managers of national property shall deposit the produce of such property, in the form of grain, in the chief town of their respective districts.

14. Owners, farmers, and others possessing grain shall be required to pay, in kind, arrears of taxes, even the two-thirds of those of 1793, on the rolls which have served to effect the last payment.

17. The Minister of War is responsible for taking all measures necessary for the prompt execution of the present decree.

18. The present decree shall be conveyed to the departments by special messengers.

38. "Make Terror the Order of the Day"
(5 September 1793)

The dramatic events of 5 September 1793 were decisive in the evolution of the Terror. During the summer of 1793, the "federalist revolts" in Lyon, Marseille, Toulon and elsewhere had been added to the uprising in the Vendée, and the attacks of foreign powers, as threats to the unity and existence of the Revolution. Incited by news that the rebellious port of Toulon had surrendered to the English rather than fall to republican armies, and fearful of famine—signs of which they attributed to counterrevolutionary plotting—the Parisian crowd again marched on the Convention. The demands presented on behalf of the people, first by a delegation of representatives from the sections and the Paris Commune, and then by a second delegation from the Jacobin Club, were typical of the revolutionary mentality of the sans-culottes. Insisting upon more vigorous action to control food prices, assure supplies, and punish those suspected of counterrevolutionary activities, they called for the creation of "revolutionary armies." These latter, which should not be confused with the military armies of the Republic, were to be armed bands of militant activists organized to terrorize the enemies of the Revolution and to enforce emergency measures in its defense.

In the wake of this new popular uprising, the Convention passed the Law of Suspects (on 17 September 1793) and the General Maximum (29 September 1793), two of the basic acts of the Terror. Although it was also obliged to decree the establishment of revolutionary armies (on 9 September 1793), these shock troops of terrorism were the most powerful example of the threat to government authority represented by sans-culotte

activism. Once the apparatus of the Terror was consolidated under the central direction of the Committee on Public Safety, they were suppressed.

**Proceedings of the National Convention (5 September 1793)**

The president [Robespierre] declares that a great number of Parisian citizens request permission to file into the chamber and to present a petition by delegation.

The delegation is introduced; the mayor and several municipal officers are at its head.

*The mayor of Paris:* “Citizen representatives, Paris has not yet been without the means of subsistence. But for six weeks the fear of shortages has been bringing crowds of citizens to the bakers’ doors every night. This fear is based on the fact that Paris is now fed only from one daily delivery to the next. The lack of any reserve stocks stems from the fact that the laws governing provisioning are not executed; it is also the result of the selfishness and ill will of rich owners of grain and this evil is common to all the large cities. The people, tired of these machinations, comes to you to present its resolution. The commune’s attorney is charged with reading the petition of the citizens of Paris to you.”

*Chaumette:* “Citizen legislators, the citizens of Paris, weary of a situation that has too long been uncertain and wavering, want to settle their fate once and for all.

“The tyrants of Europe and the internal enemies of the state viciously persist in their hideous scheme to starve the French people in order to vanquish it, and to force it into the shameful act of bartering its liberty and sovereignty for a piece of bread—something which it will assuredly never do. (A unanimous *No! No!* is heard.)

“New seigneurs, no less cruel, no less greedy, no less insolent than the old, have risen up in the ruins of feudalism; they have leased or bought the properties of their former masters, and continue to follow the paths beaten by crime, to speculate on public misery, to stifle the resources of abundance, and to tyrannize the destroyers of tyranny.

“Another class, as greedy, as criminal as the first, has gained control of basic necessities; you have struck at them, but you have only dazed them; and they continue their plunder in the very shadow of the laws.

“You have passed wise laws, which promise happiness. But they are not executed because the power needed to execute them is lacking, and if you do not create it promptly, they run the risk of falling into decrepitude almost at birth.
"At this very moment, the enemies of the country raise their knives against it, knives already stained with its blood. You control the arts, the arts obey, and in republican hands metal changes into tyrannicidal weapons; but where are the arms that must apply these weapons to the traitors' breasts?

