1978

Jacobin General; Jean Baptiste Jourdan and the French Revolution; 1792 - 1799. (Volumes I and II).

Lawrence Joseph Fischer
Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses/3228

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Historical Dissertations and Theses by an authorized administrator of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact gradetd@lsu.edu.
INFORMATION TO USERS

This material was produced from a microfilm copy of the original document. While the most advanced technological means to photograph and reproduce this document have been used, the quality is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help you understand markings or patterns which may appear on this reproduction.

1. The sign or "target" for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is "Missing Page(s)". If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting thru an image and duplicating adjacent pages to insure you complete continuity.

2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a large round black mark, it is an indication that the photographer suspected that the copy may have moved during exposure and thus cause a blurred image. You will find a good image of the page in the adjacent frame.

3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., was part of the material being photographed the photographer followed a definite method in "sectioning" the material. It is customary to begin photoing at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue photoing from left to right in equal sections with a small overlap. If necessary, sectioning is continued again — beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.

4. The majority of users indicate that the textual content is of greatest value, however, a somewhat higher quality reproduction could be made from "photographs" if essential to the understanding of the dissertation. Silver prints of "photographs" may be ordered at additional charge by writing the Order Department, giving the catalog number, title, author and specific pages you wish reproduced.

5. PLEASE NOTE: Some pages may have indistinct print. Filmed as received.

University Microfilms International
300 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106 USA
St. John's Road, Tyler's Green
High Wycombe, Bucks, England HP10 8HR

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
FISCHER, LAWRENCE JOSEPH
JACOBIN GENERAL; JEAN BAPTISTE JOURDAN AND
THE FRENCH REVOLUTION; 1792 - 1799. (VOLUMES
I AND II)

THE LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AND AGRICULTURAL
AND MECHANICAL COL., PH.D., 1978

University
Microfilms
International

300 N. ZEEB ROAD, ANN ARBOR, MI 48106

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
JACOBIN GENERAL: JEAN BAPTISTE JOURDAN
AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION; 1792 - 1799

VOLUME I

A Dissertation

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

in

The Department of History

by

Lawrence Joseph Fischer
B.S., Loyola College of Baltimore, 1969
M.A., University of Delaware, 1974
August 1978
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work would have been impossible without the help, encouragement, and patience of Dr. James Hardy, and without the editorial assistance of Dr. Gary Crump, Dr. Patrick Lipscomb, Dr. Karl Roider Jr. and Dr. T. Harry Williams. I would also like to thank the staffs of the French Archives de la Guerre at the Chateau de Vincennes and of the Louisiana State University Library for their assistance in researching this book. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the many students who have tolerated my grading and my lectures while I have been a graduate assistant at L.S.U.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## VOLUME I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I. Youth and Early Career</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The Revolutionary Army in 1793</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The Beginnings of the Revolutionary Army</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Jourdan's Predecessors; The Hondschoote Campaign</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>II. Terror and Generalship</strong></td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>III. Commander in Chief of the Army of the Nord</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Wattignies</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The Aftermath of Wattignies; Dismissal</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## VOLUME II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>V. The Year of Victory; 1794</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Fleurus</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The Completion of the Revolutionary Army</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The Advance to the Rhine</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VI. Limited War; The Campaign of 1795</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The Operations Around Mayence</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. War and Depression</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VII. The Campaign of 1796</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The Advance</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The Retreat</td>
<td>346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VIII. Jacobin Politician; 1797-1799</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Councilor in the &quot;500&quot;.</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Stockach</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Towards Brumaire; The Failure of the Jacobins</td>
<td>422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IX. Epilogue</strong></td>
<td>454</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**                                                          | 462  |

**MAPS**                                                                 | 469  |

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
This work is a study of the totality of revolutionary warfare through the eyes of a general who waged it. Revolutionary warfare during the French Revolution was a unique condition. In addition to the normal problems of strategy, tactics, and administration, it confronted its generals with stupendous problems of personnel, organization, logistics, and political control. Jean Baptiste Jourdan faced all of these problems throughout his difficult career as a general and an army commander during the conflicts of the French Revolution from 1792 to 1799. He assumed command of his first army at the height of the Terror when these problems were most acute, and while other generals buckled under the pressures of their commands to be arrested and often guillotined, Jourdan led his army to a series of victories which saved the Revolution from extinction. He was integrally involved in the creation of the French revolutionary army and in the development of the new methods of waging war which enabled the Revolution to survive, and which later allowed Napoleon to conquer half of Europe. In short, Jourdan's career is a paradigm of the way other generals of the period dealt with the problems of revolutionary warfare. In rev
searching this work, the author has relied most heavily upon the resources of the French War Archives at the Chateau de Vincennes, and upon several printed document collections such as the Correspondence Generale de Carnot.
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to investigate the career of a general of the French Revolution: Jean Baptiste Jourdan. Jourdan's career as a soldier, politician and revolutionary is of importance and interest on a number of counts. He was a general officer throughout the conflicts of the Revolution from 1792 to 1799—a period of warfare unique in military history. War during the vast and earthshattering upheavals of the French Revolution involved problems unparalleled in their newness and intensity. In addition to the normal difficulties of strategy and tactics, administration and supply, the revolution confronted its commanders with stupendous problems of personnel, organization, logistics, and political control. A revolutionary general such as Jourdan was obliged to be a singular type of commander; he had to be a front line minister of war as well as a battle captain. His task was to organize, staff, and maintain a brand new army employing an innovative and untried system of warfare under conditions of acute political and social turmoil at the same time he was attempting to defeat a competent and dangerous enemy. The Revolution had destroyed the traditional; Jourdan's task was to help create the modern.

Because Jourdan served as an officer, and usually as an army commander, during the long, difficult struggles
of the Revolution, his career is an ideal paradigm of the way other generals of the period dealt with the problems of revolutionary warfare. He assumed command of his first army during the height of the Terror, and while other generals buckled under the extreme pressures of their commands to be arrested and often guillotined, Jourdan survived the pressure, led his army to victory—and kept his head. His triumphs at Wattignies and Fleurus enabled the Revolution to survive the attempts of the First Coalition to destroy it by military force. He was integrally involved in the creation of the French revolutionary army and in the development of the new methods of total war that caused the Revolution to survive, enabled Napoleon to conquer half of Europe—and have influenced the waging of war to the present day. He was a key figure both as an army commander and a politician in the miasma of Directorial politics until Napoleon Bonaparte liquidated the Directory in 1799. In short, he was an important individual militarily at every stage of the Revolution. Moreover, Jourdan was an extremely interesting person on his own merits.

Contemporaries of Jourdan varied greatly in their opinions of his character and abilities. Napoleon considered Jourdan a mediocre general and nicknamed him the "anvil" because he was always getting beaten in battle. Paul Barras, one of France's Directors from 1795 to 1799 believed
Jourdan to be "vile, cowardly, and without talent". ¹ Louis Marie Le Revelliere-Lepeaux, one of Barras' colleagues on the Directory, was more specific: Jourdan was a man "of small ability incapable of putting unity into his operations ... a fumbler, irresolute, losing his head at the first check and not knowing what to do except draw back, or rather fly in disorder;" his victories were due to "lucky accidents". ² Yet those who worked closely with Jourdan during the revolution had a completely opposite view of his competence. Lazare Carnot, the famous "Organizer of Victory" during the Terror, considered Jourdan an able commander and a "brave and honest sans-culotte". ³ Pierre Garrau, government commissioner with the French armies in Germany, esteemed Jourdan as a good republican, a man possessing military talent, "and that which is infinitely more precious ... the esteem and confidence of his brothers-in-arms". ⁴ Garrau's colleague Louis Joubert, long an associate of Jourdan, echoed Garrau's praise: Jourdan was both a good general and a man greatly loved by his subordinates to whom he was "their friend".

⁴. A.G. Bl 64, Garrau to Carnot, 11/14/95.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Moreover, "his glory is only the secondary motivating force in his conduct;" love of country and of liberty were "the principles which essentially motivated him."\(^5\) Indeed Bonaparte while on St. Helena revised his pejorative opinion of Jourdan, commenting to his followers that he had treated Jourdan harshly and unfairly - that Jourdan was a better man than Napoleon had believed.\(^6\)

Yet this study proposes to do more than merely establish definitively Jourdan's relative merit as a battle captain. It seeks, using Jourdan's career as a sort of barometer, to answer various questions about the problems of military command during the revolution. How did a general keep his head, particularly during the Terror? Was it sufficient that he be a skilled commander, or were other qualifications necessary, and in the latter event what were those qualifications? What role did Jourdan play in the creation of history's first "peoples' army" and in the development of the revolution's version of total war? What was the nature of his relations with the various revolutionary regimes - especially the Committee of Public Safety: what were his politics, his ideas, and his personal relations with leaders such as Barras and Carnot? What influence did economics and logistics have upon his operations, and how did

---


this influence change from regime to regime? In short, what was it like to be an army commander during history's most important political and social revolution?

To answer these questions the author has relied most heavily upon primary sources. The abundant resources of the French War Archives at the Chateau de Vincennes have proven to be especially valuable. These include the general day-to-day correspondence of the various armies which Jourdan led, his correspondence with the various governments and their officials "on mission" with the armies, his order registers and his unpublished memoires. In addition, there are several published document collections and memoires written by Jourdan's contemporaries which have been quite helpful in researching his career.

The resulting work is not a mere narration of Jourdan's campaigns and battles, for such a work would ignore the problems of personnel, logistics, organization and politics which he spent most of his time facing. Rather, it is an investigation of the totality of revolutionary warfare through the eyes of a general who waged it.
I. YOUTH AND EARLY CAREER

Unlike most members of the lower middle class who were born in eighteenth century France, Jean Baptiste Jourdan's date and place of birth are both known. He first saw the light of day in a small wooden house with a black facade in the old quarter of Limoges on April 29, 1762. His father, Roch Jourdan, was a surgeon, descended from a Provencal family with its roots in the rolling, wine-growing country near Aix-en-Provence. It seems that as a young man Roch Jourdan became acquainted with a master surgeon named Foreau. The Foreau family took a liking to Roch, and so they helped him start his own surgical practice in the Foreau's home town of Limoges. Roch repaid the favor by marrying Foreau's daughter, Jeanne. Shortly after the marriage Madame Jourdan gave birth to Jean Baptiste, the family's only surviving child.¹

Contemporary sociologists would consider Jean Baptiste a disadvantaged child. There is nothing to indicate that his early years were anything but hard ones, complete with poverty and emotional trauma. When he was barely two years old his mother died in childbirth. Roch attempted to raise the boy alone for a few years, but evidently he believed himself unequal to the task. In spite of the fact that

¹ A.G. Notice of birth in Jourdan's personal folder. Biographie Universelle (Michaud), XXI, p. 244.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
there were other relatives living in Limoges, Roch decided to put his son under the care and tutelage of his brother, the abbé Laurent Jourdan, who ran a small boarding school for boys in the tiny Provencal village of Beauregueil. How old Jean Baptiste was when this occurred is unknown; it is likely that he was still quite young. He scarcely had adjusted to his new life with the abbé when he suffered another blow. His father died. At the age of nine he became an impoverished orphan.

Life as an orphan in a boarding school in a tiny agricultural village in the hills of Provence could not have been terribly pleasant, or secure. The abbé Jourdan was described as being a man "of strong personality doubled with a difficult character", unpleasant traits in a man dedicated to a religious calling. The abbé doubtlessly did not leave Jean Baptiste much room for independent development. On the other hand, the abbé may well have instilled in him a respect for authority so crucial to his later career. It is argued that Roch Jourdan entrusted his son to the abbé to insure that Jean Baptiste received a good education. The education doubtlessly consisted of the basics: reading, writing, arithmetic, plus the inevitable heavy doses of Catholic theology. Indeed the abbé considered Jean Baptiste a possible candidate for the priesthood. If so, either

a lack of money or Jean Baptiste's resistance killed this idea. Instead, the abbé apprenticed him to another member of the family, Jean Francois Jourdan, a cloth merchant in Lyons. At fifteen, Jean Baptiste collected his meager belongings and moved to Lyons to work. There he served as an apprentice salesclerk. Laboring from dawn to dusk for a man who allegedly was a hard taskmaster, he opened his uncle's shop in the morning, did stock and maintenance work, and showed customers his uncle's cloth. The hours were long, the work tedious, the punishments frequent, and the rewards few. 3

Jean Baptiste endured life as an apprentice shopkeeper for about a year. Then, some time in 1778, he fled his uncle's clothshop and enlisted in the Auxerrois regiment of the French Royal Army, then destined for service in America.4

Why did he reject shopkeeping and the priesthood for a career as a common infantryman in an old regime mercenary regiment? Possibly Jourdan was an unhappy young man, discontented with his position as a shopkeeper's apprentice because it was beneath his bourgeois heritage and education.5


5. Ibid, pp. 28-34.
That Jourdan was discontented there can be no doubt; there had been little in his life to produce contentment. However, the rest of this argument is open to debate. The assumption is that a person's heritage is the decisive factor in determining his social standing and his outlook on life. But is this in fact the case? Are not a person's experiences, as well as his actual wealth and economic standing within the community, more important? It is difficult to believe that Jean Baptiste, motherless at two, a virtual orphan at six, was ever conscious of himself as bourgeois. His position, as he saw it, was that of a propertyless orphan boy possessing a rudimentary education. In short, his class standing was similar to what the Revolution would call sans-culotte. Secondly, it is hard to conceive of a young man, conscious of himself as bourgeois, attempting to avoid a fall from that class by choosing a career as a lowly foot soldier. Jourdan's motivation for joining the army was probably more basic; he was young, restless, disgusted with both his job and his master. The army offered him both an escape from the drudgery of the clothshop and the prospect of some adventure. He would not have been the first poor boy to run away from a boring existence to seek excitement in the military.

There is little evidence to indicate how Jourdan fared in the Royal army. He apparently was a good enough soldier; there were no black marks against him on his service.
record. He spent the rest of 1778 on the Ile of Rhe where the Auxerrois regiment was encamped before it embarked for the war in America. The regiment's first duty was in the West Indies; Jourdan's first action was in the French capture of Grenada. In September, 1779, his regiment became part of the army of the Marquis d'Estaing, then deployed to besiege Savannah, Georgia. Jourdan doubtlessly participated in the bloody, unsuccessful Franco-American assault on the town that terminated the siege in the favor of the defenders. In 1780 he found himself on St. Vincent aiding in its successful resistance against an army of 4,000 British attackers; in 1781 he fought in the French capture of Tobago. He missed most of the 1782 campaign because of his health. The official diagnosis was that he suffered from a hernia contracted while on duty; it is more probable that he fell victim to an intestinal disorder, an illness that the doctors misdiagnosed, and which plagued him off and on throughout his military career. 6

Jourdan rejoined the army in November, 1782. The remainder of his career in the Royal army appears to have been uneventful. In June, 1784, he was demobilized at Verdun. For a while after he left the military, he apparently was at a loss as to what to do with himself. He wandered through Alsace, possibly seeking work. He later related that

during his wanderings he visited some friends from his old unit; one, seeing his bedraggled appearance, exclaimed in jest: "There is a poor devil of an infantryman who will never wear the pants of a Marshal of France." At that time, nothing could have seemed more unlikely; he was twenty-two years old, penniless, experienced only in clothmaking and soldiering. Desperate, he attempted to get back with his uncle's clothshop. His uncle refused to rehire him, possibly out of pique because he had fled the shop before, possibly because the depressed state of the cloth industry in Lyons in the 1780's did not permit any more workers to be hired.  

Finally Jourdan returned to Limoges. There his relatives and some friends of his late father secured him a job with a cloth merchant named Michael Avanturier. If he felt any dislike at returning to the same sort of career which he had joined the army to escape, he did not show it. Outwardly at least he accepted his lot. As an employee he was described as "punctual, industrious, conscientious, honest:" in short, he was a worker upon whom one could completely rely. And life took a turn for the better. He fell in love with the sister of his boss, Jeanne Nicolas Avanturier, and eventually proposed marriage. There appears to have been some hesitation on the part of the

7. Ibid, pp. 38-9

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
part of the Avanturiers about permitting the marriage. Jeanne was the elder by two years; moreover, at a time when rank and financial standing were all important, Jourdan's background as an orphan and a common foot soldier did not exactly make him an ideal prospect. However things were worked out, and the two were married in a Catholic ceremony on January 22, 1788. The marriage appears to have been a good one, although the lack of any personal papers for Jourdan's private life makes it impossible to judge conclusively. The marriage endured until his death, and produced six children. There is one hint of a scandal; a general Decaen claimed that Jourdan kept a mistress, dressed as an aide-de-camp, with him on the campaign of 1799, but the allegation is not supported by any other evidence.

As for Jordan's physical appearance, curiously enough there is no detailed written description of him to be found. There does exist a portrait of him, painted at some time during the 1790's; he is wearing his uniform of a general of the revolution. The first thing that strikes one about the portrait is that Jourdan does not look like a soldier. Rather he has the appearance of an intellectual or a cleric. His features are sharp and rather delicate; he


9. Phipps, op cit, V, p. 59. Decaen claimed that the soldiers objected to Jourdan's having a mistress with him on the campaign; this statement in itself suffices to cast doubts on Decaen's veracity.
seems younger than the thirty-some odd years of age which he must have been when the picture was painted. He appears to have been of no more than medium height, and on the slender side. His hair was light, sandy blond in color possibly, worn short and straight forward in the revolutionary style. Rather large and striking eyes stare out of the canvas at the viewer. His expression suggests that he was slightly amused by the whole exercise. There is none of the ruggedness in his features that one might expect of a man who was to lead armies under the intense pressures of the Terror; he appears to be anything but stolid or phlegmatic. On the contrary, there is a refinement and sensitivity in his countenance that suggests that he would find those pressures far too intense to endure.

At the outset of the French Revolution Jourdan was enjoying a certain degree of security and prosperity for the first time in his life. His marriage had enabled him, thanks to the generosity of his wife's family, to open up his own dry goods shop in Limoges. He was the father of two young daughters. He was a respectable family man with a circle of relatives and friends. It it was hardly an idyllic existence, it certainly was superior to anything he had had before.

And yet he became an active revolutionary--an apparently irrational decision. Upon closer examination, however, it was not irrational at all. If there was a
common denominator in Jourdan's motivation during his early years, that denominator was frustrated ambition. Jourdan was discontented as an orphan, as an apprentice, and as a foot soldier. It is possible that he considered life as a Limoges shopkeeper not satisfying enough to compensate for the deprivations and sufferings of his earlier years. The revolution offered him the chance to climb the ladder of success a bit higher to a more prestigious position than that of a mere sans-culotte dry goods merchant.10 Secondly, he could have felt no loyalty towards the old regime; it had done nothing for him; indeed in some ways it had hindered his attempts at upwards mobility. Had he desired to make the army his career, for example, he could never have expected to rise to a rank higher than a non-commissioned officer due to his lowly heritage. Thirdly, he had been to America. Possibly his experiences there had instilled in him a taste for republican ideas. Certainly he remained a firm advocate of representative government throughout his life, and this preference may have taken root during the American Revolution. All things considered, then, Jourdan would have acted inconsistently if he had not joined the revolution.

In the summer of 1790 he became a member of the newly formed revolutionary club of Limoges, "Les Amis de la

Constitution". The club was mainly a respectable bourgeois affair, quite moderate in its politics. Jourdan's membership in such an organization is a bit surprising. It is a fact that at approximately the same time as the club's foundation, Jourdan was elected captain of the chasseur company of the Limoges national guard, probably because of his military experience. Perhaps protocol required an officer in the local national guard to be a member of the revolutionary society no matter how undistinguished his background. Jourdan probably welcomed the chance to join the club and further his ambitions. At any rate, he became known as one of the society's "militants"; unfortunately we have no information as to what it was he was militant about.11

In the fall of 1791, the peaceful progress of the revolution in Limoges was interrupted by the threat of war. The Brissotin-Feuillante coalition in the National Assembly, having become convinced that the counterrevolution in alliance with Austria and Prussia was planning a war against the revolution, decreed that 100,000 volunteers be mobilised to help meet the threat. The Assembly called upon the Haute Vienne to raise two volunteer battalions totaling 1,150 men as its contribution to the levée. The administration of the department named Jourdan as one of three men entrusted with executing the levée. His task was not easy. Each volunteer

11. Ibid, pp. 52-4.
was expected to provide his own clothing and equipment—a considerable expense. In addition the prospective volunteers, then as now, were not eager to leave their homes for the less comfortable and secure existence of the army. Nevertheless, Jourdan and his colleagues raised 1,125 of the 1,150 men requested. The second battalion of the department elected Jourdan second lieutenant-colonel—a testimony to his standing with the volunteers. Since many of them had been under his command during his tenure as national guard captain, it is obvious that to a large extent he had won their respect and trust. 12

It was a promising beginning to his new military career. But it was a debut without immediate results. For the next year and a half, he was just one of many obscure lieutenant-colonels in one of many equally obscure volunteer battalions. The 2nd Haute Vienne was sent to the Nord in November, 1791, in spite of the protests of Jourdan and the battalion's commander that it was not yet adequately trained or equipped. There it became part of the army of Flanders under the leadership of Lafayette. To all indications Jourdan spent the spring and summer of 1792 with his battalion at Cambrai, in relative inactivity. He did not see action until September when the battalion was ordered south to join the army of General Dumouriez, then

marching to confront the invading allied army of the Duke of Brunswick. His first action was inauspicious. His battalion took part in a rear-guard combat after Brunswick's forces had surprised a portion of Dumouriez' on the upper Aisne river. The entire French force was routed—or what is more probable—simply broke and ran. Jourdan's role in the rout is not recorded. When Dumouriez marched to join Kellerman at Valmy, the 2nd Haute Vienne was detached some miles away. Jourdan consequently missed this famous "battle" that allowed the revolution a precious year to consolidate itself further. He was present at Jemappes; but because his battalion was part of Harville's division, whose mission it was to flank the enemy's positions rather than assault them directly, he again saw little action. He then took part in Dumouriez' pursuit of the defeated Austrian army—a pursuit that resulted in the temporary conquest of Belgium. He then participated in the siege of Namur. None of these operations resulted in any significant activity for the 2nd Haute Vienne; consequently there was little opportunity for Jourdan to distinguish himself.13

Nevertheless, it appears that he earned his pay during the winter and spring months of 1792-1793. In spite of a rather hard winter marked by bitter cold weather and

supply difficulties of every kind, only eighty men deserted from the 2nd Haute Vienne. This figure, compared with the desertion rates of other volunteer battalions during the same winter, was relatively low. Evidently he did an excellent job training and disciplining the battalion; certainly when he first came to be noticed by the higher echelons of the army, his reputation rested upon his abilities as a disciplinarian. He also remained in touch with the revolutionary society of Limoges, now a Jacobin club; he wrote it several letters describing his experiences in the army, and in one he requested that the society care for the indigent mother of one of his men. And at some point during the winter he became first lieutenant-colonel of his battalion.14

What was the nature of Jourdan's duties as commander of the 2nd Haute Vienne? How did he go about turning peasant volunteers into soldiers? Unfortunately, due to the lack of documentation for this period of Jourdan's career, one cannot answer these questions with certainty. Nonetheless, if one considers the experiences of other officers during this time, one can estimate many of the problems which he had to face and overcome. He first of all had to teach his men how to be soldiers. He had to see

14. Ibid. Information on Jourdan's career during these months is almost nonexistent. The extant correspondence of the Army of the Nord from 1792 to the summer of 1793 is very limited, and until August, 1793, Jourdan is hardly mentioned.
to it that they learned how to march and maneuver in formation, to load and fire a musket, to maintain proper discipline and hygiene in camp. To accomplish this, he had to develop a reliable cadre of officers and non-commissioned officers to assume the actual teaching duties. This was not easy; most of the officers were elected to their posts, and popularity rather than military ability often took precedence in these elections. An alarming number of the officers, many of them former line soldiers in the Royal army, could neither read nor write. Almost all had only a vague idea of their duties. Yet these were the men who had to bear the brunt of the responsibility of training and disciplining the peasant volunteers.

If Jourdan's experiences were typical, he had to instruct his officers in their most basic responsibilities: to remain at the head of their men during a march, to prevent straggling, not to take unauthorised absences from their units thereby leaving their troops unsupervised. Jourdan himself also had to see to it that the daily bread distributions took place on time and in order, and that his soldiers did not sell their rifles and equipment; those guilty of breaches of discipline had to receive swift, impartial judgment. Much of his time must have been spent in the day-to-day business of inspecting and adjusting the advanced posts of his battalion, a tiresome task that nonetheless demanded the constant attention of every officer.
These duties were anything but glamorous; yet they had to be carried out if the 2nd Haute Vienne was to become something more than an armed mob. Judging by his subsequent ascent to high command in the revolutionary army, Jourdan must have acquitted these duties successfully.

In the spring of 1793 Jourdan's battalion was attached to the division of general Chapuis de Tourville. Tourville was entrusted with the defense of the fortress town of Maubeuge and the surrounding area. Consequently Jourdan was not involved in the confused fighting around Valenciennes. Instead he remained occupied with the tedious chores of training his soldiers. In Tourville, he had a good master for this type of duty. Tourville was a ci-devant noble and former officer in the Royal army, a stern man allegedly with a severe and at times violent character. To judge him from his orders he was a commander who preferred the trees to the forest—a meticulous organizer and disciplinarian and a stickler for detail. The Jacobin representative on mission to Maubeuge gave Tourville high marks for his organization of the defenses of the town, which, he wrote, were "capable of resisting 80,000 men". It is likely that Jourdan learned much about discipline and organization from this veteran old-regime officer. Tourville

---

15. A.G. Bl 13 & Bl 14, Tourville's orders of the day. A.G. Jourdan's service record. Phipps is wrong when he states that Jourdan took part in the fighting around Valenciennes.
believed Jourdan capable; on June 26, he promoted him to General of Brigade and entrusted him with the garrison of Maubeuge. Jourdan in turn evidently respected Tourville's abilities. When Tourville was removed from command due to his aristocratic background and association with the arrested general Custine, Jourdan wrote a letter to the Committee of Public Safety in his behalf.16

Up to this point Jourdan's career had been strikingly unremarkable. He had won no battlefield distinction whatsoever. He had not made any friends among the powerful either in the army or in the government. His rate of promotion had been slow. He was unknown outside of Maubeuge. Yet from an unheralded colonel, he advanced in rank to become General of Brigade on June 26, General of Division on July 30, and commander of all French forces deployed around Lille on August 13—quite a rapid ascent up the ladder of promotion for a provincial colonel who had labored in obscurity until late June. He owed this sudden advancement mainly to force of circumstances. In the summer of 1793 the officer corps of the French army in Flanders was suffering rapid and

16. Arthur Chuquet, Hondschoote (Paris, n.d.), pp. 135-140. Tourville survived the revolution. In 1798 Tourville, then in retirement, asked Jourdan to intercede with the Minister of War and to help secure him a pension since he was in extreme poverty and the minister had been deaf to his requests. Jourdan did so, requesting that the minister alleviate the condition of the "old officer". A.G. B2* 260, Jourdan to the Minister of War, 11/6/98.
unprecedented turnover. Shaken by the succession of defeats suffered by that army, as well as by the treason in April of its commander, Dumouriez, the government was trying to weed out all incompetent, unpatriotic, and aristocratic officers, and replace them with younger, more talented, more politically reliable personnel. The arrest in July of general Custine, commander-in-chief of the Army of the Nord, was followed by a wholesale purge of the top echelons of the army, as the Jacobins attempted to remove any officer who might have been associated with a general whom they now considered a traitor. As a result, the army stood in desperate need of officers who were both politically sound and militarily competent.

Jourdan was an ideal candidate for promotion. Politically he was a staunch republican with a genuine sans-culotte background; he was not in any way associated with Custine. Militarily he was gradually developing a reputation as a disciplinarian and an organizer; general Houchard was to call his division that "belle division"—testimony to Jourdan's ability in putting green troops into fighting trim. A republican officer who was both a sans-culotte and a good disciplinarian was a rare commodity in an army which wanted both, even though that officer was without real distinction or experience commanding large bodies of troops.

Jourdan thus was one of the many young officers whom
the Jacobins used as cannon fodder in their desperate struggle to build a revolutionary army overnight. Like so many of his fellow officers, he was thrown untried and unseasoned into the government's battle to repair the damage done to the army by the mismanagement, betrayals, and defeats of the spring and summer. Jourdan happened to be equal to the occasion. He was lucky.

On August 13, Jourdan was put in charge of a force of some 13,000 soldiers concentrated around Lille. By mid-August, Lille had become a front line fortress. The Anglo-Dutch-Austrian forces under the overall command of the Prince of Coburg had spent the summer steadily driving the French out of Belgium. They had defeated the French forces around Valenciennes in a series of actions, captured that fortress, and driven the French from several entrenched camps. The Austrian army on the upper Sambre and Escaut was poised like an arrow pointing at Paris ninety miles away. From the Sambre valley to the coast the French held a defensive cordon in which Lille was a key strongpoint. As Jourdan was taking command of Lille, the Allies, at the behest of the English government, had decided to capture the northern most link in the cordon--Dunkirk. To accomplish this objective, Coburg had dispatched an Anglo-Dutch army under the Duke of York to march northwest, virtually parallel to the French lines, to besiege the city.

General Jean Houchard, the latest commander of the
Army of the Nord, heard about the Allies' operation. He sent Jourdan orders to observe the enemy's march when it reached the Lille area, and to determine if it was indeed directed towards the coast. "The intelligence and bravery of Jourdan are known," Houchard encouraged him, "and he will surely serve the Republic with the same zeal that he has shown during the course of the war." Accordingly Jourdan and his second-in-command, general Beru, organized a reconnaissance in force to begin on August 18 towards the villages of Roubaix and Linselles northeast of Lille. The force covering the march of York's army, under the Prince of Orange, was destined to pass quite close to the Lille defenses. Coincidentally Orange decided to launch an attack of his own against the French advanced posts near these villages, in order to provide better cover for the main advance. Thus the two offensive operations were destined to collide.  

The subsequent action, Jourdan's first as a general, is known as the combat of Linselles. It was a carbon copy of many similar engagements fought by the raw French troops during the course of the campaign. Orange's troops struck first, driving back the French advanced posts. At Lille,


18. Chuquet, op cit, pp. 135-140.
Jourdan waited to determine the exact direction of Orange's attack. Then he detached a brigade to Roubaix to check the enemy there, and marched with between 7,000 and 10,000 men to support general Beru near Linselles. At three P.M. Jourdan counterattacked. He initially met with complete success. A column under general Macdonald surprised and routed the German regiment holding the nearby village of Blaton. Two other columns apparently led by Jourdan in person converged on Linselles, attacked the Dutch force holding the town, and after a sharp fight routed it inflicting over 1,000 casualties. But as so often happened, the raw French troops, at the moment of victory, got completely out of hand. They dispersed through the village breaking into wine cellars and pillaging the houses; Jourdan and his officers were completely unable to rally them. The disorder of the French enabled the enemy to recover and take countermeasures. General Lake with a brigade of English foot guards counterattacked Linselles in his turn. Jourdan must have succeeded in holding at least some of his men at their posts, for it took Lake three assaults to wrest the village from its defenders, who resisted from ditches and palisaded houses. But when Lake's assaults at last succeeded, the fighting was over. The French ran all the way back to Lille in spite of Jourdan's best efforts to rally them. "It was not a retreat," Jourdan reported laconically, "it was a rout." 19

Strategically the action of Linselles was unimportant; it changed nothing, it decided nothing. The Allies continued their march towards the coast, and the French retained their positions around Lille. Losses were about 1,200 soldiers killed, wounded, or missing for each side. The basic strategic issue—whether Dunkirk would fall to the Allies or be held by the French—remained undecided. Nevertheless, Linselles was an important milestone in Jourdan's career. It was his first pitched battle as a general and the first action in which he exercised sole tactical control. It brought him face to face with the basic problems involved in leading peasant conscripts into battle. If he was able to deliver a deadly initial blow with them, he was unable, because of their lack of discipline and experience, to keep them under control long enough either to profit from the initial success, or to retain what was won in the face of a protracted enemy resistance. The fundamental weakness of the French revolutionary forces was that they possessed neither endurance nor cohesiveness in a combat of sustained duration.

This basic fact became the cornerpost around which much of Jourdan's subsequent activity as a general would revolve. To face the enemy on equal terms and defeat him, Jourdan would have to discover the means to overcome his

20. Dupuis, ibid.
soldiers' deficiencies in discipline and endurance. Linselles was his initiation to the problem: it introduced and typified the tactical difficulties which he would have to confront and to solve in future actions. As such, it proved to be a valuable object lesson in the art of leadership in a revolutionary army.
II. THE REVOLUTIONARY ARMY IN 1793

I. The Beginnings of The Revolutionary Army.

Jean Baptiste Jourdan became a general, and ultimately an army commander, during a time when the French Revolution had unleashed forces which caused the traditional methods of making war to become unsuitable for the revolutionaries. The slow, deliberate warfare of Old Regime Europe with its chess-match pace, its professional armies, its limited mercantilist goals, and its primitive technology and organization, did not mesh with a revolution that was trying to sever all ties with the past, and to do so overnight. As a result, the warfare waged by the revolutionaries was to be the first stage in the transformation of warfare from the traditional to the modern and from the limited to the total.

In 1793, however, this transformation had hardly begun. The warfare of the revolutionaries at this point was in limbo; it was no longer traditional, but neither was it modern, or even radically different from the traditional. Old Regime Methods were mixed with revolutionary innovations in much the same way as former noble officers were inter­mingled with improvised sans-culotte generals. As is common to the initial stages of any great change, the conditions in which the revolutionaries operated in 1793 were puzzling, difficult, and often painful. Jourdan embarked upon his career as a general under especially trying circumstances, at a time when the traditional
problems of military leadership were being replaced by new
difficulties—difficulties for which no manuals had yet been
written. Military leadership in 1793 was to be leadership
over largely uncharted ground.

It is, and has been, easy to view this change
simplistically. The differences between Old Regime warfare
and revolutionary warfare in its refined stage—as conducted
by Napoleon for example—seem so striking that it is easy
to forget that the transition from the former to the latter
did not occur either smoothly or instantaneously. The new
did not immediately replace the old, partly because the old
still had much to recommend it, partly because it was far
from clear to the revolutionaries what the new form of
warfare was to be, and partly because any major change
necessarily takes time.

Old Regime warfare had become cordon warfare by
the second half of the 18th century. This manner of con­
ducting war possessed all the flaws for which its critics
have condemned it. It was slow, cumbersome, and indecisive.
Mercenary soldiers were kept in the ranks by the stick of
vicious, merciless discipline and the carrot of compensation
in the form of loot and pay. To attempt rapid movements
with such men was inadvisable; rapid movement frequently
involved a relaxation of discipline, and a relaxation of
discipline could well lead to chaos. To attempt to push
such soldiers beyond their normal limits of endurance was
impossible. Their compensation was insufficient to evoke an extreme effort and, if such an effort was demanded, the average mercenary might well desert or go over to the enemy. The officers were nobles, ill-educated in the ramifications of military leadership, and consequently ill-equipped to bring a campaign or a battle to a decisive conclusion. The strategy of the cordon involved extending one's army in a line covering as wide an expanse of territory as possible, and engaging in a war of small actions and sieges. The brief flirtation with massed armies and major battles by Marlborough and Eugene of Savoy had been rejected by the men of the Enlightenment as too costly and too brutal; even Frederick the Great preferred maneuvers over battles as the best way to attain one's objectives.¹

This style of warfare suited 18th century conditions. The small scale of its battles prevented the mercenary soldiers, who were quite expensive and difficult to replace, from becoming casualties in great numbers. Its deliberate pace dovetailed with the primitive roads and communications of the age. The dispersal of its forces facilitated supply; the provision magazines could be located close to the front while drawing their resources from a greater expanse of territory—an important consideration in a primitive

agricultural economy. The long fronts of the cordons better allowed the generals to achieve the limited objectives of their masters, these being the capture of as much of the enemy's territory and resources as possible. Cordon warfare well served the limited ends of the dynastic and mercantile conflicts of the 18th century, as well as the primitive nature of the era's economics, organization and technology.

What the strategy of the cordon could not do was bring a conflict to a rapid, decisive conclusion. Total victory required that the armies involved have the capacity to defeat decisively, even to destroy, their foes. Old Regime armies operating in cordon did not have this capacity. Their unmotivated mercenaries would not march fast enough or fight hard enough. Their aristocratic officers were not skilled enough. Their primitive weaponry was not destructive enough. The need to keep one's army close to its supply line limited its ability to maneuver rapidly enough. The rigid linear tactics prevented large scale destructive battles, while the limited nature of the objectives made such battles unnecessary and undesirable.

Revolutionary war, in theory, rejected cordon warfare outright. Ideally revolutionary war was more rapid, more destructive, more decisive, more innovative. In place of robot-like mercenary "slaves" led by their aristocratic masters, the Revolution employed a people in arms. In place of limited mercantilistic objectives, the Revolution sought
uncompromising goals such as liberty, equality and fraternity. Instead of the deliberate tactics of maneuver, cordon and siege, it employed tactics of mass, shock, and constant offensive. The Revolutionary army did not tie itself to magazines and supply lines; it mobilized the country's resources, and it lived at the expense of the resources of the enemy. Revolutionary strategy sought to overcome the structural and organizational shortcomings of a preindustrial society to achieve total victory. Revolutionary warfare thus seemed to be a complete departure from traditional war. As St Just trenchantly observed, "Everything that is not new in a time of change is harmful. The military art of the monarchy no longer suits us...If the French nation is motivated in this war by all strong and generous passions: love of country, hatred of tyrants and oppression; if on the other hand its enemies are mercenary slaves, automatons without passions, the system of war of the French armies ought to be the order of the charge."² For how, after all, could unmotivated mercenaries and outdated aristocrats contend against a patriotic people in arms, employing new modes of warfare, committed to a conception of war "à outrance"? How could the obsolete contend against the modern, the limited against the unrestricted?

Such was, and is, the theory. The reality was otherwise. The French army in 1793 was not yet a true peoples' army. It was a "ramassis", part professional, part volunteer, part conscript. First, it contained the veteran line soldiers of the Royal army who had not emigrated. Secondly it contained the volunteers of 1791 and 1792, those men who patriotically responded to the call of the Legislative Assembly for soldiers to defend the revolution. Finally it contained the first arrivals of the Girondin levée of 300,000 men of February, 1793. But these three types of soldiers did not comprise an entire nation armed against its invaders. In fact, the suspicion was that their numbers were insufficient to withstand the rapidly growing might of the Coalition. The veterans and the volunteers had been suffering casualties steadily ever since Valmy—losses which additional volunteers were not making good. The enthusiasm of 1791 had worn off. As a result, at the beginning of 1793, the army may have numbered as few as 175,000 men.3

The Girondin levée of 300,000 men was designed to provide the manpower which the volunteering system was not supplying. Unfortunately, as with so many of the Girondins' measures, if the concept was sound, the implementation was

faulty. The levée was widely resisted. The Girondins unwisely left the carrying out of the levée to the individual departments; each one was to fill an assigned quota of conscripts using whatever means that it found most suitable. The lack of uniform guidelines caused a wealth of abuses to mar the levée. Many areas chose to select their conscripts by scrutin de liste. The local majority often used this method to draft all of its political foes. One commune lost all of its cultivators as a result. In some areas the majority chose only the feeble minded and the physically unfit; in other areas those hostile to the central government put all the local patriots on the list. C. A. Prieur (de la Cote d'Or) then on mission to help execute the levée, wrote that the levée was "a vexation and a crying injustice" in these cases "because the majority, which wants the scrutin, makes all the weight of the conscription fall upon the minority who oppose it." An additional defect was the provision that allowed a conscript to purchase a substitute if he so desired; the substitutes were frequently of poor stamina and poorer character. In many places department administrations hostile to the levée simply refused to fill their quotas, allowing the passive resistance of their citizens to go unchecked. In the Vendée it was resisted by force of arms. 4

By the summer of 1793 the defects of this levée were so manifest that it was becoming increasingly obvious that something more was needed. The consensus held that all Frenchmen must rise up and fight the invader in fact as well as in theory. The demand for a *levée-en-masse* in which everyone would be put at the service of the revolution came from a number of sources. Carnot argued for such a measure as early as 1792. The popular societies, by way of pamphlets, speeches, and demonstrations, agitated for it with increasing vehemence as the year wore on. On the other side of the social spectrum, *ci-devant* noble representatives Bellegarde and Dubois-Dubais saw the need for a general levée in early 1793. The Girondins opposed a *levée-en-masse*, ironically enough with the aid of Robespierre, who believed the measure well-intended but impractical. But after their fall in June, and with the military situation growing increasingly grim, the *levée-en-masse* came closer to becoming reality. But in mid-summer, 1793, it was not yet real, nor would it be until August 23. Its beneficial effects were not to be felt until later still.

If the French army was not yet a true people's army, neither was it a homogeneous force. Its units varied in composition, strength, uniforms, and pay. In the Army of the

---

Nord there were battalions of veterans of the Royal army, volunteer battalions like the 2nd Haute Vienne raised in 1791 and 1792, Federée battalions, special light infantry or chasseur units, national guard units, legions of Belgian "republicans, plus the conscript battalions of the first levee. All these units were differently clad, paid, and led. The wholesale emigration of the largely noble cadres of the old army had left the revolution with a serious officer shortage. While those Royalist officers who remained were competent enough, most of the rest had attained their ranks through election by their men. The variety of quality in these elected officers can be imagined; some were totally inept. The Girondins declared that two thirds of all generals were to be selected by the Conseil Exécutif; but since there was no means for the Conseil to become acquainted with the better officers, this measure only marginally improved the situation. As a result there was no clear and effective way to provide the army with qualified, competent officers.

The differences in the personnel, pay, and leadership of the various units led to serious friction among their officers and men. The regulars disliked the volunteers because the latter were better paid and less harshly disciplined. The volunteers disliked the conscripts, considering them bad patriots and reluctant soldiers; one angry volunteer wrote that the levée units were comprised of men who sold
themselves to the army as one sells pigs. Both volunteers and conscripts suspected the regulars of royalism and worse. The differing uniforms—white for the regulars, blue for the volunteers and conscripts—were a visible manifestation of the very real divisions which existed within the army.

The embrigadement law of February 21, 1793, only touched the edges of the problem. It did abolish the visible signs of the divisions in the army. It made promotion regulations and pay uniform for all units. It also decreed that henceforth the blue uniform of the volunteers and the conscripts was to be the standard dress for all republican soldiers. It officially established the demi-brigade as the largest basic unit and decreed that each demi-brigade was to be composed of two battalions of conscript-volunteers and one of veterans. It ordered that one third of all officers promoted would be promoted by seniority, while the remaining two thirds would continue to advance by election. But the embrigadement law said nothing about the added conscripts rapidly accumulating in new units under untried officers behind the front. It did nothing substantial to improve the quality of the officer corps. Since two thirds of all officers continued to be elected, popularity rather than skill continued to be the prime consideration in advancement in the army hierarchy. Worse, the law was only


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
halfheartedly enforced. The Girondins had opposed the law on various grounds, and while they continued to share power in the Convention, they made little effort to see to its execution. As a result the confusing assortment of differing smaller units remained, and the summer saw entire battalions of French regulars still fighting in their white uniforms. Embigadement was not amalgamation. The fighting qualities of the individual battalions, be they volunteer, conscript, Federée or whatever, continued to vary greatly. If the regulars and most of the volunteers could be counted on to do their duty, the others could be counted on to turn and run at the first opportunity. The army, in short, did not yet have a uniform level of performance from all of its units.  

The strategy and tactics used in the summer of 1793 were not yet standardized. Ideally, revolutionary warfare was to be warfare of mass, rather than warfare of the rigid linear formations of the professional armies of monarchical Europe. Translated into tactics, war of mass meant the deployment of one's soldiers in columns rather than lines—columns twenty to thirty men wide and fifty or more ranks deep. The revolutionaries used columns for some very practical reasons. First, columns made it easier for the

7. Soboul, op cit, pp. 171-72.
French generals to close rapidly with the enemy forces and employ shock tactics with their ill-trained recruits. To wage a war of mass made it necessary "to strike briskly with bayonet thrusts without dreaming either of opening fire or of making maneuvers which the French troops are neither trained nor prepared to make." The column was ideally designed to achieve shock; it was useless for anything else. Secondly, the few officers available to the revolutionaries could control the men better when they were packed tightly together in columns than when they were dispersed in lines. In line the recruit felt more exposed, and had more opportunity to flee; in column only those on the outside were in a position to desert. In column the herd instinct took over as the massed conscripts sprinted yelling and singing at their foes. Finer tactical considerations as to the relative merits of column vs. line—a favorite topic of debate among Enlightenment military theorists such as Folard and Guibert—played little part in causing the revolutionaries to adopt the column. At Jemappes Dumouriez began the battle by deploying in the traditional three lines of Old Regime warfare. By mid-day his raw troops were in such disorder that his officers were massing them in columns merely to be able to send them forward again in some kind of order.  

---

The tactical issue at Jemappes, as in other engagements at this time, was simply how best to win battles with masses of untried, undisciplined recruits. To solve this problem the revolutionaries were prepared to be quite pragmatic. Their practice of sending clouds of skirmishers ahead of the attacking columns to harrass the enemy was a case in point. So many men habitually broke ranks during the assaults, took cover, and skirmished with the enemy on their own, that the revolutionaries believed it better to institutionalize an accepted practice than to attempt to abolish it. However, in the summer of 1793 these tactical innovations were the exception rather than the rule. The older theories of war-making still dominated the thinking of most of the French commanders. Strategically they continued to deploy their forces in cordons and to base their operations on the seizure or retention of fortresses. The operations around Valenciennes in May and June were conducted by both sides in classic cordon fashion. As a tactical formation the column was not yet in full use everywhere; the Army of the Moselle continued to employ linear formations throughout the year. The other tactical usages typical of 19th century warfare--the square, fieldworks, the use of massed batteries of artillery, the doctrinaire dependence upon the attack--were still to come in 1793.9

The actual soldiers of the republican army presented the revolutionary generals with their greatest problem. If the average French infantryman was neither an automaton nor a slave without motivation, neither was he, as yet, a real soldier, nor was he necessarily motivated by the strong and generous passions that St Just confidently expected every soldier of the revolution to possess. The evidence overwhelmingly suggests that the revolutionary army in the summer of 1793—with the exception of the older line regiments—was little better than an armed mob of untrained militia, often more dangerous to their own officers than to the enemy.

The average republican soldier was young, usually below the age of twenty-five. He was commonly of peasant background, which meant that he came from a village of 2,000 persons or less. He normally possessed little or no education, and virtually no military experience at all. The majority of these young soldiers were away from home for the first time in their lives. In the case of the draftees, they were frequently in the army reluctantly. All of these factors—youth, rustic background, newness of surroundings, unfamiliarity with a military environment, and reluctance to serve—combined to make the average defender of the revolution a disciplinary problem of alarming proportions.

10. Sixty-three percent of the line soldiers were under 25 years of age; the average age of the conscripts probably was the same, if not younger. See S. F. Scott, op cit, p. 512.
Volunteers and conscripts alike drank to excess, fought with each other, went absent without leave or simply deserted, and generally resisted military regimentation to the best of their abilities. Like most young men at the time they consumed wine and brandy in excessive quantities; one volunteer argued that drinking had never dishonored him, that he had more honor than most water drinkers, and thus drinking was a right which properly belonged to him.11 Many recruits sold their uniforms and equipment as soon as they were issued. Others looted and pillaged at every opportunity. Carnot disgustedly described these soldiers as "scourages" to the civilian population in their vicinity; he added that the prostitutes whom the soldiers were bringing into camp were destroying more of them with social disease than were being destroyed in combat. In action they were completely untrustworthy. They easily panicked, and they tended to fall into confusion during any combat of sustained duration. Jourdan's experience at Linselles exemplified the republican soldiers' inability to sustain combat for any length of time. During the fighting around Valenciennes a battalion was forced to retreat when the troops of the battalion in second line fired into their backs. On other occasions different units fought with each other under the impression that

they were fighting the enemy.12

Because most of the officers were as inexperienced as their men, they were ill-equipped to furnish the army with the discipline and tactical leadership it so desperately needed. General officers often had to instruct subordinates in their most basic responsibilities; as late as the fall of 1793, Jourdan had to issue detailed instructions to his officers on how to hold the daily bread distribution without confusion and disruption. Many of the lower ranking officers could neither read nor write, and an alarming number of supply officials suffered from the same deficiency. Such men were hardly competent to furnish effective leadership on a day-to-day basis. In action such officers made blood-chilling mistakes. One officer ordered a French battalion to occupy a certain redoubt. The soldiers were en route to do so when another officer caught up with them and informed them that the redoubt was already occupied by masses of the enemy. Had the battalion attempted to carry out the order, it would have been annihilated. The occasional instances of French units firing on one another were not always brought about solely by the conscripts; inept officers sometimes were responsible. During the battle of Famars, some officers

remained in bed three hours after the battle began while others dallied in the shops in town while their men fought, so that some soldiers never saw their officers and consequently did not know who, or what, to obey. This is not to say that the mere presence of competent leadership insured good conduct among the troops. In May, 1793, Carnot and Ernest Duguesnoy, then on mission with the Army of the Nord, led a raid along the coast. The conscripts succeeded in taking the town of Furnes, but then proceeded to get out of hand. They dispersed to pillage the town, breaking into wine cellars and bars, and getting roaring drunk. Carnot and Duguesnoy harangued them, appealing to their patriotism and threatening them with immediate execution in an effort to persuade them to return to duty; it did no good. When shots were heard on the outskirts of Furnes, the drunken soldiers panicked and scattered in every direction. During the ensuing night Furnes was looted from top to bottom, one soldier going so far as to cut off a woman's ear to get at her earring. When Carnot and Duguesnoy tried to renew the advance the next morning, they were faced with their hungover troops vomiting and passing out along the road, obviously incapable of offering the slightest resistance to an enemy attack.

The commanders were forced to order a retreat. During the withdrawal a recruit accidentally shot and killed himself while looting a house; his comrades blamed the inhabitants and burned down their village. Throughout this episode it is clear that Carnot and Duquesnoy were helpless, utterly incapable of controlling the unruly men. Yet generals like Jourdan were expected to succeed where Carnot had failed.  

Certainly the will to defend the revolution—the love of liberty and country and hatred of tyrants and oppression that St Just spoke of—existed among the French forces. They may have been unwilling soldiers; most were not unwilling patriots. During the difficult months of 1793, they gave ample evidence of their spirit and heroism: a drummer at Wattignies, while his unit wavered, stood fast and beat the charge until he was killed; a volunteer was wounded twenty-three times, but nonetheless remained in the army, ultimately to be promoted to captain; a cavalry officer rode into a company of enemy hussars by mistake, and then had the wits about him to cry that the French cavalry were attacking until he frightened the enemy into retreating; and a foot soldier offered the 3,000 francs he had taken from an enemy officer to the nation. Men who while gravely wounded shouted that it was unimportant whether they lived or died as long as the revolution triumphed.

were not indifferent to the outcome of the war, and they were ready to support their commitment with action. But commitment without discipline was useless; to fight the professional soldiers of the Coalition, the republicans needed something more than good faith. This is why officers who were capable disciplinarians like Jourdan were worth their weight in gold. This is why they rose so rapidly through the military hierarchy as the government gradually recognized the true nature of the problem.15

If the revolutionary army was still in a period of painful transition, so were the institutions and means necessary for its guidance and maintenance. Its inexperienced officers needed sensible, sound strategic direction from the government. The levée and embrigadement both required efficient organization to succeed. The problem of discipline demanded an effective system of military justice. Above all, the ever-growing masses of conscripts required food, clothing, weapons and equipment; and this in turn demanded an expanded logistical system. The French needed the machinery to build their peoples' army and to maintain it once its construction was complete.

But this machinery was as yet lacking. The Feuillantes and the Girondins had shown themselves inexcusably lax in this regard. Both allowed the war ministry to sink

into inefficiency and confusion. They neglected to replace those bureaucrats who had emigrated with men of equal energy and ability. They played a game of musical chairs with a succession of mediocre war ministers: Servan, Pache, Beurnonville, and Bouchotte. The rapid rotation of ministers added to the ministry's instability, because each new appointee would purge his predecessor's personnel and replace them with his own. No sooner did the new bureaucrats begin to learn their duties than a new minister entered and the entire learning process had to be repeated. Nor did any of these ministers demonstrate real ability. The Girondins feared entrusting one minister with so much power, and so they wished to subdivide the ministry into six separate bureaus under the direction of a legislative committee. This project fortunately never became reality, but the Girondins did succeed in physically dispersing the war ministry into different buildings in Paris. The arrangement only added to the ministry's inefficiency. When complaints about its inability either to direct or to supply the army properly increased, the Girondins formed a fact-finding committee headed by the abbé Sièyes to study the problem. This committee eventually presented the Convention with a largely abstract treatise on how a war ministry ideally should operate. Nothing concrete, however,
was done.16

The Girondins instead decided to rely on deputies of the Convention "on mission" to the armies to afford immediate direction to the generals and to supervise the armies' supply personnel. The decrees establishing the deputies on mission seemed to grant them sufficient authority to see to the proper construction and operation of the new army. They could suspend and replace any general or bureaucrat whom they believed incompetent or unpatriotic. They were to oversee the provisioning and equipping of the army and to respond to the needs and complaints of the soldiers. Finally they were to "take all measures and employ every means" with generals and administrators alike to insure that everything necessary was done for the safety of the Republic.17

Unfortunately, as with the levée, the execution of these decrees left much to be desired. For the duration of the Girondins' domination of the Convention the deputies on mission to the Army of the Nord failed to exercise the

16. For a good discussion of the war ministry under the Gironde, see Auguste Herlaut, Le Colonel Bouchotte; ministre de la guerre en l'an II. (Paris, 1946; 2 vols.).

authority granted them. The first group of deputies sent to the 'Nord'—a group which included Georges Danton and several of his colleagues— took only a passing interest in the military and logistical affairs of the army. Instead, they devoted most of their time to organizing French control over Belgium, while writing enthusiastic letters on how this and that Belgian commune wished to be united with France. When General Miranda desired them to check the state of his provisions and the conduct of his provisioning chief, he had to request that they assist in his investigation. They agreed to help although they believed their presence "unnecessary".¹⁸ When Dumouriez began to suffer defeats, they deliberately misled the Convention as to the state of affairs, reporting the truth only to the Committee of Defense. As the French army reeled back across Belgium in a state of near collapse, Delacroix devoted the bulk of the report on his mission to a discussion on how to confiscate emigre property in that country. Worse, they failed completely to recognize Dumouriez' increasing hostility towards the government; thus when he tried to turn the army against the Republic in early April, they were caught

completely unaware. 19

Not until the establishment of the Committee of Public Safety in early April, 1793, did this state of affairs begin to change. Realizing that the representatives on mission were not satisfactorily carrying out their duties, the Committee took steps to reinforce and broaden their authority, instructing them to execute their tasks "rigorously". To assist them, the government invested them with "unlimited" power and granted them unlimited funds. In a subsequent decree the Committee, recognizing the critical importance of the Army of the North to the defense of the country, assigned it twelve representatives instead of the normal three, and instructed them to work with the generals in the promotion of officers and to carry on propaganda work with the rank and file. 20 But the government's most effective measure was to replace the incumbent deputies with more energetic and ruthless men drawn from the Montagnard faction in the Convention. Men such as Carnot, Charles Cochon, Pierre Delbrel and Ernest Duquesnoy, among others, did not wait to be invited by the military to take a hand in affairs.

19. For the nature of the activity—or lack of activity—of Danton and his associates while in Belgium, see their correspondence with the Committee in the Recueil des Actes, I & II.

By the early summer these representatives were involving themselves in a wide range of responsibilities. But, however much they accomplished, that much more remained to be done. When deputy René Levasseur arrived at the front, he was told by the commander of the Army of the Nord that the discipline of the troops was so bad, and the control of the officers over their men so unsure, that he could not guarantee Levasseur's safety. Delbrel complained that the supply agents were worthless; yet so small was the number of qualified replacements that he had to ask that no more agents be dismissed no matter how bad they were. Carnot complained of food shortages so severe that he ordered soldiers to carry out house-to-house searches for food in order to feed the troops; he added that the levée should be slowed down because the unarmed, untrained recruits were eating food that was needed for the front line soldiers. Similar complaints poured in to the government almost daily. Indeed the picture suggested by the representatives' letters is one of an army on the verge of utter chaos.

Such was the revolutionary army in 1793. So far from


being the salvation of the Republic, it was not yet truly revolutionary; indeed in some ways it was not really an army. It was "an enormous and inarticulate mass, where flourished individualism and gregariousness, patriotism and desertion, heroism and anarchy. Commanded by officers so diverse that former aristocrats rubbed elbows with improvised sans-culotte officers, the administration of which was a stupefying masterpiece of corruption and incompetence, this army was a monster."\textsuperscript{23} Moreover, it was expected to implement a theory of war as intangible and incomplete as it was itself. This army was not yet a match for the professional soldiers of the coalition, much less their superior. The Habsburg Archduke Charles later argued that France was initially able to defend herself against the onslaught of all Europe, mainly because she had worked to organize the defenses of her frontiers since the era of Louis XIV and Vauban. As a result, the Allies were confronted with a formidable network of fortresses, outposts, magazines and communications as they advanced. It is difficult not to agree with the Archduke's assertion.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{23} Reinhard, \textit{op cit}, II, p. 91.

\textsuperscript{24} The Archduke Karl Habsburg, \textit{Le Campagne de 1796 en Allemagne}, (Vienna, 1817), p. 40.
II. Jourdan's Predecessors; The Hondschoote Campaign

The generals of the Republican army were thus confronted with a frighteningly complex and brutally difficult task. It was not enough that they be skilled strategists and tacticians; they were facing more than the thrusts and maneuvers of the enemy. They also had to be prepared to take on the vast and baffling problems which the creation of the new army involved. They had to be capable of instilling discipline into raw, unruly troops, and of getting along with the various agents of the government who were working with the army, in particular the deputies on mission. They needed knowledge of logistical problems and the energy to tackle them. They had to be politically--and socially--acceptable as well as militarily competent. Then they had to go out and win victories.

The commanders of the Army of the Nord labored under additional pressures peculiar to their command. Firstly, the Army of the Nord defended the most important and vulnerable front on the periphery of France. Should it suffer defeat the enemy was a mere ninety miles from Paris, and the fall of the capital would in all likelihood mean the extinction of the revolution. The commanders of this army at all costs had to avoid defeat. Secondly, the generals of the 'Nord' worked amid the aftereffects of the Dumouriez conspiracy. The sudden treason of the most powerful general of the Republic had shaken the government greatly. To men
such as Robespierre and St Just, who had been weaned on the classics and the tales of military usurpers such as Sulla and Julius Caesar, all generals became objects of suspicion. Since classical history displayed a multitude of usurpers all fatal to democracy, there might be other traitors lying in wait among the army's hierarchy. The regime's paranoia about its generals was unmistakable; it lay at the roots of its decision to fragment the Republic's forces into eleven smallish armies, each with an independent commander. Because the 'Nord' had been Dumouriez' army, its officers fell under particular scrutiny. The representatives with the 'Nord' were issued specific instructions to root out any who might have been Dumouriez' accomplices. In such an atmosphere honest mistakes could easily be misconstrued as treasonous acts, and treasonous acts could bring execution to those who committed them. Finally, the generals of the 'Nord' faced the very serious pressure of the victorious Allied offensive across Flanders. As the military situation deteriorated, the danger grew greater; as hard-line politicians replaced less ruthless men on the Committee of Public Safety, the government became less tolerant of failure and more inclined to make immediate and sweeping changes when things went wrong.

To survive as commander of the Army of the Nord a general had to be able to handle all of these pressures. Those who could not faced quick and summary dismissal; frequently they also faced arrest, and sometimes they faced the guillotine. It is a popular misconception that the Committee of Public Safety executed all of its unsuccessful generals pour encourager les autres; the Committee was too coldly rational and pragmatic to be so needlessly ruthless. Nonetheless the penalties for failure were harsh enough, and with the popular societies howling for the blood of those who failed, it could well be punished by death. The four generals who succeeded Dumouriez as commander-in-chief of the 'Nord' failed to overcome the pressures of their job and to achieve victory. Three of them paid for the deficiencies with their lives—two on the scaffold. The fifth commander of the army, Jourdan, successfully met the challenge; or (to put it more accurately) he improved the situation in the Nord enough to avoid arrest or execution. To understand why Jourdan was able to handle the command, it is necessary to discover why his predecessors were unable to do so, to discover what qualities they lacked that he demonstrated, and what mistakes they committed that he avoided.

Dumouriez' first successor as commander of the Army of the Nord was the Marquis Auguste de Dampierre. Dampierre was a brave, dashing, somewhat erratic ex-noble officer who
had served in the Royal army. As a divisional commander he had repeatedly distinguished himself, even drawing the notice of Carnot who recommended him for the command. His patriotism was beyond doubt; it was so fervent as to be almost romantic. In the initial weeks after he assumed his post he tackled the army's problems with energy and application.  

But as the situation slowly continued to deteriorate, Dampierre's flaws gradually began to show themselves. He failed in his efforts to prevent the enemy from besieging the important French fortress of Valenciennes. He scheduled a counterattack and then could not decide whether or not to go through with it. When he asked the representatives for advice, they told him that they could not advise him on matters of strategy. Dampierre postponed the attack, rescheduled it, and then called a council of war to arrive at a final decision. Meanwhile he encountered problems with two of the representatives who complained that he forbade them to say a single word about the conduct of operations. And he failed completely to do anything to improve the army's discipline and organization. Dampierre was a front line commander, excellent in leading a charge, inept administering an army. And he knew it.  


the government that he felt himself unqualified to deal with the multiple problems of the army and suggested that he be replaced. When the government failed to replace him, he grew increasingly despondent, confessing his inability to his colleagues and saying that the only way he could escape his present dilemma was to get himself killed in battle. By mid-May his complaints and lack of success had caused his stock to fall dangerously low with the government. He was a noble who was failing to win victories and, worse, who was failing to show a positive attitude towards his duties. The evidence suggests that his dismissal was not far off when he succeeded in escaping his overtaxing responsibilities. As he hoped, he was killed in action.\textsuperscript{28}

The government decided to replace Dampierre with the best man available, the Marquis Adam de Custine, then commanding the Army of the Rhine. Like Dampierre, Custine was a \textit{ci-devant} and a veteran of the Royal army. His reputation as commander of the 'Rhine' stood high, and he reputedly was an excellent disciplinarian. Custine's drawbacks were not of a military nature; they arose from his personality and his politics. He was personally cutting, arrogant, and harsh, intolerant of others especially when they disagreed with him. While he was a doctrinaire republican, he did not like the government; he considered

\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Ibid.}
the Mountain a faction of demagogues and anarchists dangerous to order. He believed that his task was to protect the army from the machinations of such men; thus he developed an exalted sense of his own importance to the Republic. He surrounded himself with former members of Dumouriez' staff, in spite of the prevalent suspicion of such officers. In a letter to the government he stated that he ought to "pass above all the decisions of the Executive Council;" to a friend he confided that "when a decree of the Convention does not suit me, I throw it into the fire."29

In a period of crisis such an attitude could hardly endear him to a revolutionary regime which, suspicious of all generals on principle, demanded first and foremost their unquestioning subordination. And Custine did not limit himself to merely showing his distaste for the regime. He engaged in a bitter feud with the minister of war, Bouchotte. Bouchotte belonged to the radical wing of the Mountain; he was a parvenu of low birth, and his support came from radical journalists like Hebert who criticized Custine mercilessly. Moreover, the ministry under Bouchotte's direction had not improved in its logistical support of the army. Custine hated Bouchotte for all of these reasons. He treated him with open insubordination, obeying his orders

29. Chuquet, Valenciennes, contains an excellent character sketch of Custine, as well as a fine discussion of his tenure at the head of the 'Nord'. See also Herlaut, op cit, I, pp. 221-255.
with a condescending insolence and viciously criticizing his directives. Custine complained to the Committee of the "ridiculous" conduct of Bouchotte, and on one occasion stated that he was incompetent and corrupt, a "malevolent being" and an "enemy of honor" who deserved death because his "criminal stupidity" was preventing success. Custine was equally cutting in his direct correspondence with Bouchotte. Finally, he even challenged Bouchotte's authority. In spite of orders to the contrary, he forbade the distribution of Hebert's *Le Pere Duchesne* to the soldiers, and he also disobeyed a directive concerning the disposition of the Lille garrison. To colleagues he broadly hinted that he would like to see Bouchotte replaced by his own favorite and fellow ex-noble, General La Marliere.

