

PART FOUR

REVOLUTIONARY EUROPE, 1789–1850

The French Revolution of 1789 struck the first solid blow in continental Western Europe against monarchical absolutism on behalf of popular sovereignty. The roots of revolution extend back to the second half of the seventeenth century, an era of hitherto unparalleled absolute monarchical authority. The monarchs of France, Russia, Prussia, Austria, Spain, and Sweden had reinforced their authority to the extent that they stood clearly above any internal challenge to their power. Compliant nobles served as junior partners in absolutism, acknowledging the ruler's absolute power to proclaim laws, assess taxes, and raise armies, in exchange for royal recognition of their noble standing and protection against popular revolts. The governments of Great Britain and the Dutch United Provinces stood in sharp contrast to absolute states. In the English Civil War in the 1640s, Parliament had successfully turned aside the possibility of absolute monarchy in England, leading to the execution of King Charles II, followed after some years of turmoil by the Restoration of constitutional monarchy. In the Netherlands, the Dutch revolt against absolutist Spain led to the establishment of the Dutch Republic. The theory of popular sovereignty developed not only as an alternative to absolute rule but also as an extension of constitutional rule. In the dramatic events of the French Revolution that began in 1789, the theory of popular sovereignty became reality as ordinary people helped bring about the downfall of absolute rule and then, three years later, the monarchy itself.

True popular sovereignty was a short-lived experiment, however, as counter-revolution and foreign intervention led to the dramatic centralization of state authority. In 1799, Napoleon Bonaparte helped overthrow the Directory, the last regime of

the revolutionary era in France. An admirer of the Enlightenment, Napoleon claimed that he was the heir of the French Revolution. But while Napoleon saw himself as a savior who carried "liberty, equality, and fraternity" abroad, his conquest of much of Europe before his final defeat left a mixed legacy for the future. More than a fifth of all the significant battles that took place in Europe from 1490 to 1815 occurred between the coming of the French Revolution and Napoleon's final defeat in 1815.

Following Napoleon's defeat in 1815 at the Battle of Waterloo, the Congress of Vienna created the Concert of Europe, the international basis of Restoration Europe, in the hope of preventing further liberal and nationalist insurrections in Europe. But liberal and nationalist movements could not so easily be swept away. During the subsequent three decades, "liberty" became the watchword for more and more people, particularly among the middle classes, who came to the forefront of economic, political, and cultural life. Liberal movements were in many places closely tied to the emergence of nationalism, the belief in the primacy of nationality as a source of allegiance and sovereignty.

In the meantime, during the first half of the nineteenth century, the Industrial Revolution slowly but surely transformed the way many Europeans lived. Dramatic improvements in transportation, notably the development of the railroad but also road improvements, expanded the market for manufactured and other goods. Rising agricultural production, increasingly commercialized in Western Europe, fed a larger population. Migrants poured into Europe's cities, which grew as never before. Contemporaries, particularly in Western Europe, sensed profound economic, social, political, and cultural changes.

CHAPTER 12

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION



In 1791, King Louis XVI decided to flee Paris and the French Revolution. A virtual prisoner in the Tuileries Palace by the first months of the year, he had secretly negotiated for possible intervention on his behalf by the Austrian king and other European monarchs. The royal family furtively left the Tuileries Palace late at night on June 20, 1791, disguised as the family and entourage of a Russian baroness riding in a large black coach with yellow trim. But in an eastern town, the postmaster recognized the king, whose image he had seen on a coin. He rode rapidly to the town of Varennes, where the National Guard prevented the king's coach from going on. Three representatives of the National Assembly brought the royal family back to Paris. Near the capital, the crowds became threatening, and national guardsmen stood by the roadside with their rifles upside down, a sign of contempt or mourning.

The French Revolution mounted the first effective challenge to monarchical absolutism on behalf of popular sovereignty. The creation of a republican government in France and the diffusion of republican ideals in other European countries influenced the evolution of European political life long after the Revolution ended. Issues of the rights of the people, the role of the state in society, the values of democratic society, notions of "left" and "right" in political life, the concept of the "nation at arms," the place of religion in modern society and politics, and the question of economic freedom and the sanctity of property came to dominate the political agenda. They occupied the attention of much of France during the revolutionary decade of 1789–1799. The political violence of that decade would also be a legacy for the future.

The revolutionaries sought to make the French state more centralized and efficient, as well as more just. Napoleon Bonaparte, whom some historians consider the heir to the Revolution and others believe to be its betrayer, continued this process after his ascent to power in 1799.

Modern nationalism, too, has its roots in the French Revolution. The revolutionaries enthusiastically proclaimed principles they held to be universal. Among these were the sovereignty of the nation and the rights and duties of citizenship. The revolutionaries celebrated the fact that the Revolution had occurred in France. But wars intended to free European peoples from monarchical and noble domination turned into wars of French conquest. The revolutionary wars, pitting France against the other great powers, contributed to the emergence or extension of nationalism in other countries as well, ranging from Great Britain, where the sense of being British flourished in response to the French threat, to central and southern Europe, where some educated Germans and Italians began to espouse nationalism in response to the invading French armies.

THE OLD REGIME IN CRISIS

The French Revolution was not inevitable. Yet difficult economic conditions in the preceding two decades, combined with the growing popularity of a discourse that stressed freedom in the face of entrenched economic and social privileges, made some sort of change seem possible, perhaps even likely. When a financial crisis occurred in the 1780s and the king was forced to call the Estates-General, the stage was set for the confrontation that would culminate in the French Revolution.

Long-Term Causes of the French Revolution

The increasing prevalence of the language of the Enlightenment, stressing equality before the law and differentiating between absolute and despotic rule, placed the monarchy and its government under the closer scrutiny of public opinion. Adopting Enlightenment discourse, opponents accused Louis XV of acting despotically when he exiled the Parlement of Paris in 1771 and tried to establish new law courts that were likely to be more subservient than the *parlements*, the sovereign law courts, had been. Opponents believed that the king was trying to subvert long-accepted privileges. Following Louis XV's death in 1774, the young Louis XVI reinstated the *parlements*, which retained their right to register royal edicts.

As complaints mounted about noble privileges, guild monopolies, and corrupt royal officials, the implications of Enlightenment thought led to political action. In 1774, Controller-General of Finances Anne-Robert Turgot drew up a program to eliminate some monopolies and privileges that fettered the economy (see Chapter 11). However, the decree abolishing the guilds, among other decrees, generated immediate hostility from nobles, the Parlement of Paris, and from ordinary people, who rioted in Paris in 1775 because the freeing of the grain trade had brought higher prices in hard times. Two years later, Turgot's experiment ended. But some writers now

began to contrast the freedoms Turgot had in mind with the corporate privileges that characterized the economy and society of eighteenth-century France.

France remained a state of overlapping layers of privileges, rights, traditions, and jurisdictions. Nobles and professional groups such as guilds and tax farmers (who generally had bought their offices and could pocket some of the taxes they collected) contested any plan to eliminate privileges. At the same time, the social lines of demarcation between nobles and wealthy commoners had become less fixed over the course of the eighteenth century. Despite increasing opposition from the oldest noble families who believed their ranks were being swamped by newcomers, in the fifteen years before 1789 almost 2,500 families bought their way into the nobility. Yet many people of means, too, resented noble privileges, above all the exemption of nobles from most kinds of taxes. Disgruntled commoners did not make the French Revolution, but their dissatisfaction helped create a litany of demands for reform. The monarchy's worsening financial crisis accentuated these calls.

The sharpest resistance to reform came from the poorer nobility. Among the "nobles of the sword," the oldest noble families whose ancestors had proudly taken arms to serve the king, some had fallen on hard times and clung frantically to any and all privileges as a way of maintaining their status. They resented the fact that the provincial parlements, in particular, had filled up with new nobles who had purchased offices—the "nobles of the robe"—and that power had shifted within the nobility from the oldest noble families to those recently ennobled.

The monarchy depended upon the sale of titles, offices, and economic monopolies for revenue and long-term credit. But by creating more offices—there were more than 50,000 offices in 1789—it risked destroying public confidence and driving down the value of offices already held.

Economic hardship compounded the monarchy's financial problems by decreasing revenue while exacerbating social tensions. Rising prices and rents darkened the 1770s and 1780s. A series of bad harvests—the worst of which occurred in 1775—made conditions of life even more difficult for poor people. The harvests of 1787 and 1788, which would be key years in the French political drama, were also very poor. Such crises were by no means unusual—indeed they were cyclical and would continue until the middle of the next century. Meager harvests generated popular resistance to taxation and protests against the high price of grain (and therefore bread). A growing population put more pressure on scarce resources.

Many peasants believed that their hardship was being increased by landowners. Something of a "seigneurial reaction" was under way as smaller agricultural yields diminished noble revenues, while inflation raised the costs of noble life. Noble landowners hired estate agents, lawyers, and surveyors to maximize income from their lands, and reasserted old rights over common lands, on which many poor peasants depended for pasturing animals and

gathering wood for fuel. Many landlords raised rents and tried to force sharecropping arrangements on peasants who had previously rented land.

Although the feudal system of the Middle Ages had long since passed, remnants remained. Peasants were still vexed by seigneurial dues and cash owed to their lords. Many nobles still held some rights of justice over their peasants, which meant that they could determine guilt and assess penalties for alleged transgressions. Seigneurial courts were often used to enforce the landlord's rights over forests, lakes, and streams, and his exclusive rights to hunt and fish on his estate. The political crisis that led to the French Revolution would provide ordinary people with an opportunity to redress some of these mounting grievances.

The Financial Crisis

The serious financial crisis that confronted the monarchy in the 1780s was the short-term cause of the French Revolution. France had been at war with Britain, as well as with other European powers, off and on for more than a century. The financial support France had provided the rebel colonists in the American War of Independence against Britain had been underwritten by loans arranged by the king's Swiss minister of finance, Jacques Necker (1732–1804). Almost three-fourths of state expenses went to maintaining the army and navy, and to paying off debts accumulated from the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–1748) and the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), as well as from the American War of Independence. The monarchy was living beyond its means.

Where were more funds to be found? Nobles had traditionally enjoyed the privilege of being exempt from most, and the clergy from all, taxation. There was a limit to how many taxes could be imposed on peasants, by far the largest social group in France. In short, the financial crisis of the monarchy was closely tied to the very nature of its fiscal system.

The absolute monarchy in France collected taxes less efficiently than did the British government. In Britain, the Bank of England facilitated the government's borrowing of money at relatively low interest through the national debt. In France, there was no central bank, and the monarchy depended more than ever on private interests and suffered from a cumbersome assessment of fiscal obligations and inadequate accounting. French public debt already was much higher than that of Britain and continued to rise as the monarchy sought financial expedients.

The hesitant and naive Louis XVI was still in his twenties when he became king in 1774. Louis knew little of his kingdom, venturing beyond the region of Paris and Versailles only once during his reign. He preferred puttering around the palace, taking clocks and watches apart and putting them back together. He excelled at hunting. The unpopularity of Louis's elegant, haughty wife, Marie-Antoinette (1755–1793), accentuated the public's lack of confidence in the throne (whether or not she really snarled "Let them eat



(Left) Louis XVI. (Right) Marie-Antoinette.

cake!" when told that the people had no bread). The daughter of the Austrian queen Maria Theresa, Marie-Antoinette was married to Louis to strengthen dynastic ties between Austria and France. She never felt really at home in France. Unhappy in her marriage, Marie-Antoinette lived extravagantly and was embroiled in controversy. In 1785, she became entangled in a seamy scandal when a cardinal offered her a fabulous diamond necklace in the hope of winning favor. The necklace and some of the prelate's money were then deftly stolen by plotters, a strange scenario that included a prostitute posing as the queen. The "diamond necklace affair," as it was called, seemed to augment the public image of the king as a weak man, a cuckold. The queen's reputed indiscretions and infidelities seemed to undercut the authority of the monarchy itself. Her detractors indelicately dubbed her the "Austrian whore."

In the meantime, Necker continued to float more loans. But in 1781, some ministers and noble hangers-on convinced the king to dismiss Necker. Necker produced a fanciful account of the royal finances that purported to demonstrate that more revenue was coming to the state than was being spent. Necker hoped to reassure creditors that reform was unnecessary. Bankers, however, did not believe Necker's figures and some refused to loan the monarchy any more money until the state enacted financial reforms. The new finance minister, Charles-Alexandre de Calonne (1734–1802), demonstrated that Necker's calculations of royal finances were far-fetched. Yet Calonne spent even more money and put the royal treasury deeper in debt by borrowing from venal officeholders to pay off creditors now gathered at the royal door.

