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The Scottish martyrs, Scotland and internationalism in revolutionary France, 1794–99

Conor Muller*

Abstract

The case of the 'Scottish martyrs' transported from Britain for sedition in 1794 was followed closely in revolutionary France. Although these five foreign citizens of an enemy state could only be discussed and recognized as allies from afar, their case animated a renewed debate about how internationalist principles related to the peoples of England and Scotland as well as the relationship between political repression in Britain and France. This article follows French engagement with the incident from its role in the Montagnard debates of 1794 about the collective guilt borne by Britons for the crimes committed by their government to the failure of Thomas Muir to establish meaningful ties between France and Scotland in 1797–99. The case acted as a proxy for the contestation of interconnecting interpretations about repression, internationalism and the role of foreign individuals and peoples in the Revolution.

On 18 February 1794, France's governing Committee of Public Safety ordered a daring seaborne rescue mission. The minister of the marine was commanded to 'take all necessary measures' to intercept a specific vessel at sea and bring four of its passengers to France.[1] Their target was the British convict ship *Surprize*, which had set off in April as part of a convoy on route to the penal colony of New South Wales. Although the mission was not publicly announced, an American newspaper reported that the French corvettes *Fabius* and

* Conor Muller is a DPhil candidate at the University of Oxford and may be contacted at conor.muller@history.ox.ac.uk. He would like to thank Erica Charters, Colin Lucas and Luca Nelson-Gabin for their comments on earlier drafts of this article; Renaud Morieux for supervising the MPhil dissertation on which it is based; and the anonymous reviewers for their thoughtful feedback.

[1] 'Séance du 30 pluviôse an II—18 février 1794', in *Recueil des actes du Comité de salut public avec la correspondance officielle des représentants en mission et le registre du conseil exécutif provisoire*, ed. F. A. Aulard, 28 vols (Paris, 1889–1951), 11:242. Aulard cites the original order as appearing in A[rchives] N[ationales], AF/II/295, however it appears to have been moved or lost. A copy (lacking original signatures) appears in A[rchives] D[iplomatiques], C[orrespondance] P[olitique] 588, fo. 139.

La Difficile were dispatched to search in the vicinity of the Canary Islands.[2] But if the French ships did locate the well-protected British convoy, they never approached.[3]

The French had hoped to liberate four men on board the *Surprize* who were being transported from Britain for sedition. Thomas Muir, Thomas Fyshe Palmer, William Skirving and Maurice Margarot had been sentenced to transportation for having taken leading roles in a succession of radical conventions held in Edinburgh at which delegates sent by Britain's popular political societies had gathered to debate parliamentary reform. (A fifth, Joseph Gerrald, was bailed and convicted later, sailing for Botany Bay in 1795.)[4] The British authorities alleged that the 'British Convention' was intended to usurp parliament's authority and moved to shut it down permanently in December 1793. The partisan motivations behind the subsequent 'corrupt' trials of the Convention's leaders from August 1793 into 1794 were barely concealed by the government.[5] British radicals emphasized the lack of due process and that the men had been victimized for their reformist beliefs rather than criminal conduct. The 'martyrdom' of the transportees was first asserted by one of their own in a goodbye address, and the sympathetic label was made to stick in British radical commemoration of the case.[6]

Despite their collective epithet as the 'Scottish martyrs', only Muir and Skirving were Scottish. Equally, the meeting they led had styled itself as the 'British Convention', included delegates from England and addressed its 'oppressed and beloved sister country of Ireland'.[7] The group could, therefore, legitimately be referred to as English, Scottish or British—an ambiguity used to some effect by English observers who criticized the allegedly inferior state of constitutional liberties north of the border. As we will see, this flexibility was important in French interpretations of the case too, since although the 'Scottish martyrs' label arose from a distinctly British radical mythology and was not widely adopted in France, the role of Scotland, its people and its laws featured prominently in revolutionary discussions of the case.[8]

News of the martyrdom at Edinburgh intervened in a vigorous debate prompted by France's confrontation with the British state on the military, geopolitical and domestic fronts. Many politicians inside and outside the Committee of Public Safety were paying attention to the martyrs' plight not because of a wave of sympathy for the oppressed peoples of Britain but the opposite. Although the Revolution's 1792 Edict of Fraternity had promised 'fraternity and assistance to all peoples who shall wish to recover their liberty', opinion in governing Montagnard circles had become increasingly sceptical about whether the British peoples—least of all the English—could collectively be seen as partners in this

[2] *Gazette of the United States and Daily Evening Advertiser* (Philadelphia), 22 July 1794.

[3] Christina Bewley, *Muir of Huntershill* (Oxford, 1981), 108.

[4] Robert Watt and George Mealmaker are sometimes considered the sixth and seventh martyrs, but they were convicted later (in September 1794 and January 1798, respectively) and for separate offences to the other five studied here. See Emma Vincent Macleod, 'Scottish martyrs, (*act.* 1792–1798)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2008, http://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/96891.

[5] T. M. Parssinen, 'Association, convention and anti-Parliament in British radical politics, 1771–1848', *English Historical Review*, 88 (1973), 513.

[6] Thomas Fyshe Palmer's address to the London Society for Constitutional Information, 17 April 1794, The National Archives (UK), TS 11/965.

[7] *Address of the British Convention, Assembled at Edinburgh, November 19, 1793, to the People of Great Britain* (London, 1793), 18.

[8] Alex Tyrell and Michael T. Davis, 'Bearding the Tories: the commemoration of the Scottish political martyrs of 1793–94', in *Contested Sites: Commemoration, Memorial and Popular Politics in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Paul A. Pickering and Alex Tyrrell (London, 2016), 26.

regard.[9] Most republican criticism had previously been targeted carefully at the British king, his ministers or the constitution, which were said to keep the ostensibly freedom-loving peoples in chains.[10] With France under attack from the First Coalition, this distinction between the people and their rulers was increasingly contentious. Robespierre, for one, now furiously rejected it (at least in the case of *les Anglais*), polemicizing at the Jacobin Club in January 1794 that 'as a Frenchman, as a representative of the people, I declare that I hate the English people'.[11] Many of his contemporaries did disagree, but the combination of war and Jacobin frustration with the non-appearance of a revolution in Britain had clearly soured republican sympathies for their neighbours.

Historians have, however, cautioned against the notion that the revolutionary war led invariably to nationalist measures and sentiments that excluded and estranged foreigners from a nominally universalist revolutionary movement.[12] For Marc Belissa, 'the specific measures against suspicious foreigners are no different from the surveillance practised against former nobles', which aimed to protect the Revolution from subversive threats.[13] Indeed, this pre-dated both the outbreak of war with Britain and the move towards official measures for what Robespierre called 'prompt, severe, inflexible justice'—terror—by the Committee of Public Safety.[14] Saint-Just had earlier spelt this out when he declared the now-deposed king to be an '*étranger* among us' during a November 1792 speech arguing for Louis' execution.[15] The *étranger*—the foreigner, the stranger or the outsider, as the French term does not distinguish between these meanings—was marked not by ethno-linguistic difference but by antagonism towards the people's sovereignty, including anti-democratic domestic aristocrats as well as the foreign governments and citizenries who were seen as aiding them. In short, revolutionaries now perceived that a purely military defence against foreign aggression would not suffice—external attacks had to be vigorously combatted internally too. This led to the entanglement of domestic social conflicts with foreign ones against enemy states and, allegedly, their peoples. As Sophie Wahnich has shown, it is this convergence between the 'political foreigner' and 'national foreigner' that led to the increased suspicion of non-French individuals and citizenries.[16] This included legal restrictions on their rights, such as the arrest of all British and Hanoverian subjects (9 October 1793) and the removal of foreigners from public office (25 December). Strictly speaking, had the martyrs been rescued and brought to France, it would have been necessary to suspend a decree of 6 September which declared any enemy national who entered France after that date a 'conspirator' and ordered their execution.[17] The debates

[9] 'Declaration for fraternity and assistance to foreign peoples, November 19, 1792', in *Constitutions and Other Select Documents Illustrative of the History of France, 1789–1901*, ed. and trans. Frank Maloy Anderson (Minneapolis, 1904), 129–30.

[10] Jacques Pierre Brissot, *Exposé de la conduite de la nation française, envers le peuple anglais* (Paris, 1793), 2.

[11] Robespierre to the Jacobin Club, 30 January 1794, in *La Société des Jacobins: recueil de documents pour l'histoire du club des Jacobins de Paris*, ed. F. A. Aulard, vol. 5 (Paris, 1895), 633.

[12] Albert Mathiez, *La Révolution et les étrangers: cosmopolitisme et défense nationale* (Paris, 1918), 81.

[13] Marc Belissa, *Fraternité universelle et intérêt national (1713–1795): les cosmopolitiques du droit des gens* (Paris, 1998), 393.

[14] Maximilien Robespierre to the National Convention, 5 February 1794, in *Archives parlementaires de 1787 à 1860*, ed. Marcel Reinhard, George Lefebvre, Marc Bouloiseau, 1st series, 103 vols (Paris, 1862–), 84:333.

