Snitches and Informers. Popular Involvement regarding the 'High Police' under the Consulate and the First Empire (1799-1815)

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> *A Frenchman who conspires tells so many people that he does, that it would be really extraordinary if, in the number of his confidants, he did not meet a 'friend of the Minister or the Prefect of Police. The real political police, in our country, is the unofficial police, the police of conversation and indiscretion.*[1]

This excerpt from the Memoirs of Pierre-François Réal, one of the main police chiefs under the Consulate and the First Empire, invites us to consider the place occupied, in terms of political police, by persons other than just official police officers. Napoleon Bonaparte's first Empire is often presented as a police or authoritarian state.[2] However, several recent studies have undermined the idea of a dictatorial regime that would impose itself from top to bottom, by studying the different attitudes of the French towards the regime. Natalie Petiteau and Aurélien Lignereux have demonstrated that Napoleonic society is neither unanimously rallied behind the Emperor, nor uniformly silent or apathetic.[3] They pointed out that some latent opposition persisted throughout the period, from 1799 to 1815. However, at the same time, we can also see the active participation of a significant part of the French in the regime's security policy. The hypothesis we propose to examine here is therefore to consider the maintenance of order 'at ground level', noting how much this Napoleonic 'police system' was based on significant cooperation from civil society. It is therefore a question of dispelling the myth of a police force that would operate univocally, oppressively, on a submissive and silent society.

The Napoleonic police relied on the participation of part of the population in the 'high police' ('haute police'), that is, in order to eradicate any threat to State security, and thus guarantee the survival of the regime and its leader, Napoleon. As during the Ancien Régime, the Napoleonic police used members of civil society to ensure effective preventive surveillance: snitches, or other secret agents. However, the central place occupied by Vidocq's character in the legend surrounding the Napoleonic police, until today, should not obscure the existence of a more punctual participation in the maintenance of order and in this 'high police' surveillance of voluntary, unpaid individuals. We can therefore

1 Réal, Les indiscrétions, p. 2.

2 Brown and Miller, Taking Liberties; Brown, Ending the French Revolution; Hicks, 'The Napoleonic police'; Sibalis, 'The Napoleonic Police State'.

3 Petiteau, Les Français et l'Empire; Lignereux, La France rébellionnaire.

postulate a two-tiered popular participation in police surveillance: on the one hand, an occasional and voluntary, almost 'spontaneous', participation by anonymous individuals, and on the other hand, a more sustainable and explicitly paid participation by the police, that of the snitches.

In what way did the people seized the 'political' police and the question of suspects under the Empire? Was this popular participation in police surveillance a sign of the active support of part of the population for a strengthening of the weight of the police, and thus, for a restriction of individual freedoms? What were the links of these individuals with the official police? And finally, how did this active public aid question at the same time the possible instrumentalization of police practices by the population itself?

I. Fouché's snitches: from fantasy to reality

The myth surrounding the Napoleonic police refers to a massive use of snitches, whose archetypal figure is embodied by the character of Vidocq, a former convict who became the head of a secret police force – called 'Brigade de Sûreté' (security brigade) – made up of former prisoners, who disguised themselves to avoid recognition and infiltrate criminal circles.[4] Several Memoirs published at the Restoration, by Napoleonic police chiefs but also by former opponents, mentioned the idea that when three or four people were discussing, there were always ears to hear, and report the statements to the police.[5] This myth feeds an entire imagination forged around the Underworld, which could only be penetrated and understood by men from and belonging to these environments, and not by 'traditional' police officers.[6] Paradoxically, this legend is not retrospective, but has been deliberately created during the Consulate and the Empire. The Napoleonic police had an active policy of playing on emotions, aiming to build a reputation for omniscience, insisting on the supposed extent and severity of police surveillance. Affirming that 'in itself, the police is only an occult power, whose strength lies in the opinion it knows how to give of its strength; then it can become one of the state's greatest resources'[7], Joseph Fouché insisted in his Memoirs on the way in which he 'administered much more through representations and apprehension' than through real coercive means.[8] This rhe-

4 Vidocq has been the subject of a large literature since the 19th century (where it inspired the characters of Javert in Hugo's work and Vautrin in Balzac's work), and then of a very abundant filmography. It has been the subject of a few scientific publications: Parinaud, Vidocq; Roy-Henry, Vidocq; Giraudet, François Vidocq.

5 'It is certain that I had the ability to spread and make it appear that wherever four people gathered, there were, in my pay, eyes to see and ears to hear.' Fouché, Mémoires, p. 221. See also Réal, Les indiscrétions, pp. 349-350; Bertier, Souvenirs inédits, p. 129.