The parlements were certain to oppose fiscal reform, which they believed would lead to an increase in taxation through a general tax on land. They distrusted Calonne, whom they identified with fiscal irresponsibility and governmental arrogance that some believed bordered on despotism.

To sidestep the parlements, Calonne asked the king in February 1787 to convoke an Assembly of Notables consisting of handpicked representatives from each of the three estates: clergy, nobility, and the third estate (everybody else). The crown expected the Assembly to endorse its reform proposals, including new land taxes from which nobles would not be exempt. Calonne suggested that France's financial problems were systemic, resulting from a chaotic administrative organization, including the confusing regional differences in tax obligations. The monarchy's practice of selling the lucrative rights to collect, or "farm," taxes worsened the inefficiency. Calonne knew that the crown's contract with the tax farmers would soon have to be renegotiated, and that many short-term loans contracted by the monarchy would soon come due.

Denouncing "the dominance of custom" that had for so long prevented reform and encumbered commerce, Calonne proposed to overhaul the entire financial system. The Assembly of Notables, however, rejected Calonne's proposals for tax reform and refused to countenance the idea that nobles should be assessed land taxes. Moreover, the high clergy of the first estate, some of whom were nobles, also vociferously opposed Calonne's reforms. They, too, feared losing their exemption from taxation. The privilege-based nature of French society was at stake.

Nobles convinced the king to sack Calonne, which he did on April 8, 1788. Louis XVI replaced Calonne with the powerful archbishop of Toulouse, Étienne-Charles de Loménie de Brienne (1727–1794). Like his predecessor, Loménie de Brienne asked the provincial parlements to register—and thus approve—several edicts of financial reform, promising that the government would keep more accurate accounts. But the Parlement of Paris refused to register some of the edicts, including a new land tax and a stamp tax, which evoked the origins of the American Revolution.

THE FIRST STAGES OF THE REVOLUTION

Some members of the Assembly of Notables had been willing to accept fiscal reform and to pay more taxes, but only with accompanying institutional reforms that would guarantee their privileges. They wanted the king to convoke regular assemblies of the Estates-General—made up of representatives of the three estates—which had not been convoked since 1614. The king was in a difficult position. He needed to reduce the privileges of the nobles to solve the financial crisis, but to do so without their approval would lead to accusations of despotism, or even tyranny, the sometimes violent implementation of the structures of despotic authority. On the other hand, capitulating to the demands of the privileged classes in return for new taxes would compromise his absolute authority and suggest that his word was subject to the approval of the nation, or at least the nobility. The resolution of this

dilemma would lead to the events that constituted the first stages of the French Revolution.

Convoking the Estates-General

The "noble revolt" began the French Revolution. In response to the refusal of the Parlement of Paris to register the land and stamp taxes, in August 1787 Louis XVI exiled its members to Troyes, a town east of Paris. Nobles and high clergymen protested vigorously. The provincial parlements backed up the Parlement of Paris. The Parlement of Grenoble refused to register the new stamp and land taxes and convoked its provincial estates (the assembly of nobles that represented the interests of the region) without royal authorization. The "revolt of the nobility" against the monarchy's attempt to force nobles to pay taxes spread. Provincial parlements demanded that the Estates-General be convoked. This revolt was not directed against the institution of the monarchy itself, but against what the nobles considered abuses of the rights and privileges of the nation committed by an increasingly despotic crown.

The monarchy sought compromise. Loménie de Brienne agreed to withdraw the new land and stamp taxes in exchange for maintaining the tax on income (the *vingtième* tax), which nobles and other privileged people had first been assessed in the late 1750s to pay for the Seven Years' War. He made clear, however, that the crown would be forced to settle its debts in paper money backed by royal decree. Louis XVI recalled the Parlement of Paris from exile in November 1787. But the king ordered new loan edicts registered without giving the parlement a chance to be heard. When the duke of Orléans, the king's cousin, interjected that such a procedure was illegal, Louis replied, "That is of no importance to me . . . it is legal because I will it." Louis XVI thus seemed to cross the line between absolutism and despotism.

In May 1788, the king ordered the arrest of two of the most radical members of the Parlement of Paris. He then suspended the parlements, establishing new provincial courts to take their place and creating a single plenary court that would register royal edicts. Resistance to the king's acts against the parlements came quickly. The Assembly of the Clergy, which had been summoned to decide on the amount of its annual gift to the crown, protested the abolition of the parlements. Riots in support of the parlements occurred in several towns, including Grenoble, where crowds expressed support for their parlement by pelting soldiers with stones and roof tiles.

On August 8, 1788, Louis XVI announced that he would convoke the Estates-General on May 1 of the following year. He hoped that he could avert royal bankruptcy if the Estates-General would agree to the imposition of the new taxes. Two weeks later, he reappointed Necker as minister of finance, a measure he believed would appease nobles, investors, and holders of government bonds, who had never objected to unrestrained borrowing.

But the convocation of the Estates-General helped unify public opinion against the king. That the nobles forced the crown to convoke the Estates-General became the first act of the French Revolution. Many people believed that the Estates-General, more than the parlements, would represent their interests and check royal despotism.

The question of how voting was to take place when the Estates-General met assumed increasing importance. Would each of the three estates—clergy, nobles, and the third estate—have a single vote (which would almost certainly quash any reform since the majority of nobles and clergymen were against reform), or would each member of the Estates-General be entitled to his own vote?

On September 25, 1788, the Parlement of Paris, which had been reinstated amid great celebration, ruled that voting within the Estates-General would take place by estate, as had been the case when the Estates-General had last met in 1614. Thus each of the three estates would have the same number of representatives and be seated separately. Henceforth, the parlements would be seen by many people as defending the prerogatives of their privileged members against the interests of the third estate, losing their claim to defend the nation against the king's despotism for having registered the royal decree that voting would be by estate.

Popular political writers now began to salute the third estate (which made up 95 percent of the population) as the true representative of liberty and of the nation against royal despotism. Others asked for some sort of representative assembly that would reflect "public opinion." The "patriot party," a coalition of bourgeois members and some liberal nobles, began to oppose royal policies, which they contrasted with the rights of the "nation." "Patriots" denounced the vested interests of the court and the nobles close to it. Political publications transformed these debates into national political issues. The Society of the Thirty, a group that included liberal nobles from very old families—for example, the Marquis de Lafayette (1757–1834), French hero of the American War of Independence—as well as a number of commoner lawyers, met to discuss, debate, and distribute liberal political pamphlets. They proposed that the third estate be entitled to twice as many representatives in the Estates-General as the nobility and clergy.

In January 1789, Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès (1748–1836), an obscure priest, offered the most radical expression of a crucial shift in political opinion. "We have three questions to ask and answer," he wrote. "First, What is the Third Estate? Everything. Second, What has it been heretofore in the political order? Nothing. Third, What does it demand? To become something therein." He contrasted the "nation" against royal absolutism and noble prerogative, demanding a predominant role for the third estate in political life.

The vast majority of the men elected to the Estates-General were residents of cities and towns, and two-thirds of these had some training in the law. Two-thirds of those elected to the first estate were parish priests, many of whom were of humble origin and resented the privileges of the bishops



(Left) The Marquis de Lafayette. (Right) The Abbé Sieyès.

and monastic orders. Some of the younger noble representatives elected to the second estate were relatively liberal. They wanted institutional reforms in the organization of the French monarchy that would permit them to check the power of the king, in much the same way as the Parliament in England served as a check on the English crown. In December 1788, the king agreed to double the number of representatives of the third estate but declined to give all members an individual vote.

The king asked the local assemblies, along with the first two estates, to draw up lists of grievances (*cahiers de doléances*), which the Estates-General would discuss. Thousands of grievances offered the monarchy a wide variety of opinions, ranging from concrete suggestions for reform to the considered opinion that the foul breath of sheep was ruining pastureland in Lorraine. More important, *cahiers* criticized monarchical absolutism and the intransigence of seigneurs, asked for a more consistent and equitable tax structure, and called for the creation of a new national representative body. A few of the *cahiers* denounced as an abuse of royal power the so-called *lettres de cachet*, documents issued in the name of the king that allowed a person to be arrested for any reason and imprisoned indefinitely. For example, one *cahier* demanded "that no citizen lose his liberty except according to law." However, some *cahiers* also reflected continued reverence for the king, while denouncing the rapacity and bad faith of his advisers and ministers. Most *cahiers* never reached the king.

On May 5, 1789, the nearly 1,200 members of the Estates-General (about 600 of whom represented the third estate) assembled at Versailles. The king greeted the first two estates, but kept the commoners waiting for two hours. When he finished his speech, members of the third estate violated protocol by boldly putting their hats back on, a right reserved for the two privileged orders. On June 17, the third estate overwhelmingly approved a motion by Sieyès that declared the third estate to be the "National Assembly" and the

true representative of national sovereignty. The third estate now claimed legitimate sovereignty and an authority parallel, if not superior, to that of the king of France.

But, on June 20, as rumors circulated that the king might take action against them, representatives of the third estate found that their meeting hall had been locked for "repairs." Led by their president, Jean-Sylvain Bailly (1736–1793), an astronomer, the members of the third estate took the bold step of assembling in a nearby tennis court. There they took an oath "not to separate, and to reassemble wherever circumstances require, until the constitution of the kingdom is established and consolidated upon solid foundations." With principled defiance, the third estate demanded that defined limits be placed on the king's authority.

The king declared the third estate's deliberations invalid. Yet on June 23 he announced some substantial reforms, agreeing to convoke periodically the Estates-General, to abolish the *taille* (the tax on land) and the *corvée* (labor tax), to eliminate internal tariffs and tolls that interfered with trade, and to eliminate the *lettres de cachet*. He also agreed that the Estates-General would vote by head, but only on matters that did not concern "the ancient and constitutional rights of the three orders." To the radicalized members of the third estate, the king's concessions were not enough.

The Tennis Court Oath, June 20, 1789.



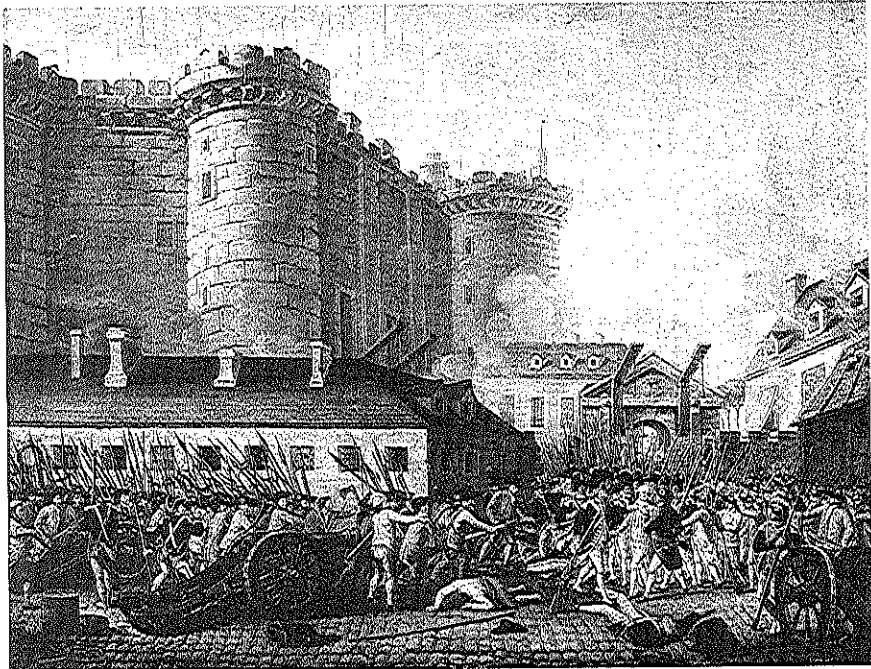
Louis XVI had dismissed Necker on June 22, but reversed himself after learning that thousands of people in Paris had invaded the courtyard of the Tuileries Palace in Paris to demand that Necker stay on. Necker's contention in 1781 that the kingdom's finances could be put on an even keel without raising taxes had increased his popularity, as had the fact that nobles were pushing for his recall. During these days, most of the clergy and a number of nobles had joined the third estate. Now, after threatening to dissolve the Estates-General by force, on June 27 the king ordered the remaining clergy and nobles of the first two estates to join the third. The new gathering began to constitute itself as the National Constituent Assembly.

