

Unit 7

French Revolution

Section 1: Background to the Revolution

Overview of the French Revolution

- French Revolution is an uprising in France against the monarchy from 1789 to 1799 which resulted in the establishment of France as a republic
- King of France during the Revolution= Louis XVI (will be executed by the guillotine)
- Queen of France during the Revolution= Austrian born Marie Antoinette (will be executed by the guillotine)
- In the aftermath of the Revolution, Napoleon Bonaparte came to power and crowns himself emperor of France

Estate System Before the Revolution

- The root causes of the Fr. Rev. lay in the condition of French society
- Before the Revolution France was divided into three estates as it had been since the Middle Ages
- The burden of taxation fell almost entirely on the Third Estate
- Privileged classes were the nobility and the clergy

First Estate

- First Estate= Clergy
 - Although they were a small group (numbering about 130,000), they owned 10% of all the land in France
- Did not pay regular taxes
 - Gave a “gift” of about 2% of their wealth to the crown

Second Estate

- Second Estate= Nobility
 - Also called the hereditary aristocracy- most powerful class in European society
- Numbered about 350,000, but owned 25% of the land
- Were very lightly taxed (exempt from the *taille*)

Third Estate

- Third Estate= Commoners of society
- Third Estate was comprised chiefly of peasants and the urban poor but also of a middle-class bourgeoisie
 - Bourgeoisie = professional people- lawyers, holders of public office, doctors, writers etc. (about 8% of the population)
 - This bourgeoisie will drive much of the French Revolution
- Most of the taxes were paid by the peasants (3rd Estate)

Estate	Privileges/Responsibilities
First Estate (Clergy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pray for the king and the people• No taxation• No military service• Clergy are tried in their own court
Second Estate (Aristocracy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Serve the king• Very few taxes/ no taxes• Held high offices/jobs
Third Estate (Everybody Else)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pay all the taxes (<i>taille, gabelle</i>, tithes)• Serve in the army• Pay rent• NO PRIVILEGES

Section 2: The Revolution Begins

Louis XVI's Ancestors

- King Louis XIV (r. 1643-1715) had epitomized the ideal of an absolute monarch
- However, financial troubles surfaced because of Louis XIV's desire for an empire
- Louis XIV's successor, Louis XV (r. 1715-1774) tried, but failed, to reform the French system for raising revenues
- During his reign, France went into debt

Crisis in France

- 1787-1788
 - bad harvests + beginnings of a manufacturing depression = food shortages, rising prices for food and other goods, unemployment (in cities)
- 1789- Louis XVI is forced to call a meeting of the Estates General (the French parliamentary body) because the French Treasury was near bankruptcy- had not been called into session since 1614

Estates General Is Called

- Opened on May 5, 1789
- Estates-General
 - Third estate got double representation (it was 97% of the population); most of them were lawyers
- How would the Estates General operate?
 - Would voting be by head (one person one vote)
 - Or by estate (only three votes cast)
- The representatives of the Third Estate demanded that the Estates-General be declared a National Assembly in order to achieve voting by member rather than estates

National Assembly

- First estate refused "one person one vote" model and insisted on voting by estate (only three votes would be cast on any measure)
- In response, on June 17, 1789, the third estate proclaimed its intent to form a separate "National Assembly," this is generally viewed as the start of the French Revolution
- When the rebellious delegates arrived to the meeting hall on June 20, 1789 to continue negotiations they found they were locked out of the meeting hall
- Third estate moves to a tennis court and pledged not to disband until they have a new constitution= Tennis Court Oath

Louis Responds

- Louis XVI addresses all three estates on June 23, 1789
 - He promises the delegates:
 - equality in taxation
 - civil liberties
 - regular meetings of the Estates General
- But he also insists that "the ancient distinction of the three orders be conserved in its entirety"
- Louis is then forced to recognize the National Assembly- at least for the time being
- However, the king secretly ordered troops to come to Paris to crush the rebellious delegates

Storming of the Bastille

- Rumors of a confrontation with royal troops began to spread in the streets of Paris
- On July 11, 1789, Louis XVI dismissed Jacques Necker, the popular finance minister
- Parisians stormed the Bastille (a royal armory) on July 14 in search of weapons/ammunition
 - Greatly weakened the French government

