Mirabeau is generally recognized as the ablest statesman in France during the opening of the Revolution. After the mob had carried off the king to Paris during the "October Days," Mirabeau was, in spite of the king's and queen's abhorrence and distrust of him, brought into relations with the court and permitted to give advice which, however, was never taken. His first communication to the king (October 15) furnishes a wonderful picture of the situation in France and the dangers to which the king was exposed in Paris. There is scarcely a feature of the approaching reign of terror which escapes Mirabeau's prophetic insight. The king, shortly after Mirabeau's death (in April, 1791), tried to escape from France in precisely the manner against which the great statesman had most urgently warned him, and with precisely the results which Mirabeau forecast.

The king could not refuse to come to Paris, and whether the National Assembly could have refused to follow him or not, it had not, in any case, the power to detain him. Is the king free in Paris? He is, in the sense that no foreign will has taken the place of his own, but he is certainly not at liberty to leave Paris. He may not select those who guard his person; he cannot even exercise any direct control over the militia to whom his safety is confided. The National Assembly is free in Paris so far as its deliberations are concerned, but it could not adjourn to another town in the kingdom, nor can it guarantee to the delegate of the nation [that is, the king] more freedom than he already has.

Will the king enjoy in Paris entire personal security even? Placed as he is, the least mischance may compromise his safety. It is threatened by external movements, commotions within, party divisions, the errors of enthusiasm and of impatience, and, above all, by the violent collision of the capital with the provinces. Although Paris is powerful, it contains many causes for disturbance. Its inhabitants, when excited, are irresistible. Winter is approaching and food may be wanting. Bankruptcy may be declared. What will Paris be three months hence? Assuredly a poorhouse, perhaps a theater of horrors. Is it to such a place that the head of the nation should intrust his existence and our only hope?

The ministers are without resources. Only one of them enjoys any popularity [that is, Necker], and he has always been supported rather by certain enthusiastic admirers than by a party. But his resources are well known, and he has just shown himself in his true light. His empty brain has never contemplated more than to prop up here and there an edifice which is giving away at every point. He is anxious to prolong the death agony until the moment he has chosen for his political retirement, when, as in 1781, he plans to leave an alleged balance between the receipts and expenditures, and some millions in the royal treasury. What will become of the nation after this useless attempt, which renders bankruptcy inevitable? We are only weary and discouraged as yet; it is the moment of despair which is to be feared…. 

Public strength lies only in public opinion and in the revenues of the state. But every bond of public opinion is severed. Only the direct taxes are paid at all, and these only partially, although the half of our taxes are indirect. Several years will be required to replace what six months have just destroyed, and the impatience of the people, which is increased by their misery, is apparent on every hand.

A still more fatal emergency is to be anticipated. The National Assembly, which is so badly constituted in principle, composed as it is of discordant factions laboriously brought together, can see that each day the confidence in its work is diminishing. The respect which an exalted title and a great revolution seen from afar inspires, as well as hope, so essential to the people,
still sustains it. But each day this great cause is deserted by a portion of those who make public opinion, although it demands the closest cooperation of every faction and party in the realm. The people are, moreover, only informed of the almost inevitable mistakes of a legislative body which is too numerous, whose footing is insecure, and which has gone through no apprenticeship: no emphasis is laid upon the ease with which such mistakes could be corrected by the next legislature. The only way to save the state and the nascent constitution is to put the king in a position which will allow him, without delay, to unite with his people.

Paris has long swallowed up the taxes of the kingdom. Paris is the seat of the financial regime which the provinces loathe. Paris has created the debt. Paris, by its miserable stock gambling, has destroyed public credit, and has compromised the honor of the nation. Must the National Assembly, too, regard this city only, and sacrifice the whole kingdom for it? Several provinces fear that the capital will dominate the Assembly and direct the course of its work.

