18.4: The Age of Napoleon

Napoleon was trained from a very early age to have a military career.

He supported the Jacobins and republican rule during the Revolution. However, he also expressed the opinion that he should support the WINNING side, whichever that was.

Had many successes in the wars against Austria and Italy, making him a war hero.

Failed in Egypt against the British, but hid the stories from his admiriers by using censors.

Soon Napoleon became strong enough to take over leadership in the Revoultion, and named himself “Consul for life,” disregarding the new Constitution.

Eventually he crowned himself Emperor (ironic!), and essentially became an absolute ruler, although he did allow some elections. He generally had the majority of support of French citizens at the time.

Reforms:

* Strengthened central government
* Controlled prices to help the economy
* Built roads and canals
* Public schools
* Religious freedom for Catholics

People of all classes loved him.

* Peasants had more rights
* Middle class liked the economic reforms

Napoleonic Code: a new code of laws, that embodied the Enlightenment priciples of equality for all, religious toleration, and the end of feudalism. However, it did also take away rights for women, and were not considered citizens.

Gradually Napoleon expanded France, taking over parts of the Netherlands, Belgium, and parts of Italy and Germany. He also ended the Holy Roman Empire.

Used diplomacy and alliances to keep his power across Europe.

Napoleon struggled to take over Britain, unsuccessfully. Decided to blockade Britain fom trading, to hurt its economy. This eventually led to the War of 1812 in the US.

Napoleon decided to invade Russia, which would be his downfall.

At the same time, the nationalism felt in the countries he had taken over began to energize revolts against him.

The Russian tsar, Alexander I, was not happy with Napoleon’s invasions, as they led to economic struggles in Europe. He removed his support for Napoleon’s Continental System.

In response, Napoleon invaded Russia in 1812, with 600,000 soldiers and 50,000 horses. The Russians used the scorched-earth policy to weaken France’s army. Napoleon’s army could not survice the winter in Russia because of this, and less than 20,000 soldiers were able to survive the walk back to France.

This ruins his status and reputation for success.

Napoleon is forced to abdicate, and he was exiled to a small island called Elba. Louis XVIII was named King of France.

However, Louis XVIII was not a very successful king, and evntually Napoleon was able to stage a comeback, and the king ran.

Napoleon was able to stay leader of France again for 100 days, but was then crusehd in a battle in Waterloo, Belgium. He again had to abdicate, and this time was sent FAR away, to an island in the Atlantic.

Congress of Vienna: had to put Europe back together again after years of Napoleon’s wars. The main goal was to create a lasting peace by balancing power in Europe, and protecting the system of monarchies.

The Congress redrew the map of Europe. They surrounded France with strong countries to contain it. Also restored “legitimate” leaders in several countries.