"Hidden internal enemies, with the word liberty on their lips, stem the flow of life. Despite your benevolent laws, they close granaries, and coolly engage in the heinous calculation of how much a famine, a riot, a massacre is worth to them. Your spirit breaks at the thought; you give the keys of the granaries and the infernal ledgers of these monsters back to administrators. But where is the strong arm that will vigorously turn the key that is fatal to traitors? Where is the proud and immovable being, unyielding to any kind of intrigue and corruption, who will tear up the pages of the book written with the blood of the people, and turn it immediately into a death sentence against those who are starving the people? (Applause.)

"Every day we learn of new betrayals, new crimes; every day we are disturbed by the discovery and the reappearance of new conspiracies; every day new disturbances trouble the republic and are ready to drag it into their stormy whirlwinds, hurling it into the bottomless abyss of centuries to come. But where is the powerful being whose terrible cry will reawaken sleeping justice—or rather justice paralyzed, stupefied by the clamor of factions—and force it at last to strike off criminal heads? Where is the powerful being who will crush all these reptiles who corrupt everything they touch, and whose venomous bites stir up our citizens, transforming their political assemblies into gladiatorial arenas where each passion, each interest, finds apologists and an army?

"It is time, legislators, to put a stop to the impious struggle that has lasted since 1789, between the children of the nation and those who have abandoned it. Your fate, and ours, is tied to an unchanging establishment of the republic. We must either destroy its enemies, or be destroyed by them. They have thrown down the gauntlet in the midst of the people, and the people is taking it up. They have stirred up agitation. They have sought to separate and divide the mass of the citizens, in order to crush the people and to avoid being crushed by it themselves. Today the mass of the people must destroy them without resources, by its own weight and will.

"And you, Mountain forever renowned in the pages of history, be the Sinai of Frenchmen! Cast with thunder and lightening the eternal decrees of justice and of the people's will! Steadfast amidst the storms conjured up by the aristocracy, stir yourselves and tremble at the people's voice. The pent-up love of the public good has seethed in your loins long enough; let it burst forth with fury! Sainted Mountain! Become a volcano whose burning
lava destroys forever the hopes of the evil and sears the hearts in which the idea of royalty is still found.

“No more quarter, no more mercy for traitors. (The unanimous cry, No! No! resounds throughout the chamber.) If we do not forestall them, they will forestall us. Between them and us, let us throw up the barrier of eternity. (Applause.)

“Patriots from all departments, and the people of Paris in particular, have shown patience enough up to now. We have been playing; but the day of justice and anger has come. (Applause.)

“Legislators, the immense gathering of citizens who assembled yesterday and today in the Commune building, and in the square outside it, passed only one resolution, and a delegation brings it before you. It is, Food, and to get it, force for the law. In consequence, we are charged to demand the formation of the revolutionary army which you have already decreed, and which the intrigue and dread of the guilty have aborted. (Unanimous applause breaks out several times.) Let this army form its core in Paris immediately and without delay, and let it be enlarged, in every department through which it travels, by all men who want a republic one and indivisible. Let this army be followed by an incorruptible and formidable tribunal, and by the fatal instrument which at a single stroke severs both the conspiracies and the days of their authors; let it be charged with forcing avarice and cupidity to cough up the wealth of the land, inexhaustible wet nurse of all children; let it bear these words on its standards, and let this be the order of every moment: Peace to men of good will, war on those who starve people, protection for the weak; war on tyrants, justice, and no oppression. Finally, let this army be composed in such a way that it can leave forces sufficient enough to restrain evil-minded people in all cities.

“Legislators, you have declared France to be in a state of revolution until its independence is assured; this decree must not have been passed in vain. Hercules is ready, put the club in his strong arms again, and soon the land of liberty will be purged of all the brigands infesting it. The country will breathe again. The people’s provisions will be assured.

