

VOICES OF REVOLT



**JEAN PAUL  
MARAT**

INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHERS

VOICES OF REVOLT

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WRITINGS OF  
JEAN PAUL MARAT

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VOLUME II



*WRITINGS OF*  
**JEAN PAUL  
MARAT**

*WITH A  
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH*



NEW YORK

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INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHERS

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JEAN PAUL MARAT

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## INTRODUCTION

MARAT, the Man of the People, the tirelessly watchful eye of the people, of all the leaders in the years of Revolution the most viciously persecuted, and finally murdered by the nobility, hated and calumniated by bourgeois historians as a "bloodhound"—occupies one of the foremost places among the great men of the French Revolution. From the very first days of the Revolution, his struggles and his destiny were united more than in the case of any other leader with the struggle and the destiny of those "who really carried out the revolution," "of the lower classes," "of the propertyless whom the rich call the canaille" (to use Marat's own words). It was Marat who recognized at the very outset, with his incomparable political acumen, the quality of the "constituent National Assembly" as a pacemaker for the "respectable" bourgeoisie, and simultaneously as an oppressor of the great masses of the people. He was the first to emphasize the class contradictions in the "third estate," the first to become a passionate proclaimer of the hardships and needs of the wage laborers, apprentices, petty artisans, petty traders, and poor peasants. He was the first in whose person the will of the proletariat to engage in

the class struggle was embodied. His memory must remain firmly anchored in the consciousness of the workers forever.

Marat—by calling a respected physician and scholar, while Robespierre, Danton and Desmoulins were lawyers—entered the political arena as a mature man, a finished personality, in which he differed from almost all the other heads of the French Revolution.

Jean Paul Marat was born in Switzerland in 1743. His studies—chiefly in medicine and the natural sciences—were carried on at Toulouse, Bordeaux and Paris, later in England and Scotland. He was given the degree of doctor of medicine by the University of St. Andrews (Scotland) and termed a “quite prominent master of the sciences.” He practiced in London, a respected physician. In 1774, he was made a member of the Grand Lodge of the Free Masons of England. After having issued a number of scientific writings he published in 1774—in English—a social and political polemic entitled *The Chains of Slavery*. In this book, still strongly influenced by the English and French philosophy of enlightenment of the eighteenth century, he attacks abuses of government by princes as the cause of social ills and demands the liberation of the people from the chains of slavery by means of a free parliamentary system. He also took active part in English politics by publishing an election leaflet.

When thirty-four years old, he returned to Paris

as the court physician of the Comte d'Artois, one of the leading members of the higher nobility. He continued to occupy this position for five or six years, after which he was glad to free himself from this situation of dependence. During this time, he published a number of sensational writings on electricity, on fundamental questions of optics, and on light. Among other things, he translated Isaac Newton's *Optics* into French, and attacked Newton's theory of color (as Goethe—who approved Marat's position—also did later). He was obliged to struggle for years against the malice of the scientific academies, a thing which embittered him considerably. His appointment to be the head of an academy of sciences about to be established in Spain was defeated by intrigues. In addition to his considerable scientific activity and his extensive correspondence, which he did not neglect even in the years of Revolution, he also published a serious political work which is indicative of his great breadth of view, the *Plan for a Penal Legislation*. In this work he appears as an opponent both of the crude materialism of his era, as well as of atheism, but demands greater liberties for the people and espouses an insurrection against the tyranny of princes and in favor of liberty of belief, and of society's obligation to take care of the unemployed and for the erection of national work shops with compulsory labor (for giving employment to those who steal because of hunger and distress; these

are to suffer no other punishment). The first call of the Revolution served as a turning point in his life: this was the convocation of the States General. The news of this step, as he himself informs us in a later address to the president of the Constituent National Assembly in 1790, made an "immense impression on him" then seriously ill, and brought about "a beneficent crisis." In the last few years he had followed with despair in his heart the conditions in France, the irresponsibility of absolutism, the nation's burden of debts, the decay of industry, the boundless extravagance of the court, the nobility and the church, at the expense of all the workers. At once—early in 1789—Marat composed an extensive pamphlet on the elections to the States General: *The Gift to the Fatherland (Ofrande à la patrie)*. This work, composed in the clear, entrancing style that marks Marat's writings, attempts to spur on the "third estate," in spite of its motley social composition, to the performance of uniform and thorough reforms. The States General must establish the sovereignty of the nation in a new constitution; a permanent parliamentary committee must be installed, to which the ministers shall be responsible; freedom of the press and of associations, abolition of *lettres de cachet*, a radical reform of the penal law, a graduated tax on incomes and capital—all these are necessary.

Up to the time he wrote this book, Marat had been a theoretical reformer, like many other men of his day. Furthermore, he had remained a faithful adherent of the king; but now he changed—impelled by his political understanding, which was as acute as it was vehement, and by reason of the course of events—into a practical revolutionary who could no longer be deceived by “horse play” or “radical rhetoric” of any kind.

An attempt to outline the rôle of Marat in the French Revolution involves also throwing light on the development of the French Revolution to its culmination, namely, the establishment of the authority of the Jacobins, from the point of view of the broad strata of the “third estate.”

Only two months after his *Gift to the Fatherland*, Marat issued a supplementary pamphlet in a much sharper vein. In the addresses to the “third estate” he not only scourges the crimes of the government, but also harshly criticizes the manner in which the States General were convoked and the nature of its membership. A broad mass movement had already begun in Paris early in 1789. The opposition of the financial and commercial bourgeoisie, of the factory owners, the guild masters, as well as of certain strata of the intellectuals—to the ruinous autocracy of Louis XVI and the court nobility, together with the reverberations of the peasant insurrections, had an

inflammatory effect on the great masses of the population of Paris, the artisans, petty traders, apprentices, wage laborers, domestic servants, the unemployed. While the interests of these classes did not coincide in any way, they were none the less united by one common demand: that of being represented in the National Assembly and of thus having an opportunity to present their grievances. For all had been excluded from representation in the constituent body. Furthermore it is these classes that were hardest hit by the general economic collapse and by the high cost of living. Among the apprentices and wage workers, who must suffer more than others, by reason of low wages and the exploitation practiced by the "respectable citizens," in other words, by the nucleus of the "third estate," there begins a vague expression of resistance to the "respectable citizens." This opposition is expressed in the "Petition of 150,000 Workers and Artisans of Paris" addressed to the States General, and putting the question: "Are we not citizens also?" It is also expressed in the "Grievances of the Poor Population," which state plainly: "We are, to be sure, to be counted among the 'third estate,' but among the elected representatives there is not one of our class (*sic!*) and it seems that everything has been done only to the advantage of the rich."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Karl Grünberg: *Archiv für die Geschichte des Socialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung*, vol. I, 1911, p. 447.

In the "*cahiers*"<sup>2</sup> of the fourth order," the wage workers demand recognition and representation as the "fourth estate," because the bourgeoisie, who are declared to be nothing but wage exploiters and vampires, are advocating interests opposed to theirs.<sup>3</sup>

This vague discontent of the petty citizens and workers made its way to Marat's ear, as is shown already in his *Outline of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, which appeared in the spring of 1789. Here, Marat is taking a step in advance, in demanding universal suffrage (for men), equal political rights for all citizens, recall of representatives by their electors. No doubt, Marat still accepts the basis of a guarantee of property, *not* of its abolition, but he does declare that great property differences jeopardize democracy.

The States General meet; the first phase of the Revolution begins. The "third estate" is constituted under the pressure of the masses as a National Assembly. The nobility and the clergy are obliged to submit willy nilly. Simultaneously, the court begins its counter-revolutionary machinations, which result in the storming of the Bastille by the lower strata of the population, on July 14, 1789. The

<sup>2</sup> The *cahiers* (Fr. *cahier* means notebook) were the written instructions issued by the electors of the three estates to serve as a guide for their representatives in the States General of 1789.

<sup>3</sup> *Loc. cit.*

Necker Government is formed and the abolition of feudal privileges is proclaimed in the night of August 4, 1784.

Marat recognizes the nature of the Revolution at this stage; he recognizes not only the subsequent threatening danger of counter-revolution, but he also understands that the revolution has been of advantage only to the upper strata of the bourgeoisie, to the rich, and not to the masses of the people. For this reason, Marat establishes, early in September, 1789, a periodical first published as the *Publiciste parisien* (September 12, 1789) whose name was changed on September 16 to *L'ami du peuple* ("The Friend of the People"). In this periodical, perhaps the most important of the many periodicals that then sprang out of the ground like mushrooms, Marat is the sole writer. Its existence continues up to his death. In the period of the Convention, beginning September 1792, it was called the *Journal de la république française, par Marat, l'ami du peuple*.

At the very beginning, Marat is the first to enter the opposition against the government and against the National Assembly, attracting great attention thereby. Marat comes out boldly to attack the proposed limitation of the sovereignty of the people by means of a second chamber (a senate) and by means of a royal veto power. He demands that the mandates of the representatives in the National Assembly



be considered as conditional. Should the delegates not discharge their duty, the people must have the right to recall them and declare their legislation as null and void.

