

To what extent did the actions and policies of Louis XVI cause the outbreak, and ...



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To what extent did the actions and policies of Louis XVI cause the outbreak, and affect the course, of the French Revolution until 1793? The French Revolution (1789-1799) was one of the most important and radical social periods in European history. The 1789 outbreak of the French Revolution was caused by many factors. Therefore it is very difficult to decide which one is the main one. According to Professor J. H. Shennan the most important problems were economic crisis and involvement in the American War of Independence.

Another historian Gwynne Lewis focuses on political and cultural issues such as the nature of absolutism and the role of the Church. However in this essay we are going to talk only about Louis XVI's policies and actions that might have caused the outbreak of the French Revolution and how they affected the course of the revolution. Louis XVI came to the throne in 1774. Although the country was squeezed out by the rule of the previous king, Louis XVI was still spending huge amounts on luxury. France's government was in financial crisis. Thus the king wanted to raise the taxes and to do that he needed the permission from the States-General. Therefore the States-General met at Versailles on May 5, 1789 (the last meeting was in 1614!). Contrary to the government the Third Estate had the demand of the abolition of all feudal dues, the ending of privileged exemption of nobles and clergy and other things that were written in the cahiers.

Moreover there was the demand that Louis XVI's despotic powers had to be curbed. During the States-General meeting the handling with the Third Estate was not conformed. (The third State had to wait longer time in corridors of

the meeting-place while nobles and clergy hadn't). Moreover during several such conferences the Third State offered arrangements (Counting by heads that the resolutions would be fair) but Louis insisted on voting by separate estates. It was the last straw in a glass. Louis extravagance, not listening to the cashiers and bad behaving with the Third State led to the outbreak of French Revolution.

Louis XVI actions and policies not only caused but also affected the course of the revolution. We can take as an example from just mentioned Louis XVI insistence to vote by separate estates. This action led to that the Third Estate declared themselves the National Assembly.

Every Louis XVI action had a counteraction, by every action and policy he made the Revolution accelerate. Although the King was always late to make decisions. Some King's decisions even showed that he was undetermined and he did not have the features which were needed for kings.

June 23, 1789 (against Necker advice) Louis XVI during royal session ordered three estates to meet separately, but the Third State did not withdraw. This action made by the Third State was big offense to the king, against his resistant of the National Assembly Louis did nothing. Thus led people feel more powerful and the authority of the king decreased. If the king would have positively reacted to the the National assembly and its goals, then the French Revolution might have ended there. Another action of the king that affected people was the king's flight to Varennes. By this action Louis XVI, according to Norman Davies, lost everything that were left, he shamefully was returned to Paris.

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He betrayed his own country by asking help. Lack of good king features , slow speed in making decisions and by betraying his country Louis XVI affected the course of the French Revolution. In conclusion, Louis decision to organize the States-General meeting and not taking attention to the wishes of the Third State are very likely to caused outbreak of the revolution. All kings actions and policy changed the course of the French revolution. If the king would have positively reacted to the changes, everything would be differently.