

The Reign of Terror



The period following Louis's execution became known as 'The Terror' in France. In the years 1793 – 1794, thousands of people suspected of anti-revolutionary activities or of helping France's enemies were sent to the guillotine. We need to look at the situation in France to understand why the reign of terror began. In January 1793, Louis was executed. In February, it was clear that the war was still going badly for France. And in March, there was a peasant revolt in Vendee, in the north-west. In August, the Jacobins declared that 'Terror is the order of the day'. By the late summer, many areas of France were rebelling against the new radical Jacobin government. Because of these threats to the stability of France, the Convention took emergency measures. It set up a Committee of Public Safety (source 1), which had twelve members. Measures such as setting up the Committee for Public Safety, were aimed at allowing the revolution to survive during a crisis. A fear of traitors had grown in France following revolution and war, and this led to another measure, revolutionary tribunals. (sources 2 and 3) The law was changed to try folk quickly.

KEYWORDS

JACOBIN – radical sort of French revolutionary.

TERROR – emergency government set up in 1792 – 1794.

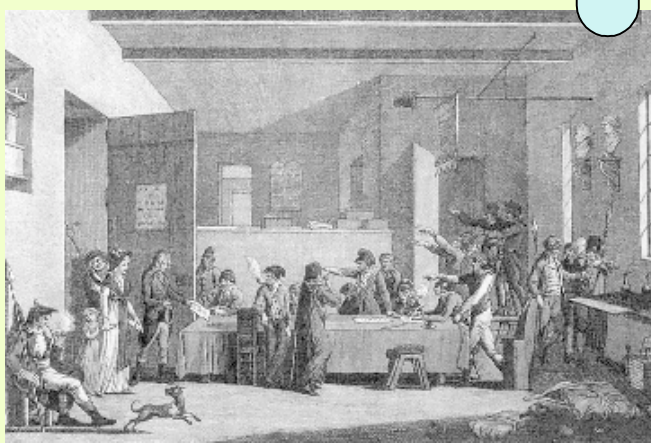
GIRONDIN – moderate sort of French revolutionary

TRIBUNAL – a hearing at court.

SANS-CULOTTES – urban workers who supported the revolution.

Source 1: Decree by Convention, April 1793 on the Committee of Public Safety.

"The Committee shall talk in secret; it shall be responsible for watching over the work of the government...under the critical circumstances it is authorised to take measures to defend the revolution against internal and external enemies."



Source 2: A painting of a revolutionary tribunal.

Source 3: Extract from a law introduced by the Committee for Public Safety, 17th September 1793, to deal with suspects brought to tribunals.

" Suspects shall be locked up.... The proof necessary to convict enemies...can be any kind of evidence....If proof already exists there need be no further witnesses....The penalty for all offences under the law of revolutionary tribunal is death."

Who was executed? One of the first to be executed was Marie-Antoinette, the former Queen. It is impossible to estimate how many people met their deaths. More than 12,000 were officially guillotined, but many others were shot, drowned, or put to death some other way. The Terror was supposed to help the revolution survive, but it was not just the former members of the first and second estates who suffered at its hands. Of the 12,000 or so who were guillotined, 1031 were Nobles; 2923 were from the middle classes; 674 were from the clergy; 7878 were workers & peasants; and 140 were of unknown classes. Some of those who faced tribunal were clearly treated in a most severe manner. Sources 4 and 5 show examples of individual cases where innocent French people were put to death un-necessarily.

CASE FILE: The Terror

Source 4: From the Execution Record, 1793.

C) - Henriette Françoise Marboeuf, aged 55, convicted of having hoped for the arrival of the Austrians and Prussians and of keeping food for them, condemned to death and executed the same day.

D) - François Bertrand, aged 37, publican, convicted of having provided the defenders of the country with sour wine, condemned and executed the same day.

A) - Jean-Baptiste Henry, aged 18, journeyman tailor, convicted of having sawn down a tree of liberty, executed 6th September, 1793.

E) - Jean Julien, wagoner having been sentenced to twelve years hard labour, took it into his head to cry 'long live the king', brought back to the Tribunal and condemned to death.

B) - Marie Plaisant, seamstress, convicted of having exclaimed that she was an aristocrat and that she did not care a fig for the nation, condemned to death and executed the same day.

Source 5: a description of the Terror at Bordeaux.

"A Woman was charged with the crime of having wept at her husband's execution...she was condemned to sit for hours under the blade which shed upon her, drop by drop the blood of her dead husband...before she was released by death..."

The Jacobins controlled the Committee of Public Safety. The leading figure in the Committee was Maximilien Robespierre. (see the fact file) As you can see from source 4, the Committee allowed revolutionary tribunals to convict people without hearing evidence. This was called the Law of Prairial. In September 1793, the Convention passed a law called the Law of Suspects. People could now be put in prison without trial.

