

5 – THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND THE NAPOLEONIC ERA (1789-1815)

OVERVIEW

Despite the influence of the Enlightenment and the abundance of resources France possessed, the French government of the eighteenth century had become corrupt and ineffective. Much of the French social structure was a holdover from the Middle Ages, and the French social classes resented one another for a number of reasons. Most importantly, though, the French government found itself buried beneath a mountain of debt with no way to dig itself out. Fueled by the fire of class resentments, a moderate reform movement spiraled out of control and resulted in a bloody revolution that destroyed the old regime. The French Revolution sent shockwaves through the rest of Europe by threatening the traditional social and political orders of other nations. In 1799, Napoleon Bonaparte began his meteoric rise to greatness by seizing control of France. After establishing himself in France, Napoleon moved on to the rest of Europe where he established one of the greatest modern empires, one in which he instituted a number of landmark reforms. After losing many of his troops, Napoleon lost the Battle of Nations in 1813. The following year, Napoleon abdicated the throne. The European powers came together and established a policy of balance of power to prevent international domination by one nation, as was the case with France under Napoleon.

BACKGROUND OF THE REVOLUTION IN FRANCE

One of the biggest problems facing France in the eighteenth century was its social structure. The entire population of France fell into one of three legal divisions or categories called *estates*. The First Estate included the clergy of the Catholic Church. This group accounted for a tiny fraction of the total population, yet they owned between one tenth and one fifth of the land in France. In addition, they paid virtually no taxes aside from a voluntary tax once every five years. The First Estate was somewhat divided, with the higher clergy of ten having different interests than the parish priests. The nobility made up the Second Estate. The Second Estate owned between one fourth and one third of the land in France, yet they also numbered but a fraction of the population. Although there were some divisions between the upper nobility and the lower nobility, none of the nobles paid taxes. With the First Estate and Second Estate both exempt from taxes, particularly the *taille*, the tax burden fell upon the Third Estate. The Third Estate included everyone in France who was neither nobility nor clergy. Although legally considered commoners, the Third

Estate, which owned the majority of the land and property in France, included people of many economic, occupational, and educational backgrounds. Peasants, artisans, the urban poor, middle class merchants, bankers, and professionals, such as doctors and lawyers, all found themselves together as members of the Third Estate. If the interests of the people in the First and Second Estates were varied, the interests of and differences between the people of the Third Estate were almost irreconcilable. The wealthiest members of the Third Estate seemed to have more in common with the Second Estate than with the poor members of their own social group. Therefore, class resentments and struggles were not as clearly defined as you might have imagined.

Perhaps the greatest challenge facing the French government during the eighteenth century was the national economy. The economic dire straits in which France found itself dated back to the uncontrolled spending of Louis XIV and the mismanagement of the government by Louis XV (1710-1774, king 1715-1774). The expense of the French and Indian War, combined with the expense of supporting the American colonies against Great Britain, placed an almost unbearable economic burden on France. By the time of the Revolution, France devoted approximately 50 percent of its national budget to the debt and the interest on that debt. In an effort to keep up with the debt, the king sold political offices and government positions. France's three primary taxes, the *taille*, the *gabelle*, and the *aide*, simply did not produce the revenue that France needed. The nobility repeatedly rejected the crown's attempt to tax them, so the tax burden fell on those least able to support it, the peasants. Louis XVI (1754-1793, king 1774-1792) appointed a number of economic advisers throughout the 1770s and 1780s, but all were forced to resign because of their attacks on the rights of the privileged. In 1788, Louis XVI gave in to the *Paris Parlement*, one of the courts, and agreed to bring back the Estates-General. The Estates-General, a legislative body that included representatives from each of the three estates, had not met since 1614. Louis ordered an election and declared that the Estates-General would meet at Versailles in May of the following year.

