

CHAPTER 28-REVOLUTIONS AND NATIONS STATES IN THE ATLANTIC WORLD

With the Enlightenment, there was a major change in political thinking. The idea of a monarch's "divine right" to rule gave way to the idea of contractual government wherein both the monarch and the people have rights. In this type of government, the government was given its rights and responsibilities by the consent of the governed. There were increased demands for social and political equality, at least for white males. These ideas were to have global impact.

In America, the tension between the colonists and the British government over taxes and representation in Parliament brought about the American Revolution (1775–1781). The Enlightenment is reflected in the U.S. Constitution, that which is based on the principles of freedom, equality, and the idea of popular sovereignty.

In France, it was an internal rather than external struggle. In 1789 Louis XVI attempted to gain support for new taxes that led to a call for political reforms and eventually revolution. The new National Assembly abolished the feudal system, changed the role of the Catholic Church, and became a constitutional monarchy in 1791. The continuing struggle for power and the threat of outside invasion led to the abolition of the monarchy, the creation of a republic, and the death of the king and queen. The political battles within France continued until 1799 with the rise of Napoleon and a period of stability. As emperor, he made peace with the Catholic Church, extended religious freedom, put in place political freedom for all adult men, but also enforced restrictions on the press and speech. His military prowess extended the empire into Iberia, Italy, Netherlands and then in 1812 into Russia, the sight of his first major defeat. He was forced to abdicate, was exiled to the island of Elba, and returned to France to again take control. He was defeated again at Waterloo (1815), and finally exiled to St. Helena where he died.

There were also revolutions in South and Central America during this era. The world's only successful slave revolt occurred in Saint-Dominique, led in part by free blacks who had fought in the American Revolution. In 1791, led by Toussaint Louverture, the slaves rebelled and in 1804 established the Republic of Haiti. In Latin America, many of the revolts were against the *peninsulares* and were often along class lines. Mexico was partially freed from Spanish control by Napoleon's invasion of Spain in 1807. Mexico had a series of revolutions, a brief military dictatorship, and then established a republic in 1822. In South America, Simon Bolivar, inspired by George Washington, led Creole forces against the Spanish first in Colombia and then across the rest of the north. Bolivar's cooperation with revolutionary leaders in other countries helped him defeat the Spanish by 1824. Brazil gained independence from the Portuguese in 1821.

These revolutions also brought the beginnings of political ideology, notably conservatism and liberalism. In brief terms, conservatism favors continuity and tradition, while for liberals change and progress are most important. These revolutions brought about a drive to end first the slave trade, and then slavery. By the late 1800s slavery was abolished in the Atlantic world. But freedom did not always mean political equality. The struggle for women's rights both within the family and in society continued during these revolutions. Women had been

involved in revolutionary movements in various roles, but will not gain political equality until the 1900s.

Key Concept 5.3. Nationalism Revolution and Reform

- I. The rise and diffusion of Enlightenment thought that questioned established traditions in all areas of life often preceded the revolutions and rebellions against existing governments.

- III. The spread of Enlightenment ideas and increasing discontent with imperial rule propelled reformist and revolutionary movements.