



In the 18th century, France was the most influential country in Europe. It kept this status at the beginning of the 19th century. The following material will show you the position of France at that time:

### **France: Still Europe's Most Important Country**

Even though France emerged defeated after twenty-three years of war, it remained the most important country in Europe in terms of population, resources, influence, and culture during the period known as the Restoration. The other large powers constantly monitored it, fearful that it might try again to implement the principles of the French Revolution in the rest of the continent—nationalism and liberalism. Although the restored French monarchy denounced the French Revolution and the events that occurred during that turbulent period, in fact it would allow the application of some of those principles, particularly “liberalism”—a constitution that limited the powers of the monarchy.

Developments in 19<sup>th</sup> century France inevitably influenced what happened in the rest of the continent, especially when more revolutions broke out or when the country instituted constitutional reforms. This view can be seen in the statement of a Russian Tsar who, when disorders broke out in France announced to his courtiers: “Gentlemen, saddle your horses, France is in



revolution again.” Another saying that confirms this attitude was: “When France catches cold, Europe sneezes.”

We will be constantly reminded of this influence when we examine European events later, but what was France like at the end of the Napoleonic Era and what course did French history take after the Emperor’s fall?

### Disaffection

In his last two years as Emperor, while he was fighting to remain on the French throne in 1813-1814, disaffection against Napoleon increased among all classes in the country.

The peasants who constituted four fifths of the French population strongly supported Napoleon at the beginning of his reign because he had secured the benefits of the French Revolution, particularly legal title to the land, while preserving law and order. However, as the Napoleonic wars dragged on, conditions worsened for them. The need for ever-increasing funds to finance the wars meant increasing taxes, even the reinstatement of hated taxes that had existed before the Revolution, such as a tax on beverages (1804), on salt (1806), and tobacco (1810, reinstatement of the tobacco monopoly). More important than the demand for money was the demand for men. Conscription became harsher as the wars continued. In addition, as the French army retreated, requisitioning of goods from the peasants increased. Resentment spread among the peasantry, although it remained mostly passive.



Among the workers in the cities, resentment against the government increased as time went on. Napoleonic laws forbade workers to organize or to change their residence without permission and gave employers the upper hand. While there was prosperity, opposition was limited, but it increased as defeat loomed and as prosperity disappeared.

The government also lost the loyalty of the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie. The Continental System—which forbade the importation of English goods into French-controlled Europe, thus favoring French industry and commerce—led to a burst of economic activity in 1810-1811. However, the British successfully smuggled in goods and the lack of trade, credit, and raw materials stifled French industry. There was also a poor harvest in 1812. All of these events produced a loss of confidence in Napoleon by 1813.

The clergy was also disaffected. Napoleon had imprisoned the Pope, annexed the Papal States, and jailed protesters.

Even the army wavered in its loyalty. Napoleon had led it to glory, but now it faced defeat. The elite corps of the army remained loyal, but the new conscripts frequently deserted.

In short, by 1814, France wanted peace. The widespread disaffection foreshadowed rebellion if it did not come soon.

What To Do With France?



The major question was, once Napoleon was defeated who would replace him? This was a question that interested not only the French people but the big powers that wanted to ensure either their influence over France or a peaceful country that would not begin a new war.

One possibility was the restoration of the Bourbon dynasty in the person of the brother of Louis XVI, who had been beheaded during the Revolution. Louis had had a son, but he died in prison, so the next in line was Louis's brother. England favored this solution, but the Bourbons were not popular in France and the British were unwilling to force the Bourbons on the French because they thought it might galvanize French support for Napoleon (there were signs of this occurring).

As a candidate for French king, the Russians pressed for a former French general, Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte, who they thought they could control. (Bernadotte later became King of Sweden, starting the dynasty that still continues. For how that happened, see [http://www.napoleonguide.com/marshal\\_bernadotte.htm](http://www.napoleonguide.com/marshal_bernadotte.htm).) The Austrians favored putting Napoleon's son on the throne. Since he was still young, they also wanted a regency under Napoleon's second wife, Marie Louise, to run France until he became an adult. This was because Marie Louise was an Austrian princess and they would have enormous influence in France. In short, both Russia and Austria suggested solutions for replacing Napoleon that would, in effect, have put France under their influence, and both were unacceptable to the British.



The solution eventually adopted was the restoration of the Bourbon dynasty, but this was by no means automatic. In order to claim the throne, the Bourbons had to demonstrate that there was popular support for them in the country. Bourbon agents managed to create the feeling that this support existed, especially in southern France. Once this happened, Talleyrand (seeing that Napoleon was doomed) maneuvered politically to get the Senate to support the Bourbons and convinced the Russian Tsar that this was the best solution. Talleyrand managed to get the Senate and the provisional government to pass a constitution and call for the return of the Bourbons.

