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Jean Tulard, ed., *La Contre-Révolution: Origines, histoire, postérité*. Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2021, 3rd ed. (1st ed. 1990, 2nd ed. 2013). 527 pp. Chronology, dictionary of the counterrevolutionaries, and index. €12.00 Fr. (pb). ISBN 978-2-271-13616-9.

Review by Glauco Schettini, Fordham University.

Very few edited volumes, if any, share the fortunes of this very fine book on the French Counterrevolution, republished for the third time and with no changes more than thirty years after it first appeared. Such an unusually long afterlife begs the question of what this book still has to say, despite the work of two generations of historians and a few historiographical “turns.” It would be unfair, to be sure, to judge its essays by today’s standards, but it is fair to ask, with the benefit of hindsight, whether the paths they pointed to have been further explored, occasionally traversed, or utterly abandoned, and why.

The volume looks at its topic from a variety of angles. Individual essays showcase different approaches, including political, social, and intellectual history, and focus on a wide range of topics. Chapters are devoted to the biographical and intellectual trajectories of prominent counterrevolutionary figures (Burke, Maistre, Bonald, Chateaubriand), to events of particular significance (the king’s flight, the coups d’état of the years 1795-99, the war of the first coalition), to counterrevolutionary networks in France and abroad, to the popular Counterrevolution in the west and the southeast, and to the legacy of the Counterrevolution in the early nineteenth century.

This variety of approaches and foci represents at the same time a strength and a weakness. Rejecting any predetermined definition of the Counterrevolution, the volume’s contributors follow counterrevolutionary politics and thought in their multifarious manifestations. At the same time, however, the lack of a shared framework prevents contributors from offering a general interpretation of counterrevolutionary phenomena. Individual chapters are for the most part self-contained, and authors pay generally scant attention to whether the subjects of their investigations defined themselves as counterrevolutionaries, or whether they were defined as such by their contemporaries, and what these definitions implied. [1] Regrettably, Jean Tulard’s short preface, which is just over two pages, does not make up for the lack of an introductory essay and leaves to the reader the task of figuring out the broader historiographical stakes of the volume.

However, some threads do run through the volume. Perhaps the most important is the description of the Counterrevolution as an internally diverse phenomenon. This emphasis is not

just the result of the polyphonic nature of the volume, but also a conscious choice influenced by the work of Jacques Godechot, who first tried to deconstruct a monolithic notion of Counterrevolution and analyze its different components.^[2] Several authors programmatically follow Godechot's insight and pluralize the subjects of their essays. Jean-Christian Petitfils, for example, divides counterrevolutionaries into conservatives, reactionaries, and reformers, and shows that the political and intellectual genealogies of these groups overlapped only partially. Jacques de Saint-Victor highlights the diversity of the aristocratic right in the National Assembly, split between the arch-reactionary followers of the abbé Jean-Sifrein Maury and the supporters of a "liberal counterrevolution" (p. 46) gathered around Jacques Antoine Marie de Cazalès. Bernard Valade argues that despite the analogies that have led historians to jumble them together as "theocrats," Louis de Bonald and Joseph de Maistre proposed two essentially distinct philosophical systems. Jean-Joël Brégeon and René Moulinas demonstrate how popular uprisings in the west and the southeast originated from both ideological opposition to the new regime and spontaneous resistance to taxation, conscription, and the expansion of state administration. This resistance is what some historians have termed "anti-Revolution" to differentiate it from the more ideologically oriented Counterrevolution. Moulinas especially emphasizes how revolts in the south were only loosely interconnected and differed from federalist insurrections in both their ideological motives and, at least at the beginning, their leadership.

