

SOCIAL STUDIES 1006

THE AGE OF STRUGGLE

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Louis XVI. Louis XVI became king at the age of nineteen. Having received the news that his grandfather had passed away leaving him to be king, Louis exclaimed, "What a burden! At my age! And I have been taught nothing!" Although the new king had the reputation of being sincere and honest, he was also known to be stubborn and hesitant in making decisions. His wife, Marie Antoinette, was one of sixteen children and a member of the famous Hapsburg family of Austria. Never popular with the French people, Marie Antoinette reminded many citizens of the unpopular alliance between France and Austria during Europe's Seven Years' War. She lost even more favor with the French when, having received word that many were starving for lack of bread, she was reported to have said sarcastically, "Let them eat cake!" Eventually, Marie Antoinette was sent to the French guillotine where she was beheaded.

Actually, Louis XVI would not have been considered a poor ruler during normal times, but the late 1700s could not be deemed ordinary times in France. The Age of Revolution definitely was not the time for a monarch who lacked strength. With a treasury nearing bankruptcy and a people being repeatedly abused by negligent and unfair leaders, Louis XVI was facing an inevitable revolt. Although Louis XVI made some effort to prevent the collapse of the French monarchy, it was too late to keep his country from disaster.

In a desperate and final attempt to reform the government, Louis XVI put forth a plan he hoped would be successful in halting the critical economic slide. Financial experts, called by the king to suggest economic improvements, listed three major things that needed to be done: (1) give greater freedom and encouragement to French industry, (2) cut down on lavish spending by the king's court, and (3) require nobles and the clergy to pay taxes. When these proposals were rejected by the king's court and especially the extravagant Marie Antoinette, France's last chance to avoid a revolution faded from view. Financial disaster was imminent when bankers refused to continue lending money to the troubled French government. Thus, the king was forced to call representatives of the people together in 1789; with this action the French Revolution was underway.

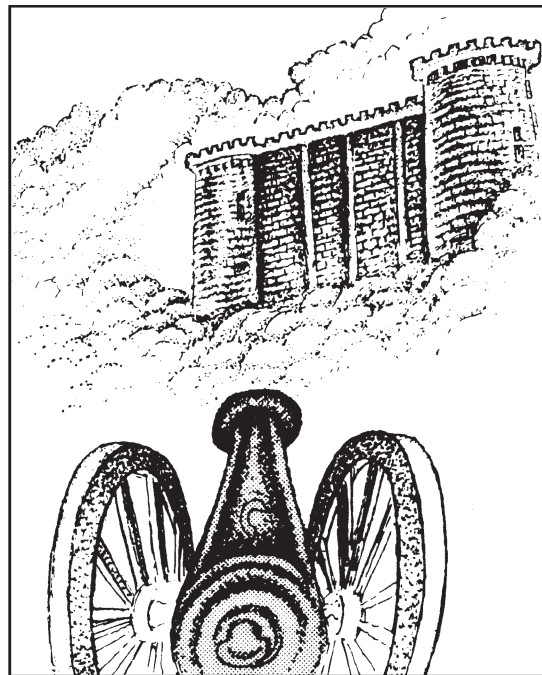
The meeting of these representatives was the resurrection of the former French legislative body known as the Estates-General. They met to consider the country's financial problems, business depression, and growing unemployment. All three classes were represented, with the Third Estate having more voice than the other two groups combined.

When the king tried to get the estates to meet in

their three separate groups, the Third Estate vehemently refused, demanding that all the estates meet together. At the same time, the Third Estate declared itself a National Assembly. Countering this move, the king barred the Third Estate from the meeting. They then met at a tennis court where they vowed in the Oath of the Tennis Court to write a constitution that would be accepted by France. With this action, the king relented and allowed the Third Estate to return. Representatives of the First and Second Estates joined together with the Third, all with an individual vote. Thus came the death of the Estates-General, and the birth of the National Assembly.

Shortly after the confrontation with the Third Estate, Louis XVI blundered into a decision that brought far greater problems. He began bringing soldiers into Paris and Versailles, where the representatives were meeting. This move caused the restless people of Paris to riot on July 14, 1789, resulting in the capture of the Bastille, the hated royal political prison. Bastille Day is still celebrated in France as their Independence Day. A new government was set up in the city of Paris; and a people's army, the *National Guard*, was formed under the command of General Lafayette, who had acquired his fame as a leader in the successful American Revolution.

