

# Chapter 18 – The 18th C.: European States, Wars, and Social Change

## The European States

Most ruled by monarchs

Divine-right reasoning being replaced by utilitarian reasoning

Maintain of laws, ensure justice, prevent corruption, defend against enemies, encourage commerce

Development of *enlightened despots* (or *monarchs*)

## The Atlantic Seaboard

European “axis” shifted from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic Seaboard

1600s: English and Dutch overtook the Spanish and Portuguese

1700s: English and French

### France: The Problems of the French Monarchs

1700s: French monarchy not much impressed with *philosophes*

Louis XV (Louis XIV’s great-grandson, who reigned for 49 years) began his reign at age of five

His regents (Duke of Orléans then Cardinal Fleury) drew back from international affairs

Promoted growth at home (esp. in coal and textiles)

1743: Louis decided to rule for himself – but he was weak and lazy

ministers and mistresses influenced his decisions

Madame de Pompadour was most influential mistress, even making foreign policy decisions

Louis XVI (Louis XV’s grandson) came to rule at age 20

Knew little, cared less

His wife, Marie Antoinette, cared about the court life, spent lavishly

### Great Britain: King and Parliament

(aside: in 1707, the *United Kingdom* began when England and Scotland were joined)

king selected ministers to set policy and guide Parliament

Parliament could make laws, levy taxes, pass the budget, and indirectly influence the king’s ministers

King could capitalize on factions within Parliament, and used *patronage* to win support

Awarded them titles, government positions, places in the church and household staff

House of Lords (peers who served for life)

House of Commons (landed gentry who were “elected”)

Elections varied widely: who voted, how many representatives per region

Essentially, members were voted in repeatedly

Anne, last of the Stuarts, died and the crown passed to George I, first of the Hanoverians (from Germany)

George didn’t speak English, relied on chief (prime) minister to handle Parliament

1721-1742: Robert Walpole pursued peaceful foreign policy, no new taxes

increasing middle class wanted expansion of trade and a world empire

1757: William Pitt the Elder supported imperial ambitions

Seven Years’ War and the acquisition of Canada and India

George III wanted to increase royal authority – and influence through patronage

Enlightenment newspapers called for reform in patronage and system of elections

Supported by commoners of London, small merchants in London and surrounding areas

American colonists joined the calls for change

Appointing William Pitt the Younger helped diminish the appeals for change

Managed to stay in power through the French Revolution and Napoleonic era

### The Decline of the Dutch Republic

Oligarchies in Dutch Republic’s towns dominated politics

But house of Orange controlled the country’s executive branch

Town burghers agitated for democratic reforms

Prussian king sent troops to protect his sister, the wife of the Orangist *stadholder*

The Dutch went back to the old system

## Absolutism in Central and Eastern Europe

### Prussia: The Army and the Bureaucracy

Frederick William I and Frederick II (“the Great”) further developed the army and the bureaucracy

FW I created the General Directory, charged with administering the agency, supervising the military, police, economic, and financial affairs

Its code: obedience, honor, and service to the king

He kept a close watch on everybody, everything

Rigid class stratification remained

*Junkers* (landed aristocracy) owned large estates (with serfs), monopolized the officer corps

Doubled the size of the army (4th in Europe, although the population was ranked 13th)

Prussian militarism was legendary: “obedience, honor, and sacrifice”

Military was the backbone of Prussian society

Civil service expanded, FW encouraged the middle class to serve

Frederick II was well-educated, sophisticated, cultured

Followed Enlightenment thought, invited Voltaire to court

Eliminated torture (except for treason and murder)

Granted limited freedom of speech and press

Religious toleration (he wasn’t particularly religious)

Couldn’t free the serfs: he was too dependent on the *Junkers* for support

Made Prussian society *more* aristocratic

Greatly enlarged the army (to 200,000)

Used it: seized Silesia (over Austria’s objection) in the War of Austrian Succession

Seven Years’ War

### The Austrian Empire of the Habsburgs

Vienna – in all its Baroque glory – became the musical capital of Europe

But it had trouble keeping the ethnic, religious, and cultural minorities aligned

