

A Brief Guide to the French Revolution

Stephen Cox and Patricia Kitcher
Humanities Program, UCSD

The term "French Revolution" is used to describe the political and social developments in France from the fall of the Bastille, on July 14, 1789, to the coup d'état of Napoleon, on the 18th of Brumaire (that is, November 9) of 1799. This guide will begin slightly before the storming of the Bastille and will follow some of the echoes of the revolution into the middle of the nineteenth century.

The Convening of the Estates-General

It is often said that there were four revolutions in France: the revolution of the aristocracy, followed by that of the bourgeoisie (the middle or upper-middle class, especially capitalists), which was supported by a popular revolt (of the lower members of the middle class, such as guild members and workers), and a revolt of peasants (farmworkers in the countryside).

The revolt of the aristocracy was caused by the French government's desperate need for money after its participation in the American Revolution. The government lacked an adequate tax base even for good times, and the war of the American Revolution left it hopelessly in debt. Calonne, the Director of Finance, tried to institute a land tax that would be paid by all. Normally, both the First Estate (the clergy) and the Second Estate (the nobility) were exempt from taxes. Fearing that the "parlements" (courts), which were dominated by the nobility, would never approve such a plan, Calonne called an Assembly of Notables (1787) to discuss it. The meeting was a fiasco and he was dismissed. His successor, Brienne, took the case for taxes to the parlements and was rebuffed. The nobility argued that taxes could be raised only if the monarch convened a meeting of the Estates-General, the legislative body of the three estates: clergy, nobility, and commons.

Although the Estates-General had not met since 1614, King Louis XVI agreed to call a meeting, with the same rule of voting that had been used 175 years before. Each estate would vote as a block. The clergy's upper ranks were dominated by the nobility, effectively guaranteeing that on every issue the nobility would have two votes, against one for the Third Estate--despite the fact that the Third Estate included 96% of the population.

The convening of the Estates-General in May, 1789, at the royal palace at Versailles, near Paris, led to the revolt of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie dominated the delegation of the Third Estate. Seeing that they were going to be the losers at the Estates-General, deputies of the Third Estate offered a new voting plan. Their representation would double in number, so that it would equal the combined strength of the first two estates, and

voting would be by person, not by block. In a famous political pamphlet, "What is the Third Estate?", Sieyès presented their case. The nobility, he argued, are idle and could be abolished without loss. Only the Third Estate is a necessary order; it is identical with the nation and is alone sovereign.

On June 17, 1789, deputies of the Third Estate took over a hall and declared themselves representatives of the whole nation. When the deputies were thrown out of the hall (June 20), 550 reassembled in a nearby tennis court and took an oath--the "oath of the tennis court"--that whenever this body should meet, it would be the National Assembly of France.

At this point, Louis XVI made three disastrous moves. In the fight between the nobility and the bourgeoisie, he took the side of the nobility. Louis XVI was indecisive at the best of times, but the death on June 4 of his son, the Dauphin or heir to the throne, left him almost paralyzed. He did not break up the National Assembly, but he gathered troops in nearby Paris and he fired Jacques Necker, the brilliant finance minister who had been attempting to deal with the crisis by introducing liberal reforms.

There had been great unrest in Paris among the bourgeoisie and the lower classes. A poor harvest in the summer of 1788 brought food shortages the following spring, shortages made worse by the fear that members of the court and nobility were hoarding food in order to drive up prices. Hopes had been raised by the gathering of the Estates-General, but it was now becoming clear that the privileged orders were not about to yield their rights. The firing of Necker appeared to signal the end of attempts to compromise; the gathering of troops raised the specter of a royal attack on the National Assembly. In Paris, the masses armed themselves. On July 14, they attempted to obtain military supplies by attacking the Bastille, a prison and fortification near one of the city's gates. The governor of the Bastille resisted at first but eventually surrendered and was murdered, along with the Mayor of Paris. The Bastille's seven prisoners were liberated.