For a former noble to attack a cabinet minister in an anti-aristocratic revolutionary regime in such a fashion was extremely ill-advised. For Custine then to put himself above the government's authority by disobeying direct orders was suicidal. In mid-June he was recalled to Paris to explain his conduct. There he fell victim to the rage of


31. *Ibid*. Chuquet, *op cit*, is more sympathetic to Custine, blaming much of the problem on the extremist journalists who were so slanderously attacking Custine in their journals.
of the extremists, who caused him to be arrested. Although
guilty only of insubordination—and of stupidity—Custine
was tried for treason, convicted, and guillotined.

Custine had commanded the army a little over two
months. His successor, General Charles Jennings de
Kilmaine, lasted three weeks. Of Irish extraction, Kilmaine
was a veteran cavalry officer of the Royal army. He possessed
all the virtues and vices of a cavalryman: he was bluff,
aggressive, brave to a fault, and proud of how his hussars had
named him the "lucky colonel"; unfortunately he also
possessed only limited operational ability. Like Dampierre
he was primarily a front line general, and like Dampierre
he soon wilted under the intense pressure of his command.
Almost immediately after arriving at his post, he was
writing the government about the unbearable burdens he
had to shoulder. He confessed to representative Levasseur
that he did not believe that he could control his soldiers,
many of whom were outraged over the arrest of Custine.
When the Allies resumed their advance, he successfully
avoided an attempt to double-envelop his army. Nevertheless,
he was compelled to make another retreat during which part
of the army panicked yet again. In addition, the rumor
spread that the brain behind the operation was not Kilmaine's,
but that of his chief of staff, Simon Gay-Vernon. None of
this should have persuaded either the government or the
representatives to have any confidence in his abilities.
When Kilmaine demonstrated increased bewilderment and discouragement, the Committee dismissed him, replacing him with General Jean Nicholas Houchard.32

Houchard seemed to be the classic victim of the ruthlessness and unreasonableness of the Jacobin dictatorship towards the generals who served it. Unlike his predecessors, who were all ci-devants, Houchard was a genuine sans-culotte—the first to lead an army. He was also the first commander of the 'Nord' to win a pitched battle since Dumouriez' victory at Jemappes in 1792. Nonetheless he ended his career, like Custine, on the scaffold. For these reasons it is necessary to examine his month-long tenure as commander of the 'Nord' with particular care.

Houchard was of humble birth and education. He had made his career as a common soldier in the Royal army, and he had risen through the ranks to become a captain of dragoons. His military experience, his sans-culotte background, the patronage of Custine, and the revolution's desperate need for qualified officers combined to enable him to advance rapidly to army command. He served briefly, and not without some merit, as the commander of the Army of the Moselle, and was with this army when the government summoned him to take command of the 'Nord'. Tall, rough

hewn, physically brave, Houchard bore the scars of his career all over his body—he had three ugly sabre cuts on his face alone. Both the deputies on mission and the commissaires of the war ministry spoke enthusiastically of his courage and patriotism.

But Houchard had flaws—flaws which were noticed not only by the representatives, but also by fellow sans-culottes such as Ronsin and Brune. Intellectually he was extremely limited. Ronsin described him as "facile and a little slow". While Ronsin judged him incapable of corruption, he wondered if the new commander would know how to use all the means for success that might be at hand and if he would waste time arriving at plans of attack and defense. Ronsin urged that aggressive revolutionaries be put beside Houchard to prod him into action if necessary. Brune wrote that "his manners and his language announce his frankness...He will not turn traitor, he will fight well, he will move briskly, but he is too nice a person not to be fooled by an adroit man." In short, the suspicion was that he might not be smart enough to handle the brutally complex problems of his command. In addition, Houchard, like Dampierre and Kilmaine, commanded only reluctantly. He freely admitted that he felt himself


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
inadequate to cope with the tasks facing him; he accepted his post hesitantly, requested that he be replaced as soon as possible, and complained that it would be unjust to force him to remain as the army's leader. This was hardly the kind of zeal and aggressiveness that the Mountain was seeking. Nevertheless, the government apparently decided that with the officer shortage as bad as it was, Houchard's merits outweighed his defects. It kept him in command.  

When Houchard took charge in mid-August, the strategic situation in Flanders had worsened still further. The Allied army, now over 100,000 men strong, was deployed in a long convex cordon extending from the Lille area on their right to the Sambre valley near Charleroi on their left. The point of this cordon was thrust well inside the French fortress barrier built by Vauban 100 years earlier; its shadow hung over Paris, a mere 90 miles away, like an ominous thunderhead. Military opinion has generally held that the proper strategy for the Allies was to pierce the fortress barrier with the bulk of their army, and to march directly on Paris. If the unfinished rag-tag French army attempted to fight, so much the better. But political and mercantile considerations intervened to block this strategy. The British government decided that it wanted Dunkirk as

remuneration for its participation in the war; it demanded that the Allied army capture Dunkirk before it undertook any further offensive operations. The possession of this coastal fortress would offer Britain a number of strategic and economic advantages. The Austrian commander of the Allied army, the Prince of Coburg, vainly protested that the capture of Dunkirk would divert valuable men from the more important advance through the barrier fortresses. The British government stood firm. Consequently in mid-August the Allies divided their forces. While the Duke of York marched north with between 35,000 and 40,000 soldiers to beleaguer Dunkirk, Coburg maintained his cordon with the remainder and simultaneously advanced to place the French fortress of Le Quesnoy under siege.

The loss of Le Quesnoy, not to mention that of Dunkirk, would have left irreparable breaches in the fortress barrier. Houchard's first priority thus was to prevent their fall at all costs. This task indeed was to take precedence over solving the vexing personnel and logistical problems of the army. Houchard's first step was to determine if the Allies had in fact divided their forces. Hence he ordered Jourdan to launch a reconnaissance towards the enemy troops reported marching towards the coast in the Lille area; Jourdan's action at Linselles was a result of this order. Linselles confirmed the fact that the Allies had indeed split their army. By doing so they presented Houchard
with a rare opportunity to turn the tide of the campaign by attacking their separate forces and defeating them in detail.

Houchard, his staff, and the representatives on mission all began to work out a plan of campaign. At this point the initiative in deciding the proper strategy to follow was entirely theirs. Houchard's first idea was to assemble 36,000 men to attack Coburg. However part of the troops that he wished to use—Jourdan's division—had already been sent towards Dunkirk to oppose the Duke of York. Next, he toyed with the idea of gathering a strike force near Menin and piercing the enemy cordon there, while at the same time advancing south to attack Coburg near Le Quesnoy. This plan was beyond the strength and capacity of the army; it was fortunate that it was not adopted. Unsure of what to do, Houchard convened a council of war on August 25. Mainly on the initiative of his staff, notably Gay-Vernon and Berthelmy, the council decided to try to envelop the Anglo-Dutch army before Dunkirk. Gay-Vernon proposed that the French assault the enemy forces at Menin, and having defeated them turn north and cut behind York's army. The Allies, their communications interdicted, would then be at a severe disadvantage. Houchard liked this plan, but representative Duquesnoy did not. Duquesnoy believed it too risky; moreover, he distrusted its originator, Gay-Vernon, a ci-devant and former associate of Custine who, while active and knowledgeable, "has eyes which do not
But the others evidently overruled Duquesnoy, because the first step in Gay-Vernon's plan, the assault on Menin, was agreed to. Both generals and representatives then informed the Committee of their plans and decisions.  

Houchard attacked the allied forces deployed south of Menin on August 28. A success would, he hoped, "check the impetuosity of the English." But the attack did not succeed. Houchard attacked with insufficient forces—under 20,000 men—in three separate columns in doctrinaire cordon fashion. The two flank columns were quickly repulsed. The center column carried Turcoing village in spite of "terrible fire" from its Dutch defenders; however, when Houchard tried to continue the advance, his troops fell into confusion. They looted Turcoing and the nearby villages in spite of the best efforts of Houchard and the representatives to control them. Then two platoons of enemy cavalry caused one entire demi-brigade to panic. It was yet another example of the indiscipline and lack of cohesion which was crippling the army. Houchard ordered a retreat.

The French planners had to begin again. Houchard

35. Duquesnoy to the Committee, 8/26/93, Corr., III, pp. 48-9.


called another council of war. He still favored the Menin operation, but the failure of the attack, and possibly some opposition from members of the council, caused him to choose a less roundabout route via Ypres to the rear of the enemy army. Thus Gay-Vernon's plan remained the basis for the army's planned offensive. Indeed, it had found favor with the Committee. Carnot approved it, urging Houchard to forget once and for all about Coburg and concentrate upon the Duke of York. Should the French destroy the Anglo-Dutch, "the most total revolution is inevitable in England." Houchard thus had a plan and approval from the government to employ it. Yet four days later he changed his mind.

In a long and rambling letter to the Committee, he enumerated the vast, crippling shortcomings of the army: undisciplined troops, insufficient cadres, logistical chaos. In addition, the nature of the terrain—marshes and canals with only a few roads and bridges all covered by enemy strongpoints—made the enveloping march behind the allied army too long and dangerous. Therefore, he had decided to abandon Gay-Vernon's plan. Instead, the French were to march via Cassel directly against the enemy covering force south of Dunkirk and to attack it. This new operation was more direct and swift and thus less risky.


39. Houchard to the Committee, 9/3/93, Corr., III, pp. 82-83. This is the letter paraphrased by R. R. Palmer in Twelve Who Ruled, ch. IV.
Why did he change plans? Were the tactical considerations mentioned the primary reason? Possibly. Did the representatives persuade him to change his plan as some historians suggest? Probably not. The government had officially approved the first plan, and the representatives followed the government's lead. It is more likely that he allowed himself to be swayed by the pressure from both the government and the popular societies that he relieve Dunkirk as soon as possible. The pressure was admittedly heavy. Carnot had written that should the French lose Dunkirk, "the most frightful discouragement among us will be the inevitable result"; other letters spoke of the necessity of putting an end to the barbarous crimes of the enemy. So Houchard opted for the strategy that would get his army to Dunkirk in the least amount of time with the least amount of risk. The Committee was not overjoyed with his decision. "We see with pain that you have abandoned the project to envelop the enemies who are before Dunkirk and Bergues. In striking this great blow the war could perhaps be ended, but if you have thought that success would be doubtful, we can only approve the resolution that you have taken."40

The strain of command was quite obviously wearing down Houchard, weighing ever more heavily upon his shoulders,

creating ever more doubts in his mind. He requested more specific directives from the government, until Bouchotte was compelled to tell him that the Committee did not think it advisable to prescribe rigidly "such and such an operation, or such and such a means of executing it...thus it has decided that it will only send you some reflexions leaving you total latitude in your operations." But total latitude in the choice of strategies meant total responsibility for their success or failure, and this Houchard did not want. Writing on the eve of Hondschoote, he again attempted to shift the burden of responsibility from his shoulders. Because the government had ordered him to lift the siege of Dunkirk, he would obey. But success depended upon the fighting qualities of the troops; and because the army was in such bad condition, their fighting qualities were low. Thus success was doubtful. And the army's defects, he concluded, were the responsibility of the government. In effect he was arguing that should he lose the battle, it was the government's fault. Here he was repeating the defeatism of Dampierre and Kilmaine. One can sympathize with his dilemma. He did not want the command; he was unqualified to handle it; and he had inherited an army whose shortcomings were not of his doing. But it was unwise to blame the situation on a revolutionary regime in the midst of an emergency, especially when that regime was the Committee
While Houchard was struggling with his difficulties, Jourdan was following the Duke of York towards the coast as ordered. He was to assist general Barthel, the French commander in the Dunkirk sector, in halting the Duke's offensive. On August 23, he reached Cassel with his division. As he continued his march, he collided with a part of the allied covering force under the Dutch general, Freytag, near the village of Wormhout. The ensuing action was almost a carbon copy of Linselles. Jourdan assaulted and took the village, only to have his troops fall into disorder immediately afterwards. Then his division was nearly attacked by French troops under general Leclaire, whom representatives Billaud-Varenne and Duquesnoy had sent to attack Wormhout from a different direction. In the resulting confusion with French soldiers firing at one another, the enemy rallied, counterattacked, and recaptured their positions. Nevertheless, Duquesnoy was happy with the action. He decided that Barthel, who although a good patriot, possessed neither the intelligence nor the energy to command the left wing of the French army, and chose Jourdan to replace him, an appointment immediately approved.

Jourdan now bore the immediate responsibility for the defense of Dunkirk and its surrounding environs, in collaboration with representative Ernest Duquesnoy. In Duquesnoy he did not have an easy colleague. Duquesnoy was, by far, one of the most radical and ruthless of the deputies on mission. He was "rude and singular", a man not inclined to be a second to anyone. On mission he dressed like a peasant and drank heavily, sometimes arriving at headquarters dead drunk. He was utterly merciless towards officers whom he judged even slightly incompetent or unpatriotic, and he dismissed them without the least hesitation. He was totally committed to the revolution; in 1795 after the abortive coup of Prarial, when convicted of "treason" by the Thermidorians, he cut his own throat. This is the deputy with whom Jourdan was to be most closely associated during the next four months. Amazingly this violent, fanatical ex-priest, so hostile to most of the army's officers, was to become Jourdan's staunchest supporter. At their first meeting on August 26, he instructed Jourdan to send reinforcements to both Dunkirk and Bergues, to hold the locks of the Gravelines canal, and to place his own division, now under Leclaire,

close to Dunkirk. Houchard may have recalled Jourdan to Lille on the following day to help in planning the offensive. If he was summoned, there is nothing to indicate that he ever left the area of his command. Instead he remained with Duquesnoy to take further measures for the defense of Dunkirk. 44

Dunkirk was causing the government extreme anxiety. When its commandant, general Joseph Souham, pessimistically informed Paris that the defenses were so dilapidated that the city could not survive a serious attack for longer than five days, the government had arrested him for defeatism. But it had also ordered immediate measures to strengthen the defenses and the defenders. Berthelmy passed on the Committee's instruction to Souham's successor, colonel Lazare Hoche, ordering him to defend Dunkirk to the last extremity. "No quarter with tyrants, no capitulation," Berthelmy dramatically added. "It is not necessary to survive shame; one is better off to die a million times. Blood and always blood." He also ordered Jourdan to throw yet more reinforcements into Dunkirk, and to go there himself to inspect the defenses. "It is absolutely necessary,"

44. Duquesnoy to the Committee, 8/26/93, Corr., III, pp. 48-9. Chuquet, Hondschoote, pp. 149-51. Phipps argues that Jourdan returned to Houchard's headquarters at this time. The correspondence of Duquesnoy and Levasseur prove conclusively that he was at Dunkirk until at least Sept. 3.
Berthelmy stipulated, "to hold out another eight days."

Jourdan had anticipated this order, accompanying Duquesnoy, Collombel and Hentz into Dunkirk on August 31. For the next few days they inspected the defenses and arrested all suspects and shirkers.46

Jourdan did not remain there long. Already his services were being demanded elsewhere. On September 3, Bouchotte asked if Houchard could send him to take command of the fortress of Maubeuge, then menaced by the enemy. But Houchard had him reserved for another task. The army commander recalled him to his own force to take command of its largest division, as his troops deployed south of the Yser river to attack the Anglo-Dutch army.46

By September 5, Houchard had concentrated 45,000 men within striking distance of the enemy army, some 38,000 strong. The Allies had deployed some 18,000 soldiers along the Yser as a covering force under Freytag; the rest were actually besieging Dunkirk. There was an additional small detachment at Ypres to the southeast. Houchard regarded the upcoming battle with gloomy anticipation. Levasseur claimed that he had to persuade him to stay with the planned assault by telling him that the enemy had not had time to prepare

45. A.G. B1 17, Berthelmy to Hoche, 8/29/93; Berthelmy to Jourdan, 8/31/93. A.G. B1 18, Levasseur to the Committee, 9/1/93.

themselves. Houchard had heard of Custine's execution, and this had frightened him. "There is a regular determination to guillotine the generals," he exclaimed, and Levasseur unsympathetically replied, "and you too if you betray us." With grim foreboding Houchard organized the attack.47

His strategy called for an offensive in typical cordon fashion, six columns of attack scattered along a nineteen-mile front. Jourdan, with 13,000 soldiers, was to make the main assault in the center; he was to cross the Yser near Herzeele and attack northward towards Hondschoote and the Dunkirk-Furnes road--the Allies' main line of supply and retreat. To Jourdan's left a 6,000-man column under Landrin was to assault Wormhout, and a second column under Leclaire was to assail the enemy near Bergues. To Jourdan's right two additional columns were to make attacks against the enemy left, and a sixth column, 9,000 strong, was to make a useless advance on Ypres to contain the small Dutch garrison there.48 In launching this attack, the French possessed two definite advantages: they outnumbered the enemy and the Allies had problems of their own. The morale of the Dutch soldiers was low. The quality of some of the English units was bad. The men had recently been recruited out of the slums and prisons of England;

47. Levasseur, Memoires, II, pp. 76-7.
48. See map #2.
they were ill-trained, ill-supplied, and frequently led by dilettantish noble officers whose sole qualification for command was the possession of enough money to recruit their regiments. Only the German element in the army was soundly professional.49

A cynic might argue that the French possessed a third advantage. From the outset of the fighting, Houchard did not have full control over the tactical conduct of the battle.

On the morning of September 6 the French army advanced to the Yser where the crossing was defended by additional enemy forces in the village of Bambecq, the bridge being covered by a "fleche" with abattis and a battery. It was a difficult position to take, and, with a rainstorm drenching the troops and their gunpowder, Jourdan requested a delay before attacking. Berthelmy heroically replied that there always was the bayonet-attack: at the head of his troops, sword in hand, Jourdan attacked. He stormed the village, was thrown out by an enemy counterattack, assaulted it a second time, and seized it for good. By now it was six P.M. and the French conscripts were showing signs of wear. Houchard proposed a halt despite the fact that his forces had not yet penetrated the enemy defenses as deeply as

planned. Representative Nicholas Hentz, a man every bit as violent as Duquesnoy and with less mental balance, overruled him, saying that free men were never too tired to fight the slaves of tyrants. Houchard ordered the advance to continue. By nightfall Jourdan had captured Rexpoede where his tired soldiers dispersed to spend the night in the houses and barns.  

The offensive had begun well, but only where Jourdan had attacked. Of the other columns, only Leclaire's had done any substantial fighting, and it had been repulsed. The others had made only minor advances.  

Worse was to follow. Jourdan had penetrated far enough to put a sizable portion of Freytag's force in a pocket between himself and the French around Bergues. Freytag ordered his troops to break out eastward through Rexpoede lest they be cut off completely from the rest of the army. The fighting had just ceased. Houchard, Jordan, Delbrel, and their staffs were sitting down to dinner when the first wave of Freytag's men struck. Surprisingly Jourdan's soldiers did not immediately panic. They held firm in the village until a squadron of French cavalry overran the center of the attacking force, routing them and capturing Freytag. But


51. Dupuis, ibid.
while this was occurring, a second enemy column had approached Rexpoede from a different direction undetected, and now it attacked. In an instant all was confusion. The enemy ripped through the French defenders and entered the village before Houchard and Delbrel had time to mount their horses. Attackers and defenders engaged in a wild house-to-house struggle. "In the most profound darkness the battalions collided with each other before recognizing each other. The [French] musketry and artillery had only the flashes of the enemy musketry and artillery as a point of aim. Lucky if in that tumult the shot and steel of the French might strike the English [sic] forces." In the dark the advantage lay with the attackers. The French could not organize their troops. "We did everything to control them; they heard our voices, but sure of not being recognized they fled with all the haste that...the muddy roads permitted." The French stumbled back from Rexpoede through the wet night in total disorder. Houchard and Delbrel were lucky to escape with their lives. 52

Jourdan had joined his troops when the allied attack first struck. When his men broke before the second onslaught, he stayed in Rexpoede vainly trying to rally them.

52. The description of the fighting is from Delbrel's memoires, quoted in Dupuis, ibid. See also Houchard to the Committee, 9/11/93, Corr., III, pp. 128-32. Phipps, op cit, I, pp. 230-32.
Without information, without any of his staff, he personally sought Houchard, who ordered him to retreat. When he returned to Rexpoede to attempt to collect his men and pull them back, he was met by a hail of musketry. His men had fled. When he finally found the fugitives, he discovered that he had been reported killed. Even so it was probably due to his vigor that there were troops left to rally after the wholesale confusion of the night.53

Morning found much of the army in a state of near anarchy, its units hopelessly mixed up, with orders arriving late or not at all. The logistics were in a shambles. The officers had forgotten to ensure that their men had properly filled their knapsacks and cartridge boxes before the battle; as a result, until additional supplies trickled into the fighti; area, Jourdan's men were without food, brandy and ammunition, and thus incapable of combat. Houchard was as confused as his army. While he allowed Jourdan's division to rest, regroup, and resupply, he ordered the other columns to continue their movements. Because Jourdan's 13,000 men represented the cutting edge of the French thrust, one wonders why he ordered the others to advance. Of the others only Leclaire and a demi-brigade under Vandamme from the right encountered the enemy. They followed the Anglo-Dutch to Hondschoote; then seeing themselves unsupported,

53. Dupuis, ibid, pp. 444-51.
they retired to Bergues.

There was no question but that the battle had to be renewed on the 8th. The Duke of York had not lifted the siege; his units stood intact before the city. Freytag's force, now under General Walmoden, had taken up a new position covering the Dunkirk-Furnes road around Hondschooote, its right on a hillock with a battery of artillery, its left strengthened by redoubts. Hedges and water-filled ditches covered its front, and the Allies had further strengthened the position by erecting earthworks near the village. Walmoden had nearly 20,000 soldiers; he had commanded about 18,000 when the battle began, and York had more than replaced his losses with a substantial reinforcement from the besieging elements. In resuming the attack, Houchard repeated his error of the 6th and compounded it. Not only did he again scatter his forces, but he also ordered one column to march from the right clear across the rear of the army to Bergues, while the division already in that area went to reinforce Dunkirk—a useless maneuver since neither place needed assistance. For the crucial fighting at Hondschooote he retained only 22-25,000 men—Jourdan's troops, Leclaire's division, and two brigades under Vandamme and Colaud. 54

It was mid-morning before the French engaged the enemy. Leclaire arrived late, and Houchard did not want to begin the attack without him. When he believed everyone to be in position, he ordered the attack to commence. Jourdan assaulted Hondschoote, his men falling out of the ranks by the score to disperse through the hedges and ditches and fight as skirmishers. For some reason neither the right nor the left supported Jourdan's assault; he was repulsed. Houchard ordered a second attack, this time getting Colaud's brigade into the fray. Again heavy enemy resistance halted the French, driving many to ground where they engaged in a firefight with the defenders. Then a counterattack by a brigade of Hanoverian grenadiers down the Rexpoede road threw Jourdan back once more. The French conscripts were badly shaken. Jourdan scattered cavalry behind the lines to round up fugitives, and having mustered his last reserves, he massed them into a column in preparation for yet a third attack, relying on herd instinct to compensate for the lack of discipline.\(^{55}\)

Exactly what happened next is not clear. As the French recoiled from their second unsuccessful assault, apparently Houchard nearly lost his nerve. Dismayed by the enemy resistance and the shaken appearance of many of his units, he wanted to break off the battle. The representatives,


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
and possibly his staff, set out to dissuade him while his troops remained stationary, trembling under the artillery fire of the Allies. Delbrel decided to take matters into his own hands. He went to the firing line and found Jourdan herding together his conscripts. Delbrel ordered him to renew the attack. Jourdan demurred; he had not received an attack order from Houchard; if he should obey Delbrel, attack, and fail, he would then be responsible for the loss of the battle. According to Delbrel, the rest of the conversation went as follows:

Delbrel: Do you fear the responsibility?
Jourdan: Yes.
Delbrel: All right, I'll assume it...I give you a formal order to muster everyone in your division to attack as soon as possible. My authority is superior to that of the general-in-chief.

And Delbrel then offered to serve as Jourdan's aide for the remainder of the battle. 56

Jourdan obeyed. It was a sensible decision. Technically Delbrel's authority was superior to Houchard's; he, after all, was the government. Also, Jourdan realized the danger of keeping raw troops stationary under fire; it was a question of sending them forward again, or watching

---

56. Delbrel's memoires, quoted in Dupuis, op cit, pp. 467-72.
them slowly melt away. As Jourdan led the third attack, he was struck in the chest by a musket ball. Bleeding heavily he was carried to the rear. Lavasseur claimed that he encountered Jourdan on his way to the doctors, and that Jourdan angrily criticised Houchard for not having sent any orders, crying "What will become of us with such a chief?" When Levasseur asked what he thought ought to be done, Jourdan urged that the army end its inaction, beat the charge, and rush Hondschoote with fixed bayonets.57

But Houchard had already bowed to the repeated urging of his subordinates and the representatives; he ordered a third attack with fixed bayonets. The French surged forward, at full strength for the first time, because Leclaire had finally joined the struggle. Houchard, Delbrel, and Levasseur all personally participated in the charge. This time they triumphed. Leclaire's men, wading across a canal under fire knee deep in water, broke the Allies' right flank and unhinged their entire position. French infantry fought their way into Hondschoote from every direction. The Allies retreated in confusion to Furnes. The Duke of York, having occupied himself for most of the day

57. Levasseur, Memoires, II, pp. 78-81. This is assuming that Levasseur's memory of Hondschoote was correct; he is not the most reliable of memoirists, especially regarding conversations which took place 35 years previously. He further stated that Jourdan suggested that he personally lead the assault since the troops had confidence in him.
repulsing sorties from Dunkirk, hastily raised the siege and withdrew. The French, at last, had a victory. 58

It was not, truthfully, Houchard's victory. Indeed, if he had been left on his own, the battle might not have been a victory but a defeat. Hondschoote was won by a collective effort on the part of staff officers, divisional generals, representatives, and soldiers, as well as by Houchard. Nevertheless the representatives duly praised him in their letters to the Committee announcing the victory. For the moment, at least, he was saved from disgrace. He was not to remain so for long.

Hondschoote had not seriously damaged the enemy army. Houchard missed his best chance of wrecking it when he neglected to launch a pursuit after the battle. Had he done so he would have caught York's force escaping across his front, strung out in no position to deploy effectively. But he did not think it advisable to order a pursuit. He believed the allied army to be stronger than his own and feared that the troops at Ypres might take him in reverse. Moreover, he thought the marshes north of Hondschoote impassable. Although a good half of his army had hardly

58. Dupuis, op cit, pp. 474-80. Exact losses are impossible to estimate. Both Dupuis and Phipps set them at a little less than 3,000 on each side; but both writers tend to understate the casualty figures. Quite possibly they were considerably higher.
fired a shot all day, he claimed that his men were too tired and disorganized to continue the action. When Levasseur urged him to press on, he refused, snapping, "You are not a soldier." All of Houchard's fears were largely without basis. Nor had he forced the Allies to give up their slow offensive through the French fortress barrier. The Duke of York believed his defeat to be heavier than it actually was, and he loudly clamored for reinforcements. But Coburg rightly considered his complaints "exaggerated", and only sent him 7,000 men under Beaulieu. Coburg, for his part, went ahead with the siege of Le Quesnoy.59

The government allowed Houchard no time to rest on his laurels. The Committee congratulated him on his victory, but also wrote that it regretted that the plan to envelop and destroy the "English" had not been carried out; be that as it may "it is necessary to profit from the moment of enthusiasm and hasten to raise the siege of Quesnoy." If Houchard thought that his task was finished, the government believed that he had only begun to complete it. Forced to resume operations, he decided to move against the Dutch force at Menin with 15,000 men from his Hondschoote army—

those who had done little or no fighting—plus 11,000 men from Lille under General Beru. If he could capture Menin, he could sever all communications between York and Coburg. Next, he planned to strike south against Coburg and relieve Le Quesnoy. On the whole, this was a fairly understandable strategy. Nevertheless it was essentially a cordon operation with limited means and goals, and it immobilized two thirds of the Hondschoote army in a useless observation of York's retreating army. Houchard could well have marched on Menin with twice the soldiers that he actually did.60

The French struck Menin on September 13 from north and south as planned. The Dutch fought feebly, misplacing reserves and losing strong positions. After 3,000 men fell, they fled in disorder towards Courtrai, while the French soldiers, as usual, celebrated their triumph by scattering to plunder Menin.61 But from this point on, it appeared that Houchard once again lost control of the situation. He hesitated after Menin; then he dispersed most of his force in a cordon along the Lys river, retaining only 15,000 men for his march against Coburg. Worse, he compromised his own plan when, possibly at the insistence of Collombel, he ordered generals Gudin at Maubeuge and Declaye at Cambrai to


61. Dupuis, ibid, pp. 13-15. Menin is the one victory that can legitimately be attributed to Houchard alone.
advance to relieve Le Quesnoy without waiting for him to join them. If he indeed was solely responsible for this order, it was a grievous mistake; Gudin and Declaye alone were no match for Coburg. 62

On September 14 and 15, disaster struck. A French brigade following the enemy east of Menin was surprised and routed by Beaulieu, newly arrived on the scene with the reinforcements. As the French fled, closely pursued by Beaulieu, they involved more units in the panic. By the end of the day Beaulieu had recaptured Menin and ruined the entire French position along the Lys. To the south Declaye, after rashly announcing his advance in the local newspapers, marched into a well prepared ambush and was cut to pieces. Gudin was also forced to retreat. Thus in two short days the French had lost the initiative and most of the advantages gained as a result of Hondschoote. Houchard excused himself for these defeats by blaming them on his subordinates. "I had given the orders...; I could not be everywhere;" and "I can not be responsible for the faults of others." This was not an excuse; it was self incrimination.

62. A.G. Bl 18, Bouchotte to Houchard, 9/11/93; Houchard to Bouchotte, 9/13/93; Collombel to the Committee, 9/11/93, 9/13/93. From the wording of Collombel's letters there is some reason to suspect that he may have ordered the offensive from Cambrai and Maubeuge on his own, thereby forcing Houchard's hand. However Houchard in his letters stated that he had ordered the attack.
He had indeed given the orders which led to these unfortunate actions. And if a commander was not, technically, responsible for the actions of his subordinates, what was he responsible for? 63

The sudden reversal of the campaign—the dashing of the high hopes raised by Hondschoote—provoked a rash of complaints by the representatives about the terrible state of the army. Levasseur and Bentabole co-authored a long resumé of its logistical and organizational deficiencies. Delbrel echoed their complaints, and added that the army was suffering defeat because its generals were too defensive-minded. Isore, Bar, and Drouet denounced the generals of the right wing of the army as incompetent. Lacoste and Peyssard wrote of indiscipline and disorder and denounced Houchard's staff and several of his divisional generals for royalism and incompetence. They described the defeats as the "system of Lafayette reappearing on the scene." They urged that the generals responsible for the Menin disaster be immediately dismissed. Levasseur criticized Houchard's failure to pursue the enemy energetically after Hondschoote. Clearly Houchard and his staff had lost the confidence of the representatives. Nevertheless, they did not throw him to the

63. Dupuis, De Hondschoote a Wattignies, pp. 18-21. 
A.G. Bl 18, Lacoste & Peyssard to the Committee, 9/15/93. 

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
wolves on the Committee as so many writers have claimed. They were well aware of the immensity of the problems which he faced, as well as his honest limitations in facing them. Only the extremist Hentz denounced Houchard directly as an incompetent, a possible traitor, and a friend of "Custinines" like his staff officers Gay-Vernon and Berthelmy.64

The government was placed in a quandry. It was clear that changes had to be made; at the same time it seemed that the Committee was not eager to begin yet another purge of the 'Nord's' officer corps. The impetus for action came from the radicals. Bouchotte arrested Gay-Vernon as a suspected royalist. For the unfortunate, overwrought Houchard, this was the last straw. He threatened to resign unless Gay-Vernon was restored to duty to assist him in his "painful functions...His assistance is so necessary to me both in my correspondence and in his local and military knowledge that I cannot continue to command the army. It is beyond my strength and ability." Gay-Vernon was his operational brain and he knew it. The government could hesitate no longer. Here was the defeatism of Dampierre and Kilmaine all over again. Here was a general whose abilities and talents were highly suspect to all frankly admitting his own failings. The Committee ordered his dismissal and

64. See cartons Bl 18 and Bl 19 for the representatives' letters concerning the multiple problems of the army of the North following the setbacks of the 14th & 15th.
arrest on September 21, along with that of Berthelmy and several other of the army's generals. It was not the sacrifice of a scapegoat; the commanders of two other armies were purged the same day. The Committee once again was trying to weed out the incompetent. In a letter to the representatives about the dismissals, Carnot's tone was almost desperate: "Collect all the information you can acquire about the talent and civisme of men who can be promoted to higher rank in the army."65

Houchard was brought back to Paris a prisoner. His fate was unnecessary, unjust, and tragic. He was denounced by the extremists in the journals, in the clubs, and in the Convention, as a traitor. The government put him on trial. The discovery of some correspondence with the enemy on some routine matters sealed his doom; this seemed to offer proof positive of his treason. On November 16, he was guillotined. His only sin had been to be unqualified for the position to which he was promoted. Yet his tragic end should not blind one to the fact that his dismissal was both necessary and inevitable.

Jourdan had spent less than a week recuperating from his chest wound—a minor graze which did not prove to be serious. He already was marked for another promotion;

on September 8, Bouchotte recommended him for the command of the Army of the Ardennes. He took command on the 14th. The Ardennes was a small force largely composed of ill-trained conscripts and scattered garrisons along the Ardennes frontier. For the next seven days Jourdan vainly tried to get Bouchotte to tell him what units were under his command, what was their strength, where were they positioned, and what was their task. He was still awaiting an answer when he was informed that he was appointed provisional commander of the armies of the North and the Ardennes. The decision to promote him was probably a collective one. Carnot's son claimed that Carnot recommended him. Bouchotte certainly esteemed him, since he recommended him for the command of the Ardennes. Representatives Bar, Drouet, and Isore had praised him earlier in requesting that he be sent to command at Maubeuge: "He is very well known and in general esteemed by this army which burns to see him arrive. We desire his arrival with so much impatience..." He was known as a staunch republican and a sans-culotte. But an examination of the officer corps at this time reveals what was probably the decisive reason. There was no one else.

66. A.G. Bl 18 & Bl 19, Jourdan to Bouchotte, 9/14/93, 9/19/93; Bouchotte to Jourdan, 9/22/93.

At first he tried to refuse the appointment. When several of the representatives announced it to him, he tried to decline, arguing that "not having either the talent or the experience that go with a command so important, it was his duty to refuse." But the representatives retorted that anyone who refused any employment to which the government had called him was subject to arrest. Jourdan was an obedient soldier; he felt that he had no choice. He accepted. He could not have had many illusions about the task facing him. It had resulted in the treason of one general, the death of a second, the dismissal of a third, and the arrest and execution of a fourth, soon to be joined by a fifth. Jourdan was noticeably reticent in his memoires about his personal feelings, almost always understating or concealing his true state of mind. The impression conveyed by his account of his learning of his promotion is that he was utterly surprised. One wonders what really went through his mind.  

68. A.G. memoires historiques #608-1 (hereafter m.r. 608-1), Jourdan's Mémoires de la campagne de 1793.
"Inferior in number to the Allies, especially in cavalry, the army indeed was in a pitiful condition," Jourdan recalled of the command that he assumed. "The generals and superior officers, having risen in rank in but a few months from the subaltern ranks to higher grades, possessed only their zeal and their courage. The troops were denuded of equipment and clothing [and here he might have added food], and the arsenals were lacking arms and munitions...The older regiments, not having received any recruits for a long time, were reduced to half their strength...The greatest number [of the conscripts] were only furnished with sticks and pikes. Nonetheless, as they judged the state of affairs, the Committee of the government, which based the strength of the Republic upon the multitude, believed that it [the army] could accomplish the greatest things." And Jourdan, inexperienced in army command, was responsible for leading this near rabble to the greatness the Committee expected.¹

In his bleak evaluation of the situation he was not exaggerating; if anything he was understanding its gravity. The reports which the representatives were sending to the government echoed Jourdan's complaints point by point, elaborated on them, and also described problems which

Jourdan had not mentioned. In a multi-page report, Levasseur and Bentabole discussed in detail the defects of the army: a lack of qualified officers and supply officials, severe shortages in clothing and weapons, and insufficient manpower. The levée was not providing the help that they had hoped; the conscripts were "incapable of being employed immediately" owing to their lack of training and equipment. Subsistence for the army "always causes the greatest embarrassment." The departments which were supposed to supply the army with the provisions it needed were not doing so, and they believed that government agents should be sent into each obstreperous department. In an oral report delivered to the Convention, Delbrel repeated virtually all of Levasseur's and Bentabole's complaints.

The passive resistance of the departments was hindering the provisioning of the army. Great abuses existed in the furnishing of horses and the lack of horses caused the shortage of cavalry which was crippling the army. The frontier fortresses needed to be strengthened, and the army required more offensive-minded officers. And then, of course, the still undefeated enemy was but ninety miles from Paris.2

The Army of the North ran, as Marcel Reinhard wrote, the dual risk of perishing from either consumption or

presumption. Jourdan's task was to alleviate the situation before either of these fates proved lethal to it. He had to reconstruct it into a capable fighting force, and he had to lead it to victory. If he failed, the army would die, either consumed by its uncured diseases or pushed to the point of no return by those who presumed that it was capable of the greatest achievements. Jourdan had to carry out his task, moreover, under the lash of a revolutionary regime growing increasingly suspicious of the loyalty and energy of its generals—a regime becoming more radical and intolerant of failure due to its own indigestable diet of successive problems and crises, and popular pressure for it to do something about every one of them.

Jourdan did not undertake this task alone. Had this been necessary, he would have had to become a veritable superleader combining strategic ability, political expertise, administrative and managerial competence, economic knowledge, plus a talent for propaganda and public relations. Jourdan was no superman. He tackled the construction of the Army of the Nord as part of a group effort. He acted in conjunction with his superiors on the Committee of Public Safety and in the Ministry of War, with his political colleagues on mission to the army from the Convention, and with the vast multitude of officers and soldiers, officials and bureaucrats, which made up the military. Some of the efforts of these various persons were, as will be seen, more
harmful than beneficial, interference rather than assistance. But on the whole Jourdan could not have pulled the army out of its incomplete stage unaided; this required the teamwork of large numbers.

In selecting Jourdan for the command of the 'Nord' the government could not have made a more fortunate choice. He was, above all, a team man. He possessed none of the arrogance, pride, and intolerance that would have prevented him from working harmoniously with others, be they politicians, generals, or common soldiers. He was a warm and sympathetic person, evidently with an easy personality and an ability not only to suffer opposing points of view but also to defer to them when necessary. He yielded gracefully to orders even when they proved vexing or difficult. The fact that he took orders from civilians did not trouble him; he possessed none of the soldier's traditional hostility towards the meddling of civilian politicians in matters which he believed should be reserved for the military expert. When offering advice, he did so with almost painful diffidence. 'I submit these considerations to you because I think them to be in the best interests of the Republic', he would so often write, but 'be assured that whatever course of action you decide upon I will obediently carry out'. Then as an added precaution he would reassure his superiors of his loyalty and devotion to the regime. Jourdan was very careful not to repeat Custine's mistake and cause the govern-
ment to suspect his patriotism. Like everyone, he had a point at which unreasonable superiors or incompetent subordinates would exhaust his patience. Fortunately, given the circumstances, he had a high threshold of tolerance.

Jourdan's ability to work with others was not limited to his superiors. He also got along well with his subordinates, be they generals or privates. The continuing loyalty of the officers who served under him in the 'Nord' and in the Sambre et Meuse and the affection that the common soldiers always had for him even in the most dire of circumstances were mute testimony to his ability to deal with his men with understanding, tact and humanity. His long years of privation and his experiences in the ranks of the Royal army enabled him to empathize with the average man in the ranks. At the same time he had doubtlessly served with malingerers and chronic discipline problems, and he well knew that the only way to deal with such persons was with tough, unrelenting discipline. Additionally, he possessed the ability always to display what one might call a positive attitude. If he doubted his ability to cope with the army's problems, he did not show it. He did not duplicate Houchard's mistake of criticizing himself in his dispatches in an effort to persuade the government to shift the responsibilities of his command from his shoulders. Only once did he commit this error. During the appalling hardships of the November offensive, he became so disgusted that
he threatened to resign his post; the government very nearly dismissed and arrested him, and he never made the mistake again.

At the head of the team entrusted with the reconstitution of the revolutionary army—the team on which Jourdan was now so important a member—stood the Committee of Public Safety. The Committee was the executive organ of the Jacobin dictatorship and, as such, Jourdan's commander-in-chief. His immediate superior was Lazare Carnot, the stern, disciplined, tireless and energetic military specialist of the Committee.³ Carnot was responsible for the construction of the army as well as the strategic direction of the war. His duties included the supervision of the commanders, staffs, officers, fortress commandants, and commissaire-ordonnateurs of the Republic's eleven combat armies. He also was responsible for the activities of the ministry of war and its various agents. He dealt directly with the army commanders and the representatives with each army in his direction of operations. That a ruthless, all-out prosecution of the war was absolutely necessary

³ The best study of Carnot's life and career is by far: Marcel Reinhard, Le Grand Carnot (Paris, 1952, 2 vols.). It contains an excellent analysis of his role in the collective organization of the revolutionary military effort. The two studies of Carnot in English: Huntly Dupre, Carnot (Oxford Ohio, 1940), and S. J. Watson, Carnot (London, 1954), are far less useful.
Carnot fully believed; in this he was as one with the rest of the Committee. He felt that the Terror was essential for reasons of state; in a revolution the state must pulverise its enemies or be annihilated by them. Any display of weakness was fatal. As for war, it was "a violent condition; one had to fight it to the limit or go home." He subscribed to Barère's dictum that only dead enemies did not return. It is a myth that he was merely a technician secluded "in his bureau" with his maps and directives. Where the safety of the revolution was concerned, he was a convinced terrorist.⁴

Regarding Carnot's direction of the war and construction of the army, several points must be made. He was not the creator of total war; he was rather the clearing house of ideas for the new "guerre a outrance". His military conceptions developed as a result of suggestions and exchanges of information with advisors, generals, representatives and popular societies. Generals Hoche and Berthelmy, representative Delbrel, Committee member Louis Prieur, and some of the Parisian popular societies all called for a national strategy of constant offensives en masse before Carnot incorporated such an idea into his directives. France has 200,000 men in garrison, they clamored; she should take the offensive! To attack best suits the nature of the

⁴ Reinhard, op cit, II, pp. 39, 107-08.
French character! The idea for organizing the army into divisions came from Berthelmy, and the complete amalgam of veterans and conscripts into the same units was urged by Jourdan. Carnot's genius thus lay in his capacity to be receptive to new ideas and to choose those which worked. Secondly, his views on the new methods of warfare were by no means completely formulated in the fall of 1793. He too was searching for the proper combinations which would bring victory. Indeed, throughout his career a substantial gap remained between his theories of warfare and their actual practice. He often allowed traditional strategic considerations to color his plans, so that at times Old Regime military ideas were juxtaposed with revolutionary concepts in the same directive. Finally, in 1793 he was by no means in sole control of the war effort. He was as yet a very junior member of the Committee, and his colleagues, most notably St Just, also took an active interest in the conduct of the war. Carnot shared operational direction of the war with the rest of the Committee. And if the other members deferred to his expertise on most occasions, there were important instances when they did not—when they allowed political considerations, or their own ideological biases, to override the technical proposals of Carnot. The govern-

5. A.G. B1 17-19, see e.g. letters to the Committee of Bentabole, 8/13/93; Delbrel, 8/23/93; Berthelmy's letters of Aug. 17, 25, & 29/93; Arthur Chuquet, Hondschoote, pp. 155-57.
Jourdan's relationship with Carnot was correct and professional. They got along with a minimum of friction. The fact that both men shared similar strategic and tactical preferences helped. Carnot issued his orders in the form of decrees which spelled out the general strategic objectives, while they left Jourdan a good deal of latitude to choose his own means of attaining them. Carnot had no intention of trying to instruct his generals on everything, as Houchard had found out to his dismay. Jourdan's greatest difficulty with him arose out of Carnot's tendency to mix the rhetoric of the new war of mass with more conservative tactical instructions. For example, on one occasion he wrote Jourdan that "it is always necessary to stay ready to profit from circumstances and to fall in force upon all the enemy's weaker corps...because it is primarily his extermination which we must bring about." Yet this same directive ordered Jourdan to remain on the defensive. The contradiction in this order is evident. Jourdan nonetheless took every care to execute Carnot's directives as literally as possible, for he well knew how the Committee felt about disobedient generals. However it is not true that Carnot


7. A.G. B1 37, Carnot to the representatives with the Sambre et Meuse, 8/13/94.
allowed his generals little or no room to change or interpret his orders. In Jourdan's case, he did not hesitate to suggest alternative courses of action if he disagreed with a proposed operation or change in personnel. Moreover, Carnot frequently took Jourdan's advice, sometimes adjusting his plans to act upon Jourdan's suggestions.

If their working relationship was a good one, there is no indication that it went beyond this to friendship. Carnot later admitted that he had "never been either the personal friend nor enemy of any of the generals-in-chief of the Republic." Those he "esteemed as skillful" he sought out and employed; those who were unfortunate he dismissed. Carnot assisted and supported Jourdan when he could because he respected his military abilities. Jourdan, Carnot believed, was a brave and honest sans-culotte. Jourdan's feeling towards Carnot are harder to define. There is some reason to believe that he identified Carnot with the "sanguinary" excesses of the Terror and with the intense pressure on him from the government to accomplish the nearly impossible. On the other hand, Jourdan obviously esteemed Carnot's talents and did not shrink from asking his advice and using him as an ally against the radicals on occasion. If Carnot was not a friend, he was an important and powerful


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
patron within the government. Jourdan's ability to work with him was a key factor in enabling him to keep his command--and his head.

The second most important man in the team was the minister of war, Jean Bouchotte. Before the Revolution Bouchotte had been a career soldier, a captain in the Royal army. He had been appointed minister of war to replace Beurnonville in April, 1793, even though he was still only a colonel. Theoretically he was the head of the Republican armies, for he controlled all strategic decisions, the nomination and promotion of all high ranking officers, and the dismissal of those judged inept. In practice he did none of these things independently of the Committee. His chief function was to manage the logistics of the Republic's armies. In acquitting this task, he left much to be desired. Bouchotte was a well-meaning but mediocre minister; he remained in office mainly because of the support of the radicals in the Parisian popular societies whom the government could not afford to offend. In return for their support, Bouchotte awarded them jobs in the war ministry and in the administration of the armies. Ultimately he fell completely under their domination--a circumstance which had dire effects upon the war effort. On a personal level Jourdan's relations with Bouchotte were smooth enough. He corresponded with him regarding the operational and logistical problems of the army, and Bouchotte in turn passed on to Jourdan the government's
Jourdan's immediate civil superiors were the representatives on mission. These were the men with whom it was necessary, above all else, to maintain amicable relations. They were more than government agents; they were the actual extension of the regime's authority over the military. They occupied positions analogous to those of the army intendants of the Old Regime; they were at once administrators, quartermasters, propagandists, and political watchdogs. Traditionally they have been pejoratively viewed by historians, especially by military historians who see them as commissars with the sole function of spying on the unfortunate generals, interfering in their operations, and denouncing them as traitors when things went wrong. In the usual assessment, they were "jealous of all authority except their own." A general who became popular with his troops became an object of their suspicion, and if an officer complained of the supply personnel or the agents of the war ministry, he was denounced as a bad patriot. "Once in command a general saw how much his will was limited by the

10. For a discussion of Bouchotte's career, see Auguste Herlaut, Le Colonel Bouchotte; ministre de la guerre de l'an II (Paris, 1946, 2 vols.). Herlaut, as well as Soboul, Albert Mathiez & R. R. Palmer all view Bouchotte favorably. For the minority view, to which I wholeheartedly subscribe, see Marcel Reinhard, op cit, II. pp. 66-67. Reinhard questions Bouchotte's ability, suggesting that much of the army's logistical difficulty lay at his door.
interference of the representatives...death if he halted to
reshape his forces, death if he was attacked and defeated,
whilst, as Houchard found, even victory might not save him."\textsuperscript{11}

In Jourdan's case—and his was typical of the situations of the other commanders—the truth of the matter was exactly the contrary. Without the work of the representatives, the reorganization of the 'Nord' would have been indefinitely delayed, if ever completed at all. The representatives grappled with a bewildering variety of organizational and logistical problems which were simply beyond Jourdan's resources to handle. They saw to the feeding and equipping of the army, the supervising of the supply personnel, and the discipling of foot-dragging departments which were not sending the army their assigned food quotas. They worked to execute the levée, and they helped to implement the \textit{amalgam}. They consulted with Jourdan in the hiring and firing of officers and supply officials, and repaired and provisioned fortresses. In a given week one representative might discover a planned night assault betrayed to the enemy by a traitor who lit a telltale bonfire; another might purge the municipality of a front-line commune of aristocrats, malingerers, and other suspects; and a third might urge the government to deliver the back pay of the personnel of a certain administration. Like all administrators they made

\textsuperscript{11} Ramsey Phipps, \textit{The Armies of the First French Republic}, I, pp. 20-29. Phipps is a typical critic of the representatives.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
mistakes and committed abuses. Some were too quick to dismiss an officer for failures which were beyond the latter's ability to avoid. But on the whole their account sheet shows an overwhelming balance on the credit side of the ledger.

Jourdan did not hesitate to work with the representatives. The assertion of one historian that he survived their arbitrariness by manipulating "tame" ones is nonsense. He cooperated with them because they were agents of the government and because they were quite useful. In deferring to their judgments, he did so not from fear of the Terror; Jourdan was no sycophant. On the contrary, he firmly believed that the foremost duty of any general was to carry out the orders of his government to the best of his ability. The general could advise and remonstrate, but once the civilian authorities had made their decision, that decision had to be obeyed.12 Secondly, he well knew the realities of generalship under the Jacobin dictatorship, and he was aware that, as St Just later decreed, the time for disobedience had passed. The revolution had demanded total subordination of the military to the civilian authority, and the civilian authority included the representatives. Finally, he worked willingly with them because their lack of experience in military matters did not prevent them from being effective supplemental quartermasters for his army as well as trans-

12. A.G. nr 608-1, preface to Jourdan's mémoires de 1793.
mitters of his complaints about the shortcomings of his forces to the Committee. The representatives could press the Committee for action in a certain area with far more vigor than could Jourdan, and they could shift some of the intense responsibility from the general's shoulders to their own. As they labored among the troops, they came to realize the extent and gravity of their problems as well as did the generals. In the struggle against disorganization, indiscipline, and the presumption of the extremists, men like Delbrel, Duquesnoy and Levasseur were Jourdan's most valuable allies.  

The representatives were not the only civilians with whom Jourdan had to deal. There were also the "commissaires" of the war ministry. These men were a different matter altogether from the representatives. They were appointed and controlled by Bouchotte, who was a key member of the extremist faction in the regime. As a result, they were often sans-culottes from the Parisian popular societies, men who burned with patriotic zeal and determination but who possessed little real expertise. In theory, they, like the representatives, were to assist in the recon-

---

13. No adequate study of the representatives exists. The work by Henri Wallon is biased; that by Edmund Bonnal de Ganges is hopelessly incoherent. Their ample correspondence is contained in the "B" series of the Archives de Guerre, as well as in the Recueil des Actes.
struction of the army. In practice, they spent as much of their time acting as the "eyes of the minister", overseeing the generals and doing propaganda work among the rank and file. In addition they rivaled the representatives for control of the army. The commissaires believed the representatives establishment types who were hindering the revolutionizing of the army. The representatives in turn believed the commissaires to be enragés who were disorganizing the army. "The majority of these agents were men with swelled heads, animated with hateful passions, seeing nothing but plots and conspiracies." Carnot believed that their interference had mainly been harmful; "without them the (levée) would have been accomplished by now."14

The conflict between the representatives and the commissaires reflected the more deep and serious division between the moderates and the radicals—the "men of mass" as Jourdan called them—over how the war should be waged. In the Army of the Nord the attitudes of the two groups towards the officer corps was the basic point of difference. The commissaires felt, as did the extremists, that revolutionary fervor alone sufficed to achieve victory. Given

14. A.G. Bl 19, Levasseur to the Committee, 9/16/93; Reinhard, op cit, pp. 43, 74-5. During the Sambre offensive in late October, the Allies shifted their artillery from one position to another. The commissaires enthusiastically reported this minor adjustment as the first step in the complete retreat of the entire Allied army. Celliez et al. to Bouchotte, 10/24/93.
enough armed, patriotic sans-culottes, the revolution could sweep the slaves of tyrants out of France by sheer weight of numbers and revolutionary ferocity. When operations went wrong, it was obviously due to the treachery or ineptness of those who led. "The soldiers of the Republic," wrote commissaire Varin, "burn with the need to measure themselves against the enemy; and if we have any reverses...we must attribute them only to those who command" [my italics]. Most would agree with the sentiments of Bouchotte's second, the enragé Francois Vincent, that most of the officers "deserved a thousand deaths since they have arrested the valor of our armies." At times their officer-phobia was almost pathological. One wanted the immediate purge of all staff officers, while another demanded that any officer who gave a subordinate leave should be shot. And all distrusted talented, assertive officers whom they believed to be dangerous to liberty.\(^\text{15}\)

And yet the commissaires did not feel and say anything that was not felt or said by certain high-ranking members of the government. St Just had observed that generals were without sympathy in the nation, and that generalships still belonged to the "nature of monarchy". Bouchotte stated that in command of the Republic's armies

he wanted true *sans-culottes*, "not these so-called men of talent". Small wonder that the war ministry frequently did not take notice of the representatives' recommendations on the selection of generals. The latter desired experts rather than zealots.  

To Jourdan the *commissaires* were more of a hindrance than a help. They forced him and the representatives to dismiss more officers and administrators than they desired. As a result the desperate shortage of qualified officers and specialists—the men most needed for the reorganization of the army—became worse. The *commissaires* placed Jourdan in a ticklish position, because too much cooperation with their rivals, the representatives, might provoke the charge that he was a tepid patriot. Worse of all they greatly increased the pressure upon him in his direction of operations. So great was the *commissaires*’ distrust and distaste for generals that his first mistake might induce them to denounce him as a traitor "arresting the valor of the soldiers," and to call for his arrest—a call which would soon echo among the *commissaires*’ comrades and the Parisian popular societies. Here was the source of the pressure that forced the generals of the Republic to fight with a guillotine suspended over their heads.

This, then, was the team with which Jourdan had to work to rectify the 'pitiful condition' of the Army of the Nord. It is now necessary to consider how the general and his associates approached their difficult task.

The first problem was to find enough qualified officers to train and to discipline the masses of raw recruits, and then to lead them into battle properly. Most of the officers upon whom Jourdan had to rely were mediocre; he was constantly forced to instruct them in the most rudimentary duties of their profession. He advised General Fromentin not to send out his flankers too far lest they get tired or even desert. He reminded General Beauregard to make sure that his troops always marched in good order. He ordered his chief of artillery not to let soldiers ride astride the cannons while they were in motion. He instructed other officers to be sure to entrench each night.17 There were still others who were unable to carry out the daily bread distribution without confusion and unrest. The shortage of competent officers was aggravated by the Jacobins' determination to weed out all former noble officers even though such men were often the best qualified and most loyal to the Republic. Bouchotte's often repeated missive to his agents was for them to "verify if the men for whom you demand

17. See A.G. B1* 223 for a good sampling of Jourdan's detailed and repetitive instructions to his generals.
promotion are not noble". 18

Jourdan and his colleagues could not afford to wait until such officers developed qualities of leadership. Good men had to be found and promoted immediately; those who proved wanting had to be ruthlessly dismissed to make room for the more promising candidates. Some have argued that political reasons lay behind most of the Jacobins' dismissals; in reality those denounced were denounced for obvious ineptness. General Declaye was arrested after he proclaimed a planned advance in the local newspapers and then fled the battlefield when the forewarned enemy ambushed his force and cut it to pieces. Representative Isore arrested General Landrin when he found the general dead drunk at the head of his disorderly soldiers. Carnot and Jourdan had the chief of staff of the garrison of Maubeuge arrested because he failed to obey a direct order to sortie during the battle of Wattingnies; he was later guillotined. 19 Many of the lower ranking officers were equally lax. Some took two months to take over the command of units to which they were assigned. "The officers promoted by seniority can be the most honest of men, but often incapable of command, and often timid or inept." Then there were the cowards--"the most


dangerous of all." The representatives recommended that all officers who abandoned their units or cannon without orders should be shot on the spot.20

Yet with all the dismissals, arrests, and executions, the fact remains that more officers were promoted than purged. But to find the good young officers -- men like Ney, Bernadotte, Hoche and Soult, all apprentices in the 'Nord' officer corps -- took time. For such men to obtain sufficient maturity and experience to improve the army's cadres took still more time. In the interim, the problem remained.

Jourdan was more reluctant to dismiss generals of questionable ability than were his teammates. He retained General Fromentin although it is obvious from his correspondence that he distrusted the latter's ability. When the former noble General Beru was relieved of his command, Jourdan defended him, writing that "his conduct and sentiments are irreproachable, his opinion is that of a confirmed republican; he has always shown a heroic courage defending the Republic." When General Ransonnet suffered a reverse, Jourdan urged him not to get discouraged by the check but instead to redouble his vigilance and later take revenge. The same day he asked Isore not to dismiss Ransonnet because there were no other officers to replace

him. For this was the crux of the problem; if a bad officer be dismissed, there often was no better man to succeed him. 21

A second problem was the incomplete amalgamation. The embrigadement law had ended the official distinctions between veterans and levées, but it had done nothing to incorporate them into the same units. As casualties reduced the veteran contingents until many were below half strength, the conscripts accumulated behind the lines in new units commanded by recently elected, untried officers. Jourdan was forced to send these conscript units to his largest base at Guise, where general Alexandre Belair saw to their training and equipping, until they could be used at the front. In addition there were still a multitude of special legions and Federée units, most under strength, and all with crowds of inexperienced officers. Indeed, the very numbers of units involved hindered the embrigadement. 22

Jourdan's solution to this difficulty was simple. The troops of the new levée had to be incorporated directly into the veteran units instead of being allowed to form units of their own. The veteran battalions would then benefit from the additional manpower, the recruits would benefit from the veterans' experience, and the army would benefit


22. Dupuis, op cit, p. 51.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
by being substantially reinforced. In mid-October Jourdan suggested that the government adopt this measure, arguing that the army could not achieve any significant success until veterans and conscripts were amalgamated. He continued to agitate for it thereafter. He told Bouchotte that he believed that they could double the size of the army by incorporating the conscripts into the older cadres. "I believe this measure necessary...If it is not acted upon, some way must be found to complete our battalions." He wholeheartedly approved the government's decision at the beginning of December to complete the amalgame along the lines which he had suggested, and added that he felt the demi-brigade ought to become the basic formation of the army. Nevertheless the war ministry took its time about sending agents to the 'Nord' to execute the amalgame, and resistance from those untried officers who stood to lose their positions slowed it still further. Jourdan and the representatives complained continually about the delay in implementation. On December 12, Laurent wrote that the amalgame was not taking place; Jourdan had not yet received either the official laws or instructions relative to it. On December 3, Bar relayed Jourdan's complaint that the agents whom Bouchotte was supposed to send to assist with the incorporation had still not arrived.23

Discipline too remained a problem. The Army of the Nord was an untrustworthy as ever in the field, and it was not much better in camp. A major reason was that the army's system of military justice was still geared to a professional army. Breaches of discipline were handled by the old process of lengthy court-martials or by the local civilian courts. These were totally unfit to dispense justice and punishment efficiently in the torrent of cases which came their way; they were too slow and too few and the numbers of lawbreaking conscripts too large. The agents of the war ministry helped somewhat, but these men were mainly concerned with crimes committed within the supply system. One result was that many, if not most, of the lawbreakers went unpunished. The future Marshal Soult recalled that "never was the army in a more shameful state of disorganization." 24

Jourdan worked tirelessly to reduce the indiscipline, issuing orders against various offenses on a daily basis. The wide range of abuses attacked in these orders testify to the bewildering variety of offenses which his conscripts were capable of committing. He ordered that soldiers who disrupted the bread distribution be arrested, as well as soldiers who stole from the army magazines. Quartermaster-treasurers were to be present at each pay distribution so that these would take place "with the greatest regularity."

Officers and sergeants who absented themselves from their units without permission were to be arrested. (This order was repeated on four consecutive days.) Since his commands seemed to have but little effect, Jourdan toughened the punishments. He decreed that any battalion or squadron ("once and for all"), which abandoned itself to shameful flight, was to be disarmed on the spot and sent to a citadel to be judged and punished according to the full rigors of the law. When cases of sentries and officers of the advanced posts sleeping on duty persisted, he ordered that any officer who allowed his post to be surprised by the enemy was to be dismissed, arrested, and sent to the interior to be judged as a criminal of the nation— and if so judged, to be executed.  

Nonetheless all of his efforts would have achieved only slow and modest progress had not the representatives assisted him by establishing revolutionary tribunals directly behind the front. The purpose of these tribunals was to try and punish— especially punish— swiftly and ruthlessly those offenders whom Jourdan's tougher disciplinary measures were

25. See e.g. A.G. Bl* 223, orders of 10/10-13/93; A.G. Bl 21, orders of 10/27/93 & 10/29/93. So meticulous was Jourdan that on one occasion he issued an official order prohibiting the sale of the manure left by the horses of the artillery on the village commons by his soldiers. It was to be left to the inhabitants as fertilizer in payment for the use of their commons.
bringing to justice, without the lengthy process of a court-martial. As Jourdan later observed, the best way to improve discipline was to mete out swift, merciless punishment to the worst offenders in order to deter their colleagues from imitating their crimes. The revolutionary tribunals provided such justice with a vengeance.26

The most serious and important problem that Jourdan and his teammates had to solve was the inadequacy of logistics. The problem, simply stated, was to supply the army with sufficient food and materiel, subsistence and habiliment in the language of the representatives, to exist. It was a problem of incredible difficulty. In the Army of the North logistics rather than terror were the order of the day; if the soldiers were unfed, unclothed and unarmed, they could not fight. They had to have warm uniforms, shoes, blankets, functioning muskets, and adequate ammunition. Above all, they had to be fed.

The source of the army's dearth of subsistence is a subject of debate. Its manifestation was obvious; there was not enough food available for the increasing number of soldiers, especially during the winter months. Why this was so is not so obvious. One argument holds that the problem was structural—a combination of static or even decreased supply and increased demand. France's primitive agriculture

suddenly had to provide food for eleven armies; the Republican soldiers, argued one historian, were the greatest consumers of meat in all of French history. The fact that parts of France, such as the Vendée, had been devastated added to the problem. Then there was the difficulty of transporting huge shipments of food to the front, some of them from remote areas of France, over primitive roads. Both Jourdan and Laurent complained that the roads in Flanders were so "impassable" from bad weather in the winter that the food convoys could hardly reach the front.27 A second opinion holds that the subsistence problem was caused mainly by the difficulty in mobilizing the economy to support the war effort. Thus there were insufficient bureaucrats to handle the provisioning of the army. Insufficient patriotism caused some administrators to be negligent or corrupt and some farmers—accapareurs—to hoard food from the soldiers in order to drive up its price.28

Whatever the cause, the subsistence shortage crippled the army. Subsistence, the representatives complained, always causes us the greatest embarrassment. It hindered, slowed, and sometimes obstructed completely the


28. Armand Montier, Robert Lindet, (Paris, 1899), argues that the dearth of food was structural. The opposing view is held by A. Soboul, op cit.
army's operations. The 'Nord' wasted an entire day at Hondschoote owing to the difficulty of getting provisions and brandy to the famished soldiers. Food shortages increased the indiscipline because they caused the hungry men to pillage and even to disrupt the food distributions. The evidence for the continuous dearth of subsistence is overwhelming. "The army lives from day to day, and in spite of the lively complaints which I employ with the administrators, Maubeuge, and the division which surrounds it, have at this moment no more than six days of food left."