Violence Spreads

- Similar clashes to the Bastille attack took place throughout France- was a growing resentment of the entire old landholding system
- Louis XVI is forced to accept the white, blue, and red (tricolor) of the New Regime- allow the National Assembly to exist
- A period known as the Great Fear followed the storming of the Bastille
 - Between July 20- August 6 (1789)
 - Peasant revolts throughout the countryside forced nobles and clergy to renounce their age-old feudal privileges

Section 3: The Revolution Spreads

Old Regime Destroyed

- *Ancien régime*/Old Regime= Political and social system of France prior to the French Revolution. Under the regime, everyone was a subject of the king of France as well as a member of an estate and province
- 1789- Assembly issued *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*- all men "were born and remain free and equal in rights"
 - destroys the "Old Regime"/estate system
- Women did NOT receive citizenship rights
- Louis refused to accept the new decrees concerning the Old Regime

Olympe de Gouges

- Olympe de Gouges wrote the *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen* (1791)
 - Insisted that women should have the same rights as men
- National Assembly ignored her demands; later, she was considered a dangerous agitator for her views, and was executed by the guillotine in Paris (November, 1793)

Louis Brought to Paris

- October 5-6, 1789- food shortages in the markets of Paris caused a spontaneous demonstration of Parisian women who marched to Versailles on foot and violently demanded that Louis XVI secure more food for the people
- Louis, Marie Antoinette, and their son are forced by the mob to return to Paris
- Louis and his family became virtual prisoners in Paris- essentially under house arrest at the Tuileries Palace

Constitutional Monarchy

- By 1791, the National Assembly had finally completed a new constitution that established a limited constitutional monarchy
- There was still a monarch, but the new Legislative Assembly was to make the laws
- The Legislative Assembly:
 - Deputies sat for two years
 - 745 representatives
 - Representatives chosen by indirect election

Struggle within in the New Order

- By 1791 the old order had been destroyed, but there was a struggle with the new order as to what direction the Revolution would take
- Jacobins
 - Politically radical and opposed the new order
 - Wanted to completely do away with all aspects of social distinction
 - Believed that the vote should be universal

Louis Attempts to Escape

- With Paris turning more and more hostile to the monarchy Louis and Marie Antoinette tried to slip out of Paris in June, 1791
- The King was recognized at Varennes, near the border, and returned to the capital
- Destroyed his standing with the public

Louis Forced to Abdicate

- Monarchs of Austria and Prussia fear that revolution would spread to their countries- invited other European monarchs to use force to reestablish monarchical authority in France
- April 20, 1792- France declared war on Austria
- Louis and Marie Antoinette were secretly hoping for a Prussian victory
- Prussian commander, the Duke of Brunswick, threatened to burn Paris if harm came to the royal family
- This threat caused the French people to question the loyalty of Louis
- Louis was forced to give up his throne and was placed under arrest

Section 4: Radical Revolution

Radical Revolution

- In September 1792, the newly elected National Convention began its sessions
 - Dominated by lawyers and other professionals
 - Almost all had no political experience before the French Revolution
- The Decree of Fraternity- National Convention offered French assistance to any subject people who wished to overthrow their monarchs
 - “When France sneezes, all of Europe catches cold!”

Chronological Order of National Convention Rule

- The National Convention:
 - Girondin Rule: 1792-1793
 - Jacobin Rule: 1793-1794 (“Reign of Terror”)
 - Thermidorian Reaction: 1794-1795
- The Directory= 1795-1799

The Sans-Culottes: The Parisian Working Class

- Shared many of the ideals of their middle-class representatives in government
- Composed of:
 - Small shopkeepers, Tradesmen, Artisans

Politics of the National Convention (1792-1795)

Jacobins/Montagnards

- Power base in Paris
- Main support from the *sans-culottes*
- More centralized [in Paris] approach to government

Girondists

- Power base in the provinces
- Feared the influence of the *sans-culottes*
- Supported more national government centralization [federalism]

Execution of Louis XVI

- Louis XVI was arrested in August 1792 and charged with treason in December 1792
- Question of what to do with Louis
 - Girondins – want national vote on his fate – some suggest exile
 - Jacobins/Montagnards want immediate execution
- January 14, 1793 – National Convention narrowly votes (387 to 334) to execute Louis
- January 21, 1793 – guillotine blade fails to cut Louis' head off the first time, has to be reset and dropped again!

