

The French Revolution

Q1. What was the condition of peasants in French society?

Ans. Condition of peasants in French society

- i. Peasants made up about 90 per cent of the population. However, only a small number of them owned the land they cultivated.
- ii. They had to pay feudal dues, direct tax (called taille), and a number of indirect taxes which were levied on articles of everyday consumption like salt or tobacco.
- iii. They were obliged to render services to the lord to work in his house and fields to serve in the army or to participate in building roads.
- iv. The Church too extracted its share of taxes called tithes from the peasants.

Q2. Why was the National Assembly formed by the third Estate?

Ans. On 5 May 1789, Louis XVI called together an assembly of the Estates General to pass proposals for new taxes. Voting in the Estates General in the past had been conducted according to the principle that each estate had one vote. This time too Louis XVI was determined to continue the same practice. But members of the third estate demanded that voting now be conducted by the assembly as a whole, where each member would have one vote. When the king rejected this proposal, members of the third estate walked out of the assembly in protest. The representatives of the third estate viewed themselves as spokesmen for the whole French nation. On 20 June they assembled in the hall of an indoor tennis court in the grounds of Versailles and declared themselves a National Assembly.