6 Kalifa, Les bas-fonds, pp. 9-15 and 52-68.

7 Fouché, Mémoires, p. 404.

8 Fouché, Mémoires, p. 221. Jean-Paul Brodeur, however, underlines the continuity of this rhetoric, aimed at creating a fear 'disproportionate to the material importance of the police apparatus they led', from the first police lieutenants of Paris, Argenson and Sartine, to Fouché. Jean-Paul Brodeur, 'La police: mythes et réalités', pp. 26-27.

toric of instrumentalizing fears thus contributed, in the end, to strengthening the foundation of the Napoleonic regime, by creating the illusion of its solidity.

Faced with the persistence of this myth of the omnipresence of police snitches, it is necessary to try to understand precisely how the police relied, in terms of 'high police', on unofficial, secret and non-professional agents.[9] As Hugues Marquis points out, legend has it that the police in Fouché used 10,000 snitches for the whole of France, to which should be added 5000 snitches for Paris.[10] This reality is most likely exaggerated. Nevertheless, it is difficult to find these unofficial police personnel in the archives. Informers wrote under a pseudonym, or were identified only by the first letter of their name, and the police generally did not keep originals. Their reports were transcribed, disappeared from the archives or were dispersed in different files. Each informer had only one contact with one agent, usually the one who recruited him.[11] Finally, it seems proven that Fouché, Minister of Police from 1799 to 1810, burned his lists of indicators at the time of his disgrace and his replacement by Savary, to force his successor to rebuild his own networks.[12]

Nevertheless, it can be estimated that about 200 to 300 snitches were employed by the Napoleonic police in Paris. The only list of snitches kept in the police archives was compiled in 1799 by a police officer, Louis-Charles Dupérou, who betrayed his administration for the benefit of the royalists, by retrieving a list of all snitches employed by the police.[13] The list included 253 police informers or indicators. Other sources, in particular the expense accounts of Parisian peace officers, which sometimes mention the remuneration of secret agents, make it possible to estimate that the total number of secret agents employed throughout Paris in 1804 would be about 130 secret agents, less than half of Dupérou's 1799 list[14]. The legend of a Paris with 5000 bugs is therefore very much exaggerated.

These unofficial police officers were primarily used for missions that fell within the scope of the 'high police', such as surveillance, information gathering or undercover operations. These were therefore preventive missions, not investigations conducted after a proven crime. It is in this sense that Fouché refered to snitches as 'mobile phalanxes of observers'.[15] As Dupérou's list reveals, snitches were recruited from all social backgrounds, from the most disadvantaged (cabaret owners, wine merchants, servants) to

9 The use of snitches by the Napoleonic police has been the subject of several studies, often ancient, most often focusing on the biography of a specific snitch. D'Hauterive, Mouchards et policiers; Blanc, Les espions de la Révolution et de l'Empire; and Madame de Bonneuil; Pingaud, Un agent secret; Douay and Hertault, Schulmeister. From an anthropological perspective, we can also mention Alain Dewerpe's study on the spy and the political uses of secrecy. Dewerpe, Espion, p. 15.

10 Marquis, Agents de l'ennemi, p. 126.

11 Brunet, La Police de l'ombre, pp. 8-9.

12 Lentz, Savary, p. 245.

13 AN F7 6247. Madelin, Joseph Fouché, pp. 401-402.

14 AN F7 3183, 'Frais de surveillance par des inspecteurs et autres agents', second division, germinal-fructidor an XII (March-September 1804).

15 Fouché, Mémoires, p. 221.

the nobility.[16] In the case of the most popular social strata, the permeability of the border between suspects and snitches, between offenders and unofficial police officers, was very high.[17] Pierre-François Réal refered in particular to these flies as 'marauders ['gens sans aveu'] [...] whom the police of the Prefect of Police monitor when they do not use them'.[18] Among these, the figure of the 'sheep', in other words the prison snitch, is frequently distinguished in the archives, revealing the use of certain prisoners as indicators, most often on an occasional basis, but sometimes more regularly.[19] The surveillance carried out by these unofficial agents from a popular background was sometimes targeted at a specific individual, subject to police suspicion, and sometimes extended to the surveillance of a given geographical area, in order to accumulate information, and to identify possible suspicious movements. In Dupérou's list of 1799, we find Gilbert Cordier, shoeshine boy at the Palais-Royal, Lecompte, 'snitching on small theatres', Morelli, 'snitching on gambling houses', or Jacotot, apple merchant pretending to be crippled, in charge of studying the walkers of the Palais-Royal.[20] The rumors circulating in the cafés were carefully noted, especially everything concerning the news of the army, in order to stop any defeatist news.[21]

These snitches were also responsible for searching for, monitoring and even arresting ordinary criminals – thieves, beggars, vagrants, etc. Thus, out of a list of nine 'secret agents' – five men and four women – employed in January 1808 in a Paris police division, eight were paid for their contribution to the search for and arrest of thieves, counterfeiters or former convicts.[22] This task reveals the permeability of the border between political control and social control in the area of 'high police'. Although the surveillance, by means of snitches, of these 'dangerous classes' was part of an 'ordinary' social control, it was not without political stakes: it was a question of purging Paris of individuals considered undesirable or dangerous for the tranquillity of the society. It was also part of an effort to depoliticize expressions of opposition to the regime.

