Welcome Delegates,

It is the summer of 1789, a time of heightened tensions between the citizens of France and the monarchy, and there is an aura of insurrection in the air. Each of you will be assigned the position of a specific figure in the National Assembly and you must research this individual and where he or she stood in the situation so that you may accurately represent these viewpoints in committee. Adherence to the opinions of the individual being represented is crucial and will be considered for awards. Do not fret if the person you are representing has radical or unique ideas from the rest of the committee, we want a variety of opinions to stir up debate!

All delegates are required to write a position paper which provides background information about your historical figure as well as in depth discussion of each of the topics, primarily focusing of specific solutions and strategies to be employed. Material from the background guide may be used but additional research will be necessary to develop a thorough understanding of the topic. The position paper should be 2-3 pages in length, single spaced and all information MUST be cited. Don’t forget to include your own name, the individual you are representing as well as your school. Please email your position paper to us at least two days prior to the conference and bring a printed copy at the start of the first committee session.

The two of us are seniors in the IB program at Henrico High and we have been involved in Model UN throughout high school, attending conferences such as VAMUN, GSMUN and NAIMUN. Our time in this club has provided us with great experiences and improved upon our speaking and writing skills. We hope that you guys will have the same experience in this committee whether you are a beginner at MUN or if you have been to multiple conferences already.

We have high hopes for this committee and we know that you all will contribute great ideas and practice effective diplomacy to solve the issue at hand. Whether this is your first conference ever, or perhaps your first crisis committee, do not be afraid to speak up and participate. We want to hear from everyone and so will your fellow delegates, so don’t worry about ‘sounding stupid’ or having ‘bad ideas’ because that is not possible in our committee! ☺

Best Wishes,

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**Introduction**

Since 1614, the États-Générals had not been called to meet at Versailles, the residence of the monarchy. After the discovery that Étienne Charles Loménie de Brienne was pilfering through the national treasury, Louis XVI saw no option but to call to order the États-Générals to reform the economy of France. In 1788, the elections for seats were held, and on May 5, 1789 their first meeting since 1614 was held at Versailles. Immediately, the assigned task was pushed aside in order to find some sort of order amongst the representatives. The Premier État was comprised of the clergymen, the men of the church. The Deuxième État was made up of the nobles and the Troisième État was meant for the commoners, but in reality was made up of the bourgeoisie. The Troisième État had actually been granted a “double representation”, or twice as many delegates, because of the amount of people being represented, but because all voting was counted by état and not by head, the double representation meant nothing. The Troisième refused this limitation and met on their own on May 28. They renamed themselves the Communes (Commons) and began verifying their power. Between June 13 and June 17, the Communes were joined by some of the nobility, the majority of the clergy, and peasants.

On June 17, 1789 the Communes, now joined by clergy, nobles, and peasants alike, officially convened under the name of Assemblie Nationale, or National Assembly. They deemed themselves an assembly composed of “the People” and invited the other orders to join them, but made it evident that affairs were to be conducted with or without the other orders.

Immediately the Assembly attached itself to the capitalists, who would be able to fund the national deficit, as well as to the commoners. Public debt was consolidated, all existing taxes were considered illegally imposed, and only provisionally were these taxes voted in, so long as the National Assembly is sitting. This gave the capitalists a better reputation and kept them interested in keeping the National Assembly sitting. Meanwhile, the commoners’ faith in the National Assembly was restored due to the committee of subsistence that was created by the National Assembly to deal with food shortage.

At first, the National Assembly felt (and publicized) that it was acting in the interest of King Louis XVI, as well as the interests of the people. However, the power of the monarchy still reigned, and new laws needed the approval of the king. In order to reel the États back in, Jacques Necker, the finance minister to the king, suggested that a Royal Session be held. While Louis XVI agreed, the three orders were never formally requested to attend the Royal Session. Debates were put on hold until the session was held.

Soon Louis XVI decided that Necker’s advice was not what he wanted, so he instead followed the advice of his privy council. Louis XVI annulled the decrees of the Assembly, commanded the orders to separate, and declared that the reforms be carried out by a restored États-Générals. On June 19, King Louis XVI closed the doors to the Salle des États, the hall where the National Assembly convened.

On June 20, when the representatives went to meet, they wre appalled that the doors were locked and guarded. Fearing a royal coup of the Assembly, they hastily met in the king’s nearby indoor tennis court. Here they collectively took an oath “never to separate, and to meet wherever circumstances demand, until the constitution of the kingdom is established and affirmed on solid foundations.” 576 men signed the oath, which was both an act of revolution and an assertion that political authority was derived from the populous, and not from the monarch.

