

# Institutional Violence: The Takeover of Municipalities by Protestants in the South of France (1560-1562)

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**ABSTRACT:** Based on a close and detailed investigation of local and strangely neglected municipal sources, combined with the meticulous scrutiny of documents conserved in the Russian archives for the period 1559-1562, and a focus on institutional history, I demonstrate how the early Calvinistic consistories cleverly manipulated the particular municipal organization (the consulates) of Midi communities and managed to take them over with relative ease. In many of these communities, which greatly varied in size, we find that the consistories were turned into “political councils”; this subsequently enabled them to control the election of magistrates (consuls) and, even before the beginning of the wars of Religion, to ensure that they controlled the municipalities, though the Protestants were very much a minority. This is a major factor towards explaining the famous “Protestant crescent” that characterizes the South of France with its tones of civil religion.

**KEYWORDS:** French Wars of Religion; Calvinistic Consistories; Municipal Organization; Confessionalization; Sacred Violence; Iconoclasm; Subversive Preaching; Religious Militancy.

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**RESUMEN:** *Violencia Institucional: La toma de control de los municipios por los protestantes en el sur de Francia (1560-1562).*.- Este artículo tiene como objetivo demostrar cómo los consistorios calvinistas, en su primera época, supieron manipular de manera inteligente una forma concreta de organización municipal de los pueblos del sur de Francia, los consulados, lo que les permitió hacerse con el poder municipal con relativa facilidad. Para ello se realiza un análisis minucioso y detallado de fuentes locales que han sido extrañamente marginadas, combinando dicha información con el escrutinio de los documentos conservados en los archivos rusos para el periodo 1559-1562, aplicando una perspectiva de la historia institucional. En muchas de las comunidades analizadas, las cuales varían enormemente en tamaño, encontramos que los consistorios se convirtieron en “consejos políticos”. Esta transformación permitió a la pequeña minoría protestante controlar la elección de magistrados locales (cónsules) y asegurar con ello el control de los municipios antes incluso de que estallaran las guerras de religión. Este factor es fundamental para entender la famosa “medial luna protestante” que se expandió por el sur de Francia y sus discursos de religión cívica.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Guerras de religión en Francia; Consistorios calvinistas; Organización municipal; Confesionalización; Violencia religiosa; Iconoclastia; Sermones subversivos; Militancia religiosa.

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The work I would like to present is research in progress regarding the circumstances of France's entry in the Wars of Religion, in which Catholics and Protestants opposed each other during almost forty years. Besides factual considerations, based on both local sources and archives conserved abroad (Spain, Italy, Monaco, Russia), this work also constitutes a methodological reflexion on the status of such an event, considered here a "founding" event. Traditional historiography considers that the Wars of Religion started with the "massacre of Wassy", on March 1<sup>st</sup> 1562. On that day, some Calvinists who had not respected the Edict of January in celebrating the cult in the Wassy neighbourhood had been exterminated by the Duc de Guise and his troops. Why has this carnage been considered a founding incident, while several others – even bloodier – had predated it? Has the selection of Wassy been determined by the consequences of this event, or by the will to establish responsibility for it?

In these confrontations, the South of France shows precocity. It is in this same South of France that Calvinist communities took root with the strongest force, giving their cult an eminently municipal and civic character. The religious conflict then got closer to the cities of Flanders, Germany and Switzerland, and the movement went beyond the urban space and extended to burgs and villages.

Here we distinguish ourselves from an approach based on the relatively plurivocal paradigm of "confessionalization" (*Konfessionalisierung*) (Reinhard, 1977; Schilling, 1981). Recently, the micro-historical approach has made it possible to analyze more finely the change, which did not systematically proceed from the superior authority of the prince. The study of the transition to Calvinism in the city of Emden, in the Netherlands, thus demonstrated the decisive role of the urban community through its "civic" consistory (Schilling, 1989). This should not lead us to think, however, that "Emden is everywhere"? (Schmidt, 1999). Still within the framework of an urbanized society, Judith Pollmann highlighted the relative passivity of Catholics in the Netherlands when municipal politicians imposed Calvinism by organizing consistories as an instrument of social discipline as well as political and military control (Pollmann, 2011). These latter studies should be compared to the case of Languedoc. We will focus here on the initial period of the takeover of municipalities, demonstrating that, far from seeking coexistence, the nascent Calvinist communities of the French South knew how to use local institutions in an attempt to impose an undivided faith.

Thus, we have to question the organization specific to southern municipalities and the nature of "*consulats*" (municipalities), which lends itself to infiltration by dawning Calvinist consistories.

## PROTESTANT CONSPIRACIES

This is the well-known word used to characterize the way Protestants acted. In the South of France, voices rose to alert the French court about secret dealings against royal edicts. Blaise de Monluc in Gascogne, Guillaume de

Joyeuse in Languedoc and Antoine de Noailles in Bordeaux warned against cabals aiming at establishing a Protestant cult by taking over churches. They were immediately labelled with the name "Cassandra", as the ancient Greek unbelieving prophets of doom.

### The conspiracy of Amboise (March 16<sup>th</sup> 1560)<sup>1</sup>

The aborted conspiracy of Amboise, led by an obscure noble from Perigord called La Renaudie, allows us to unveil the outlines of a large plot, already militarily supported by Protestant communities. Those who participated planned on finding the King, François II, so as to free him from the influence of the Guises, who were supporting a methodical repression of Protestants.