“We expect to see the aristocracy renew its efforts in order to revoke its death sentence, or at least to obtain a reprieve; the most cunning and subtle objections are going to be made in every political assembly; provisions for this army, the dangers that it could pose for liberty, are going to be talked about; all of the hackneyed commonplaces will be repeated, and we will answer that as for its provisions, not a grain of wheat will be consumed in excess of what is consumed now; there will not be extra mouths to feed, but simply mouths to feed elsewhere. The dangers that it will present to
liberty? This army will be composed of republicans, and if some audacious person dares to say 'my army,' he will immediately be put to death. As for other objections, there will be only one reply to make. The welfare of the people has been deferred for too long, it is time for its enemies to be defeated.'

Lively applause breaks out in all parts of the room and the galleries, and lasts for several minutes.

_The president, speaking to the delegation:_ "Liberty will outlive the intrigues and schemes of conspirators. The solicitude of the Convention reaches out to the ills of the people. Let good citizens unite, let them make a last effort: the land of liberty, sullied by the presence of its enemies, is going to be freed from them. Today their death sentence is pronounced, and tomorrow aristocracy will cease to exist.

"The Convention will take your demands into consideration; it welcomes you to participate in this session."

_Chaumette:_ "I must add some observations to the petition that I just presented to you. Yesterday the General Council of the Commune, together with the class of the worthy poor who filled its meeting hall and the square outside the Commune building, attended to the means of providing for their most pressing needs. We have observed that the decrease in the deliveries of basic necessities contributes to growing fears of famine and to rising prices of these very supplies. We have realized that the majority of those who grow market vegetables are in league to starve Paris by stashing them away in their storehouses. We have seen a carefully thought-out plan to destroy, through starvation, the people who made the revolution. We have looked at the map of the outskirts of Paris, and we have seen lands that serve the purposes of luxury, gardens, and parks, not one of which provides for the common utility.

"We demand that all gardens that have become national lands subject to sale be usefully cultivated. We beg you to look finally at the immense garden of the Tuileries; republican eyes will rest with greater pleasure on this former domain of the crown when it produces basic necessities. Would it not be better to grow the plants which hospitals need there than to let statues, trees in the shape of _fleurs-de-lys_, and other objects that were the accessories of the luxury and the pride of kings, remain?"

The delegation is formally admitted to the session.

It is followed by an immense number of citizens, who present themselves at the bar and enter one by one to the sound of applause and to the cheering of the assembly and the galleries. They position themselves on the tiers at the right side. Soon the whole floor is covered with citizens, both men and women: the cry _Long Live the Republic!_ is heard several times. Citizens are seen in the middle of the crowd carrying placards bear-
ing these words: *War on tyrants, war on aristocrats, war on those who starve the people*, etc.

*Moise-Bayle:* “I am turning into a motion all the measures proposed in the petition of the citizens of Paris. . . .”

There is applause, and a general demand for a vote. Publication of the petition is decreed.

*Raffron:* “I demand that the Ministry of the Interior be ordered to take all necessary measures for the formation of the revolutionary army, beginning today.”

*Dussaulx:* “I demand that the Champs Elysées be converted to useful cultivation, as well as the Tuileries.”

*Billaud-Varennes:* “By taking advantage of the energy of the people, we will finally exterminate the enemies of the revolution. We will lack neither provisions nor plots of land to grow them; what is more important, and what we must hope for, is that all the evil-minded disappear from the face of the earth. At last it is time, as we observed at the Convention; it is time, and more than time, that we settle the fate of the revolution; and indeed we must congratulate ourselves, since the very misfortunes of the people exalt its energy, and put us in a position to exterminate our enemies. I also wish to turn the proposed measures into a motion; but they are not sufficient. The moment to act has come, the time for deliberation has passed. All your enemies must be put under arrest this very day. (Applause.) I heard it said again yesterday that three thousand inspired men did not exist in Paris. Well! Let us show these persons that the whole people is as inspired as we are, that it is ready to march against its enemies, and that from today liberty will be assured. . . . If revolutions drag on, it is because only half measures are ever taken. Let us leave it to feeble souls to worry about the results of the revolution. We who estimate everything, who see the grand vision of what it must produce for the happiness of the people, let us advance with bold step along the route we have set ourselves. Let us save the people: it will aid us; it wants liberty whatever the price. Let us crush the enemies of the revolution, and from this very day the government takes action, the laws are executed, the lot of the people is strengthened, liberty is saved.

