

The main contestants that helped overthrow europe's absolute monarchies

[Politics](#)



Revolution Essay-

How does a monarchy, with all the power and money of a state, get overthrown by its own people? To help better understand this we have to understand what absolute monarchies were: An absolute monarchy is a government form in which a monarchy, such as a king or queen, has all the power in the state that it governs. Enlightenment thinker Rousseau once wrote, " Only the General will can direct the energies of the state" or in other words, " The people are the power". Absolute monarchies such as the French and English are evidence of this kind of revolution. Both situations are instances of conflicting interests of a monarch and its people. These occurrences of people challenging a monarch include the French revolution, English Revolution, and Enlightenment writers; which are crucial to understanding how and why these types of revolutions occur.

The French revolution had many occurrences of people challenging the monarch, three of which include: The third Estate, the women's March, and Robespierre's public speeches. The third estate, or lowest class of France at the time, had a large impact on the revolution. Even though the third estate had no political power, it had the most population. As seen in Document 5, the third estate not only had the highest population it had the highest percent taxes and lowest land in comparison to its people. In the light of this power, the third estate broke off from the political system and created a new form of government by Robespierre's lead. Robespierre hosted many speeches to rally citizens in rebellion of the monarch. In one of his speeches, he states, " What is the goal for which we strive? A peaceful enjoyment of

liberty and equality, the rule of that eternal justice whose laws are engraved, not upon marble or stone, but in the hearts of all men.”(Robespierre, 1794)

Which is a clear challenging of authority, and accusation of corruption and unjust in the monarch. Not only politically, but French challenged the monarch violently. The women’s march on Versailles, as depicted in Document 9, was the unifying of worker women against the monarch and more specifically the queen. The document depicts a large group of women with pikes and a cannon marching in one direction. A violent example of how French challenged the monarch. All three of the stated occurrences in France were in direct opposition to the monarch and therefore direct challenging of the monarch.

Also, examples of challenging an absolute monarch exist in the English revolution. To overthrow a king at the time was unheard of; the only true justification of overthrowing a king was in the bible. “ There was also much Old Testament History showing unrighteous kings being overthrown by God’s people. Psalm 149 encouraged the ‘ saints’ ‘ To bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron’.”(Professor Ann Hughes, 2011) To have justification to their cause through history challenged the monarchy’s credibility. Not only this but most of the English revolution challenged the monarch with the idea of rights. After being mistreated by kings like James II, the people began supporting the idea of natural rights and freedoms of man. The major freedom supported was the freedom of religion, more specifically, the freedom to worship without mediation of a church, priest, or king. “ However, the Reformation which began to influence England just before James’ birth, taught the ‘ the priesthood of all believers.’ This was the idea

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that every man can, and should, bypass the king and his bishops, hearing from god directly through scripture.”(William P. Parley) The English want for rights also challenged absolutist ideas outside of England with the English bill of rights. After the king was overthrown, and was replaced with a new king and queen. This Monarchy had their power limited by parliament. The bill of rights states the reasoning behind not having absolute monarchy through James II actions against the protestant religion, laws, and freedoms. “ By assuming and exercising power of dispensing and suspending of laws... without consent Parliament... By raising and keeping a standing army within this kingdom in time of peace without consent of Parliament, and quartering soldiers contrary to law.”(English Bill of Rights) Mainly through the support of their own rights, previously violated by monarchs and the separation of religion and monarchy the English challenged their own monarch.

Not only through revolutions did people challenge monarchs, but also through the writings and speeches of Enlightenment philosophers. Similar to the English revolution, a main focus of philosophers was rights. John Locke wrote, “ All men have certain natural rights: the right to life, liberty and property. The purpose of the government is to protect these rights. IF it fails to do so the people may set up a new government.” John Locke challenges the previous idea that monarchs were supposed to control the people and lead them, and also brings up the right to overthrow a government. He also wrote, “ If a ruler seeks absolute power, if he acts both as judge and participant in disputes, he puts himself in a state of war with his subjects and we have the right and the duty to kill such rulers and their servants.” Locke’s words are a direct and violent statement against absolute monarchies,

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stating that the people have a right to kill their own unjust leaders. Another focus of enlightenment writers was the common good, specifically Rousseau. Rousseau wrote, " Only the general will can direct the energies of the state in a manner appropriate to the end for which it was founded, i. e., the common good." This challenged absolute monarchs in the fact that the people should have a say in government. Enlightenment writers challenged the Monarchs through support of rights such as the right to overthrow a king, and the reasoning of common good.

After unjust monarchies, people of various countries began to challenge their monarchs. Some were violent, such as the French revolution and some parts of the English revolution, and some groups such as enlightenment philosophers used reason to challenge monarchs. Some of the ideas they used to influence revolutions such as the French and English included: Natural rights, the right to overthrow, and the direction of common good. These ideas played a crucial role in the revolutions across the world. These ideas helped those in revolutions set up a new just government