

# 1 The causes of the French Revolution from 1774 and the events of 1789

## The structure of the Ancien Régime

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### Social divisions

In the eighteenth century, France was divided into 'estates', or social classes. These were official divisions, and affected legal status and taxation.

#### The First Estate – the clergy

The clergy formed less than 0.5 per cent of the population but the Church owned roughly one-tenth of French land. It controlled almost all education, most hospitals and **poor relief**. It had powers of censorship and published the government's messages. In many towns the clergy dominated while in the countryside the parish priest (*cure*) was influential.

#### The Second Estate – the nobility

There were roughly 120,000 nobles, less than one per cent of the population, but they owned between a quarter and a third of French land. There were three levels within the nobility:

- The *noblesse d'épée* lived with the King in the palace at Versailles and were very wealthy, provided the King's advisers, ambassadors, **intendants** and ministers and had access to **royal patronage**.
- The *noblesse de robe* were nobles created by the monarchy selling legal and administrative offices in return for a hereditary title. In 1789 there were over 70,000 **venal offices**.
- Most other nobles lived on their country estates. Many were not wealthy. They were jealous of court nobles, protective of their own status and privileges, and dependent on their **feudal rights**.

#### The Third Estate

The Third Estate made up the rest of society and consisted of nearly 28 million people:

- At the top were the **bourgeoisie** (middle class), who lived mostly in towns. By 1789 they were growing in wealth and numbers. They owned most industrial and all commercial capital, about one-fifth of all private

French wealth and roughly one-quarter of French land. Often their ambition was to become part of the nobility.

- In the countryside were the peasants, over 80 per cent of the population. The majority farmed at **subsistence** level and worked as labourers on the land, in industries or as migrant workers in towns.
- In the towns were the small property owners, skilled workers and unskilled labourers.

### Privileges and burdens

The First and Second Estates had considerable privileges. The clergy paid no taxes. Instead the Church made a voluntary annual grant of about 16 million **livres**, just 5 per cent of total Church income. The nobility were exempt from the heaviest tax, the *taille* (land tax), and the *corvées royales* (labour service on the roads). They paid some newer taxes linked to income but were often able to avoid paying the full amount. They were exempt from military **conscription** although many volunteered to fight by buying **commissions**. The bourgeoisie, though often richer than the nobles, were frustrated because the nobles dominated the higher posts in the army and the Church and had tax privileges denied to commoners. Thus a well-educated and prosperous part of French society was increasingly resentful.

The peasantry which included some of the poorest in society, carried the heaviest burden. To the lord of the manor (the *seigneur*) they paid rents and taxes on their grain harvest and some had to do labour service. To the state they paid the *taille* and the *gabelle* (salt tax). They also did labour service on the roads. They could be conscripted or have soldiers **billeted** upon them. They paid the **tithe** to the Church. For many, their main concern was to stay alive and this was dependent on the price of bread. Many richer peasants resented the burden of dues and taxes.



## Absolutism

The head of the Ancien Régime was the King. In theory he was an **'absolute monarch'**. At his coronation the King swore an oath to God, not to his subjects. Absolutism means that there were no legal limits to the King's power over his subjects. In reality, however, his power was limited:

- Louis XVI had been taught to take advice on important decisions and it was usual to rely on career administrators and courtiers for this.
- Louis was bound by the laws and customs of France.
- Louis needed the consent of the noble elite.
- There were deep-rooted local and social privileges.

However, the personality and abilities of the King were still important.

## Louis XVI (ruled 1774–92, executed 1793)

Louis Auguste de France, Duc de Berry, was the third child of Louis, son of King Louis XV. His parents took little interest in him and he did not become a **dauphin** until he was eleven, following the death of both his elder brother and his father. He was not unintelligent and was adept in Italian and English, but was a withdrawn and shy boy. He was married at the age of fifteen to the fourteen-year-old Austrian princess Maria Antonia (**Marie Antoinette**). Their first child was not born until eight years later.

