

tion had spoiled and corrupted him. In ancient past, people were in a natural state and there was perfect equality among them. But as civilization progressed, population increased and people handed over by means of an unwritten contract the power of administration to a person since then known

Social Contract
theory

as king. The king and his people entered into a so-called unwritten contract by which the king consented to govern for the good of his people. By enunciating this theory

Rousseau's theory
inspired a whole
nation to
revolution

Rousseau stated that according to this contract, people have every right to pull down a despotic ruler. Rousseau declared that 'man is born free but everywhere he is

in chains'. To return to the state of nature, Rousseau advocated the destruction of those institutions which have thus enslaved men. The clear opinion which Rousseau expressed about the right of the people to pull down and dethrone a despot, profoundly influenced the minds of French people. 'Contract Social' became the 'Bible' of French Revolutionaries.

Denis Diderot and D' Alembert were the other two great personalities of the period. Diderot, Alembert and a group of writers had edited the famous Encyclopædia in 17 volumes. These volumes contained essays and contributions from all the notable personalities of the age. The editors and writers of the Encyclopædia had been influenced by the rationalism of the period. They tried to give new definitions and interpretations to existing order of things. In several articles, the existing

Diderot,
D' Alembert—the
French
Encyclopædists

social and political structures were severely criticised.

New interpretations to old things The educated French people read these articles. They came to realise the evils of the existing order of things and these evils must have set them to thinking for remedial measures.

Physiocrats and their doctrine A school of economists known as the Physiocrats had criticised the anomaly in the economic life of the French people. Quesnay was the most prominent of these Physiocrats and he was opposed to state's control over industry, trade and commerce. He was a believer in the Laissez Faire doctrine and advocated that state's control of the economic life in any sphere was not desirable.

Why the Revolution first broke out in France ?

Gross social inequality and political injustice prevailed everywhere in the Continent The writings and opinions of the French philosophers definitely created an atmosphere favourable for a revolution. The people of France had been suffering from the evils of the social, economic and political inequality for a long time but they accepted it as their lot.

Not only the people of France but also the people throughout the length and breadth of Europe with the exception of England suffered from the same fate. Corruption, oppression, inequality had become the prevailing order of things.

The French people began to think in a different way. The French people like their friends in Prussia and Russia had been thinking up till now that this was their lot and that this was the Decree of God the Almighty. But the ignorance and superstition of the French people were demolished. They began to think critically. By so thinking they could realise the amount of gross injustice that had been done

to them. That they would think in this line was a thing of great importance because it put the oppressed French people on a new footing. While their brethren in Prussia and Russia remained contented to their position thinking

The philosophers were responsible for this

that it was their lot, the French people were making preparations to put an end to the age-long oppression and injustice. The

writings of the French philosophers were responsible for this. This is one reason why Revolution first broke out in France and not in any other country in Europe.

There was also a second reason for it. For a long time,

The educated and intelligent Bourgeois.

France had been centre of European culture and Paris had been the cultural capital of Europe. France not only produced philo-

sophers of the calibre of Montesque, Voltaire and Rousseau but also she had intelligent and educated people to understand them. The French Bourgeois was an intelligent educated class who were confident of their own ability. But

The bourgeois supplied leadership.

however ambitious and capable they might have been, they had no right. The Bourgeois greatly resented this and

sincerely desired to put an end to this unjust state. When the Revolution broke out, this Bourgeois supplied leadership to the Revolution and guided its course.

The French philosophers had prepared the French people

The American War of Independence precipitated the crisis.

for the Revolution. The condition of France was assuming the shape of a powder keg.

At that time, the American War of Independence broke out. French volunteers

under the leadership of La fayette went to America. France

gave monetary help to the American colonies. La Fayette returned as though from a new crusade. His followers talked of Liberty everywhere in France. The American War of Independence definitely brought Europe nearer to French Revolution.

Louis XVI tried his best to solve the perplexing financial problem, but failed. His nobility had power to pay taxes but they would not pay. The common people were overburdened with taxation and they could pay no more. At last driven to extremities, Louis XVI summoned the States General—the Parliament of France. With the summoning of States General the Revolution began. 'The train which had been laid by philosophy was thus fired by finance.'

'The train which had been laid by philosophy was fired by finance'.

