

## **The French Revolution**

### The French Revolution

France had a tradition of strong monarchs

Louis XIV – “The Sun King”

Louis XV

1743 - Louis XV decides to rule himself upon Fleury's death

extremely weak and lazy

influenced by ministers and mistresses

Loses empire and territory during Seven Years War

Louis XVI

inherits the throne from his father

poor ruler who lacks intelligence and desire to reform France

married to Marie Antoinette of Austria

both of them extremely spoiled and out of touch

“let them eat cake”

### American Revolution

has a tremendous impact upon France

based on Enlightenment ideals

England had already developed constitutional monarchy

Magna Carta, Parliament, English Bill of Rights

Declaration of Independence resonates with Frenchmen

France sides with Americans to defeat rival British

thousands of Frenchmen go to colonies to fight the British

1789 - United States adopts the Constitution

very influential on French thinkers

### Estates General

France's society was reflected by divide of legislature

First Estate

clergy

less than 1% of population, own 10% of land

exempt from many taxes

Second Estate

nobility

approximately 2% of population, own 30% of land

held most Gov., military, and judicial appointments

held legal privileges and were exempt from taxes

Third Estate

peasants, merchants, professionals, and urban dwellers

97% of the population, own 60% of land

only the poorest land was left

intellectuals and merchants upset at political slavery

most reside in Paris, center of revolution

France had several other problems that led to revolution

food shortages led to rising prices and unemployment in cities

bourgeois wanted more political freedom and reform

France was on the verge of financial collapse  
constant warfare and failure to est. national bank  
Summer, 1789 - Louis XVI calls the Estates General into session  
wanted them to pass new taxes against the peasants  
had not met since 1614  
was counting on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Estates to out vote the 3<sup>rd</sup> Estate  
The 3<sup>rd</sup> Estate wanted to discuss the issues facing France  
large percentage of members were lawyers  
National Assembly  
June 17, 1789 - 3<sup>rd</sup> Estate votes to form the National Assembly  
will meet to devise a new constitution for France  
June 20 - locked out of meeting hall by the King's guards  
Tennis Court Oath  
representatives vow to continue until finished  
Louis XVI sides with the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> estate  
wants to disband the national assembly  
afraid of using the army in case they revolt  
begins exploring hiring Swiss mercenaries  
July 14, 1789 - Storming of the Bastille (Bastille Day)  
rumors in Paris that Louis will disband the National Assembly  
Parisian mob wants to arm themselves to protect NA  
surround the Bastille, royal armory in Paris  
guards fire on the crowd  
army units mutiny, attack and seize the Bastille  
August 26, 1789 - Declaration of Rights of Man published  
statement of goals for the coming constitution  
first document for equal representation in European government  
no equal rights for women  
Louis XVI laid low at Versailles hoping problems would blow over  
forced to return to Paris by the mob  
National Assembly seizes most of the church's property to finance Gov.  
angers Catholics throughout Europe  
The Great Fear  
rumors swept through France of all sorts of horrors  
nobles and peasants clash in many panics  
many nobles flee France for relative's estates in other countries  
1791 - National Assembly finishes the new French constitution  
constitutional monarchy with Louis XVI at the head  
Legislative Assembly will have significantly more power  
Political Spectrum  
conservatives - supported monarchy  
didn't want to go too far in reform  
liberals - wanted middle ground of constitutional monarchy  
radicals - wanted to overthrow the monarchy  
wished to established a more direct democracy  
The Jacobins

Louis and Marie Antoinette attempt to flee the country for Austria  
Hoped that they could raise a foreign army to retake power  
captured near the French border  
confidence in the new government is destroyed  
the radicals will eventually come to power

#### The First Coalition

1792 - Emperor Leopold II of Austria wants nations to attack France  
afraid of example being set by revolutionaries  
France declares war on Austria  
hopes war will lead to solidarity  
accusations of treachery made against king and generals  
Paris Commune takes power in government (National Convention)  
radicals also known as sans-culottes  
“patriots without fine clothes”  
Jan 21, 1793 - Louis XVI is executed  
Austria, Prussia, Britain, Spain, Portugal attack France  
countries see opportunity to gain power/revenge  
France will raise the first European “citizen army”  
650, 000 respond to the call to defend France  
Levee En Masse  
advantages: well motivated, promote through talent  
disadvantages: poor organization/leadership to start  
army will be successful defending French soil, not on offense  
nationalism