On November 1, Isore wrote that soldiers were actually starving to death. During the autumn offensive an adjutant reported to Jourdan that in spite of orders to provide bread to the army for three days, there was only bread enough for one day; he blamed the transportation and supply officials "whose administrations are in a frightful disorder." Four days later Jourdan ordered a retreat with the words, "it is absolutely necessary to leave this country; one runs the risk of dying of hunger." Conscripts awaiting arms and equipment were sent home to work the harvest. The Committee, aware of the gravity of the problem, urged the representatives to do their utmost to rectify the situation; as they wrote to two, "the provisioning of the Army of the

Nord is too important not to command your zeal."³⁰

The Jacobins attempted to obtain the needed subsistence by ordering the departments, usually those closest to the army in question, to furnish an assigned quota of food. The local administrators then had the task of fixing the national price of the foodstuffs and seeing to it that their citizens sold them the assigned amount. Local officials and private citizens, for a salary, were then to transport the food to the army magazines. For a number of reasons—greed, fear of inflation, localism—the local authorities neither fixed the prices, filled their quotas, nor prevented hoarding by their farmers. During August, a time of relative plenty, Delbrel ordered 200,000 quintals of wheat from all the departments of French Flanders. A month later only one fourth of that amount had been obtained.³¹ Faced with such obstruction the representatives gradually resorted to force. In August Carnot, then on mission to the Nord, wrote that ten hussars making "domiciliary visits" had, in twenty four hours, turned up more food than all the quotas of the last three months. In September the representatives decreed that those communes

³⁰ A.G. B1 21 & 22, Unnamed adjutant general to Jourdan, 10/30/93; Jourdan to general Duquesnoy, 11/3/93. The Committee to unnamed Representatives, 8/30/93, Recueil des Actes, VI, pp. 188-89.

which did not meet their quotas would have the balance taken by force. As the dearth of provisions continued, such requisition decrees became more common, until the representatives were openly sending out parties of troops to take what they needed from the populace, because "the war administration is not getting sufficient fourrage to the troops...and there is fourrage available in the surrounding communes." 32

Habilement also was in short supply. Carnot's first letter to the Committee when he visited Jourdan in October requested shoes and bayonets. The endless complaints of the representatives tell the story. Eighty thousand greatcoats ordered for the army had not arrived. Promised tents and blanket had not been sent either. The average soldier wore out one pair of boots a month, so the number of boots sent was not sufficient. The supply inspectors were so inefficient that, when they unpacked the supplies to examine them, they failed to repack them. Some soldiers were walking around half naked due to the lack of uniforms. Members of the new levée were "armed" with sticks. A letter of representative Jean Bar sharply depicted the effects of these shortages. Shoes, clothing, and blankets all were lacking, he wrote, and "the rigors of the season


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
each day send a great number of sick to the hospital. I have addressed myself to all parts to obtain that which the army lacks: to the bureau of military effects and to the civil administrations. They promise, they announce forthcoming supplies, but nothing arrives. The result is the great evils of denument (lack of clothing): sickness and death, discouragement and desertion for the defenders of the Republic."33

Again the question is: why the shortages? Certainly the primitive artisanal nature of the economy and the lack of a centralized, mobilized production of the necessary materials were major causes. But sheer inefficiency in the collection and distribution of these articles may have been equally important. Certainly the revolutionaries believed this to be the primary cause.

Clothing was the concern mainly of the second division of the war ministry. Unfortunately the second division was a bureaucratic nightmare, a jigsaw puzzle of illogic and incompetence. Under the guidance of Bouchotte, the war ministry had become "the refuge of those without work in Paris." All that was required of these men by way of qualifications was that "they demonstrated markedly revolutionary sentiments...and possessed an eloquent certifi-

33. A.G. Bl 21, Bar to the Committee, 10/27/93. A.G. Bl 23, Bar to the Committee, 12/8/93; Laurent to the Committee, 12/10/93.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
cate of civisme." Many of these men were totally unfit for their duties. Some were unable to sign their names. Others "sell positions, giving jobs to their creatures at prices ruinous to the Republic and confide the administrations to some chiefs and employers no less corrupt than their employees." The direction of the second division was entrusted to Charles Ronsin, a noted enragé, who filled the entire bureau with his friends and spent more time engaging in politics than supervising his employees. The inefficiency became so alarming that by December both representatives and generals were protesting Bouchotte's hiring practices. Duquesnoy told Bouchotte that "you may be an honest man, but your bureaus are encumbered with intriguers and incompetents." He urged the minister to clean out his administration. But this he could not do. His base of support was the Parisian popular societies, and by firing the incompetents he would be firing the very men who were helping to keep him in office.34

That real corruption and incompetence existed there was no doubt. Pockets of it were scattered from the bureaus in Paris through the supply lines leading to the front. Bar suspected the supply personnel of stealing the supplies. The shoes sent to the troops at Maubeuge had already been rejected by the administrators in Paris as defective, and one volunteer wore out three pairs of boots in a month. Laurent

complained that the depot guards were selling the army's fodder to the peasants. The transport personnel in charge of the food convoys disobeyed orders, took their own routes to the front, and got lost; "their insubordination makes me afraid that at every instant the army will find itself destitute." Delbrel raged that all the quartermasters and supply agents were "thieves", and the opinions of Jourdan and his officers were as hostile. The representatives established draconian punishments for corrupt supply personnel, so bad did they believe the problem to be. On October 4, they decreed that because "the efforts of malevolents" have been hindering the provisioning of the army for a long time, and because "the quartermaster corps... contains only incompetents who all cause shortages, who blame each other for the errors committed in provisioning various bodies of troops," a five-man military tribunal would try all cases of "graft" and "negligence" and that a mere majority would convict. Those found guilty were to be put to death within 24 hours. Jourdan's orders of the day prove that such punishments were indeed carried out. Nevertheless the sheer extent of the problem was such that abuses continued to occur.

Jourdan's role in the struggle against the army's

---


supply problems was an indirect one. Theoretically all supply difficulties were to be handled by the commissaire-ordonnateur (the quartermaster-general) of the army. The divisional and brigade generals were supposed to address their requirements in food, clothing, and munitions to him. In practice, when certain supplies were not forthcoming, the generals complained to Jourdan, and he passed on their complaints to the quartermaster. The latter, however, was often unable to furnish the requested materiel. When this occurred, Jourdan described the difficulty to the representatives and requested that they take action. On one such occasion, he complained that the artillery park needed 250 more horses, without which it would be impossible to move the guns. He had ordered the quartermaster-general to secure the horses; however, unless the representatives came to his assistance and requisitioned the animals, the quartermaster would be helpless.\textsuperscript{37}

That Jourdan actively struggled against the army's shortages is certain. Many of the representatives' complaints to the government of shortages were based upon information which he afforded them. On one occasion he personally wrote to Bouchotte complaining of insufficient ammunition, and even suggested that a workshop be constructed

\textsuperscript{37} A.G. B1\* 223, Jourdan to the representatives at Arras, 10/3/93; Jourdan to Fromentin, 11/5/93.
near the front for the manufacture of cartridges, muskets, and bullets. The government acted upon his suggestion and ordered such workshops established. He remained in close contact with his quartermaster, at times prodding him to increase his efforts. "In spite of the fact that I have communicated to you my anxieties about subsistence several times, I see with the greatest distress that bread has not ceased to lack for two or three days... I do not know how to keep silent about the existence in the administration of malevolents who have resolved to ruin the Republic. Do not delay a single instant to take every measure so that our troops do not suffer any further needs, and then to discover the culprits."38 Nevertheless, although Jourdan issued such orders endlessly, in truth he could have accomplished nothing without the representatives. The latter could root out incompetent supply agents, coerce obstructive department authorities into furnishing provisions, and generally cut through bureaucratic red tape to move supplies to the front; in short they could use their power to get things done in a way that Jourdan could not. Hence his willingness to work with them; he realized that without their help he was relatively powerless.

Jourdan and his teammates faced one final obstacle in their efforts to build a new army that could wage the war of mass and constant offensive action demanded by the revolution. This obstacle was the influence of the communes and popular societies in the departments at or near the front.

The influence of the communes and popular societies of the Nord was directed towards one end: they wanted protection from the raids, depredations, and outrages of the enemy army, regardless of how this affected the overall strategic situation. When the army was unable to provide them with the protection they expected, they denounced its generals to the government and to their fellow popular societies in Paris. The logic of their position was simple and irrefutable. The war was being fought to liberate all Frenchmen from tyranny and oppression; it was, after all, a peoples' war. Yet they, far from being liberated, were now oppressed by the arson, pillage, and murders of the foreign agents of tyranny. Why, they howled, did not the revolution afford them liberty in fact as well as in theory—in short why did the revolution not free them from the atrocities of the Allied Army?

What the Nord's popular societies and district councils wanted for each of their towns and localities were substantial garrisons to repel the real, or imagined, threats of the enemy. For this they unceasingly agitated, bombarding
the government and the Parisian Jacobin clubs with their complaints. The society of Vervins demanded a garrison to protect them from the rape, pillage, and arson of the enemy. The citizens of the hamlet of Candy desired an infantry battalion and 100 horsemen to protect them from enemy raids. The council of Laon decreed that the town required additional soldiers, cavalry, and artillery. The popular societies of the larger cities, such as Lille and Cambrai, were just as vociferous, frequently, as did the society of Cambrai in mid-September, exaggerating their difficulties.

Because the government depended heavily upon the support of the popular societies for its power base and because the clubs of the Nord were in constant touch with the more powerful and proximate societies in Paris, the government took their complaints far more seriously than it should have. Both Lille and Cambrai received increments of men and materiel disproportionate to the actual danger they faced. A complaint from the village of Noyen resulted in Bouchotte personally sending it a battalion. Usually Bouchotte passed on the complaints to Jourdan, ordering him to reinforce the

39. A.G. Bl 19 & 20, letters to the Committee from the citizens of Vervins, 9/17/93; Candy, 9/26/93; and Laon, 10/2/93.

40. See A.G. Bl 19 & 20 for the correspondence between the popular societies of these two cities and the government, and in particular, for the panic that resulted in Cambrai after general Declaye's defeat in mid-September.
the town or commune in question, as he did, for example, on November 25 after the complaint by the popular society of Candy. Even the Committee of Public Safety occasionally responded to these complaints. On November 25, having received complaints from St Quentin about an enemy incursion, it ordered Jourdan to "hasten to send towards that gap sufficient forces" to close it, regardless of whether such a detachment might be harmful to the overall deployment of the army.\footnote{A.G. B1 19, Bouchotte to Jourdan, 9/26/93, 9/28/93. A.G. B1 22, The Committee to Jourdan, 11/25/93.}

When the requested assistance was insufficient or slow to arrive, the communes denounced to the government the generals they believed responsible as traitors. The popular society of Montreuil wrote Jourdan, threatening to denounce him to the Committee as without talent and a traitor because he had not chased the enemy from the Forest of Mormal near the village. Jourdan felt obligated to mention the letter to the Committee lest the society go through with the threat, writing that "Jourdan may be a fool", but never a traitor. The fact that he felt obliged to answer such a charge at all is mute testimony to how the communes and Jacobin societies of the Nord had the ear of the government.\footnote{A.G. B1 22, the procureur of the Commune of Montreuil to Jourdan, 11/23/93; Jourdan to the Committee, 11/23/93.}
This is not to say that the popular societies of the Nord played no role other than to hinder the war effort. In some ways they were of great assistance. Their correspondence and propaganda helped keep the army's morale and patriotism high. They helped in provisioning the army and uncovering accapereurs. They recommended officers whom they liked for promotion and went to the aid of other officers who might have fallen afoul of the government. The popular society of Dunkirk raised such a storm at the arrest of general Souham that the Committee restored him to duty two weeks later. At times they aided the army by seeing to their own defense. The citizens of the hamlets of Elincourt and Montigny, armed only with pikes, scythes, and pitchforks, took on Austrian foraging parties, causing the general in charge of this sector to write that he wished all the communes were as energetic. 43

But total war called for Jourdan to mass his troops and send them forward to overwhelm the enemy at critical points in his defenses, and to do so until the automatons of the counterrevolution had been driven from the land of liberty. The demands for garrisons by the communes of French Flanders, although perfectly understandable, could only hinder this type of warfare. By coercing the government to grant their requests for troops, local interests compelled

43. A.G. Bl 23, general Chapuis to the Committee, 12/19/93.
Jourdan to dispatch thousands of soldiers in scattered garrisons—4,000 in Lille alone—and to detach hundreds more in useless pursuits of enemy raiding parties and patrols. This diminished the number of troops available for the war of mass desired by the Jacobins; it also caused the government to call for a strategy of mass, audacity, and aggressiveness on one hand, and to issue orders for defensive measures on the other. When Houchard was about to launch his attack at Hondschoote, Bouchotte instructed him to organize attacks in the Cambrai-Landrecies area to cut off enemy raiders there and to construct and garrison a fortified camp in the Peronne area to protect that sector more effectively. Then, when Houchard was unable to accomplish his divergent tasks, the local societies and their extremist allies in Paris wondered why—and demanded the luckless Houchard's head.44

Well could Jourdan excuse himself for leaving so many troops in a defensive posture across French Flanders during the autumn campaign. If he had left the frontier without defenders "open to the incursions of the Duke of York, the general-in-chief would have been accused of treason by all the popular societies. Victory would not have preserved him from the result always produced by the numerous denunciations

44. A.G. Bl 19, Bouchotte to Houchard, 9/6/93.
building up in the midst of the Jacobin society in Paris." When he wished to use the 5,000 or so troops in the Givet area in the offensive which led to the battle of Wattignies, he first had to survive an angry complaint by the commune of Givet that he had no business taking these troops elsewhere: it would leave Givet without a garrison. Revolutionary war required a strategy of constant offensives en masse; what the communes and popular societies of the Nord desired was cordon warfare.45

Jourdan could not have assumed command of his first army at a worse time. He was a young and inexperienced officer taking charge of an inexperienced, disorganized, and indeed incomplete army. He and his associates had to rapidly rebuild this army into a capable fighting force under the lash of a revolutionary regime which, under intense pressure itself, could not tolerate anything less than success, for anything less meant its own extermination. He and his colleagues had to train, discipline, staff, amalgamate, feed and equip the unruly conscripts who comprised their army, and they had to lead them to quick victory. If they did not, the result would probably be the total extinction of the revolution.

What Jourdan thus had to do was wage war at a pace distinctly modern, completely removed from the deliberate

45. A.G. Bl 20, the Commune of Givet to the Committee, 10/14/93. A.G. mr 608-1, Mémoires de 1793.
pace of Old Regime warfare. He had to work at a rhythm
designed to bring about immediate and constant action, and
overnight success. Yet he was expected to do this with
essentially 18th century means. He was required to mass
his forces swiftly and continuously, maneuver, assault, and
overwhelm the enemy with ill-trained peasants led by
inexperienced cadres, with primitive communications, a
disorganized logistics system, and the insufficient
resources of an underdeveloped agricultural economy. In
short, he was required to overcome the structural deficiencies
of his society. The price of failure was his life and those
of his subordinate commanders. Well might Jourdan have
taken the assignment with deep misgivings; he was under-
taking a task which might have intimidated a far more
experienced and secure officer than a sans-culotte orphan boy
turned parvenu army commander.
IV. COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE ARMY OF THE NORD

I. Wattignies

Jourdan was not allowed the luxury of a period of orientation when he first assumed command of the Army of the Nord. From his first day at his post he was assailed by the assortment of untreated ailments plaguing the army. So disorganized was the army's paperwork that he did not know who his generals were, or how many men were under his command. The government believed that he had about a quarter of a million men, but this number existed on paper only. Of this total a third were immobilized in garrisons, and of these some 39,000 men were beyond Jourdan's control under the direct orders of the Minister of War. An additional 27,000 men were either sick or "absent". So Jourdan allegedly had some 138,000 men of all arms to put into the field. Yet he did not believe that he commanded even this many; he initially estimated that the army contained some 50,000 men from Dunkirk to Douai, and another 50,000 from Douai to Maubeuge. After the Committee ordered an official headcount, he estimated that he led between 104,000 and 108,000 effectives.¹ If this figure is correct, he did not even possess a numerical superiority with which to launch the war of mass that the Jacobins wanted.

No sooner had Jourdan settled into his headquarters

than he was visited by Carnot. The government sent Carnot to the 'Nord' following Houchard's arrest so that he could work out, with Jourdan, a plan of campaign for the rest of the year. Exactly what was said and what was decided in this first recorded meeting between the two men is unknown; they left no record of their conference. It seems that they decided, in principle, to make the defeat of the Allied forces of the Prince of Coburg, which were then advancing on Maubeuge, the primary objective of the campaign. Carnot's personal visit to Jourdan testified to the Committee's anxiety over the situation on the northern border and to their determination to bring the campaign there to a successful conclusion. The Committee wanted no more bungled victories like Hondschoote, nor any more Custines or Houchards commanding the 'Nord'. It is likely that Carnot visited the army to see its new commander for himself—to talk to him, size him up, judge his abilities, and reassure himself that Jourdan possessed none of the defects that had proven so fatal to his predecessors.²

Jourdan went to work. Over the course of the next week and a half he sent a torrent of requests to Bouchotte, demanding everything from senior officers to oats. The army, he reported, was short of qualified generals and brigade commanders--some larger units were actually without


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
officers. It needed immediate shipments of shoes and clothing, especially trousers. As the specific shortages in clothing and equipment became clearer, Jourdan repeated his requests on an almost daily basis: three days after his initial letter, he asked Bouchotte for additional shoes, shirts, pants, vests, and "habits". If there was enough grain there was not enough oats. He complained three times of his weakness in cavalry, which required more horses and more fodder for the horses which it did have. The chief of artillery needed 800 horses for his park, 4,000 six-pounder shells, and additional powder. Jourdan also demanded 50,000 livres for "extraordinary expenses", which in this case meant spies. "I demand, and it is of the utmost importance," he urged, "that you make an effort to procure for me and throw into the army everything that is in the interior."  

At the same time he began to tackle the personnel and logistical problems himself. He wrote the representatives, repeating most of the requests which he made to Bouchotte. In one case he announced that he had ordered his quartermaster to obtain additional horses for the artillery; unless the representatives come to his quartermaster's aid, however, the latter would not be able to carry out Jourdan's order.

He informed the representatives at Maubeuge that the enemy was advancing on them and asked them to put that fortress in a state of defense. Because its commander, Gudin, was "old and sick", and of the next two senior generals one was incapacitated and the other had been arrested, he asked Bouchotte to appoint a new commander. He recommended a General Vezu for promotion to command of a brigade, and complained about the ineptness of General Beauregard. A few days later he ordered Gudin's successor, General Ferrand, to entrench his advanced posts more securely so that they could put up a stiffer resistance if attacked. He threw additional troops into Bouchain to protect a "treasury" and a convoy of fodder there, and appointed a new commander for that place. He ordered his quartermaster to use utmost diligence in provisioning Cambrai and Bouchain, having learned that both places were poorly supplied. He ordered his artillery chief to send more powder and shells to Cambrai and Landrecies. He issued the first of many decrees against negligence, corruption and theft among his supply personnel in his orders of the day. Duquesnoy's draconian decree of October 4 against dishonest supply agents was probably issued partially at Jourdan's urging. Jourdan also took a tentative step towards full amalgamation; he informed Bouchotte that he intended to mix some of the new levées
with some of the "anciennes" in the fortresses.  

On August 29, a mere three days after assuming command, Jourdan submitted his proposed plan of campaign to the Committee. How much of it was Jourdan's, and how much Carnot's, is impossible to determine. The plan made Coburg's army, then advancing on Maubeuge in the upper Sambre valley, the 'Nord's' primary objective. To defeat and destroy this force, the plan called for the favorite maneuver of both men, a double envelopment. Jourdan was to command two armies, each 60,000 strong. One was to advance from the Arras-Cambrai area, seize the Allies' entrenched camp at Cysoing, and assail Coburg from the west. The other force was to advance from the south into the Sambre valley east of Maubeuge and envelop the enemy from that direction; if Coburg halted his offensive, this force was to cross the Sambre and attack him in the flank north of the river. If successful, this double envelopment would not only trap Coburg's army between two fires, exposing it to utter ruin, but it would also drive the Allies entirely from French soil—a goal very dear to the government's heart owing to the propaganda value it would have in the popular societies. To assemble the needed force of 120,000 soldiers Jourdan proposed that the government send him an additional 15,000 men, mainly cavalry, and that he be allowed to denude the


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
frontier by adding all troops save the newest levées to his field forces. If this plan was too "audacieux", or beyond the government's means to implement, he proposed to remain on the defensive and concentrate as many men as possible to defeat the enemy thrust at Maubeuge.  

Two things should be mentioned regarding this plan. One is that it reflects the transitional stage through which the strategic theories of the revolutionaries were moving. In the spirit of total war it had as its objective the destruction of the enemy army. At the same time it sought to destroy him by an essentially traditional strategy. To turn both flanks of the enemy was a basic maneuver in cordon warfare, although it was usually aimed at disrupting his communications rather than at destroying his army. Secondly, this is essentially the same strategy which Carnot was to employ in 1794. Thus Jourdan must be accorded at least a portion of the credit for having devised the operation which was to drive the Allies completely out of the Low Countries and across the Rhine. 

As events turned out, the plan was deferred for the time being. The Prince of Coburg had not allowed Houchard's


6. Victor Dupuis, De Hondschoote a Wattignies, p. 57, argues that it is impossible to determine whether Carnot or Jourdan was the dominant influence at their meeting.
abortive offensive to deter him from continuing his penetration of the French fortress barrier; the latter's uncoordinated attacks had merely confused Coburg about the true aim of his foes. After taking Le Quesnoy, he advanced upon Maubeuge with 40,000 men. His immediate obstacle was not the French, but his own allies, the Dutch. "The greatest part of our difficulties came from the Hague, without even including the detestable organization of their military system which permits neither speed nor energy." On this occasion, for a variety of reasons, they refused to reinforce Coburg or to help him undertake the siege until he promised their commander, the Prince of Orange, personal command of the beleaguering forces. Once Coburg had mustered enough soldiers, his operation went quite smoothly. At the end of September he deployed his army into several columns and struck the French defenses outside Maubeuge. The French offered only the feeblest resistance. They shredded like wet tissue paper—three whole battalions fleeing without firing a shot—and collapsed into Maubeuge. There they shut themselves in while Coburg's army coiled around the city.  

Coburg's quick thrust, plus the news of the weak resistance of the French forces at Maubeuge, caused Jourdan to abandon his planned double-envelopment. He advised the government that it ought to be postponed and that he should

7. Ibid., pp. 38-9; 105-110.
instead march to the immediate relief of Maubeuge. To form
the relief army, he demanded that 10,000 men be taken from
the Dunkirk sector along with 12,000 from Menin, and that
these combine with the elements assembled in the Lille-
Cambrai area to comprise a strike force of 45,000. Given
these troops he would march immediately. He also requested
additional reinforcements from the Army of the Ardennes.
Unquestionably the solution was conservative; it bore
striking resemblance to Bouchard's strategy preceding
Hondschoote. On the other hand, Jourdan had received no
guarantees that he would ever get the troops necessary for
the original operation. In addition, he was worried about
Maubeuge's capacity to offer sustained resistance. As he
wrote a fellow officer, "should I allow this boulevard into
the Republic [sic] taken"? He believed he could not, so
he adopted the tried and true strategy of marching directly
to its succor. The government thought as he did. It
approved his changed strategy without comment, giving him
carte-blanche with the troops of the Ardennes. Then they
took an additional step that Jourdan had not requested: they
decided to send Carnot back once again to the 'Nord'.

Carnot reached the front on October 6. The sorry
condition of the troops bothered him; "we are so pressed...

8. A.G. B1 20 & B1* 223, Jourdan to Bouchotte, 10/1/93,
10/3/93; The Committee to Jourdan, 10/3/93; Jourdan to
D'Avaisne, 10/5/93.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
by the most essential needs," he wrote. The army needed 15,000 bayonets, and three-fourths of the men were barefoot. "Luckily the weather is still good." Most of the new conscripts were useless; "they do not even have sticks in their hands." Nonetheless he and Jourdan estimated that, notwithstanding all the difficulties, they could attack on October 12 or 13 at the latest.

The Committee was cheered by the news. It sent the army a decree that typified the revolutionary fervor and rhetoric of the time, as well as the philosophy of the new total war, with its vicious condemnation of the enemy, its command to exterminate him, and its demand for a complete and rapid success beyond the capacity of the attackers to achieve. "Victory belongs to courage. It is yours. Strike, exterminate the satellites of tyrants. The cowards! They have never known how to conquer by valor and force, they have only bought it through treason. They are covered with your blood and that of our wives and children. Strike, let none escape your just vengeance...In several more days the tyrants will exist no more, and the Republic will owe you its goodwill and glory."\(^9\)

But thanks to a supply breakdown typical of the confused logistics of the army, Jourdan had to wait a few

\(^9\) Corr., III, pp. 271-72, Carnot to the Committee, 10/9/93.

\(^10\) A.G. B1 20, the Committee to the Army of the North, 10/11/93.
moredays to strike. By October 8 he had concentrated his 45,000 men at Guise; by October 10 the force was marching southeast towards Avesnes. But on the same day it was discovered that the artillery possessed insufficient ammunition for a major battle, despite the fact that the chief of artillery, General Merenvue, had promised that enough supplies were on hand. Who or what caused this blunder is unknown. Carnot and Duquesnoy blamed Merenvue and put him under arrest for suspected treason; that same evening he committed suicide in his cell. The French had to wait until the necessary ammunition was brought up, and in doing so they lost four precious days.\footnote{A.G. Bl 20, Jourdan to Bouchotte, 10/6/93; Jourdan to Lacoste & Peyssard, 10/10/93; Decree of Carnot & Duquesnoy, 10/10/93.}

The French were lucky that the delay did not cost them more dearly than it did. Coburg was unable to take advantage of the extra time, either to strengthen his positions significantly or to capture Maubeuge. He had learned of Jourdan's advance, but he could not determine whether the French would attack him north or south of the Sambre. Hence he deployed his army in a long cordon west and south of the city, placing 15,000 men on the north bank, 22,000 men on the opposite bank facing south. The cordon was too long; neither force could cross the river and afford the other immediate support. Meanwhile Coburg's
efforts to press the siege had met with frustration. He wished to combine his Dutch and Austrian troops to storm the French entrenched camp on the south bank outside Maubeuge. However, the Dutch, in a bizarre political ploy, refused to allow their soldiers to cross the Sambre unless promises of additional territorial compensation after the war were made. This was mercantile warfare at its sharpest; it also was outright extortion. Coburg was forced to sit by and fume, because his Austrians were not numerous enough to launch the assault alone.\textsuperscript{12}

Coburg did not possess the dynamism to overcome such obstacles. He was a modest, mild-mannered, fifty-six-year-old general who never lived up to the expectations of his contemporaries. "Placid, heavy, phlegmatic, he seemed to arrest events, such was his air of calmness." Like all the allied commanders he was slow and wedded to the cordon system; however, he was hardly the incompetent that some writers have suggested. The Russian warrior, Suvorov, thought highly of him, and Suvorov was no mean judge of talent.\textsuperscript{13} Even so, Coburg had his limitations. His sole use of the additional time allotted him by the French was to move his 22,000 soldiers south of the river to a line further removed

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{12} Dupuis, \textit{op cit}, pp. 109-10.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Arthur Chuquet, \textit{Valenciennes}, pp. 84-5. There is no evidence to support the accusation by the English that the mastermind of the Allied army was not Coburg, but his chief-of-staff, Mack. Coburg's leadership in 1794--after Mack had left the army--was consistent with that of 1793; furthermore, Mack was a borderline incompetent as the Ulm campaign in 1805 showed.
\end{itemize}
from Maubeuge. This line, running along a ridge of low hills from Berlaimont to Wattignies, was stronger and put the covering force out of reach of a sortie by the garrison.  

By October 14, Jourdan had deployed his army on either side of the Avesnes road immediately south of Maubeuge. He had divided his makeshift force into five ad hoc divisions under largely untried generals. Of the five, only Joseph Duquesnoy, the brother of the representative, demonstrated even modest ability. The others were at best average, and one, General Beauregard—who was described as a "vile intriguer who puts his entire division into disorder"—had already been dismissed and reinstated once. Of the galaxy of talent which would one day orbit around Napoleon, only Ney, Mortier, and Eblé were in this army. Jourdan could not count on his subordinates. He also believed that he was outnumbered, having erroneously estimated Coburg's army at 64,000 infantry and 25,000 cavalry—a figure which probably included all the allied soldiers in southern Flanders. Actually the enemy numbered 63,000 of all arms, of whom 26,000 were tied down besieging Maubeuge. Against

14. Dupuis, op cit, pp. 109-13. Jourdan later argued that Coburg erred in not deploying his forces further south around Avesnes. Here he would have possessed a nearly impregnable position, and he would have interdicted the roads to such an extent that Jourdan would have had to take a long, roundabout route to get at him. Meanwhile, Maubeuge might have surrendered. A.G. mr 608-1, Jourdan's memoires de 1793.
these, the French mustered 62,000 including 17,000 in the garrison of Maubeuge. Yet at the all important point of attack, Coburg had only the 22,000 men south of the Sambre to oppose Jourdan's 45,000 men.\(^{15}\)

In spite of the enemy's possible superiority, Jourdan fully intended to attack. He reported to Bouchotte that he was probably outnumbered, but that he counted upon the courage of the brave republicans whom he commanded to achieve victory. "One [republican soldier]" he wrote, "ought to be worth two of the enemy." He would fall "with the most decided audacity on this horde which is only encouraged by the little resistance opposed previously to their [sic]efforts due to the perfidy of the [sic]leaders... I only have time to tell you that my country will be triumphant, or I shall perish in defending it."\(^{16}\)

He and Carnot planned to defeat Coburg by employing their favorite tactic: attacks on both of the enemy's flanks with secondary pressure against his center. Duquesnoy's division, aided by Beauregard's, was to assault the enemy left near the villages of Dimont and Limechaux, and to turn it towards Wattignies. Fromentin with two divisions was to attack the Austrian right in the woods near St Aubin and


\(^{16}\) A.G. Bl* 223, Jourdan to Bouchotte, 10/13/93.
St Waast. Balland's division was to launch diversionary attacks against the enemy center and convert them into a serious effort when Duquesnoy and Fromentin had successfully flanked the enemy. Jourdan ordered General Belair at Guise to take four battalions, some cavalry, and some of the new conscripts, and make an important diversion towards Cateau in order to pin the 15,000 Austrians north of the Sambre in their positions. If Coburg felt himself unmolested there, he might shift these troops to the point of combat and counter the French numerical superiority. Additionally, he instructed General Elie with 5,000 men from the Ardennes to demonstrate towards Beaumont; Isore at Lille, and General d'Avaisne at Cassel were to make diversions on their fronts, while the garrison of Maubeuge was to sortie against the enemy rear. This plan has generally been condemned by military historians who judge that Jourdan should have attacked on one flank rather than on both.¹⁷

Despite the fiery confidence expressed in his letter to Bouchotte, Jourdan must have awaited the battle with deep misgivings. The government clearly expected complete victory. Victory belonged to the courageous, and surely the republican soldiers possessed courage. Yet victory also

¹⁷. A.G. Bl* 223, Jourdan's orders to his generals, 10/14/93. Military historians have failed to assign the order to Belair the importance that it deserves.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
belonged to the well-led and the disciplined, and Jourdan's soldiers were neither. Jourdan and Carnot both realized that, with the raw troops they commanded, success was far from certain. Because failure was attributable "only to those who command", if they failed they would have to assume full blame and the resulting consequence: the execution of both by guillotine. Carnot quite candidly admitted this to his colleagues on the Committee after the battle. "The success was necessary to him [Jourdan]; he was lost if he had failed; they would have denounced him immediately as a traitor and me also for having taken the garrisons from the towns to join the army.: In spite of the fierce rhetoric of Jourdan's letter, the mood at headquarters was probably not one of confidence; it was more likely one of brooding uncertainty and anxiety.\textsuperscript{18}

The French opened the attack at 7 A.M. on October 15. From the very first shot of the battle, virtually everything went frighteningly wrong.

Fromentin's advance began well enough. His forces cleared the woods of the enemy and seized the villages of Leval and St Waast. Apparently Jourdan had given him verbal instructions not to venture out onto the flat open ground beyond the woods without taking precautions first, but Fromentin did so with his inexperienced troops. The Austrian

\textsuperscript{18} Corr., III, pp. 328-29, Carnot to the Committee, 10/17/93. The italics are the author's.
cavalry of General Bellegarde promptly swirled around his infantry who, unfamiliar with the tactics to halt cavalry, were routed and chased back to their starting point. On the right, Duquesnoy did not fare much better. His columns of infantry stormed Dimont and Dimechaux in heavy fighting, but when they tried to continue the attack towards Wattignies they were checked by the enemy. All communication broke down between Duquesnoy and Beauregard. The latter took up a position on Duquesnoy's outer flank and did nothing to offer him even the slightest assistance.\textsuperscript{19}

Carnot, Jourdan, and representative Duquesnoy were directing the battle from a position on the Avesnes road near the center of the army. As the roar of the fighting grew louder on each flank, Carnot urged Jourdan to send Balland in a full scale assault against the Austrian center. Jourdan objected, pleading that his wings had not advanced far enough and the enemy had not detached any of his forces from the center to his flanks—the time was not yet right. But "Carnot persisted in his opinion, spoke of energy and audacity, and claimed that prudence would allow the victory to escape them." Jourdan was not about to refuse the advice of a member of the Committee of Public Safety; he consented to the attack, "yielding" as he put it "to the sentiment of

\textsuperscript{19} A.G. mr 608-1, \textit{Memoires de 1793}. Dupuis, \textit{op cit}, pp. 160-64.
eagerness and fierceness of his age." He placed himself at the head of Balland's troops and led them forward.\(^20\)

The soldiers, massed in columns, had to cross low ground and ascend a gentle slope devoid of cover under enemy fire before they struck the enemy positions on the ridge around Dourleurs. Two assaults were repulsed. The third succeeded in the face of determined resistance; Dourleurs and the high ground were both taken. The French then tried to cross a ravine to get at the Austrian second line of defense. Here the enemy's plunging fire from their second line turned the assault into bloody, murderous confusion. "The greatest efforts to cross [the ravine] were useless. The first battalions which debouched were overwhelmed by cannon fire and musketry, and a company of light artillery had its horses and a great portion of its gunners killed before it unlimbered." Austrian cavalry from the neighboring heights slashed at the struggling troops. In spite of Jourdan's best efforts to lead his men forward, they began to yield, but only after every effort had failed did Carnot consent to a retreat. The French left 1,500 casualties on the field. Jourdan believed that had Coburg counterattacked while Balland's men were struggling in the ravine, the latter would have been annihilated.\(^21\)

---

20. Ibid. Phipps, op cit, pp. 252-56. Historians are generally agreed that the impetus for the premature assault in center came from Carnot, not Jourdan.

One can only imagine the mood at headquarters that night. The day's fighting had been an utter failure, and the leaders all knew what the price of failure could be. While the army licked its wounds and rested for the morrow, its leaders held a council of war. The limited evidence leaves the impression that the plans for the next day's fighting were made amid calm discussion; they may well have been devised amid tumultuous argument. Carnot and Jourdan disagreed on the best strategy to employ. According to Hippolyte Carnot, Jourdan wanted to shift troops to his left and make the main attack there. This would strengthen the army's weak point, Fromentin; it would better protect its communications with the base at Guise, and it would concentrate the mass of maneuver on one wing rather than two. Carnot disagreed. He desired to attack on the right wing instead of the left. He wanted to take advantage of the momentum generated by the only half-successful French attack of the day, Duquesnoy's; and he wanted to take Wattignies because he thought it was the key to the enemy position. How long and how heatedly they argued we do not know. Ultimately Jourdan deferred to Carnot's authority. They would make the attack on the right.22

In his memoirs Jourdan was reticent about the events of the evening, merely stating that after some

discussion it was agreed that the main attack be directed at Wattignies. Because he is generally frank in his memoires, perhaps the disagreement was not all that sharp. In any case, there was one thing that both men firmly agreed upon. The attack had to be resumed the next day and if necessary the day after that. Neither even considered calling off the offensive. That evening Jourdan wrote laconically to Bouchotte, "we have fought today...from nine in the morning until night. We have had some success on our right but our left has not done what I desired, to the extent that we will start over tomorrow." Garnot wrote in a similar vein to the Committee.23

There could have been little sleep for either army. Both were up making preparations for the following day. Jourdan issued his orders, instructing Duquesnoy to prepare for a second advance on Wattignies and Balland and Fromentin to begin shifting troops to the right by two A.M. These forces assembled at headquarters at four A.M., at which time Jourdan told them their destination. He did this to prevent deserters from prematurely alerting the enemy as to the point of attack. He instructed Belair to demonstrate again in his area and Elie to do the same towards Beaumont. Coburg, for his part, anticipated a continuation of the attack on both

23. A.G. B1 20, Jourdan to Bouchotte, 10.15/93; Carnot to the Committee, 10/15/93.
flanks. Hence he reinforced his left with three battalions and his right with four battalions of troops drawn from the siege lines and from his center. He did not, however, summon the 15,000 men north of the river to his aid; Belair's diversion had achieved its goal.24

The village of Wattignies was a typical peasant community situated atop a gentle ridge with slopes falling away to the south and east. The ground undulated to the south towards Dimont and was covered with briar patches; to the east the slope was more uniform, but the fields there were intersected with thick hedges. The Austrians had fortified the village and placed a powerful battery nearby. The elevation, plus the clear field of fire which the defenders had, made it a formidable position. Jourdan planned to assail it from the front and both sides. The center and right-hand columns were Duquesnoy's troops; while the left column consisted of the reinforcements. To Duquesnoy's right Beauregard was again supposed to help him turn the enemy flank. Carnot, Jourdan, representative Duquesnoy, and Carnot's brother Feulint, all stationed themselves with the attackers. As the 16th dawned, they set their direction on the clock tower of Wattignies and

24. A.G. Bl* 223, Jourdan's orders, night of 10/15-16/93. Dupuis, op cit, pp. 172-72, 176-77. Elie's levées were routed the following day near Beaumont by an Austrian detachment.
advanced.²⁵

At first it seemed as if they were reliving the bloody repulses of the first day all over again. The different columns apparently mistimed their attacks; Jourdan claimed that the inexperienced Duquesnoy assaulted with the center column before the flank columns were fairly in range of the enemy. Each column attacked separately and was hurled back by the murderous fire of the enemy. Jourdan, Carnot, and the others exposed themselves recklessly, setting heroic examples of personal bravery to keep their green soldiers from breaking and running. After the second repulse, Carnot-Feulint found one battalion huddled behind a swell in the ground "like chickens frightened by a bird of prey." Feulint took the commander by the collar and dragged him alongside his horse towards the enemy, thereby inducing the rest of the battalion to follow.²⁶

Ultimately the superior numbers of the French prevailed. By one P.M. the left-hand column had fought its way into the village. Even then, however, the defenders were not beaten. Jourdan claimed that Wattignies was taken and retaken three times in bitter fighting. Only after he had brought up a battery of light artillery which fired point

²⁵. For the topography of the battlefield see Dupuis, op cit, pp. 179-81.

blank at the defenders, almost entirely destroying three Austrian grenadier regiments and killing their commander, was Wattignies secured. Then the French had to survive a counterassault by Austrian cavalry. The conscripts were wavering before the enemy sabres when Jourdan and Duquesnoy rallied them to drive off their assailants.  

But the battle was not yet won. On the far right Beauregard had been routed near Obrechies by a cavalry attack which surprised him just as his troops seized the village. Moreover, the Austrians still held the heights around and behind Dourleurs, their lines stretching north towards Maubeuge and covering the main road. The woods and high ground around the village of Clarge now had to be stormed. The tired recruits advanced across the fields to attack once more. The Austrians held fast, and, in the face of the heavy enemy fire, a brigade of conscripts under General Gratien panicked and fled to the rear. Carnot and Duquesnoy dismissed and arrested Gratien on the spot. Carnot personally rallied the fugitives, seizing one recruit bodily, placing a musket in his hands, and shoving him forward. Then taking a musket from a wounded man, he led the conscripts forward again. Finally the French overwhelmed their foes. Clarge and its woods were cleared of Austrians. Near Wattignies, the Austrians who had routed Beauregard were

27. Ibid. Phipps, op cit, I, pp. 152-56.
repulsed by some of Duquesnoy's men who had been left to hold the village. 28

Only now when the French were practically astride his main line of retreat did Coburg order a withdrawal. Covered by a heavy rainstorm which dampened ammunition and turned the battlefield into a quagmire, Coburg raised the siege and safely retreated behind the Sambre. When they saw the enemy retreating and realized that the battle was won, Jourdan, Carnot, and Duquesnoy—sans-culotte general, bourgeois dictator, and alcoholic ex-priest—reportedly met in Clarge and threw themselves into each other's arms. 29

At first Jourdan may have doubted that the fighting was entirely over. He wrote Belair that "we have taken today some excellent positions from these tyrants," but he then suggested that they still had to finish the enemy off. He tentatively announced a victory to Bouchotte, but added "I do not have the time to give you more complete details. At this moment it is more essential to fight than eat." 30 But by the evening it was clear that the battle was over. Coburg's army had suffered too heavily to renew the


29. Dupuis, ibid.

30. A.G. Bl 20, Jourdan to Belair, 10/16/93; Jourdan to Bouchotte, 10/16/93.
struggle.\textsuperscript{31}

Wattignies was one of the most decisive battles of the revolution, even though it did not usher in a new era of total victory, as Jourdan enthusiastically reported to the Convention. "The valor of our soldiers fortells of other successes for the armies of the Republic, and soon the land of liberty will be afflicted with these brigands no more...Our triumph is certain despite the traitors and the cowards. Terror has seized our enemies, and I believe that it will be impossible for these slaves to sustain courageous efforts against our brave Republicans."\textsuperscript{32} Jourdan's prophecy of total success was premature. Much blood would have to be shed before events were to turn out as he predicted. In a more sober evaluation of the battle's importance in his memoires, he was closer to the truth. Wattignies was decisive because it halted the Allies' offensive long enough for the French to complete the construction of the revolutionary army. It provided the precious time necessary to train the conscripts, promote new talented cadres, and solve the multiple logistical problems. It was

\textsuperscript{31} Exact casualties for the battle will probably never be known. Jourdan's early figures of under 2,000 French casualties as opposed to 6,000 enemy casualties was inaccurate. Both armies, especially the French, exaggerated to maximize the losses of the enemy, while minimizing their own; inexact body counts did not originate in Vietnam. Dupuis' (and Phipps') method of striking a compromise figure--here 3,000 for both sides--is hopelessly inexact.

\textsuperscript{32} Corr., III, p. 311, Jourdan to the president of the National Convention, 10/17/93.
also decisive for another reason: it allowed two of the most important figures in the organization of victory—Carnot and Jourdan—to keep their heads.
II. The Aftermath of Wattignies; Dismissal.

The government gave Jourdan no time to rest on his laurels. Scarcely had it decreed that he and his army deserved well of their country, than it was urging him to resume the offensive. A mere two days after the battle the Committee wrote the representatives with the army that "here indeed is a victory over the Austrians, but it is not enough...The enemy must be chased completely from the Republic and the campaign should be the last. The Committee of Public Safety applauds the army's efforts, but it still awaits a complete victory." The author of this note did not consider the fact that generals and soldiers might need a few days of rest. The government demanded of Jourdan continuing progress in his operations, totally unlike the more deliberate movement of traditional warfare. The soldiers in the ranks felt the pressure as much as the generals did. One wrote that "since the 6th of this month when we arrived in the Army of the North, we have not ceased to fight every day...I have already found myself in four battles...It is here that one can say when one gets up in the morning, I may not be able to see the evening." Here was the reality of the new, relentless pace of war demanded

33. A.G. Bl 21, The Committee to the representatives, 10/18/93. The letter is unsigned, but the handwriting appears to be that of Collot d'Herbois.
by the Jacobins. 34

Jourdan had been unable to follow up his victory immediately. The rain had slowed the pursuit of his tired troops. In addition, his men had shot away almost all their ammunition, and, as Carnot admitted, the victory had disorganized the French forces as much as defeat had disrupted the enemy. With Coburg's army safely away, Jourdan wanted to stand on the defensive for as long as the enemy allowed him a respite. He saw the need to rest and reorganize the army, and he wished to incorporate the new levées into the veteran units. He still believed that he was outnumbered. Carnot, perhaps at the insistence of his colleagues on the Committee, wished on the contrary to resume the offensive. No final decision was reached before Carnot left for Paris, except that Jourdan was to remain stationary and await further orders. He was not overjoyed to see Carnot go. Although he admitted that they had disagreed, he added that Carnot's advice had been "infinitely useful. I tell you frankly that, seeing myself reduced to my own resources, I doubt my talents." With Carnot gone, he could see the burden of responsibility coming to rest entirely on his own shoulders. 35


On October 22, a few days after Carnot's departure, Jourdan received his orders. The Committee's directive was a surreal masterpiece of revolutionary rhetoric and confused aggressiveness in the guise of a strategic directive. It has been condemned as incoherent, and rightly so. Jourdan was ordered to strike a decisive blow and chase the enemy from the Republic, in order to bolster public spirit and because "it is intolerable for a free people to rest while tyrants occupy its territory." He was to cross the Sambre in any one of three places, "hem the enemy in, envelop him, trap him in that portion of the territory that he had invaded, cut his communications with his own country..." Yet, after exhorting Jourdan to total and relentless offensive war, the decree instructed him only to act with prudence. The French army must "hug the border as close as it can [whatever that meant], while maintaining secure communications with its places." It was to wage a war of posts and to engage the enemy "only as soon as the occasion is offered to fight with advantage." In addition to all this, Jourdan was to "defeat the enemy's projects," persuade the enemy that the French possessed immense forces, seize his depots, and attempt to capture both Namur and Le Quesnoy. Finally the decree

ordered Jourdan to pursue a variation of his original strategy of envelopment in the upper Sambre valley by attacking from the west and the south towards Mons and endeavoring to encircle the Allies at this point. "The general will hold his force in mass, and threaten him [the enemy] at several point in order to cause him to divide his forces..."37

This decree offers irrefutable proof that most of the government did not understand what their new 'total war' really was, that for many la guerre a outrance was rhetoric signifying fiery energy and fervent patriotism rather than any clear system of warfare. Simply stated, the directive ordered Jourdan to accomplish everything, and at the same time. It was shot through with contradictions. Jourdan was supposed to attack and destroy the enemy, and he was to act with prudence; he was to envelop the enemy in the field, and he was to destroy magazines and besiege fortresses; he was to chase the enemy from France, and wage a small war of posts. The provision which instructed him to act in mass while threatening the enemy at several points reflects the double-vision of the government; on cannot threaten the enemy at several points without dividing his forces! Nowhere was the Jacobins' confusion about how precisely to conduct their war more evident than here.

So confused and confusing was this directive that Carnot felt compelled to send a personal note to Jourdan to interpret it. He admitted that the operations called for were "delicate". He instructed Jourdan not to advance too far into Belgium; "to expel the satellites of despots by the surest and shortest means is all that is demanded." Carnot then suggested that Jourdan make his main thrusts by way of Landrecies and Mons in order to pinch Coburg's army. What Carnot was broadly hinting at--albeit not very well--was the Jourdan not follow the decree literally, but that he limit himself to its last provision only. Unfortunately Carnot could not explicitly instruct Jourdan to disobey a government directive of which he was one of the signitaries.38

Jourdan was appalled by "this decree where so many incoherent dispositions are concentrated." For him it was not only confusing but dangerous as well. "The general saw in it his death warrant. How could he justify himself in case of misfortune before the revolutionary tribunal, which could find in that ridiculous piece a motive for condemnation no matter how the operations had been directed?"39

38. Corr., III, pp. 374-75, Carnot to Jourdan, 10/22/93. This letter proves Reinhard's assertion that Carnot did not have a free hand in the direction of the war. Quite clearly the decree was the work of other Committee members besides him.

He could not obey certain provisions without disobeying others. Carnot's attempt to translate the instructions into some kind of meaningful strategy did not help much, and in any event Jourdan was bound to obey the entire Committee, not merely Carnot. He asked Bouchotte for additional, clearer orders on how to proceed. Apparently Bouchotte understood the decree no better than did Jourdan, or perhaps he understood that it was mainly meant as rhetoric. He wrote back restating the government's motives for issuing it, and observed that the Committee had left Jourdan "enough leeway to make use of his talents and energy." In other words, in order to strengthen the regime vis-à-vis the rest of Europe, as well as its own unruly people, Jourdan was to achieve some sort of further success. How precisely he went about it was not that important.40

Jourdan was not mollified. He did not desire rhetoric, but clear, precise strategic direction. Apparently he gave vent to his frustration at the decree in the privacy of headquarters; two of Bouchotte's agents with the army reported that the general felt frustrated and "enchained" in his direction of operations. Carnot realized that Jourdan was still confused. On October 24, he suggested that one prong of the pincers--the one via Landrecies--be eliminated, this approach being too difficult. Jourdan should concentrate


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
the weight of his army to make one major effort in the Sambre valley. By advancing from here towards Mons, he could threaten Coburg's communications and obtain provisions by placing the country between the Sambre and the Meuse under requisition. On the following day Carnot added that Jourdan's situation was very similar to one posed by the British Enlightenment strategist, Lloyd. Lloyd believed, as did Carnot, that the best way to defeat an enemy force in southern Flanders was to attack him in flank further to the east by crossing the Sambre and threatening his communications. In both letters Carnot stressed the overriding concern of the Committee: For political reasons the Allies could not be allowed to remain on French soil.41

Obediently Jourdan did his best to renew the offensive. Realizing that most of the Allied forces were concentrated under Coburg in the Landrecies-Maubeuge area, he earlier had instructed General d'Avaisne to attack in Maritime Flanders in an effort to divert some of Coburg's troops back to this sector. On October 24, he ordered an advance all along the front from Dunkirk to Beaumont with language which was a poor imitation of the rhetoric of the government. To encourage his officers he claimed that the enemy's spirits were sagging and that the French were victorious all over

41. A.G. Bl 21, Carnot to Jourdan, 10/24/93, 10/25/93; Celliez & Berton to Bouchotte, 10/26/93.
Flanders. To the north different sections of the French cordon did indeed report successes: a brigade under Vandamme captured Furnes and Souham's troops at Lille won a small engagement. On the upper Sambre Jourdan massed three divisions near Beaumont with another in supporting distance, and prepared to advance across the river once Coburg had responded to d'Avaisne's attacks by detaching troops to Maritime Flanders. 42

But the offensive was dispersed over too great a distance, and, as might have been expected, it soon bogged down. The Allied regrouped, counterattacked, and defeated the French at several points. Jourdan had trouble with d'Avaisne, whom he rightly suspected of dragging his heels. At one point he ordered d'Avaisne to reinforce the weak division of Ransonnet, to concentrate troops from Dunkirk with Souham's division at Lille, and with this mass to make a concentric attack against the enemy's positions at Cysoing. D'Avaisne hesitated, requested further orders (as was his habit), and left his troops strung out near Ypres. When Ransonnet suffered a sharp reverse as a result, Jourdan lost his patience. To Isore he wrote that he was "as angry as you, citizen representative, to see general d'Avaisne deliberating over the order that I have given him...His

42. A.G. B1* 223, see Jourdan's various orders to his generals of 10/24/93; Jourdan to d'Avaisne, 10/29/93. Henri Jomini, Histoire Critique et Militaire, IV, pp. 144-45.
conduct has offered proof that he is not in a condition
to lead an operation as important as the one which he was
entrusted with." He recommended that d'Avaisne be dismissed;
the representatives complied, replacing him with general
Souham.43 But d'Avaisne's dismissal did not get the offensive
moving again, nor did the attacks in northern Flanders induce
Coburg to detach any units there. Coburg kept his forces
concentrated and fortified the banks of the Sambre with
fieldworks and batteries. Worse, the weather had finally
broken. The heavy late autumn rains pelted down, inundating
all of the Pays Bas and turning the area's primitive roads
into stretches of bottomless mud.

Jourdan unleashed a torrent of complaints. To
Bouchotte he wrote that his position was delicate, that the
Allies were strongly entrenched and in full force: "the roads
are so impracticable between the Sambre and the Meuse that
subsistence cannot reach the army."44 If he crossed the
Sambre the enemy could flank him from the Namur area. He
repeated his complaints to Carnot, and requested that his
superior come in person and assist in the operations; "you
will be more useful to the Republic here than anywhere else."

43. A.G. Bl 21, Jourdan to d'Avaisne, 10/24/93;
Jourdan to Isore, 10/29/93. For d'Avaisne's lack of ability
see Souham to Bouchotte, 10/25/93.

44. A.G. Bl* 223, Jourdan to Bouchotte, 10/29/93,
11/1/93.
Nevertheless, he assured Carnot that he would attack as ordered in spite of his difficulties. Representative Duquesnoy too was complaining. In daily letters he emphasized the army's supply difficulties and the miserable weather which was causing many of them. Were it not for the pouring rain and the impassable roads, he wrote, the army would be at grips with the enemy by now.

Clearly both men were doubtful about the prospects of the offensive at this point; Jourdan probably wanted it postponed indefinitely. But since the decree remained in effect, the offensive had to be carried out. Jourdan scheduled the advance across the river for November 3. He planned to send three divisions—those of Duquesnoy, Balland, and Desjardins—across the river at Thuin as the main attack. Two more divisions were to cover their right and seize Charleroi while the rest of the army was to demonstrate along the upper Sambre. But before the attack, Jourdan took Duquesnoy on a reconnaissance of the enemy positions. Through cold, drenching rain with mud up to their horses knees, they rode along the river, and Jourdan showed Duquesnoy what the army was up against. Duquesnoy was suitably impressed. He agreed to go to Paris to plead the case for a suspension of the offensive before the Committee. As it happened,

45. A.G. Bl* 223, Jourdan to Carnot, 10/29/93.

46. See Duquesnoy's letters to the Committee from 10/28/93 to 11/2/93 in the Recueil des Actes, VIII.
weather made the offensive impossible. Rain pelted down on
the shivering troops as they tried to cross the flooded
Sambre valley on the 3rd. Artillery, horses, ammunition and
supply wagons were engulfed by the mud, and after an all day
struggle one division advanced a bare two miles. In such
conditions further operations were impossible. Jourdan
called off the attack the same evening. 47

For him this dreary fiasco was too much. The next
day he vented his frustration in letters to Carnot and
Bouchotte. To advance across the flooded Sambre valley with
the army in its present state was impossible, he wrote. He
described the conditions which made it impossible: constant
rain, mud, and impassable roads which prevented the pro­
vision wagons from reaching the front. Soldiers in certain
divisions had been without bread for three days, and yet the
army was expected to cross a river against the enemy's
fortified defenses. The army, he concluded, would risk
perishing from hunger if the advance were continued. "I
cannot bear the heart-breaking sight of an army destroyed
without fighting," he wrote Carnot. "I render justice to
the brave soldiers who compose it; not the least murmer has
escaped them although they are half-naked and shoeless,
exposed to all the effects of the weather." To Bouchotte
he was more blunt: "I will not conceal it...that if the

47. A.G. mr 608-1, Memoires de 1793. Jomini, op cit,
IV, pp. 145-46.
Committee of Public Safety absolutely insists upon the carrying out of the expedition between the Sambre and Meuse, I will see myself constrained to hand in my resignation." Again he repeated "I cannot endure the heart-rending spectacle of seeing an army destroyed without fighting." To members of his staff he confessed that he was so disgusted with the way things were going that he was considering asking for a leave of absence to "recover his health". 48

But the government had already decided that its planned offensive was impossible to execute. Convinced perhaps by Jourdan's and Duquesnoy's earlier complaints, the Committee decreed on November 3 that the operation was provisionally suspended. It gave as the official reason the failure of d'Avaisne to obey orders and attack in Maritime Flanders. Jourdan was, however, to continue operations on the south bank of the Sambre towards Namur. 49 Even this seemed too much for Jourdan, who complained anew that the army could not proceed—the rain was proving a thousand times more ruinous than a battle. Yet the government felt that public opinion demanded that some kind of offensive operation be continued. On November 6, the Committee ordered Jourdan


to come to Paris to discuss ways of "executing our decree".  

This sudden recall caused Jourdan great concern. For one thing he was now convinced that the Committee had changed its mind and decided not to call off the offensive after all. Then too he had proposed putting the army into winter quarters to rest and regroup and this had dis pleased the Committee: "to give the signal for winter quarters will favor the system of the enemy which consists of reorganizing and making another campaign." But Jourdan also feared for himself. A summons to Paris was an ominous sign; the Committee did not request discussions with its generals as a matter of course. And the Committee had expressed even more disquieting sentiments. "We are afflicted to see a republican general speak of resignation if the Committee insists upon the execution of its decree; the defender of the liberty of his country can find nothing impossible!" Jourdan was suspect as a defeatist. A general did not threaten to abandon his post in the middle of a crisis; such a general might well be a lukewarm patriot like Kilmaine, or even a 'traitor' like Houchard! Both Carnot and Bouchotte took pains to reassure him that his summons to Paris was not the


51. Ibid. A.G. mr 608-1, Memoires de 1793.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
prelude to his arrest; they emphasized that he was being recalled only to discuss the strategic situation, and they both expressed full confidence in his abilities. 52

There might well have been another motive for his recall. Carnot and several of the representatives were being denounced by the extremists. The latter were accusing both Carnot and Duquesnoy of nepotism in the advancement of their brothers. In addition, Hebert was loudly condemning the government's handling of the war in the Nord, claiming that the campaign was going badly because Jourdan was submitting to the harmful influence of the representatives, allowing himself to be "enchained" by them. At the Jacobin club Hebert openly accused Duquesnoy of forcing Jourdan to make unwise tactical decisions. The sources for Hebert's accusations were unquestionably Bouchotte's agents with the army. In the letter in which they reported Jourdan's disenchantment with the decree of October 22, they interpreted his complaints to mean that he felt hindered specifically by the representatives. They argued that Jourdan favored General Duquesnoy too much because of the influence of his brother, and they could not understand why Jourdan deferred to Carnot and Duquesnoy at times during Wattignies! Here the latent hostility between radical and

moderate over the progress of the war was bubbling to the surface. 53

What were Jourdan's true sentiments in early November? Certainly he did not feel hindered by the representatives; indeed, his correspondence indicates that he felt just the opposite. On the other hand, he may well have been as disgusted by the regime's handling of the war as Bouchotte's agents claimed. In a rather interesting letter to Hebert, he, Duquesnoy, and his chief of staff Ernouf poured out their frustration and anger at the disastrous course of the fall offensive. "Behold the labyrinth in which we are lost from false plans; you may well believe they come from false patriots; we have spoken to you of the man..." And then a postscript, apparently written by Jourdan personally: "I am in a rage, I too. Fuck, the army wants everything. Bougres, who have their feet warm want to make the infantry march without shoes, the cavalry without fourrage and the artillery without horses..." 54


54. This letter is cited by Paul Barras in his Memoirs (II, pp. 278-80). Both Ramsey Phipps and Hippolyte Carnot believed it to be genuine; Hippolyte believed that Jourdan corresponded regularly with Hebert, although he cited no evidence for this assertion. Because Barras quoted the letter verbatim, and because his factual evidence is usually sound, I am inclined to believe that it was authentic.
This letter raises some interesting questions about Jourdan's true feelings towards the Jacobin dictatorship. Was he something other than the loyal, obedient general that history has made him out to be, or did he co-author this letter at a moment of intense frustration at the mud, starvation, nakedness and misery at the front? Who was the "man" referred to in the letter? Were there other letters written to Hebert, and if so, was Jourdan naive enough to believe that he could use Hebert as a spokesman against the "men of mass" who Jourdan believed were disrupting the campaign? In any case, with so many complaints and accusations flying around, with real discontent with the state of affairs in the Nord prevalent, the Committee evidently wished to iron out whatever difficulties existed regarding the leadership of the Army of the North. Thus they summoned Jourdan to Paris.

On the morning of November 9, Jourdan and Duquesnoy nervously confronted the Committee. According to Jourdan's account a portion of the Committee—the "men of mass"—still desired that he continue the offensive. Jourdan and Duquesnoy pleaded their case; they cited the terrible privations of the troops, the numerous supply problems and argued that before the army could make use of its numerical superiority, the new levées would have to be amalgamated into the veteran units. "The truth of these propositions was appreciated by Carnot, and even by several of his colleagues who were not entirely strangers to the art of war; but those
who believed that the people could overcome everything by mass alone, did not understand how such a different organization was necessary...," and wished to continue attacking until the enemy had been chased from France. It must have been a nerve-wracking meeting, for it was only after the greatest of difficulty that Jourdan and Duquesnoy convinced the Committee that the army was in no condition to continue to advance. But in the end all were persuaded, even the "men of mass" who perhaps were not as unreasonable as Jourdan would have us believe.\footnote{55. A.G. mr 608-1, \textit{Memoires de 1793}. Reinhard, \textit{op cit}, II, pp. 85-8.}

Apparently it was also agreed that the government would present a united front against the criticism of Hebert and his fellow extremists. That evening Duquesnoy rebutted Hebert at the Jacobin society. He argued that far from being a hindrance to Jourdan, he was in fact "his best friend. I am here only on his account, because in reality they are enchaining him. I have come to request for him carte-blanche. I have obtained it. I bring it to him." Almost certainly the "they" in his speech were the extremists. Robespierre then supported Duquesnoy, denouncing Hebert's criticism of the regime's direction of the war. Two nights later Jourdan appeared at the society with both Duquesnoy and Robespierre. After Jourdan had briefly explained that the purpose of his trip to Paris was to deliberate with the Committee on the
means most appropriate to employ to hasten the fall of tyrants, Hebert publically apologized, and amid loud applause gave Duquesnoy a "fraternal kiss". The government, outwardly at least, had demonstrated its solidarity.\textsuperscript{56}

One is tempted to think that Jourdan may have been overstating his difficulties in view of Hoche's successful campaign in the Vosges that same autumn. But if Jourdan were exaggerating, so were his subordinate officers. In a letter to General Duquesnoy, General Balland portrayed with stark realism the desperate state of the army:

I warn you, general, that the area which we occupy cannot furnish the army with any more fourrage. In four days here we will be reduced to seeing our horses die of hunger in mud up to their stomachs. Those of the light artillery are already in a sad state. The roads are covered with wagons broken while bringing provisions to the battalions, and it is to be feared that in a few days the soldier will not be able to receive his bread and meat. The army is in a condition to make one tremble; they are in mud up to the calves of their legs. Sickness is reducing our army to half its number. If we remain here another ten days, each day at least fifteen men per battalion [will go] to the hospital.