Louis XVI was still unsure how to proceed. Should he flee, or should he attack the rebels? In the end, he agreed to dismiss his troops, recall Necker, and cooperate with the Assembly's attempt to produce a monarchy in which royal power was limited by a constitution. (On July 7, the National Assembly had begun to call itself the Constituent Assembly.) The popular revolt in Paris thus preserved and empowered the representatives of the Third Estate at Versailles.

Meanwhile, food riots and increasing violence were seen in the countryside. Seigneurs, or lords of the manor, had the right to lease their land for hunting and other purposes. They could also impose a bewildering array of taxes and fees on local peasants. Short of cash, the seigneurs pressed their claims on the peasants, who were already caught between rising inflation and stagnant incomes. In addition, peasants faced food shortages and bands of brigands roaming about the country begging and looting.

The Constitutional Monarchy

Necker had been recalled but quickly faded in influence. His leadership was replaced by that of Lafayette, famous for his service in the American Revolution, and Mirabeau, an elected delegate of the Third Estate--both members of the liberal nobility who tried to put together a government. One enormous problem was the diversity of goals among revolutionaries. Peasants wanted an end to manorial dues, but the nobility could not agree to this without losing its source of income. The right wing of the revolutionaries, the "Anglophiles" or lovers of English ways, wanted social life to go on as before but with a constitutional monarchy modeled on that of Great Britain. The left wing wanted to overturn all the old customs of France.

Such differences were papered over in the Declaration of the Rights of Man (August, 1789), a classic liberal treatise written by Sieyès but heavily influenced by Rousseau. Besides temporarily bringing opposing factions under a common banner, the Declaration was important in attracting foreign sympathy for the revolution. Louis XVI neither approved nor disapproved the Declaration.

Just before the Declaration was adopted by the Assembly, a wave of violence--"the great fear"--engulfed the countryside. Peasants attacked and destroyed the residences of the nobility and the records of their property and hereditary rights. On August 4, the clergy and nobility in the Assembly responded by "voluntarily" abolishing the seigneurs' feudal rights. But disturbances continued at Paris, and on October 5 a well-organized mob of Parisians, including workers and small shop-owners, both men and women, marched to Versailles and threatened the lives of the King and Queen. Lafayette, the head of the revolutionaries' military force, the National Guard, arrived and proposed to accompany the royal family back to Paris. In effect, the royal family was kidnapped and forced to return to Paris, along with the Assembly, which followed behind the royal entourage. From now on, both monarch and legislature would work under the watchful eye and responsive arms of a highly politicized Paris. Louis finally agreed to the Declaration of the Rights of Man.

The Constituent Assembly still found it difficult to deal with the King, a newly constitutional monarch whom few trusted and fewer respected. Revolutionary leaders also suffered from a chronic inability to trust or be trusted, an inability that in later stages of the revolution would lead to enormous bloodshed. Mirabeau and Lafayette disliked each other intensely. Further, Mirabeau was in the pay of the court and sent a steady stream of letters to advise the King and Queen. Later Lafayette made futile attempts to defend the remains of the French monarchy, lost all influence, and fled across the border to imprisonment by the army of the Austrian monarchy.

The government of the Assembly was very weak. People refused to pay taxes, the army was in disarray, violence was rising, and local authorities could not cope with threats to public order. But the Constituent Assembly did get some things accomplished. Religious toleration was instituted, as were major changes in the criminal code. Guilds were suppressed in order to unleash the forces of capitalism. As previously mentioned, the legal structure of feudalism was demolished; noble titles were also done away with. But the government could still not pay its debts. To avoid or at least to postpone financial disaster, paper currency, "assignats," were issued, starting in December, 1789. This paper money was based on the value of vast properties

that the government confiscated from the church and nobility. The assignats, unfortunately, proved not to be as trustworthy as gold or silver; their value fell, and as it fell, the government issued more and more of them. Soon they were worthless.