Though he relished the ceremonies of kingship he did not enjoy the luxuries that went with it or the grandeur of monarchy. He enjoyed hunting, poring over naval plans, ship design and lock making. He was, by nature, anxious and apprehensive, and was oppressed by a sense of duty. He did not command immediate respect as a person, and was awkward and ill-at-ease on social occasions. He was indecisive and uncommunicative, and had limited ability to analyse problems and situations. He consistently failed to act decisively to solve the problems about which he worried so much.

Louis was kind, with a rough sense of humour. He believed in the divine nature of his kingship; he was religiously devout and had a strong sense of mission to protect the Church. In many ways he was a modern monarch and took an interest in improvements for his people and all affairs of state. However, he lacked the

## Problems of government

Government, based in the Palace of Versailles, consisted of Louis, his advisers and ministers. Louis decided the overall direction of government policy and met his ministers individually to discuss the work of their department, rather than making decisions collectively. This created the problem of ministers and **court factions** working against each other, not co-operating. Dealing with these issues was hard for a King who lacked good communication skills and a decisive personality.

A second problem was the wide variation in laws and customs. France had no single representative body covering the whole country. All royal legislation had to be **ratified** by one of the thirteen regional **parlements**. France was a patchwork of different forms of administration, different legal systems, different taxes and different rules on who paid them. So there was no single solution to any problem. Previous kings had attempted to create one system by splitting the country into 36 *généralités*, or administrative areas, each under the control of a royal official, an intendant. The intendants were hindered by local law courts and parlements and seen as overly authoritarian. What was needed was decisive modernisation and reform, but this could only come from strong leadership from the King or consistent support of able reforming ministers. Again, Louis was not able to deliver.

decisive character needed to steer France through the problems it faced. He was too conscious of the importance of tradition and privilege to sweep it away, but too eager to rely on absolute authority and assert strong government.

Historians take different views on Louis' character and abilities. He has been variously described as:

- 'lacking in will; honest and well-intentioned ... far from being a great mind' (Georges Lefebvre, 1939)
- 'devoted to his subjects, committed to reform, more the victim of circumstance than his own failings' (Paul Hanson, 2009)
- having taken 'an intelligent, if fluctuating interest in matters of government' (Peter Jones, 2010).

However, few disagree that he was simply not strong enough for the challenges that faced him.



## Financial problems and attempts by Turgot, Necker and Calonne to deal with them

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### Royal debt

In 1774 Louis XVI's biggest problem was money. The monarchy was heavily in debt due to the costs of foreign wars:

War	Estimated cost
War of Austrian Succession (1740–48)	1 billion livres
<b>Seven Years' War</b> (1756–63)	1.8 billion livres

Louis could not pay off the debt. Even in peacetime royal income was not enough to cover expenditure because of the size of the interest payments. In the short term the crown borrowed from international banks but in the long term this just made things worse. The decision to go to war in support of the **American colonies** against Britain made the financial situation worse.

### Inefficient tax system

Most royal income came from taxation. This was not enough because:

- The nobles, the King's richest subjects, were exempt from most taxes.
- Tax collection was both chaotic and incomplete because of all the regional differences.
- **Tax farming** reduced the crown's income. The **Farmers-General** paid an agreed sum in advance for the right to collect certain taxes. What they collected above that sum was their profit.

### Attempts to improve royal finances

Louis tried to follow a policy of reform to improve royal finances. The Controller General was the minister responsible.

#### Turgot

In 1774 Louis appointed Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot as Controller General. Turgot was influenced by the ideas of the **physiocrats**. He removed price controls and abolished guilds and proposed a new property tax. His reforms and the way he went about them aroused great hostility from those whose interests were threatened. Louis dismissed him in 1776.

