

CAUSES OF REVOLUTION

The reasons for revolution can be complex and varied, but we can narrow the causes of revolution into 4 general categories.

Revolutions happen due to:

- **New Ideas**
- **Social Conflict**
- **Political Factors**
- **Economic Conditions**

Often, revolutions occur because of a mixture of these factors.

KEY TERMS

- **Constitution**: the laws for running a country.
- **Class**: a group sharing the same economic or social status; social rank.
- **Hierarchy**: the classification of a group of people according to ability or to economic, social, or professional standing.
- **Bourgeoisie**: the middle class in society.
- **Assembly**: a legislative body; the gathering of a political or social group.
- **Clergy**: church leaders (priests, bishops, etc)

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

- Causes:
 - Social inequality
 - Political Issues
 - Financial Issues
- The French Revolution established a new political order and a new social system.

SOCIAL INEQUALITY

All Frenchman were legally divided into three estates:

1st Estate: Clergy (Church leaders)

- Made up 0.5% of population, but owned 10% of the land
- Did not pay taxes
- Collected a **tithe** (10% of a person's income went to the church)
- Enjoyed great privileges

SOCIAL INEQUALITY

2nd Estate: Nobility

- Made up 1.3% of the population, but owned 25% of the land
- Held high positions in government, military, court system and church.
- Did not pay the **taille** (land tax) or most other taxes.
- (Nobles refused to pay taxes – “Let those pay taxes who work; we should not pay because we do not work.”)

SOCIAL INEQUALITY

3rd Estate: Everyone else

- 98% of the population of France
 - 1. Bourgeoisie**
 - 8% of population, 25 % of land
 - Merchants, doctors, lawyers
 - Had the money and ability of 2nd Estate, but not the status.
 - 2. Urban Workers**
 - Craftsmen, laborers, shopkeepers
 - 3. Peasant Farmers**
 - Largest group in France, but owned only 40% of land
 - Half had no land
 - Paid 3x more taxes
 - Owed the nobles various duties/services

POLITICAL ISSUES

- **Louis XVI (16th)** continued to rule France in the same manner as his grandfather Louis XIV (Sun King) – through “**Absolutism**”.
- **Absolutism:**
 - A political system in which a ruler holds total power.
 - The Divine Rights of Kings to rule means that:
 - Rulers received their power from God and were responsible to no one except God.
 - Rulers had the ability to make laws, raise taxes, administer justice, control officials and determine foreign policy.
- This was no longer an effective way to rule France because it had grown too large for a single ruler.

FINANCIAL ISSUES

1789 – the French Government was bankrupt. Why?

1. **Poor system for collecting taxes**

- Tax collectors took more than they were supposed to and kept some for themselves.
- The people who actually had money (1st and 2nd Estate) were not taxed.

2. **Bad Harvests**

- Lead to unemployment, food shortages, and inflation (higher prices)

3. **Extravagant Spending**

- Fought 7 years war with Britain and helped the US in the American Revolution. (Navy and Army)
- Queen Marie Antoinette was HIGH MAINTENANCE (Madame Deficit)

ESTATES GENERAL

- The King called the Estates General (gathering of representatives from all three estates) to meet at Versailles on May 5th, 1789.
- He invited the 3rd Estate to bring a list of complaints (known as the **cahiers de doléances**)
- He wanted 1st and 2nd Estate to pay taxes
- 1st and 2nd Estate would obviously vote NO, so the 3rd Estate wanted the voting process to be changed before voting on anything.
- 1st and 2nd Estate would not agree.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

- June 17, 1789: Third Estate declared that it was the **National Assembly** and would draft a constitution that would eliminate Absolutism and create class equality.
- 3 days later, the National Assembly was locked out of their meeting hall.
- They moved to nearby indoor tennis court and swore they would continue meeting until they had a new constitution. (**Tennis Court Oath**)

THE STORMING OF BASTILLE

- July 14th, 1789 mob of Parisians stormed the Bastille (an old fortress, used as a prison and armoury)
 - Why?
 - People were hungry and angry
 - It was a symbol of the King
 - Rumor: King's troops were coming and there was ammunition in the Bastille
 - They freed all 7 prisoners, killed the warden and destroyed the Bastille
 - King's troops did nothing to stop the rebels
 - Louis XVI lost his authority.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY REACTS TO RIOTS

1. They ended all legal privileges of the nobles and clergy.
2. They adopted the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen
 - All men were free and equal before the law
 - Appointment to public office based on talent
 - No group exempt from taxation
3. Brought the church under State control
 - Bishops and priests elected and salaries paid by the State
 - Lands sold off to help pay France's debt.

MARCH ON VERSAILLES

- Louis XVI refused to accept the National Assembly's ruling until angry peasant women with pitch forks forced him to sign it.
- They marched from Paris with complaints of starvation and threatened the King and Queen.
- The King and Queen "agreed" to move to Paris and donated wagonloads of flour to show their "support".

THE NEW CONSTITUTION OF 1791

Over the next 2 years (1789-1791) the National Assembly worked together to hammer out a new constitution for France. Below are the main features of the new laws:

- Limited monarchy
 - There still would be a King, but the Legislative Assembly would make the laws.
- Only men over 25 who paid a certain amount of taxes could vote
- Clergy, government officials and judges would be elected.
- Local governments in charge of taxation.

THE NEW CONSTITUTION OF 1791

- Did not have universal support
 - Poor people wanted more change
 - King angry over loss of absolute power
- The King and his family tried to escape France in disguise, but were caught.
- The New Constitution added a new law saying that the King could be put on trial for treason if he turned against the nation.

WAR WITH AUSTRIA

- Some European leaders began to fear that revolution would spread to their countries.
- Rulers of Austria and Prussia threatened to use force to restore Louis XVI to full power.
- Legislative Assembly declared war on Austria spring of 1792.
- The French did badly.

RISE OF THE PARIS COMMUNE

- Spring 1792 – angry citizens protested food shortages and losses in war.
- August 1792 – Paris radicals declared themselves a commune (a popular run city council), and organized a mob attack on the royal palace and Legislative Assembly.
- Members of the new Paris Commune:
 - Took the king captive
 - Abolished the monarchy
 - Formed the “National Convention” –(new government)
 - Wanted all men to be able to vote
 - Called themselves the ‘sans-culottes’ (without breeches)

FATE OF THE KING

- The Verdict:
 - All of the Deputies believed he was guilty
 - 321 said his punishment should be prison or exile
 - 374 said the punishment should be death
- The Execution – January 21st, 1793
 - Preparations:
 - Troops, mounted guards, foot soldiers
 - Louis has final meeting with family and attends mass
 - At around 10 o'clock, Louis arrived at the guillotine
 - At 10:22, he was dead

THE REIGN OF TERROR

- Between 1793 and 1794, the **Committee of Public Safety**, led by Maximilien Robespierre took control of the government.
 - To defend France from threats from within France, the Committee adopted policies that became known as the **Reign of Terror**.
 - Almost 40,000 people were killed, including Marie Antoinette
 - Conformity was expected.
 - Nationalism was 'encouraged'.

END OF THE TERROR

- By summer 1794, the French had mostly defeated their foreign enemies.
- Less need for the Reign of Terror
- Robespierre wanted to continue until there was no more corruption
- Deputies of the National Convention feared Robespierre and gathered votes to condemn him
- Robespierre was guillotined on July 28th, 1794
- Reign of terror ended