What then is to be done? Is the king free? His freedom is not complete, nor is it recognized. Is the king safe? I do not think so. Can even Paris save him alone? No; Paris is lost if she is not brought to order and forced to moderation. Will the National Assembly finish its session without being harassed by the disturbances which a thousand circumstances lead us to anticipate? He would be bold, certainly, who should guarantee this!

Several methods present themselves, but there are those which would entail the most terrible evils, and which I only mention to deter the king from a course which would mean certain destruction. To withdraw to Metz - or upon any other frontier - would be to declare war upon the nation and abdicate the throne. A king, who is the only safeguard of his people, does not fly before his people. . . . He does not excite all manner of suspicion against himself, nor does he place himself in a position where he can only reenter his possessions with arms in his hands, or be reduced to supplicate foreign aid.

Who can say to what a state of frenzy the French nation might be aroused if it saw its king abandoning it in order to join a group of exiles, and become one of them himself, or how it would prepare for resistance and oppose the forces he might collect? Even I should denounce the monarch after such an act.

It is certain, in short, that a great revolution is necessary to save the kingdom; that the nation has rights, that it is on the way to recover them all, and that it is not sufficient simply to reestablish them, but they must be consolidated; that a national convention can alone regenerate France; that
the Assembly has already made several laws which it is indispensable to adopt; and that there is no safety for the king and for the state except in the closest alliance between the monarch and his people.

All the methods which I have mentioned having been rejected, I will make the following observations upon a final plan which is certainly not without peril. . . .

Having taken certain precautions, the king may leave his palace in open day and retire to Rouen. He should select that city or its environs, because it is the center of the kingdom, because . . . such a choice proclaims that there is no intention of flight, and that the only object is to conciliate the provinces. . . .

Before the king’s departure a proclamation should be prepared, addressed to all the provinces, in which the king should say, among other things, that he is about to throw himself into the arms of his people; that violence has been done him at Versailles; that he was in a measure watched at Paris, and was not free to come and go, as every citizen is and ought to be. For the truth of these statements proofs should be furnished.

The king should say, moreover, that he recognizes that this situation serves as an excuse to the ill disposed not to obey the decrees of the National Assembly and the sanction given by him to these decrees, all of which could easily compromise a revolution in which he is as much interested as the most ardent friends of liberty; that he hopes to be inseparable from his people, and that the selection which he has made of Rouen proves this beyond controversy; that he is the first king of his race who has formed the purpose of investing the nation with all its rights, and that he has persisted in this design in spite of his ministers and the counsels by which princes are corrupted; that he has adopted without reserve such and such decrees of the National Assembly; that he renews his sanction and acceptance, and that his sentiments in this matter are unchangeable.

The proclamation should announce that the king is about to call the National Assembly to him in order that it may continue its work, but that he will soon summon a new convention to judge, confirm, modify and ratify the work of the first Assembly.

The king should state that he is ready to submit to the greatest personal sacrifices, since there are to be no more promises of economy which are never carried out; that he will live like a private individual; that a million will suffice him for his personal expenses and those incurred as head of a family; that he asks no more, and requires but a single table for himself and his family; that all the luxury of the throne should consist in the perfecting of the civil government and in the wise liberality of distinctly national outlays. . . .

The king should declare that, although he has resolved upon all possible personal sacrifice, he by no means holds that the same retrenchment can be applied to all the payments which have, for a long time, been granted to a host of citizens who have at present no other means of support, and he requests the nation to consider that public peace is not to be successfully reestablished by ruining and driving to despair so many thousand persons; that for the rest, he takes his people to witness as to his personal conduct in the past; that he will not subdue them by arms, but by his love; that he confides his honor and safety to French loyalty; that he only wishes the happiness of the citizens, and that his own pleasure is of no further importance. This proclamation of a good king, this peace manifesto at once firm and popular, ought to be forwarded by extraordinary couriers to all the provinces, and all those in command should be notified to be on their guard. . . .
Marat: The King Is a Friend of the People (29 December 1790 and 17 February 1791)

Through his newspaper, the Friend of the People, Jean–Paul Marat was one of the leading radical voices of the early years of the Revolution. Yet he also thought France had to have a king; his goal—evident in this passage—was to encourage “the people” to keep pressure on the King (and the National Assembly) to offset the influence of royal ministers and courtiers.

