

FRENCH REVOLUTION

- TASK 1:** *What can you remember about France under Louis XIV?*
What did all the European monarchs try to copy from France and its regime?
What wars of the 18th century was France involved in and what were the results and effects on France?
What role did France play in the Enlightenment?

The Old Regime (Ancien Régime)

France, comprising one fifth of the European population, was one of the leading European powers but at the same time due to many reasons a very troubled monarchy on the verge of bankruptcy. Some of the reasons of incredible state debt were: incredible expense of the royal court, series of unsuccessful wars, loss of colonies, bad harvests, backward economy restricted by the doctrine of Mercantilism. As a result most of the French population was dissatisfied and getting rebellious. Poor peasant families spent about 80% of their income on bread, the unemployment rate in towns was nearing 50%, prices rose by 62% but wages only by 22%. One of the most criticized features of the French absolutism was the medieval system of the **Three Estates**.

THE THREE ESTATES

The First Estate – Clergy } about 500 000 out of 26 million inhabitants of France
The Second Estate – Nobility } exempt from paying any taxes, traditional privileges, monopoly on governmental offices and high army ranks, collecting manorial dues and tithes from their subjects

The Nobility was divided into two groups:

- **Nobles of the Sword** - old aristocratic families
- **Nobles of the Robe** – newly arisen nobles named by the king for their services

The Third Estate – the towns but as a matter of fact all the others ranging from prosperous businessmen, wealthy bankers and lawyers to poor unemployed beggars and bankrupt farmers – paying all the taxes, manorial dues, tithes and extra taxes introduced to deal with the desperate financial situation (eg. Gabelle – tax on salt, Corvee – forced labour)

TASK 2: *Interpret the meaning of the 18th century French cartoon. What is it pointing at?*

TASK 3: *What features of the Old Regime was the Third Estate criticizing most? What would be the main demands of the Third Estate? One clue that might help you is that between 1700 and 1789 the kings named about 50,000 Nobles of the Robe.*



Louis XVI (1774-1792) was aware of the impossible financial situation and attempted to reform it with the help of his advisors and ministers (**Turgot, Necker, Calonne, Brienne**). However, their attempts were blocked by **parlements** (traditional courts of justice of the nobles refusing violation of their rights) In this situation the only hope for change was calling of the **Estates General** (traditional medieval assembly of the nobles which last met in 1614) the only body that could change the tax system

Estates General

TASK 4: Read the following extract, identify and underline the main worries of the author concerning the meeting of the Estates General.

'Dined today with a party, whose conversation was entirely political. ... One opinion pervaded the whole company, that they are on the eve of some great revolution in the government; that everything points to it; the confusion in the finances great; with a deficit impossible to provide without the Estates General of the kingdom, yet no ideas formed of what would be the consequence of their meeting; no minister existing, or to be looked to in or out of power, with such decisive talents ... a prince on the throne, with excellent dispositions, but without the resources of mind that could govern in such a moment without ministers... a great ferment amongst all ranks of men, who are eager for some change, without knowing what to look for, or to hope for; a strong leaven of liberty, increasing every hour since the American Revolution ; altogether form a combination of circumstances that promise e'er long to ferment into motion, if some master hand, of very superior talents, and inflexible courage, is not found, at the helm to guide events, instead of being driven by them. It is very remarkable that such conversation never occurs, but a bankruptcy is a topic....'

Arthur Young, Paris, October 17, 1787

The Estates General met on May 5, 1789. There were 610 members of the Third Estate, represented mainly by lawyers and 610 representatives of the First and Second Estate – some of them reform minded and very close or possibly even more radical than the representatives of the Third Estate.



Abbé Sieyès – one of the reform minded clergymen wrote a pamphlet **What is the Third Estate** at the beginning of the year 1789 that begins:

'The plan of this book is fairly simple. We must ask ourselves three questions.