Philip Benedict redrew the raising of troops by reformed churches in the end of 1561, which announced their mobilisation by the prince of Condé the day after the massacre of Wassy (Benedict and Fornerod, 2009, 2012; Daussy, 2014). He considers them consecutive to the request that has been made by Théodore de Bèze and reformed deputies, a few months earlier, to solicit places of worship. But this chronology cannot be applied to the South of France where, the year before, Protestants took over churches and organized a first coordinated hire of soldiers. It was as early as March 1<sup>st</sup> 1560, during the conspiracy of Amboise, instead of on March 16, 1562, which the massacre of Wassy, that religious confrontations started in the South.

The context of this uprising was first the anxiety that increased among Protestants due to the resumption of a repressive policy against them, that Henri II initiated after the Italian wars and that had been interrupted by his death. Another aspect of this environment, unfairly neglected, was external to France. It entailed the failure of Jean Calvin in his project of extending the reform to the whole Helvetic confederation from 1530 through 1549. This disillusion led him to go back to his homeland: France. Religious refugees of Lausanne and Vaud massively turned to multiply churches, while the end of the Italian wars concentrated all attentions (Bruening, 2011).

Even if Calvin and Théodore de Bèze avoided openly supporting it, the conspiracy of Amboise remained an aborted attempt of uprising by Calvinist churches reinforced by hired troops. Studies of the utilisation of troops during war times, based on bookkeeping, fail to identify the modalities of the raising of armed men at the beginning of wars (Souriac, 2008; Brunet, 2015a). The reformed militias and those of the first Catholic leagues were assembled (the latest in a fraternal context) without relying on specific financing, therefore escaping the sagacity of historians. To add to the smokescreen, the actions of these boorish of "communes", are not considered "worthy of history" (Agrippa d'Aubigné) and were consequently often ignored by annalists. They however remained essential. The communes and those who previously completed the raising of troops of "Free archers" (*francs archers*) and then of "legionaries" (*légionnaires*) for the king. Led by a few reformists and galvanised by

the preaching of Protestant ministers, they participated –rather heavily-handedly at first– in the composition of a military force, intended to protect them, but also meant to aggregate. The investigations completed on this “Tumult of Amboise”, which was decided on February 1<sup>st</sup> in Nantes, illustrates the vast ramifications of the plot: Lyonnais, Dauphiné, Bretagne, Anjou, Touraine, Poitou, Normandie, Picardie, Île-de-France, Brie, Bourgogne, Champagne and, south of the kingdom: Périgord, Limousin, Saintonge, Gascogne, Béarn, Provence et Languedoc.

After the failure of the operations of Amboise and Provence, in August and September 1560, Montbrun and Paul de Mauvans tried again to seize Lyon. Benefiting notably from a financing from Nîmes, weapons were acquired and stocked in May and June and, at the very beginning of the following September, more than a thousand soldiers raised and armed by the churches of Bas-Languedoc moved from Montpellier and Nîmes to Lyon (De Barthélemy, 1876: 37-39).<sup>2</sup>

### **The spring and autumn 1561: raising of troops and iconoclasm**

The iconoclast flow, described by Denis Crouzet, had been initiated and organized in southern France (Crouzet, 1990). During the spring 1561, Theodore de Bèze was in Nerac and, during the following autumn, Pierre Viret was in Nîmes. Calvin sent them on a “diplomatic mission”, in a concerted manner; Viret also exercised a mandate of visitor of churches and took part into a sharp debate regarding what consistories should be (Roussel, 1998). Both of them contributed to the churches’ religious and military organization.

The preparation of the synod of Sainte-Foy, in November 1561, notably followed those of Clairac (November 1560). According to the *Church History*, the synod of Languedoc in February 1562 assembled, seventy ministers, which represented seven times more than the estimate given by Guillaume Mauguet a year earlier.<sup>4</sup> Regardless of the accuracy of these figures, the difference is significant. A similar impression is given by the analysis of three lists, established by Nicolas Colladon, secretary of the Company of Pastors of Geneva, between the summer of 1561 and the beginning of 1562, which allows us to identify the pastors sent to France following the requests made by churches from May and June 1561 (Wilcox, 1993; Reid 2007).<sup>3</sup> Two thirds of the enquiring localities were located in southern France. The current Gard, Hérault, Ardèche and Drôme departments represented 22.5% of localities, while Lot-et-Garonne and Gironde total 18%. Bèze and Viret were present in these two regions, which constitute more than 40% of the localities that were contacting Geneva to obtain a pastor and build a church. Thus, when the war broke out, four large synodic provinces were already subdivided in 23 symposiums or classes: Guyenne, Haut-Languedoc-Quercy-Rouergue-Pays de Foix, Bas-Languedoc and Dauphiné-Lyonnais, confirming the meridional precocity and preponderance.

In this tense atmosphere, it seemed obvious that Théodore de Bèze, the ministers and Protestant deputies mandated by provincial synods, which were then at the French court, took the initiative of taking a census of churches and evaluating their military potential. This initiative followed the resolution adopted in March 1561 by the second national synod of Poitiers. At the general state of Pontoise (August 1<sup>st</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup>), churches obtained to record in the lists of grievances the demand to be authorised to freely gather in their places of worship, however Bèze and the six church deputies chose to exercise an even stronger pressure. For this reason, the admiral of Coligny intentionally increased the number of churches presented to Catherine de Medicis, which then reached 2150 (Benedict and Fornerod, 2009).<sup>5</sup> From October onwards, the creation of military units by churches, notably the consistory of Nîmes, acquired a completely different scope.<sup>6</sup> The following November, the provincial synod of Guyenne, orders the churches of the province to organize themselves as an army, following a clear military hierarchy. Each church had to have a company led by a captain; at the symposium level and depending on the parliament, colonels and generals lead the contingents (De Bèze, 1882, I: 888). So where did the churches find the funding required to raise and arm these troops?

