



History through Art

The Women of Les Halles Marching to Versailles, 5th October 1789

by Jean-Francois Janinet

The work shows hungry, angry French women marching in support of the revolution. They are out to confront the French royal family who live in the palace of Versailles, about 15 miles (24 km) southwest of Paris, the capital of France.

CRITICAL VIEWING Why did the artist choose to portray some ordinary people of the revolution?

Problems Abroad

KEY QUESTION Why did events in Europe create problems for America?

The United States was now independent, but it remained tied to European nations by treaty and through trade. Britain was still the United States's biggest trading partner. France was allied with the United States by a treaty of 1778. When European nations went to war, Americans feared being dragged into the conflict.

Trouble in France In 1789, a financial crisis led the French people to rebel against their government. As in the American Revolution, the French revolutionaries demanded liberty and equality. At first, Americans supported the **French Revolution**. By 1792, however, the revolution had become very violent. Thousands were killed. Then, in 1793, the revolutionaries executed both the king and queen of France.

Other European monarchs believed the revolution threatened their own thrones by spreading outside of France. They joined in opposition to the revolution. France soon declared war on Britain, Holland, and Spain. Britain took the lead in the fight against France.

France and Britain at War War between France and Britain put the United States in an awkward position. France had backed America in the Revolution against the British. Also, many ordinary Americans saw France's revolution as proof that the American cause had been just.

Jefferson felt that a move to crush the French Revolution was an attack on liberty everywhere. But Hamilton argued that Britain was the United States' primary trading partner, and British trade was too vital to risk war. In April 1793, Washington declared that the United States would remain **neutral**, meaning it would not take sides. Congress then passed a law forbidding the United States to help either Britain or France.

Hamilton and Jefferson came to agree that entering a war was not in the new nation's interest. But Federalists attacked Jefferson for his support of France anyway. Jefferson was also tired of Washington's support of Hamilton's ideas. In 1793, Jefferson resigned as secretary of state.

Britain made it hard for the United States to remain neutral. The British were seizing the cargoes of American ships carrying goods from the French West Indies. Chief Justice John Jay went to England for talks about the seizure of U.S. ships. Jay also hoped to persuade the British to give up their forts on the northwest frontier.