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The French Directory Government, 1795 -1799 (Achievements, failures and Problems)

Questions to ponder

1. Examine the achievements of the Directory government in France from 1795-1799.
2. "The achievements of the Directory government have been grossly under estimated." Discuss.
3. Why did the Directory government fail to maintain law and order in France?
4. Assess the significance of the Directory government of France 1795-1799.
5. "The Directory government was a drawback to the Ancient Regime." Discuss
6. Account for the increasing opposition to Directory Government in France.
7. To what extent was the Directory Government successful in France from 1798-1799?
8. Account for the collapse of the Directorate government in 1799.

The French Directory Government

The **French Directory** (1795-1799) was established by the Constitution of the Year III, following the fall of the radical Jacobin government and the end of the Reign of Terror. It was designed to provide a more stable and moderate government.

It consisted of a five-member committee, with each member serving a one-year term. The executive power was shared among these five Directors, who were chosen by a bicameral legislature consisting of the Council of Five Hundred and the Council of Ancients.

Achievements of the French Directory Government, 1795-1799

The **French Directory** (1795-1799) had several notable achievements despite its challenges:

1. **The Directory Government ended the reign of terror.** The rise to power of the Directory put an end to the reign of terror and peace, law and order returned to most parts of the country.
2. **Economic Reforms:** The Directory implemented monetary reforms that helped revive trade and agriculture. These reforms provided a foundation for Napoleon's later economic policies.

3. **Military Successes:** The Directory oversaw significant military victories during the French Revolutionary Wars, which expanded French influence in Europe and laid the groundwork for Napoleon's conquests.
4. **Educational Reforms:** The Directory established a system of elite centralized schools, known as the grandes écoles, which played a crucial role in educating future leaders and professionals.
5. **Legal Reforms:** The Directory continued the work of the revolutionary government in codifying laws and creating a more uniform legal system.
6. **Political Stability:** Although the Directory faced internal conflicts and political instability, it managed to maintain a degree of order and prevent the return of the monarchy.
7. **The Directory government promoted democratic government in France.** For instance, it promoted secret ballot voting on proposed laws by the Council of Ancients.

Failures of the French Directory Government, 1795-1799

The **French Directory** (1795-1799) faced several significant failures during its tenure:

1. **Corruption and embezzlement:** The Directory Government was characterized with scandal of corruption with businessmen. For instance, The Chevalier Enterprise that was paid to build three large warships and frigates never did it.
2. **Political Corruption:** The Directory was notorious for widespread corruption, with many officials using their positions for personal gain. It manipulated the electoral process and rigged elections. For example, it cancelled the 1797 parliamentary elections in 49 departments where the moderates and royalists had gotten land-slide victory.
3. **Economic Instability:** Despite some economic reforms, the Directory struggled to stabilize the economy, and issues like inflation and national debt persisted.
4. **Social Unrest:** The period saw continued social unrest, including food shortages and civil disturbances. The Directory Government failed to end lawlessness in France.
5. **Judicial Compromise:** The judicial system was compromised, with political influence often affecting legal decisions.
6. **Military Dependence:** The Directory relied heavily on the military for enforcement and revenue, which entrenched military influence in politics and fostered corruption within the armed forces.
7. **Internal Divisions:** The Directory faced internal divisions and power struggles between royalists and radical revolutionaries, which hindered effective governance.
8. **The directory government failed to reconcile the state and the Catholic Church.** This maintained numerous rebellions in French western districts of La Vendee and Brittany which were predominantly Catholics.
9. **The Directory Government failed to reconcile with France neighbours.** This strained France economically and militarily.
10. **The Directory Government failed to improve the working conditions of the Frenchmen.** The industrial workers worked long hours and were poorly paid.
11. **The Directory Government failed to provide satisfactory social services** like roads, medical and education facilities due to lack of funds.

12. **The frustrated the freedom of press.** This was through arrests and imprisonment of journalists without trial and closure of printing presses of royalist.

These failures contributed to the Directory's eventual downfall and the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte.

Problems faced by the French Directory Government, 1795-1799

The **French Directory** (1795-1799) faced several significant problems during its tenure:

1. **Lack of funds to sustain administration;** the Directorate government lacked funds to meet their obligations.
2. **Opposition:** the Directorate government faced a lot of opposition the loyalists, clergy, emigrants and socialism promoters.
3. **Political Corruption:** The Directory was notorious for widespread corruption, with many officials using their positions for personal gain.
4. **Criticism from the press:** Directory government faced severe criticism especially from the Jacobin press.
5. **Economic Instability:** Despite some economic reforms, the Directory struggled to stabilize the economy, and issues like inflation and national debt persisted.
6. **Social Unrest:** The period saw continued social unrest, including food shortages and civil disturbances.
7. **Judicial Compromise:** The judicial system was compromised, with political influence often affecting legal decisions.
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