Storming of the Bastille

Amid a shortage of food and high prices, many ordinary people now believed that a conspiracy by nobles and hoarders was to blame. Furthermore, the number of royal troops around Paris and Versailles seemed to be increasing. Rumors spread that the National Assembly would be quashed. On July 11, the king once again ordered Necker, who remained unpopular with the court, into exile. He and other ministers were dismissed because the king was convinced they were unable to control the demands for change coming from the Estates-General. Bands of rioters attacked the customs barriers at the gates of Paris, tearing down toll booths where taxes on goods entering the city were collected, thus making foodstuffs more expensive.

On the morning of July 14, 1789, thousands of people—mostly tradesmen, artisans, and wage earners—seized weapons stored in the Invalides, a large veterans' hospital. Early that afternoon, the attention of the Paris crowd turned toward the Bastille, a fortress on the eastern edge of the city, where the crowd believed powder and ammunition were stored. For most of the eighteenth century, the Bastille had been a prison, renowned as a symbol of despotism because some prisoners had been sent there by virtue of one of the king's *lettres de cachet*, summarily and without a trial. On that hot summer day, the Bastille's prisoners numbered but seven, a motley crew that included a nobleman imprisoned upon request of his family, a renegade priest, and a demented Irishman, who alternately thought he was Joan of Arc, Saint Louis, and God.

The crowd stormed and captured the Bastille, which was defended by a small garrison. More than 200 of the attackers were killed or wounded. A butcher decapitated the commander of the fortress, and the throng carried his head on a pike in triumph through the streets. The Bastille's fall would be much more significant than it first appeared. The king entered "nothing new" in his diary for that day, July 14. But the crowd's uprising probably saved the National Assembly from being dissolved by the troops the king had ordered to Versailles and Paris. Now unsure of the loyalty of his soldiers, Louis sent away some of the troops he had summoned to Paris, recognized both the newly elected municipal government, with Bailly serving as mayor,



The taking of the Bastille, July 14, 1789.

and a municipal defense force or National Guard (commanded by the Marquis de Lafayette), and capitulated to the popular demand that he recall Necker to office.

On July 17, 1789, the king came to Paris to be received by the municipal council at the town hall, accepting and wearing an emblem of three colors, red and blue for the city of Paris, and white for the Bourbons. By doing so, Louis XVI seemed to be recognizing what became the tricolor symbol of the French Revolution.

The Great Fear and the Night of August 4

News of the convocation of the Estates-General had brought hope to many rural people that the king would relieve their crushing fiscal burdens. They had expressed such hopes in the grievances they sent with their third estate delegates to Versailles. Now, upon news of the fall of the Bastille, between July 19 and August 3 peasants attacked châteaux. In some places they burned title deeds specifying obligations owed to lords. These peasant rebellions helped cause a subsequent panic known as the "Great Fear." Fueled by the rumor of an aristocratic "famine plot" to starve or burn out the population, peasants and townspeople mobilized in many regions of France. To repel the rumored approach of brigands sent to destroy crops,

townspeople and peasants formed armed units to defend themselves and save the harvest. New local governments and National Guard units were established to institute reforms and to restore order as the effective authority of the state disintegrated. These events brought to local influence lawyers, merchants, and other "new men" who had formerly been excluded from political life.

News of peasant violence galvanized members of the National Assembly. On August 4, 1789, in an effort to appease the peasants and to forestall further rural disorders, the National Assembly formally abolished the "feudal regime," including seigneurial rights. This sweeping proclamation was modified in the following week: owners of seigneurial dues, or payments owed by peasants who worked land owned by nobles, would receive compensation from the peasants (although, in general, such compensation was not forthcoming and was subsequently eliminated). The Assembly abolished personal labor servitude owed to nobles, without compensation. The members of the National Assembly thus renounced privilege, the fundamental organizing principle of French society. Other reforms enacted the following week included the guarantee of freedom of worship and the abolition of the sale of offices, seigneurial justice, and even of the exclusive right of nobles to hunt. The provinces and cities, too, were required to give up most of their archaic privileges. In these ways, the National Assembly enacted a sweeping agenda that proclaimed the end of what soon became known as the Old Regime.

CONSOLIDATING THE REVOLUTION

The Assembly's decrees destroyed absolutism by redefining the relationship between subject and king. No longer would the king rule by divine right, or buy allegiance by dispensing privileges to favorites. Instead, he would be constrained by powers spelled out in a constitution. The Assembly promulgated the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, a remarkable document that proposed universal principles of humanity. It next established a new relationship between church and state, creating a national church, making Catholic Church property "national property," and compelling the clergy to swear allegiance to the nation. The National Assembly then turned to the long process of framing a constitution for the new regime, and is therefore sometimes also known as the Constituent Assembly.

In the meantime, Marie-Antoinette denounced the revolutionaries as "monsters," and some of the king's most influential advisers balked at accepting any weakening in royal authority. Fearing the influence of nobles at the court, crowds early in October marched to Versailles, returning to Paris with the king and the royal family. Henceforth, while many nobles, among others, fled France for exile and sought the assistance of the monarchs of

Europe against the Revolution, the king himself became vulnerable to the tide of Parisian popular radicalism. As nobles and clergy led resistance to the Revolution, the Parisian clubs made more radical demands.

The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen

As it set out to create a constitutional monarchy, the Assembly promulgated the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen on August 26, 1789. This set forth the general principles of the new order and intended to educate citizens about liberty. One of the most significant documents in Western political history, the Declaration reflected some of the ideas that Thomas Jefferson had enshrined in the American Declaration of Independence of 1776. Article One proclaims, "Men are born and remain free and equal in rights." The Enlightenment's influence is apparent in the document's concern for individual freedom, civic equality, and the sense of struggle against corporatism, unjust privilege, and absolute rule, a discourse based upon a belief in the primacy of reason. All people were to be equal before the law. All men were to be "equally eligible to all honors, places, and employments . . . without any other distinction than that created by their virtues and talents." No person could be persecuted for his or her opinions, including those concerning religion.

Proclaiming universal principles, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen clearly placed sovereignty in the French nation. The notion of rights stemming from membership in the "nation," as opposed to that in any corporate group or social estate, was a fundamental change. Laws were to reflect the notion of the "general will," an Enlightenment concept, which would be expressed by national representatives. The nation itself, not the monarch alone, was to be "the source of all sovereignty." The assertion of equality of opportunity, however, was not intended to eliminate all social distinctions. The preservation of property rights assured that differences due to wealth, education, and talent would remain and be considered natural and legitimate. The Declaration thus helped make wealth, not birth, blood, or legal privilege, the foundation of social and political order in modern France.

The Declaration invoked "universal man," meaning mankind. But at the same time, its authors excluded women from the Declaration and did not espouse or foresee equality of the sexes. Nonetheless, many men and women now began to greet each other as "citizen." Indeed, some calls for women's rights arose from the beginning of the Revolution.

The abolition of feudalism and the proclamation of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen were such monumental achievements that already in 1790 people were referring to the Old Regime as having been that which existed before the representatives of the Estates-General constituted the National Assembly. It remained, however, for Louis XVI to accept the Assembly's work.

"The Baker, the Baker's Wife, and the Baker's Little Boy"

The political crisis was by no means over. The king's closest advisers, the "court party," rejected any constitutional arrangement that would leave the monarch without the power of absolute veto. Royal authority was at stake. Speaking for the patriot party, Sieyès insisted, "If the king's will is capable of equalling that of twenty-five million people . . . it would be a *lettre de cachet* against the general will." The majority of the Assembly, having defeated a motion that an upper chamber like the British House of Lords be created, offered the king in September the power of a "suspending" veto over legislation. The king would be able to delay a measure passed by the Assembly from becoming law for up to four years.

When the king refused to accept these provisions and the decrees of August 4, a flood of pamphlets and newspapers attacked his intransigence. The radical journalist Jean-Paul Marat (1743–1793) quickly found a popular following for his new newspaper, *The Friend of the People*. A physician beset by financial woes, Marat was like one of the ambitious, frustrated "scribblers" whom Voltaire, forty years earlier, had scathingly denounced as hacks. Marat captured with stirring emotion and the colorful, coarse slang of ordinary Parisians the mood of those for whom he wrote. The rhetoric of popular sovereignty, some of it borrowed from the philosophe Jean-Jacques Rousseau, came alive in the outpouring of political pamphlets that undermined popular respect for Louis XVI and even for the institution of monarchy itself.

By October, some "patriots" were demanding that the king reside in Paris, echoing a number of *cahiers*. Like many of the most important events in the French Revolution, the "march to Versailles" began with a seemingly minor event. The officers of the Flanders Regiment insulted the newly adopted tricolor emblem at a reception in their honor attended by the king and queen. According to rumor, they shouted, "Down with the National Assembly!"

On October 5, women from the neighborhoods around the Bastille, having found little at the market, gathered in front of the town hall. From there, some 10,000 people, mostly women, left on foot for Versailles, hoping to convince the king to provide them with bread. Some of them occupied the hall of the National Assembly, where they claimed power in the name of popular sovereignty. Later in the day, a large force of national guardsmen led by Lafayette also arrived at Versailles, hoping to keep order and to convince the king that he should return with them to Paris. Louis cordially greeted the women in the late afternoon, promising them bread. That night Louis XVI announced his acceptance of the Assembly's momentous decrees of the night of August 4.

Nonetheless, violence followed at dawn. When people tried to force their way into the château, royal guards shot a man dead, and the crowds retaliated by killing two guards and sticking their heads on pikes. The crowd insisted that the royal family join it on the road to Paris. Some of the women



Women of Paris leaving for Versailles.

sang that they were returning to Paris with “The Baker, the Baker’s Wife, and the Baker’s Little Boy,” reflecting the popular notion that the king was responsible for providing bread for his people. The National Assembly, too, left Versailles for Paris. By putting the king and the Assembly under the pressure of popular political will, the women’s march to Versailles changed the course of the French Revolution.

Reforming the Church and Clergy

As the National Assembly set about creating a constitution that would limit the authority of the king, it proclaimed Louis “the king of the French,” instead of the king of France, a significant change that suggested that he embodied the sovereignty of his people. Alarmed by such changes, the king’s brother, the count of Artois, went into exile after the October Days, and was soon followed by more than 20,000 other émigrés, most of whom were nobles, other people of means, and clergymen.

The Assembly turned its attention to reforming the Church. The decrees of August had ended the unpopular tithe payments to the Church, and now the Assembly looked to the Church’s wealth to help resolve the state’s mounting financial crisis. On October 10, Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand (1754–1838), who had entered the priesthood at the insistence of his family and had been consecrated bishop early in 1789, proposed that Church property become “national properties” (*biens nationaux*). After the Assembly narrowly passed Talleyrand’s measure on November 2, some 400 million francs in Church property—roughly 10 percent of the nation’s

land—began to be offered for sale at auction. The primary beneficiaries of the sale were urban bourgeois and prosperous peasants who could marshal enough cash to buy the land put up for sale.

To raise funds immediately, the Assembly issued paper money (*assignats*), which was backed by the value of the Church lands. Although the law required everyone to accept *assignats* in payment of debts, their value fell dramatically because of a lack of public confidence, and those who used the *assignats* to purchase Church lands or pay debts received a windfall. Even poor peasants were thus able to reduce their debts with inflated currency. Among the consequences of the sale of Church lands, and later of lands owned by noble émigrés, was that more land was brought under cultivation by peasants. The clearing of trees and brush to make room for crops and small-scale farming also put increased pressure on the environment.

The Assembly then altered dramatically the status of the Church itself. On February 13, 1790, it decreed the abolition of the religious orders, deemed politically suspect by many reformers. On July 12, the National Assembly passed the Civil Constitution of the French Clergy. The Assembly redefined the relationship between the clergy and the state, creating, in effect, a national church. Bishops, who could now only publish pronouncements with the authorization of the government, were to be elected by local assemblies at the local level. Ten days later, the king reluctantly accepted these measures affecting the Church.