As essays cast a wide net and intercept a variety of forms of opposition to the Revolution, it is occasionally difficult to understand where exactly the borders of the Counterrevolution lie. The *monarchiens*, for example, the moderate supporters of a constitutional monarchy modeled after the British system, are the subject of a chapter by Pascal Simonetti, who argues that they were not, strictly speaking, counterrevolutionaries, and found themselves "in an ambiguous position between Revolution and Counterrevolution" (p. 69). In another short chapter, Jacques Godechot analyzes the coups d'état of the Directory, but he does not clarify how these events, which all had very different objectives and political motives, fit within the broader history of Counterrevolution. It may well be the case, as Jean-Clément Martin later showed, that the line between Revolution and Counterrevolution was fluid and shifted over the revolutionary decade, but the volume's contributors do not explicitly make this case.^[3] Throughout the book, Counterrevolution is at times invoked as an actor's category and at other times used as a historiographical one. The transitions from one meaning to the other, even within the same essay, are not always clearly signaled.

The second theme that cuts across several contributions is the focus on international and transnational spaces. Although most chapters are predominantly, if not exclusively, centered on France, some follow counterrevolutionary actors beyond national borders. In a chapter on emigration, for example, Ghislain de Diesbach traces those quintessentially transnational figures, the counterrevolutionary émigrés, as they scattered throughout Europe and interacted with the societies that received them. Jacques Godechot's fascinating study of the transnational networks of counterrevolutionary informants highlights the role played by the circulation of news, letters, and other sorts of documents in the organization of the counterrevolutionary reaction on a European scale. It also points to counterrevolutionary secret societies as a crucial—and to this day very little known—component of the European Counterrevolution. Jean Tulard's and Guillaume de Bertier de Sauvigny's essays on the Restoration era demonstrate how counterrevolutionary secret societies such as the Chevaliers de la Foi continued to play a similar role well into the nineteenth century. It is unfortunate that Jacques Garnier's chapter on the formation of the first coalition focuses rather conventionally on diplomatic history and high

politics and does not investigate the role played by émigrés and secretive networks of informants in determining the counterrevolutionary turn of European diplomacies.

The volume includes an interesting section on Counterrevolution after the Revolution, which traces the intellectual and political legacy of opposition to the Revolution in the first decades of the nineteenth century. If the Revolution did not end in 1799 or 1804 but continued for more than a hundred years, as François Furet famously suggested, the volume's contributors seem to make a similar argument for Counterrevolution. With the exception of a brief but insightful chapter by Jean-Christian Petitfils, the authors do not trace the history of the Counterrevolution beyond 1830, but they do suggest that if the Revolution of 1789 became the unavoidable point of reference of French politics, Counterrevolution likewise remained a practicable option and a living intellectual and political tradition. Essays by André Cabanis and Jean-Paul Clément, for example, investigate the trajectory of royalism and conservatism during the Napoleonic era and the Restoration. Clément argues that the Ultras were not seeking to return to the Old Regime, but rather to become a stable presence on the political scene and "reconcile tradition...with a feasible, reasonable liberty." Their position, as exemplified by Chateaubriand, was a creative synthesis of "counterrevolutionary traditionalism and modern liberalism" (p. 328). In a few broad strokes, Petitfils brings this story to the 1980s. The political and intellectual legacy of the Counterrevolution, he suggests, remained lively, although limited to the far right of the political spectrum, from the anti-Dreyfusards and Charles Maurras's Action française to Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre's schismatic traditionalist Catholicism in the post-Vatican II era. Although Petitfils mentions *en passant* the counterrevolutionary contributions to the development of socialism, his chapter does not explore the hypothesis that counterrevolutionary culture may be one of several matrices at the origin of a variety of political traditions, way beyond the far right.

It is perhaps exactly the expansion of the chronological boundaries of Counterrevolution beyond the revolutionary decade of the 1790s that represents the most original contribution of this volume, one upon which more recent historical works have further elaborated. Darrin McMahon, for example, has unearthed the Counter-Enlightenment origins of counterrevolutionary culture in the two decades before 1789, while Carolina Armenteros's study of Joseph de Maistre has demonstrated that counterrevolutionary culture remained vital well into the nineteenth century, and also that it influenced a range of thinkers way beyond the narrow field of legitimism or ultramontane Catholicism, from socialists to positivists.[4]

The book also includes a chronology of Counterrevolution from 1788 to 1814 (though with a clear emphasis on the years from 1789 to 1799), which offers a practical summary of important events and includes the publication dates of major counterrevolutionary works, which are thus placed in their political and diplomatic context. The chronology is followed by a dictionary of the counterrevolutionaries containing short biographic profiles of a wide range of counterrevolutionary figures. The profiles of lesser-known figures remain particularly helpful, even at a time when much biographical information is easily available online.

