

Detailed Notes on Chapter 2: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity

Introduction to the French Revolution

- **Context:** The French Revolution (1789–1799) was a transformative uprising that reshaped France and influenced global history. It began with a public revolt against the despotic Bourbon monarchy, driven by social inequalities, economic crises, and Enlightenment ideas.
- **Key Event (1789):** On **June 20, 1789**, representatives of the Third Estate, denied entry to the Estates General, gathered at a tennis court in Paris and took the **Tennis Court Oath**, vowing to draft a constitution granting sovereignty to the people.

2. Causes of the French Revolution

The revolution was triggered by a combination of political, social, economic, and intellectual factors. Below is a detailed breakdown:

2.1 Political Causes

- **Despotic Rule:** The Bourbon dynasty, ruling France for decades, practiced absolute monarchy based on the **Divine Right Theory** (kings derive authority from God, not accountable to people).
 - **Louis XIV:** Declared, “I am the State,” epitomizing absolutism.
 - **Louis XVI:** Weak ruler, relied on loyal ministers, ignored governance issues.
 - **Marie Antoinette:** Queen’s extravagance and interference in governance fueled public discontent.
- **Inactive Parliament:** The **Estates General** (French parliament) was not convened from 1614 until 1789, rendering it ineffective.

2.2 Social Causes

- **French Social Structure (18th Century):** Society was divided into three estates, with stark inequalities:

Estate	Composition	Privileges	Burden
First Estate	Clergy (Catholic Church)	Tax exemptions, owned vast lands, collected tithe (1/10th of produce)	Minimal contributions to state.
Second Estate	Nobles	High positions in government/army, tax exemptions, collected feudal dues	Opposed monarchy to retain privileges.
Third Estate	Middle class, workers, peasants	No privileges, paid taxes to king, church, nobles	Crushed by taxes and unpaid services.

- **Exploitation of Third Estate:**
 - Paid **Vingtième** (1/20th of income) tax, while clergy and nobles were exempt.
 - Performed unpaid services: **Corvée** (forced labor), military service, public works.

- Paid feudal dues: **Banalité** (tax on wine/grape juice), **Banvin** (wine monopoly tax), **Péage** (toll tax), **Terrage** (harvest tax).
- **Rise of the Middle Class:**
 - Emerged due to growth in agriculture, industry, and trade.
 - Included industrialists, doctors, lawyers, bankers.
 - Paid taxes but lacked political power, fueling discontent.
 - Historians **Will and Ariel Durant** noted: The middle class used peasant and urban discontent to overthrow nobility and clergy, ending feudalism.

2.3 Economic Causes

- **Agricultural Crisis (1770s):**
 - Decreased production led to a **60% rise in cereal/bread prices** (1730–1789), while wages rose only **22%**.
 - Fodder shortage caused livestock decline, affecting 1/3rd of the population.
- **Trade Imbalance:**
 - Trade agreement with Britain reduced import duties, flooding French markets with British goods, causing unemployment among artisans.
- **State Debt:**
 - Louis XVI borrowed heavily from bankers, issuing bonds.
 - Empty treasury discouraged further loans, worsening the crisis.
 - Unequal taxation alienated the middle class, who demanded fair tax reforms.

2.4 Intellectual Causes

- **Enlightenment Thinkers:** Philosophers inspired the masses to challenge despotism and inequality.

Philosopher	Key Works	Ideas
Voltaire	Various articles	Criticized clergy, advocated free thought, expelled from France.
Rousseau	<i>The Social Contract</i>	Sovereignty lies with people; king's rule is a contract for public welfare.
Montesquieu	<i>The Spirit of Laws</i>	Advocated separation of powers (legislative, executive, judicial).
John Locke	<i>Two Treatises of Government</i>	Rejected divine right, opposed tyranny.

Physiocrats Turgot, Necker

Promoted free trade, agricultural reforms, middle-class interests.