In December 1790, Marat berates the King as follows:

... I judge you by your past conduct; I judge you for yourself. Tell me, what confidence would we have in the word, in the protestations, in the oaths of a king who had summoned the nation only to engage it to fill the abyss dug by the wastefulness of his ministers, of the household princes, of his favorites, and of the other scoundrels of his court; of a king who tried to dissolve the National Assembly as soon as he found some opposition to his wishes; of a king who worked six weeks, and quite cold-bloodedly, at the execution of a terrible plan to put the capital to fire and sword, in order to punish its unfortunate inhabitants for the generous support that they seemed to promise the representatives of the nation against the attacks of despotism; of a king who was prepared to renounce his terrible plans, only when he saw the people up in arms, ready to take justice into their own hands; of a king who, in defiance of his most solemn oaths, and almost at the very time that he had just secured his pardon from a generous people, gave ear to the treacherous counsels of his court, in order to contrive a new conspiracy against the people who had become free. ...

... You would pass, Sire, for an enemy of the public liberty, for a treacherous conspirator, for the most cowardly of perjurers, for a prince without honor, without shame, for the lowest of men. May the fear of being covered with opprobrium in the eyes of all Europe close your heart to the counsels of the scoundrels who surround you; may it determine you to deliver them yourself to the sword of the law! Finally, fear to repel the truth that dares to draw near you. It is on this new proof that present generations and future races will judge you.

Two months later, Marat continues his argument for limited monarchy.

I do not know if the counterrevolutionaries will force us to change the form of government. What I do know is that in view of the depravity and baseness of the old regime’s supporters, all of whom are so ready to abuse the powers entrusted to them, the government that best suits us today is one consisting of very limited monarchy. With such men as these, a federal republic would soon degenerate into oligarchy.

I have often been depicted as a mortal enemy of royalty, yet I maintain that the king has no better friend than me. His mortal enemies are his relatives, his ministers, the “blacks” and the “ministerials” in the National Assembly, the members of the “club monarquique,” the factious priests and other supporters of despotism. It is by their machinations that he continually risks losing the people’s confidence. Pushed by their advice, he puts his crown at risk, and it is I who fixes that crown firmly on his head by uncovering their plots, and by pressing him to deliver them to the sword and the scales of justice.
Desmoulins: A Radical’s View of the Constitutional Monarch (May 1790)

In the spring of 1790, there was much debate in the Constituent Assembly and in the press over who should have the power to declare war or peace under the new constitution—the King or the legislature? On 22 May, the Count de Mirabeau fashioned a compromise by which the King would have power to initiate a war or agree to a peace treaty, but only with legislative approval. For many observers, this compromise was a great victory for the “people” over the crown. However, in this passage from his newspaper, *Revolutions of France and the Netherlands*, Camille Desmoulins, an uncompromising republican, questioned why supporters of the Revolution were content with an arrangement that left so much power in the hands of the monarch.

In my opinion, the best touchstone as to whether a decree is good is the consternation it causes in the Tuileries Palace as seen on the long faces of the King’s ministers. Alone in the palace do the children not through their countenance tell good citizens what they should hope or fear [from a given law]. For example, on Saturday, 22 May, the young prince applauded Mirabeau’s decree [on the right of war and peace] with a good sense well beyond his years. The people applauded as well . . . thinking it was exalting the triumph of Barnave and all the glorious Jacobins who, it imagined, had won a great victory, and those deputies were weak enough not to recognize their own error.

Robespierre was more frank. He said, to the deafening applause of the crowd, "Well, gentlemen, what are you celebrating? The decree is detestable to the highest degree; let us leave this monkey [the prince] to beat his hands at his window; he knows better than us what he is doing."

