

POUR sauver la Patrie, il faut respecter les trois Ordres; c'est le seul moyen de conciliation qui nous reste.

TO save the Motherland the three Orders must be respected; it is the only method of conciliation that is left to us.¹

It seems that destiny pursues those men who place themselves too high, almost as though it now wants the French to end up like all those other notorious Peoples.

Nothing can avert this omen, neither the immense resources that France contains within her, nor the skills of her citizens, nor the observations of the learned, not even reason itself.

Patriotism alone could arrest this fatal destiny and force it, maybe, to act in our favour, if only the Nation would cast its eyes over the general desolation, on the peril that menaces us all, and on the damage that its dissension can create.

This is what those friends of mankind, the pillars of religion, the Clergy of course, will ceaselessly point out to the Nobility and to the Third-Estate; and you, Gentlemen of France who show such heroism on the battle fields, who thanks to your valour, encourage the fallen soldier, who, leading them, run the same risks to save the Motherland, do not be responsible for losing it now in this terrible revolution.

It is not the enemy that you are fighting; it is your fellow citizens, a formidable number of your brothers.

Run to embrace them; they wait for you impatiently, they are all disposed to allow you all your rights, but do not force them to withdraw their resolutions, unless the necessity of saving the Kingdom encourages them to do it of their own accord.

They surely are aware in their hearts of the damage that their proclamations will produce; nature and heaven have refused to accept them, the present situation reduced them to this, and another more favourable situation must lead them to repudiation. We must expect from His Majesty a new method of reunion that will oblige the Nobility and the Third-Estate to unite under a new proclamation based on humanity and on the well-being of France that is perilously close to falling prey to its enemy.

Oh generous Third-Estate, magnanimous Nobility, is there a better way to exercise your beliefs, your enlightenment, than to save your heritage, your motherland, from the hands of brigands and strangers?

Time is pressing; this moment is favourable; swear at the feet of your King that you will all mutually cast aside your self-interests so that from now on you will only concern yourselves with the good of the State and public happiness.

During national revolutions the ancients had a system as simple as it was august; they made a random choice of their intentions and enclosed the destiny of the motherland in an antique urn.

Can there be a more auspicious time than the present to imitate the ancient peoples!

France is perilously close to its final moments; the health of the motherland rests entirely on the union of the Estates-General.

There is only one decent way, one high-minded project that can, without prejudice, reunite minds; this project may depend only on destiny.

The authority of most of the twelve hundred Deputies is linked to their Constituents and depends on them voting only by a head count, the rest vote by Party; let the King engage them to number all the regulations in their power, let each regulation specify, on

¹ Written in June 1789 this pamphlet was liberally distributed in Versailles and Paris. De Gouges was criticised for her strange notion of using a ballot to make an important decision. Desperate to participate in the events that were taking place all around her, she longed to be useful to her country and claimed to be emboldened by patriotism alone. Aware that Versailles was deaf to her pleas she planned to found a newspaper in which to express her opinions; she failed to raise any funding for the venture.

the ballot paper, how it must be counted, and let these numbers be mixed up and placed in an urn.

The Deputies from the three Orders will take it in turns to take a ballot paper out of the urn and, as it appears, it will be deliberated upon by a head count or by Party.²

This method, proposed by His Majesty as head of the Nation, will be unanimously acclaimed.

Danger is ever present: the self-esteem of the Three-Orders must be safeguarded. Can there be a more inspiring way to fill the hearts of the French with renewed zeal than this ancient method! What could be simpler, easier, more august or patriotic than to allow this feeling to be born again amongst us all! This method offered by the best of Kings, by the kindest of fathers, will be received with rapture and gratitude.

The Estates-General must cease deluding themselves: let them keep their sangfroid as they examine the desperate public's increased exhaustion as poverty becomes widespread, as famine reaches the countryside, as the peasant abandons his hut lacking both the strength and the courage to work the soil.

No people would be happier than the French if they could only recognise that France is the richest, the most fertile and agreeable land in Europe and allow, in this instance, the sufferings of humanity to enlighten their thoughts by understanding that there is no need for them to invent new torments for themselves; a man's life is already so short and tempestuous!

If suffering has long been widespread throughout France how much more misery would a civil war create on top of this suffering?

Bank deposits, credit notes, even gold itself would have no more currency, all realisable treasures would lose their value and the French, reduced to chewing on grass like animals, would end their days regretting, too late, their past happiness and the times they had lost through an appalling carnage.

If in this moment of peril, the Estates-General recognise this truth, if the pleading of humanity on its knees, decides one of the parties to answer its prayer, the Kingdom will be saved; all will be reborn at a time when all seems bent on destruction.

Suffering carries me above and beyond my sex, and despite it possibly leading me to ruin, my zeal guides me to the foot of the Throne.

Yes, SIRE, you are being misled, the goodwill of princes is being abused; even the Nobility itself is in the wrong.

The least of your subjects is entirely disposed to revolt, all the Citizen's heads are agitated and fermentation has reached its height; the effects will be appalling and cruel.

SIRE, only listen to your own heart; your Minister still retains a modicum of trust and this feeble modicum supports the Motherland and sustains your Subjects.

He is useful to the good of France and is only the more valuable in the eyes of the French.

Yes, SIRE, it is a woman who speaks to you thus, a simple subject who only seeks the good of her country; well, a true French woman who cherishes and respects her King, and who would sacrifice herself to save her Motherland, not like a Joan of Arc, sword in hand: fanaticism does not excite her zeal; it is reason and truth that guides her courage, and it is through the voice of clemency and not arms that she dares suggest, SIRE, that in order to save your Kingdom you must unite your Subjects and oblige them, by your example, to recognise that in these tempestuous circumstances moderation alone can bring back calm and demonstrate that public good must be the only goal that focuses all minds.

² One of the main sources of contention when reinstating the Estates General was the question of how votes should be counted, by head or by party. The Third Estate, if counted by head and augmented by liberals from the Clergy and the Nobility, would hold the majority over the other two parties.

The Third-Estate must recognise that the People at this moment are susceptible to false interpretations, that even in its Assemblies its Members are not entitled to make observations without being meticulously clear, and that if the voice of reason cannot rise above the clamour then any project leading to unity will become impracticable.

Therefore the Nation should only assemble in public when the Three-Orders are united and in agreement on the public good.

If this work is fortunate enough to become redundant, the idea enclosed within it referring to the urn may yet prove useful.