



## France's Reign of Terror and Today's Cancel Culture

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*France's Reign of Terror is like today's Cancel Culture. Of course people aren't being guillotined in the streets — but they are being cancelled. They often lose their jobs and livelihoods, and are sometimes physically attacked — only because they don't adhere to the current social justice platform.*

A rare advantage of the COVID pandemic is that it leaves plenty of time to read. I recently finished [Marie Antoinette](#), by Stefen Zweig — 600 pages of fascinating detail and reprinted personal letters in what is considered "the definitive biography" of the last Queen of France.

A bit of 18th century [French history](#): The beloved King Louis XIV died in 1760 after an historic 72-year reign that turned France into Europe's leading economic and military power. His great-grandson, Louis XV took the throne next, reigning poorly — or not at all — for 59 years. In 1774, the empty-headed Louis XVI ascended to power alongside his spendthrift wife Marie Antoinette.

By this time, France was deep in financial crisis. Food was scarce, unemployment skyrocketed and taxes were hiked. In 1789, enraged mobs stormed the Bastille prison, stole weapons and gunpowder, then headed to the Chateau de Versailles. They yanked the royal family out of their comfort and imprisoned them in Paris, where they were eventually beheaded.

The French Revolution and accompanying Reign of Terror was led by the intellectuals and writers Georges Danton, Jean-Paul Marat and Maximilien Robespierre—names you might recognize from Parisian streets — who openly called for rampant executions. Paris was a bloodbath. By 1794, tens of thousands of people had been guillotined or killed in mass shootings.

The first French Republic had created a constitution that guaranteed rights to all citizens, but the leaders soon reversed course. They suspended the constitution and instead proceeded, as Robespierre famously declared, to "make terror the order of the day."

Police spies would round up anyone suspected of anti-revolutionary activities. A kind word about the monarchy or use of "Monsieur" or "Madame" instead of the new proper word "citizen" would send the traitor to "the national razor." Even inadequate support for the revolution was punishable by guillotine.

Sound oddly familiar, 225 years later?

Mayor of NYC Bill de Blasio created a [tip-line](#) for New Yorkers to turn in fellow citizens for disobeying social distancing orders.

After Goya Foods CEO Robert Unanue visited the White House and praised Trump, his company faced a **nationwide boycott**.

There are long **lists of words and phrases** that political correctness has banned, such as Peanut Gallery, Eskimo, Gypping Someone, Illegal Alien, etc. If you accidentally use the wrong pronoun when addressing a transgender person, you are **supposed to** apologize and be open to a more in-depth dialogue about "what happened."

France's Reign of Terror is like today's Cancel Culture. Of course people aren't being guillotined in the streets — but they are being **cancelled**. They often lose their jobs and livelihoods, and are sometimes physically **attacked** — only because they don't adhere to the current social justice platform.

How did the French Reign of Terror **end**? The movement turned on itself. By the mid-1790s Danton, Murat and Robespierre had been guillotined by their disillusioned followers. Ironically, their deaths marked the real beginning of the first French Republic.



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