

REPORT ON THE ROYAL SESSION

Antonio Capello, Venetian Ambassador to France

Paris, 29 June 1789

Tuesday, the 23rd of the present month, was a very interesting day, as I have informed the Most Excellent Senate in my respectful communication. His Majesty held the royal session at 9 o'clock in the morning. After a brief discourse, in which he said that it was time to stop the effect of exaggerated pretenses, that he owed it to the constitution of the kingdom to repress the attacks that were made upon it, the Guard of the Seals¹ read a declaration of the King containing thirty-five articles, and this annuls the action taken by the third estate. Then the Sovereign declared that he was going to manifest his wishes, expressed in fifteen articles, which the Guard of the Seals read and which I have the honor to send to Your Excellency, together with the other one within the same wrapper. The intentions of the King and the things asked for were truly excellent in themselves, but this was not the moment to present them. At the close of the general assembly, the third estate, or the commons, remained in the hall and almost unanimously passed the declaration that the National Assembly persisted in its preceding decisions.

As this general assembly took place contrary to the judgment of Necker, who knew well what the consequences of it would be, he asked the King to excuse him from being present at the assembly, at the end of which he unexpectedly asked for his dismissal. The King was hesitating whether he should grant it or not when, an hour before midnight, the people of Versailles, having learned of what had taken place that day, flocked in the greatest numbers to the chateau, calling out "Long live Necker". Then the King and the Queen asked that he be called, and it was only at the sight of him, and his assurance that he would continue in the ministry, that the multitude dispersed.

There was a rumor that the princes, frightened at the sight of so menacing a populace, called to arms and that the soldiers did not wish to obey, but that is false. It is very true that the French guards, having gone beyond all limits of subordination, caused a great scandal in Paris, running about the city intoxicated and crying "Long live the third estate!" which served to encourage the frenzied people greatly. But the end of this revolution, which menaced the public tranquility, was fortunate. The day after the Royal Assembly, the majority of the clergy followed the prudent resolution of uniting with the third estate, where they were received with transports of joy. Thursday, the Duc d'Orléans and a part of the nobility, to the number of forty-seven, came also to unite with the two orders—that is, with the third estate and with the majority of the clergy—and they were received with tears.

Then the assembly considered the verification of the credentials in common and passed decrees that will be spoken of at another time. To render this union of the three orders in the hall of the States General complete, His Majesty wrote a letter Saturday morning to the majority of the nobility and to the minority of the clergy, and both passed a resolution that day to defer to the invitation of the King, and to go immediately, without reserve or protest, to the common hall to unite with the National Assembly.

When the people heard the news of the complete union, they were joyful; they went in a crowd to the palace, crying in all the courts of the castle, "Long live the King". And when the King and then the Queen showed themselves upon the balcony, the acclamations redoubled, at which token the sovereigns wept for joy. This same report having immediately spread in Paris, produced great cheerfulness, especially in the order of the third estate; but now the greatest question will be this, whether they will vote by order or by head, and then it is necessary to see how the third estate will bear itself after this victory, moderation not being a virtue of the people.

Fred Morrow Fling. *Source Studies on the French Revolution* (Lincoln: Students' Co-Operative Book Company, 1899), I:13–14.

¹ Pierre Charles Laurent de Villedeuil (1742–1828), Secretary of State of the Royal Household (1788–1789), Counselor of State (1788–1792)