“In short, I demand the most prompt arrest of all suspected persons. . . .

“With regard to the organization of the revolutionary army, I demand that the minister of war be required forthwith to present a plan for its organization, and that we refer it to the municipality to be put into effect starting today. I demand that this decree be sent by extraordinary messengers so that the same army may be formed in all the departments, and our enemies finally destroyed. . . .”

*Danton:* “I agree with other members, notably Billaud-Varennes (ap-
plause), that we need to know how to profit from the sublime fervor of the people which crowds in around us. I know that when the people puts its needs forward, when it offers to march against its enemies, no measures are necessary beyond those the people itself presents—for the national spirit has dictated them. I think it would be a good thing for the Committee [of Public Safety] to make its report, to devise and propose the means of execution; but I also see that there is no reason not to decree a revolutionary army this very instant (applause). If possible, let us enlarge these measures.

“You have just proclaimed to the whole of France that it is still in a real and active state of revolution. Well, this revolution must be consummated. Never be afraid of agitation that could tempt counterrevolutionaries in Paris. Undoubtedly, they would like to extinguish the flame of liberty where it burns most ardently; but the immense mass of true patriots, of sans-culottes who have crushed their enemies a hundred times, still exists; it is ready to move into action. Know how to lead it and it will again confound and foil all intrigues. A revolutionary army is not enough; be revolutionary yourselves. Reflect upon the fact that industrious men who live by the sweat of their brow cannot attend the sections; that it is only in the absence of true patriots that intrigue can take over the section meetings. Decree, therefore, that two large section-meetings be held each week, and that the man of the people who attends these political assemblies receive just remuneration for the time they take from his work. (Applause.)

“It is also good that you proclaim to all our enemies that we are determined to be continually and completely prepared for them. You have ordered thirty million [francs] to be put at the disposition of the minister of war for the manufacture of weapons; decree that these emergency manufactures will only cease when the nation has given a gun to each citizen. Let us declare the firm resolution of having as many guns and almost as many cannon as there are sans-culottes. (Applause.) Let it be the republic that puts a gun into the hands of the citizen, of the true patriot; let it say to him: ‘The country entrusts you with this weapon for its defense; you will represent it every month, and when you are required to do so by the national authority.’ Let a gun be the most sacred thing among us; let each of us lose his life rather than his gun. (Applause) I therefore demand that you decree at least 100 million [francs] for the manufacture of weapons of all kinds; for, if we had all had arms, we would all have marched. It is our need of weapons which enslaves us. The country in danger will never be short of citizens. (Same applause.)

“But punishments remain to be meted out, both to the internal enemies already imprisoned and to those you have yet to seize. The revolutionary tribunal must be divided into a large enough number of sections (several
voices: It's done!) that every day an aristocrat, a criminal, may pay for his crimes with his head. (Applause.)

"I therefore demand that Billaud's proposition first be put to the vote;

2. That it similarly be decreed that the sections of Paris hold special assemblies on Sundays and Thursdays, and that each citizen participating in these meetings who wishes to claim payment to meet his needs receive it at the rate of forty sous for each assembly;

3. That it be decreed by the Convention that 100 million [francs] be put at the disposal of the minister of war for the manufacture of arms, and notably of guns; that these special manufactures receive every encouragement and support that is necessary, and that they conclude their work only when France has given a gun to each good citizen.

"Finally, I demand that a report be drawn up on the means of increasing the activity of the revolutionary tribunal to a great extent. Let the people see its enemies fall; let it see that the Convention attends to its needs. The people is great, and it offers remarkable proof of its greatness this very moment. For although it has suffered from famine that is artificially created and designed to make it turn to counterrevolution, it has recognized that it is suffering in its own cause, and under despotism it would have exterminated all governments. (Applause.)

