

In 1790 the Assembly issued the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. This law stated that people in the parishes and dioceses would elect their clergy. The government—as a compensation for seizing church lands—assumed church expenses and paid the salaries of priests and bishops. The pope refused to allow the clergy to accept this arrangement, and most obeyed him. Some clergy became émigrés, while others helped the remaining nobles stir up opposition to the Revolution.

### The Constitution of 1791

In 1791 the National Assembly finally finished writing a constitution for France. This constitution limited the authority of the king and set up a government divided into three branches—executive, legislative, and judicial.

The constitution greatly reduced the powers of the king. He could not proclaim laws, nor could he block laws passed by the legislature. Taxpaying male voters elected the members of the one-house legislature—the Legislative Assembly. The National Assembly was dissolved, and no one who had been a member could run for election to the Legislative Assembly. Only men who owned considerable property could hold office. The Constitution of 1791 did not permit women to vote or run for office. Despite the guarantees of equal rights and powers by the Declaration of the Rights of Man, under France's new constitution wealthy men held most of the political power.

Louis XVI reluctantly consented to the limitations that the new constitution imposed on him. At the same time, he encouraged the émigrés to plot with foreign governments. The king hoped that such plots would lead to the overthrow of the new government and a return to the Old Regime.

Some of the king's advisers urged him to flee and seek help directly from nations friendly to the monarchy. On the night of June 21, 1791, Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette, their young son and daughter, and the king's sister slipped out of Paris and tried to escape to the Austrian Netherlands. Louis disguised himself as a coachman, but the military escort for his coach, as well as the enormous coach itself, aroused suspicion. Louis's profile was on every coin in the kingdom, and he was recognized and stopped at Varennes, a town near the border. The revolutionaries arrested Louis and his family and sent them back to Paris.

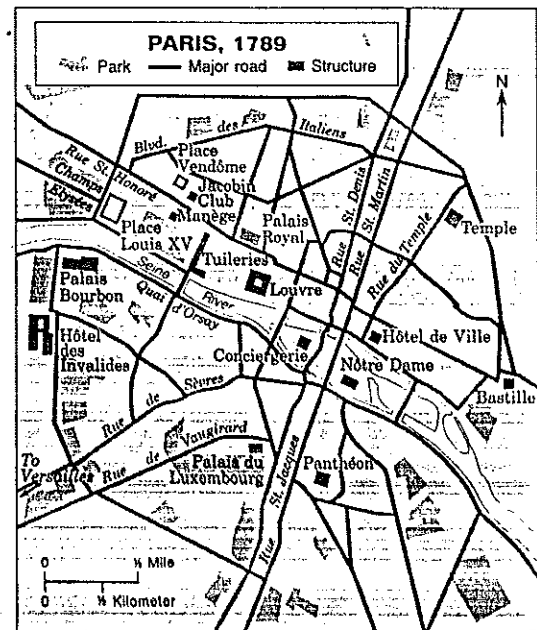
Despite Louis XVI's unsuccessful flight, the National Assembly decided to allow him to remain king. Louis pledged that he would abide by the new constitution. People hoped that under the new constitutional monarchy, France could recover without further revolutionary disturbances. Instead, the attempted escape marked a revolutionary turning point. People no longer trusted the king, and they publicly discussed creating a republic.

### The Legislative Assembly and War

The new government provided for by the Constitution of 1791 went into effect in September 1791, but it lasted less than a year. The revolutionaries had been more skillful in overthrowing the Old Regime than in creating a sound government to replace it. They had set up a weak executive and a powerful but inexperienced legislature elected by a minority of the population.

Three factions, or groups of people with differing attitudes, sat in the Legislative Assembly. One group believed that the Revolution had gone far enough. They considered the ideal form of

*Learning from Maps* Revolutionaries forced Louis XVI and his family to move to the Tuileries palace. What direction is Versailles from Paris?





*Learning from Pictures* During the Revolution, the food shortage was so severe that women in Paris stormed the Hôtel de Ville searching for food.

government to be one in which the king had limited authority. They were the conservatives—that is, they did not want to change existing conditions. Another group called the radicals wanted to get rid of the king, set up a republic, and institute far-reaching changes. A third group, the moderates, had no extreme views. They sided with either conservatives or radicals depending on the issues.

In the hall where the Legislative Assembly met, conservatives sat on the right, moderates in the center, and radicals on the left. Since the French Revolution, the terms *right* (conservative), *center* (moderate), and *left* (radical) have meant different slants of political opinion.

