

Book review on the french revolution and the people essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

For my report I read *The French Revolution and the People* by David Andress to learn what were the reasons causing the French Revolutionary War. The main thesis of the book is the known problems and reactions which affected the events and outcomes of the revolution in every stage, now everyone in France was affected by the revolution. I agree with the author's thesis on many different levels. Since the multiple troubles the people had at that time did not originate just then but decades before.

As well with constant economic pressure of all the upper classes upon them only worsened the situation. Since all the troubles and problems of the poor were never looked after, now everyone in France gets a taste of the revolution. First, many of grievances the poor had were well known throughout France. One main problem was the *taille* which was the main tax on property which everyone but the aristocrats and clergy had to pay. The community or its official got to decide how much each individual should pay. Since the state demanded the amount of money depending on the regions economic output. Although the state made sure they got the money by making the officials pay for any shortfalls of the *taille* with their own money.

Some had more strict aristocrats governing them so their rules are even more ludicrous than the others. For example, the peasants were in type of lease called *half-fruits* where they were given a piece of land to farm but they were to pay the owner outstanding amounts of there food and livestock to the point where they would lose money since the peasants paid for everything. They had to keep the land in good condition, buying own tools, and supply the hay and straw for livestock is just a little bit of the share the

peasants had then. Another form of sharecropping but most used is the three-field system.

In that form the farmer would split his field into three sections each used for specific crop for example one for wheat, another for fallow, and last for other vegetables or grains. Another issue was the clergy's economic relationship with the village. The churches collect tithes and since the right to collect tithes was owned by both the lay landowners and seigneurs (similar to mayors) the tithes were mostly mandatory. Although the tithe was to pay for the church's services you still would be charged for weddings, baptisms, and funerals. In some cases the clerics and the religious instructions to be both landowners and seigneurs, in turn being able to claim rents and feudal dues from large numbers of peasants. Second, how seigneurialism did not get rid of feudalism but only changed it for the seigneurs to get more power.

Over time it shifted from feudalism to more of a financial relationship since the lords wanted more money and they couldn't tax serfs who didn't get paid. The seigneurs had many rights such over extensive land, an annual rent, a share of harvest; fee if land has changed hands or inherited would be paid by past serfs. They also had rights over the game in their land forbidding peasants from killing anything without privilege, as well as the right to ride over peasant's crops during the pursuit of the game. Also more rights are honorary pews in the front of the church and the weathercock on top of manor house. The seigneurs also had the right to dispense justice so many tens of thousands of seigneurial courts were apart of villages. Also, another problem that occurred during that time was a drought. France ran

into a few climatic problems in 1785 which lead a drought a major problem for the largely subsistence-based population.

Maybe the ash clouds from Iceland's volcanoes in 183-1785 distorted the weather patterns for a few years. They had a decent harvest in 1785 but had a dry summer which leads to problems growing the grass crops for the livestock. Another harvest in 1786 was a disappointment in western France, another dry summer lead to another shortage of food for livestock again which lead to many peasants selling their livestock for money or food. By 1787 the harvests have only gotten worse and would play a huge role in the beginning of the French Revolution. Also, the peasants were not the only ones having trouble with the upper class; the artisans also had a difficult time. The problems were the guild master's were not allowing other tradesmen into the cities, rarely hiring journeymen, teaching apprentices wrong or not enough.

By doing these things the master's of the guilds would curb the competition and keep the monopoly in their hands. Before the revolution the artisans still lived under the economic system of guilds. There were a few problems that the artisans dealt with such as master would rarely hire a journeyman for work. Since the only way a journeyman can become apart of the guild is to show the guild his final and most prestigious job done and no masters hiring them for work that made the life of an artisan worse.

Since journeymen often worked as companions to master craftsmen, master craftsmen would rather save their money by not hiring journeymen unless a huge project was undertaken since they could always get an apprentice for

basically free. To become a guild master you had complete multiple guild requirements as well as a fee. The fee could range anywhere from 300 livres for a potter, 1000 for masons, and 2500 for the drapers.

Most of the time blood relatives of the current masters were waived of the fees or the requirements needed to be a master. The author attained all of his information from many books. I believe he used them correctly by using quotations throughout the book. One for example: "Tempers are so high the threats I hear make me and all other sensible folk greatly fear the riots and disturbances which will surely follow the tithe-gathering this year...."

All the peasants around here and in my area generally are preparing to refuse their quota of sheaves to the tithe-collectors and say quite openly there will be no collection without bloodshed on the senseless grounds that as the request for the abolition of these tithes was included in the cahier of this [district], such an abolition has now come into effect. (1) Since he got all of his information from different books such as multiple French-named French histories, books on Queen Maria Antonieta, the taking of the Bastille, and the French society, in the end the author tended to side more with revolution but after they became radical he shifted sides.