

# The French Revolution



# The Old Regime (*Ancien Régime*)

- ▶ **Old Regime** - socio-political system which existed in most of Europe during the 18<sup>th</sup> century
  - ▶ Countries ruled by **absolutism** - the monarch had absolute control over the government
- ▶ **Classes of people** - **privileged and unprivileged**
  - ▶ **Privileged people** - did not pay taxes and treated well
  - ▶ **Unprivileged people** - paid taxes and treated poorly





FRENCH LADY ENTERING A SEDAN CHAIR

The sedan chair, used by the upper classes during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, was carried by two “chairmen.” It had side windows, a hinged door at the front, and a roof that opened to allow the occupant to stand. It took its name from the town of Sedan, France. This engraving, made in Paris in 1777, shows the elegant costumes worn by the nobility and their servants.





# EUROPE IN 1789

Scale of Miles

0 50 100 150 200 250 300

----- Boundary of the Holy Roman Empire

Prussian Territories

Austrian/Hapsburg Territories





# Society under the Ancien Régime

► In France, people were divided into three estates

► **First Estate**

- High-ranking members of the Church
- Privileged class (didn't pay taxes)

► **Second Estate**

- Nobility (wealthy; royalty)
- Privileged class (didn't pay taxes)

► **Third Estate**

- Everyone else - from peasants in the countryside to wealthy bourgeoisie merchants in the cities
- Unprivileged class (paid taxes)



# The Three Estates

Estate	Population	Privileges	Exemptions	Burdens
First	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Apprx. 130,000</li> <li>•High-ranking clergy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Collected the tithe</li> <li>•Censorship of the press</li> <li>•Control of education</li> <li>•Kept records of births, deaths, marriages, etc.</li> <li>•Catholic faith held honored position of being the state religion (practiced by monarch and nobility)</li> <li>•Owned 20% of the land</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Paid no taxes</li> <li>•Subject to Church law rather than civil law</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Moral obligation (rather than legal obligation) to assist the poor and needy</li> <li>•Support the monarchy and Old Regime</li> </ul>
Second	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Apprx. 110,000</li> <li>•Nobles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Collected taxes in the form of feudal dues</li> <li>•Monopolized military and state appointments</li> <li>•Owned 20% of the land</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Paid no taxes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Support the monarchy and Old Regime</li> </ul>
Third	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Apprx. 25,000,000</li> <li>•Everyone else: artisans, bourgeoisie, city workers, merchants, peasants, etc., along with many parish priests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Paid all taxes</li> <li>•Tithe (Church tax)</li> <li>•<i>Octrot</i> (tax on goods brought into cities)</li> <li>•<i>Corvée</i> (forced road work)</li> <li>•<i>Capitation</i> (poll tax)</li> <li>•<i>Vingtième</i> (income tax)</li> <li>•<i>Gabelle</i> (salt tax)</li> <li>•<i>Taille</i> (land tax)</li> <li>•Feudal dues for use of local manor's winepress, oven, etc.</li> </ul>



What does this contemporary political cartoon say about conditions in France under the Old Regime?



# Old Regime: The Divine Right of Kings

- ▶ Monarch ruled by **divine right**
  - ▶ God put the world in motion & the King in power
    - ▶ Questioning the monarchy was blasphemy because it meant questioning God





# What the King Did

Appointed the *Intendants*, the “petty tyrants” who governed France’s 30 districts

Appointed the people who would collect his taxes and carry out his laws

Controlled justice by appointing judges

Controlled the military

*lettres de cachet*-imprison anyone at any time for any reason

Levied all taxes & decided how to spend the money

Made all laws

Made decisions regarding war and peace

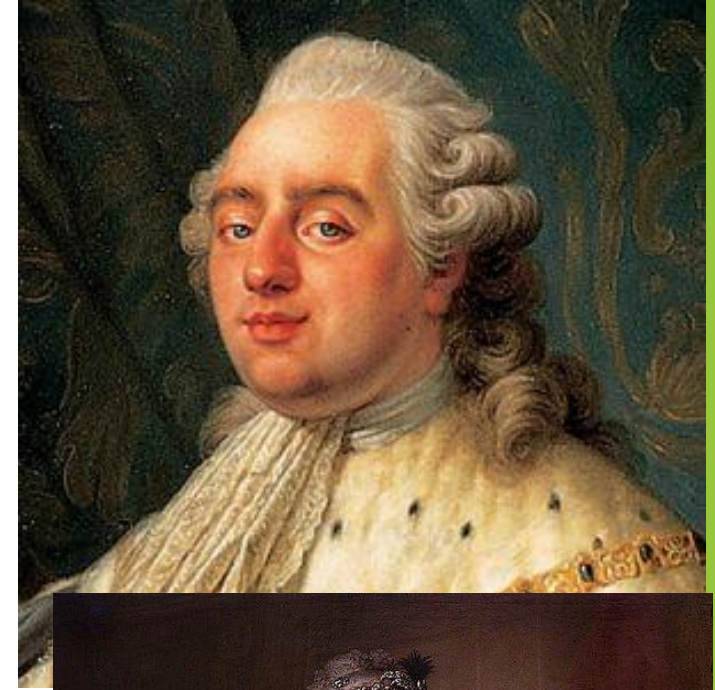
# Economic Conditions under the Old Regime

- ▶ France's economy was based primarily on agriculture
- ▶ Peasant farmers paid taxes in France
- ▶ Poor harvests = peasants had trouble paying their regular taxes
  - ▶ Certainly could not afford to have their taxes raised
- ▶ Bourgeoisie often managed to gather wealth
  - ▶ But were upset that they paid taxes while nobles did not



# France Goes Bankrupt

- ▶ King Louis XVI & Queen Marie Antionette spent lavishly
- ▶ Government found its funds depleted as a result of wars
  - ▶ 7-Years War (French & Indian) & funding the American Revolution
- ▶ **Deficit spending** - a government spending more money than it takes in from taxes.
- ▶ Privileged classes would not submit to being taxed













# Philosophy of the French Revolution: The Enlightenment (Age of Reason)

- ▶ Scientists discover laws that govern the natural world
  - ▶ Sci Revolution & Enlightenment
- ▶ *Philosophes* - intellectuals who asked if natural laws might also apply to human beings
  - ▶ *Philosophes* were secular in thinking
  - ▶ Questioned the divine right of kings
    - ▶ Used reason and logic to determine how governments are formed





# Long-term Causes of the French Revolution

## Everything previously discussed

- Absolutism
- Unjust socio-political system (Old Regime)
- Poor harvests which left peasant farmers with little money for taxes
- Influence of Enlightenment *philosophes*

## Also

- System of mercantilism which restricted trade
- Influence of other successful revolutions
  - England's Glorious Revolution (1688-1689)
  - American Revolution (1775-1783)

# Short-term Causes of the French Revolution

## Bankruptcy

- Caused by deficit spending
- Financial ministers (Turgot, Necker, Calonne) proposed changes
  - But these were rejected
- Assembly of Notables voted down taxation for the nobility in 1787

## Great Fear

- Worst famine in memory
- Hungry, impoverished peasants feared that nobles at Estates-General were seeking greater privileges
- Attacks on nobles occurred throughout the country in 1789

## *Estates-General*

- Louis XVI had no choice but to call for a meeting of the ***Estates-General*** to find a solution to the bankruptcy problem
  - All three estates
- Had not met since 1614
- Set in motion a series of events which resulted in the abolition of the monarchy and a completely new socio-political system for France