### **The churches’ resources**

Besides the financing brought by the reformist bourgeois, notably from Nîmes, iconoclasm contributed to an increase in the resources of communities controlled by consistories. Noailles realized with surprise that, in Guyenne, iconoclasts burn ornamentations and decorations of churches so as to extract precious metals “to use them for the support [of] poors and other uses”, those other uses implying the arming and defence of Protestant churches.<sup>7</sup>

During the summer 1561 and until the Edict of January 1562, this “*abatis d’images*” (destruction of pictures and statues) reaches the whole Languedoc region. Théodore de Bèze, seeing the movement as that of a population following God –*vox populi, vox Dei*– only disapproves its excesses.<sup>8</sup> Regarding Béarn, he advises Jeanne d’Albret “that nothing strikes that is not by good order and justice authority”. It was the same in Foix. Catholics, generally surprised by the dimension of those concerted actions led by churches, rarely reacted. With order, the resources of churches are taken and guarded attentively by municipalities passed under the control of consistories.

### **CONSISTORIES AND CONSULATES**

In the South of France, the diffusion of Roman law and notary positions had led to the multiplication of consulates between the XI<sup>th</sup> and XIV<sup>th</sup> centuries. Even if their distribution was not even –as evidenced by Cévennes and Gévaudan– they were developed in burgs and villages, as opposed to northern France where the communal movement remained urban. This institution

played a major role in the installation of the Protestant reform.

### The force of political councils and the accession of jurists to the consulate

Generally speaking, the end of the Middle Ages had seen the assemblies of inhabitants of burgs and villages of the South of France to disappear in front of councils, with consuls that are real organs of decisions. This change came along with an increased concentration of the power of representation between the hands of a few lineages. In the meantime, these consulates confirmed their military and fiscal capacity, servicing monarchy (Garnier, 2006: 180-227; Cayla, 1938: 25-41).<sup>9</sup> They were organized following professional and territorial criteria.

The prosopography of municipal aedile highlights a *cursus honorum* that involved charges in the making of churches and religious friaries eminently “civic”. Their prerogatives were not only administrative and judicial but also extended to the civic dimension of religion, notably in the choice of the preacher of Advent and Lent. To such a point that interrogations surrounded the potential link between the general movement of exclusion of lay persons from the management of the sacred at the end of the Middle Ages and the extension of the Reformation (Le-maitre, 1991).

It is necessary to highlight, between a general assembly of inhabitants decreasingly used and efficient, and an oligarchic consulate, the major role taken by the intermediary political council. Composed by former consuls and the extension of consular brotherhoods, it supported the consulate through various methods and, in certain cases, could oppose it (Mouysset, 2000: 126-136; Cabayé, 2008: 47-48; Saverne, 1914: 140-142).<sup>10</sup> Hard to define because it was fluctuating, this entity has not been studied sufficiently. However, it validated the main decisions of the local councils and, when a new influential structure appeared, the protestant consistory, two legitimacies opposed each other within local communities (Hauser, 1909: 199-202; Garrison, 1980: 31-33; Ricalens, 1999: 23-26).<sup>11</sup>

In Montpellier, for example, since the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, notaries, lawyers and other notable from Montpellier had requested access to the consulate. The later, which appeared since 1141, was maintaining the usage to recruit the first four consuls among money-changers, bourgeois and merchants and the remaining two among the “mechanical arts” and ploughmen. In 1483, the “Council of the Twenty-Four” was created. Substituting itself, de facto, to the old general citizen assembly, it was designated by the outgoing consuls and deliberated with the consuls on important affairs. It included three outgoing consuls, two nobles, two canons, six officers of the king at the *Cour des Aides*<sup>12</sup> (set in Montpellier in 1467), at the seneschal and at the Bureau of French treasurers (*Trésoriers de France*)<sup>13</sup>, two lawyers, two notaries and two prosecutors. Nobles of the Robe then had the majority in this municipal council, at times when the merchant city was disappearing behind

the administrative capital. In 1529, a notary became third consul and presidents or advisers to the *Cour des Aides* were appointed to the consulate, and refuse at first. In 1545, Francis I ordered them, as well as all his officers of the court, to accept joining the consulate if they were elected.

Following various modalities, a takeover of consulates by the consistories of Montpellier, Toulouse, Poitiers, Nîmes or Saint-Flour took place. In these places religious people took control over roughly between a quarter to half of position of consul and magistrates, while in Lyon they already controlled the quasi totality of the consulate after 1450. The relative importance of magistrates in secondary cities and simple burgs was a phenomenon specific to the South of France. This “capillary diffusion” of law graduates allowed the region to benefit from the renewal of elites after the great depression, at the expense of the declining aristocracy (Verger, 1987; Coulet, 1991; Courcier, 2015). These graduates and humanists were be more receptive to innovative ideas.