- 1. What is the Third Estate? Everything.*
- 2. What has it been until now in the political order? Nothing.*
- 3. What does it want to be? Something....'*

and ends:

'The Third Estate embraces then all that which belongs to the nation; and all that which is not the Third Estate, cannot be regarded as being of the nation.

What is the Third Estate? - It is everything.'

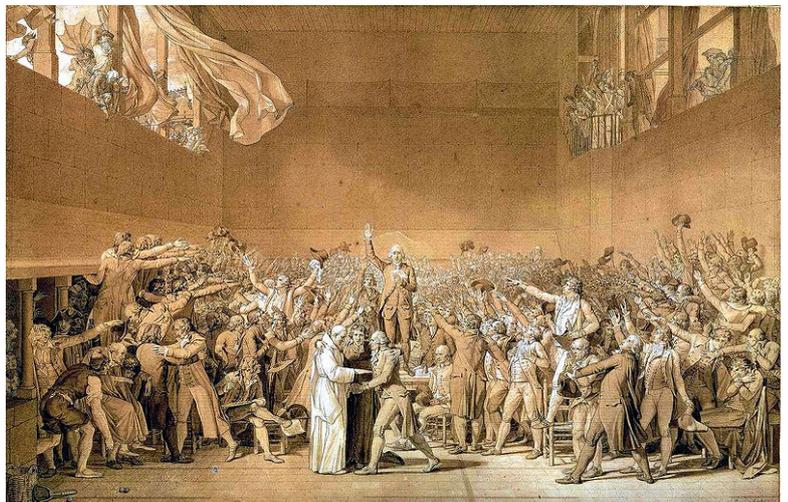
The Estates almost immediately started to quarrel about the **voting procedure**. The First and Second Estate advocated the traditional system of the Estates voting separately – each having one vote in the end; the Third Estate demanded voting by head – each delegate having one vote.

TASK 5: What would be the most likely outcome of voting under the traditional voting? Voting by head?

June 17, 1789 The Third Estate declares itself **National Assembly** – the only true parliament representing French people

June 20, 1789 The **Tennis Court Oath** of the National Assembly *'...not to disband until a constitution will be drawn for France.'*

TASK 6: Can you see only representatives of the Third Estate in the picture?



Freedom, Equality, Brotherhood (Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite)



TASK 7: *What do you think was the reaction of the king to this first revolutionary step? Who do you think belonged among the main supporters of the Third Estate?*

The Sans Culottes (middle class townspeople not wearing the breeches (shorts and stockings) typical for nobility) were afraid of a possible counter-revolution of the conservatives or violent mob actions and decided to form a **militia** to protect their interests – **The National Guard**

The need of arms led them to the place where the arms were stored - the **Bastille** – a fortress, a former prison but mainly the symbol of absolutism; currently there were only 7 prisoners – five criminals and two lunatics

July 14, 1789 – Storming of the Bastille the first of the Popular Revolts

In Paris a revolutionary municipal government was established and the same happened throughout France.

July/August 1789 the ‘Great Fear’ in the rural areas peasants were afraid of possible counter-revolution and so attacked the palaces of the nobility in order to destroy (in many cases burn with the entire palaces and its lords) the records of their obligations to the nobility.