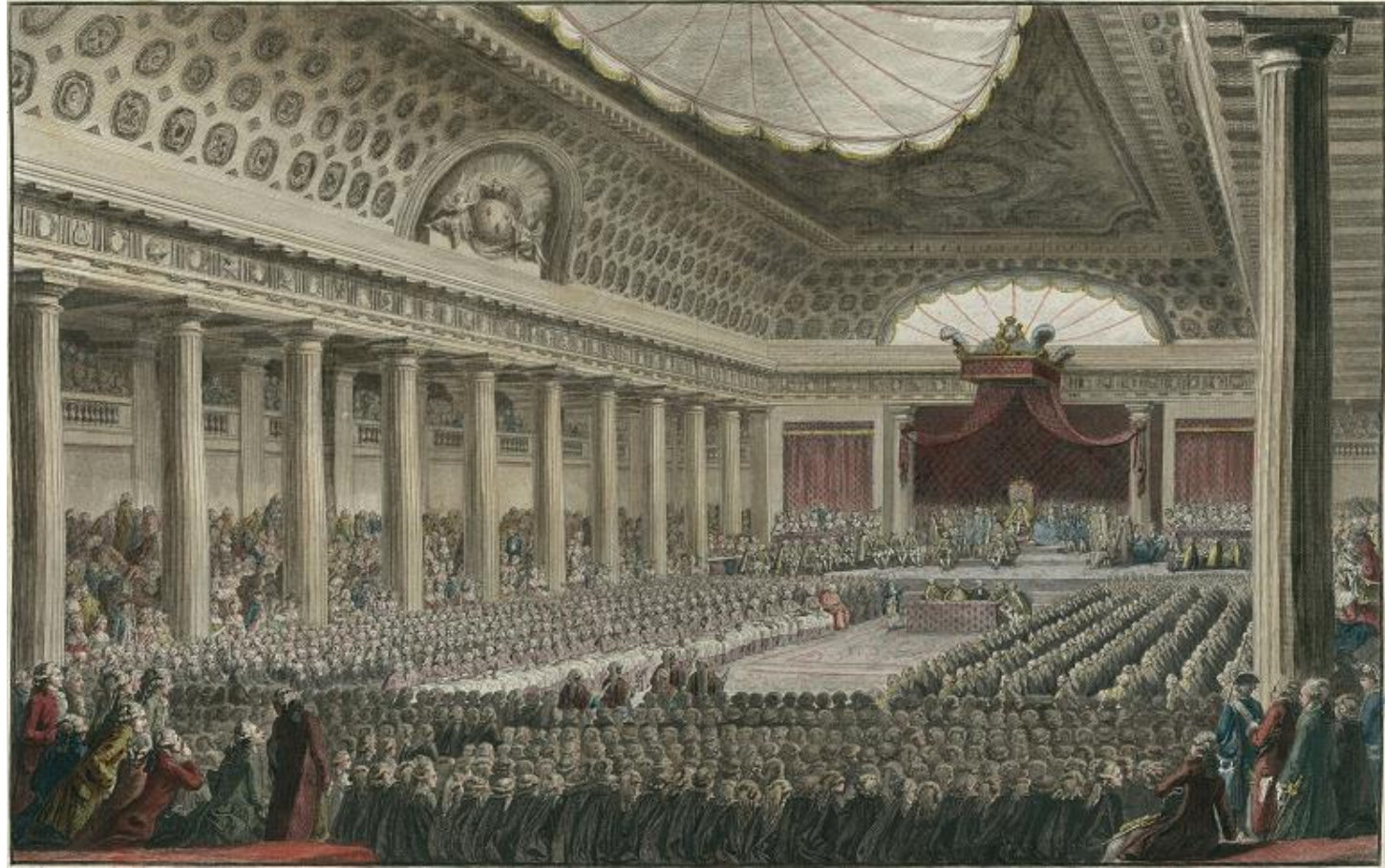
### THE THREE ESTATES

A contemporary cartoon, showing the Third Estate welcoming the nobles and the clergy to the ranks of the National Assembly, June 30, 1789.



# Meeting of the *Estates-General*: May 5, 1789

- ▶ Voting was conducted by Estate
  - ▶ Each Estate had one vote
  - ▶ First and Second Estates could **block** Third Estate from having its way
  - ▶ Privileged (2 votes) vs. Unprivileged (1 vote)
- ▶ Third Estate demanded vote by population, which would give them the advantage
- ▶ **Deadlock resulted because of their inability to agree**





First  
Estate =  
1 Vote or  
130,000  
Votes

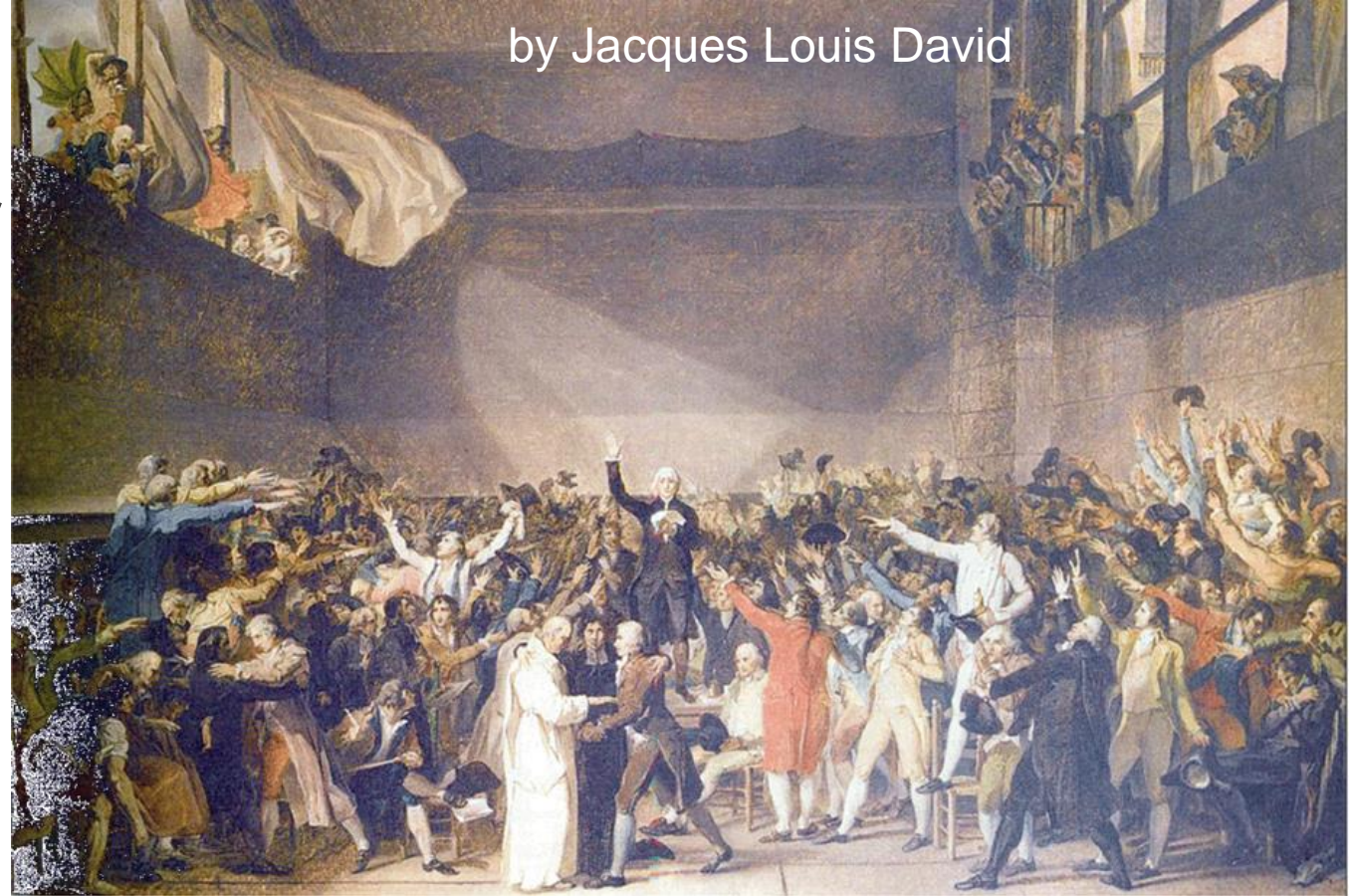
Third Estate = 1  
Vote or  
25,000,000 Votes

Second Estate =  
1 Vote or  
110,000 Votes

# Tennis Court Oath

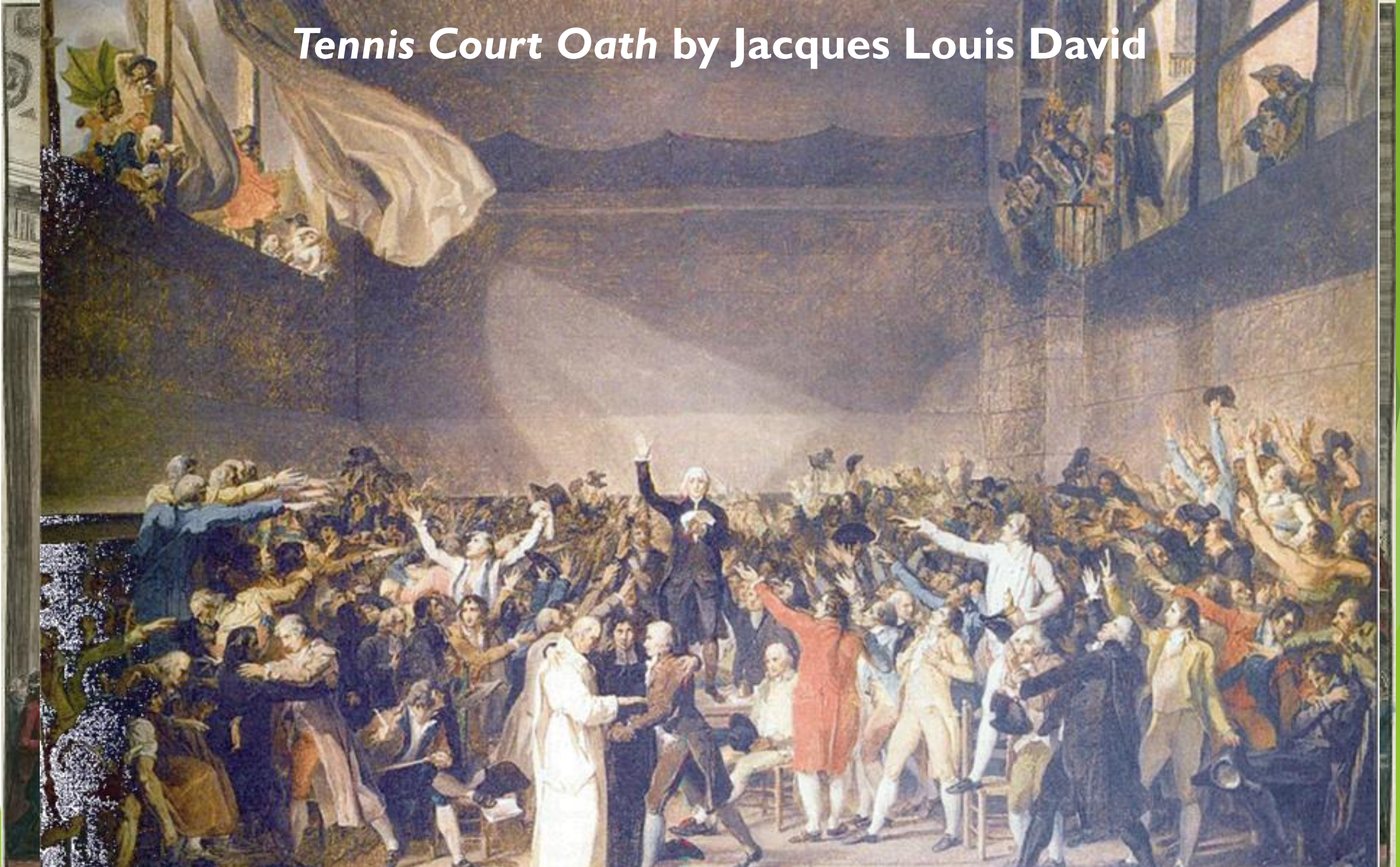
- ▶ The Third Estate declared itself to be the National Assembly
- ▶ King Louis XVI locks out Third Estate
- ▶ they relocate to nearby tennis court, vowing to create a constitution.
- ▶ Louis XVI relented on June 23, 1789
- ▶ Three Estates meet as **National Assembly** and voted, by population, on French Constitution.