Toleration of non-Catholic faiths gave way to attacks on the Catholic church, greatly complicating the revolutionary situation. The Assembly suppressed most religious orders in February, 1790; in July, 1790, it embarked on another major project, the "Civil Constitution of the Clergy", which obliged priests to express allegiance to the government's measures. The Pope would not consent to this, and most priests refused to take the oath. This attempt at reform, which forced religious people to decide between loyalty to state and loyalty to church, reflected a serious misunderstanding between the masses and the intellectual leaders of the revolution. While there is little doubt that the Church hierarchy was exploitative and corrupt, the people in general were still believers. As reformers turned on the Church with righteous ferocity, the revolution sowed the seeds of counter-revolution.

The Coming of War

In the end, the constitutional monarchy and the Constituent Assembly were brought down by the actions of the King. Political opinion in Europe had been polarized by the revolution. Many admired its ideals, but reigning monarchs and even sceptical parliamentarians, like Edmund Burke in England, were concerned that radical revolution might spread. In the minds of people who witnessed the events of the French Revolution, liberal opinion often turned rapidly into conservative opinion. Louis XVI and Queen Marie-Antoinette tried to play on the anxieties of political opinion and also to rally the aid of their relations, in particular Emperor Leopold II of Austria, the Queen's brother. The King and Queen sent a steady stream of pleas to foreign courts to rescue both them and France. At last, fearing for their lives, they tried to flee the country (June 20, 1791). But their huge entourage was sighted and stopped at Varennes, near the border, and they were dragged back to Paris.

Although the Constituent Assembly, trying to protect itself from a radical backlash, offered the incredible explanation that the King and Queen had been kidnapped and rescued, it is clear that they were in fact prisoners in their own palace. In September, the Constituent Assembly was dissolved and the Constitution of 1791 adopted. The French legislative body would now be called the Legislative Assembly.

The flight of the King and Queen and their recapture forced Leopold's hand. In the Declaration of Pillnitz (August 27, 1791), Leopold agreed that he would go to the rescue of France--if all other crowned heads of Europe were prepared to join him. Again, leaders of the revolution fell victim to a very serious misunderstanding. Leopold was bluffing. He believed that there was no chance that England would join in an antirevolutionary war. As it turned out, he was wrong about this. And the French patriots took him in earnest and expected a massive invasion by foreign troops.

The ruling party in the Legislative Assembly was the Jacobins, so called because the party originally met in a former Jacobin monastery. A wing of this party, the Girondins (so-called because many of them came from a region of France known as the Gironde), argued that the revolution could be saved only by attacking first. The leaders of the Girondins--Brissot, Roland, and Madame Roland--made another miscalculation. They believed the propaganda that the revolution had been sending out. They assumed that as soon as French troops appeared in neighboring countries, they would precipitate spontaneous local uprisings that would help them crush the superior forces of the opposition. Lafayette and the royalists believed the still more implausible thesis that, in a situation of foreign war, the country would unite behind Louis, and the monarchical branch of the government could be restored to vigor. Only the left wing of the Jacobins, represented by a young provincial lawyer named Maximilien Robespierre, argued that war would be disastrous for the fledgling revolution.

The alliance between Girondins and monarchists carried the day. The Assembly declared war on Austria on April 20, 1792; because Leopold had died by this time, the declaration was addressed to Francis II, his son and successor, the "King of Hungary and Bohemia," as the Assembly called him. The Assembly thus began a war that spread and continued, with minor cessations, until the fall of Napoleon in 1815. What the leaders failed to calculate was that the country was totally unprepared for war. There was no sound money in circulation, and no money to pay debts; the army, which had been commanded by aristocrats, many of whom had left the country, was in ruins; spontaneous risings in support of the revolution did not occur in neighboring countries.

Austrian and Prussian armies marched toward Paris, offering to deliver the King and threatening to destroy the city. In the midst of panic and hysteria, many people became convinced that there were royalist counter-revolutionaries within France ready to help the attackers. More riots broke out in Paris. Anger turned against the King and all politicians connected with him. The most revolutionary wing of the Jacobin Party, the leaders of the city government or Commune of Paris, rose on August 10, 1792, under the leadership of such people as Robespierre and Georges Jacques Danton and aided by the large army gathered from the countryside.

