

THE ROYAL SESSION

Erik Magnus (1749–1802), **Baron Staël von Holstein**, Swedish Ambassador to France (1783–1792)

to **Gustav III** (1746–1792), King of Sweden (1771–1792)

25 June 1789

The plan of conciliation of Monsieur Necker, which was favorable to the third estate, was adopted last Friday by the King, when Sunday Monsieur¹ and the Comte d'Artois² came into the council. Both, and especially the latter, were of the opinion that it should be modified in such a way that it would become inadmissible for the third estate and very favorable to the protestations of the two other privileged orders. The Royal Session was adjourned to the next day on account of the resistance Monsieur Necker made to any changes.

Monday there was a new council. The Comte d'Artois, strengthened by the success of the evening and thinking that he had gained the Queen for his side, was more violent than ever. The Guard of the Seals, Villedeuil,³ the Minister of Paris, and the four Councilors of State supported him, and the King decided to maintain the ancient constitution, that is to say, the custom of the three orders, with exceptions, which he was contented to ask and not to command.

One would scarcely believe that the Comte d'Artois could have brought himself to advise a course which would compromise so cruelly the royal authority and whose baleful results were incalculable. This conduct is all the more condemnable and inconsiderate when one thinks that its principal end was to disgust Monsieur Necker to the point of forcing him to ask for his dismissal, which he would have done immediately had he not been restrained at this time by the fear of the frightful misfortunes that his withdrawal would bring in its train. He believed that he should give it only at the moment when he had lost all hope of being useful to the nation, to which he was devoted. But profoundly wounded by such conduct, he resolved not to appear at the Royal Session. This extreme course announced to the King and to all the nation that he did not approve the plans that had been proposed.

The third estate, after having heard the declaration of the King, passed a decree by which it rejected in full the plan that His Majesty had proposed to it. Meanwhile, the report had spread that the King having declined to accept the plan of Necker, he had chosen the alternative of resigning. This news very soon spread a universal alarm. All of the Third Estate and a part of the nobility came to him. Two thousand persons were at his door.

The King and the Queen, not doubting but that Necker wished to give his resignation, sent for him. The Third Estate, the people, accompanied him with cries to the château. Necker entered. The King and the Queen urgently asked him to remain, making a thousand promises of confidence, due perhaps more to the moment than to their true intention. Urged by his duty of preserving, as far as he was able, the fortunes of an infinite number of families who had loaned money to the King only through the confidence that they had in him; urged by the nation and by the King, he promised to remain.

When he left, this news spread and never have the transports of the public gone farther, never has the enthusiasm of a nation had a more touching character. His house was illuminated and the name of the King appeared there, and his also. At the same time, it was learned that at Paris the populace was in such despair at losing Necker that the greatest misfortunes were to be feared if he persisted in his resolution. I am, however, still ignorant as to whether he has acquired the necessary ascendancy to struggle against the intrigue of the Comte d'Artois.

¹ Louis Stanislas Xavier de Bourbon (1755–1824), eldest brother of Louis XVI

² Charles Philippe de Bourbon (1757–1836), Comte d'Artois (1757–1824), brother of Louis XVI

³ Pierre Charles Laurent de Villedeuil (1742–1828), Secretary of State of the Royal Household (1788–1789), Counselor of State (1788–1792)

The majority of the clergy went to the National Assembly yesterday, and this morning forty-seven noblemen, among whom the Duc d'Orléans and the greatest names of France are counted. The majority of the nobility and the minority of the clergy resolved to accept the plans of the King as His Majesty proposed them.

The Third Estate, having now become the National Assembly, will not accept them. But as the great dispute among them is as to whether they shall deliberate in common upon the organization of the Estates General; it is hoped that the King will ask the nobility to renounce this modification of his plan and there will only remain the statement of seignorial rights for the nobility and matters of religion for the clergy. All will be agreed.

The time is very critical, for the people grossly insulted the Archbishop of Paris yesterday, and if they are not stopped, they will take this culpable manner of forcing action. It is unfortunate that the people mix in these affairs, but when once affairs reach such a point, the people are sovereign.

Fred Morrow Fling. *Source Studies on the French Revolution* (Lincoln: Students Co-Operative Book Company, 1899), I:10–12.