Pre-revolutionary France

PEASANT GRIEVANCES

➢ Peasantry formed 80% of the population (22 million)
➢ Heavily burdened by taxation
➢ Paid 10-15% of their income to the King in direct taxes such as taille
➢ Paid 8-10% of their income to the Catholic Church in the form of the tithe
➢ 10-25% of the value of their produce to the feudal landowner
➢ Contributed to the Great Fear and revolt (July-August 1789) where peasants attacked noble chateaux and destroyed feudal documents in response to the burden they have from the tax system.

Historian Peter Mcphee estimates that peasants paid on average a total of 25-33% of their wealth to the monarchy, church and their feudal lord.

“(Taxes) gave the peasants every encouragement not only to deceive and to defraud by also to curb their production.” — Florian Aftalion

1776: INVOLVEMENT IN THE AMERICAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

Political impact:

➢ 8000 troops, including Marquis de Lafayette returned from the war impassioned by the struggle between liberty and royal despotism over the issue of taxation without representation.
➢ They saw the success of not having an absolute monarchy, a privileged aristocracy and a powerful church – they were enthused and inspired
➢ Acted as a foundation for the support of Enlightenment ideas
➢ ‘spirit of America’ filled salons and clubs

Economic impact:

➢ Contributed to the fiscal crisis of 1780s
➢ Cost of its involvement exceeded 1 billion livres

Rumours:

➢ National debt caused by this war and France’s contribution to other wars affected public perceptions of the Bourbon monarchy
➢ Birth of public opinion and debate – blamed Marie Antoinette for excessive spending on luxuries (nickname of Madame Deficit) – however this was untrue as the royal spending only accounted for 6% of the national budget in 1788
➢ Added to negative perception of the Queen – blamed her for the Diamond Necklace Affair in 1785 (condemned by public opinion – demonstrates how public opinion and debate led to the unhappiness of the royal authorities)
FINANCIAL CRISIS

Necker

➢ Involvement in the wars between 1733-1783 left France in debt
➢ Oct. 1776 – Jacques Necker appointed Director of Treasury. Reform urgently need at this time
➢ Necker borrowed £520 million to finance the American war
➢ 19th February 1781: Necker presents his 'Compte Rendu au Roi' to the King – first set of accounts ever published in France. Hid the true nature of France’s financial state and created an impression of a surplus of 10 million pounds. Aim was to reassure creditors and to make it possible to raise further loans

➢ Debt was a major force of the revolution which “broke the back of the monarchy.” – DMG Sutherland
➢ ‘Bankruptcy was not only financial, but also social and intellectual.” – William Doyle

Calonne

➢ November 1783 – becomes Controller-General (replaces Necker – briefly Joly de Fleury first)
➢ forced to borrow another 653 million livres – France was facing bankruptcy
➢ 1786: Presented his ‘Plan for the improvement of Finances’ to Louis – recommending the replacement of many tax incomes to remove the burden from the Third Estate (realised it “was ruinous to be always borrowing.” – Calonne)

Caused a political crisis...

Assembly of Notables (a group of high-ranking nobles convened by the King on extraordinary occasions to consult on matters of state)

➢ Success of Calonne’s plan depended on support of the King and Assembly of Notables
➢ Problems for Calonne’s plan was the Assembly of Notables disliked Calonne and questioned Calonne about Necker’s surplus
➢ Notables rejected Calonne’s reforms as they believed these matters must be debated and approved by the Estates-General
➢ Calonne sought public support by publishing information on the fiscal crisis – exposed urgent debt relief and sparked public debate and opinion – this infuriated the King and Notables so he was dismissed in
➢ 25th May 1787: King closes Assembly of Notables, appoints Brienne as Head of Committee of Finance

➢ Judy Anderson states that by 1783 this war had cost France one billion French Pounds – by 1786 is was spending 37.5% of its revenue just repaying interest on the debt
➢ David Garrioch suggests that the crisis of 1787-89 was essentially a severe financial crisis that had intersected with new political ideas – creating a sequence of hostile confrontations between monarchy and Assembly of Notables, then parlements then the Estates-General
“[The Assembly of Notables] marked the beginning of a political crisis that could only be resolved by revolution.” – William Doyle

Parlement (sovereign court of appeal – checked over royal decrees and laws, check on royal power)

- Brienne modified Calonne’s reforms and presented tax decrees directly to Parlement for registration but were rejected, arguing that new taxes could only be approved by the nation’s representatives assembled in the Estates-General
  - After closing of Notables, parlement started a constitutional rebellion against royal power. They asserted new ideas of representation (ie. People have a say in determining the taxes they paid) – criticised ministerial despotism
  - Parlement aspired to go beyond its legal role as a high court to a body which could approve/disapprove laws.
  - **August 1787**: King closes Parlement and exiled it to the provinces (triggered public unrest and violence) – *lettres de cachet* (letters or order signed by the King of France and closed with the royal seal) were used by the King to order the arrest of magistrates
    - “It is legal because I will it” – Louis XVI

Violence and public unrest....

