

Chapter 2

French Revolution

ABSTRACT

Besides its being one of the most important events that shaped the world's political history, the French Revolution changed the lives of the people of Europe and of other countries, especially the French people, due to its socio-cultural and socio-economic infrastructure. During the period before year 1789, it is observed that especially England and France gained significant economic power. Ancient civilizations that had resisted European ideas until then were introduced to the modern world ideology for the first time by means of France. This happened due to the French Revolution. If the French Revolution would be explained in a single sentence, it can also be expressed as the gastronomic-based sociological and philosophical revolt of the French people, who cannot even find bread to eat and crawl in misery, against the elite class, who drink hot chocolate and have tea parties.

INTRODUCTION

The reasons why the revolution emerged in France, not in another country, is a social deformation caused by the domestic and foreign policy preferred by France throughout the 17th century (Gökdemir, 1961). Various events before the 1789 French Revolution opened the door for the revolution to take place. Kings have been in an almost constant war to expand the country and consolidate their power, and the period of Louis XIV (1643 -1715), famous for the phrase “I am the State” (Roskin, 2013) comes to the fore in this regard. From the 1750s onwards, the balance of power in Europe began to flex under an

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enormous weight. Britain's crushing of French forces in the Seven Years' War meant the disappearance of the only western power that could deter Austria, Prussia and Russia, who were intent on dividing Poland between themselves. Poland was disintegrated in year 1772. On the other hand, when Britain lost the American War of Independence, it was considered that the balance could be restored (Davies, 2011); but the price of victory was so heavy for France, which was crushed under the financial burden of the war, that the American Revolution, which France supported against England, caused great financial losses for the country (Roberts, 2015). In fact, Perry (2002) states that the prominent problem is not the revolution, but the state that is on the verge of bankruptcy when he talked about the French Revolution. But only reason for economic problems is not comprised of expenditures made in wars. It is known that the inability to get efficiency from agricultural products in the 1780s increased the food prices. Furthermore, there was an increase in the population and rent amounts, and it is known that the economic inactivity brought the textile sector to a standstill. Neither the palace nor the nobles bore all this burden; While the people could not harvest, they were crushed by the heavy taxes imposed to compensate increased expenses (Roberts, 2015).

During these years, the king of France was Louis XVI. Looking at the perception of royalty in France, Louis XIV used expressions of "I am the State" and XV. Louis (1710-1774) used expression of "Our throne and power rests on God" and these expressions can be said to have expressed the general principles of the absolutist principles on which the old order was based. These statements explicitly show what kind of atmosphere existed in France under the old regime. Major factors such as the absence of parliamentary institutions, the prevalence of privilege, favor, oppression and injustice, and the authority of the sole omnipotent king clearly define the old regime. Furthermore, statement of XV. Louis shows how dominant the king's authority is theocratically (Aulard, 2011). In fact, the old regime in France is described as an absolute monarchy in which kings were responsible to God and expected constant obedience from their people. In the old regime, clergy played an important role in the election of kings and became the biggest supporters of the monarchy. They made the king's sanctification by showing the people's obedience to the king as a religious duty. With the support they gave to the kings, they gained many privileges such as receiving taxes from the people but not paying taxes to the state (Çam, 2000). But this situation in France is not just an atmosphere unique to this country, it is seen in all places where the old regime is dominant. In this period, in many European countries, issues such as church, family law, education, culture and social assistance were

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