

The French Revolution

1789 – 1799.

EUROPE ON THE EVE OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

On the eve of the French Revolution of 1789, Europe was divided into two regions, namely; Western Europe which comprised Britain, France, Holland and Eastern Europe composed of Prussia, the Hapsburg Empire, and the Turkish Empire.

It should also be noted that on the eve of the French Revolution, Europe was characterised by the following:-

1. Lack of political unity and uniformity:

There existed small states as well as big ones with sovereigns, semi-sovereigns, despotism, e.g.

Turkey, Russia, France and Prussia. It was only Britain which had a constitutional monarchy.

2. Theocratic character:

Most states operated in partnership with the Church and these states were run in accordance with the principles of Christianity. In most states, the Church controlled the education sector. In Prussia, Britain, the Netherlands and Switzerland, the Protestant Church was in control, while

Russia was given excessive control over the Orthodox Church. Thus in Catholic Europe, the Pope was very influential. The Church had vast amounts of land, collected taxes, enjoyed feudal privileges and commanded political, economic and social influence. The Islamic states were run according to the sharia law and were very intolerant to the Christians. Generally speaking, there was religious intolerance which later came under serious criticism of the Philosophers

3. Belief in divine right by majority of the rulers:

Kings were seen as representatives of God and responsible to him.

4. Influence of the Aristocracy:

Most rulers were Despots though in the 18th Century, they were referred to as enlightened Despots. The people (masses) had no hand in administration. They (rulers) enjoyed many privileges in Europe, power rested not with the people but with the Aristocracy. They opposed progressive steps and they maintained the status quo.

5. Luxurious lives of Royal families:

6. State funds or revenues were spent on the Royal families i.e. in France; Louis XVI (1774-1792) had about 1600 Attendants, 2000 horses and his wife, Queen Marie Antoinette had 500 maids and she bought four pairs of shoes a week.

7. Defective Revenue System:

The burden of taxation fell on the poor while the rich and the Clergy were not taxed. Taxes went to the government, church and dues to the Landlords.

8. State progress depended on personality of the King.

If efficient and capable and gave priority to the welfare of the people, the state progressed. But if incapable, inefficient and luxurious, it declined.

9. **Economically**, Europe in the 18th Century was primarily agrarian (agricultural). About 85 % of the population earned their living by agriculture, 15 % through tax collection from peasants. In most cases, land was distributed among the Nobles and the Clergy leaving majority of the population landless.

10. **Socially**, Europe was based on the principle of inequality; society was stratified i. e. classes with privileges, completely or partially.

The European society was organized on feudal basis with the Landlords acting as petty sovereigns in their localities. The Serfs were attached to the land and most of the proceeds from the land went into the pockets of the Landlords.

- (a) **The Aristocracy**: This could be by birth, through royal favour or buying of certain government posts e.g. France and Spain.

The Higher Clergy lived in forts / palaces, posts of higher clergy were reserved for sons of feudal families, were exempted from taxation i.e. France, took major parts of the church income and amassed a lot of wealth.

- (b) **The Middle Class** (Merchants, Industrialists, Doctors, Lawyers, Bankers, Judges and Teachers): These had wealth but no privileges and as such, some of them became supporters of the revolutionary ideology of the time.

- (c) **The 3rd Class** made up of small artisans, industrial labourers, peasants, semi serfs (poor and uneducated), many were landless, had no means of expressing their grievances. Some had accepted the order of the day while others would riot in order to make their grievances felt i.e. bread riots.

FRANCE PRIOR TO THE REVOLUTION OF 1789

In the 18th Century, France was one of the richest countries, only second to Britain in Europe. For about fifty years before the French Revolution, she had a very steady economic growth which was attributed to the following:-

- (a) Industrial production was rising and she was exporting more than Britain.

- (b) The volume of foreign trade was expanding e.g. from 1716 - 1789, the volume had increased fivefold.
- (c) Agriculture was rising and they were the wealthiest.
- (d) Prosperity of the Merchant Class was rising.
- (e) France had a bigger class of Businessmen and a small class of Manufacturers than any other European country.
- (f) The French peasants were richer than their counterparts in any other European country so France was better off than any other European countries. For more than a century, since the early days of Louis XIV, France had been the undisputed leader of European civilisation. Paris was the centre of tourist attraction. It was from France that European society drew its ideas, fashions, codes of polite behaviour.

French was the second language of the European aristocracies except where they spoke it as their first. In the field of ideas, the French philosophers were the most influential.

In politics, France possessed a degree of stability, a wealth and culture far beyond that of most other lands. She was ruled for a long period of time under a single type of government (line of kings) with its branches. Yet it was in France that a revolution first broke out. This was partly under the influence of enlightenment and the whole establishment was overturned with its leaders killed. This revolutionary spirit spread to other areas until it engulfed the greater part of Europe.

The French Revolution of 1789 was one of the great events in Human History. It deeply affected man's ideas and conduct for many generations. Conditions in society have to be very bad before men in great numbers will take to overthrow it by violence.

Men will not take for anything, if the French society is considered, beginning with the Peasantry, moving through the Middle Class, the Nobility and Clergy and finally the King and his officials, we shall see that conditions in the French society were very unhealthy.

The French Revolution which began in 1789 lasted till the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte and just like its effects were still felt in the 20th Century, its origins stretched for back into the 17th and 18th Centuries. France was characterised by class system namely; the First Estate (class), Second Estate (class) and the Third Estate (Class) comprising the Clergy, Nobility then the Bourgeoisie and Peasants respectively. (The latter two belonged to the third class).

1. PEASANTRY

At the time of the French revolution, the peasants were the largest in number and at the bottom of the society. They numbered about 23 million in France, in a population of 25 million. In some districts they were still Serfs, being bought and sold with land when hands changed. They were the most oppressed, illiterate and impoverished. They lacked land yet paid rent for it. They were the most unprivileged, yet gained no exemption from taxation.

Burdens of the Peasants:

The financial burdens of the peasants were crushing. Nearly the whole of the revenue of the French government was contributed by the 3rd Estate (the people, the non-Noble and non-clerical class and the rural poor), provided most of the income of the Church and Nobility as well.

The peasants paid a number of taxes categorized as Direct and Indirect.

(a) Direct:

These were taxes paid directly to the state treasury and collected by government officials. These taxes included the following, namely:

- (i) *Taille:*** Imposed on land (land tax) and estimated income of an individual and his wealth in form of property. However, in other provinces it was the poll tax.
- (ii) *Vingtieme:*** The peasant was to pay a 20th of his income and later increased to a 6th in 1789.
- (iii) *Capitation:*** This tax was paid by every head of a household / family.

(b) Indirect:

Besides the Direct taxes, the peasants paid indirect taxes as well, e.g.

(i) *Gabelle:*

This was the most notorious tax and everyone over 7 years of age had to buy 7 lbs of salt a year. In 1783, about 11,000 peasants were arrested due to tax evasion, of which 6,600 were children. For many years before the revolution, the annual imprisonment accounted for 30,000 while 500 were either hanged or sent to exile.

It should be noted that the methods of collection of this tax were brutal, punishment for failure to pay the tax was harsh and the agents could enter peasants' houses at any time, day or night.

The direct taxes for which the peasants were responsible were collected with great difficulty and inconveniences.

Feudal Dues:

These included Hut tax, tolls for using local roads, bridges and for the right of a peasant to take his herd of cattle in the Landlord's land. The peasants were exposed to forced labour (*corvee*) for the upkeep of roads, bridges etc. He had to pay for use of the Lord's wine press or mills, oven.

In the courts of law, there was no justice for the peasants. The Lord alone had the right to appoint the judges and lawyers to settle a dispute between him and the peasant.

The Church also imposed or claimed the '**Church tithe**' - one tenth of one's income but often they got a fifteenth of the produce.

In addition to the above, the peasantry was the only class in France which could not gain exemption from forced military service in the militia, which was for six years and this was highly detested. It was not therefore, surprising that many peasants took to brigandage, smuggling and poaching. All this added to a miserable picture and yet the French peasants were probably better off than their counter parts in most European states. In Austria, Prussia etc. the peasants were outright Serfs but serfdom only affected a few Frenchmen.

It should, however, be noted that, the French peasants had definite legal rights and often gained support from lawyers of the country side who, too, had their own grievances against the Nobility and government. It was this element of legal right and independence which accounted in part for the peasants' desire for independence, which only freedom from the unfair and crushing burden from taxation could give them.

However, the peasants were neither sufficiently united nor sufficiently educated to produce a revolution by themselves. But the importance of their grievance is that they readily allied with the other discontented groups / classes, all of whom were desperate for change thus making the 1789 Revolution inevitable.

1. THE BOURGEOISIE:

They were an Industrial and professional Middle Class of the towns, more prosperous, highly enlightened, less burdened by tithes and feudal dues or the irritating military service but were aroused by religious intolerance, judicial abuses of torture, arbitrary imprisonment, cruel and unequal punishment. They also resented the social superiority and extravagance of the Nobles or the wealthy Cleric.

The Bourgeoisie was a group of educated people which included the Merchants, Traders, Industrialists, Lawyers, Doctors, Teachers and other professional groups.

Though they were not suffering the economic burdens of the Peasants i.e.

- (a) Mainly lived in towns.
- (b) Enjoyed many exemptions from military service in the militia
- (c) Owned most of the non-agricultural wealth of the country.
- (d) They were bankers, money lenders and the controllers of the rich Corporations of the towns.
- (e) They were prosperous and received better education.
- (f) They loaned money to the government of Louis XVI.
- (g) The feudal conditions and taxation had prevented them from acquiring country Estates.

It should be noted that the exemptions they enjoyed were far less compared to those enjoyed by the Nobility and Clergy. They had several grievances against the government of the day as below:-

Political:

(a) They were excluded from the government of France, had very little political powers though they were the most educated and wealthy. Real power was in the hands of the king, the Royal council and a small council of the privileged Nobility at Versailles and the Intendants in the provinces.

(b) There were no prospects of promotions for the Bourgeois class in the French army since the commissioned ranks were a preserve of the Nobility as well as the Navy and Diplomatic service.

(c) They resented not being able to criticize openly a ridiculous system of government. It should be noted that the so-called French parliament had last sat in 1614. National laws had been replaced by Royal Edicts; power of justice was in the hands of the King, the Council and the 13 royal Parliaments.

Economic:

Besides political grievances, there were economic grievances as well. The finances of the country went from bad to worse during the reign of Louis XVI. The assistance given to the Americans in their War of Independence (1776 -1783), the extravagance and luxury of the court at Versailles and the bad financial management led to a situation in which the expenses of the government far exceeded its income.

In order to rectify the situation, the government borrowed money from the Church, Nobility and

Bourgeoisie thus leading to a vast increase in the national debt. With the increased debt, the Bourgeoisie became uncertain as to whether they would recover their money. Yet the Nobility clung to their exemption from taxation. Meanwhile France was losing part of her colonial and economic empire i.e. She lost Canada and India to Britain in the seven year war of 1756 - 1763.

The Bourgeoisie considered the Nobility an obstacle in the path of their progress. Above all, the Bourgeoisie needed a government with a sound economic ground yet before 1789, the government was bankrupt.

Social:

(a) The Bourgeoisie resented the lack of religious freedom i.e. if a Protestant service was discovered, the Pastor might be hanged and the congregation sent to the galleys.

(b) They resented the liability of the 3rd Estate to suffer torture and all forms of mutilation which were spared the Nobles.

(c) The Bourgeoisie envied and detested the Nobility due to their numerous privileges.

2. THE NOBILITY:

This was a privileged class in the government but powerless. The jealousy of the Crown had excluded it from political life, rendered it obnoxious and helpless. Louis XVI had made the Nobles into Courtiers, cut them off from their own Estates, deprived of the natural leadership of the people which should have fallen to them and robbed them of the administrative experience and training which might save them and France in time of trouble.

The Nobility came to be hated by the peasants (Tenants) whom they neither governed nor knew but only taxed. Their only weapons were court intrigues, refuge (class struggle). When the revolution broke out, they found themselves laymen and Clerics alike without allies, dependent on the King, even weaker. They had divisions among themselves, inexperienced, discredited without defences. The Nobility were subdivided into 3, namely;

- (a) Greater Nobility
- (b) Lesser Nobility
- (c) Nobility of the Robe

The Nobility was a privileged class though not united

The Greater Nobility

Comprised about 1000 families who owned the largest and wealthiest landed Estates in France. They had privileges which put them above all other classes in the state i.e.

- (a) Had the largest Estates of land.
- (b) Exempted from the main weight of taxation
- (c) They monopolized many good appointments in the state.
- (d) Were allowed full use of lettre de cachet.

The Lesser Nobility

Made up of about 99,000 families, lived in country Estates which were just sufficient to maintain them. Like the Bourgeois, the Lesser Nobility had very little political power in the provinces where the King's officers and Intendants were all powerful. They envied the greater Nobility's privileges and were frustrated by their exclusion from higher social and political life. No wonder, a good number of supporters of the Revolution came from this class.

The Nobility of Robe

This was also a privileged group normally content to go along with the king, while he respected their privileges and when he did not (1787 -1788), they began to oppose him.

They were given titles as a reward for their service to the state. It was the only section of the Nobility that could claim that they held their titles on merit. They never enjoyed the privileges of the greater Nobility or lesser Nobility and thus disliked the two.

It should be noted that these divisions in the Nobility existed long before the revolution. They were concerned with their own sectional interests rather than those of the state, so that pressure for reform could only come from the other classes.

3. THE CHURCH:

The Catholic Church was the established church of France and catholicism was the official religion. Before the Revolution, there existed a lot of religious intolerance, though protestant factions existed, they were not recognised by the law. This may explain why this religious intolerance was criticised by many writers / philosophers i.e. Voltaire advocated for complete religious tolerance.

- (a) The Catholic Church constituted the First Estate which was privileged thus forming part of the class struggle.
- (b) Owned large chunks of land, about 1/5 th of the land in France.
- (c) Controlled Education.
- (d) Monopolised issuing of death, marriage and birth certificates.
- (e) Exempted from paying taxes.
- (f) Very exploitative i.e. collected taxes in form of tithes.
- (g) The Catholic Church was conservative and was in partnership with the (government) state which was highly criticised.
- (h) The Clergy lived luxuriously.
- (i) The Church received a yearly income of about 500 million francs from the tithe and other collections.

It should be noted that within the clergy, there were two divisions, namely;

The Upper Clergy

- (a) This comprised Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops.
- (b) Earned about 2500 pound sterling per annum, often with additions to this income from abbeys and other church institutions in the Diocese.
- (c) They often took well paid political posts under the crown and controlled the press.
- (d) Lived luxurious life in their palaces similar to that of the royal court and Nobility.
- (e) Most Bishops did not live in their Dioceses but spent their time in the pleasure of hunting.

- (f) Many of them drew princely rents and shared the general characteristics of the Nobility e.g. exemption from taxation.

The Lower Clergy

This was made up of the Parish priests, who were poor, compared to the upper clergy.

- (a) They earned about 25 pounds per annum yet they did all the day to day ministering.
- (b) They collected the church tithe which they could not keep.

Generally, they also suffered and this may explain why during the revolution, they supported the peasantry. Some were even poorer than some peasants, despite the fact that the Church was rich and owned 1/5th of the state land.

It should be noted that many of them became alive to the reforming movement of the day, subscribed to the encyclopaedia, they read the works of the Philosophers e.g. Rousseau and turned Democrats when they joined the people in the Hall of the **Menus Plaisirs** in June 1789, the church of the Ancient Regime in all its glory and corruption, the wealthiest institution in France, fell.

The wealth of the Church was so much and this accounted for the existing envy from both the Peasants and Bourgeoisie. The Parish Priests also had little love for their superiors in the Church.

Class distinctions in France created jealousies and those who were disgruntled sided with the Peasants in the attempt to overthrow the government and change the existing order hence the revolution. The class divisions and privileges which characterised the French society by 1785 were also seen in the French army. There were serious causes of discontent which encouraged the spread of democratic and revolutionary ideas in the army e.g.

- (a) In 1781, Louis XVI passed a law by which commissioned ranks were reserved for those born of the nobility. Non commissioned ranks were therefore the highest to which the educated Bourgeoisie could rise. This situation led to formation of secret societies in the army which undermined military discipline.

- (b) Another grievance of the Bourgeoisie and the common soldier was the excessive number of officers by 1789. There was one General to every 157 private soldiers and one staff officer to every 79. Yet many of these had entered the army very early with few qualifications. A Noble's son could become a Colonel at the age of 16 years.

- (c) During the American war of Independence (1776-1783), French soldiers under General Lafayette had served in America. They returned with revolutionary ideas and the zeal to rebel. They returned to a country which had no representative government, grievances of taxes etc. As a result when the revolution broke out, the army supported the rebels instead of the monarchy.

The government of France was despotic, inefficient, wasteful, corrupt and unjust. No parliament existed and no constitution and this brought in a revolutionary situation.

THE CAUSES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION OF 1789

The French Revolution was a radical change. The causes were both short term and long term. The causes evolved around the political, social and economic structures. Within a short period, the old privileged Aristocracy was thrown apart and a new start created. New men arose from classes which had enjoyed little or no influence or privileges under the monarchy. Lawyers and Doctors became leading politicians, the army was completely reorganised, men were promoted on merit and peasants took over the land of the Church and Nobility.

The French Revolution of 1789 had a lot of causes which can be categorised as Political, Social and Economic besides others.

1. POLITICAL:

This was the prime factor in the outbreak of the French Revolution around which the other factors evolved. The system of government was known as the *Ancient Regime* which was characterised by absolute despotism, inefficiency and lack of democracy which had existed for a long time. A lot of abuses existed which people thought could not be removed unless the King was removed. The interests and decisions of the King were unquestionable thus creating discontent among the French masses.

There was belief in Divine Rule i.e. the King ruled by the grace of God. He was the maker of laws and as such was above the law and not controlled by it. The government was oppressive and arbitrary. Many Frenchmen were sent to jail without trial for opposing and criticising the prevailing system of government. Most Frenchmen were convicted in the courts of law due to the injustice that favoured the Aristocracy and the Nobles. The strongest expression of the King's power was the '**Lettre de cachet**' - sealed letter which empowered him to arrest anyone. The use of this letter became very unpopular.

King Louis XIV expressed the despotic power of the King when he said,

'L'etat c'est moi.' (The government is me)

Louis XVI was quoted to have said,

'We own the law; the right of making our laws belongs to us. We neither delegate it nor share it.'

'The thing is legal because I wish it'

While Louis XIV was quoted to have said,

'The State ...is myself.'

(Source: An Illustrated History of Modern Europe by Denis Richards, pg 9)

Thus the crown was distanced from the commoners such that in summoning the Estates General, there were no critics or soldiers he could rely on. He only had contact with the Nobility, Upper clergy and his officials. There were several royal councils, a royal

controller of finances, royal deputies in the provinces (called Intendants), and royal officials everywhere through whom the King ruled.

The government of France was characterised by inefficiency and administrative weakness. France was administratively complex and imperfect due to variations in the judicial as well as economic systems. France lacked uniform systems of law i.e. in all there were about 360 feudal codes of law. She was under two sets of law i.e. the Northern districts in the country were under the traditional common French law and in the South, the Roman law was in use.

It should be noted that the Ancient Regime was characterised by lack of a representative government which meant that the masses were excluded from political participation. The local communities were grossly misgoverned due to the breakdown in Estates and Parlements. There was no parliament (Estates General) and it had last met in 1614. It used to bring together all the classes i.e. 1st Estate, (Clergy), Nobility (2nd Estate) and 3rd Estate made up of the Bourgeoisie and the Peasants. So there was nothing near to a parliamentary or representative system for the whole country. Besides, there was no constitution in the country (France)

However, provincial Estates existed in some parts of France. These were meant to discuss the affairs in the districts but during the reign of Louis XVI, their smallest action had to receive the approval of the Intendants. The Parlements (supreme law courts) had become aristocratic i.e. they protected only the interests of the wealthy and upper class. Thus there was no regular and recognised means by which grievances could be expressed, discussed and rectified. The government of France was in the hands of an absolute King who was advised by the Royal Council which comprised 40 Councillors whose work was to discuss and approve every detail of the state. Though their work was to advise the King, he could or could not take their advice. These officials were the direct servants of the crown and thus answerable only to the crown. Their power had been deliberately increased by successive monarchs with the aim of reducing the political power of the greater Nobility.