Aftermath of Louis' Execution

- Jacobins/Montagnards (radical/violent) gain power in the Convention
 - Manage to brand their Girondin opponents as royalists and counter-revolutionaries (even though inaccurate and unfair)
 - Girondins are alienated from the people of Paris
- October, 1793- Marie Antoinette was convicted of treason and beheaded

Section 5: Reign of Terror

Domestic + Foreign Crisis for France

- DOMESTIC CRISIS
- By 1793 the National Convention still did not rule all of France
 - Peasants in the west and inhabitants of France's major provincial cities refused to accept the authority of the convention
- FOREIGN CRISIS
- By the beginning of 1793 Austria, Prussia, Spain, Portugal, Britain, the Dutch Republic, and Russia aligned militarily against France
 - By late spring France was threatened with invasion
- If invasion was successful both the Revolution and the revolutionaries would be destroyed

French Military Responds

- In less than a year the French revolutionary government had raised an army that was the largest ever seen in European history
- Army was a true army of the people; marked the beginning of the modern concept of total war
 - Creation of the "people's" gov't

Domestic Response

- To meet the crisis facing the French nation the National Convention gave broad powers to a committee of twelve men known as the Committee of Public Safety (CPS)
 - Established to combat the dual threat of internal rebellion and foreign invasion
- For a twelve month period from 1793-1794 the Committee of Public Safety took control of France
- New laws of the CPS
 - Law of General Maximum= froze prices
 - Law of Suspects= so widely drawn that almost anyone not expressing enthusiastic support for the republic could be placed under arrest

Reign of Terror

- The rule of the CPS leads to a period of the Revolution called “The Reign of Terror”
- Reign of Terror= a period of the Fr. Rev., from about March, 1793, to July, 1794, during which thousands of people were executed by the ruling faction
- Maximilien Robespierre emerged as the Committee's leading personality
 - The Law of Suspects led to the imprisonment of 300,000 ordinary citizens for their opinions or social status
 - Refractory priests (who resisted state control of the Church) were banned from France upon pain of death
 - The Revolutionary Tribunal of Paris alone executed over 2,000 victims in 15 months
 - The total number of victims nationwide was between 16,000 – 50,000

Guillotine

- The most recognizable symbol of the Reign of Terror is the guillotine
- The guillotine was developed to carry out humane executions by decapitation
- Before the French Revolution how a criminal was executed depended on his/her social status (estate) and crime
 - hanging= lower classes; slow strangulation (neck breaking technique not yet developed)
 - burning at the stake= religious heretics
 - drawn and quartered= used for criminals convicted of assaulting the King or a member of the clergy
 - beheading= reserved only for nobility; sometimes took multiple swings to sever the head

Guillotine (Cont.)

- Dr. Joseph Ignace Guillotin (member of the Constituent Assembly as a deputy of the Third Estate) proposed that all death sentences be carried out in the same way for every person
 - “The method of punishment shall be the same for all persons...The criminal shall be decapitated. Decapitation is to be effected by a simple mechanism. “
- Dr. Antoine Louis was enlisted to design the “simple mechanism”
 - Blade was originally crescent shaped, legend has it that it was Louis XVI who suggested an angled blade to make the device work more effectively
- Guillotines were painted red to hide the blood; placed on a tall scaffold in order for a crowd to have a better view

CPS Rule

- In addition to mass numbers of executions with the guillotine the CPS crushed resistance in the provinces of France
- CPS decided to make an example of the city of Lyons which refused to acknowledge CPS authority
 - By April 1794 some 1,880 citizens of Lyons had been executed
 - The guillotine was too slow, so condemned men were blown into open graves with cannon fire

Dechristianization Attempts

- National convention also attempted to remove Catholicism from French society
 - New calendar= replaced Gregorian Calendar
 - not numbered from the birth of Christ but from the first day of the French Republic
 - no Sundays or church holidays

