time*, 40.
84. *Times* (London), 5 Jan 1813.
85. *Times* (London), 5 Jan 1813.
86. Dourille, *Histoire de la conspiration*, 66.
87. Pasquier, *History of My Time*, 36.
88. Salgues, *Mémoire*, 210.
89. Pasquier, *History of My Time*, 40.
90. Frank McLynn, *Napoleon: A Biography* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2002), 540.
91. The military commission handed down sentences to the accused on 29 October 1812, according to an article in the *Journal de Paris*. Duruy, "La Conspiration," 647. *Journal de Paris*, 30 October 1812.
92. Pasquier, *History of My Time*, 39.
93. The unanimously condemned were Malet, Lahorie, Guidal, Soulier, Rateau, Steenhower, Borderieux, Piquetel, Fessart, Lefebvre, Regnier, and Beaumont. *Journal de Paris*, 30 October 1812.
94. The unanimously acquitted were Gomont (called Saint-Charles), Lebis, Provost, Godard, Viallevielhe, Caron, Limozin, Julien, and Caumette. A sufficient vote of three to four exonerated Rouff. *Journal de Paris*, 30 October 1812.
95. Gobineau, *Les Mémoires*, 18.
96. Pasquier, *History of My Time*, 41.
97. Dourille, *Histoire de la conspiration*, 68.
98. Buchez, *Histoire parlementaire*, 388.
99. Dourille, *Histoire de la conspiration*, 67-68. Duruy, "La Conspiration," 649.

100. Denise would, in fact, find herself evicted from her home and imprisoned for more than a year because of her husband's undertaking. Because not everyone was convinced that she had been aware of her husband's specific plans, though she clearly knew of his political ideology, these repercussions remained secret. Upon Denise's release, Napoleon offered her a monthly stipend and a scholarship for her son to attend military school. Promptly refusing both gifts, she replied to the Emperor, "I would rather work to provide for myself, and leave my son to the charge of his friends, than to have any obligation to my husband's murderer." *Times* (London), 13 Dec 1814. Dourille, *Histoire de la conspiration*, 69-70. Gobineau, *Les Mémoires*, 9.
101. Dourille, *Histoire de la conspiration*, 68.
102. *Chercheurs & Curieux*, 20 June 1913.
103. *Chercheurs & Curieux*, 20 June 1913.
104. Dourille, *Histoire de la conspiration*, 69.
105. Zamoyski, *Moscow 1812*, 407.
106. Bourrienne, *Memoirs of Napoleon Bonaparte*, 315.
107. Pasquier, *History of My Time*, 44.
108. Armand Augustin Louis de Caulaincourt, *Mémoires du Général de Caulaincourt, duc de Vicence, Grand Écuyer de l'Empereur*, introduction and notes by Jean Hanoteau, 3 vols. (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1933), 2: 196.
109. Caulaincourt, *Mémoires du Général de Caulaincourt*, 123.
110. Pasquier, *History of My Time*, 49.
111. *Times* (London), 4 January 1813.

Conclusion

1. Lynn Hunt, *The French Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1998), 112.
2. Alan Palmer, *An Encyclopaedia of Napoleon's Europe* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), 126.

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