by Jacques Louis David





# *Tennis Court Oath* by Jacques Louis David





# 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.”



# Four Phases (Periods) of the French Revolution

National Assembly (1789-1791)

Legislative Assembly (1791-1792)

Convention (1792-1795)

Directory (1795-1799)

# National Assembly (1789-1791) (1<sup>st</sup> Phase)

- ▶ King Louis XVI opposed a written constitution
- ▶ Planned to use military force against National Assembly
- ▶ People storm Bastille Castle on July 14, 1789 to gather munitions
- ▶ Nobles attacked throughout France & church property was seized



STORMING 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





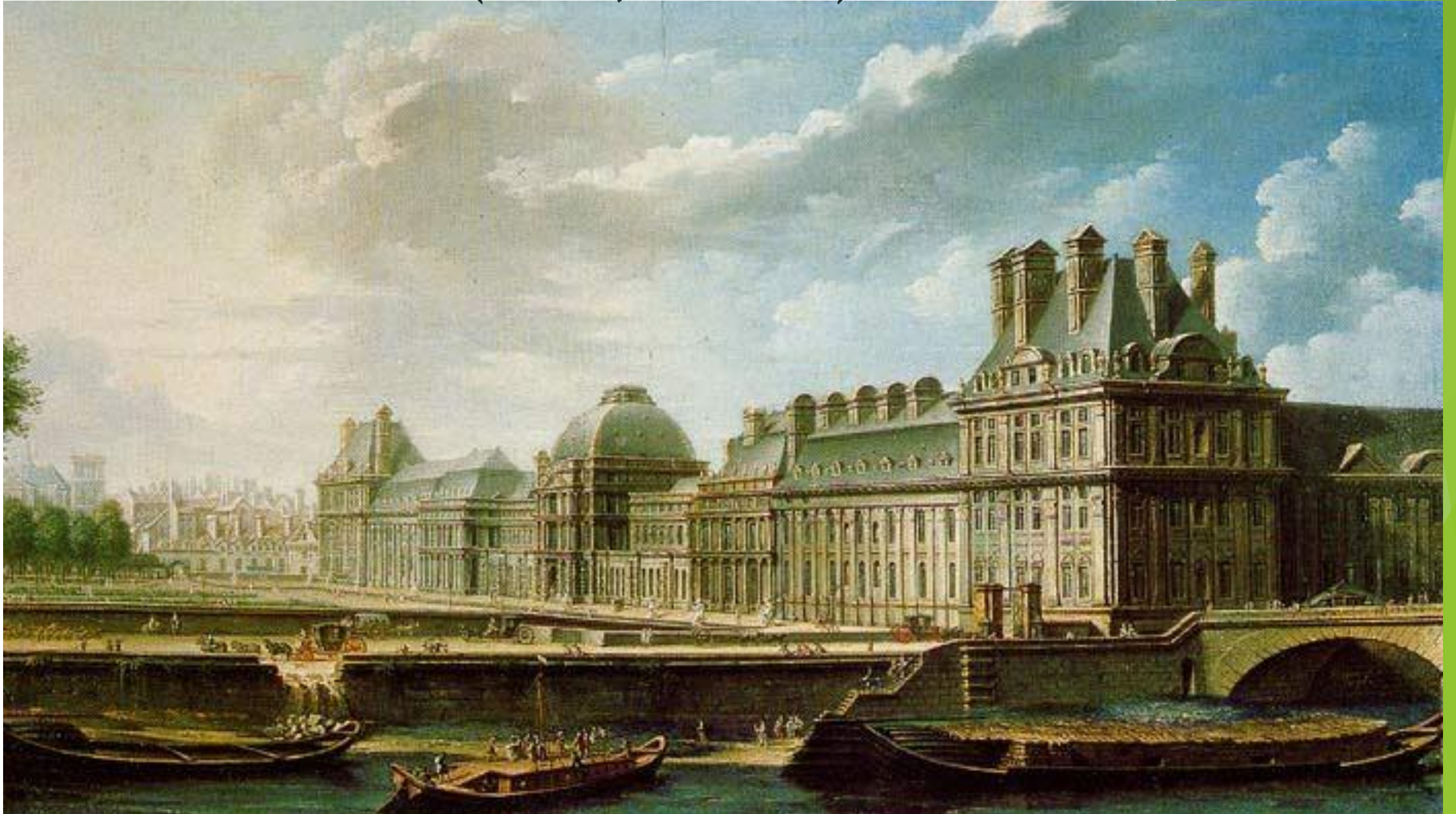
# *Adieu, Versailles!* (Goodbye, Versailles!)

- ▶ Parisians feared Louis XVI would have foreign (Austrian) troops invade France
  - ▶ Marie Antoinette was a member of Austrian Royalty
- ▶ A group of women attacked Versailles Palace on October 5, 1789
  - ▶ they forced royal family to relocate to Paris
  - ▶ Royal family lived in Tuileries Palace in Paris as virtual prisoners