The "Second" French Revolution and the "Reign of Terror"

Sometimes described as the second French revolution, this Paris revolt lacked the idealistic glow of the first. Revolutionaries attacked the Palace of the Tuileries, where the King and Queen were living, and massacred their 800 Swiss guards. Louis XVI was "suspended" as monarch; the royal family was imprisoned; the Assembly ordered new elections, conducted on the principle of universal manhood suffrage, so that the lower classes could vote; and on September 21, 1792, a new legislative body, the National Convention, took the place of the Assembly. From September 2 to September 6 (the time of the "September massacres"), revolutionaries entered prisons where people suspected of counter-revolutionary sympathies were housed, summarily trying and executing about half the prison population. Between 1000 and 1400 people were killed, including a number of refractory priests. One member of the Paris Commune, the journalist Jean

Paul Marat, encouraged the complete elimination of counter-revolutionaries.

The Jacobins were now split between the Girondins, who were trying to conduct war, and the "Mountain" (so-called because their seats were at the top of the legislative hall), led by Robespierre and the Paris Commune. On behalf of the Girondins, Mme. Roland denounced Danton as having been paid by all sides, including the court, which was probably true. The government enjoyed a brief respite created by positive news from the front, the victory at Valmy on September 20, 1792. Nonetheless, the government failed to get indictments of Marat and Robespierre, and Danton was driven further to the radical or leftward side.

On September 22, 1792, the monarchy was abolished. France was now a republic. The Mountain tried to embarrass the Girondins by calling for a trial of the King. A chest containing correspondence in which the King pleaded with Austria to save him by foreign invasion was discovered. Now the Girondins had no choice. The King was clearly a traitor and must be tried. Some still wanted to avoid a trial, seeing its possible long-term implications, but as long as the King lived, the threat of counter-revolution would remain. Further, a judicial determination of the King's treachery was needed as a justification of the bloody events of August and September.

In December, 1792, Louis XVI was tried by the Assembly and convicted in a unanimous vote. The problem remained of what to do with him. Girondins called for a public referendum, but the Mountain, normally in favor of letting the people decide, blocked this attempt to sidestep the issue of punishment. On January 20, 1793, the Assembly sentenced Louis XVI -- by a single vote -- to death by guillotining. The sentence was carried out on the following day.

The subsequent course of the French Revolution can be viewed as a continued process of division within the central group of radical liberals who dominated the National Convention. So long as liberals were struggling for power against the monarch, they were sometimes closely united; once the monarch's power was replaced by that of the National Assembly and its successors, the Constituent Assembly, the Legislative Assembly, and the National Convention, the liberal leaders of the legislative body had occasion to battle one another for power and precedence.

The two major political factions--the Girondins and the "Mountain"--held similar radical-liberal views, but the Mountain tended to apply them more consistently, or at least more ruthlessly. Both groups acted under the pressure of events that had put the revolution and the revolutionaries' lives at stake, but the Mountain's greater insistence on following principles to their "logical conclusion" embarrassed the opposing group, while the Mountain's greater readiness for violent measures, such as the King's execution, allowed its members to take actions that other people had a hard time bringing themselves to take.

The executioners of the King knew that they could expect no mercy from the foreign powers leagued against France and from the foreigners' allies, the "emigré" French who had fled the revolution, should those forces win a decisive military victory. To maintain itself in power, the radical government needed (1) to maintain control over political action and opinion, so that the

revolution would not be subverted from within; (2) to raise large armies; (3) to finance those armies. But the government's attempts to do these things consolidated opposition to it, narrowing its basis of support.

Since the "assignats" had not worked, and the government still needed to finance its operations, the more radical members of the government obtained for it the authority to confiscate property, including farmers' crops. Prices soared, and the government attempted to control them by the temporary, then by the permanent, imposition of price controls (the "law of the Maximum").

