



*Twelve Who Ruled:  
The Committee of  
Public Safety during  
the Terror*

(Click [here](#) to view our web site description.)

R. R. Palmer

The years 1793 and 1794 marked the Reign of Terror of the French Revolution, a bloody period characterized by the brutal repression of those suspected of being counterrevolutionary. The so-called Committee of Public Safety, which directed the Terror, ordered 2,400

executions in July 1794 in Paris alone, and across France 30,000 people lost their lives. R. R. Palmer's *Twelve Who Ruled* is the classic study of the twelve men who made up the committee, the most famous of whom was Robespierre. Palmer approached each man as an individual, describing and explaining his inner motivations and dramatically portraying his revolutionary role. In addition, he saw the Committee of Public Safety as the prototype of modern dictatorships and the Reign of Terror as an early incarnation of the totalitarian state.

Palmer's other great classic, also from Princeton, is his *Age of the Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760–1800* in two volumes (vol. 1, *The Challenge*, 1959; vol. 2, *The Struggle*, 1964), for which Palmer received the prestigious Bancroft Prize in 1960. Palmer's key idea was that a single great democratic revolution against an entrenched aristocracy swept Western culture between 1760 and 1800, and that the American Revolution was the most important single event in precipitating this revolutionary era. These two volumes have been of singular significance for historians on both sides of the Atlantic and together with his *Twelve Who Ruled* established Palmer as one of the most important historians of his generation.