



THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

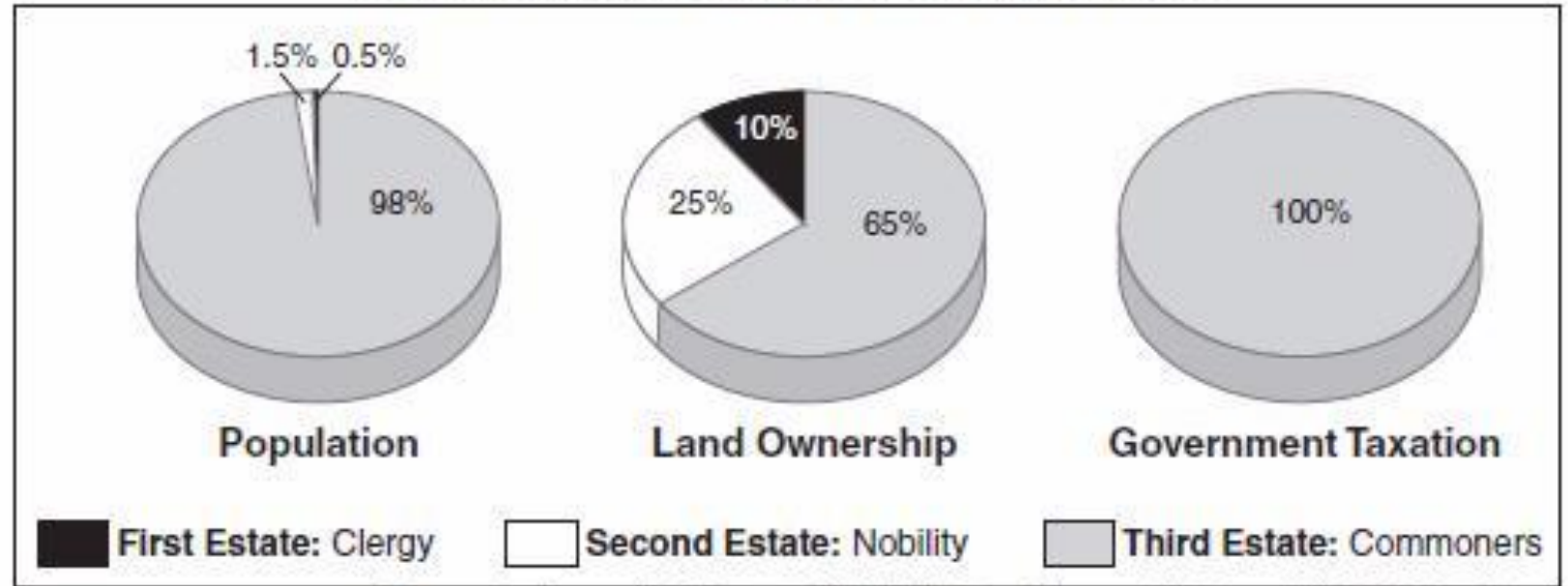
The Ancien Régime:

Since Medieval times France had been divided into three “estates” or social classes

- First Estate: Clergy
- Second Estate: Nobility
- Third Estate: everyone else, rich or poor.
 - This estate included everyone from peasants and remaining serfs to bankers and newly rich merchants (bourgeoisie)



The Three Estates in Pre-Revolutionary France



Source: Jackson J. Spielvogel, *World History*, Glencoe/McGraw-Hill, 2003 (adapted)

By 1700s the third estate made up a majority of the population (almost 27 million people), was responsible for 100% of the taxes funding the government, and owned about 65% of the land.

