

## The Effect of the Flight of King Louis XVI to Varennes

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### Abstract

*France is one of the most influential and prominent European countries in the developments of events in modern European history. This research focused on the political aspect, and the subject of studying important political figures who clearly influenced the history of France is chosen, whether at the national or global level. As historical studies aim to reveal the facts that were absent from many and to understand reality better. The history of the entire world has dealt with many figures who played an important role in shaping the historical events that the countries of the world went through, including the figure of the French King Louis XVI, who is at the forefront of the prominent figures in French history during that time and what happened during his reign of the revolution. The French world, the life and biography of King Louis XVI, starting from the year in which Louis XVI was born in 1754 AD, in an attempt to know how he grew up and the most important family circumstances he lived during his childhood and the nature of his relationship with his family members and his study to understand the nature of his personality, in addition to his political marriage to Marie Antoinette based on the alliance of France and Austria, until his ascension to the throne after the death of his grandfather Louis XV and his political role as King of France in the successive governments that ruled France from the year (1774 - 1793), and his reform attempts and the influence of foreign and domestic policies, in addition to the factors that led to the outbreak of the French Revolution during his reign and its development until the year 1793 AD, the year in which he was executed and the First French Republic appeared with his death.*

**Keywords:** France, Louis XVI, Varennes.

### Introduction

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds, and peace and blessings be upon the most honorable of the Messengers, our master Muhammad, the honest and faithful. And upon his family and companions, and those who followed them with charity until the Day of Judgment.

Many Iraqi and Arab academic researchers alike have been interested in recent years in the study of French history because of the great importance of this history at the Iraqi and Arab levels. Especially after it produced many results at all political, social, economic, and cultural levels.

In addition to the foregoing, the history of the whole world has dealt with many personalities who played an important role in drawing the historical events experienced by the countries of the world. And that French history is an important part of that.

History witnessed many personalities who played an important role in writing French history in particular, and European history in general.

On that basis, the topic “The effect of the flight of King Louis XVI to Varennes” was chosen as the title of the study. This included many events and results that were reflected at home and abroad in France and Europe in general.

The nature of the study required a descriptive approach to the events, including the information provided to us about the flight of King Louis XVI from Paris to the city of Varennes in 1791. This was presented accurately as it was for the Arab and Iraqi society. In addition to that, the historical sequence of events was used, as the nature of the subject necessitated us to use these two approaches.

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## The Effect of the Flight of King Louis XVI to Varennes

A brief description of Louis XVI (1754–1793) is in order here. He took over France as its king from 1774 to 1793. In the Palace of Versailles, he was brought into the world. Since birth, he has been looked at as Duke of Bari by his grandfather, Louis XV. At fifteen years old, he tied the knot with Marie Antoinette. In addition to sending off a French battalion under Lafayette, he stood by the American Revolution. He looked after the French Revolution, which finally brought about the fall of the absolute monarchy. He tried to run away from France with his wife in 1791, but they were tracked down and cut down by guillotine in Paris in 1793. (Americana Encyclopedia, 1904, pp. 656–657).

King Louis XVI went along with his advisers and decided to run off from Paris after a tight plan was worked out. The king and his family would break out to the garrison of Montmédy, a small castle situated on a hill located forty miles from Varennes. Preparations were carried out to house the royal family, which shot down the theory of revolutionaries that the king was planning to run off from France to foreign countries. The king's plan was to head up foreign forces and French immigrant forces to bring back the old order (Hardman, 1996, pp. 115–116).

The castle is located on the Dutch-Austrian border, where he would be waited for by the Marquis de Bouillé (1739–1800), commander of the army in Metz. After that, four German battalions and two battalions of Swiss soldiers would look out for the king. The coordinator of the escape plan was Count Axel Fersen. Fersen (1755–1810) was an officer of the Swedish battalion of the French army. Known for his decoration and courage, nicknamed the Rose of the North, he took part in the American War of Independence.

