**Timeline - Key Events of the French Revolution (1789-1794)**

Over four years after the start of the French Revolution, France descended into a period commonly known as the “Reign of Terror,” when over 16,000 people were executed for allegedly opposing the Revolution. The Reign of Terror began when the Committee of Public Safety took over the National Convention, the third government that had been established since the start of the French Revolution. The timeline below lists the governments and major reforms that were established under each.

**Name of Government Year Reforms**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **National Assembly** | **1789** | **Storming of the Bastille**  **End of Feudalism**  *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* |
| **Legislative Assembly** | **1791**  **July 1792** | **Constitutional Monarchy with King as symbolic ruler**  **Property requirements for voting**  **Prussia and Austria begin invading France** |
| **National Convention** | **Sept. 1792**  **Jan. 1793** | **Jacobins take control**  **Constitutional Monarchy abolished**  **France becomes republic with universal suffrage**  **Louis XVI executed** |
| **Committee of Public Safety takes over National Convention** | **July 1793**  **Sept. 1793**  **July 1794** | **Decree against Profiteers (Doc. A)**  **Law of Suspects (Doc. B)**  **Robespierre, leader of Reign of Terror is executed**  **Reign of Terror ends** |

**Reign of Terror Textbook Excerpt**

**The Terror Grips France** Foreign armies were not the only enemies of the French Republic. The Jacobins had thousands of enemies within France itself. These included peasants who were horrified by the king’s execution, priests who would not accept government control, and rival leaders who were stirring up rebellion in the provinces. How to contain and control these enemies became a central issue.

**Robespierre Assumes Control** In the early months of 1793, one Jacobin leader, Maximilian Robespierre, slowly gained power. Robespierre and his supporters set out to build a “republic of virtue” by wiping out every trace of France’s past. Firm believers in reason, they changed the calendar, dividing the year into 12 months of 30 days and renaming each month. This calendar had no Sundays because the radicals considered religion old-fashioned and dangerous. They even closed all churches in Paris, and cities and towns all over France soon did the same.

In July 1793, Robespierre became leader of the Committee of Public Safety. For the next year, Robespierre governed France virtually as a dictator, and the period of his rule became known as the Reign of Terror. The Committee of Public Safety’s chief task was to protect the Revolution from its enemies. Under Robespierre’s leadership, the committee often had these “enemies” tried in the morning and guillotined in the afternoon. Robespierre justified his use of terror by suggesting that it helped French citizens to remain true to the ideals of the Revolution. . .

Thousands of unknown people were also sent to their death, often on the flimsiest of charges. For example, an 18-year-old youth was sentenced to die for cutting down a tree that had been planted as a symbol of liberty. Perhaps as many as 40,000 were executed during the Terror. About 85 percent were peasants or members of the urban poor or middle class—for whose benefit the Revolution had been launched.

Source: *Modern World History: Patterns of Interaction.* Evanston, IL: McDougal

Littell (2006), pp. 226-227.

**Document A: Decree Against Profiteers (ORIGINAL)**

*Source: In July 1793, faced with an angry and hungry population, the leaders of the Committee of Public Safety passed the “Decree Against Profiteers.” The law accused “profiteers” in the countryside of hoarding or monopolizing grain in order to raise the price of bread.*

26 July 1793

1. Monopoly is a capital crime.

2. Those who keep out of circulation essential merchandise or commodities, which they buy and hold stored in any place whatsoever without offering them for sale daily and publicly, are declared guilty of monopoly.

3. Those who cause essential commodities and merchandise to perish, or willfully allow them to perish, likewise are declared monopolists.

4. The essential commodities and merchandise are: bread, meat, wine, grain, flour, vegetables, fruit, butter, vinegar, cider, brandy, charcoal, tallow, wood, oil, soda, soap, salt, dried, smoked, salted, or pickled meat and fish, honey, sugar, hemp, paper, worked and unworked wool, hides, iron and steel, copper, clothing, linen, and generally all stuffs, as well as the raw materials used in their manufacture, excepting silk goods.