Note should be taken that there lacked freedom of speech, press and worship. The press was subjected to a lot of censorship, all the French were to belong to the Catholic faith (religious intolerance). The situation by 1789 was that there was popular demand for change (reforms) but not destruction of monarchy nor the death of the monarch. The way the King handled the situation determined the fate of the monarch and the monarchy, change was necessary hence the outbreak of the revolution. As earlier mentioned, the absence of a constitution made the King and his officials rule the way they liked and tended to base their policies on trial and error. This may explain the inefficiency that characterised the government of France at that time.

The unfair political system was worsened by an unfair administrative set up based on discrimination so that while the privileged classes enjoyed the possibilities of joining important offices and employment within the state, the underprivileged (3rd Estate) had no access to such opportunities. Many people were therefore denied their source of livelihood in this way and that was why they were prepared to take any risk at any cost to open career to talents.

It should be noted that the above situations made the need for change necessary hence the outbreak of the 1789 revolution in France.

2. SOCIAL

The French society was characterised by a Class System i.e. the first Estate (Clergy) the second Estate (Nobility) and the 3rd Estate (Bourgeoisie, Peasants). The first two classes were privileged and the latter unprivileged. The privileged classes enjoyed a number of exemptions i.e. from taxation, military service etc. They occupied the topmost positions in government, had fishing and hunting rights.

The First Estate (Clergy) was subdivided into Upper Clergy and lower Clergy. The former comprised Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops while the latter was composed of the Parish Priests whose privileges were far less than those of the Upper Clergy. So these subdivisions promoted the revolution to a certain extent in that unity between the two groups was ruled out in the face of any threat.

While the Second Estate (Nobility), in order of respect was subdivided into greater Nobility, lesser Nobility had fewer privileges and at the bottom were the Nobility of the Robe who were not Nobles by birth but by right of achievement.

The Nobles in France owned about 3/5th of all the land yet they were the minority group numbering about 300,000 out of a population of 25 million by 1789. They had political and economic benefits and had the right to hire Judges and Lawyers in case of disputes with lower members of the society. The Nobility as a whole was conservative, narrow-minded and resistant to proposed positive change. Note should be taken that the divisions amongst the nobles promoted the revolution to a limited extent since they could not defend their interests collectively i.e. the Nobility of the Robe and the lesser nobles were against the greater Nobility. This may explain why Count Mirabeau, a noble, became leader of the revolution.

The 3rd Estate was composed of the Bourgeoisie and the Peasants. By 1789, the Peasants numbered about 23 million in a population of 25 million. About one million of the Peasants were Serfs. The peasants were poor and most deprived. Although they were cultivators, they were not landowners but Tenants of the Rich. Besides, they suffered crushing burdens of taxation in spite of their little earnings. They paid both direct and indirect taxes as well as feudal dues for the use of the rich man's estates, wine press, mills, ovens and other demands from the landlords (Seigneurs) They did not enjoy any exemptions at all compared to the First and Second Estates. In addition, they paid the Church tithe i.e. 10th of their earnings.

What we should note, therefore, is that the Peasants in France were therefore left with about 19 percent of their earnings. They had no say in government and could not be represented in the courts of law. Rich Hunters destroyed their crops and the government subjected them to forced labour (corvee) on public works and buildings.

The Bourgeoisie was a Middle Class composed of Merchants, Teachers, Manufacturers, Professionals, Doctors; they resented their exclusion from political privileges, lack of freedom of press, speech and worship. The Merchants were oppressed by the chaotic system of weights and measures and the internal tariff barriers. The 1786 commercial /

free trade treaty with Britain allowed competition with British goods in France and this was a blow to the interests of the Industrialists.

This class had loaned the government money to finance its adventures abroad. Owing to its poor financial stand, the government could not honour its debt obligation and this situation angered the Middle Class, who were educated and materially well off. It was this class that offered most of the leadership of the revolution.

It should be noted that Louis XVI maintained a discriminative class system yet as a Despot, he should have dictated terms and rectified the situation. He was, therefore, held responsible hence the outbreak of the French Revolution of 1789.

ROLES PLAYED BY THE CLASS SYSTEM IN THE OUTBREAK OF THE REVOLUTION.

-The class system caused political grievances in France i.e. the first and second classes were rulers while the third class, made out of the Bourgeoisie and the Peasants, was the ruled. But what should be noted is that the Bourgeoisie were the educated, rich yet were denied participation in the politics of France thus discontent which caused the outbreak of the revolution of 1789.

- The class system promoted despotism and dictatorship as well as suffocating constitutionalism in France.
- The class system also created a good ground for exploitation i.e. the first and the second Estates enjoyed extreme privileges as compared to the third Estate of the Bourgeoisie and the Peasants i.e. exemption from taxation, forced labour, military service. This situation therefore created discontent that led to the outbreak of the French revolution of 1789.
- The class system promoted unfair judicial system and related injustices which created a lot of discontent in France i.e. press censorship, letter de cachet, trial without the jury, lack of a common code and arbitrary imprisonment
- It promoted extravagance at the Court of Versailles, power of the Courtiers to embezzle government funds, bribery, corruption and all other forms of malpractices in France. These caused financial crisis that the government could not attend to thus the demand for reforms which the King and the government militated against hence the outbreak of the revolution of 1789.
- The Class system created unfair taxation of the Peasants who were least able yet most burdened.

It also denied them the ownership of land thus they lived as squatters and could be sold with the land hence discontent.

- The class system even extended to the Army causing widespread discontent and defection of the Army from the monarchical government. e.g. in 1781, a law was passed which reserved the commissioned ranks for those born into the nobility, the

non-commissioned ranks were the highest the Bourgeoisie could rise. This led to discontent that undermined military discipline.

- It should also be noted that, the Class system failed the Estates General which was summoned on 5th May, 1789 to address the financial crisis in France hence culminating into the revolution. The issue of the procedure of voting / sitting arrangement caused disagreement which led to the 3rd Estate declaring itself the representative of the nation and therefore the National Assembly hence the revolution had begun.
- The Class system and its evils thus became the centre of criticism for the Philosophers and the Writers i.e. Voltaire attacked the Clergy / Church for its religious intolerance hence discontent that caused the outbreak of the French revolution of 1789.

3. ECONOMIC

This was yet another factor that contributed to the outbreak of the French Revolution. The climax of the economic causes was the financial crisis or bankruptcy of the French crown. By 1789, the French treasury was empty. The economic structures in France by 1789 had outlived their usefulness. The bankruptcy or the financial crisis of the government was brought about by the following:

(a) Unequal distribution of Wealth

Only a section of the population i.e. the privileged few like the Clergy, Nobility and a small number of businessmen owned wealth. The majority of the people lived in abject poverty. The peasants had no land, lived on the Estates of Nobles, the workers got very low wages and in times of depression, this was the most hit sector. Thus while the country was rich, the government was poor.

(b) Inequality in taxation / poor taxation system

France was bankrupt owing to the poor system of tax assessment and method of collection, combined with privileges. The most able to pay i.e. the rich Nobles and the Clergy enjoyed exemption from tax payment, leaving the burden to be shouldered by the Bourgeoisie and the Peasants (most unprivileged and least able to pay). The Peasants were heavily taxed and were forced to pay the little that they had.

The government of Louis XVI should have taxed the rich Nobles and Clergy so as to get a lot of revenue to run the state but the bulk was to be paid by the least able to pay. This, therefore, meant that there was often very little revenue collected. Besides, there was a lot of brutality used in the collection of the taxes hence discontent which created a revolutionary situation in France thus the outbreak of the French revolution of 1789.

(c) The obstructive trade guilds

These discouraged trade among the districts thus frustrating the French leading to discontent among them hence generating a very strong desire for change / reforms that the government of the Ancient Regime militated against thus the outbreak of the French revolution of 1789.

(d) There was a high degree of corruption and embezzlement of funds in France.

The Tax collectors had to bribe for their jobs and ended up swallowing a big fraction of the funds collected in self payment. The cost of collection was also very high hence inequality and inefficiency. While the country was poor, the people were very rich i.e. the Clergy and Nobility from whom the government even borrowed money thus financial crisis.

(e) Involvement in colonial / foreign Wars

The financial crisis in France was aggravated by France's involvement in costly wars i.e. the Seven Year war (1756-1763) and the American war of Independence (1776-1783). The former involved France and Britain which led to the defeat of France and loss of her two colonies i.e. India and Canada. This, therefore, meant that France lost sources of raw materials, markets, tributes and grounds for investments. The American war of Independence cost the government a lot of money i.e. about 30 million pounds in military assistance to USA.

It should be noted that these wars compelled the government to borrow from the Church (Clergy), Nobility, Bourgeoisie and this alienated the Bourgeoisie when the government failed to pay. The Nobility and the Clergy were still clung to their privileges in spite of the fact that the finances of France were in disarray.

(f) Exploitative nature of the Catholic Church

This created an economic crisis in France. The Church demanded for 10th of one's income but in some instances demanded for more than that thus creating an economic crisis. There was therefore need for change in France hence the outbreak of the French revolution of 1789.

(g) Extravagance at the Court of Versailles

The extravagant nature of the monarchy and the Nobles depleted the financial reserves i.e. Louis XIV spent 30 million Pounds to build the Royal palace at Versailles. Similarly, the regime of Louis XVI spent a 12th of the state income on luxuries. He surrounded himself with many Nobles and Attendants and the bulk of the money was spent on amusements, pensions for the Nobility. Marie Antoinette was flamboyant; she kept 500 maids, there were 1600 Attendants, 2000 Horses and the King bought four pairs of shoes per week for the Queen. There existed lavish expenditures on heavy banquets for the conservative court Nobles which increased the state of bankruptcy in France yet the sources of income were limited. Those that had the means and most able i.e. the Clergy and Nobility were exempted from taxation. The burden fell on the members of the third Estate and especially the Peasants who were least able yet most burdened hence discontent which led to the outbreak of the 1789 French revolution.

It should be noted that before the French Revolution of 1789, the French population had increased greatly which increased the demand for consumer goods. However, this increase was not matched by a similar increase in wages / incomes. Bad financial

management, lack of accountability, widespread corruption led to an increase in expenditure as opposed to income.

(h) High prices, famine, cold and unemployment

By 1789, the rate of inflation was high due to an increase in money supply, low agricultural production due to the obstructive trade guilds (feudal dues) and mismanagement and prices of items i.e. bread shot up.

In 1788, the corn crop failed thus famine and starvation in towns and the country side. This situation was worsened by the bad winter which caused extreme suffering i.e. rivers were frozen, harvests very poor.

(i) The Laki Eruptions of June, 1783-February, 1784

This eruption took place in Iceland but its effects were felt all over Europe and the world. It produced a lot of lava and gases i.e. hydrogen fluoride and sulfur dioxide which affected agriculture thus poverty for the rural masses accompanied by drought, bad winters and summers that destroyed crops. The eruption was only one in a decade of climatic disruptions. These events contributed significantly to the build-up of poverty and famine that may have contributed to the French Revolution of 1789.

The above suffering was intensified with the signing of the Free Trade Treaty with Britain in 1786 which allowed British manufactured goods at cheap rates in return for French wine etc. This had caused a lot of industrial suffering thus unemployment in towns.

Note should be taken that agriculture was the main economic activity of the majority of the French, unfortunately, it had been seriously affected by the bad winter thus unemployment in the agricultural sector. Consequently, rural - urban drift occurred in the hope of getting jobs, food and shelter (in the urban centres). But already the free trade treaty of 1786 had had its effect on the urban population (unemployment) thus the emergence of an idle, desperate and hungry mob in Paris, which was ready to support any revolutionary measures.

MEASURES TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT TO CORRECT THE FINANCIAL CRISIS

(a) The financial crisis led the government of Louis XVI to embark on measures aimed at averting the problems / crisis which instead worsened the situation i.e. the government subjected the masses to excessive taxation that caused more discontent hence the outbreak of the revolution of 1789 in France.

(b) The government also dismissed the reformist ministers i.e. Necker, Turgot, Brienne and Callone who had been employed to correct the financial crisis. The dismissal of the Finance / Reformist Ministers marked the end of all the efforts being made to rectify the economic crisis. Necker was fired because he had published a government financial statement which embarrassed the Nobles and the rulers; he suggested taxation of the Clergy and the Nobles which met with a lot of opposition from them, led by the Queen, Marie Antoinette.

(c) The government of the Ancient regime signed the Free Trade Treaty of 1786 between France and Britain that was meant to solve the problem of scarcity of commodities but instead caused unemployment. The treaty subjected the French goods to unfair competition with the British goods which were of superior quality and cheap thus losing sales and therefore the French industries had to cut down of manpower hence unemployment that resulted into the emergence of the Paris mob which became an important element in the outbreak of the French revolution of 1789.

The Economic crisis called for the need for reforms i.e. call for an end to extravagance and privileges, better methods of tax collection and the need to appoint capable financial controllers. All efforts to bring about financial sanity failed. Ministers were dismissed every now and then. Within a period of about fifteen years (1774-1789) there were about six ministers, prominent among who were Necker, Turgot, Brienne and Callone.

Callone borrowed and spent lavishly. But later he was also dismissed when he wanted to tax the Nobles. He was replaced by Bishop Brienne who advised the King to call the Estates-General to discuss the planned reforms. Shortly afterwards, Necker was recalled to office, he agreed with Brienne on the issue of the Estates - General and he suggested an earlier date for the meeting of the Estates- General.

(d) The financial crisis led to the summoning of the Estates-General meeting on 5th May 1789 that became the immediate cause of the revolution. Louis XVI failed to overcome opposition and defend his ministers. The solution to the financial crisis should have been reforms but these were blocked making the revolution inevitable.

Note should be taken that, failure by the monarchical government to provide social amenities / services angered the masses thus leading to the Paris mob. Failure to pay the civil service, army led to retrenchment hence the monarchy became the centre of criticism by the Philosophers, Economists and Physiocrats, a situation that led to discontent and eventually causing the outbreak of the revolution of 1789.

4. FOREIGN INFLUENCES.

Before the outbreak of the French revolution, France was exposed to influences from America and Britain. Through these influences, France was able to learn a few lessons / ideas which the French could use to bring about change in France and better their situation. These influences were:

(a) Influence of the American War of Independence, 1776 -1783

In 1776, the 13 colonies of Britain rebelled and regained their independence in 1783 with the help of France. France wanted to revenge on Britain that was responsible for the loss of India and Canada in the Seven Year war (1756 -1763). The government of Louis XVI had sent French troops under General Lafayette. The help rendered to America had the following effects.

(i) Their participation, under Lafayette, gave the French a lot of ideas i.e. need for representation. The Americans had fought in the cause of '**No taxation without representation**' yet this was in existence in France, therefore something had to be done. They wanted liberty, they were aware of the burdens of the peasants at home

and it became apparent that if the Americans were justified in revolting against the English, then the French were far more justified in revolting against the French government with its multitude of abuses. The French soldiers wanted the masses at home to be accorded the same liberty by the Bourbon monarchy.

Lafayette, the veteran of the American War of Independence, became a revolutionary leader. The soldiers who participated in the war came back and instilled a revolutionary spirit / fever among the people. They came with a determination to change the mismanagement in France by the Bourbon monarchy.

(ii) The participation of the French soldiers equipped the French with a practical example and the zeal to rebel, how the oppressed people could deal with their oppressors i.e. in the case of France, the King, Nobility and the Clergy.

(iii) When the soldiers came back, they began to compare and contrast the situation at home with that they had fought against and became determined to effect change in France.

(b) The influence of England.

France was greatly influenced by the liberal institutions in Britain, i.e. constitution and parliament. The British parliamentary system and the relative freedom that existed in Britain, the separation of powers under the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary, in other words, it was a limited monarchy with a system of checks and balances.

It is vital to observe that much of the thought of the great writers was derived from their impression of England. They regarded English institutions and life through rose coloured spectacles just because life in England was undoubtedly different from that in France and in many aspects better. Voltaire and Montesquieu were greatly influenced by England. Even the great Encyclopaedias were a translation of the English Encyclopaedia to the French version. The Bourgeoisie was, too, influenced by the British way of life.

It should be noted that all these influences were spreading discontent and free thought in France. The French became critical of the system and thus contributing to the collapse of the old system in France. English newspapers circulated freely in France. The French admired the English constitution, parliament, free trade, freedom of press, speech, worship, association, equality of all before the law. France was able to learn a few lessons / ideas which they felt they could use to bring about change in France and better the conditions in their country.

However, these influences contributed to a smaller extent to the outbreak of the French Revolution of 1789.

5. THE INFLUENCE OF THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHERS AND WRITERS

This was a period of enlightenment and the French Philosophers who were intellectuals and great Thinkers were part of the forces. They wrote on various aspects of the French society in the 17th Century thus sowing the seeds of the French revolution during the age of reasoning. Prominent among these Philosophers were:-

- (a) Voltaire
- (b) Montesquieu
- (c) Jean Jacques Rousseau.

(a) Voltaire, 1694 - 1778

He was a prominent Historian, a Poet, Dramatist /Actor. He did a lot to undermine the old society of France. His views were critical of the Catholic Church and Christianity in general. He attacked the Church as an institution of superstition and ignorance. He attacked religious intolerance i.e. lack of freedom of worship. His disgust with the religious order was seen in his remark that, ***"If God does not exist, it would be necessary to create him"***.

Voltaire attacked the barbaric monarchy of the Ancient Regime in France, its arbitrary powers and lack of tolerance. His concern centred on the need for religious freedom and other liberty. He denounced unfair laws which only allowed public worship of Catholicism, the old and unfair system of taxation and torture.

He had been influenced by what he saw in England and in 1734; he published his famous ***'Letters on the English'*** from which most of his later ideas developed. He praised the high degree of religious toleration and absence of privileged class of the French type, freedom of press, trial by the jury, democratic government etc.

However, it should be noted that Voltaire did not advocate for the destruction of the Monarchy, he distrusted the masses. He once said,

"I had rather be ruled by one Lion than a hundred rats".

He advocated for the need for reforms but not a revolution.

(b) Montesquieu, 1689 - 1755

His influence was great in a more politically strict view. He exposed the evils of the absolute monarchy; he wanted the powers of the King to be limited through a system of checks and balances, to guard against abuse of power and to avoid conflicts in society. He admired the English system of government i.e. its constitution, parliament, independent judges and its constitutional King.

He advocated for a representative government in which the various organs of government would act as checks and balances on each other thus helping to preserve the liberty of the individual. He wanted separation of powers i.e. Executive, Legislature and Judiciary. He called for an end to the privileges of the Nobility and wanted laws to be discussed before being put into force. His ideas were of profound influence during the revolution. He expressed his views in the book, ***'The Spirit of Laws'***.

(c) Jean Jacques Rousseau, 1712 - 1778

He was liberal minded and preached equality and liberty of men, for he realised that though man was born free and equal, he was everywhere in chains. Hence should return to his primitive innocence and happiness and destroy the institutions that had enslaved

him. The basic work of Rousseau was presented in his famous book, '**The Social Contract**' (**Du Contract Social**). In this book, he indicated that the general will of the people should be the guiding principle or the ruling force in any society. That the ruler and the ruled entered into some kind of contract and if the government did not keep its side of the bargain, then the people would break the contract. The government, therefore, had an obligation to protect and promote the interests of the people.

Rousseau regarded the best form of government as being representative; he preferred it to be in the hands of the educated and responsible Middle Class. He did not advocate for the abolition of the monarchy but advocated for reforms. He pointed out that laws should be the expression of the general will of the deep instinctive conscience of society. Rousseau not only stressed the main doctrine i.e. sovereignty of the people and the supremacy of the general will but also helped to create the emotional spirit which made people ready to rebel. He also pointed out the fundamental rights of the people i.e. freedom of worship, press, association which were being denied the people of France.