Famine and hunger spread



- 1787 and 1788 saw poor harvests and slowed manufacturing
 - food shortages
 - rising food prices
 - unemployment
- Desperate for survival, Parisians began pawning whatever they could

Spending problems

- A series of costly wars with the British in the Americas extended French resources to the breaking point
- Led to the loss of many French colonies



- The royal family and nobles also continued to spend on luxury items
- The Palace of Versailles was built in 1628, but every king since had added on to it.
 - The royal court had a “gilded cage” for troublesome nobles
 - 350 bedrooms
 - Furniture made out of silver
 - Gardens stretching over 800 hectares
 - 1 hectare = 100 acres





Marie Antoinette

- Nicknamed “Madam Deficit”
- Youngest child of Maria Teresa of Austria Marie Antoinette married Louis XVI at 14 years old
- Initially popular Marie Antoinette was known for lavish parties and extravagant outfits
 - Would eventually catch up with her
- Also funded artists and writers, helped fund the first hot air balloon, and encouraged French support of the American Revolution

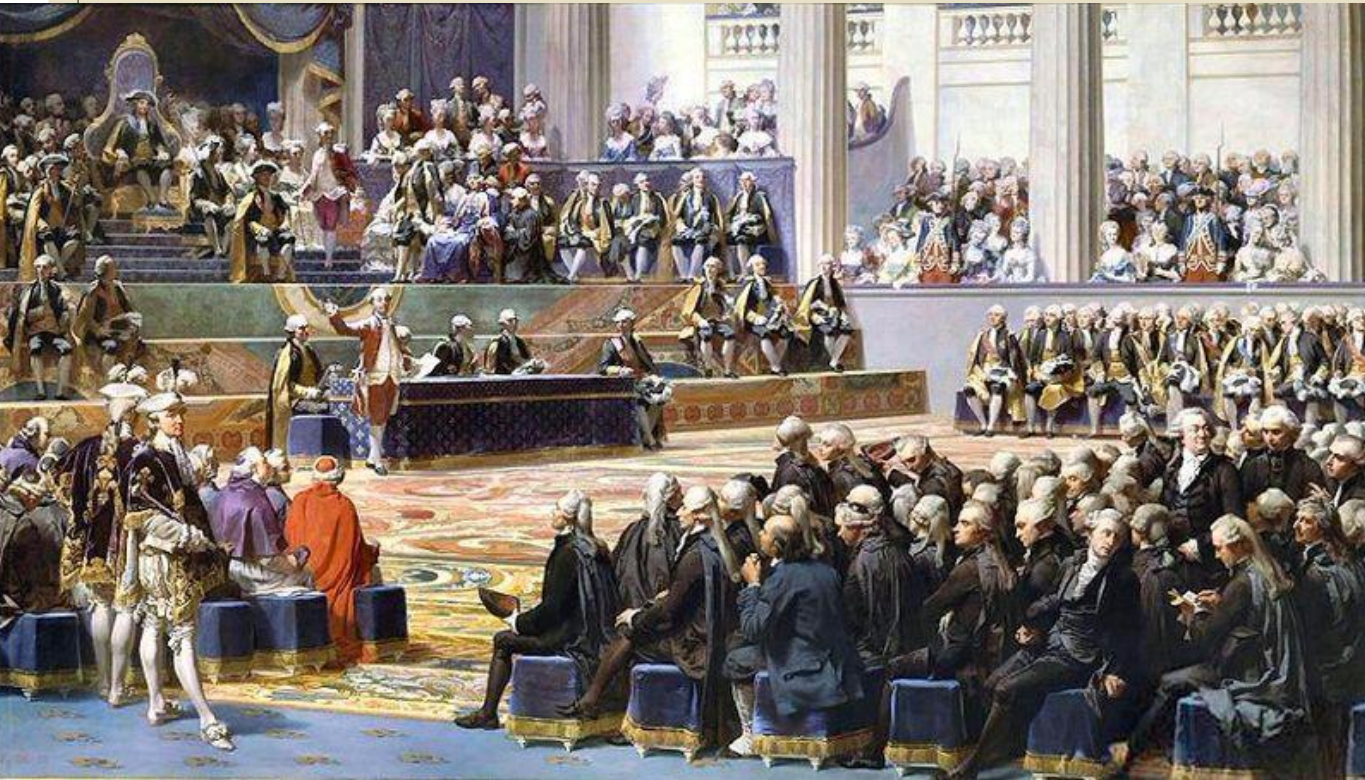


The Breaking Point

- May 5th 1789
- King Louis XVI was worried about the financial collapse of his country.
- Called for a meeting of the Estates-General
 - Would bring representatives of all three estates together for the first time since 1614.