**June 1788: Day of the Tiles**

- Crowds in Paris and cities rioted in defence of the royal administration from the town
- Stood on roofs of their houses to shower tiles on soldiers who had come to arrest magistrates
- Demonstrates one of the first acts of violence arising from this political crisis and the stirring of public opinion and debate.

- “Signifies breakdown of royal authority.” - Schama

Meanwhile.....HARVEST CRISIS AND FOOD SHORTAGE

- **July 1788**: Major harvest and crop disaster when severe thunderstorms destroyed large areas of grain crop awaiting harvest. = angers population
THE CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS

Feb-April 1789: BOOK OF GRIEVANCES – ‘Cahiers de Doléance’

- Drawn up between February-April 1789
- Expessed the new liberal, political and constitutional demands of the Third Estate and its supporters in the liberal clergy and nobility – decided by King to be presented at Versailles by elected reps.
- Noble books more radical than Third Estate
  - Many admitted that fiscal privilege was wrong
  - Appointment by merit rather than by order was fair
  - Total of 64% of the noble books insisted on the idea of the development of a constitution before collecting taxes.
- Cahiers of the Third Estate
  - Problems arose with drafting process when peasants were trying to present their grievances – many peasants were illiterate and relied on bourgeois (wealthy third estate members) to write documents for them – this meant initial grievances (ie. End feudal system) were left out
  - This meant peasants expected that their problems would be addressed by the government and the King – left disappointed and created a sense that the government was despotic and change would only occur by force (turned to methods of violence, protest – eg. Night of Patriotic Delirium 4 August 1789)
  - Created divisions of privilege – bourgeois over peasant, property owner over the poor, town over country etc.

- “The ultimate cause of the revolution was the rise of the Bourgeois.” – Lefebvre
- Process of drafting these documents gave people the expectation that their problems would be solved by the Gov. – Donald Sutherland
- Showed us that many members of the nobility and clergy also supported radical ideas - such as admitting fiscal privilege is wrong and that appointment by merit rather than birth was fair. – George Taylor

PAMPHLET WAR of 1788 and early 1789

- Necker decides to allow political clubs and publication of pamphlets prior to the meeting of the Estates-General = birth of public opinion
- Intense debates over national debts, taxation and representation – indirectly guided peoples actions in 1789
- 7000 pamphlets – debated order of voting at Estates-General
  - Will they meet in the same chamber, where the Third Estate will have twice the representatives and therefore have the numbers for change?
  - Or will they stick to traditional methods and meet in separate chambers where the 2 privileged orders would constantly outvote the meeting of the Third Estate?
- Pamphlets adopted Enlightenment ideas – created new ideas from these previous ideas of personal liberty. (eg. From Montesquieu’s Spirit of the Laws and Rousseau’s Social Contract.) Redefined Rousseau’s idea of General Will by developing their own idea of representation – sovereignty coming from the nation and not the King.
- January 1789: Abbe Sieyes: ‘What is the Third Estate?’ pamphlet – presented the view that the Third Estate was practically the nation, as they made up 98% of the population and were responsible for France’s
5th May 1789: CALLING OF THE ESTATES GENERAL

➢ Due to nation’s bankruptcy – needed to discuss reform of the taxation system
➢ By 1789 three fundamental things had already changed:
  1. French society had changed – rise of self-confident bourgeoisie
  2. French politics had changed – introduction of provincial assemblies and a new possible model of voting
  3. Public debate had changed – Jacques Necker lifted the ban on political clubs and pamphlets to improve nations approach to problem of debt = Pamphlet War
➢ Louis deliberately arranged ceremonial of Estates-General to be just like traditional way to emphasise social and political divisions (separate meetings = Third Estate outvoted) – Third Estate humiliated wearing black costumes like poor priests whilst privileged estates wore colourful ceremonial costumes
➢ Third estate insisted there be a common agenda and meeting otherwise they’d form their own national assembly.
➢ 20th June 1789: Third Estate deputies find meeting place that they’d normally discuss in has been locked – whether it was deliberate or an accident it prompted the deputies of the Third Estate to rebel