In short, according to Rousseau, those who govern must recognise their responsibilities, that the people of France were suffering because the interests of the crown were divorced from those of the state because the Nobles no longer fought and the clergy no longer prayed because the social contract had been broken.

THE ENCYCLOPAEDISTS

The two leading ones were **Diderot** and **D'Alembert**. Their articles included attacks on everything in France that was hated by the society i.e. Church and the state. Among the early contributors to the work of the Encyclopaedists were a group - the Economists, who advocated for the abolition of all forms of taxation except on land, abolition of many privileges of the Clergy and Nobility which had led to the bankruptcy of France.

ROLES PLAYED BY THE PHILOSOPHERS IN THE OUTBREAK OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION OF 1789

Through their writings, which were read and interpreted by the Bourgeoisie to the masses, the Philosophers played the following roles:- (a) Ploughed the ground for a revolution.

- (b) Made an apparent need for change.
- (c) Sharpened the reasoning of the people (masses).
- (d) Pointed out corruption and exploitation by the government e.g. taxes from which they got nothing.
- (e) Made people aware of the unfair political system, the Bastille, lettre de cachet i.e. Montesquieu.
- (f) Attacked the privileges of the Nobility and the excessive despotic powers of the King which needed change.

- (g) Aroused the desire for equal political representation and equality of all before the law.
- (h) Showed that the British system was the best alternative form of government that could be adopted in France.
- (i) They generally created the mood to rebel.

But what should be noted is that;

- (i) The Philosophers advocated for reforms and not a revolution.
- (ii) They had died by the time of the outbreak of the French Revolution.
- (iii) They did not provide practical solution to the problems in France.
- (iv) They contributed to the outbreak of the revolution to a small extent.

6. THE CHARACTER OF THE KING, LOUIS XVI.

Louis XVI had many commendable qualities i.e. gentleness, kind-heartedness, quite liberal and sincere Roman Catholic, devoted father but none of these was helpful in the existing crisis. He was born in 1754, came to power in 1774 at the age of 20 years. He was crowned King in 1775 as King Louis XVI. He inherited a government deeply in debt, and a society in which entrenched privilege made it difficult to effect the much needed social, economic and political reforms so as to solve the Monarchy's financial problems and to keep up with a rapidly changing society and economy.

King Louis XVI inherited a kingdom driven nearly bankrupt through the opulence of his predecessors i.e. Louis XIV and Louis XV. The economy was on a down turn i.e. unemployment, crop failed, price of bread and other food items soared up, people were not happy. Such a situation needed a strong King to handle unfortunately; he was weak, inconsistent, inefficient, unstable, lacked clear purpose and initiative and could easily be influenced. In other words, his personality was weak and suffered the problem of indecision and as such, Louis XVI was a misfit on the French throne.

The King, Louis XVI, inherited a despotic kingship but he badly lacked the characters of a Despot. He was a King in name and not in character, inconsistent in his policy and lacked the will to persist with reforms. He was also inefficient, ignored state duties and spent much time on leisure i.e. hunting in the Royal Estates. His Court at Versailles was the venue of different banquets and entertainment.

The King's weak character was exploited by the Nobles, his wife, Queen Marie Antoinette. He was under the terrible influence of his wife; she misadvised the King against reforms and the ministers (Finance Controllers) who were employed to correct the financial crisis / situation in France. Consequently these ministers were fired and **Voltaire** had this to say when **Turgot** was dismissed.

"I see nothing before me now but death."

Due to this influence of the wife on King Louis XVI, **Mirabeau**, a prominent Noble and leader of the revolution commented that,

“The King has only one man about him - his wife”.

The King, Louis XVI was described as,

‘Too weak minded to be stable’

All in all, the destiny of France rested with a King who was weak, not a reformist and as such dismissed reformist ministers i.e. Turgot, Necker. Louis XVI was slow to realise that the wind of change in France was blowing towards reforms thus the French Revolution of 1789.

Role of the weakness in the character of the King Louis XVI in the outbreak of the revolution

- The King lacked interest in governance of the state i.e. he spent most of his time on leisure like hunting in the royal gardens, sleeping and making locks instead of attending to issues of the state which needed to be addressed immediately such as the desire for reforms, financial crisis.
- Lavish spending / extravagance of the King, Louis XVI i.e. he bought four pairs of shoes per week for the Queen Marie Antoinette, 1600 Attendants, 500 Maids and 2000 Horses, a lot of banquets / parties at the Court of Versailles. It should be noted that the sources of income were limited and being contributed by members of the 3rd Estate and especially the Peasants who were least able yet most burdened thus discontent that led to the outbreak of the revolution of 1789.
- He lacked foresight and vision and did not see that his actions would lead France to disaster i.e. he endorsed the participation of the French in the American War of Independence of 1776-1783 which later caused the outbreak of the revolution. This was because the French soldiers who participated in the war were exposed to revolutionary ideas and came back with the zeal to rebel and the war provided them with a practical example. The soldiers wanted the government of the Ancient regime to grant the French what the Americans were enjoying after overthrowing the British rule.
- His signing of the Free Trade treaty with Britain in 1786 created a lot of unemployment because the French goods were subjected to unfair competition with the British goods that were of superior quality thus loss of sales and profits on the part of France thus reduction in manpower (unemployment) which caused discontent that caused the outbreak of the revolution.
- The King was very submissive in his character and this was a big weakness i.e. he gave way to his wife, Marie Antoinette and the Conservative Court Nobles to involve in state affairs negatively. He was under the terrible influence of the Queen, Antoinette that led to dismissal of the reformist ministers like Necker, Brienne, Turgot and Callone hence discontent which caused the outbreak of the revolution of 1789 in France.

- The King's care free attitude towards the publications of the critical writers that spread a lot of ideas that were critical of the government and the King allowed these ideas to circulate freely in France which aroused discontent hence the outbreak of the French revolution of 1789.

- Louis XVI was too slow to react to situations that needed quick actions i.e. he failed to provide relief supplies to the masses that were hungry and needed assistance despite the fact that the palace of Versailles had abundant food supplies hence the emergence of the Paris mob which became an important element in the outbreak of the French revolution of 1789.

- Louis XVI was inefficient, inconsistent, indecisive, unstable, lacked clear purpose and initiative thus a misfit on the French throne. He was described as,

'Too weak-minded to be stable,'

hence contributing to the outbreak of the revolution of 1789.

7. THE CHARACTER OF THE QUEEN, MARIE ANTOINETTE

The Queen, Marie Antoinette was strong willed, had power of rapid decision, lacked wisdom and breath of judgement. She was detached from the unprivileged classes due to her royal background and this was a source of discontent among the French masses that led to the outbreak of the 1789 French revolution.

The Queen, Marie Antoinette was extravagant, arrogant, proud, willful, impatient of restraint and fond of pleasure. Her extravagant lifestyle led to bankruptcy of the French Crown which created a lot of crisis i.e. She bought four pairs of shoes per week, had 500 maids, 1600 Attendants thus the outbreak of the French revolution of 1789.

The Queen, Marie Antoinette was at the centre of the greedy Nobles who were opposed to all reforms and through their influence, Marie Antoinette ill advised the King, Louis XVI on state matters due to ignorance of the need for reforms, unsympathetic to the needs of the people and incapable of grasping the political system of France thus a dangerous Counsellor for the King in the hours of crisis. She lacked political common sense. She was described as,

"Too strong hearted to be sensible"

Marie Antoinette meddled in French state affairs i.e. in the Courts through nepotism thus causing a lot of discontent which created a revolutionary situation thus the outbreak of the French revolution of 1789.

8. THE CALLING / SUMMONING OF THE ESTATES - GENERAL

This constituted the immediate cause of the French Revolution. It was summoned on 5th May, 1789 to address the prevailing economic crisis. It had last met in 1614 and was meeting again after 175 years. The Estates-General was an old fashioned parliament which used to bring the three Estates together i.e. first Estate (Clergy), second Estate (Nobility) and third Estate (Bourgeoisie and Peasants). But the issue of procedure of sitting / voting brought about disagreement which led to the members of the 3rd Estate

declaring themselves the representatives of the nation and therefore the National Assembly thus the revolution had actually begun.

In conclusion, by May 1789, France was ripe for a revolution. It broke out due to the fact that the government was oppressive yet weak. The King was incompetent, economic distress was widespread; the Philosophers had put the masses into a revolutionary mood which was set ablaze by the summoning of the Estates-General. In the final analysis, by 1789, the revolution had become inevitable, it could not be avoided hence its outbreak.

THE COURSE OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION OF 1789

SUMMONING OF THE ESTATES-GENERAL MEETING AND THE FORMATION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

The Estates General was an old fashioned parliament divided into 3 houses in which the first Estate was the Clergy; the second was the Nobility and the third Estate comprising the Bourgeoisie and Peasantry. The Assembly (Estate General) met on Saturday, 5th May, 1789, at Versailles. It was composed of 308 Clergy (1st Estate), 285 Nobles (2nd Estate) and 621 Bourgeoisie and Peasants (3rd Estate). This was the first meeting of the Assembly after 175 years because it last met in 1614.

The Monarch, in financial crisis, had no option but to call the Estates - General following the advice of the Finance Ministers. The parliament was to invent a way of balancing the budget by some reforms in taxation.

There had existed a campaign (list of grievances) of all the 3rd Estate (Cahiers). These were to be submitted before the actual meeting. The 3rd Estate was united in their Cahiers and contained much the same demands throughout France i.e.

- (a) Abolition of feudal dues.
- (b) End of the privileges and exemption of the Nobles and Clergy from taxation and wanted reforms in taxation.
- (c) A constitution with a regular parliament.
- (d) Abolition of arbitrary arrests.
- (e) End of despotism
- (f) An elected Assembly with members responsible to the Assembly and not the king.
- (g) Abolition of Censorship of the press
- (h) Wanted freedom of worship
- (i) Abolition of corvee.

But the cahiers of the Clergy and Nobles showed no such uniformity, instead the lower clergy were attacking the higher clergy and the lesser Nobility did the same, some wanted privileges maintained and others wanted them abolished.

It should be noted that no demand was made for the abolition of the monarchy or death of the monarch but the cahiers opened the door for criticism.

The King, Louis XVI, summoned the Estates General meeting without giving guidelines. He failed to decide on important issues e.g. the procedure of voting (sitting arrangement). Were the three Estates to sit collectively or separately? The first and second Estates preferred to sit separately so that they could out vote the third Estate by 2: 1 (Two to one). The third Estate composed of the Bourgeoisie and the Peasants were opposed to this arrangement.

This debate went on from May to June 1789 and it caused a deadlock. The King, Louis XVI, failed to resolve the misunderstanding and this forced the third Estate to declare itself the representatives of the nation, therefore the National Assembly. On June 27th, 1789, they invited the Nobles and the Clergy to join them. The Third Estate was led by Count Mirabeau, a Noble who was rejected by fellow Nobles.

The resolution went on to say that no taxes that were not freely granted by this Assembly would be legal. The Old Estates - General parliament had disappeared and the modern parliament took its place. This self-conversion of the Third Estate into a National Assembly was the real beginning of the French Revolution.

Significance of the Summoning of the Estates-General, 5th May, 1789

- (a) It displayed a strong unity and determination of the Third Estate and defiance to the old order.
- (b) It signified the beginning of the Revolution.
- (c) It revealed the weakness of the king.
- (d) It constituted a turning point to the French aristocracy.
- (e) The once underprivileged people (Rich middle class) were brought to the forefront of political, social and economic reforms in France.
- (f) The Third Estate gained a platform it could use against dictatorship and privileges.
- (g) With the formation of the National Assembly, the Revolutionaries won their first round victory.
- (h) It ended six weeks of wrangling and time wasting over procedure.

THE TENNIS COURT OATH, JUNE 1789

The King Louis XVI was advised to lock the Assembly Hall to silence the Third Estate. The latter moved to a nearby Indoor Tennis Court where they took an Oath,

“Never to separate but to reassemble whenever circumstances required until the constitution of France was established and consolidated upon firm foundation.”

Faced with this resistance, the King ordered the Clergy and the Nobles to join the Third Estate under the Single Assembly (27th June, 1789). In Paris, a Committee was set up at Hotel de Ville and formed a Voluntary Militia - the National Guard which actually became the Revolutionary army.

THE STORMING OF THE BASTILLE 14th JULY, 1789

The Bastille was an Old Fortress and Prison in Paris. On 14th July, 1789, a violent mob of several thousands invaded and broke into the Bastille owing to several reasons;

- (a) There was fear of a counter-revolution in Paris by some Royalists who had planned to regain what had been lost due to the King's indecision. In July, they had mobilised Royal troops and concentrated them on the outskirts of Paris. This created suspicion among the revolutionaries.
- (b) Dismissal of Necker on 11th July, 1789 aroused anger. Necker was a popular Finance Minister due to his Reformist policies. It seemed Louis XVI had followed the Queen's advice and rid himself of the only Reformer in his court.
- (c) Press propaganda had increased the popular clamour. Journalists like Desmoulins mobilised the masses for the defence of the revolution.
- (d) The Paris mob was fired into action. This group had watched the revolution with growing impatience.
- (e) The Bastille was believed to contain guns; the revolutionaries stormed it to secure arms to strengthen the army.
- (f) The Bastille was a symbol of oppression / despotism; many Frenchmen had been locked up in it through the famous system of 'lettre de cachet.' It was attacked to strike a blow at arbitrary imprisonment.
- (g) Rumour of using foreign troops - Swiss troops, against the Revolution.

Significance of the storming of the Bastille, 14th July, 1789

- (a) The capture of the Bastille once again revealed the decayed nature of the regime of Louis XVI. The triumph of the Paris mob demonstrated its hidden power. Hence the mob became the third element of the revolution and was to significantly influence its course. The mob had a terrible weapon of using terror and violence.
- (b) When the Bastille fell, some French Nobles and Clergy became scared and fled France to exile. The majority went to Austria and Belgium led by the King's brother, Vicomte d'Artois. These Émigrés planned to restore absolutism in France and by so doing became one of the external enemies of the revolution.
- (c) The storming of the Bastille was the first major incidence of violence. It was a signal of the oncoming period of anarchy and chaos (Reign of Terror) between 1792 and 1794. After 14th July, 1789, violence spread to the countryside. Many peasants grabbed the estates and property of the Nobles. The government was unable to control the situation.

- (d) Destruction of the pillars of despotism.
- (e) Led to the disbanding of the Royal Guard and institution of the revolutionary army, the National Guard.
- (f) The Tricolour (Red, White, Blue) - the Revolutionary flag replaced the White Royalist flag.
- (g) It constituted a second step in the downfall of the Ancient Regime.
- (h) It portrayed the unity of the people.
- (i) The 14th July, 1789 was declared a National Holiday.
- (j) Marked the beginning of the Revolutionary process.
- (k) Formation of the Paris Commune (new government) to organise security now became centre of anti-royalist feeling.
- (l) The Third Estate was recognised and empowered to make laws for France.

ACTIVITIES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY: DECLARATION OF 4TH AUGUST, 1789

(a) Abolition of feudalism and privileges

After the storming of the Bastille, a new problem cropped up i.e. How to maintain law and order and at the same time satisfy the peasants. The French Revolution aimed at the establishment of liberty, Fraternity and Equality. To achieve these ideas, on 4th August 1789, the National Assembly passed a decree with the support of some members of the Nobility; a document was completed and later adopted.

These Nobles (Moderates) wanted to appease the peasants and put an end to the disorder in the villages, they were willing to sacrifice their privileges in return for the security of their lives. According to the declaration of 4th August, 1789,

- (a) Feudalism was swept away as well as the discriminative system of taxation and established equal taxation.
- (b) Legal equality was established among the Frenchmen, (equality of all before the law).
- (c) The Nobility and Clergy denounced all institutions which had brought misery to the poor.
- (d) Appointment to public and military service was made open to all.
- (e) The people had the right to rule themselves.
- (f) Instituted freedom of worship, the forceful payment of the tithe to the church was stopped.

- (g) This event was important since it was a major gain to the peasants and the oppressed i.e. the serfs were freed and paying of feudal dues was stopped. The poor became more assured of owning property and many of them became landowners. These gains made the peasants active supporters of the revolution due to economic self interest.

It should be noted that in spite of its positive aspects, the reform of August, 1789 led to an immediate breakdown in the system of taxation because the population was too excited and in the mood of rebellion. This led to more bankruptcy and economic strangulation in France.

Significance of the Declaration of 4th August

- (a) Provided a framework and programme on which the revolutionaries could base their governance.
- (b) Destruction of the Old order where people's rights had not been taken as significant.
- (c) It reminded the people of their rights but not their duties which later led to disorder and terror.
- (d) Made the democratic expectations of the people difficult to fulfil leading to further conflicts in France.

The Assembly had already begun the task of setting up a new form of government for France and after July, 14th 1789, it had taken up the name of **CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY**. After long deliberations, it decided to make a declaration known as the **Declaration of the Rights of man** as an introduction to the new constitution.

The Declaration was a statement of the principles of the revolution. It contained an influence of Rousseau's philosophy and clauses from the Constitution of England and the American war of Independence. These rights were as follows:-

- (a) All men are born free and equal therefore they have equal rights.
- (b) All men are equal before the law.
- (c) Liberty, protection of property and opposition of oppression are natural and birth rights of man.
- (d) All men have liberty to do whatever work they want to but in this they should not harm others.
- (e) Emphasised freedom of speech, publication, press, worship and association.
- (f) No imprisonment without trial
- (g) All have the right to keep their property. No property can be confiscated without giving proper compensation.
- (h) All citizens have the right to either participate directly or through their representatives in the formation of the law.

- (i) Sovereignty is vested in the people; therefore, they have the final voice and determine their ruler.
- (j) All men are eligible to government jobs.
- (k) Equal taxation was emphasised.
- (l) Right to rebel against oppression and injustice
- (m) First French constitution made and completed in December, 1789.

The Declaration was for the whole mankind (universal) and it made the 1789 Revolution legitimate (justified). It was an instigation to other oppressed / suppressed people to rebel.

Louis XVI was incapable of keeping for long any decision, he was torn between the demands of his wife and that of the revolution; he sympathised with both and obeyed each at a time. Before long, the Court again tried to overthrow the revolution by force but the crowd reacted by instigating a rebellion of other characters who were starving thus the march of women from Paris to Versailles.

Significance of the Declaration of the Rights of Man

- (a) It asserted the legal equality of all men by nature i.e. freedom of press, speech, equality of all before the law, right to make law, dismissal of government officials who abused power given to them.
- (b) The administrative changes made swept away the old unfair system.
- (c) Unity of the French masses portrayed.
- (d) It revealed the King's reluctant commitment i.e. he was hesitant to endorse the Declaration of the Rights of man.
- (e) Abolition of the unfair social discriminative classes, feudalism and serfdom.
- (f) The Declaration of the Rights of Man and citizens filled the Frenchmen with wild expectations, idealism and fantasy. It emphasised the rights of man but not his duties or obligations to achieve them.
- (g) The Frenchmen became crazy under emotional excitement of the freedom given.

THE MARCH OF WOMEN TO VERSAILLES, 5TH OCT. 1789

This was another important event in the course of the French Revolution. It was a response by the discontented population of Paris like the storming of the Bastille; the women's march was prompted by the following factors.

- (a) Fear of a Counter Revolution i.e. the presence of the Flanders (Foreign regiment) at Versailles in preparation for counter revolution.
- (b) Problem of the King's six year suspensive Veto annoyed the Extremists in Paris.

- (c) In Paris, the French Revolution had failed to bring about any immediate economic benefit. Unemployment and starvation, increasing price of bread etc. were worsening, yet there was a rumour that the Royal Palace at Versailles was stocked with abundant food supplies.
- (d) The King's body guards had abused the Tricolour, the Revolutionary flag and insulted the National Assembly.
- (e) The King, Louis XVI, had refused to accept the decree of 4th and 5th August, he was still under the influence of the Court Royalists.

