

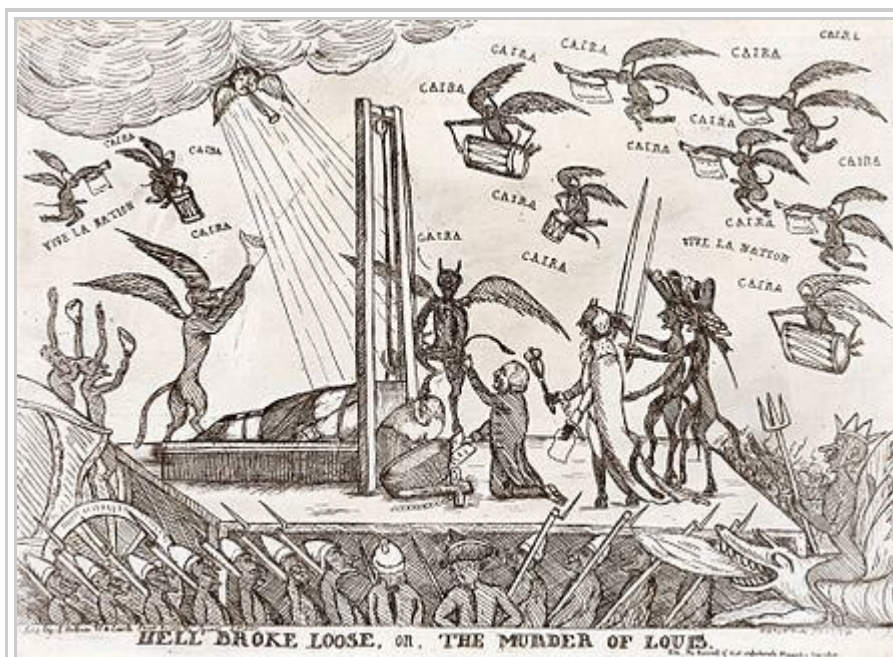
Ça Ira

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"**Ça ira**" (French: "it'll be fine") is an emblematic song of the French Revolution, first heard in May 1790. It underwent several changes in wording, all of which used the title words as part of the refrain.

Contents

- 1 Original version
- 2 Sans-culotte version
- 3 Post-revolutionary use
- 4 Modern adaptations
- 5 See also
- 6 References
- 7 External links



Demons in the sky sing "Ça ira" as the blade of the guillotine severs the head of Louis XVI in this British print published just four days after the king's execution on 21 January 1793.

Original version

The author of the original words "*Ah! ça ira, ça ira, ça ira*", Ladré, was a former soldier who made a living as a street singer.

The music is a popular contredanse air called *le Carillon national*, and was composed by Bécourt, a violinist (according to other sources: side drum player) of the théâtre Beaujolais. The queen Marie Antoinette herself is said to have often played the music on her harpsichord.

The title and theme of the refrain were inspired by Benjamin Franklin, in France as a representative of the Continental Congress, who was very popular among the French people. When asked about the American Revolutionary War, he would reportedly reply, in somewhat broken French, "*Ça ira, ça ira*" ("It'll be fine, it'll be fine").

The song first became popular as a worksong during the preparation for the Fête de la Fédération of 1790 and eventually became recognized as an unofficial anthem of revolutionaries.^[1]