Maria Theresa (r. 1740-1780) was a staunch Catholic and a conservative

Tried to reform her government to keep Prussia from seizing more land

Divided the country into districts administered by royal officials

Enlarged and modernized the army

Joseph II (r. 1780-1790) was an Enlightened monarch

Abolished serfdom

Economically: eliminated tariffs, ended monopolies, removed guild restrictions

Repealed the death penalty, established equality before the law

Complete religious toleration

But he alienated the nobility and confused the peasants (they weren’t ready for it all)

His successors undid most of his reforms

### Russia and Catherine the Great

Rose after the murder of her husband, Peter III

Would have reformed Russia in an Enlightened way but could not afford to alienate the nobility

She questioned serfdom, torture, and capital punishment, and believed in equality under the law

But she strengthened the aristocracy through The Charter of Nobility in 1785

Nobles chose the ruling officials in newly-created districts

Nobles received trial by their peers, exemption from corporal punishment

1773: the Pugachev Revolt

“freed” peasants from oppressive taxes, military service

encouraged by Pugachev, peasants killed over 1500 estate owners and their families

after it was quelled, Catherine became even more repressive

### The Destruction of Poland

Polish king was elected by the nobles; therefore *they* had the real power

Limited resources, small standing army

Made Poland vulnerable to Austria, Prussia, and Russia (who in 1772 took 30% of the land)

By 1795, Poland was gone

An argument in favor of a strong, absolute monarchy

## The Mediterranean World

### Spain

As a result of the War for Spanish Succession, Spain changed hands from the Habsburgs to the Bourbons

Initially, Philip V strengthened Spain, even making Castilian the official dialect

Later, Charles III's expulsion of the Jesuits and the end of the inquisition brought the Church under control

### The Italian States

1713: Treaty of Utrecht resulted in Austrian domination (instead of Spain)

Milan, Sardinia, and the Kingdom of Naples surrendered to the Habsburgs

Sicily was given to Savoy

1734: eventually Spain regained control of Naples and Sicily

Venice and Genoa remained independent

## The Scandinavian States

Swedish power declined after 1709; the monarch eventually became a puppet

Gustavus III (r. 1771-1792) was quite enlightened

Denmark's Christian VII (r. 1766-1808) attempted Enlightenment reforms

## Enlightened Absolutism Revisited

While Catherine and Frederick liked to think of themselves as enlightened, only Joseph sought real changes

What reforms were attempted did serve to satisfy the citizenry – but mostly to strengthen the state

It was almost impossible to overcome the will of the nobility

They were certainly not in favor of the principle of equal rights for all

## War and Diplomacy

*Philosophes* thought war was foolish; rulers thought it was necessary at times

Although *balance of power* was thought best, rulers often looked to expand territory

Standing armies increased in size and number

Diplomacy was a second means of achieving aims

*raison d'état* (reason of state) looked at long-term interests of the state

centralization of the state and international rivalry were intertwined

the greater taxes for armies and navies created a need for more efficient governments

but the increased size of the military led to at times using it rather than diplomacy

## The War of Austrian Succession (1740-1748)

Charles VI worked to have his daughter, Maria Theresa, recognized when she took the throne

Pragmatic Sanction: European powers agreed to recognize her legitimacy

When he died, Frederick attacked, seizing Silesia

France took the opportunity to attack Austria (a traditional enemy)

occupied Austrian Netherlands

allied with Prussia

Great Britain – fearing French power – allied with Austria

France and Britain fought in Europe, India, and North America

1748: Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle restored all territories *EXCEPT* Silesia (which all but guaranteed more war)

## The Seven Years' War (1756-1763)

Maria Theresa was part of the 200-year-old Bourbon-Habsburg rivalry

Two new rivalries sprang up

Britain and France – for colonial dominance

Austria and Prussia – for control of Silesia

Alliances *switched*: Britain + Prussia, France + Austria

Russia – which distrusted Prussia – allied with France and Austria

War broke out *again* in Europe, India, and North America

### Conflict in Europe

Frederick, the great militarist, was able to defeat the French, Austrians, and Russians for a while

Was on the brink of defeat but was saved by the death of the tsarina

Her nephew, who assumed the throne, was an admirer of Frederick and withdrew his troops

Treaty restored all lands, recognized Silesia as Prussian

### War in India

British (under Robert Clive) persisted and France finally withdrew from India

### The French and Indian War

Major battles fought along the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes and in the Ohio River Valley

The British found the colonists to be allies; the French allied with the Indians

Pitt the Elder decided to concentrate forces in India and North America

French success in North America depended on naval support and the British were too strong

