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The Terror: The Shadow of the Guillotine: France 1792--1794

Graeme Fife

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For the audience that made a major bestseller of Simon Schama's *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* comes this exhaustively researched, character-driven chronicle of revolutionary terror, its victims, and the young men---energetic, idealistic, and sincere---who turned the French Republic into a slaughterhouse.

1792 found the newborn Republic threatened from all sides: the British blockaded the coasts, Continental armies poured over the frontiers, and the provinces verged on open revolt. Paranoia simmering in the capital, the Revolution slipped under control of a powerful clique and its fanatical political organization, the Jacobin Club. For two years, this faction, obsessed with patriotism and purity---self-appointed to define both---inflicted on their countrymen a reign of terror unsurpassed until Stalin's Russia.

It was the time dominated by Maximilien Robespierre, Georges Danton, Jean-Paul Marat and Louis-Antoine Saint-Just (called "The Angel of Death"), when Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette met their ends, when any hint of dissent was ruthlessly quashed by the State. It was the time of the guillotine, neighborhood informants, and mob justice.

This extraordinary, bloodthirsty period comes vividly to life in Graeme Fife's new book. Drawing on contemporary police files, eyewitness accounts, directives from the sinister Committee for Public Safety, and heart-wrenching last letters from prisoners awaiting execution, the author brilliantly re-creates the psychotic atmosphere of that time.

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