

Chapter 19 – The Era of the French Revolution and Napoleon

The Beginning of the Era: The American Revolution

After the Seven Years' War, Britain sought new forms of revenue

To pay for the army's defense of the colonies

Britain and the colonies saw the Empire differently

British saw a single empire with Parliament establishing laws to apply throughout the empire

Colonists had established their own legislatures, determining their own *internal* affairs

Therefore Parliament could not tax the colonies without their consent

July 4, 1776: Second Continental Congress issued the *Declaration of Independence*

Proclaimed Enlightenment's "natural rights"

The War for Independence

It was a gamble

2nd C. Congress authorized an army headed by George Washington, who led troops in the Fr. & Indian War
internal division within the colonies: North vs. South; loyalists vs. "patriots"

loyalists (15-30%) tended to be Northern, older, wealthier, and moderate

assistance from foreign countries

French supplied arms and money at the beginning, officer's and soldiers eventually

Treaty of Paris granted independence, control of the territory from the Appalachians to the Mississippi

Forming a New Nation

Fear of concentrating power led to the *Articles of Confederation*

Ineffectiveness led to a Constitutional Convention

Federal system was established

National government could levy taxes, raise an army, regulate trade (domestic & foreign), create currency

3 branches of government (executive, legislative, and judicial) with a system of checks and balances

President could execute laws, veto legislation, supervise foreign affairs, direct the military

Congress: Senate elected by state legislatures, Representatives elected directly by the people

Supreme Court (and others, as necessary) to enforce the constitution

1789: A year after ratification, 10 amendments (a "Bill of Rights") were added

Many were derived from the natural rights philosophy

Impact of the American Revolution in Europe

The events of the American Revolution and new nation were available to the reading public of Europe

The events proved that Enlightenment ideas were "practical"

Americans had created a new social contract

Lafayette returned from the war with "proof":

Individual liberties and popular sovereignty were achievable

He joined the Society of Thirty, a salon-based political group that was influential at the start of the French Revolution

Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen was obviously influenced by the *Declaration of Independence*

HOWEVER, the French Revolution was more complex, violent, and radical – and influential

it attempted to create a new political and social order

it was the model for future revolutions in Europe and the rest of the world

Background to the French Revolution

Revolutions are rarely based on economic collapse and hungry masses yearning for change

In fact, France in the 18th C. was experiencing economic growth

Social Structure of the Old Regime

Wealth was not distributed equally

The First Estate

130,000 clergy, owning 10% of the land

exempted from the *taille*, the land tax

radically divided between aristocratic clergy and (poor) parish priests

The Second Estate

350,000 nobles, owning 25-30% of the land
exempted from the *taille*
prominent in government, law, higher church offices, and the military
controlled much of the heavy industry, investing in or owning mining and metallurgy
divided between
nobles of the sword (descended from medieval knights)
nobles of the robe (officeholders, judges, etc.)
sought to expand their power – at the expense of the king
there *were* poor nobles, but they were a small minority

The Third Estate

The commoners, making up 75-80% of the population, owning 35-40% of the land
Many owned barely enough land to get by
Paid fees to the nobles, tithes to the Church
Included skilled artisans, shopkeepers, and urban wage earners
Consumer prices rose faster than wages
Passions in the Revolution seemed to mirror the ups and downs of bread prices
Bread was $\frac{3}{4}$ of the daily diet and cost $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ of a worker's income
About 8% were the *bourgeoisie* (middle class), owning 20-25% of the land
Included bankers, merchants, industrialists, professionals (lawyers, doctors, writers, officeholders)
The revolution was a mix of unsatisfied nobles and bourgeoisie, spurred on by the Enlightenment

Other Problems Facing the French Monarchy

Bad harvests in 1787 and 1788
Economic depression resulted in food shortages, rising food prices, rising urban unemployment
The number of poor rose dramatically

Ideas of the *Philosophes*

Increased criticism of social privilege, echoing Rousseau once the Revolution began

Failure to Make Reforms

Parlements, having gained some power, blocked royal decrees – including new taxes