He was close to the court and doubted the existence of a romantic relationship with Queen Marie Antoinette (Yonge, 1876, pp. 172–173). Fersen pushed for the departure of the family in two separate express carriages, but the Queen held out for the Berlin carriage to transport the whole family. On June 20, 1791, the Berlin carriage is a large closed vehicle with four wheels (Al-Baalbaki, 1991, p. 68). After midnight, King Louis XVI set out with his wife Queen Marie Antoinette, his two children, and sister Madame Elizabeth.

As well as the royal nanny, the Marquis de Tourzel (1749–1832) and Count Fersen, as well as three trusted guards in disguise. The Marquis de Turzel took on the role of a Russian baron, Madame Korff. The king and queen acted as her own servants, while Madame Elizabeth acted as nurse for the two children of the Baroness. Count Fersen was in charge of the carriage. They were late in getting out of the Tuileries according to the timing laid out for the plan.

The king turned back to his room halfway on the stairs to jot down a note disowning his servant. The queen needed time to get away from General Lafayette (1757–1834), who was wandering in the gardens of the palace. On June 20, the Count de Provence (Browning, 1892, pp. 9–10), the king's brother, had taken off from France for Austrian territory (Fraser, 2001, p. 412).

The vehicle moved along rapidly without interruption until it showed up in Châlons in northeastern France (Browning, 1892, pp. 9–10) before midday. However, the vehicle had an accident and took some time to patch up. This brought about a difference in timing between the soldiers waiting for the procession and those who walked off when they could not find the vehicle. The vehicle carried on its march towards the second place of meeting in Sainte-Menehould. This disintegration brought down the plan as they made it to Varennes.

Varennes is a small town located in the Metz province in eastern France, 150 miles from Paris. It slopes down towards the Aire River with one narrow, long street (Ajmi & Dhaher, 2009, p. 89), located north of Eastern France (Browning, 1892, pp. 31–32). In general, in Varennes, the king did not come across the agreed security team. He was surprised on the side of the road by an ambush that was set up by the son of the head of the postal service, Jean-Baptiste Drouet.

The delay dragged on for five hours and resulted in the patrols being set up to look after the king beyond Châlons and in Sainte-Menehould to pull back. The son of the postmaster figured out the king, who had let down his disguise (Schama, 2009, pp. 648–650) (1763–1824) (Awad, 1992, pp. 146–147).

The three guards wanted to stand up for the king, but he refused to spill out any blood. In the presence of the mayor of the town, Mr. Jean Baptiste Sauce (1755–1825), the king held onto the mayor's hand and said:

“Yes, I am yours, and I hand over my fate and the fate of my wife, sister, and children in your hands. Our life and the fate of the kingdom hang on you. Allow me to carry on with my journey. I have no intention of breaking away from the country, either going off to a French city to be in the middle of part of the army to get back my true freedom that the factions in Paris kept away from me.

From there, I would like to work out an agreement with the association that is like me held back by fear. I am not about to tear down the constitution, but to shore up and save it. If you hold me back, I will lose me and all of France.

I call on you as a father, as a man, and as a French citizen to clear the way for us. In an hour, we will pull through, and France will pull through with us. If you look up to someone you call your master, I lay down to you as your king to allow us to leave.” (Abbott, 1849, p. 206).

Although the crowds were touched by the king's speech, it was too late. A bedroom was set up on the second floor in the mayor's house for the king and his family, waiting for the troops to show up from Paris. Paris had freaked out by discovering the escape of the royal family after the servants got into their apartments at seven o'clock in the morning, to find out their absence. Soon, the news got around (like wildfire), especially after the residents freaked out, expecting the enemies to take over France. General Lafayette was also blamed by Maximilien de Robespierre (1758–1794), who came down on him with threats of execution because of his role and involvement in the escape of the king. The Assembly announced that he had been kidnapped.

At dawn on June 21, 1791, fugitives' messengers from the Assembly turned up and called for the return of the royal family to Paris. The king gave out then, “there is no longer a king of France” (Schama, 2009, pp. 137–138).