Battle of Quebec: both generals (Wolfe and Montcalm) died but the British won

Treaty of Paris

France gave Canada and the lands east of the Mississippi River to the British

Spain transferred Spanish Florida to the British

French gave Louisiana territory to the Spanish

Britain became the world's greatest colonial power

## European Armies and Warfare

Professional standing armies (from 200,000 to 300,000 men) became the norm

### Composition of Armies

Officers were landed aristocracy; middle officers were middle class; lower classes were rank-and-file soldiers

Prussia and Russian conscripted peasants; others included mercenaries

Some served six-year terms, others were just recruits using the army to escape hard times

Britain had no standing army (it used German troops in America)

Dutch and British viewed navies as more important than armies

British had 80,000 sailors

### The Nature of Warfare

Warfare was not as "destructive" as in the days of religious wars

Soldiers were "expensive" to arm and keep, so they were more carefully employed

Generals were reluctant to risk destruction

Sieges replaced direct confrontation

Surrender in battle was temporary: armies had time to retreat and rearm

## Economic Expansion and Social Change

### Growth of the European Population

Population grew dramatically in the second half of the 18th Century due to decrease in death rate

More plentiful food, better transportation of food

Led to improved diet, relief from famine

However, disease was still rampant, and hygiene was poor (little bathing, dirty clothes)

### Family, Marriage, and Birthrate Patterns

Fathers still dominated the family

Selected partners for his children (in the interests of the family)

### Child Care

Lower-class women breast-fed at home; upper-class women had lower-class women as wet nurses

Second half of the 18th C.: Enlightenment ideas about children began to spread

Rousseau's ideas in *Émile* (about letting children develop their passions) began to take hold

Childhood began to be seen as a phase of life of its own

Children began to wear clothing "appropriate" to children; shops for children began to appear

Jigsaw puzzles, books for children appeared

These new opportunities and methods were limited to children of the upper classes

To the lower classes, children represented a worry and a risk

In poor times *infanticide* and abandonment to foundling homes increased

In Russia, one foundling hospital was caring for 25,000 children

1770s: 1/3 of all babies born in Paris were taken to foundling institutions

mortality rate could be 50-90%

### Marriage and Birthrates

Because couples moved into their own homes, they married relatively late (for financial reason)

Typically, men were 27-28, women were 25-27

Did this lower the birthrate? No, later marriage was offset by increase in illegitimacy

Birth control methods began to appear among upper-class women (*coitus interruptus* was preferred)

Contributions of women and children in working-class families

Children

In urban areas: all children helped handicrafts or work in the home

In rural areas: worked on the farm or in the home industry

Women

In urban areas: helped husbands, worked as seamstresses, laundresses, peddlers

In rural areas: grew vegetables, tended livestock, sold eggs and milk; worked in the fields

## An Agricultural Revolution?

Perhaps – in the Lowlands and England at least...

Food production increases

Improved climate: “little ice age” was over, bringing moderate summers

More farmland: abandonment of the open-field system

Crop rotation, with alfalfa, turnip, and clover, reduced the “fallow field” system

Nitrogen in their roots restored the soil’s fertility

Winter fodder enabled increase in livestock

Provided more meat for the diet

Provided more manure for fertilization

Scientific experimentation: Jethro Tull used the hoe to aerate soil, seed drill to more effectively plant

Introduction of maize (corn) and potatoes

All these methods best employed in large-scale farms

**Enclosure movement:** Landowners closed common (grazing) land, combined small holdings into larger farms

Squeezed out small farmers, who were forced to become wage laborers or tenant farmers

Parliament naturally sided with landed aristocracy

## New Methods of Finance

Decline of gold and silver created a shortage of money, led to creation of paper money

1694: Bank of England

received deposits, but also *loaned* money (particularly to the government)

government allowed them to issue paper money backed by government credit

issuance of government bonds allowed for a “public debt” in times of need (e.g., for larger armies)

speculators could drive prices up, create a “bubble” then a bust

happened in France, and the loss of confidence delayed its National Bank

the Dutch were still the center of banking

despite the country’s decline, they flourished by loaning money to foreign concerns

## European Industry

Textiles were most important European product (75 % of Britain’s exports)