Financial Crisis

Costly wars and royal extravagance
1788: half the budget was set aside to repay government debt
forced a calling of the Estates-General, which hadn't been called since 1614
needed their approval for new taxes

The French Revolution

Calling the Estates-General was only for taxes, not for any social or political reform
The delegates came to Paris with no particular plan for revolutionary changes

From Estates-General to a National Assembly

Met in Versailles

This time, the third estate received 2x as many representatives as the first and second estates
 $\frac{2}{3}$ had legal training, $\frac{3}{4}$ were from urban areas
actually, the nobility was diverse, and many supported enlightened reforms
 $\frac{1}{3}$ were liberal-minded, urban-oriented
 $\frac{1}{2}$ were under 40 years of age

the *cahiers de doléances* (local grievances) advocated constitutional monarchy, abolition of fiscal privilege
Opened in May of 1789

Began with question of voting by estate or by head-count

Parlement of Paris advocated the old system (in which one estate could veto the others' proposals)

The National Assembly

The Third Estate, by virtue of its numbers, pushed for a single-chamber legislature
Abbé Sieyès issued a pamphlet "What Is the Third Estate?" but it wasn't representative
The First Estate declared its preference for voting by estate
The Third state responded by declaring itself a "National Assembly" intending to write a constitution
June 20: Third state was locked out – so it went to an indoor tennis court (for the "Tennis Court Oath")

They intended to meet until they had written a constitution

Intervention of the Common People

July and August saw uprisings

When king took defensive measures, the people responded
the Permanent Committee of Paris attempted to keep order

organized to capture *Les Invalides*, (an armory), July 14: stormed the Bastille (another armory)

Paris was abandoned to the rebels

King could no longer enforce his laws

Appointed Lafayette to head a new National Guard (a citizens' militia)

Other Permanent Committees and National Guards were formed to keep the order

Peasant Rebellions and the Great Fear

The seigneurial (manorial) system, with its inherent inequity, led almost inevitably to an uprising

Fall of the Bastille and the king's capitulation encouraged peasants to rebel

Some got the nobility to give up dues and tithes

Some burned the charters that obligated them to pay

The Great Fear (July 20–August 6): a general panic based on the fear of foreign invasion (w/aristocratic help)

Encouraged even more Permanent Committees and citizens' militias

Destruction of the Old Regime

One of the National Assembly's first tasks was to strip France of feudalism and aristocratic privilege

Meant to calm the peasants and restore order in the countryside

August 4: abolition of seigneurial rights, fiscal privileges nobles, clergy, towns, and provinces

The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen

August 26: adopted *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen*

Reflected the Enlightenment, American *Declaration of Independence*

Reinforced abolition of exemptions from taxation

Access to public office based on merit

Limited the monarchy, stated that all citizens were to be granted legislative access

Freedom of speech and press; outlawing of arbitrary arrest

Olympe de Gouges wrote *The Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen*. She was ignored.

The Women's March to Versailles

Louis XVI did not act on much of anything

October 5: after marching to city hall (Hôtel de Ville) demanding bread, 1000's of Parisian women marched to Versailles (12 miles away)

Their actions "forced" the national Guard to accompany them

After meeting with Louis, they marched Louis, Marie-Antoinette, and their son back to Paris

He became a virtual prisoner in Paris

The National Assembly went to Paris

The Catholic Church

July 1790: Civil Constitution of the Clergy

Bishops and priests were to be elected by the people and paid by the state

Clergy were required to swear an oath to the state (only 54% of priests did; a majority of bishops didn't)

Church property was seized and *assignats* (paper currency) were issued based on its value

because the church became an enemy of the state, it angered the people,

A New Constitution

1791: a constitutional monarchy

most of king's actions were reviewed by the new Legislative Assembly

legislative Assembly – 745 representatives for two-year terms

only "active" citizens – over 25 with taxes equivalent to 3 days of unskilled labor – could vote

83 administrative districts were created, staffed overwhelmingly by an elected bourgeoisie (the nobles lost)