Marat points out that the commercial bourgeoisie is attempting to exploit the national assembly for its own advantage and not hesitating to ally itself for this purpose with the crown, the nobility, and the church against the people. From the very beginning, he unmasks the activities of the triune group engaged in this work, namely: Necker, Mirabeau and Lafayette. Even while the entire population, including the Lefts, lies prostrate before these men, he predicts in detail their treason to the Revolution, their passing over to the enemy, to the royal power and the nobility, all of which was later to come to pass. (Marat's *Appel à la nation*, "Appeal to the Nation").

Marat is the first to point out, in his *L'ami du peuple*, that the National Assembly has done nothing to improve the public economy.

"People without reflection! . . . Why rejoice? . . . The state lies in its death throes; the workshops stand empty, factories are deserted, trade is at a standstill, the finances are demoralized. . . <sup>4</sup>

The National Assembly does nothing to counteract this condition. Necker's financial and economic

<sup>4</sup> Heinrich Cunow: *Die Parteien der grossen französischen Revolution und ihre Presse*, Berlin, 1912, p. 325.

policy merely makes the situation worse. The workers are unemployed and starving.

Marat is the first to recognize that the "great sacrifices" of August 4 are illusions, since the land rights and feudal rights have not been annulled for the common weal; they *can* merely be *transferred*, and this condition is of practical value only to the rich.

Marat's rôle as an advocate of the poor, who have made the Revolution and who come off without any gains from it, becomes more important in the course of the Revolution. The Revolution does not bestow the suffrage on the propertyless; it denies them the right of organization, it grants them no minimum of subsistence, it crowds the unemployed into frightful compulsory labor colonies. It excludes workers from the National Guard, which becomes a guard of rich citizens. It incarcerates workers who strike or who make demonstrations for improved wages.

In the course of development, Marat's political and economic views become clearer and clearer. His horizon broadens. Marat demands a cleaning up of the national apparatus and of the local apparatus, of all elements hostile to the people. He declares: "We must sweep out of the Hotel de Ville all the . . . public prosecutors, lawyers, academic professors, gentlemen of the courts, courtiers . . . the financial jobbers and speculators."

Marat fumes tirelessly against the financial policy

of Necker which burdens small incomes and the propertyless; he wages a polemic against the policy of inflation (the issue of *assignats*). "Shall the poor artisans, the poor workers, the poor wage laborers be fleeced . . . shall twenty million human beings be reduced to beggary . . .," merely to benefit the parasites on the nation and the community, the financial speculators, the tax farmers?

In January 1790, and in the spring of the same year, Marat issues his great polemics (the *Dénonciation contre Necker*, and the *Dénonciation nouvelle contre Necker*) in which he shows that Necker's policy provides an easy path for grain profiteering and famine, and favors the traders and the rich, to the point of aiding the counter-revolution.

In his *L'ami du peuple*, Marat declares himself more and more definitely and vehemently in favor of the propertyless. (See, in this book, the passionate *Open Letter to Desmoulins*, whose fundamental note is struck in the words: "The demands of those who have nothing on those who have everything.")

He demands for them the same political and material rights as for the rich, particularly the active and passive right of suffrage without regard to amount of taxes paid, and the representation of the masses in all representative bodies, the state, the department, the commune. If this right is not granted them, the Revolution will proceed until they

obtain it by force. Marat here displays profound insight into the historical evolution:

“Laws, moreover, have authority only in so far as the nations are ready to submit to them; if the nations have been able to break the yoke of the nobility, they will also be able to break the yoke of wealth. . . . The propertyless will be able to avail themselves as well of the principles of liberty and equality in order to deprive the wealthy of their privileges and their booty, as did the “third estate” when it destroyed the privileges of the nobility.”<sup>5</sup>

Marat demands higher wages, the abolition of all head taxes and consumers’ taxes, a general supplying of cheap bread to the population.

Soon after the appearance of the first issue of *L’ami du peuple*, those attacked in its columns began their campaign of persecution, particularly Mayor Bailly, the Commandant of the National Guard, Lafayette, and the Government resorts to the Court of the Châtelet for this purpose. For three years Marat is obliged to live and work “illegally.” He is hunted from quarter to quarter, is obliged to live for months in moist, dark cellars, even to flee to England for a period. But his energy is unflagging. His writings are confiscated, his presses destroyed, his numerous letters to the National Assembly are burned. He is overwhelmed with bucketfuls of calumny. He continues to work without giving

<sup>5</sup> Heinrich Cunow: *op. cit.*, p. 329.

himself sleep and recreation, although his health has been seriously affected. His faithful lover, Simonne Evrard, stands by him bravely (until his assassination breaks her completely).

The French Revolution, meanwhile, had entered upon a new stage. After a forced transfer of the royal family to Paris, there came the period of counter-revolutionary machinations and the attempts at counter-revolutionary insurrection. Again Marat is at the head of those who demand the safeguarding of the Revolution by other means, if necessary, even by dictatorial and terroristic means. In a handbill (*Sommes-nous trahis?*, of July 26, 1790) printed in this book, he demands a general arming of the people, a disarming of the court, the beheading of the leaders of the counter-revolution. This creates a profound impression. There is a general wailing and gnashing of teeth, but Marat speaks—being a vehement yet a humane champion of the Revolution—not through love of bloodshed but because of his political clarity. Marat, the consistent democrat, recognizes that a (mild) terror is the sole means for safeguarding and expanding the work of the Revolution. He who “could not bear to see an insect suffer,” wishes to prevent whole oceans of blood from being shed later, as a consequence of “false notions of humanity,” of a foolish consideration for the feelings of the bloodthirsty enemy,” and he prophesies the dreadful raging of the counter-revolu-

tionists if they should ever again gain the upper hand.

Not long after the publication of this document, the correctness of Marat's view received its first confirmation. The National Assembly and the royalist officers at Nancy ordered bloody massacres costing thousands of lives, merely because the garrison at Nancy had demonstrated in protest against corrupt feudal military officers.

Soon the storm gathers about France. The émigrés stir the European powers to action. The campaign of the monarchs against revolutionary France begins. The king, the court, the Right section of the National Assembly, all conspire with foreign powers against the Revolution. The parties within the National Assembly are more sharply differentiated. The king makes his unsuccessful attempt at flight, leaving behind a counter-revolutionary manifesto. Marat calls for the overthrow of the king, the smoking out of the court. It is all in vain. The counter-revolutionary groups still have the upper hand. The treasonable king is soon again restored to all his rights.

Marat, who had been obliged to flee to England for a few months in the autumn of 1791 now draws his support more and more from the lower strata of society. He becomes mentally clearer as to the opposition of class interests within the "third estate." **The** safeguarding of the Revolution and its political

and social progress are assured only by the lower strata of the population.

Early in October 1791, the "Legislative Assembly" takes the place of the "National Assembly." This assembly was elected on the basis of a privileged suffrage right held by the wealthy. The Girondists have a great influence upon it. Marat, who had returned to Paris in February, 1792, again begins his campaign of exposure against the vacillating faction of the Girondists, who speak for the interests of the commercial bourgeoisie. He also antagonizes the constitutional group, who are trying to maintain the constitutional monarchy, with Louis XVI, the "crowned perjurer" and "traitor to his country," in power. "The second legislation is not less rotten than the first," writes Marat. The policy of hostility to the workers, the policy of profiteering, these make conditions worse and worse. In addition, the king interposes his veto against the resolutions opposing the émigrés and clergy which have been passed by the assembly in response to a general pressure from the masses.

High prices and hunger are on the increase. So is the general discontent.

Marat agitates in the workers' sections, where the discontent is strongest, as a result of profiteering, of unemployment, and of the general policy of hostility to the petty bourgeoisie and the workers. He plays a prominent part in the Left Club of the Cordeliers,

soon also in the Jacobins. The authorities fret and fume because they are unable to get the better of him.

Marat demands a thorough revision of the national and communal apparatus. He demands the establishment of the republic. But a new, truly democratic order, can only be established by force. "Do you really believe that you can change the inclinations and habits, the manners and passions, of the ruling class, by the preaching of moral principles?"

The court, allied with foreign powers, makes one fruitless counter-revolutionary attempt after the other, and as a result, the Tuileries is stormed on August 10, 1792, and the king taken prisoner. The Republic is proclaimed. This action is an action of the masses. The Communal Council is deposed. A new Communal Council of revolutionary membership is elected. Marat is elected as a member of the Committee of Public Safety which is the result of his motion. Now at last, in the third phase of the Revolution, Marat finds it possible to appear publicly as a protagonist. Danton, Robespierre, Marat, bring about the establishment of the flying court, which disposes swiftly of the most dangerous ringleaders of the insurrectionary attempts. These are the so-called "September murders."

The National Assembly is dissolved. The National Convention is convoked. Marat becomes a member of the Convention. The name of his paper is changed to the *Journal de la république française*.