➢ "The calling of the Estates General facilitated the expression of tensions at every level of French society, and revealed social divisions which challenged the idea of a society of orders." – Peter McPhee
➢ King decided to vote by head which meant political divisions were ‘irreconcilable’ – according to McPhee
➢ “The bourgeoisie, the leading element of the Third Estate, now took over.” – Soboul

20th June 1789: Tennis Court Oath

➢ When deputies of the Third Estate are locked out, they adjourn to a nearby Tennis Court
➢ Swore an oath to remain as a national assembly until the nation was given a constitution
PARIS IN A FERMENT (JULY 1789)

Caused by:

- Desperate food situation in Paris, calling of Estates-General, mobilisation of royal troops and King’s dismissal of Necker

Mobilisation of Royal Troops

- King prepared for military intervention, bringing troops in Paris (mostly foreign mercenaries) to an intimidating 20000
- Said they were necessary to ‘keep order’.

Dismissal of Necker (11 July 1789)

- King thought Necker was too sympathetic towards the Third Estate and caused the failure of the Estates-General so he dismissed Necker
- News hit Paris on 12 July, in which there were large gatherings at the public gardens of the Palais-Royal
- Young journalist Camille Desmoulins encouraged people to arm themselves
- This caused uproar amongst the population – now perceived the King as refusing to support a capable minister who had the trust of the French public
- Why was he popular with the nation?
  - public perceived Necker as a representation of the capable and responsible handling of France’s finances
  - he was a Protestant, not a noble so his appointment signified openness to Enlightenment ideas and was sympathetic to ‘patriot’ ideal of representation
  - defended freedom of speech – allowing political clubs and pamphlets
- this triggered the urban revolt and culminated the capture of the bastille = direct cause of the revolution

“If the Nation was sovereign, the king no longer was.” – William Doyle (national assembly = seized sovereign power in the name of the French nation)

“The decision [the declaration of the national assembly] marked the beginnings of the real revolution and it was largely as a result of the indecision of Louis XVI” – Fenwick and Anderson

“The Assembly became a constituent body.” – according to Furet
AOS1: Causes of the French Revolution - Notes

Meanwhile.....HARVEST CRISIS AND FOOD SHORTAGE

- Price of bread had risen from 50% of a working person’s income to 75-80%.
- By May 1789, historian Dylan Rees estimates that price increased to 88% of their earnings.
- Angers the population – thousands suffered as it threatened their survival.
- Urban crowds were taking decisive action in March and April 1789.
- Market-day protests about bread prices and attacks on places where grain was allegedly being hoarded were being used to solve the real food problem.
- By 13th July, crowd found enormous stocks of grain at the Abbey of Saint Lazar and concluded the grain crisis had been created artificially by the rich hoarding food.

"The [national] deficit would not have caused the Revolution [without] the price of bread.” – Arthur Young

Popular agitation was driven primarily from “popular discontent as the harvest shortfalls... pushed bread prices inexorably upwards.” – William Doyle

Militant actions of urban workers caused “more a violent protest against the scarcity of bread.” – Dylan Rees

‘Bourgeois Revolution’

- Becoming alarmed – Committee of Electors still met in Paris Town Hall to prevent the revolutionary situation.
- Distrusted the thousands of poor, unemployed people streaming into Paris from the countryside and equipping themselves with weapons stolen from royal armouries.
- In response formed National Guard – made up of reliable bourgeois citizens to protect private property.
- Tension between propertied bourgeois and revolutionary crowd is a basic division of the French Revolution – radical bourgeois were stirring up the people by giving them weapons, but reliable citizens were creating a militia (fighting force made up of non-professional soldiers) of property owners in order to protect private property.