# Tuileries Palace (Paris, France)





# Changes under the National Assembly

Abolishment of  
guilds and labor  
unions

Abolition of  
special  
privileges

Constitution of  
1791

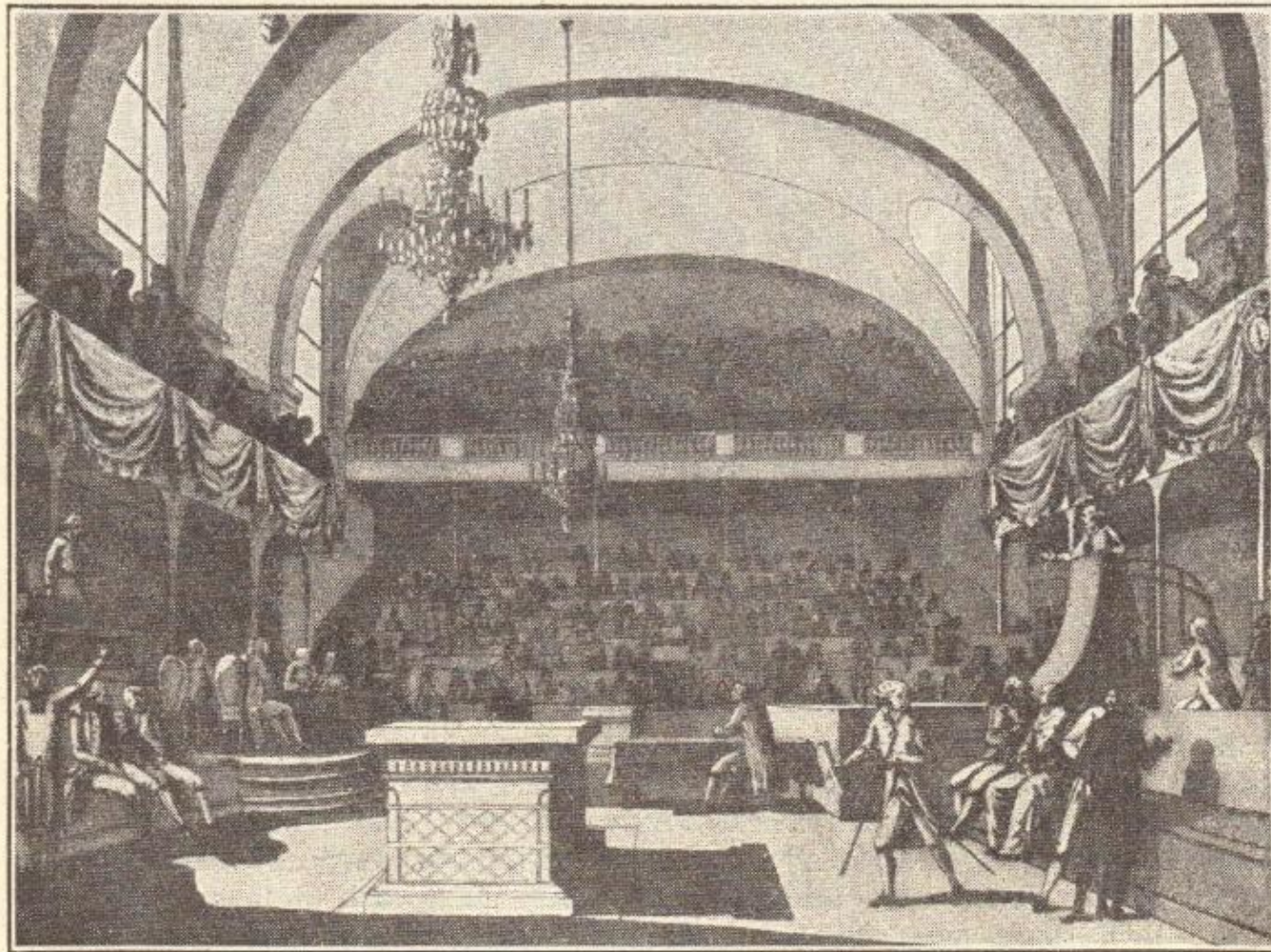
*Declaration of  
the Rights of  
Man*

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 Man

- Freedom of religion, speech, press, fair trial, property ownership
- Liberté, égalité, fraternité (Liberty, equality and fraternity)





# *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.

# Declaration of the Rights of Woman

- ▶ Could inherit property because it weakened the privileged class
- ▶ Divorce was easier because it weakened the church

## DÉCLARATION DES DROITS DE LA FEMME ET DE LA CITOYENNE,

*'A décréter par l'Assemblée nationale dans ses dernières séances ou dans celle de la prochaine législature.*

### P R É A M B U L E.

Les mères, les filles, les soeurs, représentantes de la nation, demandent d'être constituées en assemblée nationale. Considérant que l'ignorance, l'oubli ou le mépris des droits de la femme, sont les seules causes des malheurs publics et de la corruption des gouvernemens, ont résolu d'exposer dans une déclaration solennelle, les droits naturels, inaliénables et sacrés de la femme, afin que cette déclaration, constamment présente à tous les membres du corps social, leur rappelle sans cesse leurs droits et leurs devoirs, afin que les actes du pouvoir des femmes, et ceux du pouvoir des hommes pouvant être à chaque instant comparés avec le but de toute institution politique, en soient plus respectés, afin que les réclamations des citoyennes, fondées désormais sur des principes simples et incontestables, tournent toujours au maintien de la constitution, des bonnes moeurs, et au bonheur de tous.

En conséquence, le sexe supérieur en beauté comme en courage, dans les souffrances maternelles, reconnaît et déclare, en présence



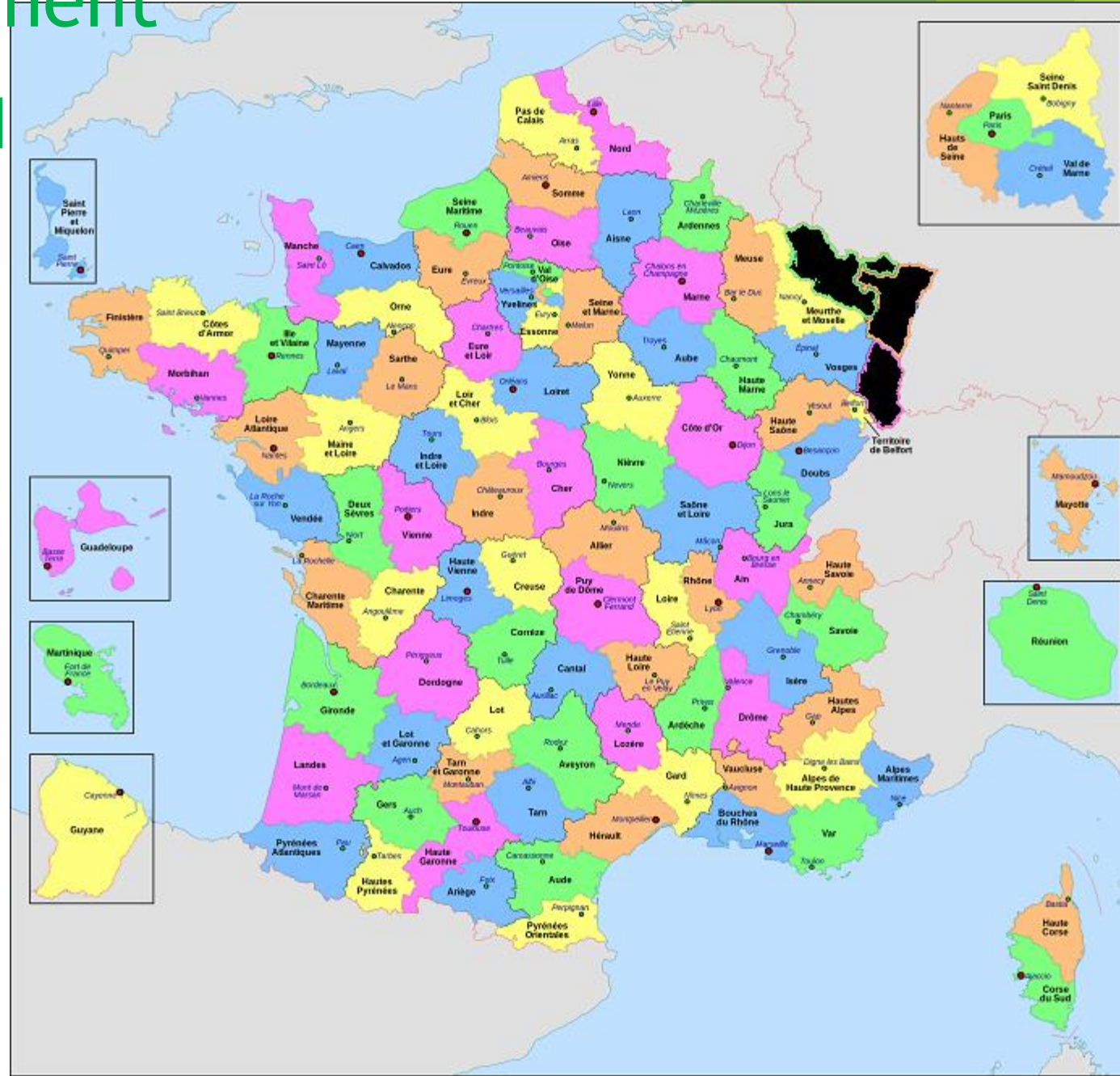
# End of Special Privileges

- ▶ Church lands were seized, divided, and sold to peasants
- ▶ Tithes and feudal dues eliminated
- ▶ First & Second Estates' privileges were abolished
  - ▶ Now have to pay taxes



# Reforms in Local Government

- ▶ The 30 provinces replaced with 83 new departments
  - ▶ Ruled by elected governors
- ▶ New courts, with judges elected by the people





