

The Declaration of the Rights of Man:

Approved by the National Assembly of France, August 26, 1789

The representatives of the French people, organized as a National Assembly, believing that the ignorance, neglect, or contempt of the rights of man are the sole cause of public calamities and of the corruption of governments, have determined to set forth in a solemn declaration the natural, unalienable, and sacred rights of man, in order that this declaration, being constantly before all the members of the Social body, shall remind them continually of their rights and duties; in order that the acts of the legislative power, as well as those of the executive power, may be compared at any moment with the objects and purposes of all political institutions and may thus be more respected, and, lastly, in order that the grievances of the citizens, based hereafter upon simple and incontestable principles, shall tend to the maintenance of the constitution and redound to the happiness of all. Therefore the National Assembly recognizes and proclaims, in the presence and under the auspices of the Supreme Being, the following rights of man and of the citizen:

Articles:

1. Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may be founded only upon the general good.
2. The aim of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.
3. The principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation. No body nor individual may exercise any authority which does not proceed directly from the nation.
4. Liberty consists in the freedom to do everything which injures no one else; hence the exercise of the natural rights of each man has no limits except those which assure to the other members of the society the enjoyment of the same rights. These limits can only be determined by law.
5. Law can only prohibit such actions as are hurtful to society. Nothing may be prevented which is not forbidden by law, and no one may be forced to do anything not provided for by law.
6. Law is the expression of the general will. Every citizen has a right to participate personally, or through his representative, in its foundation. It must be the same for all, whether it protects or punishes. All citizens, being equal in the eyes of the law, are equally eligible to all dignities and to all public positions and occupations, according to their abilities, and without distinction except that of their virtues and talents.
7. No person shall be accused, arrested, or imprisoned except in the cases and according to the forms prescribed by law. Any one soliciting, transmitting, executing, or causing to be executed, any arbitrary order, shall be punished. But any citizen summoned or arrested in virtue of the law shall submit without delay, as resistance constitutes an offense.
8. The law shall provide for such punishments only as are strictly and obviously necessary, and no one shall suffer punishment except it be legally inflicted in virtue of a law passed and promulgated before the commission of the offense.
9. As all persons are held innocent until they shall have been declared guilty, if arrest shall be deemed indispensable, all harshness not essential to the securing of the prisoner's person shall be severely repressed by law.
10. No one shall be disquieted on account of his opinions, including his religious views, provided their manifestation does not disturb the public order established by law.

11. The free communication of ideas and opinions is one of the most precious of the rights of man. Every citizen may, accordingly, speak, write, and print with freedom, but shall be responsible for such abuses of this freedom as shall be defined by law.

12. The security of the rights of man and of the citizen requires public military forces. These forces are, therefore, established for the good of all and not for the personal advantage of those to whom they shall be intrusted.

13. A common contribution is essential for the maintenance of the public forces and for the cost of administration. This should be equitably distributed among all the citizens in proportion to their means.

14. All the citizens have a right to decide, either personally or by their representatives, as to the necessity of the public contribution; to grant this freely; to know to what uses it is put; and to fix the proportion, the mode of assessment and of collection and the duration of the taxes.

15. Society has the right to require of every public agent an account of his administration.

16. A society in which the observance of the law is not assured, nor the separation of powers defined, has no constitution at all.

17. Since property is an inviolable and sacred right, no one shall be deprived thereof except where public necessity, legally determined, shall clearly demand it, and then only on condition that the owner shall have been previously and equitably indemnified.

Essay Question:

Revolution is more a pursuit of self interest than ideology

What are the ideological pursuits?

- Declaration of the Rights of Man
- Reign of terror: political gospel with the warped idea of shedding blood to uphold liberties
- The duty of the Government: justification of rebellion
- Demolition of the Bastille (symbol of tyranny)
- Removal of privilege and the execution of the monarch
- The execution of Robespierre: the end of the Terror

Self-interest:

- Refers to an individual (since the collective's self-interest is more of the general will: which was perfectly legitimate given the original tenets of the Revolution, for the country to represent its people)
- Anarchical rule by ambitious people
- Ideology could be predicated on self-interest (whereby his personal beliefs lead to what one thinks is the right system for the country: easily abused after gaining power)

For:

- The people who were leading the Revolution were more interested to fulfill their ambitious to gain more power and carve more power for themselves rather than for individual citizens, and the actions of Robespierre's administration, showed that he longed to stay in power to dictate the future of France rather than to seek the global will of the people
- The Jacobins were more interested in eliminating their enemies and political opponents, using the Revolution and the support of the sans culottes as a veil from which they could exact violence upon its own citizens (Jacques du Pan: the Revolution devours its children)

Against:

- The revolutionaries still took active measure to ensure that the values of the Revolution could be upheld by the National Assembly

Important Notes:

Descending into a state of anarchy:

What are the reasons for the degeneration into the Terror?