This outburst of anger demonstrated “the explosive combination of political unrest and economic distress.” – Gwynne Lewis
STORMING OF THE BASTILLE (14th Jul 1789)

Attack on Les Invalides Military Hospital

➢ 30000 people attacked hospital to seize weaponry
➢ Royal troops encamped nearby but they were not prepared to stop the crowd

Disaffection in the army

➢ Liberal nobles (ie. Lafayette) unwilling to order their troops to defend the King and sabotaged reforms
➢ Refused to obey King’s orders due to great agitation amongst people towards King

“\[The defection of the Army was not one of the causes of the Revolution, it was the Revolution itself\]” – Peter Vansittart

Attack on Bastille Royal Prison (14th July 1789)

➢ Believed to hold 250 barrels of gunpowder and the shot they would need for the weapons they had seized from the Invalides
➢ Large crowd gathered in front of the prison (iconoclasm – destruction of political symbols) – emotive symbol of royal authority – ordinary people destroying an instrument of royal absolutism
➢ Royal troops in Bastille panicked and opened fire, killing about 100 people
➢ Knowing defeat was inevitable, governor of Bastille, Marquis de Launey, surrendered. Being led to town hall for legal trial but crowd executed him on the spot – sawing his head off with a pen knife – carried head on a pile and marched through the street
➢ Significance:
   • Gave control of Paris to members of Third Estate under a new government led by Bailley
   • Lafayette had control of citizens’ militia called the ‘National Guard’
   • 15th July 1789: Louis recalled troops and reappointed Necker
   • Constitutional monarchy was born – Louis accepted a tricolour cockade from Bailley symbolising that the monarch and his people reconciled once more – Louis recognises his role as an absolute monarch is over and a new era had begun

➢ “[The Parisians] would see themselves as the guardians of the liberty won that day.” – William Doyle
➢ “The Parisian crowd...reminding deputies...the bullet is as important as the ballot.” – Gwynne Lewis
➢ “[The Storming of the Bastille] was the climax of the popular movement.” – William Doyle
POPULAR RURAL REVOLT (July-August 1789)

Great Fear:

- Rebellion of peasants first arose from severe economic hardship caused by the crop failure of July 1788 and soaring bread prices, compounded by rising unemployment.
- Unruly peasants then began to respond to rumours:
  - Nobles and government officials were deliberately hoarding grain to force prices even higher
  - that royalist bandits or mercenaries were sweeping the countryside
  - nobles would pay brigands to destroy crops just as they were ready for a bumper harvest and thus starve the peasants into obedience
- further motivated by disappointed hopes in Books of Grievances (‘Cahiers de Doleance’) – some left out in drafting process and never reached Versailles, however peasants didn’t know this
- then challenged the ancien regime with a wave of insurrections which demonstrated that peasants wanted the end of seigneurial rights
- attacked households of local nobles, not paying taxes, burning chateaux and forcing seigneurs to release the charters that stipulated peasants special obligations to local lords

HISTORIANS VIEWS:

- “The marchers...were single minded and knew perfectly well what they were doing.” – George Rude
- “[The Great Fear] allowed the peasants to realise their strength.” - Lefebvre

Night of Patriotic Delirium (4th August 1789)

- when National Assembly heard of news of peasants’ rebellious actions, appointed committee to investigate its causes/offer a solution
- liberal deputies from the Breton Club believed the only way to calm peasants would be a grand gesture by Assembly – partial surrender of feudal rights – task allocated to Duc d’Aigullon
- Breton Club deputies called for abolition of feudalism on August 4th – deputies went further than intended
- One after another, as if to outdo each other, deputies of Second Estate rose and renounced their feudal rights (voluntarily)

August Decrees (enacted between 4th August and 11th August 1789)

- Created fundamental change across the breadth of the nation:
  - Privilege of nobility stripped
  - Society based on individualism, equality and merit
  - Abolition of the tithe – halved income of the Church
  - Liberty, equality and popular sovereignty would replace old structures of absolute monarchy
AOS1: Causes of the French Revolution - Notes

• Proclaimed Louis to be ‘Restorer of Liberty’
  ➢ However did not abolish the feudal system completely - stated that feudal rights could only be abolished if the owner was compensated, in which the peasants could not deliver this (peasants only temporarily pacified)

HISTORIANS VIEWS:
  ➢ “…they did not all benefit equally from their new liberty.” – Alfred Soboul

DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN AND CITIZEN (August 26th 1789)

➢ Builds on ideas from August Decrees
➢ National Assembly discussed how to guarantee and protect individual rights in the new nation
➢ Formed a committee to draft a bill of rights on August 26th 1789
➢ Main sponsor was Marquis de Lafayette – veteran of American Revolution and a student of the philosophes – embraced Enlightenment ideas. Considerable division of support for Lafayette’s idea of a constitutional document (Monarchien accepted need for reform, radical deputies thought they could go further (get rid of King altogether))
➢ Drew on Rousseau’s social contract – declaration proclaimed that ‘men are born free and remain free and equal in rights’
➢ Ideas in the declaration:
  • Men are born and remain free
  • Liberty
  • Taxation to be borne by all equally
  • Freedom of expression
  • Nation is sovereign
  • No arbitrary arrest or punishment
  • Equality and utility (merit/ability rather than birth and privilege)
➢ Issues in the declaration:
  • Rights of women not addressed
  • Rights of slaves not extended

