Political Developments of the 19th Century - France

Franco-Prussian War
- Reasons for French Defeat
  o Napoleon III went to war with Prussia
    ▪ Without allies
  o Prussian Armies moved quickly in Northeastern France
    ▪ French troops slowly mobilized
    ▪ Speed and ability of the Prussians made up for better French rifles and machinery
  o Fortress of Metz was cut off from the rest of France by the Prussians
    ▪ They also cut off Marshal Marie-Edme de MacMahon
      • Who tried to relieve Metz
    ▪ French retreated to the town of Sedan near the Belgian border
    ▪ The Prussians surrounded and captured the emperor
- Louis Adolphe Thiers
  o Served as Orleanist Prime Minister
    ▪ 1830’s
  o Wanted to establish a very conservative republic monarchy
    ▪ With Bismarck’s help at the end of the war
    ▪ Provisional government negotiated with Bismarck
    ▪ Wanted an armistice
- Siege of Paris
  o September 4, 1870
    ▪ Paris was proclaimed a republic
    ▪ Provisional government formed
  o Napoleon III allowed by Prussians to leave for exile in Britain
    ▪ Prussian army surrounded Paris
    ▪ Hunger
      • Dogs, cats, zoo animals all eaten
- Fall of 2nd Empire
  o 10 days after German Empire established
    ▪ Bismarck and Thiers signed an armistice
    ▪ French lost Alsace and most of Lorraine to new German Empire
  o French voters elected National Assembly (monarchist dominated)
    ▪ Job was to make peace with Prussia and establish a new government
    ▪ National Assembly officially elected Thiers as chief executive of provisional government
- Treaty of Frankfurt
  o May 10, 1871
    ▪ Thiers’ provisional government agreed to pay large indemnity
      • Prussian troops stay in Paris, until indemnity was paid off
    ▪ Versailles (Bourbon Monarchy) chosen as temporary capital by National Assembly
    ▪ After the siege, wealthy Parisians who left Paris returned
      • Landowners wanted back rents be paid immediately
        o Angered renters who were mostly workers
The Third Republic
- Established after Franco-Prussian war
  o Republic is government without a king
  o Not liked by French
    ▪ Demanded as a requirement by Bismarck
- National Assembly
  o Dominated by Monarchists
    ▪ French blame monarchists for signing of the treaty
- **The Paris Commune**
  o Created in 1871
  o Radicals who HATE government
    • Revolted versus National Assembly
      ▪ National Assembly associated with Treaty of Frankfurt
      ▪ Wanted to save the Republic and get rid of Monarchists
    • Communards
      ▪ Rebels
        • Workers
        • Socialists
  o Second siege of Paris
    • Civil war
      ▪ Communards vs. Government
        ▪ Prussian siege
          ▪ Bright red posters on the walls of capital “Paris Commune”
    • Commune defended Paris
      ▪ Leaders were Jacobins, socialists (French Revolution), moderate republicans
      ▪ Communards were democratic-socialist activists in the 2nd Republic
      ▪ Auguste Blanqui
        ▪ Revolution from small cell of determined men seizing power
        ▪ Some were anarchists
      ▪ **Bloody Week**
        • May 21, 1871
        • Thiers’ Versailles government troops flooded Paris
          ▪ “bloody week” followed
          ▪ Army blasted through barricades
          ▪ 25,000 Parisians died
          ▪ “In Paris, everyone was guilty”
- Political Structure after Civil War
  o Political structure
    ▪ Legislative house
      • Chamber of Deputies
        ▪ Lower house
        ▪ Elected by Universal Male Suffrage
      • Senate
        ▪ Upper house
        ▪ Picked by local government officials
    ▪ President
      ▪ Picked by legislature
- Very powerful figurehead
- Cabinet
  - Picked by president
- Premier
  - Prime Minister
    - Held all real power
- Weaknesses
  - Many enemies
    - Monarchists
    - Catholics
    - Military
  - Too many political parties
    - 12 major parties
    - Led to formation of coalitions
      - In order to get a majority
      - Very shaky
      - 50 different coalitions in first 50 years
  - Scandals and corruption
    - Boulanger Affair
      - Boulanger
        - General
        - Monarchist
        - Wanted stronger army
        - Had a plot to overthrow government
        - Whipped up bitterness against Germans
          - Take back Alsace and Lorraine
      - Plot discovered
        - Accused of treason
        - Fled and killed himself
    - Panama Canal Crisis
      - Financial crisis
        - French company building canal went close to bankruptcy
          - News of bribes made to government for contract
          - People lose lots of money
            - Blame the government
    - Dreyfus Affair
      - 1894
      - Jewish Captain in military
        - Not a lot of Jews in the military
      - Accused of giving military secrets to Germany
        - Anti-Semitic frame up
          - Wave of anti-Semitism
        - Really innocent
          - Convicted
      - Found real traitor
        - Ferdinand Esterhazy
          - Catholic monarchist
        - Government refused to reopen the case
- Worldwide indignation
  - Government pardoned Dreyfus in 1906
- Sharpened divisions in France
  - Anti-Dreyfusards
    - Army and the church
- Slow reforms
  - Very very slow change
  - Weakened the Catholic church
    - Many schools closed
    - Stopped government salaries
  - Social reforms
    - Twelve hour days
    - Limits in child labor
    - Free public elementary schools
    - Social welfare and health insurance
    - French Union for Women’s Suffrage
      - Use legal methods to work for women’s suffrage
      - Jeanne-Elizabeth Schmahl
  - Zionism
    - Movement among Jews to create a Jewish homeland
    - Theodor Herzl