### The infiltration of consulates by Calvinist consistories

With the extension of the Reform, there emerged a struggle to control consulates through the intermediary political councils. In Nîmes, Guillaume de Joyeuse witnessed that, during the conspiracy of Amboise, “*le grand nombre de cette religion [réformée, s'] étant déjà saisis de la ville*” (the large number of this religion [reformed] had already taken the city), the consulate as the presidial were under the control of Protestants. “Citizen of Nîmes then take arms and revolt” and the few magistrates who were opposing the control of the city by the consistory were forced to leave the city. They “had no other expedient than to leave the city and being outside could not find other safety in the Languedoc region than in my house [the castle of Joyeuse, in Vivarais] as they are threatened of death by these scoundrels” (De Barthélemy, 1876: 29-33).<sup>14</sup> From this time onwards, ministers coming from Geneva converged in Lower Languedoc (De Barthélemy, 1876: 35-36).<sup>15</sup>

The situation was similar in the diocese of Pamiers (county of Foix), according to a chronology as precocious (Vidal, 1931: 150). During the consular elections of Easter 1561, the huguenots from Pamiers took possession of the six municipal mandates and immediately called ministers and deacons (Baby, 1981: 219-221).<sup>16</sup> The process was identical in Foix during the following months and churches were gradually erected in the Lèze Valley as consulates adopted the Reform (Pebay-Clottes, 1988).<sup>17</sup>

In Montauban, the assemblies were multiplying and reformists took control of Saint-Louis church in January 1561. The parliament of Toulouse attempted, without success, to block their conquest of the consulate by sending the seneschal, in May (Guiraud, 1918d; Benoît, 1910). On the following 15 August, the reformists entered “in fact in the principal church of Saint-Jacques and burn images,



break altars, steal furniture and beat a consul and a priest who were praying there".<sup>18</sup> The reformists from Montauban now controlled the consulate.

The evolution was even clearer in Dauphiné, in Nîmes and in its appendices in the Vivarais and Velay, where the influence of Geneva was precocious and strong (Mours, 2001: 21-42; Tulchin, 2010, who continues the work of Guggenheim, 1968). As in Gascogne, the reformists took control of the churches of Cordeliers to preach, in Valence, as early as 31 March, then in Montélimar and in Romans the following month. On 20 June 1560, the destruction of the calvary of Gap marked the beginning of the Calvinist assault. The return of Guillaume Farel, the following year, invigorated the communities. He visited the consistories of Gap, Die and Grenoble and a synod was held in Die. After heavily-handedly intervening in the consular elections of Valence, from which he wanted to exclude the reformists, the lieutenant general in Dauphiné for Guise, La Mothe-Gondrin, was murdered (27 April 1562). A political assembly of noble reformists, in Valence, replaced him with the baron of Adrets, follower of the prince of Condé. With the exception of Embrun, all cities of Dauphiné felt under the control of Huguenots, as early as the first days of May 1562.

In 1559, Guillaume Mauget, minister, settled in Nîmes. During the summer of 1561, Antoine Vivés was sent from Geneva to found the consistory of Béziers. Predecessors and supervisors then provided political advice. In Montpellier, the intrusion of the consistory in the Council of the Twenty-Four was even more evident when the deliberations of the second replaced the first on the same register. Consulates were then controlled by churches. Symposiums and synods contributed to the development of a network of civic consistories. Guillaume Mauget went from Nîmes to build the church of Montpellier on 8 February 1560 and to designate ministers before the arrival of Jean Chassinon, known as La Chasse, from Geneva *via* Meaux (De Bèze, 1882, II: 122-123). Théodore de Bèze noted how much, this year, as soon as the Calvinist Guillaume de Chaume, lord of Poussan, became First consul of Montpellier "the assemblies gathered surely, with a marvellous expansion" (De Bèze, 1882, II: 182; Guiraud, 1918d; see also De Bèze, 1963, III). However the church had to be straightened up by La Chasse, upon his return from the general synod of Poitiers, on 16 February of the following year (De Bèze, 1882, II: 477). Bèze did not mention the successor of sir of Poussan, the lawyer Jacques David, doctor in law and co-lord of Montferrier, first consul from 25 March 1561 to 24 March 1562. He played, however, a decisive role in the Protestant domination of Montpellier (De Bèze, 1882, II: 166-170, 185-191 and 221-223).

### The union of churches in the South of France

Since Geneva, Calvin could not respond to the dimension of the demand for ministers, and a symposium was organized in Montpellier on November 12<sup>th</sup>. A Calvinist

theocracy, based on the one in force in Geneva, was then established in this city. Above it were ministers, the Consistory, and the political Council of Churches, created on December 20 1561 (Philippi in Guiraud, 1918d, II: 67-69; Guiraud, 1918b, II: 337-342; Guiraud, 1918c, II: 263-264).<sup>19</sup> Had the preaching of Pierre Viret throughout Languedoc been as soothing as he pretended? In a missive of unconfirmed authenticity, the minister exhorted Huguenots to follow the edict of January 1562 (Bruening, 2012: 417-419; De Bèze, 1882, II: 480-481; Roussel, 1998: 803-839; Guiraud, 1918a, II: 227-228; Granval, 2010).<sup>20</sup>