• “One of the most powerful statements of liberalism... nonetheless ambiguous in its words and silences.” – Peter McPhee
• “The text was in effect [the death certificate] of the old regime...” – Georges Lefebvre
OCTOBER DAYS (October 1789)

- Louis XVI withheld consent for August Decrees and DORMAC due to his ‘suspensive veto’ power
- Paris market places began a place for heated discussion and debate about why it was that things had still not improved (bread prices still high, unsure of Louis’ intention) – infuriated when they discovered cockade had been trampled underfoot by drunken soldiers during a banquet for royal soldiers (symbol for not showing support for revolution)
- 30,000 women from market places in Paris set out to march from Paris to Versailles (5th October), confronting National Assembly and Royal family
  - Succeed in forcing Louis to give consent to the two documents as a way of calming the crowd
  - 6th October: Louis agreed to return to Paris accompanied by Assembly deputies and the crowd
- Parisian women significantly altered balance of power – threat of violence could protect the revolution and get what they want – convinced that direct action could achieve their goals
- 21st October 1789: National Assembly enact ‘Decree of Martial Law’ – demonstrations become unlawful (this is done very quickly as a way to prevent violence against them) – National Assembly now seen as authority

“The Revolution of the Bourgeois deputies had only been secured by the active intervention of the people of Paris.” – Peter McPhee

NOBLE PRIVILEGES

- Nobility not entirely opposed to reform or patriot ideas of the revolution – some even vocal in criticising the privilege they had
- Privilege was traditional and legal under the Bourbon monarchy – set of conditions granted by the King to this particular social group
- Privileges became increasingly intolerable amongst the Third Estate
- Fuelled their demand for the revolutionary concept of equality
- Privileges included:
  - Honorific – possess coat of arms, wear a sword
  - Legal – tried by special courts, right to be beheaded by sword not hanging
  - Opportunity – most important positions reserved for people of noble birth, such as in law, army and royal administration
  - Fiscal – payed some taxes (ie. Special wartime tax of Vingtieme) but were exempt from heavy taxes (ie. Gabelle) and common income tax (ie. Taille)
  - Economic (Banalities) – gave them a local monopoly, such as being the only ones to operate mills to grind grain, use ovens to bake bread, had special rights over hunting and fishing and had right to ride over peasants’ land creating damage to crops
  - Exempted of royal obligations such as compulsory military service and corvee (days of unpaid labour on King’s roads)

“...vested interest in a highly complex system of status and hierarchy from which came material privilege and preferment.” - Peter McPhee

DECISIONS MADE BY LOUIS XVI
By June 1789, France has seen a rapid escalation of a financial crisis (heavy debt repayments – bankruptcy) into a fiscal crisis (critical debate about France’s inequitable and inefficient taxation system), then into a political crisis (debate on manner of voting at Estates-General – questioned origins of sovereignty)

- Louis’ reactions in this helped determine the unfolding of the crisis – sometimes intended and unintended

**Failure to make a political decision**

- August 1788 calling of Estates-General
- Controversy of voting procedure
- Prompted foundation of a political club to champion representative government (Society of Thirty – November 1788)

**Tardy decision to double the number of deputies for the Third Estate (December 1788)**

- Did not calm public opinion – useless without voting by head rather than by order
- Unintended effect of leading the ‘patriots’ of the Society of Thirty to make the radical claim that the Third Estate virtually were representatives of the whole nation – brilliantly agued by Sieyes
- Aggravated the political crisis by making ambiguous decision of leaving it unclear as to whether they would vote according to the 1614 precedent – by order (favour two other estates) or by head (give more power to Third Estate)
- Decisions and ability to respond were affected by the illness and death of seven year old son

**Using armed force**

- Decision to use military force when political authority had failed
- July – deployed 30,000 troops to Paris to terminate the National Assembly by armed force
- Because of this decision, the revolutionary crowd realised their power in taking successful direct action
  - Raids on custom houses (12 July 1789)
  - Attacks on Les Invalides and Bastille (14 July 1789)

**Counter-reacting**

- Compromising and pretending to accept the revolution
- Withdrew the troops (16 July 1789)
- Appointed Lafayette as Commander of the National Guard
- Accepted Bailly as Mayor of Paris (17 July 1789)
- Adopted symbols of constitutional monarchy
- People now concluded that revolution had replaced absolutism with constitutional monarchy
- National Assembly now began with reforms

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**THE ENLIGHTENMENT**

- The Enlightenment was a long period of intellectual curiosity, scientific investigation and political debate
- It began in Western Europe in the mid-17th century and continued until the end of the 1700s
- It refused to accept old knowledge and ideas – writers and philosophes (critical thinkers) preferred to use reason, logic, experimentation and observation to obtain new information.
Montesquieu argued in the Spirit of the Laws that there must be a separation of powers (of legislative, executive and judicial functions) – argued for the end of absolutism, not the end of the monarchy.