These actions, which contradicted the economic principles originally advocated by liberals, encouraged hoarding by producers and consumers and ever more violent attempts at confiscation by revolutionary armies. Meanwhile, revolutionary fervor proved insufficient to maintain the enormous army (over 500,000 men) that was considered necessary to defend the revolution against internal and external enemies. Conscription was introduced, setting a precedent for its widespread use in future wars in Europe and elsewhere.

Conscription, confiscation, and the immense demands that the revolution made on the faith of the populace led to serious rebellions in several areas of France. A number of cities installed counter-revolutionary governments. Along the western coast, a large district (the Vendée) rebelled against the central government's attempts at conscription and its suppression of Roman Catholicism; the local people raised an army and fought off the forces of Paris for three years (1793-96). In September, 1793, royalists delivered the French naval base at Toulon on the Mediterranean to a British fleet.

Realizing how unpopular their policies were becoming with large segments of the population, the revolutionary leaders attempted to destroy their enemies before they could themselves be destroyed. They repeatedly purged their enemies in the Convention, arresting them, trying them for treason, and executing them. The Girondins were not merely removed from power but liquidated by men of the Mountain who believed that the revolution could not succeed if such potent "enemies" remained. On her way to the guillotine, Girondin leader Madame Roland responded eloquently to the Mountain by exclaiming, "O Liberty, what crimes are committed in thy name!"

As the political diversity of the Convention shrank, control devolved into the hands of one of the Convention's committees, the Committee of Public Safety, which in turn was controlled by Robespierre and such like-minded people as Louis-Antoine de Saint-Just. This group, which governed France in the period of the "Reign of Terror" (1793-94), held that the Rights of Man could be guaranteed only by the population's total support for the revolutionary government. In August, 1793, the Committee declared that the entire population of France was "permanently called to the colors," to fight in the army or to work in support of the army, until victory was won. Saint-Just, demanding the death of former colleagues in the revolution (such as Danton) who had questioned the dictatorship of the Committee of Public Safety, advocated a ruthless revolutionary nationalism:

There is something terrifying in the sacred love of one's country. It is so all-exclusive that it sacrifices everything, without pity, without fear, without regard for humanity, to the public interest.

In the provinces, local Jacobin committees placed themselves in charge of suppressing hoarding, dissent, and Catholicism. Tens of thousands of political victims perished, including those of the King's family who remained in France, many priests and other devout Catholics, many of the early liberal revolutionaries, and many people whose political role was minimal or nonexistent but who happened to be members of a group associated in some way with "counter-revolution."

In Paris, support for the radical Jacobins could be mobilized among the so-called "sans-culottes": literally, people who wore the working man's trousers rather than the gentleman's knee-breeches or "culottes." Mobs sometimes threatened or inspired the Convention. But the support of people who might be included in the governing classes continued to diminish. The Convention (or its remnant) turned on Robespierre and his friends on July 27, 1794 (a day that was called 9 Thermidor in the revolutionaries' de-theologized and de-monarchized calendar). In the famous "Thermidorean reaction," the radicals were purged as they had purged others. They were guillotined on 10 Thermidor, and the Convention set about a restoration of political stability.

From Convention to Directory, from Directory to Empire

The Convention relaxed price controls, helping to ensure a supply of food; it used force, including the artillery of General Napoleon Bonaparte, a young immigrant from the French possession of Corsica, to put down the riots of the "sans-culottes"; it adopted another constitution, that of 1795; which made possession of considerable property a qualification for voting and placed executive power in the hands of a five-member group, the "Directory," and a two-house legislative body, the Council of Ancients and the Council of Five Hundred. Under the Directory, stability was also enhanced by the re-introduction of sound money.

The great problem of the war remained. Three major powers were arrayed against France: Austria, Prussia, and Great Britain. All were fearful of a revolutionary spirit spreading to their own people, especially because the French attempted to soften opposition to their armies by portraying them as forces of liberation and by setting up revolutionary governments wherever they conquered. In addition, the Austrian royal house, the Hapsburg family, was supporting the exiled members of the deposed French royal house, the Bourbon family; and the British were fearful of the rise in France of a hostile power that could challenge Britain's preeminence in trade and naval arms.

