

## VI. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE AMERICAS AND EUROPE

### A. TWO REVOLUTIONS: AMERICAN AND FRENCH

#### 1. The American Revolution

For the most part, you won't need to know much about American history for the AP World History Exam. However, you will need to know about events in the United States that impacted developments in the rest of the world. The American Revolution is one of those events.

As you know, Britain began colonizing the east coast of North America during the seventeenth century. By the mid-eighteenth century, British colonists in America felt threatened by France's colonial settlements on the continent. France and Britain were long-time rivals (archenemies in the Hundred Years' War and since) and they carried this rivalry with them into fights in America. The French enlisted the Algonquin and Iroquois tribes to fight alongside them against the encroaching English colonists, but in 1763, England prevailed over the French in a war that was known in the colonies as the **French and Indian War**, but known in Europe as the **Seven Years' War**. The British victory changed the boundaries of the two empires' worldwide possessions, pushing French territory to the north while English territories expanded westward into the Ohio River valley.

While the colonists were thrilled with the results of the war, the British were upset about the costs, and felt that the American colonists did not adequately share in the burden. Of course, the colonists resented this, claiming that it was their efforts that made colonial expansion possible in the first place. At the same time, Britain's **George Grenville** and later **Charles Townshend** passed very unpopular laws on behalf of the British crown. These laws, including the **Revenue Act** (1764), the **Stamp Act** (1765), and the **Tea Act** (1773), were intended to raise additional funds for the British crown. In addition to generating funds, however, these laws generated unrest, not only because American colonists thought they were economically unfair but also because American colonists were not represented in England's Parliament when these laws were passed. Thus arose the revolutionary cry, "No taxation without representation."

After the colonists dumped tea in Boston Harbor to protest the Tea Act, relations between crown and colonies deteriorated rapidly. On April 19, 1775, British troops battled with rebellious colonists in Lexington and Concord, and by the end of that bloody day, nearly 400 Britons and Americans were dead. The War of Independence had begun.

#### Independence Can't Happen Without a Little Paine

The overwhelming majority of American colonists had either been born in England or were children of those born in England, and therefore many colonists felt ambivalent about—if not completely opposed to—the movement for independence. Even those who sought independence were worried that Britain was too powerful to defeat. But a student of the Enlightenment, **Thomas Paine**, urged colonists to support the movement. In his widely distributed pamphlet, *Common Sense*, he assailed the monarchy as an encroachment on Americans' natural rights and appealed to the colonists to form a better government. The printing press, the powerful tool of the Protestant Reformation, quickly became a powerful tool for the American Revolution.

### France: More than Happy to Oblige

By 1776, as the war moved to the middle colonies and finally to the South, the Americans endured defeat after defeat. But in 1777, the French committed ships, soldiers, weapons, and money to the cause. France and England, of course, had been bickering for centuries, and so the French leapt at the opportunity to punish England. In 1781, French and American troops and ships cornered the core of the British army, which was under the command of General George Cornwallis. Finding himself outnumbered, he surrendered, and the war was over. Within a decade, the Constitution and Bill of Rights were written, ratified, and put into effect. A fledgling democracy was on display.

### Focus On: Causes and Consequences of the American Revolution

Don't worry too much about knowing the details of the American Revolution. You certainly don't need to know battles or even the personalities. Instead, understand that the Enlightenment had a huge impact because it not only helped to inspire the revolution itself, but also the type of government that was created after it succeeded. Also remember that mercantilist policies drove the American colonists nuts, as was the case in European colonies everywhere. These same forces—the Enlightenment and frustration over economic exploitation—are common themes in the world's revolutionary cries against colonialism throughout the 1800's.

## 2. The French Revolution

After the reign of Louis XIV, the Bourbon kings continued to reside in the lavish Versailles palace, a lifestyle that was quite expensive. More costly, however, were France's war debts. The War of Spanish Succession, the Seven Years' War, the American Revolution, you name it...France seemed to be involved in every major war both in Europe and abroad. With droughts damaging the French harvests and the nobility scoffing at spending restrictions, Louis XVI needed to raise taxes, but to do that he needed to get everyone on board. So, in 1789, he called a meeting of the **Estates General**, a "governing body" that hadn't met in some 175 years. Bourbon monarchs, you'll recall, ruled under divine right, so no other input was generally seen as necessary. But the king's poor financial situation made it necessary to call on this all-but-forgotten group.