Even if recent calls to reinterpret the revolutions of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as civil wars should put counterrevolutionary forces center stage, the Counterrevolution has generally remained peripheral to revolutionary scholarship.[5] David Armitage has recently written that despite an abundance of global histories of the Age of Revolutions, we still lack "a synoptic account of the late eighteenth century as the age of *antidemocratic counterrevolution*," and in fact, we also lack in-depth studies of

counterrevolutionary culture in several national contexts.[6] Thus, while this volume, first published more than thirty years ago, is hardly a new *addition* to the body of scholarship on Counterrevolution, the decision to republish it and make it more easily available to scholars is certainly to be commended.

LIST OF ESSAYS

Jean Tulard, "Préface"

Première partie: Les débuts

Jean-Christian Petitfils, "Les origines de la pensée contre-révolutionnaire"

Jacques de Saint-Victor, "L'action parlementaire et les clubs contre-révolutionnaire"

Jean Tulard, "Les premiers complots et la fuite du roi"

Pascal Simonetti, "Les monarchiens: la Révolution à contretemps"

Yves Chiron, "Edmund Burke"

Deuxième partie: Les forces vives

Jean-Paul Bertaud, "La presse contre-révolutionnaire (1789-1799)"

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Troisième partie: La guerre (1792-1799)

Jacques Garnier, "Les deux premières coalitions, intérêts particuliers et Contre-Révolution"

Jean-Joël Brégeon, "Les guerres de l'Ouest"

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Jacques Godechot, "Les insurrections royalistes dans le sud-ouest de la France"

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Quatrième partie: La Contre-Révolution après la Révolution

André Cabanis, "Le courant néo-monarchiste sous le Consulat"

Jean-Paul Clément, "Chateaubriand et la Contre-Révolution, ou la liberté sur le pavais"

Jean Tulard, "Guerres et complots (1800-1815)"

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Jean-Christian Petitfils, "Postérité de la Contre-Révolution"

Benoît Yvert, "Chronologie"

Benoît Yvert, "Petit Dictionnaire des contre-révolutionnaires"

NOTES

[1] For a recent analysis of the ways Counterrevolution was defined in the 1790s, see Friedemann Pestel, "On Counterrevolution: Semantic Investigations of a Counterconcept during the French Revolution," *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 12 (2017): 50-75.

[2] Jacques Godechot, *La Contre-Révolution: Doctrine et action, 1789-1804* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1961) translated into English as *The Counter-Revolution: Doctrine and Action* (New York: Fertig, 1971).

[3] Jean-Clément Martin, *Contre-révolution, Révolution et Nation en France, 1789-1799* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1998).

[4] Darrin M. McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Carolina Armenteros, *The French Idea of History: Joseph de Maistre and His Heirs, 1794-1854* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), especially part two.

[5] Jordi Canal, “Guerres civiles en Europe au XIXe siècle, guerre civile européenne et Internationale blanche,” in Jean-Paul Zuñiga ed., *Pratiques du transnational: Terrains, preuves, limites* (Paris: Centre de recherches historiques, 2011), pp. 57-77; Pierre Serna, “Every Revolution Is a War of Independence,” in Suzanne Desan, Lynn Hunt, and William M. Nelson eds., *The French Revolution in Global Perspective* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), pp. 165-182; David Armitage, “Every Great Revolution Is a Civil War,” in Keith M. Baker and Dan Edelstein eds., *Scripting Revolution: A Historical Approach to the Comparative Study of Revolutions* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), pp. 57-68.

[6] David Armitage, foreword to R.R. Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760-1800*, “updated edition” (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), xx.

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