In addition to these informers from working class backgrounds, who were generally paid between 12 and 24 pounds according to the expense records kept[23], there were

16 This list divided the snitches employed by the Parisian police into three classes, from the most disadvantaged, employed on an occasional basis, to the greatest nobles, who received a regular salary.

17 For example, a police report said: 'On the loose on surveillance if he refuses to serve: Eyseman, leader of a gang of fraudsters, confessed, he can be used as a secret agent'. Bulletin of Wednesday, 9 May 1810, d'Hauterive, La police secrète du premier Empire, t. 5, p. 395.

18 Réal, Les indiscrétions, p. 223.

19 AN F7 3183, 'Frais de surveillance par des inspecteurs et autres agents', second division, germinal-fructidor an XII (March-September 1804). Jacobin opponent Eve Demaillot also mentions 'sheep' in his pamphlets. Demaillot, Tableau historique, pp. 83-91.

20 AN F7 6247. Madelin, Joseph Fouché, pp. 401-402.

21 See for example AN F7 7012, Dubois to Fouché report, 14 fructidor year XII (1st September 1804); AN F7 3180, Report of Lemoine, 26 brumaire an XII (18 November 1803); d'Hauterive, La police secrète du premier Empire, t. 4, bulletin of Tuesday 30 August 1808, p. 344; and bulletin of Wednesday 31 August 1808, p. 346.

22 AN F7 3191, 'compte de l'an 1808, mois de janvier. Dépenses, frais d'officiers de paix, inspecteurs et autres agens de surveillance'.

23 AN F7 3183; AN F7 3191.

also snitches from noble backgrounds. These noble informants were used by the police on a much more regular basis, and received monthly salaries – rather than one-off salaries – much higher.[24] Among them were first and foremost many former chouans or former emigrants, whose services to the police – spying on royalist circles or on abroad – enabled them to avoid a death sentence or a long prison sentence.[25] But the police use of nobles from the highest lineages can also be attested, as revealed by the attentive listening of conversations in the Parisian salons.[26] The bulletins of the Ministry of Police sent daily to Napoleon regularly reported the rumors circulating in these salons.[27]

To this 'passive' role of listening and surveillance in public places or closed spaces – from the tavern to the salon frequented by the nobility – was finally added an 'active' role, in the form of a hidden propaganda activity. The snitches were responsible for influencing public opinion, by instilling opinions in favour of the regime, in the cafés and salons where they operated.[28] A secret agent wrote in a report that he mistakenly believed that a man he was in charge of supervising was himself a secret agent, because he expressed opinions so favourable to the government that they seemed 'exalted'.[29] In his memoirs, Fouché also mentioned his 'three hundred Paris regulators' in charge of 'mastering' the 'salon talks'.[30] This close intertwining between control and the spread of rumours shows the central place of snitches in the process of shaping public opinion, thus participating in a 'fabrication of consent' that seemed to be one of the central aspects on which the Napoleonic regime was based.

Of course, the police were persistently suspicious of these snitches, and were not fooled by the amplification or even invention necessary to justify a regular salary.[31] The snitches were frequently arrested and briefly detained, but also sent to controlled residence.[32] Nevertheless, a few rare snitches experienced an exceptional social rise during the Empire. This is particularly the case of Pierre-Hugues Veyrat, a watch merchant and then pawnbroker, who informed the police from 1797, before being promoted, after the 18 fructi-

24 According to Ernest d'Hauterive, the royalist informer Rochejean received an initial sum of 6000 francs 'as a starting point', then was paid 1500 francs per month – a sum that corresponded to his high social status. D'Hauterive, Mouchards et policiers, p. 135. Réal also mentioned the remuneration of a lady from the aristocracy for 1000 francs per month, and the Duke of Aumont for 24,000 francs per year. Both were in charge of spying on Louis XVIII's court in Hartwel. Réal, Les indiscrétions, pp. 161-163.

25 Fouché claims to have defeated the chouannerie by this means. Fouché, Mémoires, p. 98-99. See the journeys of Philippe-François Rochejean or Jean Marie Édouard de L..., retraced by d'Hauterive, Mouchards et policiers, pp. 110-160.

26 On the other hand, the use by the police of Empress Josephine herself, or other high nobles close to Napoleon, such as Bourrienne, traditionally mentioned, cannot be attested by any archival evidence.

27 D'Hauterive, La police secrète du premier Empire; Gotteri, La police secrète du premier Empire.

28 Jean-Paul Brodeur has shown how 'the exacerbation of insecurity through the spread of rumours is [...] a striking feature of the use of informants by the police'. Brodeur, Les visages de la police, p. 250.