Lately, the King has appeared more often in public. He goes hunting and marches in processions. He gives his thanks to the National Parisian Guard; he reviews it on the marching fields, and I saw him galloping sadly amidst infinite cries of “Long live the King!” I alone made myself hoarse by daring to shout in his ears “Long live the nation!”

I recall some years ago, his wife, on one occasion entering Paris to a very cold reception, saying these highly comical words: “I feel that my people annoy me.” For the past year, Madame in turn, has been annoying her people.

The King Flees Paris (20 June 1791)

After 14 July, some of the King’s entourage had urged him to flee so that he would not have to approve a new Constitution. Aristocrats such as the Baron de Breteuil and the Marquis de Bouillé, along with the King’s brothers, who had already fled France, urged the King to join them in Austria, where they could organize a military invasion that would put an end to the changes being wrought by the assembly and restore the old regime. For two years, the King had resisted such entreaties, claiming that he should remain with the people—and moreover, that some of the changes were for the good. By mid-1791, the plans drawn up by Breteuil and Bouillé for the King’s escape, to be followed by a military invasion, were ready. As the Constituent Assembly moved toward the completion of the constitution, expected in July, the moment had come to act. Louis agreed to a plan whereby he would flee in secret, in the dead of night. To explain his action, he left a written statement to the assembly, justifying his action and proposing revisions to the existing draft of the constitution as the conditions for his return. In response, the National Assembly voted to have the King arrested to prevent him from leaving France.

The calling of the Estates-General, the doubling of the deputies of the Third Estate, the efforts which the King made to clear up the difficulties which might delay the meeting of the Estates-General, and those which arose after its opening, all the retrenchments which the King made in his personal expenditure, all the sacrifices which he made for his people in the session of
June 3rd, finally the union of the orders, brought about by the expression of the King's desire, a measure which His Majesty then judged indispensable for the inauguration of the Estates-General: all his anxiety, all his efforts, all his generosity, all his devotion to his people, all have been disparaged, all have been misconstrued.

The time when the Estates-General, assuming the name of the National Assembly, began to busy itself with the constitution of the kingdom, calls to mind the memoirs which the factious were cunning enough to cause to be sent from several provinces and the movements of Paris to cause the deputies to disregard one of the principal clauses contained in all their cahiers, which provided that *the making of the laws should be done in concert with the King*. In defiance of that clause, the assembly put the King entirely outside the constitution, in refusing to him the right to grant or to withhold his sanction to the articles which it regarded as constitutional, while reserving to itself the right to reckon in that class those which it thought belonged there, and by restraining for those regarded as purely legislative the royal prerogative to a right of suspension until the third legislature; a purely illusory right, as so many examples prove only too fully.

Justice is rendered in the name of the King . . . but it is only a matter of form. . . . One of the latest decrees of the assembly has deprived the King of one of the fairest prerogatives everywhere attached to royal power, that of pardoning and commuting penalties. . . .

*Internal administration.* It is entirely in the hands of the departments, districts, and municipalities, too many authorities, who clog the movement of the machine and often thwart each other. All these bodies are elected by the people, and have no relations with the government, according to the decrees, except for their execution and for those special orders which are issued in consequence thereof. . . .

*Finances.* The King had declared, even before the meeting of the Estates-General, that he recognized in the assemblies of the nation the right to grant subsidies, and that he no longer desired to tax the people without their consent.

But the nearer we see the assembly approach the end of its labors, the more we see increased measures which make difficult or even impossible the carrying on of the government and create for it lack of confidence and disfavor; other regulations, instead of applying balm to the wounds which still bleed in many provinces only increase the uneasiness and provoke discontent. The spirit of the clubs dominates and invades everything; thousands of calumniating and incendiary newspapers and pamphlets, which increase daily, are only their echoes and prepare men to become what they wish them to be. The National Assembly has never dared to remedy that license, so far removed from true liberty; it has lost its credit, and even the force of which it would have need in order to turn upon its steps and to change that which would seem to it well to correct. We see by the spirit which reigns in the clubs, and the manner in which they make themselves masters of the new primary assemblies, what must be expected from them; and if they allow to become perceptible any inclinations to turn back upon any matter, it is in order to destroy the remainder of the monarchy and establish a metaphysical and philosophical government impossible to put into operation.