The motto printed at its head is: *Ut redeat miseria, abeat fortuna superbis* ("In order that misery may be diminished, the property of the wealthy must be abolished"). This motto is a clear indication of Marat's rôle in this phase of the French Revolution.

In the Convention, the Jacobins succeed in carrying out their demand for a real political democracy. The Girondists make this concession in order to maintain themselves at the top, but in vain! Marat continues his struggle against the domination of the Girondists, whose vacillation and whose connection with the counter-revolution endangers the Revolution in the provinces. He declares that a "dictator," whose duty however shall be not that of conducting the national affairs but that of disarming the counter-revolutionaries, must be appointed. The Girondists wish to draw up an indictment against Marat and Robespierre through the Convention. The Convention refuses to do this. Marat, who enjoys the passionate affection of the broad masses in Paris, who call him their "prophet" when he permits them to express themselves in his paper, will not be intimidated. Marat's influence in the Paris Commune becomes an incisive one. He wages a campaign against food profiteering, for which the policy of the Girondist government is chiefly to blame. He proposes a number of measures for alleviating the lot of the workers. A militant article in his newspaper (which is printed in this book) on the subject of plunderings

that have taken place, arouses the Girondists to the extreme, but they dare not proceed against him. Since the Gironde continues its "respectable bourgeois policy" and opposes no serious resistance to the counter-revolutionary insurrections in the interior of the country, particularly in the Province of La Vendée, nor to the great military intervention from abroad, Marat emphatically demands its elimination. When the Girondists finally succeed in having him summoned before the Revolutionary Tribunal (on April 24, 1793) to answer a charge of "incitation," he is unanimously acquitted and led home in triumph through the streets of Paris, accompanied by almost the whole population.

This trial is a prelude to the downfall of the Girondists. Marat is at the head of the Jacobin Club. The situation in France has reached its most critical point. The Revolution is in the greatest danger—Marat organizes the defeat of the Girondists. In the last days of May, 1793, the entire working population of Paris rises. Together with the Communal Council and led by Marat, it forces the arrest of the leaders of the Gironde (on June 1, 1793), as a result of whose policy the young republic had been brought to the brink of ruin. The Convention now proceeds to take steps in accordance with Marat's most important demands for the safeguarding of the Revolution. The rule of the Jacobins and of the Committee of Public Safety is established. The

Convention succeeds in the space of a few months in safeguarding the republic within and without.

Marat became seriously ill early in June. The terrible life he had been obliged to lead for years now took its revenge upon him. He is unable to attend the sessions of the Convention, but from his sick bed sends daily letters to that body.

The hatred and rage of the counter-revolutionaries concentrates on Marat. From Caen, in La Vendée, where an opposition government has been formed, the royalists send their fanatical adherent, Charlotte Corday, to murder Marat. She obtains access to his rooms by misrepresentations of various kinds, on July 13, 1793. She stabs to death the defenseless man, who is sitting in his bath, now a practice demanded by his skin disease, and is herself decapitated a few days later.

Marat died without leaving any property. His tragic death horrified the entire population of Paris, which was fanatically attached to him. Even one of the most read bourgeois-reactionary histories of the French Revolution has the following to say: "Marat after he was murdered was even far more the object of the enthusiastic worship of the population than during his life. His name was invoked in public squares as that of a saint; his bust was exhibited in all patriotic societies, and the Convention was obliged to grant him the honor of interment in the Pantheon."

Marat's murder was a severe blow to the French Revolution, which lost in him probably its best and clearest thinker. The counter-revolution did everything it could to besmirch Marat's memory. It destroyed his monument in the Pantheon. It burned his correspondence and most of his writings. Every painting, every inscription, which suggested his name was destroyed (including a work by the great painter David). Charlotte Corday was lauded to the skies.

Yet, an honest historical presentation cannot do otherwise than admit that the soaring flight of the French Revolution will be associated forever with the shining name of Marat.

Marat was a revolutionary pioneer of the laboring masses. In the Hall of Fame that the workers will one day dedicate to their noblest pioneers, Marat will hold a place of honor.

PAUL FRIEDLÄNDER.

# THE WRITINGS OF JEAN PAUL MARAT

## A FIENDISH ATTEMPT BY THE FOES OF THE REVOLUTION

Shortly before the celebration of July 14, 1790, the first anniversary of the storming of the Bastille, Marat issued a pamphlet which was printed two days later in his *L'Ami du Peuple*. The name of the pamphlet was: "A Fiendish Attempt by the Enemies of the Revolution." In Marat's paper, the pamphlet was entitled: "A New Conspiracy of the Blacks."

WITH what consummate art have our foes marshaled their batteries. It was not without surprise that we observed the flatteries with which the King received the Deputies. Let us not be the victims of our Constitution: it conceals a number of treacherous machinations. And we may not regard the tokens of good-will that emanate from the Court as evidences of patriotism.

Our surprise did not decrease when we observed the curtsies of the General [Lafayette] in the presence of the Deputies, and all the base flatteries that were used to ensnare them. Nor could one observe without indignation the means resorted to by

Lafayette to make every one believe that he, Lafayette, was the hero of two worlds.

They are attempting, with the aid of such purchasable Deputies, to persuade the King that the nation demands the dismissal of all Ministers now in office; they wish to abolish the decree which forbids the members of the Constitutional Assembly to occupy ministerial armchairs.

But we cannot believe that the Deputies have so little intelligence as to walk like children into this trap. . . . And upon whom, I ask you, is the choice to fall? They say that it is already a settled matter. Mirabeau, Sr., is to replace Necker; Lafayette is to replace La Tour du Pin; Liancourt is to take the place of Mont-Morin; La Rochefoucauld is to replace Saint-Priest. The Abbé Sieyès is to become Keeper of the Seal; Bailly will remain Mayor at a salary of 100,000 livres. And Necker, having wasted two thousand millions, Necker will leave the city without rendering any account, and he has been preparing for this departure for some time.

Is it possible? Can the Abbé Sieyès become Keeper of the Seal? This upstart scoundrel who has sacrificed the cause of liberty to the flatteries of the Court! And then, La Rochefoucauld, Liancourt, these questionable citizens, these base courtiers! Lafayette, a traitor to his country, who was willing to aid the Monarch to set up an absolute dictatorship, and who makes effort after effort to restore

despotism! And then, Mirabeau? This vile scamp, soiled with crime and shame, for whom nothing is sacred, compared with whom the Abbé Terray, Calonne, Loménie, would be regarded as honorable men; this wretched voluptuary, who would exhaust the wealth of all France, reduce the nation to beggary, and in the long run auction off the kingdom, only in order to be able to satisfy his base lusts! Oh, disgrace, oh, dishonor, oh, despair! Is it only in order to screen with our skins the baseness of intriguers, the vileness of conspirators, the vulgarity of villains, that we have taken to arms and deserted our callings, our competence, our peace? And then! Shall the National Guards, who armed themselves in order to defend liberty, now become in their turn the most cruel of all oppressors? Shall they be permitted to set themselves up as absolute Ministers of the State and to look down upon their fellow-citizens, the people, the whole nation, as mere nothings? The civil power would be sacrificed to the military, and the soldiers of the people would be transformed into prætorian cohorts, with full power over the realm; and after a year of trials, of tribulations, of dangers, and tears, we should finally be faced with a military dictatorship, a frightful despotism! Was it really worth while for us to sweep aside our oppressors merely in order to obtain a new set of more cruel tyrants? No, forever no! Great though the corruption of the century may be,

we have not yet descended to this depth of depravity, of stupidity, of contemptibility. Our armed brothers were not summoned from every corner of the realm in order to forge chains about us.

Indignant at the speed with which it is intended to fill confidential posts with men whose choice requires careful deliberation, they know that the general weal would fare very badly in such hands. They have discerned the traps which are concealed behind the flattery of the court and its creatures.

Instead of supporting criminal measures, the soldiers of the people will safeguard their rights and the general liberty by demanding the election of officers and their supervision. The people will suddenly awake from their lethargy, will again ask the return of everything that has been taken by their plunderers; they will drive forth these dangerous characters in disgrace from their offices, and outlaw forever the corrupt intriguers whom some propose even to-day to recall to the Ministry.

Does the National Assembly really believe that the great mass of honest citizens will stand by calmly and permit a decree to be abolished whose only purpose is to keep its hands clean, while the Assembly has hitherto not dared to abolish the war laws, the indirect taxation, the rights of the Monarch, all of which deprive the citizens of their rights, undermine liberty, and endanger the public weal?