29 APP Aa 270-1, doc. 71, note for the Prefect of Police, [undated].

30 Fouché, Mémoires, p. 246.

31 Réal, Les indiscrétions, p. 1.

32 AN F7 3027. A file of 'arrests and surveillance' dating from 1800-1801 contains, out of about fifty individuals sent under controlled residence (called 'surveillance spéciale'), several former police officers. The royalist snitch Rochejean was also arrested in 1808 and from 1813 to the end of the Empire. D'Hauterive, Mouchards et policiers, p. 135.

dor (4 September 1797), to Inspector General at the Ministry of Police, then at the Préfecture de Police of Paris. He kept this position from 1802 to 1814, having under his command the 24 peace officers of the capital.[33] Another example is Jean-André François, a royalist agent linked abroad, who was first under surveillance and detained in the Temple in 1797, before collaborating with Veyrat from the prison in 1799 and obtaining a position of trust in the Ministry of Police : the drafting of the daily bulletin addressed to Napoleon, which compiled the various police reports arriving from all over France. He kept this position until the fall of the regime in 1814.[34] While these two individual trajectories are obviously extremely rare, they testify to the blurred and permeable borders between official and unofficial police under the Consulate and the Empire. This deliberate vagueness was maintained with a view to achieving greater effectiveness in political surveillance.

II. An important 'civic denunciation'

However, in addition to these unofficial agents regularly employed by the Parisian police, there was an indefinite number of occasional police informants, who escape any quantification. In most cases, this voluntary popular participation offered to the police took the form of a letter of denunciation.[35] This important place of denunciation appears as a legacy of the Revolution. During the years 1789-90, with the realization of the fragility of a Revolution perceived as surrounded by threatening enemies, the authorities showed a new encouragement for citizens to denounce.[36] The denunciation was justified by the imminent danger of the collapse of the Revolution, which made it possible to legitimize the resurgence of the use of police 'observers' who symbolized the Ancien Régime and its opaque practices, while the Revolution promoted transparency as a value. Thus the distinction appeared between 'délation' – an act with a negative connotation, which would be driven by personal or unfair interests, synonymous with treason, which would harm society by undermining its cohesion – and 'dénonciation', which took on a completely positive value, by becoming a true act of civic virtue and duty.[37]

33 However, Veyrat was briefly dismissed several times for his involvement in misappropriation cases. Tulard, Dictionnaire Napoléon, article 'Veyrat'; d'Hauterive, Mouchards et policiers, pp. 141-170.

34 D'Hauterive, Mouchards et policiers, pp. 144-154; Marquis, Agents de l'ennemi, p. 200-203, et Montarlot, 'Un agent de la police secrète', pp. 1223.

35 Jean-Paul Brunet establishes a similar typology for the 20th century between 'denunciation and more or less voluntary help', 'occasional indicators' and 'regular indicators from the community', practising 'entryism'. Brunet, La Police de l'ombre, pp. 32-53.

36 Fitzpatrick and Gellately, 'Introduction to the Practices of Denunciation', p. 750; Lucas, 'The Theory and Practice of Denunciation', p. 769.

37 This distinction has existed since the publication of Diderot's Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, but it was introduced into current language around 1792. Lucas, p. 763 and 774. According to Virginie Martin, the new virtuous 'citizen-denouncer' had to act – unlike the snitch of the Ancien Régime – according to three criteria: 'gratuity' (he was not remunerated), 'disinterestedness' (he acted in the name of the general interest, not for his own benefit), and 'spontaneity'. Martin, 'La Révolution française ou „l'ère du soupçon"', p. 133.

The Consulate and the Empire, inherited this culture of denunciation, and also erected it as a civic virtue, because it would represent a gift of self to the country – in the same way as being a soldier. While the Empire was almost constantly at war with its neighbours, each citizen, by bringing the little knowledge at his disposal, could help to save the State from its enemies.[38] The police authorities explicitly called on the population to actively participate in policing and thus contribute to the survival of the regime. Two weeks after his appointment as Minister of Police, Fouché made a declaration to the French citizens which ended with a real call for denunciation:

> *I have made a promise to restore inner peace, to put an end to the massacres and oppression of the Republicans, to stop the plots of traitors and to abduct abroad up to the hope of an accomplice. Help me, citizens, in this honourable task. Support me with your zeal, surround me with your patriotism, and may this collaboration of citizens and magistrates be the sure sign of the Republic's triumph.*[39]

With this proclamation, printed in thousands of copies, Fouché intended to reactivate the collaboration between police and citizens established during the Revolution, based largely on the practice of denunciation. The Prefect of Police of Paris Dubois had a similar attitude when he took up his fonctions. Five days after his appointment, he concluded his first proclamation to the Parisians by declaring: 'so help me with your lights and your zeal. If I assure your rest, I will not regret my waking hours'.[40] This place of denunciation at the heart of relations between police and citizens was also legalized by the important work of codification undertaken under the Consulate and the Empire.[41] The 1810 Penal Code participated in the institutionalization of denunciation, introducing severe penalties for failure to denounce crimes against state security, and offering exemptions from punishment for denunciators… but also providing measures (ranging from fines to imprisonment) against 'slanderous denunciations'.