THE ESTATES-GENERAL

Although the chance for the Third Estate to participate in government brought great excitement, it also brought great concern. The Estates-General traditionally seated 300 people from each estate, and each estate voted equally. The Third Estate realized that

the nobility controlled the First and Second Estates and would, therefore, vote in a manner that would benefit the nobles and not the commoners. The Third Estate demanded that the number of their representatives be raised to 600, and in 1788, Louis doubled the number of representatives in the Third Estate. Because each estate was to have an equal vote, though, the members of the Third Estate were not satisfied. They understood that they outnumbered the First and Second Estates combined, but they were to receive the same vote as the other two estates. For the Third Estate, this unequal representation was completely unfair. This raised the issue of whether the Estates-General should vote according to tradition with each order, or estate, voting equally, or whether the Estates General should vote by head, that is with each member of the Estates General receiving one vote. The traditional voting method favored the First and Second Estates, while the voting-by-head method favored the Third Estate. This issue was left unresolved. The members of each estate drew up a list of grievances, known as the *cahiers*, and sent them to Versailles. The *cahiers* from each estate had concerns about the need for reform of the French government, in particular the state bureaucracy. The cahiers indicated that people of every walk of life in France had concerns about the current state of affairs, and those concerns were relatively similar, despite the economic and social differences of the estates.

On May 5, 1789, the Estates-General convened for the first time in more than 150 years. The occasion began with great pomp and circumstance but deteriorated quickly. After initial tensions arose over issues of the Third Estate's clothing and their desire to wear hats before the king, the members of the First and Second Estates became deadlocked with the Third Estate over the method of voting. The Third Estate demanded that the vote be by head, thus making their collective voice equal to or greater than those of the First and Second Estate. The privileged members of the Estates-General, of course, demanded that the vote be by order, thus giving the nobility the distinct advantage. The impasse lasted for weeks and rendered the Estates-General powerless to act.

Influenced by Abbe Sieyès (1748-1836) and Honoré Gabriel Victor de Mirabeau, the Third Estate changed its name to the National Assembly and began its own meetings. After being locked out of their meeting hall by the king's guards, supposedly because of repairs, the new National Assembly met on an indoor tennis court and vowed not to disassemble until they had written a new constitution. This famous event is known as the *Tennis Court Oath*. The Tennis Court Oath essentially marked the beginning of the French Revolution. Only days later, Louis granted some

concessions and agreed to recognize the National Assembly. However, the king's efforts were too little too late.

THE FIRST (OR MODERATE) STAGE

In the meantime, the people of Paris grew increasingly unhappy with their condition. The poor faced food shortages, high prices, and back-breaking taxes, and their frustrations were compounded by the virtual stalemate at Versailles. As if the people of Paris didn't have enough to worry about, rumors began to spread that the king was amassing troops for an offensive measure that would disband the National Assembly and reassert royal power. To defend themselves, the people of Paris stormed the Bastille, a royal armory, and ordered the garrison to leave their posts and surrender the arms inside; the crowd numbered about 80,000 strong. The crowd cut off the head of the commander of the forces and paraded about Paris with the decapitated head on a pike. This served as a brutal foreshadowing of events to follow. The rebellion spread from Paris into the countryside, where the Great Fear dominated the summer of 1789. During the Great Fear, peasants attacked nobles and the nobles' estates and burned all the documents on which were recorded the peasants' financial obligations. The nobles reacted by renouncing all their feudal rights and ended feudalism in France.

The bourgeoisie of Paris feared further action by the commoners, so they established a militia known as the National Guard. They chose the Marquis de Lafayette (1757-1834) to head the new National Guard. Lafayette had been a hero during the War for American Independence, and the people rallied behind him. Under his leadership, the flag bearing the Bourbon *fleur de lis* was replaced by the tricolor flag still used in France today. Lafayette also played a role in the development of one of Europe's most important documents since the *Magna Carta*. With the help of Thomas Jefferson, Lafayette and others wrote the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen*. They based this document on the American Declaration of Independence and on such Enlightenment ideas as the right to life, liberty, and property. This powerful document made all men equal under the law and restricted the monarchy. It also guaranteed freedom of speech, religion, and due process of law.

On October 5 of the same year, a mob of Parisian women marched from Paris to Versailles, which was 12 miles away. They wanted to express their discontent to the king and the National Assembly. Armed with pitchforks, broomsticks, and guns, the women marched on Versailles and received their audience with the king. The mob then demanded that the king and his family return to Paris with them. Louis was in no position to

argue. Carrying the heads of the king's guards on sticks, the mob of women "escorted" the royal family back to the *Tuileries*, the king's residence in Paris, where they remained virtually as prisoners until they were executed in 1793. The National Assembly also returned to Paris.

