

# Chapter 23

## The French Revolution and Napoleon (1789-1815)

# Voices from the Past

A correspondent with the London *Times* sent this report to his newspaper editor on July 20, 1789:

“The number of armed men in Paris is supposed to amount to 300,000 men, and they called themselves the Militia. The way by which so many people have procured arms is, that all the public storehouses where weapons were lodged, have been broken open, as well as several private houses plundered, which they thought contained them. The Archbishop of Paris is among the number of those who have been sacrificed to the people’s rage. He was assassinated at Versailles on Tuesday night. The city of Paris is entirely surrounded with a guard, and not a soul suffered to go out who has an appearance of wealth.”

—*History in the First Person*, Louis L. Snyder and Richard B. Morris, eds., 1951

The correspondent may not have realized the full significance of the events he reported, but the French Revolution had begun.

- French
- Old Order Estates
  - 1<sup>st</sup>...Clergy, 1%
  - 2<sup>nd</sup>...Nobility, 2%
  - 3<sup>rd</sup>...Bourgeoisie, Workers 97%
- Calls for Change
  - Third Estate
    - pays nearly all the taxes
    - No power due to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> estates always out voting them
  - Enlightened Ideas
    - Equality
    - Liberty
    - Democracy
  - Economic issues
    - Nobility spending out of control
    - Royal debt and spending
    - Versailles Palace



- French Revolution
  - Estates-General
    - called for taxes June 1789
    - Dissolves
  - National Assembly
    - All members of all estates together
    - 3<sup>rd</sup> estate locked out, met at the Tennis Court
    - King sends troops
  - Fear in Paris, July-October 1789
    - Storming the Bastille
    - Great Fear Spreads all over France
      - Foreign troops
    - King forced to leave Versailles and come to Paris

***The Third Estate is the People and the People is the foundation of the State; it is in fact the State itself; the...People is everything. Everything should be subordinated to it...It is in the People that all national power resides and for the People that all states exist.  
---Comte D'Antraigues***

# Voices from the Past

Henry de Firmont reported on the major event of January 21, 1793:

“The path leading to the scaffold was extremely rough and difficult to pass; the King was obliged to lean on my arm, and from the slowness with which he proceeded, I feared for a moment that his courage might fail; but what was my astonishment, when arrived at the last step, he suddenly let go of my arm, and I saw him cross with a firm foot the breadth of the whole scaffold; and in a loud voice, I heard him pronounce distinctly these words: ‘I die innocent of all the crimes laid to my charge; I pardon those who had occasioned my death; and I pray to God that the blood you are going to shed may never be visited on France.’”

—*Eyewitness to History*, John Carey, ed., 1987

The execution of King Louis XVI in 1793 pushed the French Revolution into a new radical stage.

# • Revolutionary Reform

- National Assembly declares
  - Liberty, Equality, Fraternity
  - Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen
  - Church lands confiscated
- Louis XVI attempts to flee
  - Limited Monarchy
  - Legislative Assembly 1789 (1<sup>st</sup> gov)
  - Factions
    - Radicals-complete republic
    - Moderates-some change
    - Conservatives-monarchy
    - Emigres-Old regime
    - Sans-culottes-radical protesters

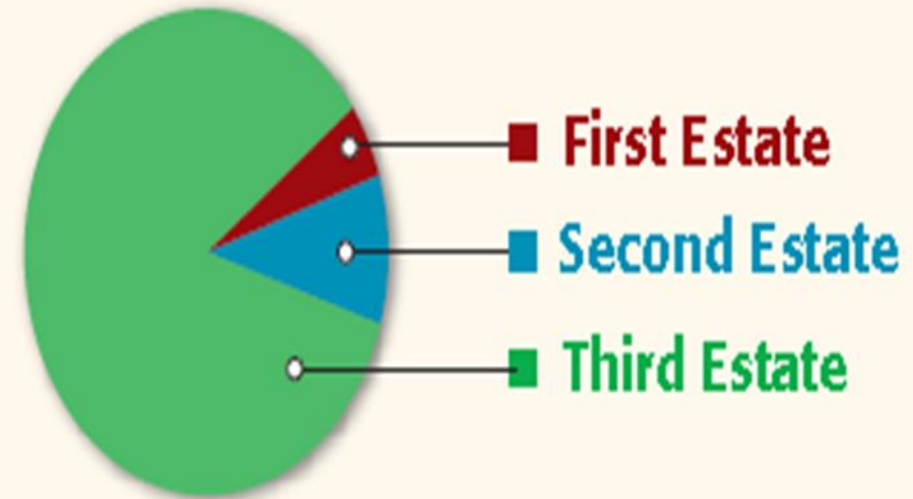


- Revolutionary Fervor
- War with Austria & Prussia, 1791
- Fear of traitors
  - Royal Family imprisoned
  - Legislative Assembly dissolved
  - National Convention proclaims republic 1792 (2<sup>nd</sup> Gov.)
  - Jacobins Radicals
  - Royal family executed
- More War with Great Britain, Holland, Spain, 1793
  - Drafting men to defend France

*The first maxim of our politics ought to be to lead the people by means of reason and the enemies of the people by terror. If the basis of popular government in time of peace is virtue, the basis of popular government in time of revolution is both virtue and terror:*

- Revolutionary Terror
- Republic of Virtue
  - Robespierre (Jacobin)
  - separation of Church and state
  - Search for enemies of the Revolution
  - Reign of Terror
  - Guillotine
  - Inflation
  - National Convention dissolves
  - New Government 1795 (3<sup>rd</sup> Gov.)
    - The Directory
    - Two house legislature

More than 2,100 people were executed during the last 132 days of the Reign of Terror. The pie graph below displays the breakdown of beheadings by class.





