

1.6 THE DIRECTORATE GOVERNMENT (1795-1999)

With the end of the reign of terror, a government was set up in France under the leadership of directors. The government was set up by the new constitution of 1795 and it ruled France from 1795-1799. It was comprised of two bodies i.e. the Executive body of directors and this included Carnot, Reberpierre, Barras, Ducas and the Legislative body consisted of the upper house of 250 members and the lower house of 500 members. The directorate government registered various achievements as analyzed below.

THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE DIRECTORATE GOVERNMENT

The directorate government ended the reign of terror and therefore restored law, peace, order and security in France. The government did this by abolishing the terrorists' agencies such as the revolutionary tribunal, the committee of public safety and also closing down the Jacobins club which was very instrumental in causing the reign of terror.

The directorate government re-organized the French army to the latest standards by recruiting new officials, disciplining them and equipping the army with modern weapons. Also promotion in army was based on merit and such a strong army enabled France to defeat Austria in the Italian campaign of 1796 and it also greatly participated in the Egyptian campaign of 1798 which increased France's glory.

The directorate government promoted parliamentary democracy where the government organized elections for the lower house of 500 members and the upper 250. This meant that people's views could be heard and considered right from the lower house which diminished dictatorship and its evils within the French society.

The directorate government also prevented personal dictatorship in France. This was because each of the directors was supposed to rule for one year and then hand over power to the next director. This helped the directors to overcome the previous dictatorship which had constituted the Bourbon monarchy and the national convention government of Robespierre.

The directorate government expanded the French boundaries through its own policy. During the Italian campaign of 1796, France acquired new territories from Italy such as Nice and Savoy. It also occupied Belgium from Netherlands, Lombardy and the Rhine lands. The Italian territories were achieved through the signing of the treaty of Campo Formio in 1797 with Napoleon I

The directorate government also spread the French revolutionary ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity to the rest of the European countries. This was initiated by the revolutionary government which wanted to free the oppressed people in different European states by Napoleon Bonaparte I through various military campaigns like the Italian campaign and at the end of the day; Napoleon was able to liberate the Germany and Italian states from Austrian oppression which increased the spread of these ideas.

The directorate government suppressed uprising and internal rebellions which were organized within France. The rebellions were mainly organized by Jacobins, Royalists as well as the Socialists led by Babeuf who advocated for socialism. The government suppressed these revolts in the districts of Lavande, part of Toulon, the district of Britney among others hence maintaining security in the country.

The directorate government improved economy of France and this was done by promoting agriculture, trade and commerce as well as development of industries which improved the government taxation system

because tax collections improved and this led to increased supply of social services like schools, hospitals and general infrastructures. Thus by 1799 there was economic recovery in the French society.

The directorate government also reduced the influence of the Catholic Church in the state affairs. Originally the Catholic Church had a lot of influence in the state like controlling education, domination of major government posts, by the clergy owning big chunks of land etc. But the directorate government implemented the civil constitution of the clergy and this reduced the powers of the Catholic Church in the state affairs.

The directorate government promoted national unity through reconciliation with the former enemies like the Jacobins and the royalists who were integrated in the government departments. The French developed a strong feeling of nationalism that is why after the downfall of the directorate government, Napoleon I continued with the achievements of the directorate government.

FAILURES OF THE DIRECTORATE GOVERNMENT

The directorate government failed to solve the economic hardships that characterized France e.g. industrial breakdown, poor standards of living, decline of trade and agriculture, financial crisis, inflation, unemployment etc. this was due to poor management of public resources. The directors were incapable of solving the problems facing France at the time because they lacked political experience.

The government suffered from corruption and poor administration where the officials/ directors were self-seeking politicians of the little ability who embezzled public resources which caused bankruptcy of the French government. This also made the government to cancel 2/3 interests on public debts hence keeping the French society in a state of financial crisis.

It exclusively promoted the interests of the rich middle class at the expenses of the poor. It was dominated by the businessmen, financial speculators, and army contractors, rich middle class who had profited from the French revolution. They were concerned with personal gains at the expense of the demands of the majority French men, the National Guard was recognized into a truly middle class body and the people of France became more poor and frustrated with the government forcing them to support in 1799.

The directorate government failed to provide total democracy to the masses e.g. the rights to vote were given to only the rich who owed property and wealth. In 1797, Napoleon helped director Barras to expel the recently elected right wing, royalists majority. In 1798, the directors narrowed that year's elections because they produced a left wing of Jacobin majority. Such policies of the government undermined democracy in France and yet the revolutionaries had fought for it.