The war that France had begun with Austria on April 20, 1792, spread to Prussia later in 1792 and to Britain on February 1, 1793, directly after the execution of the King. The tide of battle swung back and forth until 1795, when Prussia dropped out of the contest with France, on the west, in order to expand in the east, into Poland. In 1796-97, Napoleon crossed the Alps into Austria's important possessions in northern Italy. The Austrians were beaten; they signed a treaty with France giving up northern Italy and Belgium. Only the British continued in

opposition, pitting the immense financial power of their capitalist enterprises against the military genius of Napoleon and the ability of the large French population to support a much larger army than that of Britain. Napoleon organized his army into exceptionally mobile forces able to live off the regions they conquered. He obliged "liberated" areas to pay the French government for their liberation. As long as he was victorious, Napoleon could conduct war on something like a pay-as-you-go basis.

In 1798, in a characteristically bold move, Napoleon attempted to cut Britain off from its possessions in India by conquering Egypt. The British, under the leadership of Admiral Horatio Nelson, responded by destroying Napoleon's fleet, thus cutting off the 40,000 soldiers that he had brought to Egypt. Napoleon thus lost the war in Egypt, but he was able to return to France and seize power there (on November 9 ["18 Brumaire"], 1799). The Directory and its legislature had become suspicious of the Napoleonic military power on which their own survival ultimately depended. The Directory may have needed Napoleon, but he no longer needed the Directory. He surrounded the legislature with a military force and made himself dictator, with the title of First Consul -- a name recalling the Roman leaders upon whom French revolutionaries often wished to model themselves.

In 1802, Napoleon changed his position to First Consul for Life, and in 1804, he became Emperor of the French, thus attempting a final consolidation of his power by invoking the supposedly discarded principle of monarchical legitimacy. He even arranged for the Pope, whose traditional and hierarchical church had been the stubborn enemy of the revolution, to officiate at his coronation -- although Napoleon put the crown on his own head rather than allowing the Pope to crown him. Earlier, he had invoked the democratic principle by arranging for his elevation to imperial status to be confirmed by a plebiscite, a vote of the people. In succeeding years, Napoleon placed himself or his close relatives on the thrones of several other European states, including Spain and northern and southern Italy. He married a member of the Austrian royal house.

Empire and After

Napoleon always claimed, however, that his regime represented the will of the people and the institutionalization of revolutionary aims. His popularity was very considerable, and his alleged institutionalization of liberal principles was not entirely an illusion. He revised the law codes of the Empire into a body of statutes called the Code Napoleon, which enshrined the principle of equality before the law. He made the army a vehicle of social advancement offering "careers open to talents." Under the old regime, officer status had been restricted to the nobility; Napoleon said, however, that every common soldier carried "a marshal's baton in his knapsack": that is, every common soldier could attain the rank of a marshal of France, the highest rank of the army. The French bureaucracy, which had been purged many times by the turbulent political events of preceding years, was restocked with new people--another opportunity for advancement.

Wherever Napoleon's armies went in Europe, they destroyed old restrictions against the Jews and

awakened the nationalistic aspirations of language groups long dominated by the central hierarchies of the great powers of the old regime. In 1806, Napoleon abolished the Holy Roman Empire, which had been ruled from Vienna by the Hapsburg dynasty, and began to unite the welter of tiny German states that had been subject to it into a few larger ones, under his control. This consolidation, and the influence (and envy) of French nationalism, helped to prepare the way for the unification of all of Germany in 1871 under a Prussian emperor.

But Napoleon's own empire required his continued success as a military leader. During virtually his entire career as ruler of France, he was involved in warfare against Britain; often, he was involved in warfare against grand coalitions of Britain and the Continental powers. Britain paid most of the bills and contributed most of the naval forces; Austria, Prussia, and Russia contributed most of the troops.