Troops in such distress could hardly fight off a simple raid, much less launch a major attack. Jourdan realized, as Sir Douglas Haig did not realize until the useless expenditure of 300,000 casualties in 1917 convinced him, that offensive operations in Flanders during the rainy autumn season were next to impossible. The primitive technology, communications,

\textsuperscript{56} Aulard, \textit{op cit}, V, pp. 499-508.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
and logistics of the French army prevented them from being able to overcome the flooded Sambre valley, and all the revolutionary fervor in the world could not change that fact. 57

With the Committee's decision to suspend the offensive, serious operations in Flanders virtually ceased. The Army of the North settled down in a line of defenses running from the coast at Dunkirk, south through Lille, Cambrai and Landrecies, then east down the Sambre valley to the vicinity of Charleroi. Jourdan described his dispositions as adequate to protect the entire front and at the same time to allow leeway for foraging. He constructed three fortified camps behind the lines at Guise, St Quentin, and Peronne. These were to serve as points of support in case of a serious reverse on any front, while also serving as training camps for the new levées. Jourdan kept his headquarters behind the Sambre front, leaving General Souham in unofficial command of the front from Cambrai to Dunkirk. While he intended to raid and harass the enemy—and he did instruct Souham to launch minor attacks in his sector—Jourdan's strategy for the winter was essentially defensive. 58

Life at the front settled down into a tedious routine


in which handling minor problems and details, instead of launching major offensives, became the order of the day. On a typical day, general Ferrand reported an enemy probe against Sedan which was driven off with a few cannon shots, Belair announced a skirmish in which French cavalry took thirty-six prisoners, and the garrison of Landrecies repulsed an enemy raid on the town. General Balland described the excellent morale shown by his men despite their hardships, and general Souham expressed concern that some of his volunteers believed their term of service to be finished and wanted to return home. Probably remembering Houchard's fate, Jourdan complained the Committee about having to handle prisoner-of-war matters because it involved corresponding with the enemy. Much of his time was spent adjusting and readjusting his defensive dispositions. In a typical instance, he wrote General Fromentin that, apparently, Fromentin had not thrown his cantonments far enough to the left. "I warn you that the enemy occupies Catillon...and as a result this is the side to which you are to direct your emplacements." Then after furnishing him a list of places to occupy, he continued: "Now that you have a position where it is possible to rest your troops for several days, you can shoe and restore to health your horses...Address yourself to your commissaire to


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
obtain shoes and whatever else is necessary for your division; there is a magazine at the park at Maubeuge."

Yet even amid such routine tasks Jourdan felt the ominous shadow of the Terror menacing him. When Souham experienced some difficulties in his sector and requested a personal meeting with Jourdan, the general replied, "I wish I were able to authorize you to meet me here for a moment as you desire, but you know very well that, if during your absence, your division received a check, you and I would be responsible, and perhaps we would be suspected of treason."

The true enemy now became dearth—dearth of virtually every necessity from food to footwear. Jourdan had inordinate trouble procuring boots for his soldiers, and troops in Fromentin's division were wrapping their feet in straw. Jourdan asked the representatives at Arras to hasten a direct requisition of shoes which they were carrying out there. Carnot admitted that all the depots were empty of footwear and suggested that the men wear wooden clogs. There were periodic food shortages, caused as often by the awful roads as by an actual lack of provisions. Even so, Jourdan reported that 60,000 rations of bread arrived spoiled and that fourrage was so scarce that he did not know how his

60. A.G. Bl* 223, Jourdan to Fromentin, 11/5/93.
horses would survive the winter. The representatives repeatedly complained of the lack of subsistence as they attempted to provision the fortresses along the front. There were still shortages of such items as uniforms, blankets, and muskets. Denum est was so bad that both Balland's and Duquesnoy's division had 2,500 out of 12,000 sick in the hospitals. 62

Jourdan, like the government, blamed the shortages on the supply administrations. He wrote that he would very much like to meet those responsible for provisioning the army. However, he had to work through his commissaire-ordonnateur, for he was the one to whom he and the representatives sent their complaints about distribution problems and he was the one who dealt with the supply agents of the war ministry. Jourdan thus had to depend upon him to get food and supplies to the men as efficiently as possible. Of course the quartermaster, in turn, had to depend upon his own underlings, as well as the various agents of the war ministry, and it was among them that the problems lay. Carnot too believed that the supply personnel, rather than any real lack of food and materiel, were causing the shortages. "The true cause of our misfortune is not because not enough is being sent to the

the magazines; it is corruption." He then added that the reason the representatives were at the front was to "attend to the needs of the army by way of local resources, to prevent the corruption, and to chase the squanderers and traitors of every kind."^63

Jourdan also had difficulty getting the government to execute his most cherished project—the amalgame. At the end of November the Committee had finally decreed that the new conscripts were to be incorporated into the understrength veteran units as Jourdan desired. But incorporation was the task of the war ministry, and the latter proved incapable of carrying it out with any kind of dispatch. In mid-December the official laws and instructions regarding the amalgame, as well as the personnel who were to carry it out, had not arrived. Lists of the specific cadres slated to staff those conscript units destined for incorporation had not been drawn up. Some conscripts who were marked for amalgamation were going home on the pretext that they were going to receive their transfer orders. In defense of the war ministry, this was one operation in which slowness was excusable owing to the sheer number of units involved. Nevertheless Jourdan continually pressured Bouchotte to speed it up, occasionally

urged the ministry personnel handling the amalgame to hasten, and frequently gave them advice on how to proceed.64

But for all the problems with subsistence, habillement, and the amalgame, Jourdan's most severe trouble was caused by the popular societies of the Nord. Their constant complaints were to prove to be his eventual undoing.

By December their incessant criticism about the army's failure to protect them from the real, and imaginary, depredations of the enemy had reached a crescendo. The commune of Vervins complained to Jourdan that it was menaced by 2,000 Austrians and that it needed more soldiers immediately. After looking into the matter, Jourdan replied that what the commune believed to be 2,000 Austrians was in reality a mere picket. He urged them not to take such rumors so seriously. Then he softened his tone and announced that he was sending them the 5th hussars, advising the commune to invite the soldiers into their popular society and enlighten them as to the true religion of a free and reasonable people. Unfortunately most complaints were not so successfully handled. When one Lambert, a notable in the Maubeuge commune, denounced the generals for allowing their advanced posts to permit an enemy raid to reach the outskirts of the city, Bouchotte nagged Jourdan and his subordinates not to allow their

advanced posts to be negligent. The popular society of St Quentin was so vociferous about enemy incursions that it provoked Belair to write to Jourdan that St Quentin's fears of enemy attacks were groundless, and its requests for more soldiers needless: would Jourdan please convince the Committee not to take all their reports of enemy incursions seriously. Nevertheless the Committee demanded to know whether Jourdan had adequately garrisoned the St Quentin area, so that Jourdan had to add a fourth regiment of cavalry to the three regiments already patrolling that sector.65

It was in vain that he explained to Bouchotte that such complaints came from "malevolents" and "timid citizens", that his dispositions were basically sound, and that to disperse the army to protect more territory would not only be useless, but dangerous. A more extended front with the available manpower, he argued, would thin their defensive cordon to the breaking point; it would not halt enemy incursions into French territory. He then felt compelled to add that his conduct had always been that of a sans-culotte. The issue was not so much whether the fears of the local municipalities were real or imaginary. The issue was that Jourdan simply did not have enough men to erect a steel

65. A.G. B1 23, Jourdan to the Committee of correspondence of Vervins, 12/9/93; Lambert to Bouchotte, 12/21/93; Bouchotte to Jourdan, 12/21/93; Belair to Jourdan, 12/1/93. Correspondence about the St Quentin situation took place almost on a daily basis.
curtain of protection along the entire border from Dunkirk to Namur. To cover the 150 miles of front he had no more than 140,000 men, and, according to his own calculations he only had 108,000, the balance being useless garrison troops and untrained conscripts. In the all-important cavalry arm he was woefully weak. But this was something that the local communes could not understand. And the men of mass in the Parisian clubs, in the war ministry, and on the Committee itself were all hostile to the "men of talent" in the army hierarchy and among the representatives and chose not to understand it.66

So the clamor for garrisons and better protection continued—as Carnot wrote to Jourdan, "always new complaints from the communes...," and he again urged him to do his best to guard the frontier.67 But when the enemy raids persisted, the communes' disenchantment and that of their allies in Paris with Jourdan and his officers increased.

In mid-December this problem was aggravated. While on one of his periodic inspections of the front, Jourdan found Landrecies in the midst of chaos. The garrison commander Courtois, a Parisian appointee of Bouchotte, had

66. A.G. Bl* 223, Jourdan to Bouchotte, 12/24/93. The popular societies of the Nord also complained to their fellow sans-culottes in the Parisian clubs, possibly with a more virulent ink than they used in writing to the government.

hopelessly bungled a sortie against an enemy raid so that when Jourdan arrived, the garrison was in total disorder and Courtois was running through the streets screaming curses at everyone he saw. Jourdan arrested him on the spot. Courtois immediately denounced him as a part of a "Machiavellian conspiracy" to ruin him and all "true republicans", and then listed all his unpatriotic political enemies whom he wanted guillotined. A few days later a popular society denounced general Belair because he allegedly seduced the wife of one of its members. Two of Bouchotte's agents supported the denunciation. Belair was inaccessible to patriots, he slept late, took long suppers, and once kept one of Jourdan's aides waiting. Moreover, he had dined with an aristocratic prisoner and was involved in a pay dispute with some workers who had passed on their grievance to the Jacobin club in Paris. Belair, the agents noted, was a close associate of Jourdan. Belair denied the accusations, but Bouchotte ordered him to Paris anyway. Here the extremists were striking too close to home; Belair may have been Jourdan's most valuable officer since he was performing indispensable work training the new levées at Guise. Jourdan accordingly took Belair's side in the ensuing dispute.68

68. A.G. mr 283, Memoires...des evenements qui ont procede, accompagne, et suivi le siege de Landrecies (sans nom de l'auteur). A.G. Bl 23, Courtois to Bouchotte, 12/9/93; Celliez & Berton to Bouchotte, 12/15/93; Belair to Bouchotte, 12/16/93.
Trouble was brewing also between the representatives and the war ministry. Laurent complained of the inexplicable sloth of the ministry in responding to his requests for supplies, and he also reported that he had to arrest a ministry agent who tried to go over to the enemy. When Duquesnoy complained about incompetents in the war bureaucracy, Bouchotte angrily demanded that he name names. The popular society of Maubeuge began to feud with Bar who was then working in that fortress-town, and Bouchotte took the side of the popular society in that dispute. Guiot complained that Ronsin's so-called "revolutionary army" was receiving preferential treatment regarding clothing and equipment, being treated like a "spoiled child" while the troops at the front lacked essentials. When the "revolutionary army" operating in the Nord was suppressed, the Parisian clubs howled in protest. Even Jourdan, always deferential and comradely in his letters to Bouchotte, was writing with a sharper quill. Complaining about the frightful shortages in the army he wrote: "It seems like they conspire against

69. The so-called "revolutionary army" was a motley collection of sans-culotte 'soldiers', more or less under military discipline, sent out to 'pacify the countryside'. Under the leadership of the extremist, Ronsin, it roamed through the countryside, devoting most of its efforts to requisitioning—or stealing—food which the peasants were supposedly hoarding from the army and the cities. The extremists believed that the "revolutionary army" was doing valuable work; the representatives felt that it was an undisciplined rabble causing more harm than good.
the Army of the North. I tell you formally, if this disette does not cease, we run the greatest risks and the greatest dangers." 70

The result of all this was a sharp increase in the tension between Jourdan, his officers, and the representatives on mission on one hand, and the extremists in the war ministry, the Parisian clubs, and indeed the government on the other. Fueling the flames of this conflict were the discontented popular societies of the Nord. Thus Jourdan gradually fell into increasing disfavor with the extremists. Because the regime depended upon the popular societies for much of its support, and because there were men of mass on the Committee—certainly Billaud-Varenne and Collot d'Herbois qualify as such—the security of Jourdan's position was growing progressively more uncertain.

At the end of December the Committee sent C. A. Prieur (de la Cote d'Or) on an inspection tour of the Nord in company with Nicholas Hentz, the most ruthless and extreme deputy on mission to that area. The reason for their trip was almost certainly the problem of the unguarded border. The two men visited Jourdan, who had recently responded

70. A.G. B1 26, Jourdan to Bouchotte, 1/1/94. There was a dramatic increase in hostility between representatives and war ministry during December. One wonders if this pattern occurred in other armies, and if this conflict contributed to the final break between the extremists and the government in March, 1794.
to criticism from Bouchotte by suggesting that the minister himself position the troops if he did not like the way the frontier was guarded. The two men left, evidently unconvinced that more could not be done to halt the enemy incursions. Consequently Jourdan issued a general 'shape up' order to his generals. He emphasized that they must drill their soldiers daily and inspect their positions frequently, that the brigade commanders must visit their front-line troops, and that the advanced posts must improve their surveillance. All this was clearly aimed at tightening up the border defenses. His reference to the advanced posts was especially significant since a favorite complaint of the communes was that these posts were not doing their duty. 71

It was not enough. Matters boiled to a head over the "gap" in the St Quentin area. An Austrian emissary with three uhlans had ridden into St Quentin without being challenged by the advanced posts. The commune screamed that these Austrians could have been spies and that there still were no soldiers around to prevent the enemy from attacking them. Why had the government not done anything about this? Bouchotte wrote a sharp note to Jourdan, criticizing him for

continuing to allow the enemy to raid into French territory and ordering him to construct defenses in the St Quentin area. This note obviously upset Jourdan. His reply was long, rambling, and clearly written under duress. He had done everything he could, he wrote, to stop the enemy raids: inspections, frequent patrols, counterraids. He suggested that one of Bouchotte's agents accompany him on his inspections to judge for himself if he was telling the truth. But the one thing he would not do is move his defenses any further forward, or extend them and wider. "I am not in favor of spreading them any further because I would be compromising their security." It was better to keep the troops concentrated in their cantonments where they could adequately subsist than disperse them further in a dragnet which would still have numerous holes for the enemy to slip through. When the new levées were ready, he could extend himself further, "but before that takes place I would be compromising the army" by doing so, without stopping the pillage of the enemy.  

But Bouchotte had not awaited Jourdan's reply. On January 6, he announced to the Committee that the Allies were penetrating the frontiers of the Nord, burning, pillaging,  

72. A.G. Bl 26, Bouchotte to Jourdan, 1/4/94; Jourdan to Bouchotte, 1/7/94. The St Quentin area was vulnerable to enemy raids because to the east lay the vast Forest of Mormal. From its reaches the enemy could raid and then retire virtually unmolested by the cavalry-less French army (map #5).
and committing all sorts of atrocities. The invaders, he added, had been left in peace for far too long; they should be repulsed at once. This letter was unfair, exaggerated, and inaccurate; it overstated the problem and said nothing about the difficulties of solving it. Nevertheless it convinced the Committee—or at least a majority of its members—that Jourdan had to be dismissed. Robespierre already considered him suspect "due to his inactivity"—evidently in halting the enemy incursions—and due to his "correspondence."73 Perhaps some of the others felt they could no longer ignore the complaints of the popular societies. The Committee made its decision the same day. Bouchotte immediately ordered Jourdan to return to Paris to "confer" with the Committee. On the 7th the Committee decreed the arrest of Jourdan and Ernouf; no reason was given.74

The sudden, unexpected recall order caught Jourdan completely unaware. He immediately feared for his life. He did not know what to do. At one point he seriously considered fleeing and seeking safety with the enemy. But ultimately he shrank from taking such a step. Not only had he no inclination to seek protection from the counterrevolution, but he also

---


74. A.G. Bl 26, Bouchotte to Jourdan, 1/6/94; Decree of the Committee, 1/7/94.
realized that running would justify the extremists' suspicion that he was a traitor. After agonized deliberation he decided to face his accusers. He determined to obey the order and return to Paris.  

It proved to be the correct decision. What happened when he again confronted the Committee we do not know. Allegedly the session grew heated. Carnot asked Jourdan why he had not acted more energetically; Jourdan defended himself with the active support of Duquesnoy; accusations and denials flew back and forth amid bitter language, with Duquesnoy angrily pounding an inkwell on the table and Carnot at one point weeping with frustration. Finally, when asked to vouch for Jourdan's patriotism, Duquesnoy vowed to answer for it with his head. Perhaps this swayed the Committee, or perhaps the validity of Jourdan's arguments convinced them. In any case, the Committee decided merely to pension him off and send him home. Carnot drew up the decree rescinding the arrest and recommending him for the pension.  

There is an amazing number of explanations for his dismissal, perhaps because there seemed to be no logical reason for it. He had not lost a battle. He had not defied the government as had Custine, nor shown himself defeatist as had Kilmaine. He had not lost the confidence of the

75. A.G. mr 608-1, Memoires de 1793.

representatives as had Houchard, for the representatives wrote letters in his behalf to the Committee. Representative Levasseur believed that Jourdan had lost Carnot's confidence. Hippolyte Carnot suggested that he was corresponding with the extremists, and thus was dismissed for his politics. Jomini believed that he fell victim to the hostility of Robespierre and St Just who wished to replace him with their favorite, General Charles Pichegru—an opinion also held by R. R. Palmer. Collot d'Herbois, the only one of the Twelve to have expressed himself on the subject, claimed that his removal was a group decision, but Collot may have been minimizing his own role, for he almost certainly was one of Jourdan's critics. Officially the government stated that Jourdan was dismissed because he had not sufficiently exploited his successes and had shown insufficient "intensity" and "audacity" to overcome "normal obstacles" and achieve victory.

There is a certain amount of truth in most of these explanations, although the first two seem without foundation. But if the government believed that he had demonstrated insufficient energy and "intensity", it believed so because

---

77. Jomini, op cit, IV, p. 147.
he had not interdicted the frontier to enemy incursions thoroughly enough to satisfy the popular societies of the Nord, or the radicals in Paris. This judgment was far from correct. On the contrary, so active were the French patrols and counteraids in West Flanders that throughout early January the Allies were convinced that the French movements there were the prelude to a major offensive. As for his inability to halt the enemy raids, he simply did not have enough men. It is understandable that the local popular societies could not grasp this. That the extremists in the government refused to grasp it was inexcusable.

80. See A.G. Bl* 169, Enemy Correspondence, January, 1794.
JACOBIN GENERAL; JEAN BAPTISTE JOURDAN
AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION; 1792 - 1799

VOLUME II

A Dissertation

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

in

The Department of History

by

Lawrence Joseph Fischer
B.S., Loyola College of Baltimore, 1969
M.A., University of Delaware, 1974
August 1978

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
I. Fleurus.

Following his dismissal from command of the Army of the North, Jourdan returned to his home in Limoges. He was hardly treated like a man judged inadequate to command one of the armies of the Republic, for he received a hero's welcome. The Limoges popular society, now entitled "Les Amis de la liberte et de la egalite," greeted him upon his arrival, welcomed him back into the club, and loyally parroted the official Jacobin line as to the reason for his dismissal. "These two officers (Jourdan and Ernouf) are considered excellent citizens; therefore Jourdan was recalled only because circumstances required a more active citizen at the head of the army," announced the president of the society. Jourdan thanked the club for his warm welcome, saying how pleased he was to be back among his brothers. Like a true citizen-soldier, he returned to his life as a small town shopkeeper. He took up operation of his dry goods business and resumed activity in the popular society. Duquesnoy sent two letters to the club denying current rumors that he had been hostile to Jourdan during the controversy surrounding his removal from command. Such was his popularity that he was elected president of the club. Supposedly he accepted his fall from power without regret or rancor; nevertheless, it is
alleged that he hung his uniform and his sword in a prominent place in his store.¹

He did not remain a shopkeeper for long. On March 10, 1794, the Committee decided to relieve General Lazare Hoche from command of the Army of the Moselle. Its choice as his successor was none other than Jourdan. Apparently the Committee had forgotten that it earlier had judged him insufficiently energetic, intense, and audacious. Perhaps, as an obedient soldier, he considered it to be his duty to do so; perhaps, he wished to prove to the government that its previous assessment of his abilities was erroneous.²

As Jourdan assumed command of the Moselle, Carnot issued his famous "General Method of the military operations of the next campaign." These instructions contained the first cohesive summary of the new total warfare waged by the revolutionaries. The "General Method" rejected cordon tactics, "since these cause one's forces to be scattered, and the campaign will end ... with several successes which will not put the enemy 'hors d'état' of recommencing the fighting the following year."

². Ibid. A.G. mr 608-2, J.B. Jourdan, Memoires militaires de la campagne de 1794.
Instead, the French were to seek out the enemy's armies, attack them en masse, and destroy them. Territory and fortresses no longer were important; constant aggressiveness rather than thrust and maneuver became the order of the day. It emphasized discipline, minimum garrisons for strongpoints, frequent inspections and rotation of officers. The army was to engage the enemy with the bayonet and "pursue them to death." In employing this new warfare, Carnot decided that the decisive front was the Nord. Here the French must launch their biggest offensive in order to envelop the mass of the Allied army in the upper Sambre valley, a left pincer striking eastward from the Lille area, and a right hand pincer advancing north across the Sambre towards Mons. This operation was essentially the same as the one proposed by Jourdan in October, 1793.  

While Carnot's "General Method" has met with almost universal praise for ushering in a new age of warfare, his (or Jourdan's) strategy for defeating the Allied army has generally been condemned. It violated, the critics argue, the very principle of mass proposed in the general method. By dividing the Army of the North into two separate wings, each operating against the enemy's flanks, Carnot allowed the Allies the ability to mass their own

---

forces in a central position and to use interior lines to defeat the French pincers in detail. Instead, Carnot should have concentrated most of his 225,000 soldiers in the Sambre valley to strike at the Allies' left flank and force their army back towards the sea. This alternate strategy is open to criticism on two counts. It ignored the structural difficulties of launching such an operation. The French possessed neither the logistics nor the communications to march 150,000 or more men across the Allies' front and throw them en masse against his flank. It is very doubtful that Carnot could have supplied such a huge number of soldiers in so confined an area. Besides, such an operation would have left Paris open to an Allied counteroffensive, and this was politically unacceptable.

The Army of the Moselle's role in Carnot's plan of campaign was a secondary one. It was to take up a strong position near Arlon in the Ardennes, cut all communications between the enemy forces in Belgium and those in the Rhine valley, contain the Prussian army near Treves, and attack the 20,000-man force under General Jean Pierre Beaulieu which was operating near Arlon. At the very least it was to prevent Beaulieu from marching to the aid of the Allied forces in the Sambre valley.


5. A.G. mr 608-2, Memoires de 1794.
Jourdan encountered the predictable logistical difficulties when he assumed command of the army on March 19. His newest conscripts had not yet been issued rifles, bayonets, and shoes, and the division of General Rene Moreaux needed clothing and camping equipment. Jourdan complained to his quartermaster that it was "hard to see some shoes in the magazines and see the soldiers bare-foot." Getting the shoes to the soldiers, he reminded him, was his task, not that of the representatives. When it rained "frightfully" for four days in early April, there was a food shortage during which the troops were entirely without bread, because the wagons were finding it difficult to negotiate the muddy roads. However, Jourdan also inherited an invaluable colleague in representative Rene Gillet, then on mission to the 'Moselle.' Gillet proved to be a more than adequate successor to Duquesnoy: he possessed the latter's virtues without any of the accompanying defects. Gillet was young (thirty-two in 1794), energetic, tireless, a man who saw the logistical difficulties of the army as his primary concern. While a convinced Jacobin, he did not possess either Duquesnoy's fanaticism or his extreme ruthlessness. Like Duquesnoy, Gillet frequently operated right out of Jourdan's headquarters where he was in a position to collaborate closely with Jourdan in the maintenance and administration of the army.

Jourdan commanded under 70,000 men. Since he had to watch the Prussian army near Treves, he at first left the defeat of Beaulieu up to General J. Hatry with three divisions, 22,000 men. Hatry apparently bungled the operation. He advanced slowly, erroneously claiming that he was outnumbered; then, as he was about to attack, Beaulieu struck first and drove back one of his divisions. Hatry reported his defeat and strongly hinted that he would not be able to handle Beaulieu without additional troops.\(^7\)

While this was occurring, General Pichegru with the Army of the Nord had suffered a series of defeats in Belgium, losing the key fortress of Landrecies to the Allies while completely failing to get his own offensive under way. His failures forced Carnot to adjust his strategy. In order to insure victory in the decisive Nord theater he decided to send Jourdan with a portion of his army north into Belgium against Liege and Namur. This would compel the enemy to detach troops from French Flanders to defend these two important bases, which in turn would weaken the forces facing Pichegru and make it easier for him to advance. On April 30, Carnot ordered Jourdan to leave a minimum force to cover the Moselle valley and march north on Namur with the rest. He was to recapture Arlon,

\(^7\) A.G. mr 608-2, see Hatry's letters to Jourdan during the second and third weeks of April, 1794.
lost to Beaulieu by Hatry, and drive Beaulieu away from the Namur area. Carnot did not want to unite Jourdan with the right wing of the Army of the North in the Sambre valley at this point; the Moselle was to operate separately. Only gradually, as Jourdan marched north and neared the Sambre, did Carnot consider concentrating all the French forces between the Sambre and the Meuse into one great mass.  

As Jourdan approached Arlon, he suggested that they trap Beaulieu between his own army and a strong force from the Army of the Ardennes. Carnot liked the idea and instructed Pichegru to detach some 30,000 men from his right wing to help envelop Beaulieu. But Pichegru refused, evidently suggesting that Carnot get the 30,000 from somewhere else. Since Pichegru was accomplishing nothing in Belgium, Carnot was justifiably angry. "We have not received your decision on this last point (the 30,000 men). It has been several days since Jourdan received the order to march on Brabant, but what can he do if he is not seconded? Where will we get the 30,000 ... if not from the Army of the North? See if you, without losing a minute, instead of remaining stuck ... cause that force to debouch into the country between the Sambre and the Meuse."

---

Yet Pichegru never did send the troops, and his disobedience went unchallenged. It is difficult to explain Carnot's strange inability to force Pichegru to follow orders. Perhaps Pichegru did have powerful connections on the Committee which put him beyond Carnot's ability to coerce.9

Pichegru's uncooperativeness made it impossible for Jourdan to envelop Beaulieu and force him to fight. The Austrian general brushed aside the small force that Pichegru did send near Sedan. Jourdan momentarily caught up with him and defeated him in a minor engagement, but Beaulieu retreated before the action became general and succeeded in escaping northward. Carnot, still hopeful of catching Beaulieu, then ordered Jourdan to make a wide enveloping march via Bastogne through the Ardennes to get around his eastern flank and cut him off from Belgium. Jourdan wrote back, suggesting that the army would be better concentrated if it took the shorter direct after Beaulieu via Neufchateau. That way it would also be able to reach the Sambre and to assist Pichegru sooner. Once again Carnot consented to Jourdan's proposal.10

While Jourdan pursued Beaulieu through the


10. A.G. mr 608-2, Jourdan to the Committee, 5/21/94; the Committee to Jourdan, 5/23/94.
Ardennes, Pichegru failed miserably to fulfill Carnot's strategy in Belgium. Not until Jourdan's former subordinate, Souham, repulsed a major Allied attack in a confused battle near Turcoing did Pichegru's offensive make any progress at all. The right wing of his forces in the Sambre valley were putting heavy pressure on the Allies, but they were accomplishing little more. Pichegru had decided that this wing of the army be directed by a council of war consisting of four generals, the representatives, and St. Just, on special mission to the Nord from the Committee. Pichegru allowed the council to operate as it saw fit, as long as its forces attacked across the Sambre in accordance with the overall plan. There is every reason to believe that St. Just talked Pichegru into setting up this unwieldy command structure. St. Just was able to bend the council to his will, as he probably had anticipated, and he believed that the decisions taken by the council were good ones.11

But if the council satisfied St. Just, it did not win any victories. Throughout the month of May it sent the right wing across the Sambre in attack after relentless attack. Unfortunately, each time the army succeeded in

11. A.G. Gl 32, Order of Pichegru, 5/17/94; St. Just to the Committee 5/22/94. For Pichegru's mishandling of the spring campaign see Jomini, op cit, V. That Pichegru was a borderline incompetent there is little doubt. Representatives Baudot and Lacoste described him as possessing "neither the talent, the activity, nor the bearing of a general ... No talent to make a plan, no energy to carry out the plan of another."
crossing the river, the council deployed the troops badly, usually dispersing them over too great a distance. Twice the Austrians found a weak point in the French lines, broke through it, and forced a retreat. Instead of stopping to analyze its failures, the council returned to the assault again and again, usually within a day or two of the last repulse. St. Just dismissed several generals, and threatened the others with immediate execution if they left their troops unordered. On May 29, the fourth attack momentarily seemed to be on the verge of success. The French invested Charleroi, but unfortunately they again deployed their units in a cordon that was too long and too thin. Three days later, after some confused fighting, the Austrians once again gained the upper hand and sent the French scuttling back to the safety of the south bank of the Sambre. 12

These repeated failures finally convinced Carnot that if the right wing of the Army of the North was ever to fight its way successfully across the Sambre, it would need the help of the Army of the Moselle. Yet as late as May 27 he had not decided whether to mass Jourdan's force with St. Just's -- the very decision for which military historians have praised him most. His orders to Jourdan on that day were curiously indecisive. Jourdan was to

take Namur if it could be done quickly. If it could not be, he was to blockade the city with half his force and cover the right flank of St. Just's army with the other half. Then Carnot appeared to change his mind. If there were no serious enemy forces around Namur, Jourdan was to mask the city with as few troops as possible and with the bulk of his army to assist St. Just's force attacking across the river. Carnot encouraged Jourdan to bring the enemy to a general engagement: "it is better to employ your forces in fighting the enemy in open country than in making sieges."13

Carnot thus massed close to 100,000 soldiers in the Sambre valley to batter their way across the river. The problem was: who should command this huge force? The council was the logical choice, except that it was not working effectively. There was frequent disagreement among the members. Its two senior generals, Charbonnier, the commander of the Ardennes, and Desjardins, were mediocrities. The army's logistics had become so confused that representative Laurent was, in effect, forced to act as its quartermaster. It seemed that St. Just and representatives Guyton and Levasseur were the true commanders, at times overruling the generals in the council, at times ordering attacks against the latters' wishes. The failure of their

operations had left them baffled. "I was desolate," Levasseur recalled. "I did not know who to reproach for operations so badly executed."  

Now Jourdan was about to arrive with 40,000 more men. Was he also to become enmeshed in the dissensions and difficulties of the council? Levasseur did not think so. In a meeting with the other council members he suggested that Jourdan be given sole command over all the French forces along the Sambre. St. Just allegedly objected. He feared putting so many men under the control of one general; the Committee would never approve such a decision since it would "be giving a soldier power very dangerous to liberty." This story is open to question, for the evidence suggests that St. Just was in Paris when the meeting took place. In any case, Levasseur carried the day. He then informed Jourdan of the decision, apparently at a second meeting. Jourdan typically demurred at first, being unfamiliar with the army and its officer corps, he feared that the Committee would not approve. But Levasseur

14. A.G. Bl 32, St. Just to the Committee, 5/22/94. Rene Levasseur, Memoires, II, pp. 245-47. Even after four consecutive defeats none of the generals on the council had either been dismissed or arrested -- a sure indication that St. Just and company were the ones making the decisions.

15. Levasseur, ibid, pp. 252-55. E. M. Curtis, St. Just (N.Y. 1935), pp. 256-57, shows conclusively that St. Just was in Paris when Levasseur gave Jourdan the command. On the other hand, Levasseur may have first broached the subject of a unified command before St. Just left for Paris.
persuaded him to take command at least until the government declared itself on the issue. To the Committee Levasseur wrote that "convinced that this day would have been more glorious if there had been more coordination in the operations, we judged it urgent to call a single general to direct operations."16

The Committee did not act upon Levasseur's proposal until five days later. Perhaps certain Committee members did object to turning all of the soldiers in the Sambre valley over to Jourdan. On June 8, however, the Committee finally decreed that everyone between the Sambre and the Meuse rivers was under Jourdan's command. The same day Carnot notified the representatives accompanying Pichegru, reminded them that Jourdan was under Pichegru's overall authority and suggested that they rest assured about the competence of the leadership on the right. With this decision the famous Army of the Sambre et Meuse was born. Its and Jourdan's fortunes were to be inseparable for the next three years.17

This time Jourdan took command of an army under slightly more favorable conditions than in 1793. He alone was not responsible for the operations of all the French forces in the Low Countries as he had been in 1793, for

16. A.G. Bl 33, the Representatives ... to the Committee, 6/3/94. The letter was written by Levasseur. Levasseur, ibid.


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Pichegru now bore the lion's share of that responsibility. He was not leading a half-completed army whose most noticeable characteristic was its unreliability. To be sure, the army of the Sambre et Meuse was basically the same kind of force as the Army of the North. It was an army of peasant conscripts, more distinguished for their indiscipline than for their military prowess, commanded by young, inexperienced officers. It was an army with a logistical system that would have sent an efficiency expert screaming to a psychiatrist. And yet it was not the untested, unstable force that the 'Nord' had been. A year's campaigning had served to take much of the rawness out of the French soldiers. Experience had made them less inclined to disorder and indiscipline, more inclined to steadiness, toughness and endurance, especially on the battlefield. They had developed some of the cohesiveness which earlier they had so sadly lacked. Furthermore, the Sambre et Meuse did not suffer from the cadre problem that had made Jourdan's task so difficult in 1793. The Fromentins, d'Avaisnes and Beauregards had largely disappeared, and in their places were some of the most promising young officers in Europe; future army commanders like Kleber, Championnet, Bernadotte and Ney. For the first time, Jourdan could depend upon his cadres.  

One condition, however, remained the same: the pressure. For the second time Jourdan had a member of the Committee peering watchfully over his shoulder, but this time the man was not Carnot but St. Just. Louis Antoine St. Just was different from Carnot altogether. Carnot was a realist, St. Just a utopian dreamer; Carnot was coldly pragmatic, St. Just a rigid ideologue; Carnot recognized the failings in humans and took them into account, St. Just believed that a free, virtuous people could do no wrong; Carnot was a moderate, St. Just was a fanatic. His merciless hatred of royalists, traitors, and even "the indifferent" had earned him the nickname "The Angel of Death." He was not the kind of man who would tolerate any failures, especially by a general. Most importantly, where Carnot possessed a degree of military experience and expertise, St. Just possessed none at all. Yet, as long as he remained at the front, he made every effort to influence the direction of operations. Indeed, it is likely that by June he had developed such a taste for his role as a soldier-proconsul, that it was only with the greatest difficulty that Robespierre succeeded in dragging him away from the front to the less inspiring and less exciting political arena in Paris. St. Just was easily Jourdan's most difficult teammate; it took all of his team spirit to move matters forward while associated with this young terrorist.
St. Just, in short, was one of the men of mass whom Jourdan so distrusted, at least when it was a question of strategy or tactics. Their association might have been doomed, except for one consideration. For all his imperiousness and fanaticism, St. Just was more fearsome in word than in deed.\footnote{See R.R. Palmer, \textit{Twelve Who Ruled}, for St. Just's lack of ruthlessness during his mission to Alsace. During the Fleurus campaign, Levasseur claims that he came upon St. Just playing with a pistol. The gun went off accidentally, the ball nearly hitting Levasseur. St. Just went white, nearly fainted, and collapsed on Levasseur's shoulder, apologizing profusely for the near disaster -- not the expected behavior of a merciless terrorist.}

On the eve of Jourdan's first attempt to renew the offensive, St. Just outlined what he expected of him during the forthcoming operations. It was the Committee's intention that Jourdan attack without cease, since the enemy was inferior to him in numbers. He was to endeavor to advance every day, and constantly push the enemy off balance.

"Your triumphant and rapid march from Arlon has made us hope that offensive warfare will be to your taste. We will watch the administrators ... you only have to conquer. No self-doubts, nothing else in your heart, be sensitive only to the glory of the Republic! Maintain the enthusiasm of the army by continuous successes and by audacity. The struggle for liberty should be waged with ferocity. You will never be 'repris' for having acted with ardor."
And with an epigram typical of him, he concluded, "The enemy can only temporize with an army that itself temporizes." Jourdan's primary assignment thus was to put unceasing pressure upon the enemy via relentless offensive activity until they cracked. In principle this seemed easy enough. In practice, to overcome the tactical and logistical problems involved and to advance literally every day was extremely difficult.

It was difficult, in addition, because Pichegru was hindering rather than helping matters. Pichegru apparently was not happy with the government's decision to place half his army under Jourdan's command. While Pichegru nominally remained in charge, it was clear that Jourdan would exercise full tactical control over his forces. No sooner had he assumed his post than it was discovered that his force was not receiving its fair share of the supplies. Pichegru's quartermaster controlled the supplying of all the French troops in Belgium and he, evidently with Pichegru's consent, was favoring the half of the army in West Flanders at the expense of Jourdan's force. Carnot had to order this to cease, warning the representatives with Pichegru about the "particular passions which were troubling the concert which should reign in the operations of the right and the left," and which were slowing down

20. A.G. Bl 33, St. Just to Jourdan, 6/14/94.
the offensive. Nor were Pichegru's instructions to Jourdan especially helpful. He ordered him to cross the Sambre and take Charleroi. This done, he thought it would be "interesting" if Jourdan "swept" the Sambre valley clear of enemy soldiers as far as Maubeuge in order to disengage that place "from the daily insults to which it is exposed — thence all forces towards Mons." This directive was hardly in the spirit of Carnot's strategy. It made Charleroi rather than the enemy army the objective, and it ordered Jourdan to clear the banks of the Sambre rather than pursue the enemy to the death. 21

On June 12, Jourdan commenced his offensive, the fifth attempt by the French to cross the Sambre and stay there. Five divisions had participated in the fourth offensive with additional divisions left to guard the upper Sambre. Jourdan attacked with nine. He wished to add one or two more from the Maubeuge area but St. Just prevented him from doing so. The French crossed at Chatelet and Marchiennes above and below Charleroi. They encountered only light resistance. By the following day Jourdan had deployed the army in a long semi-circle north of Charleroi while one of his divisions besieged the city.

Military analysts have unanimously criticized Jourdan's position as being too extended. It was. On the other hand, peculiarities in the communications and topography of the area forced him to adopt his dispositions. His only two lines of retreat across the river -- the bridges at Chatelet and Marchiennes -- were behind each of his flanks, separated by Charleroi. He thus had to lengthen his defenses far enough to cover both bridges, because his 70,000 men could not have retreated safely over only one in a crisis. Moreover, the environs of Charleroi were heavily wooded. To afford his men clear vision of the enemy and clear fields of fire, Jourdan had to deploy them north of the woods, a considerable distance from the city (map No. 6). Finally, the Allies were scattered across his front: Beaulieu with 20,000 men at Namur, the Prince of Orange with a large force upstream, and additional troops due north of Charleroi. Jourdan knew that their usual custom was to attack from every direction at once. So he placed two divisions under General Jean Kleber on his left to face Orange, two more divisions under General Francois Marceau downstream to face Beaulieu, and three more divisions north of the city to cover that sector. At the time he was optimistic about his position, perhaps overly so. He reported to the Committee that his dispositions were advantageous, that the army was in good order and good spirits, and that it would take a major effort by
the enemy to compel them to retreat.22

But his position was not put to the test. Under pressure from St. Just, Jourdan ordered a general advance for June 16, its objective to seek out and attack the various "gruppes"23 of the Allies. Since these were stretched out in a cordon, Jourdan planned to attack and occupy each one. His intention was for Kleber to attack Orange on the French left, Marceau to attack Beaulieu on the right, while the three divisions of the center overwhelmed what he believed to be the weakest gruppe of the enemy near Quatre Bras. Coincidentally the Allied too had decided to advance, albeit with numbers inferior to those of the French. Their lines of advance all were aimed at Charleroi, and thus were destined to collide with Jourdan's troops.24

Dawn of the 16th found both armies groping their way forward through a thunderstorm so intense that the troops could scarcely see fifteen paces in front of them through the driving rain. So poor was the visibility that the

22. A.G. Bl 33 and B 34, Jourdan to the Committee, 6/12/94, 6/14/94; Ernouf to the Committee, 6/26/94. A.G. mr 608-2, Memoires de 1794.

23. The Allies, and especially the Austrians, had no permanent units larger than brigades in 1794. Any temporary grouping of soldiers larger than a brigade was ad hoc, usually with a temporary commander. Since the German word for such a formation is "gruppe," I have decided to adopt it.

advancing soldiers literally bumped into each other and began to fight at that point. At the initial shock, the advantage went to the Allies, their professionals keeping their discipline and alignment more successfully than did the less experienced French. On the left Kleber's troops fell into confusion and he had to redeploy them while in the center the Austrian gruppe of Alvinzi stormed the village of Miqueloup on the Brussels road and drove the French back. But by mid-morning the rain had slackened, visibility had improved, and the French had collected themselves. The three divisions in the center halted Alvinzi's attack in the Heppignies wood. Kleber, checked by strong resistance in the village of Trazignies, shifted troops to the left of the village and attacked the defenders in flank. The attack succeeded. Orange's troops fled in confusion from Trazignies, and had not a French cavalry charge gone astray, Kleber may well have turned Orange's retreat into a rout. When Jourdan heard of Kleber's success around noon, he adjusted his strategy. Kleber was to march east along the old Roman road and take Alvinzi's force in the flank, while Jourdan renewed the attacks on Alvinzi frontally: they hoped to catch him between two fires.25

At first the maneuver succeeded. While General Jean Championnet repulsed sporadic enemy attacks in the woods, Jourdan reinforced General Morlot's division with the cavalry reserve and counterattacked along the Brussels road. Morlot took, lost, and then retook Miqueloup with 600 prisoners in severe fighting. When the Austrian cavalry charged to retake the village, the French cavalry hurled them back. Alvinzi's gruppe was in severe difficulty. Kleber was within view behind the Austrians' flank, and they were yielding to the heavy pressure in front. But with victory in sight, the army's logistical inadequacies intervened. While fighting Beaulieu to the right of the Heppignies wood, Lefebvre's division ran completely out of ammunition. "I used up everything," he reported. "I should still occupy the Campinaire position if the ammunition had not failed ... Nothing is so disheartening as to see oneself obliged to abandon the combat having nothing left with which to return the enemy's fire." What, or who, caused the shortage is unknown. Jourdan later suggested that certain blundering supply officials were the culprits. Regardless of who was at fault, Lefebvre had to fall back.26

At once Jourdan's entire position was compromised. The Austrians poured through the gap left by Lefebvre,

forcing the troops on either side to retreat as well. A daring commander might have attempted to hang on and complete the defeat of the enemy's center, but Jourdan was prudent. He ordered a retreat. Kleber and Marceau got back across the river without difficulty, but the troops of the center were cut off by swarms of enemy cavalry. Cmapionnet, ordered to retreat by way of Chatelet, found his path blocked, and had to change direction and fight his way through the Allied cavalry to the bridge at Marchiennes. Several of Lefebvre's battalions had to form squares and repulse cavalry assaults all the way back to the river, exhibiting a bravery that the old soldier Lefebvre had never witnessed before. Under the circumstances it is a wonder that the Sambre et Meuse did not suffer more severely than it did. But by nightfall it was safe on the south bank of the Sambre, having lost between 3,000 and 4,000 men. Its casualties easily could have been higher.\(^2\)

Jourdan's meeting with St. Just that night could not have been terribly pleasant. Although he promised the Committee that the army would take its revenge, a defeat was a defeat. Typically St. Just wanted to resume the offensive the very next day. Jourdan wished to rest the army for a few days, allowing them to replenish their provisions and ammunition. He also wished to attack

\(^2\) Ibid. The casualty figures are estimates only.
elsewhere, because he was not happy with the tactical problems involved in besieging Charleroi. While he was ready to renew the offensive immediately as St. Just desired, he wrote that they "could do so more advantageously at another point." He promised to confer with St. Just and the other representatives to decide what to do. But St. Just and his colleagues were determined to continue to attack in the Charleroi sector. They granted Jourdan twenty-four hours to rest the army, and then the offensive was to recommence. Interestingly enough, two days later Carnot agreed to Jourdan's suggestion. While he reemphasized that since the French outnumbered the enemy, they must attack without respite and allow the enemy "no repose," yet they could, if Jourdan thought it best, attack elsewhere while masking Charleroi. By the time Carnot's letter arrived, however, the army, due to St. Just's impatience, had already recrossed the Sambre and reinvested Charleroi.  

With a mere one day of rest the Sambre et Meuse reapplied its unrelenting pressure on the Allies. It repeated its crossing of the Sambre of June 12, reinvested Charleroi, and redeployed in its overly long cordon from Chatelet to Marchiennes. The Allies, unprepared for such a rapid renewal of the offensive, offered no resistance. On

the eve of the advance, Jourdan tried his hand at revolutionary rhetoric in an effort to bolster spirits. "Republicans, victory has slipped through our fingers at the moment when we were about to triumph," he proclaimed. "I do not seek at this moment the causes of this event, which must be as depressing to you as it is to me. It is necessary to repair it; the slaves of tyrants have achieved a victory over free men, you tremble with indignation! You are the soldiers who tore them to pieces at Hondschoote [misspelled], Maubeuge, and Landau ... Hold yourselves ready; we will conquer or we will all perish." As this proclamation reveals, arousing men's emotions with stirring words was not one of Jourdan's talents. Perhaps he believed the reality of the situation too grim to be able to elevate it to the level of a glorious undertaking.

Jourdan's task now was to capture Charleroi before the Allies returned and attempted to relieve it a second time. Following his victory of June 16, Coburg had detached a sizeable portion of his army to West Flanders to halt Pichegru's offensive in this sector. Until he recalled these troops, Coburg could not hope to relieve Charleroi. The French pressed the siege vigorously. Under the able direction of Jourdan's chief of engineers, Marescot, the French had the city completely invested and under heavy

29. A.G. Bl 34, Order of the day, 6/17/94.
bombardment in but a few days. Throughout these operations St. Just was at his most imperious. He cashiered and arrested all the officers of one battalion which had fled on the 16th on the grounds that the soldiers would not have panicked if their officers had trained them properly. There were other arrests besides these. He wandered through the trenches, harressing Marescot and uttering dire threats against slackers and incompetents. He threatened with guillotining one artillery captain who was constructing a gun emplacement if he did not complete the work by the following morning. The evidence reveals that much of this was threat only; the artillery captain, for example, was never guillotined. Nevertheless it must have increased the already intense pressure upon the officers, and especially upon Jourdan. St. Just, in his fanatical determination to finish the campaign overnight, only made matters more difficult; instead of inspiring his generals to greater efforts, he only increased their nervousness.

Worse, he interfered with Jourdan's tactical direction of the army. When reconnaissance failed to turn up any serious enemy resistance in the immediate area and

30. A.G. Bl 34, Decree of St. Just, Gillet, and Guyton, 6/18/94.

31. Phipps, op. cit., II, pp. 157-58, on the basis of Soult's memoirs, claims that St. Just guillotined the luckless captain. Such punishments were announced in each order of the day; no such execution, or even arrest, of any artillery captain was ever announced, either before or after Fleurus.
when information reached headquarters that Coburg was detaching sizeable reinforcements to West Flanders, St. Just jumped to the conclusion that the Allies had decided to yield Charleroi. By sitting before the city, the Sambre et Meuse was failing in its express duty to attack the enemy every day. On June 23 St. Just decided to send a corps of 36,000 soldiers up the Sambre valley towards Mons to "harrass this movement" of Allied reinforcements to West Flanders. For an army to weaken itself by close to half its strength in the middle of a siege and in the face of the enemy violated every principle of military common sense. Several sources indicate that this order was never issued, either because Jourdan talked St. Just out of it or because St. Just never seriously intended to carry out the project. Both opinions are erroneous. Doubtlessly Jourdan protested against dividing the army in so dangerous a fashion. Nonetheless St. Just did force him to detach the 36,000 men and orders were issued to Kleber to begin the movement on the morning of June 25.32

Meanwhile Coburg decided to recall his troops from West Flanders and make another effort to save Charleroi. Coburg was baffled by the relentless French pressure on both

32. A. G. Bl 34, Jourdan to the Committee, 6/23/94; the Representatives to the Committee, 6/23/94. The handwriting of the second letter is St. Just's. Curtis argues unconvincingly that St. Just never seriously intended to send Kleber towards Mons. Jourdan's letter of the 23rd shows that St. Just was serious, and that he had agreed to execute St. Just's movement.
his flanks. He had been switching troops back and forth from one flank to the other in vain efforts to halt conclusively the Republican offensive. What he did not do was shift enough troops to one wing to enable him to gain a numerical superiority over one of the French arms and defeat it decisively. Now he faced for the sixth time a recently repulsed French army back again on the north short of the Sambre. The pressure was taking its toll. British officers reported that the Austrians were "profoundly discouraged" by the endless French assaults, causing over half the officer corps to request permission to retire. One judged the Austrian army "incapable of further action." Such an evaluation was premature, as the events of June 26 were to show. Even so, when Coburg concentrated his forces and made an all-out effort to crush Jourdan, his advance was hardly crisp or rapid. He moved slowly, giving the French early warning of his approach. 33

Thus at the eleventh hour, Jourdan managed to get the project sending Kleber towards Mons cancelled. Thanks to the intelligence about Coburg's approach coming from the advanced posts, he was able to convince St. Just that a major battle was imminent. Nothing could have been more

fortunate. Had St. Just remained adamant about dispatching the corps, or had Coburg delayed his advance several days, Jourdan would have had to fight with 40,000 soldiers instead of 76,000, and Fleurus might have been a defeat instead of a decisive victory.34

As the Allies threatened, their advance units driving in the French outposts, St. Just made another mistake. On June 25, the Austrian commandant of Charleroi sent an emissary to French headquarters proposing a surrender on terms. It was very important that the French take Charleroi before Coburg attacked. Jourdan needed the 8,000 men conducting the siege as a reserve for his overextended defenses. He also needed the city's bridges, since they would give him a surer retreat route, and enable him to shorten his lines which would no longer have to cover both Chatelet and Marchiennes. However, upon receipt of the surrender proposal St. Just drew himself up and imperiously announced that "it's the place we want, not a scrap of paper." He then told the astonished emissary that if the garrison did not surrender unconditionally within the hour, they would be annihilated. Jourdan and his staff were appalled. It was not the place they wanted so much as Hatry's 8,000 men and Charleroi's bridges; granting the garrison lenient terms was a small price to pay. They

34. A.G. Bl 34, Kleber to Duhesme, 6/24/94; Ferrand to Favereau, 6/24/94; Bernadotte to Kleber, 6/24/94.
hastily began to remonstrate with St. Just as time passed, as the garrison refused to surrender, and as Coburg's army came menacingly nearer. But fortune smiled upon the French. Charleroi's commandant bowed to St. Just's ruthlessness and agreed to surrender at his discretion. Thus Jourdan obtained his bridges and his precious reserve of 8,000 men, but if the Austrian commandant had not lost his nerve, Jourdan would have had to fight Fleurus with neither.35

One wonders how strained relations between Jourdan and St. Just had become by the eve of Fleurus. Certainly the constant friction over the conduct of operations had not facilitated their cooperation. Jourdan claimed in his memoirs that he once again felt as if he were fighting with a guillotine suspended over his head; one failure would cause the blade to fall. Undoubtedly he felt interfered with; he wrote no letters to the Committee after Fleurus praising St. Just's aid as he had after Wattignies praising Carnot's. St. Just's feelings towards Jourdan are more difficult to penetrate. At no point did he actually complain about Jourdan's generalship, indicating that perhaps their disagreements had not disturbed him as much as they had disturbed Jourdan. On the other hand, the future marshal Jean Soult claimed that St. Just had prepared a proscription list which included Jourdan and several other generals, and that only

the victory of Fleurus saved their heads. However, Soult is the sole authority for this, and he generally must be handled with some skepticism. Furthermore, St. Just was on excellent terms with Rene Gillet. It is unlikely that he would have been so friendly with such a close colleague of Jourdan if he had Jourdan marked for death. Even so it is hard to predict what would have occurred had he been defeated. St. Just might not have shown compassion for a general who had disagreed with him repeatedly, and who had compounded his sin by losing a battle.36

Charleroi's surrender allowed Jourdan to place Hatry's troops in the rear of his perimeter as a general reserve. He wished to pull Kleber's two and a half divisions in closer behind the Pieton stream to shorten his line, since he no longer needed the bridge at Marchiennes, but the presence of the enemy caused him to leave Kleber where he was. The French positions were essentially the same as on June 16; they ran from Marchiennes on the left, through the heights of Courcelles, Gosselies, Campinaire and Lambusart, to Chatelet (map No. 6). This time, however, they were strengthened at various points with fieldworks. The perimeter was not continuous, for Kleber was really

36. A.G. mr 608-2, Memoires de 1794. Soult casts doubt upon his claim by arguing that he too was on St. Just's list. Why St. Just would have proscribed him, a lowly brigadier, he did not say. See Phipps, op cit, II, pp. 150-60.
separate from the rest of the army on the west bank of the Pieton. Coburg planned his attack in the traditional manner: five columns striking the semi-circle at various points, the strongest columns being those on the flanks. The gruppe of the Prince of Orange was to attack Kleber and seize Marchiennes; that of Quasdonovitch was to assault Gosselies; and that of Kaunitz was to attack on the latter's left. Meanwhile, the Archduke Karl was to seize Campinaire, and Beaulieu was to break the French right and march on Charleroi. Coburg was unaware that the city had fallen. He had slightly under 60,000 men. He was outnumbered; Jourdan awaited him with 76,000.  

At three a.m. on the 26th, Coburg began bombarding the French positions as he sent his army forward. Neither the cannonade nor the fighting was to cease for fifteen hours. Of all the struggles of the revolution, Fleurus was the longest and the most murderous.

By mid-morning, after several hours of fighting, neither side had gained any advantage. On the left Orange had captured Trazignies, but Kleber's sector was otherwise secure. In the center Championnet had repulsed Kaunitz's first assault; Lefebvre had abandoned Fleurus but was holding the Austrian advance at his main line of defense. On

the right Marceau battled Beaulieu for the village of Lambusart. Over the battlefield floated history's first observation balloon manned by French observers. It provoked Coburg to complain that there was nothing that "those scoundrels" would not invent, but it did little damage since the information it sent down was quite useless. 38

The French obtained their first victory on the left. There Orange's troops had succeeded in pushing back one of Kleber's divisions, but instead of continuing the attack, Orange bypassed Kleber's position on the heights of Courcelles and marched straight for Marchiennes and its bridge. Marchiennes was strongly defended by a French brigade, and as the Allies vainly attempted to storm it, Kleber saw his chance. He debouched from the heights, and with Bernadotte's brigade leading he launched a bayonet charge into the rear of Orange's men. Caught between two fires they crumbled, and Orange lost his nerve and prematurely ordered a retreat. By mid-afternoon Kleber was so free of the enemy that Jourdan ordered him to send reinforcements to other sectors of the front. In the center things were also going well. The French were holding firm behind earthworks in the Heppignies wood, repulsing the sporadic assaults of the Allies' three center columns. 39

38. A.G. B2* 260, Jourdan to the Minister of War, 12/?/98.

But on the right the battle had entered a crisis. There Marceau had checked the initial enemy assault, but Beaulieu had lost no time in renewing the attack. Marceau's units were from the rag-tag Army of the Ardennes, the most ill-trained and badly led men in the army. Several regiments panicked before a cavalry charge. The 54th demi-brigade changed front to halt the attackers, but, assailed on all sides, it lost 300 of 400 men before being routed. Another demi-brigade suffered a similar fate, and suddenly Marceau's entire force was streaming back across the river in hopeless rout. Soult found the 24-year-old Marceau in black despair, threatening suicide. Soult claimed that he talked Marceau out of it, and the two began rallying what men they could to make a stand along the riverbank. Meanwhile the Austrians poured through the gap, stormed Lambusart, and assailed the flank of Lefebvre's entrenched division at Campinaire.

General Francois Lefebvre now became the key to the battle. If he lost his earthworks, the entire French line would come unhinged. Both sides realized it and redoubled their efforts. Jourdan moved Hatry's reserve forward to Lefebvre's support, and Lefebvre shifted some of his troops to his own right behind Lambusart. Here the fighting became ferocious. The combined forces of Beaulieu


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
and the Archduke repeatedly stormed Lefebvre's position, and each time the French threw them back with volleys at point-blank range. At each repulse French cavalry sallied out and slashed at the retreating enemy. Lefebvre called the gunfire "volcanic," and he had two horses killed under him. Some buildings in the vicinity caught fire. When the blaze spread to the wheat fields, the soldiers found themselves fighting amid smoke and flames, the wounded and dying trapped where they fell in the burning wheat. All the while Jourdan kept his men fighting, riding along the firing line chanting "no retreat today," until the troops themselves took up the chant. There was no retreat. The French held on, repulsing the Austrians; by nightfall they had even recaptured Lambusart.41

There was one last crisis. As Lefebvre sent men from his left to his hard-pressed right, he left a gap between himself and Championnet. The latter and Morlot already had enemy troops infiltrating around their left, and they now faced envelopment on their right as well. Championnet had actually begun to fall back to avoid encirclement when he and Jourdan learned of the enemy's final defeat at Campinaire. Jourdan thus threw in his last

41. Ibid. A. G. Bl 34, Official report of the battle of Fleurus by the chief-of-staff of the Austrian Army; Lefebvre's report, 6/27/94.
reserves, including some of Kleber's men, and with representatives Gillet and Guyton leading the troops, the French counterattacked one last time. By six P.M. Championnet had recaptured his former positions and his assailants were in full retreat. The battle was over.42

It had been the most punishing day of the war. The generals on the right freely admitted that had the fighting lasted an hour longer, their soldiers would have been too exhausted to resist further. The French lost 7,000 men, their highest casualties until the battle of the Trebbia in 1799. The Allies lost 10,000 men, the battle, and (although it was not evident at the time) all of the Low Countries, and in a sense the war.43

For Fleurus was the decisive battle of the revolution. It so broke the resistance of the Allied army that never again did the counterrevolution threaten to march on Paris and extinguish the revolution. Fleurus forced the Allies to evacuate all of the Low Countries, and thus opened up the fertile provinces of Brabant and Hainault to French requisitions at a time when the resources of French Flanders were virtually exhausted. Fleurus thereby saved the French armies from a major subsistence crisis. Before

43. Ross, op cit, p. 80.
the year was out, the French would conquer everything west of the Rhine River from their weakened adversaries. The victory established the revolutionary army with its new methods of total war as the dominant military force in Europe. It would not be long before Napoleon would take advantage of the military superiority which he had inherited from the Jacobins to conquer half of the continent. Most importantly, Fleurus directly affected the course of domestic policy. The Allies' defeat meant in essence that the country was no longer in danger. The internal threat had been eliminated over the course of the winter by the crushing of the Vendeans and the liquidation of the extremist opposition in Paris; Fleurus extinguished the external threat. The defeat of the Allies' most dangerous army meant that the emergency was over, and because it was, Robespierre's Prariable policies became all the more unnecessary -- and detested. Fleurus thus helped bring about the 9th of Thermidor. By winning for the Jacobin dictatorship the decisive victory for which it had worked so long, Jourdan paradoxically helped bring about its downfall.

II. The Completion of the Revolutionary Army.

Jourdan did not win the battle of Fleurus simply because he outgeneraled his opponent. He was victorious because the Jacobin dictatorship had largely eradicated the vexing problems that had crippled the army's performance.
in 1793. His army no longer suffered from units of unruly, undisciplined, unaugmented draftees incapable of fighting a serious campaign; nor did it suffer from the kind of shortages that caused soldiers to wade barefoot through mud and slush after having gone three and four days without bread. The Sambre et Meuse was far from being the perfected, polished army that Napoleon was to lead in the 1800's, but it was far superior to anything Jourdan had led previously.

The most striking and important change was the improvement in the army's discipline. No longer did the officer corps have to fear that their men would take to their heels at the first opportunity. The improvement was partly due to the greater experience of the soldiers. By 1794 most of them had become accustomed to military regimentation as well as to the hardships of the front; consequently they did not resist discipline so strongly. The spectacle of entire ranks of their comrades slaughtered around them by volleys of musketry and blasts of grapeshot was not nearly so shocking at Fleurus as it had been in their first actions in 1793. The young French peasants had become hardened to war, and as a result they were able to endure fifteen hours of combat without caving in before their foes. But the improvement was also partly due to the generals and the representatives who succeeded in establishing a system of swift, no-nonsense military justice. Potential offenders, faced with the near certainty that
if caught they would be hauled before a revolutionary tribunal or military tribunal and perhaps executed within twenty-four hours, tended not to go through with whatever breach of discipline they had planned. The new, get-tough policy of the Terror was indeed felt within the ranks. Gunner Louis Bricard in his diary recorded much disorder in 1793, and very little done about suppressing it. In 1794 for the first time he reported many cases of the actual execution of deserters and pillagers. In one instance two drummer boys who had robbed an old lady were, in spite of their youth, shot by firing squad much to Bricard's dismay.

A further reason for the improved discipline was the increased number of talented, competent leaders within the army. The Jacobins gradually realized that the policy of allowing the soldiers to elect two thirds of their officers was simply allowing more and more incompetents to reach positions of authority. In November, 1793, the Committee began to reverse this policy. It decreed that the Convention -- i.e., its deputies on mission -- henceforth had the responsibility of selecting one third of all officers promoted. In December, the representatives acquired the power to make whatever promotions they deemed

44. Louis Bricard, Journal, pp. 100-16.
necessary. In theory, one third of the officers were still to advance via election, two third via seniority. In practice the representatives, upon the recommendations of Jourdan and his senior generals, made all the important promotions in the army.45 Thus the selection of officers was taken away from the rank and file and returned to those most qualified to judge the capabilities of a candidate for promotion -- the officer corps. Indeed, the Committee decreed that it was the duty of the commanders and staff of each unit to collect information on all officers in the unit and to evaluate it to see if they merited promotion. Candidates were evaluated on the basis of education, experience, past performance, and any battlefield distinction they might have won. In another decree, the Committee required the cadre of each unit, in the case of the dismissal or death of a fellow officer, to furnish several qualified candidates for the vacancy within twenty-four hours.46

The results were striking. By mid-June, 1794, the Sambre et Meuse included within its officer corps one future king (Bernadotte, later Charles XIV of Sweden); two future was ministers (Petiet and Scherer); seven future


46. See A.G. cartons Bl 33 through Bl 38 for the Committee's various decrees to the Armies of the North and the Sambre et Meuse regarding promotions.
marshals, among them Jourdan himself and the Napoleonic heroes Ney and Soult; three army commanders, Championnet, Kleber, and Marceau (who would have become marshals had they lived); Napoleon's future chief of artillery, Eble; and countless officers who later became corps and divisional leaders during the Empire. These were men whose talents Jourdan recognized and whom he allowed such leeway that he was later accused of losing effective control over them. Generals like Kleber recommended younger men like Soult and Ney for promotion, and Jourdan, trusting their judgment, endorsed the recommendations to the government. At the same time, the incompetents were weeded out. General Fromentin, who had plagued Jourdan at Wattignies, was cashiered, along with a brigadier general, for drunkenness during the fourth crossing of the Sambre. St. Just ordered a military tribunal to investigate the conduct of several officers who had shown slackness during the same operation. By the autumn, generals and deputies had done their job so thoroughly that the problem had become a surplus of qualified officers rather than a deficiency. Carnot complained that too many generals were being commissioned, that "favoritism" was at work, and that the "scandalous" multiplicity of staff officers had to cease.47

By May the levée was functioning smoothly and the amalgame was nearly completed. Thanks to the unrelenting efforts of the representatives in the departments, the levée sent conscript after conscript to the army, until there were over 1,000,000 men in the ranks. The magnitude of this achievement can be appreciated when one notes that the most numerous army in Europe up to that time had been around 300,000 men. The agitation of Jourdan and others had stimulated the government into stepping up the pace of the amalgame. Carnot became a firm convert to incorporation, and on January 8, 1794, he persuaded the Committee to pass a decree authorizing amalgamation at the company level, with 40 conscripts and 20 veterans to each unit. This was within a day at most of Jourdan's second meeting with the Committee, and because he was one of the loudest critics of slowness of incorporation, it is possible that the two incidents were related. When the amalgame continued to progress more slowly than desired, representative Gillet assembled the men of one demi-brigade and briskly declared its existing units abolished. He then proceeded at random to mix the veterans and conscripts, and to form new units with new officers, until the entire demi-brigade was more or less amalgamated. Gillet's action eliminated the time-consuming process of matching up groups of recruits with designated veteran units and cadres, and the Jacobins lost no time in adopting it. By the summer most French units
fought the enemy with a well-integrated mixture of draftees and veterans, youth and experience, for the first time in the war.48

Jourdan also benefited from the defeat of the extremists by Carnot and his allies on the Committee. The military aspect of the conflict reached its climax on March 4, when Hebert denounced Carnot as a royalist and accused him of plotting to remove Bouchotte from the war ministry in order to place his brother in Bouchotte's place. Carnot probably wanted Bouchotte removed, but not for the reason Hebert stated. The Committee moved against the most militant of the extremists nine days later. Of those arrested, Vincent, Ronsin, Mazuel, Dubuisson and Bourgeois were all highly-placed officials in the war bureaucracy, Vincent being second only to Bouchotte. The fall of the extremists allowed Carnot to carry out his long-awaited reform of the war ministry. Its six divisions were replaced by twelve "commissions," each staffed partly by specialists some of whom were ex-nobles, and each directly subordinated to Carnot. Bouchotte was quietly fired in early April and not replaced. His agents were recalled and replaced by personnel directed by the new commissions. Carnot became, in effect, the nation's minister of defense.