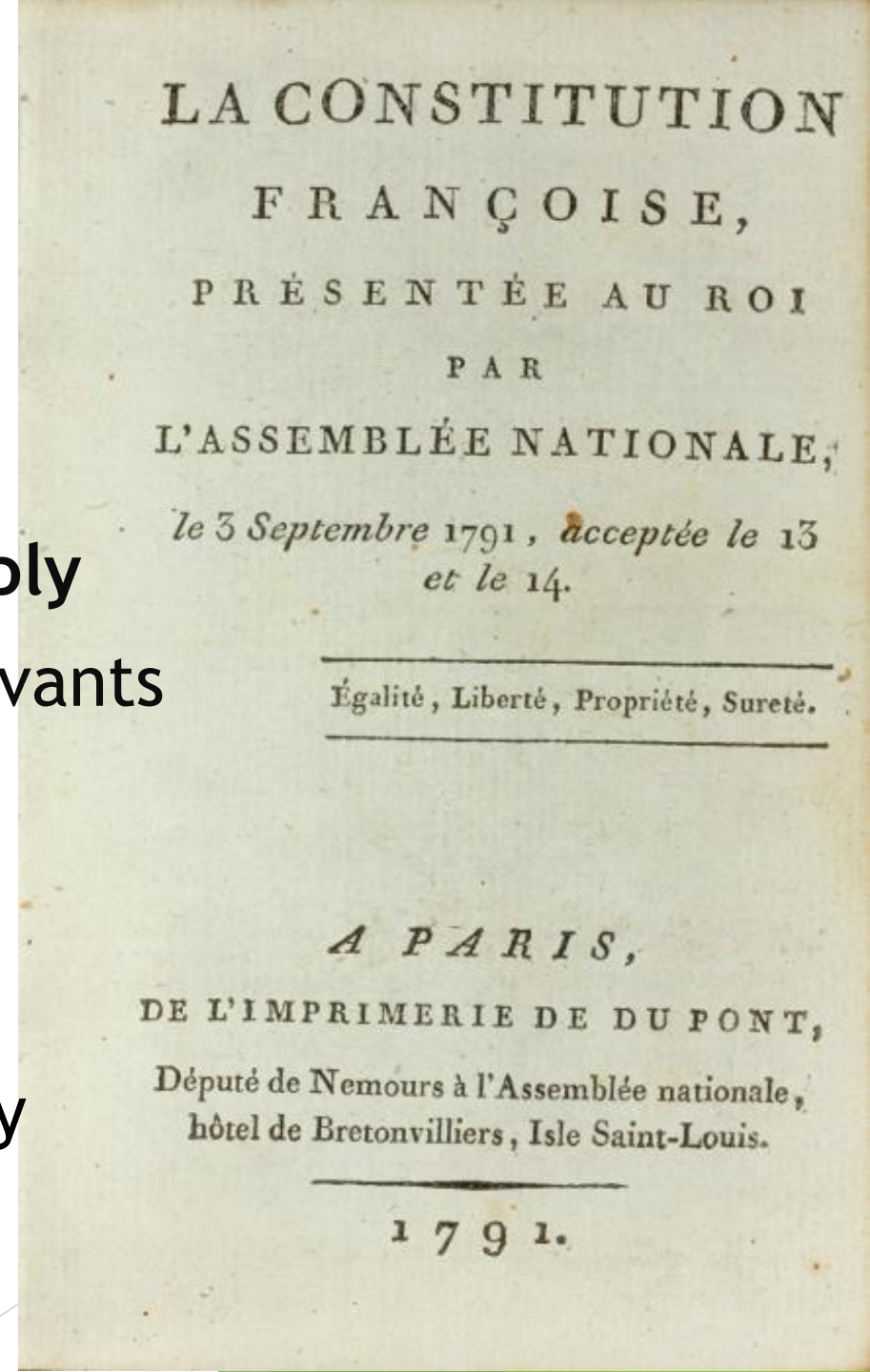
# Constitution of 1791

## ► Democratic features

- France became a limited monarchy
  - King became merely the head of state
- All laws created by the **Legislative Assembly**
- Feudalism, where land lord owns land, servants work it, was abolished

## ► Undemocratic features

- Voting was limited to taxpayers
- political offices were reserved for property owners



# Legislative Assembly (1791-1792) (2<sup>nd</sup> Phase)

- ▶ Royal family sought help from Austria
  - ▶ June, 1791, the royal family caught in Varennes trying to escape to Austria
- ▶ Nobles who fled the revolution lived abroad as *émigrés* (political refugees)
  - ▶ They hoped that, with foreign help, the Old Regime could be restored in France
- ▶ Church officials wanted Church lands, rights, and privileges restored
- ▶ Political parties, representing different interests emerged
  - ▶ Girondists - “republicans” (rich middle class)
  - ▶ Jacobins - “democrats” (most radical and ruthless; poor)







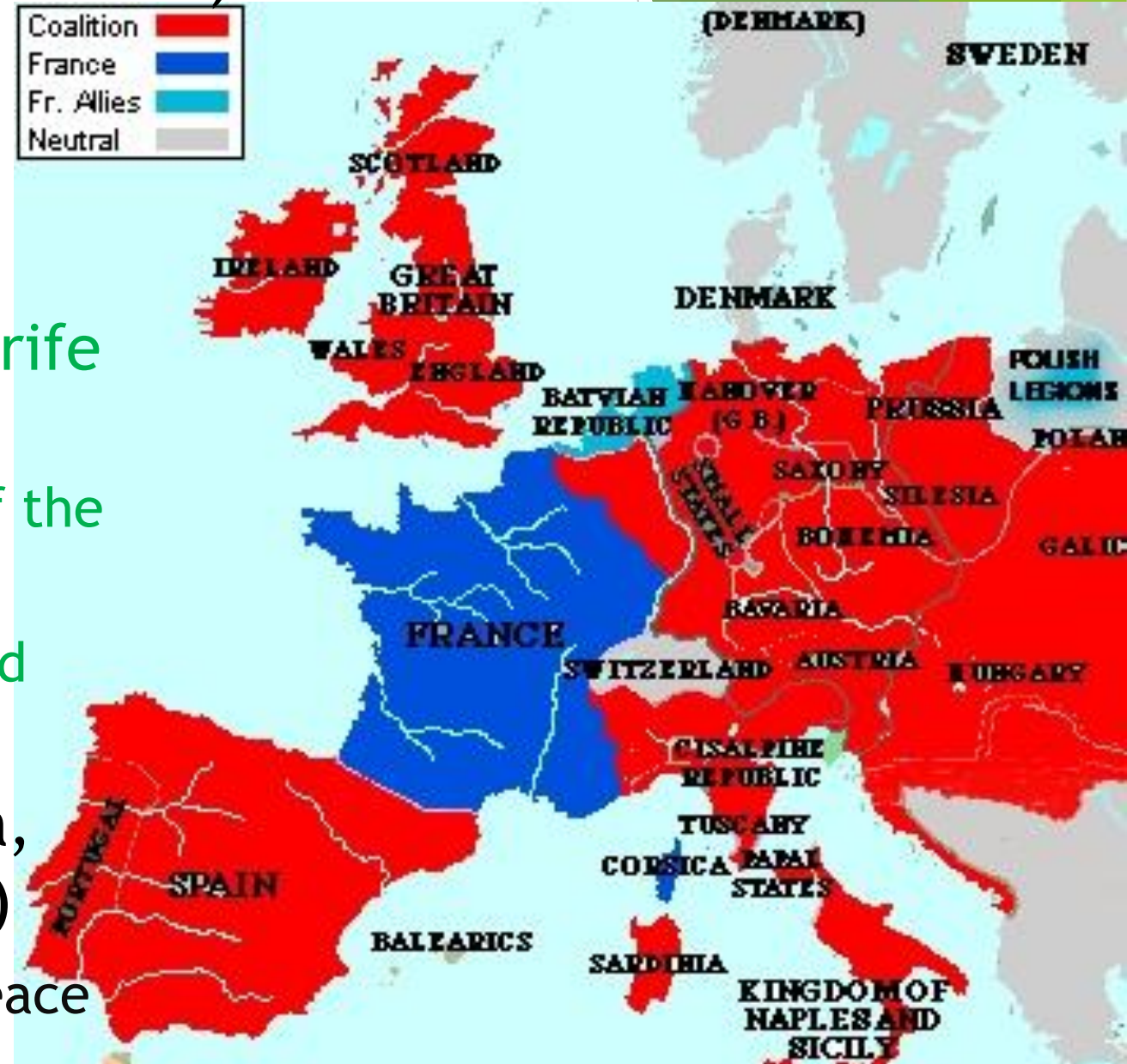
### HALTING THE ROYAL FAMILY AT VARENNES

From a contemporary print. The royal family traveled in a great coach built for the purpose. The roads were bad, and the traveling carriage was heavy, but all went well until, at a point near Varennes, the king put his head out of the window and was recognized by the likeness of his features to the profile stamped on the French coins. The man who thus discovered the royal flight jumped on a horse, dashed into Varennes and roused the citizens to stop the coach. A messenger was dispatched to Paris, and shortly after, under the escort of members of the National Assembly, the royal family was compelled to return.



# Convention (1792-1795) (3<sup>rd</sup> Phase)

- ▶ Sep. 22, 1792, the Convention met for the first time
- ▶ Est. 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
- ▶ War of the First Coalition (Austria, England, Prussia...invaded France)
  - ▶ France forced invaders to accept peace treaties



