

Marie (-Catherine) Leszczynska

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(1703-1768)

Marie (-Catherine) Leszczynska, Polish Maria Karolina Leszczynska, queen consort of King Louis XV of France (ruled 1715-74). Although she had no direct influence on French politics, her Polish dynastic connections involved France in a European conflict that resulted in the eventual annexation of Lorraine by France.

Marie's father, Stanislaw Leszczynski, was elected King Stanislaw I of Poland in 1704. After he was deposed in 1709, he settled with Marie at Wissembourg. In the hope of quickly obtaining an heir to the French throne, Louis XV's chief minister, the Duc de Bourbon, betrothed the 15-year-old king to Marie in 1725. The marriage took place at Fontainebleau on September 5. Marie bore Louis 10 children between 1727 and 1737, but only one of her two sons—the dauphin Louis—survived infancy. In 1733 France entered the War of the Polish Succession against Austria in support of Stanislaw's claims to the Polish throne; Stanislaw was made duke of Lorraine by the treaty that ended the conflict (1738). Meanwhile, Louis XV, having lost interest in his queen, was lavishing his attentions on a succession of mistresses. Marie's marital unhappiness was intensified by the death of the Dauphin in 1765. In accordance with the treaty of 1738, Lorraine became a part of France when her father died in the following year.

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