The multiplication of churches and the control of consulates were coming along with the creation of syndicates which allowed the mobilization of symposiums and provincial synods, following the will to take a census of churches. This habit was usual for local communities that wanted to regroup themselves so as to be represented in front of a jurisdiction or officer to claim their rights (Cayla, 1964: 660-661; Dognon, 1895). On September 21<sup>st</sup>, 1561, a new "*émotion et sédition de peuple*" ("commotion and popular riot") took place in Nîmes, where the consuls protected the culprits. On November 12, the consistory of Nîmes asked local symposiums to organize syndicates and to send the court's deputies documents highlighting the significant increase of the number of churches<sup>21</sup>. On the same day, it was the symposium of Montpellier that claimed temples and presented the complaints of churches to the States of Languedoc which should be organized in Béziers (Guiraud, 1918c, II: 262; De Bèze, 1882, II: 477).<sup>22</sup> A week later, there were 53 cities and villages of the symposium of Albigeois (Anonymous, 1861). Similar associations were formed in Dauphiné (Arnaud, 1875, I: 70-72). Monluc observed the intensity of the mobilization around Agen when, in January 1562 close to La Plume, he met a former soldier of his "company in Piemont" who, having being named captain of the church of Nérac, obeyed the ministre Boissnormand in fundraising and hiring. "Et quelles diables d'églises sont ceci, qui font les capitaines ?" said Monluc (Monluc, 1964: 477-478).

When the iconoclast wave started, the action taken by churches was coordinated, which made it terribly efficient. Military groups were quickly regrouped, attaining large numbers that could only win against the few guards opposing them. All observers then noted the presence of numerous foreigners in these operations.

It was at a clandestine synod at Aigladines that Sans Tartas, ministre of Sauve, regrouped fifteen pastors who decided the destructions of the spring 1561. The attack of the baron of Fumel's castle in November also resulted from a coordinated action led by local consistories, taking the form of an expedited justice (Brunet 2007: 50-53 and 2009). It responded to humiliations that the baron had imposed to the reformists of Condat, hitting a deacon in the temple on 21 November. The merchant Baltazar Vaquié united the consistory in his hour and, benefiting from the help of "the people of other nearby

churches”, two days later, troops of 1,500 to 2,000 men coming from approximately thirty nearby localities were besieging the castle. On the list of the 223 persons accused, the activities of 45 could be explained. They were artisans, an apothecary, a notary, a prosecutor, a court clerk, a collector, three unfrocked priests and a consul of Fumel. The presence of a judge from Agenais and other men of law among the insurgents contributed a pseudo-judicial character to this revolt, which was preceded by attacks against Catholic lords from Agenais-Condomois. As early as June 1560, Monluc was besieged in his castle of Estillac by a troop of 500 to 600 men<sup>23</sup>. Aggressions multiplied from the following summer onwards. “At the hen and chickens, all should be killed so that the race is lost!” is said while the baron of Fumel is massacred and his wife if humiliated.

The churches’ coordination of troops allowed them to assemble an impressive number of armed men. Two thousand men were mentioned besieging the castle of Frégimont, near Fumel, on 19 August, and the castle of Lestelle near Tournon six days later.

### Subversive predications

We have access to a few testimonies regarding the content of the predications made by these ministers, all of them marked by an Anabaptist tone. As soon as October 1560, Pierre d’Albret, bishop of Comminges and great uncle of Jeanne, told Phillip II “[qu]on promet aux gens du peuple que bientôt ils seront délivrés des impôts et des redevances qu’ils paient aux seigneurs / tell the population that they will be soon freed from the taxes they pay to lords”<sup>24</sup>.

Théodore de Bèze himself contributed to such preachings through his *Traité de l’autorité du magistrat*<sup>25</sup>. He had first suggested that “inferior magistrates” had the right and obligation to resist superior authorities if necessary to protect “the purity of religion” against a leader who fights “the rule of God”. The idea of the resistance of inferior magistrates is also the central idea of *Droit des magistrats* (1574).

The stigmatization of particular nobles and the call for elective urban magistracies are clear with Bèze, who would also give the power to resist to General Estates. The author of *Vindiciae contra Tyrannos* (1579), considering the situation of minority of Huguenots, only relied on these urban magistracies. Consulates in the South of France are an ideal environment to implement this program. Even Bèze had recommended passive resistance in *Confession de la foy chestienne* (written 1558 and published in 1559), circumstances led him to rewrite his articles regarding the right to resist in the Latin edition of 1560, including and extending the magistrate’s obligation to punish heresy. The Catholic cosmographer from Comminges, François de Belleforest, in a polemic text published in 1569, defended the idea that the rebellious Protestants from Toulouse in 1562 acted following the example of Thomas Münzer and German farmers against princes<sup>26</sup>.

We can now give greater credit to the statements of Blaise de Monluc who also listened to the reformist preaching in Nérac.

Ministers publicly preach that, if their follow their religion, they will not owe anything to nobles nor to the king that is not ordered by them. Others preach that kings cannot have any power that does not please the people. Others preach that nobles are nothing more than them and that therefore when their prosecutors will request rent from their tenants, they will respond that they show them in the Bible whether they would pay and that, if their predecessors were stupid, they did not want to be so.