"Ça ira" is written on the hat of this musician

Ça ira

Ah ! ça ira, ça ira, ça ira

Le peuple en ce jour sans cesse répète,

Ah ! ça ira, ça ira, ça ira

Ah ! It'll be fine, It'll be fine, It'll be fine

The people on this day repeat over and over,

Ah ! It'll be fine, It'll be fine, It'll be fine

Malgré les mutins tout réussira.	In spite of the mutineers everything shall succeed.
Nos ennemis confus en restent là	Our enemies, confounded, stay petrified
Et nous allons chanter « Alléluia ! »	And we shall sing Alleluia
<i>Ah ! ça ira, ça ira, ça ira</i>	<i>Ah ! It'll be fine, It'll be fine, It'll be fine</i>
Quand Boileau jadis du clergé parla	When Boileau used to speak about the clergy
Comme un prophète il a prédit cela.	Like a prophet he predicted this.
En chantant ma chansonnette	By singing my little song
Avec plaisir on dira :	With pleasure, people shall say,
<i>Ah ! ça ira, ça ira, ça ira</i>	<i>Ah ! It'll be fine, It'll be fine, It'll be fine</i>
Suivant les maximes de l'évangile	According to the precepts of the Gospel
Du législateur tout s'accomplira.	Of the lawmaker everything shall be accomplished
Celui qui s'élève on l'abaissera	The one who puts on airs shall be brought down
Celui qui s'abaisse on l'élèvera.	The one who is humble shall be elevated
Le vrai catéchisme nous instruira	The true catechism shall instruct us
Et l'affreux fanatisme s'éteindra.	And the awful fanaticism shall be snuffed out.
Pour être à la loi docile	At being obedient to Law
Tout Français s'exercera.	Every Frenchman shall train
<i>Ah ! ça ira, ça ira, ça ira</i>	<i>Ah ! It'll be fine, It'll be fine, It'll be fine</i>
Pierrette et Margot chantent la guinguette	Pierrette and Margot sing the guinguette
Réjouissons-nous, le bon temps viendra !	Let us rejoice, good times will come !
Le peuple français jadis à quia,	The French people used to keep silent,
L'aristocrate dit : « Mea culpa ! »	The aristocrat says <i>Mea culpa!</i>
Le clergé regrette le bien qu'il a,	The clergy regrets its wealth,
Par justice, la nation l'aura.	The state, with justice, will get it.
Par le prudent Lafayette,	Thanks to the careful Lafayette,
Tout le monde s'apaisera.	Everyone will calm down.
<i>Ah ! ça ira, ça ira, ça ira</i>	<i>Ah ! It'll be fine, It'll be fine, It'll be fine</i>
Par les flambeaux de l'auguste assemblée,	By the torches of the august assembly,
<i>Ah ! ça ira, ça ira, ça ira</i>	<i>Ah ! It'll be fine, It'll be fine, It'll be fine</i>
Le peuple armé toujours se gardera.	An armed people will always take care of themselves.
Le vrai d'avec le faux l'on connaîtra,	We'll know right from wrong,
Le citoyen pour le bien soutiendra.	The citizen will support the Good.
<i>Ah ! ça ira, ça ira, ça ira</i>	<i>Ah ! It'll be fine, It'll be fine, It'll be fine</i>
Quand l'aristocrate protestera,	When the aristocrat shall protest,
Le bon citoyen au nez lui rira,	The good citizen will laugh in his face,
Sans avoir l'âme troublée,	Without troubling his soul,
Toujours le plus fort sera.	And will always be the stronger.
Petits comme grands sont soldats dans l'âme,	Small ones and great ones all have the soul of a soldier,
Pendant la guerre aucun ne trahira.	During war none shall betray.
Avec cœur tout bon Français combattra,	With heart all good French people will fight,
S'il voit du louche, hardiment parlera.	If he sees something fishy he shall speak with courage.

Lafayette dit : « Vienne qui voudra ! »
 Sans craindre ni feu, ni flamme,
 Le Français toujours vaincra !

Lafayette says "come if you will!"
 Without fear for fire or flame,
 The French always shall win!

Sans-culotte version

At later stages of the revolution, many sans-culottes used several much more aggressive stanzas, calling for the lynching of the nobility and the clergy.

Ça ira

Ah! ça ira, ça ira, ça ira
les aristocrates à la lanterne!

Ah! It'll be fine, It'll be fine, It'll be fine
aristocrats to the lamp-post

Ah! ça ira, ça ira, ça ira
les aristocrates on les pendra!

Ah! It'll be fine, It'll be fine, It'll be fine
the aristocrats, we'll hang them!

Si on n' les pend pas

If we don't hang them

On les rompra

We'll break them

Si on n' les rompt pas

If we don't break them

On les brûlera.

We'll burn them

Ah! ça ira, ça ira, ça ira
les aristocrates à la lanterne!

Ah! It'll be fine, It'll be fine, It'll be fine
aristocrats to the lamp-post

Ah! ça ira, ça ira, ça ira
les aristocrates on les pendra!