In view of all these reasons and the impossibility for the King, from the position in which he is placed, effecting the good and preventing the evil which is perpetrated, is it astonishing that the King has sought to recover his liberty and to put himself and his family in safety? Frenchmen, and especially Parisians, you inhabitants of a city which the ancestors of His Majesty were pleased to call the good city of Paris, distrust the suggestions and lies of your false friends; return to your King; he will always be your father, your best friend: what pleasure will he not take in forgetting all his personal injuries, and in beholding himself again in the midst of you, when a constitution, which he shall have freely accepted, shall cause your religion to be respected, the government to be established upon a firm footing and made useful by its operation, the property and status of each person no longer disturbed, the laws no longer violated with impunity, and, finally, liberty founded upon firm and immovable foundations.

Signed, Louis
Paris, 20 June 1791.

The King forbids his ministers signing any order in his name, until they receive further orders; he commands the keeper of the seal of the state to send it to him, as soon as may be required on his part.

Signed, Louis

Paris, 20 June 1791.

Decree for the Arrest of the King. 17 June 1791.

The National Assembly orders that the minister of the interior shall immediately send couriers into all the departments, with orders to all the public functionaries and the national guards or troops of the line of the kingdom, to arrest or cause the arrest of all persons whomsoever leaving the realm, as well as to prevent all removal of goods, arms, munitions of war, and every species of gold, silver, horses, vehicles and munitions of war; and, in case the said couriers should encounter any persons of the royal family and those who may have assisted in their removal, the said public functionaries or national guards and troops of the line shall be required to take all the necessary measures to stop the said removal, to prevent them from continuing their route, and to render account of everything to the legislative body.

Louis Apologizes (27 June 1791)

Louis’s unsuccessful flight polarized opinion on the powers the King should have under the new constitution. For the first time, some deputies seriously proposed doing away with the monarchy altogether and declaring a republic. Those hoping to salvage the King’s credibility created a story whereby the King had not fled but had been abducted. To this end, the King appeared before the National Assembly and apologized, indicating that he had never intended to flee the kingdom or to oppose the constitution and that he had voluntarily returned to Paris upon learning of the public outcry over his departure.

The outrages committed upon and the threats made against my family and myself on 18 April were the reasons for my departure. Since that time several writings have sought to provoke violence against myself and my family, and thus far these insults have gone unpunished. Thenceforth I felt that I lacked security and even decency so long as I remained in Paris. . . .

One of my principal motives for leaving Paris was to vitiate the argument concerning my lack of liberty, which might furnish occasion for disturbances. . . .

I have never made any protest other than in the memoir which I left of my departure.

Even that protest, as the contents of the memoir attest, has no bearing on the fundamental principles of the Constitution, but only on the form of sanctions, that is to say, on the scant liberty which I seemed to enjoy, and on the fact that, since the decrees had not been presented together, I could not judge the Constitution as a whole. The principal objection contained in that memoir relates to difficulties in the methods of administration and execution.

During my journey I became aware that public opinion favored the Constitution. I had not believed that I could fully recognize such a public opinion in Paris; but, from the impressions which I personally acquired on the way, I was convinced of the necessity, even for the maintenance of the Constitution, of providing the established powers with authority in order that they might maintain public order.
As soon as I became cognizant of the general will, I did not hesitate in the least, as I have never hesitated, to make personal sacrifice for the happiness of the people, whose welfare I have always had at heart.

In order to assure the peace and felicity of the nation, I shall willingly forget all the unpleasantness which I may have suffered.

