
English polemics on the French revolution

❶ English satirical cartoon by Isaac Cruikshank, January 1, 1793. It mocks Edmund Burke, the famous MP, who had fiercely attacked the French revolution in his *Reflections on the French revolution* published in 1790.



❷ From a letter sent by the writer Horace Walpole to his friend Hannah More on January 24, 1795.

I could feel no pity on reading the account of the death of Condorcet¹ (if true, though I doubt it). He was one of the greatest monsters exhibited by history; and is said to have poisoned himself from famine and fear of the guillotine [...] Though we must not assume a pretension to judging of divine judgments, yet we may believe that the economy of Providence has so disposed causes and consequences, that such villains as Danton, Robespierre, the Duke of Orleans², etc. do but dig pits for themselves. I will check myself, or I shall wander into the sad events of the last five years [...] May we have as much wisdom and courage to stem our malevolent enemies, as it is plain, to our lasting honour, we have had charity to the French emigrants, and have bounty for the poor who are suffering in this dreadful season!

Adieu! Thou excellent woman! Thou reverse of that hyena in petticoats, Mrs. Wolstonecraft³, who to this day discharges her ink and gall on Marie Antoinette, whose unparalleled sufferings have not yet stanchd that Alecto's blazing ferocity⁴. Adieu! adieu! Yours from my heart.

➤ Using the documents and your knowledge, explain why the English were divided about the French revolution.

¹Condorcet (1743-1794), French mathematician, supported the revolution, which eventually chased him because he was a marquis. He died of a heart attack while being arrested.

²Philippe-Égalité, duke of Orleans, took sides with the revolution and voted for the execution of king Louis XVI, his own cousin. Philippe-Égalité was executed on 6 November 1793 because he was a duke.

³Mary Wollstonecraft.

⁴Alecto is one of the furies in the Greek mythology.