Fitzgerald Answer to Jefferson DBQ - excerpt from letter to Tench Coxe on French Revolution

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| Indent  Use wording of prompt  Make main idea specific to ideas in document – so you can prove that is what it says  Address historical background on the topic that we have learned in our studies  Address the context of the letter in terms of knowledge from our studies that speaks of Jefferson’s relationship to the French, the war that developed between Britain and France and all that was happening in American politics surrounding the war  Interpret the letter, focusing on what it says about the French Revolution and using this to prove your main idea  Conclude by returning to your main point | Jefferson thought that the French Revolution would be an obstacle in the way of future attempts at seeking to overthrown a monarchy and establish democracy because it was so violent.  The French Revolution started peacefully enough, but due to the need to take the wealth and control of land away from the nobility that controlled well over 90% of these resources and the refusal of the nobility to accept the rule of the majority of the people willingly violence became necessary. Revolutionaries executed 17,000 members of the nobility and those who worked for them, needing to invent an execution machine, the guillotine to deal with this number of executions.  Jefferson had been the ambassador to France during the American Revolution and had secured the support of the French that had been so critical to our winning the war: money, troops, military leadership, and naval forces. Jefferson was chosen as Secretary of State by George Washington because of his ambassadorial experience in general and because of this relationship with France, as the Revolution started just as Washington took office. However, when war broke out between Britain and France when Britain attacked France due to concern over the increasing violence spilling out of France and into the surrounding monarchies of Europe, Jefferson disagreed with Washington and the other members of the cabinet over which side the United States should take in the conflict. He believed the United States needed to support France due to the fact that it was fighting for democracy against a monarchy as we had and had helped us in our fight, while other members of the cabinet led by Alexander Hamilton believed we need to support Britain as over 90% 0f our trade was with Britain and the violence of the revolution had become too great. Jefferson ended up resigning from Washington’s cabinet, despite Washington remaining neutral on the war, and starting a political party, the Democratic-Republicans in part to address his position on the war.  This letter might seem to be against the French Revolution without this context. Jefferson states in that letter that the United States could be proud that it had started the trend of overthrowing monarchy and establishing democracy that he believed would continue around the world. He uses the metaphor of the “ball of liberty” rolling around the world to describe this trend and says that the United States “first out [it] in motion.” He admits that the violence of the French Revolution is frightening, calling the execution during the Reign of Terror “atrocities” and saying that they would be  make future attempts at fighting for democracy more difficult, calling the violence a “tremendous obstacle.”  This does not mean that he believed the French were wrong in taking this path. The French people were in a completely different situation than the colonies, who had for many years been self-governing and had thrown off a mother country that was far across the ocean and had other colonies to turn to instead. The revolutionaries of the colonies had not had been victims of centuries and centuries of crimes by a nobility against the common man and had no nobility that controlled the vast majority of the wealth, land, and power of the country refusing to give up its power. |