

UNION, COURAGE, SURVEILLANCE,

et la République est sauvée.

Union, Courage, Surveillance, and the Republic is Saved.¹

Convention, you show yourself and the partisan spirit faints away.² Paris, you rise up and the conspirators hide themselves. Commune, Sections, Citizens, crime observes: you observe too. Agitators watch out for sleep; let your eyelids close only when the Republic is out of danger. Let all citizens be armed day and night, and instead of mounting guard fortnightly let them mount it every twenty-four hours, The slightest negligence can lose the republic. Feast days particularly are gala days for the agitators for they know these are days when the populace abandons its work to unbend with open and pure gaiety. It is at such times of relaxation that the conspirators diffuse, at their leisure, crime's poison in the midst of these delights.

Mayor of Paris, General of the National Guard, it is not enough that your active surveillance saved Paris twice in the last fortnight by confounding hatred and envy.³ You may yet need to redouble your courage in order for your names to pass on to posterity. The final efforts of the aristocracy and Philippe's party will risk everything; may the blows they wish to rain on the Republic only fall on their odious machination.

Convention, Commune, Sections, Mayor, General of Paris, and all the constituted Powers, are you really Republican? If you are you must be aware of the extreme measures you are yet to take; these measures are violent, I myself had disapproved of them but the circumstances have taught me to change my opinions.

The Bourbons keep the fire of discord burning. Philippe, especially, serves as a rallying point for the conspirators. He may be innocent, but he is guilty in the eyes of the Republic when he becomes an object of concern to it; let him go and live in the United States of America, bearing the protection of the French Republic. He would surely live there happy and quiet. Time will do the rest. I believe I am doing him a service by offering him this advice. I would be within my rights to criticise him for if he were a good citizen why did he send the greatest share of his fortune abroad? And why has he so little faith in the French government? Would he have wished, by this precaution, to risk everything by firmly underscoring his projects? And is it not manifest that what he is saying to himself is: 'If I become king, regent or dictator, I will be powerful enough, wealthy enough in France; if I fail in my project my fortune is assured elsewhere.' If this conduct is not criminal it is at least very strange and very suspicious of the Republic. I will tell Philippe even greater truths: were I to save my country before my death, I would forgive my assassins.

1 Produced in March 1793 as a poster (then published in the pamphlet edition of *Avis pressant à la Convention, par une vraie républicaine* (*An Urgent Notice to the Convention, from a True Republican Woman*)) this text shows clearly the anxiety de Gouges and others felt at the military and political setbacks during this time. French troops, stretched by internal as well as external conflicts, were showing signs of defeat. One senses an author saddened by her failure to encourage those in power to unite, and obliged to question her pacifist sensibilities. De Gouges unleashes her fury at the duc d'Orléans' camp. Now renamed the more republican Philippe Égalité she accuses him of betraying the revolution he allegedly supports. Her anger is undoubtedly fuelled in part by her association with him in the past (she dedicated her 1788 *Oeuvres* to him but even more by the recent physical attack she suffered at the hands of an assailant clearly orchestrated by the Orléans household, almost certainly initiated by the duc's secretary Laclos.

2 Convention was the name given to the third iteration of France's ruling body since July 1789, the first was the National Assembly, the second from 1 October 1791 was named the Legislative Assembly and the third from 21 September 1792 was named Convention in honour of the 1787 American gathering of that name that led to the signing of the United States Constitution.

3 Jean-Nicolas Pache (1746 – 1823) was Mayor of Paris from February 1793 to May 1794.

Citizens, you have seen me abide by the laws of my country, and defend a constitution, masterpiece of the human spirit that could not withstand the disfigurement imposed upon it by the falsehood of the leader and his agents. It pained me to see the collapse of this constitution. I admit it, to console myself, I have recognised that it was nothing but a beautiful dream, and that kings never act in the interests of peoples. I had intuited this truth from my earliest years, this constitutional masterpiece had always fascinated me. This social contract was made for a brotherhood of man. I had thought that from it to the Republic would be just one small step. I recovered my true principles in this government: death, I swear it, or I will defend it.

Therefore learn, citizens, to feel these republican virtues, half-measures are always damaging. Great wrongs require great manoeuvres; when evil is contagious roots must be cut for the shade of a tree's branches can poison a free earth.

The distancing of the Bourbons from the Republic's territory will break all the threads of discord and conspiracy. The rabble-rousers and the tyrants help themselves via opposing paths and diverse interests; Philippe outside our territory surprises and horrifies the foreign powers. That is when you will see the courage of our volunteers revive itself, our generals will head straight for the enemy and the independence of our Republic will be recognised by the whole of Europe. That is when you will see the peoples of the Universe imperceptibly regenerated, the fugitives from other nations will bring us back the funds that the emigrants took to their countries. Could you prevaricate and hold on to three or four Bourbon families under the specious pretext of their slaves who say that their expenditures enrich the Republic? Cast out these vile personal interests: public fortune makes it imperative.

Citizens, the Bourbons, far from our borders, will be like the affect of the sun on clouds; storms, tempests, all will disappear and days of serenity will cast light on the Republican.

I would like to develop my observations further but ill, and pursued by assassins, I hastily threw down my ideas on paper, without reconsidering them. Nothing can stop me when it comes to saving my country, and until my last breath I will devote all my time to it.

OLYMPE DE GOUGES