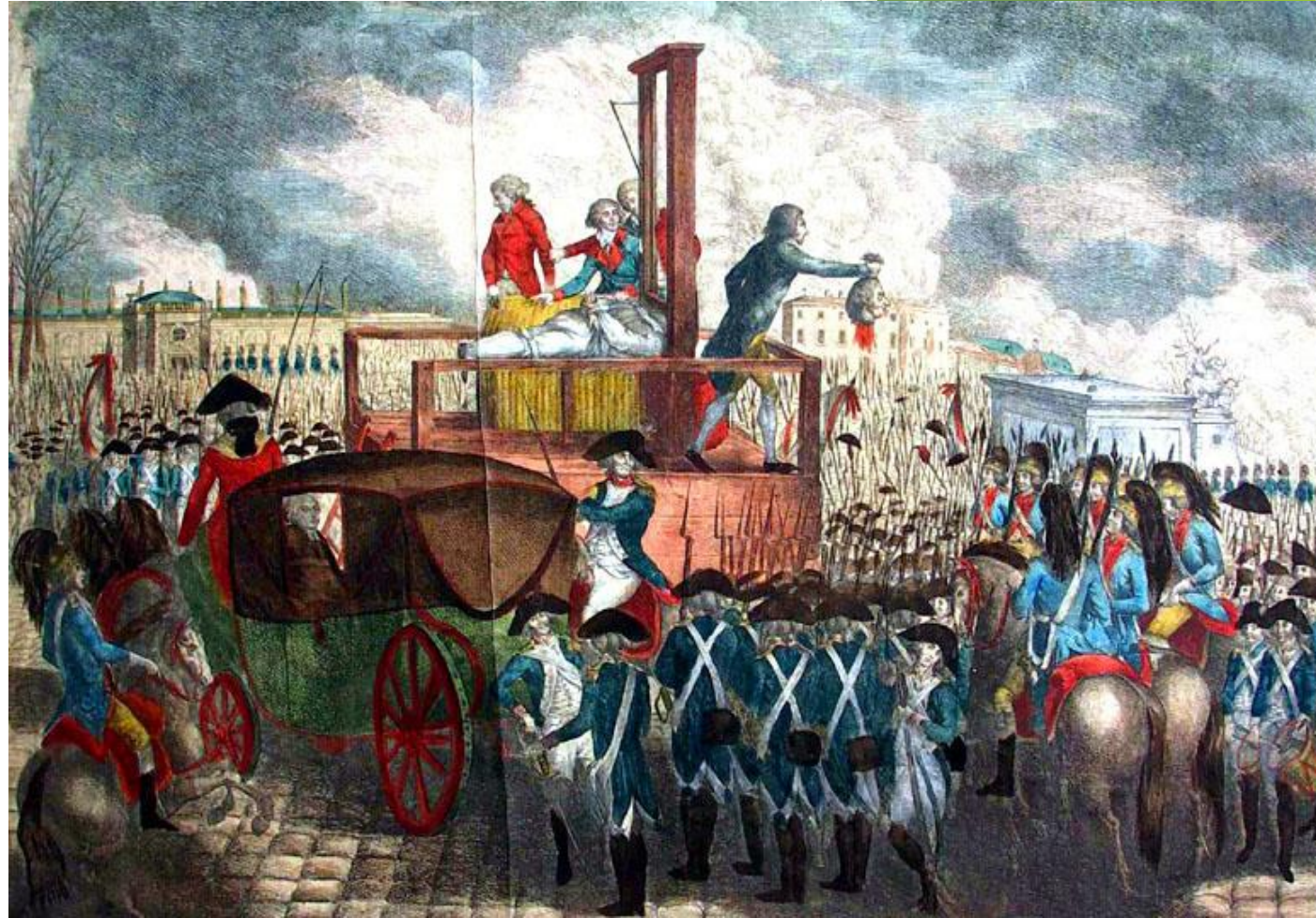


# Abolishment of the Monarchy

- ▶ 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

# Abolishment of the Monarchy

- ▶ **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 Salic law 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



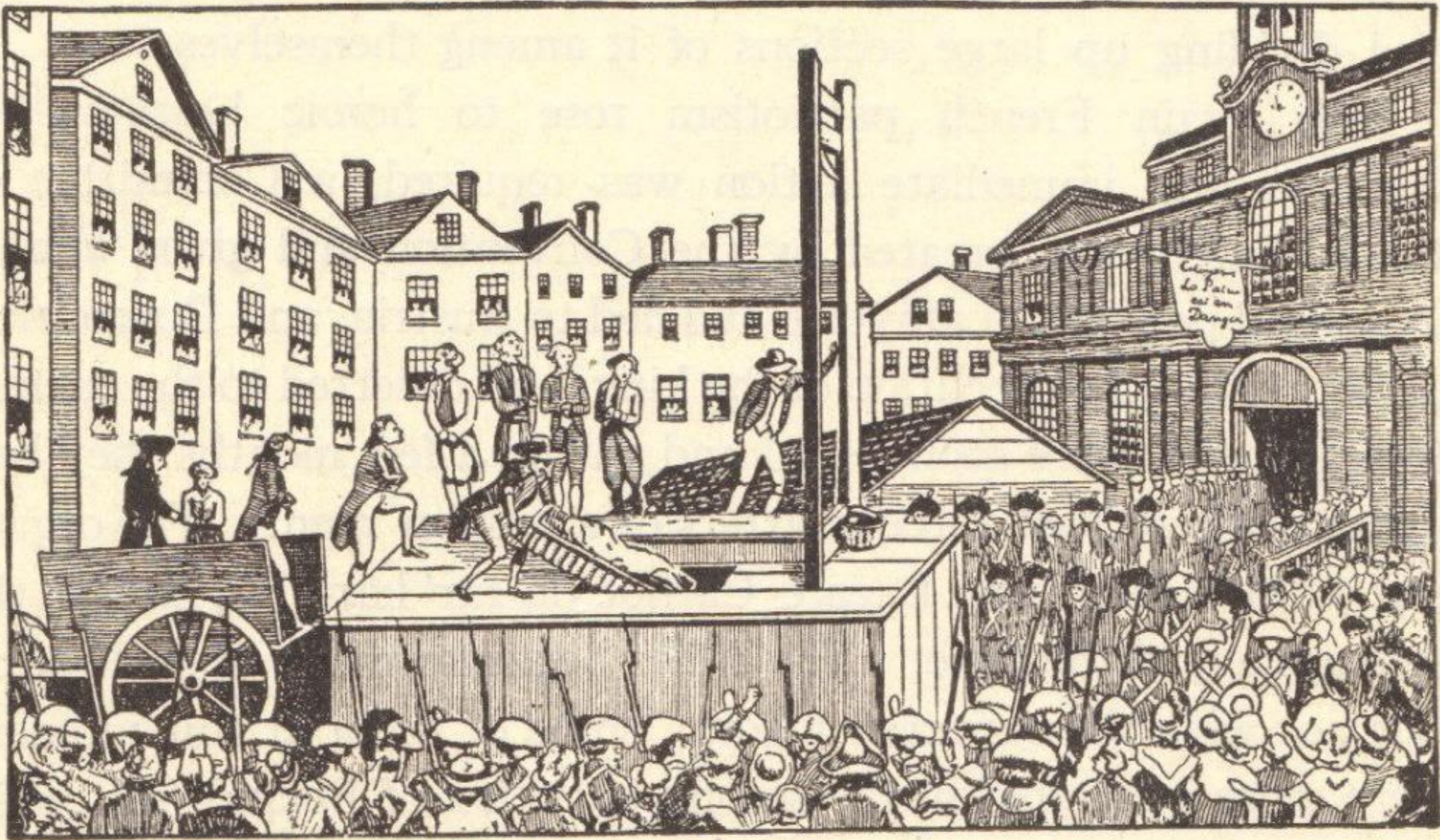




### MEMORIAL TO THE KING AND QUEEN

Drawing of a funeral urn with the profile of Louis XVI in the base at the left, Marie Antoinette at the right, the Dauphin in the willow tree at the right margin, and his sister Madame Royale at the left of the king's head. Made for sympathetic royalists by a contemporary artist.





GUILLOTINE IN THE SQUARE BEFORE THE HOTEL DE VILLE

Illustration from a contemporary newspaper.