—*From L'Ami du Peuple, July, 1790.*



## ARE WE UNDONE?

On July 26, 1790, Marat published a passionate circular which called for a struggle against the King and the counter-revolutionaries with all possible resources. The final section of this document reads as follows:

### AN Appeal to All Citizens!

Citizens, our enemies stand without the gates, the masters have had the frontiers opened to them under the pretext of granting them free passage through our country. Perhaps, at this very moment, they are advancing in our direction with great speed. The King will go to Compiègne, where the apartments for his reception have already been prepared; the road from Compiègne to Toul or Metz can easily be traveled incognito. Who will prevent him from joining with the Austrian army and with the troops of the line which have remained faithful to him? Soon he will be surrounded by hosts of army officers who are hastening to him from all sides, the malcontents, and particularly his faithful retainers, de Bezenval, d'Autichamps, Lambesc, de Broglio. Already one of the ministers, the vile Guignard [the Count of Saint-Priest], who has been unmasked as head of the conspirators, and whose arrest was

demanding by me, has taken to flight; his colleagues will soon follow his example and repair to some town of Lorraine in order to constitute a "government" there. The King, this "good King," who disdained to swear allegiance to you on the altar of our country, has observed the profoundest silence concerning all these facts. The National Committee of Investigation did not open its mouth until the mine had been sprung; the local Committee of Investigation, who had sold out to the Court, has refused to take any steps to ascertain the instigators of this infernal attempt.

In order to prevent you from deliberating on the dangers that threaten, they have not ceased to overwhelm you with festivities, and to keep you in a constant state of intoxication in order that you may not see the disaster that is about to engulf you. Can you believe it—your General, who has neglected not a single means of corruption, has just organized an entire battery of artillery, against the will of all the districts, in order to destroy you; the staff of your guard consists only of your enemies, who draw princely salaries; your heads of battalions have almost all been bribed; and, horror of horrors, the Militia of Paris consists now only of undependable or blind men, who have forgotten their country for all the flatteries of the General!

Citizens of every age and every station! The measures adopted by the National Assembly cannot

save you from destruction; you are lost forever if you do not take arms speedily, if you do not again give evidence of your heroism, which has already saved France twice, namely, on July 14, and on October 5. Go to Saint-Cloud before it is too late; bring the King and the Dauphin back within your walls. Guard them well. They shall be your hostages in the events that are yet to come; shut in the Austrian<sup>6</sup> woman and her brother-in-law, so that they may not instigate further intrigues; seize all the ministers and their agents and put them in irons; make sure you have the Mayor and the City Secretaries! Do not take your eyes away from the General; arrest the General Staff; remove the battery of artillery from the Rue Verte, take possession of all the magazines and powder mills; the pieces of artillery must be distributed to all the districts. All the districts must again meet and declare themselves in permanent session; they must rescind all counter-revolutionary decrees. Hurry, hurry, before it is too late, else soon the numerous legions of the enemy will be upon you; soon you will see the privileged classes again rising, and despotism, frightful despotism, will come to life more terribly than ever before.

The cutting off of five or six hundred heads would have guaranteed you peace, liberty and happiness.

<sup>6</sup> Marie-Antoinette (1755-1793), daughter of Emperor Francis I and Maria-Theresa, wife of Louis XVI, later guillotined.

A mistaken humanity has crippled your arms and held back your blows; it will cost the lives of millions of your brothers. The soldiers of the National Guard shall escape death no more than the others! The French guards whom I have just mentioned, and all the soldiers who are deserting the King's flags and gathering under those of the nation, will be sacrificed first of all, in spite of all the pacifying sermons which the General is delivering to them. Your enemies need only to triumph for a moment, and blood will flow in torrents. They will murder you without compassion, they will rip open the bellies of your wives, and in order to choke within you the love of liberty, their bloody hands will explore the entrails of your children to find their hearts.

—*From L'Ami du Peuple, July 26, 1790.*

## A FAIR DREAM AND A RUDE AWAKENING

This pamphlet, which appeared in *L'Ami du Peuple*, was written by Marat on August 25, 1790. The order of the day of the National Assembly was a discussion of the insurrection of the garrison at Nancy, which had risen against its officers. Marat was again the only one to speak for the rebellious soldiers. He considered the officers to be participants in the conspiracy to involve France in military complications, and to prepare the country for a restoration of the monarchy. His manifesto ends with the following appeal:

### AN Appeal to the People!

Here at last we have the dark plan devised behind the scenes by the infernal Riquetti [*i.e.*, Mirabeau, who was descended from the Florentine family of the Riquetti]. Here is the frightful decree which will soon unleash against us the dreadful scourges of war, the sole resort still left to our counter-revolutionary officials and agents to put us in chains. Where were you, Barnave, Lameth, d'Aiguillon, Robespierre, Menou, when they were so bold as to make this proposal? No doubt you were sleeping, since the proposal was adopted without encountering opposition from you. Or, did the infernal serpent perhaps succeed in leading you astray with its cunning speech? Beloved country, is it possible

that you have defending you only a few honest hearts, who are unprotected against the treachery of scoundrels hired by the despot? They have held out their hands in peace to you and sworn fidelity to you; they have tied the hands of your defenders, who have been deceived by a pretended fraternity, and they have succeeded in chaining you yourselves on the very altar of Liberty. You now sleep at her breast. A few days more, and a rude awakening will follow this disastrous calm; you will recognize with terror that this glorious triumph in which you have been lulled to sleep was only a false dream.

How frightful is the scene that presents itself to me! When you are made the victims of your gullible natures, you will readily turn your eyes from domestic affairs to external affairs; you will sacrifice your most essential interest in response to idiotic news items and the lies of newspaper writers. To accelerate your destruction, the wretches who govern you will seek to raise enemies everywhere against you and will attempt to involve you in ruinous wars. Incapable of maintaining yourselves against these hostile forces, you will find your fleets annihilated and destroyed; billions will be spent in a few years. The estates of the clergy, which should be used for the purpose of liberating and aiding the people, will soon have served no other purpose than again to enchain you and to fasten upon our necks once more the yokes of serfdom and misery. Far

from the eyes of their fellow-citizens, the soldiers will soon no longer be thinking of their rights and will finally forget their country. Surrounded by the tumult of battle, they will respond only to the voice of their leaders; thousands of devices will be resorted to in order to reduce the soldiers to serfdom; finally, after having been brought back home, they will be ready, on the slightest provocation, to assail their own fellow-citizens.

Oh precious country, you are already on the point of being misunderstood by your children; you are about to be rended and again enchained by them. What more is there for me to say? A single suggestion by despotism will be sufficient to transform our soldiers into hangmen. While these hangmen vie with each other in covering their murderous hands with your blood, they will slay your wives and children and tear apart your quivering entrails—these are the fruits of your self-denials, your fasting, your labors, your dangers, your wounds, your victories, or rather, they are the bitter fruits of your blind confidence, your foolish sense of security.

Fellow citizens, in order to escape this terrible fate, we have but a single means: attach yourselves closely to your comrades-in-arms of the troops of the line; let them swear by their honor that they will not march against the enemy but will set up liberty within your own walls. Let the guilty heads of your ministers fall under the avenging axe. And, above

all, assemble yourselves without delay in order to invade the Senate and demand with loud shouts the recall of the ruinous decree which the so-called fathers of our country have no doubt presented for confirmation with all speed. . . . But will the People's Friend preach to you forever in vain? Draw the moral from your misfortune, oh powerless and blinded nation! And if there is nothing that will remind you of your sense of duty, then continue to spend your days in oppression and misery, and end them in shame and slavery.

—*From L'Ami du Peuple, August 25, 1790.*



## NOTHING HAS CHANGED!

THE Revolution has turned against the people and has turned out to be the people's greatest misfortune. . . . From the very beginning it was nothing but a continuous source of bribery and plots. . . . Not long after its beginning it became a constant means for public officials to carry on chicanery and oppression. It afforded even the legislators (deputies) an opportunity for business jobbing, deception and crookedness, and now it must serve the rich and the speculators as a means of providing themselves with unlimited profits and monopolies, of profiteering in foodstuffs and interest rates, of ruining the people with a shameless system of pillage and exploitation, and of forcing the lower classes to sell themselves through their fear of declining into poverty. . . .

Nothing has changed but the decorations on the National Tribunal; but the actors, the masks, the intrigues, the distribution of parts—these have remained the same. Nothing, absolutely nothing, has changed in the working of the political machinery, and this will continue to be the case until the people will have attained mental clarity enough to spoil the game of the impostors who are deceiving them, until

they have become ruthless enough to punish the criminals who hoodwink them. . . .

The first and principal reason for the impotence of our efforts to attain liberty is due to the very nature of liberty itself.

The plebs, I mean the lower classes of the nation, who have no one but themselves to depend upon in their struggle against the upper classes, in the moment of insurrection, no doubt, will crush everything by their numbers; but they will finally succumb, since they always proceed without understanding, without the arts, without wealth, weapons, leaders, with a plan of operation. . . . This has been the case with the French Revolution. It is not true that the entire nation rose against the tyrants; for there always remained behind the nobility, the clergy, the legal class, the financiers, the capitalists, the scholars, the literary men, who were always a last prop and bulwark of reaction. While many well-informed, affluent and intriguing members of the upper classes at first took sides against the tyrants, they did so only in order later to turn against the people, as soon as they might have secured its confidence and made use of its strength in order to assume for themselves the posts of the privileged classes that have been overthrown.

