1848 in France was a revolution by accident. If the revolution had not happened then, it may be said, as of other revolutions, that it would have happened at some other time, whenever the 'conjecture' — the term in current French historical jargon that has replaced the 'psychological moment' — was appropriate. But of course, if it had occurred later or earlier it would have occurred in different circumstances and would have been a different revolution. The revolution was not the fore-ordained result of the emergence of new social forces that could not be contained in the old institutions, for none of adequate importance had yet arisen; it was rather the accidental though highly probable result of the inherent weakness of government in France. Since 1789 no régime had possessed the conditions necessary for stability. A series of political upheavals had fragmented conservative forces, the unity of which was the prerequisite of political stability, by introducing ideological cleavages which cut across economic ties and destroyed the cohesion of the forces of property and order. Simplifying the situation, we may say that in 1848 the propertied classes were split between the old noblesse, legitimists, and clericals, for whom an Orleanist king was worse than no king at all; those men of property and officials who liked to think themselves liberal, who were inclined towards anti-clericalism and reasonably satisfied with Louis-Philippe; and a rising class of educated and professional men of varied economic standing, with
republican sympathies. As for the mass of rural small proprietors, because of the memory of 1789 the peasants were still labelled in the public mind as potential revolutionaries: the events of June 1848 were to show how mistaken was this opinion, but in February there was no way in which their weight could be cast into the scales against change.

Indeed, hardly any element in French society outside Paris could materially influence events in the crisis of February. This was a second inheritance from the Revolution and Napoleon; authority had been concentrated so thoroughly in the ministries at Paris that whoever held Paris held France. And Paris, of course, was the most difficult part of France to hold. Under the Orleanist monarchy it was a witch's cauldron fermenting with dangerous ideological ingredients.

The collapse of divine right left a void, which the revolutionaries of 1789 attempted unsuccessfully to fill. Their principles were too self-contradictory, and too difficult to reconcile with hard political and social facts, to provide the ideological basis for a new society. The new ruling classes that emerged from Revolution and Empire had used democratic and egalitarian ideas to justify their attack on the older privileged classes, but with no intention of allowing the same principles to be turned against themselves. France, throughout the nineteenth century, was an oligarchy of wealth, especially landed wealth, and office; but unlike the British governing classes in the same period, the French élite was insecure, not only because its internal divisions went much deeper, but also because it did not believe in itself. It had no reason to: it had neither inherited an old tradition of government nor had it evolved any Burckian or Benthamite philosophy to provide a moral basis for its new powers and privileges. Too often its self-justification took the form of a cynical assertion of material interests. At the same time it lacked the crude virtues of a get-rich-quick society. Sunk in a stubborn and unimaginative defence of its vested interests, it lacked the enterprise

necessary even for its own economic progress. With only a little harshness, we might say that the French ruling class, heir of the great Revolution, was devoid of social conscience, devoted -- inevitably -- to its own property rights, and indifferent -- not quite so inevitably -- to the conditions of life, or death, of the populace beneath it. Because the ruling classes were weak they feared to make concessions in advance, but were quick to appeal to force when a threat had materialized. The Orleanist monarchy has been unfairly blamed for its failure to alleviate the misery caused by the economic crisis of the forties: this is to be attributed to the forces of society rather than to the fault of the government.

There was no reason to fear any threat to the social order from conditions in the countryside or in the provincial towns, apart from Lyon. Paris was another matter. The population of the capital was both growing and changing in character. The centralization of the life of France in Paris played its part in promoting the drift of population there, even from comparatively distant provinces and before the railway era. Beginning as a seasonal immigration, it turned into a permanent transfer. Under the Orleanist monarchy the population of Paris, within what were to be the increased limits of 1860, grew from roughly 860,000 to 1,250,000. There had been little industrial development to give work to these extra arms, and little increased agricultural production to provide food for the mouths. There is no coincidence in the fact that two countries which escaped serious trouble in 1848 were the only two in which industrialization had made substantial progress -- Great Britain (but not Ireland) and Belgium. In France the population, already before 1789 rather more than the country could support without a declining standard of living, had continued to grow, though at a slower rate, with no substantial industrialization to assist in its absorption.

How a political quarrel between the Ins and the Outs unintentionally set fire to this inflammable social situation has already been indicated. Perhaps it would not have done so if there had not already been 1789 to provide such a
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model. So de Tocqueville thought. In the presence of the revolutionary mob which invaded the Assembly, he could not persuade himself, he said, that there was a real danger of bloodshed, despite the muskets and bayonets and sabres. "Nos Français," he wrote, "surtout à Paris, mêlent volontiers les souvenirs de la littérature et du théâtre à leurs manifestations les plus sérieuses." It seemed to him, he added, that they were playing at the French Revolution rather than continuing it. The revolution of 1848, Marx said, could find nothing better to do than to parody that of 1789-95. Nevertheless the fighting in February was real enough to destroy a monarchy; the days of June 1848 were to see a bitter social war than ever the first Revolution knew; and an empire was to emerge from the republic in four years instead of fourteen.