[15] Saint-Just to the National Convention, 13 November 1792, in *Archives parlementaires*, 53:392.

[16] Sophie Wahnich, *L'Impossible Citoyen: l'étranger dans le discours de la Révolution française* (Paris, 1997), 223.

[17] '6 Septembre 1793, décret contenant des mesures de sûreté relatives aux étrangers qui se trouvent en France', in *Collection complète des lois, décrets, ordonnances, réglemens, et avis du conseil-d'état depuis 1788 jusqu'à 1830*, ed. J. B. Duvergier, vol. 2 (Paris, 1834), 148–49.

about the role of Britons in their government's crimes provided an opportunity to revisit some of these issues.

The political interpretation of foreignness did become a criterion for targeting reprisals against those who allied themselves against liberty. But since recent re-interpretations have questioned the extent to which a unitary system of 'terror' was implemented in Year II, we do need to avoid reifying this term unduly. As Jean-Clément Martin points out, Montagnards consistently attacked rather than endorsed any suggestion of establishing such a system, and at no point did the revolutionary government set out any legal definition or programme of repression, either with or without a particular plan for dealing with foreign nationals.[18] Terror did have 'an occasional reality' but not as a permanent institution of Montagnard governance.[19] Likewise, the estrangement of outsiders did not reflect a 'national' system of repression but a means of identifying enemy 'rebels' to the people's sovereignty, whether they were French or foreign.[20] Being found to stand against this principle could have severe consequences, but this did not amount to a wave of xenophobia. The door to French recognition of foreign allies was never definitively shut, either within or outside the republic.

While the martyrs' case is of obvious import to these historiographies of foreigners and state repression, one of its interesting complexities is that the martyrs occupied an interstitial position between the two. They were politically and legally estranged (as well as physically expelled) from Britain and hailed as friends of liberty by the French, but they remained outside the republic as both non-citizens and non-residents. They were, therefore, not liable to have their revolutionary credentials and loyalties called into question as foreign-born French residents would be—a test that fewer and fewer foreigners were able to satisfy at this time, as Michael Rapport has shown.[21]

The martyrs' case indicates cross-cutting interpretations of what the relations, rights and obligations of the French were with regard to foreign peoples. Its meaning was often contested as a proxy for these issues. The case could be read either as conclusive proof of the British peoples' guilt by inaction or as a cause for faith in their democratic capabilities. It animated discussions about whether current policies surrounding foreigners, war and repression were politically expedient or sustainable. It also shed light on the state of British society and the respective degrees of culpability that could be accorded to each of the British nations in the crimes committed by their government, which would in turn determine the prospects for fraternal relations in the future (if not, perhaps, right now). Some of these questions would be revisited almost four years later, when one of the martyrs (Muir) finally set foot on French soil and attempted once more to rally support for France's alleged brethren in Scotland. Internationalist ideas, claims and language emphasizing the Revolution's expectations of and responsibilities towards the peoples of other nations feature heavily within all of this. However, the process of determining the course of action prescribed by these widely shared principles—and whether to act upon them—was difficult and riven by interlocking conflicts.

[18] Jean-Clément Martin, *Violence et révolution: essai sur la naissance d'une mythe nationale* (Paris, 2009), 196–97, 233.

[19] Ibid., 235; Michel Biard and Marisa Linton, *Terreur! La Révolution française face à ses démons* (Paris, 2020); Annie Jourdan, *Nouvelle histoire de la Révolution* (Paris, 2018).

[20] Belissa, *Fraternité universelle*, 393.

[21] Michael Rapport, *Nationality and Citizenship in Revolutionary France: The Treatment of Foreigners 1789–1799* (Oxford, 2000), 207.

I

News of the 'martyrdom' of the British convention's leaders entered the French revolutionary scene at a critical juncture. The *Moniteur* had reported the proceedings of the British Convention in December 1793.[22] On 6 January 1794, it announced the arrest of much of its remaining leadership in addition to Muir and Palmer, who had already been convicted of sedition and sentenced to transportation in August and September, calling this development a 'purely ministerial war against which the majority of the [British] nation is in indignation'.[23] The following day, Robespierre added the issue of the 'crimes of the English government and the vices of British society' to the agenda of the Jacobin Club, which was subsequently amended to address instead 'the vices of the British constitution'.[24] By this point, there was little doubt that those charged with sedition in December (Margarot, Skirving, and Gerrald) would be transported too, and indeed Margarot's sentence was confirmed by the *Moniteur* on 4 February.[25] During this period, the vices of the British peoples and their constitution were the subject of multiple days' worth of debate in the Jacobin Club. The emphasis was not on internal British politics but on where the desperate state of liberty in Britain left the relationship of the British peoples to the French Revolution. Moreover, although it was not until May that the National Convention discussed Barère's infamous report of 7 Prairial An II (26 May 1794) 'on the crimes of England towards the French people', the issue of the martyrs was addressed in an earlier debate on the repression of suspected plotters within France beginning on 26 February. The martyrs, therefore, appeared recurrently in discussions of threats to the Revolution by *étrangers*, including foreign plotters and French collaborators alike.

Within these debates, Montagnards agreed that the holding of a convention at Edinburgh represented, to at least some extent, a positive development for the cause of liberty in both Britain and France. The dividing line was not whether the actions of British friends of liberty ought to be applauded by French patriots but the question of how to understand the much broader relationship of the British peoples to the Revolution. On one side, Robespierre headed a group of 'Anglophobes' whose interpretations were extremely critical of the British and their complicity in their government's crimes, although some did occasionally recognize the martyrs as fellow victims and enemies of oppression.[26] This group was in the minority, but Robespierre's personal authority gave his polemics disproportionate sway. Barère, Collot d'Herbois and a handful of others, including Simond and Dubois-Crancé, echoed at least aspects of his scathing view. For Collot, 'the Englishman is rich, hard, selfish, inhuman'.[27] He did gesture towards the difference between English supporters and opponents of Pitt's ministry and target his attacks at the latter as Robespierre did, but his overall assessment was that English people belonged to 'a species of men incapable of maintaining their liberty', evidencing his assessment with the failure of the Scottish martyrs' case to bring about significant change.[28] Others referred more directly to the transportation of the martyrs in their judgments on English crimes. Dubois-Crancé

[22] *Le Moniteur universel*, 30 December 1793, 401–02.
[23] *Moniteur*, 6 January 1794, 429.
[24] 'Séance du 18 nivôse an II', in *Société des Jacobins*, 5:595, 5:596.
[25] *Moniteur*, 4 February 1794, 546.
[26] Norman Hampson, *The Perfidy of Albion: French Perceptions of England during the French Revolution* (Basingstoke, 1998), 132; Robespierre to the Jacobin Club, 30 January 1794, in *Société des Jacobins*, 5:635.
[27] Collot d'Herbois to the Jacobin Club, 22 January 1794 and 12 January 1794, in *Société des Jacobins*, 5:618, 5:609.
[28] Collot d'Herbois to the Jacobin Club, 12 January 1794, 5:610.

remarked that the Edinburgh Convention had achieved nothing other than giving Pitt a pretext for an authoritarian crackdown, while an unnamed Jacobin even intervened to block a proposal to send a message of support to London radicals.[29] Likewise, Barère's later report on the 'crimes of the English' cited violations like the transportation of the martyrs and exclaimed that 'the English nation has yet to express its indignation … What a government! What a people!'.[30] Reformist moderation, it must have seemed to them, was now worse than useless in Pitt's Britain, and there was little indication that British radicals were willing to move beyond it, even if the martyrs themselves were honourable exceptions.

Conspicuously, Robespierre's signature did not appear on the rescue order despite his presence at that sitting of the Committee of Public Safety.[31] It would have been difficult for him to openly condemn the martyrs as pathetic symbols of the failure of tepid moderation in the face of a criminal populace, but he may have been conscious of some of the more negative reports the Committee of Public Safety was receiving at the time from its correspondents in Britain, who stressed that the opposition were enemies of Pitt rather than friends of liberty.[32] Perhaps he even remembered that Muir had travelled to France in January 1793 to join the unsuccessful efforts to preserve the life of Louis XVI, during which time he had associated himself with Paine and Condorcet.[33] In any case, Robespierre refrained from positively naming or praising the martyrs in his contributions to the debate, and he was by far the most energetic in combatting what he called 'Anglomania' in the Jacobin Club and the National Convention.[34] For Robespierre, it was clear that perceived popular passivity in the face of a regime bent on destroying liberty both at Edinburgh and internationally (in France) was the agent of this. 'Why would I distinguish the people who make themselves complicit in the crimes of their government from their perfidious government itself?', he asked.[35] The plight of British partisans of liberty like the Scottish martyrs represented not mitigation of these crimes but further evidence of them. Far from sympathizing with the people as fellow victims of oppression, Robespierre raged against English complicity in the face of a government which was 'perfidiously Machiavellian toward its own people' and malicious towards other nations.[36]