The Breaking up of the Revolution

We have occasion to state that France was experiencing acute financial trouble when Louis XVI ascended the throne. The participation in the War of American Independence further deteriorated the condition and Louis XVI was forced to summon the States General or the French Parliament. This Assembly was convened after a period of some one hundred and seventy-six years. The session of the States General commenced on the 5th May, 1789.

Summoning of the States General

The States General was the Parliament of France. It was a feudal body and it had three chambers, each chamber representing one of the three estates—the noble, the clergy and the commons. Each chamber had a vote and no individual had the capacity to vote. This procedure of voting

The composition and procedure of voting

kept the Third Estate in permanent minority because the two privileged Estates always voted against the Third Estate.

There were complications in respect to this procedure of voting when the States General met. The members of the Third Estate expressed opinion that the States General was not a feudal assembly but a national assembly representing the whole nation and demanded that the meeting must not be held in three separate chambers but in a single chamber and that every member should have a vote in that assembly. The acceptance of this demand meant the transference of real power from the hand of the privileged Estates to the commons. Hence the privileged classes gave stout

resistance to this demand. In spite of every attempt to coerce them, the members of the Third Estate remained firm to their resolution. They took one more step towards the revolution when they declared that the members of the Third Estates have formed the National Assembly and they have right to act and speak for the whole nation. The king at first opposed these proceedings of the Third Estates. But he soon gave way and ordered the nobles and the clergy to sit in a single chamber with the commons. Thus, the Third Estate secured a very important triumph and at the very beginning, power passed out of the hands of the king and the privileged class.

Louis XVI now acted unwisely and he wanted to suppress the National Assembly by force. Soldiers were summoned to Paris and the popular minister Necker was dismissed. The people of Paris took alarm. They feared that the king would use armed forces to suppress the National Assembly. They

The demand of
the Third Estate

The Third Estate
secures a triumph.

Attack and
demolition of
Bastille

rose in fury and attacked the state prison known as Bastille (14th. July 1789). After a hot fight with the soldiers, the mob released the prisoners and razed the prison to the ground. Bastille was regarded as the symbol of royal despotism and oppression and its destruction was everywhere acclaimed as the triumph of common people.

The Parisian mob did not remain satisfied with the fall of Bastille. They took control of the city, established 'Communes' for its municipal administration. They organised a city militia known as the 'National Guard' to maintain law and order in the city and La Fayette was put in charge of this new force. With these activities of the Paris mob, the Revolution had definitely entered into a new phase. The king took alarm at these developments and sent away the troops.

Meanwhile, the destruction of Bastille had produced reaction throughout France. Everywhere the poor people and the peasantry rose against the nobles. They pillaged and plundered the wealth and property of the nobles and destroyed the symbols of the rights and privileges of feudal order. Many nobles fled from France with their families. The National Assembly was then in session in Paris. The effects of these risings against the nobles produced reactions even within the National Assembly. The assembled feudal lords thought it wise to give up their feudal rights instead of being forced to do so. In the open session of the Assembly, the nobles made declaration that they were giving up all their feudal prerogatives (4th August, 1789). Thus the effete

The Paris
Communes and
National Guards

Destruction of
feudal lords'
property

The nobles
voluntarily gave
up their feudal
rights.

feudal order with all its accompanying evils and social inequities were destroyed within a very short time.

But the abolition of the feudal rights and privileges could not reduce the extreme dearth of food and the dis-

The king with his family was brought to Paris by the women belonging to Third Estate.

content of the people. The National Assembly was framing the constitution of France—and it would have no immediate effect. So, there was outbursts of popular fury once again. The women of Paris

belonging to the common class marched in procession towards the Versailles Palace and forcibly brought the king, the queen with their families to Paris (5th Oct., 1789). After this incident, the king became practically a prisoner in the hands of the Paris mob. The king was forced to live in the Tuilleries palace in Paris under detention.

The States General, converted into National Assembly had been framing the future Constitution of France. For this work, it came to be known as the Constituent

The 'Declaration of Right' contained in the constitution that was framed by the Constituent Assembly.