The Paris riots soon spread to the countryside. Frustrated peasants overran and destroyed monasteries, wealthy mansions, and government property,



Storming of the Bastille

killing many nobles and government officials in the violent uprisings. In an attempt to restore order and discipline, the Assembly abolished the feudal system of serfdom and peasant services that had survived since the Middle Ages. Dealing with the nobility, however, was extremely difficult. Many fled France to neighboring countries, vowing to return someday and gain control. Others of the aristocracy convinced Louis XVI to call troops to Versailles in support of their cause. This decision brought more violence to Paris. On October 5, 1789, several thousand women and some men marched on Versailles from Paris. After demands of food from the National Assembly and the king, the crowd forced the king and his royal family to move to Paris. The National Assembly also moved to Paris realizing how much they were at the mercy of the Paris mobs.

A historical decision for the French was taken when the National Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of Man. Beginning by declaring freedom of speech, the press, and religion, the declaration went on to say that men were not only born equal and should remain so before the law, but were also entitled to the rights of self-government, personal liberty, and fair trials.

By 1791 the National Assembly was ready to fulfill its Oath of the Tennis Court by completing its constitution. Contained within its pages was the provision for a limited monarchy with separate executive, legislative, and judicial branches. The king's powers were greatly limited, giving him no power to proclaim laws himself. The legislature had one house, elected by tax-paying voters. Since only property owners could hold office, most of the power was held by the middle class.

The new constitutional monarchy had a short-lived existence due to pressures at home and abroad. Nobles who had emigrated to foreign countries (*émigrés*) tried to get support in resisting the new government. They dealt secretly with Louis XVI and eventually persuaded him to flee the country. While trying to escape, however, Louis, his wife, and his children were caught and returned. The hatred and suspicion of the people grew against the royal family along with their demands for the removal of the king.

The only legislative assembly elected under the new constitution began on October 1, 1791. They immediately faced a crucial test from foreign soldiers. A group of European countries joined to form an army to invade France and to stamp out the dangerous growing spirit of revolution. In retaliation, Louis XVI was forced to sign a declaration of war against Austria and Prussia. This touched off mob violence once again in Paris, bringing additional pressure against the Assembly to rid France of the king's office.

The constitutional monarchy crumbled, bringing about a complete change of government in the middle of a war. Louis XVI and his family were placed in prison. Lafayette left as commander of the army and joined the *émigrés*. Georges Jacques Danton, leading a group that seized control of the Paris city government, became a virtual dictator as Austrian and Prussian armies invaded France. The type of government France would have was no longer the main issue. Rather, as foreign troops marched across French soil, the concern of the French was whether France would have any government at all. Neither foreign military rule nor dictatorship was desired.



Write the letter for the correct answer on the line.

- 4.7 Troubles facing Louis XVI's rule were _____.
a. unpopular wife, near bankrupt treasury, hesitancy in making decisions, and English harassment
b. near bankrupt treasury, hesitancy in making decisions, people's unrest from poor leaders, and English harassment
c. unpopular wife, near bankrupt treasury, hesitancy in making decisions, and people's unrest from poor leaders
d. unpopular wife, near bankrupt treasury, people's unrest from poor leaders, and English harassment
- 4.8 Suggestions financial experts gave to France included _____.
a. encourage industry, raise Third Estate taxes, and require wealthy to pay taxes
b. encourage industry, cut down royal spending, and require wealthy to pay taxes
c. raise Third Estate taxes, cut down royal spending, and require wealthy to pay taxes
d. a, b, and c

- 4.9 Measures taken by the National Assembly included _____.
a. made Danton dictator, abolished feudal system, and adopted Declaration of the Rights of Man
b. made Danton dictator, adopted Declaration of the Rights of Man, and set up constitutional monarchy
c. made Danton dictator, abolished feudal system, and set up constitutional monarchy
d. abolished feudal system, adopted Declaration of the Rights of Man, and set up constitutional monarchy
- 4.10 Factors during the reign of Louis XVI that spurred on the French Revolution included _____.
a. rejection of financial improvements, recall of Estates-General, Declaration of the Rights of Man, Bastille Day, invasion by Austria and Prussia, and takeover by Danton
b. recall of Estates-General, Declaration of the Rights of Man, invasion of Spain, Bastille Day, invasion by Austria and Prussia, and takeover by Danton
c. rejection of financial improvements, recall of Estates-General, Declaration of the Rights of Man, invasion of Spain, invasion by Austria and Prussia, and takeover by Danton
d. a, b, and c



Identify the following.

- 4.11 Estates-General _____

- 4.12 National Assembly _____

- 4.13 Oath of the Tennis Court _____

- 4.14 Bastille Day _____

- 4.15 Declaration of the Rights of Man _____



Answer these questions.

