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## The French Revolution, 1789-99

**D**URING the long reign of Louis XV (1715-74) French prestige declined steadily from the lofty heights it had reached under Louis XIV. Louis XV was a vain, lazy, selfish, and cynical man who lavished more time and money on his mistresses, Madame de Pompadour and Madame du Barry, than on affairs of state. His participation in the War of Austrian Succession and the Seven Years' War resulted only in disgraceful defeats and the loss of France's empire in India and North America to Great Britain. His successor inherited an unbalanced budget and a discontented populace. Young Louis XVI (1774-92), though well-meaning, reasonably intelligent, and of good moral character, was not the man to restore the prestige of the throne. He was awkward, shy, and weak-willed when the situation called for decision. His reign was marked by one of the greatest and most far-reaching upheavals in the history of Western civilization—the French Revolution.

### 1. The Last Days of the Old Regime in France

France at the succession of Louis XVI, though somewhat weakened, was not in dire distress. With the possible exception of Great Britain she was still the richest and most influential nation in the world. During the reign of Louis XV, in spite of France's defeats and the loss of most of her empire, her commerce and prosperity had steadily

increased. By 1774 only Great Britain, among the major powers, had a higher standard of living than France.

Discontent arose, however, from the maldistribution of wealth and privilege. Since the end of the reign of Louis XIV the nobility had made a comeback in high government office at the expense of the bourgeoisie, reversing a trend that dated from the fifteenth century. These offices, many of them useless, carried handsome salaries and pensions. Furthermore, the nobility was exempt from virtually all direct taxation. Socially, the nobles looked down on the ambitious bankers, lawyers, and merchants. The city proletariat was another group that failed to share in the rising prosperity, for wages had not risen nearly so fast as the cost of living.

The peasants, who constituted approximately nine tenths of the total population, were on the whole discontented. Although serfdom was rapidly disappearing, the peasants still owed many feudal dues and obligations—even most of those who owned their own land. Upon their backs fell the bulk of the direct taxes. They themselves could not hunt or fish, but the aristocracy hunted in their fields and the game ate their crops. They were compelled to keep up the public roads with their own unpaid labor. Most of the peasants were *métayers*, or share croppers, who, in addition to giving up half of their crops to the landlord for rent, paid many other feudal dues such as fees for the

use of the lord's mill, bake oven, wine press, and breeding stock. Although the French peasants were better off than those of any other major country on the continent of Europe, their very well-being made them more ambitious to rid themselves of the remaining vestiges of feudalism.

Government was arbitrary. The king's decree was law. The Estates-General, the French counterpart of the British Parliament, had not met for nearly two centuries. Justice was capricious and corrupt. There were 237 different codes of law to confuse the litigants. There were no juries as in Great Britain. The king could arrest and imprison at will (although Louis XV and Louis XVI seldom did). The judges of the thirteen superior courts, called *parlements*, purchased their titles. Torture still prevailed. The Roman Catholic Church, possessing many of the privileges of government, was rich, powerful, intolerant of other religions, and highly aristocratic in its organization. This arbitrary system, which had been taken for normal in earlier days, seemed intolerable to the readers of Voltaire and Rousseau.

The breakdown of the old regime in France occurred in the field of finance. Louis XVI inherited a large and constantly growing national debt. It was not excessive for a rich nation like France; Great Britain and the Netherlands had higher per-capita debts. But, together with the exemption of the nobility and the clergy from direct taxation and extravagant expenditures by the government and the court, it spelled eventual bankruptcy. Furthermore, the corrupt system of tax collection, which made use of profiteering tax farmers (private contractors), allowed much of the revenue to be diverted from the treasury.

Upon assuming the throne Louis XVI appointed the physiocrat Turgot, a friend of Voltaire, as minister of finances. Turgot initiated a series of sweeping reforms that would have cleaned up the financial mess and alleviated much of the social discontent. However, the vested interests brought about his dismissal at the end of two years. A suc-

cession of ministers then tried all kinds of palliatives such as borrowing, pump-priming expenditures, better bookkeeping, but to no avail. By 1786 the debt was 3,000,000,000 livres,<sup>1</sup> and the annual deficit had reached 125,000,000. Even the aristocracy became alarmed and demanded reforms. In a desperate effort to save the old regime, Louis XVI called the Assembly of Notables in 1787 in an attempt to persuade them to consent to be taxed. When they refused, Louis had no alternative but to call the Estates-General—an act that precipitated the French Revolution.