Thus the dissension and conflict between representatives and commissaires and between moderates and extremists, which had so marred the progress of the war, were largely eliminated.\(^{49}\)

As the Jacobins mobilized the economy into an all-out effort directed at war production, the equipment and munitions shortages diminished. By the early spring the Committee, or more specifically Prieur de la Cote d'Or, had organized a national armaments industry. Prieur placed all weapons manufacturing under government control, and started twelve new plants in Paris which turned out 600 muskets a day. Other shops were built for the production of bayonets, cannon, gun carriages, and so on. Prieur started additional workshops in the departments which operated under the supervision of the representatives. He also initiated a saltpeter mining campaign, encouraging citizens throughout France to extract this important component of gunpowder wherever they could find it and placing the actual mining of the resource under a government agency. Discipline among the workers and quality control over the products were maintained in military fashion. Work was carried on for fourteen hours a day, strikes were forbidden, and attendance at work was obligatory under pain of arrest. Defective products were paid for by the agents responsible,

and repeated cases of negligence were punished by imprisonment. The Jacobins organized the production of habilement in a similar manner. The clothing and leather workshops in Paris were placed under government regulation. In the case of shoes, all cobblers were placed in requisition, and all worked for the army selling their products at a fixed price. Those who worked independently were fined and imprisoned, as were those who violated the maximum. Agents of the war ministry and popular society members served as quality inspectors and warehouse chiefs.\textsuperscript{50}

Because was production was still basically artisanal in nature, the Jacobins never entirely eliminated the periodic shortages of one commodity or another. They lacked the technology to turn the country into a gigantic arsenal. Shortages of ammunition, such as the one which caused Jourdan to lose the battle of June 16, continued to occur. Nor was corruption and ineptness completely eliminated from the logistics system. On August 30, 1794, Carnot complained yet again about the blundering and malevolence within the supply services, and ordered all quartermaster-generals to "declare with impartiality your opinion on the patriotism, morality, aptitude and talent of these

\textsuperscript{50} For an excellent discussion of the Jacobins' creation of the national armaments industry see Georges Bouchard, \textit{Prieur de la Cote d'Or}, pp. 215-223.
diverse functionaries." Bureaucratic dysfunction was one problem which the revolution never quite solved, although the tribunals of the Terror came the closest to doing so. The frequent and severe penalties which were handed down against offending supply personnel certainly diminished the amount of corruption and negligence, even if they did not eradicate it altogether. 51

The Jacobins also solved, or at least improved, the subsistence problem. They had, at first, mobilized France's agriculture, directing its produce towards the front. But it soon was obvious that this was not enough. However much they crushed the resistance of the local authorities to their quotas, still the episodic food shortages continued to occur. France's primitive agriculture could not feed over a million soldiers indefinitely, not without a degree of coercion that the government could not perpetuate. Carnot realized this by early 1794. "No one should know better than ourselves ... " he wrote, "the unbelievable difficulties which hindered all kinds of provisioning; no one is more persuaded that it would be most unjust to attribute to negligence those things which are by their nature insurmountable. We are doing our utmost for you, but it

must not be concealed from you that we are lost if you do not quickly enter enemy territory to obtain subsistence and effects of every kind, because France cannot sustain for a long time the state of force that she is exerting at this moment..." Carnot's solution to this dilemma was simple and direct: "It is necessary to live at the enemy's expense or perish."52

To live at the enemy's expense now became the policy of the revolutionaries. It was a policy out of step with the forward-looking programs of nationalization and mobilization that marked the Terror; it was a measure straight out of the Thirty Years' War. And yet if the Terror "did not doubt its right to draft 1,200,000 men to expose their lives each day to fight (its) enemies," it should not doubt that "we have the right to requisition the property of the foreigner."53 Thus did Robert Lindet justify this policy. Not that requisitioning needed much justification under the circumstances. It was consistent with the Republic's program of war on the chateaus, peace to the cottages in foreign lands. It was implicit in the Jacobins' whole conception of total war.

Gradually generals and representatives realized

52. Corr., IV, pp. 298-99, Carnot to the representatives with the Army of the North, 4/1/94.

that if the supply system was unable to feed the army, requisitions could and did. Isore reported that in one expedition soldiers had requisitioned 108 head of cattle, several horses, and a number of carts filled with hay. This capture was not extraordinary, "for a month this has occurred several times --- Our brothers now know that it is now necessary to live at the expense of the enemy."

Gunner Bricard recorded the seizure of substantial quantities of provisions as the result of requisitioning expeditions, including 120 carts of grain on one occasion and a large quantity of grain and animals on another. Bricard implied that these requisitions enabled his unit to survive the winter.54

By the summer of 1794, requisitioning had become systematized. Either Jourdan or the representatives authorized the quartermaster-general of the army to requisition from a designated area whatever foodstuffs the army needed. The quartermaster then ordered the administration of that district or commune to see to it that all shopkeepers, merchants, and farmers made declarations of everything they owned which might be useful to the French army. Then, usually within twenty-four hours, he issued his requisition decree. The requisitions were not light. From the


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
commune of Mons the quartermaster demanded 100 pipes of brandy, 20,000 quintals of flour, 3,000 quintals of oatmeal, 600,000 bales of hay, 900 head of cattle and 3,000 head of sheep. The actual foodstuffs were collected by supply agents protected by detachments of gendarmerie and cavalry, then taken to depots behind the lines where other supply officials saw to their distribution to the various units of the army. Those municipal officials who failed to deliver the quantities of provisions requisitioned were put under arrest until all the provisions were collected.

There is little doubt that the requisitions were both essential and effective. As they increased the flow of subsistence to the army, complaints against the supply personnel diminished. In mid-August the Sambre et Meuse's quartermaster reported that due to the ample resources of Brabant, then just overrun by the army, subsistence for both men and animals was assured for six months. This was fortunate because the army had completely exhausted the resources of West Flanders. When the Brabanters proved dilatory in responding to the requisition decrees, the quartermaster suggested that the army take hostages

55. A.G. Bl 35, Decree of Quartermaster-General Vaillant to the Commune of Mons, 7/3/94.

56. A.G. Bl 33, requisition decrees of 6/1/94, 6/7/94. Ibid.
until the decrees were fulfilled. He then admitted that so exhausted was French Flanders that the army could not survive without these requisitions from Brabant. 57

Jourdan had no objection to living at the expense of the enemy; indeed in the fall of 1795 he was to suggest a broadening and expansion of this policy. He believed that the welfare of his soldiers came first, and if this meant that the enemy had to suffer, so much the worse for them. His only concern was that the requisitions be carried out in an orderly and efficient manner without confusion or theft. Thus he and Gillet, with whom he worked closely throughout 1794, decreed that any supply agent who robbed the people from whom he was requisitioning was liable to execution. Any officers or soldiers who took the requisitioned subsistence for their own use instead of sending it on to the army depots were also to be punished by death. He ordered his divisional generals to forbid their subordinated to forage on their own; they could requisition only on his personal order. There was nothing ideological about his willing employment of what in reality was national theft. He had no commitment to the kind of war-on-the-chateaus policy espoused by doctrinaire Jacobins such as

57. A.G. Bl 37 and Bl 38, Vaillant to Gillet, 8/12/94; Le Chef des Vivres a Vaillant, 8/29/94; Vaillant to Gillet, 8/30/94.
Robespierre and St. Just, and even Carnot. Requisitions were simply a necessary measure for keeping the army provisioned in the absence of an efficient supply system and a productive agriculture. When the Commune of Ath in Belgium responded to a requisition by accusing Jourdan of interfering with its individual and religious freedom, he angrily denied that he had any such intention -- he would respect the liberties of the civilians regardless of their political or economic standing.58

On the other hand, he certainly harbored no sympathy in his heart for the wealthy. When the Austrians opened what he considered a needless bombardment on the recently occupied (by the French) city of Liege, he informed the Austrian general that he would burn to the ground all emigre property in Brabant if he did not halt the cannonade. The general complied.59

That the work of Carnot, Prieur, Jourdan and their colleagues had borne fruit by the spring of 1794 is unquestionable. Their new strategy of mass and constant offensive, their new tactics of columns, skirmishers, squares, massed batteries and the like would not have been successful without the structural improvements in the


59. A.G. mr 608-2, Jourdan to the Committee, 8/1/94.
military system. No longer did the representatives write despairingly about the frightful, abysmal disorder in the army. Instead, they complained now about specific shortcomings in specific units. "I have been satisfied in general with the good bearing and discipline of the division commanded by Duhesme," reported Gillet after inspecting Kleber's corps. "That of Montaigu is equally good. But the third contrasts strikingly with the first two. The service there is bad, the soldiers are ignorant, no precautions taken against the enemy." In 1793 the third would have been no different from the first two. Late September saw an outbreak of pillage, but by early October the representatives reported that the pillaging had been dealt with, and the culprits placed under rigorous arrest. When Kleber's corps besieged Maastricht, Gillet reported admiringly, "one could not, it would seem, put more activity into the operation."60

The improved supply situation enhanced the performance of the army as well. Provisions were supplied regularly from both the magazines and the requisitions, the latter making up for the deficiencies of the former. The requisitions were carried out "in the strictest order."61 While the

60. Le Comte Pajol, Kleber; sa vie et correspondance (three volumes; Paris, 1877), I, p. 109. Recueil des Actes, XVII, pp. 90-1, 267-69; Bellegarde and Lacombe to the Committee, 10/6/94; Gillet to the Committee, 9/26/94.

soldiers still slept out in the open due to the lack of tents, the complaints of demenent had almost entirely ceased. No longer were new conscripts being sent home because there were no weapons to arm them. The Terror had reduced the confusion in the army's logistical system to manageable proportions. When ammunition ran low after a battle, Levasseur admitted that the shortage was due to the constant fighting -- not due to malevolence in the supply administration. Moreover, this happy state of affairs continued through the winter. Although there were several food shortages and a good deal of sickness because the troops were constantly exposed to the elements, there was nothing comparable to the distress of the winter of 1793-94, or of 1795-96.62

It is interesting, and significant, that some officers of the Sambre et Meuse -- officers who later campaigned with Napoleon over much of Europe -- looked back upon the campaign of 1794 with a kind of nostalgia. The improvement in the army and the resulting victories of the summer had filled the army with enthusiasm, good feeling, and comradeship. Generals prefaced their letters to one another with "my good friend," or "my dear comrade," and even the usually reticent Jourdan began to address his

generals in these terms. Because the Terror was only marginally relaxed for many months after the 9th of Thermidor, the fall of Robespierre and his associates could only have been partly responsible for this general buoyancy. "This was the epoch during the wars when there was the most virtue among the troops," recalled Soult, not the most sentimental of men. Officers shared the hardships of their men, carrying their knapsacks on their backs and standing in line for the distribution of food and equipment like everyone else. When one officer distinguished himself, the others "sought to surpass him by their talent or courage." The soldiers possessed the same spirit of self-sacrifice. Often they refused extra "distributions" (of brandy) before battle, crying "after the victory you can give them to us! Discipline did not suffer the slightest tarnish. Never were the armies more obedient, nor filled with more ardor." 63

III. The Advance To The Rhine.

The government received the news of the victory of Fleurus with jubilation. "The armies concentrated on the Sambre have covered themselves with glory," Carnot congratulated Jourdan. "The Committee is happy to have found

63. Soult, Memoires, I, p. 198.
in you a leader worthy of commanding them." The Allies in contrast were depressed. They had been grievously damaged -- more grievously than Jourdan realized. The dissension among the Allied officers broke out afresh. Beaulieu violently criticized Coburg for his tactics during the battle, and several others asked to be relieved of their commands. Their mercenaries deserted in increasing number -- 400 in one day alone. The officers could persuade those who remained to march only with blows from their batons.

The Allied army thus seemed ripe for the annihilating pursuit to the death so often called for by the Jacobins. Hindsight reveals that such a pursuit may well have destroyed Coburg's army. There was no killing pursuit, however, and consequently the Allied army recovered to fight another day.

After the battle Jourdan was not sure in which direction to advance. He believed the enemy army to be intact and capable of launching another offensive in spite of its defeat. He suggested two alternative courses of action. He could advance up the Sambre towards Maubeuge and attempt to trap the enemy forces there between himself and Pichegru. Or he could continue to press the enemy on his eastern flank by marching on Namur, the capture of which would offer "the greatest advantages." Carnot's reply revealed that at times a sizeable gap still existed between


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
his theories of war "a l'outrance" and their actual execution. He instructed Jourdan to divide his forces, one corps to advance on Namur, and another to march in the opposite direction and capture Mons. The largest corps was to pursue Coburg's center towards Brussels, while the remainder were to rest in reserve. Jourdan was to put Belgium under contribution, seeing to it that the "contributions" fell solely upon the rich and upon those hostile to France. Carnot hoped that as Jourdan thrust northward and westward, Pichegru would push eastward from Courtrai and Ypres, and the two French armies could then destroy the Allied army caught between them. Carnot then added a personal wrinkle; he ordered Pichegru to detach 15,000 men to capture the British army's base as Ostende. 65

This was a return to cordon warfare. Jourdan was not pleased with this strategy, especially when Pichegru decided to take the 15,000 men for the Ostende operation from the Sambre et Meuse. He argued that the directive did not enable him effectively to follow up his victory, and that it overly dispersed his army from Mons to Namur in front of an enemy who could yet concentrate his own forces. "My position," he wrote, "does not permit me to try anything of consequence." This was dangerous because, thanks to a lack of cavalry and spies, he was not sure of the Allies' whereabouts. He had

his own ideas but he was too circumspect to present them directly to Carnot, since they contradicted Carnot's strategy top to bottom. Instead, he proposed them through the medium of representative Gillet. The Austrians, Gillet (Jourdan) warned, could overwhelm the corps detached towards Mons. Thus Pichegru should advance and defeat the enemy in the Tournai area so this would not occur. Meanwhile Jourdan would concentrate 80,000 men, and initiate a general offensive towards Namur and the left flank of the Allied army. Then Gillet went so far as provisionally to countermand Pichegru's order directing Jourdan to provide the 15,000 men for the Ostende operation.66

Carnot's reaction to all this was quite curious. He evidently was nettled by Jourdan's and Gillet's tacit rejection of his strategy. In a letter to the representatives he sharply criticized them and Jourdan for failing to pursue the enemy more vigorously immediately after Fleurus. Had they pursued, they would not have had to worry about another enemy counteroffensive. Furthermore, he considered their anxieties about an enemy attack against their left unfounded. Yet in his response to Jourdan on the same day, there was

66. A.G. mr 608-2, Jourdan to Carnot (2 letters), 7/2/94. A.G. Bl 35, Gillet to the Committee, 7/2/94. One is hard pressed to believe that the strategic ideas contained in this letter were Gillet's. Gillet had no military experience of any kind; furthermore the concentration towards Namur had been suggested by Jourdan on the 27th.
no hint of his irritation. He agreed to the Namur operation, while stipulating that a sizeable portion of the army be left to cut off the Allied forces in the Maubeuge-Tournai area. He agreed that it was likely that the Austrians would offer battle again to avenge Fleurus, indeed writing St. Just to the same effect. He assured Jourdan that he had left Pichegru "leeway" to take the 15,000 men from his own army. Carnot then ordered Pichegru not to take the 15,000 from the Sambre et Meuse and urged him to attack the enemy in the Tournai area. He still hoped to trap Coburg near Brussels. "If we put some speed into our march, and the enemy does not hasten to evacuate Brussels, he will find himself trapped on the left bank of the Meuse, and pressed on both flanks by the two Republican armies."67

Once again Carnot modified, albeit reluctantly, a plan in accordance with Jourdan's suggestions. Nevertheless the French had lost a precious week during which the Allies had time to regroup. The Sambre et Meuse was still too widely scattered to be able to overwhelm the Allies at any single point. And both Carnot and Jourdan based their strategy upon the false supposition that the enemy intended to fight another battle. As a result, their dispositions were prudent rather than daring, cautious rather than aggressive. There

was no all-out pursuit aimed at hounding the enemy to his destruction.

The Sambre et Meuse resumed its advance on July 5. Coburg had evacuated Mons, and had deployed his army in a cordon from Hal through Mont St. Jean and Sombreffe to Namur. Kleber attacked the Prince of Orange at Mont St. Jean, and after a sharp struggle routed him, inflicting almost 2,000 casualties. At Sombreffe Championnet and Hatry had a more difficult time with Beaulieu, but after two days of fighting, they also were victorious. Beaulieu retreated towards the Meuse having lost 2,000 casualties and 600 prisoners. Jourdan now had use of the 30,000 soldiers whom St. Just had kept on the upper Sambre. These occupied Mons, then turned west to recapture the lost French fortresses of Valenciennes, Conde, Landrecies, and Le Quesnoy. Pichegru too was advancing, although not as swiftly as desired. On July 11, his and Jourdan's forces met at Brussels. Unfortunately they were too late; the enemy had escaped the envelopment and were fleeing towards the Meuse. Jourdan persisted in his belief that the enemy would not evacuate Belgium without a fight. He again complained that his forces were too scattered, and on one occasion mistook the retreat of an enemy force as a maneuver leading to a counterattack.

68. A.G. Bl 35, Jourdan to the Committee, 7/7/94; Jourdan to Pichegru, 7/7/94. A.G. nr 608-2, Memoires de 1794.
Although Carnot repeatedly urged Pichegru and Jourdan to crush the Allies as they crossed the Meuse, the French were unable to do so. Jourdan blamed the slowness of Pichegru's advance, which compelled him to delay his lest a gap develop between their armies. He easily captured Namur, the fortifications of which Carnot ordered razed to the ground, but he was too late to intercept the enemy retreat. With the Allies safe on the far side of the Meuse, Carnot suddenly decided to suspend the advance until the French had recaptured the four lost fortresses and until Pichegru had advanced far enough to permit Jourdan to attack across the Meuse without worrying about his northern flank. Once again the pursuit to the death was suspended.69

As Jourdan deployed the army along the Meuse, he learned of the 9th of Thermidor. His initial reaction to the news was typical; he wrote to reassure the Committee of his continued loyalty. "Be calm, citizen representatives, we know that our task is to exterminate all the Republic's enemies, and we will fulfill it with all the more confidence now that we know ... that all those who seek to use the services which they would have rendered (sic) to the country to replunge the people into irons, will perish like the scoundrels Robespierre, St. Just and company. We are the


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
children of the people, we fight for its liberty, and we never will be the tools of a tyrant." This was mild compared to what was flowing from the pens of Pichegru and the representatives. As their bitter denunciations of the "triumvirate" appeared in the newspapers, Jourdan worried that perhaps his statement was not strong enough. Even so, he did not add his denunciation to theirs. Instead, he informed the Committee that he had seen "with pleasure" the letters of the others on the "Robespierre conspiracy" in the public papers, but he feared that his army might be "surprised at not seeing anything by me on the subject [for army one might substitute 'government']. Nevertheless ... I think my letter of the 14th [above] contains sufficient expressions of Republicanism, and I think what I write. I do not desire to make a name for myself. If I can serve my country without having my name known, I shall do it readily." Still he was not sure what to do. "I submit my reflexions; you do ... that which you believe to be the most appropriate."70

His reaction to Thermidor is revealing. It demonstrated his basic conviction that a general should keep out of politics because his business was war and the welfare of his troops. He could not have felt any remorse at the fates of Robespierre, St. Just, and their colleagues. He was not

70. A.G. Bl 37, Jourdan to the Committee, 8/1/94, 8/12/94.
fond of the Terror, because he felt that it placed unnecessarily intense pressure on its servants. He was even less fond of the radicals of the Terror whom he blamed for its extremities, and the evidence suggests that he placed Robespierre and company in this category. Nevertheless, he did not give way to the violent ascerbic denunciations of these new "traitors" that so many others gave way to; his language was subdued when compared to that of the representatives -- several of whom had been quite friendly with St. Just. A general did not criticize his political superiors any more than a soldier criticized his generals. A general could advise and suggest, and then with circumspection; his primary duty was to obey his government's orders. Jourdan was one general who could never be mistaken for a militarist. Furthermore, he realized that in a revolution today's political victors might well become tomorrow's villains, and today's punished tomorrow's martyrs. Perhaps he did not desire to make statements that another change of government might cause to come back and haunt him.

As the corps of General Barthelmy Scherer moved to recapture the four fortresses, Jourdan was faced with an extremely vexing problem. In early July the Committee had

71. Both Gillet and Guyton were on excellent terms with St. Just while he was with the Sambre et Meuse during the Fleurus campaign.
menacingly decreed that any enemy garrison which did not surrender within twenty-four hours of being summoned to do so was to be executed upon capture. Their purpose was to avoid long, time-consuming sieges by terrorizing the enemy into swift, premature capitulations. Such a decree violated every contemporary rule of warfare. To execute unarmed soldiers after they had ceased resistance was as much a war crime then as it is today. The twenty-four hour decree put Jourdan and his generals on the horns of a miserable dilemma. Should the enemy refuse to surrender within the allotted time, they were the ones who would have to carry out the executions. If they disobeyed the decree and spared their prisoners, they could expect the most rigorous punishment for insubordination.

Jourdan and the representatives attempted to feign a willingness to execute the decree, while at the same time they tried to avoid being placed in a position where they might have to carry it out. Jourdan instructed Scherer not to summon all four fortresses at once, but to summon each successively as he placed it under siege. Furthermore Scherer was not to summon the garrison until all parallels were dug and preparations for storming completed -- in other words when its fall was imminent anyway. Meanwhile they sought loopholes in the decree. They asked the Committee what they should do if the garrison was ignorant of the decree owing to the efforts of their officers, or if the officers forced the soldiers to resist beyond the time limit.
Committee admitted that such an occurrence exempted the garrison from the rigors of the decree, the French commanders would have a potential escape — they could always argue that the garrison prolonged their resistance out of ignorance or compulsion, and thus should not be executed.\textsuperscript{72}

Their strategem worked to perfection at Landrecies, the first city to be besieged and taken. However at Le Quesnoy they encountered trouble. The garrison resisted strenuously causing the siege to drag on, and the Committee ordered that the defenders be summoned. Jourdan assured the Committee that he was implementing the decree "literally." Nevertheless, he hoped that the defenders surrendered within the prescribed time limit; otherwise the lives of many brave Republicans might be lost — possibly in having to storm the place. If the Committee decided to change their instructions, he urged them to notify him as soon as possible. But the Committee remained adamant. Scherer duly summoned the garrison to surrender, but it refused. Gillet and Duquesnoy wrote worriedly to the government that they agreed with the decree in principle, but executing it at Le Quesnoy might drive the other garrisons to desperation and cause them to resist longer and harder than otherwise. The issue came to a head when Le Quesnoy finally agreed to capitulate. According to the decree, Scherer now had to execute the

\footnotesize{72. A.G. mr 608-2, Memoires de 1794. A.G. Bi 37, Scherer to the Committee, 8/5/94.}

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
entire garrison. Horrified, he asked Jourdan and Gillet for instructions; they, equally horrified, told him to ask the Committee. In a letter to the latter, Gillet admitted that Scherer's questions were "embarrassing." 73

In fact he, Jourdan, and Scherer -- not to mention the soldiers who would have had to make up the firing squads -- were perilously close to having to commit an atrocity of major proportions. Fortunately their efforts to shift the responsibility for executing the decree squarely onto the shoulders of the government bore fruit at the eleventh hour. In an official order to Scherer, the Committee instructed that the decree be carried out. However, in a letter to Duquesnoy, Carnot permitted Scherer to accept the garrison's surrender on the grounds that the officers may have kept their men ignorant of the decree. In a second letter he stated that Scherer did not have to carry out the decree immediately, since it did not specify when the executions were to take place. Besides, something might persuade the "Convention" to modify the decree in the interim. Nonetheless officially the decree remained in effect, and Carnot rather curtly ordered Scherer to be sure to carry it out with the remaining fortresses. Fortunately both Conde and Valenciennes surrendered within the prescribed twenty-four

73. A.G. Bl 37, Jourdan to the Committee, 8/5/94; Gillet to the Committee, 8/8/94; Duquesnoy to the Committee, 8/12/94. See also Scherer's letters during this time.
With their rear now secured, the French made preparations to renew the offensive. The Austrian army, now under General Clerfayt, numbered 90,000 men deployed in a 40-mile cordon along the Meuse and Ourthe Rivers from Roermonde to the vicinity of Luxemburg. Carnot overruled Jourdan's objections and ordered him to make his next effort south of the Meuse in the tangled forests of the Ardennes, while Kleber's corps was detached to besiege the important Dutch fortress of Maastricht. Carnot hoped to trap the Allies between the Sambre et Meuse and the Army of the Moselle in the Luxemburg region. This meant that Jourdan had to defeat the enemy positioned along the Ourthe. At first glance, this seemed to be a formidable task. The Ourthe flowed north through rugged hills and deep ravines: "its banks are either very high hills or immense precipitous rocks which only leave very narrow passages between them." In short, it was an excellent defensive position. But the Ourthe position was too long -- too long to be adequately covered by the 40,000 Austrians detailed for the job.

74. Corr., IV, pp. 565-73, The Committee to Scherer, 8/12/94; Carrot to Duquesnoy, 8/12/94; Carnot to the Representatives with the Sambre et Meuse, 8/17/94. Carnot's letter to Scherer of the 17th condemned him strongly for his handling of the situation. What Carnot's motives -- or the Committee's -- were here is unknown; certainly Scherer was not to blame.

Jourdan had shifted two thirds of his army south of the Meuse. His army, too, was extended over 40 miles of front, but since it now numbered about 120,000 men, it ran no undue danger. Jourdan began the operation by sending Kleber against Maastricht. This feint completely fooled Clerfayt into shifting his reserves north to that sector. Then Jourdan attacked. The French stormed across the Ourthe at three points, and seized the high ground on the far side from the outnumbered defenders. There were acts of heroism. At Ayewalle in the center the passage was a narrow bridge covered by two twelve-pound cannon, with enemy artillery blanketing the treacherous fords above and below the bridge. But the French infantry braved the case shot whipping along the length of the bridge as well as the plunging fire from the heights; they stormed across the bridge, scaled the heights and took them. Once on the high ground across the river, the French could penetrate into the rear of the Austrians long before the latter could muster their scattered forces. Clerfayt pulled his army back to the Roer River. 76

The Austrian position behind the Roer closely resembled that of the Ourthe. The Roer also flowed through broken, wooded country, its rapid current washing steep, rocky banks. The Austrians broke all the bridges, fortified

76. Ibid. Jomini, op cit, VI, pp. 28-29.
all the fords, and crowned the heights with artillery and fieldworks. But they repeated their earlier mistake; they attempted to cover the entire length of the river. Since they had about 90,000 soldiers to defend over 40 miles of front, their cordon once again was dangerously thin. Thus Jourdan's task, as at the Ourthe, was to find the most accessible passages across the river, mass his forces at those points, and break the enemy line.77

Jourdan's first step was to get Carnot to agree to a temporary suspension of the siege of Maastricht, so that he could bring half of Kleber's corps south to join the attack. This agreed to, he planned to assault across the Roer at four points: Rathem, Linnich, Aldenhoven (where the enemy held a bridgehead) and Duren. For this strategy he has been criticized by several commentators who argue that he should have massed his forces on his right to roll up the enemy flank, rather than dispersing them in four separate columns.78 His critics have ignored the nature of the terrain. Due to the primitive roads, it would have been impossible for the French to move fast enough to make such a flank attack successfully. Furthermore, Jourdan believed Clerfayt's forces to be too widely dispersed to resist effectively.


78. Jomini, Phipps, T. A. Dodge, and other Jomini disciples all believed that Jourdan erred in not concentrating a mass of maneuver on his right.
for the lack of lateral communications through the thickly wooded Ardennes made it impossible for the different sectors of the Austrian defenses to come to each others' support. Jourdan ordered attacks which would bring the maximum number of men to bear on the thin enemy cordon in the least amount of time. Had the Austrians been in a position to offer stern resistance, he would not have attacked on the right because this would have pulled his army too far away from Pichegru. Instead, he would have attempted to break the enemy cordon on the left near the Meuse. If Jourdan's critics found fault with his strategy, Carnot did not. He approved it, writing that "the attack you propose ... is one of the most decisive and the most delicate which has ever taken place."79

Jourdan's soldiers advanced quietly to their jump-off positions near the river. He had ordered a silent approach without skirmishing in order to allow the enemy as little advance warning as possible. When the Sambre et Meuse deployed the next morning, it did so impressively. "Nothing was more majestic to see than, in an immense plain, the army advancing at an even pace, in the greatest order without the slightest confusion. The columns arrived in the position

where they had to join battle, deployed calmly under the fire of the enemy batteries; the alignment formed on the guides as in training camp." The improvement in the army from the previous summer was striking. At Hondschoote it fought uncertainly, at times in incoherent confusion; on the Roer it demonstrated the control and ensemble of a professional army. 80

The battle itself was anticlimactic to this grand beginning. A heavy rainstorm delayed matters, making the bad roads worse, and the worse roads impassible. Scherer's attack on the right was delayed, and his division, which was to make the longest march, never did get into action. Scherer's troops waded the river under fire and took the enemy positions at bayonet point. Then Marceau stormed Duren, a town surrounded by a palisade and a water-filled ditch, and held it against several feeble counterattacks. In the center, Championnet defeated the Austrians in the bridgehead on the Aldenhoven plateau. In a sharp cavalry action he broke an Austrian counterattack and chased the enemy across the river into Juliers, but he never crossed the river himself. Lefebvre stormed Linnich, only to find that the rain had made the fords there too swollen to use. On the left at Rathem, Kleber also found the fords flooded, so when his men

80. Championnet, Souvenirs, p. 84.
braved plunging fire from the heights opposite to try to throw a prefabricated bridge across the water, they discovered that it was too short. Kleber persisted, dragging artillery right up to the riverbank and blasting away, while Bernadotte led a demi-brigade into the river. Half wading, half swimming, these men crossed and had secured a precarious bridgehead when night ended the fighting.81

When morning dawned, the French must have been astonished to see that the Austrians had withdrawn. Clerfayt's line had been breached only in two places, but his troops were so dispersed that the French could enlarge these breaches long before he could repair them; so he retreated.

The Battle of the Roer is generally acclaimed as Jourdan's finest achievement. This is odd because Jourdan himself did not consider the battle either a particularly difficult or successful one. Due to the bad weather, the French attacks did not reach their assigned objectives; the enemy position was weak, and its resistance halfhearted. The French inflicted a moderate 3,800 casualties on the Austrians at a cost of 1,500 of their own. Basically Jourdan did nothing more than make use of his superior numbers to punch holes in the enemy defenses. Certainly the difficulty encountered did not match Fleurus. In any case, the Roer was the final action of the campaign. Clerfayt retreated

across the Rhine, abandoning the west bank completely. The Sambre et Meuse occupied Krefeld, Bonn, and Cologne without bloodshed, and then moved south to help the Army of the Moselle expel the enemy from the Moselle valley. The Allies did not await the entrapment battle that Carnot planned, for they fled here also. Jourdan deployed the army along the Rhine in winter cantonments, while Kleber's corps reinvested Maastricht, and after a short siege, took it in early November.

The amazing triumphs of the campaign swept the enthusiasm in the officer corps to dizzying heights. As Soult recalled, never had the soldiers shown more obedience and order, nor the generals more cooperation and skill. And never was Jourdan to be so esteemed by his fellow generals. When Scherer and Kleber received promotions to take independent commands, both sorrowfully wrote Jourdan bemoaning their departures from the army. "To tell you that I regret no longer serving in the army you command," Scherer wrote, "to prove to you that since I have known you, I have loved and esteemed the brave general to whom the country owes gratitude for one of the most glorious campaigns cited in the world's triumphs." And Kleber wrote: "It would be necessary, dear comrade, that you know all the esteem and sincere attachment I have vowed to you to understand the pain I have felt at receiving the order to leave the victorious army you command." That both men wrote sincerely there is no doubt. When Jourdan fell sick during the next spring,
Kleber wrote in similar language anxiously inquiring about his health. It is an interesting commentary upon Jourdan's reticence and inhibitions that he never was able to express himself with the effusiveness of his colleagues. Even so he certainly was gratified by these expressions of friendship. The officer corps of the Sambre et Meuse was a band of brothers in the springtime of their success; it was unfortunate that the grim campaigns of 1795 and 1796 were to take the bloom off their comradeship. 82

By the end of 1794, Jourdan stood at the summit of his career. He was, in his colleagues' eyes, at the height of his profession, probably the most respected general in the Republic. He had conducted a campaign which was indeed unparalleled in the annals of French history. Never before had a French army swept the entire Pays Bas -- the notorious "cockpit of Europe" with its innumerable fortresses and waterways -- clear of an enemy in a single campaign.

82. A.G. mr 608-2, Scherer to Jourdan, 10/9/94; Kleber to Jourdan 11/23/94.
VI. LIMITED WAR: THE CAMPAIGN OF 1795

I. The Mayence Campaign

While the French armies drove the forces of the Coalition back across the Rhine, the revolutionary government was undergoing profound change. The fall of Robespierre, St. Just and their colleagues, and their replacement by a more moderate faction of the Jacobins, had resulted in a stage-by-stage dismantling of the Terror. This process, begun in the French government and economy in 1794, had by the spring of 1795 spread to the firing line. The Thermidorians, in their eagerness to erase every vestige of the Terror from the face of the country, turned against its policy of total war and against national economic mobilization which is the logical concomitant of total war. They removed from the Committee the three key figures in the war effort: Carnot, Lindet and Prieur (de la Cote d'Or) and replaced them with men who did not possess either their intelligence, their energy, or their commitment to the defeat of the enemy. Since they no longer faced a situation in which they had to kill or be killed, the Thermidorians fought only to secure what they believed to be an advantageous peace.

The Republic's war aims were now limited: the occupation of the Rhine valley, perhaps the seizure of Franconia and Swabia, and generally the conquest of enough territory
to pay for the war. These goals did not require "war a
l'outrance" for their attainment. Consequently, by the spring
of 1795 the Republic was no longer waging war with the energy,
ferocity or determination that it employed in the year II.
Jourdan and his fellow generals thus had to adapt to the
new state of affairs. The pressures of the Terror were gone,
and this was welcome. But as the Thermidoreans returned to
normalcy, new pressures every bit as severe and far more
crippling replaced the old -- pressures brought about
by negligence and corruption rather than by fanaticism and
ruthlessness.

Jourdan had spent a tranquil winter and spring.
He had gone on leave in late March to Limoges to visit his
wife and family and to take care of his health\(^1\) --
probably his stomach ailment. His army, aside from the
periodic shortages that plagued all pre-industrial armies,
had survived the winter in relative comfort. Its task
during these months was simple enough -- to capture the
fortress city of Luxemburg and prevent the Allies from
marching to its relief. The Allies remained inactive, leaving
the city to its fate, and Jourdan had little out of the ordinary
to do, save to negotiate with the Prussian Marshal Mollendorf
the line of demarcation once Prussia had made peace. The

\(^{1}\) A.G. mr 608-6, Kleber to Jourdan, 4/7/95, 4/10/95.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
imminence of Prussia's departure from the Coalition had paralyzed the Allied forces, which now declined to move until the diplomatic picture became clearer.  

While the peace negotiations at Basle dragged on, Jourdan, Pichegru (now commander of the Army of the Rhine et Moselle), and the government began a three-way discussion of plans of campaign when hostilities resumed in earnest. The Thermidorians had not replaced Carnot with another military "expert," preferring instead to direct the national defense collectively. As a result, each army commander was left largely on his own to direct his army as he saw fit; indeed the generals advised the government on strategy rather than vice-versa. After some written discussion, Jourdan and Pichegru advised that once Luxemburg had capitulated, their armies should open an offensive across the upper and lower Rhine, always endeavoring to operate on the outside flanks of the enemy armies. The government responded to their suggestions by ordering that their armies cross successively rather than simultaneously, and that Jourdan effect his passage at Rhinefels, a town in the Taunus mountains near Coblenz. 

Jourdan quickly protested. He did not like the idea  

2. A.G. mr 608-6, Jourdan's Memoires Militaires sur la Campagne de 1795.  
3. A.G. mr 608-6, Jourdan to Pichegru, 5/2/95, 5/8/95; Pichegru to Jourdan, 5/9/95.
of having the armies cross successively, and he was even less enthused by the choice of Rhinefels, which was a dangerous place to cross. The Austrians had a sizeable force positioned there. Moreover, the terrain was totally unsuitable, since the hills, ravines and defiles on either bank of the river were so difficult that by local estimates an army of 30,000 would require nineteen days to cross with all its baggage. Furthermore, the bridging equipment had to be transported through the wilds of the Hundsruick — the wooded, hilly area south of the Moselle. Jourdan considered this "difficult if not impossible" because of the region's poor roads. Clearly the army could not mount an effective attack under such conditions. Fortunately the Committee took his advice. They agreed to let him choose his own crossing point and also decided that he was to make the primary, and Pichegru the secondary, crossing. Once they had driven the enemy from the entire east bank of the Rhine, their objective was no less than an occupation of all of southwest Germany as far as the Danube River.4

The government expected Jourdan and Pichegru to begin the offensive by mid-June at the very latest. They were soon disappointed. When Jourdan finally crossed the Rhine, it was on September 5. The problem was not the resistance of

4. A.G. mr 608-6, Jourdan to Gillet, 5/10/95; the Committee to Jourdan, 6/12/95.
the enemy, but the paralysis of logistics. The severe
shortages of every kind which had so grievously crippled the
Republican armies in 1793 had returned with a vengeance;
these rather than the enemy were the cause of the three-
month delay.

To begin, Jourdan needed bridging equipment. The
enemy had not been so kind as to leave any bridges across
the Rhine standing for his convenience. But the government
had done nothing to provide the necessary timber, cordage,
nails and pontoons required for a temporary heavy-duty
bridge. Indeed it had dismantled those bridges which the
Sambre et Meuse had used in 1794. Jourdan had retained
a couple constructed across the Meuse, but these had to be
taken down and hauled across country to the Rhine, and he had
insufficient transport to do this quickly. The government
had furnished the army with cash to purchase the needed
materiel; unfortunately all that cash bought from the
contractors was promises. They failed to supply what they
had been paid for. Most occupied territories did not
possess the required items in sufficient quantities, and those
areas that did were reluctant to sell them.5

It was not long before Jourdan decided that he
might never secure the equipment through conventional channels.

5. A.G. mr 608-6, Memoires de 1795. Henri Jomini,
General Bonnard, then procuring materiel along the Rhine valley, advised him that force might be necessary. Jourdan suggested to representative Dubois that they no longer depend upon the contractors to furnish the needed supplies, since these were obviously not doing the job. Instead they should requisition it. Jourdan asked the government for broad and sweeping powers of requisition in the Rhineland, and even in eastern France. On his own he ordered his officers to seize all boats on the Waal and Meuse Rivers which could be used as pontoons. Reluctantly the government agreed to his request in early June. But limited requisitioning did not solve the problem. The army was so desperately short of horses that it could not carry what it requisitioned to the front with any dispatch. Claude Petiet, the quartermaster, estimated that the army lacked a staggering 34,870 horses, not to mention over 3,000 wagons.  

From early June the government, with increasing sharpness, attempted to prod Jourdan into motion. This was useless. As Jourdan rather uncomfortably admitted on July 13, he was utterly powerless to accelerate the construction of the bridges any more than he already had. Earlier Dubois had confirmed that Jourdan was ready to begin operations except for the bridge problem. How insoluble it was appears

6. A.G. Bl 55 and Bl 56, Jourdan to Dubois, 6/26/95; the Committee to Jourdan, 6/7/95; Petiet to Jourdan 6/21/95.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
in the minutes of a conference between Jourdan, his staff, and representative Dubois. The crux of the problem was that to build bridges they needed more large boats. But, to requisition craft along the Meuse was impractical because they were too small to withstand the Rhine's current. To purchase boats from private firms was inadvisable because they all had other "engagements." To transport some craft found in eastern France would not help much, because those of the needed length (thirty-five feet) were very difficult to haul overland, and besides France could provide only two thirds of the number required. It was judged too dangerous to cross in boats and on the one light bridge already on hand, seize a bridgehead, and then wait for reinforcements. Ultimately Jourdan managed to borrow the necessary equipment from a reluctant Army of the Nord in Holland, but for a number of reasons, transporting the equipment was also a time-consuming process. 8

Finally, at the end of July everything was ready: bridges, materiel, soldiers and generals. The weather, however, was not. For a week heavy rains fell, flooding the Rhine so extensively that Jourdan dared not risk his makeshift bridges on the swollen current. He had to wait two weeks for the river to go down, and by then the enemy had discovered

8. A.G. Bl 56, Precis of a council of Jourdan's staff with Dubois to discuss various proposals suggested by Jourdan to accelerate the passage of the Rhine.
where he intended to cross. They poured troops into that
sector, and a rueful Jourdan had to inform the government
that once more he was postponing the offensive. "Unfortunately,"
he apologized, "these (difficulties) are not of a nature to
be overcome by good will and courage."9

Strategically he had to start over. He now had his
bridging equipment, but he had no crossing point at which to
employ it. Then at last, he was favored by a stroke of luck.
Several Rhenish princes had joined Prussia in withdrawing
from the war, and one of them, the Elector Palatine, controlled
a parcel of land along the Rhine just north of Dusseldorf.
By the terms of the Treaty of Basle, the territories of all
signatories were neutralized and the contending armies
forbidden to campaign on them. Nonetheless this particular
area was ideal for a crossing point, so much so that Jourdan
asked the government if there was some way he could make use
of it. The government discovered — or claimed to have
discovered — that the Elector had not withdrawn all his
troops from the Allied Army. Thus technically he was still
a belligerent and his land subject to invasion. On this
pretext the government authorized Jourdan to attack as he
desired.10

With this advantage in hand Jourdan devised his

9. A.G. mr 608-6, Jourdan to the Committee, 8/4/95,
8/13/95.
strategy. The task was more formidable than is generally recognized. To cross the Rhine in the face of the enemy was to launch an amphibious operation, far more difficult to effect in 1795 than in 1945 owing to the primitiveness of the means employed. His plan of attack was a triumph of careful foresight and detailed preparation rather than of boldness and imagination; it was based not upon the calculated risk but upon the elimination of every uncertainty altogether.

Jourdan took advantage of the fact that the Austrians still expected him to cross where he had first planned, at Neuweid. He ordered Hatry to begin preparations for a passage there: to construct batteries, prepare a floating bridge, and spread rumors of an impending attack all over Coblenz. In general he was to do everything he could to distract the enemy's attention from the real point of attack: the area north of Dusseldorf. Here Kleber was to cross with four divisions: two directly into the "neutral" territory, one into the adjacent area, and one directly into Dusseldorf which would be terrorized into a quick surrender. The operation was to take place at night. Kleber was to collect the required boats and construct the necessary batteries; his troops were to approach the river in complete silence and cross in the same manner. Once bridgeheads were established, the engineers were to build permanent bridges across the river.11

A glance at Jourdan's orders to two of Kleber's divisional generals reveals the incredible amount of planning and detail which went into this operation. He ordered Lefebvre to discover the best spot in the neutral territory to cross. Then he was to make his preparations: rehearse his troops in their duties, assemble boats to carry 3,000 to 4,000 men across the river, and conceal his preparations from the enemy all the while. He was to arrange with his officers the exact boats which each unit was to use, and to make sure that they took the current into account when they crossed. His most intelligent chasseurs were to lead the assault and penetrate inland. These were to be followed by sappers who would dig entrenchments and gun emplacements to cover the bridgehead. Guides were to direct each wave of troops to their positions. Lefebvre was to insure that his soldiers maintained absolute silence throughout the passage, even to the extent that they not bang their arms and accouterments together. Jourdan ordered Championnet to follow much the same procedure. In addition, Championnet was to prevent anyone from going near the river without a personal order from him, and he was not to allow anyone into the church steeples along the river. When the attack began the troops were not to fire, but to seize the enemy positions with the bayonet. All concerned were to hold themselves ready; final attack orders were to be issued two hours in advance.¹²

Unfortunately the government had not been nearly so thorough, especially in the measures it took to supply the army. Jourdan confessed that he did not know how the army was to subsist while on the march. The provisioning service was in such disarray that he doubted there would be enough food convoys to keep the men from starving. The transport service lacked wagons, and its horses were dying of hunger due to a lack of fodder. He wondered whether he could requisition on the east bank or would be compelled to purchase everything -- and in the latter case could he do so with assignats. He had received no instructions on how to treat the various neutral German duchies which were within the army's line of march. Quartermaster Blanchard reported that the firm contracted to supply wagons to the army had failed to deliver a single one. The cavalry was understrength owing to a shortage of horses, the 800 a decade which the government had promised in June had not yet arrived. The bread was so bad that many soldiers had dysentery, and those that could were taking out their frustrations by pillaging. Worse, the government was weakening the army by allowing extended leaves to the men without sending replacements -- this on the eve of a major offensive. The government responded to his complaints by vaguely promising remedies in the indeterminate future. Meanwhile he was to proceed with the attack and do the best he could with
the means at hand.\textsuperscript{13}

The assault was set for eight p.m. on September 5. While Hatry demonstrated at Neuweid, the rest of the army silently assembled along the banks of the river. Lefebvre put 3,000 men in boats, crossed into the neutral territory, and disembarked; his officers announced to the astonished sentries that the treaty had been violated and was no longer in effect, and that they ought to go home. They did. Quickly Lefebvre's men and those of the second division deployed and attacked the Austrians resisting the passage of Grenier's division at Urdingen. After a brief struggle they routed them. Championnet landed outside Dusseldorf in total silence; his elite grenadiers bayoneted the defenders, and by mid-morning he had Dusseldorf at his mercy. The city's burghers meekly surrendered. The Austrian sector commander ordered an immediate retreat south.\textsuperscript{14}

The passage of the Rhine went amazingly well. Not only were casualties minimal, but also nothing serious had gone wrong. The precision of this operation testified to the quality of the planning that Jourdan put into it.

With the major obstacle overcome Jourdan proceeded to the next step in the campaign -- the capture of the key fortress city of Mayence. He put his army on the roads

\textsuperscript{13} A.G. mr 608-6, Jourdan to the Committee, 7/29/95, 8/30/95.

to the Main Valley. The march to the Main was like a training exercise, for the French encountered virtually no resistance. By September 20, the Sambre et Meuse was blockading the north and east walls of the city, and awaiting the arrival of Pichegru to complete the investment south of the river.

The ease of the army's advance was deceptive, especially to the Committee who already considered the campaign won. Actually the army's problems were just beginning. Jourdan had scarcely crossed the river when his ill-fed troops exploded in an orgy of pillaging. Angrily Jourdan explained one of the causes: There existed only one military tribunal to handle all the army's breaches of discipline, and it was on the far side of the Rhine at Aix-La-Chapelle, "able to judge very slowly ... crimes very numerous."

It was of little use in curbing indiscipline "because if one sent there all those who were guilty of pillage ... a third of the army would be at Aix-La-Chapelle ... and another third would be employed in escorting those guilty. Laws are necessary in an army which punish those guilty severely and at once; by this means a small number of punishments will make the majority do their duty." He recommended that tribunals be established to cashier negligent non-commissioned officers on the spot. The government's response was to send him a high sounding note ordering him to restore discipline and criticizing the lack of energy of his officers in this regard. This irritated him even more, for the tribunal at
Aix had just freed a gang of looters who had threatened to kill their officers when the latter attempted to restore discipline. He offered to resign if discipline were not restored to the government's satisfaction.\textsuperscript{15}

But discipline would not be restored until some way was found to feed the army adequately. Jourdan complained again of his soldiers marching without regular food distributions, thereby causing them to forage for subsistence on their own. His excitable quartermaster, Blanchard, sent in his resignation because of his frustration at the supply problems. The army needed horses and wagons to haul provisions, but of the 34,000 horses requested the government had furnished only 500.\textsuperscript{16} The plight of the men was desperate. The 59th and 66th demi-brigades went so far as to send deputations to army headquarters with letters denouncing both their generals and the government for negligence in feeding the army. Jourdan had to tell the protesters that the generals were doing everything in their power to solve the subsistence problem and that similar protests would only allow "royalists" and "anarchists" the chance to "trouble public tranquility."

\textsuperscript{15} A.G. Bl 60, Jourdan to the Committee, 9/9/95; the Committee to Jourdan, 9/15/95; Jourdan to Gillet, 9/14/95. Jourdan told Gillet that in the case of the liberated looters he could cite 300 similar judgments of the tribunal.

\textsuperscript{16} A.G. Bl 60 and Bl 61, Jourdan to the Committee, 9/19/95; Blanchard to Jourdan, 9/15/95.
He then condemned the leaders of the two deputations to nineteen and twenty-five days in prison; this was a mere slap on the wrist. He knew that imprisoning hungry soldiers would not prevent them from expressing discontent at their hunger. As one soldier wrote Gillet, the indiscipline was atrocious and deplorable, but the "inexactitude of the distributions and the indulgence of the laws" were its primary causes. And these Jourdan was powerless to affect.  

Be that as it may, Jourdan's immediate task was to capture Mayence. To accomplish this he needed the cooperation of both the government and the Army of the Rhine. Neither was forthcoming. The Committee had finally decided that it needed real military expertise to aid in the direction of operations, and so invited Emmanuel Letourner into its ranks. Like Carnot, Letourner was a former army engineer and representative on mission to the armies, but aside from this his qualifications were limited. Letourner only marginally improved the strategic direction of the campaign. He failed totally to get Pichegru to carry out his part of the offensive. Pichegru was supposed to cross the Rhine and attack Mayence from the south, but he had sent barely 15,000 of his 95,000 men across the river. Relations between him

17. A.G. Bl 61, Championnet to Jourdan, 9/6/95. A.G. Bl 62, Jourdan to the Committee, 10/1/95. A.G. Bl 60, Delbrel-Casse, soldier, to Gillet, 9/10/95. The evidence suggests that the 59th and 66th demi-brigades were not the only protesters.
and Jourdan were strained. Although he was the senior general, he did not communicate with Jourdan for days at a stretch, and so the Committee had to order him to keep Jourdan better informed. Indeed, it had to remind both men that harmony and cooperation must reign between them for the campaign to succeed.18

Jourdan believed that Pichegru's lack of cooperation resulted from the latter's bad faith. He could not have known that Pichegru's actions were not due to ill-will, but to treason. Exactly what Pichegru's commitment to the Allies was is still not clear. At this time he was negotiating with them to open the upper Rhine to their armies as a preliminary step to a march on Paris and a coup against the government. Hence his failure to carry out his part of the offensive was, in all likelihood, deliberate. Certainly he could not have wished to contribute to the defeat of an army which shortly was to become his ally. Thus, in one way or another he had to see to it that the southern jaw of the French vise never closed around Mayence. This would doom the offensive to failure, for he well knew that Jourdan could not take Mayence unaided in the face of an enemy army numbering 100,000 men. Pichegru thus determined to resist any attempt to get

18. A.G. mr 608-6, e.g. the Committee to Jourdan, 9/24/95, 9/29/95. The Committee to Pichegru, 9/20/95.
him to advance.\textsuperscript{19}

The government was quite unaware of Pichegru's treason. Confident of success it sent to both generals, on September 24 and 26, instructions on how to bring the campaign to a victorious conclusion. In essence it ordered them to continue to advance and endeavor to trap the Austrians in the watery triangle formed by the Rhine, Main, and Neckar Rivers (map number 7). Once the enemy saw themselves threatened on both flanks, the government believed they would retreat. The French should then complete the capture of Mayence, and then advance to occupy all of southwest Germany up to the Danube. The new attitude of the Thermidorians towards the war was evident in this directive. Jourdan was no longer to make the enemy army his objective; he was to besiege fortresses, occupy terrain, and drive back the enemy by threatening his flank. In a remarkable paragraph the government decreed that the two generals were "limited to enfamishing the Allies in this region and giving them no alternative but to capitulate or perish of starvation. It is indeed of the greatest importance not to hazard any combat. The impetuosity of the French, their impatience for victory,

\textsuperscript{19} For Pichegru's treason see R. Phipps, The Armies of the First French Republic, II, pp. 261-67; John Hall, General Pichegru's Treason, (London, 1915). Much about Pichegru's treason remains unclear: for example, did he ever finalize his deal with the Austrians to link up with them on the upper Rhine? Or were his hesitant moves due to vacillation, as he tried to make up his mind when to complete his treason, or indeed whether to commit treason at all?
make it a duty for the Committee to insist particularly upon this disposition. The battles of Poitiers and Agincourt ... are deadly examples of the danger there would be if contrary measures are adopted.  

This directive completely contradicted the spirit of "guerre a l'outrance." The government did not bother to tell Jourdan what he was to do if the Austrians decided to fight rather than retreat. They also failed to explain how the Sambre et Meuse was to subsist with its chaotic logistics while it "enfamished" its foes. Most importantly, the government failed to compel Pichegru to advance, in spite of the fact that if he did not advance, their plan was only so much unworkable rhetoric.  

A week passed. Jourdan remained before Mayence, waiting for Pichegru to join him as ordered. He grew increasingly worried that the Austrians would enter the Prussian-controlled territory to the east -- neutral territory which he was forbidden to enter -- and take him in flank. As for Pichegru, he limited himself to launching a weak offensive with two divisions towards the Neckar. The Austrians

20. A.G. mr 608-6, the Committee to generals-in-chief Jourdan and Pichegru, 9/24/95, 9/26/95. The italics are the author's.

21. Ibid. Jomini bitterly criticized Letourner as inept because he kept the two French armies separated, instead of concentrating them in a single mass. It is, therefore, ironic that Letourner instructed Jourdan and Pichegru that if the enemy concentrated in Franconia, a junction of their two armies would then become indispensable. Here is Jomini's mass of maneuver!
routed it. With help from Pichegru still not forthcoming and with rumors of an impending Austrian offensive through the neutral territory rampant, Jourdan again asked the government for instructions.22

The Committee's response was not to respond at all -- at least with concrete instructions. It agreed with every objection and every complaint that Jourdan had raised since the outset of the campaign. Yes, Mayence was too large for one army to besiege successfully. Yes, the supply situation was atrocious. It had no more instructions to issue on the passage of the Main since the subsistence problem and the lack of transport obviously made a crossing impossible. True, Pichegru had been dragging his heels; nonetheless the Committee did not care how he and Pichegru arranged matters so long as they captured Mayence. Even so, it was confident that Jourdan would continue his "ardor" until he saw the opportunity to strike some blows "as certain as decisive." In short, the government evaded every issue. It effectively abdicated its responsibility to offer Jourdan suggestions on how to remedy the situation. Letourner and his colleagues quite clearly did not know how to proceed, so they shifted the burden to Jourdan. They had placed him in a corner, and it was up to him to find his way out.

22. A.G. mr 608-6, Memoires de 1795.
23. A.G. Bl 62, the Committee to Jourdan, 10/4/95.
Desperate now to end the paralysis into which the offensive had degenerated, the four representatives on mission with the two armies called a council of war for October 4 to resolve how to capture Mayence in the absence of any direction from the government. According to Jourdan, he offered to march against the Austrian field army while Pichegru undertook the siege. This plan was rejected. He then offered to undertake the siege himself and reinforce Pichegru with 20,000 men if Pichegru would oppose the Austrian field army. Pichegru rejected this plan too. He then suggested a joint operation against Mayence with the armies combined under a single commander. When Pichegru also refused this suggestion, he threw up his hands. If Jourdan's version of the meeting was accurate, Pichegru had no intention of advancing; indeed Pichegru argued that to advance would pull troops away from the upper Rhine where the enemy was threatening an invasion of Alsace. This is the area where Pichegru hoped to join forces with the Allies when he believed the time ripe. Thus any combination was impossible. Clearly the representatives should have ordered Pichegru either to advance or to submit his resignation; instead they avoided making any decision by writing back to Paris for instructions. Since the demise of the Terror, the time for disobedience had evidently returned.\[24\]

\[24\] A.G. mr 608-6, Memoires de 1795; Jourdan to the Committee, 10/9/95. Phipps, op cit, II, pp. 268-74.
From this point on the campaign was inevitably doomed. The government balked at initiating the only measures that might have put the campaign back on to the path to victory. They were unwilling to force Pichegru to advance, and they neglected to procure for Jourdan the supplies and equipment that would give him even a chance of defeating the Austrian army. The Sambre et Meuse could not mask Mayence and march against the enemy because it had no pontoons with which to bridge the Main, no horses to haul supplies for a further advance, and insufficient food to feed the men. It was reduced to immobility, pinned helplessly on the banks of the Main until either dearth or the enemy forced it to retreat.

A letter from Kleber to Jourdan revealed the atmosphere of frustration in which the generals labored. The council of war had entrusted Kleber with the command of all the siege forces -- including four of Pichegru's divisions which were blockading that part of Mayence on the west bank of the Rhine. In four days the administrative problems of commanding this force had driven Kleber to despair. "I swear

25. The government was also unwilling to replace him. At one point they offered his command to Kleber; however when Kleber refused to take it, they neither offered it to anyone else, nor coerced Kleber to do his duty and accept it.

26. A.G. Bl 62, Jourdan to the Committee, 10/6/95; Joubert to the Committee, 10/6/95.
to you, my dear friend, that it is only out of friendship for you that I accepted this miserable, wretched command ... and because I hoped that under your orders I would not suffer any of the miserable screw-ups [tracasseries] that we have ever encountered. Mistaken in my expectations, I must declare that should I be arrested, bound, gagged, or even guillotined, I will not continue to command the four divisions of the Rhine et Moselle." In spite of Kleber's black portrayal of his problems, he could not have been facing anything more severe than Jourdan was -- or Scherer was in Italy, or Hoche in the West. And for how long had Jourdan struggled with the same difficulties that were now causing Kleber to despair.

On October 11, the Austrians broke the deadlock. The army of General Francois Clerfayt had been reinforced by 25,000 men from Wurmser's army on the Upper Rhine, and Clerfayt now planned to maneuver the French away from the walls of Mayence. Clerfayt was a Belgian in the Hapsburgs' service, a careful, deliberate commander in the traditional style. Sixty-two years old in 1795, he had become overly cautious owing to his long years of experience, his advanced age, and his health. He was suffering from skin ulcers and an unhealed wound in one arm. "Ah ... I am only the shadow

27. A. G. mr 608-6, Kleber to Jourdan, 10/8/95
of a man" he exclaimed after Fleurus. But he was still able to take advantage of the excellent opportunity which the indecision of the French offered him. As had been rumored for weeks, indeed, as Jourdan had warned the government since late September, Clerfayt intended to flank the Sambre et Meuse out of its position by marching through the neutral territory to the east. It is possible that Allied agents had assured him that Pichegru would remain inactive while he attacked Jourdan. On the 11th Clerfayt crossed the Main.28

It was what Jourdan expected. When he first learned of the advance he boldly prepared to fight, taking up a position on the Nidda facing east with five divisions and the cavalry reserve. This was a mistake, as he later admitted; had Clerfayt been in a pugnacious mood he could have thrown nearly twice Jourdan's numbers against the Sambre et Meuse which, crippled by supply shortages and the Rhine at its back, would have been hard pressed to accomplish anything. But aggressiveness was not Clerfayt's style; he merely maneuvered towards Jourdan's communications with the lower Rhine and waited for dearth to compel the French to retreat. Jourdan was checkmated and he knew it. He ordered a retreat northward. Informing the Committee of the Austrian advance he bluntly blamed the government for the situation. Had it taken his warnings seriously or followed through on any of

his plans, things might have ended differently. Such a letter
would have been unthinkable during the Terror. Nothing more
strikingly reveals the depths to which the authority of the
Thermidorians had plunged than the diffident Jourdan's
criticism of them. Because they were not firmly exercising
their authority, Jourdan ceased to respect them. 29

The campaign literally was making Jourdan sick.
His intestinal ailment had flared up again, and he was suffering
from incessant diarrhea brought on by the "shaking" and
"jerking" of riding horseback -- quite possibly also brought
on by the wretched food and the pressures of command. His
physician informed the government that he considered Jourdan's
health too precarious to sustain further hardships of war.
To the physician's report Jourdan added that the recent
exertions had made the ailment incapacitating; he did not
want to abandon his post, but he might have to. 30 The
Committee was concerned. With the situation deteriorating
it did not want to lose its best general. It also may
have felt that motives other than diarrhea were causing
him to request leave. While they expressed solicitude for
his health, they kept him in command. 31

29. A.G. mr 608-6, Memoires de 1795; Jourdan to the
Committee, 10/11/95.

30. A.G. Bl 62, Certificate de visite (medical
report) concerning Jourdan's state of health, 10/6/95.
Jourdan to the Committee, 10/11/95.

31. A.G. mr 608-6, Cafferejli to Jourdan, 10/20/95; the
Committee to Jourdan, 10/16/95.
The Sambre et Meuse retreated north, harassed by famine and indiscipline. On the Lahn Jourdan called a meeting and asked his officers whether they should turn and attack. Their response was unanimous: there were not enough rations or horses to launch an effective attack. So Jourdan sent Hatry with four divisions to Dusseldorff, while Kleber marched to Neuweid. The withdrawal would have gone without a hitch had not Marceau committed an unbelievable blunder.

Ordered to collect all the boats on the river near Coblenz so that the enemy could not use them, Marceau decided to burn them -- upstream from the Neuweid bridge. The burning boats drifted downstream and incinerated Kleber's only line of retreat. It was fortunate that Clerfayt was not pressing the French withdrawal. While Kleber dug in on the east bank and Marceau vowed suicide, engineers constructed a new bridge and Kleber got his men to safety on the west bank.32

The French defeat before Mayence forced the government to abandon its hopes of conquering the entire Rhine Valley. It ordered Jourdan to cordon his army along the west bank from Mayence to Dusseldorff. The latter place Jourdan was converting into a strongpoint on his own for future offensives into Germany. The government toyed with the idea of launching

32. A.G. mr 608-6, Memoires de 1795; Kleber to Jourdan, 10/17/95. It is a testimony to Marceau's popularity -- and Jourdan's tolerance -- that Marceau was forgiven for what could have been a very lethal error.
a new offensive from Mannheim, but when Kleber refused to command it, the plan was abandoned. The government was still operating in a mood of embarrassment and excuse-making. It informed Jourdan that it had not been surprised by the results of the campaign, it had expected the enemy to violate the line of neutrality, and it had never expected to take a place as important as Mayence without waging a great battle. Perhaps that great battle would have been waged before their dispatch arrived. At any rate Jourdan must now make a "supreme effort" to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat in spite of everything. The government would not tell him how to accomplish this since it had full confidence in his abilities. As for his ailment, "Maurice de Saxe conquered at Fontenoy and the victory restored him to health."33

As Jourdan tried to decide how to make a supreme effort without supplies, Clerfayt transferred the bulk of his army to the west bank of the Rhine at Mayence and defeated Pichegru's four divisions on the Pfrimm River outside the city. The enemy now could sever all communications between the two French armies. The government regarded this latest defeat as a major crisis. Jourdan thought that he should either recross the Rhine and march against Clerfayt's communications or march upstream against Clerfayt's flank. The Committee

33. A.G. Bl 63, the Committee to Jourdan, 10/19/95, 10/20/95. The italics are the author's.
suggested that he attempt both maneuvers. Jourdan was not sufficiently supplied to attempt even one with any great hope of success and he had no hope of any help from Pichegru. In obeying the directive he resolved to "act with prudence." He ordered Marceau, whose 15,000 men were already in the area, to seize and hold the defiles through the Hunsrück west of Mayence. He was to prevent the enemy from breaking out any further westward, and to try to reestablish communications with Pichegru. Hatry at Dusseldorf was to demonstrate towards Clerfayt's communications on the east bank, while Jourdan assembled the rest of the army on the Nahe River as the preliminary step in an offensive against Clerfayt's northern flank.  

