

Celebrating the Revolution on the Duchess's Moreuil Estate

Summary

The first anniversary of the Storming of the Bastille was celebrated on an epic scale in Paris. Out in Moreuil the duchess and the relations she had staying with her found themselves at the centre of the local municipality's festivities for the same occasion. This truce between the old France and the new did not last long: within a month the duchess found herself under seige on her estate, as she described in her very next Letter.

Date and place of writing

31 July 1790, Moreuil

Themes

- The Duchess
- National Politics
- Public Opinion
- Municipal Government

Letter

Moreuil. 31 July 1790

This much-publicised 14 July, so feared by many people, went just as I had expected, Madame. Everyone busied themselves with the numerous celebrations for the day, overcome with joy at all the goings-on and ignoring the stupidity of throwing money away by the sackful in a time of penury: the 400 million stolen from the church and from charitable foundations was used to inebriate the most wicked sections of the general populace, and to win over the most dreadful women. Our own respectable municipality did not require us to attend the morning ceremony, where I would certainly not have been able to bring myself to swear the oath,¹ and for the evening they requested that the Rougé children² join them for a dance. So as to give me, along with various ladies who were staying at mine, the pleasure of watching this, 5 or 600 of the people descended on my courtyard. The marquise de Rougé, still displaying her youthful beauty, danced with the mayor, and her children chose to honour all those with ties to the municipality and the National Guardsmen. I

gave a little money for refreshments and the fiddlers, and before nightfall we all went our separate ways full of mutual happiness.

Notes

1. These first anniversary celebrations of the Fall of the Bastille initiated a long-running practice of encouraging citizens to swear an oath of loyalty to the Nation and, by implication, to the Revolution and its principles.
2. The marquise de Rougé, a relative of the duchess who was staying with her at that time, had two young sons: Bonabes-Alexis and Adrien.

Source

Archives nationales de France, F7 4775/1 (notebook 1, pp. 42-43).

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