Accordingly, in early October, a strange procession of hungry women set out for Versailles to present the people's grievances. They were accompanied by men in disguise. They first forced their way into Hotel de Ville, got arms and dragged a canon along with them as they marched to Versailles. The women were chosen because they had a greater impact. They were accompanied by the National Guard - the Middle Class army to defend its newly earned power.

The veteran Lafayette could do nothing but stop an attack from the people. The following day he persuaded the people to give way and the King and Queen were carried to the Tuilleries Palace. The crowd was still loyal to the king and they brought with him the Baker, his wife and a cook. The King thought he had been removed from the corrupt influence of the Nobles to that of his loyal subjects.

He was no longer at the head of his troops but under the hands of the mob. The revolution had won its 3rd (third) round victory. From then on, Paris dominated the revolution, the Royal family were more or less prisoners now and the Orators increasingly took control of the situation. This control was greatly assisted by the fact that the public was allowed to the galleries of the Assembly whose members were thus under constant pressure from the mob.

Significance of the march of Women

- (a) The march of women to Versailles was an act which caused fear among the Nobles and Monarchy.
- (b) The King agreed to recognise the decrees of 4th and 5th August, and the declaration of the Rights of man.
- (c) The King, Louis XVI agreed to recognise the National Guard and not the Royal Flanders as the defenders of the Monarchy.
- (d) Due to the people's cry of hunger, the King promised special food supplies to Paris.
- (e) The King, Royal family and their servants or Attendants were transferred from Versailles to Paris on 6th October 1789. They were removed from the luxurious life at Versailles, given refuge in the old Palace at Tuilleries. Thus Louis XVI was no longer at the head of his troops, no longer his own master. He was in the hands of the Paris mob and became a real prisoner of the Revolution.

- (f) Paris became the centre of Revolutionary activity and dominated the revolution.
- (g) The mob (public) began attending the debates in the Assembly, cherished extreme Revolutionaries and shouted down that which was moderate.
- (h) Paris got special food supplies.

Ten days later, the National Assembly voted to follow the king to Paris and by so doing, the Assembly came under the dangerous influence of the Paris mob. This, therefore, was a danger to the revolution.

THE ASSEMBLY AND THE CHURCH

The complete break away of the old system of taxation after the decree of 4th August, 1789, had left the state without funds to meet expenses of the state. The government was left in an insecure financial embarrassment. The Assembly adopted two radical measures.

1. To borrow from the public by which the government issued creditors with Assignats (bond with interest) which were later declared to be a form of general currency. Although this measure averted the financial crisis, the Assignats later lost value gradually due to inflation.
2. Church land was confiscated and sold off to the public by auction. This left the Catholic Church poorer and unable to meet its financial obligations. Many Priests went without salaries and for this reason, the National Assembly passed on the Church's financial obligations to the government.

It should be noted that, the issuing of the Assignat was one of the cleverest moves made by the National Assembly and cannot be underestimated in the revolutionary History because every Holder of the Assignat became a supporter of the revolution for economic self-interest.

THE CIVIL CONSTITUTION OF THE CLERGY JULY, 1790

It was the revolutionary law passed by the National Assembly to regulate the position of the Church.

It was passed also because the church had soiled itself through her alliance with the state. It was designed to strike a blow at the church by reducing its influence and reducing its economic wealth.

According to the constitution,

- (a) The state took over control of the Church. The Pope was recognised only as the Head of the Church but did not have powers to appoint, promote or dismiss the clergy.
- (b) The government undertook to pay the salaries of the clergy therefore they became servants of the state.

- (c) Salaries of the Upper Clergy i.e. Bishops, were reduced and those of the lower Clergy (Parish Priests) were increased.
- (d) New Dioceses were created and the old ones abolished. Each of them was to correspond to the newly created districts (Departments).
- (e) The number of Bishops reduced to 80.

Finally, the Clergy were to take an oath of allegiance / loyalty to the civil constitution of the clergy. Several Bishop(s) and other members of the clergy welcomed these changes because they saw this as a means of improving the life of the church and removing the scandals.

However, some Bishops and Priests rejected the oath due to the fact that the Pope secretly urged the King not to allow this civil constitution of the clergy. Those who took the oath of allegiance were known as **Juring Priests** while those who did not take the oath were known as the **Non-Juring Priests**. Out of **134** Bishops, **130** resisted the Oath and only **4** took the oath.

This led to alienation of Priests who had earlier on supported the revolution considerably. The nonjuring Priests had considerable support in the country side and continued administering despite the decree issued by the Assembly.

In the Western Province of La Vandee, where the Royalist sympathisers were strong, there was a counter revolution. This situation, of course, encouraged the Émigrés to continue their war against the revolution and it gave them alliance with the Priesthood.

Significance of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy

- (a) The relationship between the revolutionary government and the Pope was restrained. For example, in April 1791, the Pope denounced the law. The clergy and many devout Catholics in France supported the Pope and in so doing, defied the constitution.
- (b) It created division and antagonism in France at the time when unity was very important, many priests refused to take the oath of allegiance, they became rebels, had considerable support in the countryside and therefore became enemies of the revolution.
- (c) The Constitution put the King, Louis XVI in a dangerous spot. He was a sincere Roman Catholic who feared to rebel against the Pope. He was made to sign the law against his will and did so with fear. He resolved to halt the revolution by seeking help from abroad.
- (d) The Civil Constitution of the Clergy increased violence in some parts of France in the La Vandee region.
- (e) It eroded the influence and power of the Church. It increased the support and attachment to the revolution of those who had gained control and ownership of the land of the church.

- (f) Raising of revenue through the national institution of the Church land for administrative purposes.
- (g) Peasants acquired land from the revolutionary government and became supporters of the revolution.
- (h) Louis XVI resolved to annul the Ecclesiastical legislation and halt the revolution by searching for assistance from outside.
- (i) For the first time the Church became a department of the state and not its partner in political issues.
- (j) Abolition of the Church tithes because they were seen as part of feudalism.

THE DISASTROUS FLIGHT TO VARENNES, JUNE, 20TH 1791

Louis XVI had always accepted and witnessed the revolutionary change with fear and hatred. As a good Catholic, Louis XVI could not sign the Civil Constitution of the Clergy of 1790 willingly; he was forced to do so. It was a humiliation for him to have to oppose the Church and what he considered to be the best of interest of the religion.

Encouraged by the Nobles, wife and the Pope, Louis XVI decided to halt the revolution. Consequently, he planned to flee to Austria to seek help against the Revolutionaries. He had been ill-advised and he miscalculated. He had wanted to join the Émigrés over the frontiers especially his brother-in-law, the Emperor of Austria.

With the aid of his troops, he hoped to return to France and impose his terms on the people. This was the last gamble of independence but it failed. The journey was a whole chapter of miscalculation and accident. The King, Louis XVI, his wife and their children were sighted at an eastern frontier town of Varennes. Their coach was escorted back to France amidst hostile demonstration and great humiliation by the mob.

The King, Louis XVI was unfortunate that Count Mirabeau who could have given him better guidance had died in April, 1791. On his death bed, Mirabeau had remarked, ***“I carry with me the last rags of the Monarchy”***.

Significance / Effects of the Flight to Varennes

- (a) The attempted escape of the King, Louis XVI was a humiliation to himself and the Bourbon Monarchy which was one of the most respected Royal Houses in Europe. He lost popularity at home.
- (b) The King became a discredited figure; he was considered a traitor to the revolution which gave the extreme Revolutionaries the opportunity to work in favour of his removal.
- (c) By attempting to rely on foreign help, Louis XVI had wounded the French people on the tenderest spot and their love for their motherland.

- (d) It led to the rise of the Republican Party which then onwards dominated the course of the French Revolution under the dangerous influence of the Jacobins in Paris.
- (e) Documents found on the King linked him to the Émigrés and on moves of a counter revolution.
- (f) The King was seen as an enemy of the revolution for he refused to sanction law condemning the Émigrés who could not take the oath of allegiance.
- (g) The flight to Varennes was a blow from which the monarchy never recovered.

“At Varennes, the Monarchy had died; all that Paris had to do a year later was to bury it”.

THE NEW CONSTITUTION OF SEPTEMBER, 1791 (THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY, SEPTEMBER, 1791)

The National Assembly completed the Constitution by September, 1791 and it was signed by the helpless King, Louis XVI and it had the following major provisions:-

- (a) France was to be governed by a Constitutional Monarchy i.e. headed by a King with executive powers. He could appoint the Cabinet, Army officers, Ambassadors.
- (b) The King was given a Suspensive Veto for six years i.e. a law proposed by the parliament could be delayed.
- (c) A single Chamber Parliament of 745 Deputies was to be established.
- (d) It should be elected by Frenchmen who paid taxes equivalent to three (3) days labour. (Nontax payers could not vote).
- (e) The local government was changed. The old historical provinces such as Brittany, were also abolished. In their places, 83 districts were created and this was an attempt to destroy variations that hindered development.
- (f) The Departments were divided into Arrondissements which were subdivided into Cantons and finally Communes.
- (g) No members from the Constituent Assembly could be re-elected in the new parliament, Cabinet Ministers were also excluded.

However, though the constitution had good intentions, it made a series of blunders as below:

- (a) It excluded the votes from town workers due to tax qualification. This conflicted with the rights of man because some Frenchmen were denied the rights to vote. Thus violating the political equality and removed many Frenchmen from the ranks of the revolution.
- (b) It was bad to exclude the former members of the Constituent Assembly from the new parliament and later misguided the Revolution.

(c) The suspensive Veto of the King occasioned conflict between him and the Head of the Executive and Parliament.

(d) It was also politically unwise to give the Communes the excessive powers in the local government. France at this time needed a strong government to preserve peace and stability.

Effects on France

(a) The new government formed after September, 1791, was weak and divided and when Louis XVI tried to use his powers of Veto, he displeased many revolutionaries.

(b) The parliament itself did not have experience but was dominated by the Feuillants, many were Republicans. These were opposed to the Monarchy, whether constitutional or otherwise. Political parties gained influence due to the revolution e.g. the Jacobins and the Cordilliers (these were Republicans).

(c) Another Republican party, the Girondins were overpowered in the parliament. They came from the district of Gironde and other parts of the countryside. They conflicted with the Jacobins.

(d) The supporters of the King, the Feuillants, tried to protect the King with increasing difficulty, failed to contain the forces of republicanism.

(e) Some of the observers thought that the Constitution would open for France, an era of peace but this was not the case. The constitution was bad, created a weak government that created chaos at home and abroad.

It should be noted that the new Assembly which came into effect in October, 1791 had to address itself to the serious issues pertaining to France i.e. position of the King, Internal uprisings and disorder and External threats posed by the Émigrés, Austria and Prussia .

In August 1791, Austria and Prussia made a joint declaration - '**The Declaration of Pilnitz,**' in which the two expressed their total support and readiness to restore the King, Louis XVI, to power. This declaration and other matters made the king's position tricky and intensified the republican feelings in France.

The Legislative Assembly decided to take strong measures on the Émigrés and Non-Juring Priests. Decrees were passed, one of which gave the Émigrés a deadline of 21st January, 1792 by which all of them would have come back to France or they would face death penalty. On the Non-Juring Priests they were to take the oath of allegiance or the government would deprive them of their living. When these decrees were given to the King to sign in order to become effective, using his '**Suspensive Veto**', he refused and this clearly showed that he was in league with the enemies of the revolution.

THE REVOLUTIONARY FRANCE AT WAR, 1792 - 1802

It should be noted that the new Assembly, (Legislative) led to the return of 136 Jacobins, 246 Feuillants and a group of 350 Deputies, who belonged to the Centre group. The Assembly was composed of men with strength and enthusiasm but with little political experience. The Jacobins Club was well represented throughout France and campaigned

against the Moderate and the Constitutional Monarchy. However, they were outnumbered in the Assembly by the Feuillants and the Centre group.

The Feuillants were numerically strong but weak in organisation and unity compared to the Jacobins. They wished to preserve the constitutional monarchy.

The period 1792 -1802 was characterised by war, terror and dictatorship. In April 1792, France went to war against her neighbours i.e. Austria, Prussia and later Britain and Russia as well as some small powers which joined the war against the revolutionary government. The origin of the war has been a matter of dispute ever since it started. The ambitions and passions of the French Revolution contributed together with jealousy and fears of the great powers.

CAUSES OF THE WAR BETWEEN REVOLUTIONARY FRANCE AND OTHER EUROPEAN POWERS

(a) The changes caused by the Revolutionary government created fear among the neighbours i.e. domestic policies. The abolition of feudalism (4th August declaration) affected the Germans who had land in France e.g. The Duke of Wurttemberg had possessions in Alsace which were affected by the decree of 4th August, 1789, joined the war against Revolutionary France.

(b) The success of the French in the war was a threat to the European Monarchs. Excited by their successes, the French expressed their readiness to give armed assistance to those that were struggling for democratic governments so long as they would meet the war expenses. They feared the French revolutionary idea of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.

(c) The French declarations of having natural boundaries and this would make her have the Alps, Rhine and Pyrenees. This threatened Nice, Savoy and Belgium. Therefore, there arose the need to crush the war in order to stop the aggressive move of the French.

(d) The execution of the King was an unpardonable affront of the divinity attached to the person of the King. France, therefore, became an enemy of all Kings who made a joint attack on France. Accordingly, the monarchs of Italy, Germany, Spain, Austria and Prussia formed the first Coalition in 1793 against France.

(e) The aggressive policies of the Revolutionary leaders. The Republicans had the policy of exporting the French revolutionary ideas outside France. In November, 1792, they issued the **Edict of Fraternity** which declared that France would give total support to those who wanted to overthrow their kings and this constituted enough threat to the other European countries. Their slogan was,

“War against all Kings and peace to all peoples.”

(f) French policy of denouncing international treaties e.g. When France occupied Belgium and the Netherlands; she denounced the restrictions on trade taking place on River Scheldt. This was a threat to the British trade on the river which she could not tolerate.

(g) Territorial ambitions. If a country defeated another, it would claim part of the latter and annex it. So there was fear that should France invade them, then the result would be annexation of their territories hence they had to fight France in order to stop the aggressive move.

(h) Declaration of the **Brunswick Manifesto**, (August, 1792). The Duke of Brunswick, the commander of the Prussian army sent a manifesto in which he threatened total destruction of Paris should any further harm be done on the King, as in June. The Prussian army would invade and destroy the city of Paris.

(i) The flight of the King. His flight as a fugitive to the Eastern border showed clearly that the real and effective opposition to the revolution lay in foreign powers to which the dispossessed Nobles had already turned. Royalism seemed to go beyond the frontier and was seen as treason.

Accordingly, on 10th April, 1792, the Assembly decided on war on the basis of, '**War against all kings, peace to all peoples.**' This was a challenge to the leaders of Europe which they were not slow to accept. When the document was brought to the King to sign, he did so but against his will. He had earlier vetoed the decrees and dismissed some of the Girondin ministers. This action of the King excited the mob which organised popular demonstration against the King on June 20th, 1792. They invaded the Tuilleries and the King, Louis XVI, was compelled to fraternize with the mob, to drink to their health and wear a red cap of liberty.

Lafayette made the last effort to save the monarchy by leading the guard against the Jacobins but by this time, Marie Antoinette had already notified the Assembly of Lafayette's decision, so the attempt failed. She stated that she sooner perished than be saved by Lafayette.

It should be noted that the Revolutionary wars that began in April, 1792, brought glory at home but in the short run, had disastrous effects as below:-

(a) The French were initially defeated because the forces that invaded Belgium were ill-organised, indisciplined and unprepared. Some of the army officers lacked commitment; the original army of the Monarchy had been dismantled, while the National Guard lacked experience. With these weaknesses, the French suffered humiliating defeat on the first encounter on the battle field.

(b) Panic cropped up in France as the French forces retreated and this increased fear that the enemy would over run the country and overthrow the revolution.

(c) When the war backfired, the Girondin Ministers who had advocated for the war campaign were accused of inefficiency and were accordingly overthrown by the Jacobins who were more radical and henceforth the Girondins lost their influence during the revolution.

(d) The King's palace at the Tuilleries was attacked on 20th June, 1792. Louis XVI was blamed for rendering half-hearted commitment to the revolution; he had vetoed the parliamentary decrees against the Émigrés and the Non-Juring priests. By so doing, he had created anger and suspicion against himself. The mob forced him to put on the revolutionary cap and to sign the decrees - this was another humiliation to the King.

NB: This incident provoked the ***Brunswick Manifesto of August, 1792***. It was a statement issued by the Duke of Brunswick threatening destruction of Paris should any harm be done to the king. This caused fear and excitement in France and worsened her relationship with her neighbours.

(e) The downfall of the King followed i.e. by 1792 (August), King Louis XVI had become increasingly unpopular while the Republicans were gaining ground. A group of supporters of the Jacobins led by Danton attacked the King's palace. The King, Louis XVI and his family became refugees within the palace.

On 22nd September, 1792, the Assembly voted to suspend the King, Louis XVI and France was declared a **Republic**. The Paris Commune played a role in this course of event and its triumph led to the downfall of the Monarchy.

The war abroad and the defeat of the French forces created political chaos in France in form of the **Reign of Terror(1792-1794)**. The government cracked down on its internal opponents, real or imaginary. Many Royalists, priests and their supporters were arrested, jailed or executed from September, 1792. This claimed the lives of the King, Louis XVI who was executed on 21st January, 1793 after being found guilty, the Queen, Marie Antoinette and the children on 16th October, 1793 and many others.

Instability and insecurity became rampant owing to the tremendous problems at home and abroad. There was struggle for power and the government failed to address social problems. The war proved too costly for France in economic terms which worsened the people's conditions of living.

THE REIGN OF TERROR 1792-1794.

This was a period characterised by violence, mistrust, power struggle, rivalry, suspicion, bloodshed and death. Between 1792 and 1794, the National Convention managed a very chaotic period in France.

The Reign of Terror in France was brought about by the following factors:-

1. The Change in the Trend of events in France by 1792

The revolution which had begun peacefully in 1789 had to take on a violent course. The Liberals and the Moderates were no longer in control of the situation in France i.e. Mirabeau and Lafayette. Mirabeau had died and Lafayette had fled in to exile.

Power had shifted into the hands of the Radicals and Extremists like Danton, Robespierre and Marat who never wanted compromise with the Old Order. Those who had links with the old order had to be destroyed and this involved a lot of bloodshed hence the Reign of Terror.

2. Character of the King, Louis XVI

The King was weak and therefore could not provide practical leadership. This leadership was removed from him and put under liberals i.e. Lafayette and Mirabeau. Louis XVI mismanaged the events leading to the revolution and even when the revolution broke out, he mismanaged the events of the revolution. His lack of

persistence with reforms and taking half measures as well as his indecisiveness on very crucial issues created a lot of discontent among the French.

The King's stubbornness and his refusal to endorse documents i.e. Declaration of war on the enemies, civil constitution of the Clergy, declaration of the rights of man. The French were always annoyed whenever the King refused to sign documents or declarations. All these proved that the King, Louis XVI was against the revolution thus the terror.

3. Louis XVI's association with the Émigrés

The Émigrés had formed a big force at the border with Austria and his association with them cost him the sympathy which the people had for him, and the monarchy. The documents found with him when he was arrested and those in his office drawer clearly proved that he was in league with the enemies of the revolution hence the Reign of Terror.

4. Louis XVI's attempted flight and his subsequent arrest at Varennes

This showed that the King was conspiring against the revolution. He was identified as a Traitor and enemy number one of the revolution. This led to the slipping away of power from the King and his supporters to the Radicals i.e. Danton, Marat and Robespierre. He thought of fleeing France and get help from Austria then come back and overthrow the revolution and the revolutionaries unfortunately he was arrested at Varennes and brought back to Paris amidst great humiliation. He had wounded the French at the tenderest spot, the love for their country. His enemies i.e. the radicals and the extremists, therefore, carried out the Reign of Terror.