### Cottage Industry

18th C.: Textile production (mostly wool) moved from the cities to the countryside: in “cottages”

created the “putting-out” or “domestic” system

merchant-capitalist took the raw materials to the cottage, where it was spun and woven

then paid piece-work and sold the finished product for a profit

women spun and men wove (on hand looms)

### New Methods and New Machines

Introduction of cotton from slave plantations (lightweight, less expensive)

Succession of improvements

Flying shuttle

Water frame (Richard Arkwright) multiplied the spinning

Increase in production of yarn spurred faster weaving: power looms

Threatened the livelihood of rural workers, who protested

Eventually resulted in rural workers moving to the cities

## The Social Order of the Eighteenth Century

Organized along lines created during the Middle Ages

Hereditary “orders” or “estates” which didn’t mix socially

Enlightenment proposed that “progress” necessitated a change in that order

### The Peasants

Because Europe was primarily rural, 85% of the population was peasants

“free” in the West, serfs in the East

in the West:

paid *tithe* (often 1/3 of their crops) to the Church, and which was *supposed* to go to the parish priests  
might have paid *hunting fees* on their lord’s lands

In the East:

Bound to the land or landlord (often couldn’t marry or move without permission)  
had to work the land

### The Village

The center of peasants’ social life

Maintained order, provided relief, a village church, perhaps a schoolmaster, maintained roads and bridges

Established procedures for planting, sowing, and harvesting crops

Often dominated by wealthiest peasants

Resisted change – particular technology

### The Peasant Diet

Dark bread (high in vitamins and nutrients)

Water, wine, and beer; soups and gruel made from vegetables and grains

Potatoes and corn – newly arrived – helped

Poor harvests made peasants more vulnerable to starvation and disease

### The Nobility

Though 2-3%, they dominated

Had special rights: jury of peers, immunity from severe punishment, exemption from many taxes

In Eastern Europe, the power of life or death over servants

Theoretically they lived off the farmland of their estates

Some made a profit from estate resources: mining, metallurgy, and glassmaking

Diet included much meat and fish

Served as military officers

In most of Europe, they controlled local/provincial governments

NOTE: *not all landowners were rich*

Some people with money managed to be elevated into the nobility

### The Aristocratic Way of Life: The Country House

The lavish centers of living for the aristocrats

Might have a home in London for Parliamentary sessions, but...

Modeled on classical serenity of 16th-C architect Andrea Palladio

Floors had separate purposes

Lower floors were public spaces: dining, entertaining, and leisure

1 or 2 common rooms, drawing room (for music or dancing), library, study, gallery, conservatory

Upper floors: bedrooms (for children’s play, sewing, writing, and reading)

Servants in a separate wing downstairs – and called for with a system of long cords and bells

After dinner, the sexes separated: men to brandy and cigars in the dining room; women for conversation

Great “parks” were created to hide the surrounding towns and farmland

### The Aristocratic Way of Life: The Grand Tour

High culture was cosmopolitan; they “all” learned Latin and French

Travel was considered sophisticated, part of a man’s education

The Grand Tour: sons of aristocrats spent a year or more touring great European cities

The travel could be uncomfortable or dangerous

Often accompanied by tutors

Pursued culture – and wine, women, and song

Stops: Paris (for the sophistication), Florence (for the art), Venice (for the women), and Rome

## **The Inhabitants of Towns and Cities**

Townspeople were in the minority (except in Netherlands, Britain, and parts of Italy)

London was a million; Paris: 500-600,000

Cities over 100,000: Naples, Lisbon, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Vienna, Amsterdam, Berlin, Rome, and Madrid

Cities known for education, culture, and material consumption

Class divisions within cities

Aristocrats were a small minority

*bourgeoisie* (upper middle class): financiers, bankers, merchants, professionals (incl. lawyers), investors

*petty bourgeoisie* (lower middle class): master artisans, shopkeepers, and small traders

laborers (working class): unskilled workers, including servants, maids, and cooks

high death rates because of unsanitary conditions (polluted water, lack of sewerage facilities)

## **The Problem of Poverty**

A visible problem both in the city and in the countryside

Beggars in Venice: 3-5% licensed, 13-15% unlicensed

Prostitution rose

France and Britain: about 10% depended on charity or begging

Officials viewed begging as a stepping-stone to theft

St. Vincent de Paul, Sisters of Charity (Catholic orders) founded

A problem for which there seemed no solution