Crucially, Robespierre viewed events like the making of the Scottish martyrs as incidents of transnational significance. The non-appearance of an insurrection in Britain in response to tyranny was analogous to the passivity of the British people in the face of their government's war of extermination against French freedom: both were violations of the *droit de gens*. By failing to act at this turning point, the British peoples were guilty by joint enterprise in oppressing the Revolution and subverting the international ideals of liberty and popular sovereignty—a criminal act. As Robespierre had written in a draft of the Constitution of 1793:

> The men of all countries are brothers, and the different peoples must help each other, according to their power, as citizens of the same state. He who oppresses one nation declares himself the enemy of all. Those who make war on a people, to stop the progress of freedom and destroy the rights of man, must be prosecuted everywhere, not as ordinary enemies, but as assassins and rebellious brigands.[37]

[29] 'Séance du 3 pluviôse an II (22 janvier 1794)', in *Société des Jacobins*, 5:618–19.
[30] Bertrand Barère, *Rapport sur les crimes de l'Angleterre envers le peuple français* (Paris, 1794), 31.
[31] 'Séance du 30 pluviôse an II—18 février 1794', in *Recueil des actes du Comité de salut public*, 11:242.
[32] Report from 'Drury', January–February 1794, Paris, AD, CP 588, fo. 143.
[33] Bewley, *Muir of Huntershill*, 56–57.
[34] Robespierre to the Jacobin Club, 30 January 1794, in *Société des Jacobins*, 5:633.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid., 5:634. Italics added.
[37] Robespierre, 'Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen', in *Œuvres complètes de Maximilien Robespierre*, ed. Gustave Laurent, vol. 5 (Paris, 1961), 363.

Here, Robespierre emphasized an active obligation to act in defence of liberty rather than a passive one not to obstruct it. This was, at its core, a legalistic argument as well as a political one. It reflected what Edward Kolla has shown to be a constant struggle on the part of revolutionaries to translate their guiding principles of popular sovereignty into an international setting.[38] The above passage of Robespierre's draft did not make it into the constitution's final text, but one of the finished document's articles did state that 'when the government violates the rights of the people, insurrection is … the most sacred of rights and the most indispensable of duties'.[39] There was, therefore, a legalistic test applied to foreign peoples in the determination of guilt and the application of internationalist principles.

However, as the martyrs' case shows, the results of this test could vary within multinational states like Britain. Jacobin polemics against the body of British subjects may give the impression that revolutionaries did not discriminate between the British state and the nations of England, Scotland and Ireland, or that they did not view such distinctions as important. In fact, although they often used 'the English' as an umbrella term to refer to the Irish and to Scots, as well as in the collective sense to all British subjects, they did also discriminate between these nationalities.[40] The oppression to which the martyrs fell victim was depicted as fundamentally the responsibility of the English, even though most of the martyrs were English and all were British subjects convicted by a Scottish judge applying Scots law.[41] It is clear—especially in Robespierre's repeated targeting of 'les anglais'—that the English people were seen as 'both sovereign and tyrant'.[42] As Jean-Paul Marat had recognized some twenty years previously, the English were still a free people, despite his pessimism for the future prospects of this liberty and disdain for the corruption of the English government and judiciary.[43] It was Simond, who was hardly a reliable ally of Robespierre, who stated this most clearly when he condemned 'cowardly islanders, whose ancestors wanted to be free and believed in the purity of this gift' but now 'confound the morality of peoples' by showing pride in their own baseness.[44] The English could reasonably be expected to understand what was occurring and to take action accordingly. Failure to do so made them doubly culpable in a way that an unfree people would not have been, first for the criminal act of acceding to their own re-enslavement, and secondly for failing to halt their government's attacks on foreign freedom. The martyrs' treatment underscored English guilt in British oppression.

In other words, the reaction of these revolutionaries was to make a negative case against the English rather than a positive one for the Scots. It is entirely possible that this is partly because Robespierre and his allies had not formed conclusive views on the positively revolutionary credentials of the Scots as they had on the negative ones of the English. The 'Scottish martyrs' label is an Anglophone one: French observers referred directly to each of the men by name rather than through an explicit terminology of Scottishness. (French

[38] Edward James Kolla, *Sovereignty, International Law, and the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 2017), 34.
[39] Article 35 of the Declaration of the rights and man and of the citizen 1793, 'Constitution of the Year I', in *Constitutions and Other Select Documents*, 174.
[40] Colin Lucas, 'The French revolutionaries and England' in *Revolusjon og resonnement: festskrift til Kåre Tønnesson på 70-årsdagen den 1. januar 1996*, ed. Øystein Rian, Finn Erhard Johannessen, Øystein Sørensen and Finn Fuglestad (Oslo, 1995), 56.
[41] Atle L. Wold 'Was there a law of sedition in Scotland? Baron David Hume's analysis of the Scottish sedition trials of 1794', in *Liberty, Property and Popular Politics: England and Scotland, 1688–1815. Essays in Honour of H. T. Dickinson*, ed. Gordon Pentland and Michael Davis (Edinburgh, 2015), 163–64.
[42] Wahnich and Belissa, 'Les Crimes des Anglais: trahir le droit', *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, 300 (1995), 241.
[43] Jean-Paul Marat, *The Chains of Slavery* (London, 1774), xii.
[44] Philbert Simond, *Discours sur les crimes du gouvernement anglais contre le peuple français* (Paris, 1794), 16.

reporting accurately pointed out that the Edinburgh Convention had sought to represent the English too.)[45] Instead, it seems that—like Scotland—they were seen as victims of a towering structure of English oppression. After all, this was presupposed in Robespierre's initial agenda item on 'the crimes of the English government and the vices of British society'—the former was the cause of the latter.

However, the case nonetheless appealed to the internationalist principle that diplomacy should take place only between free peoples and their republics; the revolutionary drive towards genuinely international rather than inter-state relations.[46] Again, Robespierre's view focused on the English as they had excluded themselves from possibilities for internationalist fraternization with the French. Their very act of doing so—by maintaining the slavery of Scotland (and Ireland) and even consenting to their own oppression—had deprived the other British nations of the agency to make such a decision and rendered the English liable to be held to account for it through reprisals by free peoples like the French. As Mathieu Ferradou has shown, 'empire' and domination—of which the English were seen as guilty beyond doubt—were viewed as incompatible with liberty, and opposition to them was a powerful basis for revolutionary internationalist affinity.[47] Instead of going straight to a view of the martyrs' case as straightforwardly indicative of a repressed Scottish desire for liberty, revolutionaries first perceived it as evidence of English domination and that Scots were qualitatively different from and less guilty than the 'tyrant people' with whom they shared a state.[48] In other words, it was evidence that the Scottish people were being malignly controlled and had therefore not excluded themselves from fraternity as the English had.

Therefore, Robespierre and those Jacobins whose views came closest to his hardline stance interpreted the repression of British radicals as proving rather than disproving their argument that the English were an outlaw people. 'Some want to separate the English people from their government. I ask for nothing more, provided that we also distinguish the English people making war on liberty, jointly with their government, from the English people punishing this same government for its attacks against liberty', he argued on 30 January, at the close of the debate.[49] The martyrs were the exception that proved the rule, as Barère's later report made clear: 'We convinced ourselves … that a great revolution in England was inevitable and imminent while, in truth, the patriots who dared to form popular societies were being imprisoned in London, and Margarot and Muir, guilty of having felt their hearts beat for liberty, were being sent to Botany Bay.'[50] There had been no revolution, only passivity and corrupt repression: the English were, therefore, 'a people foreign to Europe, foreign to humanity: they must disappear', hence Barère's infamous order, printed in the same document, to take no English or Hanoverian prisoners.[51]

This political and legal interpretation was emblematic of the shift from revolutionary cosmopolitanism to internationalism and the notion that *étrangers* were marked by their foreignness not to France but to liberty. Far from rejecting this internationalism, Robespierre and his allies claimed to insist on its highest form. They argued that it required not the benevolent emancipation of foreign peoples by a philanthropic French nation but reciprocal solidarity and collective responsibility between peoples in the armed defence of their

[45] *Moniteur*, 30 December 1793, 401.
[46] Mathieu Ferradou, 'Between Scylla and Charybdis?: Irish republicans between the British Empire and the early French Republic, 1792–1794', *French Historical Studies*, 44 (2021), 443.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Wahnich and Belissa, 'Les Crimes des Anglais', 242.
[49] Robespierre to the Jacobin Club, 30 January 1794, in *Société des Jacobins*, 5:633.
[50] Barère, *Rapport*, 26.
[51] Ibid., 29, 36.

sovereignty. This '*réciprocité*' sustained—at least in theory—the Revolution's claims to the universal emancipation of humankind while also curtailing the civil liberties of those who had come to France from abroad.[52]

II

If adherents of Robespierre's line acted as the prosecution against the British people in this debate, there was equally no shortage of Montagnard politicians willing to make qualified defences, perhaps emboldened by the fact that even some of those close to Robespierre expressed very different views on the matter of British collective guilt. The approach of this latter camp towards the martyrs was more explicitly positive, since they continued to defend the traditional vision of the British as junior partners whose revolutionary potential could be unleashed with French tutelage and support.

