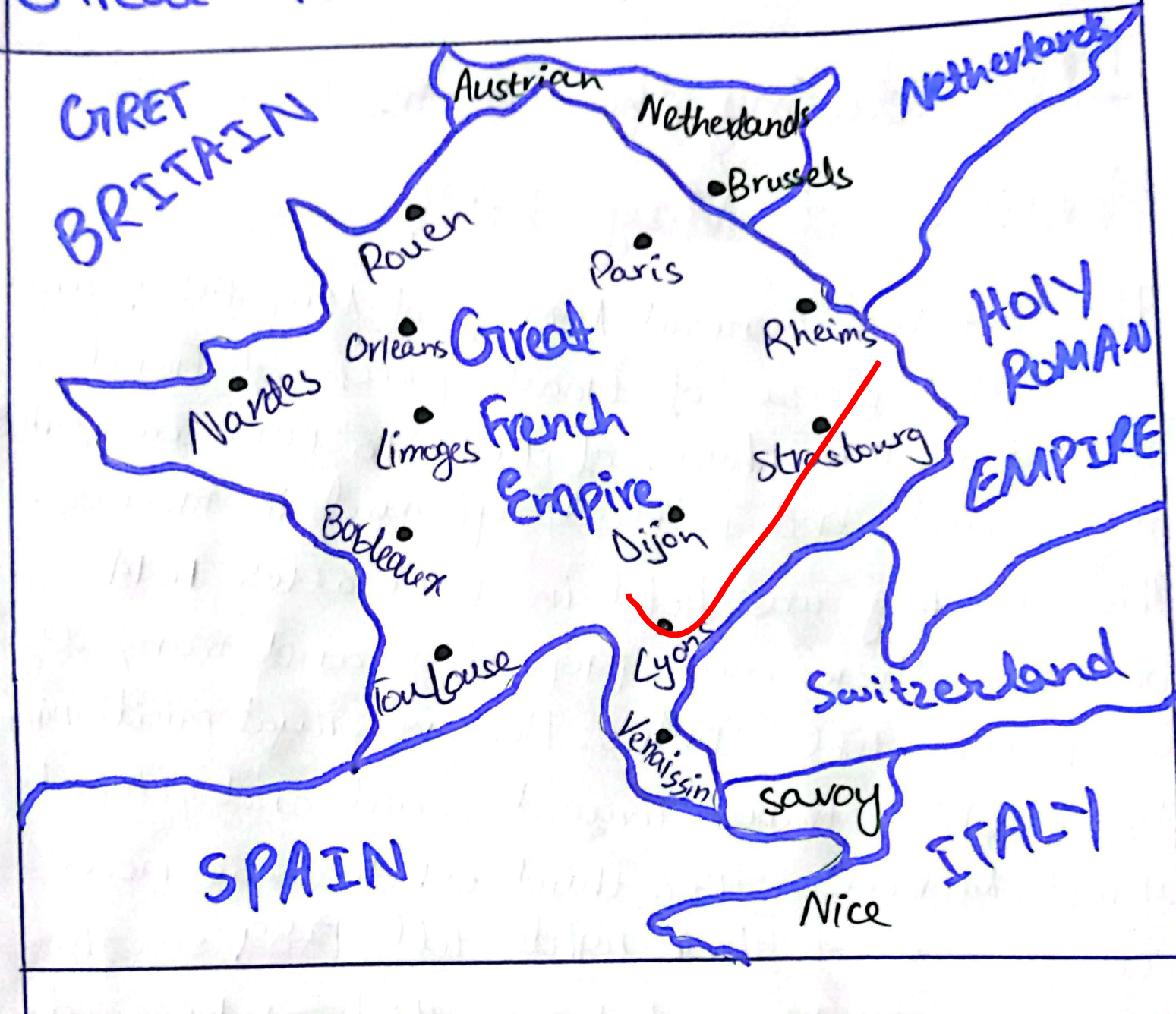


Q: Explain why the Estates General was called in 1789 and why it was not able to deal with the issues France faced.

Illucidating the Estates General Meeting of May 1789

The Estates General Meeting of May 1789 was a critical phase of broad process of French revolution. This phase of 1789 to 1799 was marked by social and political upheaval in France. This meeting was held in 1789 after 1614 because there was prosperity and tranquility in France till 1740s. However, royal pusillanimity pushed France toward social and political unrest. Moreover, 97% third estate was now well-aware of their rights till 1789 so the ambiguous relations between third estates and first two estates compel king to call for Estate General meeting, which failed to solve issues France faced due to tussle between nobility and third estate.

