

Importance of the french revolution



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The French Revolution is a moment in France's history that brought upon a political upheaval and chaotic mess. What many people do not realize is the enormous impact the French Revolution has on current European Civilization and other societies in the world. The revolution changed not only France, but other countries as well. Consequently, the revolution was not a mark in history, but a stepping stone. The Revolution started a domino effect which led to imperative events in the world's history and inspired many notorious leaders. The French Revolution was a historical moment for the lower class of society, change.

Unlike the Old Regime the aristocracy was "...stripped of its privileges" and no longer maintained a dominant social status. The French Revolution was able to annihilate the feudal system by removing any trace of feudalism. Some changes were that peasants were no longer demanded to pay unreasonable dues or religious tithes (Sherman). Corporations and monopolies were eliminated and the national market was unified. In The Decree Abolishing the Feudal System it states in the first article that, " The National Assembly hereby completely abolishes the feudal system.

It decrees that, among the existing rights and dues...all those originating in or representing real or personal serfdom shall be abolished without indemnification"(The Decree1). The Revolution abolished the feudal system and brought upon a new way of living, capitalism, which is still practiced today throughout Europe. Throughout European history the Catholic Church had a large role in European affairs. Consequently, when the revolution occurred, the Catholic Church lost most of their independence (McCrorry 58).

The French revolution saw many of the worst aspects of the Old Regime in the Catholic Church (Sherman 518) since they did enjoy “ extensive property rights and special privileges under the Old Regime” (Kaiser 3). Officials of the Revolution sold, rededicated, and even transformed the church buildings. “ The sale of church land was seen as a sort of guarantee that the forces of reaction would not prevail” (McManners 29). Another reason why the church land was sold off was because of the enormous interest people had in the land (McManners 29).

Some drastic revolutionaries even went to the extreme of mutilating statues by sending them to the guillotine. The most drastic change was when some of the clergy were sought out for prosecution. Since the revolution the “ religious liberty to non-catholics and the growing freedom of the press” (Cahier1) grew extensively. This resulted in more Christian religions. The impact of the revolution did not stay within France, but it crossed the country and even the ocean by having a powerful impact on the opinions of nations outside of France (Sherman 519).

Many thought that the revolution was a great idea, and supported the revolutionaries’ ideas of freedom. This quickly changed, however, when they realized the threat that was imposed on their own monarchy and aristocracy positions. Even though the idea of the Revolution was not fully supported after violence erupted, these ideals still made an enormous impact on other nations. In Poland patriots were inspired by the French, and used this inspiration to try and gain independence from Russia. Unfortunately, the attempts for Poland failed.

However the inspiration of the French Revolution did not end there, ...200 years later Chinese students, who weeks before had fought their government in Tiananmen Square, confirmed the contemporary relevance of the French Revolution when they led the revolutionary bicentennial parade in Paris on July 14, 1981 (Kaiser 6). Just the inspiration of the revolution made a significant impact on Poland and China. Another to be inspired was Ireland. In Ireland, the motto of liberty, equality, and natural rights flourished the streets. The Irish took heart to the motto, which inspired them to rise against their British lords.

In An Address to the people of Ireland it states that: The Aristocracy of Ireland which exists only by our slavery, and is maintained in its pomp and splendour by the sale of our livers, liberties and properties, will tumble in the dust;...we shall have a wise and honest legislature, chosen by the People, whom they will indeed represent. And whose interest, even for their own sakes. They will strenuously support. ...Your peasantry will no longer be seen in rags and misery, their complaints will be examined, and their suffering removed;...The unnatural union between Church and state...will be dissolved. (Flood 9)

The Irish wanted a legislation that was free, and took in consideration the people of Ireland, not the people of Britain. This exact idea is what the French had in bedded into the Irish minds, liberty, equality, and natural rights of man. The Irish also gained military support from the French. The French planned an invasion to help the Irish defeat Britain, but because of horrible communication the invasion never took place (Flood 1). Just this encouragement from the French revolution changed Ireland forever by

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making Ireland a republic. Again the Revolution was heard in another country, St. Domingo, an island in the Caribbean.

