

A REPUBLICAN MANIFESTO

On June 20, 1791 Louis XVI, disguised as a valet, fled to join the counter-revolutionary armies threatening France. He was recognized and stopped at Varennes. On his departure he had published a manifesto condemning the work of the National Convention, and calling upon his faithful adherents for assistance. The king's flight and his manifesto enraged the French people and pro-Republican sentiments rapidly increased. This was the setting for Paine's "A Republican Manifesto" which denounced the king and monarchy and boldly proclaimed that the time had come to establish a republic. On July 1, 1791, Paine and Achille Duchâtelet placarded the streets of Paris with the manifesto, and had it nailed to the door of the Assembly.—*Editor.*

BROTHERS AND FELLOW-CITIZENS: Did we require the most indubitable evidence that the presence of a king is rather a bane than a blessing, that as an element of the political system he is without force or value, and that he is an onerous affliction whose weight crushes the people, we should discover it in the calm attitude of the people during the King's flight, and the air of unconcern with which they have viewed his reappearance.

Do not allow fallacies to delude you; the whole question may be resolved into four simple propositions:

His flight is equivalent to abdication; for, in abandoning his throne, he has abandoned his office; the brevity of the period during which he was absent counts for nothing; in the present case it is the attempt to escape that counts for everything. Never again can the nation trust a ruler who has proved derelict to his duties; has broken his oath, entered into a secret conspiracy to escape from his post, hidden the Royalty of France under the mask of a menial, made his way to a frontier full of

traitors and deserters, and then intrigued for his return at the head of an army that would enable him to act as a tyrant.¹

Is he responsible for his departure or should we only regard as responsible those who were the companions of his flight? Was his project of escape his own voluntary act, or was it suggested by others? It really does not matter in the least what answer is given to these questions. The facts show that, if he is not a hypocrite or traitor, he must be a madman or an imbecile, and, in any case, entirely unfitted to discharge the function confided to him by the people.

Therefore, mutual obligations which may have existed between him and us are dissolved, no matter from what standpoint we view the subject. He is no longer invested with authority. He has no claim on our allegiance. There is no distinction between him and other individuals; to us he is simply Louis Capet.

The history of France is chiefly concerned with the misfortunes of the nation, and we find that the vices of kings have been the root and origin of these misfortunes; we have always been the miserable victims of monarchical oppression, sometimes being ruined by our own devotion to royalty, sometimes crushed to the earth by its tyranny. Now that treason is added to the long series of cruelties and crimes which France has had to endure at the hands of kings, the long catalogue of their awful offenses is finished; there are no more crimes left for them to commit, therefore their claim to rule is a thing of the past.

An office that may be filled by a person without talent or experience, an office that does not require virtue or wisdom, for its due exercise, an office which is the reward of birth, and which may consequently devolve on a madman, an imbecile or a tyrant, is, in the very nature of things, an absurdity, and, whatever its ostentation, has no real utility. France, which has now attained the age of reason, should no longer be deceived by mere words, and should also reflect on another aspect of the case; namely, on the peril to which the government of a king subjects a people, even when he happens to be in himself a very paltry and despicable individual.

It takes thirty millions of francs to keep the coarse state and grandeur with which the King surrounds himself. Supposing this amount were applied to the diminution of taxation, what a relief it would be to the overburdened nation, while at the same time an important source of political corruption would be eradicated. The greatness of a people is

¹ General Bouillé's army was supposed to save the king, but arrived too late.—*Editor.*

not, as monarchs claim, based on the magnificence of a king, but in the people's sense of its own dignity and on its contempt for the brutal follies and crimes which have, under the leadership of kings, desolated the whole of Europe.

There need be no alarm as to the safety of Louis Capet's person. France will not step down from her lofty position in order to retaliate her wrongs on a miserable creature who is conscious of his own dishonor. The tranquillity which exists everywhere is evidence of the fact that self-respect is the attribute of a free nation, and that, when the cause which it upholds is just and glorious, it will never allow that cause to be degraded.

TO THE ABBÉ SIEYÈS

In the same month, July, 1791, in which he wrote "A Republican Manifesto," Paine published in *Le Republicain*, which he and Condorcet had founded, an attack on the monarchy. Abbé Sieyès, the spokesman of the French middle classes, who had framed a constitution in which the monarchy was retained, wrote a reply to Paine's article, arguing that "one is freer under a monarchy than under a republic." Paine expanded his attack on the monarchy in this letter to the Abbé which appeared in the *Moniteur* for July 16, 1791.—*Editor*.

AT the moment of my departure from England, I read in the *Moniteur* of Tuesday last, your letter, in which you give the challenge, on the subject of government, and offer to defend what is called the *monarchical opinion* against the republican system.

I accept of your challenge with pleasure; and I place such confidence in the superiority of the republican system over that nullity of a system, called *monarchy*, that I engage not to exceed the extent of fifty pages, and to leave you the liberty of taking as much latitude as you may think proper.

The respect which I bear your moral and literary reputation, will be your security for my candor in the course of this discussion; but, notwithstanding that I shall treat the subject seriously and sincerely, let me promise, that I consider myself at liberty to ridicule, as they deserve,