#### Reign of Terror

During 1<sup>st</sup> Coalition crisis, Committee of Public Safety takes power  
Maximilien Robespierre chairman  
radical who thought he knew “truth” of revolution  
will become first modern dictator  
courts were formed to find and execute “enemies of the state”  
very loose standards of evidence were used  
up to 50,000 people were executed  
guillotine  
victims included Marie Antoinette  
Revolutionary armies enforced compliance of all France  
Robespierre sought to establish a “Republic of Virtue”  
seized economic control of France  
reformed the administration of the county  
sought to eliminate all Christianity from France  
wanted to replace with reason  
extremely moralistic, bans crime and vice  
military success led to questions as to need for Terror  
executes leading members of Paris Commune  
July 28, 1794 - radicals have Robespierre executed  
brings end to radical phase of the revolution

#### The Directory

five moderates were selected by National Convention to rule  
period of stagnation, no leadership from committee

Directory was very corrupt, materialistic

People of France want true leadership

sets the stage for Napoleon Bonaparte

Napoleon Bonaparte

Born in 1769 in Corsica

joins military at age 16

rises through ranks during first coalition wars

1795 - saves National Convention from Paris mob

1796-97 - given command in Italy

uses artillery, terrain, spies, psychology to defeat enemies

earns nickname "little corporal"

Austria and Prussia bow out

1797 - returns to Paris as hero

given command of army in Egypt

leaves when supplies are cut off by British navy

liberator or conqueror?

Napoleon seizes power

Directory was corrupt

1799 - Napoleon's troops occupy the legislature

Votes to end directory

Why bother?

Napoleon is named one of three consuls

Second Coalition - 1800

Britain organizes with Austria and Russia

Napoleon victorious again in Italy

Treaty of Amiens - 1802

1800 - Napoleon named First Consul

approved by the voters

1802- voted consul for life

Dec 2, 1804 - pope crowns him emperor

Napoleon established many reforms

balanced the budget

established national bank

encouraged nobility to return

made merit the measure of success

Catholic church allowed to return

Napoleonic Code

Equal rights for all

began to build a large French navy

Empire is extended

Third Coalition

Britain, Austria, Russia, and Prussia

Battle of Austerlitz

Napoleon defeats Russians and Austrians

- Austria sues for peace
- Battle of Friedland
  - French defeat Russians
  - czar Alexander I in command of Russian troops
  - Treaty of Tilsit
- Battle of Trafalgar
  - British navy under Horatio Nelson defeats French
  - No invasion of Britain possible
- Britain vs. France
  - Continental System
    - Napoleon orders all countries to boycott British goods
    - not in the best interest of Europeans
    - Britain survives through smuggling, colonies
    - trade actually triples thanks to world-wide trade
    - War of 1812
  - Spain revolts
    - Napoleon attempts to put his brother on Spanish throne
    - Spanish rebel with guerrilla warfare
    - Britain lands army to assist
    - Duke of Wellington
    - nationalism has been exported Spain
- Napoleon invades Russia - 1812
  - Alexander I breaks CS to buy British grain for starving Russians
  - The Grand Army
    - 600,000 man French army
    - many non-French
    - Napoleon seizes horses and supplies throughout Europe
  - Alexander I employs scorched-earth policy in defense of Russia
  - trades land for time by drawing Napoleon into Russia
  - burns all supplies army can't carry with them
  - burns Moscow to the ground
  - severe Russian winter devastates French army
  - Russians counterattack
  - Napoleon is forced to retreat
  - only 10,000 make it back to France
- Fall of Napoleon
  - Grand Alliance
    - Britain, Russia, Austria, Prussia, and Sweden
  - Battle of Leipzig
  - April 1814, Napoleon surrenders
  - Exiled to Elba
  - Louis XVIII is made new king
  - Napoleon returns in March of 1815
    - Hundred Days
  - Duke of Wellington defeats him at Waterloo
  - June 18, 1815

Napoleon exiled to St. Helena  
Dies in 1821