Assembly because its chief function was to frame a Constitution. The preamble of the Constitution which the Constituent Assembly framed contained a 'Declaration of Right'. Equal rights of all classes, equality in the eye of law, individual liberty

and the sovereignty residing in the people—were the main features of this Declaration. The spirit of American Constitution were thus echoed in this new Constitution. This new Constitution ended the old order of things and introduced a new order. The new Constitution secured consent of the king on the 14th September, 1791.

The New Constitution

The new Constitution so framed may be briefly discussed. France was to be governed by the king with the help of a Parliament known as Legislative Assembly. The king would choose his own ministers and they were not to sit in the Assembly.

The provision of
the new
Constitution

Thus, the separation of the executive and legislative departments as advocated by Montesque found expression. The king's power was made subject to certain checks though he was still in possession of a moderate amount of power. The Legislature was to be in charge of all legislative functions. It was a single chamber assembly consisting of 745 members elected for a term of two years by a system of indirect representation based upon a limited franchise. Judiciary was separated and judges were made elective which however proved very unsatisfactory. The

New adminis-
trative subdivision

highly centralised administrative structure was fundamentally changed. Enough power and function was transferred to the local institutions. Old provinces were abolished and whole of France was divided into 83 'Departments' of uniform size and they were further subdivided into smaller administrative units. The vexed question of finance was solved

Changes in
the Church

by confiscating the properties of the church and issuing paper currency upon the security of this church property. The church was itself subjected to severe reform. The Civil Constitution of the clergy which had been drawn up had abolished the old Dioceses, each of the new Departments was made a Bishopric and bishops and priests were to be elected by

popular vote and were to be paid by the state. Thus, church became a department of the state.

Meanwhile the king became impatient. He could not bear his captivity any longer. Therefore, he made a plan to slip away from his position of captivity and leave France. But this attempted flight by the king and queen failed. Before they could cross the border of France, they were detected and again taken back to Paris (June 21, 1791). The attempted flight and failure had important consequences. Uptill now, the king was not

Flight of the
king and failure

Effects of this
abortive flight

very much disrespected and there had been no talk for its abolition. The leaders of the Revolution and the people lost their faith upon the king when he tried to leave France and seriously thought of replacing the monarchy by the republic. The attempted flight of the king and queen became highly inauspicious for the French monarchy.

The king was forcibly brought back from the frontier. He was not allowed to join the session of the Constituent Assembly next day. But time had not become ripe as yet for the abolition of the monarchy. So a compromise was arrived at between the Constituent Assembly and the king. When the Assembly had finished the frame work of the new Constitution the king gave his consent. The work of drawing a constitution being over, the Constituent Assembly voted its own dissolution.

New constitution
accepted by the
king

The Constituent Assembly had some achievements and not a few drawbacks. It secured for France a new constitution based on the legal equality and individual liberty of all people. This work of the Assembly had replaced an old and notorious social order based on social inequity,

oppression and corruption by a new order of state and society based on the the equality of men. The gross defect of the Assembly was its church policy. The church policy divided the revolutionaries and antagonized the whole of Catholic Europe.

The achievements and drawbacks of the Constituent Assembly

The session of the Legislative Assembly according to the New Constitution commenced on and from the 1st October 1791. The Constitution had provided that no member of the Constituent Assembly could be member to the new Assembly. So, the

The Legislative Assembly

members of the newly formed Legislative Assembly were all new without any experience. From the very first they became divided into several political groups. Notable among these groups were the Jacobins and the Girondists.

The Legislative Assembly faced two very difficult questions. The Constituent Assembly had nationalised the church property and Civil Constitution of the Clergy had been drawn up for the regulation of the Church. This had made the churchmen salaried officials of the state. While trying to apply the new regulations regarding church the Legislative Assembly declared

Order of the Legislative Assembly regarding Church and the emigree nobles.

that those clergymen who would not consent to abide by the rules and regulations of the Civil Constitution of the clergy would lose benefits of pay, pension and other advantages. Secondly, when the revolution broke out, many nobles had fled from France. These people had been termed as 'emigrees'. A proposal was passed in the Legislative Assembly which ordered the emigrees to return to France within a certain specified period failing which their

property would be confiscated and they would be given capital punishment on capture.