The Terror Intensified: March to July, 1794

- Law of 22 Prairial (June 10, 1794)
 - Trials were now limited to deciding only on liberty OR death, with defendants having no rights
 - Law was so broadly written that almost anyone could fall within its definition of a traitor
 - 1,500 executed between June and July

End of the Reign of Terror (1794)

- July 26
 - Robespierre gives speech claiming to have the names of new enemies
- July 27
 - the Convention arrests Robespierre
- July 28
 - Robespierre is tried & guillotined
- The removal of Robespierre and the resurgence of the moderates is known as the “Thermidorian Reaction”
- Immediate Results of the Fall of Robespierre= Stagnation/corruption followed, Reign of Terror ended, New Constitution

The Directory Years (1794-99)

- After the Reign of Terror five directors- the Directory- acted as the executive authority
 - A new constitution was created
 - However, moderates found it difficult to mediate between die-hard royalists and radical Jacobins
 - Out of the instability and uncertainty of the Directory years (1794-99), rose Napoleon Bonaparte

Section 6: Age of Napoleon

The Age of Napoleon

- Napoleon Bonaparte dominated both French and European history from 1799 to 1815
- Born: 1769, Corsica
 - The year before Napoleon’s birth, France acquired Corsica from the city-state of Genoa, Italy
 - Parents were members of the minor Corsican nobility, but the family was not wealthy
- Napoleon attended school in mainland France went on to graduate from a French military academy in 1785
- In 1795, Napoleon helped suppress a royalist insurrection against the revolutionary gov’t in Paris and was promoted to major general

Military Necessity

- March 1795 – France at war with Great Britain and Austria
 - the Directory (French gov’t after the Reign of Terror) was dependent on the military for stability at home and success abroad
- One of the most successful generals of the revolutionary war was Napoleon Bonaparte

Napoleon’s Rise

- 1797- Given command of an army in training to invade England
- Napoleon proposed to strike indirectly at Britain by taking Egypt (was unsuccessful)
 - Napoleon then planned to move on to India, a major source of British wealth
 - British navy cut off French supplies
- Napoleon abandoned his army in Egypt and returned to France

Napoleon Takes Power

- 1799- *coup d'état* in France; Napoleon participated in the coup and gained control of the executive authority of the French gov't
- Napoleon is made first consul= directly controlled the entire executive of the French gov't

Consulate

- After the coup, a new form of the Republic was proclaimed= Consulate
 - bicameral legislative assembly
 - executive power in the hands of three consuls
 - BUT "The decision of the First Consul shall suffice"

Consulate (Cont)

- As first consul Napoleon:
 - appointed members of the gov't bureaucracy
 - controlled the army
 - conducted foreign affairs
- 1802- made first consul for life

Napoleon as Emperor

- 1804- France returned to monarchy when Napoleon crowned himself Emperor Napoleon I
 - "I AM THE REVOLUTION!"
- Napoleon's gov't was far more domineering than the monarchy of the old regime
- As his reign progressed and the demands of war increased, Napoleon's regime became ever more dictatorial

Peace with Church

- 1801- Napoleon makes peace with the Catholic Church
 - But, Napoleon regarded religion only as a convenience (In Egypt he called himself a Muslim; in France a Catholic)
 - Concordant- Church would not question the lands confiscated during the Fr. Rev.

Codification of the Laws

- Napoleon's most important accomplishment= codification of the laws
- Napoleon finished the work begun during the Rev. by creating seven codes of law
 - Most important= Civil Code (or Code Napoleon)

Civil Code

- Recognized:
 - the right of each individual to choose his profession
 - religious toleration
 - abolition of serfdom and feudalism
- Other Napoleonic Reforms
 - Civil service system based not on rank, wealth, or birth but upon ability
 - No tax exemptions due to birth or status

Inequality in the Civil Code (cont.)