The king was closed in by guards as well as the inhabitants of Varennes, which made his exit impossible. He was unable because of the barbarism of the crowds and the delay of setting off until the arrival of the Marquis de Poitiers with his soldiers to back him up. The people were crying out, demanding the removal of the king by force. Despite the procrastination, the king was made to step out with his family and get into his chariot to head back to Paris (Schama, 2009, pp. 651, 652; Awad, 1992, pp. 137–138).

The return trip was terrifying and humiliating for the royal family. On the way between the city of Eperna and Dormans, three commissioners of the association joined up with the king. The first was Jérôme Pétion. Born in the Chartres region, Jérôme Pétion (1753–1794) was a French writer, lawyer, and politician.

In 1791, he took part in the committee that cruelly dealt with King Louis XVI and his family when they were being transported from Varennes. The Queen backed up his bid to become Mayor of Paris that same year, which was a slight to General Lafayette. The National Convention voted in Pétion as its first president. He served from September 20 to October 4, 1792.

He stood by the king's execution, was imprisoned in Paris following the events of June 2, 1793, and then broke out to Caen and the Gironde to avoid punishment. Saint-Émilien is where his body was come across in 1794 (Challamel & Lacroix, 1889, p. 34).

The second was Antoine Barnave. He was a French lawyer, author, and politician who lived from 1761 until 1793. He got into the Jacobin Club and the National Assembly before joining up with the Feuillant Club. After his covert letters to the Queen to bring back the king's constitutional authority were found out, he

was called out for treason and cut down by guillotine on November 28, 1793. He was a proponent of constitutional monarchy (Chisholm, 1911, pp. 411–412).

Lastly, Comte de La Tour Mauburg (1756-1831). The return trip was a real tragedy. The news of the escape got out, and panic broke out about a foreign invasion, reverberating in the country. Members of the Jacobin Club put out a statement calling on citizens to take up arms.

Rumors went around about the extermination of fleeing in revenge for the king, and newspapers brought out offensive pictures of the king. In the suburbs of Paris, everyone could pick up on the curses of women on the queen.

There was no celebration of the king's return to Paris. The citizens kept on their hats, a sign of lack of joy, and the soldiers of the National Guard held up their weapons as a sign of defiance.

With the return of the royal family to Paris after the failed escape, and despite the kidnapping scenario, it was impossible to believe it. The king, upon his escape, had left behind a statement condemning the events and revolution that came about.

Giving the king a constitutional role was a lie because he had no real role or authority (Schama, 2009, pp. 654–656; Rashid, 1986, pp. 75–76). Divisions and accusations of helping King Louis XVI escape began to show up many, including the Bishop of Talleyrand (1754–1838).

He was called out for receiving large sums of money from the king in exchange for helping to escape. Bishop Talleyrand quickly got rid of the accusations, which is easy to believe because of his well-known love for money and luxury (McCabe, 1906, p. 98). The king's escape backfired (Abbott, 1849; Browning, 1892).

The lie of the abduction was the only way in which the Assembly, General Lafayette, the King, and the Queen were let off in France but temporarily. The approval of the king's flight to the enemy camp necessitated his deposition, trial, and execution, which was turned down by the constitutional monarchists (Awad, 1992, pp. 137–138; Soboul, 1970, pp. 200–201).

This was backed up by the left of the extreme folk clubs, in particular, the Sans-Culottes. The term stands for laborers, housekeepers, artisans, and small business owners, all of whom rose up in the spring of 1792.

The phrase “those without knee-breeches,” or sans-culottes, was used to point out those who hated the silk stockings worn by the wealthy nobility and bourgeoisie, not because they didn't wear pants (Heridi, 2009, pp. 61–62; Ramadan, 1997, pp. 360–361; Fouret & Richet, 2012, p. 176).

The royal palace ended up under the forced guard of the association. There was no longer any privacy for the royal family. The palace gates, gardens, and tiles were shut down, and the people allowed in to see the king and queen were determined.

