

- Fearing revolts from the Third Estate and desperately seeking relief from the Crown's mammoth debt, Louis XVI instead, tasked various ministers of finance over the course of the 1780s, with evaluating the situation and proposing a solution
- The first of these was Jacques Necker, who attempted some minor reforms, though was dismissed by the other King after he published a report on the income and expenditure of the State that advertised false surplus
- Hired to replace Necker, was Jacques Turgot, who sought to minimise the expenditure and corruption of the royal court and attempted to compel the King to increase tax revenue, by retracting the tax exemption privilege of the 1st and 2nd Estates
- These radical propositions, merged with the resentful attitude of Marie Antoinette and a string of prestigious nobles, eventually forced Turgot into resignation, leaving France's economy in a dire condition and enraging the Third Estate
- The next Finance Minister of France in 1783 was Charles-Alexandre Calonne, who's proposition to abolish tax privileges and internal tax barriers was also dismissed, driving him to borrow from foreign bankers in order to meet the expenditure of the royal court
- Whilst it offered immediate relief, this policy was barely a solution, propelling the national debt from 300,000,000 to 600,000,000 Franks within the span of only three years.
- By 1786 France's once prosperous reputation was demolished, and foreign bankers finally refused to lend more money
- Maintaining that his tax reform was the only feasible, long-term solution Calonne finally convinced Louis XVI to gather an 'Assembly of Notables', during which Calonne and the King could fully explain the frailty of France's economy and urge the nobles either to agree to the new taxes or to surrender their exemption to the current ones
- The Assembly of Notables, was unsurprisingly unsuccessful, with the power-ravenous nobility refusing Calonne's attempts at reform and demanding the calling of the Estates-General, a general assembly representing all three Estates, which had not met since 1614. This major act of defiance challenged the absolutism of Louis XVI and fuelled a nationwide 'aristocratic revolt'.
- Meanwhile, public opinion was being stimulated by the Parlement of Paris, a judicial body that consisted of other equally non-compliant nobles. They refused to enforce financial minister Etienne Briennes' fiscal reforms targeting the 3rd Estate, radically asserting that new taxes could only be approved by the three Estates combined
- Though Louis XVI warred with the parliament over legislative sovereignty for eight solid months, in 1788, the nationwide protests and demonstrations against the monarchy, ultimately compelled Louis XVI to surrender. He reappointed the popular Jacques Necker as the finance minister and, though it undermined his authority, relinquished to convene the Estates-General on May 5, 1789.
- The 'aristocracy revolt' served as an ultimate demonstration that much of the populace of France were willing to sacrifice their own social and political liberties for equality; a powerful message to the monarchy that served as a significant catalyst for the revolution

Ideological Causes

- Despite France's urgent need for reform, It was only when the enmity of the people collided with a series of progressive ideals opposing the rigid social, political and economic institutions of the Ancien regime, that the need for total social, economic and political overhaul was truly realised
- Largely emboldened by the recent American Revolution, the ideals were centred in rational questioning and empirical research, concepts that directly contradicted the previously unopposed perpetuations of the church and challenged the foundation of monarchical power
- The 18th Century philosophers, thinkers and writers, otherwise known as the philosophes, expressed the urgency of this intellectual movement, through public dialogues and publications. They referred to this ideological movement as the '**Enlightenment**'