Napoleon never had the equipment or the expertise to invade England and destroy the heart of the opposition to him; his major campaigns took place on the Continent. In 1801, he successfully attacked Austria both in Germany and in Italy; by 1802 he had established a brief peace with all of his adversaries. But war began again in 1803. In October, 1805, at the battle of Trafalgar, just outside the Straits of Gibraltar, Nelson—who perished in the fight—destroyed most of Napoleon's fleet. Later in that year, however, Napoleon defeated the Austrians and Russians at the battle of Austerlitz, in what is now Czechoslovakia. In the next year, he defeated the Prussians at the battle of Jena; in the next, he defeated the Russians at the battle of Friedland. The Russian Czar met with Napoleon and agreed to cooperate with him.

Britain remaining an enemy, Napoleon attempted to destroy the commerce on which it depended by closing the Continent to British trade. His plan hurt his own trade worse than Britain's. Royalist guerillas in Spain began to oppose the Bonapartist government there; Britain sent in troops, under the Duke of Wellington, to strengthen the opposition, which Napoleon proved unable to quell.

But the great disaster to the Napoleonic Empire came in 1812, when Napoleon invaded Russia in response to the Czar's attempts to withdraw from his understanding with France. Napoleon's Grande Armée of 500,000 French and foreign troops took Moscow but failed to destroy the Russian army. The Grande Armée was isolated in Russia without adequate supplies; it was forced to retreat across a frozen landscape, harassed by Russian forces. Only a tiny part of it returned to France.

Napoleon managed to raise a new army, but it was defeated at Leipzig in 1813. His opponents organized themselves into a firm alliance and committed themselves to destroying the French empire and to remaining allies while postwar Europe was reshaped. They closed in on Napoleon, and he submitted to overwhelming power and abdicated in April, 1814. The monarchist Allies were hesitant utterly to destroy anyone who had ever been a monarch, even Napoleon, whom they did not consider legitimate. So they made him King of Elba, a tiny island off the coast of Italy, and confined him to it. Carrying monarchist principles a step further, the Allies restored the Bourbon family to the throne of France; one of Louis XVI's surviving brothers became King Louis XVIII. (The executed king's young son, who would have been

Louis XVII, had died in a revolutionary prison.)

This appeared to be the astonishing end of Napoleon's astonishing career. But in early 1815 he surprised the world once more. He escaped from Elba, landed in southern France, and appealed successfully for support to the populace. During the period of the "Hundred Days," he raised yet another army and attempted to win a quick victory over the startled Allies. In June, he attacked Wellington's army at Waterloo in Belgium and was defeated. He retreated, surrendered, and was exiled to the British possession of St. Helena in the middle of the South Atlantic Ocean, where he died in 1821.

The victorious Allies convened in the Congress of Vienna to establish a basis on which Europe could be restored to permanent peace. They carved up the map of Europe, returning France to something like its old frontiers, stabilizing the boundaries of the empires, and creating some new buffer states. In 1815 the Continental empires, Russia, Prussia, and Austria, constructed a "Holy Alliance" to help one another suppress any future threat of revolution.

The Bourbons returned once more to the French throne, but this time they tried, with some success, to cooperate with a parliament. Cooperation broke down in 1830; the Bourbon monarch, Charles X, another brother of Louis XVI, was overthrown by liberal revolutionaries, one of whose leaders was the aged Marquis de Lafayette, who had figured prominently in both the American Revolution and the French Revolution of 1789. Seeking to stabilize the new revolution by invoking a principle of monarchical legitimacy, they installed as king a relative of the deposed royal house, Louis-Philippe, Duke of Orleans.

Louis-Philippe reigned until 1848, when another great spasm of revolution convulsed the Continent. He was overthrown, and a republic was reestablished. Within a few years, however, the nephew of Napoleon became Emperor, restoring the Bonapartist regime. Within less than one lifetime, France had been three times a kingdom, twice an empire, and twice a republic; it would become a republic again after the new Napoleon lost a war with Prussia in 1870, was deposed, and went into exile. In the meantime, political developments in France had illustrated the many things that can happen when such abstract principles as individual liberty, political and social equality, nationalism, and monarchical legitimacy are tested in practice.