## 2. The Triumph of the Third Estate

Throughout the winter of 1788-89 elections were being held for members of the Estates-General. All France was agog with excitement. Voltaire and Rousseau had done their work; it was generally believed that man could construct an earthly paradise if given a chance.

Since the Estates-General had not met for a hundred and seventy-five years, no one quite knew the procedure. Hundreds of pamphlets on the subject appeared, accompanied by widespread debate. By tradition each of the three estates, the clergy, the nobility, and the commoners, elected their own representatives. All males who had reached the age of twenty-five and paid taxes were permitted to vote. Since the Third Estate, including the bourgeoisie, the peasantry, and the proletariat, comprised more than nine tenths of the total population, it was given as many seats as the other two combined. This large representation for the Third Estate was not especially significant at the time, since by tradition the three estates sat separately and each group had one vote.

By April 1789, the delegates began to arrive at Versailles. Good will prevailed. Violent revolution was far from anyone's mind.

<sup>1</sup> The livre was technically worth about twenty cents, but its purchasing power in the eighteenth century was much greater than that of the mid-twentieth-century American dollar.



The delegates came armed with *cahiers*, the lists of grievances which had been called for by the king. Of the six hundred representatives of the Third Estate only twenty were peasants. The rest, except for a handful of liberal clergy and nobles, were bourgeois. Nearly all of the members of the Third Estate, as well as many members of the two privileged estates, were fully acquainted with the philosophy of Locke, Montesquieu, and Voltaire. Rousseau was a little too radical for these moderate men.

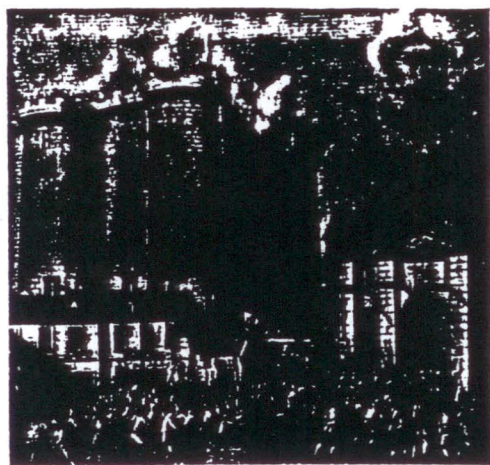
The first formal session was held on May 5. Immediately a sharp debate began over the method of voting. The two privileged estates demanded that, according to custom, the three estates meet separately and vote by order, that is, each estate cast one vote. This would mean that all attacks on privilege and inequality would be defeated by a vote of two to one. The Third Estate, already becoming disillusioned by the snobbish attitude of the royal court and of some of the members of the first two estates, demanded that the voting be by head. The three estates would meet jointly, each individual member casting one vote. This would mean that all measures for fundamental reform would pass, for, not only did the Third Estate have as many members as the other two combined, but a certain number of liberal clergy and noblemen sympathized with the common people and the cause of reform. Both sides realized that the outcome of this issue would be decisive.

On June 17, after six weeks of fruitless haggling, the Third Estate, now joined by several liberal members of the First and Second estates, declared itself the National Assembly of France and invited the other two estates to join it in the enactment of legislation. Three days later, on June 20, when the members of the Third Estate arrived at their meeting hall, they found it locked and guarded by royal troops. Adjourning to a nearby building used as an indoor tennis court, they took the "Tennis Court Oath," vowing never to disband until France had a constitution. It was the Third Estate's first act of defiance. On June 23 the king called

the three estates into a royal session, at which he commanded them once and for all to meet separately and vote by order. The king, his ministers, and members of the first two estates filed out, but the Third Estate defiantly remained seated. When the Marquis de Dreux-Brézé returned to remind them of the king's orders, Mirabeau, a liberal nobleman elected by the Third Estate, jumped to his feet and shouted in his thundering voice, "Go and tell those who sent you that we are here by the will of the people and will not leave this place except at the point of the bayonet!" When the startled courtier repeated these words to his master, Louis XVI, with characteristic weakness, replied, "They mean to stay. Well damn it, let them stay." A few days later he reversed himself and ordered the three estates to meet jointly and vote by head.