Voltaire criticised the oppressive authority of the Catholic Church and believed in the separation of the church and the state – the church should have no influence on daily life.

Rousseau created the Social Contract in 1762 which stated that man’s original state under natural law is one of liberty and equality – natural law should be protected.

Diderot and d’Alembert created the Encyclopedie (1751-1780) with the aim of collecting all knowledge scattered over the face of the earth. Diderot’s materials originally confiscated as it was perceived as an attack on the church.

Did Enlightenment ideas reach all people?

➢ One volume of the Encyclopedie cost peasants 200 livres – unlikely people could buy them
➢ Illiterate people?? – still heard ideas in salons, marketplaces and discussions in community
➢ According to Darnton’s research, people were still getting access to these things through the printing of illegal copies in Switzerland
➢ Lafayette brought enlightenment ideas of ‘patriotism’ by being a veteran of the American Revolution

How did the Enlightenment contribute to the Revolution?

➢ Montesquieu’s idea of the separation of powers contributed to Revolution through limiting the King’s powers and thus creating dissatisfaction for the monarchy - The notion of having an executive, a parliament and a judiciary not influenced by each other saw the destruction of the principle of divine right and thus catalysed the desire for the nobles on the 4th August 1789, to abolish feudal privileges as the first step towards the destruction of the old regime.
➢ Lafayette brought back enlightenment ideas of a constitutional monarchy from the American War of Independence
➢ DORMAC reflected Rousseau’s Social Contract (natural rights)
➢ Pamphlet writers adopted ideas of the Enlightenment and created their own ideas – formed own ideas of personal liberty from Rousseau’s Social Contract and Montesquieu’s Spirit of Laws – that is, an individual possesses inalienable rights and cannot arbitrarily be deprived of them. Idea of law itself was also redefined from Rousseau’s idea of General Will – which stipulates that all citizens must be involved in the making of laws that apply to them - Rousseau’s idea of the ‘law not made by the people is not a law at all’ transferred to the Parlement of Paris (2 July 1787) who refused the approval of Brienne’s tax bills as they believed it should be approved by those who had to bear it, contributing to the discontent of the monarch in Paris
➢ Ideas reflected in political clubs, such as the Society of Thirty, consisting of 60 patriots nearly all nobles – criticising traditional system of voting at the Estates-General through publication of pamphlets. Members such as Mirabeau criticised the whole system of privilege.

Hence, although Enlightenment ideas weren’t significant in themselves, they were expanded upon and new ideas were generated from the philosophes. This led to the criticism of absolutism and privilege, therefore scrutinising traditions of the ancien regime. Although not revolutionary in themselves, they do act to criticise the old regime and feed people with new ideas on how to reform society.

OPINION:

➢ While the philosophes might not have suggested that the old regime be overthrown by a revolution, they certainly taught people to criticise the political and social system, and to consider alternative ways of arranging society.
➢ It triggered a wave of discussion – even if the works of Diderot etc. could not be read, they were certainly discussed amongst society – and it organised salons.
HISTORIANS VIEWS:

- “The writers of the Enlightenment...were clearly not responsible for the revolutionary situation...but they did dictate the terms in which educated people thought about society.” – Norman Hampson
- “None of these philosophes...claim to be revolutionary.” – Peter McPhee
- “The Enlightenment undermined the ideological foundations of the established order.” – Soboul

