

The french revolution – collapse of the ancient regime assignment

[History](#)



The Collapse of the Ancient Regime. The memorandum sent to the king by the princes of the blood in December 1788 is a document of record; as it is the petition itself, not a record of it and it is a private source as it was generated solely for the use of the king, although the petition was published shortly afterwards, and therefore became a public source.

The source was written in the period of the ancient regime, a month before the French revolution occurred in 1789 and is a strong source of information concerning the collapse of the ancient regime, it contains the worries and concerns people had over the opposition to the ancient regime and the third estate.

The source cannot be representative for the whole of the ancient regime as it only relates to December 1788, we would need to look at other sources such as other petitions, decrees, declarations and newspapers before and after December 1788 to obtain a detailed understanding of the reasons why the ancient regime collapsed, even though some were mentioned in the memorandum. The princes of the blood created the document and its purpose was to inform the king of the problems he and the kingdom faced.

It is a reliable source of information; the princes had a leading role in the 'Assembly of Notables' and presided over various committees gaining a good insight to the disagreements and disputes which existed and would gain nothing by being dishonest especially as the Assembly of Notables had already been dismissed. However, it only provides us with the attitudes of one particular group out of the Assembly of Notables, we can't see the signatures in the extract and there may have been an inclination to

exaggerate or reinforce views which may have posed a threat towards themselves.

In the extract there are several words that require elucidation in order to gain a better understanding of the extract such as; Third Estate, the two orders, Estates General. The Estates General was a medieval body and consisted of three estates or orders; the Clergy, the Nobility and the Third Estate (which consisted of the rest of French population who weren't in the clergy or the nobility) Homage, feudal dues. A medieval system of political organization involving the relationship of lord and people with all land held in fee or acts done as form of payment.

Some others are as follows; ' the mode hallowed by law and custom', " renounce any prerogatives which have pecuniary value" and " barbarous, oppression" With respect to the collapse of the ancient regime, from this source we can learn through the witting testimony that the state was in danger with respect to the differing views to the way the monarchy was operating resulting in a revolution being prepared, the king was in danger of losing the throne although we don't know the reasons as to why all the disputes originated from this extract.

We can also learn that it appeared unpopular for the Third Estate to have two votes instead of one like the others and that they should be focusing on trying to reduce their share of taxation instead. The princes of the blood appear to feel strongly about the fundamental principles of the governing body, how they have operated perfectly well in the past; the right to equal

votes, the separate orders ??? “ these unchangeable foundations of the French monarchy”, and yet much deliberation appeared.

The most important unwitting testimony in the extract that I can see is the immense divide in opinions and attitudes towards French monarchy which are considered dangerous and a warning that something must change or a collapse of the ancient regime may be imminent. One other unwitting testimony that emerges is the disputed idea of the Third Estate having one more vote than the other two orders, if it stayed the was the princes of the blood think it should be, the Clergy and Nobility will appear much more popular and favourable when they offer to pay more money towards taxation to help the Third Estate citizens.

Another seemingly important unwitting testimony is how a petition seemed to be the best way of getting your views across and that they would be listened to and considered, despite the fact the Assembly of Notables had collapsed, but perhaps special reservation was made as the princes of the blood were Louis XVI blood relatives.

In conclusion, I think this source is very reliable and provides us with snatches of important information; of which some proved to be true and some of which were later acted upon within the French Revolution but, as with any source, we need to look at others before deciding upon a well formulated reason as to why the ancient regime collapsed. Bibliography J. Hardman, ed. 1999, The French Revolution Sourcebook, 2nd edn, London, Arnold, pp. 69-71