

Unit 4: French Revolution Phase #3 Outlined Notes

I. The Rise of Napoleon

A. Napoleon Bonaparte dominated European history from 1799 to 1815. He never stopped reminding the French that he preserved what was beneficial in the revolutionary program.

B. Napoleon was born in 1769 on the Mediterranean island of **Corsica**. He went to a military school in France on a royal scholarship. In 1785 he was commissioned as a lieutenant in the French army.

C. For the next seven years Napoleon educated himself in philosophy and the world's great military campaigns. The French Revolution and the European wars that followed it gave him the chance to use his knowledge.

D. By the age of only 25, Napoleon was made a brigadier general by the Committee of Public Safety. He won a series of victories as the French commander against armies in Italy.

E. Napoleon's combination of intelligence, charm, wit, and decisiveness allowed him to win the support of his troops and other people. He returned to France in 1797 as a conquering hero. Napoleon's attempt to strike at Britain by taking Egypt and threatening India failed. In 1799 he returned to Paris.

F. Napoleon took part in the coup d'état that overthrew the Directory. Even though in theory France was a republic, Napoleon held absolute power as the first consul of a new government called the **consulate**. He appointed members of the bureaucracy, controlled the army, conducted foreign affairs, and influenced the legislature.

G. In 1802 Napoleon made himself consul for life, and in 1804 he had himself crowned Emperor Napoleon I.

II. Napoleon's Domestic Policies

A. Did Napoleon preserve the ideals of the revolution and republic with his domestic policies? We will see in this section.

B. Napoleon made peace with the Church to restore stability to France. He himself was an Enlightenment believer in reason. In 1801 Napoleon made an agreement with the pope that recognized Catholicism as the religion of most of France. The pope gave up asking for the return of Church lands seized during the revolution. With this agreement Napoleon pleased both the Church and those who had seized its lands.

C. Napoleon's most famous domestic achievement was codifying French laws. Before the revolution France had up to 300 separate legal systems.

D. The most important part of the new unified codes was the **Civil Code**, or Napoleonic Code. It recognized equality before the law, the right to choose a profession, religious toleration, and the end of serfdom and feudalism. The Code also outlawed unions and strikes.

E. Napoleon's Civil Code also undid revolutionary changes, such as making divorce easy for both men and women, and allowing children, including daughters, to inherit property. The new code made it harder for women to divorce. Their husbands controlled their property when they married. Women were considered minors in lawsuits, and their testimony was considered less reliable than that of men.

F. Napoleon developed a powerful, centralized administrative machine with promotion based on ability. Opening government careers to individuals based on their ability was one change the middle class wanted.

G. Napoleon created a new aristocracy based on merit in the state service. He created 3,263 nobles between 1808 and 1814. More than half were military officers and from the middle class.

H. Did Napoleon preserve the ideals of the French Revolution, as he claimed, in his domestic policies? The Civil Code recognized equality of all citizens before the law, and he did open government careers to more people. So to that extent he did preserve the revolutionary ideals. He also destroyed some revolutionary ideals. He ruled despotically, for example, shutting down 60 of France's 73 newspapers, insisting that the government view all manuscripts before they are published, and having government police read people's mail.

I. Anne-Louise-Germaine de Staël was a prominent writer of this period who had a salon for the powerful that lasted from 1790 to 1804. She first supported Napoleon but then clashed with him and denounced him as a tyrant. He banned her books and exiled her. Once when Staël asked Napoleon who the greatest woman of history was, he answered, "The one who had the most children."

Unit 4: French Revolution Outlined Notes #3 (CONTINUED)

III. Napoleon's Empire

- A.** Napoleon's conquests began soon after he reached power. First, however, he achieved a peace treaty (1802) with the many nations warring with France after the execution of Louis XVI. However, in 1803, the war was renewed. From 1805 to 1807, Napoleon's Grand Army defeated the Austrian, Russian, and Prussian armies.
- B.** Napoleon now could create a new world order. His Grand Empire had three parts: the French Empire, dependent states, and allied states. The dependent states were kingdoms that Napoleon's relatives ruled, including Spain, Holland, Italy, and the Grand Duchy of Warsaw.
- C.** The allied states were those Napoleon defeated and forced to join him in war against Britain. These included Prussia, Austria, Russia, and Sweden.
- D.** Napoleon sought to spread some of the principles of the French Revolution, including equality before the law, religious toleration, and economic freedom, through his empire. He urged his rulers to be constitutional kings.
- E.** He tried to destroy the feudal, hierarchical order in the French Empire and his dependent states. Nobility and clergy lost privileges, and equality of opportunity was declared, along with religious toleration and equality before the law. Napoleon's spread of French revolutionary principles to these countries was an important factor in the development of liberal traditions in them.

IV. The European Response

- A.** The survival of Great Britain and the force of nationalism are the two main causes of the quick collapse of Napoleon's empire.
- B.** Britain survived principally because of its sea power, which made Britain virtually invulnerable. Even so, Napoleon mounted a fleet for an invasion. Britain's defeat of a combined French-Spanish fleet at Trafalgar (1805) ended Napoleon's dream of invading.
- C.** Napoleon tried to use the Continental System to defeat Britain. The Continental System was intended to stop British goods from reaching continental markets. Allied states resented being told they could not buy British goods, and this strategy failed as well. Also due to new markets in Latin America and the Middle East, Britain's exports reached a near-record high in 1810.
- D. Nationalism** is the cultural identity of people based on common language, religion, and national symbols. The French spread and aroused nationalism in two ways: they were hated as oppressors; French nationalism showed other countries what a nation in arms could do.

V. The Fall of Napoleon

- A.** Napoleon's fall began with his invasion of Russia, which had refused to remain in the Continental System.
- B.** In 1812 a Grand Army of over six hundred thousand men entered Russia. Napoleon needed to score a quick, decisive victory. The Russians would not fight but kept retreating. They burned their villages, and even **Moscow**, as they wanted to deny the French food and supplies. Lacking food, Napoleon left Moscow after two months to retreat. He left in October, so his "Great Retreat" happened under terrible winter conditions. Only forty thousand men arrived back in Poland.
- C.** Other European nations rose up to attack the crippled French army. Paris was captured in 1814 and Napoleon was exiled to the island of **Elba**. Louis XVIII, Louis XVI's brother, restored the Bourbon monarchy.
- D.** The king had little support. Napoleon escaped. Troops were sent to capture him, but on their meeting, Napoleon opened his coat and invited anyone who would to kill the emperor. No one did and instead the troops shouted, "Vive l'Empereur" ("Long Live the Emperor"). Napoleon entered Paris in triumph on March 20, 1815.
- E.** The European powers and Napoleon, whom they called the "Enemy and Disturber of the Tranquility of the World," fought again. At **Waterloo** in Belgium in 1815, Napoleon was defeated by a combined British and Prussian army under the **Duke of Wellington**. The allies exiled him to St. Helena, a small island in the south Atlantic. Napoleon's power was ended.