The Third Estate had thus won the first round. However, alarming news soon began to arrive that the king was calling the professional troops of the frontier garrison to Versailles. It appeared that he was at last preparing to use force. At this critical juncture the Paris proletariat countered the threat of force with force. On July 14, a riotous Parisian mob marched on and destroyed the Bastille, a gloomy old fortress prison in the workingmen's quarter that symbolized the arbitrary tyranny of the old regime. July 14 has long been celebrated as the French national holiday. This show of force stayed the king's hand.

Throughout the remainder of July and August the spirit of violence spread from Paris to the rest of France, where it had been only desultory hitherto. Many nobles fled from France for their lives (the *émigrés*), and feudalism, for all practical purposes, came to an end. Since the peasants feared reprisals from the nobility and believed a widespread rumor that the nobles were raising brigand bands against the peasants, this period is known as the Great Fear. The legal end of feudalism came on August 4, when, during a hysterical night session of the National Assembly, one nobleman after another stood up and renounced



**STORMING OF THE BASTILLE.** A former fortress turned into a prison, the Bastille was a symbol of arbitrary government of royal and aristocratic tyranny. Its destruction in 1789 by a Paris mob marked the beginning of large-scale mob violence in the French Revolution. The date of its destruction, July 14, has long been celebrated as the French national holiday. (*The Bettmann Archive*)

his feudal rights and privileges. After the excitement died down, the king once more began quietly to assemble troops around Versailles and Paris. In answer to this new threat of force a huge mob of Paris women on October 5 and 6 marched the eleven miles out to Versailles, surrounded the palace, and forced the king to accompany them to Paris, where he became a virtual prisoner of the Paris proletariat. As the carriage bearing the royal family rolled toward Paris, the surrounding mob shouted jubilantly, "We have the baker, the baker's wife, and the little cook boy! Now we shall have bread!" A few days later the National Assembly itself voted to move its sessions to Paris, where it came increasingly under the influence of the radical populace of the great city. The Third Estate had triumphed.

### 3. Making France an "Enlightened" Monarchy

The National Assembly could now at last settle down to the task of making France

over in the image of Voltaire and Montesquieu. During the next two years it passed a series of sweeping reforms that may be conveniently classified as follows:

#### JUDICIAL

An orderly system of lower and higher courts was established. Judges were to be elected for six-year terms. Torture was abolished. Juries in criminal cases were to be used for the first time in French history.

#### ECONOMIC

In accordance with the doctrine of *laissez faire*, guilds and trading associations were abolished. All occupations were declared open to all classes. Feudal obligations, including labor on the public roads, had already come to an end on the night of August 4. Internal tolls and customs were abolished.

#### FINANCIAL

The complex and unequal taxes, direct and indirect, were swept away. They were replaced by a tax on land and a tax on the profits of trade and industry. Both were uniform, and no one was exempt. Tax farming was, at long last, abolished. Expenditures were henceforth authorized only by the national legislature. To meet the pressing financial needs of the government, the National Assembly issued paper money called *assignats* to the value of 400,000,000 livres. To back up this paper money, the property of the Roman Catholic Church valued at approximately that amount was confiscated.

#### RELIGIOUS

The seizure of church property was the first step toward the nationalization of the Church. Monasticism was abolished. The secular clergy was to be elected by the people (including non-Roman Catholics) and their salaries paid by the state. The bishops were reduced in number, wealth, and power.



They were no longer to be invested by the pope. These measures were incorporated in the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, to which all the members of the clergy were required to take an oath of allegiance in order to perform their functions and draw their salaries. The pope, whose control over the organization and the clergy of the French church would have been broken, declared the Civil Constitution of the Clergy to be founded upon heretical principles and ordered the clergy to refuse to take the oath of allegiance. A majority of the clergy, including nearly all of the bishops, followed the pope's command. The defection of the "non-juring clergy" and of thousands of their devoted parishioners was the first serious split in the ranks of the revolutionists.

