Napoleon Bonaparte and the Aftermath of the French Revolution

Notebook Assignment # 7
Including some details from slides, answer questions on notetaking guide in own words.

Brainstorm:
What are some reasons people might actually want a military dictator after a violent and radical revolution?
“Political Spectrum” During the French Revolution and Beyond

Explain the definition of a “political spectrum” in your own words
Napoleon Bonaparte

• Was born in 1769 in French controlled island of Corsica to a middle class family, attended military school & joined army at 16

• Became a General at 27 years old and considered military “genius” in war with Prussia & Austria during the Revolution

• Quickly became a national hero during the revolution and war with Austria & Prussia because of victories he led and inspiring his men to save France from foreign invasion
The Reign of Terror Sets Stage for Napoleon to Take Power

Radicals lead by Maximilien Robespierre attempts to remake France into a “republic of virtue” with no trace of the Catholic Church or Monarchy. Anyone who is even suspected of questioning the revolution faces the guillotine by order of the “Committee of Public Safety”.

Thousands are executed during the “Reign of Terror” in 1793 & 1794. The Terror eventually ends when Robespierre himself is executed.

France comes under control of more moderate & conservative leaders who form yet another government called the “Directory”. This government promises to “restore order” to France. The leaders of the Directory turn to the military for help and Napoleon was the “star” of the French military at the time.

Why did Napoleon appeal to many people in revolutionary France?

Is the cartoon supporting or criticizing the radicals? Explain
Napoleon Seizes Political Power

- The leaders of the Directory were corrupt and many feared a return to the Reign of Terror by 1799
- Napoleon aggressively assumes power with support of French military (rules until 1814)
  - This quick seizure of power called a “coup d’état”
    - Pronounced: *koo dey-tah*
    - Definition: a sudden and decisive action in politics resulting in a change of government illegally or by force.
  - The Directory is dissolved
  - Napoleon makes himself “1st Consul” of France…a “temporary” dictator
- In 1800 France votes for yet another new constitution
  - The 5th form of government in ten years!
  - Napoleon wins “Plebiscite” – a vote by the people to approve of the new constitution and make Napoleons rule “official”
Napoleon Brings Changes to France

• Stabilizes French Economy
  – Fairer tax, currency & banking system established

• Reduced government corruption
  – Runs government in a my systematic & “military” manner
  – Government jobs & promotions were based on merit (not connections)

• Established Lycées (free public schools)
  – Majority of citizens could attend school for the first time

• Made peace with the Catholic Church (Concordat)
  – Traditional religion allowed again

• Rewrites the Laws of France…see next slide
Napoleonic Code of National Laws Established

- Comprehensive new set of written laws created under leadership of Napoleon
  - Establishes stability with consistent national laws
  - Ensured rights of peasants
  - Eliminated many tax injustices

- However:
  - Reduces women’s rights
  - Restricted freedom of speech & the press
  - Restored slavery in French colonies
Napoleon Builds an Empire

In 1804 Napoleon declares himself emperor for life (not temporary “1st Consul”) and another “plebiscite” approved this.

Who is crowning Napoleon in image below?  Relevance?
Napoleon Attempts to Conquer Europe

• Napoleon sells Louisiana territory in North America to US to finance military exploits in Europe…aka the “Napoleonic Wars”

• Napoleon won victories against Austria, Prussia, Switzerland & Italy – French armies dominate Europe for about 10 years in the early 1800’s
  – Countries forced to sign peace treaties with France granting Napoleon direct or indirect control over most of continental Europe…see map on next slide

• Napoleon turns attention towards England but loses naval Battle of Trafalgar in 1805 and abandons plans to take over England
Napoleon’s Empire by 1812: Huge but UNSTABLE
Explain the message of the political cartoon below.
Napoleon’s Decline

3 main reasons:

1) His excessive ambition and egotism

2) The “Continental System” of European economic control by France fails…conquered nations do not “buy in” when economic problems hit under Napoleonic rule

3) Overextension of his armies. Tries to fight in too many places at the same time and spreads French armies too thin.
   - Example: Fighting in Spain/Portugal (Peninsular Campaign) to the west at same time as battling Russia/Germany/Austria to the east (Scorched Earth Policy)
   - Eventually too many enemies “gang up” on Napoleon for his armies to handle
     • British, Russians, Prussians & Swedish (among others) all join together and defeat Napoleon
The End of Napoleon’s Rule

- Napoleon captured and exiled in 1814, escapes in 1815, attempts a “comeback” and loses before he is finally (permanently) exiled until his death of cancer in 1821
- The Napoleonic Wars did **not** provide any lasting territorial gains for France
- The Napoleonic Code & some government reforms proved lasting
- “He was as great as a man can be without virtue” says a famous French historian of Napoleon…meaning of quote?
The Congress of Vienna - 1815

Led by Prince Metternich of Austria, the major powers of Europe meet in Vienna, Austria to try and undo what Napoleon had done and restore “legitimate” monarchs.

**Anti-Revolutionary in some ways:** The royal leaders at the Congress of Vienna revise the borders and restore “legitimate” rulers across Europe. Leaders agree to come to each others aid to stop revolutionary movements in the future.

**Pro-Revolutionary in other ways:** Absolute monarchies ended (except in Russia) and limited, constitutional monarchies developed across most of Europe enhancing democratic ideals and nationalism.

**Why do you think conservative royal leaders at the Congress of Vienna agreed to end absolute monarchy?**
The Successes and Failures of the French Revolution??

Intro French Revolution Debate