In 1790, the Revolution opened the door for dissent with the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. This legislation, reluctantly approved by Louis, basically made the Church a state institution and made members of the clergy, by virtue of an oath of allegiance, employees of the state. In essence, those who took the oath supported the Revolution, and those who did not take the oath were considered counter-revolutionaries. Pope Pious VI denounced this legislation and the principles of the Revolution. The National Assembly confiscated much of the Church land and used it to payoff some of the national debt – an act that infuriated Catholics. The friction between Church and state served as a catalyst for counter-revolutionary activity.

The National Assembly, also called the Constituent Assembly for its work on a new constitution, completed its work on the constitution in 1791. The new constitution limited the power of the "king of the French" by creating a Legislative Assembly, the members of which were to be chosen by electors. The National Assembly also divided France into eighty-three departments, thus eliminating the old provincial system. The Assembly extended rights to Protestants and Jews, perhaps due in no small part to the influence of some Enlightenment thinkers. In addition, the National Assembly abolished slavery in France.

In 1791, the brother of Louis XVI encouraged the king to flee France with his family. The king got as far as Varennes before he was recognized and taken back to Paris. The National Assembly, still working for a constitutional monarchy, told the public that the king had been kidnapped; the Assembly did not want the public to know that their king had attempted to leave the country. Also in 1791, the King of Prussia and the Emperor of Austria, partially persuaded by the *émigrés*, issued the Declaration of Pillnitz. In this document, the foreign monarchs threatened to intervene in French affairs and restore the old regime of France. As a result, the Legislative Assembly declared war on Austria the following year.

THE SECOND (OR RADICAL) STAGE

The war with Austria went poorly, and the French suffered miserable defeats. After the defeats, everyone in France was looking for someone else to blame. Combined with the agony of defeat, the economic hardships that faced the French people sparked a radical group of Parisian citizens to storm the Legislative Assembly in August of 1792. The mob forced the

Assembly to call for a National Convention that was to be elected by universal male suffrage. The mob was composed of the *sans-culottes*, which literally means "without breeches." The *sans-culottes* were the working people who did not wear the fine breeches of the elite. These radicals ushered in the next stage of the Revolution. The *sans-culottes*, under the leadership of Georges Danton (1759-1794), carried out the September massacres. The mob executed thousands of people, including many already in prison, that they believed to be traitors and counter-revolutionaries.

In September of 1792, the National Convention met for the first time with the task of abolishing the monarchy and developing a new constitution, one that would create a republic. The task would be a nearly impossible challenge, since the Convention was split into two major factions. One group was the *Mountain*, named for the raised platform on which they sat in the Convention. The Mountain generally represented the radical Parisians and advocated the execution of the king. The second group was the *Girondists*. The Girondists represented the countryside and sought to preserve the king's life. Both groups were members of the Jacobin club. The Mountain won the first great battle in the Convention and condemned the king to death. On January 21, 1793, Louis XVI lost his head on the brand-new guillotine. The execution of the king outraged many people in France and in other countries.

In 1793, the radical Paris Commune dominated the political scene in Paris. Early in the summer of 1793, the members of the Paris Commune broke into the Convention and arrested the leaders of the Girondists. The Mountain now controlled the Convention. Under the Mountain's control, the National Convention faced a daunting task. Several European nations had joined together to confront France. Led again by Danton, the radical French welcomed the challenge. They formed the Committee of Public Safety that helped put down counter-revolutionary activity. The Committee also sought to raise a national army to defend France from foreign invaders. Maximilien Robespierre (1758-1794) rose to a prominent leadership position on the Committee of Public Safety. Between August 1793 and September 1794, France raised a staggering 1.1-million-man army, the largest Europe had ever seen. The formation of the national army and the defeat of the European forces greatly contributed to the formation of the modern notion of nationalism.

France more or less rid itself of external dangers, but the country still faced internal problems. These internal problems centered around those Frenchmen who were thought to be counter-revolutionaries and conspirators with other countries. To deal with these problems, the Committee of Public Safety instituted the infamous

Reign of Terror. The Committee formed courts that tried people suspected of treachery against the Republic. Between 1793 and 1794, the Reign of Terror claimed more than 40,000 lives. Many of the executed lost their lives to the guillotine, some to gunfire and cannon fire, and still others were drowned. In addition to executing enemies of the state, the Committee enforced economic policies, including price controls and food rationing. Later in 1793, the Committee declared France a Republic of Virtue. They attempted to de-christianize the Republic by pillaging churches and creating a new, non-Christian calendar.

