

The nature and
extent of the
opposition in 1789 to
policies of louis xvi
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Examine the nature and extent of the opposition in 1789 to policies of Louis xvi. The nature and extent of opposition to the policies of Louis xvi's policies can be described as radical and violent and it emanated from nearly all classes in France. In this case nature refers to the way in which the opposition was demonstrated and extent refers to how widespread the opposition was, thus it was essentially from all classes in France. The resentment of Louis xvi ' s policies were staged in the form of the self - conversion of the third estate into the National Assembly and the storming of the Bastille to mention but a few . These forms of opposition were aroused by Louis xvi's voting policy in the meeting of the estate general and the king ' dismissal of Necker, respectively. To commence with, the system of taxation caused opposition to Louis . This stemmed from the king's participation in the American War of Independence.

The king ' s participation in the American War of Independence imposed extra strains on the royal finances which eventually brought the French monarchy to the point of bankruptcy which went on to trigger the revolution of 1789. This aggravated the precarious state of finances and before embarking on this policy Louis was opposed by Turgot who warned him that such a move would lead France into bankruptcy . Thus the war was unwarranted from an economic point of view because France was yet to solve the enormous debts caused by Louis . Hence the American War of Independence had serious economic repercussions . Consequently Louis faced opposition from the bourgeoisie who had economic grievances , merchants and industrialists. The government had tried to meet the situation by raising huge loans from the nobility , the bourgeoisie and the church.

This created a feeling of discontentment amongst the bourgeoisie as to whether they would ever recover their money. In a bid to solve this problem the Government increased taxes upon the middle class and peasants whilst the nobility, who had the capacity to do so were exempted. This created a feeling of uncertainty among the lower class which propelled the third estate to file a document which aimed at sweeping away the discrimination and segregation of the ancient regime-the Declaration of the Rights of Man. This move by the third estate was radical since it was against the will of the king; hence it shows the nature and extent to which the third estate opposed Louis xvi's policy of taxation and privileges. Moreover, the existing voting procedure which Louis adamantly refused to change was greatly resented by third estate. In May 1789 the estate general was called where the third estate had expected the voting to be by head and not by estate. Louis crashed their hopes by proposing that the voting be done by estate as he realized that the first and second estates would be overwhelmed by the third estate as they had 621 members as compared to the 593 of the joint first and second estate.

This would lead to the end of Louis's monarch and he was well aware of this. In response the third estate refused to accept this and consequently they self converted themselves into the National Assembly. The famous Tennis court oath of 20 July further cemented the existence of the National Assembly, each member swearing their adherence until a constitution has been drawn up. They did this as a result of Louis threats to dissolve the Assembly. This was another radical move by third estate as they usurped the authority of the king. This applied to the hearts and minds of the Frenchmen

showing the extent of opposition to Louis as exhibited by the joining of some nobles and clergy. Furthermore, the dismissal of able ministers was received with mixed feelings by the populace which initiated in the storming of the Bastille. The news of the fall of the Bastille intensified riots in the rural areas and in Paris.

The grievances of wage earners, craftsmen, wine producers and small traders were allied to those of the mass of the peasants against tithes, feudal dues and hunting rights hence a vast popular movement appeared in 1789 and the social economic crisis welded together. In response to the dismissal of Necker the mobs plundered shops, broke open jails and finally stormed the Bastille a notorious prison. The police force was not equal to the task, and the French National Guard fraternized with the person, which depicts the widespread of the opposition. Having observed this it is crystal clear that the opposition to Louis' policies was radical. More so Louis's reluctance to sign the Declaration of the Right of Men and the August 4 Decrees propelled the third estate to take an initiative to force him to do so by staging the March of Women. This was precipitated by his poor economic policies which failed to eradicate hunger and the social unrest which was caused by the drought of 1778. It was in July 1788 when the prices were skyrocketing . Whilst the masses were lurking in poverty and hunger Louis and his court were lavishing the country's resources and the people were well aware of this, hence the March of Women.

This was a violent form of opposition because the Paris mob broke into the Versailles palace with arms and with the intention of demanding bread from the king . In addition, opposition was also found among the nobility and the <https://assignbuster.com/the-nature-and-extent-of-the-opposition-in-1789-to-policies-of-louis-xvi-essay-sample/>

clergy against Louis's policy of appointing financial ministers who threatened to eradicate their privileges. They also accused him due to the financial crisis . In 1787 they forced him to call the Assembly of the Notables which ultimately failed to solve the financial problem . They also forced the king to call the Estate General after they had rejected his reforming ministers' proposals. Louis faced stiff resistance from the nobility and Marie Antoinette for appointing Necker hence it is crystal clear that Louis faced opposition from essentially all classes in France.

Also it should be noted that Louis faced opposition from the bourgeoisie within the army. The law of 1781 by which commissioned ranks were restricted to those who were born into nobility, created or aroused a feeling of discontentment within the army . Non-commissioned rank was therefore the highest to which the sons of the bourgeoisies could rise. Also a noble son could become a colonel at the age of 16 without qualifications . This led to the existence of various secret societies within the army. Consequently the army became an unreliable instrument of support for the monarch such that when the revolution broke out in 1789, the army was found sympathizing with the revolutionaries. Having observed this, it is plausible to infer that Louis faced opposition from essentially all classes in France.

One is thus inclined to conclude that Louis xvi's policies faced opposition from essentially all classes in France . This is exhibited by the radical steps taken by the populace to air their discontentment. Amongst others these are the self-convention of the third estate into the National Assembly and the storming of the Bastille Prison.