French Revolution Part 2
The Tennis Court Oath

“The National Assembly, considering that it has been summoned to establish the constitution of the kingdom, to effect the regeneration of the public order, and to maintain the true principles of monarchy; that nothing can prevent it from continuing its deliberations in whatever place it may be forced to establish itself; and, finally, that wheresoever its members are assembled, there is the National Assembly;

“Decrees that all members of this Assembly shall immediately take a solemn oath not to separate, and to reassemble wherever circumstances require, until the constitution of the kingdom is established and consolidated upon firm foundations; and that, the said oath taken, all members and each one of them individually shall ratify this steadfast resolution by signature.”
Trivial

• When grain was scarce peasants often ate grain infected with ergot, a fungus with LSD-like hallucinogenic qualities. This may have fuelled some of the unrest of the Great Fear in 1789.

• When the Legislative Assembly met, those with radical views sat in the benches on the left while those with more moderate views sat on the right. Led to modern political descriptions.

• According to legend, Robespierre was laid on the guillotine face-up so that he could see the blade falling.

• Since the revolution in France, ‘Thermidor’ has been used to describe a period in a revolution where power reverts to those whose values are more in line with the old regime than the new.
Four Phases of the Revolution

- National Assembly (1789-1791)
- Legislative Assembly (1791-1792)
- Convention (1792-1795)
- Directory (1795-1799)
National Assembly (1789-1791)

- Louis XVI did not actually want a written constitution

- When news of his plan to use military force against the National Assembly reached Paris on July 14, 1789, people stormed the Bastille
Uprising in Paris

People of Paris seized weapons from the Bastille

- July 14, 1789
- Parisians organized their own government which they called the Commune
- Small groups – factions – competed to control the city of Paris

Uprising spread throughout France

- Nobles were attacked
- Records of feudal dues and owed taxes were destroyed
- Many nobles fled the country – became known as émigrés
- Louis XVI was forced to fly the new tricolor flag of France
Changes under the National Assembly

- Abolishment of guilds and labor unions
- Abolition of special privileges
- Constitution of 1791
- *Declaration of the Rights of Man*
- Equality before the law (for men)
- Many nobles left France and became known as *émigrés*
- Reforms in local government
- Taxes levied based on the ability to pay
HALL OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IN PARIS

From a contemporary print. The States-General which met in May, 1789, had adopted the name National Assembly. When the mob compelled the king to move to Paris from Versailles the Assembly followed and convened in a hall near the Tuileries. From the speaker’s rostrum at the right of the picture the Assembly was addressed at various times by the leaders of the Revolution, including Lafayette and Mirabeau. The mob filled the galleries, hissing or applauding the speakers. Those who could not crowd inside stood without and were informed by signals from the windows of what was going on within.
Declaration of the Rights of Man

- Freedom of Religion
- Freedom of Speech
- Freedom of the Press
- Guaranteed Property Rights
- “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity”
- Right of the People to Create Laws
- Right to a Fair Trial
Declaration of the Rights of Woman

Journalist Olympe de Gouges argued in her Declaration of the Rights of Woman that women are equal citizens and should benefit from governmental reforms just as men did. Madame Jeanne Roland also served as a leader in the women’s rights movement, and was able to heavily influence her husband (a government official).

Women did gain some rights during the French Revolution, but these were designed for purposes other than liberating women.

- Women could inherit property, but only because doing so weakened feudalism and reduced wealth among the upper classes.
- Divorce became easier, but only to weaken the Church’s control over marriage.
End of Special Privileges

• Church lands were seized, divided, and sold to peasants

• **Civil Constitution of the Clergy** required that Church officials be elected by the people, with salaries paid by the government
  – 2/3 of Church officials fled the country rather than swear allegiance to this

• All feudal dues and tithes were eradicated

• All special privileges of the First and Second Estates were abolished
Reforms in Local Government

- The 30 provinces and their “petty tyrants” (*Intendants*) were replaced with 83 new departments
  - Ruled by elected governors

- New courts, with judges elected by the people, were established
Constitution of 1791

• **Democratic features**
  – France became a **limited monarchy**
    • King became merely the head of state
  – All laws were created by the **Legislative Assembly**
  – Feudalism was abolished

• **Undemocratic features**
  – Voting was limited to taxpayers
  – Offices were reserved for property owners

• This new government became known as the **Legislative Assembly**
Legislative Assembly (1791-1792)