THE THIRD (OR REACTIONARY) STAGE

In 1794, the Committee of Public Safety, began to lose its appeal, and public opinion swayed against the Committee. Contrary to public opinion, Robespierre continued his authoritarian rule, and he even executed Damon for speaking out against the Reign of Terror. A group of leaders of the National Convention became convinced that if they did not get rid of Robespierre, Robespierre would get rid of them. The convention decided to move, and Robespierre was arrested and then guillotined the next day, July 28, 1794; this day was the Tenth day of Thermidor, one of the months of the new non-Christian calendar. The death of Robespierre began the Thermidorian Reaction, in which the moderates regained control of France. In 1795, a new two-house legislature was established. The new National Convention consisted of a lower house, the Council of 500, and an upper house, the Council of Elders. In order to begin the healing process in France, the Convention reduced the power of the Committee of Public Safety, closed the Jacobin clubs, and granted amnesty to many people formerly persecuted during the Reign of Terror. In addition, the National Convention relaxed old economic controls, made divorce more honorable for women, and allowed Catholic services to be held again.

In 1795, the National Convention vested governmental authority, in a five-man body known as the *Directory*. The period during which France operated under the Directory was filled with controversy and corruption. The economic situation in France did not improve. People from the political left and the political right disagreed with and disapproved of the Directory and its methods. Power began to slip away, and the Directory turned to the military as a tool by which it would maintain control. On October 5, 1795, a royalist rebellion broke out in Paris against the Directory, and General Napoleon Bonaparte was ordered to crush the rebellion. Napoleon did as instructed and saved the Directory from the rebels.

THE NAPOLEONIC ERA

In November 1799, Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) overthrew the Directory in a *coup d'état* and created the *Consulate*. Under the Consulate, France received male suffrage, but the power actually remained in the hands of the Consuls. Napoleon was one Consul, and the other two Consuls were Roger-Ducos and Abbe Sieyes. Under the constitution in late 1799, Napoleon was First Consul. In 1802, the constitution made him Consul for life, and in 1804, the constitution made him Emperor. For each of these constitutions, Napoleon held a national vote (called a *plebiscite*), and the people of France approved the new constitution.

Napoleon instituted numerous domestic policies that helped France get back on its feet after the exhausting Revolution. One of Napoleon's first moves was reconciliation with the Church. In 1801, Napoleon signed a concordat with Pope Pius VII. The concordat recognized Catholicism as the religion of the majority of Frenchmen, but it did not make Catholicism the sole religion of France, as the Pope had wished. In fact, Napoleon maintained the upper hand throughout the negotiations. Because of Napoleon's negotiating skills, France kept the Church land it had confiscated during the Revolution, and France retained the right to nominate bishops in France. After the concordat, the state had virtual control over the Church in France.

Napoleon's next move was the reform and overhaul of the laws of France. He systematically arranged laws into a single organized code, called the *Civil Code* often referred to as the Napoleonic Code or Code Napoleon), by which everyone was treated equally under the law. The new laws abolished serfdom and granted religious toleration to Protestants and Jews. Unfortunately for women, though, Napoleon's new laws negated much of the progress women had achieved during the Enlightenment and Revolution by making men superior to women.

The great reformer reworked the French bureaucracy and made it more efficient. Although he kept the departments in France, he appointed new prefects for each department. He chose experienced officials to occupy the positions in his new government. Napoleon promoted people based on a merit system instead of title or social status. He practiced nepotism, or showing favoritism toward relatives, as often as he could. For example, Napoleon's stepson, three of his brothers, and his brother-in-law were all made rulers of conquered territories. He eliminated tax exemptions and created a new, more efficient tax collection system. Napoleon's domestic reforms strengthened and stabilized the government of France.