As a result of this active encouragement by the authorities, it can be said that the Consular and Imperial period was the time of intense use of denunciation. Most of the letters denounced precisely identified individuals, and concerned demonstrations of hostility towards Napoleon Bonaparte himself. The letter of denunciation written against a man named Pigenat Lapalun in 1809 is an archetypal example.[42] The denouncer, named Nourrier, reported the hateful remarks about Napoleon that this man made the day before

38 However, the rise of denunciation should not be seen as the 'only result of political will', of a call for denunciation from the authorities, since the population chooses whether or not to cooperate. Charageat and Soula, Dénoncer le crime, p. 11.

39 Proclamation by the Minister of the General Police to French Citizens, 16 thermidor year VIII (4 August 1800), quoted by Madelin, Fouché, p. 226.

40 Proclamation of Dubois to Parisians, 25 ventôse year VIII (15 March 1800), quoted by Rigotard, La police parisienne de Napoléon, p. 46.

41 In the continuity of the revolutionary legislation (Sieyès 'grande police' law of the 1er germinal year III, and Code des délits et des peines of the 3 brumaire year IV).

42 APP, Aa 317, letter of 26 August 1809. This letter was addressed to an unidentified 'general', but came into the hands of the Prefect of Police Dubois, who himself reproduced it in a report to the Minister of Police on 9 September 1809.

in his home. The whole letter first explicitly presented the denunciation as an act of civic duty, in order to justify the denunciation of a close friend. Indeed, the letters of denunciation kept for the period almost always included a deep concern for moral justification on the part of the denunciator. The very content of the denunciation against Pigenat Lapalun, for example, was framed by the justification that the denouncer gave to his act. The letter began with these words: 'General, I hasten to take another opportunity to prove to you my zeal for the interests of our August Sovereign and for public order'. The conclusion of the letter repeated the same rhetoric: 'I hand him over to your supervision and I am happy to have fulfilled, once again, my duty to a sovereign so worthy of our esteem and love'. The denunciation, then, took on the appearance of a selfless act, symbol of total adherence to the regime and boundless devotion to Napoleon.

While the First Consul wanted a return to order and the elimination of all factions, the act of denunciation was proof of patriotism, making it possible to make oneself unsuspected. By describing the person he denounced as a 'monster', the informer could thus appear by contrast as a model and virtuous subject, and avoid becoming a suspect himself in the eyes of the police. This is evidenced by the rhetorical insistence he placed on clearing himself of the remarks he was reporting, showing that he did not share them in any way. He even apologized twice for having to repeat them: 'Convinced that you will excuse the need, where I am, to report to you his horrible and revolting words', 'Once again, General, please excuse me; the truth is that I have to put these infamous insults and shouts on paper'.

But above all, the letter of denunciation against Pigenat-Lapalun – like others – seemed to have truly integrated police vocabulary, particularly in the detailed physical description of the individual denounced, closely resembling the reports issued by the police. Finally, it revealed an integration of police concerns regarding the 'high police'. The denouncer, by reporting the 'insulting' remarks, was referring to a whole combination of the elements most likely to interest the police and lead to the arrest of the denounced: direct threats to the Emperor's person – called 'villain, scoundrel, whoremonger [...], that damn scamp, that damn Corsican', and adding 'he must perish, and he will perish' –, pessimistic news about military campaigns, and the emphasis that it was not an isolated disgruntled person, pointing to the existence of rallies of royalists, potentially preparing for a possible plot. While it is impossible today to distinguish between truth and slander in this letter of denunciation, the undeniable mastery of police rhetoric by the whistleblower may give rise to the suspicion that this individual was attempting to instrumentalize the police in the service of his own interests.[43]

Indeed, whether implicitly or more openly, a number of these voluntary 'high police' aids reveal a partially interested act on the part of the denouncer.[44] Some letters of denun-

[43] Martine Charageat and Mathieu Soula evoke in the same manner the way in which, since the Middle Ages, denunciations made before the courts had to adopt a particular language, in order to promote the success of the case, which implied knowing, even briefly, the codes of justice. Charageat and Soula, Dénoncer le crime, pp. 15-16.