August Decrees 1789

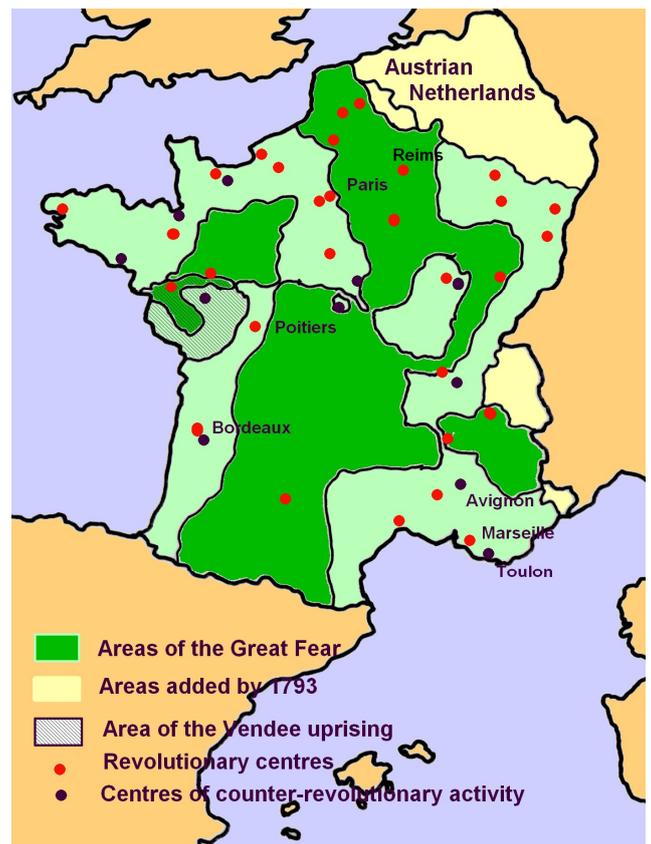
To calm down the situation the National Assembly passed two important decrees:

Aug 4, 1789 the Nobility surrendered their privileges (tax exemptions, hunting rights, monopoly on offices, forced labour...)

Aug 26, 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (civil rights and liberties, liberty of person, thought, press, equality, freedom of speech...)

The two decrees virtually ended the Old Regime and the medieval division of society into Estates. Now everyone was **equal – a citizen of France**

Louis XVI postponed signing these two documents and provoked the third popular revolt:



The October Days (Oct 5/6, 1789) started as a march of women on Versailles demanding bread, but ended as a revolt bringing ‘the baker’ – King- to his palace in Tuilleries in Paris and making him sign the August decrees.

TASK 8: Read the following extract from the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. Can you identify any link to the Declaration of Independence?

In consequence, the National Assembly recognizes and declares, in the presence and under the auspices of the Supreme Being, the following rights of man and of the citizen:

Article I - Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions can be founded only on the common utility.

Article II - The goal of any political association is the conservation of the natural and imprescriptible [i.e., inviolable] rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, safety and resistance against oppression.

Article III - The principle of any sovereignty resides essentially in the Nation. No body, no individual can exert authority which does not emanate expressly from it.

Article IV - Liberty consists of doing anything which does not harm others: thus, the exercise of the natural rights of each man has only those borders which assure other members of the society the enjoyment of these same rights. These borders can be determined only by the law.

Article VI - The law is the expression of the general will. All the citizens have the right of contributing personally or through their representatives to its formation. It must be the same for all, either that it protects, or that it punishes. All the citizens, being equal in its eyes, are equally admissible to all public dignities, places and employments, according to their capacity and without distinction other than that of their virtues and of their talents.

Reforms of the National Assembly

The leaders of the National Assembly were moderate politicians whose aim was to turn France into a **constitutional monarchy**, where the access to the parliament and government would be guaranteed for the wealthier citizens.

Main leaders: **Abbe Sieyes** – author of the pamphlet ‘What is the Third Estate?’ and the name National Assembly

Count Mirabeau – the best speaker advocating the constitutional monarchy

General Lafayette – leader of the National Guard and the main author of the Declaration of the Rights

Constitution (Sep 14, 1791) – constitutional monarchy, all citizens equal but limited franchise (50% of men could vote), no direct elections, voting only electors who nominate the members of parliament – power for the rich secured

Administration - 83 departments, all offices elected, standard system of courts of justice

Church – Nov 1789 Secularization of the Church, all property confiscated (used as a guarantee for the new paper money – **Assignats**)

July 1790 **Civil Constitution of the Clergy** – church subordinate to the state, paid by the state, bishops and priests elected by people

Economy – end of inner taxation, uniform system of weights and measures, guilds abolished, strikes and trade unions forbidden, support of free trade

TASK 9: *Which of the reforms provoked the strongest resistance?*

Which one was unacceptable for the king? Try to suggest the possible reaction of Louis XVI to this controversial issue.

