

Coming of the French Revolution



Objectives

- Describe the social divisions of France's old order.
- List reasons for France's economic troubles in 1789.
- Explain why Louis XVI called the Estates-General and summarize what resulted.
- Understand why Parisians stormed the Bastille.

Terms and People

- **ancien régime** – the government in pre-revolution France
- **estate** – social class
- **bourgeoisie** – the middle class
- **deficit spending** – when a government spends more money than it takes in

Terms and People (continued)

- **Louis XVI** – king of France from 1774 to 1792; executed in 1793
- **Jacques Necker** – a financial advisor to Louis XVI
- **Estates-General** – the legislative body consisting of representatives of the three estates
- **cahier** – notebook used during the French Revolution to record grievances

Terms and People (continued)

- **Tennis Court Oath** – an oath taken by the members of the National Assembly to meet wherever the circumstances might require until they had created a constitution
- **Bastille** – fortress in Paris used as a prison; French Revolution began when Parisians stormed it in 1789

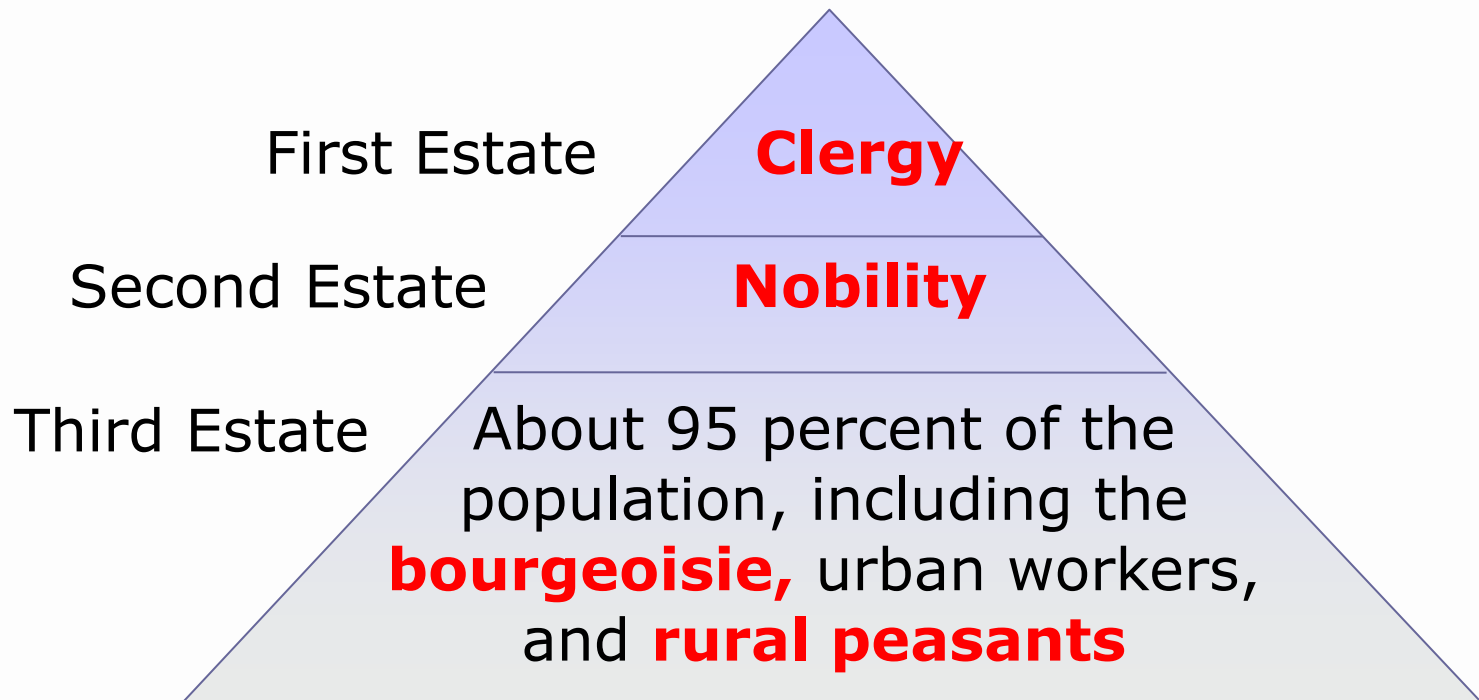


What led to the storming of the Bastille, and therefore, to the start of the French Revolution?

A **volatile atmosphere** in France resulted from a widespread **famine** and the influence of reformers inspired by **Enlightenment ideas**.

The situation exploded on **July 14, 1789**.

In 1789, France's society was based on a system created in the Middle Ages. The **ancien régime** separated everyone in French society into one of three **estates**:



The first two estates enjoyed most of the wealth and privileges of France.

The Church	The nobility
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Owned 10 percent of the land• Collected tithes• Paid no direct taxes to the state	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Had right to top jobs in government, the army, the courts, and the Church• Paid no taxes

At all levels, members of the Third Estate had reason to resent the existing social order.

- Even wealthy members of the **bourgeoisie** did not have access to the best government positions.
- **Urban workers** earned pitiful wages and faced starvation whenever the price of bread rose.
- **Rural peasants** owed fees and services that dated back to feudal times.