### The Charter

The new king, Louis XVIII, rejected the Senate constitution because it restricted the monarch's power too drastically. In theory, he argued that the king did not have to give a constitution at all, but he issued a constitution, called the Charter, as a "gift" to the French people in the "nineteenth" year of his reign (the fiction was that the Revolution had never taken place). In fact, it would have been politically impossible for Louis to have done otherwise, because that would have meant to invite a new revolution. The Charter was an important document because it began the normalization of French politics and started the country on the road to parliamentary democracy, despite all the Charter's problems.

The Charter represented a compromise between the Revolution and the Restoration. It was the creation of Louis XVIII, who represented the liberal



viewpoint among the restored ruling class. Louis's greatest opponent was his brother, Charles of Artois, who led the reactionary party, the "ultras," and caused his brother much trouble throughout his reign (Charles eventually became king as Charles X, with the results we will see).

The main points of the Charter were the following:

1. It recognized Catholicism as the religion of the state (the 1801 Concordat between State and Church remained in effect), but guaranteed freedom of religion.
2. It allowed freedom of the press but this was subject to the law, and this issue was to be a growing problem.
3. The property of the nobles that had been confiscated and sold during the Revolution was recognized. This issue was to be a growing problem because the nobles who returned with Louis wanted their old property back anyway, or at least to be compensated for it. Louis was sympathetic, but could not go along with this provision because he feared revolution, so the nobles backed Charles who was willing to help them in some way, creating a major debate in the country.
4. The ministers in the government were to be responsible to the king (i.e., not to the Parliament. This meant—in theory—that even if the government did not have a majority in Parliament, the king could still keep it in power. This was a major issue in Restoration France and even in later times. A democratic parliamentary regime mandates that if the Prime Minister and his/her government

does not have a majority in Parliament, it should resign even if it has the confidence of the king or president of the country.)

5. A legislature of two houses was created, a Chamber of Deputies and a Chamber of Peers. The Chamber of Deputies was elected but was based on property. It was voted in by male taxpayers who were at least 30 years of age and paid at least 300 francs a year in direct taxes; this last provision excluded 99% of adult Frenchmen from voting (only about 100,000 were eligible to vote). In order to become a deputy, a person had to be male, at least 40 years old and pay at least 1,000 francs a year in direct taxes. Although the voting system varied from time to time, power remained in the hands of the high bourgeoisie. The Chamber of Peers was appointed by the king. The legislative power was split between the Parliament and the King. The king made proposals for laws, although the Chambers could petition the king for a law.

6. Taxes were voted by the Chamber of Deputies.

7. There was no separation of powers in the Charter. Remember that the government was not dependant on a majority vote. This set up the condition for future fights.

The political fights under the Charter would, however, get France more used to parliamentary government because, unlike the French Revolution, if you were on the losing side of an issue you would not be beheaded.

The "Hundred Days"



The Bourbons quickly lost the sympathy of the nation. The reasons for this included the demands of the old nobles for their old jobs back, especially in the bureaucracy. At the same time, there were fewer jobs to go around. Similar problems plagued the army. With the end of the wars, the army had to be reduced. At the same time, nobles were demanding their old jobs back, with seniority. The government retired many Napoleonic officers, and these resented it because they had fought for their country while the nobles had fought against France. At the same time, the Bourbons had a problem. The old aristocracy was loyal but inefficient; the old Napoleonic officers were efficient but possibly not loyal. The government tried to walk a tightrope between these two, but ultimately did not succeed.

At the same time there was a religious restoration that alienated many people who had grown up during the Revolution. The salaries of the clergy were increased, religious schools were favored, lay teachers were discriminated against, the police forbade people to work on Sundays, Revolutionary anniversaries were declared days of mourning, etc.

Finally, the financial system did not change. That is, high taxes that had been imposed during the Napoleonic wars continued to be collected despite the end of those wars. As public resentment grew, the government cracked down.

In exile on the island of Elba (off the Italian coast), Napoleon landed in France on March 15, 1815. The army sent to defeat him instead deserted to him and the Bourbons had to flee Paris. When Napoleon reached the French capital,





he issued a new constitution, but the rest of Europe mobilized against him. In June, Napoleon lost the Battle of Waterloo and was exiled to the island of St. Helena in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, from which he could not return. He died on May 5, 1821.

After Napoleon's defeat the Allies restored Louis XVIII but, unlike the last time, there was no pretence of popular support.