The directorate government failed to maintain the achievements of the French revolution of 1789 e.g. the 2nd coalition of Austria, Russia and Britain expelled France from the Italian and Germany states as well as Swaziland which Napoleon Bonaparte had conquered during the Italian campaign of 1796. This made the French men to blame the directorate government and supported Napoleon in 1799.

The directorate government also failed to maintain peace in France and this led to occasional instability caused by uprising of the supporters of the Jacobin club and the royalists. There was also increase in crime rates in the Southern borders of France especially in the region of the directorate government.

It over entrusted Bonaparte with the French army which consequently led to its collapse e.g. during the 1796 and 1798 Egyptian and Moscow campaigns respectively, Napoleon was given over 30,000 soldiers to command them which enabled him exercise authority and also convince the French army to support him against the directorate government which they did in 1799 leading to the collapse of the directorate government.

The directorate government failed to reconcile with the Emigres but instead passed strict laws against the relatives of the Emigres, established military tribunals to try the Emigres, confiscated their property in France hence increasing revolutionary war between France and her neighbours.

The government failed to build a strong army loyal to the state and not individuals. For example the army was loyal to Carnot and Napoleon. This put the government in danger because the soldiers trusted more in Napoleon and Carnot. This was seen when Napoleon was in Egypt during the Egyptian campaign. This dependence on one man explains Napoleons coup-de-dat of 1798.

The government failed to reconcile the state and church in order to restore law and order in Catholic dominated provinces. It should be remembered that the relationship between church and state became strained since the civil constitution of the clergy in which the government took over the church property. This hostility was ignored by the directorate government which led to political instability in France.

Questions

Assess the achievements of the Directorate government by 1799.

Examine the significance of the directorate government in the history of France.

EFFECTS OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION ON FRANCE BY 1799

The French revolution created the national assembly which consolidated parliamentary democracy. The revolutionary government in France tamed the National Assembly in May 1789 maintained the revolutionary government in France whereby its members would be elected through universal human suffrage. It established the function of parliament where different bodies were presented. The government passed the different laws which assisted to create law and order in France which was not the case in the ancient regime.

The revolution led to the formation of National Guard as a revolutionary army. it replaced the national army and its main role was to protect the French revolution. The National Guard defeated the anti-revolutionary forces and exported revolutionary ideas to other parts of Europe.

It led to the declaration of the rights of man and citizenship in August 1789 and this introduced equality of all men, granted individual rights, granted political liberty, freedom of speech, press, worship, ownership of property etc this changed the French society, which had suffered dictatorial rule for a long time under the Bourbon monarchy.

The revolution introduced constitution in France. Where a constitution was out in place in 1791 in order to safeguard people's rights and freedom. This constitution was later commended in 1793 and 1795. It was the first written constitution in the history of France since the separation of the powers of executive, judiciary and legislature which all opened France to modernity.

The revolution introduced judicial reforms in France i.e. feudal laws and thoughts were abolished and all French people were equal before the law, legal tribunals and systems were abolished, judges were to be elected and corporal punishments were reduced in France.

The revolution abolished discriminative classes in France through the declaration of the rights of man and ownership. This resulted into the abolition of the nobility and the idea of 3 states. This led to the rise of a new law and common people who had better education and skills to positions of responsibility.

The French revolution introduced military reforms in France i.e. promotion of high ranks were now based on ability and talent irrespective of social background. It also ended mistreatment of the ordinary soldiers by the senior army officer.

The French revolution gave way to the rise by Napoleon Bonaparte to power in 1799. Napoleon participated at a tender age and therefore exercised his skills which made him very popular hence his rise to power. The revolution also killed the would be competitor to Napoleon's rise to power.

The French revolution led to massive loss of lives in France during the reign of terror i.e. Maximillan Robespierre was executed, Danton and King Louis XVI himself together with his wife Marie Antoinette were not exceptional. Also a considerable number of peasants met their deaths that involved arbitrary arrests and imprisonment without trial.

The revolution led to massive destruction of property during the reign of terror. Hotels were destroyed, industries among others. Social infrastructure was destroyed thus increasing misery among the French masses.

The revolution led to the occurrence of the reign of terror. Hotels were destroyed, agriculture in which plantations were destroyed. This came as a result in the course of the French revolution where the revolution changed its course from the peaceful venture to a more violent venture more so after the formation of political parties. This period came with advanced effects hence being negative in nature.