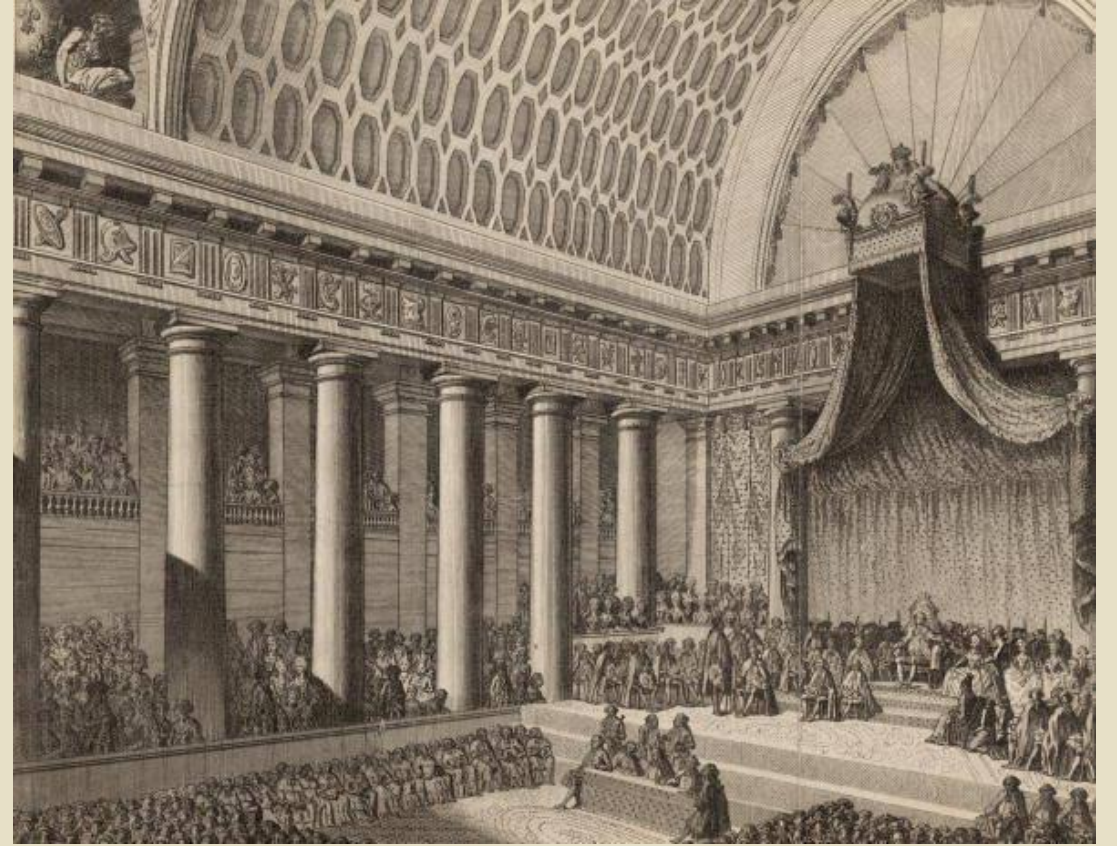
The Estates-General



- In the Estates-General the First and Second Estates had 300 representatives each while the Third sent almost 600.
- The Third Estate proposed a constitutional monarchy with taxation being extended to the other estates.
 - Demanded that each delegate be given a vote, as opposed to each estate having one vote.
 - With the help of a couple swing clergymen and nobles, they would have the majority vote.
 - Louis declined the offer

June 17, 1789

- Fed up with the dilly dallying of the Estates-General, the Third Estate took matters into their own hands, declaring themselves the National Assembly and promising that they would draft a constitution.
- This freaked out the remaining Estates who, three days later, locked the newly formed National Assembly out of the hall.



The Tennis Court Oath

- The National Assembly ran to nearest, biggest building they could think of: the local tennis court.
- There they swore that they would continue to meet, no matter the circumstances, until they had a finished constitution.
 - This became known as the Tennis Court Oath.