Others were not let in, and guards were set up on every door and corridor, even the private corridor between the king's and queen's room. All doors had to be kept open, including bedrooms, violating the privacy of women, especially the queen.

The queen had to put up with sleeping between her bed and the door to be hidden from the guards' eyes. The king was taken aback by the events he was going through and the disasters that came upon him.

He looked in on a state of daze, as if his mind was exhausted and paralyzed. He was getting around sadly and in a state of despair and indifference. He did not strike up any conversation with anyone for ten days.

He was caught up in gloomy silence until the queen pleaded with him while kneeling on her knees. She brought forward her children in front of his eyes and begged him to stand up to everything for her sake and for their little ones.

In addition to being faithful and without having an affair or illegitimate child, the monarch was well-known for his devotion to his wife and kids (Abbott, 1849, pp. 224–225).

In the meantime, specifically on July 16, 1791, demonstrations broke out, which called for the deposition of the king in the Place de Mars. These demonstrations were led by the Cordelier Club and Saint Quelot and at the instigation of the Duke of Orléans, the king's cousin.

Events sped up, and the next day (50) thousand demonstrators came together, and (6) thousand signatures were gathered up to isolate the king and push him off the throne and ask for his trial.

However, the Constituent Assembly called for the dispersal of the masses due to chaos and riots. They were of the opinion that the return of the king to his throne and reining in his powers until the completion of the drafting of a constitution for the country was necessary.

They also wanted to force on the king the oath of fidelity to the constitution. So, the National Guard, headed up by General Lafayette, took over the Place de Mars. During the dispersal of the demonstrators, groups of unarmed masses fell down dead (Al-Douri, 2014, p. 54; Abdulrahim, 1995, p. 151–153).

The decision to stop the king stirred up a number of European countries. These countries were afraid of and freaked out by the French revolutionary tide spreading out to reach them (Ramadan, 1997, p. 362; Durant & Durant, 2002, p. 95; Soboul, 1970, p. 204).

The Emperor of Austria had a personal goal, which was to look out for his sister Queen Marie Antoinette and his son-in-law, the King of France. So, in agreement with the King of Prussia, Frederick William II, he came out with the Declaration of Pillnitz on August 27, 1791.

According to the declaration, “The two kings are ready to step in quickly in agreement with the necessary forces, but on the condition that other countries come together in their efforts at that time, and in that case, intervention will come about” (Al-Douri, 2014, p. 55; Al-Nuwwar & Na'nai, 2014, pp. 43–441).

In this, we announced that the countries of Europe would go all out to protect, ensure, and guarantee the safety of King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette and bring back the royal family to France (Karqut, 1980, p. 151; Al-Sayed, 2006, p. 31; Palmer, 1957, p. 354).

In the meantime, the Assembly worked on finishing up the constitution, which was signed off on on September 3, 1791. It was handed over to King Louis XVI, who went along with it and swore by the constitution and France the oath of sincerity after putting his name on it on September 13, 1791.

Following the issuance of the constitution on September 13 and the amnesty for political prisoners on September 15, several nobles took advantage of them. They got away across the border to the Rhine region to team up with the army of émigrés.

Louis XVI was called on by the king's brothers, the Count d'Artois and the Duke of Provence, in a letter dated September 10, not to accept the constitution. They pointed out that accepting it would be taken as giving in to pressure and threats, and that his orders would not stand for his free will (Hampson, 2008, p. 118).

The king declared to the deputies: “I no longer have any doubt in the will of the people, so I go along with the constitution and promise to stand by it in the homeland. I pledge to fight off any attack from outside and to carry it out by every means given to me” (ibid).

One of the most prominent principles laid out in the new constitution is that the French monarchy is passed down in the royal dynasty from one male to another, according to the system of virginity.

The sovereignty is given its start by the nation, which takes care of its functions through the king and elected bodies. This made the king draw on his authority from the people and not from God.

The French king was tied down by the constitution and cut back in powers to stand for the will of the nation. The constitution secured its political rights. The king took over the executive authority and became the first leader in the public administration of France.