The Church became essentially a department of the state, which henceforth would pay clerical salaries, the expenses of worship, and poor relief. In November 1790, the National Assembly proclaimed that all priests had to swear an oath of loyalty to the Revolution, and thus accept the Civil Constitution of the French Clergy. His authority directly challenged, Pope Pius VI denounced the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen in March, and in April 1791 he condemned the Civil Constitution of the French Clergy.

The Civil Constitution of the French Clergy altered the course of the Revolution, largely because it was widely resisted and contributed directly to the growth of a counter-revolutionary movement. Between one-half and two-thirds of parish priests refused the oath, and the Assembly prohibited these disloyal, "non-juring" priests from administering the Church sacraments. Nonetheless, many continued to do so with popular support. The issue of the oath split dioceses, parishes, and some households. In some provinces, violence mounted against "non-juring" priests; in others, refractory priests received popular support and protection. Such issues were no small matter, as many Catholics, Louis XVI among them, believed themselves obliged by faith to refuse to take sacraments from the "juring" clergy, that is, those who had taken the oath.

The Constitution of 1791 formalized the break with the Old Regime by substituting a constitutional monarchy for absolute rule. Although the king retained only the power of a suspending veto, he would still direct foreign policy and command the army. Acts of war or peace, however, required the Assembly's approval.

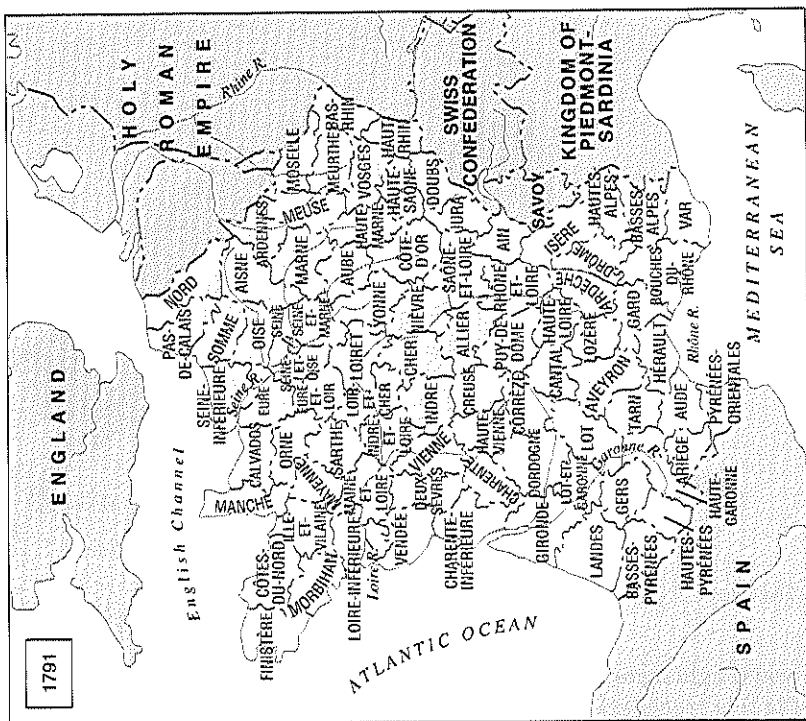
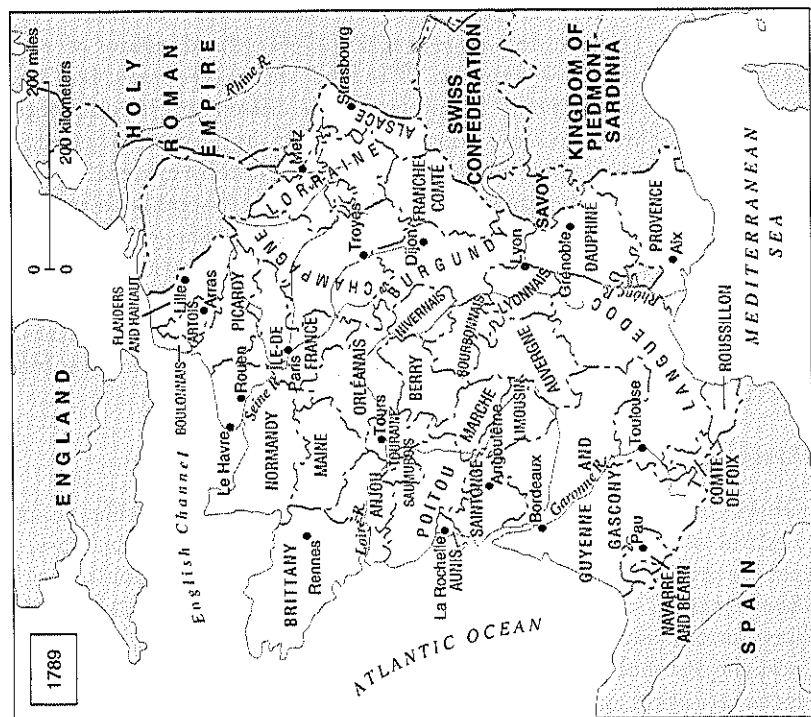
But France was far from being a republic. In sweeping away the Old Regime, the Revolution had redefined the relationship between the individual and the state by stripping away hereditary legal privileges. Although all citizens were to be equal before the law, when the Assembly abolished titles of hereditary nobility in June 1790, it carefully distinguished between "active" and "passive" citizens. Only "active citizens," men paying the equivalent of three days' wages in direct taxes, had the right to vote in indirect elections—they would vote for electors, wealthier men, who in turn would select representatives to a new legislature (see Map 12.1). Critics such as Marat and the populist orator Georges-Jacques Danton (1759–1794) denounced the restrictive franchise, claiming that the Assembly had merely replaced the privileged caste of the Old Regime with another by substituting the ownership of property for noble title as the criterion for political rights. Rousseau himself would have been ineligible to vote.

In Europe, religious discrimination still characterized many states. In Britain, English Dissenters and Catholics could not hold public office and were excluded from certain professions; in Hungary and the Catholic Rhineland, Protestants faced discrimination. Jews faced intolerance and persecution in much of Europe, excluded, for example, from certain occupations or forced to live in specially designated places. In some parts of Eastern Europe and Ukraine, they suffered violence as well.

Now the National Assembly granted citizenship and civil rights to Protestants and Jews by laws in 1790 and 1791 (Protestants had already been granted civil rights in 1787). The Assembly abolished guilds, declaring each person "free to do such business and to exercise such profession, art or trade as he may choose." It subsequently passed the *Le Chapelier Law* on June 14, 1791, prohibiting workmen from joining together to refuse to work for a master. This law was a victory for proponents of free trade. The Assembly also passed laws affecting the family: establishing civil marriage, lowering the age of consent for marriage, permitting divorce, and specifying that inheritances be divided equally among children.

The National Assembly abolished slavery in France, but not in the colonies. This exception led to a rebellion by free blacks on the Caribbean island of Hispaniola in October 1790 against the French sugar plantation owners, many of whom were nobles. It was led by Toussaint L'Ouverture (1743–1803), a former slave who had fought in the French army. The National Convention (which would replace the Assembly in September 1792) abolished slavery in the colonies in 1794, hoping that the freed slaves

MAP 12.1 FRANCE BEFORE AND AFTER 1789 The map on the left indicates the provinces and provincial capitals in France before the Revolution. The map on the right indicates the administrative districts (*départements*) created in France in 1790.





The Three Estates hammering out the next constitution.

would fight against Britain. Half of Hispaniola—modern-day Haiti—became the first free black state.

In 1791, the call for equal rights for women was first made explicit in France when Olympe de Gouges (1755–1793), the daughter of a butcher, published *The Rights of Women*. “The law,” she wrote, “must be the expression of the general will; all female and male citizens must contribute either personally or through their representatives to its formation.” Encouraging women to demand their natural rights—and thereby evidencing the influence of the Enlightenment—she called on the Assembly to acknowledge women’s rights as mothers of citizens of the nation. She insisted on women’s right to education and to control property within marriage and to initiate divorce proceedings. Olympe de Gouges defined the nation as “the union of Woman and Man,” and suggested that men would remain unfree unless women were granted similar rights, stopping short of demanding full political rights for women.

Resistance and Revolution

On July 14, 1790, the first anniversary of the fall of the Bastille, an imposing Festival of General Federation took place on the Champ-de-Mars, a royal parade ground in Paris. But there was no revolutionary consensus in France. In the south, nobles had already begun to organize resistance against the Revolution, and militant Catholics attacked Protestants, who tended to support the Revolution. By the summer of 1791, as the Assembly promulgated its constitution, open resistance to the Revolution had broken out in parts of the south and west, and in Alsace.

Such resistance prompted further calls for even more radical changes. Some of the revolutionaries, who did not accept the distinction between active and passive citizens, called for more democratic participation in political life. From where did this democratic thrust come? The monarchical state had rested on an intertwining network of groups—each with a set of privileges—at virtually every level of society. These included judicial, professional, administrative, and clerical groups, ranging from provincial Estates to artisanal guilds. Participatory and sometimes even democratic procedures within such bodies (or *corps*) may have instilled a tendency toward democracy that affected the course of the Revolution and pushed France toward a republic.

The first clubs were established by political factions among the deputies to the National Assembly. Some of the Assembly's most radical members split off to form the Jacobin Club, so-called because it met in the house of the religious order of the Jacobins. The Cordeliers Club brought together the radicals of Paris, while supporters of the cause of constitutional monarchy, whose members broke with the Jacobins in July 1791, gathered at the Club of the Feuillants. Monarchists formed royalist clubs. Moreover, some women began their own political clubs, such as the Club of Knitters, or joined the Fraternal Society of Patriots of Both Sexes. By 1793, there were at least 5,000 clubs in France. During the first years of the Revolution, however, there was little in France that was not political, and the political clubs were not the only place where political debate occurred. In Paris, there were also meetings of neighborhood "sections," which had first been defined as electoral districts for the convocation of the Estates-General.

Parisian revolutionaries became increasingly known as *sans-culottes*. They defined themselves by what they were without—the fancy knee britches, or *culottes*, which were associated with the aristocracy. The *sans-culottes* were shopkeepers, artisans, and laborers who were not opposed to private property, but who stood against unearned property, and especially against those people who seemed to have too much property, or who did not work for a living. They demanded that a maximum price be placed on bread, which alone absorbed more than half of the earnings of the average working family. *Sans-culottes* were for "the people," as they put it. They were defined by their political behavior. Even aristocrats could be *sans-culottes* if they supported the Revolution. Likewise, laborers or peasants could be called "aristocrats" if they seemed to



A female *sans-culotte*.



King Louis XVI wearing the Phrygian cap.

oppose the Revolution. In a world in which symbols played a crucial political role, sans-culottes could be identified by the Phrygian cap, a symbol of freedom drawn from the Roman Republic—close-fitting, red in color, with a tricolor emblem—in contrast to the three-cornered hat that had been worn by urban social elites. The language of the sans-culottes also quickly indicated who they were; they called everyone “citizen” and used the familiar (*tu* and never *vous*), egalitarian form of address. The political ideal of the sans-culottes was that popular sovereignty had to be practiced every day in direct democracy, in revolutionary clubs and in the sections.

The Flight to Varennes

Fearing the growing violence of the Revolution and counting on the support of the other monarchs of Europe, Louis XVI and his family tried to flee France in June 1791. The king’s goal was to throw his support behind the foreign enemies of the Revolution and return to France to revoke the concessions that he had made. Apprehended by the National Guard in Varennes, the royal family was prevented from continuing their journey into exile and freedom.

The king’s attempt to flee turned public sentiment further against him, and strengthened support for a republic. The day after his flight, the Cordeliers Club called for the establishment of a republic, but the majority of the Assembly feared civil war. On July 17, 1791, at the Champ-de-Mars in Paris, people came to sign (or put their “X” on) a petition resting on the “Altar of the Fatherland” that called on the National Assembly to replace the king “by all constitutional means.” The National Guard opened fire, killing fifty people. Bailly, the moderate mayor of Paris, and Lafayette, the commander of the National Guard in Paris, declared martial law. However, even Louis XVI’s formal acceptance of the constitution on September 14, 1791, could not stem the popular tide against the monarchy.

WAR AND THE SECOND REVOLUTION

The Revolution now entered a new, more radical phase. The king’s flight seriously weakened the constitutional monarchists within the Assembly.