The island of St. Domingo was owned by the French, during the Revolution. The tiny island in the Caribbean was quite different than Ireland and Poland since it had a direct connection with France. With the revolution declaring liberty, equality, and natural rights for man, slaves became hopeful of freedom. Regrettably the National Assembly did not consider the colonies as a part of the new constitution. Antoine-Pierre Barnave proclaimed that “...the National Assembly declares that it never intended to introduce innovations into any of the branches of indirect or direct commerce between France and its colonies...”(Barnave 2).

This inconsideration that the National Assembly showed, outraged the slaves of St. Domingo and also many other French citizens. An influential newspaper wrote ...It is not true that Negroes are narrow-minded. Experience has proven that they have succeeded in the sciences, and if the mindlessness in which they are plunged makes them believe that Whites are a superior race, liberty will soon bring them up to the same level. As for what people say of their wickedness, it will never equal the cruelty of their masters. (A Left-Wing) Since the island was mainly slaves, and with the slaves outnumbering the white plantation owners, a revolt began.

A wealthy French plantation owner described the revolt that slaves “slaughtered and torched much of the countryside hereabouts...How can we stay in a country where slaves have raised their hands against their masters” (Sherman 519). The fight for freedom was a long vicious fight

which led to an independent St. Domingo, which is now Haiti. Again this island is another example how the French Revolution changed a country during the 18th century and the change is still being felt in the 21st century. During the chaos of the Revolution, a leader emerged; Napoleon Bonaparte. Napoleon was and still is an important figure in French society. He achieved many great things such as bringing the revolution to an end, creating the modern French government and state, and helping to spread the ideals of the revolution across Europe (Haine 90). Napoleon also created a civil code which is also referred to as the Napoleonic Code. The code affected several countries in and outside of Europe. In South America many Spanish colonies, such as Argentina gained their independence from Spain and "...adapt[ed] the Napoleonic Code as their basis of civil law" (Sherman 528).

The Napoleonic Code continued to inspire other nations, so that when the government and laws were reformed they would look towards the civil code. (Sherman 528). The code spread quickly throughout Europe since " Napoleon had imposed or adopted the code within several European countries" (Haine 90) during the Napoleonic Wars. He also changed the map of Europe due to the Napoleonic wars. Large countries such as Prussia and the Holy Roman Empire are nonexistent. Napoleon also affected the United States territory by selling Louisiana to America.

By leading the revolution, stimulating the economy and changing France, Europe and even the United States it is evident that napoleon an emergent leader of the French Revolution caused on enormous impact. The French Revolution started a snowball ball effect towards World War II by inspiring

fascism. Fascism was the key ingredient to World War II, and without it, the war would not have been the same. Author, George L. Mosse, wrote in *Journal of Contemporary History* explained how the French Revolution inspired many of the Nazi's actions such as their fascination with death, the use of martyrs, the obsession with beauty of war and youth (7).

Hitler used the French Revolution as an example. He stated that “ The purpose of a revolution is not to tear down the whole building, but to remove what is unsuitable and to build again upon the space thus vacated”(Mosse 12). This exact statement of how Hitler saw a revolution was exact opposite of how the French executed theirs. During the French Revolution one of the most significant fights was the tearing down of the Bastille. The revolutionaries tore the building down literally brick by brick.

Hitler also saw the French Revolution as a failure, and that the “ French Revolution, manipulated by the Jews, had produced evil rather than good” (Mosse 12). It can be concluded that the French Revolution had provided Hitler with more anger towards the Jewish population. In general the “ French Revolution stood at the beginning of a democratization of politics which climaxed in twentieth century fascism”(Mosse 20) The French Revolution and the movement towards fascism played a significant role in the Nazi era. Though their similarities were noted long after each battle, they both stood for the same thing.

Mosse noted that the French Revolution had regarded itself as a new departure, creating a nation of brothers, while some of its radicals had talked about creating a new man. That was precisely what Mussolini had in mind:

fascism should create a new type of man, no longer a product of the present order. (20) The French Revolution is the most significant event in European history that gave rise to European civilization. It helped redefine the way people lived by abolishing the feudal system and exerting more freedoms.

The Catholic Church was completely reconstructed inside and out. They no longer played a role in political affairs, and allowed for non-catholic religions to up rise. This is significant to present European civilization because it has allowed the transformation for other religions. The revolution also impacted several countries. The laws of the countries were directly impacted from the revolution. The revolution also help shape many infamous leaders like Hitler and Napoleon. The French revolution is a moment in history in which defined the rest of Europe's history.