The Legislative Assembly frequently deadlocked on domestic issues, but it united in facing a foreign threat. Before the Legislative Assembly first met, Marie Antoinette's brother, Emperor Leopold II of Austria, and King Frederick William II of Prussia had issued the Declaration of Pillnitz. This declaration invited European rulers to help Louis XVI restore the monarchy to its full power.

The fear of foreign invasion electrified the Legislative Assembly. Each group in the Assembly

hoped that a successful foreign war would increase its own influence. Louis XVI favored war because he hoped that foreign armies would defeat the French army and restore his authority. Only a few farsighted people feared that war would lead to dictatorship. With only seven members opposed, in April 1792 the Legislative Assembly voted to declare war on Austria. It hoped to keep Prussia and the other German states out of the war, but it failed in that objective. Soon afterward an army of Austrian and Prussian troops invaded France and headed toward Paris.

### The End of the Monarchy

The invasion of France by Austrian and Prussian armies touched off mass uprisings in Paris. A group of radicals seized control of the city government and set up an organization called the Commune.\*

When the Prussian commander, the Duke of Brunswick, vowed to destroy Paris and punish the revolutionaries if any harm came to the royal family, members of the Commune threatened the Legislative Assembly with violence unless it abolished the monarchy. The Commune accurately accused Louis XVI of plotting with foreign monarchs to overthrow the Constitution of 1791. Revolutionary troops arrived from Marseilles to help defend Paris, singing their marching song—the *Marseillaise*—which became France's national anthem.

On August 10, 1792, the Legislative Assembly, coerced by the Commune, voted to suspend the office of king. Troops marched on the Tuileries palace, massacred many of the king's guards, and imprisoned Louis XVI and his family in the Temple (see map, page 431). The Commune now ruled Paris, and the Legislative Assembly tried to govern France.

With the monarchy suspended, France needed a new constitution. The Legislative Assembly voted itself out of existence and set a date for the election of delegates to a National Convention to draw up a new constitution for France. In late 1792, in the

\*People called *sans-culottes* (san-skyoo-LAH) offered the greatest support to the Commune. The term *sans-culottes* means "without knee breeches"—the craftworkers, artisans, apprentices, and small shopkeepers of Paris who belonged to the *sans-culottes* wore long pants, while the nobility and rich bourgeoisie wore knee breeches. It became unfashionable to dress like the nobles and the wealthy, so in this way, revolution and social class influenced fashion. In the 1800s and 1900s, all men in the West began wearing long pants.

midst of great danger, with a foreign war and political turmoil at home, France faced both a national election and a complete change of government.

## 4 The French Republic Faced Disorder at Home and War Abroad

The delegates to the National Convention were elected by **universal manhood suffrage**—every man could vote, regardless of whether he owned property. Although some 7 million qualified voters lived in France, only 10 percent cast their ballots.

### The National Convention

The National Convention held its first meeting in September 1792. The delegates, like those in the Legislative Assembly, were divided into three main groups. This time, however, no one supported the king. On the right sat the Girondists (juh • RAHN • duhsts), so called because many of them came from the department of the Gironde in southwestern France. The Jacobins (JAK • uh • buhns), members of a radical political club of that name, sat on the left. Among the most powerful Jacobins were Georges-Jacques Danton and Maximilien Robespierre. The third group consisted of delegates that had no definite views. Later most of these delegates came to favor the Jacobins. The Convention also included some Jacobins who were extreme radicals and wanted reforms that would benefit all classes in society, including the *sans-culottes*. Jean-Paul Marat (muh • RAH), a doctor from Paris, led these radicals.

The National Convention governed France for three years. As soon as it met, it proclaimed the end of the monarchy and the beginning of a republic. Besides drawing up a new constitution, it had to assume many of the responsibilities of government. It had to suppress disorder and revolt at home and fight a war against foreign invaders.

The National Convention tried Louis XVI on charges of plotting against the security of the nation. Putting a king on trial was serious business. The Convention studied carefully the records of the Long Parliament, which had tried and executed Charles I in England 143 years earlier. The Convention declared Louis XVI guilty and by a large margin sentenced him to death. On January 21, 1793, Louis was beheaded by the guillotine (GIL • uh • teen), a new device believed by its inventor to allow for quick and more humane executions.

### Exporting the Revolution

Even before Louis's execution, the National Convention heard encouraging news. The French army had defeated the Austrian and Prussian forces and stopped the invasion. The French followed up their military victories by invading the Austrian Netherlands and capturing Brussels. Joyful over these victories, the National Convention declared that the French armies would liberate all the peoples of Europe from oppression.