### The Estates General: Generally a Mess

French society was divided into three estates (something like social classes). The First Estate comprised the clergy. Some were high ranking and wealthy; others were parish priests and quite poor. The Second Estate was made up of the noble families. Finally, the Third Estate comprised everyone else—peasant farmers and the small but influential middle class, or bourgeoisie, including merchants. The overwhelming majority (more than 95 percent) of the population were members of the Third Estate, but they had very little political power.

When Louis XVI summoned the Estates General, he was in essence summoning representatives from each of these three estates. The representative nobles of the Second Estate came to the meeting of the Estates General hoping to gain favors from the King in the form of political power and greater freedoms in the form of a new constitution. The representatives of the Third Estate (representing by far the greatest proportion of France's population), always suspicious of the nobility, wanted even greater freedoms similar to what they saw the former British colonies had in America. They went as far as suggesting to the king that the Estates General meet as a unified body—all Estates under one roof. However, the top court in Paris, the *parlement*, ruled in favor of the nobility and ordered that the estates meet separately.



Frustrated at the strong possibility of being shut out of the new constitution by the other two estates, the Third Estate did something drastic on June 17, 1789—they declared themselves the **National Assembly**. The King got nervous, and forced the other two estates to join them in an effort to write a new constitution. But it was too little, too late. By then, peasants throughout the land were growing restless and were concerned that the king wasn't going to follow through on the major reforms they wanted. They stormed the Bastille, a huge prison, on July 14, 1789. From there, anarchy swept through the countryside and soon peasants attacked nobility and feudal institutions.

By August, the National Assembly adopted **The Declaration of the Rights of Man**, a document recognizing natural rights and based on the ideas of the Enlightenment, the American Declaration of Independence, and particularly the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. This declaration was widely copied and distributed across Europe, furthering the ideas of freedom, equality, and rule of law. The Assembly also abolished the feudal system and altered the monopoly of the Catholic Church by declaring freedom of worship. Meanwhile, the King and his family were taken to Paris, where the Third Estate revolutionaries could ensure that they wouldn't interfere with the work of the National Assembly. But perhaps most importantly, the French Revolution established the nation-state, not the king or the people (as in the United States), as the source of all sovereignty or political authority. In this sense, France became the first "modern" nation-state in 1789.

### A New Constitution Causes Consternation

In 1791, the National Assembly ratified a new constitution, which was somewhat similar to the U.S. Constitution ratified just two years before, except that instead of a president, the king held on to the executive power. In other words, it was a constitutional monarchy, rather than a constitutional democracy. Those who wanted to abolish the monarchy felt cheated; those who wanted to retain the feudal structure felt betrayed.

Remember how most of the royalty in Europe intermarried? Well, it just so happened that Marie Antoinette, who was the wife of the increasingly nervous Louis XVI, was also the sister of the Emperor of Austria. The Austrians and the Prussians invaded France to restore the monarchy, but the French revolutionaries were able to hold them back. Continuing unrest led French leaders to call for a meeting to draw up a new constitution. Under the new constitution, the **Convention** became the new ruling body, and it quickly abolished the monarchy and proclaimed France a republic. Led by radicals known as the **Jacobins**, the Convention imprisoned the royal family and, in 1793, beheaded the king for treason.