ATTACK ON MINISTERIAL DESPOTISM

- Despotism (tyranny) – used to condemn a monarch who appeared to be ruling arbitrarily – simply ruling according to his own aims and desires without respecting the traditional rights of other authorities such as the parlements
- Term defined in the Spirit of the Laws (1748) by Montesquieu
- Ministerial despotism – King has both removed the powers and rights of traditional bodies and relies heavily on exerting his authority through his executive government of ministers
- Louis XV (not actual Louis) accused of this in authorising Maupeou to limit the powers of the uncooperative parlements (1771)
- Prompted demands to call back the ancient Estates-General of 1614- to serve as a guarantee against the tyrannical will of the monarch
- Louis XVI re-opened parlements after coronation to avoid being labelled a despot
- Process of addressing national debt from 1786 inevitably caused accusations that Minister Calonne in dealing with the Assembly of Notables showed signs of ministerial despotism
- Disastrous Royal Session (19 November 1787) – Louis XVI ordered the Paris parlement to register the decrees, causing Duc d’Orleans to hurl the accusation of illegality, exemplified the prime feature of despotism
- King proceeded to demonstrate classic despotic behaviour by using a lettres de cachet to send the Duc d’Orleans into exile and arrest two leaders of the parlement
- Books of Grievances condemned absolute monarchy and ministerial despotism (noted by Peter Mcphee)
- Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen had translated into law the opposite of ministerial despotism – representative government, with the rule of universal laws and the codification of natural human rights

CRITIQUE OF PRIVILEGE

- Enlightenment thought that posed the idea of universal rights and equality
- Suggested by Diderot – “extreme poverty and extreme wealth would be also rare”
- Books of Grievances demanded firmly the end of all forms of privilege
AOS1: Causes of the French Revolution - Notes

- Fiscal and legal privilege of nobility
- Remove privilege of appointment to jobs – make them open to talent rather than birth (personal merit over noble birth)
- Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen had consigned privilege to the past and established the diametric principle of equality

ATTACK ON FEUDALISM (peasant or worker receiving land in return for serving a lord, especially during war)
- Began shortly before the revolution in the Peasant Revolt (December 1788) – hunting on the lord’s land and refusing to pay tithes or rents
- Full attack began in wake of capture of the Bastille
- Began with small individual acts of renunciation
- Impulse to attack feudalism at national legislative level came from Breton Club
  - Committed to achieving liberty and equality by abolishing privilege in all its forms
  - Deputies asked to mount a concerted campaign to abolish feudal system on night of Patriotic Delirium (4 August 1789)
  - This night did not completely abolish feudalism

CLAIMS TO POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY AND EQUALITY

Sovereignty:
- Under the old regime, King ruled by divine right – authority came from God
- This idea was challenged by Rousseau’s Social Contract
  - Suggested there was a contractual relationship between King and subjects – should be ruling for the benefit of his people
- Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (August 1789) – relocated sovereign power to the people
  - “source of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation”
  - However political right of voting and holding was strictly based on socio-economic status
    - Transfer of political power never universal
    - Political participation passed to people with a degree of wealth – such as paying tax or owning property

Equality:
- Men of 1789 did not mean equality to be social equality – explicitly stated that there would still be social differences between people
- Social usefulness differentiated people – borrowed from the Enlightenment
- Possession of wealth and owning property was an expression of an individual’s merit
- Created the legal basis for equality
  - Abolished legal foundations of privilege
  - No special courts
  - Laws would apply equally to all French men and women
- All French people would pay taxes without exemption or exception
- Noble birth no longer a reason for monopolising top positions in the government administration, army or church – legislated for the triumph of personal merit over aristocratic birth

