

Lesson Thirty-Seven

Aftermath Of The French Revolution

LESSON IDEA

To show how terror was used to make the French Revolution "successful."

PREPARATION

Read the discussion segments of the lesson and prepare appropriate examples, facts, clippings, and booklets about communism for further study by family members. Also, read the "During The Week" section and adapt the suggestion to fit your family's interests.

EVERY REVOLUTION has its unique symbols that people recall when looking back on the event in historical perspective. What are some of the symbols of the American Revolution? [Examples from school classroom study or our Family Heritage Series lessons could include the Liberty Bell, the Declaration of Independence, and "Old Glory.]

What are some of the symbols of the French Revolution? [The guillotine is probably, known, while more advanced students of history might mention the red hat worn by the revolutionaries or the tricolor cockade (a rosette or similar ornament worn on a hat as a badge).]

The guillotine is the most memorable — and infamous — symbol of the French Revolution. Some historians have claimed that this brutal instrument of death was used only sparingly, to rid France of hated aristocrats and a corrupt King and Queen. In fact, however, more than one million persons were killed during the revolution, most of whom were commoners, not aristocrats. For example, during one six-week period in which 2,700 died, at least 2,000 were from the working class — the so-called "poor people" of France. Why do you think that these farmers, workers, merchants, and craftsmen whom the revolutionaries claimed would benefit most from the revolution were instead murdered by it? [Allow time for discussion and speculation.]

The group of conspirators mentioned in last week's lesson had succeeded in dethroning

and beheading the King. The monarchy was no more; the revolutionaries had seized control of the government. Chief among them was Maximilien Robespierre, a member of the secret group called the Illuminati. Robespierre and his compatriots had some peculiar ideas about government. Their two main goals, they claimed, were equality and state control. Every aspect of life and every human relationship (except their own, of course) were to be regulated by the State. Everyone was to be equal in money, property, employment, and food, and other essential elements of existence. Does that theory sound familiar? What contemporary movements can you name that also preach equality and government control? [They would include communism, socialism, and sundry other "isms" based on collectivism and compulsion.]

Here are some examples of how government control was to work:

.... Parents were to be forbidden either to strike or to caress their children, and the children were to be dressed all alike in cotton, to live on "roots, vegetables, fruit, with bread and water," and to sleep on mats upon the floor.

Boys were to belong to their parents only till the age of five; after that they were to become the property of the State until their death. Every one was to be forced by law to form friendships, and "to declare publicly once a year in the Temple who were his friends." Any infraction of these laws was to be punished by banishment. (*The French Revolution* (1919) by Nesta Webster.)

If such ideas seemed difficult to implement, the revolutionaries had an even greater problem with their attempt to make everyone equal. The population of France at the time was about 25 million people, and there was simply not enough money, property, jobs, and food to go around. With "too many" people and too few resources, the revolutionaries either had to increase resources, reduce the number of people, or abandon their scheme of equality. Which option do you think they chose? Why? [Discuss the amoral nature of the criminal revolutionary mind, and the "any means to an