### MACH 1562: CONDÉ AND THÉODORE DE BÈZE CALL FOR A MILITARY UPRISING

#### In the South of France: enhancement of the control of consulates through consistories

The Edict of Pacification of January 1562, according to Théodore de Bèze, made that “ceux de la religion [...] devindrent merveilleusement insolents / men of religion started being wonderfully violent” (De Bèze, 1882, II: 340).<sup>27</sup> Bèze, who said that the massacre of Wassy had been premeditated, was asking the king for justice. This request did not prevent him from writing to churches of Languedoc, probably as early as March 16<sup>th</sup>, to ask for help in the form of men and financial resources. He stipulated that the defense of the king, his family and the religion “était prise ce jour par M. le prince de Condé, qui à tel effet avait pris les armes en italiques / is conducted by the prince of Condé, who has armed himself at this effect” (Guggenheim, 1975).<sup>28</sup> On March 20<sup>th</sup>, he sent another letter to all the churches of France to ask them to prepare to defend themselves. After Guyenne, Bèze’s letters clearly show the precocity of the military organization of the churches in Languedoc. When Condé attacked Orléans, his justification of armed resistance in support of an imprisoned king’s as well as a response to his own captivity evaporated, appearing simply as a rebel. Cities of the Loire valley, Normandy and Lyon, fell in the hands of Protestants. In the South, it was simply a matter of reinforcing a control already in force; but the effort was less effective in Bordeaux, Toulouse or Avignon, where Catholics were resisting.

The case of Montpellier, presented by Jean Philippi, then Calvinist, evidences the complexity of consulates. Facing the threat of war and the militarisation of the citizens of Montpellier, on 30 May 1562, the Court of Aids, first court by order of honours, assembled “all estate of the city”. It advises to “drop weapons”, on both sides, in Montpellier and neighbouring cities.

On 3 May, celebration of the Invention of the Holy Cross, the calvinist insurrection was triggered in Béziers. Iconoclasm spreaded in the city and its surroundings. If the destructive troops left Béziers between the end of May and early June 1562, the city remained under the control of Protestants until the intervention of Henri de Montmoren-

cy-Damville, the new governor of Languedoc, in November 1563. The mass was removed and supervisors of the consistory, as in Montpellier, forced recalcitrant inhabitants to attend preachings by using the blows of sticks called “dust remover of the consistory” (Vidal, 1931).<sup>29</sup> As in Fumel, the “*basochiens*” or men of justice, appointed a mock jury. “Little king shit” (“*reyot de merde*”) hears Monluc in Gasconne, while in Montpellier a confectioner “says that if he seized the king, [he] would force him make small pastries”, meaning against any Lent.

### Catholics caught off-guard

Catholics, who largely remained the majority, despite the assertions of Théodore de Bèze, were surprised and did not react. The leagues of Agen or the “syndicate” of Bordeaux of the autumn 1561 were not sufficient. It will be necessary to wait until March 1563 for defensive Catholic leagues to be formed, as instigated by the cardinals d’Armagnac and Strozzi, Monluc, Terride, Nègrepelisse, Fourquevaux and Joyeuse, and to extend to the whole south of France (Brunet, 2007: 176-202 and 2015b). However, the Protestants who created the entities essential to urban power relied on external help. It is Claude de Narbonne, baron of Faugères, who called himself protector of the churches of Lunas, Faugères and probably Bédarieux. But hundreds of soldiers were coming from far away, including Rouergue and Albigeois, with local nobles. On May 30<sup>th</sup>, it was Jacques de Crussol, lord of Baudiné, who came with his brother, lord of Acier. In May-June, the Calvinists of Nîmes placed him at the head of Protestants of Languedoc, while his brother, Antoine, was elected protector of Protestants of Languedoc in November. In November 1562, Philibert de Rapin was named governor of Montpellier by Antoine de Crussol. After Castres, Lodève and Béziers, it was Montpellier and all coastal cities which rapidly were taken over, giving the consulate to Catholics (Serres, 1977: 37).

In Toulouse as in Bordeaux, the presence of a parliament defending Catholicism allowed resistance to the authority of the *capitoulat* and the *échevinage* (names given to the municipalities of Toulouse and Bordeaux). Thus, on 23 February 1562, the parliament of Toulouse did not hesitate to issue police orders intended to monitor circulation between the city and the outside and forbidding any remarks contrary to the Catholic religion.<sup>30</sup> In April 1562, Hunaud de Lanta, *capitoul* (town councillor) of Toulouse, is sent to the prince of Condé to propose to surrender the city to him. These transactions were finally known by Monluc, who informed the president of the parliament, Jean de Mansencal, who then stopped the *capitouls* in force and took over the government. Protestants tried to take over the city by surprise during the night between May 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>, but fail after an intense fight.

If the consulates of Narbonne and Carcassonne succeed in resisting the Calvinist takeover, it was thanks to their particular status as “frontier cities” where no assembly or exercise of the new Religion could establish itself (De Vic and Vaissète, 1874-1892, XI: 377-378 and XII,

col. 599).<sup>31</sup> The authority of a governor, the baron of Fourquevaux, allowed these cities to guard their doors and even to keep people suspected of heresy outside of them, using for this purpose a stratagem that Viret bitterly denounces to Calvin (1575: 270-271; See Philippi, 1918: 54).<sup>32</sup>

Each case followed an identical scenario, which we could detail: the takeover of the consulate has prepared the general uprising. Similar attempts to take control of the consulate could be found in Béziers, Ganges, Montagnac, Pézenas, Millau, Marsillargues and apparently in Uzès (Guy, 1996: 18-19; Rouquette, 1987: 66-68; Dumas, 1984: 28-35 and Bourrilly, 1896).<sup>33</sup> The case of Serres, in Villeneuve-de-Berg is significant. Olivier, whose brother Jean, went to study at the Academy of Geneva, was elected deacon. As the consistory did not manage to obtain a minister from Nîmes (where a school of theology was founded in April 1561), in July 1561, Jean sent letters to the consuls of Villeneuve, but also to other reformist cities to enjoin them to organise themselves well and to maintain correspondence among themselves. Churches of the Vivarais then gathered in three symposiums (Annonay, Privas, Aubenas) to create a synodal province. On 4 January 1562, Villeneuve decided to send two messengers to Geneva and Olivier was one of the two elected. Once the war declared, Olivier de Serres was charged to keep at home objects of worship and reliquaries of the Churches of Villeneuve, with the same attention as in Montpellier and in other consulates (Lequenue, 1970: 73-83; Mours, 2001: 40-41). In numerous southern consulates, the war that followed the massacre of Wassy was an opportunity to extend a Calvinist conquest already undertaken.

