

The French Revolution and Napoleon

A SUMMER OF RIOTS

In the late summer of 1789, bread was in such short supply that French women fought for it in bakeries. In one such incident, an angry mob killed a baker and a municipal officer. Outraged by the shortages and violence, revolutionary leader Jean Paul Marat wrote the following words to inspire the French people to revolution.

When public safety is in peril, the people must take power out of the hands of those to whom it is entrusted. . . . Put that Austrian woman . . . in prison. . . . Seize the ministers and their clerks and put them in irons. . . . Make sure of the mayor and his lieutenants; keep the general [Lafayette] in sight, and arrest his staff. . . . The heir to the throne has no right to a dinner while you want bread. Organize bodies of armed men.

March to the National Assembly and demand food at once. . . . Demand that the nation's poor have a future secured to them out of the national contribution. If you are refused, join the army, take the land, as well as the gold, which the rascals who want to force you to come to terms by hunger have buried, and share it among you. Off with the heads of the ministers and their underlings. Now is the time!

1. (a) Who is the Austrian woman to whom Marat refers? _____
(b) Why do you suppose Marat refers to her in this way rather than by her title?

2. Identify three courses of action recommended by Marat.

3. (a) What is the "national contribution" to which Marat refers? _____
(b) According to Marat, what should be done with the national contribution?

(c) In reality, how was the national contribution being used?

4. In the summer of 1789, the French people were hungry and desperate. Given this mood, how might Marat's words have affected them?
