

## **Theme:** Change—Collapse of Government (January 2013)

The sudden death of a ruler, a defeat in war, or a successful revolution has often led to the collapse of a government. Political, social, and economic changes have occurred as a result of the collapse of a government.

**Task:** Select two situations where the collapse of a government has led to significant changes in a country or region, and for each

- Describe the historical circumstances that led to the collapse of a government
- Discuss the political, social, and/or economic changes that occurred as a result of the collapse of that government

You may use any situation from your study of global history and geography in which the collapse of a government led to significant changes in a country or region. Some suggestions you might wish to consider include collapse of the Roman Empire, **collapse of Louis XVI's government**, collapse of the Tokugawa shogunate, **collapse of Czar Nicholas II's government**, collapse of the Ottoman Empire, collapse of the Nationalist government in China [Guomindang], collapse of Batista's government in Cuba, fall of Reza Pahlavi's government in Iran, breakup of Yugoslavia, and collapse of the Soviet Union.

### **Collapse of Louis XVI**

- Describe the historical circumstances that led to the collapse of a government
  - Economic
    - Unequal tax structure
      - Only 3<sup>rd</sup> estate paid taxes
      - Louis could not order changes to the tax code, needed the Estates General to approve them
    - France was bankrupt
      - Louis XIV built Versailles which bankrupted the French treasury
      - Not enough tax revenue
    - American Revolution
      - Louis XVI got France involved in the American Revolution which cost a substantial amount of money
  - Social
    - Estate System
      - France was divided into 3 estates (social classes)
        - Based on birth
        - No mobility
      - 1<sup>st</sup> estate – clergy
      - 2<sup>nd</sup> estate – nobles
      - 3<sup>rd</sup> estate – peasants
        - Bourgeoisie – wealthy peasants who were oppressed because they were members of the 3<sup>rd</sup> estate – wanted more influence
    - Shortage of food
      - Due to poor harvests and inflation the majority of peasants in France were starving
  - Political

- Absolute government
  - Louis XVI did not have to consult advisors before making a decision
    - Could spend money in any matter he saw fit
- Estates General
  - Legislative branch in the French government that only met at the will of the king – had not met for 175 years.
  - Louis XVI called them to change the tax code to have the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> estates pay taxes as well
    - He did not give them an agenda
    - Fighting began over voting processes
      - 3<sup>rd</sup> estate wanted voting by head not estate
        - They were constantly outvoted by the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> estates with voting by estate
- Discuss the political, social, and/or economic changes that occurred as a result of the collapse of that government
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> estate refused to participate in the Estates General until the voting changes were made
    - Took the Tennis Court Oath – stay on king’s tennis court until he agrees to their demands
  - King was forced to sign the Declaration of the Rights of Man and a new constitution – guaranteeing rights to citizens – ended the absolute monarchy
  - People were not satisfied by the king’s changes and demanded more severe changes
    - Led to Reign of Terror
  - Robespierre wanted to create a Republic of Virtue and killed all enemies of the revolution – including King Louis XVI and his wife Marie Antoinette
  - After Robespierre – the Directory (5 man council) came into power, sought Napoleon’s help to rule
  - Napoleon
    - Created the Napoleonic Code
    - A Meritocracy
    - Allowed peasants to keep lands taken when the nobility fled
    - Eventually became a dictator –and crowned himself emperor
      - Did not support legislative assemblies

### **Collapse of Czar Nicholas II’s government**

- Describe the historical circumstances that led to the collapse of a government
  - Economic
    - Russia did not go through the Renaissance due to the Mongolian occupation
    - Peter the Great’s attempts at gradual modernization failed
      - Russia was forced to modernize quickly
        - Led to many problems – poor working conditions, unfair working hours and wages
  - Social

- Russia ended feudalism in the late 1800s but did not give the peasants land
    - Majority were homeless and starving
  - Poor harvests led to increasing unhappiness
  - Bloody Sunday – peaceful protest on the Tsar’s winter palace led to the death’s of many people – bond with the Tsar was broken
    - Peasants felt abandoned by their Little Father
  - People resented not having a say in their government
- Political
  - Poor leadership of Tsar Nicholas II
    - Inept ruler – make poor decisions
    - Repeatedly dismissed the Duma (legislature) without making any changes
    - Russo-Japanese War – 1<sup>st</sup> time an Asian nation beat a European nation
    - Left his wife in charge of Russia while he visited the frontlines of WWI
      - She was influenced by Rasputin (medical man) to put his supporters into power – weakened the monarchy
- Discuss the political, social, and/or economic changes that occurred as a result of the collapse of that government
  - 1917 – Tsar was overthrown by Marxist revolutionaries who supported adopting communism
    - Led by Lenin and the Bolsheviks
      - Lenin campaigned on the idea of peace, land, and bread
        - Would end WWI
        - Redistribute land
        - Provide food to people
      - Small group of people ruled Russia with absolute power
        - Called Soviets
      - Began the New Economic Policy – included capitalist ideas to try to jump start the Russian economy
    - Stalin takes over after Lenin’s death
      - Command economy – government controls all means of production
      - Great Purge – eliminated all opposition
      - No political rights.