

History

Theme III: Society, Culture and Politics in France during the 19th Century

Chapter 7: The Third Republic from 1870 to 1914

Introduction

In July 1870, France declared war on Prussia. Emperor Napoleon III was taken prisoner at Sedan. Two days later, on 4th September 1870, republicans proclaimed the Third Republic.



La guerre franco-prussienne (1870-1871)

- Les monarchies en Europe
- Avancée des troupes prussiennes
- Défaite de Napoléon III à Sedan
- Siège de Paris
- Traité de Francfort en 1871
- Perte de l'Alsace et d'une partie de la Lorraine
- L'unité allemande (janvier 1871)

La naissance de la III^e République

- Proclamation de la III^e République (1870)
- Ville monarchiste
- L'inégale adhésion des Français aux idées républicaines
- Faible
- Moyenne
- Forte

The Franco-Prussian war (1870-71)

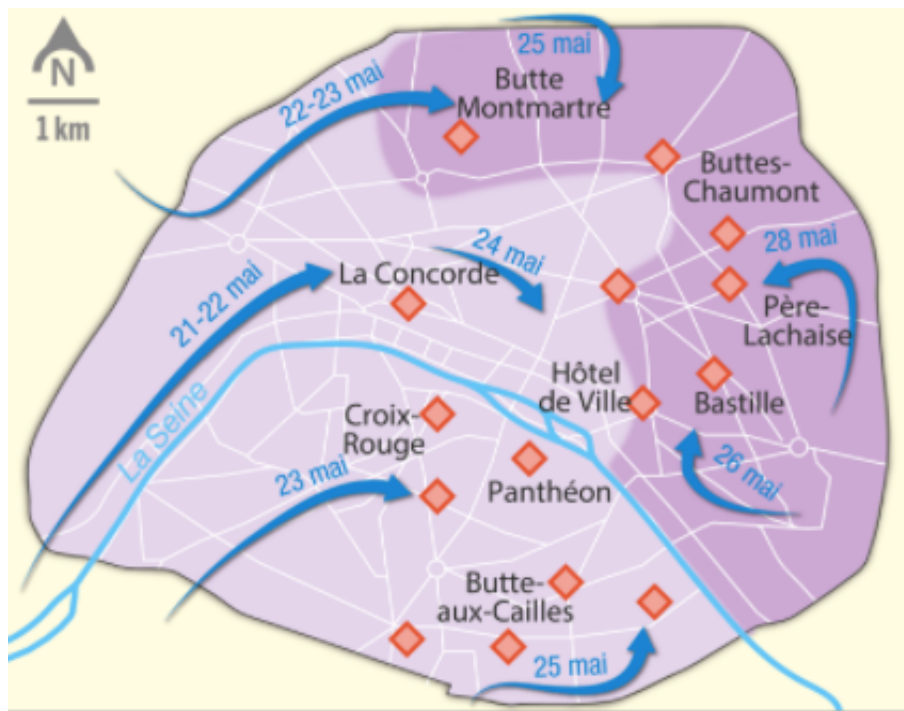
- European monarchies
- Advance of Prussian troops
- Defeat of Napoleon III at Sedan
- Siege of Paris
- Treaty of Frankfurt, 1871
- Loss of Alsace and part of Lorraine
- United Germany (1871)

The birth of the Third Republic

- Proclamation of the Third Republic (1870)
- Monarchist town
- Uneven adhesion of the French to republic ideas
- weak
- Medium
- Strong

The Paris Commune

This was the revolutionary government put in place in Paris between March and May 1871. In reaction to the defeat against Prussia, the Parisians revolted and created an autonomous government for several months. The Communards (defenders of the Commune) advocated rights and liberties for workers and women. They were violently put down by the government at the end of May 1871.



La Commune de Paris (1871)

- Pourcentage de salariés
- Faible
- Fort
- Barricades des Communards
- Les armées versaillaises
- 21-28 mai La « semaine sanglante »

The Paris Commune (1871)

- Percentage of salaried employment
- Weak
- High

Barricades of the Communards

- Army from Versailles
- 21st-28th May: The 'bloody week'

Photograph of a Communard Barricade, 18 March 1871.



Strengthening the Republic

During the 1870s and 1880s republican ideas strengthened in France. The places and institutions of the Republic diffused republican values and from the school to the army, the French learnt about the principles of the Republic. These principles were displayed at each town hall, which was the republican place where people got married and voted.



The municipal law of 5th April 1884 made it obligatory for all communes to have a town hall. This was where people voted, got married and it often served as the village school.

What was the Dreyfus Affair?

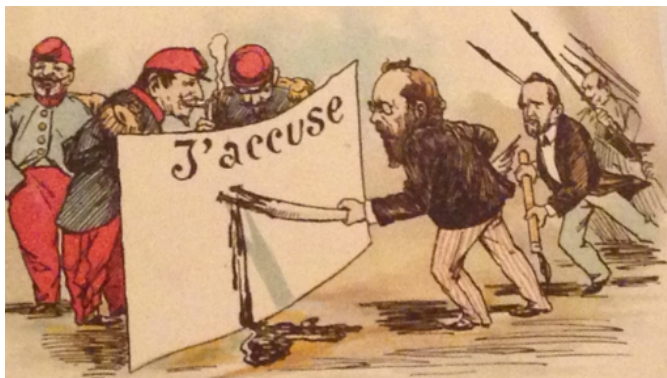
A scandal that rocked France in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Dreyfus affair involved a Jewish artillery captain in the French army, Alfred Dreyfus (1859-1935), who was falsely convicted of passing military secrets to the Germans. In 1894, after a French spy at the German Embassy in Paris discovered a ripped-up letter in a waste basket with handwriting said to resemble that of Dreyfus, he was court-martialed, found guilty of treason and sentenced to life behind bars on Devil's Island off of French Guiana.



