

The Execution of Louis XVI

Summary

The deposed king's trial before the nation's elected representatives in the National Convention began on 11 December 1792. A guilty verdict was never in doubt, but there was bitter debate between the Girondin and Montagnard factions about what punishment should accompany this verdict, as well as whether a national referendum should take place to ratify it. The proposal for an 'appeal to the people' was rejected, and a death sentence was finally confirmed on 20 January 1793 by 387 votes to 334. Louis's execution took place the following day. The duchess contrasts the former king's ignominious end with the honour accorded to the body of a deputy in the National Convention who had just been assassinated. This entry comes from the section of the Elbeuf manuscript comprising short daily entries rather than the much longer letter entries found earlier in the notebook series.

Date and place of writing

21 January 1793, Paris

Themes

- National Politics
- Violence
- Monarchy
- Public Opinion
- Revolutionary Justice

Letter

21st. They cut the king's head off in the Place de Louis XV, between 10 and 11 in the morning, and nobody said a word against it because of the sheer number of armed ruffians holding back his faithful subjects. The previous evening, a former guard of His Majesty called Pâris confronted Monsieur de Saint-Fargeau over his crimes and murdered him. The following day his body was carried to the Place Royale, where the people all rushed to see it, and the Convention decreed that he will be accorded extraordinary funerary honours, paid for by the nation, and with its representatives in attendance. Meanwhile the body of the sacred king is thrown in a hole 12 foot deep and filled with quicklime.

Source

Archives nationales de France, F7 4775/1 (notebook 5, p. 147).

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