The Terror continues...

There were many incidents of horror during the Terror. In Lyons, a Jacobin ordered 300 people to be executed by cannon fire as the guillotine was 'too slow'. At Nantes, barges containing 2000 people were towed into the middle of the River Loire and sunk. Everyone drowned. Birds hovered above the water, eating dead flesh. The river water was so contaminated that fishing was banned. In Paris, thousands watched the executions. Women took their knitting with them, bets were placed on the order the prisoners would be executed in.

Eventually, people got sick of all the killing, and by mid-1794, the Terror had died out. As the Austrian threat decreased, so too did the need for the emergency government. Many now looked for someone to blame for the Reign of Terror. The leading Jacobin, Robespierre found himself at the centre of the blame, despite acting on the wishes and with the backing of the Convention, and was arrested and locked up. In July 1794, Robespierre found himself facing the same fate as thousands of other French people, the guillotine.

FACT FILE:

Maximilien Robespierre

1758 - Born in Arras.

1780s - Becomes a lawyer; defends poor folk.

1789-92 - Elected to Estates General, National Assembly, National Convention. Speaks out against slavery and death penalty. Becomes leading Jacobin member.

July 1793 - elected to Committee of Public Safety.

December 1793 - Suddenly comes out to support the Terror, after years of resisting members of the committee who wanted to intensify it.

1793-1794 - has many executed.

July 1794 - denounced and arrested by the Convention.

July 28th 1794 - Guillotined with 21 of his close supporters.



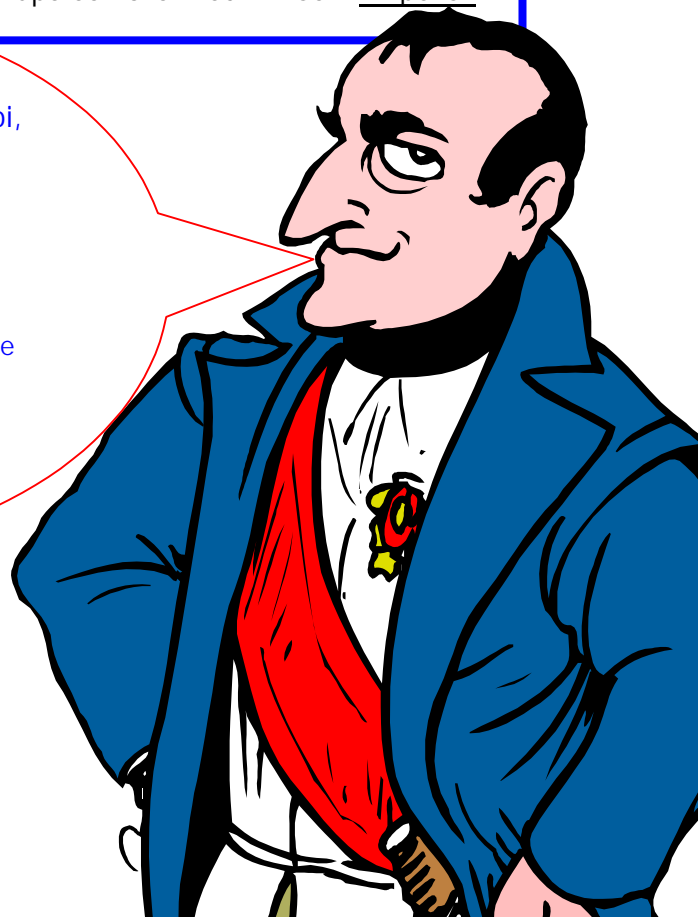
The Rise of Napoleon

As you already know, Napoleon seized power in **November 1799**. But, who was he? And what had he done?

Napoleon Bonaparte was born on the island of Corsica in **1769**. He was the son of a noble. In **1784** Napoleon won a scholarship to the élite military training college in Paris. In **1785**, at the age of 16, Napoleon became second lieutenant in the artillery. Napoleon became sympathetic to the Revolution in **1789**. In the Battle of Toulon in **1793**, Napoleon led a victorious attack on a Royalist fort and was then promoted to Brigadier General. Napoleon gained more attention in **1795** when he put down a pro-royalist coup in Paris. He was promoted to Major General. In **1796**, Napoleon married Josephine Beauharnais. He was put in charge of the French army fighting the Austrians in Italy. Between **1796 and 1797**, Napoleon re-organised the French army and inspired the dispirited soldiers. They went on to win several great victories over the Austrians and Italians. The Austrians were forced to sign a ceasefire at Leoben in **1797**. Between **1798 and 1799** Napoleon's plans to attack the British went badly wrong. His army was ravaged by plague and sickness, and Nelson's British Navy destroyed many of Napoleon's own ships. Still, Napoleon seized Malta and had several victories in Egypt during the expedition. Napoleon returned to Paris in **August 1799**, after hearing of the military crisis facing France and on **November 11th 1799**, Napoleon seized control of France in the 'coup d'état' (or Coup de Brumaire). Following the Coup, a new constitution was introduced, and Napoleon was made First Consul of France. Then, on **December 2nd, 1804**, in the presence of the Pope, Napoleon crowned himself Emperor.