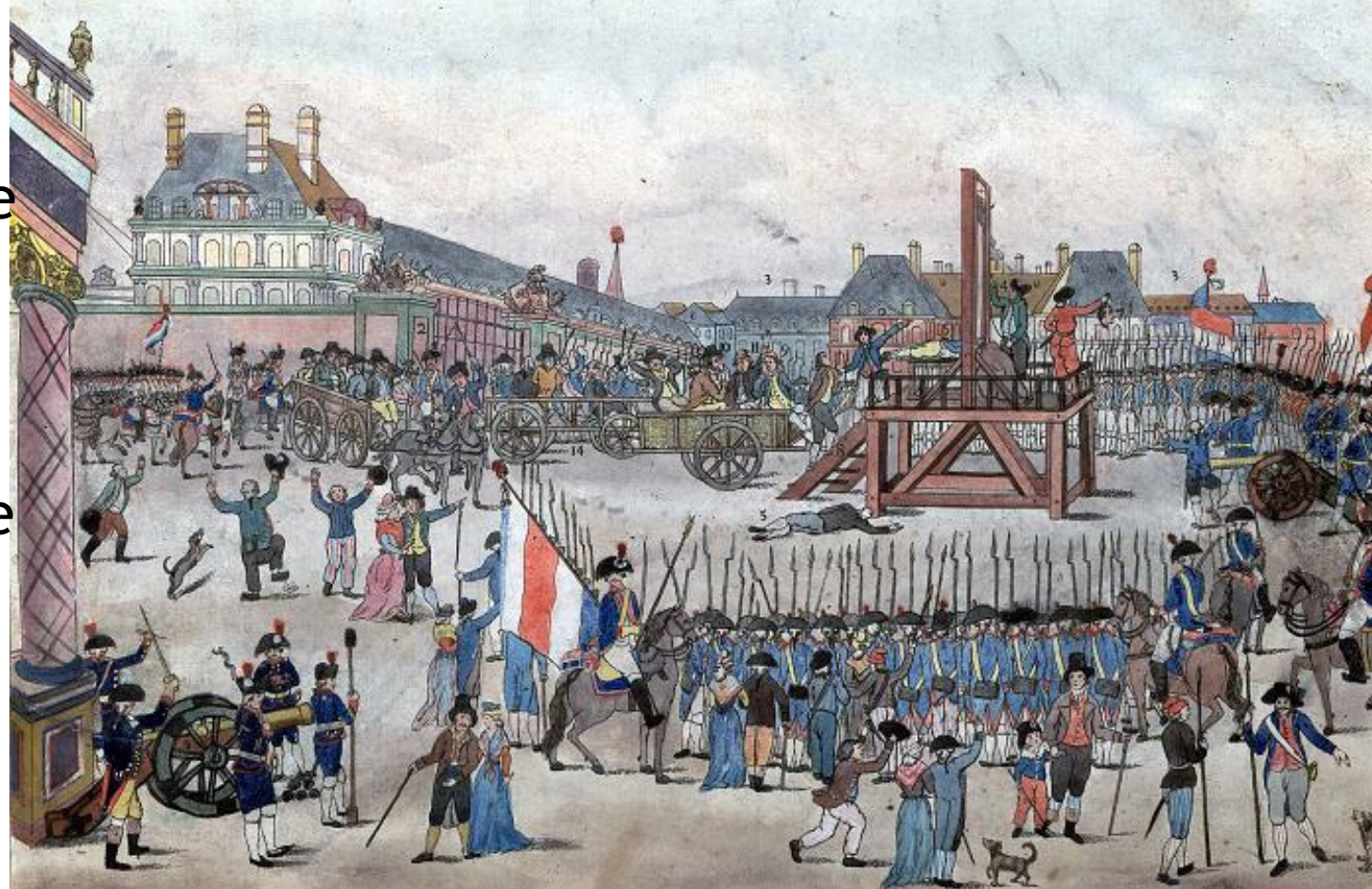
- ▶ Jean-Paul Marat (J-PM) published a newspaper called *L'Ami du peuple* (*The Friend of the People*), calling for a bloody revolution
  - ▶ J-PM was assassinated by Charlotte Corday.
- ▶ George Danton- leader of radical Jacobins was guillotined for calling to end of executions
- ▶ Maximilien Robespierre – leader of Jacobins after Danton's execution





# Reign of Terror(ROT): Sep 1793-July 1794.

- ▶ Danton and his Jacobin political party came to dominate French politics
- ▶ est. a 12-man “Committee of Public Safety” (CPS)
  - ▶ Headed by Danton (and later Robespierre)
  - ▶ Those accused of treason were tried by the CPS’s Revolutionary Tribunal
  - ▶ Approximately 15,000 people died on the guillotine aka. the “National Razor”
    - ▶ Including innovative thinkers like Olympe de Gouges and Madame Jeanne Roland









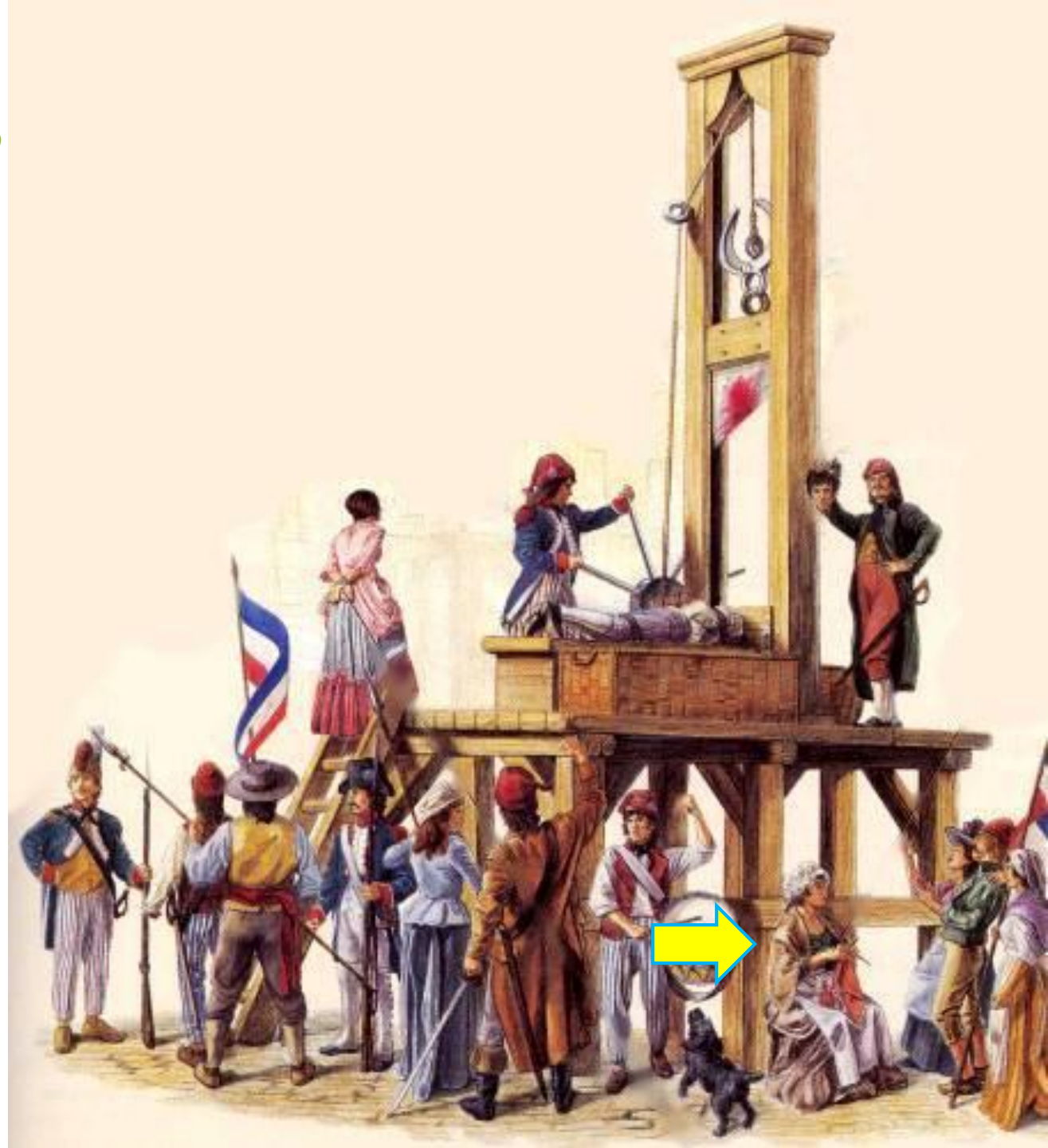


MADAME ROLAND ON HER WAY TO  
EXECUTION

From a painting by Royer.