The religious war had started in the South of France during the conspiracy of Amboise. Churches, which were ready to fight in Provence, Dauphiné, Languedoc and Guyenne, fostering relationships more or less secret among conspirators. After the failure of Amboise, the death of Henri II kept the repression away (Bourrilly, 1896: 399-400; Brunet, 2015b). The iconoclast outburst of the summer and autumn of 1561 formed part of a Calvinist operation of taking over municipalities. It was a concerted action, the attentive study of which will highlight the participation and the direct influence of Geneva. If Calvin quickly denied any implication in the conspiracy of Amboise and the following massacres, the role played by Bèze seems obvious. Condé only had to call for the uprising following the slaughter of Wassy, and each consulate could extend its power without sharing and without requiring help from military chiefs. This general uprising, made of multiple individual revolts, whose leaders were later recognized by the prince of Condé, gave at the time the illusion that the action was not concerted. Aware of the weight of consulates, Damville in Languedoc and Henri de Navarre in Guyenne imposed mid-party consulates. Apart from an implicit recognition of municipal power, these measures appear to be another modality of the control of minority Calvinists over the rest of the population (Brunet, 2007: 579 sq).



## NOTES

- 1 Brunet, 2015
- 2 Joyeuse to François II, Joyeuse, 26 September 1560. Only one person from Nîmes, who calls himself Bois and that Joyeuse could not identify despite the pressing demands of the King, had then advanced 8,000 *livres* in this objective.
- 3 From Saint-Valéry-en-Caux, he founds the churches of Montpellier (8 February 1560), of Nîmes (23 March 1561) then of Villeneuve-lès-Avignon (10 November 1561). Calvin is concerned to end his strong opposition to Jean Mutois.
- 4 Not less than 363 churches rose during 1561.
- 5 The actual number of churches was likely below 800 and the number of pastors was likely even lower.
- 6 Register of the consistory of Nîmes (Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris [BnF], French manuscripts 8666, f. 38 v°-39).
- 7 Antoine de Noailles to François II, Bordeaux, 18 November 1560 (BnF, French manuscripts 6908, f. 45).
- 8 Bèze responds to Jeanne d'Albret who alerted of the devastation of the collegial St-Georges of Vendôme, and of the profanation of the tombs of the ancestors of her husband, by the garrison of Swiss and Gascons Protestants of the castle: "*je ne puis dire autre chose de cet abatis d'images, sinon ce que j'en ay toujours senty et presché, c'est asçavoir que ceste manière de faire ne me plaist aucunement, d'autant qu'elle ne semble n'avoir aucun fondement en la parole de Dieu et qu'il est à craindre que cecy ne parte plustost d'impétuosité que de zèle. Toutesfois pour ce que le fait de foy est selon la volonté de Dieu qui condamne les idoles et ydolatrie, et qu'il semble qu'en une chose si générale [collective] il y ayt quelque conseil secret de Dieu qui veult peut être par ce moyen faire honte aux plus grands par les plus petitz, je me contente de reprendre en général ce qui est digne de répréhension et de moderer telles impétuosités autant qu'il m'est possible.*" (Théodore de Bèze to Jeanne d'Albret, Orléans, 13 May 1561, BnF, french manuscripts, Fonds Dupuy, 333, f. 6, copie).
- 9 In the localities where the consular regime was not established, we were discussing syndics, who were surrounded by advisers designated by themselves. The functions of syndics and consuls were identical.
- 10 Rodez being divided in two consulates, there are 9 advisers in Bourg and 12 in the Cité according to Mouysset. Composed of 20 to 50 people, it is called "*conseil général*" in Albi as reported by Cabayé. In L'Isle-Jourdain, we call the "*conseil ou syndicat*", generally composed of 20 to 40 persons, but with a difference of 8 to 100 depending on the years according to Saverne.
- 11 In Carcassonne, the last reunion of the general council took place in July 1562, after the aborted attempt of huguenots to take control of the city. While the four councils were relying on a political council of 24 prominent citizens, it is decided, in 1572, to establish a restricted council.
- 12 Court in charge of judging with sovereign rights, under both civil and penal regimes, matters relating to the levying of royal taxes.
- 13 The Treasurers of France are charged of the administration and preservation of the royal domain. In 1577, they become general Treasurers of France by uniting with the finance generals, who were initially in charge of royal taxation.
- 14 Guillaume de Joyeuse to François II, Nîmes, 26 April 1560, to Anne de Montmorency, Joyeuse, 5 September 1560, to the cardinal of Tournon, 8 September 1560. See notably Joyeuse to François II, 8 September 1560.
- 15 Joyeuse to Anne de Montmorency, 16 September 1560 ; Joyeuse to François, Duke of Guise, 16 September 1560.