The Revolution was made only by the lower classes of society, by the workers, artisans, petty traders, peasants, in short, by the entire submerged

class, by those disinherited ones whom the rich call the *canaille*, and whom the Romans in their arrogance once termed the proletariat. But what most persons are not yet ready to believe is the fact that the masses really made the Revolution only in the interest of the petty landed proprietors and the clique of barristers.

—From *L'Ami du Peuple*, No. 667, July,  
1792.

## THE FRIEND OF THE PEOPLE TO THE FRENCH PATRIOTS

Marat, who had been hunted for many years, who had to change his domicile from day to day, spending most of his time in a damp cellar, was finally elected to the Paris Communal Council. We print below a campaign document which he published early in August, 1792, at least earlier than August 10, the date of the storming of the Tuileries and the Proclamation of the Republic.

A MAN who has long lived in concealment in order to preserve himself to serve you, to-day leaves his subterranean asylum and makes the attempt to solidify the victory in your hands.

It is his desire to prove to you that he is not unworthy of your confidence, and to beg for your permission to remind you that already in the days when tyranny was in the saddle he revealed to you the vile machinations of our cruel enemies.

He predicted to you that your allies would be led to the slaughter by their treacherous generals, and the opening of the campaign was heralded by three shameful defeats; he predicted to you that the frontiers of your kingdom would be handed over to the enemy, and already the enemy has for the second time taken possession of the city of Bavay; he pre-

dicted to you that the contaminated majority of the National Assembly would continue forever to betray their country, and the treachery of their latest laws, which raised the indignation of the public to its pinnacle, was the provocation of the cruel—but, alas!—all too necessary events of this day.

He predicted to you that you would forever continue to be sold by your faithless trustees, the officials, so long as you were not able to make up your minds to cause the blood of your enemies to flow, in order to save your country.

My dear fellow-citizens, believe these words from the lips of a man who knows all the intrigues and plots, and who has not ceased for three years to watch over your safety.

The glorious day of August 10, 1792, may be a decisive one for the triumph of liberty, if you show intelligence in taking advantage of your gains. Many of the adherents of the despot have already bit the dust; your irreconcilable enemies seem thunder-struck, but they will soon have recovered from their terror and will again take the field, more formidable than ever. Think of the Châtelet trial, which was a result of the events of the night between October 5 and October 6. Tremble lest you lend an ear to the voice of a misguided compassion. After you have shed your blood in order to save your country from the abyss, tremble lest you become the victims of their secret dealings; tremble lest you be dragged

from your beds by bloodthirsty soldiers in the dark of night and be cast into subterranean prisons where you will be left to your despair until they drag you to the scaffold.

I repeat, you must fear the reaction. Your enemies will not spare you when their time comes. Therefore, show no mercy now! You are lost forever if you do not hasten to strike down all the corrupt members of the city administration, of the Departments, all the unpatriotic Judges of the Peace, and the most contaminated members of the National Assembly. I say, of the National Assembly; why should any fatal prejudice, any ruinous excess of respect for them, spare the members of that body? They do not tire to tell you that, however bad the Assembly may be, it is necessary once more to obey the Assembly. This would be equivalent to asking you to assemble over the mine which lies concealed under your feet, and to entrust the safeguarding of your destiny to scoundrels who are determined to achieve your destruction. Do not forget that the National Assembly is your most dangerous enemy; once it again stands firm, it will exert every effort to destroy you; and so long as you have weapons in your hands, it will flatter you and seek to put you to sleep with false promises. It will inaugurate secret machinations in order to nullify your efforts; and if it ever is able to do so, it will hand

you over to the mercies of hired camp soldiers. Do not forget the blood-bath on the Champs de Mars!

No one abhors bloodshed more than I. But, for the sake of escaping the necessity of shedding an ounce of blood, I warmly beseech you to shed a few drops of it, in order to reconcile the duties of humanity with your solicitude for the public welfare; I propose that you cause to be executed every tenth man among the counter-revolutionary members of the City Administration, the Judges of the Peace, of the Department, and of the National Assembly. If you recoil from this, then do not forget that the blood shed on this day will be a net loss and that nothing will have been achieved for liberty.

But, above all things, take the King, his wife, and his son as hostages, and let him be shown to the people four times a day until his final sentence shall have been spoken. And, since it rests with him to free us forever from our enemies, explain to him that if the Austrians and the Prussians do not retire within two weeks to a line twenty miles beyond the boundaries, never to return, his head will be sent rolling to his feet. Let him write out this frightful condemnation in his own hand and send it to his crowned accomplices; it will rest with him to free you from the necessity of executing it.

Also take possession of the persons of the former ministry and put them in irons. All the counter-revolutionary members of the Paris General Staff

must be executed; all the unpatriotic officers must be banished from their battalions; disarm the infected battalions of Saint-Roche, of the Filles-Saint-Thomas, of Notre-Dame, of Saint-Jean-en-Grève, of the Enfants Rouges. All patriotic citizens must be armed and supplied generously with ammunition.

Demand the convoking of a National Convention for the purpose of condemning the King and reforming the Constitution; above all, its members must not be elected by an independent body of electors, but by the direct vote of the people.

Cause the immediate sending back of all foreign and Swiss regiments to be decreed at once, for they have shown themselves to be enemies of the Revolution.

Tremble, tremble, lest you permit to pass unused a single one of the opportunities placed in your hands by the protecting genius of France, to escape from this abyss and to consolidate your liberty forever!

—*From L'Ami du Peuple, August, 1792.*



## MARAT, THE PEOPLE'S FRIEND, TO THE BRAVE PARISIANS

On August 10, Marat had become a member of the Revolutionary Communal Council. He was put forth as a candidate for the National Assembly. His periodical, *L'Ami du Peuple*, was changed by him to the *Journal de la République française*. His handbills, moreover, which were printed independently of his paper, succeeded in mobilizing the citizens of Paris and in inspiring them to a struggle against the European coalition that was taking the field against France. The poster reprinted here was to be seen on every wall in the city on August 26, 1792.

THE countless bands of the conspiring despot are advancing against us; the Fatherland will soon fall under their blows; in fourteen days, it will no longer exist; we ourselves shall have been eliminated from the living, unless we at once abandon our mutual hatreds, postpone our subjects of discord, and command the silence of all petty passions. Let us unite against the common enemy! Let us finally adopt energetic measures to protect our houses from plunder, our wives and daughters from the brutality of savage soldiers, our children from the shameful yoke of slavery, and our lives from the daggers of murderers.

Do not doubt that our cause is lost forever if all the friends of liberty, all the National Guards, all the brave *Sans-culottes* who are able to bear arms, will not inscribe themselves at once in the public squares for service against the enemy; unless all those who refuse to join in the campaign will hand over their arms to their brothers who are ready to fight; unless all the horses available in the Capital are at once requisitioned for the organization of light cavalry; unless the entire gendarmerie is ordered to the front; unless the Minister of War at once occupies and adequately fortifies the heights that dominate Paris; unless he at once sends forth specialists to construct fortifications that will be strong enough to hold back the enemy's advance.

From to-night on, all citizens must be summoned by the commune, under pain of death, to deliver up all arms which are not a part of their own personal equipment; from to-night on, commissaires must be appointed to conduct house searches in all houses that are suspected; this very day the commune must appoint three enlightened and reliable commissaires whose duty it shall be to watch over the general welfare; from to-night on every armorer, cutler and locksmith must be ordered to engage in a public and unceasing manufacture of pikes and daggers.

In the name of liberty, of our country, of humanity, and in the interest of the welfare of your wives, of your children, of the unborn generations of the

human race, and of yourselves, my dear fellow-citizens, lend your ear to the voice of your true friend; unite to save the State!

Those among you whom fortune has favored will try to segregate themselves, to conceal themselves, and to remain inactive, but their attempts will be fruitless. Paris will be handed over to be plundered, and *their* houses particularly will be devastated. Their concern for the preservation of their possessions and their lives will permit them to choose no other course than that of uniting with their brothers and fighting by their side. From to-day on, every citizen who is ready to fight for his country must be supported at the Nation's expense.

Shall I tell you, my dear friends, that you may be obliged finally, in order to save the people, to elect a triumvirate of the most intelligent, most upright, and undaunted men, who will be instructed to adopt all their measures in a council to consist of the most resolute and unsullied friends of our country?

Be not terrified at these words. It is only by force that we can come to the point of securing a victory for Liberty and safeguarding the public weal. As a guarantee of their good conduct, it will be a sufficient precaution to have the trustees of the national authority permitted to make use of their power only for the purpose of destroying the enemies of the Revolution and not for that of oppressing

their fellow-citizens, and to have their office terminate at such moment at which the enemy may no longer be able to raise his head. For so many centuries you have been suffering from the fact that unscrupulous rulers have exercised an arbitrary dominion over you in order to destroy you; will you refuse to hand over to the most virtuous of your brothers the same power, when it is for the purpose of saving you? In order to keep in check the enemies within, it will be sufficient to show them your daggers!

## MARAT, THE PEOPLE'S FRIEND, TO THE FAITHFUL PARISIANS

The following is one of Marat's political handbills, issued during his campaign against the Girondists, (August 28, 1792) on the subject of the elections to the Convention.