Opposition from Within

Clergy angered by the Civil Constitution of the Clergy

The poor who faced inflation and whose dues had not been repealed

The political clubs (particularly the Jacobins) who wanted more radical solutions

After a year, there was a network of 900 Jacobin Clubs throughout France
June 1791: Louis attempted an “escape” (The Flight to Varennes)
National Assembly tried to call it a kidnapping so that the radicals wouldn’t react
October 1791: the Legislative Assembly first met
The representatives were reasonably moderate (few clergy and nobles, were men of property)
King tried to work with them

Opposition from Abroad

August 1791 (during the National Assembly): The Declaration of Pillnitz
Leopold II of Austria, Frederick William II of Prussia invited European monarchs to help the king
April 1792: French enthusiastically declared war on Austria
Conservatives hoped it would diminish the Revolution; defeat might even restore the old monarchy
Leftists hoped it would strengthen the Revolution at home and spread it throughout Europe
Initially, the war went badly and blame was pointed everywhere
August 1792: Radical Paris commune attacked the palace and the Legislative Assembly
Captured the king, forced the Assembly to suspend the monarchy, call for a National Convention
Power rested in the hands of the Commune
Composed of *sans-culottes* (patriots who refused to wear knee breeches)

The Radical Revolution

The Paris Commune (and the sans-culottes) dominated the political scene
George Danton became minister of justice
“September Massacres”: half the prison population (about 1200) was executed
September 1792: National Convention meets
To draft a new constitution, but it also passed laws
Full of lawyers, professionals – property owners (mostly men under 45) distrustful of the king
September 21: the monarchy was abolished, a republic proclaimed
Girondins and the Mountain disagreed on the fate of the king

Domestic Crisis

Girondins represented the provinces and feared the radical mobs of Paris
Wanted to keep the king alive (just in case)
The Mountain represented Paris; they passed an ordinance condemning Louis XVI to death
Sans-culottes kept pressure on, invaded the Convention and had leading Girondins arrested and executed
Rebellions broke out in the provinces (esp. the Vendée, Lyons, and Marseilles)

Foreign Crisis

After the execution of Louis, most of Europe rose to attack France (*The First Coalition*)
Austria, Prussia, Spain, Portugal, Britain, and the Dutch Republic
Defeated French troops, approached the border
National Convention turned its attention to two (2) tasks:
Curb anarchy and treason at home, and mobilize the people for a larger military force
Created an executive Committee of Public Safety (comprised of 12 men)
Dominated in the beginning by Danton; later by Robespierre

A Nation in Arms

August 1793: universal mobilization of young men
By September 1794, it had grown to almost 1.2 million (the largest in Europe)
The army pushed the coalition past the Rhine River, conquered Austrian Netherlands
The army was a “people’s army” fighting a “people’s war” – a first
These wars became violent and unrestrained, as it was when war was fought over religion

The Committee of Public Safety and the Reign of Terror

Revolutionary Courts were established to try “internal enemies”
Victims included royalty (incl. Marie Antoinette), Olympe de Gouges, and 1000’s of peasants)
Officially 16,000 died at the guillotine – but it was probably closer to 50,000
The bulk occurred in the places that had expressed rebellion
Revolutionary armies were sent to cities and districts to restore control to the Revolution
Lyons was bombed, men were killed by cannon and grapeshot (guillotines were too slow)

Victims were statistically reflective of the country as a whole

Nobles: 8%, clergy: 6%, middle classes: 25%, peasants and laborers: 60%

Once peace and order were restored, there was to be a “Republic of Virtue”

The “Republic of Virtue”

By 1793: Committee of Public Safety provided economic controls

The radicals had demanded them

The Law of General Maximum: price controls of necessities (food, drink, fuel, clothing)

It failed because the government couldn’t enforce them

The Role of Women

As spectators at meetings and trials, they made their wishes known (forcefully at times)

1793: Society for Revolutionary Republican Women formed (mostly working-class women)