5. During the week following the proclamation of the present decree, those who have on hand, in any place whatsoever in the Republic, any of the merchandise or commodities designated in the preceding article, shall be required to make a declaration thereof to the municipality or section in which the store of the said commodities or merchandise is situated. The municipality or section shall have the existence thereof verified, as well as the nature and quantity of the items contained therein, by a commissioner whom it shall appoint for such purpose. The municipalities or sections are authorized to grant him an indemnity on behalf of the operations with which he is charged, which indemnity shall be determined by a decision made in a general assembly of the municipality or section.

6. The verification completed, the owner of the commodities or merchandise shall declare to the commissioner, on the summons made to him therefor and issued in writing, whether he wishes to offer the said commodities or merchandise for sale, in small lots and to all comers, three days, at the latest, after his declaration. If he consents thereto, the sale shall be held in such manner, without interruption or delay, under the supervision of the commissioner appointed by the municipality or section.

7. If the owner will not or cannot hold said sale, he shall be required to submit to the municipality or the section a copy of the invoices of prices pertaining to the merchandise verified as present in the store. The municipality or section shall give him an acknowledgment thereof, and shall then charge a commissioner with holding the sale thereof, according to the manner above indicated, fixing the price so that the owner may receive, if possible, a commercial profit according to the invoices communicated. If, however, the high price of the invoices makes such profit impossible, the sale thereof shall take place, nevertheless, without interruption, at the current price of said merchandise; it shall also take place, in the same manner, if the owner is unable to produce any invoice. The amounts resulting from the proceeds of such sale shall be remitted to him as soon as it is finished, the expenses incurred being first deducted from said proceeds.

8. One week after publication and proclamation of the present decree, those who have not made the declarations prescribed thereby shall be considered monopolists, and, as such, punished with death; their property shall be confiscated, and the commodities or merchandise which constitute a part thereof shall be placed on sale as indicated in the preceding articles.

9. Those convicted of making false declarations, or of countenancing substitutions of names of persons or property relative to warehouses and merchandise, likewise shall be punished with death. Public functionaries, as well as the commissioners appointed to effect the sales, who are convicted of abusing their offices to protect monopolists, also shall be punished with death.

*Decree against Profiteers*: Stewart, J.H. (1951). *A Documentary survey of the French*

*Revolution*, 469–71. New York: Macmillan. Retrieved

October 5, 2012, from: <http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/414/>

**Vocabulary**

**capital:** punishable by death

**decree:** an official order

**monopoly:** total control over something

**municipality:** local government

**commodities:** things that can be bought or sold

**Document B: Law of Suspects (ORIGINAL)**

*Source: By September 1793, the leaders of the Committee of Public Safety faced growing counter-revolutionary uprisings and mounting fear of foreign invasion. They responded by passing the Law of Suspects, which established revolutionary courts to try anyone suspected of treason against the revolution. The passage below is an excerpt from the law.*

1. Immediately after the publication of the present decree, all suspects within the territory of the Republic and still at large, shall be placed in custody.

2. The following are deemed suspects:

1– those who, by their conduct, associations, comments, or writings have shown themselves partisans of tyranny or federalism and enemies of liberty;

2– those who are unable to justify, in the manner prescribed by the decree of 21 March, their means of existence and the performance of their civic duties;

3– those to whom certificates of patriotism have been refused;

4– civil servants suspended or dismissed from their positions by the National Convention or by its commissioners, and not reinstated, especially those who have been or are to be dismissed by virtue of the decree of 14 August;

5– those former nobles, together with husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, sons or daughters, brothers or sisters, and agents of the *émigrés*, who have not constantly demonstrated their devotion to the Revolution;

6– those who have emigrated between 1 July 1789, and the publication of the decree of 30 March (8 April 1792), even though they may have returned to France within the period established by said decree or prior thereto.

Source: *Law of Suspects*: Duvergier, J-B. (1793). *Collection complète des lois, décrets,*

*ordonnances, règlements, avis du conseil d'état . . . de 1788 a 1830*

*. . .* , 2d ed., 110 vols. Paris. 6:172–73. Retrieved October 5, 2012, from:

<http://sourcebook.fitchburgstate.edu/history/lawofsuspects.html>

**Vocabulary**

**certificates of patriotism:** proof of patriotism required to serve in military

**émigrés:** people who leave their own country to settle in another, usually for political reasons