The French decision to export the ideas of the Revolution by force of arms alarmed the monarchs of Europe. Great Britain, the Netherlands, Spain, and the kingdom of Sardinia joined Austria and Prussia to form an alliance against France called the First Coalition. For a time, the enemies of France succeeded in driving French troops out of the Austrian Netherlands, and they invaded France again.

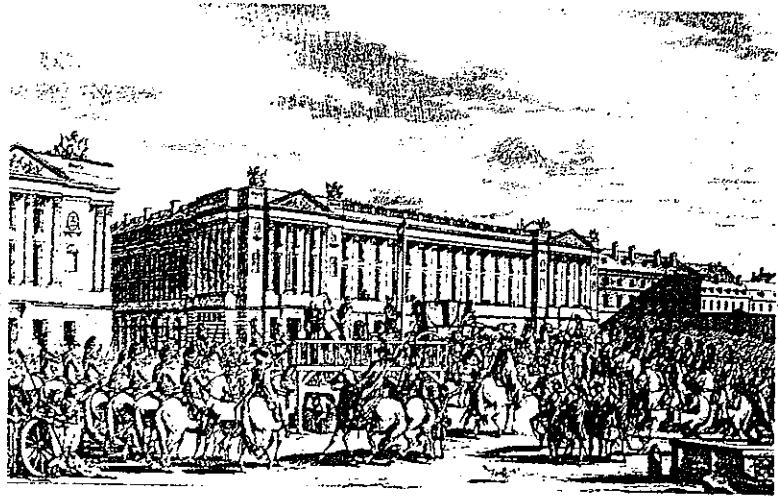
In 1793 the National Convention took steps to meet these dangers. It set up the Committee

### What If?

#### Louis XVI

Louis XVI was a weak monarch who was more interested in hunting than in governing France. How do you think world history would have been different if Louis XVI had been a strong king like Louis XIV?

*Learning from Pictures*  
*The beheading of Louis XVI*  
*shocked most of Europe.*  
*Even the United States,*  
*which a few years earlier*  
*had succeeded in its own*  
*revolution, condemned*  
*the execution.*



of Public Safety to direct the army in crushing all foreign invaders. It also established a court called the Revolutionary Tribunal to try "enemies of the Revolution."

To meet the danger of invasion, the Committee of Public Safety adopted conscription—the draft. All men between 18 and 45 were liable for military service. As a force of loyal, patriotic young men, the French army took on a new spirit. Many of the nobles who had been professional officers had fled as émigrés, so now men of all classes who proved their ability and daring could serve as officers. For the first time, a country called upon the talents and abilities of its entire population to fight a war.

Despite the army's optimism, the war created many problems for France. In the cities, working people demanded that the government do something about food shortages and rising prices. In the countryside the clergy refused to take the oath of loyalty to the Revolution. Instead they organized small armies of peasants to fight against it. Some nobles joined them. In western France, particularly in the department of the Vendée (vahn • DAY), the "Royal and Catholic army" fought against the French revolutionary army. The term that describes their activities is **counterrevolution**, because it was aimed counter to, or against, the Revolution. In short, counterrevolutionaries supported the Old Regime.

Jacobins, including Danton and Robespierre, controlled the Convention. They arrested many Girondist delegates who opposed their policies.

Charlotte Corday, a woman from Normandy influenced by Girondist propaganda, journeyed to Paris and assassinated Marat. The Revolutionary Tribunal sent her to the guillotine for her crime.

### The Reign of Terror

To meet the danger of opposition and revolt within France, the Convention started a systematic program to suppress all opposition. The Reign of Terror, as it became known, lasted from September 1793 to July 1794. According to one delegate, "What constitutes the Republic is the complete destruction of everything that is opposed to it."

The Revolutionary Tribunal conducted swift trials and handed down harsh sentences. It arrested, tried, and executed many people on mere suspicion. Marie Antoinette became an early victim of the Reign of Terror. The Jacobins directed the Reign of Terror not only against the nobility, however. The guillotine—the "national razor"—chopped off the heads of people of all classes suspected of disloyalty to the Revolution. The revolutionaries executed twice as many people from the bourgeoisie as nobles and clergy, and nearly three times as many peasants and laborers as people from all other classes. Danton and Robespierre sent their Girondist opponents and Olympe de Gouges to the scaffold. They also arrested the extreme radical followers of Marat. The Revolutionary Tribunal condemned Antoine Lavoisier, the famous chemist, because he had been involved