- **Salons and Coffee Houses:**

- Centers for intellectual discussions, where revolutionary ideas spread.
- Women hosted salons, discussing philosophers' ideas; coffee houses were hubs for planning revolutionary activities.

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3. Key Events of the French Revolution

The revolution unfolded through a series of pivotal events:

3.1 Estates General Convened (1789)

- **Context:** Economic crisis forced Louis XVI to summon the **Estates General** after 175 years to impose new taxes.
- **Structure:**
 - **Clergy:** 285 members (by inheritance).
 - **Nobles:** 308 members (by inheritance).
 - **Third Estate:** 621 members (elected).
- **Dispute:** Voting system (one vote per estate) favored clergy and nobles, who could outvote the Third Estate.
- **Outcome:** Third Estate demanded joint meetings, but Louis XVI refused, escalating tensions.

3.2 Tennis Court Oath (June 20, 1789)

- **Event:** Third Estate representatives, locked out of their meeting hall, gathered at a tennis court and declared themselves the **National Assembly**, vowing to draft a constitution.
- **Leaders:** Jean-Sylvian Bailly, Abbé Sieyès, Mirabeau.
- **Significance:** Marked the Third Estate's assertion of popular sovereignty, challenging royal authority.

3.3 Fall of the Bastille (July 14, 1789)

- **Trigger:** Dismissal of advisor **Necker** provoked public outrage.
- **Event:** Crowds seized granaries, bakeries, and weapons, storming the **Bastille** (symbol of Bourbon despotism) on July 14, 1789.
- **Outcome:**
 - Marked the start of the French Revolution.
 - Violence spread to countryside, targeting tax collectors.
 - Louis XVI, fearing public wrath, approved National Assembly's reforms.

3.4 Women's March to Versailles (October 1789)

- **Cause:** Food shortages and Louis XVI's resistance to National Assembly's reforms.
- **Event:** Thousands of women, armed with brooms, swords, and guns, marched to Versailles, forcing the royal family to relocate to Paris.
- **Key Figures:**

- **Olympia de Gouche:** Advocated women's rights in *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen*.
 - **Madame Jeanne Rolland:** Fought for property rights and divorce rights.
- **Outcome:** Louis XVI agreed to National Assembly's decisions.

3.5 Reign of Terror and September Massacre (1792–1794)

- **Context:** National Convention replaced National Assembly in 1792, declaring France a republic and executing Louis XVI.
- **Jacobins' Rule:**
 - Led by **Danton, Hébert, Marat, Robespierre**.
 - Formed **Committee of Public Safety** to counter foreign invasions (Britain, Austria, Russia).
- **Reign of Terror:**
 - Thousands (nobles, priests, royalists) were imprisoned and executed as traitors.
 - **September Massacre:** ~1,500 people killed on Paris streets due to overcrowded prisons.
 - **Guillotine:** Used for executions, including Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette, and later Robespierre.
- **Revolutionary Calendar:** Adopted in 1793, with 10-day decades, starting from September 22, 1792 (Republic's formation).

3.6 Directory and Napoleon's Rise (1795–1799)

- **Directory (1795):** New constitution established a five-member governing body, but corruption led to its collapse.
- **Napoleon's Coup:** In 1799, Napoleon Bonaparte overthrew the Directory, declaring himself **First Consul** and later **Emperor** in 1804.

4. Reforms and Outcomes of the French Revolution

The National Assembly and subsequent governments introduced sweeping reforms:

4.1 Social Reforms

- Abolished feudalism, slavery, and noble privileges.
- Confiscated church and noble lands, redistributing them to the middle class.
- Declared religious tolerance; clergy became salaried state employees.

4.2 Economic Reforms

- Introduced **Assignat** (paper currency) to stabilize the economy, but overprinting led to inflation.
- Unified weights and measures (metric system).

