

The 18th Century

European States, International Wars
and Social Change

Enlightened Absolutism

- The Enlightenment also had an effect upon the political development of Europe
- Concept of Natural Rights
 - A corollary to the idea of natural laws were natural rights
 - These included equality before the law, freedom of religion, freedom of speech & press, and the right to assemble, hold property, and seek happiness

Call for Enlightened Rulers

- The question was how could these rights be established and preserved
- The Philosophes believed this could only be done through an enlightened ruler, but what made a ruler enlightened?
- Only a strong monarch, swayed by enlightened principles, seemed capable of overcoming vested interests and enact reform
 - Reform came from above as the Philosophes were distrustful of the masses
- As we will see there have been differences of opinion as to the success or failure of enlightened monarchs

France: the Long Reign of Louis XV

- The France Louis XIV bequeathed to his 5 year old grandson was greatly enlarged, but with a heavy debt and unhappy populace
- Regency of the Duke of Orleans
- Replacement by Cardinal Fleury who was successful in restoring France to some stability
- Upon Fleury's death in 1743, Louis XV decided to rule alone
 - *Lazy and weak monarch*
 - Dominated by a series of ministers and mistresses, the most famous being the Marquise de Pompadour

France: the Long Reign of Louis XV



- Consequences of Louis XV
- Succession of Louis XVI
- He was not equipped to handle the mounting problems within France, especially the financial crisis that would engulf France in the last decade of the century

Great Britain: King and Parliament

- The success of the Glorious Revolution prevented absolutism while not clearly inaugurating constitutional monarchy
- Still the 18th century British political system was characterized by a sharing of power between king and Parliament with Parliament gradually gaining the upper hand
- Succession of the Hanoverians
 - George I & II
 - Relied upon Robert Walpole, as chief or prime minister, to handle Parliament and dispense the patronage the monarchy controlled

Great Britain: King and Parliament



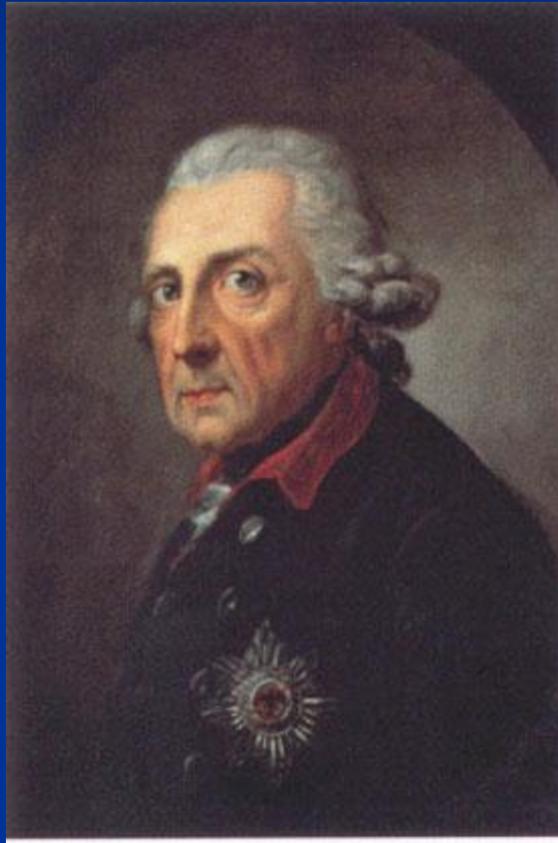
- Walpole dominated British politics and pursued a peaceful foreign policy
- Replacement of Walpole by William Pitt the Elder in 1757
- Succession of George III and drive toward more personal rule
- Opposition in Parliament and the colonies to George's policies
- Appointment of William Pitt the Younger as Prime Minister
- Pitt would remain PM throughout the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Ages and his successes postponed any major political reform in Britain for another generation

Prussia:

Frederick William I (1713-1740)

- Promoted the evolution of Prussia's highly efficient civil bureaucracy with the establishment of the General Directory
- This centralized administrative machine allowed the Hohenzollerns to control their disjointed territories
- To protect his disjointed territories, FWI increased his army from 45,000 to 83,000 making it the fourth largest army
- Link between the nobility, army and monarchy
- The army became such an important pillar of Prussian society that in 1800 it was remarked that "Prussia was not a country with an army, but an army with a country which served as headquarters and food magazine"

Frederick II the Great



- One of the best educated and cultured monarchs of the period as he was well versed in Enlightenment thought
- Relationship with father
- A firm believer in the king as “first servant of the state”
- Frederick also took an interest in military affairs, which was to be the hallmark of his reign

Austrian Empire of the Habsburgs: Maria Theresa



- Ruler of the Austrian empire from 1740-1780
- Great foe of Frederick the Great
- Began process that reformed and centralized power within Austria

Austrian Empire of the Habsburgs: Joseph II



- HRE, tried to further reform Austria
- Highly influenced by the Enlightenment and saw Frederick as a model
- Unfortunately, his reform program proved to be too overwhelming for Austria, alienating many
- He viewed himself as a failure for he ordered his tombstone to state “Here lies Joseph II, who was unfortunate in everything that he undertook.”