Ah! It'll be fine, It'll be fine, It'll be fine
the aristocrats, we'll hang them!

Nous n'avions plus ni nobles, ni prêtres, We have no more nobles nor priests

Ah ! ça ira, ça ira, ça ira,

Ah! It'll be fine, It'll be fine, It'll be fine

L'égalité partout régnera.

Equality will reign everywhere

L'esclave autrichien le suivra,

The Austrian slave shall follow him

Ah ! ça ira, ça ira, ça ira,

Ah! It'll be fine, It'll be fine, It'll be fine

Et leur infernale clique

And their infernal clique

Au diable s'envolera.

Shall go to hell

Ah! ça ira, ça ira, ça ira
les aristocrates à la lanterne!

Ah! It'll be fine, It'll be fine, It'll be fine
aristocrats to the lamp-post

Ah! ça ira, ça ira, ça ira
les aristocrates on les pendra!

Ah! It'll be fine, It'll be fine, It'll be fine
the aristocrats, we'll hang them!

Et quand on les aura tous pendus

And when we'll have hung them all

On leur fichera la pelle au cul

We'll stick a shovel up their arse

Post-revolutionary use

The song survived past the Reign of Terror, and, during the Directory, it became mandatory to sing it before shows. It was forbidden under the Consulate.

The ship of the line *La Couronne* was renamed *Ça Ira* in 1792 in reference to this song.

At the 1793 Battle of Famars, the 14th Regiment of Foot, The West Yorkshire Regiment, attacked the French to the music of Ça Ira (the colonel commenting that he would "beat the French to their own damned tune"). The regiment was later awarded the tune as a battle honour and regimental quick march. It has since been adopted by the Yorkshire Regiment.^[2]

Carl Schurz, in v. 1, ch. 14, of his *Reminiscences* (https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Reminiscences_of_Carl_Schurz/Volume_One/14_Br%C3%BCning_Salon_%E2%80%9494_Triumph_of_the_Reaction), reported from exile in England that upon Napoleon III's *coup d'état* of 2 December 1851, "Our French friends shouted and shrieked and gesticulated and hurled opprobrious names at Louis Napoleon and cursed his helpers, and danced the Carmagnole and sang 'Ça Ira.'"

Modern adaptations

An alternative "sans-culotte"-like version was sung by Edith Piaf for the soundtrack of the film *Si Versailles m'était conté* by Sacha Guitry.

The song is featured in the 1999 television series *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, starring Richard E. Grant. There the lyrics are sung in English as follows :

Ah ça ira, ça ira, ça ira
 Over in France there's a revolution
 Ah ça ira, ça ira, ça ira
 Watch what you say or you'll lose your head
 Ah ça ira, ça ira, ça ira
 Pass some time, see an execution!
 Ah ça ira, ça ira, ça ira
 Une deux trois and you fall down dead
 Ah ça ira, ça ira, ça ira
 Hear the tale of Marie Antoinette-a!
 Ah ça ira, ça ira, ça ira
 A bloodier sight you have never seen!

See also

- La Marseillaise*

References

- Hanson, Paul R. (2004). *Historical Dictionary of the French Revolution*. Scarecrow Press. p. 53. ISBN 978-0-8108-5052-1. Retrieved 23 November 2011.
- "The Band of The Yorkshire Regiment". *British Army*. Ministry of Defence. Retrieved 19 July 2014.

External links

- "Ça ira" (<http://edith-piaf.narod.ru/piaf1954.html>) sung by Edith Piaf, 1954 (mp3)
- "Ça ira" (<http://www.univie.ac.at/igl.geschichte/europa/FR/Petz/Marc%20Ogeret%20-%20Ca%20ira.mp3>), original version (mp3)
- "Ça Ira" (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/caira.html>) from the Modern History Sourcebook website of Fordham University, includes translation and discussion of lyrics (song title translated as

"We Will Win!")

- "Ça Ira". *New International Encyclopedia*. 1905.
- "Ça ira". *Encyclopedia Americana*. 1920.

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Categories: Songs of the French Revolution | French military marches | 1790 songs | Songwriter unknown

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