#### Necker

Instead, in 1777, Jacques **Necker**, a Swiss banker, was appointed. He tried a different route of reforming royal expenditure and increasing the royal share of farmed taxes. He tried to cut venal offices, but this drew hostility from the nobles who held them.

Necker's key mistake was advising Louis that France could afford to enter the American War of Independence when it could not. This war cost an estimated 1.3 billion livres, so royal debt increased.

In 1781 Necker issued the first public report on royal finances to show that, in his view, they were in good order. However, some of the minor details of court expenditure were seized upon as examples of extravagant royal spending by enemies of the monarchy. This lost Necker the support of the court and he resigned.

#### Calonne

From 1783 Louis' chief minister, the Vicomte de Calonne, managed the royal finances by selling offices and by lavish spending. The spending maintained confidence in the monarchy, which meant that it could raise loans. However, Calonne recognised that this could not continue indefinitely and that reform was still needed. He hoped to make changes when a number of taxes were due for renewal in 1787. But events overtook him. Calonne was unsuccessful in raising loans in 1785, and in early 1786 and in August 1786 he told Louis that the government was close to bankruptcy.

The financial situation by 1789 was particularly bad, with a deficit of 126 million livres and interest on debt taking 51 per cent of total spending – more than the 36 per cent spent on defence.

### Importance of financial problems

The financial problems were of great importance because they revealed the weakness of the crown and opened the King and Queen to accusations of extravagance. They also led to attempts to involve the nation in reforms of finance, first by calling a special Assembly of Notables in 1787 (see page 18) and then the consultative and legislative assembly of the different classes of France that had met intermittently between 1302 and 1614, the **Estates General**, in 1789. It was this that led to the Revolution.



## The ideas of the Enlightenment and the impact of the American Revolution

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### The Enlightenment

The intellectual movement known as the Enlightenment spread across Europe in the eighteenth century. Writers and thinkers challenged a wide range of views that were accepted at the time about religion, nature and absolute monarchy. They considered the nature of society and men's relationships with each other, exploring ideas of freedom, liberty and equality. The Enlightenment had a particularly strong influence in France.

### Extent of influence in France – the *philosophes*

The Enlightenment's leading writers and thinkers in France were the *philosophes*. Many of them contributed to the most important work of the French Enlightenment – *The Encyclopædia*, edited by Diderot and published 1750–72. Its aim was 'to change the way people think'. Articles dealt with topics like 'reason' but also with agricultural techniques, printing and metalworking. Its scientific approach directly challenged ideas held by the Church and other institutions, and caused huge controversy. Some in the Church wanted it suppressed.

The most influential *philosophes* were Montesquieu, Voltaire and Rousseau. They expressed a deep dislike of organised religion and discussed how social and political institutions might be changed for the good of the people. They questioned the institutions of the Ancien Régime but did not advocate revolution.

- Montesquieu criticised royal absolutism, but argued that it was the role of the aristocracy to limit royal power, not the people.

- Voltaire criticised the Catholic Church and religious intolerance, but believed religion was necessary to preserve public morals. He also defended royal authority.

- Rousseau went furthest. He argued that a **despotic** monarch could be overthrown by their subjects and that sovereignty resided in the people, rather than just in the person of the King.

The *philosophes'* ideas reached a wider audience through their stories and plays. Voltaire's popular novel, *Candide*, was banned for blasphemy, and Voltaire was imprisoned in the fortress in Paris known as the Bastille.

### Salons

Enlightenment ideas were often spread through the **salons**. An aristocratic hostess would invite a range of guests, nobles and bourgeoisie, to discuss art, literature and politics. On occasion, political decisions were taken and deals made between the King's ministers in salons.

The new ideas were also discussed in the increasing number of cafes and **Masonic Lodges**, and in the growing numbers of newspapers: there were three newspapers in 1700 but over 80 by 1785.