- Made women "less equal than men" in many ways
 - Divorce more difficult for women
 - Control of fathers over families restored
 - When a woman married, her property came under the control of her husband
 - Women treated as minors

Domestic Scorecard

- In domestic policies Napoleon both destroyed and preserved aspects of the Revolution
 - The most ironic aspect of Napoleon's rule in France was that it was more autocratic than Louis XVI's
 - Civil Code preserved the equality of citizens

Peace and War

- When Napoleon was made consul in 1799 France was at war with the European coalition of Russia, Great Britain, and Austria
 - Napoleon made peace with these nations in 1802- however it was not a lasting peace
- 1803- War is renewed

Grand Empire

- In a series of battles from 1805 to 1807, Napoleon's Grand Army defeated members of the coalition
- Countries defeated by Napoleon were forced to join the struggle against Great Britain; they included Prussia, Austria, and Russia
- Within his empire Napoleon demanded obedience
 - However, he also sought to destroy the Old Order within his empire- nobility and clergy lost special privileges
 - Therefore, the spread of French revolutionaries ideas by Napoleon helped to bring liberal traditions to these countries

Survival of Great Britain

- Napoleon never could defeat the powerful British navy
- Resorted to the Continental System
 - 1806-1807
 - Napoleon attempted to prevent goods from reaching Gr. Brit with the hope that it would stop the British ability to wage war
 - The system failed because allied countries never fully participated

Section 7: The Fall of Napoleon

Beginning of the End

- Beginning of Napoleon's downfall comes with his invasion of Russia
 - Russia defied the Continental System
 - Fear other countries would as well
- June 1812- a Grand Army of approximately 500,000 men entered Russia

Disaster in Russia

- Napoleon's victory in Russia depended upon quick and decisive victories because the Russian winter would destroy the army
 - Russian army retreated over hundreds of miles- Napoleon forced far into the country
 - Russians destroyed/burned resources as they retreated= scorched earth policy

Great Retreat

- Battle of Borodino- Russians did stop to fight
 - Napoleon wins the battle but it is a very costly victory
- By the time Napoleon's forces reached Moscow, the city had been burned and all resources destroyed
- "Great Retreat"- With no food/supplies in Moscow, Napoleon was forced to retreat in October (bitter winter)
- January 1813- only 27,000-40,000 of Napoleon's troops made it back to Poland

Domino Effect

- The disaster in Russia led to wars of liberation all over Europe, culminating in Nap.'s defeat in April 1814
- Napoleon was exiled to the island of Elba (off the coast of Tuscany)
- The Bourbon dynasty was restored to France with King Louis XVIII (brother of Louis XVI)

Napoleon Returns

- Louis XVIII had little support in France and when Napoleon slipped back into France the troops sent to capture him joined Napoleon
- Napoleon triumphantly re-entered Paris on March 20, 1815

Napoleon Attacks

- The nations who had defeated Napoleon pledged once again to defeat him
- Napoleon decided to strike first at his enemies
 - He raised another army and moved to attack the nearest allied forces stationed in Belgium

Final Defeat at Waterloo

- At Waterloo on June 18, 1815 Napoleon met a combined British and Prussian army
- Against the Duke of Wellington Napoleon suffered a bloody defeat that was his last battle
- This time the victorious Allies exiled him to St. Helena, a small, barren island in the south Atlantic- Napoleon never again regained power

Congress of Vienna

- After Napoleon's initial defeat, European monarchs sought to turn back the clock to 1789 and restore Europe's Old Regime
- A meeting was called in Vienna, Austria
- Members included the "Big Four" and France
 - Austria – Prince Metternich
 - England – Duke of Wellington and Lord Castlereagh
 - France – Talleyrand
 - Prussia – Frederick William III, Hardenberg, and Humboldt
 - Russia – Tsar Alexander I

Congress of Vienna (Cont.)

- The most influential leader at Vienna was the foreign minister of Austria – Prince Klemens von Metternich
 - He opposed democracy and nationalism
 - Metternich had three goals at the Congress:
 1. Containment of France- Prevent French aggression by surrounding the country with strong countries
 2. Balance of power- did not severely punish France b/c that could lead to French vengeance and another country becoming too powerful in France's absence
 3. Compensation & legitimacy- Compensate countries who had land taken or had fought against Napoleon, return the monarchs to power in the countries in which Napoleon drove them out

Congress of Vienna Legacy

- People had no say over territorial changes
- Language, nationality, and religion were not taken into consideration when drawing borders
- Ideas of democracy and self-government were rejected by European leadership
- But those ideals lived on in underground movements and erupted in revolt over the course of the next 50 years