

The french revolution



The French Revolution began in 1789. During the 19th century, France was consistently at war with their long-time rival, Britain as well as other European countries. Most of these wars were unsuccessful and very costly. Frances economy fell, the country was quickly running out of money. During this time famine also struck and severe weather was hitting the country. The weather conditions destroyed grain crops and created a shortage of food.

The poorer people began starving and started to attack wagons carrying grain. Those who suffered the most were the people of the First Estate. The First Estate counted for 96% of Frances??™s population and over several decades their feeling of inequality began to shape the revolution.

The third estate was comprised of the workers, the beggars, the artisans, and the bourgeoisie. This class did all the working of the land and created most of what the higher classes took for granted, yet they reaped little to no benefits. They did not have equal representation in the government, no influence in voting procedures, and paid the heavy taxes laid down by the King. The king recognized this tension and called together the Estates General. But when the Estates General met in 1789, his plan to change the taxes backfired. Many upset members of the third estate were determined to change the system, they declared themselves the National Assembly. The National Assembly created an oath of allegiance, revolting against the government to place real representatives in the government, gain influence on the vote, and lift the burden of the hefty taxes under which they were placed.

The document was signed by 576 of the 577 members of the Third Estate, as well as, a few members of the First Estate in a meeting of the Estates General held in the tennis court on June 20, 1789. The oath later came to be known as the Tennis Court Oath. This led to a greater revolt against the King himself and his wife, both of whom greatly decreased the economy of France in their lust for luxuries and vanities. The First Estate was made up of religious leaders and the clergy. They represented less than 1% of the people of France. This small minority, however, owned or controlled one-fifth of the land. Members of the First Estate enjoyed special rights, including the freedom from carrying the burden of taxes.

Among the members of the First Estate were many poor and well-meaning people. The parish priests served the religious needs of their people and received few rewards. Furthermore, there were many bishops and pastors who knew they had unfair privileges. During the famine in France though, the first estate did well and suffered no lack of food.