As busy as Napoleon was in France introducing reforms, he was even busier abroad engaging in one of his favorite pastimes-war. When Napoleon assumed power in 1799, France was at war with the *Second Coalition*, which consisted of Russia, Austria, and Great Britain. In 1802, Napoleon bought himself some time by signing a temporary peace agreement at Amiens. The peace lasted until 1803 when France resumed war with the *Third Coalition*, which included Austria, Russia, Prussia, and Great Britain. After many major battles between 1805 and 1807, Napoleon's Grand Army, the largest Europe had seen to date, defeated the armies of the Coalition. In the wake of his grand victory, Napoleon formed the Grand Empire. The new Grand Empire included the French Empire, Holland, Spain, the German states (excluding Austria and Prussia), Warsaw, the Swiss Republic, and Italy. Napoleon forced Austria, Russia, and Prussia to help him against Great Britain, although they were not included in the Grand Empire. In each place that Napoleon added to the Grand Empire, he instituted reform. He sought equality under the law and religious toleration and relaxed economic policies for his new subjects. He stripped the nobility and the aristocracy of their privileges in an attempt to stamp out the old regime across Europe. Like in France, Napoleon enacted the Civil Code in his new lands.

Napoleon wanted very much to invade England, the final thorn in his side. However, the British fleet, under the direction of Admiral Nelson, crushed the French Navy at the Battle of Trafalgar. Since a military defeat of the British seemed unlikely, Napoleon decided to break the economic back of Great Britain. Napoleon began his *Continental System*, his plan to cut off Britain from the countries on the European continent, with the intent to prevent British goods from being distributed throughout Europe. Unfortunately for Napoleon, many European nations did not abide by his commands, and the French Empire suffered worse economically than did Great Britain. This economic turn of events began the downward spiral of the Grand Empire and Napoleon's dream of total European domination.

Historians generally agree that nationalism played a major role in the defeat of Napoleon. First, Napoleon tried to place his brother, Joseph, on the Spanish throne. In reaction to Napoleon's actions, a Spanish nationalist rebellion erupted and sidetracked hundreds of thousands of Napoleon's men for a number of years. Nationalism spread through other French holdings in Europe as well, especially Germany. Also contributing to Napoleon's downfall was his invasion of Russia. In 1812, Napoleon led well over a half million men into Russia. The Russians refused to engage the Grand Army and instead retreated deeper into Russia. As they

retreated, they burned farms and villages, so the French troops were left with no means of gathering food or finding shelter. When the French reached Moscow, they found it in ashes. At this point, Napoleon began the Grand Retreat, in which the Grand Army turned and headed for Poland. Only 40,000 of the original Grand Army soldiers made it out of Russia.

After Napoleon's disastrous expedition in Russia, the countries of Great Britain, Russia, Prussia, and Austria fought together to liberate Europe from Napoleon's rule. In 1814, after a defeat, Napoleon abdicated his throne. He was then exiled to Elba, a small island off the Italian coast, where he could be emperor of the tiny island and nothing else.

In France, Louis XVIII (1755-1824, king 1814-1815, 1815-1824), a Bourbon, ascended to the throne. In Vienna, the major European powers gathered for a landmark conference known as the *Congress of Vienna*. Under the heavy influence of Prince Clemens von Metternich, the participants – Austria, Russia, Prussia, and Great Britain – wanted to make sure that nationalism and liberalism were put to rest in Europe. In addition, the Congress wanted to prevent France, or any other nation, from dominating Europe as Napoleon had done. They were more than fair in granting concessions and demanding reparations from France, mostly to discourage France from becoming angry and retaliating. They allowed

France to keep all the territory it acquired prior to 1792. Then, the Congress established a geographic barrier around France to prevent its expansion.

Although Napoleon had been exiled, Europe had not seen the last of him. In 1815, Napoleon escaped his island prison and returned to France. Upon his return, Napoleon discovered a large group of his supporters who were still loyal to him. Napoleon even convinced a group of guards, originally sent to arrest him, to join his cause. When the king heard of Napoleon's return, he fled for his life. Napoleon once again became Emperor. He knew, though, that the other European nations would not sit idly by and allow him to rule. Therefore, Napoleon raised an army for the inevitable confrontation. On June 18, 1815, a British commander named Wellington defeated Napoleon at the famous Battle of Waterloo. Thus ended the Hundred Days, Napoleon's second stint as Emperor. Louis XVIII returned, and Napoleon was exiled to the remote island of St. Helena, where he died in 1821.