Why were many French citizens disillusioned with the results of the first phase of the revolution?

June 1791 **the king**, unable to direct the revolutionary movement, becoming just a victim of events, **decided to escape** to the **Austrian Netherlands** but was recognized in **Varennes** and forced to return to Paris, where he was kept in his palace under house arrest.

Many people lost their confidence in Louis – claimed that he was guilty of treason, plotting with Austrians against the reforms – and demanded his **dethronement, the end of monarchy**.

TASK 10: *What role in the above mentioned events did Queen Maria Antoinette play? Do you know anything interesting about her?*

July 17, 1791 **Massacre on the Champ de Mars** radicals demanding the dethronement of Louis were met by the National Guard – about 50 radicals were killed

August 1791 **Austria** and **Prussia** issued a joint memorandum – **the Declaration of Plinitz** – stating that restoration of order (= return to absolutism) is a common interest to all sovereigns of Europe.

April 20, 1792 the **National Assembly** declared war on **Austria** and **Prussia**

TASK 11: *Why do you think the National Assembly declared war?*

What was the reaction of European and especially the neighbouring countries?

Why do you think most political groups welcomed this coming war?

- *The National Assembly*
- *The monarchists*
- *The radicals*

The war went really badly for France and in August 1792 the Austrian and Prussian armies were close to Paris.

August 1792 **Brunswick Manifesto** – if anything happens to the king or his family Paris will be destroyed

Louis XVI was accused of secretly plotting with Austria

August 10, 1792 an angry mob **massacred the king's Swiss Guard** guarding his palace

Radicals seized power in Paris, formed a **new, more radical municipal government – the Commune**, which called for new elections to the National Assembly based on **universal male suffrage**

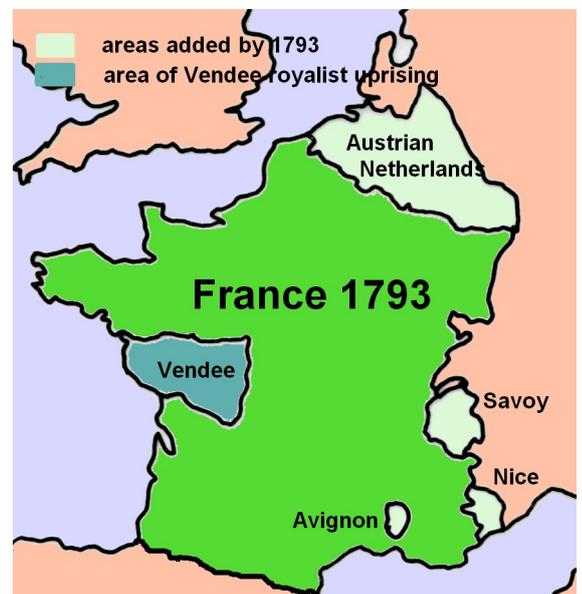
Sep 1792 – **September Massacres**, Austrian army almost in Paris, enraged mob entered prisons and killed about 1000 political prisoners (mostly monarchists)

Sep 20 **Battle at Valmy** - French army defeated Austrians, forced them to retreat

Sep 21 **France declared a republic**

The French army was then victorious and occupied the Austrian Netherlands, Savoy, Rhineland

New, more radical parliament **the National Convention** elected



The Radical Stage of the Revolution (1792-1794)

Political Clubs and Fractions

‘the Mountain’ radicals in the assembly, left upper seats in the meeting hall

Cordeliers Club – Danton, Marat radical rhetoric in favour of the ordinary people

Girondins – Brissot, Vergniaud, interests of the bourgeoisie, tradesmen, craftsmen

State should not interfere with free trade, more autonomy for the departments

Jacobins – Robespierre, radical republicans favouring strong central government and state control of economy

Main leaders:

Jean Paul Marat (1743-1793)

- Physician
- Defending the rights of common people
- Publisher of a radical newspaper L’Ami du Peuple
- Murdered