"Such is the character of the French, enlightened by four years of revolution.

"Let tribute be paid to you, exalted people! You unite greatness with perseverance. You are obstinate in your desire for liberty. You fast for liberty, and you must attain it. We will march with you, your enemies will be routed; you will be free!"

Universal applause breaks out in all parts of the room simultaneously; cries of Long Live the Republic! are heard repeatedly. All the citizens who fill the hall and the galleries rise as if impelled by the same force; some raise their hands into the air; others shake their hats; the enthusiasm seems universal.

Danton's three motions are carried.

Cheering is heard again. The room resounds with cries of Long Live the Republic! . . . The president announces a delegation composed of representatives of the Parisian sections and of the Society of Jacobins, so-called. The delegation is introduced.

The spokesman: "We come before you to present an address of the Society of Friends of Liberty and Equality meeting at [the former convent of] the Jacobins, together with the representatives of the forty-eight sections.

"You who have received the people's mandate, the country's dangers are extreme and the remedies must be also. You have decreed that the French shall rise up as one to drive far from our borders the brigands who ravage
our countryside. But the satellites of tyrants, the savage islanders, the tigers of the North who bring destruction upon us, are less to be feared than the traitors who stir us up from within, who divide us, who arm us one against another. Impunity has emboldened them. The people loses heart as it sees the most guilty escape the nation's vengeance; all the friends of liberty are indignant to see that the fomenters of federalism have not yet been punished for their crimes. In public places, republicans speak with indignation of Brissot's crimes, pronouncing his name with nothing but horror. We remember that this monster was spewed forth by England in 1789 to upset our revolution and to hinder its march.

"We demand that he be tried, as well as his accomplices. (Applause.)"

"The people is indignant to see that privileges still exist in the republic. What about it! The Vergniauds, the Genonnes and other criminals, stripped by their treasons of the dignity of the people's representatives, have a palace for a prison, while poor sans-culottes groan in dungeons under the daggers of federalists! . . . (Applause.)"

"It is time that equality pass the scythe over every head. It is time to terrorize all conspirators. Well then! Legislators, make terror the order of the day. (Enthusiastic applause.) Let us be in a state of revolution, since counterrevolution is everywhere plotted by our enemies. (Same applause.) Let the blade of the law hang over all who are guilty!

"We demand that a revolutionary army be established, that it be divided into a number of sections, that each be followed by a fearsome tribunal, and by the terrible instrument executing the vengeance of the laws. We demand that this army and its tribunals continue their functions until the republic's soil is purged of traitors, down to the death of the last conspirator. (Numerous outbursts of applause from citizens present at the session.)"

"Before doing anything else, banish this class burdened with crimes which still insolently occupies the highest positions in our armies, where they have only distinguished themselves by their betrayals since the beginning of the war. Nobles were always the irreconcilable enemies of equality and of the whole of humanity; to deprive them of all means of increasing the hordes of our enemies, we demand that they be imprisoned until peace is restored; this race thirsty for blood must henceforth see none flow but its own. The departed spirits of victims heaped up by betrayals demand a spectacular revenge, and the voice of the people imposes it upon you as law." (Applause from many sides follows the reading of this address.)

The president, speaking to the delegation: "Citizens, it is the people that has made the revolution; it is up to you in particular to assure the execution of the prompt measures that must save the patrie. You ask for the establishment of a revolutionary army; your wish is achieved. Already the Convention, heedful of everything that can intimidate and foil foreign powers and their agents, has decided that this army will soon be formed.
"Yes, courage and justice are the order of the day. All good citizens, instead of trembling, will bless the moment when the Convention took measures to secure the fate of the revolution at last. All Frenchmen will bless the society to which you belong, the society in whose name, together with that of the city of Paris, you come to ask for these imperative and definitive measures. All criminals will perish on the scaffold, the Convention has solemnly sworn it. Already it has taken steps to increase the activity of the revolutionary tribunal. Tomorrow it will busy itself with increasing the number of judges and juries.