THE MAJOR PLAYERS

Louis XVI (1754-1793, king 1774-1792) – Born in 1754 at Versailles, Louis became the Dauphin in 1765 when his father, Louis XV's only son, died. He married Marie Antoinette, the daughter of Maria

Theresa, in 1770. Louis was generally regarded as a weak and unintelligent ruler who devoted as much time to hobbies like hunting as he did to governing the country. He frequently allowed himself to be persuaded and even controlled by his wife.

When he became king, Louis inherited a nation with a great debt and millions of subjects living in poverty. He tried to institute economic reforms but often was challenged by the aristocracy and the courts. Later, he contributed to the economic problems by sending large sums of money to support the American colonies against the British. In addition, he borrowed until he could borrow no more, and he spent a great deal on his lavish lifestyle. Finally, the notables, or the clergy and the nobility, forced Louis to call a meeting of the Estates-General for the first time since 1614. The notables had hoped the Estates-General would prevent Louis from instituting economic reform that limited their rights and privileges.

When the situation deteriorated during the French Revolution, Louis and his family tried unsuccessfully to flee the country. In 1792, the king was tried as a traitor and sentenced to death. On January 21, 1793, Louis XVI was executed on the guillotine.

Marie Antoinette (1755-1793, queen 1774-1792) – Marie Antoinette was born in Vienna in 1755 to Holy Roman Emperor Francis I and Maria Theresa of Austria. She was married to Louis in 1770 in an attempt to form an alliance between France and the Austrian Habsburgs. After Louis became king in 1774, she bore him a daughter and two sons. The French people never accepted Marie because she was a foreigner and because she devoted much time and interest to the affairs of Austria. She earned a bad reputation with the French as an extravagant spender and is notorious for her statement, "Let them eat cake." She was tried for and convicted of treason in 1793 and was guillotined on October 16, 1793, nearly nine months after her husband.

Abbé Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès (1748-1836) – As a young man, Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès studied to become a member of the clergy, and he became a priest in 1773. In 1789, he wrote a famous pamphlet called *What is the Third Estate?* He served as a member of the Estates-General, the National Convention, the Council of Five Hundred, and the Directory. He worked with Napoleon and helped him achieve greatness. In 1799, he became a member of the Consulate along with Pierre Roger-Ducos and Napoleon Bonaparte. He drafted a constitution for Napoleon, but Napoleon reworked most of Sieyès' original draft. Sieyès was exiled from France in 1815, but he returned to France in 1830.

Marquis de Lafayette (1757-1834) – Lafayette was born to a noble family of France in 1757. He joined the

French army and served from 1771-1776. After the Americans declared their independence from Britain, he went to the United States Congress to offer his assistance. Congress made him a major general in the Continental Army and a member of George Washington's staff. In 1778, he returned to France and helped convince the French to offer further support to the Americans and their cause. He went back to America once more in 1780 and served in Virginia.

Years later, in 1789, Lafayette became a member of the National Assembly where he supported a constitution modeled after the United States Constitution. He later became commander of the newly formed French National Guard. Lafayette commanded the French army against Austria. After being declared a traitor by the Jacobins, he fled the country, was arrested by the Austrians, and was thrown in prison. He returned to France in 1799 and remained inactive in politics until after the fall of Napoleon. Lafayette played a key role in the French Revolution and always supported equality, tolerance, and other popular rights, such as those granted by the United States Constitution.

Georges Danton (1759-1794) – Georges Danton was born in France in 1759. He studied law and became a wealthy lawyer. He became involved in politics in 1789 with the outbreak of the Revolution. Danton's prominence came in 1792 after he was elected to the National Convention. He became a fierce opponent of the Girondists. Danton went on to serve on the Committee of Public Safety after the fall of the Girondists. However, Danton became overshadowed by Robespierre. Eventually, Robespierre attacked Danton and had Danton sent to the guillotine in 1794.