Georges Jacques Danton (1759-1794)

- Lawyer
- Interests of the masses, radical speaker
- Organized the terror, member of the Committee of Public Safety
- Guillotined in April 1794



Maximilien Robespierre (1758-1794)

- Lawyer, considered incorruptible
- Leader of the Jacobin Club
- Radical republican ideas – any means justifiable, regardless the cost
- Guillotined in July 1794



Reforms of the National Convention

- Slavery abolished
- Prohibition of imprisonment for debt
- Metric system of weights and measures
- New calendar, starting Sep 22, 1792
- Property of enemies confiscated
- **Maximum prices of grain**
- **Universal male suffrage**
- Attempt to replace Christianity with the worship of the supreme rational being
- **Republican constitution 1793** (postponed till the end of war, never ratified)

Girondins – became the leaders of the first months of the republic, liberal, successful as long as the war was going on well (Sep 1792 – spring 1793)

January 1793 king Louis XVI executed

Spring 1793 – new coalition of European countries against France – Austria, Prussia and England, French troops forced to retreat

TASK 12: *Why do you think the new coalition was formed after the execution of Louis XVI?*

April 1793 – **Committee of Public Safety** formed as a new form of government with exceptional powers

- 9 members of the Committee were elected by the National Convention

Reforms of the Committee:

- Centralization of power, officials to report directly to the Committee
- General levy, compulsory army service, forced recruitment – success in war again
- Terror to intimidate and get rid of opposition
- New fashion – trousers and red caps
- Slowing down of the industrial transformation (republicanism ≠ capitalism, free trade)
- Laws of the Maximum – maximum wages, prices fixed

June 1793 war going on badly for France, many sabotages, uprisings within France – **Jacobins** seize power

Jacobin dictatorship (June 1793-July 1794) – the most radical phase of the revolution

Dictatorship powers given to the Committee of Public Safety, special courts of justice set up

Great Terror against opposition (approximately 500,000 arrested, 30,000 executed, 20,000 without trial)

Main opposition groups:

- **Girondins** – rebellions especially in towns, industrial centres
- **Royalists** – uprisings demanding monarchy, rehabilitation of Church, the biggest in **Vendee**
- **Enrages** (wild men) – radicals led by Jacques Hebert fighting for classless society (anarcho-communists)

War against Austria, Prussia and England went on, France successful in 1794, Danton called for the end of terror

April 1794 Danton executed but by July most of people fed up with Robespierre, Jacobins and the terror

July 1794 (Thermidor 9 according to the new calendar) **Robespierre executed**

The Directory, Thermidorian period (1794-1799)

Return of the moderate republicans, political prisoners freed but Jacobins persecuted, laws of the maximum repealed, emigrants allowed to return to France

Constitution of 1795

- **Universal male suffrage** but electing only the **Electors** (richer ones, property qualifications), the Electors then choose the members of parliament = power secured in the hands of the rich
- New government – **the Directory** – 5 men chosen by the assembly

The Directory faced many problems:

- 1795 a royalist uprising against the constitution – suppressed by **Napoleon**
- 1796 Babeuf – anarchist riots aiming to abolish private property and the parliamentary system
- 1797 elections – **success of constitutional monarchists** – December, results annulled with the help of **Napoleon**
- 1799 change of government – **Napoleon** became the first Consul of the state

TASK 13: *Who did the leaders of the various phases of the revolution represent? Choose any other famous modern revolution and compare whether it worked the same way.*

| The French Revolution | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1789 - 1792 | |
| 1792 - 1793 | |
| 1793 - 1794 | |
| 1794 - 1799 | |
| 1799 - 1815 | |

TASK 14: *All the following events took place in France between 1789 and 1799. Can you put them in the correct order and find out the dates (month and year) of each?*

