Louis Xiv 2 Essay, Research Paper

Louis XVI began his reign with absolute power, however he ruled at a time when changes were being demanded and ultimately revolution occurred. Louis power slowly began to decline and on October 10, 1784 he signed a constitution forced upon him by the French Assembly, which limited his power and made him no more than a salaried figurehead who could be convicted of treason (Furneuax 12). On June 20, 1791 Louis made an unsuccessful attempt to regain his power, but he was caught and imprisoned (Furneaux 13). Though Louis Appeared coldhearted he was a kind man and did not deserve to be overthrown, Phyllis Corzine put it best by quoting:

I ve never known anyone whose character contradicted his outward appearances. [According to this man] No man could speak to Louis of disease and war without seeing a look of compassion come over his face, yet his replies were often hard, his tone harsh, his manner unfeeling, (Unknown as quoted by Corzine 13).

Louis XVI was not guilty of treason, however he was an ineffective ruler and was beheaded as a scapegoat by the French so they could prove to themselves that the king was just a regular man and not above his subjects or the law. Louis XVI, the king of France from 1774-1792, was the grandson of Louis XV. Louis XVI was born at Versailles on August 23, 1754 (Corzine 2). He was the youngest of the family, with two elder brothers. However, the death of his two elder brothers and father allowed Louis to claim the throne easily. He was made the young prince of Dauphin in France in 1765 at the young age of eleven. Louis was an ugly man, about five and a half feet tall and slightly overweight, Although he had clear blue eyes, and thick fair hair he was pale, with a full flabby mouth and a double chin, and on top of all that he had a bad case of nearsightedness (Corzine 13). Louis XVI married Marie-Antoinette in 1777 and oddly did not consummate the marriage for seven years due to sexual problems and because of this was the laughing stock of European vaudeville (Furret 28). Louis was crowned king in 1774 at the young of twenty and he believed he had divine right to rule, because he was part of the long line of Bourbon rulers (Furret 28). At 10:22 a.m. on January 21, 1793 Louis was beheaded (Hunt 1).

Louis who was unaware of the volatility of French government was forced to call a meeting of the Estates-General. It was considered the first meeting in the past 175 years. This angered the French Assembly and on October 10, 1784 France became a limited monarchy when Louis signed a constitution forced upon him, which limited his power (Furneaux 12). The meeting of the Estates-general in 1789 was the mark for the beginning of the French Revolution. On July 14, 1789 a mob of peasants attacked the Bastille, which was a fortress that was converted into a prison. In 1790 twenty thousand nobles planned a revolution in order to prevent Louis from regaining absolute power. Finally on August 10, 1792 the people of France arrested Louis and his wife (Furneaux 12). In 1791, Louis and his family tried to escape from France to the Austrian Netherlands. Just as they were near the border, they were caught and sent back to Paris (Furneaux 13). Pressured by the people of France, the royal family was forced to move from their lavish palace in Versailles and live in the Tuileries palace under close guard. On August 10, 1792 the people of France arrested Louis and his wife, and they were charged as being traitors to France. This led to the doom of Louis XVI. The National Convention had declared France a republic in 1792, and Louis XVI was overthrown. The people tried the king as a traitor and condemned him to death. The French gave a name to the new government they formed by demolishing the monarchy; they called it the Ancien Regime (Furret 3).

Louis XVI was a weak ruler who got much of his advice from his wife, however the French did not like Marie-Antoinette or her radical ideas. Marie-Antoinette was generally hated because she was Austrian and Austria were long time enemies of France, and because she was known for being extravagant in her way of life, and because people thought she undermined the monarchy (Corzine 14). Louis was unsure of himself, and his weakness was part of the reason he was overthrown. During the American Revolution France went into national debt because they helped America. This is why Louis called upon the Estates General; little did he know however that his actions were most probably the immediate cause the French Revolution.

Even at the time of his death Louis XVI said he was innocent and had commited no crime. Louis was truthful in saying that he was innocent and was killed to remove the monarchy from France and make it a republic. Louis was basically a scapegoat for all the problems going on in France at the period of time during the revolution. Louis XVI never was a strong king and he was constantly was indecisive in his actions.

Louis XVI was not guilty of treason at all, he was a weak ruler during a volatile time in France and because of this he was overthrown. Unlike his great grandfather Louis XIV, Louis XVI did not rule with absolute power even before he signed the constitution limiting his power, and his wife Marie-Antoinette made many of the decisions, finally when the people found out that their hated queen was running the kingdom it angered them. Louis XVI was the wrong to put in power during such a volatile time in France.