The revolution led to the nationalization of the church property and hence forced members of the church into exile to institute the Émigrés.

The revolution sored the revolution between France and other European monarchies especially between 1792-1799. The changes caused by the revolution of King Louis XVI and the Queen attack on the Catholic Church, declaration of France as a republic and desire to spread revolutionary ideas to other states like Russia and Spain resulted into the revolutionary wars.

The revolution resulted into formation of directorate government in France from 1794-1798. The government tried to bring some orders more so in the bid to end the reign of terror.

It resulted into the collapse of feudalism and serfdom which changed the balance of power in France.

Questions

To what extent did the French revolution solve the problem of the third estates?

How successful was the 1789 French revolution in France?

Assess the achievements of the 1789 revolution in France.

THE IMPACT OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION ON EUROPE

The French revolution caused the downfall of the Bourbon monarchy in France and later on other monarchies in Europe. The Bourbon monarchy in France was overthrown which led the nationalism in other countries and also alternatively led to the collapse of monarchies in Spain, Italy and Germany states. In Holland, the monarchy was replaced by the Batavian republic and even after these monarchies were replaced by the leaders at Vienna, the subjects highly resented them in 1730s, 1740 and 1750 still contributing to their fall.

The revolution resulted into wars between France and the rest of Europe from 1792 and 1802 which were termed as the revolutionary wars. These wars broke out because the French revolutionaries wanted to extend revolutionary ideas of liberty, fraternity and equality to other countries which were not willing to accept them hence leading to the wars.

The revolution united Europe. i.e through forming coalitions where countries like Austria, Russia, Prussia and England united in the 1st coalition against France which overthrew the revolutionary government. Other forms of unity were also registered when European countries formed the 2nd coalition in order to overthrow Napoleon and defeat revolutionary France.

The revolution resulted into loss of independence i.e. Italian states lost independences to France in 1796 after the Italian campaign also the Germany states, Holland, Sweden and Denmark also lost their independence through Napoleonic wars.

The revolution led to massive loss of lives first in France and later in Europe. In France the reign of terror pledged many lives including King Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette, Danton e.t.c while in Europe the first revolutionary wars between France and the rest of Europe claimed a lot of lives in various European countries.

The revolution inspired the outbreak of future revolutions in Europe. This was because the revolution gave birth to the revolutionary ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity which gave the growth to the people of Europe that oppressive leaders and governments should be overthrown by fighting against them. This inspired masses to stage rebellions later.

The French revolution led to the expansion of France's boundaries thus leading to violating the powers on European countries. France began expanding in 1792 even she registered victory against Britain and by 1807, she had greatly expanded and covered the largest part of Europe.

Led to the collapse of serfdom and feudalism in Europe. Serfdom was abolished in countries like Germany, Spain etc also in 1801; Russia was supposed to give freedom to the serfs. This war of 1788 put an end to the serfdoms.

The revolution led to the rise of capitalism when the feudalism collapsed following the abolition of feudalism land was distributed to peasants and other people which increased production and trade within the different countries, this increased trade and profits of the producers as well as revenue hence rise of capitalism in Europe.

It led to diplomacy through the formation of settlements and congresses. Indeed the major aim of this congress was to solve the problems of the Napoleonic war, diplomacy led to the Vienna settlement of 1815.

The revolution created for France some alliance especially after the defeating of the first coalition in 1795. Spain entered into an alliance with the republic of France and this was after the signing of the treaty of Basel in 1795. Spain entered into alliance with the republic of France and also the king of Russia gave assistance to France especially in the left Bank of River Rhine and Holland also formed a new republic known as the Batavian republic which entered into alliance with France.

The French revolution led to the downfall of the Holy Roman Empire. Through the civil constitution of the clergy in 1790, the powers of the church were greatly reduced as well as that of the pope; this led to development of other religions e.g. Protestants, Orthodox and Muslims. Napoleon and Bismarck greatly fought against the Catholic Church after being inspired by the civil constitution of the clergy.

The revolution led to the economic development of France when the peasants got to own land. They exploited the land to extend agriculture export. However, the revolution also led to the economic decline of the European countries especially due to the continental system of Napoleon I in 1806 which slowed down economic progress of France and other countries.

Question

Assess the impacts of the French revolution on Europe.

Examine the impact of French revolution in Europe.