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| Louis XVI        | • Supported the American war of independence  
|                  |   o Resulted in massive national debt  
|                  |   o However was logical in that France gained enormous wealth from colonial possessions in the Caribbean area  
|                  |   o Wanted to avoid open war with England  
|                  |   o Changed his mind in 1777 – increase debt by another 1000 million French pounds  
|                  | • Estates General  
|                  |   o Failure to make a political decision  
|                  |   o Led to controversy of voting procedure  
|                  |   o Resulted in formation of political club (Society of Thirty) – dedicated to idea of representative government  
|                  |   o Double deputies of Third Estate – useless as he failed to concede the idea of voting by head rather than by order  
|                  |   o Only served to spur the patriots of society to more radical demands that Third Estate was the nation – Abbe Sieyes ‘What is the Third Estate’  
|                  |   o Didn’t tell them whether they’d be voting by head or by order  
|                  |   o Decision to ignore Necker’s advice to abandon honorific distinctions between deputies of the Estates – insisted on traditional costumes – asserting traditional power structures and privileges  
|                  |   o Unintended effect of making the Third Estate even more defiant when the Estates-General met  
|                  | • Deploy army force (July 1789)  
|                  |   o Using military force where traditional royal authority had failed  
|                  |   o Moving 30,000 troops into Paris – close National Assembly by force  
|                  | • Giving impression that he supported the revolution  
|                  |   o Abandon armed forces  
|                  |   o People now concluded that the revolution had succeeded in replacing absolutism with constitutional monarchy  
|                  |   o National Assembly proceeded to make reforms  
|                  |   o Subsequent failure to ratify the DORMAC and August Decrees prompted suspicion about his true motives – resulting in women’s march |
| Marie Antoinette | • Diamond Necklace Affair  
|                  |   o Known for lavish spending  
|                  |   o Linked with national debt – making her deeply unpopular  
|                  |   o Exaggerated by rumour of this affair  
|                  |   o “Austrian bitch”  
|                  |   o “Madame Deficit”  
| Duc d’Orleans     | • Proposed new political ideas and played host to radical speakers  
|                  | • Royal prince  
|                  | • Campaigner for constitutional monarch  
|                  |   o Joined Society of Thirty  
|                  |   o Suggested constitutional monarch  
|                  | • Providing venue for patriot agitation  
|                  |   o Opened up his buildings of the Palais Royal to radical speakers who were then free of police interference |
## AOS1: Causes of the French Revolution - Notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Abbe Sieyes</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- What is the Third Estate Pamphlet</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Suggested that the Third Estate was the nation</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Credit goes to Sieyes for the suggestion to create a National Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Declaration 17 June 1789</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Wrote the long declaration of the creation of the Assembly</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Sieyes both conceptualised the idea of the nation and facilitated the momentous transfer of sovereignty from the King to the nation</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Mirabeau</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>- Bought up in a family in which reformist ideas of Enlightenment were common currency</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Wrote against royal despotism and lettres de cachet</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Praised English parliament and jury system</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Became a deputy of the Third Estate</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Famous speech at Royal Session 23 June 1789</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Disdainfully challenged the royal Master of ceremonies to remove deputies – superb eloquence won him the “voice of the revolution”</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Demanded the removal of troops after capture of the Bastille</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Double agent – reporting secretly back to the King</td>
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<th><strong>Lafayette</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>- Defied King’s orders and went to America to help the colonists in their war of independence – lifelong friend of Washington - publicised his leading role as a fighter of freedom</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Son of the enlightenment – committed to ideals of religious freedom and toleration, universal rights and opposing slavery</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Served in the Assembly of Notables (1787) – hoping to push reformist ideas of toleration for Protestants and removal of barriers to free trade</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Demanded the calling of the National Assembly, reminding notables of the American phrase “no taxation without representation”</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Joined Society of the Friends of the Blacks (1788) – anti-slavery</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Supported rebellion of Paris parlements in 1788 – condemning the arrest of two judges</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Joined Society of Thirty – advocating a constitutional monarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Drafted his own version of the DORMAC – drawing heavily on advice of Thomas Jefferson – idea of natural rights upheld in actual document</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Commander of the National Guard</td>
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<tr>
<td>o 15 July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Struggled to prevent crowd violence</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Failure to control October days</td>
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<th><strong>Desmoulins</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>- Condemned absolute monarchy</td>
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<td>- Admired the philosophes – adopted Voltaire’s hatred of religious intolerance</td>
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<td>- Joined the patriot movement for reform</td>
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<tr>
<td>- 12 July, aware that national Assembly would need help to overcome royal resistance and knew Paris workers would be alarmed by high bread prices and influx of 30,000 troops into the city</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Spoke to the crowd at the Palais Royal – urging them to arm themselves for self-defence</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Wrote a pamphlet recommending a republic</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Became link between middle-class intellectuals and Parisian revolutionary crowd</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Newspaper: Revolutions of France and Brabant</td>
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- contribution of popular movements in mobilising society and challenging the existing order
REVEILLON RIOTS

- 26-29 April 1789
- Provides an example of how material concerns can trigger popular collective action
- Details:
  - Jean-Baptiste Reveillon – owned a wallpaper factory in Paris and was a good employer, paid workers more than average wage
  - Made speech in local preparatory meeting for Estates-General expressing concern about economic conditions in Paris – arguing that the price of bread should be reduced
  - Misreported as being a plan to reduce wages
  - Agents helped stir up resentment – crowd of local artisans and workers first stages marches and later attacked the Reveillon’s home and factory (28 April)
  - Royal government sent in French Guards to crush the disorder
  - As many as 100 killed
  - Frightening spectacle of popular violence and crowd violence – crowd could descend into systematic destruction of property
  - Rehearsal for action for storming of the Bastille