### Contrast Them: American and French Revolutions

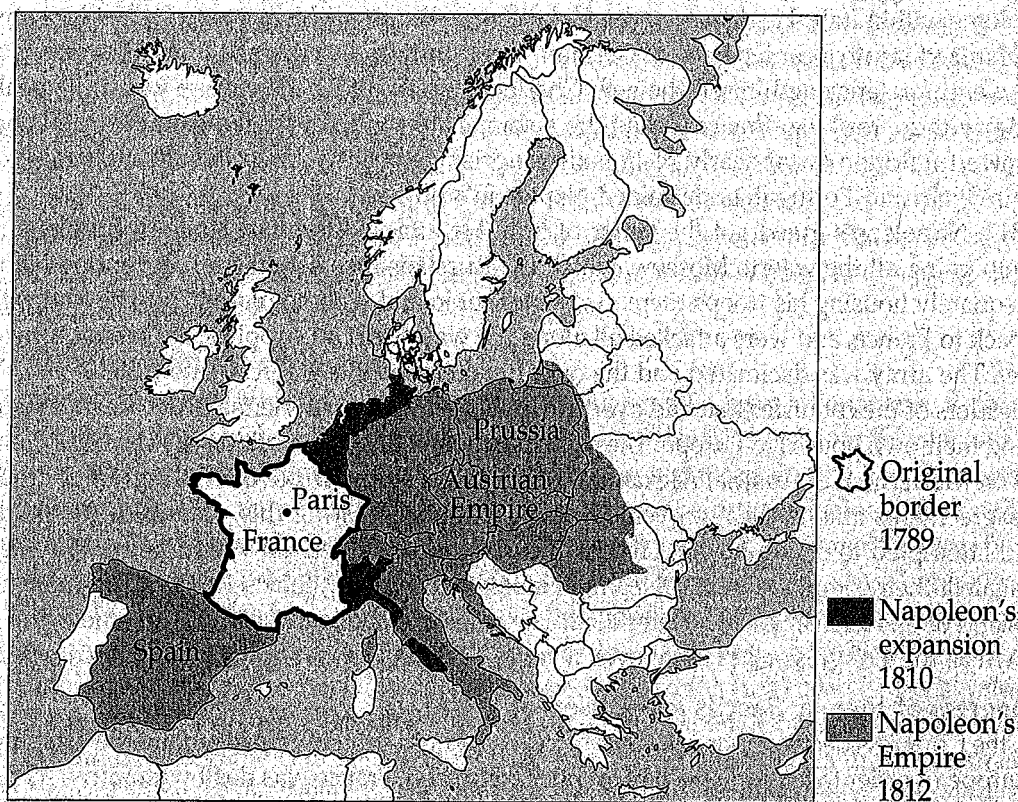
The American Revolution involved a colonial uprising against an imperial power. In other words, it was an independence movement. The French Revolution involved citizens rising up against their own country's leadership and against their own political and economic system, and in that sense was more of a revolution. In other words, at the end of the American Revolution, the imperial power of England was still intact, and indeed the new United States was in many ways designed in the image of England itself. In contrast, at the end of the French Revolution, France itself was a very different place. It didn't simply lose some of its holdings. Instead, the king was beheaded and the socio-political structure changed.

That said, the word *revolution* aptly describes the American independence movement because the United States was the first major colony to break away from a European colonial power since the dawn of the Age of Exploration. What's more, the ideas adopted in the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and in the French Revolution inspired colonists, citizens, and slaves across the globe. Quite revolutionary indeed!

### The Reign of Terror: The Hard-Fought Constitution Gets Tossed Aside

While Prussia and Austria regrouped and enlisted the support of Great Britain and Spain, the Convention started to worry that foreign threats and internal chaos would quickly lead to its demise, so it threw out the constitution and created the **Committee of Public Safety**, an all-powerful enforcer of the revolution and murderer of anyone suspected of anti-revolutionary tendencies. Led by **Maximilien Robespierre** and the Jacobins, the Committee of Public Safety certainly wasn't a committee of personal safety, since it was responsible for the beheading of tens of thousands of French citizens. Even though the Committee was successful at controlling the anarchy and at building a strong national military to defend France against an increasing number of invading countries, after two years the French had enough of Robespierre's witch hunt and put *his* head on the guillotine. France quickly reorganized itself again, wrote a new constitution in 1795, and established a new five-man government called the **Directory**.

### Napoleon: Big Things Come in Small Packages



The Height of Napoleon's Empire

While the Directory was not so great at implementing a strong domestic policy, the five-man combo was good at building up the military. One of its star military leaders was a teenager named **Napoleon Bonaparte**, who was a general by age 24. After military successes on behalf of the Directory, Napoleon returned to France and used his reputation and immense popularity to overthrow the Directory in 1799. He legitimized his actions by putting them before a popular vote, and once affirmed, he declared himself the First Consul under the new constitution (if you're counting, that makes four constitutions since the Revolution began).

Domestically, Napoleon initiated many reforms in agriculture, infrastructure, and public education. He also normalized relations with the church and restored a degree of tolerance and stability. Most importantly, his **Napoleonic Codes** (1804) recognized the equality of French citizens (meaning men) and institutionalized some of the Enlightenment ideas that had served as the original inspiration for many of the revolutionaries. At the same time, the code was also extremely paternalistic, based in part on ancient Roman law. The rights of women and children were severely limited under the code. Still, the code was a huge step forward in the recognition of some basic rights and in the establishment of rules of law. The code has since been significantly modified to reflect more modern sensibilities, but it is still in effect today, and has served as the model for many other national codes, especially in Europe.