## The impact of the American Revolution and War of

### Independence

America was another source of ideas challenging the Ancien Régime. Louis XVI had taken the fateful decision to enter the War of Independence in 1778. The American colonies had been in revolt against British rule for two years and many in France were sympathetic to the colonists' cause of freedom (liberty) and democracy. Some idealistic French aristocrats, notably the **Marquis de Lafayette**, had already crossed the Atlantic to enlist in the American forces. When they and the 8,000 troops who served in America came home after 1783 they brought with them the renewed ideas of liberty and democracy, as well as the example and experience of the overthrow of an existing political authority and the building of a new order in its place.

## Social discontent and economic problems from 1787

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### Social discontent

As well as absolutism and an unfair tax system, the other major source of resentment in French society was corruption at court and in the Church. The system of selling offices (venality) provided income for the monarchy and a bloc of supporters but also led to wasteful corruption and blocked the advancement of those with talent.

There were complaints about the Church. *Curés* (parish priests) complained they were poor because they did not receive the entire tithe. Instead the archbishops, bishops and abbots who often collected it kept most. These higher clergy enjoyed huge incomes which made such positions very desirable. As they were in the personal gift of the King they were secured by court nobles as careers for their younger sons. This led to problems of **absenteeism** and **pluralism**.

The privileges of the court nobles were resented by other nobles. Meanwhile the privileges of the nobility were resented by all the other classes, especially the peasants.

There was a lot of discontent among the middle classes about privilege and the unequal burden of taxation. There was a big expansion of books, newspapers and journals in the eighteenth century and the French middle classes grew in political awareness. There were widespread debating clubs among professionals, both in Paris and the provinces, and an interest in the ideas of the Enlightenment.

### Economic problems

#### The countryside

Conditions across the French countryside varied but foreign travellers, like the Englishman Arthur Young, noted a great deal of rural poverty. Poor harvests between 1770 and 1789 were a major reason for increased hardship. A longer-term issue was land holding. On a man's death, his land was divided equally among his heirs rather than going to the eldest son. The cumulative effect of this was smaller estates. By 1789, roughly a quarter of French farmland was owned by small peasant farmers and much of the rest rented out in small plots. This led to subsistence farming, with no incentive to make improvements in methods or crops. Agricultural problems also adversely affected the woollen industry, which added to rural poverty.

#### Towns

There was a dramatic growth of towns in the eighteenth century. Towns grew because of the growth in industries (for example, silk in Nîmes) and in foreign trade (for example, ports like Nantes). This growth led to problems and tensions in urban populations.

Most of France's wealthiest and most educated people lived in towns. These were the nobles and bourgeoisie, a few manufacturers and the skilled craftsmen who were organised into guilds. Besides them, there were small property owners, shop-keepers and artisans. However, the majority of the populations of towns were unskilled workers and the urban poor.

Paris had grown in size considerably in the eighteenth century and its poorer districts had become densely populated. Poorer people, including many small traders, craftsmen and labourers, lived in overcrowded and unhealthy conditions. They depended heavily on bread, and any sudden rises in prices would cause hardship and trigger public disorder. Bread riots were a common feature of urban life. There could also be attacks on unpopular employers, as in the riots against the wallpaper manufacturer Réveillon in Paris in April 1789.

#### Conditions in 1789

The harvest of 1788 was disastrous. The weather in the early months of 1789 was the coldest in living memory and food prices steadily rose to a high point on 14 July 1789.



## The Assembly of Notables and political developments 1787 to May 1789

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In order to collect new taxes, the agreement of the Paris parlement was needed. They had refused to agree new taxes in 1785 and had no confidence in Calonne so he feared they would refuse again if asked. Calonne's advice was to call an Assembly of Notables.

### The Assembly of Notables

The Assembly comprised 144 Notable men selected by the King. They included:

- leading members of the parlements
- the seven **Princes of the Blood**
- important nobles
- important churchmen.

They met in February 1787 and Louis expected them to agree with Calonne's proposals for:

- a new land tax with no exemptions
- new elected regional assemblies to implement the new taxes
- the economy to be stimulated by removing restrictions on trade such as internal customs barriers.