Maximilien Robespierre (1758-1794) – Maximilien Robespierre was born in France in 1758 and received a good education as a young man. During his studies, he was greatly influenced by the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He became a member of the Estates-General in 1789 and then was a member of the National Constituent Assembly. He was elected president of the Jacobins in 1790. He opposed the monarchy and the Girondists. In 1792, after the fall of the monarchy, he was elected to the National Convention where he argued for the execution of Louis XVI. In 1793, Robespierre succeeded in ridding the National Convention of the Girondists. Shortly thereafter, he joined the Committee of Public Safety and initiated the Reign of Terror. During the Reign of Terror, he ordered the elimination of many "enemies of the Revolution." He persuaded the National Convention to institute the Cult of the Supreme Being, a theology based on Rousseau's deism. Robespierre went on to become the president of the National Convention. However, in 1794, many members of the National

Convention began to fear for their own safety, and they arrested Robespierre. He and 100 of his followers were guillotined in 1794.

Jean Paul Marat (1743-1793) – Jean Paul Marat left his home at the age of 16 and eventually earned a medical degree. He spent several years in Britain and then returned to France where he tried to become a successful writer. Marat wrote on politics and science but found little success. When the Revolution broke out, he began a radical French newspaper called *The Friend of the People* in which he called for violence against moderates. His writings greatly influenced the violence of the Revolution in France. He was elected to the National Convention where he fought against the Girondists. Marat was assassinated in his bathtub in 1793 by Charlotte Corday. His death is the subject of a famous painting by Jacques-Louis David.

Charlotte Corday (1768-1793) – Marie Anne Charlotte Corday d'Armon was born in Normandy in 1768 and spent her younger years in a convent. She supported the Girondists and hated Marat for his role in the Reign of Terror. In 1793, she said she had information for Marat about the Girondists, and she was allowed inside Marat's home. She found Marat in his bathtub and killed him. Marat's friends caught her before she could escape and guillotined her in 1793.

Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825) – Jacques-Louis David was born in Paris in 1748. He studied art under the direction of a rococo painter. However, he was influenced more by the classical art of Rome that he saw on a trip there. Because of this influence, David developed the neoclassical style and introduced it with *Oath of the Horatii* in 1784. After 1789, he painted in a realistic style in which he painted Revolutionary scenes such as the *Tennis Court Oath* and *Death of Marat*. David became Napoleon's official painter and created for the Emperor such works as *Coronation of Emperor and Josephine*.

Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) – Napoleon Bonaparte was born in Corsica in 1769. After his father entered the French aristocracy, Napoleon received a French military education. Napoleon joined the artillery and became a second lieutenant at the age of 16. In 1791, he became a colonel in the Corsican National Guard but then fled to France when Corsica declared its independence. In France, he became a captain and won a great victory over the British at Toulon. Because of that victory, Napoleon was promoted to brigadier general at the age of 24. In 1795, he crushed a revolt in Paris and saved the government. The following year, he became commander of the French forces in Italy and defeated four superior Austrian generals and their armies. In 1798, Napoleon conquered Egypt in order to cut off British trade with the East. In a battle with the British

navy, Napoleon lost his fleet to the fleet of Admiral Nelson. In 1799, Napoleon led a *coup d'etat* in Paris, seized the government, and formed the Consulate. He eventually became Emperor of France where he codified the laws and initiated major reforms.

As Emperor, Napoleon fought against the coalition of Austrian, Russian, and Prussian forces and won major victories at Austerlitz, Jena, Auerstadt, and Friedland. He seized Naples, Westphalia, and Warsaw and created Holland and the Confederation of the Rhine. In 1807, he seized Portugal and made his brother king of Spain. In all of his lands, he abolished feudalism, established a civil code and constitution, and granted religious toleration.

In 1812, however, Napoleon began his downward slide when he led a fateful military campaign into Russia where he lost a majority of his Grand Army. In 1814, he abdicated the throne and left France in exile for the island of Elba. He escaped Elba in 1815 and returned to France where he ruled for the Hundred Days. He was arrested and exiled to St. Helena, where he died in 1821.

Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington (1769-1852) – Arthur Wellesley was born in Dublin and educated in the French military academy as a young man. He entered the British army in 1787 and fought against France in the First Coalition. He went on to participate in battles against the French in Hanover, Denmark, and Spain. As the Duke of Wellington, he participated in the Congress of Vienna and then took command of the allied armies when Napoleon escaped from Elba. In his most famous battle, Wellington defeated Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo. He stayed in France for the following three years as commander of the allied forces occupying France.