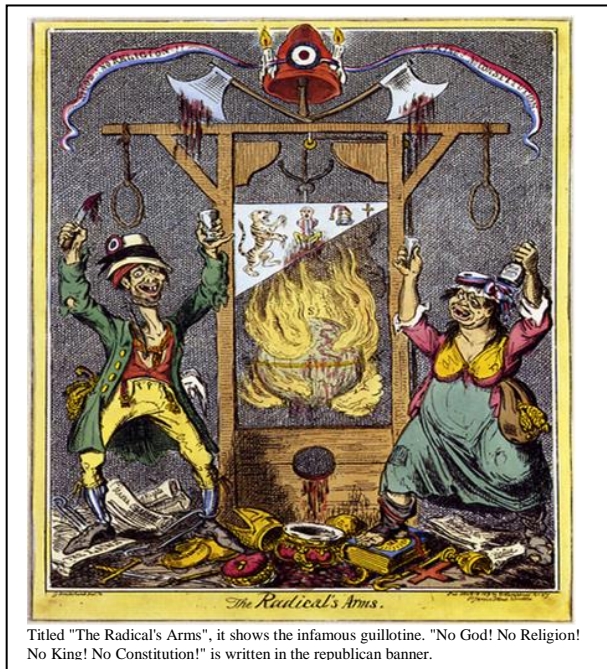


Aim #6: Why did the French Revolution turn radical?



Mini Lecture

- The passage of a new constitution & the creation of the Legislative Assembly did not end the turmoil in France- with falling currency values, rising prices, & food shortages.
- Working class men & women called **sans-culottes** pushed the revolution in a more radical direction & demanded a **republic**. They found support among the **Jacobins** party- who aimed to preserve & spread the revolution at all costs.
- In 1793, the revolution entered a frightening & bloody phase. The war vs. Austria was not going well for France & some felt the king was in aiding France's enemies.
- Radicals took control of the Assembly & called for an election of a new legislative body called the **National Convention** w/ a new constitution- which abolished the monarchy & made France into a Republic.
- The Convention held a trial for the king & found him guilty of crimes against the people. The Jacobin leader was **Maximilien Robespierre**, a believer in the general will as described by Rousseau. He called for execution & on January 21, 1793, Louis XVI was taken to the **guillotine**.
- War with other European nations & internal rebellions, the Convention created the Committee of Public Safety (led by an absolute Robespierre) to deal w/ these issues (financial & military crisis). They enacted measures to stabilize the economy, expansion of the army, & putting down counterrevolutionaries- this action began the **Reign of Terror** (lasting from Sep. 1793-July 1794).
- During the Reign of Terror, special courts conducted speedy trials for those suspected of resisting the Revolution ("enemies of the Republic"), many were victims of false accusations & about 20-40,000 were executed by guillotine. Victims included aristocrats, clergy, & even ordinary people suspected of treason, even if no actual proof existed.
- For Robespierre, the Reign of Terror was necessary. He believed that only an authoritarian, violent government could defend the gains made by the Revolution.
- As the Terror claimed more victims & Robespierre became more aggressive, he was overthrown & executed by guillotine- ending the Reign of Terror & the Radical phase.

Political Spectrum

(French Revolution)

Jacobins The Plain Girondists Royalists

Radicals Liberal Moderate Conservative Reactionary
(Today)

Favors extreme change Favors some change Favors minor change Keep as is Return to past traditions



THE REIGN OF TERROR 1793-1794



Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite!

PROCLAMATION OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

22 September

1792



Assignat from the 1792 issue: 400 livres

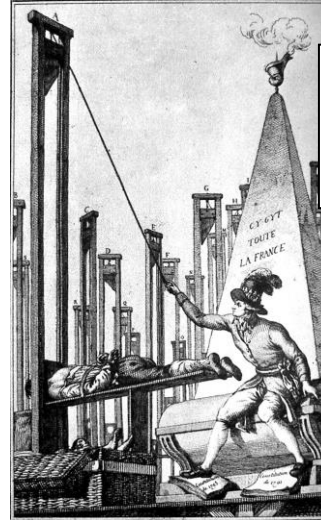
Review Questions:

1. What type of government did each of the following want- Moderates, Radicals, Reactionaries?
2. What was the Reign of Terror?
3. Why did the Reign of Terror/Radical Stage come to an end?