However, the Assembly rejected all the government's proposals. The Assembly, once seen simply as an expression of selfish noble opposition to change, came to be seen more as the 'prelude to revolution'. It opposed new taxation without more widespread consultation. The fact that it was summoned at all showed that the situation was very serious and the failure to get agreement weakened the position of the King and his government.

### Brienne and aristocratic revolt

After Calonne's failure, Louis appointed Archbishop de Brienne as Controller General. He took revised proposals, again including a new land tax, to the Assembly of Notables. For a second time they refused. Instead, they argued that the approval of the whole French nation was needed for such changes and to obtain this an Estates General should be called.

Louis then dissolved the Assembly and instead presented the proposals to the Paris parlement. They refused to approve them. Louis exiled them to the provincial town of Troyes and used a *lit de justice* to force through new taxes. This prompted an aristocratic revolt against absolute monarchy. Nobles and clergy met to discuss how to defend the power of the parlements. This gained much popular support.

### The opening of the Estates General, 5 May 1789

At the time of the elections the three estates were asked to draw up a list of grievances and suggestions for reform, the so-called *cahiers de doléances*. This was a remarkable exercise in public consultation, and meetings were held all over France to discuss grievances. Elections were held to send representatives from the three estates to the new Estates General.

- The First Estate was dominated by parish priests. They wanted higher **stipends**, access to the higher offices of the Church, greater Church control of education and a limit to the toleration of Protestantism.

- The Second Estate was dominated by deputies from long-standing noble families who held conservative views. However, about a third were more liberal in outlook and were willing to give up their financial privileges. They were divided over Third Estate demands for tax reforms and a modern constitution.
- The Third Estate deputies were mainly lawyers, landowners and office holders. Though the Third Estate included the mass of the people, the peasants and workers were not represented proportionate to their numbers.

When the Estates General met at Versailles, Louis failed to put forward a programme of action for discussion. There was no mention of a new constitution, just unspecified talk of fairer taxation. Having asked his subjects what their grievances were, the King offered little in the way of change to deal with them. This proved to be a dangerous misjudgement.

In August 1788 the royal treasury had to suspend interest payments on loans made to the state. The crown seemed to be bankrupt. Louis had run out of options. He was forced to reappoint Necker, and agreed to call for an Estates General to meet in May 1789 in the hope that this would lead to financial reform.



## The Estates General and events in Paris in 1789

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### The National Assembly, 17 June 1789

The three estates were meant to meet separately. Thus, the nobles, the clergy and the Third Estate would be in separate rooms as they were three distinct classes of society. But the Third Estate argued for voting by head rather than by class. That is, they wanted every member of the Estates General, whether nobleman, clergyman or commoner, voting individually, which would have meant meeting together. The nobility and clergy voted against this. The representatives of the Third Estate were more numerous, so they would be outvoted. Thus there was deadlock because of the lack of agreement about the key issue of how the Estates General would vote.

On 10 June the Third Estate voted to begin verifying deputies' credentials (i.e. whether they were indeed the representatives of their local areas) without the clergy and nobles. This was an essential preliminary to starting discussions. A few clergy joined them. On 17 June the Third Estate voted to call themselves the National Assembly. They claimed to represent the French nation, to speak for the people. Some historians, like William Doyle, see this as the key event of the whole Revolution – the new Assembly claimed its authority not because the King had summoned representatives but because the people had chosen them.

### The Tennis Court Oath

Louis tried to regain the initiative by holding a *séance royale*. Preparations involved closing, without explanation, the Third Estate's (now National Assembly's) meeting room. Angry at what they saw as a despotic act, the deputies moved to a nearby indoor tennis court and swore an oath not to disperse until they had given France a constitution.