**Press Reports of the King’s Flight: Révolutions de Paris (25 June 1791) and Père Duchesne (1791)**

The news of the King’s flight and subsequent arrest provoked strong responses in the press, most of which attacked Louis as a traitor and questioned the National Assembly’s acceptance of his excuse that he had been “kidnapped.” The *Révolutions de Paris*, previously somewhat supportive of the King, aggressively attacked him as a “traitor,” “criminal,” and “cannibal.” Even more striking was the response of Jacques-René Hébert in his popular newspaper, *Père Duchesne*. Also a supporter of the King, Hébert declares that Louis is “no longer king” and not even a citizen.” He suggests that the King and Queen should be imprisoned in the asylum of Charenton.

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Les Révolutions de Paris

*The most honorable man in his kingdom!* (You cowardly writers, incompetent or hired hacks, this is how you refer to Louis XVI?) The most honorable man in his kingdom, the father of the French, like the hero of two worlds, also deserted his post, and escaped in the hope of sending us, in exchange for his royal person, several years of foreign and domestic war. This conspiracy, worthy of the united houses of Bourbon and Austria, this cowardly, treacherous conspiracy, hatched for the last eighteen months, has at last been carried out.

Citizens! We warned you! Remember that we didn’t wait until the dénouement of 21 June to tell you what kings are capable of. He left, this vile king, but he is no doubt the last to fool you. Let him go, never to return. To have kept him any longer at our head would have been far too much of an encumbrance.

But citizens, look at how all the circumstances which have preceded, accompanied, and followed this flight are criminal. Has the enforcer of righteousness, with his lethal weapons ever struck more accomplished villains than those who have just fled the Tuileries Palace by night? Julius Caesar, stabbed to death by the Romans, Charles I, decapitated by the English, were innocent compared to Louis XVI.

Our former King (for Louis XVI is no longer King and can no longer be King) first greedily demands 25 million from the Civil List and numerous estates. He wants his debts and those of his brothers paid off. He even sends his wet-nurse before the nation to be paid for the milk that she lavished on the royal wolf-cub. He orders the felling of his woods. He no longer has to pay his ministers and his armed guard is no longer maintained at his expense. Yet already he finds himself in debt. He needs advances. The royal cannibal devours all the cash and when he has converted the people’s bread into gold, he is still ravenous for whatever money we have left.

Le Père Duchênes

You my King. You are no longer my King, no longer my King! You are nothing but a cowardly deserter; a king should be the father of the people, not its executioner. Now that the nation has resumed its rights it will not be so bloody stupid as to take back a coward like you. You, King? You are not even a citizen. You will be lucky to avoid leaving your head on a scaffold for having sought the slaughter of so many men. Ah, I don’t doubt that once again you are going to pretend to be honest and that, supported by those scoundrels on the constitutional committee, you are going to promise miracles. They still want to stick the crown on the head of a stag; but no, damn it, that will
not happen! From one end of France to the other, there is only an outcry against you, your debauched Messalina, and your whole bastard race.

No more Capet, this is what every citizen is shouting, and, besides, even if it were possible that they might want to pardon you all your crimes, what trust could now be placed in your remains? You vile perjurer, a man who has broken his oath again and again. We will stuff you into Charenton and your whore into the Hospital. When you are finally walled up, both of you, and above all when you no longer have a Civil List, I'll be stuffed with an ax if you get away.

**Champ de Mars: Petitions of the Cordelier and Jacobin Clubs**

In the aftermath of the King’s failed flight in June 1791, the more radical clubs circulated petitions calling on the National Assembly to depose the King rather than grant him executive power as a constitutional monarch, under the new constitution. Below are excerpts from two such petitions, from the Cordeliers and Jacobin clubs, respectively; note that these efforts technically violated a law passed the previous 10 May, which had proscribed the circulation of petitions by clubs.

