

The Storming of the Bastille in Paris on July 14, 1789

Abstract

The storming of the Bastille on July 14, 1789, marked the beginning of the French Revolution and was viewed as an event of momentous consequence, not only for France but for Europe in general. Enlightenment visions of rational self-rule, popular in Germany before 1789, were reinforced by images like the one below, which shows the Bastille, the *ancien régime*'s ominous fortress-prison, being attacked by an angry Paris crowd. The Bastille was widely perceived as a symbol of absolutist power and tyranny. Over the years, it had indeed seen more than its share of prisoners sent there by arbitrary royal orders, or *lettres de cachet*. At the time of its storming, however, it held relatively few inmates, mostly common criminals. During the initial phase of the Revolution, many German writers and thinkers reacted positively to the events in France. Later, the *terreur* prompted criticism, fear, and widespread condemnation.

Source



Source: Colored copperplate engraving by Paul Jakob Laminit, no date.
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