He also stepped into the role of Commander-in-Chief of the Land and Naval Forces. He was allowed to handle the external security of the Kingdom, look after rights and property, and had the right to pick out or reject ministers.

They are not put together before the Assembly or come along with it. The King's order is not carried out if it is not brought up or signed by the minister or the caretaker of the concerned ministry.

The ministers are held accountable for breaking into the property and personal freedom or giving away public money for their ministries. They are called upon to turn up every year to the legislative body at the opening of the session to look into the allocations of their ministries. The right to veto was handed over to the King (veto) for a certain period on some laws or legislation brought out by the Assembly.

The King looks after the currency industry on which his image is laid down, and puts in employees and officials in mints. He takes up all his powers to hold onto the constitution and bring about laws. The constitution also pointed out some cases in which the king is thrown out or taken away his status and brought up accountable as an ordinary citizen. This comes up if he takes off from France and does not come back after two months of the request to get back to him by the legislative committees.

Or if he brings in the army or its forces to fight the nation or stands against an official order to do so. (Mahmoud, 2021, pp. 24–25; Al-Nuwwar & Na'nai, 2014, pp. 47–48; Planteau, 1890, pp. 51–52).

The authority of the Assembly has been laid out by bringing up and signing off laws. Its members are picked up by the people for a period of two years. The deputy can only be called up after a decade has passed since the end of his term. This sets out the role of its convening and the King cannot break up the Assembly. The Assembly works out public expenditures, putting in taxes, weights and the value of the currency. It keeps up with officials and conspirators working against the Constitution. It does not set off war except by decree of the legislature on an official proposal from the King to sign off. The same goes for alliances and agreements for imminent or direct aggression. The king is tied up by the decision to get into the war first by the decision of the legislature (Mahmoud, 2021, p. 26).

The Constitution also spelled out that members of the Constituent Assembly cannot be put up for the Legislative Assembly. This can only come about after a decade has passed since its formation. France also set up administratively to (83) Directorate taking into account geographical considerations in the demarcation of provincial boundaries.

It tried to come up equal in area (Murad, 2010, p. 31). The new system cut off the right to put up and pick out most citizens. For the estimated population of (Shoukry, 2008, p. 237) million there are working citizens figured out at (4,298,360) and voters (50,000) thousand. That decision has been called out because it passed over the equality of the people. It brought out class differentiation in a new dress and led to the building up of the middle class.

With the signing off of the Constitution, the era of the Constituent Assembly wound up. It broke up itself on September 30, 1791 (Ramadan, 1997, 362). The power of the Legislative went into force October 1, 1791. This marked the setting off of the Legislative Assembly's first session, which wrapped up in September 1792.

Following the breaking up of the National Assembly and the wrapping up of the constitution, this authority was handed over. It had 745 members, of whom 264 were conservative right-wing monarchy supporters (Feuillants), 136 were left-wing (Girondins, Jacobins, etc.), and 345 were independents or constitutionalists tied up to the revolution (Al-Bustani, 1884, p. 41; Palmer, 1992, pp. 331–401).

## Conclusion

- The escape of King Louis XVI with his wife is one of the most important results of the French Revolution and had serious repercussions on the French interior and abroad.
- The king's escape to Varennes was a milestone, and it was the zero hour that determined the fate of the king, who preferred to sacrifice the bloodshed of his supporters than to sacrifice the blood of the revolutionaries who attacked his palace and his family, and wanted to assassinate them, as his reluctance led to the loss of great opportunities to recover his power.
- The escape had serious consequences in the external European arena through the desire of European countries to intervene in French internal affairs in order to save the royal family, especially by Austria and Prussia.
- The Constituent Assembly tried with all its might to avoid the anger of the French people from the royal family because of the escape by spreading the idea of kidnapping the royal family, but this prevents the people from demanding that the king be prosecuted.
- Supporters of the republican system played a major role in stirring up domestic public opinion in France against the royal family and supporters of the monarchy.

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