**Topic 1: Organizing the National Assembly**

Amongst all of the chaos of separating from the États-Générals and being locked out of their own meeting hall, the National Assembly was finding trouble establishing a certain level of organization. Having essentially committed an act of revolution against the King of France, the Assembly needs to gain a semblance of stability. Originally purposed with reforming the economy, it is now evident that there are more problems with the government of France than simply a fiscal breakdown. The Tennis Court Oath sparked a sense of revolution in all of the members of the Assembly, laying the groundwork for a reformation that could upheave the monarchy. Yet in order to do that, order must be set in place.

The underlying issue of most failed revolutions is the lack of organization. Often there will be utter chaos and the eventual victor is the existing power, with the majority of the revolutionaries being sent to prison or death. The monarchy will undoubtedly ignore the presence of the National Assembly if it is still in disarray. In order for the National Assembly to achieve anything, to go in any direction, it must first determine what exactly needs to be changed how to go about doing so.

Questions to Consider:

1. In what ways did the États-Générals a weak form of having the citizens’ voices be heard and what could be bettered in the National Assembly?
2. How can the National Assembly solve the issue of underrepresentation that was apparent in the États-Générals to ensure that all peoples’ voices are heard?
3. How can the National Assembly establish itself as a legitimate body that has influence on the Ancien Régime and the future of France?

**Topic 2: Bringing About Change**

The members of the newly formed National Assembly have three primary goals to be accomplished in the near future: writing of a Constitution, economic restructuring and social reform. The first, which was explicitly stated in the Tennis Coart Oath, was to form a constitution. This constitution may be used to establish changes in the economic and governmental structure of the nation that the people have been seeking for so long.

The monarchical control of France’s political and economic system dates back to the 15th century and the system of absolute monarchy was established in the 16th century. Most of Europe’s nations at this time are run by monarchial system; however, the world has recently seen the ability of mere citizens to rebel and institute a democracy in the American Revolution. France was a strong ally of these rebels, the citizens of the colonies, during the war and their support was key in ensuring the establishment of a free nation separate from Great Britain. The Americans have been a great source inspiration for the French to work towards escape from the strict governance of a monarchy.

Involvement in the American Revolution well as the Seven Year’s War, took a major economic toll on the French. The King attempted to recover the lost money by increases taxes on the people, but this caused discontent. The citizens of the Troisième État were most dissatisfied with this as they were required to pay the highest taxes, while the nobles and clergy of the Premier and Deuxième États were often excluded from taxes. Only going deeper into debt, King Louis appointed Jacques Necker, and after he failed, Charles de Calonne, as financial advisors who he hoped would provide solutions for the financial crisis. When neither man was able to do so King Louis turned to the États-Générals. Land ownership and tax obligations have been very disproportionately spread among the classes and bettering conditions for the middle and lower class is a top priority for the Assembly.

As was previously mentioned, a vast majority of revolutionaries have been killed by their respective government for their actions. The best way to avoid this catastrophe is for the National Assembly to maintain the support of the commoners. With all of the starvation and economic unbalance, King Louis XVI does not want to give the populous another reason to dislike him. Once the people support the National Assembly, the pressure from the monarchy will diminish. What will in turn happen is that the monarchy will receive more pressure from the people to reach an agreement with the National Assembly. Thus it is imperative that the Assembly win over the people of France in order to have enough power to reform the government.

Radical thoughts have been spreading about France, with the possibility of revolution becoming quite real. The National Assembly must decide whether to attempt negotiations with the King or resort to rebellion. If the latter is the course of action decided upon, then armed forces will most likely be necessary to combat the King’s army and the Assembly may consider forming alliances with other nations or groups. Turning to the newly independent Americans is a possibility, however, they are themselves still attempting to organize and stabilize their nation. It is important to bear in mind that the Ancien Regime may easily find allies in the British and other monarchial European countries hoping to rid the world of radical notions that would threaten their control.

Questions to Consider:

1. Is the best way to incite change to attempt negotiation with the King or are drastic measures necessary?
2. Should the monarchy be completely eliminated or simply repressed, and how can the National Assembly ensure that the citizens of the Third Estate are appropriately represented in the future?
3. The root of the issue currently being faced is the financial crisis; how can the government escape from debt without burdening the people with taxes?
4. If the path of revolution is chosen, then how will the National Assembly and the citizens of France combat the government? If offensive measures are to be used, from where will they get the manpower and weapons needed to engage in successful rebellion?

**Citations**

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