Bastille Day

- While Louis XVI prepared to use military force on the increasingly insubordinate Third Estate, they had other ideas.
- July 14, 1789 900 hundred hungry, angry Parisians (including women and children) stormed the Bastille - an old fortress that served as a prison and armory.
- After cutting off the prison warden's head, releasing seven prisoners, and demolishing the Bastille brick by brick the king's army got the message and abandoned the city of Paris to the rebels.





◦ Seeing their success, people revolted across the country in what became known as the Great Fear.

- August 26, 1789 -The National Assembly adopts the Declaration of the Rights of Man
- Promised “the natural and imprescriptible rights of man” to “liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.”



- October 5-6, 1789
- Months later King Louis XVI and his family refused to recognize the National Assembly.
- Angry peasant women who were upset by stories of bread being hoarded by the royal family grabbed whatever pitchfork/musket/shovel/cannon/broomstick they found lying around and marched to the palace.
- Louis not only agreed to accept the National Assembly but also forced him to move himself and his family to Paris where they would remain virtual prisoners.

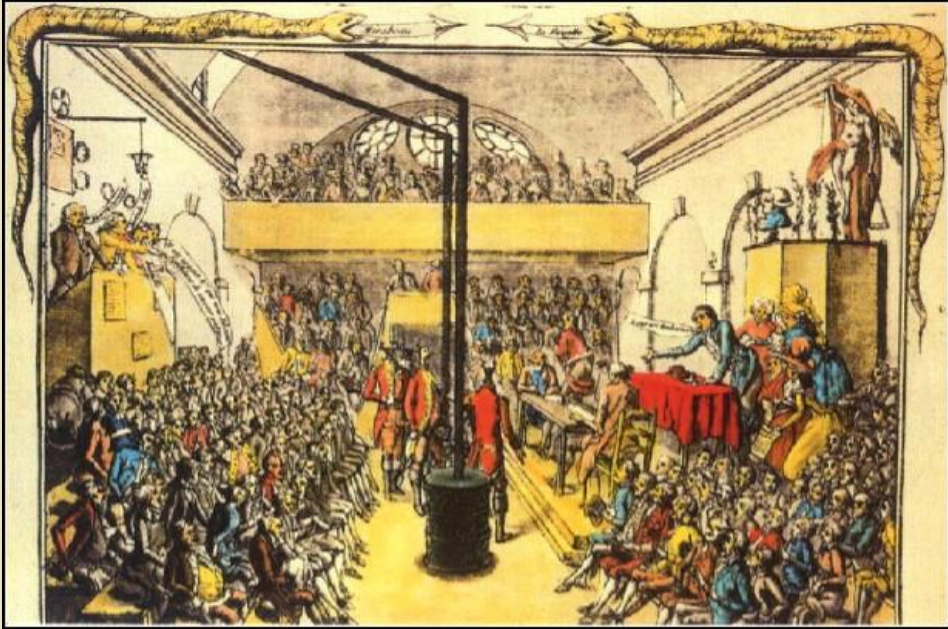


Olympe de Gouges

- The Declaration of the Rights of Woman (September 1791)
- A self-educated butcher's daughter from the south of France
- Replaced the word "Man" with "Woman" or "Citizen" with "Citizeness"
 - Ex: "The law should be the expression of the general will. All citizenesses and citizens should take part, in person or by their representatives, in its formation. It must be the same for everyone."
- Beheaded in 1793 for being an "unnatural woman"



Political clubs



- Despite the nice sounding words of the Declaration life for the average French citizen did not immediately improve or change.
- People began founding political clubs promoting their political views. The most popular were the Jacobins:
 - The Girondins –
 - Moderate liberals
 - often representing non-Parisians
 - generally in favor of keeping a limited monarchy
 - The Mountain –
 - Representing the interest of Paris radicals,
 - wanted to end the monarchy, anything resembling the Ancien Regime.