As **Enlightenment** ideas spread among the Third Estate, many began to question the **ancien régime**.

Economic troubles added to the social unrest and heightened tensions.

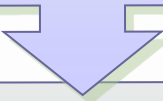
Years of **deficit spending** had put the government deeply in debt. The money had been spent on:

- **Louis XIV' s lavish court**
- **the Seven Years' War**
- support for Patriots in the American Revolution
- rising costs of **goods and services**

Bad harvests in the 1780s made it harder to recoup this money.

To solve the financial crisis, the government had to **increase taxes**, reduce expenses, or both.

The first two **estates** resisted any attempts to make them pay taxes.



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Louis XVI was weak but attempted some economic reforms.

Louis XVI appointed **Jacques Necker** as his financial advisor. Necker made recommendations to reduce the debt:

- **Reduce extravagant court spending**
- **Reform government**
- **Abolish tariffs on internal trade**
- **Tax the First and Second Estates**

When Necker proposed **taxing** the First and Second Estates, the nobles and high clergy forced Louis XVI to **dismiss** him.

The pressure for reforms mounted, but the powerful classes demanded that the king summon a meeting of the **Estates-General**.

The nobles hoped that the Estates-General could bring the **absolute monarch** under their control and guarantee their own privileges.

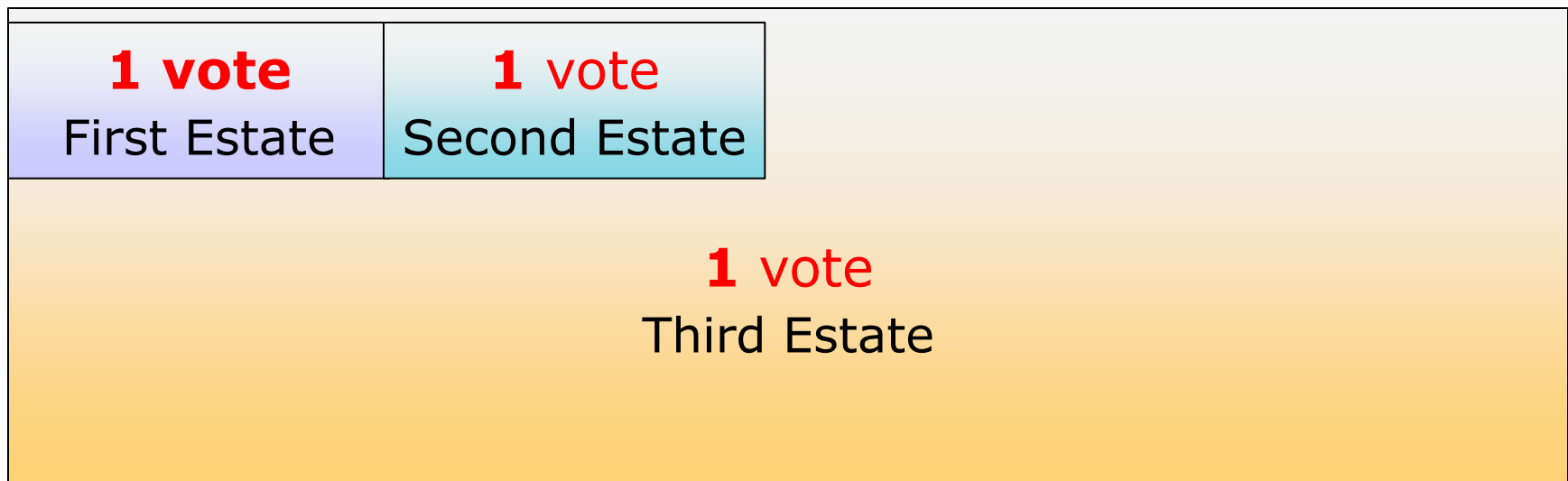
- In the meantime, France was on the verge of **bankruptcy**.
- Rising prices led to **bread riots**.
- Nobles continued to fight against **taxes**.

Before the meeting, Louis had all the estates prepare **cahiers listing their grievances.**

- **Fairer taxes!**
- **Freedom of the press!**
- Regular meetings of the Estates-General!

Many delegates from the **Third Estate** wanted to solve the financial crisis, but insisted on **reforms**.


The voting system created a stalemate, because each estate traditionally met separately and had one vote.



The Third Estate moved to create a fairer system in which the three estates met together and votes were counted by **heads** rather than estates.


In June 1789, after weeks of stalemate, members of the **Third Estate** declared themselves to be the **National Assembly** and the true representatives of the people.

They were **locked out** of their meeting hall and moved to a nearby tennis court.



The members of the National Assembly took the **Tennis Court Oath**. They pledged to continue meeting until a **constitution** was established.

Some reform-minded **clergy and nobles** joined the Third Estate in the National Assembly.



Louis XVI was forced to accept the new body.



But when royal troops gathered in Paris, rumors spread that the king planned to dissolve the **National Assembly**.

On July 14, 1789, events erupted into revolution with the storming of the **Bastille**.



- A crowd gathered outside the **prison** to demand **weapons** they thought were stored there.
- The commander **fired** on the crowd, **killing** many. The mob broke through, freeing prisoners but finding no weapons.
- The **fall** of the Bastille challenged the existence of the ancien régime.