Paris Commune outlawed women’s clubs and the presence of women at their meetings

Dechristianization and the New Calendar

Saint was removed from street names, churches were pillaged and closed, priests were encouraged to marry

Notre Dame was renamed the Temple of Reason

New Republican calendar: based on the day (September 22, 1792) that the new republic was proclaimed

12 months of three 10-day weeks (*décades*) with the tenth day being a day of rest

religious celebrations were to be replaced by civic festivals

5 leftover days formed a half-week of festivals for *Virtue, Intelligence, Labor, Opinion, and Rewards*

months were renamed for seasons, temperature, or vegetation

remained in effect (though largely ignored) until Napoleon cancelled it in 1806

Equality and Slavery

Although slavery was outlawed in France in 1791, but remained in effect in the West Indies

National Convention outlawed it in the colonies in 1794

1791: slave revolt in Saint Domingue (eventually led by Toussaint l’Ouverture)

seized control of the whole island

1802: Napoleon reinstated slavery, imprisoned l’Ouverture

1804: now called Haiti, it proclaimed independence

Decline of the Committee of Public Safety

1793: Law of 14 Frimaire (December 4) attempted to reduce the radicalism of the Terror

cut back on the dechristianization

turned on the Paris Commune

military successes made the Terror largely unnecessary

Robespierre became obsessed with ideological purity

Attacked all corruption, hoping to establish the Republic of Virtue

An anti-Robespierre faction formed in the National Convention

July 1794: Robespierre was guillotined

The goals of the Committee had been reached (political stability and national defense) but its methods had

outraged the populace

Reaction and the Directory

The Thermidorean Reaction took effect

National Convention curtailed the power of the Committee of Public Safety

It shut down the Jacobin Clubs

Churches were reopened, all cults were free to worship

Laissez-faire economics were established

1795: a new, more conservative constitution was written

two legislative chambers (to avoid the past excesses)

lower: Council of 500 made laws

upper: Council of Elders accepted or rejected them

appointed a *Directory* (of 5 directors nominated by the Council of 500) to be executive branch

National Convention ruled that 2/3 of the new members be from its own ranks

Angered some Parisians, but Napoleon and the army was sent to quash the protests

The Directory was ineffective and corrupt

High fashion – associated with the nobility – returned, as did gambling

Increasingly, it turned to the army to maintain power

That opened the door in 1799 for Napoleon to stage a coup d'état and seize power

The Age of Napoleon

Napoleon dominated French history from 1799 to 1815

He was both a child of the Enlightenment and an absolute monarch

The Rise of Napoleon

Born of minor Italian nobility in Corsica just after the French took it

Sent to military school in France; commissioned an artillery lieutenant in 1785

Not well liked: an outsider, he spoke with an Italian accent and he had little money

Studied the Enlightenment and military history

Napoleon's Military Career

1792: promoted to captain

1793: as artillery commander, he helped recapture Toulons

1794: promoted to brigadier general

1795: promoted to major general for (essentially) firing on a Parisian mob

1796: married Josephine de Beauharnais, a widow who lived in luxury thanks to her lovers

1796: named commander of the French army in Austria

turned his troops into effective force, stunning Austria with his strategy

tough on his officers, but friendly to the troops, winning their loyalty

1797: given command of training for an invasion force to Britain

1798: he changed it to a trip to Egypt – to capture Egypt and threaten to cut off British trade to India

1799: British navy cut off his troops' escape, but he managed to get back to France

Proclaimed his expedition a victory, participated in the coup d'état (he was 30)

One of the Directors (Abbé Sieyès) asked him to assist in the coup

Napoleon in Control

New constitution placed executive power in the hands of three consuls

But the decision of the First Consul was sufficient

He moved into the old Tuileries Palace and in 1802 got himself elected "First Consul for Life"

1804: was "elected" emperor by the people and then crowned himself in Notre Dame

stabilized the government but increasingly he became a dictator

The Domestic Policies of Emperor Napoleon

While claiming that he was preserving the Revolution, he was actually creating an autocracy