[44] Of course, this is not a particularity of denunciations under the Consulate and the Empire. Fitzpatrick

ciation requested a reward, most often of a monetary nature, in exchange for the information provided. The police offered rewards for revelations after each conspiracy. In his Memoirs, Fouché stated, with regard to the royalist conspiracy of Cadoudal and Pichegru in 1804, that he '[had] soon, in fact, by the mere beginning of a reward of two thousand louis, all the secrets of Georges' agents, and I was put on their trail'.[45] These individual requests for rewards can be seen throughout the period, asking for example for reimbursement of expenses that the whistleblower would have incurred in order not to lose the denounced person's traces.[46] But the expected reward could also be a job in the police or gendarmerie[47], a title or a decoration. For example, a man named Félix Macaux solicited the 'star of the Legion of Honour' for having 'denounced and led to the arrest' of a man named Robert, who, in a cabaret, had 'announced the project to attack the days of the savior of France'.[48] Finally, the whistleblower's interest could lie in the elimination of a person, or a group, with whom he felt enmity, both politically[49] and personally.[50] The denunciations could also be part of 'localist' tensions, between two cities or two districts, as evidenced by an anonymous letter addressed to the Police Commissioner in Versailles stating that the attack on the 'Infernal Machine' had been 'directed by the inhabitants of Versailles', out of hatred of Parisians.[51]

Studying denunciation as an act partly driven by personal interests therefore makes it possible to relativize the univocal idea of a population 'victim' of 'high police measures', and to reverse the perspective. While the police system was therefore founded in part on cooperation between the police and the population, based on voluntary assistance from the latter, it appears that part of society had sufficiently internalized police thinking patterns, what for the police was part of the suspicion register, to be able to use them for their personal benefit. It was a reversal of the balance of power between police and citizens, an instrumentalisation of the former by the latter, which could therefore take place: some denunciators could have individuals arrested by giving them the appearance of the police suspect, by speaking the police language, by using the concepts forged by it, which shows how the state could be 'internalized' by citizens.[52]

and Gellately, 'Introduction to the Practices of Denunciation', pp. 757 and 762-763.

45 Fouché, Mémoires, p. 167. Similarly, during the attack on the 'Infernal Machine' in 1800, a list mentioned the names of the people the police paid to find one of the conspirators, Carbon. APP, Aa 278.

46 AN F7 3183, letter from Bertrand to the Prefect of Police, 5 prairial year XII (25 May 1804).

47 APP Aa 270-1, document 33.

48 AN F7 7012, Félix Macaux's file, letter from Dubois to the Minister of Police, 3 June 1806.

49 APP, Aa 281, document 272, Undated anonymous letter denouncing the 'scoundrels of septembrisers and jacobins'.

50 A prisoner named Desforges claimed to have been denounced by a man who divorced his wife because of him. AN, F7 6267, Desforges' file, letter from Desforges to the Minister of Police, 28 ventôse year IX (19 March 1801).

51 APP, Aa 281, document 102, anonymous letter to the citizen Pille, Police Commissioner in Versailles, 11 nivôse year IX (1st January 1801).

52 Fitzpatrick and Gellately, p. 763. See also Brodeur and Jobard, Citoyens et délateurs.

The police were of course not fooled by these attempts at citizen instrumentalization – just as they were wary of regular indicators, described by Fouché as 'often dubious instruments'.[53] Pierre-Marie Desmarest – the chief of the secret police at the Ministry of the General Police – mentioned in his memoirs the police mistrust of these letters of denunciation and referred to conspiracies and denunciations as 'two plagues that multiply one by the other'.[54] He also deplored the large number of slanderous denunciations received by the Ministry of Police.[55] As a result of this police mistrust, the reported facts seemed to be fairly systematically verified. Several individual surveillance files concerning suspicious individuals testify to the police investigation following a denunciation.[56] Nevertheless, these denunciations, once verified, constituted a central tool used by the Consular and Imperial police in the area of 'high police', in two ways. They were first of all the frequent starting point for placing an individual under surveillance, thus becoming a suspect, or the origin of the intensification of the surveillance of an already known suspect. They could also form the basis for a detention by 'high police measure' – that is, without going to court. This was the case of Pigenat-Lapalun, arrested the day after his denunciation.[57]

Many letters from detainees by 'high police measure', sent to the Senate Committee on Individual Freedom ('Commission sénatoriale de la liberté individuelle') – an institution that was supposed to guarantee citizens against arbitrary detention – claimed to be victims of slanderous denunciation.[58] For many of them, it was probably an additional rhetorical argument to claim their innocence, and not necessarily reality. However, the very fact that denunciation was an argument that was so frequently considered to be put forward is indicative of the very importance of the existence of this practice at the time.

In addition, the police made even more intensive use of these letters of denunciation in a conspiracy context. In 1800, for example, in the few days following the explosion of the 'Infernal Machine', which almost killed Bonaparte but exploded, killing 22 people and injuring around 50, the police investigation involved a central task of collecting testimonies and denunciations, in particular by distributing the reports of the conspirators and their equipment in the press or on posters, with a promise of a reward for giving information to the police. The police asked also the health officers to inform the police commissioners of the injured individuals they had treated on that day, hoping in this way to find possible accomplices on the run.[59] As a result of these active police incitements, the

53 Fouché, Mémoires, p. 92.

54 Desmarest, Témoignages historiques, p. 24.

55 One example is the case of Joseph Benoît Coney, detained by 'high police measure' for the continuous sending of false denunciations to the police, and for whom Fouché wrote that 'this individual's mania for denunciations was increased to an incredible extent'. AN O2 1430A, file 36, letter from Fouché to the Commission sénatoriale de la liberté individuelle, 2 thermidor year XII (21 July 1804).