As mentioned above, the factional divide differed from the usual alliances and antagonisms in the Jacobin Club and the Convention. The defenders of the British people included many supporters of revolutionary terror, including Saint-Just. Despite his reputation as the 'archangel of death' and an architect of revolutionary repression in France, he was the most forceful of the Committee of Public Safety members speaking in support of the martyrs, including before the Convention on 26 February: 'May Margarot return from Botany Bay! May he not perish! May his destiny be stronger than the government which oppresses him!'[53] It was also from Saint-Just's hand that the order to attempt the rescue of the martyrs at sea was signed.[54] While he had strongly advocated for the mass detention of British subjects in his report of 25 Vendémiaire An II (16 October 1793), Saint-Just had always been clear that this represented 'a political measure and not resentment'.[55] He insisted that far from representing prejudice, such measures would 'help them [the English] to break their chains, if they are worthy of liberty; the court of London is Carthage for us, and not England'.[56] Saint-Just did not reject the main contention of Robespierre's argument: the English had indeed 'violated the law of nations toward us [France] with a barbarity previously unknown' and thus sanctioned reprisals like those against them, like mass detention. But the criteria for targeting these reprisals had to remain political and not become 'nationalized'.[57] France's struggle was against the oppressive sections of English society and not English society itself, as Saint-Just had argued, thus leaving a theoretical route open for French recognition of British patriots. For most Britons who showed their opposition to their government by joining the revolution in France, these possibilities were so narrow as to be almost non-existent because of the narrowing down of the permissible political orthodoxy, which made the test of one's loyalties almost impossible for foreigners to pass.[58] But as the martyrs remained outside France, their loyalties to the republic were not liable to be called into question and potentially found wanting.

[52] Anthony Di Lorenzo and Mathieu Ferradou, 'The early "Republic of France" as a cosmopolitan moment', *La Révolution française*, 22 (2022), https://doi.org/10.4000/lrf.6311, par. 50.

[53] Jules Michelet, *Histoire de la Révolution française*, vol. 7 (Paris, 1853), 217; Saint-Just to the National Convention, 26 February 1794, *Archives parlementaires*, 85:517.

[54] 'Séance du 30 pluviôse an II—18 février 1794', in *Recueil des actes du Comité de salut public*, 11:242.

[55] Louis Antoine de Saint-Just, *Rapport fait à la Convention nationale, au nom du Comité de salut public, sur la loi contre les Anglais* (Paris, 1793), 11.

[56] Ibid., 7.

[57] Ibid., 9.

[58] Rapport, *Nationality and Citizenship*, 257.

Alongside Saint-Just, another important exponent of the fraternal position was Georges Couthon, whose early defence of Britain on 20 January gave subsequent speakers licence to break with the early contributions of Robespierre and Collot. Couthon pointed to all the testimony the Club had heard about the vices of the British constitution and argued that no people so deprived of their right to national representation could be held to the responsibilities that would come with this. Against Robespierre (and Marat before him), Couthon insisted that the English were not, in fact, a free people because of the stranglehold of monarchy and aristocracy over the institutions of government. He then directly addressed the British people from the Jacobin Club: 'the French, who you have not yet defended against so many attacks, do not cease to wish for your deliverance and happiness', and he promised that when the English finally liberated themselves, France would offer 'in retaliation for the cruelties of your government only the kiss of fraternity'.[59] This applied the defence of diminished responsibility: the English may be legitimately viewed as 'dupes', as Félix Lepeletier put it, but this did not attract the culpability attached to the 'skilful knaves' who manipulated them.[60] The point of no return—after which a conscious people's continued collaboration with oppressors would constitute a criminal act—had not yet been reached.

This opened the ground for further defences of Britain, including on pragmatic grounds. Jeanbon Saint-André, the member of the Committee of the Public Safety responsible for the navy, articulated this clearly. Like Couthon, he was certainly not a moderate, nor was he an Anglophile—he had proposed just a few months previously the execution of all British subjects living in France as a reprisal if Britain killed a captured French deputy.[61] When he intervened in the Jacobin Club's debates on 30 January 1794, he had recently returned from the latest in a series of missions to Brest, where he had sought to impose the authority of the central government.[62] In his contribution to the debate at the Jacobin Club, he claimed to have instructed Brest's sailors 'that the English should not cease to be the object of our contempt and our hatred, and that we should not make peace with them until they came out of slavery', invoking the *levée en masse* and the complete defensive mobilization of the republic.[63] But he also argued that 'in pursuing the English, we will only punish the government that controls them. Pitt must account to the universe for all the blood he has shed'.[64] For Saint-André, national 'hatred' was legitimate as both a rallying cry and a means of forcing the English to confront 'the shame they bring upon themselves by obeying a foolish king'.[65] But the offer of fraternity had to stand, not in the naïve hope that the English would suddenly turn on Pitt, but as the sole pathway to peace and absolution for their (very real) crimes.

A string of Jacobin politicians made speeches emphasizing imminent prospects for revolutionary change in Britain. Many insisted that the prosecution of the Scottish martyrs represented not definitive proof that the British (or indeed the English) should be written off as hopelessly reactionary slaves to church and king but the very opposite. Alexandre-Louis Lachevardière, a protégé of Robespierre, felt enabled to break from his ally and insist that the martyrs' case suggested that a revolution could be closer than thought:

[59] Georges Couthon to the Jacobin Club, *Moniteur*, 29 January 1794, 522.
[60] Félix Lepeletier, *Discours sur les crimes du gouvernement britannique et sur les vices de la constitution anglaise, prononcé à la séance du 26 nivôse* (Paris, 1794), 10, 14.
[61] Hampson, *Perfidy of Albion*, 123.
[62] William S. Cormack, *Revolution and Political Conflict in the French Navy, 1789–1794* (Cambridge, 1995), 243–44, 290.
[63] Jeanbon Saint-André to the Jacobin Club, 30 January 1794, in *Société des Jacobins*, 5:635.
[64] Ibid., 5:636.
[65] Saint-André to the Jacobin Club, 30 January 1794, in *Société des Jacobins*, 5:632.

> If we, citizens, run through the history of peoples, we almost always see resistance follow oppression and liberty following extreme tyranny. So, when we see … the principal members of this Scottish convention plunged into irons, we can say with assurance that if the English people are not the vilest of all peoples, they are reaching the moment of their awakening.[66]

Revolutionaries were seemingly not ready to give up hope on this because of the utopian possibilities which would open up if it came to fruition: 'who could prevent a hundred thousand brave French *sans-culottes* from uniting with those of England to overthrow the entire coalition of tyrants?', asked another speaker, Butteau, optimistically.[67] A further member, Bontemps, agreed that the holding of a British Convention was an encouraging sign, but he further argued that it might even signal that the overthrow of the British government was imminent because of the prospect of the agitation spreading into northern England.[68] He also referred explicitly to the Scottish martyrs and insisted that their prosecution would in due course excite the (now defunct) British convention movement to go further, calling on his fellow Jacobins to 'develop' Britain's path to revolution, not close the door on it.[69] Indeed, some of the more excitable information that the revolutionary government was receiving in the spring of 1794 seemed to corroborate this, incorrectly suggesting that there were 90,000 insurrectionary workers in both London and Edinburgh awaiting arms and instructions.[70] In this context, the speculative published appeals of some revolutionaries to 'the *sans-culottes* of London' reflected a genuine hope that the prospects of revolutionary change in Britain, including in England, were rising.[71] There seemed to be plenty of evidence that pressure on Pitt's government was growing because of the prosecution of the Scottish martyrs. Now, it seemed to many, was not the time to be further alienating the opposition in England by rescinding the offer of peace and fraternity between peoples and declaring the entire English nation to be irredeemable enemies of the Revolution.

While French observers did note other, previous instances of government-backed repression in Britain, like the Priestley Riots of 1791, the Scottish sedition trials and their victims were the current issue that made British politics directly relevant to French observers, especially to those who were similarly critical of repression closer to home.[72] Camille Desmoulins, the leading opponent of the Terror who would be executed with the Indulgents on 5 April, rejected denunciations of the English as a tyrant people as counterproductive. He took a similar view of the suggestions of Robespierre's allies that France should raze London to the ground as Rome did to Carthage.[73] Writing in approximately mid-March, Desmoulins argued in the final volume of his journal *Le Vieux Cordelier* that Robespierre

> 'thumbs his nose at [the British Whigs] Fox, Sheridan and Stanhope. Who could fail to see that on receiving this speech and Barère's report, they must have said to themselves in London: "Well! since we are Carthage, let us have the courage of the Carthaginians … and rise en masse [against France]'.[74]

[66] Alexandre-Louis Lachevardière, *Discours sur la constitution et le gouvernement d'Angleterre* (Paris, 1794), 19–20.
[67] Butteau to the Jacobin Club, *Moniteur*, 15 January 1794, 465.
[68] G. Bontemps, *Discours sur les crimes du gouvernement anglais et les vices de ses finances* (Paris, 1794), 11.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Anonymous letter from Amsterdam, 6 May 1794, AD, CP 588, fo. 164.
[71] Xavier Audouin, *Lettres aux sans-culottes de Londres* (Paris, 1794), 2.
[72] Lachevardière, *Discours sur la constitution*, 19–20.
[73] Barère, *Rapport*, 14; Hampson, *Perfidy of Albion*, 120–44.
[74] Charles Vellay, 'Le Numéro VII du "Vieux Cordelier"', *Annales révolutionnaires*, 1 (1908), 622–23; *Le Vieux Cordelier* (Paris, 1794), no. 7, 206.