Napoleon and the Catholic Church

1801: Concordat with the Pope (the Church had been the Revolution's stiffest opposition)

Pope regained the right to select bishops, hold festivals and maintain monasteries

Actually, Napoleon kept the right to nominate bishops

Napoleon gained an admission that the accomplishments of the Revolution would stand

State kept the church lands

Catholicism was *NOT* made the state religion

A New Code of Laws

France had never had a single set of laws (300 different systems before the Revolution)

Napoleon set up seven codes – the most significant being the Civil Code (or *Code Napoléon*)

Recognized equality of all citizens before the law, right to choose professions, religious toleration, and abolition of serfdom and feudalism

Property rights, outlawed trade unions and strikes

Fathers' control over their families was restored

Overtaken divorce rights for women, inheritance rights for all children

French Bureaucracy

Replaced the old system of *intendants* with **prefects**, directly dependent on the central government

Tax collection became organized and efficient

No tax exemptions (introduced in 1789 but never really enforced)

Selection and promotion by merit, not by rank or birth

Created a new nobility (almost 60% were of *bourgeois* origin)

Napoleon's Growing Despotism

Liberty was largely replaced by benevolent despotism

Closed down 60 out of 73 of France's newspapers; demanded manuscripts be reviewed before publication

Mail could be opened by government police

Germaine de Staël, who ran a salon in Paris, fought back – but Napoleon banned her books and exiled her

Napoleon's Empire and the European Response

1799: as consul, he tried to stop the war against the Second Coalition (Russia, Britain, and Austria)

1802: got the peace; 1803: Third Coalition again attacked France

1805: Battle of Austerlitz – devastated both the Austrian and Russian armies

1806: Prussia joined the Coalition, was beaten

1807: Napoleon's Grand Army had defeated all the Continental members of the Coalition

Napoleon was ready to establish an empire

Napoleon's Grand Empire

Three parts

1) France, expanded to the East and including the western half of Italy

2) dependent states: Spain, Netherlands, Kingdom of Italy, Swiss Republic, Confederation of the Rhine

3) allied states: Prussia, Russia, and Austria

set him up to attack Britain

He demanded obedience

But he spread Enlightenment ideas throughout the empire

Legal equality, religious toleration, and economic freedom

Removed the privileges of the nobility and clergy

The Problem of Great Britain

Britain remained unconquerable because of its navy

led by Admiral Horatio Nelson, it defeated a French-Spanish fleet at the Battle of Trafalgar

Napoleon never considered invasion again

So he turned to the *Continental System* (a blockade)

Tried to destroy Britain economically (and therefore militarily) by strangling trade

Allied states resented the French hegemony, tried to cheat and encourage others to resist

Besides, Britain could find goods and markets in the eastern Mediterranean and Latin America

Nationalism

Coincidentally the Revolution's emphasis on brotherhood (*fraternité*) and unity rubbed off

1) the French fostered nationalism by being the hated foreign oppressor, and instilling patriotism

2) they provided a model for what devoted nationalists could accomplish

as an example, Spanish nationalists held off 200,000 French troops in the Peninsular War

The Fall of Napoleon

1812: the invasion of Russia – they had withdrawn from the Continental System

Napoleon had to attack or be perceived as weak (and lose more allied states)

His hopes depended on a quick victory

The Russians refused to fight, burning the land and depriving the French of food and forage

Battle of Borodino, which the French won, was costly and indecisive

When they arrived in Moscow, it was abandoned and burning

The Grand Army retreated in the middle of an historically cold winter

Perhaps 40,000 of the original 600,000 made it back to Poland in 1813

1814: the Coalition finally defeated Napoleon

he was exiled to Elba (off the coast of Italy); Louis XVIII (the brother of Louis XVI) was enthroned

The next spring he returned, the troops sent to capture him hailed him as a hero

The Coalition was ready to fight again, so he raised another army and attacked

In Belgium, at Waterloo, he was finally defeated by the British (under Wellington) and Prussia

He was exiled to St. Helena, off the African coast, where he died six years later