(Left) Georges-Jacques Danton. (Right) Maximilien Robespierre.

The leaders of the Parisian population—Danton, Marat, and Maximilien Robespierre—were Jacobins who had given up on the idea that a constitutional monarchy could adequately guarantee the liberties of the people. Elections brought to Paris a Legislative Assembly, which met on October 1, 1791. It replaced the Constituent Assembly, which had dissolved following the proclamation of the constitution the previous month. Republicans—now identified with the “left” as monarchists were with the “right,” due to the location of the seats each group occupied in the Assembly—became a majority in March 1792.

In the meantime, French émigrés at the Austrian and Prussian courts were encouraging foreign intervention to restore Louis XVI to full monarchical authority. The republican followers of Jacques-Pierre Brissot (1754–1793), former radical pamphleteer and police spy as well as a flamboyant orator, called for a war to free Europe from the tyranny of monarchy and nobility. The members of this faction became known as the Girondins because many were from the district of Gironde, in which the major Atlantic port of Bordeaux is located. Under Girondin leadership, the Assembly’s proclamations took on a more aggressive tone. The French declaration of war against Austria led to the Second Revolution, the formation of a republic, and, ultimately, a Jacobin-dominated dictatorship, which imposed the “Terror.”

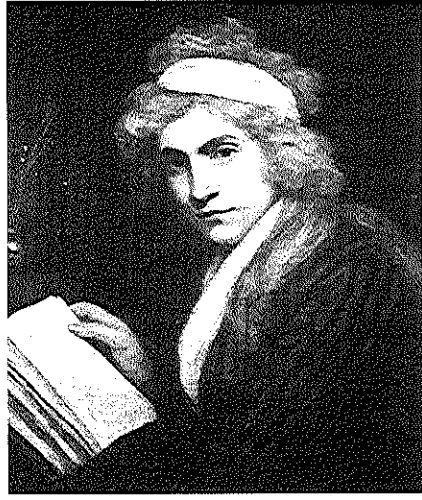
The French Revolution had a considerable impact on the rest of Europe. The early work of the National Assembly, particularly the abolition of feudal rights and the establishment of a constitutional monarchy found considerable favor among educated people in Britain, the Netherlands, and some German and Italian states. Some lawyers and merchants in other lands applauded, for example, measures taken to reduce the independence of the Catholic Church. The promulgation of the principles of national sovereignty and self-determination, however, threatened the monarchies of Europe. The threat posed by the French Revolution brought about a rapprochement between Austria and Prussia, rivals for domination in Central Europe, as well as a wary alliance between Great Britain and Russia.

The Prussian government's first reaction to the Revolution had been to try to subvert the alliance between France and Austria and to undermine Austrian authority in the Southern Netherlands (Belgium). In Vienna, the Habsburg emperor Leopold II was initially preoccupied with demands from the Hungarian nobility for more power. In 1789, a rebellion drove Austrian forces out of the Southern Netherlands and led to the establishment of a republic that survived only until Austrian troops returned in force in 1790.

In London, some radical Whigs greeted with enthusiasm the news of the fall of the Bastille and the first steps toward constitutional monarchy in France. But in 1790, the British writer Edmund Burke attacked the Revolution in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. He contended that the abstract rationalism of the Enlightenment threatened the historic evolution of nations by undermining monarchy, established churches, and what he considered the "natural" ruling elite.

The Englishman Thomas Paine (1737–1809; see Chapter 11) wrote pamphlets denouncing monarchical rule and unwarranted privilege. *The Rights of Man* (1791–1792) defended the Revolution against Burke's relentless attack. Political societies supporting the Revolution, in which artisans played a major role, sprang up in Britain during the early 1790s. A small group of English women also enthusiastically supported the Revolution. Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797), a teacher and writer, greeted the Revolution with optimism, traveling to France to view events firsthand. Angered that the Assembly limited the right to education to men only, she published *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), the first book in Britain demanding the right for women to vote and hold elected office.

The rulers of the other European states felt threatened by the proclamation of universal principles embodied in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. The Revolution also posed the threat of French expansion, now on behalf of carrying the revolutionary principles of "liberty, equality, and fraternity" to other lands. Besieged by exiles from France eager to tell tales of their suffering, the rulers of Prussia, Austria, Naples, and Piedmont



Olympe de Gouges (left), whose book *The Rights of Women* was published in France in 1791. It detailed the notion of equal rights that Mary Wollstonecraft (right) would take up the next year in Britain with the publication of her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.

undertook the suppression of Jacobin sympathizers in their states. In Britain, the seeming threat of foreign invasion helped affirm British national identity (see Chapter 11). Popular respect for the British monarchy and probably also for nobles soared as anti-French and anti-Catholic feelings came to the fore. Pitt the Younger's government lashed out at the development of popular politics in Britain, suspending the freedoms of association, assembly, and the press, as well as the writ of *habeas corpus*. "Coercion Acts" facilitated the arrest of those advocating parliamentary reform.

Thus, Louis XVI's virtual imprisonment in the Tuileries Palace in Paris and the thunderous speeches in the Assembly proclaiming the necessity of "a war of peoples against kings" worried the crowned heads of Europe. On August 27, 1791, Emperor Leopold II of the Holy Roman Empire (brother of Marie-Antoinette, who had not seen him in twenty-five years) and King Frederick William II of Prussia promulgated the Declaration of Pilnitz. It expressed their concern about the plight of the French monarchy and stated the common interest of both sovereigns in seeing order restored in France. Despite Robespierre's speeches warning the deputies that the Revolution must first deal with its enemies within France before waging war abroad, the Assembly, egged on by General Charles François Dumouriez (1739–1823), minister of foreign affairs, in April 1792 declared war on Austria. The stated reason was fear that an Austrian invasion from the Southern Netherlands was imminent. The declaration of war soon seemed a rash move, as the army had been devastated by the desertion of two-thirds of its officers (85 percent of its officers had been nobles before the Revolution). Moreover, Prussia

soon joined with Austria in fighting the French. The early stages of the war produced French defeats at the hands of Austrian and Prussian armies.

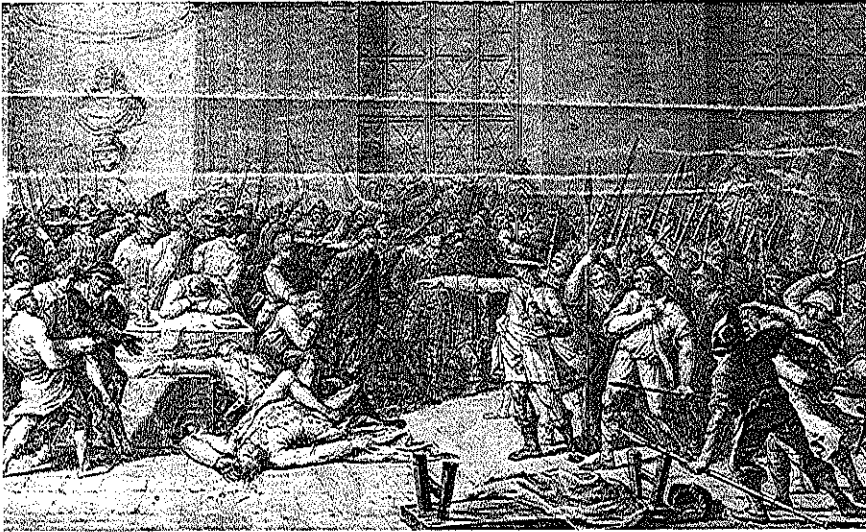
A Second Revolution

The war sealed the fate of the monarchy and the royal family. As France faced the possibility of foreign invasion by Austria and Prussia, the popular fear that aristocrats and clergymen were betraying the Revolution brought down the monarchy. Early defeats on the northern frontier by Austrian troops and soaring bread prices (in part due to the requisitioning of food for the army) compounded popular anxiety and led to a new revolutionary groundswell, particularly in Paris.

In early April 1792, women marched through the capital demanding the right to bear arms. On June 20, a crowd stormed into the Tuileries Palace and threatened the royal family, shouting, "Tremble, tyrants! Here come the sans-culottes!" Strident calls for the end of the monarchy echoed in clubs and in the sections. On July 11, the Assembly officially proclaimed the *patrie*, or nation, to be "in danger," calling on all citizens to rally against the enemies of liberty within as well as outside of France. The Assembly encouraged the sections to admit the "passive" citizens who had previously been excluded because they had failed to meet tax requirements. Troops from Marseille, among volunteers called up to defend the front, sang a new revolutionary song, "The Marseillaise," penned by Rouget de Lisle. It became the anthem of the Revolution. In the meantime, the Jacobins pressed their attack against the monarchy.

In the Brunswick Manifesto (July 1792), Austria and Prussia warned the French that they would be severely punished if the royal family were harmed. All but one of the forty-eight sections of Paris responded by demanding that the king be immediately deposed. Popular discontent and Jacobin agitation came together in August. A radical committee overthrew the city council and established a revolutionary authority, the Commune of Paris. On August 10, sans-culottes from the Paris sections attacked the Tuileries Palace. The invaders killed 600 of the king's Swiss Guards and servants after they had surrendered. The royal family escaped and found protection in the quarters of the Legislative Assembly. The Assembly immediately proclaimed the monarchy suspended and ordered the royal family's imprisonment.

The popular revolution doomed France's first experiment in constitutional monarchy. On September 2, 1792, a Prussian army entered French territory and captured the eastern fortress town of Verdun. The proximity of the allied armies and the fear of betrayal at home led to the imprisonment in Paris of many people suspected of plotting against the Revolution. When a rumor circulated that the prisoners were planning to break out of prison and attack the army, mobs dragged the prisoners from their cells and killed them. During these September Massacres, more than 1,200 people, includ-



The September Massacre of 1792 in the abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés in Paris.

ing 225 priests, perished at the hands of crowds who acted as judges, juries, and executioners.

But just as Paris seemed vulnerable to foreign invasion, a ragtag army of regular soldiers and *sans-culottes* stopped the Prussian and Austrian advance with effective artillery barrages on September 20, 1792, near the windmill of Valmy, near Châlons-sur-Marne. The German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, amazed by the victory of such ordinary people over a highly trained professional army, wrote, "From this time and place a new epoch is beginning." An officer trained under the Old Regime called the resultant warfare of the revolutionary armies a "hellish tactic," which saw "fifty thousand savage beasts foaming at the mouth like cannibals, hurling themselves at top speed upon soldiers whose courage has been excited by no passion."

The Revolution had been saved by the same people who had first made it. Delegates to a new assembly called the National Convention were selected by universal male suffrage in elections. The Jacobins dominated. The delegates arrived in Paris to draft a republican constitution. Their first act was unanimously to abolish the monarchy and proclaim the republic on September 21, 1792, even before news of Valmy had been learned.

The revolutionary armies of proud, loyal citizen-soldiers, however badly armed, pushed Prussian troops back across the Rhine and entered Mainz in October. On November 6, Dumouriez defeated the Austrians at Jémappes in the Austrian Netherlands, which was soon controlled by the French revolutionary army (see Map 12.2). To supply French troops, arms manufacturers turned out 45,000 guns in one year, and a Parisian factory produced 30,000 pounds of gunpowder every day.



MAP 12.2 EXPANSION OF REVOLUTIONARY FRANCE, 1792-1799 The map indicates French revolutionary army offensives and foreign anti-revolutionary army offensives. It also shows areas annexed by the French, areas occupied by the French, and dependent republics established by revolutionary France.