5. Hostility of the Émigrés to the revolution

After the outbreak of the Revolution in France, members of the privileged classes could not withstand the new situation in France and as a consequence went to exile in the countries which were against the revolution i.e. Austria and Prussia. From there, they had planned to come back and crush the revolution. This annoyed the Frenchmen and had to fight the Émigrés and it was against that background that massive killings took place hence the Reign of Terror.

6. Foreign Hostility

When the French Revolution broke out, France found herself in a situation whereby the countries of Europe were hostile to her. It should be noted that the ideas presented by the French Revolution i.e. Liberty, Equality and Fraternity did not only threaten the Ancient Regime but even the rest of Europe.

Consequently, leaders in the various countries in Europe feared a spill over of these ideals to their countries. The established monarchs of Europe never wanted the revolution to succeed and spread to their countries. In order to check such a situation, two declarations were issued i.e. **the Declaration of Pilnitz, August, 1791** in which Prussia and Austria made a joint declaration where they expressed their readiness to restore the king to power. Then the **Brunswick Manifesto of August, 1792** in which the Duke of Brunswick, the Commander of the Prussian army threatened total destruction of Paris should more harm be done on the King, Louis XVI.

These two declarations fanned the flames of Terror. The Revolutionaries were determined to go ahead with the revolution and in order to prevent the hostility of the rest of Europe to the revolution, there was need to establish a strong leadership by using blood and Iron thus the Reign of Terror.

7. The Death of Mirabeau, April 1791

Mirabeau was one of the liberals who was charismatic and possessed magnetic quality and personality. He attracted the obedience of even the Extremists. He campaigned all along for the preservation of the Monarchy in a constitutional manner. He acted as a link between the King (Monarch) and the Revolutionaries. Before his death, Mirabeau said,

“I carry with me the last rags of the Monarchy.”

His death therefore left a vacuum with no other liberal leader to fill thus creating a fertile ground for taking over power by the Radicals and Extremists who were very uncompromising and inflexible against the monarchy. This was true of the people because they could never forget the privileged classes that had oppressed them for so long. They had to revenge by killing some of them hence the Reign of Terror.

8. Emergence of Political Clubs

There came into existence different parties (Clubs) with different political outlook and interests. These clubs included the Jacobins, Feuillants and Republicans. Their differences resulted into a lot of unrest and power struggle, massacres, mistrust and suspicion hence violence. Many people were killed i.e. Robespierre, a strong leader of the Jacobins club carried out the Reign of Terror because, partly, he wanted to eliminate members of other political clubs and even some of the members of the Jacobins Club who threatened his leadership.

9. Existence of the Paris Mob

This contributed a lot to the Reign of Terror. The mob had the general characteristics of the revolution that events tended to be governed by emotions rather than reasons and principles. The people became excited and with this excitement, the Paris Mob shared and supported even the radical revolutionary leaders with little or no opposition. This situation helped the Radicals like Robespierre to come up and then carry out the Reign of Terror.

10. Declaration of the Rights of Man, 26th August, 1789

This was confirmed by the 1791 constitution. It contained an influence of Rousseau's philosophy and clauses from the Constitutions of England and America.

The French Revolutionaries emphasised and advocated for the rights and freedom which had been denied the Frenchmen for so long. This created excitement, it did not spell out their obligations and as a result a lot of killing was involved. With time, their system of rights and freedom could not work hence violence.

11. Difficult economic conditions

Note should be taken that France had experienced difficult economic conditions that brought the people from the countryside to urban areas hence leading to formation of the mob i.e. the Paris mob which was characterised by idleness, desperation and hunger. They just became the victims of the terror. Besides, there was the misleading idealism that the mob is always right (mob justice) that claimed many lives hence the Reign of Terror.

12. Internal Opposition

During the course of the French Revolution, there was general opposition to the revolution at home; especially from the conservative Catholic peasants i.e. open revolts against the revolution in the districts like La Vendee, Toulon and Lyon. The conservatives wanted to preserve the privileges of the church. This internal opposition had to be crushed; those suspected to be opponents of the revolution had to be killed. Consequently, the National Convention instituted three terrorist organs / bodies namely; -

(a) The Committee of Public Safety

This took charge of the army and foreign affairs. The key leaders were Danton and Robespierre. This committee later became the guiding force of the Revolution and tended to control the Convention that created it. The Committee issued decrees, appointed and dismissed officers as well as sending agents to government departments to round up those against the government.

(b) The Revolutionary Tribunal

This was a special court to try all those accused of opposing the government and guillotine them.

(c) The Committee of General Security

The Committee took charge of the internal affairs i.e. prisons, police and intelligence network.

The Convention also instituted three laws, namely;

- (i) The **Law of Suspect** by which anybody suspected of being against the revolution, sympathisers of the Royalists were rounded up and sent to the guillotine.
- (ii) The **Prairal Law** by which the suspects were deprived of the Counsel and could be condemned to the one possible punishment, death on the reputation of a bad moral character.
- (iii) The **Law of Maximum** by which Robespierre tried to control prices of bread.

It should be noted that internal opposition was crushed through the **September Massacres** of 2nd to 6th September, 1792 during which hundreds and thousands of

Royalists and those suspected of being against the revolution were rounded up and killed.

Forced recruitment into the army was also carried out as a way of crushing the external threat and actually became a policy.

What should be noted is that, the Reign of Terror actually began with the institution of these terrorist organs in 1793.

13. Rivalry for power

With time, there developed rivalry for power which plunged France into further chaos i.e. Jacobins against the Girondins, the Commune against the Herbertists and later Robespierre conflicted with Danton over the continuation of terror hence the violence, chaos and death experienced in France. Having got rid of his rival(s), Robespierre intensified the terror so much so that people (members of the Committees) feared for their lives. Opposition increased against Robespierre especially from the moderate elements in France. On July, 24th 1794, opposition to Robespierre broke out in the Convention where he was shouted down with cries of, '**Down with the Tyrant.**'

The Convention ordered his arrest but he was released later by his followers and joined the Commune at Hotel de Ville. The Convention with its troops attacked Hotel de Ville, shot Robespierre thus marking the end of the Reign of Terror in France.

THE DIRECTORY, OCT 1795 - NOV 1799

Having got rid of the Reign of Terror, the National Convention was faced with three tasks, namely:-

(a) Crushing the remaining bits of opposition which was done by abolishing all the Committees, closing the Jacobins club and ending the Commune, the Prairal Law was repealed.

(b) Establishing a new Constitution and therefore a new form of government. This was done by drafting a new constitution which came up in October, 1795 and was known as the **Constitution of the Year III** (Beginning from 1792 when France became a Republic).

According to the new Constitution,

1. There were to be two Law making bodies i.e.

(a) **Upper Chamber.** This was a Council of Elders made up of 250 members all from 45 years and above. These approved laws passed by the lower House.

(b) **Lower Chamber.** It was a Council of 500, ranging between 30 - 45 years of age. It was a body that proposed laws.

2. The Directory which was the Executive body consisted of five members, one retiring each year.

This body came to rely very much on the army. The real power was actually with the Directory.

3. Only tax payers voted.
4. Upholding the Republican status of France.
5. To ensure against mob rule, the idea of universal manhood suffrage was abandoned and only tax payers were eligible for voting.

It should be noted that the new constitution provoked opposition from the Royalist Supporters who favoured a Monarchical rule but opposed to a Republican rule. It too provoked opposition from the Radicals. The Jacobins Club, the extreme Republicans rose up in arms against the government but were cleared militarily by Napoleon Bonaparte's '*Whiff of Grapeshot.*' The National Convention was later dissolved and power given to the Directory in October, 1795.

Immediately, it assumed power, the Directory was faced with the problem of war with the European powers. Between 1793 and 1795, the enemies were defeated; Carnot had re-organised and equipped the army with new weapons. So that when the Directory took over power, Prussia, Spain and Holland were already out of the war and had made peace with France. The only countries remaining in the war were Austria and England and some smaller states i.e. Piedmont and the German state, even Russia had withdrawn.

The Directory, therefore, decided to face Austria and England. The decision was to start with Austria which was to be attacked through two fronts i.e. through Southern Germany under Generals Jourdan and Moreau and the other front through Italy under the command of Napoleon Bonaparte.

THE ITALIAN CAMPAIGN 1796 - 1797

Napoleon Bonaparte's rewards for saving the National Convention in 1795 were:

- (a) Command of the French army.
- (b) The hands of a mistress - daughter of Barass - Josephine with whom he was passionately in love and whose aristocratic connections would help his social status to equal his military advancement.

The army that Bonaparte took command of in 1796 had been idle for about three (3) years; he found them in rags, ill-fed, disorganised and demoralised. The young General was in command of Generals far superior to him. They received him with a lot of hostility. But his genius made him overcome all these difficulties. Within a month, he had organised the army and his influence caught the army like a disease. He amazed the soldiers with such nice words as,

"You are badly fed. I am going to lead you to the most fertile plains in the world where you will reap your greatness, glory and honour. "

Though his army was outnumbered by the enemy, Napoleon Bonaparte made use of surprise attacks and indiscriminate use of artillery of which he was an expert. Having forced his army into Italy, he achieved his own aims of isolating the enemy forces by defeating the Piedmontese who were fighting on the side of Austria. Napoleon Bonaparte also had a strong moral weapon which was the appeal for the doctrine of 'liberty,' to the enslaved Italians.

The defeated Piedmontese sued for peace in April 1796 in return for Savoy and Nice which then became part of France. Bonaparte then directed the war against the Austrians and at the battle of **Lodi** in May, 1796; he conquered Milan, the Austrian Headquarters in Italy. In January, 1797, his army overran Mantua and then defeated Austrian forces at **Rivoli**. He then threatened to advance to Vienna.

The Austrians hurried to surrender and signed a treaty with Napoleon Bonaparte-The Treaty of **Campo-Formio** in October, 1797. According to the treaty;

- (a) France got Belgium and acquired the entire left bank of the Rhine River.
- (b) The North Italian states were created into a Republic known as Cisalpine which was to be under direct French rule.
- (c) Austria in return got Venetia but it was badly looted by the French troops.

Meanwhile Napoleon concentrated on shipping Italian works of art to France which were used to enrich the French museum. Then Italy paid great indemnities to France and supported the French army of occupation i.e. the Papacy had to pay 300 million Francs for the murder of a French Envoy and the Duke of Modena had to pay 10 million francs to France in form of war indemnity.

The Italian Campaign transformed the formerly short, unknown artillery officer into a Hero. He had on behalf of France disorganised enemy forces, enriched France, raised her military prestige and extended her frontiers. The campaign was a boost to the career of Napoleon Bonaparte as they got a lot of wealth which the Directory government used to finance its expenditures.

The soldiers were given morale and it displayed Napoleons abilities as an Army General and won him a lot of popularity in France and gave France foreign glory. On return to France, Napoleon Bonaparte was applauded by the French.

Importance of the Italian Campaign

1. It enriched France in that the conquered states like Italy and Austria paid Indemnities and Napoleon also got other valuables i.e. Italian works of Art which were taken to France.
2. The Campaign brought about the defeat of the Austrian Empire and the confederation of the German states to France as well as Belgium.
3. It also gave more evidence of Napoleon's brilliant military organisation.

4. The Italian Campaign marked the beginning of a future common practice among the French forces (led by Napoleon) to undermine conquered territories which was later to lead to his down fall.
5. Napoleon gained prestige with his troops from his military successes.
6. Made Napoleon determined to dominate France and Europe.
7. Won the admiration of the French people especially when the Directory failed to cope with the resurrected Jacobinism in form of '***Society of Friends of Liberty and Equality,***' a big threat to the French Republic.

THE EGYPTIAN CAMPAIGN 1798 – 1799.

Napoleon Bonaparte's second expedition was in Egypt. He was assigned Egypt to sabotage British commercial interests in the Mediterranean and possibly advance and seize India. Britain was the only country not yet conquered by France.

The Directory government saw this as an excuse to remove the popular General from Paris, for he was now a threat to his masters. He set sail with a huge force of about 38,000 soldiers, a large group of Scientists, 400 ships. The whole expedition was financed by plunders from two French vassal Republics (Heltevic and the Roman). He conquered Malta from the Knights of St. John and then landed in Egypt (at Alexandria in June, 1798).

The Turkish forces known as the Mamelukes were no match to Napoleon's military and professional soldiers. They were massacred at the battle of the Pyramids. Napoleon Bonaparte then declared his aims of bringing liberty and equality to the Egyptians and to redeem them against the Mamelukes and the Christian Europeans as below:-

'Let every Imam and Sheik in Egypt proclaim these truths in the Mosques. Glory to the Sultans, Glory to the great French army, curse to the Mamelukes and Happiness to Egypt.'

Though this made no impression on the backward Muslim Egypt, his influence was felt in the establishment of a news paper, an Egyptian Advisory Council and Institute of Egypt to encourage the learning of the past.

However, this victory was rendered short-lived by a British Admiral, Nelson when he destroyed the French fleet at Aboukir Bay which was later called the battle of the Nile in August, 1798. The destruction of the French fleet cut off communication and also meant that the French were virtually prisoners in Egypt. With insufficient resources, Napoleon could not proceed to India.

Bonaparte devised another plan of invading Syria, pushing through Asia Minor with the aim of capturing Constantinople and smashing the Ottoman Empire. Syria fell easily but he was held up at Acre by Admiral Sir Sidney Smith. This meant that he could not go to India. By the Turks blocking Napoleon's way meant that they had joined the war on the side of Britain besides Russia. The three countries, later joined by Austria, formed an Alliance in December, 1798 - The Second Coalition.

At this time, news of difficulty at home reached Napoleon. The second coalition which had been formed had dismantled all the French gains in Italy and the whole of France was being threatened by the members of the second Coalition. This gave Napoleon Bonaparte the opportunity to escape from his dangerous position, leaving his troops trapped in Egypt. He reached France in October in 1799.

THE COUP D'ETAT OF BRUMAIRE, 1799

On return to France, Napoleon found the Directors quarrelling and scrambling for power. In 1799, he found the Directory had lost all that he had gained for France. The Directory was also discredited due to the defeat abroad by the second coalition and violence at home.

One Historian said,

“The Nation talked only of Napoleon, the Conqueror of Italy and Hero of Egypt.”

In this confusion, Napoleon plotted with the most capable Directors - Sieyes Abbe, Barass and Lucien who wanted a new constitution and a General to impose it. Napoleon Bonaparte happened to be the Candidate. The plan was to overthrow the Directorate and get the Assembly to accept one Executive Committee reversing the constitution. Consequently, an arrangement was made to effect the coup. The plot matured in France and it was aided by many strongly positioned supporters of Napoleon Bonaparte, his brother.

It was a misconception that Napoleon, in power, would continue with the Republican rule in France and would uphold the Revolution. No one in November 1799 betrayed the causes and the aspirations of the Revolution. The French Republican government framework was to be ejected and an elaborate dictatorial system of government was bound to be superimposed on France with Napoleon at the head. Napoleon believed in absolutism, he distrusted popular control such as parliamentary democracy. We are told he disliked and feared parliamentary discussions. He desired a strong centralised government with himself at the top.

The Frenchmen never foresaw that Napoleon's rule was to breed turmoil in Europe and hinder domestic government in France. Napoleon set up a new government of the Consulate in 1799 thus marking the end of the French Revolution. The French accepted the new government without much resistance. Napoleon became the First Consul with all the Executive powers. A State Council was to be created and the members nominated. Besides, a Senate was to be created. Through plebiscites, the new arrangements had an overwhelming support of the people. From this period, Napoleon was virtually the ruler of France.

PROBLEMS OF THE DIRECTORY GOVERNMENT

(a) It did not have proper administrators thus a number of problems arose. They were disreputable and self-seeking politicians of little ability were corrupt and only interested in increasing their gains.

(b) There were struggles among the Directors who formed the Executive and Legislative Chambers i.e. Abbe Sieyes had personal ambition of changing the constitution which he managed to do because of the weak administration.

(c) The separation of powers was still clear to the minds of the French Theorists. A third of the Assembly retired every year while only one Director did every year thus the Director was not in sympathy with either the Assembly or the Constituencies. The Directory tended to be dictatorial hence unpopular.

(d) The financial situation seemed hopeless. The increased printing of the Assignats (paper money of the revolution) had lost value yet the economy had not quite stabilised. There was shortage of food, rampant unemployment all of which discredited the Directory. There was corruption and a lot of wastage in public expenditure. A lot of money was required to support the army.

(e) The religious situation was full of menace. The Constitutional church set up by the revolution had almost disappeared. A new religious movement - theophilanthropy was founded by an Englishman and patronised by the Directors. Even financially, it had problems. The Roman Catholicism was still strong and popular with the people.

(f) There was the question of the Émigrés whose property had been confiscated and others had been declared Émigrés in order to seize their property. Their relatives protested against this kind of injustices and created unrest.

(g) There was also friction between the Assemblies and the Directory and interferences of army chiefs i.e. some supported the Jacobins.

(h) The Directory was opposed internally by a movement called '*Society of the Pantheon*' in 1795 by Francois Babery. He aimed at abolition of private property and wanted all land nationalised. He got support from the poorer class, opposed by the merchant class and the new propertied class created by the sale of church land. The society also attracted a large number of the Jacobins who wanted to revive the Jacobins constitution of 1793 which had been approved but not enforced.

(i) The Directory suffered from plots and intrigues in the country. The Royalists and the reactionaries were elected to the Legislative Assembly in large numbers and they did not hesitate to use fair or foul means to sabotage the government. These, however, were kept in check by use of the government.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE DIRECTORY:

1. It succeeded in preventing a repeat of Robespierre revolutionary dictatorship only at the price of producing Napoleon's military dictatorship after saving the Directory from a royalist uprising in Paris; he soon became its master.
2. It managed to crush rebellions at home.
3. In foreign affairs, the army assumed an even greater role. By 1796, France's only active enemies on land were Austria and Sardinia and at sea, Britain. Peace had also been made with Portugal, Germany, state of Saxony, Italian states of Naples, Parma, and the Papacy during the Italian campaign.

4. While political prestige of the Directory sank, the army pursued its successes abroad. The Directory government used this advantage to revolutionise neighbouring states i.e. Belgium was annexed; Holland was overrun and bound to France by a close alliance.

The left bank of the Rhine was in the hands of France while in Italy, the Cisalpine Republic was formed. These new states paid heavy indemnity and subscribed to the support of the French armies which had conquered or liberated them (fame / prestige).

5. It got rid of the Extreme republicans by force in 1798.

FAILURES OF THE DIRECTORY GOVERNMENT

(a) By 1798, the Treasury was empty. Even Napoleon's coup succeeded because the Directory was weak.

(b) Society became increasingly cynical, dissolute and heartless as the revolution lost the impulse of its early ideals.

(c) The Directors did little to relieve the famine and suffering for they were chiefly intent on safeguarding their power against royalist intrigues and popular revolts.

(d) It tolerated corruption and profiteering with rampant poverty compared to the propertied class created by the sale of church lands thus killing the burning zeal of reform that characterised the earlier stages.

(e) Lost Napoleon's conquests while he was in Egypt. This was when the second coalition of Austria, Russia and England succeeded in driving the French from Italy, Switzerland and the German states back to the Rhine frontier.

(f) It was overthrown by Napoleon on 9th November, 1799, coup d'état of 18th Brumaire, 1799. **THE RESULTS / EFFECTS OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION ON**

FRANCE AND EUROPE UP TO 1848.

1. ON FRANCE.

(a) Led to the Reign of Terror, the end of the Monarchy and the establishment of a Republic in 1792.

(b) Feudalism, privileges and social classes that had existed were swept away leading to the establishment of a classless society for sometime.

(c) The declaration of the Rights of Man brought with it the liberty, equality and freedom of man as fundamental rights i.e. freedoms and liberties of the French were encouraged e.g. equality of all before the law, freedom of speech, press, association, worship, expression.

(d) The general will of the people was accepted as a ruling force in the French society and resistance against oppression was declared as one of the fundamental rights of man. What should be noted is that this was a dangerous provision which bred

chaos as the significance came to be applicable not only in France but even all human beings elsewhere in the world.