- Stopping the counter-revolution in order to save the Revolution (by killing people who were inherently against it: nobility, priests)
- Differences between political factions (Jacobins and Girondins)
- Power struggle between powerful political factions led to one dominating and removing the other
 - Lack of a hierarchy
- Centralization of power to exert dominance over the people
- External threats to France
 - Other monarchs were afraid that the revolutionary fervor would spread to their people
 - Austria had interests in saving the French monarchy due to an internal alliance
- Maintain control: forcing people to live in constant fear to submit themselves to the state
- Too self-absorbed in creating ideas of a perfect society
- Needed to maintain the intensity of the Revolution
- Power vacuum: lack of a King meant people were uncertain of how to establish a new system
- Impatient people who fought for change within (infighting)

The period of fear and terror:

Events:

- Storming of the Bastille
- National Assembly abolishes the feudal system
- National Assembly approves of the Declaration of the Rights of Man
- Royal family is dragged from Versailles to Paris
- War with Austria
- Royal family tries to escape and Louis XVI is taken prisoner
- France is declared a Republic
- September Massacres
- Louis and Marie-Antoinette are executed
- Danton killed and Marat murdered
- Provinces revolt and Robespierre is executed

Characteristics:

- Violent and Savage
- Anarchy: madness, chaos, violent, bloodshed
- Fear: panic, running away, accusations, rumours
- Struggle: disunity, assertion of ideas, ambition

Actions:

- Massacre: killing, bloodshed, guillotine, beheading
- Arrest, Escapades and Accusations

Why?

- Paranoia of leaders of the revolution
- People's impatience for change
 - Mass involvement
 - Wanting to fulfill the Declaration
 - Pent up frustration of the people who wanted to vent it out
 - "in the name of liberty, liberties disappear"
- Fears of loss of newfound freedom and power
- Royalist plot to overthrow the Revolution
- Factional struggle for power
- Differences in ideas
- Absence of a unifying figure
- Ambitions of individuals and the abuse of power and liberty
- Threats from neighbouring countries

Factions:

Radicals:

- Jacobins
 - Educated bourgeoisie
 - Sought to limit the powers of the king

- Advocated universal manhood suffrage, popular education, and separation of the Church and State
 - Relied mainly on the strength of the Paris commune and the sans-culotte
- Sans-culotte
 - Shopkeepers, artisans and workers of Paris
 - Hated the monarchy, nobles and Church
 - Believed in a republic
 - Prepared to take violent action
 - Wanted all men to be given the right to vote, wealth and land

Moderates:

- Girondins
 - Provincial commercial-agricultural middle class
 - Against absolutism, for republicanism
 - Led the struggle against the Parisian factions
 - Disagreed with Robespierre, Danton and Marat
 - Seen to be working for their own interest
 - Later accused of being counter-revolutionary by the Jacobins
 - Signaled potential conflict amongst the different groups with different interests, goals and ideas

Involvement of the masses and the poor

- Angry women: fisherwomen, stall keepers, seamstresses took part in the uprising, armed with pikes, cudgels and scythes

Leaders of the Revolution:

- Of different strong personalities or different inclinations, viewpoints and wishes for France
- Robespierre: pushes the Revolution forward and brought frenzy to new heights
- Marat: called for the overthrow of the monarchy and more bloodshed
- Danton: voted relentlessly for the King's death, but was executed by the revolutionaries for being "too soft" at the end

Was the Terror necessary?

- For the survival of the Revolution that would protect the new found rights and liberties which were denied the people for a long time against traitors and counter-revolutionaries
- The violence and deaths caused many innocent people to suffer and the killings violated the principles of the Revolution which was meant to uphold justice and freedom

Quotes from the Leaders:

- Camille Desmoulins: "You want to remove all your enemies by means of the guillotine? Has there ever been such a great folly? Could you make a single man perish on the scaffold without making ten enemies for yourself from his family or his friends?"
- Police reports of Paris, March 1794: "The majority of the citizens agreed unanimously saying that the tribunals act well, that they acquit the innocent and punish the guilty"
- Outsiders "What a pity that the French, who are capable of such great energy, should be governed by those who are guilty of such unheard of crimes and cruelties" From a speech by Charles James Fox, a British politician, November 1793, he was a supporter of the Revolution until the September Massacres
- Modern Historians "Anarchy within. Invasion without... War. Inflation. Hunger. Fear. Hate. Sabotage. Fantastic hopes... And the horrible knowledge for the men in power that if they failed they would die as criminals and murderers of the King, and all the gains of the Revolution would be lost, and the faith that if they won they would bring liberty, equality and fraternity into their world" Written by Palmer, a modern historian, describing France of 1793 and trying to explain why the Terror happened at all

Impacts of the FR:

Short Term:

- The era set the French economy back by 20 years at least and fell behind Britain even more
- Revolution unleashed horror
- Gave opportunity for Napoleon to rise and become an Emperor: pushing the Revolution back

Long Term:

- Triumph of democratic values
- France eventually became a republic: a hard-won democracy
- Hope for “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity”
- Liberalism took centre stage in France and started its roots in Europe

Others:

- Nationalism
 - Inspired countries and peoples to stand up for their independence
- “Mother of all Revolutions”
 - Forerunner of other revolutions, like the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the Chinese Revolution of 1911
- An example for the world
 - In the advocacy and promotion of human rights and liberties
 - Western societies took the example of the spirit and the essence of the Constitution when they drafted their own rules and laws