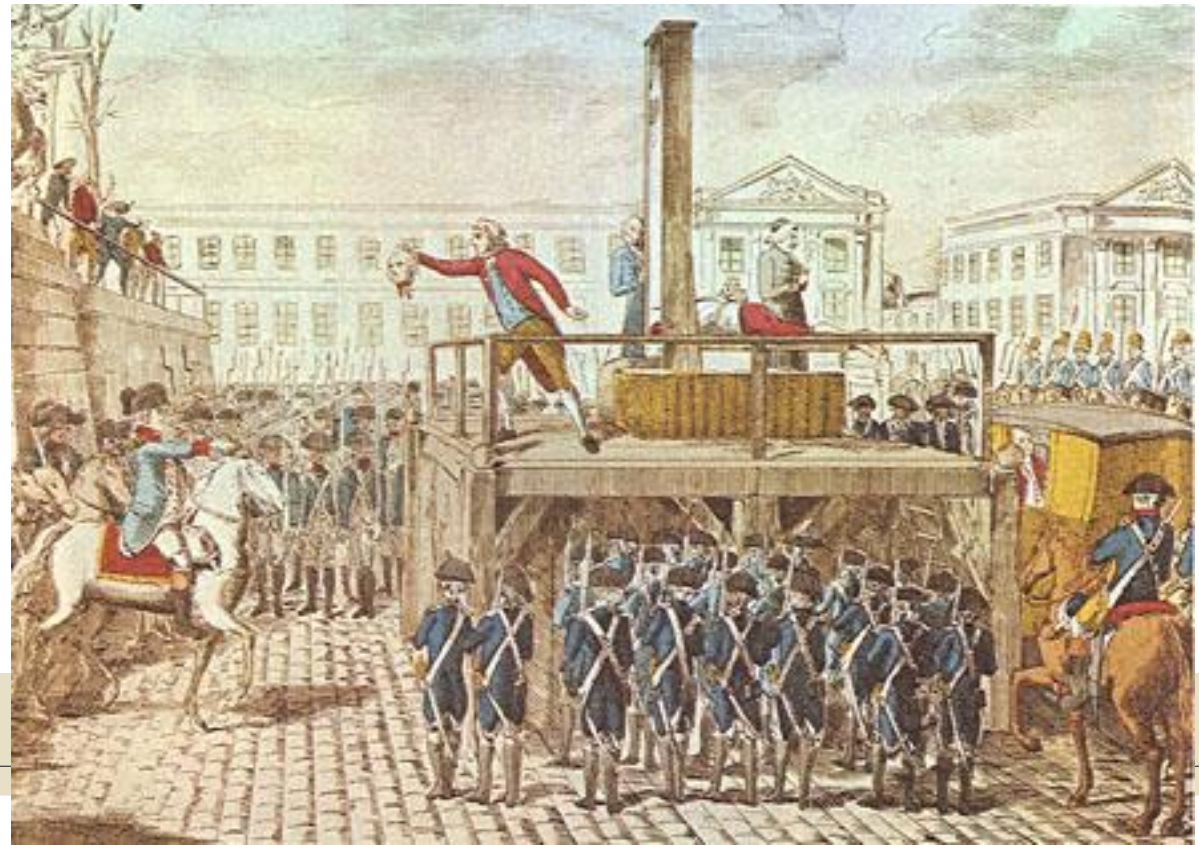


- The moderates succeeded with new Constitution of 1791 which set up a limited monarchy. There was still a king, but all decisions and law would be made by a legislative assembly.
 - Set up a 3 branch Gov't (leg., exec., jud.)
 - King couldn't make laws or veto laws passed
- Did not provide universal suffrage. Only men who paid a specific amount of taxes could vote

- With the help of foreign allies the royal family disguised themselves and made a break for it.
 - they were recognized in Varennes, arrested, and hauled back to Paris.
- September 1792 spurred by Louis XVI failed escape and known affiliations with foreign kings The National Convention decides to write up a new constitution.
- On September 21st they officially abolish the monarchy and establish the French Republic
- Also amended the Constitution to allow the king to be tried for treason.