- (e)** The Civil Constitution of the Clergy reduced the powers and influence of the Catholic Church, its independence and control of education was lost, freedom of worship was encouraged and the Church taxes were abolished, lands of the Church were distributed to the landless Peasants, the divine right of Kings was terminated, the old alliance of king and the church was put to an end.
- (f)** The revolution liberated French commerce and industry. New currency was issued in 1790 i.e. Assignat in circulation intended to control inflation which was rampant. Further improvement on commerce and industry was done by the Directorate government. Tax assessment and collection that had been entrusted with the Tax Farmers was improved and made more efficient / reorganised.
- (g)** Revolutionary ideas were spread to the rest of Europe by the revolution especially in the Italian and German states under Napoleon Bonaparte.
- (h)** The revolution led to the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte, and failed to produce democracy and liberalism as expected. Instead it produced war and terror under revolutionary Robespierre and dictatorship under Napoleon.
- (i)** France was made an enemy of the rest of Europe leading to hostility of Europe and formation of revolutionary and counter- revolutionary coalitions among powers up to 1815.
- (j)** The revolution led to the birth of socialism as a government in France from 1790 that began with the confiscation of Church lands and property. These seeds of socialism had been destroyed by the murder of Babeuf.
- (k)** Education in France was liberated and made free for everybody i.e. no longer a monopoly of the privileged few e.g. the Nobility.
- (l)** Dismemberment of the Royal Guard and institution of the National Guard- The revolutionary army. The white Royalist flag of the Bourbon Monarchy was also replaced with the Tricolour-the Revolutionary flag.
- (m)** Emergence of political clubs following the weakness and inconsistency of King Louis XVI's character i.e. Jacobins, Feuillants, Cordilliers, Girondins.

2. ON EUROPE.

- (a)** Spread of revolutionary ideals far and beyond the boundaries of France in accordance with the French Revolutionary doctrines of Equality, Fraternity and Liberty to the whole of Europe.
- (b)** Formation of coalition against France to counteract the spread of the ideals as well as the French revolutionary wars.
- (c)** Napoleon Bonaparte carried out conquests of European countries i.e. Italy, Austria, Belgium, the German states and the subsequent conquest of the Holy Roman Empire.

- (d) The Restored rulers (Monarchs) by the Vienna Settlement had to rule moderately though in some instances they reverted to the past i.e. the Restored Bourbons in France.
- (e) Europe experienced a number of revolts e.g. 1821, (Naples), 1830, Belgium, Italian states and in 1848 in the German states thus undermining the Metternich system.
- (h) The civil constitution of the Clergy (July) strained the relations between France and Catholic Europe.
- (i) A new era of diplomacy was ushered in Europe.
- (j) Led to the rise of Nationalism and Nationalist revolutions e.g. Belgium, Poland, Italy and German states.
- (k) The 1830 liberal revolutions and the 1848 nationalist revolutions were primarily due to the French revolution.

REVISION QUESTIONS:

1- Account for the outbreak of the French revolution of 1789.

Approach

- Identify and analyse the factors that caused the outbreak of the French revolution of 1789.
- No stand point is required.
- **2- How did the financial crisis cause the outbreak of the French revolution of 1789?**

Approach

- Identify and analyse the factors of a financial nature and show how they caused the French revolution of 1789.
- No stand point is required.
- **3. 'The weakness in the character of the King, Louis XVI caused the French Revolution of 1789.' Discuss.**

Approach

- Analyse the weaknesses in the character of King Louis XVI and show how they sparked off the revolution of 1789 in France.
- Other factors should also be analysed.
- A clear stand point is required.

4. To what extent did Foreign Influences lead to the outbreak of the French

Revolution of 1789? Approach

- Identify the foreign influences and analyse them to show how they caused the outbreak of the French revolution of 1789.
- Other factors should also be analysed / explained.
- A clear stand point should be taken.

5. Assess the role of the Bourgeoisie in the outbreak of the French revolution of 1789.

Approach

- Analyse the contribution of the Bourgeoisie to the outbreak of the French revolution of 1789.
- Contribution of other factors should also be analysed.
- A clear stand point should be taken.

6. Account for the political turbulence in France between 1792 and 1794.

Approach

- Identify and analyse the factors that caused the political turbulence (Reign of Terror) in France between 1792 and 1794.
- No stand point is needed.

Chapter Two

- 1. Napoleon Bonaparte, 1799 -1815.**
- 2. TheVienna Settlement-1814-1815.**
- 3. The Congress System, 1815 - 1830.**

1. Napoleon Bonaparte, 1799-1815.

He was born on 15th August, 1769 at Ajaccio, on the Island of Corsica which had been annexed to France in 1768. Napoleon Bonaparte belonged to a poor background and for that reason, he was sent to a military school in France at the age of 10 years. He attended the military academies of Brienne and Paris and trained as an Artillery officer.

Napoleon suffered ridicule by his classmates who teased him because of poverty, strange manners and accent. This humiliating experience aroused in him a strong thirst for power and glory.

Napoleon Bonaparte was good at mathematics and military science and even won a title. At the age of 16 years (1785), Napoleon became an Army Officer (Artillery officer). He fought during the French Revolutionary wars and was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General after suppressing a Royalist uprising at Toulon which was aided by a British fleet. It should be noted that such posts / ranks were formerly reserved for the Nobility. At one time Napoleon Bonaparte was suspected as a partisan of Robespierre, he suffered a brief arrest but later released.

In October, 1795, Napoleon saved the government from a Royalist insurrection against the new constitution. He crushed the revolt by *'Whiff of Grapeshot'* and was later appointed the commander of the army of the Interior.

In October 1796, Napoleon Bonaparte was appointed commander of the Italian Campaign. He gave the Directory government a detailed plan against Austria. The army Napoleon took command of had been ill-equipped, disorganised, not sufficiently clothed, ill-fed, and were far superior to him. But within a month, he had re-organised the army and in April 1796, the army began its campaigns. With such nice words like,

"You are badly fed. I am going to lead you to the most fertile plains in the world where you will reap your greatness, glory and honour. "

Napoleon was able to instil discipline and morale in the army.

In two brilliant campaigns, Napoleon crossed the Alps and drove the Austrians out of Italy. His success made him a National Hero but the Directory government refused to sponsor his troops, so, Napoleon developed his own foreign policy. The defeat of the Austrians led to the signing of the **Treaty of Campo Formio** in 1797. This treaty was important for France abroad and the looted Art pieces were put in the French museum.

Napoleon Bonaparte's expedition to Egypt and Syria in 1798-1799 ended in defeats by the British, however, he returned to France only to find the country in chaos. The Jacobins and Girondins were planning to overthrow the government while the moderate

Republicans under Roger Ducos and Sieyes were looking for help to revise the constitution.

Taking advantage of the situation, Napoleon Bonaparte overthrew the government of the Directory to alleviate the fear of the French people. He forced the resignation of three of the Directors, allied with two which resulted into a successful coup d'état that ended the Directory government on 9th November, 1799. This coup brought Napoleon to supreme power and he instituted a military dictatorship.

In the early 1800's, Napoleon made numerous reforms in government and education, defeated the Austrians, went to war with Britain and had himself crowned Emperor in 1804. His greatest victory, the battle of Austerlitz, against Austria and Russia came in 1805. Thereafter, except for temporary setbacks in Spain, he was successful, consolidating most of Europe as his empire about 1810.

His downfall began with the disastrous invasion of Russia - 1811 - 1812 (though he had earlier involved in the Continental System), he was forced to abdicate and exiled to the Island of Elba. In March, 1815, he returned to France for the 100 days episode and was decisively defeated at the battle of Waterloo (June 18th 1815) resulting in his second abdication and final exile to the Island of St. Helena (in the Pacific).

FACTORS FOR THE RISE OF NAPOLEON BONAPARTE TO POWER

1. His Background

Napoleon's humble background provided him with the determination and courage which propped up his rise to power. He later became a hardened soldier due to poverty and this helped him as a professional soldier who could go on long campaigns without food, water and rest. He became determined to achieve his success through talent and hard work rather than economic status.

His father, Carlo Bonaparte identified with the Nobility in France which gave Napoleon chance to be admitted to the military Academies of Paris and Brienne which gave him the necessary skills and talents which he used later. He had his education in France thus enabling him to assess the situation and participate in French politics. It was through this education that Napoleon exposed his military ability.

2. The French Revolution of 1789

The outbreak of the French Revolution provided opportunity for Napoleon to display his military talents and skills, for he was already an artillery officer. The revolution removed class system in France and ushered in career open to talent which Napoleon effectively exploited i.e. his promotion to Brigadier General.

The revolutionary violence and terror created scarcity of officers i.e. by 1795, many able and experienced Generals had died or others went to exile yet they were vital in suppressing the constant rebellions generated by the French Revolution. This, therefore, left the floor to Napoleon to rise to power.

The French Revolution precipitated insurrections i.e. in 1795 by the Royalists and Parisians against the Directory. It was Napoleon who saved the situation by his '*Whiff of Grapeshot.*' This enabled Napoleon Bonaparte to come to the fore front and he was made Commander of the army of the Interior.

His successes in the Italian Campaign made him a National Hero. Napoleon greatly used the French Revolutionary propaganda (revolutionary ideals) of liberty, equality and fraternity which increased his influence abroad. i.e. he exported these ideals abroad.

The French Revolution turned most of Europe against France i.e. involved her in several wars, which Napoleon took advantage of and proved his ability - the defeat of Austria - hence his rise to power.

3. His Genius and Organising Ability

Napoleon's military genius, ambitions as well as resourcefulness assisted in his rise to power. Napoleon had a swift sense of judgement in war and adoption of tactics depending on the situation i.e. his plan to attack the British by conquering Egypt and attacking British post in India instead of attacking Britain directly.

His wisdom in dealing with soldiers i.e. made so many verbal promises to them and also allowed them to plunder which increased their willingness to fight (boosting their morale).

He was full of restless energy, not given to too much sleep, ability to absorb new knowledge and coordinate in war campaigns. Napoleon was very ambitious and this drove him to do all he could to get to the top. He had a burning desire to excel in all he did; he took advantage of every opportunity available to him. His prompt action, his tact and skill saved the Directory government hence gaining him prestige / honour. Wellington, the British Commander likened him to an equivalent of about 40,000 soldiers (men).

4. Napoleon's Character

He had powerful imagination and clearness of vision as well as swift judgement. He was knowledgeable, had an untiring capacity for work, a rarely failing memory, power of instant and inspired decision and he dared to be noticed. Napoleon was a shrewd politician who knew how to make friends i.e. Robespierre and his brother, Lucien Bonaparte, made him stay on the good side of the Jacobins during the Reign of Terror. Roger Ducos and Abbe Sieyes helped him to consolidate his power after the coup of 1799. Barass and Carnot helped him secure command of the army of the Interior, Italian and Egyptian campaigns thus increasing his popularity hence his rise to power.

5. Luck

Napoleon was born in 1769; a year after Corsica had been annexed by France thereby giving Napoleon opportunity to exploit French benefits / right to offices and enjoyed all privileges as a French citizen.

In 1794, Napoleon was imprisoned for a short time after the downfall of Robespierre. He could have been killed because he had a link with Robespierre.

The death of Joubert in Italy made Abbe Sieyes remain with Napoleon as the candidate whom he could use to bring about a perfect constitution for France. At this time, both the Jacobins and Girondins were plotting to overthrow the Directory Government while the moderate Republicans under Sieyes looked for a 'soldier' to help them revise the constitution which Napoleon did.

He was lucky that his brother, Lucien Bonaparte was the President of the Council of 500 Deputies in that he saved him from death while he (Napoleon) was addressing the council. Napoleon was shouted down and physically attacked. Lucien Bonaparte convinced the troops about Napoleon's good intentions not to become a dictator and persuaded them to disperse the Councillors (the Assembly members). The members of the Assembly who supported Napoleon 'abolished' the Directory and set up a Special Committee to work out a new constitution for France. From their first meeting Napoleon became the leader.

Napoleon's link with Robespierre and his having read the works of the Philosophers i.e. Voltaire and Rousseau assisted his rise to power. Through the works of the Philosophers, Napoleon believed that political change was imperative in France.

It was argued that during the days of his early life, the King of France offered an amnesty to the Corsican Patriots fighting for the liberation of Corsica. On his return from exile, Napoleon's father won the friendship of a French Commander in Corsica and later used his position to secure a vacancy for Napoleon at the military academy at Brienne.

His having survived the Reign of Terror (1792-1794) was out of luck in spite of associating with Robespierre.

During Italian campaign, Napoleon could have died; the bullet aimed at him killed his second-in-command. (at the battle of Arcola).

Napoleon was born in a family of 13 children, eight of whom survived; he being one of them was due to luck.

The weakness of the Directory was one factor that Napoleon took advantage of and staged a coup, 9th November, 1799, which brought him to power.

6. Scientific Development

It should be noted that Napoleon Bonaparte benefited from the improved scientific development of the time in Europe i.e. (Modern maps, better roads, more mobile artillery, compass equipment).

This brought improvement in transport and communication, increased the mobility of his troops, improved methods i.e. surprise attacks, ambushes hence his rise to power.

7. Weakness of the Directory Government

The Directory government was established in 1795 by the National Convention and was in power for four (4) years when it was overthrown by General Napoleon. By this time, the Directory government was characterised by a lot of corruption, power struggle, unemployment, bribery and weakness as well as inflation and bankruptcy. The

Directory government was weak, brigandage was rife, revolts were common i.e. Jacobins and Girondins were plotting to overthrow it and religiously it was in chaos.

The Directors were men of mediocre talents and did not hesitate to practice bribery and corruption. Because of this, they failed to tackle the problems of the country. These Directors were Carnot, Letourneau, Larevelliere, Rewbell and Barass.

Note should be taken that they elected many Royalists / Reactionaries to the Legislative Assembly which gave them the opportunity to sabotage the Directory government i.e. the Babeuf Conspiracy of 1796. Napoleon was employed to close the Babeuf Club.

The Directory was extravagant in public expenditure for instance, large military establishment i.e. 1 million men where a lot of money was required to maintain them.

The Directors also failed to control inflation, unemployment and deteriorating economy leading to low levels of production resulting into discontent among the people.

The power struggles undermined the authority of the government and the result was inefficiency. The members of the Directory were divided among themselves in policy and plan; there were quarrels among themselves e.g. Barass and Carnot.

The Directory lacked confidence in itself i.e. depended too much on Napoleon, sent him on many times to suppress revolts, campaigns against European powers. No new Victories had been won; the Directory had thrown away the fruits of Napoleon's Italian victories and involved France in new wars. It also used Napoleon to rig elections in 1797 in favour of the Jacobins club when the Moderates had gained influence and the Jacobins had lost in the elections.

The situation in France by 1799 was such that a strong government was needed headed by a strong personality so as to address the problems that were facing the Directory government. A person that could change the trend of events at the battle field, restore the confidence of the French, bring victory to France.

Napoleon Bonaparte, a revolutionary, successful General with immense organisational ability, a statesman, not a party man, was undoubtedly welcomed by the French.

They believed that he would put an end to internal disturbances and conclude the war which had put a lot of burden on France since 1792. Other Generals had proved that they could win battles but Napoleon had crowned his Italian campaign with the peace treaty of Campo Formio (1797).

Taking advantage of the disorder and discontent in France, the brigandage which was rife, revolts against the Directory i.e. in Brittany, depreciation of the currency and the success of the second coalition, Napoleon, together with a few of the Directors, organised a coup d'état on 9th November, 1799 and that did away the Directory government.

8. Napoleon Bonaparte read widely and was well versed in arts of peace and never identified with any political group. This may explain why he was generally supported by the French thus his rise to power in 1799.

9. Marriage to Josephine

Napoleon Bonaparte's marriage to Josephine the daughter of one of the Directors - Barass, paved way for his rise to power. This marriage actually assisted in the appointment of Napoleon to command the Italian campaign (1796-1797) which broadened Napoleon Bonaparte's popularity. On his return from the campaign Napoleon was hailed as a Hero, capable of controlling the internal and external affairs of France.

It should be noted that Napoleon's popularity threatened the power of the Directory government and once again planned for another campaign - the Egyptian campaign (1798 -1799) which was aimed at getting rid of Napoleon thus ending the threat he posed to the Directory. But Napoleon overthrew the government and pushed himself to power in 1799.

NAPOLION BONAPARTE'S INTERNAL POLICY

After the coup d'etat, Napoleon together with Ducos and Abbe Sieyes worked on the revision of the constitution which provided for the following:-

(a) EXECUTIVE (CONSULATE)

Three Consuls were to be appointed, of whom, the first Consul was the most important and this was Napoleon Bonaparte himself:- As the first Consul, Napoleon:

- (i) Appointed all the chief officials of the state, both military and civil i.e. Ministers, Judges, Ambassadors, Prefects, Sub-prefects, Mayors. This helped to recover control over the provinces which was lost in 1789-1791 and the Frenchmen had little effective share in governing their own localities.
- (ii) He alone could propose laws which were to be drafted by a Council of State and then submitted to the legislative body for voting, without discussion.
- (iii) Had the right to make war or peace.
- (iv) Was to rule for 10 years.
- (v) He was the Commander - in-chief of the armed forces.
- (vi) Was the President and nominated the Council of State which initiated legislations.
- (vii) Controlled foreign affairs and the diplomatic services.
- (viii) The second and third Consuls only had consultative functions.

(b) LEGISLATURE

(i) Senate

This brought legislative proposals before the Tribunal. Had the power to cancel any law contrary to the principles of the constitution.

(ii) Tribunal

The Council of State was composed of 100 members nominated by the Senate who debated the proposals. They could pass or reject but not alter the laws given by the government.

(iii) Legislative Body

Comprised 300 members nominated by the Senate who voted on proposals which they could not discuss. This arrangement and the fact that legislation came from the first Consul and Council of State placed the legislature as well as the executive power in the hands of Napoleon Bonaparte.

It should be noted that the Senate was the highest body with members appointed for life. These members were sixty in number. The Senate had the power to choose the Consul, Tribunal members and legislators and could declare any action unconstitutional. It nominated the 300 members of the legislative body. The constitutional set up made the first consul a virtual dictator.

(c) FRANCHISE

(i) The universal manhood suffrage was limited to about five million citizens to elect about a tenth of their members as Communal Nobilities.

(ii) These elected a tenth of them as Departmental representatives. These in turn elected a tenth as National Notables and from these 5000, the Consuls and members of the Senate were to choose officials, councillors, legislators, members of the tribunal. The system left voters to cast their ballots and Napoleon was free to promote only those loyal to him. Most appointments were made before lists were complete. Nevertheless, the system resulted into efficiency.

NAPOLÉON BONAPARTE'S RE-ORGANISATION OF FRANCE

Having given the French a written constitution, between 1800 and 1803, Napoleon devoted his energy to the reorganisation of France, in some measure, to fit the post-revolutionary days (in line with revolutionary ideals and principles). He did great and memorable things for France during this period which made him be regarded as a great statesman.

The main aim of the internal policy was to reorganise and reconstruct the legal, financial and administrative institutions of France. The reorganisation also covered the fields of Education, religion, culture etc. Napoleon's reforms were carried out in the following fields:-

1. Financial and Industrial Re-organisation

Before Napoleon's coming to power, the French Financial system was in shambles, there was no bank, the currency was losing value, the Directory government was unable to

pay debts, government revenue was squandered in speculation, bribery and forgery i.e. money was invested in bonds which later lost value. There was high rate of inflation, high unemployment rate and the system of taxation was very ineffective.

Accordingly, Napoleon Bonaparte created the Bank of France in 1800 which was to:

- (a) Issue and maintain a stable currency based on gold.
- (b) Manage government loans
- (c) Keep tax collectors' deposits
- (d) To tax revenue deposits

It should be noted that these reforms restored the financial credibility which was needed during this period. State revenue doubled which had never been the case before.