March 1793: Robespierre leads Committee of Public Safety and the Reign of Terror begins

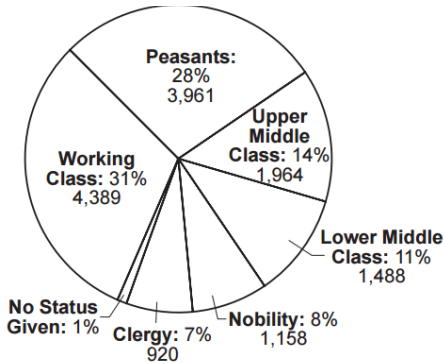
The Committee of Public Safety was set up in 1793 to defend France against **internal** and **external** enemies. The original leaders of the Committee of Public Safety were replaced with more radical revolutionaries who were willing to defend the revolution at any cost. One of the most well-known new leaders was **Maximilien Robespierre** who led the **Reign of Terror**.

The **Reign of Terror** was a period from 1793 until 1794 when the Committee of Public Safety **suspended** rights guaranteed in the new constitution leading to wide-scale **repression**. The freedom of the press, previously an important aspect of the revolution, was taken away. The influence of the Catholic Church was attacked. Spies were sent throughout the country to find “enemies of the revolution.” During this time, those suspected of being an enemy of the revolution were executed by **guillotine**.



The text at the bottom of the engraving reads (translated): “Robespierre, after having all the French guillotined, beheads the executioner with his own hand.”

Executions During the Reign of Terror



1. Why did the Committee of Public Safety form?
2. Who was Maximilien Robespierre?
3. What actions did the Committee of Public Safety take during the Reign of Terror to expand the revolution and fight its “enemies?”
4. What was the purpose of the Reign of Terror?
5. According to the pie chart, which groups suffered the most during the Reign of Terror? Based on what you’ve learned about the goals of the French Revolution, why is this impact unexpected or surprising?

Robespierre’s Changes to the Government

... When he entered the Committee [of Public Safety], Maximilien [Robespierre] **persuaded** the other members to accept new procedures, to reorganize the clerical staff and to hold weekly meetings with the other Committee [of General Security]. The press, which, from intimate knowledge, the leader regarded as dangerous, was to be temporarily **deprived** of its freedom. Only when true **democracy** had been established would it be possible to allow journalists to have their say again! In all such decisions, the will and interests of the majority of citizens of France were both the pretext [alleged reason] and the inspiration. In other words: the government was to remain revolutionary until peace had been restored and all enemies put to flight...

Source: John Laurence Carr, Robespierre: The Force of Circumstance, St. Martin’s Press from the NYS Global History and Geography Regents Exam, January 2015

The Law of Suspects

This law, passed on 17 September 1793 [by Robespierre and the National Convention], authorized the creation of revolutionary tribunals to try those **suspected of treason** against the Republic and to punish those convicted with death. This legislation in effect made the penal justice system into the enforcement arm of the revolutionary government, which would now set as its primary responsibility not only the maintenance of public order but also the much more difficult and controversial task of identifying internal enemies of the Republic—such as “profiteers” who violated the Maximum [decree to fix prices]—and then removing them from the **citizenry**, where they might subvert [sabotage] the general will...

Source: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution, online site, a collaboration of the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media and the American Social History Project from the NYS Global History and Geography Regents Exam, January 2015.

1. According to both documents above, what changes did Robespierre make during the Reign of Terror?
2. Did these changes support the ideals of the French Revolution or betray them? Explain.

“On the Moral and Political Principles of Domestic Policy” a speech given to the Convention by Maximilien Robespierre, Feb. 5, 1794

To found and **consolidate** democracy, to achieve the peaceable reign of the constitutional laws, we must end the war of liberty against **tyranny** and pass safely across the storms of the revolution: such is the aim of the revolutionary system that you have **enacted**. Your conduct, then, ought also to be regulated by the stormy circumstances in which the republic is placed; and the plan of your administration must result from the spirit of the revolutionary government combined with the general principles of democracy...

Now, what is the fundamental principle of the democratic or popular government—that is, the essential spring which makes it move? It is virtue; I am speaking of the public virtue which affected so many prodigies in Greece and Rome and which ought to produce much more surprising ones in republican France; of that virtue which is nothing other than the love of country and of its laws...

The whole development of our theory would end here if you had only to pilot the vessel of the Republic through calm waters; but the tempest roars, and the revolution imposes on you another task.

We must smother the internal and external enemies of the Republic or **perish** with it; now in this situation, the first maxim of your policy ought to be to lead the people by reason and the people’s enemies by terror.

If the spring of popular government in time of peace is virtue, the springs of popular government in revolution are at once virtue and **terror**: virtue, without which terror is fatal; terror, without which virtue is powerless. Terror is nothing other than justice, prompt, severe, inflexible; it is therefore [part] of virtue; it is not so much a special principle as it is a consequence of the general principle of democracy applied to our country’s most urgent needs...

1. What is Robespierre’s purpose in writing this document?
2. Who is his audience?