It is generally known that judges, and lower and higher administrative officials, including those appointed by the elective bodies, that practically all these are counter-revolutionary; on the other hand, the City Deputies, who were elected directly by the people, are without exception in favor of the people's government.

All that would have been necessary was to draw up a list of the candidates who had shown solicitude for the interests of the people; the list might later have been corrected by striking out those candidates who had incurred, with some reason, the displeasure of the people. It was desirable to post the list of the candidates of each Department publicly in order to unite the majority of the electors of a city in a single vote. This would have simplified considerably the operation of the national machine, and we should have retained for the citizens the right to execute their direct suffrage, which is their most important political right. For base and treacherous

reasons, Brissot, Condorcet, Guadet, Lacroix, Le-source, Vergniaud, Ducos and the other reactionaries of the National Assembly, acting against the will of the people, have succeeded in effecting the election of persons of their own type as Deputies to the Convention. They attained this end by retaining the elective bodies and having themselves elected.

Has this been thoroughly grasped? The traitors have dared to write, to this very day, to all the Departments, to the effect that the National Assembly was working under the pleasure of the armed Paris commune, which they allege is led by about thirty criminals. They therefore wished to establish the seat of the National Convention in a city in which they could exert their ruinous influence without let or hindrance. It is in your hands, fellow-citizens, to ward off the dangers which threaten you from the side of these rascals who operate under the mantle of fidelity to the Constitution; permit only honest republicans to be elected, whose fidelity has already been proved by their deeds! You must demand unconditionally, in advance, that every candidate indicate, under pain of punishment and disgrace, what were the titles and offices held by him before July 17, 1789; you must ruthlessly cast out every one who possessed any privileges before this date; you must eject all former nobles, advocates, bankers, courtiers, money changers, prosecuting attorneys, notaries, inspectors and merchants; in addition, you

must eject all men who have been guilty of acts against the people since the Revolution; particularly, you must eject the electors of the Church, the members of the Royalist clubs, and Bailly's [who had been Mayor up to this time] representatives of the nobility.

Nor must you grant any recognition to the City Deputies who voted in 1792 for the erection of a monument to Lafayette, or to any of the members of the departmental representation, of the Council of State, or to the officers of the Paris army, or to any deputies of the Constituent Assembly who protested against the adoption of a legal procedure because of the events in the night between October 5 and October 6! You must also eject the defenders of Mollien in the elections to the National Assembly!

Citizens, the outcome of the election of deputies to the National Convention depends on your intelligent selection of electors. And on this outcome depends your happiness, the creation of a just and free state, peace, prosperity, and the destruction of tyranny in all countries.

Let us be vigilant, for an abyss still yawns at our feet. The nobility is again triumphant in the administration and in the commune; sleepy heads and intriguers infest the spot; they have already had new elections of commissaires and Judges of the Peace; stool-pigeons and elements that shun the light of day have already begun to molest good

citizens in the public streets and pick quarrels with them; the conspirators are already holding their gatherings; they are already declaring openly that the affair of August 10 was only a flash in the pan, which might perhaps be frustrated by another flash in the pan; and it is their effort to produce such a second occasion at the earliest possible opportunity.

Their gathering place is the notorious Extraordinary Committee for the National Defense, whose majority, which had been counter-revolutionary before August 10, turned out to be so contaminated that it served as the point of departure for all the new machinations. It is their goal to remove from Paris the Federals and the French Guards, these faithful defenders of liberty, to have them, as they allege, occupy a camp outside the city, and to bring into the city in their place their own poor soldiers. And this is not enough; they will send our guards to the boundaries and have them kept occupied by the German armies, perhaps also by the Luckners or Birons.

M. Verrières, whose acquaintance with the new gendarmerie has netted him the command of one of its sections, and who no doubt goes too far in his serious attention to duty and his mad ambition, is at present attempting to accelerate the departure of the gendarmerie. Any one observing him thus acting to the advantage of the machinations of the counter-revolutionaries, would be inclined to think



he was in the pay of the enemies of our country, all the more since he attempts to win over the gendarmes for himself by promising to pay their first quarters. But I venture to express the hope that he will bear the closest scrutiny, even though he has rendered himself suspicious by his petty weaknesses, which are unworthy of a true friend of liberty.

However this may be, I have far too high an opinion of the political good sense of our brothers, the Federals as well as the French Guards, to fear even for a single moment that they would permit themselves to be lured into this trap. They must be made to understand that their place is in Paris, where their presence is an absolute necessity. Nor does the National Assembly still hope to remove them from Paris by means of a secret ordinance. If it approves of a concentration of troops far from Paris, it will send to such points chasseur and grenadier companies from all the suspicious battalions. Such is the miracle that may come to pass.

Citizens, your salvation rests with you alone: drive out from the Provisional City Assembly the enemies of the equality of citizens, who publicly revealed themselves in the session of the 25th; never forget that in the period of the worst crisis the deliverance of all is the highest law of the state. You must trample on the suspicious and dangerous decrees of your deputies, who have so long shown themselves to be unworthy of your confidence.

## GUARD AGAINST PROFITEERS!

This vehement attack on the profiteers resulted in the raising of an accusation of "incitation" against Marat on the part of the Girondists, but the indictment was not sustained.

It cannot be disputed that the capitalists, the brokers, the bureaucrats and former nobles are almost all of them props of the old régime. As I see no means of altering their attitude, I know of nothing else that can assure peace to the State than a complete annihilation of these accursed conspirators. They are now redoubling their energies for the purpose of driving the people into starvation and misery by means of prices far in excess of anything we have seen before.

In view of the fact that the nation, tired of constant filibustering, does not yet take means to purify our liberated soil from this band of criminals, that it even encourages its merry representatives to undertake such offenses by insuring them immunity, one may only marvel that the people of the various cities, maddened by the situation, do not take the law into their own hands. In all countries in which the rights of the people are not mere phrases to be displayed ostentatiously on paper, the plundering of

a few shops and the hanging of the shop-keepers at their doors, would soon put an end to these corrupt manipulations which reduce millions of persons to despair and starve thousands to death. Will the representatives of the people not finally do a little more than merely babble about the distress, without proposing any remedy to alleviate it?

Legal measures of precaution are of no avail. It has been made apparent time and time again that they are ineffective. Only revolutionary means may be resorted to. I know of no other means that would be acceptable even to our weakest elements than that of equipping the Committee of Public Safety, which after all does not consist of patriots, with the power of investigating this matter and dragging the principal grain profiteers before a Court of State, to consist of five permanent members in good standing, and to indict them with treason before this court.

To be sure, I also know one other means that would also lead surely to this goal. This means would be to have all the well-to-do citizens organize with the purpose of importing the necessary food-stuffs from abroad, of selling them again at cost, and thus abandoning their price manipulations until food-stuffs may come down to a reasonable level; but the execution of this plan would imply the possession of virtues that are not to be found in a country ruled by impostors who display their civic virtues only at

times when such a display is useful for deceiving the simple-minded and exploiting the people. Furthermore, this disordered state cannot last much longer. A little patience, and the people will finally recognize the truth that it must free itself.

—*From Journal de la République Française,*  
*February 25, 1793.*

## MARAT TO DESMOULINS

(June 24, 1790)

Early in the Revolution, Marat, who was somewhat older than Camille Desmoulins, had felt a genuine friendship for this young and ardent revolutionary, who was issuing the weekly paper, *Révolutions de la France et de Brabant*. In the course of time, however, Marat was brought to recognize the vacillating opportunist character of Desmoulins and did not hesitate to express his criticism of his former friend.

A LETTER from the Friend of the People to the Editor of the *Révolutions de la France et de Brabant*:

In order to establish a truly free constitution, *i.e.*, one that will be truly just and wise, the foremost requirement is to have all laws approved by the people and to install preliminary searching examinations, particularly, to give the people time enough to watch the various machinations, which presupposes a maturity of the national spirit and the formation of a public opinion concerning all fundamental points. The decrees of the National Assembly can, therefore, be nothing but provisional measures until they have been sanctioned by the Nation; for the right to sanction them pertains exclusively to the Nation. Failing the execution of this essential, inalienable,

direct and immediate right, it would subject itself to blindly operative laws of caprice and its representatives, who are exploiting their power to command the people according to their own whims, would find themselves in the possession of the supreme power. They would become the absolute masters of the nation's fate and would thus remain the final rulers of the State. This culmination, which was not attained even by our kings after fifteen centuries of encroachments on the rights of the people, was the object of their efforts and designs, their hopes and aspirations, but they carefully concealed this goal. And the National Assembly, this embryo of a day, which was not created by the people, this posthumous child of despotism, this disgracefully constructed body, in which there are so many enemies of the Revolution and so few true friends of our country? This illegal body, which the Nation has rather tolerated than created, would it have the audacity to go so far; would it possess the impudence to boast of such a step? Such a claim would be the acme of boldness, if it were not really the pinnacle of insanity.