- Royal family sought help from Austria
  - In June, 1791, they were caught trying to escape to Austria
- Nobles who fled the revolution lived abroad as émigrés
  - They hoped that, with foreign help, the Old Regime could be restored in France
- Church officials wanted Church lands, rights, and privileges restored
  - Some devout Catholic peasants also supported the Church
- Political parties, representing different interests, emerged
  - Girondists
  - Jacobins
Opposition to the New Government

- European monarchs feared that revolution would spread to their own countries
  - France was invaded by Austrian and Prussian troops
- In the uproar, the Commune took control of Paris
  - Commune was led by Danton, a member of the Jacobin political party
- Voters began electing representatives for a new convention which would write a republican constitution for France
  - A republic is a government in which the people elect representatives who will create laws and rule on their behalf
  - Meanwhile, thousands of nobles were executed under the suspicion that they were conspirators in the foreign invasion
Convention (1792-1795)

- On September 22, 1792, the Convention met for the first time
- Established the First French Republic
- Faced domestic opposition and strife
  - Girondists were moderates who represented the rich middle class of the provinces
  - Jacobins (led by Marat, Danton, and Robespierre) represented workers
- Faced opposition from abroad
  - Austria, England, Holland, Prussia, Sardinia, and Spain formed a Coalition invading France
Abolishment of the Monarchy

• The Convention abolished the monarchy
  – As long as the royal family lived, the monarchy could be restored
  – Put the royal couple on trial for treason
    • Convictions were a foregone conclusion
  – Louis XVI was guillotined on January 21, 1793
  – Marie Antoinette was guillotined on October 16, 1793
  – Daughter Marie-Thérèse was allowed to go to Vienna in 1795
    • She could not become queen because of Salic law, which did not allow females to succeed to the throne
  – Son Louis-Charles, a.k.a. Louis XVII (lived 1785-1795) was beaten and mistreated until he died in prison
GUILLOTINE IN THE SQUARE BEFORE THE HOTEL DE VILLE

Illustration from a contemporary newspaper.
Reign of Terror: September 5, 1793-July 27, 1794

• Despite military successes, the Convention continued to face problems domestically

• **Danton** and his **Jacobin** political party came to dominate French politics

• **Committee of Public Safety**
  – Headed by **Danton** (and later **Robespierre**)
  – Those accused of treason were tried by the Committee’s **Revolutionary Tribunal**
  – Approximately 15,000 people died on the guillotine

• **Guillotine** became known as the “**National Razor**”
Committee of Public Safety
MADAME ROLAND ON HER WAY TO EXECUTION
From a painting by Royer.
End of the Reign of Terror

• Members of the Girondist political party tried to end the Reign of Terror initiated by the Jacobin political party
  – This opposition to the Committee of Public Safety caused many Girondists to be tried and executed for treason

• Eventually, even Georges Danton wanted to end the executions
  – This resulted in Danton being tried and executed for treason

• Maximilien Robespierre became leader of the Committee of Public Safety
  – He continued the executions
  – Convention came to blame Robespierre for the Reign of Terror

• Reaction
  – July 27, 1794 – ended the Reign of Terror
  – Convention sent Robespierre and other members of the Committee of Public Safety to the guillotine
  – Robespierre was guillotined on July 28, 1794
With the foreign invaders vanquished and the Reign of Terror at an end, the Convention was finally able to inaugurate its new constitution.

Constitution of the Year III of the Republic (1795) created the **Directory**
Government under the Directory

Executive

- 5 directors appointed by the Legislature

Legislature

- Lower house (500 members) proposed laws
- Upper house (250 members) voted on these laws
- 2/3 of the Legislature would initially be filled by members of the Convention

Qualifications

- Girondists (middle-class party) had defeated the Jacobins (working- and peasant-class party)
- Girondists’ constitution stated that **suffrage** (the right to vote), as well as the right to hold office, were limited to property owners
Directory (1795-1799)

• The Directory suffered from corruption and poor administration.
• The people of France grew poorer and more frustrated with their government.
• Despite, or perhaps because of, these struggles, the French developed a strong feeling of nationalism – they were proud of their country and devoted to it.
• National pride was fueled by military successes.
• It would be a military leader – Napoleon Bonaparte, coming to power through a coup d’état – who would end the ten-year period (1789-1799) known as the French Revolution.