Emboldened by these unexpected military successes, the National Convention on November 19, 1792, promised "fraternity and assistance to all peoples who want to recover their liberty." French troops captured Frankfurt and occupied much of the Rhineland. The Convention also declared the outright annexation of the Alpine province of Savoy, belonging to the Kingdom of Sardinia, and the Mediterranean town of Nice, captured at

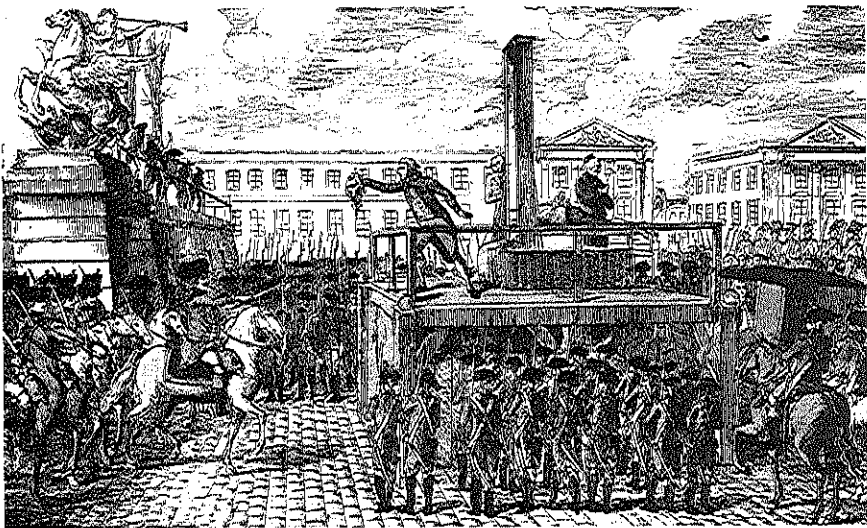
the end of September. They declared them within the “natural frontiers” of France—a claim that contradicted the principles of popular sovereignty and self-determination contained in the annexation decrees themselves. On December 15, 1792, the Convention abolished all feudal dues and tithes in those territories occupied by French armies.

The governments of Britain and the Dutch Republic viewed the occupation of the Austrian Netherlands as a great threat. When it appeared that both states were considering joining Austria and Prussia in taking action against France, the Convention on February 1, 1793, declared war on Britain and the Dutch Republic. Spain and the Kingdoms of Sardinia and Naples joined this First Coalition against France.

When correspondence between Louis XVI and the Austrian government was discovered, his trial became inevitable. Accused of treason, the king defended himself with grace and dignity. He called on the Convention to look after his family as he had tried to watch over those of France. But with the words “one cannot reign innocently” ringing in the hall, the Convention condemned the king to death. On the morning of January 21, Louis XVI was guillotined. The huge throng roared its approval as the executioner held up the severed royal head, symbol of the Old Regime, for all to see.

As the Convention and the more radical Paris Commune vied for authority, the French Republic, still at war, began to split apart. The Girondins and the Jacobins quarreled bitterly. The Girondins were popularly identified with the economic liberalism that characterized the port cities and with the desire to carry the Revolution aggressively beyond the frontiers of France. Opposed to centralizing power in Paris, they wanted a significant

The execution of Louis XVI.



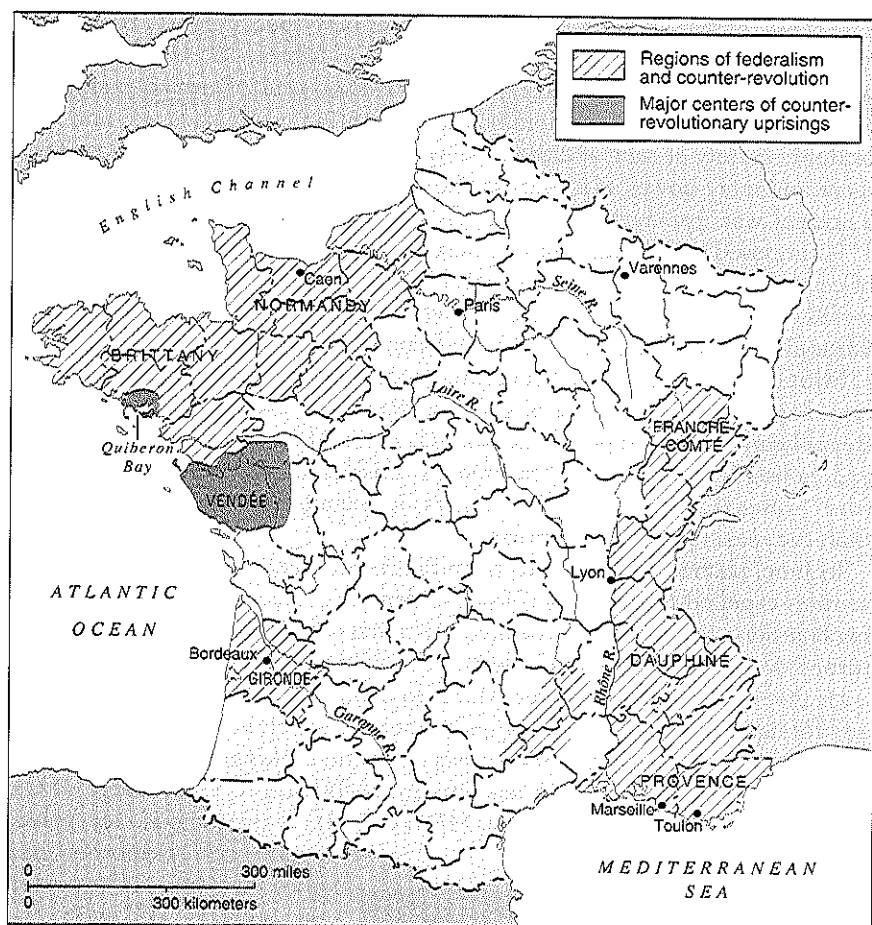
degree of local political control. The deputies of the far left, principally the Jacobins and their followers, sat on the raised side of the Tuileries Hall where the Convention met. The far left became known as "the Mountain" (their followers the *Montagnards*). The political center became known as "the Plain." Backed by the Parisian sans-culottes, the Jacobins insisted on the necessity of centralizing authority in the capital to save the Revolution from internal subversion and foreign armies. The Girondins, more moderate, believed that the Revolution had gone far enough. The Jacobins accused them of secretly supporting the monarchy and demanded swift punishment for traitors.

From the point of view of the Jacobins, those who were not for them were against the Revolution. The sense of vulnerability and insecurity was heightened by reverses in the field. The armies of the First Coalition defeated the French in the Austrian Netherlands in March 1793. Dumouriez then betrayed the Revolution, preparing to march his soldiers to Paris to put Louis XVI's son on the throne as Louis XVII. When his army refused to follow him, Dumouriez fled across the border to join the Austrians and other émigrés. In the meantime, the allies recaptured the left bank of the Rhine River.

Counter-Revolution

The Counter-Revolution began in regions where religious practice still seemed strong and where the Civil Constitution of the French Clergy had met with considerable resistance (see Map 12.3). A full-scale insurrection against the Revolution began in March 1793. This revolt in the western part of France became known as the Vendée, after the name of one of the most insurrectionary districts (the old provinces having been divided into *départements* in 1790). In August 1793, the revolutionary government decreed mass conscription, the *levée en masse*, which initiated the concept of the nation at arms: "Young people will go to battle; married men will forge arms and transport supplies; women will make tents, uniforms, and serve in the hospitals; children will pick rags; old men will have themselves carried to public squares, to inspire the courage of the warriors, and to preach hatred of kings and the unity of the Republic." The unpopularity of military conscription in defense of the republic also generated resistance.

South of the Loire River, the counter-revolutionary forces principally emerged from the relatively isolated bocage, or hedgerow country, where the old noble and clerical elites had been relatively unaffected by the economic changes of the past few decades, specifically the expansion of the market economy. In Brittany, which had enjoyed a relatively light tax burden during the Old Regime, the revolutionary government was hated for having ended that privilege, thereby increasing taxes. Both sides fought with a brutality, including mass executions and systematic pillage, that recalled the Thirty



MAP 12.3 THE COUNTER-REVOLUTION The map indicates areas of federalism and counter-revolutionary activity, including major uprisings.

Years' War (1618–1648) in Central Europe. In insurrectionary areas during 1793–1794, perhaps a quarter of the population perished, as many as 250,000 people, in part because the revolutionary troops, facing guerilla warfare, saw local civilians as potential threats.

The Terror

Faced with foreign invasion and civil insurgency, the Jacobins further centralized government authority and implemented the "Terror" against those considered enemies of the Revolution. The Convention set aside a planned Constitution of 1793 (which was to have replaced the Constitution of 1791).

The rights of the accused were limited, and new special courts prosecuted anyone considered disloyal to the republic. On March 19, 1793, the Convention passed a law permitting the immediate trial of armed insurgents without a jury. The Jacobin-dominated Convention established a Committee of Public Safety of nine and then twelve members, which gradually assumed more and more power as it oversaw the Terror. The Convention also decreed a special war tax, including a forced levy on wealthy people, and in May 1793 imposed the "Maximum"—a maximum price on grain. These measures of centralization and government interference in the economy led to an irreversible break between the Jacobins, who believed in state controls, and the Girondins, who believed in economic freedom.

Military requisitions of foodstuffs accentuated hardship. Poor people rioted against the high price of grain. In Paris, the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women took to the streets, demanding laws against hoarding and calling for women to be granted citizenship. A group called the *enragés* (the "enraged") demanded that bakers be penalized if they charged more than the maximum price for bread.

In June, pushed on by crowds from the radical sections of Paris, the Convention expelled twenty-nine Girondin deputies, accusing them of supporting hoarders, and it ordered the arrest of some of them. Insurgents in Toulon turned over half of the French fleet to the British. In July, Charlotte Corday, a royalist noblewoman, stabbed Marat to death in his bathtub. Tax revenue and foreign trade fell by half. *Assignats*, more of which had rolled off the government presses as the financial crisis continued, plunged further in value.

Two young radical Jacobin leaders strode forward to take charge of the Terror. Louis Antoine Saint-Just (1767–1794), a precocious, icy young deputy whose mother had once had him incarcerated for running off with the family silver, waged war on royalists, hoarders, and Girondins. "Those who make revolutions by halves dig their own grave," he warned.

Maximilien Robespierre (1758–1794) emerged as the leading figure on the Committee of Public Safety. He knew that the Mountain drew its support from the sans-culottes, some of whom supported the Terror. But he also believed that the popular



Jacques-Louis David's *The Death of Marat*.

movement remained a threat to the orderly transformation of political life in France. Historians have offered interpretations of Robespierre that range from the view that he was a popular democrat who saved the essence of the Revolution from counter-revolutionaries to the suggestion that he was actually a precursor of twentieth-century totalitarianism.

Robespierre was the son and grandson of lawyers from the northern town of Arras. After his irresponsible father abandoned his family, Robespierre depended on scholarships for his schooling. At age eleven, he was chosen to read an address in Latin to the royal family at his school in Paris. It was raining and the royal family, it was said, without acknowledging the young student, ordered their driver onward. The royal coach splashed Robespierre with mud.

After completing his law degree, Robespierre defended a number of poor clients, including a man unjustly accused of stealing from an abbey. After he was elected to the third estate, Robespierre gradually established a reputation in Paris for his well-organized and thoughtful but colorless speeches. Contemporaries noted the prissiness of the impeccably dressed, slight man with very pale skin and chestnut hair always perfectly powdered. A favorite of the Parisian *sans-culottes*, the man they nicknamed "the Incorruptible" called in 1793 for "a single will" of the nation to save the Revolution.

Insurrections by supporters of the Girondins against the Jacobins and the authority of the Convention broke out in Lyon, Marseille, Bordeaux, and Caen, where merchants and lawyers played prominent roles in failed "federalist revolts" against centralized revolutionary authority emanating from Paris. Lyon fell to Jacobin troops on October 9, 1793, and bloody reprisals followed.

The "Law of Suspects" promulgated by the Convention in September deprived those accused of crimes against the nation of most of their remaining rights. The Convention banned clubs and popular societies of women. Olympe de Gouges was among the Girondins guillotined. Marie-Antoinette, though hardly a feminist, also went to the scaffold.

The Jacobins were so intent on destroying the Old Regime and building a new political world that they instituted a new calendar in October 1793. The old calendar gave way to a new republican calendar based upon "weeks," or cycles of ten days, and "months" taking their names from more secular notions of the changing of the seasons (such as *Germinal*, meaning "the budding," *Ventôse*, meaning "windy," and so on). September 22, 1792, the first year of the republic, became, retroactively, day one of the "year I."

The Jacobins adopted new revolutionary symbols to take the place of Old Regime symbols and to help maintain revolutionary enthusiasm. Following the execution of Louis XVI, the revolutionaries chose a female image for liberty and the republic, which was ironic in light of their denial of political rights to women. The female image of the republic appears gentle,

non-threatening, and virtuous, representing the abstract virtues of liberty, popular sovereignty, community, and nation. Contemporaries contrasted republican virtue with the abuses of power that seemed to have characterized the Old Regime. They did so even as Jacobin representatives of the Revolution imposed their will wherever they were resisted in the provinces.