#### POLITICAL

One of the first constructive acts of the National Assembly was to draw up the Declaration of the Rights of Man. This document, which followed the English Bill of Rights by an even hundred years and preceded the American Bill of Rights by two years, was replete with the phrases of the philosophers of the Enlightenment. Life, liberty, and property were declared to be the natural rights of man. The declaration also provided for freedom of religion, speech, press, and assembly, together with the right to resist oppression and the right to freedom from arbitrary arrest and imprisonment.

The central government was patterned after the ideas of Montesquieu. Judicial, legislative, and executive powers were separated. Lawmaking was given to the single-chamber Legislative Assembly of 745 members elected for two-year terms. Voting, however, was limited to males at least twenty-five years of age who paid taxes equivalent to three days' wages. It is estimated that some four million adult males ("active" citizens) could meet these qualifications and that some three million remained "passive" citizens. Actually to sit in the Legislative Assembly required the payment of taxes equivalent to fifty days' wages.

Only about 50,000 Frenchmen could meet this qualification, and the weight of power fell to the bourgeoisie. The king was granted a suspensive veto over all but financial and constitutional measures, but three successive legislatures could pass a bill over the king's veto. The conduct of foreign relations was left in the hands of the king, but he could not declare war or make treaties without the consent of the Legislative Assembly. The king's expenditures were limited to a sum voted by the legislative body. France was greatly decentralized. For purposes of local government and administration the country was divided into eighty-three departments, each of which was administered by a small elected assembly.

In October 1791, the National Assembly declared its work to be completed and gave way to the Legislative Assembly, which had recently been elected under the new constitution. Had Voltaire and Montesquieu been alive, they would have had every right to say, "I told you so." Within a brief span of two years and with very little bloodshed, France had been made over. The monarchy had been limited and "enlightened." The Roman Catholic Church had been subordinated to the state. Individual rights and liberties had been defined and established. But Rousseau would have been unhappy. Actual majority rule had not been completely achieved.

#### 4. Foreign War and the Failure of the Moderate Regime

The new government so optimistically launched was expected to last forever. Actually it lasted less than a year. Although the Legislative Assembly, elected under the restricted suffrage provisions of the new constitution, was made up largely of moderate men, it probably represented the wishes and the interests of the great majority of the French people. The chief gainers in the French Revolution thus far had been the bourgeoisie and the peasants. The bourgeoisie had gained political control over the country and social equality with the nobility.

Most of the peasants, who constituted the bulk of the French population, could now vote, and all of them were at last free from feudal obligations. To the numerous peasant landowners who owned their land before the Revolution were now added many others who had seized the lands of émigré nobles or had purchased confiscated Church lands. These two numerous classes were satisfied and wished to see the Revolution stop where it was, lest they lose their sacred property and their political dominance.

However, there were other groups that were quite dissatisfied. The royal family, the aristocracy, most of the clergy, and the army officers yearned for the restoration of their privileges. On the other hand, the city proletariat and some of the poorest peasants wished to see the Revolution continued on to more radical ground. They had gained little except theoretical rights and legal equality. Owning no property, they could not vote. Yet they had supplied the force that had saved the Third Estate and made the moderate reforms possible. Leadership for these disgruntled groups was found among the intelligentsia who were disciples of Rousseau. These intellectual radicals would be satisfied with nothing less than perfect democracy and complete equality.

The radical groups, although a definite minority of the French people, were well organized and ably led. In the Legislative Assembly itself the most liberal or radical group was the Girondins, so-called because their leaders came from the vicinity of Bordeaux in the department of Gironde. Outside the Assembly numerous clubs, of which the Jacobin Club became the most influential, were formed to debate and plan political matters. Although the Jacobins were and remained predominantly intellectual bourgeoisie and were moderate at first, they gradually became the most radical group in France. Three Jacobin leaders came to tower over all others. Jean Paul Marat, Swiss by birth, was an inordinately ambitious and frustrated physician and scientist turned popular journalist. His was the gift of rabble-rousing journalism. He incessantly de-

manded the beheading of all those leaders who opposed the further extension of the Revolution. Georges Jacques Danton, a former lawyer in the king's council, was a thundering orator of great energy and ability. Maximilien de Robespierre, eventually to become dictator, was also a lawyer and former judge. This eloquent and sincere man was a fanatical disciple of Rousseau, bent upon the establishment of perfect democracy and equality. He also favored the total eradication of Christianity.