The tax collection system was centralised and special departments were created thus ensuring that loss of funds was at its minimum. The currency was stabilized which led to stimulation of business.

Commercial Exchanges and Chambers of Commerce were created and Advisory Boards were set up to advise manufacturers, Artists as well as Craftsmen.

High protective tariffs were established to protect French industries from foreign competition and this enabled the industries to expand. Napoleon used prizes, loans and exhibits to encourage development of new processes thus industrial advancement. Napoleon established a good network of communication system to increase trade, new inventions were encouraged and Factory Acts were passed. He invented new cotton machines.

Better scientific methods of farming were introduced in agricultural production. In 1806, Napoleon declared the Continental System which encouraged the French farmers to produce substitutes i.e.

Chicory for coffee, beet sugar for fine sugar etc. However, with time, the continental system led to problems.

It should be noted that by 1801, a balanced budget had been attained and this revived the business confidence and trade expanded. The merchants in the city and peasants on farms gave Napoleon their support.

2. Administration (Local Government)

France had been very unstable and virtually there was no peace. Administration was monopolised by the king, the privileged nobility who held the top most posts in government.

It should be noted that the Revolutionaries wished to end such a system and institute a better system in place where the majority would be represented. Accordingly, Napoleon Bonaparte used the royal and revolutionary experience so as to modernise and

reorganise the administrative system. He centralised the system of local government to decrease the chaos of the post - revolutionary and pre1800 era.

He retained the 83 departments (created by the revolutionary leaders) and each was headed by a Prefect. Each Department was divided into an Arrondissement headed by a sub - prefect. These (Prefects and Sub-Prefects) were directly appointed by Napoleon himself, the first Consul.

The Commune was headed by a Mayor. All these played advisory roles. The Local Councils continued to be elected but powers became largely advisory as much of the work was done by the officials who represented and owed their position to the central government thus the centre of control was in the hands of Napoleon, the first Consul, directly or indirectly. In other words, the local administration institutions were completely subordinated to the central government.

By the above arrangements, Napoleon managed to make the administration easy for; there was a hierarchy of officials. There was order and possibility of a strong united national government. Through the reorganisation, Napoleon did fulfil the aspirations of the revolutionaries.

However, to some extent, power once again went into the hands of the king as it was the case during the period of the Ancient Regime and it was this that made Napoleon a dictator.

3. Education Reforms

Before the revolution, education was monopolised by the wealthy and privileged classes. Napoleon knew the importance of education for the development of nationalism and republicanism. On coming to power, he devoted his attention towards spread of education. There were three main principles of his education system, namely.

- (a) Loyalty to government or state.
- (b) Faith in Christian religion.
- (c) Conduct of the students in accordance with the rules of universities and Education Department. Education was designed to train future military and civil leaders of France.

Accordingly, Napoleon made Education free and for all and was based on career open to talent. Primary schools were set up in every Commune under the supervision of Prefects and Sub-Prefects. Secondary schools were opened under the Central government.

In these schools, French and Latin were used. High schools (Lyc'ees) were established and were run by government. In these, emphasis was placed on science, maths, technology and military training.

In 1806, Napoleon founded the University of France with seventeen (17) Academies in different districts, aimed at bringing about uniformity in the field of education and supervising the Institutions of higher learning. Napoleon appointed all the high officials of the University, scholarships were offered. Napoleon also built Technical schools

mainly to provide man power for the expanding industry and discovery of new industrial processes.

However, Napoleon undermined women's education. To him, they (women) did not hold any position of significance as far as public matters were concerned. He said,

'I don't think we need to trouble ourselves with any plan of instruction for young females ...

Public Education is not suitable for them because they are never called upon to act in public.

Manners are all in all to them and marriage is all they

look to.' thus constituting a weakness in his rule.

4. The Concordat, 1801

All along, the main issue had been the relationship between the church and the state. During the revolution, the Extremists had severed the Church in France from its head i.e. the Pope, thus conflicts and chaos. The Church became discontented and cut off from Rome. Napoleon recognised the Church as cement of social order that kept men quiet, meek and obedient; he wanted to please the men who were Catholic at heart and end religious strife in the west of France. He believed that a society without religion was like a ship without a compass.

Napoleon realised that the breach between France and the Papacy created by the Civil Constitution of the Clergy grieved the majority of the French people who were still Catholic in sentiment. He saw the church as a valuable support to his power, for behind the church was a vast majority of the peasantry of France whose loyalty would help him maintain power. Napoleon also hoped to use the friendship of the Pope to have alliance with the Catholic Church where his power extended.

Accordingly, Napoleon Bonaparte entered into agreement with the Pope not because Catholicism was his religion nor his favourite denomination but because he wanted to restore sanity in France, a country so much eroded by religious strife and chaos. He once remarked"

'I was a Mohammedan in Egypt; I shall be a catholic here for the good of the people.'

To Napoleon, religion was a useful political instrument, a national flag, something that bound society together.

According to this agreement (Concordat):

- (a) Freedom of worship was guaranteed. Catholicism was declared a religion of the majority of the French but others were tolerated.
- (b) The Church became a department of the state and the clergy, servants of the state.
- (c) The Pope recognised the sale of confiscated lands. This pleased the peasants because he confirmed their gains of the revolution.

- (d) Bishops were chosen by the government (first Consul) but consecrated by the Pope. The Bishops chose Parish Priests on government approval.
- (e) In future, the Priests were not to leave their Parishes and go out.
- (f) The state undertook to pay the salaries of the clergy. The salaries of the upper clergy were reduced while those of the lower clergy increased.

Through this, Napoleon was able to silence the former religious antagonism and won support for himself. The agreement helped restore social stability as well as political peace and reconciled the church with the state. The concordat continued to be the basis of mutual relations between the state and church for the next 103 years.

5. Code Napoleon

This was a set of clearly defined statements of law enabling the citizens to know their positions as far as the law of the land was concerned. It affected the French on such issues as civil rights and duties, marriages, divorce, parentage, inheritance of property. It was actually the first set of clear laws France had had for a long time.

Prior to 1789, the French knew no common law i.e. France had two sets of law, the Traditional common law in the north, the Roman law in the south, altogether there were 360 feudal codes of law. Jurisdiction was overlaid by a tangle of feudal customs, royal edicts.

The Peasants knew nothing about their rights, responsibilities before the law and as a consequence, they suffered torture at the hands of their feudal Lords. The successive revolutionary governments also failed to cope with the legal demands and confused the French legal system.

It should be noted that, the idea of a comprehensive law had been embarked upon earlier, (between 1792-1796) by the Revolutionaries but the successive governments had failed to cope with the legal demands.

Accordingly, Napoleon appointed Committees comprising legal Experts for framing French laws, worked together with a commission of lawyers and the Council of State to discuss, amend, amalgamate and synthesise all the laws into the code which had 2287 articles which was produced in 1804.

The Code Napoleon contained the following:

- (a) Granted freedom of worship (religious tolerance).
- (b) Equality of all citizens before the law.
- (c) Trial by the Jury and in public thus limiting the corruption in the courts.
- (d) It confirmed the right to private property ownership.
- (e) Concretised the gains of the revolution and ensured that there was no counter revolution. This actually won him the good will of the peasants and the Middle Class.

- (f) Eligibility of all citizens for offices i.e. civil or military.
- (g) It permitted divorce.
- (h) It upheld the value of family life, the authority of the father i.e. a child below the age of 25 years could not marry without the consent of his father.

The code preserved a number of important changes brought about by the revolution i.e. Equality of all before the law, regardless of rank, riches, religion.

However, it should be noted that Napoleon sometimes used the Code against the interests of the Frenchmen i.e. the penal code and criminal code introduced arbitrary arrest, persecution and dictatorship thus a return to the pre-1789 situation (therefore a weakness of his government)

The Code was originally introduced into areas under French control in 1804 i.e. Belgium, Luxemburg, German states, (northern) Italy, Monaco. It was later introduced into territories conquered by Napoleon i.e. Netherlands, Switzerland. It is still in use in Belgium, Luxemburg and Monaco.

6. Legion of Honour

This constituted an important aspect in Napoleon's political career and achievement. Comprised titles conferred upon those who had done / rendered distinguished services to the state. There were various grades of the Legion of Honour awarded for various services in political, civil service, local government, art and music, literature and military service.

Napoleon was quoted to have said, "*Men are led by Toys*". The French were accessible to only one sentiment, love of honour. The Legion of Honour helped to increase efficiency in state service and promotion based on merit which had not been the case during the period of the Ancient Regime and the Revolutionary governments. Through this principle, Napoleon was able to rebuild a strong army and economy.

However, as his empire expanded, Napoleon mixed up the legion of Honour with a new hierarchy of rank. New dignitaries such as Grand Elector, Arch Chancellor of state, Arch Treasurer and the Constable were established. Nepotism was exercised especially in the conquered areas where Napoleon appointed his brothers, sisters, friends and relatives thus creating a new type of nobility to replace the old one except that this was based on intellectual and practical abilities.

7. Public Works

Napoleon realised that to support his financial and communication reforms, there was need for improvement in public works. Accordingly, Canals were dug, bridges constructed, roads established. He drained marshes, enlarged and fortified sea ports.

The above ensured a good net work of communication system and aided the expansion of industry in an effort to remove unemployment. Occupations like tailoring, shoe making, hat making. were encouraged. He built new Royal Palaces, old ones were

repaired e.g. St. Cloud, Fontainebleau, Rambouillet were lavishly decorated and this enhanced their prestige. Paris was beautified by construction of beautiful buildings.

It should be noted that all these things done by Napoleon earned him great honours and he became known as a, '**Great Statesman,**' earned him support and strengthened his position at home. However, some opposition still remain to his administration i.e. in 1801 there occurred an assassination attempt on Napoleon believed to have been carried out by a member of the Jacobins club.

Due to the above attempt Napoleon had to resort to dictatorial measures, i.e. in 1802 he made himself First Consul for life, with powers to nominate his successor. This was put to plebiscite and supported by the majority of the French.

In 1804, Napoleon became Hereditary Emperor of France for life with the right to nominate his successor. The Senate which the Emperor had nominated became the chief Legislative organ and could make laws on its own - **Senatus Consulta**. Having been crowned Emperor, he assumed the title of **Napoleon I**.

An Imperial Court and a new aristocracy were set up. The Ex-Consuls became Arch Chancellor and Arch treasurer respectively and the leading generals became Marshals of the Empire.

NAPOLEON'S FOREIGN POLICY

Napoleon's foreign policy was based on and dictated by war and conquest. His fifteen years of rule was a period of continuous warfare, partly because of the traditional struggle for supremacy between big powers and Napoleon's personal ambition.

The foreign policy, apart from the foreign glory he earned France through his victories, was comparatively not as sound as his domestic policy, wars and treaty signing dominated the foreign policy of Napoleon. The revolutionary changes undermined the basis of European society and foreign rulers endeavoured to suppress them and to restore the Bourbon monarchy.

The threats of Austria, and Prussia after the flight of the king to Varennes (**Declaration of Pilsnitz**, August, 1791 and the **Brunswick manifesto**, August, 1792) led to the Assembly, urged by the Girondins, to declare war.

When Napoleon came to power as the First Consul in 1799, the second coalition (England, Austria, Russia and Turkey) was a threat to France. He turned his attention to the second coalition, defeated the main Austrian army at the battle of Marengo. At Hohenlinden another Austrian army was defeated by the French under the command of Moreau. Accordingly, in 1801, the Treaty of Lunneville was signed, by which the terms of the treaty of Campo Formio were reaffirmed.

In England, the public opinion was against war, for it interfered with trade and social life. They (English) wanted peace with France and when this was suggested to Napoleon, he accepted because it would give him a chance to consolidate his position at home and concentrate on his policy.

Accordingly, France and Britain signed the **Peace Treaty of Amiens** in March, 1802. By the Treaty:- (a) England took back the French colonies she captured except Trinidad and Ceylon (Srilanka).

(b) England agreed to evacuate Malta and Egypt and by that time, the French army had to be withdrawn.

(c) England recognised the French boundaries as in 1802.

It should be noted that, the Peace Treaty of Amiens was neither popular to the British nor the French. But it gave them time to reorganise themselves and it was not surprising that war broke out again in 1803.

THE RENEWAL OF WAR

By this time, Napoleon had saved France from anarchy and external threat. He had given France a government which by every test was stable. Napoleon I had done his work but the Peace Treaty of Amiens (1802) turned out to be a truce or ceasefire. War broke out again in 1803, between Britain and France.

Napoleon had not been happy with the treaty of Amiens, for he had not signed it on his own terms as he had preferred. He had hoped for a day when he would dictate terms to England. England had hoped to be able to trade with France more freely but Napoleon I set up tough tariff system.

France continued to send Spies and Agents to Egypt and these developments alarmed England which refused to vacate Malta. Moreover, England had never recognised the French occupation of Austria and Netherlands. Her traditional policy was to keep the Belgium coastline free from a potential enemy i.e. France.

The Battle of Trafalgar, Oct. 1805

Sure of winning at sea, England renewed war in 1803. The French fleet had been blocked by the British thus cutting off connections with the colonies. Napoleon in return prepared to hit at England by crossing the English Channel but he failed miserably. He is reported to have said,

'If I can be the master of the sea for six hours, England would cease to exist.'

The French / Spanish fleets were smashed off the Cape of Trafalgar by Nelson in 1805. Consequently, the invasion of England was a total failure but Napoleon I insisted that the invasion of England was prevented by a few unforeseen accidents and had his Generals passed the sea, they would have been successful.

Significance of Trafalgar - 1805

(a) Showed the British naval superiority in Europe and the invisibility of French attack of Britain by the land.

- (b) Led to the major and most significant blow to the French Navy making it unable later to effect the Continental System or try another campaign against the English.
- (c) Led to the formation of the Third Coalition having been given fresh momentum to thrash Napoleon I.
- (d) A significant 'peg' in creating the fall of Napoleon I.
- (e) Napoleon's military genius shown.

It should be noted that, having failed to beat England, Napoleon I turned to Austria and defeated it. He also took the kingdom of Naples from Austria and placed it under his brother, Joseph Bonaparte as ruler. Louis Bonaparte was crowned king of Holland.

In 1805, the European countries i.e. England, Austria, Russia and Sweden formed the Third Coalition against Napoleon I (France) with the aim of chasing the French out of Belgium, Italy and the Rhineland states. In December, at the battle of Austerlitz, Napoleon I defeated a combined force of the Austrian and Russian troops.

In January, 1806, Austria was forced to sign the treaty of Pressburg by which:

- (a) Austria surrendered Dalmatia, Istria to France.
- (b) Napoleon took Venetia from Austria and added it to Italy.
- (c) The Holy Roman Empire, formerly under Austria was broken up and the German States were created into the confederation of the Rhine and these promised to support Napoleon I. Napoleon then turned to the Russians whom he defeated at Friedland, after which a peace treaty, Treaty of Tilsit was signed on 7th July 1807 between Napoleon I and the Czar, Alexander I of Russia. This treaty marked the zenith of Napoleon's power.

According to treaty,

- (a) Alexander I of Russia recognised Napoleon I as Emperor of the west. While Napoleon I did recognise Alexander (Czar) as the "possible" Emperor of the East.
- (b) Napoleon I assured the Czar, Alexander I that he would not oppose him if he wanted Finland from Sweden. The Czar was free to carry out his plans in the Balkan Peninsular.
- (c) Alexander I was promised a share of the Turkish Empire.
- (d) Russia promised to ally with France against Britain.

The treaty was significant in that Napoleon's control of Europe was recognised by the Czar. Historians have noted that had Napoleon I died in that year; his career would have seen the most miraculous records in the military annals of Europe, perhaps in the world. He had succeeded in every task; he outwitted all enemies and had arranged Europe according to his liking. He had no military threat; he was in an apparently close and friendly alliance with the Czar of Russia.

Due to these achievements, it was not France but Napoleon I who commanded in Europe and he had carried with him his family to wealth, fame and power. Most important and probably interesting if not surprising was that his mother, a once simple House wife of Ajaccio was installed as an Empress mother in Paris.

THE CONTINENTAL SYSTEM - 1806

This was formulated just after the French success at Jena in 1806. It followed the French realisation that Britain could not be defeated by sea hence the only option was to destroy her wealth, cause social distress in Britain and she would surrender to the French whims (ideas). According to Montgaillard,

'It's through her commerce that England must be attacked..., to destroy British Commerce is to strike England to the heart'.

Napoleon then arranged conquests on most of European ports. He ensured that Europe did not sell her produce to England. So through the Berlin and Milan Decrees of 1806, Napoleon I stipulated a ban on British ships and confiscation of their goods by all French allies and subjects. He also aimed at creating France's economic supremacy in Europe. He enforced this system by consolidation of his power in Europe through the use of relatives and close friends i.e. Jerome Bonaparte in Westphalia, Louis Bonaparte in Holland and Joseph Bonaparte in Naples and later, Spain. He also hoped to employ the Danish fleet in effecting the system.

Britain reacted in 1807 through the Orders in Council which stipulated that all French allies and subjects were under blockade. She effectively executed counter blockade because of her naval power. British Industries were hard hit but her navy remained intact and the destruction of the Danish fleet by the British in 1807 expelled any naval opposition to the British by allies of France.

Between 1807 and 1810, Napoleon I made strenuous efforts to make his decrees effective, he attempted to seal off the whole European coastline. He accordingly took drastic action i.e. in 1807, Denmark was forced into the system and in 1810, the French troops occupied North German ports of Hamburg, Bremen and Danzig. When Louis Bonaparte refused to woo the Dutch to accept the decrees, Napoleon dethroned him and put Holland under the laws.

The ultimate results of this policy were as follows:-

- (a) Trade declined and unemployment was widespread i.e. in Germany and Britain.
- (b) Foreign trade suffered seriously.
- (c) Smuggling and Black marketeering became widespread.
- (d) The middle class suffered because they had to pay heavily in terms of taxes to meet the cost of enforcing the Continental System.

What should be noted is that the people, who once looked at Napoleon as their liberator, were now treated as subjects ruled by the French officials and were forced to submit to

French laws instead of their own. It was no wonder that such a situation later aroused a spirit of nationalism in countries like Spain. Thus those who had initially welcomed Napoleon turned against him. In the process, the Continental System led Napoleon I to war with various countries of Europe until his final defeat.

By 1810, the Continental System had a lot of loopholes. Many countries of Europe no longer observed many of its clauses and as early as 1807, Portugal refused to comply.

Causes of the Failure of the Continental System

- (a) The French lacked a strong Navy to accomplish the necessary task of patrolling the European coastline to effect the embargo. The Navy was lost at Trafalgar (1805).
- (b) The British confiscation of the Danish fleet disabled France from getting any other formidable fleet for the purpose of patrolling.
- (c) Smuggling and Corruption enabled the passage of British goods through ports.
- (d) The British Orders in Council were more effective than the Berlin and Milan Decrees. The British had a powerful navy to patrol and effect their own rules, something the French lacked. The Continental System inevitably collapsed as European Countries lacked not only British goods but all goods.
- (e) The system lacked public support and much in contrast was greatly resented by the European public which, through strikes and revolts pressurised their home government to withdraw from the system.
- (f) The system was instituted during a time of Economic Depression in most of Europe following a decade of war and uncertainty. Its impacts were too stinging to allow it time it needed in order to be effective and affect the British strength, moreover, the 1812 winter was itself unbearable and countries could not stand the lack of items like coal for warming.
- (g) The Peninsular war (1808) and the Moscow Campaign (1811-1812) themselves caused by the system diverted Napoleon's attention from the system hence its crumbling.

THE PENINSULAR WAR – 1808 (THE SPANISH CAMPAIGN 1808 – 1814)

Portugal was the first country to violate the Clauses of the Berlin and Milan Decrees because she had for long carried out trade with Britain. Napoleon I enlisted the support of Spain and occupied Portugal.

Having defeated Portugal, Napoleon I turned to Spain, overthrew the Spanish Monarch and made his brother, Joseph Bonaparte, King of Spain in 1808. This was Napoleon's greatest miscalculation, to expect to bully into submission what he called backward countries. He believed that he would be welcomed as a Liberator of the peasants from a dictator. He was quoted to have said,

'I shall write upon my banner the words, liberty and destruction of the Nobility.'