Once the régime of Louis-Philippe and Guizot had collapsed in Paris, its hollowness was shown by the rapidity with which its adherents joined in a general sauvage que peut and proclaimed their allegiance, along with legitimists, republicans, clericals, anti-clericals, liberals, socialists, and all, to the revolutionary government. In its opening days this was a revolution of fraternity and universal love. The hero of Flaubert's L'Éducation sentimentale, after the February Days revisiting the fair friend whom he had left on his previous visit in a somewhat disgruntled frame of mind, found that the revolution had restored harmony. "Now that all was peaceful and there was no cause for fear, she kissed him and declared herself for the République -- as M. Monseigneur the Archbishop of Paris had already done, and as, with a marvellous alacrity, the Magistrature, the Council of State, the Institute, the Marshals of France, Changarnier, M. de Falloux, all the Bonapartists, all the Legitimists, and a considerable number of Orleanists, were to do."

The government to which France entrusted its fate, of course provisionally, on the morrow of the February revolution, was as accidental a product as the revolution itself. The Chamber of Deputies, which was an

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Orleanist chamber, was watching with hearts full of sentiment the lovely Duchess of Orleans, mother of Louis-Philippe's grandson in favour of whom he had abdicated, and listening to emotional appeals on their behalf -- 'The crown of July', declared Odilon Barrot, 'rests on the head of a child and a woman' -- when the blouses and the National Guards burst into the hall with shouts of 'À bas la Chambre', 'Plus de dépérités'. The courage of the members and the hopes of the dynasty vanished together: only a republican government would pacify the mob. Out of the tumult the names of seven leading republican figures -- Lamartine, Ledru-Rollin, Marrast, Arago, Crémieux, Marie, Garnier-Pagès -- emerged. At the Hôtel de Ville a left-wing demonstration had put forward the socialists Flocon and Louis Blanc, and a solitary, symbolic (of nothing in particular) worker, Albert. These names were added, and thus did France receive its new government.

The first act of the Provisional Government was to proclaim the right of universal suffrage, swelling the electorate overnight from a quarter of a million to nine millions, and laying the foundations for the subsequent Bonapartist dictatorship. Next, it abolished slavery on all French territory, thus freeing about half a million slaves, a belated reform, introduced without any preparation or precautions, which brought immediate economic disaster to the slave colonies.

A more pressing problem was that of unemployment in France, and principally Paris. The general European slump had reached bottom in 1847 and conditions were slowly improving; but in France the uncertainty produced in the business world by the Revolution prohibited any recovery and in 1848 the economic crisis was intensified. Shops were closed, craftsmen without work, men dismissed from the few factories; credit was lacking, private charity quite inadequate, and government assistance totally absent. To the starving hordes of unemployed, or to those who were vocal among them, one idea had filtered down. How the economic position had changed in the past half century
is shown by the shape of this idea. They no longer, as between 1789 and 1794, called for a maximum on prices; the demand now was for work, embodied in Louis Blanc's formula, le droit au travail. It is evident that the labouring masses in the towns now thought of themselves primarily as producers rather than as consumers.

In a revolutionary situation something had to be done to satisfy their demands or those of their spokesmen. It was not too difficult to find an innocuous solution. Louis Blanc and Albert, political innocents compared with the politicians, were put at the head of a Parliament of Industry which met at the Luxembourg and was allowed to talk its way through the crisis. Louis Blanc's plan for National Workshops, which involved the state in providing credits for industry, was rejected. To the Minister of Public Works, Marie, and many others, it seemed a revolutionary proposal, alien to the spirit of brotherhood that had prevailed in February. If the name National Workshops was adopted, it was only as a sop to the followers of Louis Blanc; in fact all the Workshops, or Ateliers, ever amounted to was a system of registering the Paris unemployed for the payment of a wretched dole. By June 1848 some 120,000 were in receipt of this pittance and the lists had been closed to exclude perhaps 50,000 more. To give the impression that something was being done, a young engineer named Thomas was entrusted with the task of organizing the so-called Workshops. In spite of opposition, he managed to set about 12,000 men to work levelling a small hill on the site of what was later the boulevard Montparnasse. The prevailing attitude of mind among the wealthy classes, though intensely protectionist in relation to foreign trade, was sternly non-interventionist in respect of internal economic activity. When the government of Louis-Philippe had proposed to meet the economic crisis of 1847 by a programme of public works, a legislative body of proprietors naturally rejected the proposal. The Provisional Government, in so far as it ever even contemplated the same programme, met with the same resistance.