As Norman Hampson has demonstrated, the motif of Carthage, the enemy of republican Rome in the Punic Wars, reflected the Jacobin belief of an absolute, irreconcilable polarity between Britain and revolutionary France.[75] Desmoulins used it here to suggest that alienating the British people would not just be a missed opportunity. It would make Robespierre's declarations that the English people and the British state alike were enemies of the republic into a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Furthermore, the strand of Montagnard opinion represented by Desmoulins elucidates the overlap between opponents of political repression in France and supporters of a more conciliatory view towards the English people. *Le Vieux Cordelier* argued that 'we dare not praise what is less bad about the English, such as freedom of opinion and habeas corpus, or offer it as an example to our fellow citizens'—Britain was not an unambiguously counter-revolutionary villain, and France ought to learn from the freedom of speech and of the press allegedly enjoyed by its subjects, even though this had been undermined by the ongoing repression of British radicals.[76] Desmoulins' lasting faith in the revolutionary potential of the British people, including the English, was undoubtedly informed by his affinity for what he saw as their anti-authoritarian history as well as, perhaps, a more pragmatic need to make his proposals for peace negotiations with them more palatable. As Rachel Hammersley has shown, Desmoulins shared Marat's interest in the recent and historical republican traditions of the British nations.[77] The Scottish commonwealth thinker Thomas Gordon, who had argued in support of constitutional protections against despotism like trial by jury and a relative freedom of the press, was a particular influence.[78] In short, Desmoulins believed that Britain, even in 1794, was not a barren wasteland where liberty had no prospects. The two countries, he argued, had much to learn from each other's contrasting histories, despite the failure of the British to follow the revolutionary example of the French.

Although he had intended for this seventh issue of *Le Vieux Cordelier* to be published quickly as a response to Jacobin attacks on him, it was not to be made public before Desmoulins' execution on 5 April 1794.[79] However, it nonetheless demonstrates a third interpretation of instances of British repression—like the transportation of the martyrs—which was anti-authoritarian in principle. While Desmoulins did not refer directly to Margarot, Muir and their co-accused, his retort to the arguments of his opponents, who stressed that the Scottish trials had not provoked a meaningful uprising in Britain, would likely have been that the martyrs demonstrated the longevity of British radical traditions even in the winter of 1793–94. This point, however, would have been lost on Robespierre and his allies, who shared neither Desmoulin's interest in the history of British radicalism nor his demand for peace negotiations with foreign powers. Instead, Desmoulins' response to the debate came in practical terms, which (he hoped) his opponents would understand: that the pronouncements of English collective guilt served only to heighten the danger to the Revolution by fatally weakening the position of sympathizers and prospective allies across the Channel. Desmoulins interpreted the situation in Britain in the winter of 1793–94 as a compelling reason to slow revolutionary efforts to liquidate social and political threats rather than a justification for their continuation. Robespierre's polemics, he argued, endangered the

[75] Hampson, *Perfidy of Albion*, 121.
[76] *Le Vieux Cordelier*, no. 7, 128.
[77] Rachel Hammersley, 'Camille Desmoulins's *Le Vieux Cordelier*: a link between English and French republicanism', *History of European Ideas*, 27 (2001), 115–32; Rachel Hammersley, 'Jean-Paul Marat's *The Chains of Slavery* in Britain and France, 1774–1833', *Historical Journal*, 48 (2005), 660.
[78] Hammersley, '*Le Vieux Cordelier*', 126–28.
[79] Vellay, 'Le Numéro VII', 622.

Revolution and served only to impose upon the French a republican variant of the same oppression that was then in the process of corrupting the anti-authoritarian British principles Desmoulins had championed.

III

In response, Robespierre and his allies pushed back forcefully against suggestions that the plight of the martyrs showed that all Britons were victims as much as they were perpetrators. The martyrs were now used not as a cautionary tale of why repression should be avoided but as a justification for terror in France.

On this issue, Robespierre and Saint-Just agreed. The latter was seemingly determined to avoid 'nationalized' generalizations about foreign peoples, but not as a way of discrediting revolutionary self-defence or lapsing into passivity in the face of foreign aggression. On 26 February, Saint-Just referred to the Scottish martyr Margarot in his attack on the Dantonists, whose sympathetic position on English popular guilt (as articulated by Desmoulins) was superficially closer to Saint-Just's reluctance to roundly denounce them than Robespierre's hawkish polemics. Saint-Just implicitly resisted the apparent connection between non-aggression towards the English people and opposition to terror in France by refusing to break from Robespierre on the issue or allowing himself to be drawn into openly defending the revolutionary credentials of the English. This might have angered his ally or even perhaps left Saint-Just open to attack from his left, as Hébert was at this time criticizing those who sought to 'convert to liberty those who are not yet worthy of knowing it' before French liberty and equality had been fully secured at home first through the vigorous pursuit of social enemies.[80] Rejecting Dantonist calls to lessen revolutionary repression, Saint-Just instead insisted that 'we are moderates compared to all other governments':

> Your revolutionary tribunal has killed three hundred scoundrels over the past year; what court in England has not done more? … Do you not have the right to treat the partisans of tyranny as the partisans of liberty are treated elsewhere? … They have killed Marat and banished Margarot and confiscated his property.[81]

Here, Saint-Just mounted a defence of the Revolutionary Tribunal and the Law of Suspects of September 1793.[82] Since September, convictions by the Tribunal had accelerated to about 300 each month (of whom about 60% were sentenced to death), but Saint-Just defended this here by insisting that such brutal methods were also being used by the Revolution's enemies.[83] The case of the Scottish martyrs, in other words, underlined rather than undermined the case for terror. Opposing repression in Britain was entirely consistent with supporting it in France since there could be no moral equivalence whatsoever between a revolution neutralizing subversive threats and a reactionary monarchy oppressing its own people.[84] Revolutionary attitudes about the oppression experienced by the British people were, Saint-Just emphasized, to be guided not by humanitarianism but by *réciprocité*, the notion that foreign peoples had to make themselves sovereign and respectful of human

[80] *Le Père Duchesne*, 347 (1794), 4. This issue is dated to 19 February 1794, thus coinciding with the debates in the Jacobin Club, in Jacques Guilhaumou, 'Dater *Le Père Duchesne* d'Hébert (juillet 1793–mars 1794)', *Annales historiques de la révolution française*, 303 (1996), 74.

[81] Saint-Just to the National Convention, *Moniteur*, 27 February 1794, 641.

[82] 'The Law of Suspects', in *Constitutions and Other Select Documents*, 185.

[83] Patrice Gueniffey, *La Politique de la Terreur: essai sur la violence révolutionnaire, 1789–1794* (Paris, 2000), 240.

[84] Collot d'Herbois to the Jacobin Club, 12 January 1794, in *Société des Jacobins*, 5:609.

rights in order to expect that those rights would be respected by other peoples.[85] Citing Margarot's transportation as an attack on the Revolution alongside the assassination of Marat recognized the former as a 'partisan of liberty' on the same terms as the latter, but it also emphasized the allegation that the enemy was conspiring and plotting against freedom everywhere—in Edinburgh as well as in Paris.

When Robespierre closed the debate in the Jacobin Club on 30 January, he used this suggestion question the consistency of his opponents' views with their professed commitment to the Revolution. He thus asked, 'What is this Anglomania, disguised under the mask of philanthropy, if not the remnants of the old Brissotism?'[86] (Brissot had, in fact, strongly criticized those in Britain who he accused of glorifying their constitution.[87]) In his lively exchange with Saint-André, Robespierre attempted to discredit 'philanthropic' sympathy for the British by linking it to Girondism and the counterrevolution within France. Saint-André quickly apologized for any appearance of weakness and reaffirmed his hatred of tyrants, emphasizing in his closing remarks that his disagreement was not about whether revolutionaries should 'hate' the English but how.[88] Robespierre accepted this, but the message was clear: prominent advocates of lasting faith in an English capacity for self-emancipation risked their own republican virtue being called into question.[89]

Robespierre's exasperated complaints about 'Anglomania' in the Jacobin Club also seem to reflect a slightly greater sympathy there for those who left at least some room for fraternization. Indeed, as Sophie Wahnich observes, his speech was a polemic intended to break a 'taboo' against excluding any peoples—even enemy nations—from universal brotherhood.[90] His closing attack on Saint-André challenged the legitimacy of the latter's views. This could force speakers like Saint-André to quickly recant and defer to Robespierre's polemics. The accusers of the English did, therefore, indeed have a 'field day' in the Jacobin Club debates of January 1794, as Norman Hampson put it, partly because of Robespierre's ability to silence the opposition.[91] Earlier proposals to print English translations of the speeches of Couthon and Lepeletier were thus seemingly dropped.[92] Robespierre had the last word in the debate (apart from Saint-André's final concession), establishing 'national hatred' as a principle for revolutionaries to abide by.[93]

