Napoleonic Wars And Reasons Leaded To Them

To understand the Napoleonic wars, first of all, it is necessary to know their historical context, the years of revolution that precede them, the great hierarchical change, the abolition of the monarchy, the importance of the ideals thought and executed in the illustration, the great global influence of them and the figure of a historical figure like Napoleon Bonaparte that would change the way of seeing the world. In this essay we will delve into history and look for arguments and counterarguments when it comes to understanding the Napoleonic Wars, the eagerness to conquer and whether war is really a good strategy to spread ideals or a simple imperialist excuse.

Enlightenment was a cultural movement that developed in Europe at the beginning of the 18th century, known as the Enlightenment, until the beginning of the French Revolution. This movement came about thanks to a large number of influential thinkers of the time who held a series of ideals for modernizing the world, through new conceptions of nature, reason, equality, freedom and secular morality. Later the illustration, in its more mature stage, chose to be collected in a movement of more intellectual air. Thus, under a slogan that groups all the great European thinkers, the order based on God is abandoned and an order based on man is initiated. This movement had a strong impact on French society which was experiencing a great economic crisis due to serious financial and fiscal problems, on the other hand due to the impact of a new set of social practices and intellectual beliefs contributed by the Enlightenment, without forgetting the example and stimulus that the victory of the American Revolution meant, and to end the military imperialism of France.

The economic crisis was mostly due to the excessive costs of war. Throughout the century, France participated in seven wars: The War of Spanish Succession, the War of the Quadruple Alliance, the War of Polish Succession, the War of the Seven Years, the War of Succession of the Austrias and the War of American Independence. As a result, one quarter of annual expenditures went to that cost and two quarters to pay debts. Eventually, such a large debt was generated that the debt could not be repaid because the income was less than the necessary expenses. Faced with this situation, and the impossible collection of sufficient taxes, 'Le Taille', to pay the debt due to tax evasion of the privileged group, which in turn was the richest. After this event, in 1786, the Comptroller Charles Alexandre de Calonne presented Louis XVI with a project based on the equality of citizens with regard to taxes. He proposed the abolition of a series of indirect taxes to reinforce direct taxes. It also contemplated the confiscation of the Church's lordly rights to repay the clergy's debt and a new tax: the territorial subsidy, proportional to the land tax and applicable to all properties, without distinction.

These measures were not well received in the high spheres of the French aristocracy, including the high nobility and the high clear. Faced with this initiative, King Louis XVI convened the assembly of notables at Versailles, composed of 144 personalities chosen by himself same, for a vote on Alexander Calonne's measures which were quickly rejected in February 1787. According to the French historian Michel Vovelle, a specialist in the French Revolution, the beginning of the Revolution took place just at that moment. Other great protagonists during these years precursors to the revolution were the bourgeois, a middle class coming from the “borough”, who exercised a series of functions as great merchants, artisans, lawyers, and

thinkers, among other trades. This social group was characterized by not belonging to the privileged classes nor to the peasantry. Many of the enlightened ones of the revolution belonged to the bourgeoisie and with the passage of time their ideals quickly spread to this class. The first revolutionaries who provoked and expanded these ideals belonged to this middle class and during the 10 years of revolution they were divided into two broad clubs: Girondins and Jacobins. In both groups it is worth mentioning several important personalities such as Maximilien Robespierre or his predecessor Antoine Barnave, leader of the Jacobins and Jacques Pierre Brissot, leader of the Girondins group.

Faced with the terrible demonstrations and the enormous upheavals that arose throughout France, the king decided to convene the General States, formed by the representatives of each class, the First State by the clergy, the Second by the nobility and the Third by the rest of the population, thus gathering the bourgeoisie and the peasantry. This call was originated by the monarchy with the intention of manipulating the assembly at will. Not in vain, Marie-Joseph Paul Yves Roch known as Lafayette pronounced his well-known phrase 'Insurrection is the holiest of duties' thus inciting the uprising. But what was her surprise when she discovered a very strong Third State that would seek the duplication of the assembly members with the right to vote. The government accepted the proposal and soon the Third State proclaimed itself a National Assembly and committed itself to writing a constitution. The national assembly, representing the people, took as its first step the creation of the 'Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen'. The monarchy, totally opposed to the new assembly, closed the rooms of the building where they were meeting and as a countermeasure the assembly members moved to a nearby building where they used to play 'jeu de paume', that June 20, 1789 is known as the day of the 'Tennis Court Oath' where they promised not to dissolve until they created a constitution for the French people.

Focusing on some of the most outstanding ideals provided by the revolution, we find those of a more social and political nature that led to the creation of the aforementioned declaration and constitution. All this is due to important philosophers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in my opinion the most influential in the philosophy of Napoleon, who defended in his brilliant work 'Le contrat social' that man to live in society would have to donate part of his freedoms to achieve a social consensus in which no man was freer than another and could live together equally. In addition, Rousseau defended that there were four stages of life, the first describing it as the primitive or natural, where man lived alone, was strong and was good and therefore happy. Napoleon sums up these ideas by saying: 'I was happy because I lived according to Nature. Only the strong man is good; the weak man is always bad,' because the weak man suffers jealousy when compared with others, and that is where evil begins. On the other hand, the figure of Baron de Montesquieu should also be highlighted, with his policy of dividing powers into legislative, executive and judicial powers as he defends that nobody should have absolute power over all of them as it would be a tyrannical and corrupt government. Another very important philosopher was Hegel, who shows great admiration for the French emperor by being a pure example of an idealistic man and considering that the human uses reason and therefore the human will always be evolving to a better future, as the same philosopher thought.