4.3 Political Reforms

- **Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789):**
 - Key Principles:
 - Equality and freedom for all men.
 - Rights to liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.
 - Sovereignty resides in the nation.
 - Laws protect society, not individuals' harmful actions.
 - Influenced global human rights movements.
- Unified constitution applied nationwide.

4.4 Symbols of Revolution

- **Sans-culottes:** Wore long trousers (pantaloon) to protest noble breeches.
- **Phrygian Cap:** Red cap symbolizing liberation.
- **Tree of Liberty:** Planted as a symbol of freedom (e.g., by Tipu Sultan in Srirangapatnam).

5. Napoleon's Reforms and Downfall

Napoleon's rule (1799–1815) modernized France but ended in defeat.

5.1 Administrative Reforms

Reform Area Changes

Legal	Napoleonic Code: Abolished feudal laws, ensured equality, religious freedom.
Religious	Concordat: Restored Catholic Church's freedom, granted rights to other religions.
Educational	Universal education, established lycees and University of France .
Economic	Founded Bank of France , unified currency system.
Military	Reorganized army into battalions.

5.2 Foreign Policy

- **Continental System:** Banned trade with Britain to weaken its economy, but failed due to resistance.
- **Wars:** Defeated Austria and Prussia but lost to Britain in the **Battle of Waterloo (1815)**.

5.3 Congress of Vienna (1815)

- **Leaders:** Austrian Chancellor **Metternich**.
- **Decisions:**
 - Restored pre-revolutionary monarchies, including Bourbon monarchy in France.
 - Recognized Britain's naval supremacy, Russia's dominance in Eastern Europe, and Austria's in Central Europe.
- **Outcome:** Ended French dominance in Europe.

6. Consequences of the French Revolution

The revolution had profound short- and long-term impacts:

6.1 Short-Term Impacts

- **End of Feudalism:** Abolished noble and church privileges, redistributed land to the middle class.
- **Economic Stabilization:** Metric system and unified currency introduced, though Assignat failed.
- **Political Change:** Established republic, executed Louis XVI, laid groundwork for democracy.

6.2 Long-Term Impacts

- **Modern Nationalism:** Defined nation as people, not monarchy, inspiring global independence movements (e.g., Asia, Africa).
- **Democratic Governance:** Based on Rousseau's idea of popular sovereignty.
- **Human Rights:** Declaration of the Rights of Man influenced universal human rights frameworks.
- **Global Influence:** Inspired revolutions worldwide, including Tipu Sultan's anti-British stance.

7. Comparative Analysis

7.1 French Society: Pre- vs. Post-Revolution

Aspect	Pre-Revolution (18th Century)	Post-Revolution (Post-1789)
Social Structure	Three estates with inequality	Feudalism abolished, equality promoted.
Taxation	Third Estate bore tax burden	Equal taxation attempted, though challenges remained.
Governance	Absolute monarchy, divine right	Republic, later Napoleonic rule, democratic ideals.
Rights	Privileges for clergy/nobles	Universal rights declared (liberty, equality).

7.2 Jacobins vs. Girondists

Group	Characteristics	Leaders	Position
Jacobins	Radical, influential, supported republic	Robespierre	Extreme reforms
Girondists	Moderate, represented upper classes, landowners	From Gironde region	Conservative stance

8. Key Figures and Their Contributions

Figure	Role	Contribution
Louis XVI	King	Weak ruler, executed during revolution.
Marie Antoinette	Queen	Extravagance fueled public unrest.
Voltaire	Philosopher	Criticized clergy, inspired free thought.
Rousseau	Philosopher	Advocated popular sovereignty in <i>The Social Contract</i> .
Montesquieu	Philosopher	Proposed separation of powers in <i>The Spirit of Laws</i> .
Necker	Financial Advisor	Attempted economic reforms, dismissed multiple times.
Olympia de Gouche	Women's Rights Activist	Demanded gender equality in <i>Declaration of the Rights of Woman</i> .
Napoleon	Military Leader, Emperor	Implemented Napoleonic Code, modernized France, defeated in 1815.