Great French Empire of Europe



Expounding the Reasons for which Estates General was called in 1789

1. Royal Pusillanimity

One of the primary reasons due to which Estates General was called in 1789 was royal pusillanimity. It was poor administration of king due to which aristocrats were so corrupt that 60% of taxes did not reach the government. Moreover, one-third of land was not taxed at all. This caused discrimination between the nobles and third estate, raising tensions in France and compelling king toward Estates General Meeting of 1789.

2. Economic Downturn in France

The corruption of nobility, clergy and poor administration of king led toward increased discrepancy between privileged first two estates and disenfranchised third estate. This also caused economic downturn in France. According to Paul Kennedy "France had no financial policy." General consumer price index reached upto 65%, causing unrest in France which forced the king to call for Estates General meeting.

3. Ambiguous relations between the king and aristocracy

Another reason due to which Estates General meeting was held in 1789 was that the relations between the king and aristocracy backed by clergy became ambiguous. The contention emerged from the suggestion of Charles de Calonne about Across-the-board taxation. The nobility and clergy refused to do so and king was dependent on them for implementation of his orders. So ^{these} ambiguous relations led them toward meeting of Estates General.

4. Appointment of Jacques Necker

One of the primary factors that called for Estates General meeting in 1789 was the dismissal of Calonne and appointment of Jacques Necker by the king. Keeping in view the growing financial, social and political crises of France, Jacques Necker suggested king to call for Estates General meeting in which all three estates would participate and try to sort out the growing issues faced by France. That is why Estates General meeting was held in May 1789.

Expounding the Reasons due to which Estates General Meeting failed to solve the Issues France faced

Following were the reasons due to which this meeting could not deal with the issues France faced.

1. Tussle between Nobility and Third Estate

Estates General could not deal with the issues France faced due to tussle between nobility and third estate. It was extremely unjust that the 3% population (first two estates) had two votes in Estates General whereas 97% population had only one vote. The third estate was demanding for equal political rights which resulted in political deadlock in France. That is why Estates General could not deal with the issues faced by France.

2. Revolutionary Movements across France

Estates General failed to deal with issues of France due to revolutionary movements erupted in France. When third estate declared itself National Assembly of France on ~~20~~^{17th} June, 1789 the king locked its representatives in palace. So, they gathered at a nearby

Tennis court on June 20, 1789 vowing not to disperse until a new constitution would be written. David Thomson says, "If nothing else had happened, this was enough to be called a revolution." Tennis court oath sparked revolutionary movements like Bastille incident of 14 July, 1789. These movements failed Estates General meeting.

3- Food Shortages in France

Estates General ^{of 1789} also failed due to food shortages of France which had caused a hysteria and riots in France. For instance, it compelled women to march toward Versailles on October 5, 1789 (Tuileries-I incident) in result of food shortages and resistance of king against Declaration of Rights of Men and Citizens. These conditions failed Estates General to deal with issues faced by France.

4- Treason of the king

Another reason due to which Estates General failed to address issues faced by France was treason of the king which is known as Varennes incident. In June 1791 the king tried to escape France with his family and they tried to reach Austria where they were supposed to meet Austrian army.

So, King acted as a fifth column to foreign powers and disabled Estates General to deal with issues faced by France.

5. Political and Social Unrest caused by French war with Austria and Prussia

When National Legislative Assembly was formed in ~~on~~ ^{September} ~~August~~ 1791 Girondins came into power and declared war against Austria and Prussia on 20th April 1792. After French defeats, there was social and political unrest in France. Extreme revolutionary group Jacobins came into power on 9th August, 1792 which caused Tuileries III incident of 10th August 1793 and Paris Massacres of September 1793. That is why Estates General failed to address issues faced by France.

6. Issue of Emigres ^{of 1792}

The issue of emigres fueled the contention between conservation and extreme revolutionary groups of France. The committee of public safety was taken over by Robespierre and reign of terror began in France which lasted from ~~27th~~ ^{5th September} July 1793 to 27th July, 1794 which resulted in total

executions of 17000 officials. So, these extreme violent conditions of France followed by the declaration of France as a republic on 20th September 1792 disabled ^{Estates} General to deal with issues faced by France.

It was not a law making body. Its meeting was called after 175 years

Issue of how to count votes. Voting by heads or voting by class? Tennis court oath.

Concluding Thoughts

Estates General meeting was held in May 1789 due to issues faced by France during that period. It was not called before 1789 because there was no need to call this meeting as France was a great power and prosperous state in 1740s. However, social and political upheaval of France of 1789 called for this meeting, which failed to address issues faced by France due to growing tensions faced by France from 1789 to 1799.