56 AN F7 4260.

57 APP, Aa 317, Dubois to Fouché report, 9 September 1809.

58 AN O2 1430-1436.

59 APP, Aa 278, document 86, Basile Jacques Louis Colin ,s interrogation, 3 pluviôse year IX (23 January 1801).

Paris Police Prefecture received about thirty anonymous denunciations in three days, to which several dozen others were added in the weeks that followed.[60] Again, these letters reflected a strong preoccupation with moral justification on the part of the whistleblower. They expressed the 'guilt' that there would be not to denounce, 'at a time when the first consul has just been exposed to the greatest dangers'.[61]

The study of these denunciations makes it possible to sketch out how the population denounced its surroundings or neighbourhood, and according to what criteria. Thus, neighbours, or merchants, were often denounced for comments against the government. For example, a man named Poacher was arrested for saying on the night of the explosion of the 'Infernal Machine': 'It's nothing, let's have a drink to Bonaparte's health'.[62] In a context of strong emotion linked to the attack, any words that were not sufficiently patriotic were perceived as suspicious, by the police but also by the people themselves. Other denunciations were made on the criterion of non-belonging to the neighbourhood, which became all the more suspicious in this post-attack context. For example, a baker, Simonnan, reported that on the day of the attack, he saw a bloody man entering his home. He insisted on asking for his papers, under the pretext of calling a car to take him home; then, faced with his refusal, he left him in his shop to denounce him to the police station on rue Saint Nicaise, and asked 'that someone go to his house to find out who this individual was'.[63] Finally, it was sometimes simply the suspicious attitude that aroused popular suspicion. For example, a cooper came to the police and told them that he had encircled a barrel in a shed where he had seen a little mare and a cart, and denounced the person who had commissioned this work because he had 'noticed that he looked and stared a lot at the pavement, and looked dreamy like a worried man'.[64]

Thus, the Parisian people were largely confronted with police mental categorizations: the supposed link of the man denounced with the conspirators, the adequacy of certain men with the police figure of the suspect, the non-appartenance to the neighbourhood, the departure from habit, comments against the government, a suspicious attitude, etc. It was just as much the police that conformed to the suspect's popular conceptions (with the notion of belonging to a community) as the opposite: if any denunciation is a subjective interpretation of reality, the informer seemed to use the police's language well, to be sure that he was understood by the police and that his information was considered of the highest importance by the police.

In addition, the denunciations also evolved during the police investigation after the 'Infernal Machine', following the evolution of the criteria of police suspicion. While the first letters mainly mentioned individuals 'known for their Jacobin convictions'[65], the fol-

60 APP Aa 276 and 281. See also Salomé, L'ouragan homicide, p. 111.

61 APP, Aa 281, document 248, anonymous letter [undated].

62 APP, Aa 281, document 163, report on Braconnier, 1er pluviôse year IX (21 January 1801).

63 APP, Aa 278, document 26, declaration by citizen Simonnan, baker, 4 nivôse year IX (25 December 1800).

64 APP, Aa 278, document 41, delaration by citizen Baroux, cooper, 9 nivôse year IX (30 December 1800).

65 Salomé, p. 111; APP, Aa 281, document 272.

lowing letters denounced royalists, which shows the adequacy between 'official' police research and voluntary public aid.[66] Desmarest thus reported in his memoirs that at the time Fouché provided proof that it was the royalists who committed the attack,

> *Opinion suddenly turned, and people began to arrest what were called chouans. It was to whom would bring before the Minister any man who bore any resemblance to these once so despised records; and, as we could see them everywhere, Mr. Fouché still had to defend himself against this new zeal.*[67]

As Karine Salomé points out, these letters of denunciation reveal 'the context of tensions and cleavages in which the attack on rue St Nicaise took place', and the permanence of 'resentments' and 'hatred' behind the shock caused by the attack.[68]

III. Other occasional citizen assistance to the police

The occasional assistance provided to the police by individuals, on a voluntary and spontaneous basis, in terms of 'high police', could finally take other forms than that of denunciation. A few individuals offered to help the police by sending projects to improve the action or the workings of the police itself. These proposals for improvement were sometimes a pretext for requesting a position or compensation, the project remaining vague or confusing. However, other improvement projects were more concrete. This is the case of a letter sent by a soldier named Lesavre Caillier to Napoleon in 1812, stating that Paris needed more surveillance, especially at night, because 'it is in the darkness that plots are formed'.[69] Noting that the size of the police districts was too large to allow a night patrol to prevent all crimes, he proposed the formation of a night guard who would take up his duties from sunset until dawn, with the aim of 'completely eliminating those disrupters who, in full peace, demand that the quiet inhabitant stand on his guard'. This guard would have numbered more than 1000 men each night: he planned to create 24 companies of 75 men each, not counting officers and non-commissioned officers, and considered the smallest details: financial treatment of each policeman, financing of this guard by establishing a new tax on owners and tenants, 'proportionate to the price of rents above one hundred francs', recruitment methods for guards, uniform, model of pass,... It was therefore a project to set up a large-scale surveillance system, based on the traditional police idea, visibly integrated by this individual, that any person found on the street at night was suspicious and must be the subject of intense surveillance.