We might say to them: You petty intriguers, who owe your seats in the Senate only to intrigues, to petty devices, to corruption or to election by a few privileged castes that have now disappeared, cease your attempts to put us under the yoke. The first of your attempted crimes was to recognize the King's

“Veto of Postponement”; the right of veto—of absolute veto—inheres in the people alone. The people will accept this right with eagerness and will pass over to the order of the day in spite of your faithless actions. You are already at the end of your political existence; soon you will be dissolved in the mass and your works will be your judgment; the Nation will weigh your labors according to its wisdom, and of the great mass of decrees which you have taken pains to transform into irrevocable laws, it will retain only those that are in accord with the common weal; it will reject with scorn all those ill-devised decrees that have sprung from your ignorance; it will reject with abomination all the vicious decrees that have resulted from your corruptibility; and your names, engraved in the annals of the Revolution, will be preserved only as a means of unmasking your shame and your ridiculousness!

Believe me, faithful companion in arms (Desmoulins), that nothing is more important for a victory of Liberty, for the happiness of the Nation, than to enlighten the citizens as to their rights, and to create a public opinion. Therefore I summon you to labor without ceasing; publish in our periodical prints a number of selected drafts for the best possible constitution; this is the only means we have of evaluating the labors of our representatives at their true worth.

I shall begin the series:

The serious demands of those that have nothing,  
on those that have everything.

Assembled Law-givers!

The nation consists of 25,000,000 persons; we alone constitute more than two-thirds of this number and yet are nobodies in the State, or at least, if you speak of us at all in your sublime decrees, it is only to humble us, to oppress us, and enslave us. Under the old régime, such neglect on your part, such treatment at your hands, would hardly have appeared unreasonable; we lived under rulers who considered that the whole nation was merely themselves; we were nothing in their eyes, and only when it was a question of robbing us of the fruits of our labor or of harnessing us to their own chariots, would they deign to consider us at all.

Those times are past. But what have we gained? In the first days of this Revolution, which turned so many heads, which was the occasion for so many shouts of joy and intoning of Te Deums, of this Revolution that has elevated so many writers to the skies, celebrating them in so many festivals, and which admires so many blockheads to this day, our hearts were opened to joy for at least a moment. We cradled ourselves in hopes that our sufferings would end and our lot improve.

Desirable though the changes may be that have been introduced in the State, they are all for the rich



alone; Heaven was always hard on the poor, and this will always be the case.

Assembled Law-givers! You term yourselves representatives of the people, you allege that you have formulated its demands and safeguarded its rights. Yet, what have you done for us? No doubt you will say: we have worked in order to liberate the Nation. Very well! But of what use is political liberty to us, to us who have never known such liberty and never will know it? It is of value only in the eyes of the thinker who would teach men, of the publicist who would make a name for himself, of those citizens who would have no ruler at all; but we poor unfortunates have no time to ponder these matters. (What would become of the nations if the poor should be as conscious of their rights as the philosophers, and if their minds should permit them to appreciate their terrible situation!) We rarely intervene in the affairs of the State and even if this should occasionally be the case, we play the part of onlookers only!

We were never much impressed with the liberty of citizens, and we shall never take it seriously again. Why should we have any illusions on this matter? Under the so-called rule of liberty we are worse off than under despotism. We are exposed a hundred times more to the affronts of the petty accomplices of our tyrants than we ever were under the terror of

**Kings' bailiffs.** We have no one to whom to present our complaints, no one from whom we may demand justice. Our Section Commissaires, our Justices of the Peace, our state officials, all have retained their old posts. In our new administration, you can find more of the old people that were in the former administration, and, in addition, new intriguers, new ambitious rascals, new scoundrels of still less dignity. All of these are the accomplices of the old régime who apply extortion to us, plunder us, incite us and oppress us, at their pleasure; in broad daylight they enter our houses, and drag us from our homes in the dark of night, for no other reason than their own caprice. Our police courts and our district courts are as badly organized as were our old chief courts of the provinces.

What more can we say to you? Formerly we had half a million tyrants; to-day we have a million oppressors! Assembled Law-givers! You hand us over to their mercies defenseless; and by the lack of interest you show in our security and our peace, we can fully understand, in spite of your principles of liberty, in spite of your big words about equality of rank and equality of the conditions of life, that we remain nothing but a low rabble in your eyes.

Furthermore, in the matter of true inner liberty, which cannot exist at all for them that have nothing, the lot that is in store for us is an eternal serfdom. Since we are fettered all day long at our labor,

whether we be day laborers or servants, we can achieve no higher lot than to be constantly at the beck and call of a hard and exacting master.

You know well that this inestimable possession of liberty that will be yours does not exist for us; in this respect, we are therefore as alien to the accomplishments of the Revolution as if we were not citizens of the State at all.

You have solidified possession in the law and placed it under the protection of the Constitution. But how slight is the value of these regulations for a man who has no possessions to administer, no interests to defend! What can property itself mean for the poor?

You have destroyed traditional privileges, you have introduced a greater degree of equality among the upper classes of citizens, a better distribution of taxes. These forms, all of which are to your advantage, are still indifferent to us. Even though you have distributed taxes more justly among the great fortunes, you still permit them to weigh as a heavy burden on the poor; the bread the poor man eats, the wine he drinks, the cloth his clothes are made of—these are burdened with heavy taxes. How is it possible for you not to feel that it is a demand of justice that the disinherited be freed from these taxes? How were you able to escape the feeling that taxes should not exist for him who is held down by his poverty below the level of the fulfillment of

the most necessary bodily needs, that for him taxes must be an unbearable burden?

Far from affording us your aid, you have cruelly and barbarously taken from us everything we once had. The possessions of the Church were the patrimony of the poor; you have taken from them this patrimony in order to defray the expenses of the follies of the government, the extravagances of the ministers, the extortions of the administrators, the shameful splendor of the court, the impostures and piracies of the vampires of the State. You have alleged your intention of eliminating the abuses of the clergy; and yet you have permitted the crozier and the miter to retain an immense portion of the possessions that actually belong to us; you have not made any effort to assure us even a small fraction of these possessions, and the clerical officials now hold them as their property, as a claim to indemnities with which they can continue to secure all the good things of life to which they are accustomed. In the reading of our decrees concerning holders of benefices, bishops and archbishops, who, depending on the case, draw either their full salaries, or one-half, or one-third, or one-fourth of their salaries, one might take these saintly personages for chief rabbis who are cashing in on their usurious claims.

We are at last being given, for all the underfed persons in the kingdom, fifteen millions taken from the estates of the Church, which had been taken

away from the poor under the pretext that they were to be used in payment of the obligations of the State; this means, once they are paid, about thirty-five sous per head of the population; and yet, through one of your leaders, you appropriated nineteen millions for the purpose of paying the debts of a scamp who happened to be born close to the throne, a shameful wastrel, whose obscene dissipations are the least of his crimes, an enemy of our country, who has finally become a disgusting conspirator (d'Artois).

What shall be inferred from all this? All these advantages enjoyed by the rich with the aid of our ordinances, and as a result of their possessions, are of no value to us. And in this respect we have been sacrificed by the Revolution just as if we were not members of the State at all.

Up to the present time, the new order of things exists entirely for the advantage of the rich and the intriguers: but this is only a portion of their privileges. Assembled Law-givers! You have pretended to be trying to assure all citizens, as a result of the most careful study, equal rights, for the great good of the entire country; and you made it a condition that offices, positions, honorary appointments, should be bestowed only by reason of talent and virtue. All this would have been wonderful, if you had not made every effort to destroy your own work. After the manner of stage magicians, you have caused one concession after the other to disappear. Hardly had

you declared that free and equal citizens should be appointed to positions without discrimination by virtue of their fitness alone, for discharging the duties of such positions, than you added: but they may not represent the nation unless they pay a direct tax of one silver mark; unless they pay a direct tax of ten livres they cannot become electors; unless they pay a direct tax of three livres, they cannot enter into the possession of civic rights. In this manner, by means of these petty provisions, you have succeeded in shutting us off from admission to the Senate, to the courts, to the leading posts, to the magistracy. You declare us incapable, in the name of the law, of filling any of the positions to which you have summoned us by virtue of our natural rights; and now—the culmination of your injustice—you go so far as to declare us incapable of appointing those who are to represent us, so far as to deny us even the quality of citizens. Your famous Declaration of the Rights of Man was merely a shameful deception for the delectation of the simple-minded, since you feared their wrath; for, when more carefully examined, this Declaration of the Rights of Man amounts merely to a promise that the rich shall enjoy all the advantages and honors of the new régime. It appears, therefore, that the glorious Revolution was made only to benefit those who were the sole enjoyers of the blessings of the century.

But if this famous decree, which makes talent

and virtue the sole condition for attaining public office, were not meant merely as a parody, it would, nevertheless, have no value for us. Thrown back again upon our poverty, we can serve our country in no other way than with the strength of our arms, as we have always served it. In this way, you alone enjoy the privilege of commanding others, we are asked only to obey, to devote to the State our labors, our fatigue, our sufferings. The advantages of the Constitution for us amount to nothing more nor less than the privilege of remaining in filth and misery.