The Constitution had provided that a proposal must first be passed by the Assembly and after securing royal assent, it would become law. The clergy who opposed the Civil Constitution of the clergy were royalists. The emigres were supporters of the crown. So, it became difficult for the king to give his assent to these two proposals by which the clergy and the emigres would be chastised. The king vetoed both the resolutions. At this, there was popular fury again in Paris. The king was frightened and was forced to withdraw his veto.

The king's veto
and the fury of
the mob

The veto of the king and the violence of the Paris mob revealed that the revolution was passing into the hand of the mob. The poor hungry mob was ready to perpetrate any cruelty and misdeed. Meanwhile the revolution in France had attracted European attention and reaction.

The Revolution
and the Paris mob

European Attention Towards the Revolution

The French Revolution and the miserable state of the French monarchy had already attracted the uneasy attention of Europe. The monarchs of Europe could not view with satisfaction, the developments in France, the destruction of the old order, etc. The violence of the mob had created alarm and uneasiness. The Austrian Emperor Leopold was the brother of the French queen Marie Antionette. When the French king and queen failed to cross the frontier, the Austrian Emperor published from Padua some papers.

European atten-
tion towards
French Revolution

Padua and Pilmitz
declarations

(July 1791). By this, he asked the European monarchs to consider the danger of the French monarch as the danger of their own. In the same year, Prussia and Austria published a joint statement. This is known as the Declaration of Pilnitz. In this statement, both Prussia and Austria expressed concern at the courses of events in France. The Pilnitz Declaration contained a threat to attack France.

When the king vetoed the proposal of the Legislative Assembly, regarding the clergy and the emigree nobles, there was again an outburst of popular fury. It was found that the riotous mob was taking the upperhand in the Revolution. The mild Girondists were turned out of the Municipal Council of Paris and Jacobin 'Communes' were set up. When the country was in such a hot condition, the Prussian general Duke of Brunswick declared that the people of Paris would be punished 'with all the rigours of war' if the safety of Louis XVI was jeopardized to any extent in the case of his attacking France.

This declaration of Brunswick inflamed the whole country. On the 10th August 1792, the Parisian mob attacked the Tuilleries Palace and massacred the Swiss Guards of the king. The king was forced to take shelter in the Legislative Assembly Hall to save his life. Abolition of monarchy was fiercely demanded by the crowd and the Assembly voted the suspension of the monarchy on pressure and ordered the election of a National Convention to consider the basis of a new constitution. With this order the Legislative Assembly

Declaration of
Duke of Brunswick

Massacre of
Swiss guards

The king was
suspended

was dissolved and the constitution framed by the Constituent Assembly in 1791 was cancelled.

From 10th August onward, the courses of the Revolution assumed a new aspect. Up till now the bourgeois had been dominating the revolution. But the revolutionary Council or the Paris Commune took over the control of the Revolution. The new leaders of France were Danton, Marat and Robespierre and their main support was the Paris crowd. The National Convention ordered by the Legislative Assembly on August 10 met on Sept. 20, 1792 and next day voted the deposition of the king. With the deposition of the king, France became a Republic. A committee was appointed to draw up a new constitution for the Republic.

The French Revolution by this time became a matter of European concern. On April 20, Louis XVI had been forced to declare war on Austria. Prussia was also involved in the war. The French were defeated by the Austrian army everywhere. The humiliating defeat of the French army evoked laughter of the Austrians.—‘We need not swords but whips’—they said. But thinking the enemy helpless and their victory certain, the Austrians remained inactive for nearly two months. On July 25, Prussia declared war upon France and on the 28th of July the Prussian general Brunswick had issued his declaration which has been stated earlier.

His challenge resulted in the attack of August 10. On August 19, the joint Austro-Prussian army together with the emigree nobles invaded France. They scored easy wins. On Sept. 2, they captured Verdun—a place only fifteen days’

New turn of the
Revolution

Republic
established

Easy victory of
Austria and
Prussia

march from Paris and not a fortress lay between Verdun and Paris. The situation was indeed an alarming one. Danton, the new leader had ordered a house to house search for weapon

Second massacre
at Paris

and supporter of the king. As a result a few thousand people comprising of Girondists, royalists and relatives of the emigree nobles were arrested. And on the same day when Verdun fell at the hands of the enemy, Parisian mob attacked the prisons and massacred the inmates on the mere ground of suspicion. Altogether 1600 men lost their lives that day and it has been said that Danton and Marat had a hand in the incident. But the primary work of framing the constitution was long

The Girondist and
the Jacobin
controversy

postponed due to the severe tug of war to secure power between the Girondists and the Jacobins. The Girondists were composed mainly of Bourgeois. They were in favour of an orderly government and they disliked and distrusted the violence and nature respectively of the Parisian mob. The Jacobins were of course more organised and composed of men of more fierce nature. Their sole aim was to save France and they wanted to make the Paris commune supreme. At first the Girondists were supreme in the convention but they were soon driven out by the Jacobins who assumed control of it.