In a public ceremony on 5th January 1895, in Paris following his conviction, Dreyfus had the insignia torn from his uniform and his sword broken and was paraded before a crowd that shouted, “Death to Judas, death to the Jew.”

In 1896, the new head of the army's intelligence unit, Georges Picquart, uncovered evidence pointing to another French military officer, Major Ferdinand Walsin Esterhazy, as the real traitor. However, when Picquart told his bosses what he'd discovered he was discouraged from continuing his investigation, transferred to North Africa and later imprisoned.

Nevertheless, word about Esterhazy's possible guilt began to circulate. In 1898, he was court-martialed but quickly found not guilty; he later fled the country. After Esterhazy's acquittal, a French newspaper published an open letter titled “J'Accuse...!” by well-known author Emile Zola in which he defended Dreyfus and accused the military of a major cover-up in the case. As a result, Zola was convicted of libel, although he escaped to England and later managed to return to France.



The Dreyfus affair deeply divided France, not just over the fate of the man at its center but also over a range of issues, including politics, religion and national identity. In 1899, Dreyfus was court-martialed for a second time and found guilty. Although he was pardoned days later by the French president, it wasn't until 1906 that Dreyfus officially was exonerated and reinstated in the army.



Caran d'Ache, 'A Family Dinner', Le Figaro, 14th February 1898

The Separation of Church and State

How did France become a secular country?

The 1905 French law on the Separation of the Churches and State (French: loi du 9 décembre 1905 concernant la séparation des Églises et de l'État) was passed by the Chamber of Deputies on 9th December 1905.

Enacted during the Third Republic, it established state secularism in France. France was governed by the Bloc des gauches (Left Coalition) led by Emile Combes. The law was based on three principles: the neutrality of the state, the freedom of religious exercise, and public powers related to the church. This law is seen as the backbone of the French principle of laïcité.

A caricature on the separation



Legend

1. A priest who symbolizes Catholicism
2. Marianne, symbol of the Republic
3. The Minister of Public Instruction, Bienvenu-Martin, defending this law

Prior to the French Revolution of 1789, Roman Catholicism had been the state religion of France, and closely identified with the Ancien Régime. However, the revolution led to various policy changes, including a brief separation of church and state in 1795, ended by Napoleon's re-establishment of the Catholic Church as the state religion with the Concordat of 1801.

The 1871 Paris Commune had proclaimed state secularism on 3 April 1871, but it had been cancelled following the Commune's defeat.

However, beginning in 1879, the French state began a gradual national secularization program starting with the removal of priests from the administrative committees of hospitals and boards of charities.

Thereafter, the Third Republic established secular education with the Jules Ferry laws in 1881–1882, which were a significant part of the firm establishment of the Republican regime in France, with religious instruction in all schools forbidden.

In 1886, another law ensured secularisation of the teaching staff of the National Education.

Other moves towards secularism included:

- the introduction of divorce and a requirement that civil marriages be performed in a civil ceremony
- legalizing work on Sundays
- secularising schools and hospitals^[8] ^[12]
- abolishing the law ordaining public prayers at the beginning of each Parliamentary Session and of the assizes

The rupture in relations between France and the Vatican



Post card, 1905

Summary of the State and the Catholic Church

| Before 1905 | After 1905 |
|---|--|
| Freedom of religion | Freedom of religion |
| The Concordat (1805) | The Law of Separation (1905) |
| Bishops and priest remunerated by the State | Bishops and priest remunerated by the Church |
| The State nominated bishops | The Pope nominates bishops |

The Third Republic

The Difficult debut of the 3rd Republic

The Third Republic was proclaimed on 4th September 1870 in the context of war. France had been invaded by the Prussian army and the emperor taken prisoner. France lost Alsace and part of Lorraine to the newly established state of Germany.

In Paris, a revolutionary movement, the Commune, enacted new social laws but was violently opposed by the French government installed at Versailles and overthrown at the end of May 1871.

The Strengthening of the Republic

During the 1880s several landmark laws were passed. These re-established the fundamental liberties of the French Revolution, which had been suppressed by the Second Empire. These laws included: the freedom of the press (1881), the right to form unions (1884), the school laws of Jules Ferry which rendered education free, secular and obligatory for boys and girls up to the age of 13 years and subsequently, the right to form associations (1901).

School and the army through the practise of military service became the pillars of the Republic. The town hall in each commune became the focus of local power. Finally, the 1905 law separating Church and State turned France into a secular country.

The Republic confronted by crises

Several crises rocked the Republic between 1870 and 1914. The crisis of 16th May 1877 ensured that the Republic became a parliamentary and not presidential system. The Boulanger Affair of 1889 witnessed the threat of a coup d'état by General Boulanger and during the 1890s there were a series of attacks by anarchists who were opposed to authority and order.



Extract from Le Petit Journal, 23rd December 1893, showing an attack in the Chamber of the Deputies that led to several injuries.

On the night of June 24th 1894, President Sadi Carnot (1887-94) was fatally stabbed by an Italian anarchist who described the assassination as a political act.

The most serious crisis was the Dreyfus Affair because It divided the country between republicans who supported Dreyfus and adversaries who wanted to destabilize the country.

By the start of the 20th century, France was one of the great world powers (e.g. by 1911 it was the second largest constructor of cars and planes, and the fourth biggest producer of steel in the world) and enjoyed a vastly improved quality of life than that experienced under the Second Republic . It is for all these reasons that this period is known as the Belle Epoque or Beautiful Epoch.

The Constitution of the Third Republic

This was a parliamentary regime, nearly all executive power was in the hands of the President of the Council, however his decisions were overseen by parliament.

