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“The Blame Game: The Fusillade”

On February 23, 1848, an event occurred on the Boulevard Des Capucines in France. Trouble began in January when the *Guizot[[1]](#footnote-1)* cancelled a banquet for a political group of the National Guard. In response, National Guard members and citizens of the city led a popular protest against the Guizot. The protest turned into a massacre, however; and the crowd dispersed after shots were fired. An unidentified mob member is responsible for the fusillade based on the testimonies from members of the regular army, National Guard, and other members of the crowd.

A shot was fired from by a mob member after protesters unsuccessfully tried to pass through Lieutenant-Colonel Courant’s 14th regiment to reach the Guizot. Statements from Neveu and Sergeant Giacomoni confirm Courant stating “I told them that they could not go by, and that it was my duty to see they respected my command.”[[2]](#footnote-2) Courant gave the crowd a warning to abandon their march through his [Courant] regiment. After Courant gave the warning, he was provoked by crowd members before re-entering the ranks. Courant, Giacomoni, and Neveu were three credible sources that remembered the initial shot before the fusillade. Courant was positioned by the boulevard; being well within earshot of the crowd and the 14th regiment. Giacomoni was with Courant in the 14th regiment, stationed directly in front of the Guizot. He was positioned directly facing the crowd. Neveu, who was a National Guard soldier (against the regular army) concurred with the statements of Courant and Giacomoni. He was stationed adjacent of the Guizot, directly by the Boulevard des Capucines, where the 14th regiment was located. Neveu was able to hear and see the crowd, and he was beside Courant when the shot and fusillade occurred. Moments after Lieutenant-Colonel Courant re-entered the ranks, Sergeant Giacomoni saw a man in the crowd fire the first shot. Giacomoni said, “I saw a man who was part of the crowd raise a pistol and aim it at the Colonel; the shot rang out and struck rifleman Henri full in the face”[[3]](#footnote-3) Giacomoni’s company was in the middle of the first troop, giving him a good view of the crowd and Courant. Courant recalled hearing a shot immediately after ordering the charge of bayonets. Neveu also remembered hearing a shot fired left of the troop before the fusillade.

Statements from Launette, Dauptain, Lieutenant Schumacher, and Pannier-Lafontaine cannot be considered credible based on geographical location and bias. Their testimonies claim the crowd did not provoke Lieutenant-Colonel Courant nor did they mention a shot prior to the fusillade. Launette and Lieutenant Schumacher were positioned at the front of the march and stood next to Courant, trying to urge him to let them pass. Courant re-entered the ranks, and the fusillade began moments later. Launette and Schumacher similarly stated, “the colonel gave the firing order,” however; Neveu stated a firing order was never issued. Their [Launette/Schumacher] claims are contradictory to Neveu—all three are members of the National Guard. Neveu could have sided with his National Guardsmen but did not show bias against Courant and the regular army. Dauptaine was a spectator of the fusillade—not a member of the regular army, National Guard, or the mob. He was not near Courant, Schumacher, Launette, or Neveu when the crowd tried to march through the 14th regiment. Despite his location, Dauptaine claimed he heard a firing order given. After the shots were fired, Dauptaine fell to the ground but still claimed he saw all three ranks open fire. Dauptaine’s testimony is not credible because of his bias against the regular army. He stated “I threw myself to the ground” revealing it was geographically impossible for him to give an accurate account of what happened. Pannier-Lafontaine was located at the front of his march, however; he was pushed back to the third ranks when the march stalled. He claimed no firing order was given, but proceeded to claim the other ranks of the regular army continued to fire. Also, he did not say a shot was fired before the fusillade (although he was closer to the shot than he was to Courant). Pannier-Lafontaine does not show much bias but he did sustain injuries and fell violently to the ground during the fusillade. The stress of the situation, his adrenaline, and the fact that he was on the ground during the event eliminates him as a credible source.

To conclude, the unidentified mob member is to blame based on the testimony of those closest to the event, those with the least bias, and a correlation of various witnesses with different biases. The individual fired a shot which caused the regular army to react and open fire. The 14th regiment would not have opened fire if the unidentified mob member had not fired.

1. French Ministry of Foreign Affairs [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Lieutenant-Colonel Courant’s statement; p. 160 *The Fall of the July Monarchy in France* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Sergeant Giacomoni’s statement; p. 161 *The Fall of the July Monarchy in France* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)