Robespierre executed

The Tennis Court Oath

Estates General meet for the first time since 1614

Massacre of the Champ de Mars

Women of Paris march on Versailles

Louis XVI's flight to Varennes

The September Massacres

Execution of Louis XVI

France declares war on Austria

Napoleon annuls the elections

Storming of the Bastille

Civil Constitution of the Clergy

NAPOLEONIC PERIOD

Early Career of Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821)

- son of a petty **Corsican** nobleman, Italian speaking, problems with his French
- military school in Paris, interested in mathematics, history
- main strength: ability to understand a problem in its full length, work out every single detail
- became an officer in the artillery
- 1793 helped to recapture Toulon – made **general in the age of 24**
- 1794 lost his rank in the army as a Jacobin sympathizer
- 1795 suppressed the royalist plot against the Directory
- 1796 as a reward sent as a commander to **Italy** – series of surprising moves and victories, **sister republics in Italy**
- 1797 annulled the election results – saves the Directory
- 1798/1799 **Egyptian Campaign**
 - Battle of the Pyramids
 - Rosetta Stone discovered
 - the supply routes cut off by the British Navy under admiral **Horatio Nelson**, French fleet destroyed



- Napoleon managed to escape back to France, but his army stayed and died in Egypt
- 1799 Coup d'Etat in Paris, became the **First Consul of the Republic** (age 30)
- 1802 became the First Consul for life
- 1804 crowned himself **Emperor**

Napoleon's domestic policy

TASK 15: *What reforms were needed in France? What problems were still not solved?*

System of government:

Council of the State – 50 members, named by Napoleon, chaired by Napoleon, advisors, proposes new laws

Tribunate (100) and Legislative Chamber (300) – elected, approved new legislation

Senate (80) – named by Napoleon

- Administrative uniformity (departments) and efficiency
- Careers open to men of talent
- Religious toleration – Concordat with the Pope (1801) – the end of religious experiments, Catholicism recognized as the religion of the majority of the French
- Education reorganized – **Lycee** – under the supervision of the University of Paris
- **Code Napoleon (1804)** – equality before law, freedom of conscience, property rights guaranteed, abolition of serfdom

✘

Sole ruler, police state, press censored, state controlled economy, restoration of slavery in colonies...

Foreign Policy – Napoleonic Wars

TASK 16: *Study the following outline of Napoleonic Wars and mark the map with the scenes of the most important battles and other important places.*



1796 – 1797 expedition to Italy- defeat of Austria, sister republics established

1798 – 1801 **War of the Second Coalition** (Britain, Russia, Austria)

- Napoleon's failure in Egypt but success against Austria – Austria forced to recognize the republics in Italy