Nonetheless, the expression of lasting hope for fraternity did not immediately become heretical after January 1794. The Jacobin Club printed a variety of speeches from both sides of the debate, including appeals for English self-emancipation.[94] Likewise, in April, the *Moniteur* put on record a Parisian popular society's resolution of support and sympathy for the Scottish martyrs, undertaking to 'recognize the true friends of liberty wherever they may be found on the globe'.[95] While most were now obliged to accept the principle that

[85] Wahnich, *L'Impossible Citoyen*, 355.
[86] Saint-Just, *Rapport fait à la Convention nationale*, 5; Robespierre to the Jacobin Club, 30 January 1794, in *Société des Jacobins*, 5:633.
[87] Brissot, *Exposé*, 5.
[88] Saint-André to the Jacobin Club, 30 January 1793, in *Société des Jacobins*, 5:635–36.
[89] Hampson, *Perfidy of Albion*, 133.
[90] Wahnich, *L'Impossible Citoyen*, 308.
[91] Hampson, *Perfidy of Albion*, 132.
[92] Both were printed but only in French. See Lepeletier, *Discours*; Couthon, *Discours prononcé à la séance des Jacobins du 1er pluviôse an II de la République* (Paris, 1794).
[93] Wahnich, *L'Impossible Citoyen*, 311–24.
[94] For example, see the aforementioned printed speeches of Audouin, Bontemps, Couthon, Lachevardière, Lepeletier and Simond, as well as Jean-Charles Laveaux, *Discours sur les vices de la constitution anglaise* (Paris, 1794) and Edmond-Louis-Alexis Dubois-Crancé, *Discours sur notre situation politique* (Paris, 1794).
[95] *Moniteur*, 18 April 1794, 348.

hatred of tyrants included hatred of 'tyrant peoples', there remained considerable ambiguity about whether it was permissible to separate particular individuals or even entire sections of society from this. Robespierre implied that doing so would simply give further licence to 'Anglomania', but he was unable or unwilling to explicitly direct this against those visibly persecuted for their belief in liberty, thus leaving open some possibilities for solidarity. One use of the martyrs, then, was to allow other revolutionaries to preserve the principle of British self-emancipation by emphasizing reputable individuals rather than defending an entire enemy people and risking condemnation as an apologist for their collective crimes.

Broad acceptance of sweeping English criminality seems not, therefore, to have translated into an official abandonment of interaction with foreign dissidents or even of hopes for an uprising against the British government. Before long, some of those who had asserted the hopelessness of prospects for liberty in Britain were once more looking closely at those who fought for it. Barère and Collot, for example, gave their support to the order of 30 Pluviôse (18 February) to attempt the rescue mission along with Saint-Just and Saint-André—it lacked only the signature of the apparently unyielding Robespierre.[96] Of course, the 'Anglophobes' might have viewed a rescue mission as worth pursuing for the propaganda value alone, but this would have also meant a public acknowledgement that British reformers were worthy of French support after all. Recognition and assistance for certain individuals thereby remained a political option, despite public assertions that the Revolution no longer made any distinction between enemy governments and their complicit citizenries.

Moreover, on 6 April, the Committee of Public Safety issued a further order, this time marked as secret. This was again signed by Barère and was also authorized by Carnot, Billaud-Varenne and Lindet (although again not Robespierre). The Committee authorized the Minister of the Navy to 'immediately send to Scotland a patriotic, intelligent and active agent charged with taking all necessary measures to have the Scottish National Convention enact the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen' and 'divide Scotland and England and restore to the former its rights'.[97] One million livres were appropriated for the Scottish mission, and a further 400,000 were earmarked to send further agents to Ireland to 'excite' Irish political agitation. For Marianne Elliott, it was in early 1794 that France signalled that it would no longer 'foot the bill' for the agitation of enemy countries, but in this order, we can see revolutionaries continuing to do just that.[98] Even for Barère, the idea of engineering some kind of political upheaval north of the Channel—if not, perhaps, in England—had not been conclusively abandoned.

While the French did correspond with agents in Britain, it is not certain that this particular order was acted upon.[99] Nonetheless, its approval reflected the common aspects of the Jacobin discussion about Scotland, emphasizing the 'freeing' of the country from English infringements on its rights without explicitly declaring the guilt of the English people in this. Furthermore, as the inclusion of Ireland shows, both Scotland and Ireland were viewed as potential allies against England because of their potential for emancipation, especially under French tutelage. This perhaps made the project palatable enough

[96] 'Séance du 30 pluviôse an II—18 février 1794', in *Recueil des actes du Comité de salut public*, 11:242.

[97] '17 Germinal an II (6 avril 1794): arrêtés secrets', in *Recueil des actes du Comité de salut public*, ed. Marc Bouloiseau, supplément (Paris, 1992), 3:45.

[98] Marianne Elliott, *Partners in Revolution: The United Irishmen and France* (New Haven, 1982), 53.

[99] It is possible that the order of 17 Germinal An II (6 April 1794) provided funding and instructions for the mission of the Irishman John 'Eugene' Aherne, who was sent from Paris to Scotland in December 1793. See C. J. Woods, 'Aherne, Eugene (John)', *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, 2009, https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.000064.v1.

for the 'Anglophobes', who were seemingly surer of English guilt than that of the other British peoples. It is difficult to attribute this attention to Scotland wholly to the plight of the Edinburgh convention and the Scottish martyrs, but given the signatories' explicit attention to them over the preceding weeks, the incident surely played a significant role in raising Scotland's profile as a partner for reciprocal relations between peoples. (This, of course, disregards the fact that it is doubtful that Scotland—which was considerably more stable than Ireland—really would have proved fertile ground for a republican uprising in 1794.)[100]

The agreement to launch this speculative venture shows that adherents of both views of the British peoples could at least agree that some kind of revolutionary upheaval was possible and, crucially, still worth pursuing. By pivoting to Scotland, both sides could feel satisfied that they had remained true to their internationalist principles: the 'criminal' English were no longer afforded unduly lenient treatment as partners to the French, but a revolution that would bring freedom to all Britons nonetheless remained on the cards. Internationalism was, therefore, contested ground, but it accommodated stinging indictments of the English alongside the maintenance of hopes for their eventual emancipation. It goes too far to suggest that Scotland was now established in French eyes as an oppressed republic which had a monarchy foisted upon it by England and which was implicated in British crimes only under duress. However, its profile as a prospective partner for reciprocal relations was certainly not hurt by the declaration that France's reciprocal ties with the English were null and void, even if not all revolutionaries were comfortable with the dismissal of them as a universally criminal people.

IV

After spring 1794, memory of the martyrs mostly went dormant as the case lost its immediacy. Some of the more ardent reactionaries associated them with Jacobinism. When news of Muir's February 1796 escape from New South Wales reached Europe (it was said initially that he had died in the process), a royalist newspaper chided him as a 'disciple of Collot d'Herbois and Billaud-Varenne', gloatingly recalling an earlier prediction by Saint-Just that Muir would return to Britain a hero.[101]

Nonetheless, the news about Muir clearly stirred French memory of the earlier discussions of his plight. Muir had in fact escaped the penal colony by rowing out to the American ship *Otter*, which carried him to Vancouver. From there, he convinced a Spanish captain to convey him to California before being summoned to Mexico by the Spanish viceroy to be transported to Spain as a suspected spy via Havana, at which point French colonial officials became aware of his presence and began arguing for his release and reporting his presence to the Directory.[102] Muir was nonetheless shipped to Cádiz as a prisoner, losing an eye en route as he narrowly evaded capture by the Royal Navy. After a French consul reported his arrival and recalled the 1794 rescue mission, French ministers ordered consular assistance, and the ambassador repeatedly pushed the Spanish Secretary of State to release Muir.[103]

[100] Bob Harris, *The Scottish People and the French Revolution* (London, 2008), 17.

[101] *La Quotidienne, ou Feuille du jour*, 21 February 1797, 1.

[102] Victor Hugues to the Directory, 13 April 1797, AD, CP 590, fo. 260; Nicolas Georges Jeannet-Oudin to the Governor of Havana, 21 April 1797, Aix-en-Provence, Archives nationales d'outre-mer, COL C14 76, fo. 189.

[103] Roquesante to Charles-François Delacroix, 2 May 1797, AN, AF/III/62, dossier 246, plaquette 1; Catherine-Dominique de Pérignon to Manuel Godoy, 24 June 1797, 18 August 1797 and 25 October 1797, A[rchivo] G[eneral de] I[ndias], estado 37 N 32B.

