Enlightenment Absolutism and the Balance of Power

Chapter 8: Section 3
Enlightenment Thought

- They believed in natural rights for all like equality, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of press, right to assemble, hold property, and the pursuit of happiness

- They thought everyone should be ruled by enlightened rulers
Enlightenment Thought

• Only strong monarchs could bring about the enlightened reforms of society

• This led to .... ENLIGHTENED ABSOLUTISM!
  • This means that rulers tried to rule by enlightenment principles but still trying to maintain their royal powers
Enlightenment Thought

• Did European rulers really follow the advice of the enlightenment and change??? Lets look at these three case studies: Prussia, Austria, & Russia
Prussia

- And so there were two kings.. Frederick William I & Frederick II
- They made Prussia a major European power in the 8th century
Frederick William I’s Prussia

• He kept a highly efficient bureaucracy of civil servant workers => A group of people made decisions

• Their values were: obedience, honor, and service to the king

• “One must serve the king with life and limb. The latter is reserved for God. The rest is mine.”
Frederick William I’s Prussia

- A major concern for Frederick William was the army
- He DOUBLED the size of his army => Fourth largest army
- The army was the most important organization in the state
Frederick William I’s Prussia

- Nobility who owned large pieces of land were the officers in the army
- They had strong service to the king
- They believed in duty, obedience, and sacrifice
Frederick II a.k.a. Frederick the Great

• He was one of the best educated Kings of the time!
• He knew the enlightenment well and was very dedicated to rule
• He widened the army but kept a strict rule over the bureaucracy
Frederick II a.k.a. Frederick the Great

- Frederick II abolished torture EXCEPT in treason and murder
- He also granted limited freedom of speech and press
  - He allowed greater religious tolerance
- BUT .. He wasn’t all that good .. He kept a rigid social structure
Austria – Empress Maria Theresa

- Austria was one of the greatest European states by the Enlightenment
- It was hard to rule because of how different it was
  - There were different languages, nationalities, religions, and cultures
- Empress Maria Theresa wanted to strengthen Austria
- She was not open to changes after the Enlightenment but tried to help the serfs (lowest class)
Austria – Joseph II

- Maria Theresa’s son Joseph II felt differently
- He abolished serfdom and eliminated the death penalty
- He also made everyone equal and accepted religious tolerance
Austria – Joseph II

• Well, although Joseph II had good intentions, his reform failed...

• He alienated the nobles and Catholic Church...he couldn’t even make the serfs happy!

• Joseph’s successors undid almost all of his reforms
Russia – Catherine II a.k.a. Catherine the Great

• She favored the Enlightenment reforms

• She also liked the idea of equality for all.. BUT…. She did nothing because her support came from nobles

• By favoring the nobles, conditions for peasants were bad => This led to rebellion

A little rebellion now and then is a good thing!

~Thomas Jefferson
Russia – Catherine II a.k.a. Catherine the Great

• A Cossack (Russian Warrior) led a rebellion that spread across Russia
• Catherine shut it down and expanded serfdom into more parts of the empire
• Catherine expanded Russia southward to the Black Sea by defeating the Turks
• She then gained control of 50% of Poland – the land was split between Russia and Austria
Lets Discuss…

- Only Joseph made changes based on the Enlightenment ideas
- Frederick II and Catherine II liked to talk about the Enlightenment ideas
- They both attempted but it didn’t work
It was a good thought...

• All three of them – Catherine, Frederick, and Joseph were enlightened absolutists

• They only cared about their interest in the state

• When they strengthened themselves, they did not follow enlightenment ideas
So they decided to do this instead

- Their power was used to collect taxes and to create armies, to wage wars, and to gain even more POWER
Europe is selfish

- Philosophes thought war was a waste of time and resources
- However, the rivalry among the states remained the same
- Europe’s interests were guided by their ruler’s self-interests
Monarchs were concerned though

- They were concerned with the balance of power
- States should have equal power and everyone would get along
- But those large armies meant to protect were actually taking land
Famous Words

• Frederick II of Prussia, “The fundamental rule of governments is the principle of extending their territories.”

• And so this rule led to TWO major wars