- January 1793 -The convention condemned Louis XVI to death
- January 21st he was beheaded by the guillotine.
- Peasants around Paris founded the “Paris Commune” forcing universal male suffrage



- The one thing Great Britain, Prussia, Austria, Spain, Portugal, and the Dutch Republic could agree on was their strong desire to not see the severed heads of their kings.
 - They enter an alliance with the intent of containing, and hopefully destroying the young republic.
- Austria feared it would spread to them
 - They threatened to invade France to get it under control for them
 - France in turn declared war on them





Death of Marat

Assassination of a
radical writer
further set Paris
on edge

- Spring 1793 - Worried about external and internal threats the National Convention formed the Committee of Public Safety.
- Under its second president, Maximilien Robespierre, the Committee took control of the government
- Adopted brutal policies that became known as the **Reign of Terror**.
 - Suspending the rights put forth in the Declaration of the Rights of Man
- The Committee of Public Safety sought stability and control through intimidation and swift punishment.
- In addition, the Committee expanded the army, turning it into the biggest in Europe.

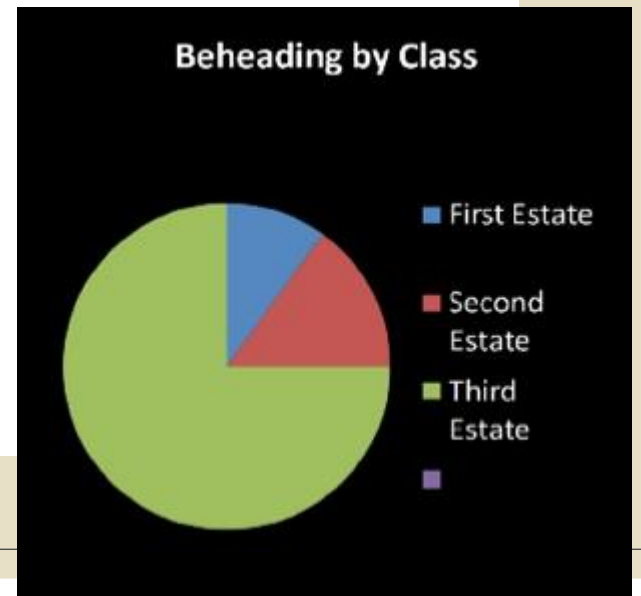


- In a year 650,000 troops were raised
- By 1794 – 1,169,000
- The largest army ever to be assembled up till then in Europe
- France pushed out its foes and seized the Austrian Netherlands