Bonjour mon est ches amis, c'est moi, Napoleon! Some keywords for you!
ROYALIST - a supporter of the King
NELSON - The British Admiral who defeated me!
COUP - a takeover of Power
FIRST CONSUL - My title following the coup
EMPEROR - I crowned myself in 1804

TASK!
Complete a timeline of Napoleon's life using the information above.



How Did France Change Under Napoleon?

Napoleon has been remembered not only for his military victories, but also as a 'Great Reformer', bringing about improvements to France and French Society. Napoleon himself said: "I intend to keep the Revolution's useful changes, but not to abandon the good institutions it mistakenly destroyed." So, how did France change under Napoleon? And did it change for the better? To answer these questions, we need to look at France before, and during Napoleon's rule.

CHANGES TO EDUCATION

UNDER THE KING - Only the privileged went to schools, which were run by The Church. Pupils were taught respect for elders and religion.

THE REVOLUTION brought some change. Revolutionaries proclaimed that school was for everyone, and state schools were even proposed, but none were set up. The Aim was to encourage pupils to investigate and question.

UNDER NAPOLEON - The education system in France changed. Four grades of school were set up; primary, secondary, lycées (schools run on military lines) and technical schools. Schools now stressed the importance of obedience and military values - although primary education stayed almost as it had been before 1789. Science and maths became more important subjects in secondary schools. In 1814 9000 pupils were attending the 36 lycées - out of a population of 30 million.

THINK!! How much change had taken place in schools?



GOVERNING FRANCE

UNDER THE KING - Louis had absolute power, and could not be removed. There was no National Assembly (or Parliament) and there were no elections, so people did not have a say in who was in power in France. The King made all the laws, and as a result, some were very out of date such as the Estates system, and inequality of different groups in society.

THE REVOLUTION brought changes. There was no single ruler of France, and a National Assembly was elected by voters (all men). The Assembly made all the laws, which meant that many new laws were introduced.

UNDER NAPOLEON - More changes were introduced. Napoleon became Emperor of France, and could not be removed from power. There were two National Assemblies, with members chosen by Napoleon from candidates elected by the people. All men could vote, but after 1804, there were no elections. All laws were made by the Assemblies.

THINK!! In what ways were the regimes of Napoleon and Louis different?



The Code Napoleon, 1804

The Code stated that:

- All people were declared equal before the law. There were no longer any special privileges for Nobles, Churchmen or rich people
- Feudal rights were ended.
- Trial by Jury was guaranteed.
- Religious Freedom was guaranteed.
- Parents were given powers over their children.
- Wives were not allowed to sell or give away property.
- A wife could only own property with her husband's consent in writing.
- Fathers were allowed to imprison their children for any time up to a month.

In 1804 the Napoleonic Code was introduced. It had a set of clear laws, applicable to all members of French Society. The Code was also introduced into other parts of Europe conquered by Napoleon, like Italy, Spain and some parts of Germany.

"The husband must possess the absolute power and right to say to his wife: 'Madam you shall not go to the theatre, you shall not receive such and such a person, for the children you bear shall be mine'. Women should stick to knitting."
Comments made by Napoleon when drawing up the Code.

INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS.

France under Napoleon sometimes seemed similar to France under King Louis. The Prison and Courts system was 'officially' different, in that you could no longer be put in prison without charge and everyone was equal in the courts, nobles did not have special rights anymore, but even in Napoleon's rule there were restrictions. He had a secret police force, which from 1810 could arrest people without trial. Napoleon, like King Louis, and unlike the Revolution, tried to control and control the newspapers, and free speech was not allowed in France or the French Empire.



"If the press is not controlled, I shall not remain three days in power." *Napoleon.*

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

During the Revolution, the land owned by the Catholic Church was sold off and any religion was permitted (only Catholicism was practised in the 'Ancien Regime'). In 1802, Napoleon made an agreement with the Pope called the Concordat in which the Pope agreed that the Church would not get its land back and in return, Catholicism was accepted as the religion of the majority. As well as this, it was agreed that Bishops were to be chosen by Napoleon, and agreed by the Pope. This meant that the government now had greater control over the Church.

"The People must have religion, and religion must be in the hands of the government."
Napoleon.



ARE YOU STILL THINKING? How far have things changed under Napoleon? Are his ways really that different from Louis?