Having already learned of France's rescue attempt and sensing an opportunity to claim asylum and make a name for himself as a political martyr, Muir wrote an embellished letter to Paine in August, who was then living in Paris, which soon appeared in the French and British presses.[104] In it, he lavished praise on the French government and its 'concern for the weak', thus offering it a major public relations coup in return for the concerted efforts of its ministers to secure his release. After being released in September, he spent some time recovering from his injuries and arrived in Bordeaux in November 1797 to reportedly 'magnificent' celebrations by the city's patriots, a banquet and a public ceremony.[105] The crowd that gathered to greet him raised toasts to the republic and its government, to Muir himself (along with other victims of British oppression) and, more broadly, to 'the martyrs of freedom'.[106] It is difficult to gauge the level of popular engagement from the press coverage, but it seems likely that rather than a genuinely rapturous public welcome, this event was another of the Directory's 'moribund civic ceremonies' which were typical of its propagandistic brand of commemoration intended to inculcate a civic ethos of republicanism and popular support for the government against apathy and economic crisis.[107] Nonetheless, the published French account of Muir's suffering insists (perhaps unconvincingly) that he was welcomed by the 'patriots of Bordeaux [who] celebrated, treated and welcomed him as a martyr of liberty'.[108]

If France now claimed Muir energetically for the republican project—the career diplomat Pierre David insisted in a long article in the *Moniteur* that 'it is the Directory itself that urged him to come here'—Muir's foreignness was still front and centre in his public personality.[109] 'Let him find in his new *patrie* friends and brothers, and may our victorious phalanxes soon call him back to the country which gave him birth to establish liberty there!', David went on.[110] This emphasized that Muir's stay in France as a political exile would, by its nature, be temporary, ending when he returned to a liberated Scotland. Between his arrival at Bordeaux in 1797 and his untimely death in January 1799, Muir was installed within a cadre of foreign radicals which was periodically consulted by officials on the politics of their home countries, along with United Irishmen like Theobald Wolfe Tone, James Napper Tandy and William Duckett. In public and in private, Muir and his image lent credibility to the Directory's plan to invade Britain with the support of insurrections in Scotland and Ireland. The government's interest in recruiting a symbol of Scottish radicalism can only have been increased by the longstanding insistence of Irish figures in France like Duckett that 'to establish liberty, the English government must be destroyed' and its corrupting influence over other peoples extinguished.[111] If Ireland and Irishness were the subject of much debate under the Directory, did Muir's appearance prompt the French to reconsider Scotland and Scottishness, too?

[104] Thomas Muir to Viceroy Branciforte, 20 August 1796, AGI, estado 25 N 45; *Le Républicain français*, 18 October 1797, 1; *Edinburgh Advertiser*, 27 October 1797, 268.

[105] *La Clef du cabinet des souverains*, 28 November 1797, 2898; Bewley, *Muir of Huntershill*, 160.

[106] *Journal de Toulouse*, 28 November 1797, 3.

[107] Joseph Clarke, *Commemorating the Dead in Revolutionary France: Revolution and Remembrance, 1789–1799* (Cambridge, 2007), 3, 253, 284.

[108] *Histoire de la tyrannie*, 19.

[109] *Moniteur*, 2 December 1797, 290; Bewley, *Muir of Huntershill*, 161. See 'Pierre-Laurent Jean-Baptiste David' in *Dictionnaire des parlementaires français depuis le 1er mai 1789 jusqu'au 1er mai 1889*, ed. Adolphe Robert and Gaston Cougny, vol. 2 (Paris, 1890), 274.

[110] *Moniteur*, 2 December 1797, 290.

[111] William Duckett to the Committee of Public Safety, 1795, AN, 284 AP (10), doss. 8.

The timing of his arrival was fortuitous. He disembarked just weeks after the Coup of 18 Fructidor, which—although anti-royalist—retained the ban on expressions of support for the Jacobin Constitution of 1793 (a demand of Babeuf's failed Conspiracy of the Equals).[112] Moreover, with the temporary cessation of hostilities with Austria, attention was now devoted to Britain, at whose hands Muir had suffered so visibly. The post-Fructidor government stood to benefit from an iconography which was resolutely republican and anti-royalist yet committed to order, and which served to bolster the new leadership's credibility, especially in contrast to its British enemy. Muir fit into none of the categories targeted by the Directory's own repressive measures: as a foreigner of petty-bourgeois birth with moderate reformist politics, he could not be considered a noble, émigré, or a priest, yet he and his plight still personified resistance against a dangerous foreign monarchy.[113] France's republican past could thus be reclaimed without any troublesome connotations of neo-Jacobinism.

But Muir was not just a cheerleader for the Directory, as his private correspondence shows.[114] He pushed for a French-led liberation of Scotland, at first alongside Ireland and then, seemingly, separately from it. This had already been briefly considered in 1796 as a possible extension of plans to invade Ireland.[115] In August 1797, General Daendels prepared plans for an invasion of Scotland en route to Ireland, noting that 'three years ago, the people of the [Scottish] lowlands began a revolution which ended with the deportation of [Thomas Fyshe] Palmer and his friends' (i.e. the Scottish martyrs).[116] This effort was thwarted by Dutch defeat at Camperdown, but Daendels wrote to the Directory in January 1798 proposing another attempt at a Scottish landing in the spring.[117] The plan was to land first at Leith and seize control of the Scottish Central Belt in anticipation of being 'supported and helped by the zeal of the Scottish nation'.[118] If Scotland could be held, attention could then turn to Ireland. The French minister Delacroix immediately recommended these plans to Bonaparte.[119]

In the interim period, although he was presumably unaware of Daendels' proposals, Muir lobbied to consolidate French faith in the Scottish people. In March, he submitted to the government a long report on British politics, written in French and depicting England as the common denominator in the shared Scottish and Irish experience of oppression. He advised that 'there is no people in all of Europe so ignorant and barbarous' as the English and that only a segment of the political opposition there had any meaningful republican principles.[120] Muir's strategy of positioning Scotland alongside Ireland as a common victim of English oppression was evident in public, too: he proactively declared in the press that 'I am a United Irishman, I am a Scotsman and I can speak in the name of these two countries … [which] are waiting only for the French to smash their chains'.[121] Muir might have hoped that this would encourage the government, but it infuriated Tone, whom Muir had

[112] Georges Lefebvre, *Les Thermidoriens—Le Directoire* (Paris, 2016), 284.
[113] Howard G. Brown, 'Mythes et massacres: reconsidérer la "terreur directoriale"', *Annales historiques de la révolution française*, 325 (2001), 23–52.
[114] Bewley, *Muir of Huntershill*, 170–75.
[115] Henry W. Meikle, *Scotland and the French Revolution* (Glasgow, 1912), 167–72.
[116] Herman Willem Daendels, quoted in C. J. Woods, 'A plan for a Dutch invasion of Scotland, 1797', *Scottish History Review*, 53 (1974), 111.
[117] Woods, 'A Dutch invasion', 109.
[118] 'Projet d'invasion en Écosse', January 1798, Vincennes, S[ervice] H[istorique de la] D[éfense], GR 1M 1420, dossier 39.
[119] Delacroix to Bonaparte, 15 January 1798, SHD, GR 1M 1420, dossier 39.
[120] Muir to Talleyrand, 3 March 1798, AD, CP 592, fo. 162.
[121] *Le Journal de Paris*, 2 January 1798, 416.

already antagonized through his closeness to the rival faction within the United Irishmen in Paris around Napper Tandy. Tone believed that Ireland was a distinct nation with its own history, and he had previously been sceptical of taking any action in Scotland at all until Ireland had been freed.[122] Tone complained to Muir—a 'vain, obstinate blockhead'—that 'he had neither licence nor authority to speak in the name of the people of Ireland'.[123] Nonetheless, Muir aimed to appropriate Irish arguments about English crimes to engineer the French-led liberation of his own country.

Daendels' efforts were of greater consequence than Muir's lobbying. Just as the former had proposed, preparations began at Texel for a Franco-Batavian invasion of Scotland. Muir had no direct input, but his arrival in France may have lent some credibility to the case for such a strategy by illustrating vividly the alleged English oppression that made Scotland a potential partner. One internal French assessment of British politics from February affirmed that 'destined to live under the same government, the Scot has the right to the enjoyment of the same prerogatives; he must be the fellow citizen and not the subject of the English, and he will serve the people [the French] whose triumphs or example will bring about the improvement of his [the Scot's] lot'.[124] In other words, because of their oppression at the hands of the English, the Scots would welcome a French invasion. Tone had also begun to look favourably upon the Scottish plan principally as a means of diverting English attention from Ireland and, unsurprisingly, opted not to involve Muir in it, leaving the Scotsman limited to lobbying and receiving lukewarm replies from Talleyrand thanking him for his input.[125] Tone instead recommended the Irishman John 'Eugene' Aherne to Daendels, and the two began to work together on the proposed invasion.[126] Tone respected Aherne and knew that he had been 'already employed in Scotland' as a French agent, travelling to Edinburgh and Glasgow in late 1793 or 1794.[127] Thus, as far as the Daendels plan was concerned, Scotland was spoken for by Irishmen, at least one of whom viewed it as a project of secondary importance and a means to a more pressing goal of defeating the English in Ireland.[128]

Perhaps sensing that he was being ignored and fearing that the Scottish cause had been forgotten (as he was not party to Daendels' proposals), Muir's portraits of Scotland quickly became more dismissive of the Irish. In one of his memorials to Talleyrand, probably sent in the summer, Muir mocked 'the ridiculous & fatal comedy of O'Quoigley [James Coigly] and [Arthur] O'Connor', United Irishmen whose efforts to instigate a French-supported uprising had recently seen them arrested in England.[129] Muir intimated that Ireland—unlike Scotland—was not really a republic in the making but a rural land of oppressed and impoverished but ultimately hopeless and deeply religious Catholics. This put him directly at

[122] Tone's diary, 9 April 1796, in *The Writings of Theobald Wolfe Tone*, ed. T. W. Moody, R. B. McDowell and C. J. Woods, 3 vols (Oxford, 1998–2007), 2:150.