Orthodox economics also insisted, and more successfully than in 1789, that the National Debt was sacred. To maintain public credit, interest continued to be paid scrupulously on state loans, the budgetary gap being filled by imposing an extra tax of 45 centimes, which fell mainly on the peasantry. This was the most misconceived of all the Provisional Government's measures. Whereas the National Assembly of 1789 had, intentionally or unintentionally, lightened the burdens of the peasantry, the revolution of 1848 actually increased them. Here is at least one factor which helps to explain the changed attitude of the peasants to revolution.

The mutual fear and suspicion of the middle classes and the populace in Paris, which had been violently intensified, though not created, by the economic crisis, came into the open very early in the Revolution. On 16 March the better-off members of the National Guard, distinguished by their uniform and fur caps, staged a rather futile demonstration which is known as the manifestation of the bonnets à poil. There followed on the next day an imposing and far larger counter-demonstration by masses of Paris workers. The situation was tense but Ledru-Rollin, known as the most sympathetic to the people among the middle-class republican leaders, acquired considerable, though not lasting, prestige by pacifying the demonstrators. Though the great body of conservative republicans did not trust him and detested his ideas of moderate social reform, it was evident that he could not be dispensed with while the danger from below existed; so he had to be tolerated.

In the key position of Minister of the Interior, Ledru-Rollin had the responsibility for organizing the election of a Constituent Assembly. Universal suffrage represented a leap in the dark, and the more they thought about the implications of this sudden and unprecedented granting of their democratic demands, the darker the outlook seemed to the democratic factions; for the great mass of the new electors were illiterate peasants, likely to follow the lead of their clergy, local landowners, and notables. The only hope the
left-wing politicians could see lay in a postponement of the elections, to give them time to indoctrinate the peasants and teach them who their real friends were. Hence a series of petitions flowed in from the clubs of Paris in favour of postponing the elections, which was also one of the demands of the demonstrators of 17 March. In more general terms it may be said that the democrats of 1848 were faced with the constant dilemma of democracy: can the sovereign people, if it so wishes, be allowed to abdicate, has it the right to repudiate democracy? Suppose it chooses to follow a conservative, or even a reactionary policy, instead of a progressive and reforming one, is this permissible? The members of the great Committee of Public Safety had been faced with the same question and their answer was the Terror. Ledru-Rollin and the republicans of 1848 did not contemplate this solution. They would doubtless have been less despised by historians if they had been more bloody-minded. Unfortunately they were idealists who believed in their own principles.

Within the limits which seemed legitimate to him, Ledru-Rollin did what he could towards the winning of the elections. The essential first step was the replacement of the Orleanist administrative machine. All the prefects, and all but twelve of the sub-prefects, were dismissed, and revolutionary commissaires appointed in their place. By mid-April tried republicans were at the head of practically every department. The Provisional Government instructed them not to imitate the usurping governments of the past in corrupting the electors. Ledru-Rollin, rather more frankly, addressed them with the rhetorical question 'What are your powers?' and replied, 'They are unlimited. ... The elections are your great task.' By this he meant that the duty of the commissaires was to enlighten the electors and purge the administration of non-republican officials who might exercise a dangerous influence.

The discredited and disorganized Orleanist machine could not resist Ledru-Rollin. On the other hand the clerical party, with an anti-Orleanist record behind it, was not afraid to engage in open political agitation under the leadership of Montalembert's central Committee for Electoral Liberty. It was supported energetically by most of the bishops. Few leaders of the Church were as far-seeing as the bishop of Viviers, later Cardinal Guibert, who wrote, 'I am convinced that we are doing an imprudent thing, and that the few votes in favour of religious liberty we may be able to send to the Chamber are not worth the sacrifice of the fine position we have won by our isolation from political power since 1830.'

Faced with the clerical threat, the Minister of Education, Hippolyte Carnot, called on the village school-teachers to counteract the clergy by spreading the republican faith. This was the beginning of the ideological struggle between the curé and the instituteur, but the struggle was as yet a very uneven one. The Church was still far stronger than the State in the rural communes, and the republicans were not unaware of this fact. Possibly they fixed on Easter Sunday for the elections, in the hope of keeping the faithful away from the elections. If so, it was a gross miscalculation. Mass was celebrated at an early hour in the morning, and the villagers marched to vote with the priest at the head of the procession, sometimes in harmony, sometimes in undignified rivalry, with a republican maire.