Events soon played into the hands of the radicals. The kings of Austria and Prussia, fearful of the spread of revolutionary ideas to their own lands and egged on by the French émigrés, began to make threatening moves and to issue meddling warnings to the French revolutionaries. In France the reactionaries believed that a successful war would enhance the prestige and power of the throne and that a defeat would result in the restoration of the old regime. Most of the radicals believed that war would expose the inefficiency and disloyalty of the king and bring about his downfall. When, therefore, in April 1792 Louis XVI appeared before the Legislative Assembly to request a declaration of war against Austria and Prussia, only seven votes were cast in the negative. Thus lightly was begun a war that was to last twenty-three years and affect most of the Western world.

The French armies, leaderless since nearly all of the high-ranking officers were members of the nobility and had either fled or been deposed, were badly defeated. As the Austrian and Prussian armies advanced toward Paris, panic seized the capital city. The king, who had already forfeited his popularity when he attempted to flee the country in June 1791, was now rightly suspected of being in treasonable communication with the enemy. On August 10, 1792, a huge Paris mob advanced on the king's palace. The royal family fled for its life to the Legislative Assembly, and not a minute too soon. The interior of the palace was wrecked, and several hundred of the Swiss guard were slain. The Legislative Assembly suspended



Louis XVI and called elections for a national convention to draw up a new constitution to take the place of the one that had just failed.

### 5. The Triumph of the Radicals and the Reign of Terror

The elections to the constitutional convention took place in an atmosphere of panic and violence. During the interim between the overthrow of the limited monarchy and the meeting of the convention, Danton assumed the emergency leadership of the nation. Feverishly he superintended the gathering of recruits and rushed them to the front. As the recruits were preparing to leave Paris, rumors spread that their wives and children would be murdered by the reactionary clergy and nobles. Violent elements began murdering members of the non-juring clergy and reactionary nobles who were being held in the prisons of Paris. During the first three weeks of September 1792, more than a thousand such victims were massacred. In the elections to the National Convention, held amid this hysteria and violence, the radicals won a sweeping victory. Most of the conservative elements prudently stayed away from the polls.

In the Legislative Assembly the Girondins had been the leftist group.<sup>2</sup> In the National Convention they found themselves on the extreme right. The new left was made up of the Jacobin followers of Marat, Danton, and Robespierre, mostly from the city of Paris. They came to be called the Mountain, since they occupied the highest seats in the convention hall. This radical convention, elected for the purpose of drawing up a new constitution, was to rule France for the next three years (1792-95)—the most exciting years of the Revolution.

The first act of the National Convention was to declare France a republic. Their next move was to dispose of the king. After a fair

<sup>2</sup>The present political connotation of the terms "right" and "left" derives from this period. In the Legislative Assembly the conservatives sat quite by chance on the speaker's right, the liberals and radicals on his left.

trial he was found unquestionably guilty of treasonable communication with the enemy and sent to the guillotine—an instrument adopted by the revolutionists for the more scientific and humane beheading of the condemned. The execution of Louis XVI, accompanied by proclamations of world revolution by the evangelical Jacobins, sent a shudder of horror through the royal courts of Europe. Furthermore, the hastily recruited French revolutionary armies, which had checked the Austrians and Prussians at Valmy in September 1792 had taken the offensive and overrun the Austrian Netherlands.

Austria and Prussia were now joined by Great Britain, the Dutch Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Sardinia, and Naples in a great coalition bent upon the destruction of the French Revolution and the restoration of the old regime. The French armies were unable to stand up to such an array of armed might. But the defeats and invasions were not the worst disasters to confront the revolutionary government. The ignorant peasants of the Vendée region in western France, who had been stirred up by the non-juring clergy, rebelled against the radical government. The rebellion spread until some sixty of the eighty-three departments were affected. Major provincial cities such as Bordeaux, Lyons, and Marseilles were in revolt. Toulon, the chief French naval base on the Mediterranean, invited in the British fleet. Inside the Convention itself many of the moderate Girondins were sympathetic with the rebels.