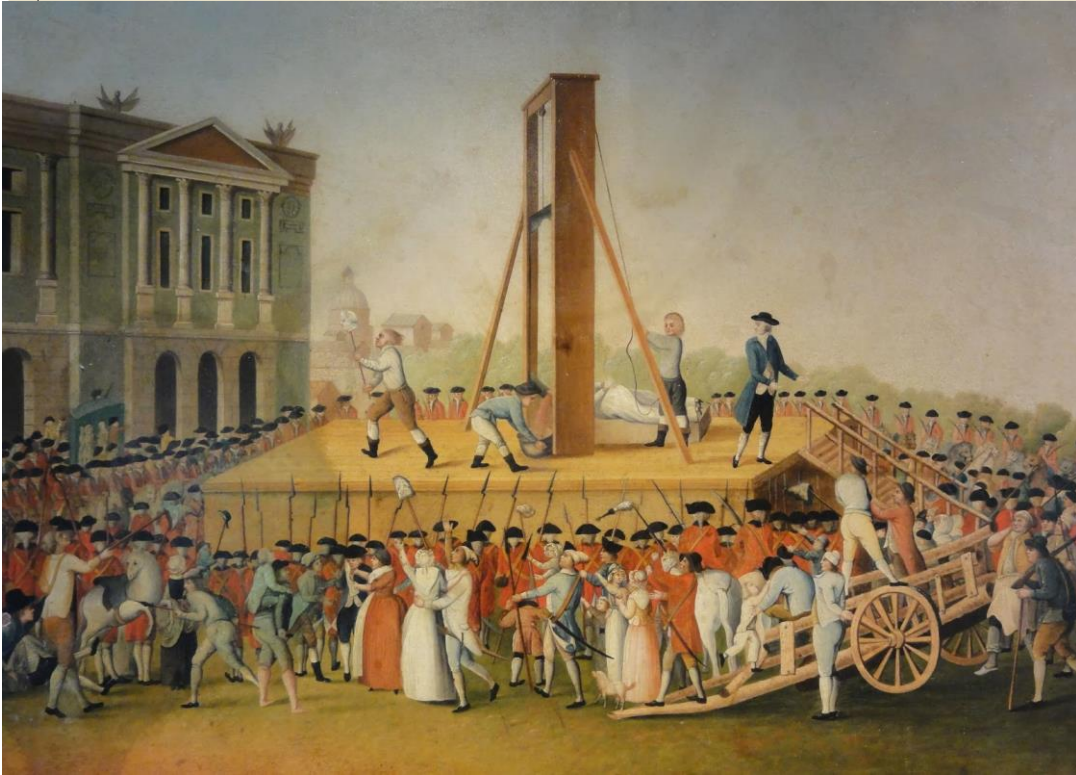


Reign of Terror

- Under the Reign of Terror close to 40,000 people were killed.
- This included:
 - people of high rank, like the beleaguered Marie Antoinette,
 - Members of the revolution who criticized it's leadership, like Olympe de Gouges
 - anyone who was suspected of opposing Robespierre.
- All social classes were subject to scrutiny.



The Guillotine



- Designed by Dr Joseph Guillotine with the goal of making executions more humane
- the guillotine quickly became a symbol of tyranny
- Victims were placed on a bench, face down, and their necks positioned between the uprights.
- The actual beheading was very quick
 - often to the gathered crowd's disgust - taking less than half a second from blade drop to the victim's head rolling into the waiting basket.
- Humanness is questioned, as many doctors argue that it could take up to 30 seconds before the victim lost consciousness.
- An estimated 40,000 executed
- Facts and Figures
 - Total weight of a Guillotine was about 580 kilos (1278lb)
 - The blade weighed over 40 kilos (88.2lb)
 - Height of side posts was just over 4m (14ft)
 - The blade drop was 2.3m (88 inches)
 - **Power at impact was 400 kilos (888lb) per square inch.**

Beyond the Guillotine

- When the Committee of Public Safety decided to make an example of the rebellious city of Lyon they rounded up 1,880 citizens for execution.
- Guillotining proved too slow for such a large number so the condemned were lined along graves and used grapeshot to kill them.



- In Nantes...
- “Women, priests, monks, children, all have been put death. I have spared nobody”
- Victims in Nantes were executed by sinking barges in the Loire River