It should be noted that, the very tools of nationalism he intended to use were turned against him by the Spaniards who became extensively nationalistic in the wake of the French aggression. The Spaniards rose up against Napoleon in a guerrilla warfare. The French were defeated at Baylen and with the help of the British, defeated another French force at Vimiero. Spain proved the cancer that drained Napoleon's strength.

The British under Wellington from the nearby Portugal which they had liberated made unpredictable earth fortifications at Tornes Verde and from there carried out attacks on the French. This greatly checked Napoleon's strength and marked the beginning of his speedy fall.

The Spaniards continued with their guerrilla war which was so intensely and savagely carried out that they poisoned the wells, food and meat such that others died, so disastrous was the campaign.

Significance of the Peninsular war to Napoleon I's Downfall

- (a) Provided England with a land base which she had hitherto lacked. She could now contribute to the ousting of Napoleon I from Europe as she did in 1813.
- (b) Portrayed the failure of Napoleon I to find refuge in his propaganda of Liberty, as the backward Spaniards denied him the chance. Nationalism had turned against him.
- (c) An example of the unpopularity of Napoleon I in Europe contributing to his downfall.

Napoleon was hated because he had earlier annexed Rome and deposed the Pope (and actually imprisoned him in 1808). The strongly Catholic Spaniards were ready to fight Napoleon and never before, public unpopularity was in arms.

- (d) Showed the expanse of Napoleon's army as he raised five different armies and assembled them in Spain. His Marshals hence became more responsible for taking on the field challenges. Yet they did not have his military talents and genius, thus calling on him to come from Central Europe to effect any success.
- (e) Since the peninsular war was a result of the continental system and its devastation on Napoleon hence portrayed the contribution of the continental system to his downfall.
- (f) Ambition of Napoleon I being a cause of his downfall was shown in the peninsular war.

Napoleon I had finished his campaign against Portugal but his ambition led him to unnecessary bullying of the Spanish monarch hence his downfall.

The resistance of the Spaniards and the defeat of Napoleon in Spain encouraged the Austrians to revive war against Napoleon I. They were, however, humiliated at Wagram in 1809 and Napoleon entered Vienna. This was followed by the signing of the Treaty of Vienna, by which:- (a) Austria surrendered the Dalmatian provinces to Napoleon.

- (b) Austria promised to enter and adhere to the Continental System.
- (c) Austria had to give her princess, Marie Louise in marriage to Napoleon I.
- (d) Austria surrendered western Galicia to the Grand Duchy of Warsaw and a population of 2.5 million subjects.
- (e) Austria gave back Tyrol, Salzburg to Bavaria.

THE MOSCOW CAMPAIGN, 1812

Russia which was a signatory to the Tilsit Treaty of 1807 began to feel the effects of the Continental System. The friendship between Napoleon I and the Czar Alexander I quickly cooled down. The Czar abandoned the Continental System because it had seriously affected the Business class.

Consequently, Alexander I had to compromise with Turkey which France and Russia had earlier agreed not to undertake. He had betrayed Napoleon I by signing an agreement with the Austrians where the latter promised no practical help to France in case of Russo-Turkish conflict, Sweden too made the same promise. The Czar, Alexander I was displeased by Napoleon's annexation of the Polish territory which Russia claimed. Napoleon I had seized Ordenberg, a north German state ruled by the Czar's brother-in-law. The Czar realised that, Napoleon I had merely wanted to use him for his own interest and to strengthen his own position in Europe.

Napoleon I gathered a grand army of about **600,000**, the largest in history, to teach the Czar a lesson. The Russians eluded the invaders and as they resorted to the scorched earth policy and even set Moscow ablaze. Thus, the French army was denied shelter and food. Napoleon's forces were destroyed and decided to retreat, winter had begun and famine hit them hard. The bulk of his army perished in the march home due to hunger, cold, harassment by the Cossacks and as they were crossing rivers whose bridges had been destroyed by the Russians.

Only **20,000** troops returned the bulk of whom was unfit. This, therefore, meant that Napoleon I had to depend on inexperienced soldiers. Napoleon's military overconfidence had led to the grave miscalculation and under estimation of the Russian strength. The campaign revealed that Napoleon I could be defeated. It was evident that Napoleon I's ambitions were eroding his military strength thus the formation of the 4th Coalition in 1813 comprising Britain, Austria and Sweden.

Significance of the Moscow Campaign to Napoleon I's

Downfall (a) Caused the 4th coalition which led to Napoleon's downfall.

(b) Greatly diminished the French military strength as it depleted up to 500,000 troops. This was too large and it led to Napoleon I's downfall.

(b) Portrayed Napoleon's loss of his apparently supernatural genius. He undermined Russian strength and their capacity to resist, overlooked an eminent

bad, winter in a way that had not been seen in any of his earlier campaigns. Napoleon's military capacity had certainly been depleted eventually leading to his fall.

(c) Served to show Napoleon's ambition in applying the Continental System which was put into effect.

THE WAR OF LIBERATION 1813

By February, 1813, Napoleon I had assembled a new army of about 250,000 troops against the 4th Coalition. He set out for Dresden and gained victories in May 1813 at Lautzen and Bautzen against Russian and Prussian forces but he did not follow up these successes.

The allies were able to regroup their forces and met Napoleon's forces at **Leipzig** in 1813 in what is commonly referred to as the '**Battle of All Nations**' when his forces were overwhelmed. The Allies pursued him in France from Spain. The work of the Allies was made much easier by being fed with information by Talleyrand and Fouché, who were conspiring with the future Louis XVIII, and Britain as well as Russia. This showed Napoleon I's unpopularity even among his officers. Napoleon's power outside France had ended in 1813.

Napoleon I was now on the defensive and he was forced to conscript many youth for the next encounter. His countrymen were not giving him the best moral support. They were frustrated by his continuous wars which reduced them to miserable state. The situation in France scared the Wealthy and Landless Peasants and everyone longed for peace. Meanwhile the Bourbon royalists were ganging unsuccessfully with the clergy in an underground movement to sabotage Napoleon I.

The fears and frustrations of France were summed up in an address to the Council in 1813 thus;

'Our ills are at their height. France is threatened at all points of the frontiers. Commerce is destroyed and Industry dying. What are the causes of all these miseries?'

Napoleon refused to listen to his country's advice and the Allies demanded that he should stop war and to recognize his territories as the natural frontiers of France. Accordingly, Napoleon dismissed the Council and set up a brilliant resistance.

However, Paris fell in March 1814 and on 6th April, 1814, Napoleon I was forced to abdicate and by the Treaty of Fontainebleau;

- (a) Napoleon gave up the throne of France.
- (b) He was allowed to keep the title of Emperor.
- (c) He was exiled to the Island of Elba.
- (d) The Allies were lenient and allowed France retain her frontiers as at 1792, pay no indemnity and further allowed her maintain her army.

Meanwhile, in accordance with the wishes of the Allied powers, the brother of the executed king, Louis XVI, Louis XVIII was proclaimed King of France. He granted a constitutional charter which established a parliamentary system of government; He also gave guarantees of liberty to the people.

But surrounding Louis XVIII were many Royalists and Émigrés who were determined to destroy anything which the revolution of 1789 had achieved. They made him unpopular within a few months.

THE HUNDRED DAYS EPISODE - 1815

Before the Congress of Vienna which sat in November, 1814 had completed its work, Napoleon escaped from Elba and was welcomed by the French. He amassed an army for the recovery of his lost Empire. The Bourbon ruler, Louis XVIII fled from his capital. The allies once more combined to defeat Napoleon and on June 18th, 1815, he was defeated at the battle of Waterloo.

Napoleon I's last military adventure had underlying causes as follows:

(a) Discontented Army

In spite of Louis XVIII's attempt to appease the French by his moderation, there were shortcomings in his rule which helped stimulate the return of Napoleon because they were suffering. Most officers were retired and soldiers were put on half pay especially those who had served under Napoleon I. They were being replaced by Nobles and returning Émigrés who lacked ability and experience.

(b) Peasants' fears

Peasants who had acquired land during the revolution were more than alarmed by the return of the Nobles whose land they had taken. They felt that the catastrophe which had befallen the army would next hinge on land. This fear paved way for the return of Napoleon I. This situation was worsened by the return of Ceremonial Court practices of the Ancient regime. Most intolerable of all was the return of the Ancient Regime's white Royalist flag, the symbol of enslavement.

(c) Napoleon's Personality

It should be noted that it was Napoleon the man who was the brain behind the entire venture. His ability to attract followers caused the 100 days episode. By the beginning of March alone, he had more than 1000 soldiers. He promised democratic rule, reorganisation of the army and ensured land ownership of the peasants.

He had cleverly timed his revolt to exploit French grievances. Furthermore, Napoleon was a rallying cry for the soldiers, who deserted Louis XVIII for Napoleon I. This was an effort by France to declare allegiance to a man who had brought her almost to world supremacy.

Napoleon's ambitions and restlessness were far from silenced. Elba was a great humiliation. He still dreamt of being a master of France. Accordingly, Napoleon entered France, marched through Lyons all the while gathering more followers who proclaimed; ***'Long live the Emperor'***

Napoleon I promised a Chamber elected by the people and to rule as a Constitutional king. In his new Constitution, the press was to be free. Apart from the rising in **VENOE**, his strength was unchecked.

Outside France, Napoleon met stiff resistance from the Prussians under Burche and the British under Wellington. On 18th June, 1815, Napoleon was defeated at the battle of Waterloo; he retreated to Paris where he abdicated. The war ended Napoleon's career.

This time, the Allies showed no sympathy to France and Napoleon. They banished him to the Island of St. Helena in the Pacific, imposed indemnities on France and an Allied army of occupation was imposed on France and were to remain there until the indemnity was paid. France lost Saarland and her frontiers reduced to those of 1790. The Author of all these was to live in St. Helena till his death in 1821, on 5th May and his body was returned to France in 1841.

THE DOWNFALL OF NAPOLEON I

Napoleon I, who had brought success / fame to France both at home and abroad, was finally defeated by 1814. He had disorganised Europe politically, economically, and socially. The European masses suffered a lot due to his endless wars, repressive policies such that by 1813, there was a high sense of unity among the European countries to get rid of him. This may explain why a number of Alliances / coalitions were formed to get rid of him.

The downfall of Napoleon I can be explained by the following factors:-

1. Despotic Administration.

Napoleon I had, by 1804, established himself firmly in power. His rule, both at home and abroad was autocratic and oppressive and to some extent exploitative. He increased his powers, stepped up the level of nepotism by using members of his family as officials in France and the Satellite states. He muzzled the press, restricted political association, instituted arbitrary arrests and extermination of his opponents. The Secret police and the Spy-net work caused a lot of panic amongst the European public. He prohibited / prevented the teaching of certain subjects i.e. History, philosophy, Literature, Political science and he denied people the right to choose their own leaders.

Napoleon imposed heavy taxes on the subjects. In 1808, he even imprisoned the Pope thus antagonism with the Church which led to loss of the Catholic support. Generally, Napoleon I lost internal popularity which eventually made him fall from power.

2. The forces of nationalism and liberalism

These forces were gaining impetus in Europe. He had propagated these forces in Italy, Germany, Holland and other states. He had made use of the revolutionary principles of

Liberty, Equality and Fraternity as basic human rights to a mass support against his enemies thus registering a lot of success as a Liberator of the oppressed and he built an extensive Empire.

It should be noted that through his aggressive foreign policy, Napoleon I forced many states under his control either directly or indirectly. As the Empire expanded, Napoleon I abandoned his liberal policies and took to dictatorship.

These very same forces were later used against him to form concerted effort against dictatorship and economic exploitation. E.g. in Spain, when he imposed his brother, Joseph Bonaparte as king, it aroused in the Spaniards the spirit of nationalism. In Austria, nationalistic feelings were aroused among the militia and all classes to join in defence of their country.

Besides, he imposed on Europe undesirable and dictatorial policies which forced Europe to come together to destroy him i.e. the war of liberation at Leipzig in 1813 (The battle of All Nations) and his subsequent abdication in 1814 after the Treaty of Fontainebleau hence his downfall.

3. Overwhelming Ambition

Napoleon I had love for glory, power and thirst for fame. He was never contented with his conquests, he wanted to conquer and bring the whole of Europe under his control. Consequently, Napoleon I embarked on an aggressive and expansionist policy which meant fighting many wars. The situation led to his creating more enemies in Europe who got determined to overthrow him. He had involved the whole of Europe in continuous and expensive wars thus affecting the peace and stability in Europe. It should be noted that this overwhelming ambition of Napoleon led to the following:-

(a) The Continental System, 1806

This was declared through the Berlin and Milan decrees in 1806. Napoleon I's bid for mastery of Europe led him to the desire to bring Britain into subjugation which led him to devise the Continental System. This was an economic blockade against Britain to defeat her and bring her to terms with Napoleon I especially after Trafalgar, 1805.

The steps to enforce the Continental System brought Napoleon I into conflict with most countries of Europe. The Merchant class was disgusted with confiscation and burning of goods which led to decline in trade, unemployment thus generating nationalistic feelings against him. In Russia, it was the merchant class which put pressure on the Czar to refuse to comply with the system which brought about the Moscow Campaign, 1812.

The Continental System involved Napoleon I in too many wars which necessitated the use of more forces which had to be put under his Marshals and Generals who did not have his military genius, ability and over whom he could not keep close watch to ensure efficiency. It made Napoleon I adopt harsh and punitive measures and increased taxation to maintain the inflated army and so it became a concern to all peoples of Europe who decided to bury their differences in order to remove Napoleon I.

The system also made him lose support of his own people (French) due to unemployment, general poverty, high taxes and forced conscriptions. It also involved

him in unnecessary expensive and disastrous wars which weakened the army, lowered their morale, destroyed the invincibility of Napoleon's army, led to increased determination by other countries to get rid of him, gave Britain morale, courage, obligation and unique opportunity to enter the continental war which seriously altered the military balance against Napoleon I hence his downfall.

(b) The Spanish Campaign, 1808 - 1814

The Continental System was so biting to the countries whose economies depended on trade with Britain, one such country was Portugal which could not stand the effects of the system thus violated the terms of the Berlin and Milan decrees of 1806. He enlisted the support of Spain to bring Portugal back into the system and later on turned against Spain that had assisted him against the Portuguese.

About 300,000 troops, of Napoleon I, were tied up in the peninsular, yet they were badly needed elsewhere. The Spaniards resorted to guerrilla warfare, intercepted French supplies and beat off French attacks thus lowering the morale of the fighting forces, a situation which became widespread.

The invincibility of Napoleon I's army was destroyed hence constituting a turning point in Napoleon I's military career in the first 15 years, which had experienced a history of no surrender by his army but the defeat and surrender of 20,000 French forces at Baylen in July, 1808 destroyed the morale of the French soldiers. This situation also gave other powers like Austria and Prussia the courage to fight against a power which had been brought to its knees by the Spanish guerrillas.

(c) Conflict with the Pope, 1808

The system also brought Napoleon into conflict with the Pope whom he imprisoned in 1808 and added the Papal states to the kingdom of Italy. This won him the wrath of the Catholics who turned against him thus losing their support. This portrayed Napoleon I as one who could not be relied upon, one who could use you for his own selfish ends.

(d) The Moscow Campaign, 1812

Russia was yet another country that could not continue with the Continental system because it was damaging to her economy being an agricultural country. She had depended on British trade and being prevented from trading with her was death itself. As a result, she also violated the terms of the Berlin and Milan Decrees. Napoleon I, in order to teach the Czar a lesson, mobilised about **600,000** troops and embarked on a campaign, one of the biggest in human and military history. It was intended to bring the Czar, Alexander I back into the Continental System. But it later turned to be the most disastrous campaign which destroyed the grand army. Of the **600,000** troops he started the campaign with, only **20,000** returned, the majority of whom were disabled and unfit for war again. Napoleon I had to rely on inexperienced young soldiers who lacked the necessary experience to win wars.

The Moscow Campaign completely shattered the invincibility of Napoleon's army and his reputation as an able General. The fact that Napoleon I's army was routed by the backward Russians gave the Austrians and the Prussians unprecedented confidence on assumption that Napoleon I's militarism was on the decline and could be easily

challenged. It also gave Britain the bargaining power to convince her former allies that it was imperative to form a Coalition hence the 4th Coalition formed in 1813 against Napoleon I.

Napoleon I had to apply harsh measures to raise new conscripts and revenue which cost him popularity among his Frenchmen, allies and Satellite states. It also made his foremost generals who foresaw his downfall to desert him and began to work against him i.e. Talleyrand and Fouché hence Napoleon I's downfall.

4. Old age and deteriorating health

Napoleon I's age and deteriorating health were instrumental in his downfall as he was now given to misjudgement, failing to follow up defeats where necessary. At the beginning Napoleon I used to overwork himself and as he grew old, he began to lose his military shrewdness and energy i.e. his failure to pursue the Prussians at Ligny made difference to Waterloo Campaign. He began to underestimate his enemies and leave command of Campaigns to his Marshals, who were jealous of each other i.e. Soult and Masséna in Spain who refused to help each other leading to failure in Spain.

Napoleon I had lost so much in the elasticity of the mind and was losing his quick sense of judgement i.e. he could not realise that when he launched the Moscow Campaign (1811 -1812), winter was approaching and his belief that Moscow was the heart of Russia and its capture would mean the end of Russia and he suffered his heaviest defeat in History hence his downfall.

5. Lack of strong / good navy

It should be noted that the British Navy was too strong for Napoleon I as a result; Britain was France's, arch enemy in Europe. Due to lack of a strong Navy, it became difficult for France to defeat Britain.

She financed Coalitions, helped Portuguese and Spanish armies against France, destroyed French fleets and those of her allies i.e. In 1807, at Copenhagen, blocked French ports thus causing the first break in the Continental System, annihilated French shipping, destroyed French trade and made the Continental System unworkable and it became a boomerang hence the downfall of Napoleon Bonaparte.

- 6.** Napoleon I had created a large empire which he could not rule effectively. Besides, Napoleon I had exhausted his resources and as such could not hold his extensive Empire together hence his downfall.

7. Coalition of European countries.

Napoleon I faced a Coalition army of European states. No man, no army has ever defeated a coalition in the history of warfare. Entire European army and resources were released against Napoleon which were too much. The battle of Waterloo which sealed his fate was as a result of concrete effort hence his downfall.

NAPOLEON'S WEAKNESSES DURING HIS REIGN

- (a) Napoleon I created new nobility thus a return to the old order.
- (b) He installed his brothers and sisters as kings and queens i.e. in Holland, Westphalia, Spain.
- (c) Napoleon increasingly became a Dictator.
- (d) He discouraged the teaching of certain subjects i.e. philosophy, literature, history, and political science.
- (e) He neglected primary education and concentrated on sciences and military training.
- (f) The tariff system imposed by Napoleon affected the Frenchmen.
- (g) The civil code gave too much power to the father at the expense of the children and wives.
- (h) The prefects system Napoleon I created in his administrative reform was a replica of the Intendant system of the pre - 1789 era.
- (i) The Empire created by Napoleon I was too vast for effective administration.
- (j) The continental system which Napoleon I devised created a lot of economic suffering in both France and the Empire thus making him unpopular.
- (k) Napoleon I over centralised power and command and this made the Generals over dependent on Napoleon hence inefficiency in the army.
- (l) Napoleon I's short-sightedness and under estimation of opponents constituted a serious weakness.

REVISION QUESTIONS.

1. Assess the role of the Directory government in the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte to power in France.

Approach

- Analyse the contribution of the Directory government to the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte to power in France.
- Other factors should also be analysed.
- Take a clear stand point.

2. To what extent did the French Revolution of 1789 contribute to the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte to power in France?

Approach

- Analyse the role of the French revolution in the rise to power of Napoleon Bonaparte.
- Other factors should also be analysed.

Take a clear stand point.