# Voices from the Past

Napoleon once wrote:

“But let that impatiently awaited savior give a sudden sign of his existence, and the people’s instinct will divine him and call upon him. The obstacles are smoothed before his steps, and a whole great nation, flying to see him pass, will seem to be saying: ‘Here is the man.’ . . . A consecutive series of great actions never is the result of chance and luck; it always is the product of planning and genius. Great men are rarely known to fail in their most perilous enterprises. . . . Is it because they are lucky that they become great? No, but being great, they have been able to master luck.”

—*The Mind of Napoleon*, J. Christopher Herold, 1955

Napoleon possessed an overwhelming sense of his own importance. He was convinced that he was the man of destiny who would save the French people.

- Napoleon Bonaparte
  - Hero for National Convention 1795
  - Success in Italy 1796
  - Success/failure in Egypt 1799
  - Returns to France, Coup
  - Successfully ends wars with
    - Britain
    - Austria
    - Russia
  - Ends Terror in France
  - Peace with Catholic Pope
  - Napoleonic Code
    - Justice
    - Less liberty for stability



- Napoleon  
become Emperor  
1804-1807

- Haiti
- Louisiana
- Success against
  - Austria
  - Prussia
  - Russia
  - Spain
  - Only Britain  
resists at sea
    - Trafalgar

***Soldiers! I am pleased with you. On the day of Austerlitz, you justified everything that I was expecting of [you]. . . . In less than four hours, an army of 100,000 men, commanded by the emperors of Russia and Austria, was cut up and dispersed. . . . 120 pieces of artillery, 20 generals, and more than 30,000 men taken prisoner—such are the results of this day which will forever be famous. . . . And it will be enough for you to say, “I was at Austerlitz,” to hear the reply: “There is a brave man!”***

**---NAPOLEON**

- Napoleon's Mistakes
  - Continental system
    - Blockading Britain
  - Peninsular War (Spain)
  - Invasion of Russia
  - Chaos in France
  - His allies abandon him
  - Return of Old Enemies
- Napoleon Banished to Elba 1814

***Napoleon worried about what would happen to his vast empire after his death. He feared it would fall apart unless he had an heir whose right to succeed him was undisputed. His wife, Josephine, had failed to bear him a child. He, therefore, divorced her and formed an alliance with the Austrian royal family by marrying Marie Louise, the grandniece of Marie Antoinette. In 1811, Marie Louise gave birth to a son, Napoleon II, whom Napoleon named king of Rome.***

- Return of Bourbon King Louis XVIII
  - Tries to undo the Revolution
- Napoleon escapes and returns in 1815
  - 100 days
  - Rebuilds army
  - Fights at Waterloo but loses to combined armies
  - Exiled to St. Helena in South Atlantic

*The Hundred Days Louis XVI's brother assumed the throne as Louis XVIII. (The executed king's son, Louis XVII, had died in prison in 1795.) However, the new king quickly became unpopular among his subjects, especially the peasants. They suspected him of wanting to undo the Revolution's land reforms.*

*The news of Louis's troubles was all the incentive Napoleon needed to try to regain power. He escaped from Elba and, on March 1, 1815, landed in France. Joyous crowds welcomed him on the march to Paris. And thousands of volunteers swelled the ranks of his army. Within days, Napoleon was again emperor of France*

- Congress of Vienna
- Metternich's Europe
  - Isolate France
  - Balance of power
  - Restore monarchies
  - Stabilize Europe

### ***Congress of Vienna and the United Nations***

***The Congress of Vienna and the Concert of Europe tried to keep the world safe from war. The modern equivalent of these agreements is the United Nations (UN), an international organization established in 1945 and continuing today, whose purpose is to promote world peace. Like the Congress of Vienna, the United Nations was formed by major powers after a war—World War II. These powers agreed to cooperate to reduce tensions and bring greater harmony to international relations. Throughout its history, the United Nations has used diplomacy as its chief method of keeping the peace.***

- Results of Metternich's Conservative Europe
  - Constitutional monarchies
    - France & Britain
  - Absolute Monarchies
    - Russia, Prussia, Austria
  - Royal families intermarried for peace
  - Concert of Europe
  - Cooperative action to Put down revolutions
- Results of Liberal Latin America
  - Spanish Colonies become republics

***“The first and greatest concern for the immense majority of every nation is the stability of laws; not their change.” K. Metternich***