- 4.16 What two factors forced Louis XVI to recall the Estates-General in 1789?
a. _____
b. _____
What three issues did these representatives discuss? c. _____
d. _____ e. _____
- 4.17 What factors brought the birth of the National Assembly? _____

- 4.18 Why was the outcome of France's government in such doubt after the take-over by Danton? _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

NEW LEADERSHIP

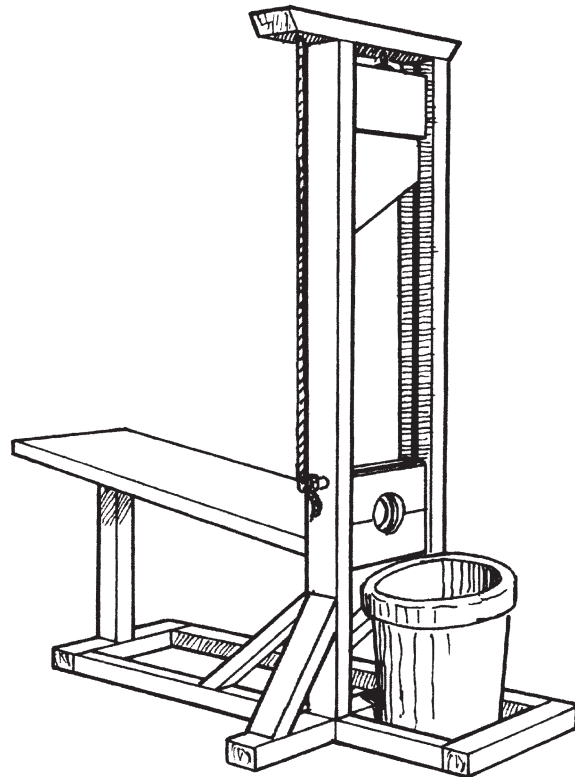
The Monarchy had accomplished little except to put France deeper in debt and to keep her at odds with her neighbors. France was looking for new leadership, new direction. The National Convention was formed, giving an emergency government for three years. This led the way to the Directory, a constitutional form of rule. The five-member committee worked for a new constitution and individual rights. Their success was limited, however. Because of the failure of the Directory, the people looked for a new leader. They found this leader in Napoleon Bonaparte, who led France during times of peace and times of war.

The National Convention Years. France's army, led by its new Commander, General Charles François Dumouriez, defeated the Austrian and Prussian forces. They prevented the conquest of France. The National Convention of 1792 greeted this good news by declaring an end to the monarchy and the beginning of a French republic. During its three-year rule, though, this national government often resorted to dictatorial methods.

Having declared France a republic, the National Convention put Louis XVI on trial for treason. The king was found guilty and sentenced to death. On January 21, 1793, he went to the guillotine where he was publicly beheaded.

Having stopped the invading troops, the French army under Dumouriez continued to push onward until they drove the Austrian and Prussian armies out of their country. Following this success in their homeland, they went on to invade the Austrian Netherlands, capturing the city of Brussels. So impressed were they by their army's triumphs, that the National Convention publicly announced their intention of liberating all of Europe from the rule of monarchies.

The greatest danger to this declaration was the fact that they aimed to achieve their goal by force. As the French Revolution took on an international scope, England, Spain, and Holland



The French Guillotine

joined Austria and Prussia in a **coalition** against the French. Many Frenchmen were also opposed to the tactic of spreading their ideas by the power of gunpowder. Following Lafayette's example, Dumouriez gave up the command of his army and joined the opposition.

The French soon faced another invasion. The National Convention met this new crisis by initiating the drafting of men into the army. The draft gave the army the young men needed to fight the opposition. Led by Lazare Nicolas Carnot, Organizer of Victory, the soldiers brought instant success. The army was now composed of young and patriotic men. Unlike previous forces, the officers were representative of all French estates and were well respected by their subordinates.

Thus, the European coalition was driven off by 1795; however, victory did not come easily for the French. Not only were many lives lost in the fighting, but the country's treasury was also depleted. The French army had grown dangerously strong and popular and had crushed any opposition to the National Convention. The possibility of military rule seemed imminent.

The National Convention dealt strongly with the nation's internal disorder. Trials were quick, with severe punishments. Many who merely fell under suspicion were arrested and often executed by the guillotine.

Constructive accomplishments were also achieved by the National Convention, however. Many helpful reforms were passed under the convention's direction. French laws were organized into a code, a national system of public education was set up, slavery was abolished in French colonies, and the metric system of weights and measurements was adopted.