### The "Second Restoration"

This period started under worse conditions than the previous restoration. Many people called for the punishment of those who had supported Napoleon, and they had to flee. The Allies this time imposed a harsher treaty on France, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Treaty of Paris. This treaty imposed an indemnity on France and occupation of certain areas until it was paid (this happened by 1818).

When elections for the Chamber of Deputies were held, something strange happened. It was a very conservative Chamber and goes under the name of the "Chambre Introuvable." The Chamber passed sedition laws and a number of other very conservative measures restricting liberty of expression. It was so royalist that it scared the king, who appointed a minister who was more liberal than the majority. Louis and his liberal minister (Decazes) clashed on a number of issues until finally in September 1816, he dissolved the Chambre Introuvable and held new elections. In retrospect, this was probably an error because the king went against the will of France as expressed in the elections for



this Chamber. This set a precedent that kings could dissolve parliamentary bodies when they did not like the majorities the country expressed—something that threatened liberals more than conservatives.

The newly-elected Chamber was more moderate and is noteworthy for the emergence of early “parties,” really groupings, that took different sides of political issues. This Chamber witnessed—again—a struggle between the “ultras” and more liberal groups led by Louis. In 1818, new elections were held. This time, more liberals were elected; the government did not want to go too far to the left but hoped to be able to control the liberal tide. More liberal laws were passed. The press, for example, became freer and attacked the government. This period is known as “the liberal experiment,” but at its height something happened: the Duc de Berry, a young man who would eventually have become king, was assassinated. After Charles of Artois, the House of Bourbon had no more heirs because Berry had just married. This event was blamed by the ultras on the liberal policies of the king and the government. Spurred by this event and the aging of Louis XVIII who came under the influence of his brother, there now began a period of involution. (Don’t worry students. It was soon found that Berry’s wife was pregnant. She eventually gave birth to a boy. This incident is known in French history as “the miracle of the House of Bourbon.” However, he never became king.)

### The Reactionary Phase



After the assassination of Berry, the liberal phase ended with a new minister coming in (Richelieu). Restrictive laws curbing individual freedom and freedom of the press and favoring the Church were passed. A new electoral law gave the rich more influence in elections. These changes resulted in a defeat for the liberals in 1820 as disorders increased in the country. Despite passage of these restrictive laws, Richelieu was not an extremist and the laws did not go far enough to satisfy the ultras. Between August and December 1821, the parliamentary maneuvering by the ultras forced Richelieu's resignation.

Given the declining health of Louis, his brother Artois was now running the show. The Chamber passed more restrictive legislation and laws favoring the Church. New elections completely defeated the liberals who only won 19 seats in the Chamber. These developments spurred popular opposition in the country, which saw a great increase in secret societies (such as the French version of the Carbonari, who began in Italy), but this opposition did not dissuade Charles.

### The Revolution of 1830

In September 1824, Louis XVIII died. His brother Charles succeeded him as Charles X. Charles was handsome and athletic, but he did not understand the new generation that had come of age during the French Revolution. He immediately proceeded to alienate the country with his policies.

As king, Charles's first measure was to indemnify the old nobles who had lost their land during the Revolution. It was politically impossible to restore their



land, but it was possible to pay them something. This might have had positive effects because it might have put the issue to rest, however, the financial provisions by which Charles proceeded to indemnify the nobles alienated the bourgeoisie, the class that was most able to oppose him. In 1825, Charles succeeded in getting through the Chamber a law that indemnified the nobles by reducing the interest paid on the French debt by 20%. Because this debt was mostly held by the bourgeoisie—who had lent the government money and now saw their income reduced—it turned against him. The government further alienated the liberals by passing legislation that protected the Church—the “law of sacrilege” that punished with death anyone committing a crime in church. People brought up under the revolutionary regimes that had sought to curb Church power were outraged. Anti-clerical and anti-government feelings escalated. In addition, in 1826 Charles dissolved the National Guard, a move that also struck at the middle class and intensified resentment.

The next several years witnessed a complicated series of parliamentary fights between the king and the liberals in which Charles tried to impose his policies on Parliament, in which liberal influence grew, and in which the right was divided because (ironically) it had achieved most of its objectives.

By 1829, Charles had decided that he could defeat his opposition, end a muddled situation, and give the Charter a monarchical interpretation by unilateral action. He appointed as his minister the extremely unpopular, stubborn, and arrogant Jules Armand de Polignac (read more about him at



<http://www.encyclopedia.com/html/P/PolgncJ1.asp>). The resulting cabinet was extremely unpopular, alienating even intelligent conservatives such as the poet Chateaubriand, not to mention liberals such as Lafayette (of American revolutionary fame). The naming of this government aroused the Chamber's hostility, as did a speech Charles made to it in March 1830. Charles believed that he had the right to name the government even if it did not have a majority, something the Chamber rejected in its answer to him when it asked him specifically to change the government.