Faced with what seemed to be inevitable disaster to their radical cause and indeed to the Revolution itself, the leaders of the Mountain decided on drastic action. Since the Paris Commune, as the city government was called, was already controlled completely by the Jacobins, the Mountain leaders conspired with it to incite a mob. On June 2, 1793, the National Convention, now dominated by the left wing and surrounded by a howling Paris mob, voted the expulsion and arrest of twenty-nine Girondin leaders. Having thus silenced all opposition

within the convention, Robespierre, Danton, and their followers inaugurated a reign of terror. (Marat was assassinated in July.) Their goals were to unite France and to save and extend the Revolution.

For streamlined efficiency the National Convention delegated unlimited powers to a Committee of Public Safety, composed of twelve men working in secret. This all-powerful committee came under the dominance of Robespierre. At its beck and call was the Committee of General Security, a national police force. A Revolutionary Tribunal was set up to try, condemn, and execute suspects without the usual legal procedure and as quickly as possible. Agents of the Committee of Public Safety, called representatives on mission, carried the Terror to every nook and cranny of France. Although tens of thousands of persons, possibly half a million, were imprisoned during the Reign of Terror, only some 16,000 are believed to have been executed. The drastic policy was remarkably successful. The disaffected elements were quickly silenced, and the rebellions quelled. The defense of the republic was entrusted to Lazare Carnot. A *levée en masse* was ordered. All men, women, and children were called to the colors. The able-bodied young men were rapidly trained and rushed to the front. Everyone else contributed his bit to the war effort on the home front. This common activity for defense of country produced a high state of morale—the first mass national patriotism in history. Able new officers were found. The armies of the coalition were defeated on every front and hurled back beyond the frontiers.

#### 6. Robespierre's Utopia of Rousseau

While Robespierre and his associates were saving the Revolution, they were also busy extending it to more radical ground. A fanatical disciple of Rousseau, Robespierre was determined to make France a deistic, semi-socialistic utopia where perfect liberty, equality, and fraternity would reign supreme. During the emergency of 1793 a maximum price was placed upon the necessi-

ties of life for the protection of the consumer, particularly the city proletariat. Efforts were made to force people to accept the badly inflated *assignats* at their face value. The lands of the *émigrés* were confiscated and sold in two- or three-acre farms to the peasants. Since these farms could be paid for over a long period of time, almost every French peasant could now become a landowner and most of them did. France has remained a nation of peasant proprietors ever since. The metric system was adopted; the Louvre Palace was turned into an art gallery; the national library and the national archives were founded; a law (never implemented) provided for a comprehensive national system of public education. The Rousseau type of democracy became popular in society. Women adopted the flowing robes and hair styles of ancient Greece. Silk knee breeches, the symbol of aristocracy, gave way to trousers. Rich and poor alike took pride in being *sans culottes* (without knee breeches). Titles of all kinds were discarded for Citizen and Citizeness.

One of Robespierre's greatest ambitions was to replace Christianity in France with the deistic religion of the Enlightenment. A group of his followers, mistaking him to be an atheist, set up in Notre Dame an actress of questionable morals as goddess of reason. Robespierre, however, was planning the establishment of the worship of the Supreme Being in the fashion of Rousseau. In an elaborate ceremony Robespierre, wearing a sky-blue suit and carrying a bouquet of red roses, led a procession across Paris to the scene of the festivities. Thus was inaugurated the "Republic of Virtue." Thousands of Christian churches were closed. Even the calendar was dechristianized by eliminating Sundays. The months were made equal and named after the seasons. The year I was dated from September 22, 1792, the date of the declaration of the republic.

Meanwhile, discontent with Robespierre and his policies was steadily increasing. The defeat of the invading armies of the coalition and the suppression of the internal re-



bellion removed the justification for the Terror, yet the Terror was intensified. When Danton counseled moderation, Robespierre sent even him and his most prominent followers to the guillotine. No one, not even the members of the National Convention, felt safe any longer. Finally, in July 1794, the convention found the courage and the leadership to overthrow Robespierre and send him to his own guillotine.