This was sound and necessary strategy; unfortunately the army lacked the means to execute it properly. The government was as far from solving the logistics problem as ever, especially in the furnishing of horses. The shortage of transport hindered every facet of the army's operations. The army could not haul enough food to the front to feed the troops because there were no horses to pull all the wagons. Whole squadrons of cavalry were dismounted, and six battalions were fighting without their cannon because there were no horses to pull them. Until more were sent, the

34. A.G. mr 608-6, Memoires de 1795. A.G. Bl 64, Jourdan to Marceau, 11/1/95; Carnot to Jourdan, 11/3/95.
army could carry only enough ammunition for six hours of combat. Jourdan was forced to keep an inordinately large force at Dusseldorf so that they would be near the food convoys from Holland which in turn could not march farther for lack of horses. The supply system was laced with corruption and inefficiency, displaying "neither energy nor zeal in supplying the troops" and thus perpetuating their starvation and demenment. "There is not one commune in the conquered territories which, at one time or another, has not given money to these employees in order not to place their produce in the magazines of the army," Jourdan complained.  

The dearth of supplies was causing terrible suffering among the soldiers. It was now mid-November, and the wet, bitter late autumn weather added to their misery. Many pillaged in order to obtain the food and clothing that their supply system was not furnishing. Marceau, facing the Austrians in the barrens of the Hunsruck, wrote that his men were fighting in mud and slush up to their knees, without bread or shoes, and as a result indiscipline was increasing so rapidly that he feared he could not count on his men in a serious engagement. Marceau was so distraught that only his sense of honor kept him at his post. He preferred to die and be buried in the snow than endure such conditions.


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
indiscipline. Jourdan laconically told the government that the men were sleeping uncovered in the snow without bread or brandy "as usual." The starvation and cold were sending hundreds to the hospitals and hundreds more were deserting. Many received letters from home urging them to escape their sufferings and come home, while others disappeared when sent on foraging expeditions. Sickness and desertion eroded the army's strength. When Jourdan assembled his sixty battalions and thirteen regiments of cavalry designated for the Nahe offensive, he found that instead of an anticipated 40,000 men he had 35,000.36

Pressed by the government to move swiftly, Jourdan opened a limited offensive along the Nahe on November 30. His plan was to turn the enemy's eastern flank and threaten its line of retreat to Mayence. While Marceau held the enemy on the right, Jourdan attacked them at Kreuznach with two divisions. The Austrians would have repulsed the attack had not Jourdan and Bernadotte personally rallied the shivering soldiers and led them forward in a second assault which took the village. The army continued to advance, but its deprivations slowed its impetus. Furthermore, the enemy had intercepted a courier from Pichegru with the French plans, and had published them in a German newspaper. Consequently

36. A.G. Bl 65 and Bl 66, Marceau to Jourdan, 12/1/95; Jourdan to Marceau, 11/1/95; Carnot to Jourdan, 11/3/95.
Clerfayt would soon be shifting reserves to the Nahe, and when they arrived he could turn both of Jourdan's flanks.\textsuperscript{37}

The government's grasp of the reality at the front was uncertain, and consequently the gap between its expectations and Jourdan's ability to execute them remained substantial. As the Sambre et Meuse struggled in the snow, the Directory\textsuperscript{38} urged Jourdan to penetrate between the enemy's army and Mayence in order to cut Clerfayt's line of retreat. He was to avoid a major battle while persuading Clerfayt that he desired to fight one and annoy the enemy without becoming involved in a full-scale conflict. Patiently Jourdan replied that he could not penetrate behind the Austrian army because this would risk bringing on the battle that he was not supposed to fight. Moreover the army did not possess the mobility for such an operation due to the weather and its lack of horses and transport -- besides he was outnumbered. The best strategy to follow, he argued, was to stand fast on the Nahe.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{37} A.G. mr 608-6, Jourdan to the Directory, 12/3/95; Memoires de 1795. That the French plans should be captured on one of Pichegru's couriers was indeed fortunate. There was a serious information leak to the enemy, so much so that even the government became suspicious; it instructed both Jourdan and Pichegru to be sure to keep the contents of its directives to them secret.

\textsuperscript{38} The Directory assumed power on October 31, at which point Carnot, who had been elected as one of the five Directors, took over the operational control of the French armies.

\textsuperscript{39} A.G. Bl 66, the Directory to Jourdan, 12/3/95; Jourdan to the Directory, 12/3/95, 12/12/95.
The Directory responded by urging him to do his best to prevent any further advance by the Austrians, leaving the specific tactics he employed up to him. As Carnot wrote this, the Austrians were driving Marceau's outnumbered troops back across the Nahe on the right. Marceau described his division as on the verge of disintegration; Jourdan told him not to take his setback so seriously because help was on the way. He was determined to hold the Austrians on the Nahe. He sent Poncet's division and part of Bernadotte's to Marceau's aid. While Marceau occupied the enemy frontally, Poncet stormed a wooded ridge on the enemy's right overlooking Sulzback, lost it, then retook it in a second attack. The Austrian force retreated across the Nahe.

But this was the army's last gasp. The soldiers were on the verge of collapse. The indiscipline, desertion, starvation and lack of clothing had reduced the army to the point that one severe shock might shatter it. Poncet's division, previously 10,000 men strong, was below 5,000. Jourdan believed that the only measure which might improve matters was to attach Marceau with 20,000 men to the left wing of the Rhine et Moselle at Kaiserslautern to prevent a resumption of the enemy's advance westward, while he concentrated the rest of the Sambre et Meuse behind the

40 A.G. Bl 66, the Directory to Jourdan, 12/12/95; Marceau to Jourdan, 12/8/95; Jourdan to Marceau, 12/9/95, 12/12/95. A.G. Bl 67, Poncet to Jourdan, 12/18/95.
Moselle near Coblenz. This would pull together its somewhat scattered forces, offer it a strong line of defense, and pull it out of the foodless barrens of the Hundsruck. If this was not done, the enemy might attack and force him into the battle that he could ill afford to fight — that he was ordered not to fight. Worse, the Austrians had captured Neuweid and were threatening to break out westward; if this occurred his Nahe force would be cut off. Jourdan's mood was as fatalistic as at any time in the war. He wrote Ernouf that he was now paying dearly for the honor of supreme command and the glory of his past victories. When General Paul Grenier warned of an impending enemy attack, Jourdan dryly told him to fight hard; he would recommend him to the good saint "Frappefort." 41

Thus when on December 19, Clerfayt proposed a truce, Jourdan must have thought it an act of divine intervention. The Austrians, even with the superior experience and organization of their supply service, were finding it difficult to live in the Hundsruck. So Clerfayt, via an emissary to Marceau, proposed an "arrangement" by which hostilities would cease and discussions be held to arrange a truce. The entire French officer corps was for this solution. Marceau's troops had been without bread for three days and the other

41. A.G. Bl 66 and Bl 67, Jourdan to the Directory, 12/18/95; Jourdan to Ernouf, 12/13/95; Jourdan to Grenier, 12/18/95.
divisions were scarcely better off. Jourdan's initial response to Marceau's news of the proposal was: "could Clerfayt be seeking winter quarters." He agreed to hold talks, and in a second parley it was agreed that hostilities would cease for a month and that the truce could be renewed at that time. A cease-fire line was then drawn up. Jourdan had to await Pichegru's agreement, but Pichegru was as eager for a truce as Jourdan and immediately consented. The two sides signed an agreement which brought hostilities to an end all along the Rhine Valley. For the Sambre et Meuse it was a godsend. Jourdan pulled it back behind the Moselle where provisions were more plentiful and where it could recuperate unmolested by the enemy. As he wrote, it was beyond its power to attempt anything more. 42

That Jourdan would take such a step without the prior approval of the Directory testifies to his desperation. Despite his later protests of ignorance of the Constitution, he must have realized that he did not have the legal authority to conclude an armistice with an opposing power on his own. 43 The Directory's initial impulse was to annul the truce and remove Jourdan from command for his cavalier disregard of their authority. They also felt that a cessation of hostilities

42. A.G. Bl 67, Jourdan to the Directory, 12/21/95; Marceau to Jourdan, 12/19/95; Jourdan to Poncet, 12/19/95; Joubert to Garreau, 12/20/95.


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
would irritate public opinion, harm army morale, and prevent draftees and deserters from joining the army because it was uselessly inactive. The last two reasons were utterly fantastic. They wrote a letter ordering him to cancel the agreement, but the realities of the situation persuaded them to withhold it. Since both armies remained as destitute of everything as ever and since Pichegru had agreed to the truce, the Directory realized that a resumption of hostilities was impossible. So the Directory, in order to confirm its authority over the military, annulled the truce in principle only. It rendered justice "to the good intentions" which caused Jourdan to conclude the cease-fire but stated that, without the participation of the Directory itself, such an arrangement was unconstitutional. At the same time, it authorized its commissioners at the front to conclude a similar agreement with the Austrians if they saw fit to do so. They, of course, immediately legalized the armistice. 44

So the campaign of 1795 ended as an unqualified failure. The conservatives in the government criticized Jourdan's generalship. Barras wrote that the Sambre et Meuse would have been more successful if its commander had possessed his daring of former days -- daring produced perhaps by the

44. A.G. Bl 68, the Directory to Jourdan, 1/1/96.
Terror's placing its generals between "the guillotine and victory." The left defended him, Carnot and Letourner arguing that if the government had provided Jourdan the means to cross the Rhine in the spring, the campaign would have succeeded. Indeed the criticism of the right was unfounded. Jourdan did everything in his power to accomplish his task. All the daring and strategic genius in the world could not have overcome the difficulties under which he labored: Pichegru's treason, the poor strategic direction of the government, and above all the crippling lack of provisions, supplies, and horses. Joubert was closest to the truth when he reported that "the dearth of horses is the principal cause of the reverses which we have suffered." It is to the causes of this dearth that we must now turn.45

II. War and Depression

"The monetary disaster," argued Georges Lefebvre, "was the major event of the period." It was the principal factor in the disastrous economic crash that so dangerously sapped the life of the revolution during 1795 and 1796 and which left its armies in a state of destitution and near famine during the same period. Lefebvre was not the first to recognize this fact; Jourdan's quartermaster-general, Blanchard, recognized it in the autumn of 1795. Blanchard blamed the

logistical shambles of the campaign squarely upon the
depreciation of the assignat. Without stable, available
currency he could not purchase the army its bread and meat or
buy the horses necessary to bring provisions and other supplies
to the army while it was in the field. He had attempted
to furnish what the army required via contracts. However,
the depreciation of the assignat to four pennies to the franc
and the absolute lack of hard currency in the army treasury,
combined with the demands of the contractors for hard cash
before they fulfilled their contracts, all prevented Blanchard
from purchasing the army its necessities.46

The monetary disaster was caused by the Thermidorians' decision to return to economic normalcy -- to a free market
economy -- before they terminated the war. To do this they had to dismantle the national economy with its requisitioning
and wage and price controls. "Price limitation, since it limits profit, comes up against the producer's passive resistance, and is ineffective ..." unless accompanied by the coercive force of the state. But force and mobilization for ends other than profit were incompatible with free enterprise. The dismantling process began gradually. At first the Thermidorians simply neglected to enforce the maximum, while at the same time they allowed requisitioning to ease off. Foodstuffs and goods began to be sold again

in the marketplace, and the peasants withheld their produce to drive up prices. Then the government established a maximum based upon the 1790 price index increased by two thirds to be enforced by each department. Finally price controls were abolished altogether. In December, under pressure from private enterprise, the Thermidorsians began closing down the state-operated clothing and munitions workshops, as well as the arsenals, powder mills, and saltpeter mines run by C. A. Prieur. The commission of trade and supplies was abolished. Both Prieur and Robert Lindet were eased out of the government. Requisitioning was gradually abandoned as the peasants sold their produce for as much as they could get. The provision of food, clothing and armaments to the armies was taken over by private firms. By March, 1795, the entire national economy had been liquidated.47

The return to economic liberty was disastrous to the war effort. The assignat depreciated with frightening speed as the government printed more and more of them, and financiers and businessmen speculated on those in circulation. By the end of 1794 the assignat had fallen to 20% of its original value, by April, 1795 it was down to 8%, by August 4%. And the Thermidorsians expected their armies to conduct business with assignats! Worse, as the assignat

47. Lefebvre, ibid, pp. 85-96; 99-111; 159-163.
shrank in value, as the peasants reacted to the depreciation by hoarding or by selling to the wealthy who alone possessed hard money, the price of food and other essentials skyrocketed. When the maximum was abolished, the price of meat stood at forty sous a pound; by April, 1795 it was up to seven francs, by September twenty francs. Bread prices for the same period rose from five sous to twenty sous a pound while the Thermidorians' belated establishment of grain controls in late 1795 to halt this price rise were poorly enforced and thus ineffective. During the summer of 1795 wood rose from 500 to 800 francs a cord, and shoes from 200 to 250 francs a pair. All of these items were necessities to the army, and yet Blanchard could not furnish them to his soldiers. The average soldier's daily ration was reduced from twenty-eight to twenty-four ounces, and "the soldier who received a pound could consider himself lucky."

If he tried to supplement his meager diet by buying food from the local populace, he found that his pay bought virtually nothing.  

In spite of the fact that the summer months were normally a time of relative plenty, the soldiers were suffering in the summer of 1795. The veterans of the Sambre et Meuse, accustomed to the regular food distributions and stable currency of 1794, were unwilling to accept meekly the return

48. Ibid.
to hard times. A rash of mutinies and disturbances spread through the army, with the cause of each outbreak the same: insufficient food and the worthlessness of the pay. When the local populace refused to accept assignats for food, the soldiers of the 59th demi-brigade began to take the food by force, roughing up some of the civilians in the process. Order was restored only after the soldiers had suffered several casualties. At Aix-la-Chapelle the lack of food forced representative Meynard to reduce the garrison's rations, which led to a mutiny and the demand that the reduction be rescinded. When Meynard refused, the troops rioted and rampaged through the city breaking into stores and houses and stealing every morsel of food they could lay their hands on. It took Meynard two days to restore order at gunpoint. Other units sent petitions to Jourdan begging him to do something about their worthless pay. Uselessly he warned the government of the outbreaks, emphasizing that he could not count on his officers to maintain order because many, destitute themselves, sympathized with their men.49

The Thermidorians' decision to rely upon private enterprise to supply the armies also proved disastrous to the troops. The government contracted with various companies for them to furnish the armies with various necessities:

grain, fodder, shoes, and horses. In theory contracts were to be awarded to those firms which agreed to supply a given item at the lowest cost to the government. In practice, contracts were awarded in the secrecy of government offices to political cronies, or to those firms which contributed the sweetest bribes -- *pots de vin* in the language of the day -- to the politicians awarding them. Frequently the companies were without ready cash and when this occurred either the government itself had to purchase the items which were to be supplied or it had to advance the company enough money so that it could make the purchase. Thus in reality the company contracted only to deliver the supplies, not to procure them. The defects of this system during a time of economic disorder were many. The companies frequently defaulted on their contracts, pocketing the advance without supplying anything to the army. Others profiteered. Cerf Berr, hired to provide horses to Jourdan's army which the government acquired for him for 600 francs a head, resold them to the army for 1,500 francs a head. The inflation wreaked its havoc here also. The contractors covered themselves against the depreciation of the currency by inflating their prices, which in turn further exacerbated the depreciation.  

The Thermidorians attempted to alleviate the situation by authorizing their armies to make partial "requisitions" in their sectors. However, since the supplies "requisitioned" had to be paid for with worthless or nonexistent currency out of the army treasuries, the armies were back where they started. In the Sambre et Meuse frustration with the contractors increased throughout 1795. Representative Rene Gillet, who operated out of army headquarters and was Jourdan's closest collaborator, translated this frustration into increasingly sharply worded complaints about the worsening logistical situation. "I warn you ... that the Army of the Sambre et Meuse is always in the same poverty of horses. The contractor of wagons makes new promises every day and has not kept one. Lanchere has received the order to send to the army 3,000 horses which he said were in Holland; not a one has arrived. I invite you to examine attentively if this contractor will finally execute his contract, or if he will wait until the end of the war." Vainly he and Jourdan requested broader powers of requisition, but not until late autumn did the government allow them to overstep the limits of the marketplace to any great extent. Gillet sarcastically evaluated the regime's policy in the Rhineland as one of never having a fixed plan for anything; "a decision taken yesterday has already been changed by tomorrow ... everything is
arbitrary."51

Such conditions readily explain the paralysis of
the Sambre et Meuse on the Rhine throughout the summer.
Without food, horses, and bridging equipment, it could not
march. And Jourdan did not have the power to force the
contractors to supply them, the cash to purchase them, or
the authority to requisition them.

Jourdan could no longer rely upon the representatives
on mission to bear the brunt of the logistical burden.
The Thermidorians decided that in a republic returning to
normal political activity, government proconsuls were out
of place. So they began to reduce the number of representatives.
They recalled all those who had been on mission for over six
months and did not bother to replace eleven of them. Worse,
the authority of those representatives who remained was
weakened. The Thermidorians deprived them of their powers
of law enforcement and promotion: all suspensions and
arrests, as well as promotions, were provisional only until
the government approved them. The representatives henceforth
had to send all decrees to the Convention for approval
within twenty-four hours, and they also were deprived of the

51. Recueil des Actes, XXVI, p. 244, Gillet to the
Committee, 8/6/95, 8/11/95. The increasingly critical and
didactic language which Gillet used towards the government
during the summer testifies to the decreasing respect in
which it was held at army headquarters.
unlimited funding which they enjoyed under the Terror. By 1795 they were reduced to playing the roles of relatively powerless, overworked supervisors and advisors. By August there were only two with each army, and obviously these could not begin to duplicate the volume of work that their more numerous and powerful predecessors had accomplished.52

The endless frustration and strain, overwork and overexertion broke Jourdan's colleague Gillet. By September his health was so ruined that he had to take to his bed; by December he was dead -- at the age of thirty-three. His loss was a severe blow both to Jourdan and to his army. Jourdan needed his energy and toughness at a time when indiscipline and supply deficiencies were increasing dangerously; he also needed his blunt, no-nonsense approach when he explained the army's problems to the government and demanded that they be rectified. Gillet got results from the government, from the bureaucracy, and from the officials in the occupied territories that Jourdan by himself could not hope to obtain. Moreover, Gillet's absence from the council of war on October 4 was crucial to the rest of the campaign. He alone of the representatives might have induced the council to take the tough decisions necessary to capture Mayence; he alone might have forced the others to adopt one of Jourdan's plans and to relieve Pichegru of his

command if Pichegru failed to cooperate. The qualities which Gillet took with him to the grave were qualities which Jourdan and the French armies could ill afford to lose.

The Directory perpetuated the state of affairs. It assigned "commissioners" to supervise each army, but their powers were every bit as limited as the representatives' had been. Their primary responsibility was to assure that the generals observed the government's authority, not to insure that their armies were receiving enough food and supplies. Since there was only one commissioner per army, they could scarcely affect the mountain of logistical and disciplinary problems plaguing the French forces. As a result, more and more of the logistical work fell into the laps of Jourdan, his quartermaster-general, and their unreliable supply and transport services.

The army's supply administration had, by 1795, reverted back to the inefficiency and disorganization of 1793. There was little Jourdan or his quartermaster could do to correct this, because they had been deprived of their most effective weapons against the inept and negligent officials who caused it. They no longer had representatives to arrest malefactors or military tribunals to convict them on the spot. The penchant for corruption and profiteering, so epidemic among the contractors, had spread to the bureaucrats. Commission Haussmann described them as throwing themselves after the subsistence of the soldiers "like birds of prey; they traffic in their bread and clothing,
leaving them in the most pitiful abandon when they are sick, sending them insolently away when they justly complain. In a word, their wrongdoings affect and touch everything; since these monsters can satisfy their cupidity ... and enrich themselves at the expense of the people, this is all they desire." The relaxation of the Terror meant that there was nothing to deter them, hence they stole with impunity, administering "neither the inhabitants nor the soldiers nor the treasury." 53

If Jourdan, with quite limited effectiveness, was able to insure that his quartermaster curbed the "frightful disorganization" and corruption in his own supply services, he could do nothing to police the various agents subordinated directly to the government. His complaints about their abuses were acknowledged by the regime, but that was as far as matters went. Indeed the abuses by supply officials of every kind became so outrageous that Jourdan's generals began taking the law into their own hands, arbitrarily arresting and punishing any supply agent whom they believed guilty of an offense. Under pressure from the Directory Jourdan was forced to order his generals to cease and

53. Haussmann to the Committee, 1/12/95 (96?), Edmund Bonnal de Gauges, Les Representants en mission ..., IV, pp. 132-33.
desist and allow the culprits to be prosecuted in the military courts.\textsuperscript{54}

The supply shortages which resulted both from the depression and the logistical chaos caused by the depression were catastrophic. On November 4, 1795, the army lacked 23,000 coats, 10,000 trousers, 5,000 hats, 40,000 pairs of shoes, 10,000 pantaloons, 5,000 tents, and 100,000 sets of horseshoes and nails. The 40,000 men whom Jourdan concentrated on the Nahe required 18,750 quintals of bread a month, but there were only 12,000 available. Meat was even scarcer, and the army needed 380,000 francs to make up a deficit in meat "almost absolute." This same force needed 4,000 more horses for the transportation of provisions, and 8,000 more to pull the artillery. It suffered from a severe shortage of wagons and a complete absence of bridging equipment. To pay the contractors who might be able to supply the necessary provisions and materiel, the army possessed insufficient money.\textsuperscript{55}

The effects of these shortages on the officers and men of the Sambre et Meuse were devastating. For the men on the Nahe they meant sleeping uncovered in the snow without


\textsuperscript{55} A.G. Bl 64, Report of the chiefs of the administrations of the Sambre et Meuse to Jourdan, 11/4/95. The report does not mention how short of horses was the cavalry; whole squadrons were dismounted due to the lack of mounts.
provisions "as usual." For Marceau's soldiers they meant fighting the battle of Sulzbach after having gone three days without bread. For thousands they meant slogging through the mud and snow in bare feet without overcoats, with influenza and pneumonia as their reward. Famine stalked the army the entire time it campaigned on the east bank of the Rhine.  

Gunner Bricard recalled that "the rations were of poor quality, the provisions were very expensive, and we had almost no money because our assignats had lost ninety-five percent. The soldiers were obliged to cut plants, to kill cats . . . to subsist." The bread was made of bad flour, the meat was scarcely sufficient for soup, and the green peas produced dysentery. And all the while skin disease ravaged the troops. The officers were hardly better off than their men. Kleber found several literally in rags, wearing greasy caps instead of hats worthy of their rank, and with no money to buy better clothing. Thousands shared their plight. When the generals complained about the terrible condition of their men, it was like "speaking to the deaf." Championnet recalled that he "asked for shoes from the representatives and no one responds ... I beg you to tell the Commissary general to send me some or I will ..."  

be obliged to make more than 3,000 men march with bare feet."\(^57\)

The soldiers reacted to their misery by deserting and pillaging. The entire Republican army, 1,100,000 men strong at the end of 1794, had shrunk to 454,000 by the winter of 1795. Poncet's division, 10,000 strong on paper, was below 5,000 in December, and it had fought in exactly one engagement. Yet the depletion of strength in his division was average for the rest of the army. Kleber recalled that, during one two-day period, 400 men deserted from two demi-brigades.\(^58\) Those who remained looted and stole in order to find food and clothing. The government blamed Jourdan and his generals for the indiscipline and ordered them to work miracles to stop it. Uselessly Jourdan explained that "discipline would depend upon the measures which the government took to ameliorate the lot of the officers."

The officers received a bare eight francs a month in hard cash; the rest of their pay was in assignats. They had to scrounge for their food, clothing, and equipment just like their men. Under such conditions it is hardly surprising


\(^{58}\) Lefebvre, The Thermidorian, p. 163. A.G. Bl 67, Poncet to Jourdan, 12/18/95. Phipps, ibid. Desertion was even worse in the other armies; the Army of the Alps lost 1,000-2,000 men every ten days.
that they had difficulty enforcing discipline, or indeed that they felt little inclination to enforce it at all. The government's unwillingness to allow them to requisition aggravated their frustration; Jourdan repeatedly had to order that only authorized supply agents were allowed to requisition. To restore discipline, Jourdan took it upon himself to demote to the ranks on the spot any grenadier or non-commissioned officer who behaved badly, thereby bypassing the military courts, but he admitted that "all this is useless." Morale among the officers reached rock bottom. During a party thrown for some of them by the representatives, angry officers started a brawl.59

Jourdan thus was not defeated by the Austrians; he was defeated by the consequences of economic depression. The Sambre et Meuse was incapable of fighting the enemy on equal terms as long as the indiscipline and desertion continued unchecked. Until additional rations, clothing and equipment were furnished, the officers could not hope to restore order among their hungry, ill-clad men. As long as the depression persisted, the lack of supplies persisted. And the depression was destined to continue

59. A.G. Bl 65, Jourdan to the Directory, 11/23/95. Godechot, op cit, I, pp. 152-53. And yet as bad as the situation was in the Sambre et Meuse, it was even worse in the other armies. Perhaps the comradeship which reigned among Jourdan's officers helped keep morale higher than elsewhere; perhaps Jourdan's leadership helped too.
because the government had no intention of taking the only measures which might help bring it to an end. To solve the logistical problems, the Thermidarians would have had to abandon free enterprise and return to a controlled national economy geared towards war production and fixed prices. But because the government was committed to a policy of political normalcy and free enterprise, they could not return to authoritarian rule. So the supply shortages continued.

In early January, 1796, Jourdan traveled to Paris, both to recover his health and to meet with the Directory. The Directory gave him a flattering reception; it wined and dined him and presented him with a set of weapons from the "renowned" arms manufacturers of Versailles. He was the first army commander whom the new government had received, and perhaps it wished to impress the military by impressing him. But Jourdan had not traveled to the capital merely to be feted; he went to hold a series of conversations with Carnot on how to restore the army to fighting trim so that it could avoid the setbacks of the 1795 campaign.60

The measures which Jourdan proposed during these discussions revealed that he understood the economic roots of the army's problems no better than did the government. The army, he believed, had to rest and reorganize before

anything else. Thus the first order of business was to put it into winter quarters. During the period of recuperation, the economy could stabilize and the government could accumulate enough cash to be able to increase the trickle of supplies flowing to the army to a flood. Meanwhile he suggested a government sponsored program of constructing additional depots, workshops for the manufacture of shoes, uniforms, and weapons, and repair shops for the artillery, all as close to the front as possible. This would both increase the amount of clothing and other effects available to the soldiers and at the same time place less pressure on the army's weak transport service, since these items would not have to be shipped a great distance. 61

When the government had insured that an adequate flow of supplies to the front would be maintained, Jourdan proposed that a formidable army under a single commander invade Germany. This army should follow essentially the same strategy as in 1795; it should endeavor always to operate on the flanks of the enemy army. Because it might not be possible to maintain effective communications with France, and since Jourdan distrusted the ability of the transport service

61. A.G. Bl 63, unfinished note of Jourdan on the situation of the army, 10/22/95. Representative Garrau showed this note to the government. There is no reason to believe that Jourdan's ideas on the forthcoming campaign changed to any extent between October and his meeting with Carnot in January.
to keep the army supplied while on the march, the army could subsist by placing all of western Germany under requisition. The general-in-chief should be granted sweeping powers to levy all contributions and establish all regulations necessary to nourish and maintain the army on the spot. Previously, supply agents under the loose control of the minister of war handled all requisitions, but this did not work well because these men tended to steal to their heart's content. The general-in-chief should direct all requisitions, and his own officers and subordinates should carry them out. These "contributions" should mainly be in hard currency, and once collected should pass under the control of the army's quartermaster, who would use them to purchase, "on the spot," the army's necessities from private companies.62

The Directory's eventual plan of campaign owed much to Jourdan's suggestions. The Directory ultimately decided that in the spring of 1796, the French should invade Germany once more, always operating on the outside flanks of their foes and depending upon the resources of Germany to subsist. Thus conquering and placing as much of west Germany under contribution as possible became the key to the campaign. The alternative was to bind the army to the Republic's depressed economy and inefficient logistics and allow for the possibility of another Mayence. However, the Directory omitted two

62. Ibid.
crucial parts of Jourdan's program. They did not grant the general-in-chief unlimited powers to levy contributions and spend the proceeds in any way he saw fit. This would have enabled him to provision and supply the army more efficiently and honestly, but it also would have made him a veritable Julius Caesar, and for political reasons the Directory could not allow this. Instead, the Directory continued the wasteful system of requiring all contributions to be sent to the Ministry of Finance before they were spent; and it placed the army's logistics, as well as the levying of contributions, under the overburdened supervision of the army commissioner. Thus the army remained at the mercy of a bureaucracy. Secondly, the Directory did not unite the French forces in Germany under a single commander but left them divided in two independent armies, which were only loosely controlled from Paris.

From January until May of 1796 the Sambre et Meuse rested and reorganized while Jourdan, quartermaster Blanchard, and army commissioner Joubert did their best to restore it to health. They stockpiled provisions and supplies, often scouring the occupied territories for whatever they needed. They attempted to alleviate the plight of their destitute officers. Commissioner Pflieger, an ex-Jacobin deputy on mission, attacked the critical shortage of horses. He fixed an adequate ration for all army horses, had additional stables built, sold those animals which were broken down,
urged the Directory to sever all relations with those contractors who had defaulted on their contracts, and finally demanded a levée of horses from the interior of France. By April his energetic efforts had reduced the horse deficit to about 7,000 for both armies on the Rhine.  

But by April it was also evident that the reliance upon the workings of the marketplace to solve the army's logistical problems was not bearing fruit. The Directory's ill-advised experiment with the mandats merely perpetuated the monetary crisis; the army remained as short of hard currency as ever. The grain contractors defaulted on their agreement to furnish the army with bread due to a "lack of funds" while the Lanchére company defaulted on a contract for transport for the same reason. The Fockday company agreed to deliver grain to the army in April but it did not do so until June and then it sold the grain to the army for 24 livres a quintal although the market price was 16 livres. The Directory left the horse levée demanded by Pflieger up to each department so that of the 40,000 horses expected the armies received 20,000. When Pflieger requested the passage of a forced loan to purchase more, the Directory refused. The transport service remained destitute of wagons and wagon drivers until Jourdan requisitioned both from the Rhineland.  


64. Ibid, pp. 97-100, 143-44. Godechot cites letters from both Blanchard and Commissioner Joubert which reported the repeated failures of the contractors to fulfill their contracts.
Jourdan could do little to assist events other than to call Joubert's and Blanchard's attention to specific problems; he was not authorized to requisition anything that he deemed necessary. So slow was progress that Joubert felt obliged to go to Paris to inform the government personally of the "critical condition of the army," and to ask for help.65

On the eve of the opening of the campaign, it was obvious that the Sambre et Meuse was not ready to resume operations. "The magazines for food rations and the parks for animals were absolutely empty; the occupied territory did not provide the requisitions they were supposed to and the non-incorporated territories were incapable of furnishing anything; the army did not have any money, its equipment was in bad condition, the clothing magazines were empty at a time when the soldiers were badly dressed and lacked shirts, pants and shoes; the territorial mandats were not accepted ..." The manpower losses from the preceding campaign had not been made good, and desertion still bothered the army somewhat. Even so the government was not conscripting any additional soldiers. When Jourdan and Joubert requested reinforcements the Directory proposed to raise troops from the conquered territories by drafting 3,000 Belgians whom it supposed would be willing to "sacrifice to maintain the glory and liberty

65. Ibid, Jourdan to the Directory, 4/26/96. Jourdan wrote in support of one of Joubert's complaints that Joubert "knew the conditions he was talking about."
common to both them and the Republic." It further proposed to form battalions of loyal troops out of vagabonds and Austrian deserters! Both of these proposals were ridiculous. But to Jourdan and Joubert's complaints that the army was not yet in a condition to advance, the Directory turned a deaf ear.66

Thus Jourdan began the campaign of 1796 handicapped by many of the same problems which had caused the campaign of 1795 to collapse in defeat: a depressed economy, a demobilized war effort, a divided supreme command, and a chaotic logistical system. As a result the entire campaign hinged upon the ability of the French armies to loot Germany as quickly, thoroughly, and efficiently as possible, for without Germany's wealth and resources they could not live. One historian argued that the French should have remained on the defensive until the Directory's provisioning and resupplying had been completed. It would have been better still if the government had made a decision, either to mobilize the country to support the war or to declare for peace.67

66. Ibid., decree of Jourdan and Joubert of 5/24/96.

67. Ibid. Godechot, who is generally hostile to the French military, admits that of the three major armies the Sambre et Meuse had enjoyed the best job of resupplying and reorganization -- a tribute to both Jourdan's and Joubert's energy and application.
VII. THE CAMPAIGN OF 1796

I. The Advance

The Campaign of 1796 was the turning point in Jourdan's military career. In 1796 he suffered his first unquestionable defeat as an army commander and as a result his reputation as one of revolutionary France's foremost military leaders suffered a blow from which it never recovered. Writers have traditionally viewed the defeat as the result of faulty strategy and faulty tactics: the French adopted the antiquated method of operating their two armies in Germany separately on exterior lines. Consequently the Austrians were able to remain concentrated between them and defeat both in detail. So Jourdan lost because his opponent employed a more adept strategy than he and his colleagues. As will be seen, this is a greatly oversimplified explanation of what went wrong in 1796. In reality, the major cause of Jourdan's — and France's — defeat was not faulty strategy, but faulty preparation and faulty logistics.¹

Viewed in comparison with his triumph in 1794, Jourdan's failure in 1796 seems to be a paradox. In 1794, with a largely semi-disciplined army under largely untried young officers Jourdan blasted his opponents entirely out

¹. For example, see Henri Jomini, Histoire Critique et Militaire ... vol. VIII. T. A. Dodge, Napoleon: the Art of War (Boston, 1907), vol. I. Most modern writers have essentially adhered to Jomini's views when discussing the campaign.
of the Low Countries; in 1796, with a veteran, disciplined army under seasoned and skilled officers he went down to defeat. The solution to this paradox lay in Paris. In 1794, the Committee saw to it that Jourdan's army was properly supported: it provided Jourdan with the means to feed, clothe, equip, discipline, and reinforce his battalions. In 1796 the Directory provided him with insufficient means to accomplish any of these things. As in 1795, the Directory embarked upon an ambitious offensive only vaguely realizing the difficulties involved, and as a result it did not properly prepare its armies. If the Committee obtained results by putting its generals between the guillotine and victory, it also afforded its generals the means to avoid the guillotine and carry out their tasks. The Directory failed miserably in both of these respects.

* * * * *

When Jourdan received his orders to resume operations late in May, he was still laboring to reorganize his supply services and to accumulate enough provisions for the campaign. His and Joubert's complaints had not convinced the Directory that logistically the Sambre et Meuse was far from ready. It remained short of shoes, blankets, uniforms and horses. The transport services, so crucial to the program of requisitioning which was supposed to enable the army to live, was in dire need of everything from drivers to horses.

As in 1795, Jourdan was to advance against an enemy
equal, if not superior, in numbers. Because of the heavy desertion during the winter and the failure of the government to take measures either to halt the desertion or replace those who fled, the Sambre et Meuse was understrength. It numbered 77,792 effectives, as opposed to the 93,778 Austrian soldiers of the army of the Archduke Karl. Of the total number of soldiers in Germany at the outset of the campaign, the Austrians outnumbered the two French armies 176,554 men to 157,788. The detachment of 25,000 Austrians to Italy to reinforce the army attempting to contain Bonaparte and the defection of many of the west German troops eventually brought Austrian numbers to a point where the French had a slight numerical superiority. But this would be negated by the fact that as the French advanced farther from their bases they had to detail men to guard their lines of communication, while the Austrians neared their home and its ready supply of reinforcements.  

More serious was Jourdan's deficiency in cavalry. The French began the campaign with about 18,000 poorly mounted troopers in all Germany to oppose 43,000 well mounted Austrians. The reason for this weakness was the government's unwillingness to supply their armies with a sufficient

number of horses. Jourdan commanded between 10,000 and 11,000 horsemen against twice as many Austrians, and in the kind of offensive campaign which he was about to wage, this shortage of cavalry was crucial. "A strong superiority in cavalry is of great importance in covering retreats ... The superiority of this arm gives to the rear guards the means to hold firm without fear and to assure retreats in good order which the enemy will not know how to interrupt. The corps of Wartensleben and Latour ... were saved only by the deployment of their numerous squadrons." 3 The Austrians' superiority in cavalry also enabled them to make regular communications between Jourdan and the Army of the Rhine under Moreau all but impossible. Marauding enemy squadrons intercepted French couriers with such ease that Jourdan and Moreau each operated for days without knowing what the other was doing.

In their conference in January, Carnot and Jourdan had agreed in principle that the French should operated on the outer flanks of the enemy army. In his directive of April 10 which outlined the strategy for the offensive, Carnot affirmed this plan, ordering Jourdan always to operate on the outside flank of his foe since this allows the aggressor to "constrict all [the enemy's] movements and

force him to take positions which expose him to complete
defeat." Carnot, however, added a few new touches that he
and Jourdan apparently had not discussed. Jourdan was to
cross the Rhine, attack the Austrian right, and attract the
enemy's reserves, while General Jean Moreau was to mount
a similar feint with his army on the middle Rhine. Once
the enemy had reacted to these diversions, Marceau with 25,000
men was to march clear across the rear of Moreau's army
and cross the Rhine above Strasbourg. Both Jourdan and
Moreau felt that Carnot's plan was needlessly complex.
In a joint letter they proposed that Marceau be left with
the Sambre et Meuse, lest Jourdan have to face the Archduke
Karl's entire army with but 45,000 men, that the plan be
simplified to allow Moreau to attack across the upper Rhine,
and that they be allowed to operate as they saw fit should
the enemy seize the offensive first. Carnot agreed, but
the basic strategy of operating on exterior lines remained
in effect.  

Jourdan thus began the campaign laboring under several
distinct disadvantages. His army was deficient in provisions
and supplies, men and horses. It was expected to live off

the country with insufficient transport to carry what was requisitioned. Furthermore, the plan of campaign limited Jourdan's freedom of maneuver. He was reduced either to defeating the enemy head on, or enveloping him by his outside flank. He could not, if he so desired, maneuver in a way to join his army with Moreau's.

These fundamental weaknesses were not felt immediately. The Austrian army also had its problems. Its position astride the Rhine with its flanks on the east bank and its center on the west bank covering Mayence, was a poor one. Both flanks were vulnerable to precisely the sort of movement that Carnot planned. When the Archduke Karl suggested that the Mayence salient be abandoned, the Austrian War Council refused. So when Jourdan began the offensive by ordering Kleber with two divisions to advance south from Dusseldorf towards the Austrians' communications, everything went as planned. Kleber attacked and defeated an enemy detachment on the Sieg on May 31, then outflanked and defeated another enemy force near Altenkirchen four days later. The Austrians retreated to the Lahn River with Kleber in pursuit. Jourdan rapidly crossed the Rhine at Neuweid and brought three more divisions to Kleber's aid. His thrust had its desired effect. Karl abandoned the Mayence salient, shifted his reserves north, and began to build up his forces on the Lahn opposite the Sambre et Meuse.6

The detachment of General Wurmser with 25,000 men to fight Bonaparte in Italy left the Archduke in sole command of the Hapsburg Empire's forces in Germany. Karl was not only the Empire's foremost soldier, he was also one of the most talented commanders in all of Europe. He was a man of unusual intelligence, with an excellent grasp of the fundamentals of strategy and tactics which, in his writings, he reduced to a geometric science. If Karl was never able to overcome the basic inability of the Austrian army to move and to strike rapidly -- a failing that many writers blame on him rather than the Austrian system -- he never made the mistakes which a good opponent could use to seize a decisive advantage. The Duke of Wellington, judging by Karl's books and plans of campaign, believed that the Archduke's military contemporaries were "unworthy to fasten the latchet of his shoes." His major weakness was his health: Karl was an epileptic. The disease tended to make him moody and hesitant, at times incapacitating him altogether and thereby leaving his army without a commander. Nevertheless, he was a large step up in talent from Coburg and Clerfayt and the toughest opponent Jourdan had yet faced.  

7. R. Phipps, The Armies of the First French Republic, II, p. 49. F. Lorraine Petre, Napoleon and the Archduke Charles (London, 1909), pp. 35-39. Napoleon owed, in part, his victory at Eckmuhl in 1809 to the fact that on the day Napoleon's army was most vulnerable, the Archduke was in the grips of a seizure, unable to direct his army -- and launch his attack.
By June 15, Karl had concentrated on the Lahn a force superior to Jourdan's. The line of the Lahn was longer than Jourdan could comfortably defend, and Karl used his manpower advantage deftly to outflank the Sambre et Meuse on the left near Wetzlar, roughly handling General Lefebvre's division in the process. With the enemy closer to his communications than he was himself, and with orders to maneuver rather than fight, Jourdan quickly ordered a retreat. The French avoided the Austrian envelopment by the simple process of outmarching their foes. Jourdan sent Kleber back to Dusseldorf while he recrossed the Rhine with the rest of his army. Carnot approved the retreat without comment, and the withdrawal would have gone without incident had not Kleber decided to surprise the pursuing Austrians. In a sharp little engagement near Ukerath Kleber received a repulse for his efforts. When Jourdan heard of Kleber's action he reproved him, evidently with some sternness, for involving himself in an entirely needless action. It is possible that the sensitive Kleber resented it, and that the later falling out between the two men had its origin in this incident.8

Jourdan's thrust achieved its purpose, for it drew the majority of the Austrian army northward and away from the upper Rhine where Moreau was to cross. By June 16 some 17,000 badly led Austrians without any hope of immediate reinforcement were all that opposed the Army of the Rhine. Unfortunately the Directory let Moreau cross at his own pace, and the commander delayed the passage until June 24. Then, once across he proceeded to linger near Rastadt until July 4, allowing Karl time to march south with his army to confront him. Karl later wrote that "it is astonishing that Moreau did not profit from all his advantages with more activity," instead of permitting his enemy time to recover. Moreau's delay lost the French an opportunity that they were not to have again. 9

With the greater part of the Austrian army having marched south to face Moreau, Carnot ordered Jourdan to resume the offensive. He was to advance against that portion of the enemy forces facing him, force it into a decisive engagement, and destroy it. He was to move with speed, avoid sieges, avoid the defensive, and above all avoid taking up positions perpendicular to the Rhine since the enemy could always turn them. Carnot believed that Jourdan should have little trouble overwhelming the Austrian force which Carnot

believed to be far inferior in numbers to the Sambre et Meuse. Carnot was mistaken. The Austrian army of Count Wartensleben numbered upward of 38,000 men. Once Jourdan had detached Marceau with 20,000 men to blockade Mayence and its large (fifteen to twenty-thousand man) garrison, he would have about 46,000 soldiers to defeat Wartensleben -- a slender advantage of 8,000 men. And in the all-important cavalry arm, he was outnumbered by about two to one. 10

For the third time in less than a year the Sambre et Meuse crossed the Rhine and marched southwest towards the valley of the Main. As Kleber advanced again from Dusseldorf, Jourdan recrossed the river at Neuweid and united their forces. After several skirmishes Jourdan caught Wartensleben with his army divided, some on the Lahn, and some en route from the Main trying to join the former part. For a number of reasons Jourdan failed to capitalize on the best opportunity to destroy Wartensleben during the entire campaign. According to one source, Jourdan delayed his attack a full day in order to bring up much needed provisions and supplies, which allowed Wartensleben to concentrate his forces and avoid having his army broken in two "for the rest of the campaign." According to Jourdan, Lefebvre attacked and routed an Austrian detachment, thereby frightening Wartensleben into

retreating before the rest of the French army could come to grips. Whatever the reasons, the chance was missed.  

Jourdan continued to pursue the enemy and caught him again on July 9. The Austrians were in position along a range of wooded hills overlooking the villages of Bauernheim and Offenheim. This time Kleber became prematurely engaged with the enemy rear guard before Jourdan could deploy the rest of the army for a decisive encounter. Again the enemy evaded the decisive battle that Jourdan desired; after some sharp fighting they fled, suffering 1,200 killed and wounded and 600 prisoners. Jourdan paused for a day to allow his supply trains to catch up, and then he continued the advance on into the Main Valley. By July 16 he had put Mayence under blockade and he had captured Frankfort, but he had not inflicted serious damage upon the enemy army. 

As the Sambre et Meuse advanced, Jourdan and Joubert began levying the "contributions" which, in theory, would provide the army with its provisions and supplies and enable the Directory to pay for the campaign. Their usual procedure upon entering a given area was to impose a contribution based upon the amount of wealth which they believed to be present. These contributions were mainly in hard currency, but usually they also included different quantities of foodstuffs and effects such as shoes, pants, blankets, and horses.

Various government bureaucrats under the supervision of Joubert and quartermaster-general Dubreton would then actually collect the contributions; they would ship the currency back to Paris, while they stored the provisions and effects in army magazines until they could be distributed to the troops.

Usually Jourdan set the contributions at too low a figure. He initially imposed a one-million-livre contribution on the area between the Sieg and Lahn Rivers, but Joubert increased it to three million since the area was fertile and had not been ravaged by French stragglers, whose conduct had been better than usual. The original assessment for Frankfort was six million; Joubert raised it to eight million, a figure that the Directory later hiked to ten million. One is tempted to believe that Jourdan imposed light contributions in order to show leniency to the luckless inhabitants of the areas in the path of the French army, and certainly he received numerous requests from various German magistrates to go easy on their little states. However, it is more likely that he merely underestimated the wealth and resources in given areas. After Ernouf had imposed an eight-million-livre contribution on all of Franconia — evidently at the request of the Franconian magistrates — Joubert convinced Jourdan that Franconia could easily contribute twelve million. Jourdan then wrote Ernouf that the Franconian deputies were taking advantage of "our good
faith," and could indeed pay twelve million. In certain instances he authorized quartermaster Dubreton to take hostages until contributions were paid in full. Jourdan was a proponent of requisitioning; he would hardly be inclined to hesitate deliberately in the confiscation of wealth and resources which he believed to be essential to the survival of his army. 13

The dividing line between requisitioning and outright theft was a very fine one, and one not always observed by the government. On July 20, the Directory instructed Jourdan on how he was to handle the wealth of the city of Frankfort. He was to impose a ten-million-livre contribution -- an increase of two million over Joubert's suggested figure, and to confiscate all materiel and provisions useful to the army, as well as any property which might have belonged to the departed Austrians. Jourdan was not to allow himself to be "dazzled" by the protests of the citizens that they had legitimately purchased the property in question; he was to confiscate it anyway. But this was not all. Jourdan was told that "the Directory, always envious of assembling on the territory of the Republic some masterpieces of art," invited him to list all art objects which might appear with "brilliance" in French museums. He was to be sure to include the painting of "the 'Twelve Apostles' of Piazetta," as


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
well as all the remaining crown jewels of the Holy Roman Emperors! Then, as if to reassure Jourdan of their sincerity and integrity, the Directors ordered him to prevent any "dilapidations" which might add to the burden of the unfortunate Frankforters!¹⁴

Jourdan may have been a harsh conqueror; but he was no thief. He acquiesced to the delaying tactics of the Frankfort government, which ultimately contributed only four million of the ten million livres levied. He left the rest of the decree to be executed by his overworked quartermaster and, one wonders if the crown jewels ever found their way to a French museum. When the government decreed that its agents and officials could force the Frankforters to accept mandats for hard cash -- at one thousand percent of the mandats' market value -- Jourdan, on the advice of Joubert, tried to prevent the inevitable rash of speculation by prohibiting any soldier or administrator from entering Frankfort except on official business. He further declared that the mandats could be exchanged only at their market value -- in other words for whatever price the inhabitants were willing to give for them. These measures were a testimony to Jourdan's honesty at a time when the representatives of the French government in non-French territory were all too

often stealing everything that was not fastened down. They also may have been the beginning of his unpopularity with the Directory. At a time when Jourdan had barely collected four million livres from Germany, Bonaparte had already sent the government thirty-two million from Italy.  

As Jourdan continued his pursuit of the Austrians up the Main Valley, the government gave in to a veritable orgy of unwarranted optimism. On July 20, the Directory again ordered him to turn the outer flank of the enemy, whom it mistakenly believed still to be near Mayence. The Austrians could not menace Jourdan's own flank as he made this maneuver because "according to our calculations the enemy can scarcely oppose to either you or General Moreau more than 50,000 men." Subsequent orders urged Jourdan to hasten his advance and bring Wartensleben to battle; he should have little difficulty in defeating Wartensleben since "he is quite weak and should be easy to overwhelm." Afterwards Jourdan could detach a division towards Bohemia to watch Wartensleben's remnants while the rest of the army marched to Ratisbon and united with Moreau. The Directory was encouraged in its optimism by Joubert.


16. The Directory to Jourdan, orders of 7/20/96 and 7/31/96, ibid, pp. 265-75. As of July 31, Director La Revelliere-Lepeaux took over the government's correspondence with Jourdan.
The commissioner jubilantly reported that the enemy army was near collapse, that it could no longer stand up to the French soldiers, and that it was disintegrating through desertion. The French soldiers were advancing enthusiastically, believing, as Joubert obviously did, that peace was just around the next bend. "The debris of the Austrian army ... hurries to unite with that of Prince Charles, to retreat to defend the territories of the House of Austria."  

It is not clear what prompted Joubert to be so overconfident. To be sure, desertion from Wartensleben's army was substantial; moreover some of Jourdan's advance guard commanders were reporting grossly inflated enemy losses after the various rear-guard combats. But if Jourdan and his divisional generals did not believe that such questionable evidence indicated the imminent collapse of the enemy army, one wonders why Joubert did. Perhaps Joubert believed that the enemy's continuous retreat meant that they were incapable of further resistance. He should have known better. He was a veteran commissioner; he had served on mission with the army in 1795. But if he was conscientious enough in his political duties, he was utterly incapable of recognizing the military realities of the campaign. He allowed himself to be completely misled by the apparent ease with which the Sambre et Meuse was driving back its foes. When Jourdan

protested that Wartensleben's army was far from collapse, Joubert brushed aside Jourdan's complaints as overly pessimistic. Indeed, when Jourdan continued to complain that the campaign was far from won, Joubert wrote the Directory attributing Jourdan's complaints to his stomach ailment and the pressures of his command. Perhaps Jourdan would see things more optimistically if the Directory wrote expressing its confidence in him; "some expression of affection would contribute not a little to sustain him and infuse into his spirits some calmness and satisfaction in his difficult task." And then Joubert again described the strategic situation as better than ever.\(^\text{18}\)

Incredibly the Directory believed Joubert instead of Jourdan. That it took the strategic advice of a civilian over that of a soldier was inexcusable, notwithstanding Jourdan's tendency towards pessimism. It is likely that Joubert's carefree reports were what the Directors -- Carnot included -- wanted to believe. In any case, Jourdan's attempts to counteract such overconfidence were futile. He assured the Directory that, in spite of reports to the contrary, Wartensleben's army numbered at least 30,000 men,

\[^{18}\text{Joubert to the Directory, 7/31/96. Inflated reports of enemy losses were a standard feature of warfare in the 18th century -- as they are today. With a year's experience as an army commissioner behind him Joubert should have realized this. Why he considered Jourdan's warnings exaggerated is a mystery.}\]
that the bulk of the Austrian forces were with the Archduke, and that annihilating Wartensleben was not going to be so easy; his advice fell upon deaf ears. Indeed, the Directory's optimism was completely misplaced. The Austrians still had well over 100,000 men in Germany, and Wartensleben still commanded at least 35,000, including a sizeable cavalry force. His reluctance to fight was not because he was too weak to offer resistance, but because the Archduke had ordered him to fall back slowly towards the upper Danube, delaying Jourdan's advance as much as possible while avoiding a full-scale battle. Karl had decided to retire towards the Danube until an opportunity presented itself for him to defeat the two French armies in detail. Far from being a sign of collapse, the Austrian retreat was the consequence of sound strategic considerations.\textsuperscript{19}

The story of the next month was one of constant and futile pursuit, of innumerable forced marches and rear-guard actions as Jourdan vainly attempted to bring the Austrians to battle. The Sambre et Meuse pursued the enemy up the wooded, hilly Main Valley. On August 1 it was near Schweinfurt where it halted to rest and reprovision. From there it pursued Wartensleben via Wurzburg and Bamberg to Nuremberg, 

\textsuperscript{19} A.G. B1 77, Jourdan to the Directory, 8/5/96. The Archduke Karl, op cit, II, pp. 195-96. Wartensleben may indeed have been suffering losses, but he was also receiving reinforcements.
always in contact with the Austrian rear guard. On repeated occasions Jourdan deployed in the hope of forcing a battle with the Austrians, but each time the Austrians withdrew, covering their retreat with their powerful cavalry. Once Jourdan even deviated from the strategy of always maneuvering by his outside flank and attempted to turn the enemy left on the Regnitz, but the attempt ended without results.

On another occasion Jourdan ordered a silent advance through densely wooded country, hoping to surprise the enemy in their positions before they could fall back. He had earlier issued orders to the advance-guard commanders not to "compromise" themselves if they met a superior force and to "await the arrival of the entire army" before they attacked. Nevertheless the future Marshal Michael Ney impetuously assaulted one of the enemy's posts and became so heavily engaged that Jourdan had to attack prematurely to relieve him. Forewarned, the Austrians again fled, eliminating any chance of a decisive engagement. 20

That Wartensleben was under heavy pressure there can be no doubt. His casualties were considerable and he was not delaying Jourdan's advance in the least. The Archduke was quite displeased by his rapid retreat, and on two occasions ordered him to slow Jourdan down. But Wartensleben

was unable to do so.\textsuperscript{21}

A glimpse of Jourdan going about his daily work is provided by a Prussian officer who had some business with him during the advance. "General Jourdan arrived at six p.m. at Erlangen where he placed his headquarters. Shutting himself up with some of his aides, the government commissioner [Joubert], the intendant of provisions [probably Dubreton], several officers and heads of departments, he at once drew up the orders for the operations of the following day ... At nine p.m. all the business was finished, and the orderly officers were on their way to their different divisions. Each general of division received information on the general aim of the movements, and in particular on what concerns his division. It is for him afterwards to regulate the details of the work assigned to him. I could only admire the order which reigns on this point." During the day Jourdan was on horseback, frequently right up with the advanced guards, and on two occasions he was nearly taken by the enemy while reconnoitering.\textsuperscript{22}

Yet it would be wrong to allow this picture of energy and order blind us to Jourdan's being under considerable emotional stress. Twice he fell victim to his chronic stomach complaint, and once he was so ill that he had to turn


\textsuperscript{22} Phipps, \textit{op cit}, II, pp. 304-05.
the command of the army over to Kleber for several days. Joubert described the illness as a "bilious colic" brought on by the indiscipline of the army, the logistical problems, and the pressure from the Directory to make the campaign more successful — and profitable. Indeed Joubert at one point informed the government that Jourdan was very concerned that the Directory would blame him for the shortcomings of the advance and remove him from command.23

The advance had failed to achieve its primary objective — the destruction of Wartensleben's army. Jourdan was unable to destroy it because he was unable to bring it to battle, and he was unable to bring it to battle for several reasons. One was a lack of information. Because southwest Germany was hostile to the French, it was difficult to obtain news of the enemy from the population. In addition, the Directory had neglected to furnish the army with decent maps so that often Jourdan had a very poor knowledge of the terrain. As a result he had to move cautiously at times. The shortage of intelligence could have been overcome had the French possessed a numerous, aggressive cavalry that could have hung on the heels of the enemy and reported his every move, but the French cavalry was poorly mounted, outnumbered, and consequently not very active. It was unable either to collect


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
enough information, or to apply the relentless pressure that often turns a retreat into a rout. As long as the Austrian cavalry could prevent the French from penetrating its protective screen, the rest of the army could safely avoid the clutches of its pursuers. Thirdly, the French were hampered by the terrain: rolling, wooded country with countless streams and small rivers meandering at the bottom of deep gullies bordered by steep slopes. There were but two roads running in the southwest direction of Jourdan's advance, and lateral communications were difficult. Such terrain was ideal for the Austrian rear guards, for one well positioned behind a stream or on top of a wooded ridge commanding one of the main roads could hold up the advance for hours. For the French merely to flank a holding force out of its position was difficult and time-consuming.24

Jourdan also was forced to march with his divisions more widely scattered than he would otherwise have desired. The terrain and lack of roads was one reason for this and subsistence was another. The army was depending heavily upon requisitions from the immediate area for its food, so unless the troops were well spread out, they could not cover enough territory to gather provisions for their needs. Requisitioning was hindering the pursuit in another way too, because it

---

caused many soldiers to be absent from the ranks at times when they were needed to attack the enemy. The episodic food shortages induced others to leave the ranks and forage on their own. These descended upon neighboring villages and pillaged them, and when their officers attempted to force them to return to their units, the stragglers often thrust bayonets at them and sometimes shot at them. So many men were straggling that divisions were arriving in camp at night with only a third or a quarter of their men present for duty. The others would wander in at all hours. Jourdan would order attacks which required a division, only to find a mere brigade available. With the army strung out in a long cordon, the men often dispersed in requisitioning details (or looting), Jourdan was unable, if an opportunity presented itself, to concentrate his forces for an attack.25

Jourdan thus was facing obstacles that tactics could do little to overcome. Wartensleben could stand his ground until there was danger of a battle; then he could retreat, protected by the terrain and his powerful cavalry. "A more accelerated advance would have produced no other results than to hasten the retreat of the Austrians."26

Jourdan has been criticized for not sidestepping Wartensleben's army to the right and marching straight


for the Danube and a rendezvous with Moreau.\textsuperscript{27} By
neglecting to do so, Jourdan perpetuated the faulty strategy
of operating on exterior lines and failing to unite the two
French armies into a single Napoleonic mass of maneuver,
and thus contributed significantly to the ultimate failure
of the campaign. This is a case of the proposed cure being
worse than the disease. Had Jourdan marched south for Ratisbon
he would have placed his dwindling army between two fires —
the Archduke's to the south, Wartensleben's to the north.
It would not have sufficed to mask Wartensleben with a small
portion of the army while the rest marched for the Danube,
because Wartensleben was almost as strong as the entire
Sambre et Meuse. Once on the Danube, Jourdan would have had
to stand by helplessly and await Moreau's arrival. He had
no bridges with which to cross the river, and no clear
knowledge of Moreau's whereabouts — indeed at the time,
Moreau was maneuvering away from the Sambre et Meuse rather
than towards it.\textsuperscript{28}

A proper concentration of the two armies required
the orders of the Directory. But the Directory needed swift,
regular communication with its armies to order such a

\textsuperscript{27} See for example, Jomini, \textit{op cit}, VIII; Phipps,
\textit{op cit}, II; Hippolyte Carnot, \textit{Memoires sur Carnot II};
T. A. Dodge, \textit{Napoleon and the Art of War} (4 volumes; Boston,
1907); not to mention the 19th century French historians
such as Michelet and Thiers.

concentration: it needed to know where they were, and to be able to get in touch with them within a day's notice. But swift communications were lacking entirely. There were only two bad roads leading from the front in the Main Valley to the nearest bridge over the Rhine at Neuweid; from there it was another two-hundred-fifty-odd miles to Paris. A dispatch could reach Paris only as fast as a horse could cover this vast distance over the poor roads of the era. Thus communications between Paris and the front took between seven and ten days one way. This time lag often rendered the Directory's orders useless, since, by the time it reacted to the news from the front and issued its orders, the situation had changed. The weakness in the strategy pursued was not that exterior lines were inherently deficient; the weakness was structural. The Directory was too far away, given the primitive communications of 1796, to coordinate the movements of the two armies properly from a desk in Paris. As Jourdan had foreseen, a single commander for both armies was needed in Germany, able to direct operations on the spot. Communications between Jourdan and Moreau were equally bad. The lack of French cavalry allowed Austrian hussars to blanket the area between the two armies unchallenged, intercepting all of the French messengers. Jourdan had to send his couriers to Moreau by way of the west bank of the Rhine in order to insure that his dispatches got through. For nine and ten days...
in succession Jourdan received no news from Moreau at all. On August 8, when Jourdan confidently expected Moreau to be about two days' march away, he was shocked to learn that Moreau was actually miles in the rear held up on the Neckar River. These were difficulties which only modern technology could have overcome; unfortunately there were no telephones nor telegraphs in west Germany in 1796.

It is unlikely that the Directory would have united the two armies even if it had been in closer touch with them. By August it believed that the campaign had been won. On July 31, Director La Revelliere-Lepeaux instructed Jourdan to consider sending a division to Bohemia to levy contributions, now that Wartensleben was able to oppose his advance with only a thin "screen" of troops. In subsequent letters, La Revelliere-Lepeaux drifted even further from reality; he suggested that Jourdan detach a part of his force to Saxony to pressure that state into signing a peace more advantageous to France, and further requested that Jourdan detach troops to escort a convoy of French merchandise to the Leipzig fair! Jourdan's protests that the campaign was not yet won went unheeded. So overconfident was the government that it ordered Moreau to operate on the south bank of the Danube, with a view towards eventually

lending a helping hand to Bonaparte through the Tyrol and harrassing the rear of the Austrian army in Italy. "Prince Charles, reduced to half his forces by losses and garrisons detached ... takes the road down the Danube. Moreau and Jourdan press it with energy on both flanks. The campaign appears to already be beyond any unfortunate reversal."

Such overconfidence, even considering the ebullient reports from Joubert, was disastrous. For Jourdan to have taken it upon himself to march south to join Moreau, precisely when the Directory was ordering Moreau to march south to aid Bonaparte, would have been the height of folly. 30

On August 19, Jourdan had reached the Naab River in the hills southeast of Nuremberg, some twenty-one miles from Ratisbon. The day began as if it was going to be a carbon copy of the day before, and the day before that. The advanced guards -- light infantry and cavalry under Ney and Mortier -- began to fight with the Austrian rear guards. Jourdan brought up reinforcements to help Ney and Mortier cross the stream. But after they had seized several bridgeheads, resistance stiffened. Wartensleben reinforced his defenders and checked the French advance. To the right Grenier attempted to flank the Austrian defenders who were holding the

---

advanced guards. His division had to cross a marsh and take two hamlets to do it, and in sharp fighting during which one hamlet burned to the ground, he also was held.  

At first it appeared to be a temporary delay. The Austrian flanks were somewhat exposed, and Jourdan was sure that they would retreat as soon as he launched a serious assault. But the Austrians did not retreat; they redeployed themselves in a very formidable position. The French remained on the Naab, excepting Bernadotte's division which was detached to the southeast in hopes of establishing communication with Moreau. As Jourdan rested and reprovisioned his tired soldiers while he tried to decide what to do next, he did not know that the Naab was to be the zenith of his army's advance. The Archduke had determined that the time had come to execute his strategy of counterattacking and defeating the French armies in detail. He had marked the Sambre et Meuse as his first victim.