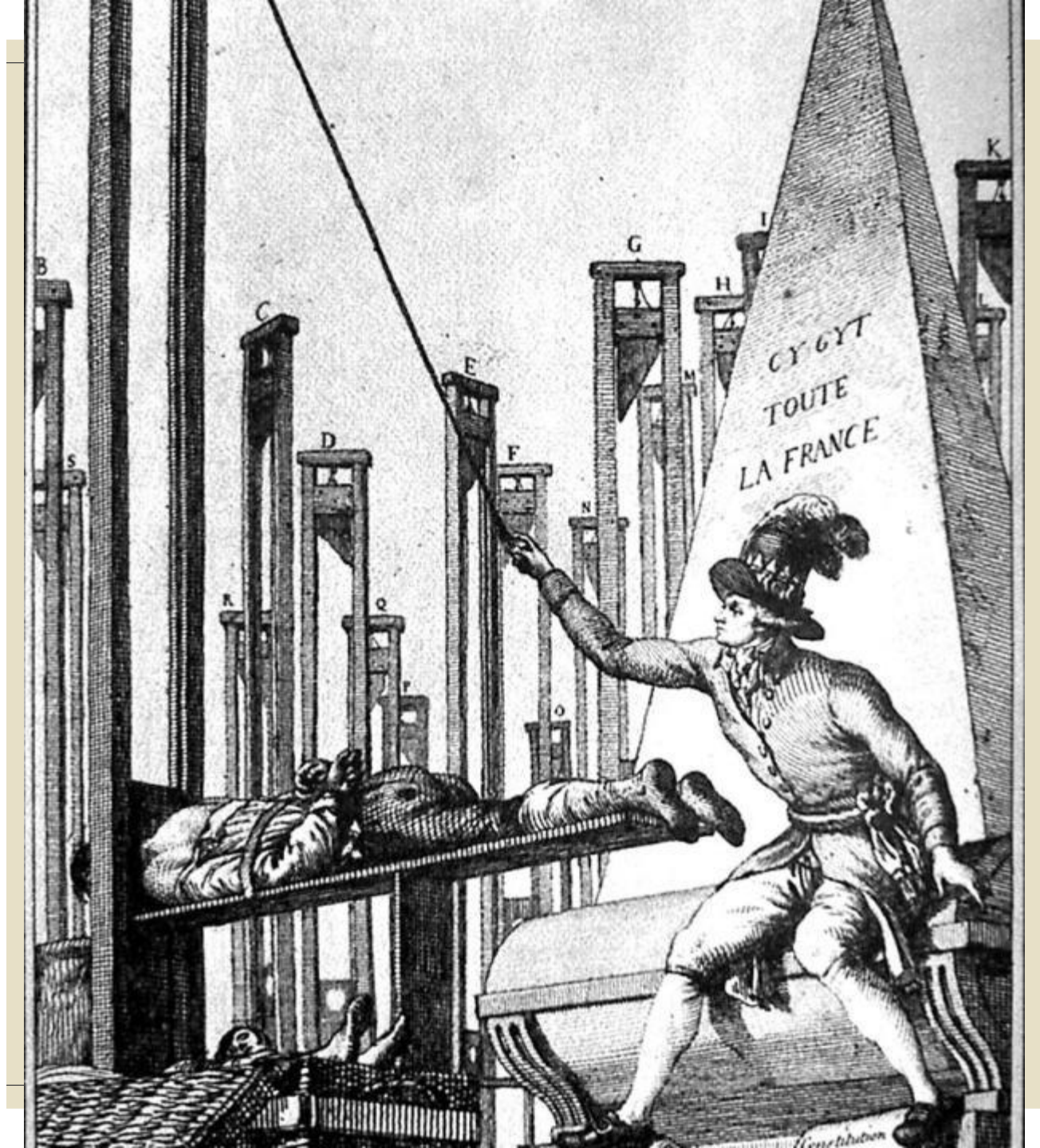




Mitglieder der Commune. (1793—1794.)

- In addition to the Terror, the Committee attempted to further shape French society.
- The titles Citizen and Citizeness replaced Monsieur and Madame
- Clothing became plain with the exception of a the bonnet rouge.
 - Modeled after the headgear worn by freed Roman slaves it became obligatory headgear for all French Patriots.
- The Committee also began a rigorous de-Christianization campaign
 - Changed the names of the months and renaming the Cathedral de Notre Dame the Temple of Reason.

- As the bloodshed continued opposition to Robespierre grew
- In the end it was his former allies in the National Convention, who, fearing they might be next, conspired to end his reign.
- Uniting disparate factions they gathered enough votes to condemn Robespierre himself under the system he designed and on July 28, 1794 he was guillotined.



The Directory

- 1795 -After Robespierre's death the Reign of Terror died out
- Jacobins began being replaced with more conservative politicians.
- A new constitution set up two houses whose members were elected by qualified voters:
 - the Council of 500 who drafted the laws
 - 250 member Council of Elders who accepted or rejected those laws.
 - The Council of Elders was also responsible for choosing an executive committee of five known as the Directory



- Overtime the Directory became increasingly corrupt
 - their moderation, originally a selling point, began to work against them as they could please neither liberals nor conservatives.
 - They came to rely more on more on their military and its charismatic general
 - A Corsican named Napoleon Bonaparte
 - 1799 coup d'état allows Napoleon to seize control

Why Napoleon?



- Early success made him a General at Age 26
 - Moved his troops quickly
 - Mastered artillery
 - Divide and Conquer tactics
- Imprisoned when opposition took power, he was released without a job to go back to.
- 1795-Made himself useful by firing into the streets of Paris at Royalist forces
- As the Directory falls apart he was seen as the best chance of keeping Royalists from taking over
- “I found the crown of France lying on the ground and I picked it up with my sword.”