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The Society of Friends of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen [Cordeliers Club] to the Representatives of the Nation (21 June 1791)

Petition of the Cordelier Club (14 July 1791)

We were slaves in 1789, we believed ourselves free in 1790, we are free at the end of June 1791. Legislators! You had allocated the powers of the nation you represent. You had invested Louis XVI with excessive authority. You had consecrated tyranny in establishing him as an irremovable, inviolable and hereditary king. You had sanctioned the enslavement of the French in declaring that France was a monarchy.

Good citizens lamented and opinions clashed vehemently. But the law existed and we obeyed it, waiting for the progress of enlightenment and philosophy to bring us our salvation.

It seemed that this so-called contract between a nation that gives everything, and an individual who gives nothing, had to maintained. Until that time when Louis XVI had become an ungrateful traitor, we believed that we had only ourselves to blame for our ruined work.

But times have changed. This so-called convention between a people and its king no longer exists. Louis has abdicated the throne. From now on Louis is nothing to us, unless he become our enemy.

The Society of Friends of the Rights of Man considers that a nation must do everything, either by itself or through removable officers chosen by it. It [the Society] considers that no single individual in the state should reasonably possess enough wealth and prerogatives to be able to corrupt the agents of the political administration. It believes that there should be no employment in the state that is not accessible to all the members of that state. And finally, it believes that the more important a job is, the shorter and more transitory its duration should be. Convinced of this truth and of the greatness of these principles, it can no longer close its eyes to the fact that monarchy, above all hereditary monarchy, is incompatible with liberty. Such is its opinion, for which it stands accountable to all Frenchmen.

It anticipates that such a proposition shall give rise to a host of opponents. But did not the Declaration of Rights itself encounter opposition? Nevertheless, this question is important to deserve serious debate by the legislators. They have already botched the revolution once because of lingering deference for the phantom of monarchy. . . . let us therefore act without fear and without terror, and try not to bring it back to life. . . .
Legislators, you have a great lesson before your eyes. Consider well that, after what has happened, it is impossible for you to inspire in the people any degree of confidence in an official called "king." We therefore call upon you, in the name of the fatherland, to declare immediately that France is no longer a monarchy, but rather that it is a republic. Or at a minimum, wait until all the departments and all of the primary assemblies have expressed their opinion on this important question before you consider casting the fairest empire in the world into the chains and shackles of monarchism for a second time.

The society has decided that the present petition shall be printed, posted, and then sent to all the departments and patriotic societies of the French empire.

Petition of the Jacobin Club (16 July 1791)

The Frenchmen undersigned, members of the sovereign;

Considering that in matters affecting the safety of the people, it has the right to express its desire in order to enlighten and direct the representatives who have received its mandate; that there has never been a more important question than that concerning the king's desertion; that the decree passed on 15 July contains no provision regarding Louis XVI; that while obeying this decree, it is important to decide promptly the matter of this individual's fate; that this decision must be based on his conduct; that Louis XVI, after having accepted the duties of kingship and sworn to defend the constitution, has deserted the post entrusted to him, has protested against this constitution by a declaration written and signed by his own hand, has sought to paralyze the executive power by his flight and orders, and to overthrow the constitution by his complicity with the men today accused of attacking it; that his betrayal, his desertion, protestation (to say nothing of all the other criminal acts preceding, accompanying, and following these) entail a formal abdication of the constitutional crown entrusted to him; that the National Assembly has judged him to this effect in taking over the executive authority, suspending the king's powers, and holding him under arrest; that new promises to observe the constitution on Louis XVI's part could not offer a sufficient guarantee to the nation against a new betrayal and a new conspiracy;

Considering, finally, that it would be as contrary to the majesty of the outraged nation as to its interests to entrust the reins of the empire to a perfidious, traitorous fugitive;

Formally and expressly demands that the National Assembly accept, in the nation's name, Louis XVI's abdication on 21 June of the crown delegated to him, and provide for his replacement by all constitutional means.

