

Describe how the empty coffers of Monarchy can fill the squares with revolutionary crowds by detailing the chain of economic pressures that led to the political eruption of 1789 in France.

## A. INTRODUCTION

French Revolution of 1789 did not erupt suddenly from abstract ideas of liberty equality, instead it was based on the empty coffers of monarchy. A political explosion and long economic crisis that emptied the Monarchy's coffers pushed the people onto the streets. There were a chain of economic pressure that contributed in the eruption of French Revolution. The chronic fiscal mismanagement, elite capture, tax evasion, economic distress, bankruptcy and popular unrest filled the streets of France headed towards French Revolution.

## B. EMPTY COFFERS OF MONARCHY FILLING THE SQUARES OF REVOLUTION BY DETAILING THE CHAINS OF ECONOMIC PRESSURE:

## 1. CHRONIC FISCAL MISMANAGEMENT

In the pre-revolutionary era, France contributed in the 7-years war (1756-63) and US war of independence (1778-83) right after two years when Louis XVI came into power. Instead of making tax reforms, inclination towards loans created fiscal deficit in France. By 1780's, more than half of the revenue goes to debt servicing, hindering the provision of basic health necessities and daily life requirements. The monarchy was rich in land and prestige but poor in cash.

## 2. TAX EXEMPTION AND BLOCKED REFORMS

France was divided in three Estates, clergy, nobles and commoners. The taxation system among these three Estates was profoundly unjust. Louis XIV appointed Charles De Calonne and Jacques Necker to resolve the economic crisis but they failed and then dismissed after increased insurrections instead of solution. The resistances from Estates and parlement further worsened the financial crisis.

## Three Estates

Clergy

Nobles

Commoners

- were not under the tax base
- Owned 5 to 10% of land
- levy on 10% revenue to support church as tithe.
- 1% in population

- were not under the tax base
- Owned 30% of land.
- 2-3% in population

- from peasants to business class elite.
- 97% in population.
- Owned 50% land.
- tax-payers.

### 3. PROBLEM OF AFFLUENCE

In the era of 1787-1789, population faced rising living costs. The prices of bread were extremely high due to poor harvests in 1787 and 1788. While elites were indulged in luxuries and poor were starving. At the same time, industrial slowdown and increased unemployment fueled grievances among the public and had transformed abstract financial problems into daily sufferings. Ultimately, French revolution got its way and revolutionary crowd came to streets.

#### 4. ADMINISTRATIVE MALAISE

France was divided in many administrative areas and the rules of measurement keep changing as there were no standard rule of measurement. Royal pusillanimity was responsible for aggravating economic and political woes.

#### 5. POPULATION EXPLOSION

The population in France exploded from 18 million to 26 million in a very short time periods, further creating economic deprivations and state's inability to cater such challenges. The economic downturn and population explosion together filled the squares with revolutionary crowds that led to the political eruption of 1789 in France.

#### 6. ROYAL PUSILLANIMITY

French Revolution didnot erupt only due to Financial constraints, instead the behavior of Royal family was also the major concern. Louis XVI was unable to cater the problems and his wife Marie Antoinette was also in favor of let it be the way

it is: The unanimous response of the king played a key role, headed towards French Revolution.

## 7. EVENTS OF FRENCH REVOLUTION

### Convention of Notables - 1787

↳ Proposed by Calonne to broaden the tax base.

Clergy and Aristocracy refused & protested.

### Estate General Meeting - May 1789

↳ Commoners demanded more political representation.

### National Assembly of France - June 1789

↳ Commoners declared itself the National Assembly of France.

### Tennis Court Oath - June 1789

↳ National Assembly demanded the right to draft the constitution of France.

### Bastille Incident, July 1789

↳ Revolts increased, houses of clergy were burnt and Jacques Necker was dismissed by king.

## Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Rights of Citizen - 1789

↳ constitution drafted by National Assembly and opposed by king, further aggravated the revolts.

### D. CONCLUSION

In the way of conclusion, the empty coffers of French Monarchy were not merely a financial problem, they were the trigger that exposed systemic inequality, fiscal mismanagement and erosion of popular sovereignty. Economic collapse undermined royal authority, politicised hunger and hardship, and ultimately filled the squares of France with revolutionary crowds demanding a new order.



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