Gunner Bricard vividly described the growing anxiety in the French army on August 22, as the increasing number of campfires on the hills across the Naab made it clear that the enemy was being reinforced. Then came orders for all supply personnel to head to the rear. "There reigned a deep silence in camp, and the majority of us experienced

---

great uneasiness." Then the soldiers heard cannonfire on their right; and as it drew closer they were ordered to form line of battle and begin to retreat. "Never had we heard a cannonade like this one which rumbled on our right; it was a continuous thundering, and with pain we observed that the firing was advancing behind us. The weather was calm and the sky crimson with flame and smoke." As the troops moved out they maintained the most "gloomy" silence. The Naab was not only the turning point in the campaign, it was the turning point in Jourdan's career as well.32

II. The Retreat

The logistical deficiencies of the campaign were, by midsummer, hurting the Sambre et Meuse and hurting it badly. The lack of maps and bridging equipment were minor inconveniences compared to the continuous dearth of everything from food to footwear. As in 1795, the army existed on a day-to-day basis. The soldiers were perpetually hungry and their clothing and equipment became more threadbare and battered as the campaign wore on and no replacements arrived. While exact statistics are lacking, it is possible that without the munitions captured from enemy magazines

during the advance the artillery might have run out of ammunition during the retreat. A lack of statistics also makes it impossible to measure exactly how much, in terms of stamina and fighting ability, the supply shortages cost the army.

By August the army, as planned, was depending almost entirely upon requisitioned food and effects for its existence. Yet living at the expense of the enemy was not improving the lot of the soldiers markedly over that of 1795. The Directory had forgotten that it was not sufficient merely to order a given area to hand over its wealth and resources. The contributions had to be collected from the inhabitants, transported to the army -- or to Paris in the case of the currency -- and distributed to the troops. There was a considerable interval between the time when the contributions were levied, and the time at which they actually benefited the troops. In the interim the men had to shift for themselves as best they could, and since the traditional methods of supplying them had almost completely broken down, the army suffered until the requisitions reached it.

Requisitioning, like everything else, required personnel, materiel, and organization. Unfortunately the Directory had been negligent in each of these areas. Joubert complained incessantly that he did not have enough men to cover the vast stretches of southwest Germany where the army was requisitioning; as a result collecting the
contributions was being endlessly delayed. A greater obstacle was a critical lack of transport. The transport problem was one which the French were never able to solve. Its causes were obvious: there were insufficient wagons, wagon drivers, and especially horses, to cart the contributions from the countryside to the army's depots. Jourdan complained that the army periodically ran short of bread because there was no means available to bring requisitioned grain from the surrounding farms to the troops, and the same problem was preventing him from utilizing the contents of the captured enemy magazines. The solution, however, was not so obvious. Jourdan tried to solve it by requisitioning more horses and wagons, even by using the horses taken from the enemy. He encountered difficulty here too, and not only from the resistance of the population. When he ordered, through Joubert, a levée of wagons from the Cleves district, the transport chief, Dilean, and the chief of the wagon park allowed the inhabitants to escape the levée for a bribe of 400 couronnes. The captured horses were bought up by sutlers and supply agents who then sold them for hard currence at tidy profits; the soldiers could not buy the animals because their mandats were worthless. Jourdan issued orders that this practice was to cease, but it is doubtful

that they produced much of an effect.\textsuperscript{34}

A second problem was that certain areas had been so devastated that they were physically unable to provide the army with anything. The Rhine Valley had been fought over so much that there was little left of value, and the area on the east bank between Dusseldorf and the Main Valley was absolutely desolate due to the extensive campaigning that had taken place there. "We had to live on the resources of the place where we happened to be," Soult recalled, "and these were soon exhausted because the armies passed and repassed over these same districts." The Sambre et Meuse had to draw upon Belgium and Holland for much of its provisions. In Belgium the population was so incensed at the requisitions that they openly resisted them, and the Army of the North had to send in 4,000 soldiers to quell the disturbances and permit the supply personnel to carry out the requisitions.\textsuperscript{35}

The contributions in hard currency being levied all over Germany were not producing the desired results. Very little of the huge sums of money demanded ever benefited the army. For example, it is doubtful that much, if any, of the twelve million livres demanded from Franconia was ever collected. Whole convoys of captured currency en route to the treasury were pillaged by gangs of marauding peasants


in the Taunus mountains north of the Main Valley. The currency which did reach Paris all too often disappeared into the pockets of the contractors. For example, the Directory ordered that the four million livres collected from Frankfort be advance to the contractor Lamotze, a man of exceedingly dubious reputation who, in spite of a previous contract, had yet to deliver anything of substance to the Sambre et Meuse. Lamotze proceeded to install himself in Frankfort in oriental splendor while his contract went unfulfilled and the army suffered. Joubert finally complained about Lamotze to the Directory. By the time the Directory authorized him to look into the matter, it was too late. The army was in full retreat to the Rhine and the Austrians had reoccupied Frankfort. Lamotze kept the four million. 36

Corruption was a major obstacle. It was a disease which obstructed the arteries and ate away the vitals of the supply system. It was relatively easy for dishonest transport and depot personnel to steal the requisitions and either to sell them or to keep them for themselves. Contractors complained of having supplies they had purchased disappear from the magazines long before they could be delivered.

36. A.G. B1 79, Joubert to the Directory, 9/6/96. Godechot, op cit, I, pp. 319-23. This was precisely what Jourdan wished to avoid by entrusting all monetary contributions to his quartermaster, and allowing him to dispense them for the army immediately.
One Lolliot, in charge of the army's finances, absconded with 25,000 francs. Soult recalled the the officials "who should have been feeding the troops, followed fifteen leagues in rear and gathered what the poor soldiers had harvested. They were as opulent as the men were wretched."  

As always there was a real question as to how corrupt the supply administrations actually were. Charles Alexander, Joubert's successor as commissioner and a source who admittedly must be taken with a grain of salt, claimed that graft was rampant -- that Lolliot's activities were merely the tip of an iceberg of corruption. Alexander recalled that the chief of provisions for the army told him that the army required 1,800 quintals of food a day to live, despite the fact that 'better' opinion told Alexander that 1,400 quintals a day sufficed. Thus some 400 quintals a day were subject to pillage or wastage. When the Directory confronted Joubert with this figure, he was of a different opinion. "Citizen Alexander has set way too low the figure for those consuming provisions in this army." Alexander forgot that the hospital, depot, auxiliary and garrison personnel all had to eat too, as well as the work crews who were hired from time to time to construct fortifications. Joubert admitted that extensive corruption existed but believed

Alexander's suspicions too extreme to be correct. The matter was never settled. Perhaps thievery in the administrations was not the major cause of the dearth in the army as Alexander believed, but certainly it was a contributing factor.38

It is possible that the corruption reached all the way to Jourdan's staff. Alexander described Jourdan's quartermaster, Dubreton, as "roguish" and "ignorant," inept enough to plunge the entire administration of the Sambre et Meuse into confusion. Dubreton's alleged misdeeds were extensive. He took a 1,500 livre bribe from the municipality of Schweinfurt in return for delaying the contributions there and accepted similar "gifts" from the municipalities of Frankfort, Amburg, and several other towns for the same considerations. He embezzled 8,000 livre from the treasury of the paymaster of provisions and kept twenty army horses for his personal use, feeding them with army fodder. Joubert believed Dubreton to be at least hardworking and honest, but as Dubreton assured the government that the army was well provisioned, the minister of way urged him to crack down on the "dilapidateurs" in his administration. Meanwhile

38. A.G. Bl 76, Joubert to the Directory, 9/11/96. Alexander to the minister of war, 8/26/96. ibid. Alexander was an unquestionably biased source. He bore a noticeable grudge against the hierarchy of the Sambre et Meuse because they had dismissed him from his post as army quartermaster for insubordination and incompetence in the spring of 1795.
Jourdan complained of an officer and several men dying of malnutrition and exhaustion due to their exertions on empty stomachs. Alexander also suggested that Jourdan's chief of staff, Ernouf, was corrupt, and told of French customs agents intercepting one of his carriages containing some 180,000 francs. If Alexander were only partially correct in his accusations, Jourdan had to shoulder a portion of the blame for such thievery, because all of his staff officers were, at the very least, approved by him. His poor judgment in Dubreton's case may have been especially damaging. Dubreton was the second most important man in the supply system after Joubert, since he commanded the army's entire supply bureaucracy. Its efficiency and honesty depended greatly upon how competent and honest Dubreton was.

Finally, living at the expense of the enemy contributed to the rampant depredations that so marked the French presence in Germany. Requisitioning was a sword with a double edge. In the short run it allowed the army to subsist, but in the long run it increased indiscipline and corruption. As authorized requisitions failed to alleviate the army's misery to any degree, Jourdan's officers and soldiers felt justified to requisition on their own. The results were

39. Ibid, pp. 131-33, 135, 154. Again the source must be considered. In Ernouf's case the Minister of War told Alexander either to produce solid evidence of Ernouf's depredations, or make a formal retraction of his accusations. No more was heard of Ernouf's alleged corruption after that. See also A. G. Bl 76, Jourdan to the Directory, 7/17/96 for Dubreton's credibility.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
ruinous. Many pillaged under the pretext that they were requisitioning. This system of "organized plunder ... raised the whole population against us and destroyed the discipline of the troops." Repeated orders from Jourdan and Joubert against unauthorized requisitioning went unheeded, and indeed there was little they could do to enforce them. When Alexander later prohibited all requisitioning by the Sambre et Meuse's officers and forbade all local authorities to respond to such requisitions, he inspired a near mutiny. Kleber angrily told Grenier that if the officers could not requisition, the army would collapse. He was probably right. Kleber later refused command of the army largely because he could not tolerate either Alexander or his policies.40

Requisitioning thus did not prove to be the panacea that everyone expected. It enabled the army to survive from day to day; it did not eliminate any of its chronic shortages in provisions and supplies. It aggravated the discipline problem as much as it alleviated it. It also affected strategy. When Jourdan wanted to shift his line of communications from Dusseldorf to Strasbourg -- a line both shorter and safer -- the Directory refused. It deemed the resources of the Rhine and Main Valleys too essential

to the war effort to allow Jourdan's troops to leave the area. 41

The effect of these logistical deficiencies upon the army was disastrous. The continuous shortages demoralized the men more and more with each passing day. As in 1795 straggling and desertion were severe problems. Bricard recalled that "the inhabitants always took flight at our approach; their absence combined with the lack of rations caused our soldiers more and more to become pillagers. Many, under the pretext of going to search for food, took some booty and other valuables, while some others dishonored the French army by every crime possible. The state of distress which the army found itself in often prevented the pillage from stopping, because the soldiers did not receive any food most of the time, and were obliged to go searching in the villages; little by little they became familiar with theft ... Even during [the battle of] Wurzburg a number of the men were scattered among the houses, staving in wine casks and violating women." 42 The French marauding got so out of hand that during the retreat the entire countryside rose up against them, killing stragglers and couriers and assaulting


42. Bricard, op cit., pp. 207-08, 214-15. No volume of official complaints can match the stark description of the gradual demoralization of the army as told by this simple, sans-culotte gunner.
convoys and requisition squads. Jourdan ordered "terrible examples" to be made to halt the disorders: villages protecting insurrectionary peasants were burned and peasants taken with weapons in their hands were shot. But all this only exacerbated the problem, since the soldiers rather than the peasants were the ones causing it. Jourdan ruefully admitted to the government that the army was "dishonoring itself."43

There were limits to what Jourdan could do to halt the indiscipline. He did, as all generals do, issue orders against it. After praising the soldiers for their bravery and endurance, he criticized them for their repeated marauding and brigandage. Officers were to see to it that their men abstained from straggling and pillage. They were to take frequent roll calls, both on the march and in camp, and all those absent without leave were to be assembled upon their return, searched for plunder, and punished. The names of the guilty along with their crimes were published in the orders of the day. Deserters and looters were to receive severe penalties. But orders alone were not enough. With the military police not numerous enough to enforce them, as long as the men's pay remained worthless and the inhabitants refused to accept it, the requisitioning -- and stealing --

continued. The orders were "good;" but "in order that they properly be put into effect, it was necessary that the army receive some rations."44 Then, too, Jourdan's orders were ineffective because of the military councils.

The military councils were the government's solution to the problem of maintaining discipline. They were ad hoc courts called to judge breaches of discipline. The problem was that they included enlisted men and non-commissioned officers as well as officers. If a private was arrested for theft, three privates, three sergeants, and three officers, all usually from his unit, tried him. The government's reasons for establishing the military councils are unknown, but perhaps they wished to transform military discipline as far as possible from its draconian nature under the now hated Terror. The military councils aggravated the problem they were established to ameliorate. During the course of a rapidly moving campaign, it was often physically impossible to summon a council to try an accused offender. The soldiers on the councils tended to be quite lenient on their fellows. They hesitated to punish comrades, and besides the judges of today could well be the accused of tomorrow, so it made sense to be lenient since a favor given was often a favor returned. Worse, the officer who made the accusation was often made to


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
look ridiculous by hostile councils which acquitted the man he was trying to discipline. This practice in turn eroded the authority of the officers. The inspector-general of the Sambre et Meuse, Dumuy, told the government that, because of the "laws," Jourdan had been turned into a powerless "spectator" to the indiscipline of the army. Dumuy urged immediate remedies; the government failed to act. 45

Such was the state of the Sambre et Meuse when the Archduke Karl launched his counteroffensive. Karl had been at grips with Moreau throughout the summer. However, after an indecisive engagement near the village of Neresheim, Moreau halted his advance to regroup, allowing the Archduke to break all contact with his army and fall back to Ingolstadt. Karl's chance to execute his concentration with Wartensleben and fall upon Jourdan's army had come. On August 19, he marched north with some 28,000 men aiming for Nuremberg and the right rear of the Sambre et Meuse. He picked the right moment. Moreau remained inactive until the 19th, completely ignorant of the whereabouts of Karl's army. Then, upon receipt of orders from the Directory to operate on the south bank of the Danube, Moreau backtracked to Dillingen where he crossed the river; this maneuver increased the distance between his army and the Archduke's. When

Moreau finally regained contact with the enemy, the force facing him was an army of 30,000 men under Latour, with orders to occupy Moreau for as long as it took for Karl to annihilate Jourdan's army; Karl was already launching his first attacks against Jourdan.46

Jourdan first learned of Karl's march on August 21. He was not alarmed at first; according to the last dispatch from Moreau, the Army of the Rhine was still on the north bank of the Danube and could intercept such a march. Jourdan ordered Bernadotte on his far right at Teining to move a bit further south to try to communicate with Moreau. Should he be attacked by superior forces, he was to retire. Jourdan's confidence was reinforced by a note from Moreau on the 22nd. For the first time he learned that Moreau's army was south of the Danube, but the rest of the note assured him that the enemy force heading north was merely a reinforcement for Nauendorf's division operating between the two French armies. Moreau promised to give no "rest to Prince Charles, and he will not be able to escape me" should he try to advance against the Sambre et Meuse.47

Jourdan's trust in Moreau cost him a precious twenty-four hours. As he read the note, the Austrians were attacking Bernadotte's isolated division on the right. With

47. Moreau to Jourdan, 8/20/96, Jourdan, op cit, pp. 120-22, 312-13.
great skill and tenacity Bernadotte held off three times his own number long enough to extricate his division and escape northward. Karl sent a gruppe under General David Hotze after Bernadotte while he turned with the rest of his army against Jourdan. When Jourdan finally learned the true situation from Bernadotte and ordered a retreat, it was eleven p.m. By then the Austrians were practically in his rear, within striking distance of the main road leading northwest to the Main Valley.  

Jourdan reached Amberg on the morning of August 24. He deployed his army on the wooded heights northwest of that town. He was in as difficult a tactical position as at any time in his career, with superior enemy forces closing in on him from two sides. Yet the Archduke failed completely to take advantage of his opportunity. He launched his main effort against Jourdan's right, attempting to cut the French line of retreat. With between 60,000 to 65,000 soldiers against at most 36,000, he had every hope of success. His principal attack was slowed by the cavalry reserve under General Bonnaud. Bonnaud fought a tough, intelligent rear-guard action, falling back from position to position in the broken, wooded terrain, cannonading the advancing enemy with his light artillery and falling upon them with his cavalry whenever

they pressed too close. Beside him Championnet's division repulsed several attacks on the level ground behind Amberg, then made its retreat in good order. Colaud's division was the last to retreat and in fighting Wartensleben's troops, Ney received his baptism of fire as a rear-guard commander. By nightfall he was almost completely surrounded; his survivors had to cut their way out. Two battalions were entirely destroyed before they could escape. Yet two battalions were a small price to pay to save an entire army. Karl should have decisively defeated the Sambre et Meuse; in reality he only damaged it slightly. 49

For the moment Karl hesitated. Amberg was to have been the decisive battle, and Jourdan was to have been crippled, if not destroyed. Instead, Jourdan had escaped the trap, his army as much of a threat, in Karl's mind, as ever. Moreover, Moreau remained a worry. If the French armies were working together the way they should be, the Archduke could expect Moreau to advance against him shortly, and then he would be in the jaws of the pincers. He did not know that all communication between the two armies had broken down. When it seemed clear that Moreau would stay in Bavaria, Karl hesitated no longer; he marched in pursuit of

Jourdan.50

For the next seven days Jourdan struggled to escape his pursuers. Not only had the Austrians severed the best road leading northwest into the Main Valley, they also were in a position to cut Jourdan off entirely if they moved quickly. Jourdan was obliged to order long forced marches, and sometimes night marches, through the wilds north of Nuremberg over roads which were narrow and slippery. One defile, which a staff officer had assured Jourdan was wide enough for the supply train, was not, and much of it had to be abandoned. The superior Austrian cavalry harassed the army mercilessly. At one point it cut Kleber's two divisions off from the rest of the army completely, and on another occasion Hungarian hussars raided army headquarters and came perilously close to capturing Jourdan himself in a wild sabre-swinging melee with Jourdan's staff. Jourdan himself appeared thoughtful and depressed during these difficult days. When a dispatch from Bernadotte reached him, "in order that he might read it an artillery officer lit a torch by the smoky glare of which Jourdan glanced over

50. Archduke Karl, op cit, III, pp. 49-51. Karl is quite critical of his operations, admitting that he was needlessly slow and hesitant, unsure whether to continue after Jourdan or turn and face Moreau since his initial stroke had failed. Of course, had Moreau acted as he promised, Karl would have had to halt his pursuit; his counteroffensive would have ended right there.
what must have been bad news, for he carried his hand to his face with a grieved air, and then went aside to give his orders." 51

Such a precipitous retreat further weakened an army already short of supplies -- and discipline. "The French army, harrassed ceaselessly on its flanks by the enemy and by armed civilians lacked subsistence; most of the time the troops only had some potatoes dug up from the vicinity of their bivouacs for nourishment. These deprevations, combined with the long and continuous marches, had weakened their strength." The columns plodded in disorder most of the time. Looting increased dramatically. Stragglers looking for their units late at night caused momentary panics -- French soldiers stampeding in confusion through the darkness firing at each other. Overexertion and malnourishment discouraged the entire army. Bricard recalled that at times no one in his unit believed they would ever see the Rhine again, "without clothing, without rations, forced to fight daily, to march at night, without hope of saving the wounded."

The rigors of the retreat took its toll in casualties. By August 31 the army numbered only 30,000, if that many. Yet all things considered, it is a testimony to Jourdan's leadership and to the endurance of his men that the Sambre

et Meuse did not suffer far worse than it actually did.\textsuperscript{52}

The forced marches and Jourdan's tactic of deploying one division on his right to hold off the enemy while the rest of the army retreated behind its protective shield kept the Sambre et Meuse one step ahead of its foes. Indeed, on the 29th Jourdan felt bold enough to attempt a blow against the enemy advanced guard under Hotze, which had become separated from the rest of the Archduke's army. Unfortunately his thrust misfired completely. The exhausted troops failed to reach their jumping off points in time, and the bridges constructed across the Regnitz river were too weak to support artillery. When Austrian cavalry once again cut the main road farther to the west, Jourdan called off the attack, erroneously believing that he was facing the entire enemy army rather than Hotze alone. In fact Hotze was still by himself, so Jourdan missed an excellent chance to cripple the Austrian pursuit by defeating a portion of Karl's army in detail.\textsuperscript{53}

While Jourdan struggled against superior forces, Moreau dallied in Bavaria against an army half the size of his own. It took him four days to drive Latour's force from the Lech. On August 26 a dispatch from Jourdan finally got through, advising him that Jourdan now faced the bulk


of the Austrian army. Moreau remained unconvinced that this was the case, and when General Gouvion St. Cyr suggested that Moreau march to Jourdan's aid, Moreau refused. Jourdan, he felt, was about to stand and give battle to his pursuers who had lost their superiority over him by returning Nauendorf's division to the Danube. As for the Archduke, he was still at Ingolstadt. Moreau wrote to Jourdan that his own continued advance against Latour was the best way to force Karl to recall whatever forces he had sent against the Sambre et Meuse. Indeed Moreau felt bound to stay in Bavaria because of the orders of the government. "The march back which I would have to make on Ingolstadt ... would not disengage you as effectively as the one I have made across the Lech, all the more so since I have positive orders from the Directory." Moreau may have had positive orders, but the evidence suggests that he was encouraging the Directory in its faulty strategy by misleading them about the true whereabouts of the enemy army. In any case, Moreau had no intention of marching north to Jourdan's aid.

54. Gouvion St. Cyr, L'armee du Rhin (4 volumes; Paris, 1829), III, pp. 247-49. It is doubtful that Nauendorf was even included in the 28,000 men that Karl marched with to begin with!

55. A.G. mr 608-6, Moreau to Jourdan, 8/16/96. Phipps, op cit, II, pp. 334-35. St. Cyr, and Phipps, believed that Moreau acted in bad faith; that in fact he did realize that the bulk of the Austrian army was attacking Jourdan, but that for his own selfish reasons he preferred to remain in Bavaria. The problem is: what would have been his motives? It is more likely that he simply misjudged the situation; after all Moreau was as capable of poor generalship as anyone else.
Thus Jourdan had to depend upon his own resources. After the missed opportunity on the Regnitz, he made a detour to the north, thereby putting his army beyond the reach of his pursuers who continued to advance along the main road to Wurzburg. He managed to give the army a short day of rest while he pondered what to do. His decision was to attempt once more to seize the initiative away from the Archduke. Considering the weakened state of the army it was a curious choice. It is possible that Moreau's assurances contributed to it; it is more likely that he was under heavy pressure from Joubert to halt the retreat and initiate some kind of offensive. But his principal motive, as he himself admitted, was personal; he simply did not want to retreat any further without a fight. The campaign had gone sour, and his stock with the government had fallen low -- why not make one more effort to reverse the tide of the campaign. It was one of the very few instances in his career when he allowed emotion to dictate a tactical decision. He came to regret it.56

His decision touched off a conflagration, the embers for which had been smouldering among the generals of the army for some time. The pressures and disappointments of

the retreat had strained the nerves of the officers to the breaking point. Several had fallen ill, including Jourdan's good friend Kleber. On September 1, the day after Jourdan had decided to renew the offensive, he ordered Kleber to reverse his march west, and head for Schweinfurt as the preliminary step in the proposed counterstroke. Kleber had just begun to execute Jourdan's orders to continue the retreat. It was not the first time that Jourdan had hastily countermanded orders to Kleber, for he had done so on several occasions during the retreat. Overwrought, suffering from a chest ailment, angered by yet another unannounced change in orders, Kleber blew up. Apparently he stormed over to Jourdan's headquarters and accused Jourdan of mismanaging the entire campaign -- of ignoring the health of the soldiers by allowing them no rest, and of uselessly marching them back and forth. Kleber possibly had the support of some of the other officers who opposed Jourdan's planned counterstroke. Jourdan angrily denied Kleber's accusations, and the two former comrades engaged in a violent argument with Jourdan calling Kleber to order several times. 57

How the argument ended we do not know. But we do know its result. That same evening both Jourdan and Joubert tendered their resignations to the Directory. It is clear


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
that the argument had upset Jourdan greatly, for dissension among his fellow officers was one difficulty that he was not prepared to handle. He was quite frank in his letter as to his motives. "I must warn you that the good of the service requires that I should cease to command the army of the Sambre et Meuse, because I have lost the confidence of the generals, who doubtlessly do not believe me capable of being their chief. I think, however, that they will render justice to my good will, my probity, and my zeal ... You will sense, Citizen Directors, that having lost the confidence of the generals, I shall lose that of individual officers and then that of the soldiers; it is urgent then that you should recall me." He wrote a personal note to Carnot, asking him to support his request to be relieved of the burdens of command with the other Directors. Jourdan's patience had finally snapped. It is possible that he tendered his resignation in the heat of the moment, profoundly discouraged by this latest problem, but it is more likely that, since he never tried to retract his request, the ever accumulating difficulties of the campaign finally became too much for him to bear.58

Jourdan was not the only one to have become discouraged. Joubert also resigned due to his friendship and esteem for Jourdan; he felt "pained" to see the fruits of victory

taken from a man "as pure and honest as General Jourdan" because of the "brigandage" among the troops. Kleber resigned due to ill-health; before doing so, he apologized to Jourdan for his criticism of Jourdan's marching orders. Among the divisional commanders, General Colaud resigned, and Bernadotte went on sick leave. He was not too sick, however, to write to Director Letourner, urging him to protect Jourdan from those who would slander his name due to the setbacks which he suffered. It is unfortunate that Jourdan believed the unrest among his officers to be directed against him when in reality it was directed at the government. When Jourdan offered the command of the army to his harshest critic, Kleber, the latter refused, unwilling to struggle with the insoluble logistical problems bequeathed him by the government.59

Meanwhile, Jourdan persisted with his counterstroke. With no more than 27,000 troops he marched for Wurzburg, a sizeable town and center of communications astride the main road leading back to the Rhine. On the afternoon of September 2, the French advance guards encountered enemy troops who had just occupied the city. After a brief skirmish, they drove the enemy back. Jourdan deployed in a semi-circle just north of Wurzburg at nightfall. He again believed

that he was facing the Austrian advance guard only, and his intention was to overwhelm it before the Archduke could bring up the rest of his army. There were two things wrong with this plan. One was that the Austrian army was not as dispersed as Jourdan believed, although it was more spread out than Karl desired. The Archduke ordered his rearmost troops to accelerate their march when he learned of Jourdan's advance. The other was that Jourdan erred in leaving Lefebvre's 8,000 man division to guard his line of retreat via Schweinfurt against what turned out to be a negligible enemy force. Lefebvre's soldiers might have meant all the difference in the first four hours of the battle.60

Heavy rain slowed the French as they attacked early on September 3. Nevertheless in the center and on the left the attack made progress. Championnet and Grenier pushed Hotze's Austrians steadily back through a woods, eventually storming the village of Euerfeld within sight of the Main. The French infantry, considering their privations, fought surprisingly well, even repulsing several enemy cavalry attacks. But the initial successes of the attack did not lead to more substantial results. The Austrians' stubborn resistance caused the French advance to take time, and time was one thing Jourdan did not have. By mid-morning the rest of Karl's

army had arrived. As a force under General Paul Kray turned Jourdan's left, Karl personally led his reserves against the French advance and brought it to a halt. Superior numbers determined the outcome; the French were inexorably driven back despite their best efforts, while Kray simply overlapped Grenier's outnumbered defenders and rolled him up, his cavalry raiding deep into Grenier's rear.

Too late did Jourdan attempt to summon Lefebvre; the Austrian cavalry had cut the road to Schweinfurt. Stubbornly Jourdan persisted, collecting every cavalryman he had and throwing them against the advancing enemy. Unfortunately the Austrians had three cavalrmen to every Frenchman. In a confused melee of hooves and sabres into which Jourdan personally plunged to hold his outnumbered troopers to their task, the superior Austrian cavalry gradually forced the French horse from the field. Only then did Jourdan order a retreat. The Sambre et Meuse withdrew in good order. It had suffered about 4,000 casualties, while inflicting an equal number on the enemy. Tactically Wurzburg changed little, for Jourdan was as compelled to retire before superior numbers after the battle as before it.61

The Sambre et Meuse made its disorderly way back to the Rhine, leaving a swath of destruction in its wake.

61. Ibid. Jomini, Phipps, T.A. Dodge and several 19th century French historians all have described this battle in some detail.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Desperate to end the indiscipline, Joubert decided to override the existing disciplinary laws, which had not been done earlier owing to the "timid circumspection" of Jourdan, who refused to act without the Directory's approval. Supported by Bernadotte and Bonnaud, he suggested to Jourdan that they take some action on their own authority. Jourdan agreed. The same day he issued a proclamation recalling the soldiers to their duty, and ordering the officers to crack down on all looters. If the military councils were unable to "agree" on a penalty for an obvious offender, the councils were to inform him of the fact and Jourdan would place the accused under indefinite arrest. Jourdan also stated that he believed the disciplinary laws -- i.e. the military councils -- too complicated and ineffective, and urged the government to make the laws more simple and rigorous. This action Jourdan should have taken earlier, but his habitual diffidence towards the government inhibited him from attempting such a step until it was too late.62

What was required to reverse the tide of the campaign was not within Jourdan's power to bring about. It was necessary for Moreau to march from Bavaria against Karl's flank and rear. But such a maneuver was not forthcoming. Moreau remained convinced that he, not Jourdan, faced the bulk


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
of the Austrian army; worse, he convinced the Directory that he, not Jourdan, had correctly evaluated the situation. Thus the government continued to order Jourdan to halt the enemy advance. On September 9, the Directory momentarily decided that Jourdan's warnings were not groundless after all and it at long last instructed Moreau to march against the Archduke. But on the 15th, on the advice of Moreau, it reverted back to its original strategy, since the forces opposite Jourdan were "equal to his own." One wonders why the Directory, Carnot included, chose to believe Moreau instead of Jourdan. All that its obstinate insistence upon the demonstrably useless tactic of forcing the Archduke to retreat by attacking his flank in Bavaria accomplished was to complete the failure of the campaign. 63

Jourdan retreated back to the Lahn River. Here he could expect a brief respite to rest his tired army, for the position was formidable with wooded ridges overlooking a fairly deep river. Marceau's corps from Mayence, plus belated reinforcements of 6,000 men under General Castleverd, had brought his army back above 50,000 effectives. Yet the Sambre et Meuse was far from being on safe ground. The Lahn position, while strong, was too long to guard properly; the two main passages at Limburg and Wetzlar were widely

separated and it was essential to cover both. Thus Jourdan cordoned his army along the entire river, deploying most of his troops at Limburg and Wetzlar, while keeping Bernadotte's division in reserve. Furthermore, if Jourdan was reinforced, so was Karl; he now added to his army the 20,000-man garrison of Mayence. Finally, confident as always, the Directory sent him their latest out-of-date instructions to attack, before he retired to the Lahn.64

Karl reached the Lahn on September 12. For the next three days he probed the French defenses, especially the left flank at Wetzlar. This latter activity convinced Jourdan that the Austrians were about to turn his left for the third straight time, and he began to shift reserves in that direction. But the enemy thrusts were only feints. When Karl attacked on the 16th, his main assault was against the French position under Marceau at Limburg. Kray's secondary attack was met on the hills behind Wetzlar by three French divisions and roughly thrown back across the Lahn. But the decisive struggle was at Limburg. Karl attacked with a two to one superiority, clearing the French from the heights south of the Lahn, and penetrating into the villages of Limburg and Dietz. At Dietz, the Mayence troops under General Neu in heavy fighting seized

64. A.G. Bl 79, the Directory to Jourdan, 9/15/96; Dubreton to Petiet, 9/10/96. Dubreton assured the government that the army could not subsist unless it resumed the offensive.
a tiny foothold on the hills from Castleverd's men. But at Limburg Marceau performed wonders. Twice his gallant defenders expelled the Austrians from Limburg in savage fighting, and when the enemy finally captured it, the French defenders on the hills above the river prevented them from debouching. 65

By nightfall the Archduke faced defeat. Jourdan's worn-out soldiers had repulsed him completely, and Jourdan, at the eleventh hour, had recognized that the main threat was downstream at Limburg. He ordered Bernadotte to counter-march his division and go to Marceau's aid, and told Marceau to hold the crossing at all hazards until help arrived. Unfortunately Castleverd, a coward and an incompetent, had other ideas. In spite of emphatic orders from Marceau to hold his ground, Castleverd abandoned his position and headed straight for the bridges across the Rhine. Karl, on the verge of giving up the attack, took courage from what he believed to be a failure of Jourdan's nerve, and advanced. When Marceau awoke to find the enemy where Castleverd was supposed to be, he had to retreat. Bernadotte arrived in time to check the enemy long enough for the rest of the

army to withdraw from a now-untenable position.  

The Lahn was Jourdan's last chance to win back a measure of respect for himself; it in no way could have decisively affected the outcome of the campaign. The Sambre et Meuse retreated to Dusseldorf and Neuweid, during which a final rear-guard combat cost young Marceau his life. At Dusseldorf Jourdan turned the command over to Beurnonville, and went home. His usefulness had ended and he know it. La Revelliere considered him inept, and even Carnot seemed to have lost confidence in him. Joubert reinforced their opinion by nastily asserting that Jourdan had lost his head during the retreat. Perhaps he worried that the government might ask him about his exaggerated predictions of success which had so affected its strategy. The campaign came to a close, with Beurnonville remaining inactive, and Moreau retreating back across the Rhine after finally discovering that the Archduke was, indeed, not at Ingolstadt.

66. A.G. Bl 79, Marceau to Jourdan, 9/16/96; Jourdan's orders, 9/16/96. Castleverd gallantly excused himself of all blame, saying that Jourdan's officers simply wished to make him the scapegoat, and suggesting that they all go and get "buggered." Castleverd never saw active duty again.

67. M. Reinhard, op cit, I, pp. 209-10. Carnot argued before the Directory that Jourdan's -- and Joubert's -- resignations be accepted. However, he might have done so because Jourdan had asked him to (9/1/96), not because he doubted his ability.
There is an initial temptation to exonerate Jourdan of all blame for the failures of the 1796 campaign. It is a temptation that must be resisted. Jourdan was partly responsible for the campaign plans to operate on exterior lines and subsist at the expense of the enemy, neither of which proved successful in the end. Unwilling to operate independently of the directives of the government, he remained "too docile to the orders emanating from the Luxembourg three hundred leagues away," despite the fact that these orders were usually out of date by the time they reached him. He remained too closely chained to his orders always to operate on the enemy's outside flank. A less predictable strategy probably would not have forced Wartensleben to battle, but it might have. He delayed too long in overriding the Directory's laws concerning the military councils. He bowed to government pressure and attacked rashly at Wurzburg, then committed tactical errors which contributed to his defeat. Most importantly, had Jourdan followed his earlier inclination and kept control of all the monetary contributions regardless of the government -- as Bonaparte did in Italy -- he could have caused his quartermaster to distribute them directly to his destitute officers and soldiers instead of sending them back to Paris to be squandered. Available hard cash would have curbed the indiscipline and disorders, the army would have fought better, and Jourdan, as he later realized, "would
have made some friends."

Nonetheless one cannot deny that Jourdan was far more the one sinned against than the sinner. He was not given enough cavalry, either to overwhelm the rear-guards of Wartensleben's army or to maintain the regular communications with Moreau that were so essential to the campaign on exterior lines that the French were waging. The Directory failed to provide him with the essentials which could have caused requisitioning to succeed: the personnel, the horses and wagons, the military police, and above all the authority for Jourdan to dispense the contributed money on the spot. The breakdown in the army's supply system caused the breakdown in discipline that was so ruinous to the army. When Jourdan attempted to reestablish discipline, he was hindered in his efforts by the hopelessly ineffective military councils. These basic weaknesses prevented Jourdan from being strong enough to execute the task which was the key to his campaign -- the destruction of Wartensleben's army. Then too, both the Directory and Moreau committed costly strategic errors. The Directory tried to run the campaign from too far away considering the primitive communications of 1796 and as a result it was in no position to judge that Joubert's optimism during the advance

was misplaced, and that Moreau's vision in Bavaria was faulty. Moreau blundered badly in Bavaria, leaving Jourdan alone to absorb the Archduke's counteroffensive.

The campaign of 1796 was not a failure mainly because, as Jomini and so many others argue, the French strategy was intrinsically wrong. The campaign failed because the material deficiencies of the armies were such that generalship could not overcome them. Indeed, one can argue that the failure occurred, not because the French erroneously chose to operate on exterior lines, but because they failed to operate on exterior lines properly. And the responsibility for the logistical shortcomings which so sabotaged the campaign must be shouldered by the government. As Kleber wrote, "[the army's] reverses can be attributed to the battles it has delivered, but naked and unfed, what can the bravest men do?"

69. Reinhard, op cit, II, p. 210, admits that Carnot failed to coordinate the operations of the two armies properly.
I. Councilor In The "500"

After turning command of the Sambre et Meuse over to General Pierre do Beurnonville, Jourdan returned home to his wife and family in Limoges. It does not seem that he again sought to become the unassuming private citizen and shopkeeper, as in 1794. Instead, after a brief period of rest, he re-entered the political life of the town. Once again his difficulties as a general had not lost him popularity with his fellow citizens. He was elected president of the electoral college of the Haute Vienne, a body chosen by the citizens to select deputies for the national legislature from the department. With such popular support, it was logical that he should become one of the Haute Vienne's candidates for election to the Council of 500; his fellow electors reflected his popularity by making him a deputy by the lopsided vote of 195 to 7.¹

Jourdan sat on the left in the Council of 500. The Republican left comprised the remnants of the old Jacobin party of the year II. These were the most ardent and radical Republicans in the "500," men whose views were more in line with the policies of the revolutionary Montagnards than


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
with those of the business-as-usual Thermidorians. Jourdan gravitaged towards these men because he was a fervent republican himself and because he had worked with many of them previously. Among these "Neo-Jacobins" were a mixed assortment of former Montagnards from the Convention, many of whom had been representatives on mission and some to armies which Jourdan had commanded. Among these were his former colleagues Delbrel, Laurent, and Levasseur from the 'Nord," and Talot and Joubert from the Sambre et Meuse. In addition, the Neo-Jacobins included several generals such as Pierre Augereau and Bernadotte and a scattering of new men such as Francois Lamarque and Jourdan's fellow deputy from the Haute Vienne, Gay-Vernon. 2

These Neo-Jacobins were still a small, ill-formed group of like-minded deputies in 1797; they were not even a faction much less a coherent party. Their politics were not yet clearly distinguishable from those of the more moderate deputies of the center. Basically they supported the Constitution of the Year III, although they wished to add to it some of the ideas of the unfinished constitution of 1793. They were wedded to the principles of representative government, public spiritedness or civisme, and active

2. This Gay-Vernon was the brother of Houchard's chief of staff in 1793, the man whose eyes had so displeased Duquesnoy, but who had survived the Terror even so, to soon become president of the Ecole Polytechnique.
democracy, particularly at the local level in clubs and political societies. They shared with the moderates a healthy suspicion of the conservative right in the Councils, who they believed to be royalist, Catholic, and possibly plotting to overthrow the Republic. In spirit they favored economic leveling -- policies which would eliminate the very rich and the very poor, especially the former. However they had few concrete ideas on how to achieve this goal. Their more specific programs, such as educational reform to provide free education for poor children, a public works program for the unemployed, a progressive tax weighing most heavily upon the rich, and a retirement bonus for discharged veterans, had probably not yet been formulated as a coherent platform in 1797. Nor did they yet demonstrate the bitter hostility to the Directory that so characterized their movement in 1799. In general they were men who wished to protect the little man against privileged government and big business.  

Jourdan's political ideas were generally similar to those of his colleagues and in most cases equally vague. He too was a convinced republican in the sense that he believed in liberty, equality of opportunity, representative government.

3. A definitive work on the Neo-Jacobin movement during the Directory needs to be written. The best, so far, is Isser Woloch, Jacobin Legacy (Princeton, 1970). However, Woloch concentrates upon the revival of the popular clubs at the expense of the Neo-Jacobins' politics in the government itself.
government, and the other basic ideals of republicanism, although he had few specific ideas on how best to put them into practice. He believed in free enterprise and private property but became increasingly convinced that most of the fortunes amassed by the entrepreneurs were amassed dishonestly. He wished to eradicate all extremes of wealth, although he had no clear plans for bringing this about. He favored government intervention in the economy, more to strengthen the war effort than to produce social harmony. In spite of, or because of, his boyhood with his uncle, the Abbé Jourdan, he was quite anti-clerical. His first speech in the "500" was directed against the Catholic clergy, whom he accused of preaching the virtues of monarchism from their pulpits. Although hard evidence is lacking, there is no reason to suspect that he differed from the Neo-Jacobins in any of their other aims. Where he did differ slightly was in his ardent belief in fraternité; he was, in other words, a nationalist. He thought that the duty of every citizen was first and foremost to serve the "fatherland," and he supported local democracy in the political societies because he believed it increased public spiritedness and civisme, which in turn led to a more patriotic, united citizenry -- a citizenry which would put the welfare of the

nation ahead of their own selfish interests, and would keep the fatherland vital and virtuous.  

His views of the Directory and its politicians were sharper and more easily definable. He had definite reservations about both; while he supported the constitution, he did not like its servants. He believed that there were far too many long-winded orators in the Councils -- men who deliberated when they should have acted. Too many of the deputies were mere time-serving careerists, men "who had no other care than to demand positions for their parents and friends, and who believed that everything would go marvelously when they had obtained them." Like so many soldiers, he viewed parliamentary politics and politicians with a certain contempt, which grew stronger as the Thermidorian majority cynically violated the Constitution to perpetuate itself in power. As for the government itself, he believed that its basic failing was its weakness. The Directory's powers were too limited, and the endless deliberations of the Councils further "enfeebled [them] each day on the pretext of ensuring public liberty." In addition, there

5. See Paul Barras, Memoires, III, pp. 405-10. In a single short paragraph, Jourdan used the word "fatherland" no less than nine times.

were no clear lines of authority and responsibility governing the expenditure of funds by the bureaucracy. The Councils could never obtain from the ministries "exact accounting of the employment of funds which it [sic] allocated for the different sectors of the public services." This lack of clear accounting allowed graft and waste to persist, because the legislators concerned could never tell whether the money was being legitimately spent or stolen. It also, he felt, was behind the huge fortunes amassed by the speculateurs, as well as the constant logistical shortcomings of the army.7

The Directory, in short, did not provide the strong, efficient, responsible rule that a soldier like Jourdan expected from a government. Jourdan never considered authoritarian rule incompatible with republicanism. As a result inefficiency and neglect went unchecked, corruption and theft went unpunished. While soldiers and civilians suffered, the politicians debated constitutional niceties. "In Rome in similar circumstances they would have named a Dictator; in France they debated the limits of the authority of each power."8

It was a simplistic view of a complex situation, but one nevertheless containing a good deal of truth. If the


financial chaos of the government was due in large part to the complicated economic problems it faced, its finances were very loosely controlled, and much graft and inefficiency did result. And if the deputies in the Councils moved slowly and discussed extensively because of the immensities of their problems, rather than because of any unnatural taste for oratory, there were far too many untalented careerists in the government interested more in self-advancement than in the public welfare.

It is doubtful that Jourdan felt so critical of the Directory in the first year of his legislative career. Outwardly at least he was content to remain in the background and to play the political game as a loyal republican. He dutifully joined his colleagues in their attacks against the conservatives. When the right nominated his old nemesis, Pichegru, as its candidate for the presidency of the "500", the left retaliated by nominating him to oppose Pichegru. Perhaps they felt that the best way to defeat a famous general was to run another famous general against him, for certainly they did not select Jourdan because of his political experience. The conservatives' majority in the "500" enabled Pichegru to win the election decisively. All the same, Jourdan soon enjoyed his revenge. When the Directory initiated the coup of the 18th Fructidor, it purged all the most pronounced conservatives -- including Carnot -- from the government and arrested Pichegru for conspiring against
the Republic. Jourdan warmly supported the coup as a necessary blow against the counterrevolution.⁹

Meanwhile Jourdan apparently was on quite friendly terms with the dominant figure in the Directory, Paul Barras. How close this friendship was is debatable; Barras tended to exaggerate the warmth of his relations with most of his contemporaries. Barras claimed that he was Jourdan's patron in the Directory. According to him, "Jourdan introduced into our relationship more personal attentions than were consistent with his generally reserved and circumspect character." On occasion he sent Barras presents of game which he had shot while hunting, and at other times he sounded Barras out on proposed military plans and requested personal favors. On one occasion, when the Directory toyed with the idea of sending an expedition to India to support Tipoo-Sahib in his war with the British, Jourdan asked Barras if he could command it. Evidently he had become bored with politics and longed for a return to action. Jourdan's friendship -- if that is what it was -- with this clever, cynical, disillusioned ex-aristocrat seems inconsistent. Certainly he must not have realized at first how deeply Barras was involved in the jobbery and corruption of Directorial politics. Perhaps he felt a certain affinity for a fellow ex-Montagnard, or perhaps he was doing no more

⁹. Valentin, op cit, pp. 158-60.
than keeping on good terms with the most influential and powerful man in the government. 10

Jourdan's loyalty both to his fellow republicans and to the Directory was rewarded several months after the Fructidor coup. He was elected president of the "500" by an overwhelming majority. It was the first of two terms which he served at the head of that body. As a staunch republican and noted war hero, he was an ideal choice for that prestigious but largely powerless post.

His loyalty to the regime received its first severe shock the following year. During the month of Floreal the Directory made known its intention to invalidate the recent elections to the Councils of some one hundred and six left-leaning republicans who, the Directory feared, would be in instruments of "anarchism" and "terrorism" within the government. The Directory's motive for this new coup was actually more sordid; it feared that the new deputies would be less docile to its will than the centrist Thermidorians who heretofore had dominated the Councils. The Floreal coup not only offended Jourdan's sense of justice and fair play, it struck him close to home since it invalidated the election of his colleague from the Haute Vienne, Gay-Vernon. He

10. Barras, Memoires, III, pp. 103-05. Barras also claimed that he championed Jourdan against Carnot while the latter was on the Directory. Here he was almost certainly exaggerating; there is no evidence that Jourdan ever needed championing against Carnot.
joined the other deputies of the left in opposing the exclusions. When they were first announced, he argued before the "500" that duly elected deputies could be excluded from their seats for two reasons only: for fraudulent election, or for conspiring against the government. Because the government was arguing the latter case, Jourdan denied that the excluded deputies were conspirators. Furthermore, "if they [the Directory] wish to transform the Council into a jury without the customary forms of liberty, they misunderstand the Constitution and the sovereignty of the people." He then pleaded that the Council consider each case on its own merits.¹¹

The Thermidorians did not misunderstand the Constitution, they merely considered legality unimportant in the present circumstances. They insisted that the exclusions be adopted en masse rather than be debated separately. Jourdan again joined the protests. He pointed out the obvious inconsistencies in the exclusions, and argued that those who described the proscribed deputies as intriguers and agitators desirous of reviving the Terror "were creating phantoms." Since the proscriptions were "the work of the Directory," the latter was infringing upon the prerogatives of the legislature. "If such a process is introduced in France, there will be


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
liberty, no guarantee for the representatives of the people; they will begin by excluding dangerous men, and end by excluding those who, due to an energetic character, express in their discourse the sentiments of free men." But his protest was unavailing; his adversaries urged the "500" to "bar the way to the Terror" and exclude the deputies, and it was in vain that Jourdan denied he was a defender of anarchists. On the 22 Floreal (May, 1798) the invalidated elections were agreed upon. 12.

The Floreal coup almost certainly initiated Jourdan's crisis of confidence in the regime. The proscribed deputies were opponents of the Directory rather than conspirators. Jourdan surely realized this fact and, as a firm proponent of constitutional rule, was revolted by it. Although he was reelected president of the "500" shortly afterwards, his determination to leave politics and resume his military career quite possibly originated with this incident.

Jourdan was most active as head of the military commission of the "500," a sub-committee involved with all problems related to the French army. Unfortunately, evidence for the actual workings of this committee is lacking. However, we do know of the most important legislation that Jourdan dealt with. He proposed a bill suspending the

appointment of any new staff officers or supply officials, the number of which had expanded from 8,000 to 25,000 over the preceding two years, gravely eating into the budget. In the same bill he proposed that the number of officers per staff be fixed at a given level to prevent superfluous aides from being promoted. The bill appears to have been passed since there was no further discussion on the subject. He also supported the agitation for a severance bonus for all veterans upon their retirement from the army. The Directory had promised that such a bonus would be paid, but only when hostilities had definitely ceased. The left wanted the bonus paid immediately, since most retired veterans hailed from poor families and needed the money. Jourdan asserted that the bonus was not a "degrading salary" like the bounty then paid to volunteers, but a "just reward" for their good services. He further urged that the indigent families of dead or disabled soldiers receive some kind of pension.13

But it was in the promulgation of a comprehensive conscription law that Jourdan provided his most important service. Since the levee en masse in 1793 the government had enacted no legislation to provide the army with recruits nor had they bothered to draft additional men to replace those killed or crippled, or those who had

13. Valentin, op cit, pp. 159-60. Le Moniteur, 6 Thermidor, 1'an VI (7/24/98).
deserted. As a result the army had shrunk from over 1,000,000 men in 1794 to 454,000 in 1796, mostly due to desertion, and declined even more following the Treaty of Luneville in 1797. Most replacements were volunteers induced to enlist for a bounty, and these were few enough. As the diplomatic situation deteriorated in the summer of 1798, the feebleness of the army became a subject of concern.

Jourdan's initial proposal for strengthening the military was to establish an auxiliary army of 100,000 men, its soldiers chosen from the citizenry by ballot. The Councils rejected this on the grounds that it was "unequal." 14

Obviously some form of conscription was necessary, no matter how distasteful this was to many of the Thermidorians. The alternatives were either to reestablish a professional army of paid mercenaries or to resort to the *levee en masse* in times of national crisis. The first was impossible because it smacked of the recruiting gangs and tyranny of the monarchy; the second was unpopular because it had been a measure of the Terror. Yet the left believed that the Republic dared not attempt to get by with a skeleton army. As Jourdan argued when proposing his conscription bill, "the too voluminous history of warfare has taught us that treaties of peace ought to be considered only as truces ... It is said,

with reason, that to keep the peace it is necessary to be in a condition to make war. But if this maxim is applicable to all governments, it is even more applicable to a nation which has just overthrown the throne under which it has groaned for so many centuries." Only a powerful army could deter the monarchies of the rest of Europe from attempting to overturn the verdict of 1794.15

On July 20, 1798, Jourdan proposed a bill that would draft a contingent of young men into the army on a yearly basis. The justification for the conscription was that all Frenchmen capable of bearing arms were responsible for the defense of their nation. The Revolution had granted them liberty, equality and full citizenship, and it was their duty to serve as soldiers to protect it. Jourdan argued that the alternative was a professional army, and that both the Roman Empire and the French Monarchy had demonstrated the dangers of dividing society into separate military and civilian castes. Should national security be turned over to professionals, not only would the citizens be at the mercy of a contemporary praetorian guard, they also would become prey to effeminacy and degeneracy. "The base greed for money will replace the noble passion for glory; self love, love of nation: riches will become more important than virtue; and the Nation, enervated by luxury, will be prey to every ravisher." Like

15. Le Moniteur, 2 Thermidor, l'an VI (7/20/98).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
most career soldiers Jourdan considered military service beneficial, a strengthener of character, an instiller of discipline in young men. A defender of one's country, a soldier of liberty, was a man to be respected and admired by family and relatives, neighbors and fellow citizens. He instilled vigor into a society that might otherwise become soft and degenerate.  

The provisions of Jourdan's conscription law declared that all able bodied French males between the ages of twenty and twenty-five, except those married before January 12, 1798, were subject to military service. They were to be registered according to their ages in five classes. The legislature would decide at a given time how many conscripts were required, and the Minister of War would then call the necessary number to the colors beginning with the youngest class -- those twenty years old. Jourdan argued that the youngest class should be called first because most would have completed their education or apprenticeships, but would not yet be involved with a family or career. Besides men at that age were best suited to bear the physical

16. Ibid. At the end of his speech Jourdan romantically described the soldier-conscription returning home covered with glory, greeted by the tears of his family, the awe of his friends, and the respect of his fellow citizens as he recounted tales of his heroism. As a pure romantic Jourdan gave away nothing in spirit to men like Mickiewicz and Lamartine.
hardships of war. Each conscript was to serve five years, although chances were that he would not have to serve his fifth year. Each new class of men twenty years old was to replace those having finished their service. The municipal authorities of each arrondissement were to draw up draft lists of their citizens, while the war ministry compiled a master list, coordinated the other details of registration, and handled the actual call-up of the draftees. The conscripts were to be incorporated into veteran units as replacements -- the amalgamation perpetuated. Although volunteers were still to be accepted, Jourdan urged that the incentive bounty be done away with lest conscripts be tempted to enlist prior to receiving their draft notices in order to collect the bounty; volunteers should enlist out of patriotism, or out of a desire to pursue a military career. All draft evaders were to be treated as deserters, deprived of their civic rights, and subjected to arrest.17

In spite of the Thermidorians' commitment to normalcy, the bill met with surprisingly light opposition. Much of it was directed at the provisions of the bill depriving draft evaders of their civic rights which opponents claimed were unconstitutional. But when it was made clear that all accused draft evaders would face a trial, this objection was rejected. Opponents also objected to the provision which

17. Le Moniteur, 23 Fructidor, an VI.
called the youngest class to the colors first and proposed in addition that anyone of draft age who had already seen military service be granted a complete exemption. Both of these were rejected also. It was also proposed that conscripts who had completed a certain amount of schooling be granted priority in gaining officer status, but instead a provision was added requiring that all officer candidates have a minimum of three years' experience in the ranks. The entire thrust of the law was to ensure that everyone of draft age, regardless of their social standing, serve in the army under equal conditions, and possibly the Thermidorians felt it impolitic to oppose this outright. After a little further debate the bill was made law on the 19th Fructidor (September 5, 1798).  

In spirit the bill seemed to accomplish all that its authors desired. But in its execution it possessed flaws — flaws for which Jourdan was partly responsible. When the government fixed the first draft at 200,000 men, it was discovered that the registration details left much to be desired. Permitting the local authorities to draw up the draft lists proved to be a mistake; these men placed local imperatives ahead of the national interest as usual and performed their tasks unsatisfactorily. Some localities refused outright to implement the conscription, and their

obstruction and negligence prevented the war ministry from compiling an accurate national draft list. Furthermore, no provisions had been made for determining those physically unfit. Local ad hoc boards, composed of the fathers of many of the conscripts, were hastily formed to give medical examinations, and all too often fathers fraudulently declared their sons medically unfit to serve. But the worst problems arose, not from the shortcomings of the law, but from the inefficiency of the war bureaucracy. The latter took no measures to feed and equip the conscripts once they joined the army. Draftees lacked pay, provisions, uniforms and weapons. At Belfort, where the war ministry sent many of the recruits destined for the Rhineland, there were no officers to train them and no barracks or other facilities to house them. Jourdan, when he took command of the Rhine forces, had to incorporate them untrained into his veteran units. Even then the war ministry neglected to send the conscripts their pay or provisions for months afterwards. Disgusted by such colossal neglect, many draftees deserted almost as soon as they had joined their units.

The result was that the conscripts did not flow into the army, but arrived in driblets. Of the 203,000 men

registered on the first lists, 60,000 were "found" unfit for duty. Only 97,000 men actually obeyed their call-up, and since these were marched to the front in isolated detachments, a practice which facilitated desertion, only 74,000 men actually joined their units. In December, when the government confidently expected the army to be augmented by 150,000 men, only 23,899 had arrived. The Councils reacted predictably to this huge wastage: faced with such widespread disobedience, they blamed it on the harshness of the law rather than the slackness of its execution, and so they allowed those who did not want to serve the opportunity not to. They permitted reluctant draftees to find volunteers, or substitutes, to replace them. This, of course, mainly benefited the wealthy who could now escape the draft by hiring substitutes. These new provisions did not appreciably improve the situation, but, because Jourdan was then at the front, he could not object to these new provisions which robbed his law of its spirit of equality.21

Nonetheless, for all of its inadequacies, the Jourdan conscription law marked a watershed in military history. It was the first modern draft law ever enacted; this fact alone explains its many rough edges. Its content and philosophy forshadowed the modern age, for the concept of obligatory military service for a nation's young men, so basic to the

mass armies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, was first articulated in the Jourdan law. Indeed, the arguments which he used to defend the bill, that defense of one's country was the duty of every citizen, that a professional army allowed a nation's manhood to go soft and thus was dangerous to liberty, and that young men were physically and mentally best suited to undergo the rigors of military duty, can be found in any modern brochure defending the merits of conscription. The French theory of the nation in arms originated here. The Jourdan law has remained the basis for French conscription to the present day, and if the law has changed in particulars over the years, the fundamental fact of compulsory military service has remained in effect since 1872.22

Early in October, 1798, Jourdan resigned his chair as president of the "500" in order to assume command of the Army of Mayence. He resigned amidst general acclaim: in a laudatory farewell speech Lucien Bonaparte announced that the Council was losing "an estimable colleague."23 But if his political associates esteemed him, and most seemed to, Jourdan apparently did not esteem his associates. Thus,


he was willing to abandon prestige and comfort as a legislator for hardships and danger as the commander of a neglected and ill-equipped army. Like so many soldiers he felt enchained by the oratory, compromise, intrigue and hypocrisy of parliamentary politics, a feeling which the Floreal coup could not have ameliorated. Combat became more attractive than debate. The command in the Rhineland offered him the chance to escape the miasma of Directorial politics, and an opportunity to refurbish his military reputation, so tarnished by the debacle of 1796.

II. Stockach

The Army of Mayence was an occupation force of some 47,000 soldiers. Its troops were scattered in garrisons up and down the Rhine Valley from Dusseldorf to Brisach, some located as far west as Luxemburg where peasant unrest was keeping them occupied. The army was totally incapable of taking the field should hostilities break out. While the men were comfortable enough quartered in German villages, living at the expense of the inhabitants, they had no logistics system to support them once they marched.

Jourdan's job was to put the army on a war footing. To do this, he first had to provide it with a supply system.

24. A. G. B2* 260, see Jourdan's letters to the Minister of War of November, 1798 to February, 1799 for the sorry condition of the Army of Mayence.
He had to start virtually from scratch. He drew up plans for supplying the soldiers when hostilities resumed and they took the field, assembled food reserves for a campaign, and constructed magazines on both sides of the Rhine. He harried the war ministry until it took steps to train and provision some of the conscripts at least. He waged relentless war upon the peculation of the contractors. He was heartily sick of their graft and broken promises; if he still favored free enterprise, he distrusted its entrepreneurs. He accused the Bernard Company of having defaulted on a contract to supply the army with fodder. Of the horse contractors, the Victor Company had agreed to supply 4,800 horses and had delivered 3,213, the Schunk Company only 687 out of 1,220, and a third firm not a single horse. By January he was objecting to having private firms supply the army at all, a practice that always "turns entirely to the benefit of the contractors" who did not do their jobs.²⁵

He proposed instead that the Directory adopt his suggested program of 1796, the program which Bonaparte employed in Italy with such success. The government should allow the army quartermaster to control all monetary contributions, as well as all requisitioned subsistence and effects. The quartermaster, instead of sending the money to Paris where

it disappeared, would use it to purchase the army's needs on the spot. He could place the requisitions in army magazines until hostilities resumed, at which point he could distribute the materiel directly to the soldiers. Jourdan lobbied for this solution ceaselessly, so ceaselessly that he must have ruffled some feathers in Paris. The Minister of War peevishly wrote that he should restrain his "solicitude" over the supply situation "within the proper boundaries."

Jourdan exploded. Had it not been for him, he angrily replied, the entire right bank of the Rhine would have been without a supply administration. He alone had insured that the Rhineland contributions entered the coffers of the Republic, rather than serving "to enrich the Companies which are busier purchasing themselves --- wealth than seeing to the needs of the army." If he had not overstepped his proper boundaries, nothing would have been done. This was hardly the diffident Jourdan of 1793-94, but then this regime was not the Committee of Public Safety.

The Directory based its strategy for the forthcoming campaign upon a memorandum submitted by Jourdan, evidently while he was head of the military committee in the "500." Like all of his strategies, this one was simple, direct, unremarkable. He supposed that when hostilities resumed, 

---

26. Ibid. See also his letter to the Minister of War of 1/12/99.
Austria would be France's principal opponent. Austria probably would make her main thrusts in Italy and Switzerland, so to counter this, 40,000 Frenchmen should defend Switzerland, while 60,000 should garrison the peninsula of Italy. France in turn should make its main efforts with two armies of 80,000 men each, one in Bavaria and one in northern Italy. These should advance, pinching the enemy between them as the latter invaded Switzerland, and eventually uniting in the area of Klagenfurt to march on Vienna. A further 40,000 men should cover the Rhine from Holland to Strasbourg. Jourdan considered this strategy entirely consistent with the means at the government's disposal. The Councils had voted funds for over 400,000 men and the conscription should furnish the necessary manpower. The Directory "only needed to profit from the resources which the corps legislatif put into its hands ... A great effort of genius was not necessary for such operations."27

The key to this strategy was manpower. Jourdan believed that with superior manpower and battlefield performance, the French could simply overwhelm their foes, gathering momentum as they advanced as in 1794. He expected the government to provide the necessary manpower; he remarked to his officers that "if the Minister keeps his word, I shall be at Vienna."

27. Jourdan, Precis des operations ... , pp. 9-11.
But Jourdan's trust in the government's promises was misplaced, perhaps naive. By February, 1799, he commanded 46,000 men, not 80,000. The other armies were no better off: the Army of Switzerland numbered but 30,000 men, the Army of Italy, 50,000. When Bernadotte took command of the "Army of Observation" along the Rhine, he found not 40,000 men but 8,000. 28

Nonetheless the Directory insisted that its armies assume the offensive. When it asked Jourdan for an offensive plan for his army, Jourdan replied that his army was so small that he could not suggest one. He must instead wait and see what the enemy intended to do. He judged it impossible to act offensively and protect the Rhine Valley simultaneously as the Directory desired. The Directory responded by ordering him to advance as soon as the enemy crossed the neutrality line in Swabia; he could count on reinforcements in the near future. Jourdan replied that by the time he learned of the enemy advance, they would have several days' advantage over him. He urged that he be allowed to anticipate the beginning of hostilities, advance to the reverse slope of the Black Forest, and take up a strong position. "The surest method of fighting will be to hold the army concentrated in order to be able to send it successively against each portion of

the enemy forces, which will surely be divided into several
corps ... " And then he noted that surely his orders assumed
the presence of an army larger than the 46,000 men whom he
then led.29

It was doubtful that the Directory so assumed. The
alliances being formed by the members of the Second Coalition
and the murder of two government plenipotentiaries at Rastadt
by unknown assassins were stampeding it into a war that it
was ill prepared to fight. The Directory should have
negotiated, playing for time to strengthen its armies.
Instead it deceived its generals and forced them to open the
campaign with insufficient forces. It did not make sure
that the conscription was actually working, and kept
valuable soldiers at home to "preserve law and order" during
the elections, promising to send these men to Jourdan
as soon as the elections were over. It swore that the Army
of Observation numbered 47,000 men. Instead of beguiling
the enemy, the Directory beguiled its own generals. Indeed
Director Jean Reubell had the temerity to announce publicly
that never had France put such grand forces into the field
before; one wonders how he mouthed that lie with a straight
face. His propaganda was so convincing that Jourdan's

29. A.G. B2* 260, Jourdan to the Minister of War,
friends in Paris were congratulating him on being able to open the campaign with 150,000 men! 30

When the Directory ordered General Andre Massena to open hostilities in Switzerland, thereby forcing Jourdan to begin his own advance to conform with Massena's movement, Jourdan marched with a grand total of 38,263 soldiers. "One can scarcely conceive," observed St. Cyr, then a divisional commander in Jourdan's army, "that the Directory ... would embark upon a campaign with means so inferior to those of the enemy." Jourdan's opponent, his old adversary the Archduke Karl, commanded 78,000 men. It is hard not to agree with St. Cyr's trenchant remark that "from the opening of the campaign, it was easy to foresee to outcome." 31

Even so Jourdan bowed to the will of his cynical superiors and advanced. Certainly he could have resigned his command rather than face such long odds with so little


Precis des operations ..., pp. 11-13. As usual it is impossible to ascertain where the fault lay for the incredible gap between anticipated and actual manpower. The Councils blamed the Directory; the Directory blamed the war minister, Scherer, who became something of a scapegoat for all the army's problems. It appears that while Scherer was partly responsible, he could not control the local obstruction to the conscription -- or the Contractors.

support from his own government, or at the very least he could have stood fast in the Black Forest and left Massena to his own devices. But this was not his way; when his government issued orders, he obeyed them. Moreover, there may have been other motives involved. It is suggested that Jourdan badly wanted to face the Archduke again in order to take revenge for his defeat in 1796. Edmund Dubois-Crance, Jourdan's colleague on the military commission in the "500," and then inspector-general of the army, claimed that Jourdan was eager to begin regardless of Karl's superior numbers. "You will be beaten," Dubois warned, "you will not be long in returning to Strasbourg, crestfallen, after having cracked your whip so much, having sacrificed yourself by your obstinacy." Evidently Jourdan burned to redeem his reputation so much that he was willing to compromise his usual prudence. Even so, how Jourdan was to ignore direct orders to advance, Dubois-Crance did not say.32

On March 5, Jourdan crossed the Rhine and marched to take up a strong position in the Black Forest. Contrary to Dubois-Crance's fears, this was only a precautionary step. With war imminent, Jourdan wanted his army concentrated in as advantageous a position as possible. It was here that he learned of Massena's advance. Officially he exercised authority

32. Phipps, op cit, V, pp. 30-1.
over both Massena and Bernadotte. Although their forces were separate, the Directory had told him to consider them "as two great wings of your army ... the Directory will suffer no disobedience to your orders from one or the other."