In response, Charles dissolved the Chamber of Deputies and put his prestige on the line in the new elections. The result was a resounding defeat for Charles, who lost the elections by a 274 to 143 margin.

Charles's opponents—fearing a revolution—offered to compromise, but Charles took a hard line. Even before the newly-elected Chamber met, he issued four ordinances in July 1830 (the "July Ordinances"). These ordinances suspended liberty of the press, dissolved the newly-elected Chamber, reduced the number of deputies, and increased the property requirements needed to be eligible to vote (the number of voters would have dropped from about 100,000 to 25,000; this was a big mistake because he had the support of the peasants and they would have voted the way he said), finally, the ordinances set a date for new elections.

A revolution immediately broke out and Charles fled France for exile in England. The Bourbon restoration had come to an end.

### Economic and Social Life During the Restoration

Although advances were made, the Restoration was not a period of material prosperity for France. In 1827, the first railway line was opened up, but the country had to wait for a new king for a railway network to be established, although roads and waterways were built. In 1826, 72% of the French still depended on agriculture for their livelihood; France was still in the pre-industrial age. Agricultural methods were still old, and the government did not consider it its duty to try to improve them. Machinery was introduced haphazardly, mostly from England, and still ran on water or animal power. Workers were hostile to machinery. The textile industry was most important—cotton products tripled over a 15 year period and the domestic system was still important.

The French economy, as others, suffered from a shortage of coins. Paper money was hardly used and the bills were enormous, the equivalent of \$100 or \$200. Banks served mostly merchants and usually did not make loans to commercial or industrial enterprises. Consequently, capital was difficult to find and moneylenders' rates were exorbitant (as was the case in other countries). This situation contributed to the stagnation of business and hurt the economy.

Despite these shortcomings, the Restoration allowed France to recover from the exhaustion caused by the wars of the French Revolution.

Social life was also stagnant. The population of France in 1815 has been estimated at 32 million, high for the time. The birth rate was very high, estimated



at 318 per thousand in 1826. In the same year, it has been estimated that 67% of the French population was under 40 years of age. The illiteracy rate was at least 75%. The population was mostly rural, with only Paris showing an appreciable gain in population.

Social distinctions were gone in law, but not in fact. People with money were socially and politically important. Labor organizations were prohibited (as they had been in the old regime); the labor organizations that were tolerated were not adaptable to the emerging factory industries.

Conditions in the factories were extremely bad, as they were everywhere at the beginning of the industrial revolution. In 1827, the average annual salary varied between 387 and 492 francs (\$77-\$98); a worker earning less than 600 francs a year (\$120) was in dire poverty. Those in need increased greatly where large industrial factors appeared; for example, in one district in 1828, out of 224,000 workers 163,000 had to be helped by welfare agencies.

The government intervened in the economy to help the employers. Workers could not form unions and had to carry the "livret," a small record book of their employment (which would show if they had been fired and why) without which they could not quit their jobs or find another one. In disputes over wages, government officials took employers at their word while workers had to furnish proof of what they said. In addition, if employers did not pay workers the wages they owed them, the workers had to go to court, while employers merely deducted "debts" they said the workers owed them from their pay. Arbitration



boards were composed of a majority of employers, while workers were represented only by foremen and skilled workers—a minority. Strikes were rare: only 25 of them took place between 1815 and 1830.

The liberals, who were mostly rich, fit in well with this system. Ironically, the right protested, but only out of hatred for the liberals. The right demanded the return of old aristocratic lands and the return of the medieval guild system.

### Cultural Life

Cultural life during the Restoration was brilliant—perhaps a reaction to the return of cultural freedom following the Napoleonic Era. New intellectual fashions were imported from other countries. The period saw the flowering of French Romanticism, with such practitioners as the writer Victor Hugo, the poets Chateaubriand and Laménais, the composer Berlioz, and the painters Géricault, Ingres, and Delacroix. Early French Romantic thought was Catholic and royalist (e.g. Chateaubriand), but later Romanticism deserted the royalists for the liberals. In another field, the reorganization of society to confront the new industrialism, this was also a fertile period. Here the most important thinker of the age was Saint-Simon. Interestingly enough, intellectual life no longer had its focus at the king's court but in Salons, usually run by women, as had been the case during the Enlightenment. Different political and cultural groups had their own Salons.





From this snapshot of the Restoration in France, we will take a look at the other major European countries, which were not so well off.