### 7. Reaction and the Rise of Napoleon

Since Robespierre was overthrown on July 27, which was 9 Thermidor by the revolutionary calendar, the reaction that followed is known as the Thermidorian Reaction. The propertied bourgeoisie, who quickly gained control of things, had been frightened and angered by the socialistic measures of Robespierre's regime. All such measures still in force were repealed. The Terror was brought to an end, and the chief terrorists executed. Armed bands of bourgeois hirelings went around for some time beating or killing Jacobins. In 1795 the National Convention finally got around to the task for which it had been elected three years earlier: the drawing up of a new constitution. The constitution reflected the conservative reaction. Only property owners could vote for members of the legislative bodies. Members of the Council of Elders, 250 in number, had to be forty years of age

and married. Members of the Council of Five Hundred had to be thirty years of age. Executive functions were placed in the hands of five directors, who were chosen for five-year terms by the two legislative councils. The directors must be forty years of age and married. In October 1795, the National Convention turned over its powers to the Directory, the name that was given to the new government.

The most significant development of the period of the Directory, 1795-99, was the rise to power of Napoleon Bonaparte. The directors, though men of reasonable competence, were unable to restore peace and social tranquillity. Though peace had already been made with Spain and Prussia, war with Great Britain, Austria, and Sardinia dragged on. Government finances were chaotic, and brigandage was rife. More and more people longed for a strong man who could bring peace abroad and order at home. Napoleon proved to be the man. The story of his rise to power will be told in the next chapter. [When in November 1799 Napoleon overthrew the Directory and made himself dictator, the French Revolution had run full cycle from absolute Bourbon monarchy to absolute Napoleonic dictatorship] France had failed by popular democratic processes to establish the utopia promised by Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Rousseau. She would now try to achieve it by the dictatorship of a genius.

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#### SUGGESTED READING

- E. J. Lowell, *The Eve of the French Revolution* (1892). A brilliant description and analysis of all phases of French society before the Revolution and of the ideas of the reformer-philosophers. A masterpiece of historical writing.
- \* Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the Revolution* (Anchor). A penetrating analysis by one of France's most astute historians. De Tocqueville was the first to observe that the Revolution was not the result of widespread misery.
- \* Georges Lefebvre, *The Coming of the French Revolution* (Vintage). A brief but perceptive

analysis of the causes of the great revolution, incorporating the results of the latest and best scholarship.

Louis Madelin, *The French Revolution* (1928). Probably the best single-volume account of the Revolution. Combines deep scholarship with literary and dramatic skill.

\* Leo Gershoy, *The Era of the French Revolution* (Anvil). A brief but scholarly survey by one of America's leading scholars on the French Revolution.

E. L. Higgins, *The French Revolution as Told by Contemporaries* (1938). The story is skillfully woven together with eyewitness accounts.

1. Name the MAIN problem with French society under the old regime that spread discontent? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What NATIONAL responsibility led to the breakdown of the old regime: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Name the three enlightened philosophers whose ideas were widely accepted:
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
4. What group in French society did the NATIONAL ASSEMBLY represent? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Which groups benefited most from the French Revolution?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Under the consitutional monarchy, what roles were left to the king?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
7. The Jacobians were led by:
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
8. Why were other European governments fearful of the new French REPUBLIC?



9. Under the leadership of the Jacobins the new republic set up three committees. Briefly explain the function of each:

- a. Committee of Public Safety
- b. Committee of General Security
- c. The Revolutionary Tribunal

10. List four examples of Robespierre's program to bring about a utopian society along the lines advocated by Rousseau:

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.

11. The government which followed the Reign of Terror was called: \_\_\_\_\_

12. Give a brief definition, description, or explanation of:

- a. The Mountain
- b. The National Convention
- c. The Directory
- d. assignats
- e. émigrés
- f. sans culottes
- g. Republic of Virtue
- h. Louis Madelin
- i. The Great Fear
- j. cahiers
- k. National Assembly
- l. Legislative Assembly
- m. bourgeoisie
- n. Declaration of the Rights of Man