## MARAT TO DESMOULINS

(August, 1790)

IN spite of all your cleverness, my dear Camille, you are still quite a novice in politics. Perhaps the amiable frivolity which is the basis of your character and which permits your pen to disport itself in the most serious fields, serves as an obstacle to reflection and to serious and sound discussion. It is with reluctance that I tell you that your pen, which belongs to our country, would serve it to greater advantage, if your path were firm and straight; but you are irresolute in your judgment; you censure to-day what you will approve to-morrow; you glorify unknown persons for insignificant performances; you appear to have neither plan nor goal, and you cap the climax of your silliness by obstructing the labors of your friend and holding back his blows in his struggle—during these moments of crisis—when he deals passionate and inspired blows for the common cause, and when the people appear to hope for nothing except from their despair.

The inappropriate and yet bitter reproofs addressed to me by you in your paper, might deprive the cause of freedom of its most zealous defender. For they rob me of the confidence of a great num-



ber of citizens who are not in a good position to pass sound judgment on me. It is this solitude that moves me to-day to take the sad step of expounding to you the motive for my conduct during the period of the Revolution. If you had taken the pains to follow my course, you would have judged it more soundly and you would have spared me the humiliation of being obliged to explain things to you that should not have escaped your attention.

Marat now makes reference to the appeal printed above, "Are We Undone?" in which he declares the use of terror against counter-revolutionists to be the only means of safeguarding the Revolution. Desmoulins had opposed this measure. Marat continues:

Is there any one that does not know that this patriotic document, which was denounced by a miserable scoundrel, was considered a crime against the Nation only by men who had joined in a conspiracy against liberty, who were the slaves of vice and the purchasable creatures of injustice, who make it their sport to conspire against their country and their duty to murder its most zealous defenders? But I am by no means inclined to be displeased with their disapproval, since I regard it rather as a certificate of honor.

Indignant at the conspiracies again and again cropping up by reason of ancient prejudices, disquieted by the reports of the enemy's approach, and convinced that it will be impossible for us to escape

the horrors of civil war if we do not finally make up our minds to cut off the heads of those most responsible for the present situation, the author of this document summons the people to take possession of the ring-leaders of the conspirators. Horrified at the thought of the boundless misfortune that would be the inevitable consequence of their triumph, he reminded the people that five or six hundred heads cut off would assure the people liberty and happiness forever, and that—if these heads should be spared for any considerations of mistaken humanity—millions of innocent persons would be condemned to die a frightful death.

Present this alternative even to those wise men who consider themselves men of leniency, and I doubt whether one of them will hesitate. But let the enemy once cross the boundaries, and the most peaceful citizens will go far beyond the author's present demands, and you yourself, dear Camille, will bitterly regret the failure to punish all of the traitors to the Nation!

**THE END**

## EXPLANATORY NOTES

**Assignat:** A promissory note of the French Revolutionary government, circulating as currency (1789-1796), secured by confiscated church lands, the national domain, and the estates of emigrés.

**Bailly, Jean Sylvan (1736-1793):** French astronomer and orator. His reactionary measures infuriated the people of Paris and he retired to Nantes (1791). Late in 1793, he was recognized at Melun, arrested and brought to Paris. He was condemned to death by the revolutionary tribunal (November 10) and guillotined on November 12.

**Bastille:** The prison fortress built at the Porte St. Antoine, Paris, in 1369, destroyed by popular uprising, July 14, 1789. It was regarded as the symbol of monarchical despotism, and July 14, the day of its demolition, has been made a national anniversary.

**Biron, Duc de Lausanne (1747-1793):** A French marshal, who fought in America during the Revolution; guillotined.

**Blacks (The):** The Blacks were the members of the Right Section of the Constituent Assembly, while the members of the Left were called Whites. The Moderates were called Impartial Blacks or Impartial Whites, depending on the side to which they leaned.

**Brissot, de Warville, Jean Pierre (1754-1793):** A French writer; originator of the Girondists; guillotined.

**Châtelet:** Cases of high treason were tried by this court under the authority of the Constituent Assembly, until it, together with the other tribunals of the *ancien régime*, was suppressed by the law of August 16, 1789.

**Committee of Public Safety (Comité de salut public):** A group of nine leaders in the French Revolution, appointed by the Convention of 1793, who acted as a governing body and during the Reign of Terror exercised great powers.

**Danton, Georges Jacques (1759-1794):** A French revolutionary leader, member of the Convention; he was tried by the Revolutionary Tribunal, and guillotined May 4, 1794. A volume of this series is devoted to his speeches.

**Dauphin:** The title of the eldest son of a French king, a title originally held by the lords of Viennois.

**Desmoulins, Benoit Camille (1760-1794):** A French revolutionist and writer; author of the *Histoire des Brissotins*; guillotined May 4, 1794, together with Danton.

**Ducos, Pierre Roger (1750-1816):** Lawyer and statesman; deputy to the Convention; later Third Consul; exiled as a regicide after the Bourbon restoration, in 1816.

**Emigré:** An emigrant; especially, one of the Royalists or other refugees who fled from France during the French Revolution of 1789; they lived in a number of centers outside of France, one of which was Coblenz, on the Rhine.

**Federals (*Fédération*):** The name of the armed associations formed during the Revolution to put down its enemies.

**Girond:** The moderate Republican Party during the first French Revolution (1792); so called from the department whence its earliest members were sent as representatives.

**Goethe, Johann Wolfgang (1749-1832):** Most famous classical writer of Germany; the author of many well-known prose works, poems and dramas (including the tragedy *Faust*), and an amateur scientist of mark in many fields: his *Farbenlehre* (1810), or "Theory of Color," is an extensive work aiming at a revaluation of optics generally, and attempting to combat Sir Isaac Newton's refraction of light.

**Guadet, Marguerite Elie (1758-1794):** A French Girondist leader; guillotined.

**Jacobins:** A French revolutionary club, so called from its meeting in a hall of the former Jacobin convent in the Rue St. Honoré, Paris. It called itself "The Society of Friends of the Constitution." Its twelve hundred branch societies, led by Robespierre, Danton and Marat, had an enormous influence. It controlled the Legislative Assembly after 1791, and organized the Reign of Terror and the agitation against the king. It was overthrown in November, 1794, but not dissolved until 1799.

**Lafayette, Marquis de (1757-1834):** Lafayette is particularly known for his participation in the American War of Independence. During the French Revolution he played a reactionary rôle. In May, 1790, he founded the "Society of 1789," which afterwards became the Feuillant Club. He retired to private life in 1791.

**Louis XVI (born 1754, ascended throne 1774, guillotined January 21, 1793):** King of France, dethroned, imprisoned and executed by the Revolution.

**Luckner, Nikolaus (1722-1794):** A French marshal, born in Bavaria; he was guillotined January 4, 1794.

**Mirabeau, Comte de (1749-1791):** A French statesman and writer; called the French Demosthenes; a member of the Constituent Assembly.

**Mollien, Count Nicolas François (1758-1850):** Financier, entered the Ministry of Finance, brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal of Evreux as a suspect in 1794, narrowly escaped the guillotine.

**National Assembly:** the first of the revolutionary bodies of France (1789-1791); called also *Constituent Assembly* because pledged not to separate until the constitution was established.

**Necker, Jacques (1732-1804):** A French financier; minister of Louis XVI; the father of Madame de Staël.

**October 5 (1789):** On this day the people of Paris brought Louis XVI from Versailles to the city.

**Robespierre, Maximilien Marie Isidore (1758-1794):** A French Jacobin orator, prominent particularly in the early days of the Revolution of 1789; he became a leader during the Reign of Terror, which began in 1793 and ended with his execution on July 28, 1794.

**Sans-culottes ("Without knee-breeches"):** The poor wore trousers, not knee-breeches; the term was first applied by the aristocrats as a term of reproach to those who started the Revolution; it afterwards became a popular name for one of the revolutionary population; a Jacobin.

**Sieyès, Emmanuel Joseph (1748-1836):** Author of the celebrated pamphlet, "What Is the Third Estate?" (*Qu'est-ce que le tiers état?*); renounced his religion when the Goddess of Reason was installed.

**States General:** A general as opposed to provincial legislature, composed of different classes or estates of citizens; the name of the legislative body of the Netherlands and that of France before the Revolution.

**Swiss Regiment:** Swiss mercenary troops, common at the time throughout Europe, also served as bodyguard to Louis XVI.

**Third Estate:** the commons (*communitas, communitatis*), as distinguished from nobles and clergy.

**Tuilleries:** A French royal palace completed under Louis XIV (1643-1715). It was badly damaged by attacks made upon it in 1792, 1830, and 1848, and burned during the Commune of 1871.

**Vendée (La):** A department in central western France: scene of the revolt of local peasants and Royalists against the French Republic in 1793-1795.

**Vergniaud, Pierre Victurnien (1753-1793):** Orator, revolutionist, president of the National Convention which sentenced Louis XVI to death; guillotined November 31, 1793.

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