

France National Day Special

Freedom hailed as legacy of uprisings

July 14 marks the anniversary of the 1790 Fete de la Federation, which celebrated the storming of the Bastille one year previously. This date is still celebrated every year as a day to commemorate the unity of all French people, as well as the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity.

Amid food shortages and civil unrest at unfair taxation, increasingly heated sessions of Parliament spilled over into

a riot. On July 14, 1789, a crowd first stormed the Hotel des Invalides to loot royal stores for weapons. Then the crowd moved to the Bastille, a notorious site that symbolized the absolute power of the Ancien regime. The armed mob rising up against this potent symbol of ruling class tyranny has become the defining image of the revolution.

The symbol of royal power in the cen-

ter of Paris falling to the armed militia became the flashpoint for a revolution that would eventually lead to a number of radical changes, including the abolition of feudalism and the extension of suffrage.

Today, Les Invalides stands proudly in central Paris as an example of classic architecture and serves as France's national war memorial. Initially constructed during the reign of Louis XIV as housing for wounded and homeless war veterans, today it retains this function and is also home of the Ministry of Armed Forces. Inside can be found the Musee de l'Armee (Army Museum), Musee des Plans-Reliefs (Museum of Map Reliefs) and the Musee de l'Ordre de la Liberation (Museum of the Order of the Liberation). It is also the location of Napoleon Bonaparte's tomb, under the Eglise du Dome (Dome Church), with statues of Charlemagne and St. Louis decorating the lower levels.

Remains of the Bastille are few and scattered, as the prison was quickly demolished in the aftermath of July 14. The foundations of the Liberte Tower were



The July Column reaches into the sky above Bastille square in Paris, marking the site of the former prison.

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discovered in 1899 during the construction of the Paris Metro and were dismantled and reconstructed in a nearby garden. Some of the walls can still be seen in preserved form at Bastille Metro station. The site is now home to the Colonne de Juillet (July Column), which commemorates the 1830 July Revolution.

This article references excerpts from official French government and Paris Tourism websites.

For more information, visit <https://www.france.fr/en> and <https://en.parisinfo.com>.



The facade of Les Invalides in Paris GETTY IMAGES

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the National Day of

France

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