The vocabulary used here again echoed the suspect's police rhetoric, evoking 'vile intriguers', 'men unworthy to exist in society', 'disruptors', or 'corrupt beings, who must no longer be counted among a people as polite and civilized as the French'. The criteria for dangerousness advanced are very similar to those used by the police in surveillance re-

66 Indeed, the attack was first attributed to the Jacobins, before its royalist origin was discovered by the police investigation.

67 Desmarest, Témoignages historiques, p. 46.

68 Salomé, L'ouragan homicide, pp. 109-111.

69 APP DB31, Petition by Lesavre Caillier to the Committee on Petitions, 21 January 1812.

ports, showing the integration, and reuse, by Imperial society of police thinking patterns. How did this soldier justify his project, and his very approach? As with the letters of denunciation, the intertwining was fine between the declaration of a deep attachment to the regime, the promotion of oneself as the paragon of the perfect virtuous subject, and the act of self-interest. In the hope of obtaining a position in this new night guard, Lesavre Caillier once again testifies to the way in which a proposal for voluntary police assistance could also reveal an attempt to instrumentalize the police for its own purposes, while knowingly contributing to the strengthening of the regime.

The last example of this interweaving is a collective petition of the prisoners of Bicêtre, written to ask Napoleon for their pardon, in a context of regime change – since it was written two days before the official passage to the Empire.[70] This request for pardon was accompanied by a plan to improve the prison system, which would be based on a kind of quota system, by reducing the number of prisoners in the Empire to 30,000, which would have had the effect, according to the authors, of instilling in the released individuals a feeling of 'gratitude' towards the regime, and an unconditional love for its leader. This project is thus similar to the previous one in the way it would both strengthen the regime – at least in theory – and at the same time bring a reward to its authors: here, their release.

IV. Conclusion

While we must be careful not to exaggerate or generalize – since part of society has remained reticent towards the regime – this observation of active popular participation in the political police, under the Consulate and the Empire, leads us to deeply relativize the idea of a Napoleonic police force as an all-powerful and tentacular institution, weighing on a society unanimously victim of Napoleonic tyranny. The very idea of a highly formalised police system, with a solid foundation, is an illusion, since the 'high police measures' were based to a significant extent on a multifaceted and shifting network of exceptional informants or snitches.[71]

The importance of denunciation can be read in particular as a sign of genuine individual participation in the Napoleonic regime, a voluntary citizen assistance indicating the consent of at least part of the population to 'high police measures', in which the informer would feel responsible for a 'civilian surveillance'[72] role. However, beyond this role as a disinterested 'high police' actor, finally, there is a suspicion of a conscious use of 'high police' tools in the service of the whistleblower's own interests, who cannot be seen in a simplistic way as the regime's simple zealot. This popular participation clearly reveals the

70 AN O2 1430A, file 19, petition of the 27 prairial year XII (16 June 1805).

71 As Clive Emsley points out, 'the apparent centralization and professionalization of the police has often concealed the local impulses that actually ensured the balance of the police forces and guaranteed the effectiveness of the social regulations they claimed to exercise.' Emsley, 'Police, maintien de l'ordre et espaces urbains', pp. 11-12.

72 This term is borrowed from Brodeur and Jobard, Citoyens et délateurs, p. 87.

possibilities of the police being instrumentalized by the citizens themselves. We could thus speak of 'internalisation' by the population of police rhetoric: letters of denunciation in particular were able to borrow the police word, to internalise their expectations and their way of thinking. These speeches are therefore not a pure reflection of reality, but a reality that can be seen under an appearance likely to convince the authorities, a construction that conformed to police expectations, in order to try to instrumentalize the police to achieve their own ends: a financial reward, a job, or their release. Therefore, any denunciation should not be read as a reflection of blind faith in the regime.

But at the same time, by providing occasional assistance, these citizens contributed to the strengthening of the regime, by helping to legitimize it, by recognizing its domination as an institution constituting the monopoly of legitimate physical violence and by 'participating in the process of criminalizing certain behaviours'.[73] It was in this sense that the police authorities explicitly encouraged popular participation in policing throughout the Consular and Imperial period.

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[73] Charageat and Soula, Dénoncer le crime, p. 16 and 336.

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