Napoleon Bonaparte and the Aftermath of the French Revolution

Notebook Assignment #7
Pages 229-237
Including some details from slides and textbook, answer questions on notetaking guide in own words.

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

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

• Was born in 1769 in French controlled island of Corsica to a middle class family, attended military school & joined army at 16 and worked his way up in the military due to his skill, not family connections

• Became a general in the French army at 27 years old and was considered military genius and national hero after he successfully defeated foreign armies who wanted to restore the monarchy during the French Revolution

Why did the Reign of Terror and Napoleons military background appeal to many people in revolutionary France?
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 takes power from the Directory with the support of the French military (he stays in power 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 government 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 a “Plebiscite” – a vote by the people to approve of the new constitution and make Napoleons rule “official”
Napoleon Brings Positive Changes to France

- **Stabilizes French Economy**
  - Fairer tax, currency & banking system established

- **Reduced government corruption**
  - Runs government in a more systematic & “military” manner
  - Government jobs & promotions were based on merit (not family connections)

- **Established Lycées (free public schools)**
  - Now the majority of citizens could attend school for the first time

- **Made peace with the Catholic Church (called the “Concordat”)**
  - Traditional religion including holidays and Catholic schools and charities are allowed again which is popular with many average French people

- **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, Napoleonic Code also:
  
  – Reduces women’s rights
  – Restricted freedom of speech & the press
  – Restored slavery in French colonies
Napoleon Makes Himself Emperor

In 1804 Napoleon declares himself emperor for life (not temporary “1st Consul”) and another “plebiscite” approved this. Vote of the people approves this change, but there was no other option on the ballot.

Napoleon crowns himself emperor in the painting below. Traditionally, church leaders crowned the monarch, but Napoleon wants to show symbolically that no institution is more powerful than he.
Napoleon Attempts to Conquer Europe

- Napoleon sells Louisiana territory in North America to the new USA in order to help him pay for military exploits in Europe known as the "Napoleonic Wars"

- Napoleon won many victories against Austria, Prussia, Switzerland & Italy – French armies dominate Europe for about 10 years in the early 1800’s

- Many countries forced to sign peace treaties with France granting Napoleon direct or indirect control over most of continental Europe. Napoleon makes many of his relatives leaders of the countries he conquers. 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
England (who had its own vast empire) becomes the primary power fighting to stop Napoleon from taking control of any more nations.

What is the meaning of the political cartoon?
Napoleon’s Decline Caused by 3 Main Reasons

1) His excessive ambition and **egotism** leaves France with no allies

2) The “**Continental System**” of European economic control established by France fails. Efforts by Napoleon to boycott trade with England hurt the economy of Europe. Many of the 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 and growth of democracy across most of Europe did proved lasting
- “He was as great as a man can be without virtue” says a famous French historian of Napoleon…meaning of quote?
Consider the two Napoleon cartoon videos you saw and explain if you believe he did more harm or good for France and the ideals of the revolution.