In reality the government was acting with as much bad faith in this as in everything else. The Minister of War simultaneously assured Massena that he was absolutely independent of Jourdan, but must appear deferential to him in order to please the Directory. It was in vain that Jourdan complained of Massena's refusal either to communicate with him or to follow orders without a corresponding directive from the government.

So when the Directory ordered Massena to advance, Jourdan was powerless to force him to stand fast. Instead, in order to prevent the Austrians from throwing superior forces against Massena, "I thought that I indeed should act," and march to his support.  

Jourdan's army, now styled the Army of the Danube, marched southeast towards the headwaters of the Danube. He ordered Bernadotte to besiege Phillipsburg with the Army of Observation. Bernadotte protested that he had no soldiers, which was true, but the Directory had assured Jourdan that Bernadotte was being reinforced, which was false. An exchange of nasty letters succeeded only in irritating the two generals; it did not lead to Phillipsburg's

investment. As Jourdan crossed the Danube, he proceeded more cautiously. He was now in the wooded, hilly country between the Danube and Lake Constance where it was difficult to obtain information. But with Massena operating on the other side of the lake, Jourdan was obliged to take this route if he wished to support him. He did not know that he was on a collision course with Karl's army. The Archduke's spy service in southwest Germany had kept him informed of every move that Jourdan had made since he crossed the Rhine.

Karl left Bavaria, crossing the Lech on March 9, and took the shortest route towards Jourdan's advance. He desired a battle. He wanted to make use of his numerical superiority to defeat Jourdan before Jourdan could unite with Massena. 34

Jourdan marched with his army in a diamond-shaped formation: Lefebvre with the advanced guard at the point, Ferino and St. Cyr's divisions on either wing, Souham's division and d'Hautpoul's cavalry in the rear within supporting distance of any point on the diamond. As an added precaution, he detached Vandamme with a mixed force of 3,500 men north of the Danube to guard against any attempt by the enemy to turn the army from that direction. Each division was expected to sustain an enemy attack long enough for the others to come

to its aid. The diamond probably extended over too great
a distance, but as usual Jourdan judged being overlapped and
enveloped by the Austrians' superior numbers as the greater
evil. Jourdan's diamond was nothing less than a preview
of Napoleon's much acclaimed "battalion carré." 35

On March 20, Jourdan encountered the Archduke near the
village of Ostrach. So confused was the Directory's
diplomacy that only then did hostilities officially begin
between France and Austria. Lefebvre's division was deployed
around Ostrach in depth: his first line positioned in the village
and along a stream, a second line in the woods and on the
hills behind the village, and a battery covering the road
exiting from Ostrach. St. Cyr and Ferino were similarly
deployed on the left and right, with Souham and d'Hautpoul
in reserve. Jourdan was awaiting events; Karl intended to
attack. He sent a force of eleven battalions and twenty
squadrons to keep St. Cyr busy, while he deployed two
massive columns totaling thirty-seven battalions and ninety-
two squadrons to crush Jourdan's center at Ostrach. He had
a four to one superiority over Lefebvre. 36

de la Campagne de l'an VII. Henri Jomini acclaimed the
battalion carré as one of the keys to Napoleon's amazing
military success. What are we to conclude: that Jourdan, by
anticipating this formation, placed himself at a level of
strategic ability with Napoleon -- or that the battalion carré
was not the military breakthrough that Jomini and others
believed?

Karl, op cit, I, pp. 150-58.
At two a.m. on March 21 Karl set his army in motion. Twelve thousand soldiers under his best general, Nauendorf, began the attack by assaulting Ostrach. The French fought back amidst a violent rainstorm with high easterly winds that blew the gunsmoke back into the faces of the defenders. But if the French could not see, the Austrians could not generate any momentum in the pouring rain. Lefebvre hung on grimly, losing and retaking Ostrach several times. Karl fed more and more men into the fray, but this produced little effect other than to congest the battlefield. Jourdan and Lefebvre fought in the front lines. In Jourdan's case this was as much to discern the enemy's movements as to encourage his men, the visibility being so poor that he could not see how overwhelming were the odds he was facing. Consequently he only reinforced Lefebvre with one demi-brigade from Souham's division. 37

But when the storm abated at noon, the weakness of his French position became clear. The Austrians were seeping into the gaps between Lefebvre, and St. Cyr and Ferino on either wing. Their superior numbers finally drove the French out of Ostrach, in spite of a vicious counterattack led by Soult that temporarily halted them. Lefebvre was shot through the arm and had to leave the field. Jourdan

was violently thrown to the ground when his horse was
killed under him; he recalled later with great pleasure that
his men expressed joy and relief when he got to his feet
unhurt. On the left St. Cyr initiated local attacks as soon
as he heard the roar of the fighting at Ostrach. These
drew some of the enemy towards him, but by mid-afternoon
he too had his hands full. Jourdan had no option but to
order a retreat. Lefebvre's men, now under Soult, fought
their way out, losing many killed and wounded, but few
prisoners. By nightfall the army had escaped the Archduke's
clutches. 38

For the Austrians Ostrach was a tactical success
but a strategic setback. The Archduke had set out to
destroy his smaller adversary; he succeeded only in driving
him back. The French lost 2,200 men, but the Austrians
lost 3,000 and had little to show for their efforts. 39

Jourdan did not retreat far. He fell back to a line
running from the shore of Lake Constance through Engen to
Emmingen-ob-Eck on his left. He made good his losses by
recalling Vandamme from north of the Danube. Karl followed,
but cautiously, being puzzled by the vigorous resistance of
the French and the quickness of their movements. He desired

39. Phipps, ibid, pp. 36-38.
to move around their southern flank and cut Jourdan off from Massena in Switzerland, but he was afraid to attempt this until he was sure of Jourdan's dispositions. When his advanced guard came off second best in a series of skirmishes with St. Cyr's division on the 24th, he became even more cautious. He halted his army near the village of Stockach and ordered reconnaissances in all directions. His position was poorly chosen. Stockach was situated on low ground dominated by hills to the west, and Karl's flanks rested on relatively flat terrain where thick woods left his troops without clear fields of fire. Only two roads crossed the marshy stream which flowed through a ravine behind the army. The Austrians thus had a tenuous escape route in case of defeat. Clearly Karl did not expect to fight a defensive action on this difficult battlefield.  

But Jourdan intended differently. Unquestionably he still hoped to devise some way to halt the Austrian advance. One source described him as being in a state of high excitement during these difficult days, refusing to eat, constantly on the move to check every detail personally. And at some point on March 24 he decided to throw caution to the winds and hurl his 38,000 men against Karl's 78,000 men.

The decision is surprising. The planned attack involved high risk totally inconsistent with his usual prudence. It also, at first glance, seemed unnecessary. Jourdan could have harrassed Karl indefinitely, hanging on his flank and bothering him with small actions while he waited for the Directory to provide him with reinforcements. If the Directory did not, he had still done his duty. One impetus to attack came from St. Cyr, who reported that he believed Karl to be shifting troops to Switzerland while Jourdan remained inactive. "I believe ... that we are dupes to the movements of the enemy. I am convinced that we have encountered only a body of troops which has advanced to mask a movement towards Switzerland." St. Cyr then urged Jourdan to return to the attack to defeat at least a portion of Karl's army, and force him to halt his movement. A second incentive came from Massena. Long mute, he broke his silence on March 23 to complain that Jourdan's withdrawal after Ostrach left him facing the entire Austrian army, including the Archduke. "If you have not been able to resist this last, how can I do so?" These two letters apparently convinced Jourdan that for the moment the Archduke had transferred his attentions from Jourdan to Massena. To save Massena from being overwhelmed, he felt compelled to attack. Unfortunately both St. Cyr and Massena had totally misread Karl's intentions; Karl's entire army was
still directed against Jourdan's. 41

Jourdan planned his attack under the mistaken impression that he would be assailing an army reduced in numbers. From the wording of his orders, he evidently expected the enemy force remaining before him to continue a slow advance westward. He ordered a concentric advance upon Stockach: Souham from Engen, and Soult from Emmingen "will continually annoy the enemy ... until the enemy will be forced to retire by the movements which will be executed by the two wings of the army." The two wings were to be Ferino on the right and St. Cyr, reinforced by Vandamme, on the left. Jourdan thus planned to overwhelm whatever was in front of him by his favorite tactic; as it turned out he was facing the entire Austrian army. It was a bold, even reckless strategy, given the limited information at his disposal; yet within limits it could wreak havoc upon an unsuspecting enemy. It was a strategy which, if successful, made its general a genius; if unsuccessful, damned him as a fool. 42


42. Jourdan to St. Cyr, 3/24/99, St. Cyr, ibid, pp. 320-21. A.G. mr 367, Journal de 1799. Jourdan was silent as to his reasons for these dispositions. Nonetheless, considering his past record, it is inconceivable that he premeditatedly set out to double-envelop an army twice his size. See also A.G. mr 608-6, Soult's official report (n.d.).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
For the first few hours of March 25, Jourdan was a genius. His attack caught the Austrians completely unawares, especially their right flank under Meerfeld. Soult drove Meerfeld's troops back towards Liptingen while St. Cyr and Vandamme began to envelop his flank; Meerfeld hastily tried to organize a defense around Liptingen, but the French moved too swiftly for him. Vandamme, with a series of cavalry charges, broke one flank, Soult drove in the other, and suddenly the Austrians fell apart. Of Meerfeld's 14,000 men, 4,000 remained on the field, most prisoners; the rest streamed back towards Stockach in wild rout. So feebly had they resisted that St. Cyr believed that Meerfeld had neglected to put his men into a state of defense. Jourdan enthusiastically pushed the attack forward; when the enemy attempted to make a stand in the woods south of Liptingen, the French threw them back again. Souham's and Ferino's attack had not gone as well, but by ten a.m. they had broken the enemy reconnaissance force on the Engen road and forced it to retreat.

The attack had exceeded all expectations; Jourdan was within an ace of inflicting a smashing tactical defeat upon Karl's larger army. Unfortunately with victory within his grasp, Jourdan proceeded to fumble the battle back to

the Archduke.

The sight of thousands of enemy soldiers fleeing in disorder, tumbling into the ravine pursued by French cavalry while thousands more laid down their weapons, destroyed Jourdan's equilibrium, whetting his appetite for greater triumphs. He could have been content with the complete defeat of the Austrian right flank; instead he attempted to destroy the entire enemy army. As Meerfeld's remnants fled towards Stockach, Jourdan ordered St. Cyr to make a long flank march around the enemy right to his rear and his tenuous line of retreat, while Soult pursued Meerfeld alone. If St. Cyr could cut the roads behind Karl's army while most of it was still around Stockach, the Austrians would be caught in the tangled woods and marshes along the shore of Lake Constance, without adequate roads on which to maneuver or retreat, their numbers compromised by nature. Jourdan later admitted that this maneuver would seem "rash" to military men; however it was the only way he believed that he could convert a partial triumph into a complete victory that would reverse the course of the campaign. One wonders if he would have tried it had he known that Karl's entire army was before him. The maneuver was too rash, too ambitious. St. Cyr had too far to march and too few troops to disrupt the retreat of an entire army. Nor had Karl determined on a retreat; he was organizing resistance around Stockach. St. Cyr protested that Jourdan was attempting
too much, but Jourdan remained adamant and ordered the fatal movement to begin.44

Meanwhile Soult was encountering stiffening resistance on a wooded farm north of Stockach. Karl was shifting troops from his right and center to his left, and was rapidly constructing a new line of defense. Soult met the Austrian grenadiers under Wallis. He repulsed their first counterattack, and then attacked three times himself; on each occasion the ever-increasing numbers of the enemy repulsed him in savage fighting and finally began to force him back step by step. Jourdan waited for his other divisions to make their presence felt, but Ferino launched only two half-hearted attacks to the west of Stockach, and St. Cyr was still en route to the enemy rear.45

As Soult was slowly overpowered, Jourdan saw the battle swing against him. "He recalled Vandamme's small force and a demi-brigade of St. Cyr, but the Austrians checked their advance on the far side of the ravine. As a last resort Jourdan ordered d'Hautpoul with the cavalry to halt the enemy with a charge. Apparently d'Hautpoul bungled the job. He aligned his troopers in front of his own artillery, masking its fire as well as the fire of


45. Ibid. Ferino's most distinguished moment came in 1796 when, as one of Moreau's generals he allowed his division to be surprised by the enemy --- while he had a friendly luncheon with the enemy commander!
Soult's infantry which had rallied momentarily near Liptingen. When he charged, he charged late. The Austrian cavalry, always the elite of their forces, defeated d'Hautpoul after a violent struggle and drove him from the field. Vainly Jourdan threw himself into the melee, trying to arrest the retreat by sheer energy and exertion, but his army fell back, overwhelmed by superior numbers. Always fighting, the French retreated towards Tuttlingen and the Danube. St. Cyr, belatedly recalled from his fruitless march, arrived in time to cover the retreat.46

Jourdan's performance at Stockach was a paradox. He inflicted 6,000 casualties on a vastly superior force at the cost of only 3,600 of his own, and he very nearly destroyed an entire wing of the enemy army. Yet he had thrown away his triumph by recklessly attempting to destroy Karl's whole army. He vacillated between inspired generalship at one moment, rash generalship the next. In some ways he was twice the strategist in 1799 that he was in 1793, or even 1794. His plan for throwing his small army upon the Austrians as they advanced and defeating them in detail was both sound and intelligent; had the Directory agreed to it, the campaign might have progressed quite differently. His tactics demonstrated a new daring and aggressiveness that were missing before. His resistance at Ostrach and his attack


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
at Stockach were the operations of a great general, but his rash decision to send St. Cyr on his long flank march was the decision of a poor one. But his most critical mistakes did not arise out of tactical miscalculations; they arose out of his determination to be the dutiful general. He could have evaded the Directory's instructions; instead he obeyed orders and advanced. He could have let Massena escape his difficulties as best he could but advanced to his aid and was beaten. Had he possessed a more selfish, insubordinate attitude, he might never have suffered defeat.

The rest of Jourdan's short tenure with the Army of the Danube can be briefly summarized. He retreated to the Black Forest where he took up a defensive position. He did not attempt to join Massena because he hoped to draw Karl away from Switzerland by operating on his northern flank and because there was not enough subsistence in Switzerland to support both armies. Also, he must have wished to avoid the personal conflict that a junction with Massena would have involved. The Austrians pursued halfheartedly. While awaiting the Austrians in the Black Forest, Jourdan's health broke down completely. He retired to Strasbourg to recuperate, leaving the army in charge of Ernouf, a poor choice because Ernouf, although a loyal, efficient staff officer, was utterly incapable of commanding the army on his own. When the enemy made a local penetration in the French lines, Ernouf mishandled the situation, panicked, and then retreated.
across the Rhine. This unnecessary retreat made Stockach seem more damaging than it really was. The Directory relieved Jourdan of his command on account of his "health," replacing him with Massena. Although it suspected that he had lost the confidence of the army, his departure in fact caused an angry uproar among his soldiers. "He was ardently missed. They [the troops] knew his great experience, his objection to excesses, his extreme solicitude for the needs of his men, and his love of order and discipline." They also knew, as the Directory did not, that they had not been defeated so much as they had yielded to superior numbers. The uproar was not confined to the ranks. Bernadotte, Souham, and St. Cyr all resigned rather than serve under Massena.

Jourdan returned to Paris to reoccupy his seat in the "500." The Councils had received the news of his setback calmly, for they well knew that he had been assigned a nearly impossible task — besides, Massena and Scherer had also been defeated. The Directors blamed the defeat on "General Crawfish," as they named Jourdan; the Councils blamed it on the Directory. As for General Crawfish, he returned to politics with a mission: to rid the government of the

47. Phipps, op cit, V. pp. 57-61. St. Cyr, op cit, I, pp. 162-63. The quote is St. Cyr's. Such praise, coming as it did from the sharpest military critic in the Napoleonic Army, was high praise indeed.
corrupt, negligent politicians who had been responsible for his downfall. Henceforth he was no longer a loyal, respectable Republican, but a convinced, bitter member of the opposition. 48

III. Towards Brumaire; The Failure Of The Jacobins

Jourdan rejoined the ranks of the Republican left upon his return to the Council of "500." He now became, in the eyes of the moderates, one of the diverse collection of "demagogues, semi-anarchists, unreconstructed terrorists, discontented generals, and ambitious politicians" whom the moderates believed comprised the Neo-Jacobin faction. The Neo-Jacobins' membership may have been as diverse -- and tainted in part -- as their opponents alleged. Nevertheless all now shared a similar goal: the overthrow of the Directory and the Directorial party within the legislature. This community of purpose had welded them together into the beginnings of an opposition party. As the government had followed blunder with blunder and scandal with scandal, the Neo-Jacobins had increased their strength; in the elections of the First Prarial (May 19, 1799) they had campaigned

48. So outraged was Jourdan by the government's treatment of him that in his Precis des Operations, which he wrote in 1800, he went so far as to accuse his political enemies of deliberately sabotaging his campaign in order to ruin him personally, pp. 27-30.
as defenders of liberty against the tyranny of the Directory and had won an increased number of seats.\textsuperscript{49}

Jourdan became a convinced member of the opposition because he was "revoluted by the incapacity of the Directory and the vexations and peculations of its agents." The survival of such a government, he felt, would be more than a guarantee of additional problems for the French nation; it would be a moral outrage. "What idea can [sic] one have of the patriotism, the morality, and the conscience of rulers capable of such combinations? Such abominable conceptions would have indeed escaped the liberty-killing genius of Machiavelli." Thus the overthrow of the Directory became a matter of patriotic necessity. "I shared the opinion of those who thought it necessary to drive away the men without talent and without morality and to carry out some modification of the Constitution of the Year III." Like his fellow Jacobins Jourdan wished to replace the greed, negligence, and "turpitude" of the Directory with a government both "violent and honest," a regime which, instead of supporting itself upon the profiteers and thieves within the bureaucracy, would wage merciless war upon them.\textsuperscript{50}

The maneuvering and intrigue to this end began almost as soon as Jourdan resumed his seat in the "500."

\textsuperscript{49.} Albert Vandal, \textit{L'Avenement de Bonaparte}, I, pp. 70-75.

The Neo-Jacobins were not the only politicians interested in ousting the Directory, or at the very least in capturing it for their own ends. A growing faction of the tougher minded Thermidorians was coalescing around the Abbe Joseph Sieyes, newly elected to the Directory to replace the departed Reubell. These men formed a kind of "party of order," opposed both to the ineptness and weakness of the Directory and to the demagoguery and "anarchism" of the left. To carry out his designs, Sieyes believed that he needed the support of the army and to win this support he had to capture the allegiance of one or more of its leaders. As one of the most influential generals in the army, Jourdan was one of Sieyes's prospects as a possible "sword" for his faction. Jourdan, Bernadotte, and General Barthelmy Joubert, late of the Army of Italy, had been charged with the task of drawing up a situation report on the French Army. When the three men met with Sieyes to discuss the report, in the course of the conversation Sieyes obliquely suggested a coup d'etat. Everyone recognized that the Constitution did not meet the present needs of France, he argued; why should they not work together to change it. But Jourdan and Bernadotte did not rise to the bait. Sieyes was quite vague on the type of government that would replace the Directory. Besides, they distrusted Sieyes's republicanism and with good reason; he was not a republican, but an ambitious
opportunist hungry for power. They pretended not to understand his proposal. Joubert alone was won over to his side.\textsuperscript{51}

Oddly enough, Jourdan placed his hopes for an ally on the Directory itself upon Barras. It is strange that Jourdan still retained illusions about him; perhaps when compared to bitter personal enemies like La Revelliere-Lepeaux and Reubell, Barras appeared respectable. In any case, Jourdan requested Barras's help in saving the "fatherland" in a private letter dated 13 Prarial. "If I have been mistaken as to your character and patriotism, I shall certainly be a victim of my zeal and confidence."\textsuperscript{52}

The letter is an excellent capsule of Jourdan's views and motivation during this period. He began by describing the problem: a republic in decay with defeated armies, corrupt officials, unenforced laws, a renewal of royalist agitation, incivique citizens -- "all Frenchmen are groaning under the burden of oppression." Causing these problems was the "Directorial" faction, "composed of men who, lacking both character and loftiness of soul, would willingly bow

\textsuperscript{51} Vandal, ibid, I, pp. 94-95. Jourdan, Notice sur le 18 Brumaire, pp. 161-62. Sieyes was in touch with various emigres and other foes of the Republic including the Prussian government during this time. Barras was not the only Director whose conduct bordered on the treasonous.

\textsuperscript{52} Barras, Memoires, III, pp. 405-410.
their heads under a despotic power provided such power gave them offices ... " The goal of this faction was to gain dictatorial power for itself. If such a measure would save France, Jourdan would support it. Yet such a measure would not save France, but substitute despotism for representative government, and history had shown that the former did not work. "The more authority has been limited to a few, the more has the public spirit been weakened, and the more have the means of action decreased." The government was made by the people for the people; now the people were in the process of losing control of their government. However, there existed another faction, the "Republican" faction, composed of men dedicated to reinvigorating representative government and reviving public spirit. It sought "to kindle in the people an enthusiasm whereby they will make great sacrifices to repair past mistakes." It desired to unify all republicans in a common program and make the Republic "one of men and not of words." Barras, Jourdan concluded, must unite with the latter faction, make his influence felt among the uncommitted and the wavering, and help lift it to power. If he did not, he would be counted among the ranks of the Directorials. "Save the Fatherland," Jourdan urged, "it is within your power to do so."53

53. Ibid.
This letter again demonstrated Jourdan's fundamental belief that representative government and strong, energetic rule were far from incompatible; a democratic society could be both free and disciplined at the same time. His antidote for France's malaise was a national revival of energy, self-sacrifice, and if necessary, ruthlessness. He desired a temporary suspension of business as usual in favor of national mobilization and discipline to meet the nation's crisis. In short, he proposed a mild revival of the Terror. If his program lacked sophistication, if he saw the problem in terms of the corrupt Directorial forces of evil opposing the patriotic republican forces of good, and if his suggested antidote of controlled Terror was "worn out," as Barras later argued, his assessment of the turpitude and moral bankruptcy of the Thermidorian establishment was accurate. The basic weakness in his, and indeed his fellow Jacobins', program was its commitment to a constitutional struggle. The Neo-Jacobins sought unconstitutional ends: the overthrow of the Directory and their Machiavellian allies, yet planned to achieve them within the boundaries of legality. The Directorials were not to be so finicky. In promising to play by the rules, the Jacobins sowed the seeds of their eventual defeat.

Jourdan of course was mistaken about Barras's character and patriotism; Barras was the most directorial
of the Directorials. He remained uncommitted. The Jacobins therefore began their offensive without him. During the last week of Prrial, as the military situation further deteriorated and the Directory's credibility declined, they began to criticize the Directors: Treilhard for having been elected to the Directory illegally and Merlin (de Douay) and La Revelliere-Lepeaux for having publicly lied about the number of soldiers actually under arms. They were joined in their criticism by Sieyes's faction which, for its own reasons, also wanted the Directory purged. On the 28th Prrial (June 16), various deputies called for the resignations of the three. When they refused, the "500" declared itself in permanent session until the impasse was resolved.

On the motion of Boulay (de la Meurthe) it also established a committee of eleven deputies to take the place of the assembled committees and handle whatever "diverse propositions" that the situation might require.54

The Committee of Eleven has been all to little studied. Apparently it was a kind of steering committee aimed at ramming through necessary legislation over Directorial opposition. Its charge to handle all "diverse propositions" attested to its flexibility, and its task

---

of ending all illegal and unconstitutional acts by the executive attested to its purpose. However its exact responsibilities are hard to establish. From its dominant role in the passage of legislation over the next two months, its creators may have intended it as a kind of quasi-executive within the "500" -- the ghost of the Committee of Public Safety. Certainly the charge to block all illegality on the part of the Directory indicates that the Jacobins intended it to usurp some of the Directory's executive authority.\textsuperscript{55}

Jourdan was one of the first deputies selected to this committee. Joining him from the ranks of the left were Talot, Joubert (the former commissioner) and Quirot. Representing Sieyès's faction were Boulay, Lucien Bonaparte, and François de Nantes. Also selected were Bergego, a moderate of uncertain leanings, and Petiet, Jourdan's former quartermaster who evidently leaned towards Sieyès. Because the committee seemed to be weighted in favor of the party of order, Jourdan proposed that two more men be added to it: Poulain-Grandpréy and General Augereau, both sympathetic to the Jacobins. From the outset Jourdan and Lucien Bonaparte were the respective spokesmen for the two groups. This was a contest in which Jourdan was at a disadvantage; his prestige and honesty were overmatched

\textsuperscript{55} Le Moniteur, 2 Messidor, an VII. Vandal, \textit{ibid.} Lefebvre, \textit{ibid.} Unfortunately Jourdan was silent on his work as a member of the Committee of Eleven in his \textit{Notice.}

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
by Lucien's skillful oratory. The Committee of Eleven thus possessed a nearly equal balance between moderates and Jacobins, and in this lay its weakness. Its purpose was to establish swift, energetic government, but its equally balanced rival factions produced dissension which later made vigorous action impossible. 56

Initially, however, the two groups were able to cooperate. They were the driving force behind what has been called the coup of the 30th Prarial (June 18, 1799). The coup purged the Directory of La Revelliere-Lepeaux, Merlin, and Treilhard, all of whom resigned under pressure. The Councils replaced them with two leftist nonentities -- Louis Gohier and General Moulins -- and an equally undistinguished Sieyès client -- Roger Ducos. The coup also rid the ministries of careerists like Ramel and Talleyrand and replaced them with men who approached their jobs with a more forceful and ruthless attitude. Bernadotte took over the war ministry, Nicholas Quinette the interior, and General Antoine Marbot the important Paris military district. Completing the left's domination of the ministries as Minister of Finance was a name from the great Committee -- Robert Lindet. These men were specifically selected to root out the corruption and untangle the red tape and confused

---

lines of authority ruining the bureaucracy. The predominantly leftist flavor of these appointees indicated that for the moment the Jacobins held the ascendency both in the "500" and on the Committee of Eleven.57

Jourdan's exact role in the coup and the resulting Jacobin resurgence is unclear. There were no specific leaders in the faction; as in 1793 the Jacobins operated collectively. It seems clear that he was one of the dominant figures, being the Jacobins' most frequent spokesman in the "500." However this does not mean that he was the dominant figure behind their political program; certainly he never so claimed in his memoirs. Doubtlessly the Jacobins assembled their platform as a team in the Montagnard tradition. If Jourdan masterminded the military legislation, the political and financial planks were the work of other veteran Jacobin leaders.

Over the course of the next month the Committee of Eleven initiated its program for saving the Republic from the internal and external threats that menaced it. On June 27, Jourdan proposed, on behalf of the Committee, that a forced loan of one hundred million francs be levied, especially upon the rich. This measure would at once help finance the war and limit the extreme wealth among the newly rich.

which the left detested. Later the Committee proposed that the government be empowered to take hostages from the families of aristocrats or émigrés in those departments troubled by royalist agitation. It also proposed to prohibit any deputy from becoming a Director until a year after his legislative term had expired and to allow the political clubs to reopen and operate freely. Jourdan defended these motions by arguing that while the dangers were great, France's resources were immense. "It is necessary to deploy them, it is necessary that the French people recapture that fiery attitude which made liberty respected; Republicans must reunite everywhere and oppose the brigands with a sacred battalion which will put them to flight: the youth of France must arm itself and fly to the combat; citizens whose property is menaced must pay from their savings." All of these motions became laws over the course of the summer. 58

The deteriorating military situation was the major cause of the crisis and the major factor in bringing the Jacobins to power. Therefore, it was essential that they reorganize and reinvigorate the army. Here Jourdan's influence was evident. He initially believed that no new

58. Histoire Parlementaire, XXXVIII, pp. 67-8, 79. Lefebvre, ibid. The law of hostages was aimed at halting the depredations of gangs of royalists who were terrorizing parts of southern France. These were the "brigands" whom Jourdan referred to in his speech.
levy of recruits would be needed to reinforce the army and that the strict enforcement of the existing conscription laws was sufficient to raise the number of soldiers to 500,000. However, he soon changed his mind. On June 27, he proposed that all five classes of those men then eligible for the draft be called up at once. No replacements were allowed, and all leaves were to be reviewed and most cancelled. This was a revival of the famous levée of 1793. He also proposed the creation of an auxiliary army of 100,000 men whose purpose was both to insure internal tranquility and to provide reinforcements into the field forces. He treated the problem of desertion with a mixture of honey and vinegar. All current deserters were to be pardoned if they rejoined their units within twenty days, alternatively they could join the auxiliary army where it was easier to feed and clothe them than at the front; at the same time all future deserters were to be executed. The following month he caused the national guard to be augmented. In conjunction with Bernadotte he secured the release of their old colleague, Championnet, from prison, where he had been confined for exceeding his authority in Naple by turning that kingdom into a republic. They gave him command of the Army of the Alps, and appointed Sieyès's protege, Joubert, commander of the Army of Italy.59


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Most historians either have agreed with Barras that the Jacobins' measures were outdated, overly harsh, and unnecessary, or have argued that they were poorly chosen, ineptly applied, and thus largely unproductive. It is true that the Jacobin program might have been better executed. For example, the Committee of Eleven left the levying of the forced loan up to departmental "juries" of local citizens who decided how much each wealthy citizen within their department had to "loan" the government. The abuses and inequalities possible in such a system are obvious. On the other hand, the majority in the Councils shrank from employing the centralized force which would have insured efficiency. The men of Prarial were attempting strong government; yet strong government without coercion is impossible, and the majority were unwilling to employ coercion. But if some of these measures were inefficient, they were not unproductive. The appointments of Bernadotte, Lindet, and the others injected needed energy and honesty into the bureaucracy. The forced loan, however imperfect, raised considerable cash. The political clubs, though only a pale imitation of the clubs of 1793, stimulated public-spiritedness. Most importantly, the military reforms halted the army's

60. Historians favorable to Napoleon, like Vandal, particularly take the latter view, arguing that the only effective reforms were passed after Brumaire.
drift towards disintegration. The new levée injected 161,000 men into the ranks, the desertion rate was reduced, and a return to limited requisitioning within France produced 40,000 horses to alleviate the army's chronic shortage of mounts. Jourdan's auxiliary army produced the manpower for the famed Army of Reserve, which Bonaparte used to conquer his crown the following year at Marengo.61

The Jacobins' program might have been more effective if they had been allowed to carry it out without opposition and interference. The Party of Order soon lost its taste for collaborating with demagogues and unreconstructed terrorists; the two factions, never really compatible, began to quarrel. This split was deadly to the Committee of Eleven. Its purpose was to expedite legislation and provide vigorous rule until the crisis was over, but the dissension between the two factions divided the Committee in half and made vigorous action impossible. Jourdan and Lucien Bonaparte became antagonists, both on the Committee and at the tribune. The dissension spread to the "500" where the seances became punctuated with violent arguments and near fistfights and then to the streets where right-wing gangs clashed with members of the political societies. On one such occasion a crowd of rightists surrounded Jacobin headquarters

at the Ménage, and as the Jacobins emerged singing patriotic airs, the crown began to hoot and jeer, screaming "a has la guillotine, vive le Roi." When their harassment escalated to rock-throwing the Jacobins retaliated in kind, and the resulting full-scale riot had to be broken up by troops from the Councilor Guard.62

The right had no intention of resigning itself even to a mild revival of the Terror. The draft took its sons for the army and the forced loan took its profits for the war effort. The wealthy resisted both with every means at their disposal: they concealed their wealth, fled the country to Switzerland or Hamburg, or simply declared bankruptcy. Others retrenched their businesses, laying off hundreds of workers, or defaulted anew on their contracts. More simply bribed the "juries" into low loan assessments, or intimidated them into not collecting the money. Admittedly the loan was harsh: a wealthy man could be assessed three fourths of his income. The Jacobins had hoped to use such arbitrarily high assessments to ruin specific corrupt contractors who had enriched themselves fraudulently. In response, the wealthy threw their support behind Sieyès's faction, which joined the moderates in violent criticism of the Jacobins. All denounced the Jacobins as terrorists and

anarchists whose goal was to overthrow the government and initiate a new Terror; in one such speech, Courtois hysterically warned that the Committee of Eleven was the elite of a conspiracy supported by "all Israel" intending the slaughter of two Directors and two hundred and fifty deputies before it reestablished the Monarchy. The left retaliated by branding their foes thieves and royalists. Jourdan was as implacable as the rest. At the Manege on Bastille Day he attacked the moderates and proposed a toast to "the resurrection of the pikes." 63

As the struggle between the two factions dragged on through the summer, news of two more serious military defeats reached the country. On July 10 Joubert was bloodily defeated by the Russian general Suvorov, at the battle of Novi. Joubert was killed and his army nearly annihilated. Scarcely two weeks later an Anglo-Russian army landed in Holland and captured the Dutch fleet at its berth. Once again France's defenses appeared on the verge of collapse. The renewed emergency bolstered the cause of the Jacobins at a time when they were beginning to lose popularity. To deal with this new crisis, they desired again to increase both energy and coercion -- indeed to proclaim, as had the Mountain in 1793, the country in danger, and establish emergency government for the duration of the crisis.

On September 8, Barras asked Jourdan to meet with him. Evidently Barras had heard rumors of the Jacobins' intentions. If Jourdan confirmed the rumors, possibly Barras hoped to persuade him to get his colleagues to moderate their plans. Jourdan agreed to a meeting but stipulated that it be held secretly. He feared that his colleagues, violently hostile to Barras as they were, might misconstrue his motives if he met with Barras publicly. 64

At six a.m. on the 9th Jourdan was admitted to Barras's office at the Luxenbourg. Barras asked Jourdan what his intentions were. Jourdan asserted that the country was in danger, and that strong measures were necessary. He asked Barras to support such a proclamation. Barras refused. Such an approach to the nation's problems was "worn out." Not only was the country in less danger than it appeared, but also it possessed adequate resources and organization to deal with the crisis without resorting to strong-arm tactics. The way to meet the crisis, Barras suggested, was simply to utilize existing resources and to call for the aid of all citizens "in a regular way and without shock." Obviously Barras believed a return to coercion a cure worse than the disease. He then reproached Jourdan for voting with the men of "disorder and blood." Jourdan replied that the men of disorder and blood voted

with the Jacobins, and that the latter could not prevent this. Jourdan then evidently suggested that certain Directors and their followers were not sincere republicans. Barras replied that "the whole Directorate is one in desiring the Republic." "And Sieyes," Jourdan asked, "is he what one calls a good republican?" There was no answer to this question. The conference ended in a stalemate: Barras remained committed to the status quo and Jourdan stuck to his convictions. The gap between the two men — a gap which was philosophical rather than ideological — was unbridgeable. 65

Jourdan was not blind to Barras's side of the argument. He well knew the dangers of a revived Terror, having been the near victim of the old one. Both he and his friends on the left realized that emergency government was a sword with a double edge. They expected to have to struggle against the "effervescence populaire," and realized that they might fall victim to it. But, like their Montagnard predecessors, they were willing to run the risk, rather than entrust the crisis to thieves, careerists, and politicians. 66

On September 13, Jourdan addressed the "500." He described the evils that menaced the Republic: the succession of defeats suffered by her armies and the vast royalist conspiracy enveloping the nation in its web. The legislators,

65. Ibid.
66. Jourdan, ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
instead of mobilizing the nation against the threat, decreed new taxes that were stolen before they reached the treasury by thieves who went unpunished. Worse, those who attempted to rouse the country against its enemies were criticized as counterrevolutionaries and conspirators, and thus had to keep silent to avoid persecution. "This Machiavellian system has weakened all Republican energy." Moreover, "they fear terror and revolutionary committees; chimeric fears sustained by royalist: to prevent the harmony so necessary among patriots." The Jacobins, he swore, were bending every effort to avoid the horrors of a new revolution, not to produce one. The solution, he concluded, was not to stifle republican energy, but to mobilize it, to employ it in destroying the true enemies, the thieves and the royalists, and in assembling all patriots to hasten en masse to the borders. "The country is in danger," Jourdan warned. "Let us proclaim that simple truth, and then a commission can present to you the energetic measures which will be a consequence of that proclamation." 67

Jourdan's speech was greeted by tumult. Deputies wrestled for possession of the tribune while others screamed at each other from their benches. They had good reason; Jourdan's motion, if passed, would suspend politics and business as usual for the duration of the crisis. As calm was restored, the debate began. Chenier denied the country was

danger, arguing that the difference between 1793 and the present was great, and that emergency measures would endanger order. Lamarque disagreed, arguing that proclaiming the country in danger in 1793 had proven beneficial. Lucien Bonaparte denied that extraordinary measures were needed and asserted that Jourdan's motion would create discord and terror when what was needed was calm and unity. Besides, he added, a stronger executive would strengthen the hated Directory. Quirot hotly labeled Lucien's last statement a fabrication; the left well realized that the Directory was responsible for the present impasse. And so it went, charge following charge and denial following denial, until everyone retired for the evening to rest and regroup.

The Jacobins fully hoped to carry the day on the floor of the "500," but their opponents more sensibly decided that the issue might be decided elsewhere. Sieyès and Barras, temporarily united, realized that without troops the Jacobin bid for power would lack a cutting edge. Hence they could not be allowed to control the military. This meant that Bernadotte had to be eased out of the war ministry. They summoned him to the Luxembourg the next morning and told him that his presence as war minister was creating dissension in the government -- it was not his fault, but perhaps he should

68. Ibid, pp. 125-36.
69. There is no evidence to suggest that the Jacobins had a coup d'état in mind.
resign. Bernadotte, no revolutionary, played into their hands. He made the grand gesture as expected and resigned; much to his chagrin it was accepted. Simultaneously Sieyès and Barras replaced the commander of the Paris district, Marbot, with General Lefebvre, who was loyal to whoever issued him orders. This insured that the left would not be able to use the Paris garrison to overthrow the regime should Jourdan's motion be rejected; likewise the Directory could use the troops against the Jacobins should the proclamation pass. Barras's and Sieyès's sleight of hand doomed the left's bid for power. Their action probably rendered the outcome of the debate in the "500" irrelevant.70

As debate was resumed that afternoon, the news of Bernadotte's resignation and Marbot's dismissal reached the "500." Again the seance dissolved into a chaotic uproar as the Jacobins howled about a possible conspiracy. Jourdan seized the tribune and praised both men as good republicans: "I would like to believe that the Directory has had the intention of utilizing the talents of these two soldiers in placing them in other posts. But if this act is only the prelude to a coup d'état ... " The moderates retaliated by accusing the left of plotting to overthrow the government. Jourdan hotly denied it, calling the accusation a "perfidious tactic."

Yet the two dismissals were not crucial to the final outcome of the debate, unless the knowledge that the Directory controlled the army discouraged some from voting with the left. With the Terror so fresh in everyone's mind, the majority did not feel that the crisis warranted a return to even a limited version of it. When Jourdan's motion finally came to a vote, moderates and conservatives allied to defeat it 245-171.71

It was a serious setback for the Jacobins. It did not end their resurgence because they remained an influential and vociferous faction right up until Brumaire, but it did deprive them of their best chance to seize undisputed power constitutionally. During the course of the next month, the Republic's defenses were stabilized. The Coalition divided over the proper strategy to pursue and then resolved its differences by trying to pursue several separate objectives at once. As a result the Coalition dispersed its forces. Massena defeated the Russians at Zurich and chased them from Switzerland, while Brune, one of Bouchotte's former commissaires, overcame the Anglo-Russians in Holland and forced them to evacuate that country. In Italy and on the Rhine the Austrian advances ground to a halt. The gradual improvement of the military situation made the Jacobins'...
program seem all the more unnecessary and thus left them fur­
ther from power than ever. Indeed, their various reforms
passed after Prarial were paradoxically working to their
disadvantage. As more conscripts joined the army, as more
money flowed into the treasury, and as patriotism revived,
the moderates' policy of handling the crisis in a regular
way seemed justified.

The defeat of Jourdan's motion also caused the
Jacobins to realize belatedly that they would have to act
outside the Constitution if they ever hoped to oust the
Directory. They now recognized that they needed military
support. But to gain that support they needed a leader,
a man on horseback who could rally the army to their side
in case of emergency. Because the left was largely com-
posed of unknown politicians, it lacked such a leader, al-
though efforts were made to find one. The Jacobins' initial
choice for their "sword" was Bernadotte: he was a staunch
republican, a man of charisma and intelligence, and at that
time minister of war and so in a position to control the
military. Jourdan sounded him out, asking him if he would
lead a coup against Sieyès and Barras. According to Berna-
dotte, he flatly refused. According to Jourdan, Bernadotte
was "ready to take his place in our ranks and to use his
influence over the troops, but that before doing anything,
he would have to give up his portfolio, not wishing to
abuse the confidence of the Directory for the purpose of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
overthrowing it."72

A more obvious choice as the left's sword was Jourdan. On the surface he seemed ideal: he was a convinced Jacobin well liked by the faction's politicians, and at the same time he was an ex-soldier and revolutionary hero, popular with the army. But for a number of reasons he was unsuited for the role. He did not possess the political experience, acumen, or charisma to become a revolutionary leader, and he was well aware of it. Moreover, to lead a coup, he would have to act independently and shoulder an immense responsibility. His entire experience lay in operating as part of a team in which responsibility was shared; he shrank from the intense pressure that leading a coup would involve. He was accustomed to offering advice and sharing authority as the obedient soldier; he would have made a pathetic dictator. If the Jacobins ever did suggest that he lead them—and nowhere did he claim that they so suggested—he undoubtedly turned them down.73

By late October the Jacobins had turned their eyes toward Bonaparte. Napoleon was their newest candidate for two reasons: his victories in Italy and Egypt made him


73. Unfortunately Jourdan, again, wrote nothing on the workings of the Jacobin leadership during the critical months preceding Brumaire.
France's most prestigious and popular general, and, if they
could not win him over to their side, the party of order
would assuredly use him against them. Furthermore, his
politics at first seemed to be politics which the Jacobins
could live with. He spoke of restoring law, order, honesty
and unity to the country--goals that were fundamental to
their movement. They must have realized that they were
playing with dynamite. Intelligent people realized, Jourdan
later wrote, that if presented the opportunity, Bonaparte
would not hesitate to take over the government. Neverthe­
less, the Jacobins would have run greater risk in trying
to seize power without him; Bonaparte was far more dangerous
as an opponent than as an ambitious colleague. Besides,
no one, including Sieyès and Barras, realized that his
capacity for handling power was as immense as history has
revealed it to have been.74

In late October the question of Bonaparte was raised
at a Jacobin meeting at Bernadotte's house. Jourdan pro­
posed that they offer to place Bonaparte at the head of the
executive branch of the government, provided that "liberty
and representative government were guaranteed by good insti­
tutions". His suggestion met with opposition, some of it
violent. Augereau growled that the only reason he would

74. Jourdan, ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
go to see Bonaparte would be to put his foot up the latter's backside. But the majority agreed with Jourdan. In fact, some already had been in touch with Bonaparte and were impressed by his vow to reconquer Italy and revive patriotism. They delegated Jourdan to meet with him and to offer him, in effect, the leadership of their movement. On the 10th of Brumaire, Jourdan went to Bonaparte's house and asked to see him; Bonaparte's aide, Duroc, replied that Bonaparte would be happy to talk with him at dinner on the 16th (November 7, 1799).75

The dinner at Bonaparte's house was a quiet one. Jourdan made his proposal: the safety of the Republic could be despaired of if the Directory was not ousted immediately, but representative government had to be preserved, no matter what other modifications were made in the Constitution. The Jacobins were ready to throw their support behind Bonaparte if he were willing to fall in line with their plans and preserve the republican ideals which they believed so essential to the revolution. Bonaparte quite candidly refused. "I cannot do anything with you and your friends," he said, "you do not have the majority. You have frightened the Councils by your proposition to declare the country in danger, and you have some men among you who dishonor your ranks." Here he was referring to the Jacobins' connections

75. Ibid. Valentin, op cit, p. 194. Vandal, op cit, I, pp. 243-44.
with the radicals of the rejuvenated political societies. Bonaparte turned Jourdan down because he believed the Jacobins too weak and too unpopular with the monied interests with whom he was in concert, not because he disliked Jacobinism. In the course of further discussion he assured Jourdan that the Jacobins had nothing to fear from him, "everything", he promised, "will be done in the interest of the Republic." 76

It is generally believed that Jourdan left the dinner having determined upon inactivity, either duped by Bonaparte's promises that everything would be done in the interest of the Republic, or assured by Bonaparte that he would be "satisfied" if he made no effort to prevent the coup. The evidence suggests otherwise. First, in his memoirs Jourdan did not admit to being lulled into inactivity. Secondly, his actions during the coup prove otherwise; after all he and his colleagues did attempt, however ineptly, to prevent the coup. Furthermore, if he made a personal deal with Bonaparte to stand aside during the coup in return for some unspecified guarantee of "personal satisfaction", why did Bonaparte outlaw him after the takeover was accomplished? To be placed on a proscription list was poor reward

76. Jourdan, ibid. Admittedly Jourdan is the only source for the content of this conversation. Yet even Vandal, who was hostile to the Jacobins, believed in Jourdan's veracity. Certainly the account is inconsistent neither with the course of events nor with the characters of those involved. The italics are the author's.
for tacit cooperation in a coup d'état, and even Bonaparte was not so cynical to proscribe a man who had done his bidding. Jourdan had indeed "gotten the warning" when he left the dinner. He most probably remained ignorant of Bonaparte's exact plans, but he was aware that the chances of a rapprochement between Bonaparte and him and his fellow Jacobins were nonexistent.  

On the 18th Brumaire (November 9), two days later, Bonaparte set the machinery of the conspiracy in motion, maneuvering the Councils out of friendly Paris to relatively isolated St. Cloud. His move caught the Jacobins by surprise. Like everyone in Paris they expected an eventual coup; they did not anticipate that he would launch it so soon. Consequently they did not know what to do. They were also at a disadvantage in that Bonaparte's partisans controlled the all-important Paris military district, as well as the police (Fouche) and the Ministry of justice (Cambacérès). Should the Jacobins decide to fight back, they commanded no forces with which to initiate the combat.

At first the Jacobins may not have been sure that the move of the Councils to St. Cloud was the prelude to a coup. Jourdan described their position as "embarrassing", ignorant as they were of Bonaparte's intentions. Apparently

77. Vandal, op cit, argued that Jourdan had advanced warning of the coup and agreed to stand aside. Phipps, op cit, V, argued that Bonaparte duped Jourdan with his promises to preserve the Republic. Most historians tend to follow Vandal.
they met at the houses of several of the leaders — including Jourdan — to try to map out a strategy. A portion of them — Delbrel, Talot, Destrem, and several others — wished to initiate some sort of action, but were uncertain what it should be. They were not yet sure of what they were facing. Possibly Bonaparte was only going to purge the Directory of Sieyès and Barras, and they were all for that. They shrank from mustering the popular societies and opposing Bonaparte's forces with the people, for the people were the more dangerous. But the majority finally decided that Bonaparte must be stopped. During a meeting at Jourdan's house they decided that they would proclaim Bonaparte an outlaw on the floor of the "500" if he was in fact attempting to take over the government. They would appoint Bernadotte commander of the Council Guard, and, with him leading the way, they would arrest Bonaparte and launch a counter-coup of their own at the appeal of the legislature.78

This strategy was consistent both with the Jacobins' desire to act constitutionally and with their reluctance to initiate any revolutionary activity on their own. It was a poor strategy for both these reasons — the best way to fight fire is with fire. Worse, the plan placed the burden of responsibility on Bernadotte, who was a poor choice. He was an opportunist who avoided risks, an "ambitieux" both violent and timid, whose Jacobinism was probably no more than skin deep. Furthermore, he had already promised.

Bonaparte that, he would not intervene, unless summoned to do so by the government. When at five a.m. on the 19th Jourdan and his colleagues requested his aid, he repeated to them what he told Bonaparte: he would act only if officially ordered to do so by the "500". Evidently the Jacobins consented to Bernadotte's stipulation. Thus, instead of anticipating events the Jacobins awaited them, they counted upon political action within the "500" to halt Bonaparte. They forgot that political action had failed completely during the 'country in danger' controversy, and was unlikely to prove more successful this time. Yet, in view of their determination to act legally if possible, it was the logical strategy to follow.  

The Jacobins, of course, failed on the 19th Brumaire. Bonaparte made his hostility to them clear from the outset. In the Council of Ancients he accused them of desiring to restore the Convention, the scaffolds, and the revolutionary committees, and declared that their menace was partly responsible for his decision to reorganize the government. As for Jourdan, Boneparte described him as one of the leaders of these "terrorists", accusing him in the "500" of having prepared to march to St. Cloud with the "people of the Faubourgs", complete with prescription lists, with the intention of establishing a revolutionary government "more

frightful than 1793." In fact Jourdan and Augereau arrived at St. Cloud alone, and not until about four p.m. according to Jourdan. There, wearing uniforms under street clothes according to some sources, they awaited the signal from the "500" to muster the Council Guard and stop Bonaparte. In the interim Jourdan mingled with the soldiers, talked to them, tried to gauge whether they would march against Bonaparte if the time came to do so. But the time never came. The "500" debated when it should have acted and wasted precious hours swearing useless oaths of allegiance to the Constitution when it could have decided upon a plan of action. The Jacobins' lone act of energy was the eject Bonaparte from the Council chamber when he entered to announce that he was overthrowing the Directory. Then they fell into hopeless disagreement, partly because Lucien Bonaparte skillfully delayed a vote on the question of outlawing his brother and partly because they still were but a minority in the Council. Perhaps they hoped Jourdan and Augereau would take the initiative; Jourdan and Augereau in turn awaited the "500's" orders. In the end it was Bonaparte who acted. He took command of the guard, marched it into the "500", and dispersed the deputies at bayonet point.  


Bonaparte proscribed about twenty of the most prominent members of the Jacobins - including Jourdan. All had to go into temporary hiding until Bonaparte saw fit to pardon them. In many ways they had brought it upon themselves. They were the men advocating extraordinary measures to save the country, yet when such measures became necessary to stop Bonaparte, they could not bring themselves to violate the Constitution. They had lacked decisive leadership throughout their bid for power. They were unable to resolve the basic contradiction of their program. They were revolutionaries advocating policies of unity, self-sacrifice and national mobilization in the spirit of 1793, but they were simultaneously attempting to become a respectable opposition party - in a disreputable government unmatched for its inefficiency. For this failure Jourdan must share a part of the blame, since he shared his colleagues' goals and aspirations. Yet to suggest, as his biographer does, that he could have changed history if he had only rallied the troops to the Jacobins on the 19th, is to deal in illusions. If he could have done that, he would not have been Jourdan; he would have been another Bonaparte.

alone hand throughout, hoping to "pose as a mediator, to arbitrate a situation which in the end might have changed to his advantage;" Thus his hesitation on the 19th. There is no evidence to suggest this.

IX. EPILOGUE

The events of Brumaire did not end Jourdan's public life as it did the careers of so many of the other Jacobins. Shortly after Bonaparte rescinded Jourdan's proscription, Jourdan made his peace with the new ruler of France, and he evidently agreed not to combat the regime overtly. Perhaps he felt that avoiding a lonely, penniless exile with a wife and children to care for was worth compromising his republican principles. Perhaps he realized that Bonaparte was achieving one of the two essential planks in the Jacobin platform: the restoration of law, order and efficiency in government as a prerequisite to military victory. His compromise with Bonaparte provided worthwhile, for it enabled the former orphan boy to enjoy another thirty years of power and prestige, and ultimately a Peerage in 1819.

Immediately upon his return to favor, he served as special ambassador to Piedmont from 1800 to 1802, where he acted as a sort of military viceroy. From there he returned to France, and, after a brief tenure as a counselor of state and an unsuccessful candidature for the Senate, he was appointed commander of the Army of Italy. In 1804 Napoleon awarded him a marshal's baton - one of two given to former Jacobin generals (Brune received the other). Even so, Bonaparte never really trusted Jourdan's loyalty, and never forgave him for his opposition during Brumaire. When war was resumed in 1805, he replaced Jourdan as commander
of the Army of Italy with Massena. He never awarded Jourdan a title of nobility, as he did his other marshals. Napoleon was willing to provide him with employment to the extent that Jourdan did not rejoin the opposition, but he was not willing to admit him into the inner circle of the Empire's elite. In 1806 he sent Jourdan to Naples to become the military advisor to Joseph Bonaparte, then King of Naples. When Joseph ascended the throne of Spain in 1808, Jourdan accompanied him to Madrid as his advisor and chief of staff.

It was a position for which Jourdan was ill-suited. Joseph required a general who would twist his arm and force him to make the tough strategic decisions which he habitually shrank from taking; Jourdan was a dutiful subordinate, not an arm-twister. Joseph also required a man who could coerce obedience from the assortment of prima-donna marshals who commanded his army, but Jourdan had neither the authority nor the personality for such a role. As an untitled marshal, he could not order around princes and dukes of the Empire, and as an outsider in the marshalate he could not cajole intimates of the Emperor to do his bidding. As a mere chief of staff, he could not command obedience unless officially supported by Joseph. Jourdan's stay in Spain was frustrating and unsuccessful. After the failure of the Talavera campaign in 1809, Napoleon relieved him of his duties. In 1812, after Wellington destroyed Marmont's army at Salamanca and threatened to expel the French from Spain entirely, Napoleon
called Jourdan out of "retirement" and sent him back to help Joseph save his throne. For the balance of the year, it appeared that he commanded Joseph's attention. He persuaded the King to reduce the insubordinate Marshals Soult and Suchet to obedience. Then, in a masterful campaign, he concentrated the widely dispersed French forces, recaptured Madrid, maneuvered Wellington out of northern Spain and chased him back to Portugal. At one point he had a chance to inflict a serious defeat upon the Allied army, but Soult convinced Joseph that Jourdan's proposed tactics were too risky—which they were not—and Joseph vetoed them. This failure of nerve lost him his last chance to retain his throne. In 1813 Wellington threw the now weakened French army out of Spain for good, and Jourdan received the blame for Joseph's defeat at Vitoria.

For the rest of his career Jourdan was a dutiful, apolitical public servant. At Napoleon's abdication he rallied to Louis XVIII, and at Louis' abdication during the Hundred Days, he patriotically offered his services to Bonaparte. This only temporarily placed him out of favor when Louis returned after Waterloo. By 1816 he was military governor of Grenoble, and in 1819 he joined the peerage. Clearly Jourdan's preoccupation during his advanced years was to hold on to what he had. He remained in the French Chamber of Peers until 1827, when he fell into disgrace for opposing Charles X's oppressive jury laws. As a result
he readily supported Louis Phillipe when the later assumed power after the July Revolution. He served as interim foreign minister, then as governor of Les Invalides. Jourdan now was an old man. In 1833 he died at Les Invalides as the result of a massive tumor in his chest.

* * * * *

There is no easy way to gather Jourdan's career into a neat, cohesive summary. His activities during the revolution were simply too multifaceted to permit this. At first glance, his career falls within certain superficial patterns. He was a young, self-made officer who rose to army command, won a series of important victories with some tough, inspired leadership, enjoyed a brief moment of martial glory, and then fell from the limelight as his victories were replaced by defeats. He was a Jacobin who reached the zenith of his career thanks to his work during the most intense period of the revolution, and then, like so many other revolutionaries, faded into obscurity when the return to normalcy and tranquility caused his talents and ideas to become obsolete. Yet these patterns, when filled out with details, only describe the "what" of Jourdan's career - and not all that accurately. But what Jourdan accomplished is not the only important issue to be dealt with; how and why he accomplished what he did should equally command our attention.
Jourdan made his most important contributions to France's future — and reached his greatest success — as an army commander during the Terror. Yet his success was not merely because of his skill as a battle-captain, although this certainly was important; his success required additional qualifications. Jourdan was able to withstand the intense pressures which the Jacobin dictatorship brought to bear upon all of its servants. His ability to work as part of a team effort enabled him to get along with the assortment of fanatics, radicals, and hardened revolutionaries with whom he labored. This ability more than anything enabled him to preserve his head. His cooperativeness encouraged him to make use of those key figures in the construction of the revolutionary army — the representatives on mission. Unlike his Thermidorian superiors in 1795 and 1796, he realized how crucial their assistance was. He correctly realized that his role as a general was to subordinate himself completely to the civilian authorities — to advise and suggest when appropriate but always to obey in the end. Furthermore, he possessed the specific qualities so desperately needed in the chaotic revolutionary army of 1793. He was a tough disciplinarian, a stickler for detail, and an organizer. He regarded personnel, administrative and logistical problems to be as serious as problems of strategy and tactics. In dealing with these problems he was a man of unusual patience. His years as a private in the Royal army taught him that the
average soldier had to be fed and clothed before he could fight — that his sufferings were not something to be taken lightly. His attention to organization caused him to recognize the importance of the amalgam to the army, and to agitate for it until it was brought to reality. In short, Jourdan realized that the revolutionary army must win the war of preparation before it could win the war of campaigns and battles. Then too he was a good battle captain; he would not have retained his command if he had not been. While he possessed neither the strategic wizardry of Napoleon nor the encyclopaedic tactical knowledge of the Archduke Karl, he was good enough to overcome the myriad of diverse problems at Wattingnies and Fleurus and in both cases to come away the victor.

Paradoxically the qualities which served him so well during the Terror contributed to his setbacks during the Thermidorian era of the revolution. His dutiful subordination to the civilian authorities was of little use when the civilian authorities included lax, negligent incompetents like Reubell, La-Revelliere-Lepeaux and the two Merlins. Such men required generals who would force solutions upon them, not respectfully carry out their orders. His team spirit was useless when the situation inevitably called for individualism and the ability to operate in the fashion of a feudal warlord — as Bonaparte operated in Italy in 1796. His emphasis on discipline was ineffective given
the weak system of military justice and the logistical inadequacies, and his integrity was relatively helpless in the corrupt atmosphere of contractors and "contributions". Indeed, his preference for collective leadership and shared authority contributed to his failure to preserve the Republic in 1799. And yet, without his patience, courage, attention to logistics, and concern for his men, the defeats of 1795, 1796, and 1799 would have been far worse than they were. Finally, let us not forget that these failures were not so much failures of strategy and tactics as they were failures of preparation, direction and support — failures in which the government was the principal culprit. Jourdan repeatedly received insufficient means to accomplish his assigned tasks. Bonaparte's victories do not prove that Jourdan could have achieved more had he been a better general; they prove that Bonaparte's genius was required to overcome the obstacles and difficulties with which the Thermidorians enchaîned their generals.

Jourdan is described as a mediocre general, and when compared to Bonaparte, he was. Yet by any other standards, and given the unique difficulties under which he led, he was a first-rate leader - head and shoulders above such overrated beau sabres as Ney, Soult and Kleber. Jourdan reminds us: "One cannot make comparisons between commanders who did not have time to immerse themselves in the art of war and over whose heads the axe of the revolution was suspended,
and a man all powerful, gifted with an extraordinary military genius, not having to answer to anyone but himself. Without wishing to take away from Napoleon's glory, one can also remark that when he first took command, he found generals and officers who had learned how to make war, and soldiers who possessed the experience of several campaigns."

One indeed should not be overcritical of the generals of the Republic, men who had to cope with Robespierre and St. Just as well as with the enemy, men who put their lives on the line "during the time of the greatest dang...".¹

¹ A.G. inv. 608-2, J. B. Jourdan, Memoires militaires de la campagne de 1794.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

I. Archives de Guerre; Ministere de Defense.
Archives Historiques: Correspondence.

Armees du Nord et des Ardennes, 1793; Cartons Bl 16 -- Bl 23.

Armees du Nord et de Sambre et Meuse, 1794; Cartons B1 32 -- B1 40.

Armee du Sambre et Meuse, 1795 - 1795; Cartons B1 55 -- B1 79.

Armee du Danube, 1799; Cartons B2 73 -- B2 76.


General correspondence of Jourdan, Gillet, Championnet etc., 6/94 - 10/94; no. Bl* 137.

Enemy Correspondence, 12/30/93 - 1/24/95; no. Bl* 169.


N.B. The basic correspondence between Jourdan and the various governments, ministers of war, representatives on mission and army commissioners, subordinate officers and various other officials, is contained in the Bl series. The correspondence of each day is in a separate folder; the correspondence for each month is generally in a separate carton.

II. Memoires Historiques.

Memoires Militaires de General Jourdan sur les Campagnes de 1793, 1794, 1795, 1796 & 1799 (unpublished manuscripts with supporting correspondence); no's 608-1 --- 608-6.

mr 270; Memoires de le Colonel Leclairc

mr 298; Precis des Operations de l'armee de Sambre et Meuse de Adjutent-General Ducheron.
mr 342: Precise des Operations de la Campagne de 1796 par General Marescot.

mr 367: Journal de l'ouverture de la Campagne de 1799 par le General Jourdan.

III. Printed Document Collections.


IV. Memoires.


--------. *Notice sur le dix-huit Brumaire*. Published in *Le Carnet Historique*. VII, (February, 1901).


V. Newspapers.

*Le Moniteur.*

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
SECONDARY SOURCES


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
ARTICLES


Michon, Georges. "La Justice militaire sous le Directoire," Annales Revolutionnaires, XIV (February, 1922).


PLEASE NOTE:
Pages 469 to 476 are hand drawn maps containing light and broken print. Filmed as received.

UNIVERSITY MICROFILMS
Lawrence J. Fischer received the B.A. from Loyola College of Baltimore, and the M.A. from the University of Delaware. While working on his doctorate at Louisiana State University he specialized in the history of modern Europe and the history of France. He is interested in military and naval history and has published previously in The American Neptune. Mr. Fischer is a native of Baltimore, Maryland.
EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

Candidate: Lawrence Joseph Fischer

Major Field: History

Title of Thesis: J.J COBIN GENERAL; JEAN BAPTISTE JOURDAN AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION; 1792 - 1799

Approved:

[Signature]
Major Professor and Chairman

[Signature]
Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signature]

[Signature]

Date of Examination:

June 30, 1978