The undersigned declare that they will never recognize Louis XVI as their king, unless the majority of the nation expresses a desire contrary to that contained in the present nation

Marie Antoinette's View of the Revolution (8 September 1791)

Fears about Marie Antoinette's intentions and actions were not baseless. Although inexperienced in the new style of politics, Marie Antoinette did see a need for help from abroad if the monarchy was to stop or reverse the course of the Revolution, which she thought to be getting out of control. She wrote this letter to her brother Leopold II, Emperor of the large Habsburg Empire in central Europe, describing the Revolution as she saw it and asking for his help to end it.

Only the Emperor can put an end to the troubles caused by the French Revolution.

There is no longer any possibility of reconciliation.

The armed forces have destroyed everything—only armed forces can repair the situation.
The King has done everything to avoid civil war, and he is still very much convinced that civil war cannot correct anything, and that it shall, in the end, destroy everything.

The leaders of the Revolution correctly feel that their constitution cannot last, that it is being sustained by the personal interests of all those who dominate the departments, municipalities, and clubs. A portion of the People have been deceived and follow the opinions of these leaders. However, all educated people, the peaceful bourgeois, and, in general, a majority of the citizens from all walks of life, are fearful and discontented.

If opposition to the [armies of the great] powers was to arise, if the language of the powers was reasonable, if their assembled forces were imposing, and if there was no civil war, it would be risky to assume that a general revolution would occur in the cities. There would be, rather, no difficulty in returning things to order.

But if there is a civil war, the forces of the powers will only prevail in the areas where their armies are located. The distant provinces will be divided—those that have been oppressed will want to avenge themselves, those that have dominated will certainly feel that they must risk everything. There will be massacres in the name of revenge. There will be massacres to gain twenty-four hours in order to have time to escape. Everyone is armed. Things will be in a deplorable state, and crime and murder will enter into people's houses and no citizen will be assured of surviving from one day to the next... . . .

The united powers must take into account the position of the King, his powers and his dignity, and the relationships that depend on them. He cannot be firmly reestablished if factions are allowed to dictate laws which, on the pretext of deciding how he can exercise his authority, deprive him of those powers he requires. The united powers must ensure, in accordance with the principles and fundamental laws of the French monarchy, that no law or constitution may be reestablished in France that does not call for the free, full and entire concurrence of the King, and that no possibility exists of stipulating a limit on the free declaration of his will.

The united powers cannot view without concern the spreading of the principles of anarchy and confusion within a large European state... principles destructive to all governments. More than any argument, excess, or danger, it is the deplorable state of France that clearly demonstrates what these principles give rise to. The powers must recognize that this is a question of vital interest not only for all sovereigns, but for all orders, states, and classes of citizens in all countries and in republics as well as monarchies... . . .

It seems impossible that the nation should be without misgivings, and ready to lose all its resources because an immoderate and improvident assembly has destroyed, at a stroke, both the King's authority and its own. The Assembly is not the nation. Different forms of government can be disturbed or suspended. The nation remains, and, being more aware of the dangers, it can see where its true interests lie. It was the time-honored method of the kings of France to appeal to the good cities. It is probable that the cities, in order to redeem themselves from the misfortunes of the war, will entreat the King to take back his power and play a mediating role. The desire for public safety can restore to him the love of the people. All the anxieties, all the fears will rally to his authority. Upon his head will rest all hopes. His sufferings will be recalled, and those of the Queen, and their courage in the terrible days of October 5th and 6th. All the crimes of the Revolution will be remembered. It is possible that there will arise a terrible cry against their authors, against all the violent men who have been placed in office. Those frightened men will try to save themselves by flight, and the communal assemblies will no longer be composed of the same members, dominated by the same force, and governed by the same sentiments.

The Revolution will be effected in the interior of each city; it will be effected by the approach of the war and not by the war itself. The King, his powers restored, will be entrusted with negotiations with the foreign powers, and the princes will return, in the general tranquillity, to reassume their ranks at his court and in the nation.