The French Revolution is all about the rise of the “Third Estate” or the “commoners” at the expense of the so-called “privileged” estates consisting of the nobility and clergy. But early on, monarchical propaganda drove advocacy of the Third Estate. This development is abundantly clear in the pre-revolutionary and early revolutionary pamphlets, which also strongly suggest that the many municipal petitions on behalf of the doubling of the numbers of the Third Estate’s deputies and the vote by head in the future Estates General were “planted” and not entirely spontaneous.

The French Revolution would have turned out very differently had the monarchy in May 1789 followed its own propaganda and resolutely taken the side of the Third Estate against the other two.