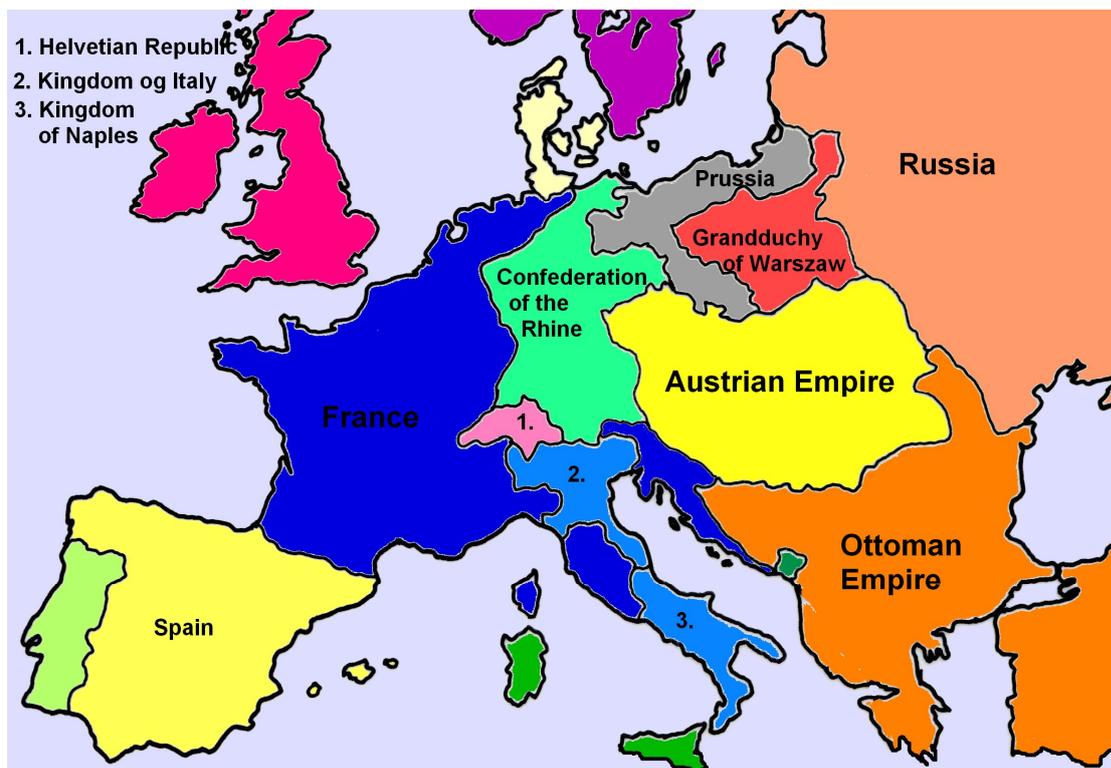
1803 – 1805 **War of the Third Coalition** (Britain, Russia, Austria)

- Napoleon prepared for the invasion of Britain
- **Battle of Trafalgar** – Horatio Nelson defeated the French navy, invasion impossible
- Napoleon turned against Austria and Russia – quick march on Vienna
- **Battle of Austerlitz** ('**Battle of the Three Emperors**')

1806 **War of the Fourth Coalition** (Russia, Prussia, Britain and Sweden)

- Prussia defeated at **Jena and Auerstadt**

Napoleon arranged peace and as a clear winner reshaped Europe the way he wanted:



TASK 17: *What were the main changes of the map of Europe in the Napoleonic period?*

Unable to defeat Britain Napoleon declared a **Continental Blockade** – trade with Britain was forbidden, European ports were closed for British ships. Britain responded with the **blockade of Europe** – Europe was virtually cut off the overseas trade.

TASK 18: *What was the outcome of the blockades? Who suffered more?*

1808 – 1814 **Peninsular War**, Napoleon imposed his brother Joseph on the Spanish throne, but met fierce resistance – **Guerrilla warfare** – of the Spanish supported by the British force under **Duke of Wellington** operating from Portugal (British ally)

1809 Austria attempted to rebel against Napoleon, success in the **Battle of Aspern**, but defeated at **Wagram**, Austria became a forced ally of France, Napoleon married **Maria Louisa** (daughter of Francis I of Austria)

1812 **Russian Campaign** Russia under **Alexander I** suffered a lot because of the Continental blockade, opened its ports for Britain and Napoleon decided to punish Russia.

- **Grande Armee** (about 600.000 men including Austrian forces)
- Several battles on the way to Moscow – **Borodino** the most famous
- Clever tactics of the Russian commander **Kutuzov**
- Napoleon spent Sep.-Oct. in Moscow, which was abandoned by Russians
- Winter came, Napoleon lacked supplies, equipment, forced to retreat
- Bitter retreat, Napoleon lost the entire army

1813 **War of the Fifth Coalition** (Britain, Austria, Prussia, Russia, Sweden)

- **Battle of the Nations by Leipzig** - Napoleon defeated

Napoleon sent to exile on **Elba**, **Bourbons** – **Louis XVIII** (brother of Louis XVI) returned to France

1815 **One Hundred Days**, Napoleon escaped from Elba, returned to France, was welcomed and became an Emperor again

- Defeated at **Waterloo**

1815 – 1821 exile on St. Helen in southern Atlantic

TASK 19: Look at the cartoon and try to identify the different stages of Napoleon's career.