[123] Tone's diary, 1 February 1798, in *Writings*, 3:199.

[124] 'Reflexions sur la situation politique de l'Angleterre relativement à la France', 7 February 1798, AD, Mémoires et documents (Angleterre) 53, fo. 249.

[125] Tone's diary, 13 September 1797, in *Writings*, 3:146; Talleyrand to Muir, 8 March 1798, AD, CP 592, fo. 167.

[126] Tone's diary, 13 September 1797, in *Writings*, 3:146; Tone to Daendels, 25 February 1798, in *Writings*, 3:207; Tone to Daendels, 12 March 1798, in *Writings*, 3:214.

[127] Tone's diary, 9 April 1796, in Writings, 2:150; Woods, 'Aherne'.

[128] Tone to Daendels, 21 October 1797, in *Writings*, 3:169.

[129] Muir to Talleyrand, [1798], AD, CP 594, fo. 57. This memorial, written in Muir's handwriting and signed by him, is dated 27 Vendémiaire An 9 (19 October 1800). Confusingly, Muir was dead by this point. However, the date seems to have been added later by someone else. Given its references to Coigly, O'Connor and the Irish rebellion, the document was probably sent in the summer of 1798.

odds with Tone's years-long mission to 'dechouannize' Ireland in French eyes and demonstrate its capacity for self-emancipation.[130] Muir instead presented the Scots as an alternative partner to Ireland and invited the French to see a flattering mirror image of themselves in them.[131] He portrayed the Scots as a proud, thoughtful people committed to republican principles, especially in the relatively developed lowlands and among the lower social orders, who 'are in general best informed' and would provide a social constituency for an uprising.[132] Previous insurrectionary efforts in Ireland had been 'premature', but Muir was adamant that this could not possibly be the case in Scotland because of its higher level of political sophistication and economic development.[133]

Meanwhile, despite the political turmoil in the Batavian Republic following the coup in January (which Daendels had supported), the general now complained that 'the silence of the French government is paralysing everything'.[134] He urged Tone to help him obtain a definitive answer from Bonaparte, who was seemingly prevaricating, concerned that the French navy was not strong enough to land in Great Britain and contemplating his eventual expedition to Egypt instead. Tone wrote of an indefinite 'suspension' of the plans as a result of Bonaparte's protracted ambivalence.[135] Events were further overtaken by Daendels' involvement in a further Batavian coup in June, when he and his allies are said to have stormed Delacroix's dinner party and placed a pistol to the French ambassador's chest.[136] The Scottish plan was finally all but abandoned that same month when Bruix, the new French Minister of the Navy, wrote to General Joubert at the Hague directing him to prepare to embark for Ireland instead, where reinforcements were now needed more urgently. Bruix argued that the mere threat of an invasion of Scotland would be enough to detain the British there, allowing Joubert's force to reach Ireland more quickly without landing.[137] There was no mention of Scotland's alleged readiness for republicanism. In any case, it was not until after a further delay that two Dutch frigates set off to support the French intervention in Ireland in October, and this too came to nothing as they were quickly intercepted by the Royal Navy.[138] The Irish insurrection foundered, and Tone died awaiting execution, having been captured by the British. Scotland had been passed over for no gain in Ireland.

Instead of proving that Muir had been right all along, disaster in Ireland in late 1798 simply expended (at least for now) whatever French willingness there had been to seriously countenance relying on popular British support for a landing.[139] While calls for further French activity in Scotland may have been taken up again in 1799 and 1800, Muir was certainly not in a position to singlehandedly rally an increasingly crisis-riven Directory to the idea.[140] His initial public celebrity had worn off, and his quarrel with the well-connected Tone had already seen him marginalized from meaningful strategic planning. More ominously, his health was by now seriously fading. He had departed Paris for Chantilly around September

[130] Ferradou, 'De William Jackson à Theobald Wolfe Tone: un lobby irlandais entre le Comité de Salut public et le Directoire?', *La Révolution française*, 23 (2022), https://doi.org/10.4000/lrf.6859, par. 51.
[131] Rapport, 'Loyal Catholics and revolutionary patriots: national identity and the Scots in revolutionary Paris', *Journal of Irish and Scottish Studies*, 2 (2008), 67.
[132] Muir to Talleyrand, 18 October 1798, AD, CP 594, fo. 64.
[133] Muir to Talleyrand, 18 October 1798, AD, CP 594, fo. 60.
[134] Daendels to Tone, 12 March 1798, in *Writings*, 3:214.
[135] Wolfe Tone to Matilda Tone, 22 April 1798, in *Writings*, 3:240.
[136] Simon Schama, *Patriots and Liberators: Revolution in the Netherlands, 1780–1813* (New York, 1977), 350.
[137] Bruix to Joubert, 26 June 1798, Vincennes, SHD, MV BB^4 123, fos 192–93; Paul L. Dawson, *French Invasions of Britain & Ireland, 1792–1815* (Barnsley, 2023), 145.
[138] *London Gazette*, 3 November 1798, 1052–53.
[139] Elliott, *Partners in Revolution*, 243–44.
[140] Rapport, 'Loyal Catholics', 58.

1798, perhaps hoping to recuperate.[141] Politically redundant, he also seems to have retired from his campaigning activities at this point, undisturbed by any residual French interest in him as a source of knowledge or as an emblem for Scottish republicanism. He died in January 1799, and his death was only perfunctorily reported in the French press.[142]

Muir's impact in France from 1797 until his death went little further than his fleeting promotion as a government-sponsored living martyr. One does not get the sense that he was insufficiently skilful or energetic in attempting to convince the French that his countrymen were fundamentally different and more worthy of republicanism than their English oppressors, but that such appeals were not likely to command much of an audience in government, much less guide policy and strategy. By now, fraternity with the people of Scotland could be an emotive rhetorical device and a reassuring justification for proposals to land there in opposition to the common English enemy, even for those like Tone, who were primarily concerned with Ireland. But the 'liberation' of Scotland was always incidental to other goals. There was little suggestion even by the advocates of the Daendels plans that the underlying motivation of the landing in Scotland was about upholding fraternal obligations to a people seeking to establish their own freedom. In the absence of a meaningful determination to follow through on internationalist pronouncements, the venture was vulnerable to the headwinds of Batavian political instability, Bonaparte's departure for Egypt and military failure in Ireland. French commitment to Scotland evaporated as the country's strategic usefulness became less clear and as Muir's celebrity faded. There was, in this climate, little need for Muir's intended role as an ambassador of the people of Scotland to France. His attempts to show that his country had demonstrated its republican capacities and earned the right to reciprocal relations with the French could only fall on deaf ears.

V

The French reception of the Scottish martyrs' case was not as straightforward as might have been expected. It provided much of the impetus and debating material to revisit the beliefs and assumptions about foreign peoples that had predominated since the outbreak of war. Jacobin praise for the martyrs and their actions was nearly unanimous. But there was no resultant inversion of the status quo: hopes of a British uprising were neither extinguished nor confirmed, revolutionary terror was not abandoned, and Scotland was not decisively and irrevocably established as a budding republic in French eyes. The case illuminates a diverse range of opinions.

As for internationalist affinity for non-English Britons, lip service to the efforts of Scottish democrats to free their country from English tyranny could certainly be dusted off and deployed when necessary. This was especially true under the Directory because of its willingness to exploit the idea for propaganda purposes, as it did through Muir. But such internationalism was preserved partly because it could either be asserted recurrently within the arguments of all sides of these debates or quietly forgotten without being explicitly repudiated, as was the case with the aborted Scottish landing of 1798. Internationalism's limits and punitive aspects—the need to decide who had rendered themselves ineligible for fraternal relations with the French and who would have to wait before enjoying such rights—remained elusive and, at times, controversial.

What is clear is that reciprocal relations between the French and foreigners were easier to sustain when the loyalties of the *étranger* were (literally) beyond question. This is encapsu-

[141] Bewley, *Muir of Huntershill*, 182.
[142] *Moniteur*, 30 January 1799, 533.

lated by Saint-Just's promotion of the martyrs' cause and his efforts to launch the seaborne rescue mission despite his close association with authoritarian measures to curtail the liberties of foreign individuals residing in France. The martyrs could be safely recognized by the Committee of Public Safety as friends and allies—despite their moderation—because faults like Muir's demonstrable Girondin sympathies did not need to be subjected to the same scrutiny as those of foreigners in France who shared them.