

Near the end of 1791, many believed the French Revolution was coming to an end. A new constitution had been introduced and King Louis XVI had pledged an oath of loyalty to honor the constitutional monarchy that was created. However, the problems France was facing were far from being over...

PROBLEMS WITH AUSTRIA

Austria was just over the border from France and was ruled by an absolute monarchy. The emperor of Austria was **Marie-Antoinette's** brother who protected nobles who fled revolutionary France. The emperor and the French nobles had plotted against the revolution. By April 1792, the French government declared war on Austria. Louis was no longer King, but a **Constitutional Monarch**. The war would prove to have dramatic effects for him; however, not all French supported the war.

Written by Louis, December 1791

"A war with Europe would greatly improve me situation."

From a letter from Marie-Antoinette to the emperor of Austria, 1791

"Our only hope of help lies with foreign powers. It is for you to put an end to the disturbances of the French Revolution."

THE WAR GOES BADLY FOR FRANCE

The war started off badly for France, as many former officers had been nobles before the revolution, who fled the country after their chateaux and palaces were burned in 1792. As a result, new volunteer soldiers were enthusiastic, but had no formal military experience-war. As the war worsened for France, its economic situation grew worse. There was a loss in confidence in the new paper money, the assignat, and so prices rose. Many young men had been taken to fight in the war; so much of the harvest had not been gathered. This also led to rising food prices in France and hunger throughout the population. These economic hardships led to more discontent and unrest in France, with many people seeking to blame Louis and his minister for the situation. They suspected that Louis wanted France to lose the war against Austria and Prussia, in order for the monarchy to be restored once again.

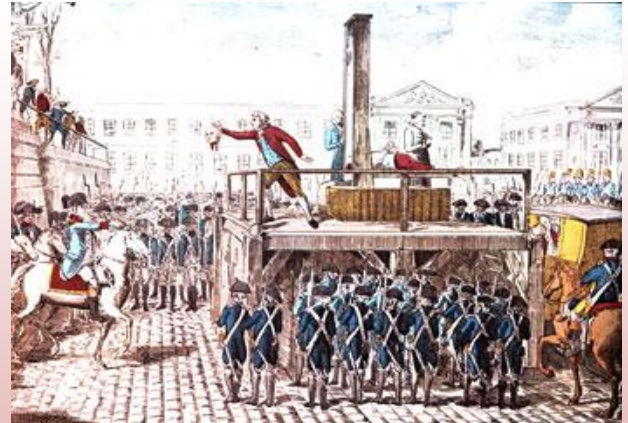
THE KING IS OVERTHROWN

By the summer of 1792, unrest grew throughout France and came to a head on August 10th when National Guards from all over France joined the Paris mob and stormed the King's palace, the Tuileries. The French people called Louis "Louis the Last" and did not want a king any longer. The King was then taken prisoner and on September 21st France was declared a **Republic**. It was following this decree that the Revolution entered its most violent phase...

The angry mob began looking for other "traitors" – clergy and nobles who had supported the king, and those who had criticized the Revolution. By August, they had been imprisoned, while some were hacked to death by the guillotine. By September, those left were dragged from jail, put on "trial" and executed. Between 1100 and 1400 prisoners were killed and the massacres horrified Europe. The Reign of Terror would soon follow in revolutionary France.



Prise du palais des Tuileries, Jacques Bertaux, 1793.



Death of King Louis XVI on 21st of January 1793. Engraving by Faucher-Gudin, 19th c.

WHAT IS TO COME...

Timeline of the Reign of Terror Various Sources

1789	July	Beginning of the French Revolution. King Louis XVI is forced to share power.
1791	August	Austria and Prussia form an alliance to stop the French Revolution.
1792	August 19	Revolution grows more radical. Louis XVI is imprisoned.
	September	Constitutional monarchy ends. Replaced by a republican government. War with Prussia and Austria begins. Louis escapes, flees with family, is caught and imprisoned again.
1793	January 21	Robespierre presides over the guillotining of Louis XVI.
	March-April	Tribunal and Committee of Public Safety is created to fight "enemies of the revolution."
	April	Counterrevolutionary revolts break out inside France.
	August	Levée en Masse (forced military draft for all French males) fuels revolts.
	November	Festival of Reason. Christian churches are soon closed by revolutionary government.
	December	Committee of Public Safety cracks down on rebels.
		Counterrevolution in western France is near collapse.
1794	February	All slavery abolished in the French colonies.
	April/May	French victory over foreign enemies is nearly complete.
	June	Government denies legal counsel to accused enemies of the revolution. The number of government executions sharply increases. Two-thirds of all execution during the Reign of Terror occur in June and July of 1794.
	July	Radical leader Robespierre is executed by guillotine. Many government policies of last two years will soon end. The Reign of Terror is declared over.