From September 1792 onwards, the need of preserving the state was supreme and this need dictated the course of events. The new form of government was naturally designed to give France security against invaders and traitors. From this necessity arose the Committee of the Public Safety which committed one of the most notorious tyrannies of history—the Reign of Terror of 1793 and 1794.

Need of preserving
France

On the day when the National Convention first met, there happened a small incident of very extra ordinary importance. The Prussian forces were checked in a small encounter at Valmy and it became the turning point of history.

French victory at Valmy and the withdrawal of the Prussians

France which was on the verge of disaster was saved. The Prussians began a slow retreat and crossed out of French border. The victory at Valmy marked the signal of a series of success of the revolutionaries. Savoy and Nice were conquered from the Sardinians, Belgium from Austria and the French forces occupied a strong position in the Rhinlands.

These victories intoxicated French people and they talked of the natural frontiers of France. The French revolutionaries proclaimed that they would supply armed

The propagandist activities of the revolutionaries

help wherever the people would rise against their rulers to end the ancient regime. Moreover, the French revolutionaries had become very propagandist and they tried to disseminate the ideas of the Revolution. These propagandas alarmed the monarchs of Europe. The success of the French forces against Austria and Prussia increased this alarm and they were very much apprehensive of the spread of revolutionary ideas in their own dominions.

Louis XVI had been deposed. But what was to be done with him? The Jacobins wanted to execute the king without a trial while the Girondists were in favour of putting the case of the king before the nation. While the breach between the Girondists and the Jacobins increased, the fate of Louis XVI was decided. He was found guilty of high

Execution of the king and the European war

treason and conspiracy against the nation and on January 21, 1793 he was executed. 'The execution of the king precipitated the European war which other causes had already brought with in sight'. By the end of March of the

The First Coalition
against France
and her critical
condition

same year, France found herself at war with greater portion of Europe viz. Austria, Prussia, England, Holland, Sardinia, Portugal, etc. Though Russia had been friendly to the coalition, she did not join the war. The European powers formed the first coalition against France. At first, the French army was defeated everywhere. The French army was driven out of Belgium by the Austrians, from the Rhine area by the Prussians and the English besieged Dunkirk. The condition of France became highly dangerous. To add to this, there was serious disturbance at home. The peasants of La Vindi rose against the republic and there existed strong royalist sentiment in the country. So, within and without, France faced a very critical situation.

The Reign of Terror

The Convention determined to face this situation with a strict hand. A committee of Public Safety was formed and it was empowered to take any measure to safeguard the national security of France. A Revolutionary Tribunal was formed and it secured the right to try all persons who were anti-revolutionary and traitors to the country. This measure was taken by the National Convention to meet the grave emergency.

The new regime at first showed leniency towards the rebels of La Vindi and peaceful attitude towards the enemies

of France. But this did not prove very much successful.

Severity and mass
execution in
guillotine

Then the National Convention punished the rebels heavily. Thousands of rebels were executed in guillotine, a new machine for execution. A Law of Suspects was passed

and thousands of people were executed on the mere suspicion that they were anti-revolutionary and supporters of the king.

Among those who became victims to the Law of Suspects

Reign of Terror

were included Marie Antoinette, the queen of Louis XVI and Madame Rolland, the

Girondist minister. The wild ferocity with which the Government of France tried to face the situation has earned the name of Reign of Terror.

The Committee of Public Safety formed a large army by conscription and this army was loyal to the republical government. With the help of this army

Defeat of the
enemies

the enemies of France were defeated everywhere. Internal revolt had already been put

down. So France was once more safe.