At first the King opposed both voting by head and also the new Assembly; but he gave way as popular opinion in Paris turned against the nobility and there were rumours that the Palace of Versailles was going to be invaded by the people. Louis ordered the nobles and remaining clergy to join the Third Estate in the National Assembly. This was a major turning point. The King had been unable or unwilling to control events.

### Revolt in Paris – the storming of the Bastille, 14 July 1789

Louis took action to try to restore order in the last week of June, moving more troops into the Paris/Versailles area. It was feared that he was planning to dissolve the National Assembly, using force if necessary.

### 11 July

With over 20,000 troops in the area, Louis felt strong enough to dismiss the popular minister Necker. This was to spark mass discontent in Paris. The National Assembly was renamed the National Constituent Assembly.

### 12 July

News of Necker's dismissal spread in Paris and inflamed a tense situation. High food prices had already led to rioting. Necker was seen as the minister to solve the economic crisis. Radical orators like *Desmoulins* claimed that a massacre of the supporters of reform was planned. People armed themselves. There were violent clashes with royal troops. The Paris electors (those who had chosen the representatives of the Estates General) set up a *citizens' militia* to maintain order.

### 13 July

Barricades were erected to stop any more royal troops entering Paris. In Versailles the Constituent Assembly called for the removal of all troops.

### 14 July

This was the first *Journée* of the Revolution. Parisians seized muskets and cannon from the arsenal, Les Invalides. They then went to the Bastille, a royal fortress and prison, for the gunpowder and cartridges stored there. Troops in the Bastille fired on the crowds and 93 were killed. The people and some members of the *Garde Française* stormed the fortress. Launay, the governor, surrendered and was then murdered. The Paris mob – later to be known as the *sans-culottes* – had shown their power and neither the new National Assembly nor the King had been able to stop them. Louis had lost control of the armed forces in Paris. An important precedent had been set for political violence achieving results, as the King gave way and made concessions.

### 15 July

Louis visited the National Constituent Assembly to announce that he was withdrawing all troops from Paris and Versailles. In Paris the electors formed themselves into the new revolutionary council, the *Commune*, and turned the citizens' militia into the National Guard, commanded by Lafayette. They wanted to keep the *sans-culottes* under control.

### 17 July

Louis now had to share power with the National Assembly. He recalled Necker and visited Paris, where he recognised the legality of the Commune and the National Guard. The Comte d'Artois, Louis' youngest brother, went into exile, as did many other nobles in the following weeks. They believed the royal cause was lost.



## The Great Fear

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### Developments in the country

Across France, towns and cities copied Paris and set up revolutionary committees and a National Guard to maintain order and to prevent counter-revolution by royalists. The King's intendants abandoned their posts as royal authority collapsed.

The peasantry had not played a very important part in the events of 1788–89 but they had been part of the discussions prior to the calling of the Estates General and their expectations had been raised. The peasant *cahiers* reveal a lot of grievances and these were made worse by the bad harvest of 1788, high food prices and unemployment and lay-offs in the textile trades. Many peasants relied on part-time work and were suffering by the summer of 1789. As authority broke down in Paris and in the regions, so there was a wave of discontent.

Rumours spread that gangs of **brigands** (or criminals) had been hired by fleeing nobles to take revenge by destroying the harvest. Peasants armed themselves and attacked the hated symbols of feudal power. Chateaux and documents recording feudal obligations were burned but few people, nobles or their agents, were killed. Many tithes barns, which held the grain taken by the Church as payment due from the peasants, were attacked. The main unrest was between 20 July and 6 August.

### The abolition of feudalism

News of the violence reached the National Assembly deputies. They wanted to crush the rural revolt but did not want to use royal troops in case those troops were used against them. They decided to gain the support of the peasants by giving them what they wanted, the abolition of **feudalism**, though in practice change was slow to take effect.

On 4 August the National Assembly voted for the August Decrees. This was one of the most remarkable debates of the Revolution as the deputies became increasingly enthusiastic about ending privileges.