"The Convention applauds your patriotism; it welcomes you to participate in the session."

The delegation is introduced and files past, to the sound of applause. . . . [Turbulent discussion continued until, late in the afternoon, a spokesmen for the Committee of Public Safety appeared to address the assembly.]

Barère, in the name of the Committee of Public Safety: "For several days everything has seemed to point to a movement afoot in Paris. Intercepted letters, destined either for abroad or for aristocrats within the country, told of constant endeavors made by their agents to incite an immediate uprising in what they call the big city. Well! They will have this last uprising—(enthusiastic applause)—but it will be organized and carried out legally by a revolutionary army that will finally put into effect the mighty slogan we owe to the Commune of Paris: 'Make terror the order of the day.' This is the way to make the royalists, the moderates, and the counter-revolutionary rabble that perturbs you disappear in an instant. The royalists want blood; well! they will have the blood of conspirators, of the Brissots, the Marie-Antoinettes. They want to stir up a movement, well! they are going to feel its effects. We are not speaking of illegal acts of vengeance; special tribunals are going to bring this about. You will not be shocked by the means that we present to you when you understand that these criminals are still conspiring in the recesses of their prisons, that they are the rallying points for our enemies. Brissot has said and written that before his head falls, those of part of the Convention would no longer exist, and that the Mountain would be destroyed. This is the way they seek to use terror to check you in your revolutionary march.

"The royalists want to upset the work of the revolution. Conspirators, the Convention will upset yours! (Enthusiastic applause.)

"They want to destroy the Mountain. Well! The Mountain will annihilate them!

"As early as tomorrow, the Committee will propose measures to create a revolutionary army of six thousand men in Paris, with twelve hundred gunners. (Applause.)

"Royalists cry out every day to the one and indivisible republic—they want to destroy it. They hoard basic necessities or obstruct markets—and
they accuse the Convention of these acts. They speculate, and degrade the assignats—and they lay the blame on the Convention. They put the squeeze on the flow of provisions near Paris—and there they are inveighing against the Convention which takes steps every day to facilitate and accelerate new deliveries. Royalists surrender our ports to the English—and they have it said by traitors and published in the Midi that the Convention wants to surrender the ports. Royalists instigate agitation around Paris; they lead poor citizens astray or borrow their names and clothing—then they slander the sans-culottes and the Convention.

“What is required to put an end to so many crimes and conspiracies? A revolutionary army that sweeps away conspirators; an army that is organized in the same way as battalions of national guards, and can therefore be mustered today and mobilized tomorrow. We must have an army that carries out all the measures of public safety to be decreed by the Convention. We must have an army, not only for Paris, but wherever counterrevolutionary movements make themselves feared.

“For four years the aristocracy has sought, either with gold or with intrigue, by imaginary terrors or calumnies, to establish itself on the territory of this vast city that witnessed the birth of liberty. For four years, its soil has beaten them back. But the counterrevolutionaries have formed a ring around Paris. Under the pretext of spending the summer in the country, they have gone to live in the châteaux that arrogance and feudalism have erected. This is where the counterrevolutionaries gather, where symbols of royalty, the religious images of these alleged citizens, have been found. There these men, scattered among the villages, alarm the people, inciting them to draw up petitions concerning food supplies, whilst the harvest has been more than abundant everywhere.

“What a moment for them to have chosen to spread from one village to another these terrors that impede and delay the provisioning of Paris! Yesterday and today the mayor and minister of the interior declared to us that deliveries were declining.

“You had taken a wise measure providing that the Maximum would be the same in all departments. Well! This is the moment they have chosen to create agitation over food supplies. They wanted to surround this law with suspicion and fears at the very moment of its inception, because they knew it would be effective.

“So far, the Committee of Public Safety has been able to prepare only a fraction of the measures that it must propose to you.