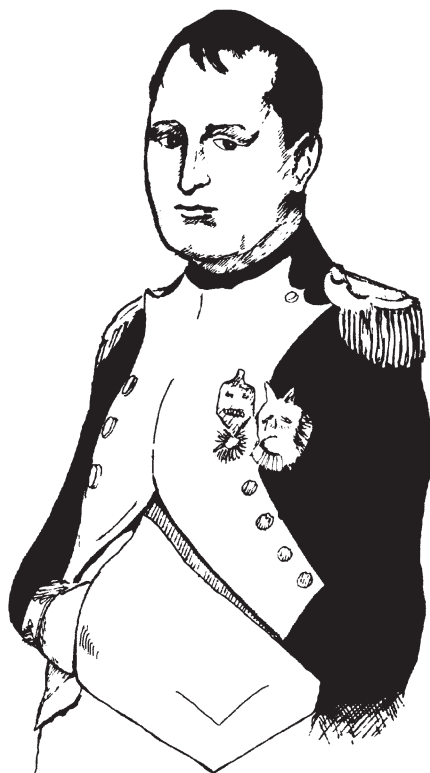
The Directory Years. As the new constitution went into effect in 1795, an uprising again took place in Paris. Quickly smothered by French soldiers, the action marked the beginning of many French military victories under the leadership of Napoleon Bonaparte, a relatively unknown artillery officer.

The constitution drawn up by the National Convention in 1795 restricted voting to property owners, most of whom were middle class. The new government, called the Directory, consisted of a committee of five men, called Directors.

The Directory ruled France from 1795 to 1799. Its reign was short-lived because it was unable to give France a stable government or a peaceful existence. The Directory satisfied few people, trying to be a middle-of-the-road government. Because they continually argued among themselves, the Directors provided inept and unreliable government leadership to the French people. This weak leadership left France wide open to military takeover, which had been long feared by many Frenchmen.

Unlike the Directory, the French army had strong leadership. Continued victories against England and Austria gave many military leaders fame and national recognition, with Napoleon Bonaparte standing high above his compatriots. Having previously saved the Directory from Paris mobs, Napoleon already had the government's respect. He used this advantage in his quest for power.

Born in 1769 on the island of Corsica to Italian parents, Napoleon moved to France to attend military school, where he graduated as an artillery officer. Called a military genius by many, Napoleon led France to victories against the Austrians and Sardinians. He became a general at the young age of twenty-six. Short, domineering, and extremely ambitious, Bonaparte was a master organizer and administrator in political and military affairs. Some would argue that this transplanted Corsican was one of the greatest military leaders of history.



Napoleon Bonaparte

Following an especially impressive triumph in Italy, Napoleon returned to France as a national hero. Fearing his popularity, the Directory persuaded Bonaparte to sail with an army to Egypt to disrupt trade there. This move proved to be a disaster as Napoleon's army met a humiliating defeat in Syria. Bonaparte secretly escaped to France, where he minimized the true situation, even exaggerating his victories.

previous to the Syrian disaster. This tactic was yet another crafty one the master general used in seeking power. With his image as a military leader blemished, the former artillery captain was hardly in the right place at the right time. With unrest at home and military defeats in various parts of the world, France was in a state of uncertainty and confusion. An increasing number of Frenchmen were looking for a strong leader who would lead them out of their fear and chaos.

Sensing the timeliness of the hour, Napoleon plotted to seize power by overthrowing the government. Backed by his army and with the strong support of the French people, Bonaparte forced three of the Directors to resign. Arresting the remaining two, he then forced the legislature to dissolve. Later describing the takeover, Napoleon proudly stated, "I found the crown of France lying on the ground, and I picked it up with a sword."

The Consulate years. The forceful takeover of France gave the French their fourth constitution in ten years (1789-1799). Because its executive branch was made up of three consuls who were appointed for ten years, this new government was known as the Consulate. The true power of the Consulate rested in the office of First Consul, the position to which Napoleon conveniently appointed himself. Along with his command of the army and

navy, Napoleon also exercised the power to appoint or dismiss officials and the authority to oppose all new laws. The legislature, given little if any power, was composed of several assemblies established only as puppets in the hands of the First Consul.

Napoleon modified some of the ideas of the French Revolution. He, too, stressed equality, but explained that liberty meant freedom of opportunity. He taught that people should obey their leader, who in turn ought to govern to the best of his ability for the good of the people. The principles of the Declaration of the Rights of Man continued in effect, and the feudal system remained abolished, allowing peasants to keep their land. The Consulate was effective in that all that Napoleon proposed and provided, the French generally agreed to, as long as the peace and security they sought came along with it. The people had little voice in governing political affairs.

The Christian can experience peace and security through the Lord Jesus Christ; Isaiah 9:6 relates that Jesus is "... The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Through this Prince we have peace, security, and hope for our lives. The peace that men seek through the governments of the world is not a lasting peace. However, the peace the Christian receives from Jesus Christ endures forever.



Complete these statements.

- 4.19 The National Convention, facing a new invasion, initiated the _____ in order to reinforce the army.
- 4.20 The government established by the constitution of 1795 was called the _____.
- 4.21 Napoleon's government was controlled by three _____.

Answer these questions.

- 4.22 What military measures, battles, and reforms occurred during the National Convention's administration from 1792 to 1795? _____