During the "year II" (which began in September 1793), radical revolutionaries undertook an ambitious campaign of "de-christianization," a war on religious institutions and symbols. They closed down churches and removed crosses standing in public places. The campaign failed, unable to overcome centuries of firmly implanted beliefs and traditions, even among many people who supported the Revolution. It also turned many clergy who had accepted the Civil Constitution away from the Revolution, generating further resistance.

Outside of Paris, "representatives on mission," armed with dictatorial authority in the name of the Convention, tried to maintain order. They worked with local "surveillance committees" and "revolutionary tribunals" of Jacobins. Some of these revolutionary officials sent counter-revolutionaries to the guillotine. "Revolutionary armies" of artisans and day laborers guarded requisitioned provisions for the military and oversaw the melting down of church bells for war use.

Yet the Terror was never uniformly implemented. Between 11,000 and 18,000 people perished at the hands of the Committee of Public Safety (a fraction, by comparison, of the deaths that had resulted from the Thirty

A Revolutionary Tribunal during the Terror.



Years' War or the American Civil War). About 300,000 royalists, Girondins, or other "enemies of the Revolution" were imprisoned for some period during the Terror. About 15 percent of those killed were nobles or clergy. Thus, nobles and clergy suffered disproportionately in terms of their number in the population as a whole (5 to 8 percent). However, artisans and peasants constituted by far the largest number of those dispatched by the revolutionary tribunals. The majority of these were arrested near the northern and eastern frontiers that had been invaded by foreign armies or in the counter-revolutionary west where civil war raged. During the winter of 1793–1794, perhaps as many as several thousand prisoners—including priests and nuns—captured from the counter-revolutionary armies of the Vendée were taken out into the swirling waters of the Loire River in boats that had holes bored in them and drowned at the orders of a cruel revolutionary official. In all, several thousand people perished.

In the meantime, the tide of the war had turned in favor of the aggressive French armies. Significant French victories on the battlefield undercut the argument that the Terror was necessary because of the immediate external threat to the republic. A French army defeated the Austrians in the Austrian Netherlands in June 1794, forcing them out of Belgium. Another French force reached the Rhine River and captured Mainz. A third French army recaptured Savoy from the Kingdom of Sardinia. The Spanish army retreated across the Pyrenees Mountains.

The Terror then struck the *enragés* leaders in March 1794 after they demanded even more economic controls and an intensification of the "de-christianization" campaign. They were brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal of Paris, condemned, and guillotined. The Committee of Public Safety then went after Danton and his followers, who believed that the Terror was no longer necessary, and thus had been labeled the "Indulgents." They too were condemned and guillotined. Real and imagined conspiracies provided the justification for the Terror, which now seemed without end. "Who will be next?" was whispered among even those loyal to the most radical members of the Committee of Public Safety. In May, Robespierre survived an assassination attempt.

Robespierre sought to establish a secularized "Cult of the Supreme Being" that would serve as a "constant reminder of justice" to bind the people to the new values of republicanism. With the elimination of the *enragés* and Danton and many of his followers, Robespierre devoted his energies to creating a "Republic of Virtue." Early in June 1794, the republic celebrated the "Festival of Reason." The cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris became a "temple of reason." A popular female opera singer, dressed as Liberty, wearing a Phrygian cap and holding a pike, bowed before the flame of reason. The painter Jacques-Louis David constructed huge statues of monsters like Anarchy and Atheism made of pasteboard. After Robespierre set fire to them, a statue of Wisdom rose out of the ashes.

The Terror took on a momentum of its own. Saint-Just warned, "We must punish not merely traitors, but also the indifferent." The Jacobins arrested the Marquis de Condorcet (1743–1794) for alleged counter-revolutionary activity. Condorcet, an influential philosophe of the late Enlightenment, had been elected to the Assembly in 1791. He believed that all people should have a voice in approving acts of government, albeit indirectly, and that all citizens should be equal before the law. He had campaigned against the death penalty and slavery, and he defended political equality and the rights of women. Condorcet died of apoplexy—or committed suicide—in his cell in the spring of 1794, shortly before he was to be executed. The Revolution seemed to have turned on and destroyed the enlightened reason that had arguably helped bring it about.

THE FINAL STAGES OF THE REVOLUTION

Moderate Jacobins and other members of the Convention, fearing that they might be next in line to be purged, overthrew the Jacobin dictatorship. They established a new government called the Directory, which ended the Terror. Caught between staunch Jacobins on the left and monarchists on the right, the period of the Directory was marked by great political instability, ongoing wars abroad, and economic hardship at home. Although the Directory consolidated some of the gains of the Revolution, it too would be overthrown by conspirators led by the Abbé Sieyès and one of the rising stars of the revolutionary army, Napoleon Bonaparte.

Thermidor

The Revolutionary Tribunal of Paris used new powers granted by the Committee of Public Safety in June 1794 to send 1,376 people to their deaths over a period of six weeks. Afraid that they would be next on Robespierre's list, moderates in the Convention began to plot against Robespierre and his allies. They were led by Paul Barras (1755–1829), a follower of Danton, and Joseph Fouché (1758–1820). On July 27, 1794 (the 9th of Thermidor), Robespierre haltingly addressed the Convention, calling for one more purge. But, anticipating his own downfall, Robespierre also murmured, "I ask for death." That night, Robespierre and Saint-Just were arrested at the virtually unguarded town hall of Paris. Robespierre attempted suicide, shattering his jaw with a shot.

Robespierre and the others were executed without trial, their fate as swift and pitiless as that of the Terror's victims. They were followed to the scaffold by more than a hundred of their allies. In the provinces, particularly in the south, the revenge against the Jacobins by their enemies was swift and brutal. Lazare Carnot (1753–1823), a talented military engineer, brilliant administrator ("the organizer of victory"), and one of the twelve members of

the Committee of Public Safety, survived because he had opposed Robespierre. Moreover, the continuing war effort desperately required his administrative talent.

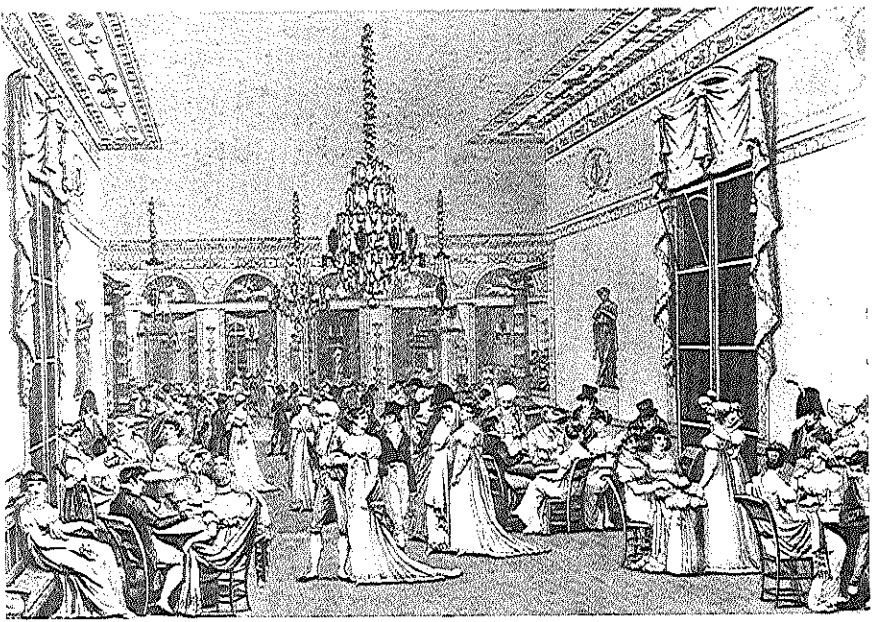
After dismantling the Paris Commune, the victors of Thermidor—the name taken from the period in the revolutionary calendar in which Robespierre fell—set about establishing a new national government. Order was only slowly and incompletely restored in the countryside. The Thermidorians greatly reduced the powers of the Committee of Public Safety on July 31, 1794, and then abolished it completely. In November 1794, Jacobin Clubs were banned.

The Directory: Politics and Society

In 1795 the Thermidorians produced a constitution that created a bicameral (two-house) legislative assembly and a collective executive of five directors. The latter provided the name “the Directory” for this period of the Revolution. The two assemblies included the Council of the Ancients (250 members), which discussed and voted on legislation proposed by the second assembly, the Council of Five Hundred. Two-thirds of the members of the new councils were elected from among the members of the existing Convention. The two councils elected the five directors who formed the collective executive authority, or Directorate. Beginning in 1797, one-third of the members of each council and one of the five directors were to be replaced each year.

People with property benefited from the Thermidorian reaction. By the Constitution of 1795, all male taxpayers could vote, but they selected electoral assemblies for which only about 30,000 men were eligible, a smaller group than in the indirect elections of 1789–1791. But although about 2 million men could vote (out of some 7 million men of voting age), the system of indirect election favored the selection of the wealthiest citizens to serve in the assemblies.

The period of the Directory was marked by a decided turn against the asceticism associated with Robespierre’s Republic of Virtue. The *jeunesse dorée*, or gilded youth, drawn from the bourgeoisie and old nobility, set the social and cultural tone of the day. Wearing square collars and fancy clothes, wealthy young men smashed busts of Marat. The red-colored symbols of the sans-culottes—such as the Phrygian cap—quickly disappeared. Women who could afford to do so wore long flowing white robes of opulence and sensuality, with plunging necklines that would have horrified Robespierre. The familiar (*tu*) form of address, identified with section and club meetings, gave way to the formal *vous* more characteristic of the Old Regime. Crowds in which women played a prominent part demanded that churches be reopened. Boisterous social events amused the middle class; among them the macabre “Dance of the Victims,” a ball to which only those with a relative who had perished in the Terror could be admitted. Some revelers turned up with their



The return of high society during the Directory.

hair cut away from the back of their neck, mimicking the final haircut of those about to be sent to the guillotine.

Under the Directory, the comforts of the wealthy, some of whom had made their fortunes during the Revolution (by buying Church lands or supplying the military), contrasted sharply with the deprivations of the poor. The economy lay in shambles. The winter of 1795 was cruelly harsh. The abolition of the Maximum spelled the end of cheap bread, which rose in price by thirteen times that spring in Paris. The price of basic commodities soared. Near Paris, people scrambled to eat the carcasses of dead army horses, and in mountainous areas people searched for berries and edible roots while trying to stay warm. Peasants suffered the military requisition of food supplies.

Instability

The Directory may have ended the Terror, but it brought neither stability nor peace to France, despite peace agreements concluded with Prussia in April 1795. Prussia accepted the French annexation of the left bank of the Rhine River, the Austrian Netherlands, and the Dutch United Provinces (which became the “Batavian Republic”). In the meantime, French armies continued to press forward against the Austrian armies in Central Europe and Italy. Mass desertion and heavy casualties drastically reduced the size

of the French army, which, after reaching a million men in the summer of 1794, fell to less than 500,000 a year later.

War compounded social and political instability in 1795. That spring, the Directory repressed two small popular demonstrations by crowds demanding a return to controls on the price of bread. Encouraged by the Convention's move to the right, royalists also tried to seize power. The king's son had died in a Paris prison in June 1795, and so the count of Provence, Louis XVI's brother, was now heir to the throne. An army of nobles supported by the British landed at Quiberon Bay in Brittany on June 27, but French forces turned back the invaders with ease. On October 5, 1795, royalists attempted an insurrection in Paris, where they found support in the more prosperous districts. The government called in Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821), a young Corsican general, who turned away the insurgents with a "whiff of grapeshot."

Instability continued. François-Noël Babeuf (1760–1797), who was called Gracchus, plotted to overthrow the Directory. Influenced by Rousseau and espousing social egalitarianism and the common ownership of land, Babeuf concluded that a small group of committed revolutionaries could seize power if they were tightly organized and had the support of the poor. Babeuf organized the "Conspiracy of the Equals," finding support among a handful of Parisian artisans and shopkeepers. In May 1796, Babeuf and his friends were arrested; they were guillotined a year later after a trial. The Directory took advantage of the discovery of this plot to purge Jacobins once again.

Caught between the intransigent, dogmatic followers of Robespierre and the Jacobins on the left and the royalists on the right, and lacking effective and charismatic civilian leaders, the Directory's difficult tightrope act grew more precarious in an atmosphere of uncertainty, intrigue, and rumors of coups d'état.