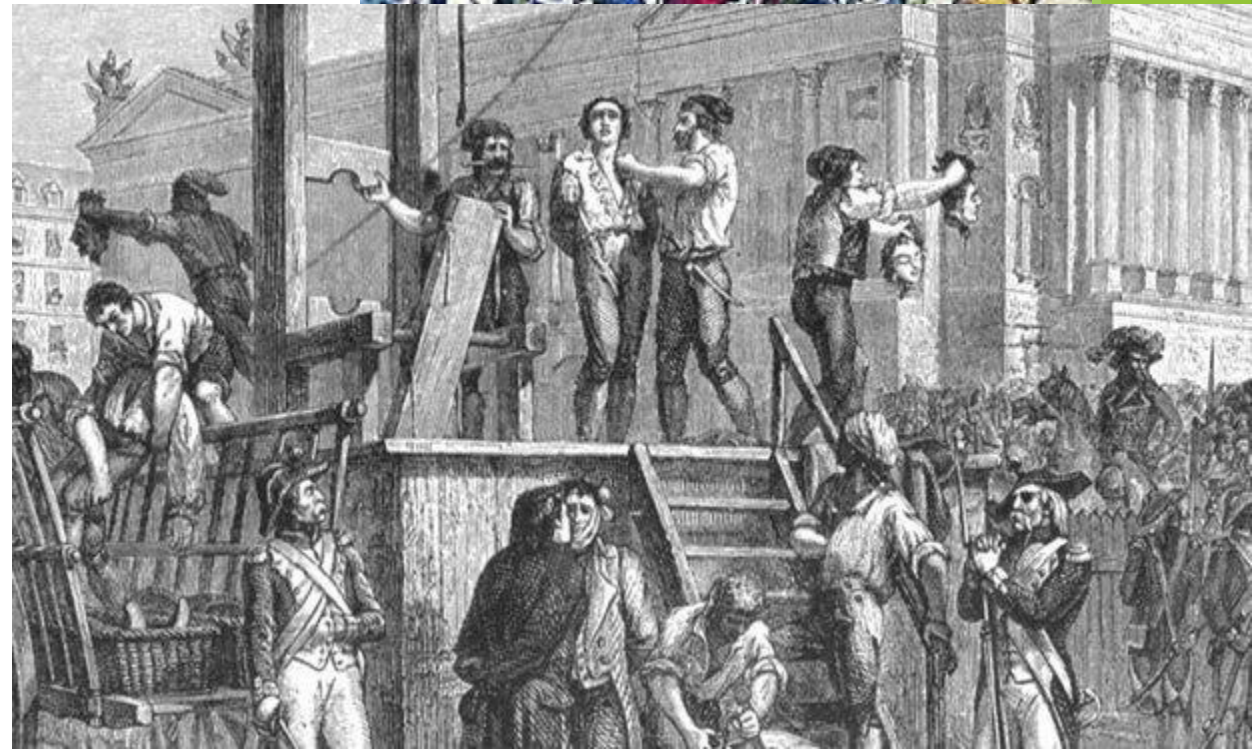


# Desensitized to Violence?



# End of the ROT

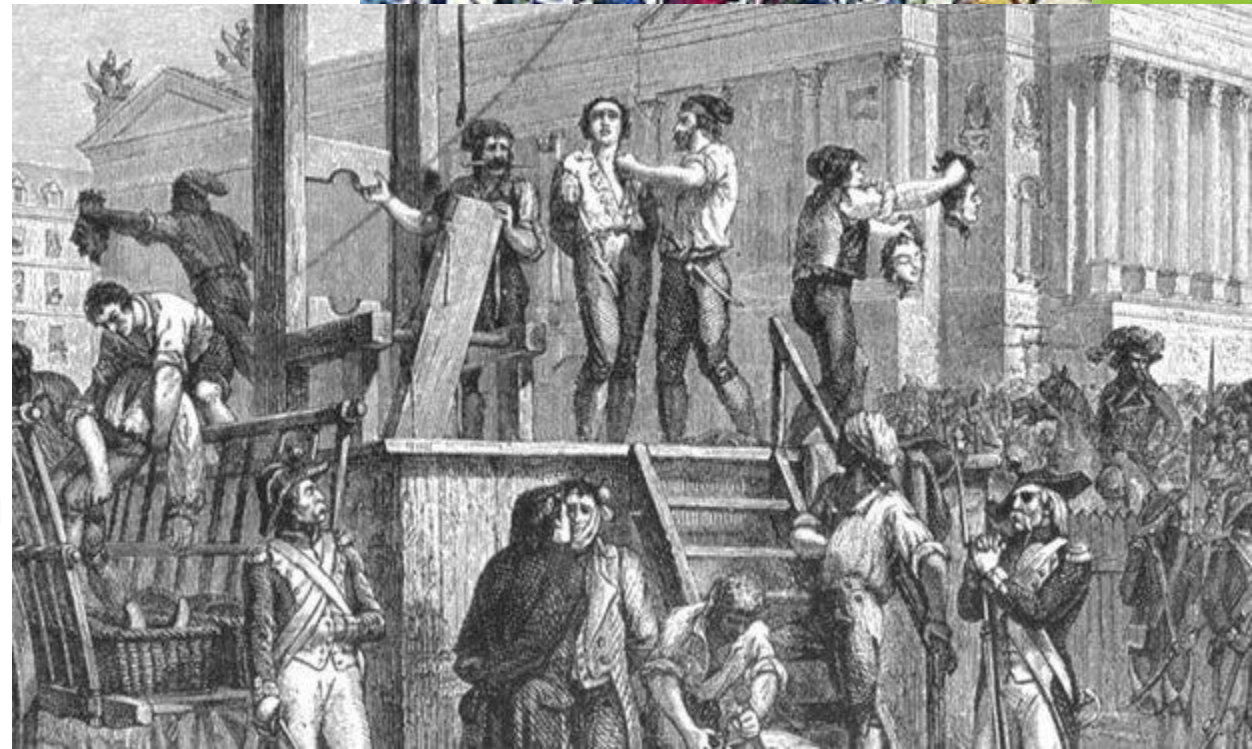
- ▶ Girondists tried to end the ROT initiated by the Jacobins
  - ▶ Opposition to the CPS caused many Girondists to be tried and executed for treason
- ▶ Georges Danton, who wanted to end the executions, was executed





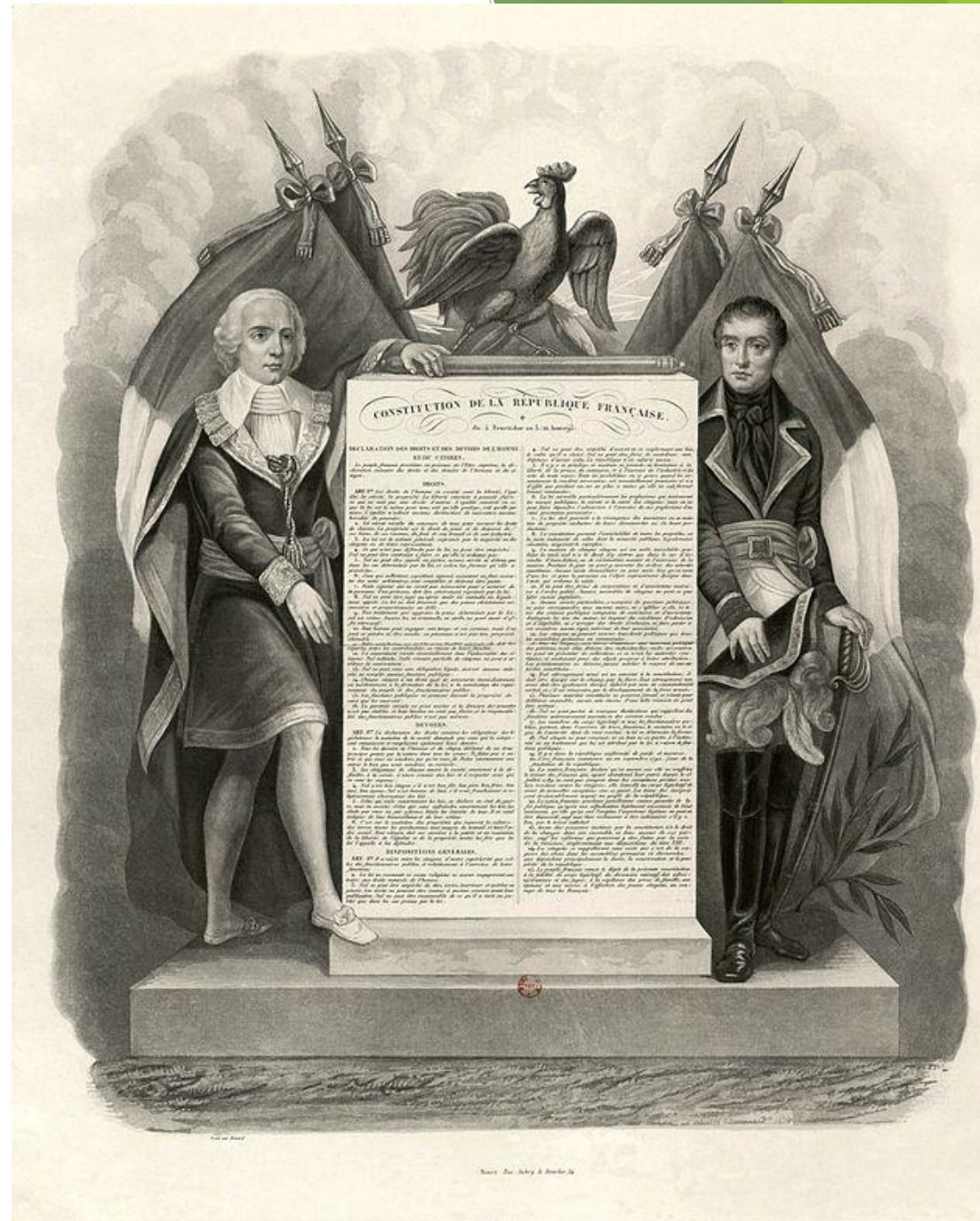
# End of the ROT

- ▶ Maximilien Robespierre became leader of the CPS
  - ▶ He continued the executions
  - ▶ Convention blamed Robespierre for the ROT
- ▶ Thermidorean Reaction - collapse of revolutionary fervor and the ROT
  - ▶ July 27, 1794 - ended the ROT
  - ▶ Robespierre was guillotined on July 28, 1794



# The Directory (Phase 4: 1795)

- ▶ Foreign invaders vanquished; the Convention inaugurates a new constitution; Reign of Terror over
- ▶ Constitution of Year III of the Republic (1795)
  - ▶ Similar to the Constitution of 1791
  - ▶ Two houses: Lower House and Council of Ancients





# 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

# Other Parting Reforms Passed by the Convention

Adopted the metric system

Dealt the final blow to feudalism by abolishing primogeniture (the system whereby the oldest son inherited all of his father's estate)

Drew up a comprehensive system of laws

Ended debt imprisonment

Ended slavery in France's colonies

Established a nationwide system of public education



# 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.

# Tennis Court Oath

The Third Estate declared itself to be the **National Assembly**.



Louis XVI locks out Third Estate & they relocate to nearby tennis court, vowing to create a constitution.



Louis XVI relented on Jun 23, 1789



Three estates to met together as the **National Assembly** and voted, by population, French Constitution.