The justification of the Reign of Terror solely depended upon the amount of success it achieved. The Orderly Government in France had broken down. Apart from

Was the Reign of
Terror justified

the rebellion of the peasants of La Vindi, there were royalist supporters who were ready to rise against a government which had

killed the king and destroyed the church. To bring back order in the country, it became necessary

The Reign of
Terror was forced
by the desperate
need of the country

to create in the public mind a sense of undivided loyalty to the government.

Moreover, internal disorder must be put to an end in the face of external danger and the enemies

of France had crossed the French border at several places. The wild ferocity which was displayed excellently served this twofold purpose viz. establishment of order at home and defeat of the enemy that knocked at the door. The condition of France was desperate at that time and a

Conclusion desperate process was devised to face it. It is easily felt that a reign of terror can never be supported. But it must be admitted that despite gross defects and ferocity, the Reign of Terror had saved France from disaster. It must be said that the Reign of Terror "was in short, a marvellous product of practical statesmanship and it saved the Revolution."

In connection with the Reign of Terror, two names were prominent. They were Danton and Robespierre. They were responsible for the bloody excesses during the Reign of

Danton and Robespierre and their fall Terror. Towards the middle of the year 1794, Danton thought to reduce the proportion of cruelty. Danton gave his life in guillotine on the charge of misappropriation of government money. Robespierre became all in all in the government. But the necessity of the Reign of Terror had come to an end and there was a reaction against it. Robespierre was captured along with his followers and guillotined on the 28th July 1794. With his fall ended the Reign of Terror.

Directory and Rise of Napoleon Bonaparte

The National Convention had drafted a new Constitution for France. This new constitution entrusted the executive function to a Board of Five Directors. For this reason, this constitution has been given the name of Directory. A two-chambered

The Govt. of the Directory

House consisting of a Council of Ancients and a Council of Five Hundred formed the Legislature. This new form of administration was in vogue from November 1795 to November 1799.

The constitution had provided that two-third members of the new Legislature would be appointed from among the members of the National Convention. This did not satisfy the National Guards—they attacked the Convention. Napoleon Bonaparte set cannons in the streets of Paris and by a show of determination, saved the Convention. By saving the Convention, he saved France from being overflooded with another course of anarchy and bloody excesses. For the first time in seven years, the Parisian mob had secured a sound battering. This event was important for another reason. It marked the beginning of the brilliant career of Napoleon Bonaparte.

During the Reign of Terror, after initial defeats, the French army secured victory everywhere. The Convention raised a huge army by conscription. The fighting spirit of the French received impetus when it was ordered that promotion would depend on the military skill displayed and that higher military posts would no longer be reserved for the noble class. The ideals of the French Revolution was to establish an order of society where there was no discrimination between different classes—where there was equality before law. The immediate object of the Revolution was to overthrow the oppressive political and social set-up. When, therefore, career was made open to talent,

The strong action
of Napoleon
Bonaparte

Fighting spirit of
the French army
increased

the French soldiers fought under inspiration. This caused French success everywhere.

The English were compelled to raise the siege of Dunkirk. They were further obliged to leave the French port of Toulon thanks to the exertions of the young colonel Napoleon Bonaparte. Prussia concluded with France the treaty of Bassel and left the Coalition. So, the first coalition broke down. England, Austria and Sardinia were left in the field to fight with Revolutionary France. The young general Bonaparte was given the responsibility to tackle Sardinia and Austria. Napoleon planned to fight these two countries separately and to proceed with quickness.

Victory of
France

Napoleon attacked Sardinia first and secured success easily and quickly. Sardinia gave up to Napoleon some fortresses and withdrew from the war. The turn of Austria came next. Napoleon secured two victories over Austria at Arcola and at Rivoli. When he made an advance towards Rome, the Pope took alarm and concluded treaty with Napoleon. Napoleon created the Cisalpine Republic with the small kingdoms which were under the Pope. When the war with Austria again began, Austria was forced to conclude the Treaty of Campo-Formio (October 17, 1797). Austria withdrew from the Coalition and the Italian principalities of Austria were incorporated in the Cisalpine Republic.

Victory at Arcola
and Rivoli

Treaty of Campo-
Formio, 1797.

Only England remained to be defeated of the powers that had formed the First Coalition against France. To Napoleon two ways were open to chastise England. He would either