In 1797, elections returned many royalists to the Council of Five Hundred. Fearful that they might press for peace with France's enemies in the hope of obtaining a restoration of the monarchy, the Directory government annulled the election results. The coup d'état of the 18th Fructidor (September 4, 1797) eliminated two of the directors, including Carnot. In May of the next year, the directors refused to allow recently elected deputies to take their seats on the Council of Five Hundred.

For all of its failures, the Directory did provide France with its second apprenticeship in representative government. The Constitution of 1795 was an important transition between the political system of the Old Regime, based primarily upon monarchical absolutism and noble privilege, and modern representative government grounded in the sanctity of property.

The Directory had rejected cautious British suggestions that a workable peace might be forged without France having to give up its conquests of the Rhineland and the Austrian Netherlands. Perhaps fearful that a more bellicose ministry in Britain might replace that of William Pitt the Younger if such a peace were signed, the French fought on.

Napoleon Bonaparte, who had swept aside the royalist insurrection, now commanded the Army of Italy, checking in with Paris only when it suited him. His armies overwhelmed the Austrian troops in northern Italy. The Treaty of Campo Formio (October 17, 1797) left France the dominant foreign power in Italy. This victory, and Napoleon's boldly independent diplomatic negotiations in the Italian campaigns, made him the toast of Paris. The Austrians joined the Prussians in recognizing French absorption of the left bank of the Rhine River and annexation of the Austrian Netherlands. Reorganized in July 1797 as the Cisalpine Republic, much of the north of Italy became a feeble pawn of France.

Despite these victories, years of war had exhausted the French nation and damaged the economy. France's financial situation deteriorated even further. Inflation was rampant, and the collection of taxes was sporadic at best. *Assignats* were now virtually worthless. Many bourgeois were dissatisfied, having lost money when the Directory cancelled more than half of the national debt in 1797.

In May 1798, Napoleon sailed with an army to Egypt, over which Turkey was sovereign; he hoped to strike at British interests in India. Fearing that France sought to break apart the Ottoman Empire and extend its interests in an area Russia had always wanted to dominate, Russia allied with Britain. Austria also joined the alliance, which became the Second Coalition (1799–1802). Austria hoped to undo the Treaty of Campo Formio and to prevent further French expansion in Italy, where French forces had sent the pope into exile and established a Roman Republic.

The combined strength of the Coalition powers for the moment proved too much for the overextended French armies in Italy. In Switzerland, a combined Russian and Austrian army defeated a French force. When Irish rebels rose up against British rule in 1798, France sent an invasion force to aid the insurgents, in the hope of launching an invasion of England. After the defeat of the Irish insurgents and French troops who landed ashore, a French fleet attempting to land more soldiers was defeated off the coast. British troops crushed a series of Irish rebellions in a bloody struggle in which 30,000 people were killed, and the British navy captured one of the French ships and turned back the rest.

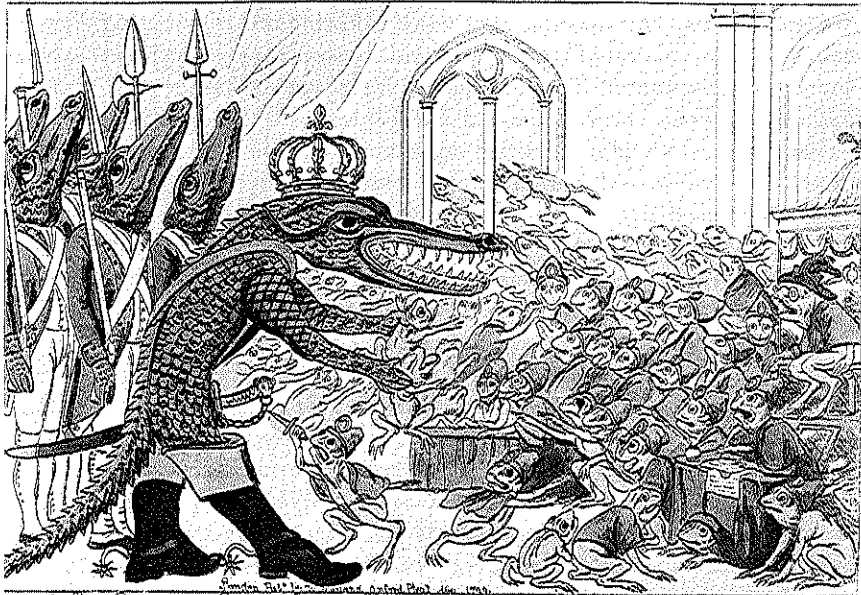
In the meantime, coalition members quarreled over strategy and eventual goals. Russian Tsar Paul (ruled 1796–1801) withdrew from the Second Coalition in October 1799, as he was irritated with the British for insisting that the Royal Navy had the right to stop and search any vessel on the seas.

The Eighteenth Brumaire

The wily Abbé Sieyès (who once replied "I survived" when asked what he had done during the Revolution) became a director in the spring of 1799. He believed France needed a government with stronger executive authority.

Because the role of the army had grown enormously, he concluded that it would emerge as the arbiter of France's political future. In the face of endemic instability, Sieyès decided in 1799 to overthrow the Directory. The go-between was Talleyrand, the foreign minister. The career of Talleyrand provides another remarkable example of revolutionary survival; a detractor once claimed that Brie cheese was "the only king to whom he has been loyal." Sieyès contacted General Napoleon Bonaparte. On November 9, 1799 (the 18th Brumaire), General Bonaparte announced to the hastily convened councils that another Jacobin conspiracy had been uncovered and that a new constitution had to be framed to provide France with a stronger executive authority. The deputies were justly dubious. Some demanded his immediate arrest. Napoleon's response was incoherent and ineffective, but the quick thinking of his brother, Lucien, president of the lower assembly, saved Bonaparte from one of his few moments of indecision. Lucien rejected the call for a vote to outlaw Napoleon, and he ordered troops to evict members who opposed him. Those who remained delegated complete power to Sieyès and General Bonaparte. Would Napoleon, whose rise to power would have been almost unthinkable without the French Revolution, be the heir of the French Revolution, or its destroyer?

A contemporary British caricature of the 18th Brumaire: "The Corsican Crocodile dissolving the Council of Frogs!!!"



The Corsican Crocodile dissolving the Council of Frogs!!! 18th Brumaire 1800

The French Revolution, which began in Paris, swept across Europe. In France, it marked a significant break with the past, although, to be sure, important continuities from the Old Regime helped shape the modern world. In other countries, too, the Revolution effected major changes. These included in some places the abolition of feudalism, curtailment of clerical privileges, and establishment of a more centralized governmental structure. But while some people welcomed the export of the French Revolution, others did not, viewing "liberation" by the French as indistinguishable from conquest. The French presence engendered a patriotic response in Russia, Spain, and some of the German and Italian states, contributing to the emergence of nationalist feeling there.

Like the contemporaries who witnessed the Revolution, modern historians also have had a variety of interpretations of it. Many of them still disagree as to the causes, effects, and significance of the Revolution, debating the dramatic events with some of the same passion as those who experienced it firsthand.

European Responses to the Revolution

In countries over which revolutionary armies swept, enthusiastic shouts for "liberty, fraternity, and equality!" echoed in German, Dutch, and Piedmontese, then disappeared in a sea of French muskets, military requisitions, and even executions. The revolutionary wave did bring about sweeping changes in some of the "liberated" territories, and these changes continued even as Napoleon consolidated his authority in France (see Chapter 13). Thus, in Piedmont, French control reduced the influence of the nobility and left a heritage of relative administrative efficiency. The abolition of feudalism in some of the conquered German states, northern Italy, and the Kingdom of Naples increased the number of property owners. The French conquerors proclaimed the rule of law and curtailed some of the influence of the clergy.

But the French faced the realities of almost constant warfare and, increasingly, local resistance. As the wars dragged on and the economic situations of the "republics" grew worse, the benefits brought by the French seemed increasingly less important. Ruined merchants and former officials joined nobles and clerics in opposing rule by France or its puppets. As the Civil Constitution of the French Clergy led to a violent reaction against the Revolution in France, anticlerical measures in the occupied territories had the same effect. The peoples of the Rhineland, the Netherlands, and Flanders bitterly resented the revolutionaries' de-christianization campaign. Increasingly, the French presence bred contempt and hatred. Bavarian, Dutch, Piedmontese, Austrian, and Swiss patriots found willing listeners. The French occupation gave rise to general opposition and a new wave of national feeling among the conquered. In Great Britain, the French Revolu-

tion also contributed to the accentuation of British nationalism in the face of a perceived threat by its old Catholic enemy in a new guise.

The French conquests in Europe were themselves an exercise in statemaking, largely unanticipated and unwanted by the local populations. Between 1795 and 1799, the Directory established satellite "sister republics" directly administered by France. The Helvetic Republic (Switzerland), the Batavian Republic (the Netherlands), the Cisalpine Republic (Milan), and the Parthenopean Republic (the Kingdom of Naples) were founded with the goal of shoring up alliances against the other great powers. But in the Italian states, only the Cisalpine Republic generated any local enthusiasm for the French invaders, and then only briefly. People "liberated" from the rule of kings and princes found themselves governed by a revolutionary bureaucracy administered from Paris.

The French found support and hired officials principally from the middle class, which had already provided officials in the old state structure. But the French invasions gradually generated a hatred for the revolutionary invaders and in some places a concomitant nationalist response. This was especially true within the German states, where many writers and other people in the upper classes hoped one day that "Germany"—300 states, 50 free cities, and almost 1,000 territories of imperial knights of the Holy Roman Empire—would one day be politically unified.

Historians' Views of the Revolution

Marxist historians long dominated the historiography of the French Revolution. They have described the Revolution as the inevitable result of a bourgeois challenge to the Old Regime, dominated by nobles. Thus, Marxists have interpreted the Revolution in terms of the rise of the bourgeoisie and its struggle for social and political influence commensurate with its rising economic power during the eighteenth century. Marxists have insisted that the nobility compromised the authority of the absolute monarchy by refusing to be taxed; then, according to this interpretation, the emboldened bourgeoisie allied with urban artisans and workers to bring down the absolute monarchy. They have described the emergence of the bourgeoisie as the dominant social class in France, insisting on its growing role in the country's increasingly capitalist economy.

This traditional Marxist economic interpretation of the French Revolution has been largely discredited. Some historians have noted that differences between aristocrats and bourgeois, and within both social groups, had become considerably blurred during the eighteenth century; that most of the "bourgeois" members of the Estates-General were not drawn from commerce and manufacturing but rather from law; and that, in any case, the upper middle class and nobles by the time of the Revolution shared a common obsession with money, not privilege. Thus, one cannot accurately depict the Revolution as having been simply a victory for the bourgeoisie.

Moreover, the Revolution did not expedite capitalism but may even have retarded it, by launching France and Europe into a long series of costly wars.

Views critical of the "bourgeois revolution" thesis have also emphasized that within France the complex nature of local political power, divided among provincial Estates and parlements, and among various groups enjoying formal privileges or monopolies and municipalities, limited the actual prerogatives of absolute monarchy. Many historians now see the Revolution as affirming the victory of men of property—a rubric that included both nobles and bourgeois—over titled nobles born into status and power.

A related interpretation has seen the Revolution as part of an essentially democratic "Atlantic Revolution" stretching across the Atlantic Ocean. By this view, the American War of Independence was the first manifestation of an essentially political quest for popular sovereignty. It influenced, in turn, the French Revolution and subsequent attempts in other European countries to gain political rights, as well as movements for independence in Spain's Latin American colonies early in the nineteenth century.

More recently, another revisionist school has argued that a new political culture was already in place in the last decades of the Old Regime. An extreme version of this interpretation sees the French monarchy as a state well on the way to reforming itself through the collaboration of liberal nobles before the Revolution interrupted this process. One view sees in the 1750s and 1760s the origins of this new, revolutionary political culture, seen in the political and ideological opposition to Louis XV and particularly in the rhetorical violence of the Revolution's first year.

None of these varying interpretations, however, diminishes the significance of the French Revolution in transforming the Western world by providing its first modern European democratic experience. This is why its origins and nature continue to generate excitement and debate today, well more than 200 years after the fall of the Bastille.