- 16 Since 1300, the election of councils did not achieve the most by the direct suffrage of household heads but by the intermediary of an assembly of notables. However, at the beginning of religious troubles, canons and consuls were constantly confronting one another and consular elections were only leading to repeated frauds, despite the effort of correction of the parliament of Toulouse, which notably withdraws to the consulate its justice powers to only leave them the police. The bishop Pellevé, co-lord with the count of Foix, annuls the election of 1561 and names new consuls renowned Catholics, but three of them declared themselves reformists (Departmental Archives [AD] of Haute-Garonne, H 116, IIA, f. 16-18).
- 17 Three first churches (Bélesta, La Bastide and Calmont) arose under the control of the local lord, the baron of Audou for the first two and the viscount of Calmont for the last. Others are with the support of the consulates, accompanying the taking of the city.
- 18 In July, the "*assemblées et presches*" continue in Villefranche-de-Rouergue, "*tous les cordelliers auroyt esté tirés de leur couvent et faicts prisonniers sayssy et occupé ledict couvent, les ymages et autels ruynés y continuant leurs presches*" (Toulouse parlement to Catherine de Medici, 23 August 1561, BnF, French manuscripts 15875, f. 162).
- 19 "*Délibérations du conseil général de Montpellier sur les assemblées publiques des calvinistes, 24 September 1560*", Municipal Archives [AM] of Montpellier, BB 393, f. 42 v°-44 v°. On the following 19 December, the count of Villars purges the Council of the Twenty-Four. "*Le 20 décembre 1561 fut dressé un Conseil politique de l'Eglise*" according to the above mentioned *Histoire de l'Eglise de Montpellier*.
- 20 Pierre Viret to churches of Languedoc, Nîmes, 15 January 1562. It should however be noted that the manuscript of this letter remains unknown and that it is only revealed to us through its retranscription in De Bèze. Curiously, the letter from Viret is written on 15 January, two days earlier than the edict of pacification said of January, which is itself only published on 7 February. It was responding to the request that Crusol makes to the then reformist consulate of Montpellier to respect the royal ruling of the 15 November. The reformist domination extended to the establishment of a mi-parti regime by the consulate, in December 1563, by the new governor Henri de Montmorency-Damville, who, during the following elections, selected himself the "consuls of cities and villages", who were all catholic. The passage of the court reinforces the catholic re-establishment.
- 21 Register of the consistory of Nîmes, BnF, French manuscripts 8666, f. 33.
- 22 According to De Bèze, Pierre Chabot, "*député des églises de Languedoc, estant finalement oui, [qui] remonstra plusieurs poincts appartenans à la conservation du repos public*".
- 23 François II to Antoine de Bourbon, Chambord, 16 June 1560, BnF, French manuscripts, new French acquisitions 1234, f. 164-165.
- 24 Pierre d'Albret to Philippe II, Nérac, 16 September 1560, Archivo General de Simancas, Estado K, 886, n° 170.
- 25 *De haereticis a civili magistratu puniendis*, 1554, fr. trad. : *Traité de l'autorité du Magistrat en la punition des hérétiques*, 1560.
- 26 *Remonstrance au peuple de Paris de demeurer en la Foy de leurs Ancestres*, Paris, Mangnier et Norment, 1568.
- 27 The investigation of 1563 only identifies 98 persons from Béziers who are implicated in iconoclasm. They are from all social backgrounds, with an overrepresentation from the *Basoche* (lawyers). We find five advisers of the presidial, the prevost marshal, a dozen agents of the law. Seven are current or former consuls of Béziers and one of Saint-Chinian.
- 28 This author, with Lucien Romier, believes that this is an order or mobilisation. The appeals of 5 and 7 April, signed by Bèze and Jacques Spifame, would only be a response to the action of triumvirs and of Antoine de Bourbon, who have brought, with firmness, the king and his mother to safety.
- 29 In Pamiers, where the same theocracy was reigning, Catholics were forced, under the threat of beef nerves, to attend the preaches of three ministers in January 1562.
- 30 AM of Toulouse, AA 302.
- 31 The transcribed document is: Declaration by Charles IX, Paris, 24 April 1562, BnF, French manuscripts, Fonds De Coislin, n° 153.
- 32 Under the pretext of an imaginary duel between two Spanish in front of the rampart, "*tous les citoyens et presque tous les habit-*



ants” (all citizens and almost all the inhabitants) came outside. Upon their return, the sentinels refused entry to those suspected of heresy. It should be noted that, on 3 February, Joyeuse had already ordered that, within 24 hours, all foreigners who were staying in Narbonne should present themselves to Fourquevaux, or risked “*l’estrappede et d’estre chassés hors de ladicte ville honteusement*” (be immersed in the sea at the end of a rope and be shamefully out of town) and all who were accommodating undesirable persons, unless “*d’un billet*” (short letter) of Fourquevaux, should chase them or would receive whipping (Ruling of Guillaume de Joyeuse, 3 February 1562, BnF, french manuscripts, new French acquisitions 25118, f. 44). An order of similar content was published on 13 February, clarifying that the persons housed should also declare “*quelles armes ils ont rièrè eux*” (what weapons they carry) (AM of Narbonne, BB 58, f. 16). Joyeuse reiterated this measure on 14 May (BnF, French manuscripts, new French acquisitions 25119, f. 36).

33 AD of Hérault, G 1516.

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