But Napoleon's biggest impact was external, not internal. In a stunning effort to spread France's glory throughout Europe and the Americas, Napoleon not only fended off foreign aggressors, but also made France an aggressor itself. Napoleon's troops conquered Austria, Prussia, Spain, Portugal, and the kingdoms within Italy. He dissolved the Holy Roman Empire, which was on its last legs anyway, and reorganized it into a confederacy of German states. In 1804, he crowned himself emperor of this huge new empire, fancying himself the new Charlemagne. By 1810, the empire was at its peak, but it didn't stay there for long. France lacked the resources to control a far-flung empire, and conflicts with a powerful Britain cost it dearly. Nationalistic uprisings, such as unrest in Italy and fierce guerilla warfare in Spain and Portugal, undermined Napoleon's power.

In 1812, Napoleon's greed got the better of him. He attacked the vast lands of Russia, but was baited into going all the way to Moscow, which the Russians then set aflame, preventing Napoleon from adequately housing his troops there. As winter set in and with no place to go, the troops had to trudge back to France, and were attacked all along the way. Short on supplies, the retreat turned into a disaster. The army was decimated and the once great emperor was forced into exile.

The leaders of the countries that had overthrown Napoleon met in Vienna to decide how to restore order (and their own power) in Europe. The principal members of the coalition against Napoleon were **Prince von Metternich** of Austria, **Alexander I** of Russia, and the **Duke of Wellington** of Britain. At first, disagreements among them prevented much progress. Hearing this, Napoleon returned from exile and attempted to regain power. His enemies, of course, rallied. At **Waterloo** in 1813, the allies united against their common threat. Defeating Napoleon decisively, they sent him to permanent exile on the island of St. Helena, where he later died. The allies eventually came to an agreement, in a meeting known as the **Congress of Vienna**, over what to do with France and its inflated territories.

### **The Congress of Vienna: Pencils and Erasers at Work**

In 1815, the Congress decreed that a balance of power should be maintained among the existing powers of Europe in order to avoid the rise of another Napoleon. France was dealt with fairly: Its borders were cut back to their pre-Napoleonic dimensions, but it was not punished militarily or economically. And although it rearranged some of the European boundaries and created new kingdoms in Poland and the Netherlands, the Congress also reaffirmed absolute rule, reseating the monarchs of France, Spain, Holland, and the many Italian states. While remarkably fair-minded, the Congress of Vienna ignored many of the ideals put forth by French revolutionaries and the rights established under France's short-lived republic. In other words, it essentially tried to erase the whole French Revolution and Napoleon from the European consciousness and restore the royal order.



## B. LOTS OF INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENTS: LATIN AMERICA

The European colonies in Latin America were inspired by the success of the American Revolution and the ideas of the French Revolution. To be sure, there had been unsuccessful revolts and uprisings in the Latin American colonies for two or three centuries prior to those revolutions. In the early nineteenth century, however, the world order was different. Europe was in chaos because of the rise and fall of Napoleon, and this distracted the European powers from their American holdings, a development that gave rebellious leaders an opportunity to assert themselves more than they previously could have.

### Haiti: Slave Revolt Sends France a Jolt

The first successful Latin American revolt took place in Haiti, a French island colony in the Caribbean. The French, true to their mercantilist policies, exported coffee, sugar, cocoa, and indigo from Haiti to Europe. French colonists owned large plantations and hundreds of thousands of slaves, who grew and harvested these crops under horrible conditions. By 1800, 90 percent of the population was slaves, some of whom had been freed, but the vast majority of whom worked on the plantations.

In 1801, as Napoleon was gaining momentum in Europe, **Pierre Toussaint L'Ouverture**, a former slave, led a violent, lengthy, but ultimately successful slave revolt. Enraged, Napoleon sent 20,000 troops to put down the revolt, but the Haitians were capable fighters. They also had another weapon on their side—yellow fever—that claimed many French lives. The French did succeed, however, in capturing L'Ouverture and imprisoning him in France, but by then they couldn't turn back the revolutionary tide. Toussaint's lieutenant **Jacques Dessalines**, also a former slave, proclaimed Haiti a free republic in 1804 and named himself governor-general for life. Thus, Haiti became the first independent nation in Latin America.

### South America: Visions of Grandeur

In 1808, when Napoleon invaded Spain, he appointed his brother, Joseph Bonaparte, to the Spanish throne. This sent the Spanish authorities in the colonies into a tizzy. Who should they be loyal to? The colonists decided to remain loyal to their Spanish king and not recognize the French regime under Bonaparte. In Venezuela, they ejected Bonaparte's governor and, instead, anointed their own leader, **Simon Bolivar**. Tutored on the republican ideals of Rousseau during his travels to Europe and the United States, Bolivar found himself in the midst of a great opportunity to use what he learned. In 1811, Bolivar helped establish a national congress, which declared independence from Spain. Royalists, supporters of the Spanish crown, declared civil war. But Bolivar proved to be a wily and effective military leader, and during the next decade, he won freedom for the area called *Gran Colombia* (which included modern-day Columbia, Ecuador, and Venezuela). Bolivar envisioned a huge South American country spanning across the continent, similar to the growing United States in North America, but it wasn't meant to be. In the following decades, the individual nation-states of northwestern South America formed their own governments.