“But you have already adopted some very good ones. The measure relative to the arrest of suspected persons has been prompted by the representatives of the sections and by the members of the excellent Society of Jacobins, who watch night and day over the public safety. The same patriots are busy drawing up others.
“We limit ourselves to proposing the raising of a revolutionary army, and a useful and urgent means of removing from Paris this enormous crowd of military men who have quit their posts or who are not on active duty.”

39. The Law of Suspects (17 September 1793)

Action against persons suspected of revolutionary activity was one of the chief demands of the crowd that marched upon the Convention on 5 September 1793. Enacted in response to that demand, the Law of Suspects provided the principal legal basis for the Terror.

1. Immediately after the publication of the present decree, all suspected persons within the territory of the Republic and still at liberty shall be placed in custody.

2. The following are deemed suspected persons: 1st, those who, by their conduct, associations, talk, or writings have shown themselves partisans of tyranny or federalism and enemies of liberty; 2nd, those who are unable to justify, in the manner prescribed by the decree of 21 March last, their means of existence and the performance of their civic duties; 3rd, those to whom certificates of patriotism have been refused; 4th, public functionaries suspended or dismissed from their positions by the National Convention or by its commissioners, and not reinstated, especially those who have been or are to be dismissed by virtue of the decree of 14 August last; 5th, those former nobles, husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, sons or daughters, brothers or sisters, and agents of the émigrés, who have not steadily manifested their devotion to the Revolution; 6th, those who have emigrated during the interval between 1 July, 1789, and the publication of the decree of 30 March–8 April, 1792, even though they may have returned to France within the period established by said decree or prior thereto.

3. The Watch Committees1 established according to the decree of 21 March last, or those substituted therefor, either by orders of the representatives of the people dispatched to the armies and the departments, or by virtue of particular decrees of the National Convention, are charged with

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1. The Watch Committees (comités de surveillance) were initially spontaneous instruments of political vigilance formed by revolutionary activists at the local level. Their existence was regularized by the Convention on 21 March 1793. The Law of Suspects greatly expanded their legal powers.
drafting, each in its own arrondissement, a list of suspected persons, with issuing warrants of arrest against them, and with having seals placed on their papers. Commanders of the public force to whom such warrants are remitted shall be required to put them into effect immediately, under penalty of dismissal.

4. The members of the committee may order the arrest of any individual only if seven are present, and only by absolute majority of votes.

5. Individuals arrested as suspects shall be taken first to the jails of the place of their detention; in default of jails, they shall be kept under surveillance in their respective dwellings.

6. Within the following week, they shall be transferred to national buildings, which the departmental administrations shall be required to designate and to have prepared for such purpose immediately after the receipt of the present decree.

7. The prisoners may have their absolutely essential belongings brought into said buildings; they shall remain there under guard until the peace.

8. The expenses of custody shall be charged to the prisoners, and shall be divided among them equally: such custody shall be confided preferably to fathers of families and to the relatives of citizens who are at or may go to the frontiers. The salary therefor is established, for each man of the guard, at the value of one and one-half days of labor.

9. The Watch Committees shall dispatch to the Committee of General Security of the National Convention, without delay, the list of persons whom they have arrested, with the reasons for their arrest and with the papers they have seized in such connection.

10. If there is occasion, the civil and criminal courts may have detained, in custody, and dispatched to the jails above stated, those who are accused of offences with regard to which it has been declared that there was no occasion for indictment or who have been acquitted of charges brought against them.

40. Saint-Just, Report to the Convention on Behalf of the Committee of Public Safety (10 October 1793)

The youngest member of the Convention, Louis-Antoine Léon de Saint-Just was also one of its greatest orators and most zealous theorists of revolutionary government. Idealistic and authoritarian, he remained closely associated with Robespierre throughout the period of the Terror. From Réimpression de l'ancien Moniteur, 32 vols. (Paris, 1858–1863), vol. 18, pp. 106–10. Translated for this volume by Caroline Ford and Keith Michael Baker.