

symbolized the despotism of the old regime. Its fall marked the triumph of liberty and the intervention of the Parisian populace into the turbulent events of the revolution.

From *A Parisian Newspaper Account*, July 14, 1789

The night of Monday to Tuesday was extremely quiet, apart from the arrest by the citizen militia of some thirty-four unauthorised persons, who had plundered and caused a great deal of damage at St.-Lazare; they have been taken into custody. . . .

But a victory of outstanding significance, and one which will perhaps astonish our descendants, was the taking of the Bastille, in four hours or so.

First, the people tried to enter this fortress by the Rue St.-Antoine, this fortress, which no one has ever penetrated against the wishes of this frightful despotism and where the monster still resided. The treacherous governor had put out a flag of peace. So a confident advance was made; a detachment of French Guards, with perhaps five to six thousand armed bourgeois, penetrated the Bastille's outer courtyards, but as soon as some six hundred persons had passed over the first drawbridge, the bridge was raised and artillery fire mowed down several French Guards and some soldiers; the cannon fired on the town, and the people took fright; a large number of individuals were killed or wounded; but then they rallied and took shelter from the fire; a row of bayonets, fixed in the wall, enabled some brave individual to cut through a post that locked the drawbridge; immediately it fell and they came to the second ditch, near which lay the first victims; meanwhile, they tried to locate some cannon; they attacked from the water's edge through the gardens of the arsenal, and from there made an orderly siege; they advanced from various directions, beneath a ceaseless round of fire. It was a terrible scene. The brave French Guard did wonders. About three o'clock they captured the overseer of the gunpowder store, whose uniform made them mistake him for the Governor of the Bastille; he was manhandled and taken to the town, where he was recognised and set free. The fighting grew steadily more intense; the citizens had become hardened to the fire; from all directions they clambered onto the roofs or broke into the rooms; as soon as an enemy appeared among the turrets on the tower, he was fixed in the sights of a hundred guns and mown down in an instant; meanwhile cannon fire was hurriedly directed against the second drawbridge, which it pierced, breaking the chains; in vain did the cannon on the tower reply, for most people were sheltered from it; the fury was at its height; people bravely faced death and every danger; women, in their eagerness, helped us to the utmost; even the children, after the discharge of fire from the fortress, ran here and there picking up the bullets and shot; [and so the Bastille fell and the governor, De Launay, was captured] . . . they strip him of his badges of rank; they treat him shamelessly; he is dragged through the crowd . . . Serene and blessed liberty, for

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the first time, has at last been introduced into this abode of horrors, this frightful refuge of monstrous despotism and its crimes.

Meanwhile, they get ready to march; they leave amidst an enormous crowd; the applause, the outbursts of joy, the insults, the oaths hurled at the treacherous prisoners of war; everything is confused; cries of vengeance and of pleasure issue from every heart; the conquerors, glorious and covered in honour, carry their arms and the spoils of the conquered, the flags of victory, the militia mingling with the soldiers of the fatherland, the victory laurels offered them from every side,—all this created a frightening and splendid spectacle. On arriving at the square, the people, anxious to avenge themselves, allowed neither De Launay nor the other officers to reach the place of trial; they seized them from the hands of their conquerors, and trampled them underfoot one after the other. De Launay was struck by a thousand blows, his head was cut off and hoisted on the end of a pike with blood streaming down all sides. . . . This glorious day must amaze our enemies, and finally usher in for us the triumph of justice and liberty. In the evening, there were celebrations.

Feudal Rights Abolished

On the night of August 4, 1789, after hearing reports of peasant uprisings in the countryside, the delegates to the National Assembly voted to destroy noble rights and privileges that still existed. The declarations of that long and dramatic session were set forth more soberly in the decree of August 11. On August 26, the Assembly voted for the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, which was to serve as a preamble to the new constitution. A year later the Assembly turned its attention to the Catholic church, and in its most controversial early legislation, it confiscated church lands, stripped church officials of special privileges, and established the clergy as paid servants of the French state.

The August 4th Decrees (August 4-11, 1789)

1. The National Assembly abolishes the feudal regime entirely, and decrees that both feudal and *censuel* rights and dues deriving from real or personal *main-morte* and personal servitude, and those representative thereof, are abolished without indemnity, and all others declared redeemable; and that the price and manner of redemption shall be established by the National Assembly. Those of the said dues which are not suppressed by the present decree, however, shall continue to be collected until reimbursement has been made.

2. The exclusive right to *fuies* and *colombiers* is abolished; pigeons shall be confined at times determined by the communities; and during such periods they shall be regarded as game, and everyone shall have the right to kill them on his own land.

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