

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Causes

1. Weather/Bad Harvest

- Skyrocketing Food Prices
- Inability to pay rents and taxes

2. High Unemployment

3. Unrest in the Cities

- Flood of Unemployed
- Middle Class (Bourgeoisie) closing business due to loss of customers and insufficient supplies
- Upper Class confronted with homelessness, hunger, and high crime
- Increasing class conflict

4. Louis XVI & Marie Antoinette

- Lavish Lifestyle
- Large national debt / nearing bankruptcy

5. American Revolution

- Caused French debt crisis
- Proved that democracy could work and that revolution against absolute rule can succeed

6. Enlightenment

- Locke: Man has a right to overthrow his govt. if it fails to preserve his basic, inalienable rights
- Rousseau: Break the chains of society to create a society that will allow all to return to total equality
- Montesquieu: Provide balance in govt. to prevent any one person from control

7. Political System

- Estates General not called in 150 years (No legislature)
- Only one vote per estate means that the Bourgeoisie has no voice anyway

Old Regime and the Three Estates

First Estate

- Catholic Church held 10% of land
- Paid no direct taxes to the royal government
- They gave a “free gift” of 2% of their income to the King

Second Estate

- Nobles
- Less than 2% of the population
- Owned 20% of the land
- They also refused to pay taxes
- They held the highest offices in the army, government, and the courts of law

Third Estate

- 98% of the population was in the 3rd estate
- City dwelling middle class (bourgeoisie)
- Urban lower classes
- Peasant farmers

Bourgeoisie

- Many were well educated and believed in the ideas presented during the Enlightenment
- Yearned for social status and political power equal to their wealth
- Culottes

Urban Lower Class

- Sans-Culottes: “Without Britches”
- Ordinary patriots who did not wear finer clothes like culottes
- Often went hungry
- Mostly survived on bread and were dependent upon bread prices for their meals
- 1788 grain harvests were small and bread prices doubled

Peasants

- Made up 4/5 of France's population
- Lost half of their income to taxes (the burden of paying taxes fell heavily on the poor)
- Lost homes and land to taxes/rent
- Could not afford to feed families

Louis XVI

- Good hearted and generous, but...
- Weak and indecisive and allowed matters to drift

Marie Antoinette

- Pretty, lighthearted, and charming
- Austrian princess
- Unpopular due to her heritage and spending habits

Louis XVI

- Government was deeply in debt due to American Revolution
- Louis decided to tax the nobles to make up for the debt
- Nobles refused unless a meeting of the Estates General was called which had not met since 1614

May 1, 1789

- Estates General Meets
- Each estate meets in its own hall and decides how to cast its one vote

THE TENNIS COURT OATH: The 3rd estate demanded all three estates meet together so that the 3rd Estate would have a real voice in the French government

- Louis XVI rejected their request

Abbe Sieyes

- Clergymen who supported the 3rd estate
- “What is the third estate? Everything. What has it been up to now in the political order? Nothing. What does it demand? To become something herein.”
- He suggested they change their name to the National Assembly
- He called on the Assembly to pass laws and reforms in the name of the French people

Louis XVI “THE WET NOODLE”

- Allows the 3rd estate to meet with the 1st and 2nd estate
- Louis orders mercenary army of Swiss troops toward Paris because he can no longer trust French soldiers
- Bourgeois deputies feared the soldiers would break up the National Assembly

THE GREAT FEAR

- Rumors about Nobles hiring soldiers to terrorize peasants spread through the countryside
- Peasants burned many old manor houses of Nobles
- Oct. 1789 women stormed Versailles killing a number of Louis’ guards and requested a meeting with the King and Queen
- Louis and Marie went to Paris and never returned to Versailles again

1789-1791 National Assembly

- Nobles join the National Assembly and pledge their allegiance to liberty and equality....why?
- National Assembly voted to end Feudalism, serfdom, church tithes, and special privileges of nobles and clergy
- THE OLD REGIME WAS DEAD

“THE RIGHTS OF MAN”

- “A Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen”
- Men are born and remain free and equal in rights
- The right to liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression
- Equal justice, free speech, and freedom of religion

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

- Created a limited constitutional monarchy somewhat like England
- No absolute powers for the King, but he could enforce the laws
- Government took over the church and lands
- Priests were to be elected and paid as state officials
- This drove a wedge between the peasants and the bourgeoisie

National Assembly steps down

- Having fulfilled its role to create a new constitutional government the National assembly dissolved
- The Legislative Assembly now took charge of the French government

THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY 1791-1792

- First Limited Constitutional Monarchy
- 745 Delegates
- Too big, too many opinions, deeply divided
- Political parties form at varying levels of the political spectrum
- (Legislative Assembly Graph)

Radicals take control

- Radicals try to push the revolution to other nations in Europe
- France began wars with Austria and Prussia to spread revolutionary ideas
- Soldiers are extended on 3 fronts and peasants are once again angered

Louis tries to flee France pg. 26

- Louis tries to escape to Austria
- A postmaster recognizes Louis from his picture on paper money
- Louis discredited himself and the plan for a constitutional monarchy
- Increased the actions of radical enemies and sealed his own doom

Louis Charged With Treason and Sentenced to Death

- Looked bad because France is at war with Austria
- There can no longer be a constitutional monarchy with Louis in jail
- Radicals forces demanded that the legislative assembly and the monarchy dissolve
- More Nobles flee Europe Emigres

National Convention is formed

- Constitution of 1792 creates a Republic and the Monarchy is abolished
- Louis and Marie are executed by guillotine pg. 30
- 9 year old son is sent to an adult male prison
- Died at age 11 of disease

National Convention 1792-1794

- Dominated by Radicals
- Sans Culottes
- Jacobins
- Paris Commune

Robespierre / Reign of Terror

- Leader of the Jacobins who gained power in France "The Incorruptibles"
- Georges Danton & Jean Paul Marat pg. 33,34
- Robespierre set out to build a Republic of Virtue and crush any opposition to the Revolution during the Reign of Terror
- All traces of the Monarchy were eliminated
- People name Louis, playing cards had no Kings, Queens, or jacks. Instead Liberties, Equalities, & Fraternities

Robespierre

- Closed all churches
- Committee of public safety formed in 1793 and appointed Robespierre as the brutal head of the committee
- The Committee of Public Safety was given broad powers to defend France from all threats to the revolution
- LAW OF SUSPECTS PASSED: Enables committee to execute anyone suspected of being an enemy of the Revolution
- Had many fellow revolutionaries killed because they challenged his power
- People were guillotined for frivolous actions (Tree, Tavern)

Robespierre

- Roman calendar is abolished, including renaming the days of the week, months, and year (Year I of the revolution)
- 40,000 people killed
- Non-Jacobins representatives of the National Convention are executed
- Danton is executed by Robespierre and said "My only regret is that I am being sent to the blade before that rat Robespierre!"
- "The streets of Paris ran red with blood"
- 1793-1794

Robespierre falls from power

- Conspirators plotted to overthrow Robespierre in 1794
- Robespierre was sent to the guillotine and with his passing the radical phase of the French Revolution ended as well as the Reign of Terror
- The overthrow of Robespierre from power is known as the Thermidorian Reaction

Directory is formed

- Public opinion shifted to the right
- People were tired of the terror and high bread prices
- Moderate leaders of the National Convention drafted a new constitution 1795

Directory

- Five directors were placed in charge of the government along with a two house legislature
- Despite their corruption they brought stability to France
- Appointed Napoleon as the general of France's Army