Meanwhile, farther south in Argentina, the conflict between the French governor and those who still wanted to support the Spanish crown created another opportunity for liberation. **Jose de San Martin** was an American-born Spaniard (or Creole) who served as an officer in the Spanish army. In 1814 he began to put his extensive military experience to use—but for the rebels—taking command of the Argentinian armies. San Martin joined up with Bernardo O'Higgins of Chile and took the revolutionary movement not only through Argentina and Chile, but also to Peru, where he joined forces with Bolivar. The Spanish forces withered away. By the 1820's, a huge chunk of South America had successfully declared its independence from Spain.

## **Brazil: Power to the Pedros**

Brazil, of course, was a Portuguese colony, and so when Portugal was invaded by Napoleon's armies in 1807, **John VI**, the Portuguese king, fled to Brazil and set up his royal court in exile. By 1821, Napoleon had been defeated and it was safe for John VI to return to Portugal, but he left behind his son, **Pedro**, who was 23 years old at the time, and charged him with running the huge colony. Pedro, who had spent most of his childhood and teenage years in Brazil and considered it home, declared Brazilian independence and crowned himself emperor the next year. Within a few more years, Brazil had a constitution.

In 1831, Pedro abdicated power to his son, **Pedro II**, who ruled the country through much of the nineteenth century. While he reformed Brazilian society in many ways and turned it into a major exporter of coffee, his greatest single accomplishment was the abolition of slavery in 1888 (which actually occurred under the direction of his daughter, Isabel, who was running the country while Pedro II was away). This action so incensed the land-owning class that they revolted against the monarchy and established a republic in 1889.

## **Mexico: A Tale of Two Priests**

As in other parts of Latin America, a revolutionary fervor rose in Mexico after the French Revolution, especially after Napoleon invaded Spain and Portugal. In 1810, **Miguel Hidalgo**, a Creole priest who sympathized with those who had been abused under Spanish colonialism, led a revolt against Spanish rule. Unlike in South America, however, the Spanish armies resisted effectively, and they put down the revolt at Calderon Bridge, where Hidalgo was executed.

Hidalgo's efforts were not in vain, however, because they put the revolution in motion. **Jose Morelos** picked up where Hidalgo left off and led the revolutionaries to further successes against the loyalists. But similar to what later happened in Brazil, the land-owning class turned against him when he made clear his intentions to redistribute land to the poor. In 1815, he was executed.

It wasn't until 1821, after the landowning class bought into the idea of separation from Spain, that independence was finally achieved. In the **Treaty of Cordoba**, Spain was forced to recognize that its 300-year-old domination of Latin America was coming to an end. Mexico was granted its independence and Central America soon followed.

## **The Effects of the Independence Movements: More Independence than Freedom**

While Europe was effectively booted out of many parts of the American continents during a 50-year time span beginning in about 1780, in some Latin American countries the independence from colonial power wasn't accompanied by widespread freedom among the vast majority of citizens. As in the United States, slavery still existed for decades. Peasants still worked on huge plantations owned by a few landowners. But unlike in the United States, a significant middle class of merchants and small farmers didn't emerge, and many of the Enlightenment ideas didn't spread to populations other than the land-owning male class.

There were several reasons for this. The Catholic Church remained very powerful in Latin America, and while many of the priests advocated on behalf of the peasants and of the slaves (some martyred themselves for that cause), the church hierarchy as a whole protected the status quo. The church, after all, was one of the largest landowners in Latin America.

What's more, the economies of Latin America, while free of Europe, were still largely dependent on Europe. Latin American countries still participated in European mercantilism, often to their own detriment. They specialized in a few cash crops, exported almost exclusively to Europe, and then bought back finished products. In other words, most Latin American economies didn't diversify, nor did they broaden opportunities to a larger class of people, so innovation and creativity rarely took root.

There are notable exceptions. Chile diversified its economy fairly successfully, and Brazil and Argentina instituted social reform and broadened their economies to include a growing middle class. But ultimately, the hugely successful independence movements in Latin America didn't result in noticeable changes for a majority of the population for more than a century.