Russia under Catherine the Great



- Originally a German princess married to Peter III
- Intelligent woman familiar with the works of the Philosophes
- Wanted to reform Russia along Enlightenment ideals, but she could not afford to alienate the nobility
- Catherine's policies actually hurt the peasantry
- Expansion of Russia and rise to Great Power Status

Enlightened Absolutism Revisited

- Of the three major rulers associated with Enlightened Absolutism, only Joseph tried to institute any major reforms
- Some historians have argued that Frederick and Catherine, though interested in enlightened reforms, never truly instituted policies based upon the beliefs of the Enlightenment
- They believe that Joseph, Frederick, and Catherine were guided by a concern for power and the well-being of their states and their policies were no different than their predecessors, but in the process did make some reforms

War of the Austrian Succession (1740-1748)

- Vulnerability of Maria Theresa
 - Began with the succession of Maria Theresa to the Austrian throne & the rejection of the Pragmatic Sanction
 - Frederick sees an opportunity to gain Silesia and invades
 - The French side with Prussia against Austria, while the British come to Austria's aid
 - War spreads throughout Europe and beyond
- Weak Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle
 - Restores status quo except for Silesia
 - Creates circumstances for another war

Seven Years' War (1756-1763)

- European Theater
 - Diplomatic Revolution: France allies with Austria while Britain becomes Prussia's ally
 - He is able to hold off an alliance of France, Austria, Russia, and the German states
 - Frederick has numerous victories, one of the most important was Rossbach (1757)
 - Frederick is nearing exhaustion and defeat, but was saved by the death of Tsarina Elizabeth
 - War is ended by the Peace of Hubertusburg in 1763
- India and the French & Indian War
- British Victory – Peace of Paris in 1763 makes England the greatest colonial power

European Armies and Warfare

- Dramatic Increases in Size of Armies
 - Most European armies double in size
 - Examples
- Class Divisions of the Armies
 - Officers: From the landed aristocracy; middle class is shunned
 - Rank and file: Formed from the lower classes of society
 - Use of mercenaries
- Maneuvers over Confrontation

Growth of the European Population

- Falling Death Rate
 - Greater food supplies
 - Better transportation
- Improvements in Diet
 - Better crops – the potato
- Lingering Outbreaks of Disease
 - Last outbreak of plague
 - But, diseases like typhus, smallpox, and influenza still remained

Family, Marriage, and Birthrate Patterns

- Nuclear Family
- Treatment of Children of the Rich
 - Childhood was increasingly seen as a stage of development
- Suffering of Poor Children
- Late Marriages
- Women, Children, and Family Income

New Methods of Finance

- Decline in the supply of gold and silver in the 17th Century created a shortage of money that undermined the efforts of governments to meet their financial needs
- The establishment of new public and private banks and the acceptance of paper notes made possible an expansion of credit in the 18th century
- The best example was in England and the creation of the Bank of England in 1694

Social Order of the 18th Century: Peasants

- Domination by Wealthy Landowners
 - Western Europe: Peasants were mainly free, but still owed obligations
 - Eastern Europe: Peasants still remained serfs tied to the land
- Village As Center of Culture
 - Maintained public order, provide poor relief, a village church and a schoolmaster
 - Collected taxes for the central government, maintained roads and bridges and established common procedures for sowing, plowing and harvesting crops
- Poor Diet

Social Order of the 18th Century: Nobility

- Constituted only 2-3% of the European population
- Not a homogenous social group
- Government and Military Service
- Country House
 - English main example
- The Grand Tour

Inhabitants of Towns and Cities

- Urban Oligarchies
 - Only a small part of the population
 - Continued to dominate city government
- Growing Middle Class
- Laborers
- Problem of Poverty
 - Change in attitude toward the poor

Conclusion

- Although it appeared that King and noble were in an unassailable situation, the winds of history were changing
- More than any where else, the events of the 18th century had a profound affect upon France
- The foundation of the monarchy was crumbling
- Madame de Pompadour's prophetic remark of "après nous le déluge" was about to be fulfilled