- Feudal rights over people were abolished.
- Tithes, hunting rights and **seigneurial courts** were abolished.
- All citizens were to be taxed equally.
- All citizens were eligible for any office in Church, state or army.
- Though the nobles were to receive compensation for the loss of their feudal rights, this was later ended in 1793.

### The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, 26 August 1789

The next task facing the deputies was to draft a new constitution. Their first step was the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen. All citizens were equal. These decrees formally dismantled the Ancien Régime. The Declaration contained very important principles which reflected the thought of the Enlightenment. It began 'Men are born free and remain free and equal in their rights'. This seemed to echo the American Declaration of Independence of 1776, which stated that 'all men were created equal'. The freedoms guaranteed included freedom of speech, opinion, property and justice. The Declaration stated that taxation should be by consent of the governed. Privilege was to be ended, and careers and offices open to all with the necessary talent.

The effects of popular discontent in Paris and other cities, together with the considerable rural unrest of the Great Fear, had acted as a spur to the reforms of the National Assembly to end the Ancien Régime and inaugurate a new **constitutional monarchy** which would recognise the will of the people. The influence of a number of factors can be seen: economic conditions, social unrest, the influence of the American Revolution, the ideas of the Enlightenment, and a weak King. In the country as a whole the people had been consulted in the lead up to the Estates General in an unprecedented way and as a result of the events of 1789 had shown their power and influence.



## The October Days

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The changes voted by the Assembly in August were not legal without the King's acceptance. Louis refused to agree and once again there was a stalemate. Both the King and the Assembly were at Versailles. In Paris there was growing unrest.

### The suspensive veto

On 11 September the deputies voted to allow Louis a suspensive **veto**. He could delay laws for up to four years but not veto them completely. They wanted a constitutional monarchy. However, it was not clear that the King would share power. On 14 September he summoned loyal troops from the Flanders Regiment to Paris and they arrived on 28 September.

### Unrest in Paris

The flight of many aristocrats from Paris had hit many trades and there was unemployment. Food was not being brought to market by the peasants and bread was in short supply. The middle-class leaders of the Paris Commune and the National Guard established to protect property faced a great deal of revolutionary agitation from orators like **Jean-Paul Marat** stirring up the crowds. The National Guard struggled to maintain order, especially as bread shortages triggered riots. Meanwhile radical journalists like Desmoulins and Marat reported on National Assembly debates and portrayed the supporters of a royal veto as unpatriotic. They advocated direct action by the people. The King was urged to flee but decided to remain at Versailles without any clear plan of either embracing the Revolution or overturning it.

### The King insults the Revolution

On 2 October the King seemed to show his disdain for the people by insulting the new revolutionary flag – the Tricolor – at a banquet for the Flanders Regiment. This was seized upon by the radical orators and large crowds, hostile to the King and particularly to the Queen, gathered on 3 October. Marie Antoinette had become particularly unpopular; she was disliked as a foreigner and it was believed that her extravagance had caused financial problems and that she had undue influence over the King.

### The march to Versailles

This triggered a violent reaction, a second *Journée*. On 5 October women in Paris seized weapons and marched on Versailles. The National Guard would not stop them. The commander of the National Guard, the Marquis de Lafayette, was ordered by the Commune to follow the marchers.

At Versailles the deputies of the National Assembly had to welcome the marchers. Louis was forced to agree to the August Decrees. Next day the crowd broke into the palace and the Queen was threatened. The National Guard restored order but both the royal family and the deputies were forced to agree to go to Paris.

The King had declined to use force again and returned to Paris from Versailles in a procession accompanied by the National Assembly deputies.

### The results of the October Days

Both the National Constituent Assembly and the royal family were now essentially prisoners in the centre of Paris, where they were vulnerable to the power of the crowds. The King had accepted the major changes of August and now was faced with making the experiment of constitutional monarchy work, but he would be under pressure from the Paris mobs.