Apart from propaganda, a game at which the local notabilities and priest could usually defeat Ledru-Rollin's commissaires, the elections were notably free. The failure of the more advanced republicans supported by Ledru-Rollin is evidence of that: Ministers of the Interior did not normally lose elections in nineteenth-century France. There was a poll of 84 per cent and the vote of the peasantry ensured that the Constituent Assembly should be in a majority conservative and traditionalist in its complexion. Four-fifths of the deputies were men of the district which elected them; four-fifths were also over 40; nearly 700 out of nearly 900 were men of substance paying a tax of over 500 francs a year. Half the deputies were monarchists, divided into some 300 Orleanists and 150 Legitimists.
About 350 were committed to support the clerical campaign for freedom of education. There was a mere sprinkling of red republicans, and still fewer socialists. The conservative nature of the Assembly was demonstrated by the voting on two proposals. Only 72 members supported a motion recognizing the right to work; and only 110 out of 900 were in favour of that most revolutionary of all measures, a graduated income tax. Of course, even a vote of one in eight for such a measure would have been inconceivable in the great French Revolution. Ledru-Rollin's attempt to secure an advanced republican Assembly had thus decisively failed. His influence in the government naturally declined, and he would probably have been pushed out of it by the new Assembly if it had not been for the support of Lamartine, who thereby sacrificed much of his own prestige.

It was an Assembly interested in political, but opposed to all economic change. From the beginning it exhibited the besetting sin of the Second Republic, an obsession with political dogma. This appeared in the Assembly's insistence on turning the Provisional Government into an Executive Commission, appointed by the Assembly, which had the duty of deliberating on policy, while a separate body of Ministers had the duty of carrying it out. This division was introduced for the purpose of maintaining the sacred principle of the separation of powers.

The left-wing leaders of Paris, frustrated by the elections, carried on an increasingly bitter agitation in the press and the popular clubs. Their violent speeches, invocations to social revolution, songs like

Clap ton bas devant ma casquette,
À genoux devant l'enfer,

did not lessen the alarm of the middle and upper classes. Since one thing that all France definitely wanted was not to be involved in a revolutionary war, with characteristic inanition the club leaders decided to use a petition for assistance to the Polish revolution as the excuse for an attempt to overthrow the National Assembly by a mob demonstration after the established model. This attempted 'push' on 15 May, under the revolutionary leaders, Barbes and Blanqui, who hated one another even more than they hated their opponents, was easily put down by the regular troops and the National Guard. Its only result was that practically all the left-wing agitators disappeared from the political scene, either in flight abroad or in prison. Hence they cannot be held responsible for the great popular rising of June.

The revolt of the June Days is one of the most mysterious episodes of its kind. It is not easy to find another popular movement, especially of such magnitude, in which not a single leader, even of the second or third rank, can be identified. The psychological preparation for the June Days is not difficult to see, and it can be granted that there was plenty of inflammable material in Paris. The hope of salvation, with which the unemployed and starving masses had poured out of their garrets and cellars in February, had given place to disillusionment when under a republic economic conditions became worse instead of better. Class hatred in Paris reached perhaps its highest point, before the Commune, in 1848. De Tocqueville, returning to the capital after the elections, found the aspect of Paris terrible and sinister. 'I saw society split in two: those who possessed nothing united in a common greed; those who possessed something in a common fear. No bonds, no sympathies existed between these two great classes, everywhere was the idea of an inevitable and approaching struggle.'

It is a classic fact of revolutions in a predominantly agrarian economy that the late spring or early summer is the point of greatest danger, when the previous year's harvest is exhausted and the new one has not yet come in; semi-starvation was the lot of the masses of unemployed in Paris. The dole handed out by the so-called National Workshops was only a slight alleviation of their misery, and even so, many of the unemployed were excluded from it and the National Assembly was determined to get rid of it as rapidly.
as possible. For the chairman of the Labour Committee of the Assembly, the comte de Falloux – a devoted son of the Church and proud aristocrat, whose grandfather, a cattle-merchant, had been ennobled by Louis XVIII in 1823 – the National Workshops were ‘a permanent and organized strike’, ‘an active centre of dangerous agitation’. To the suggestion that if they were dissolved there might be resistance, he replied, ‘Have you not the National Guard? ... Take what measures you choose, we guarantee they will not meet with serious resistance; and if we do encounter it, let us not be afraid to use force, force without the shedding of blood but that moral force which belongs to the law.’

As a result partly of de Falloux’s pressure, on 22 June it was decreed that all unmarried workers in the National Workshops should join the army, and the remainder go to the provinces, under penalty of losing their payments. This seems to have been the spark which set off the rising in Paris, though how or why is far from clear. It is alleged that those who were enrolled in the National Workshops did not in fact participate in the June Days to any great extent, but there is no doubt that it was, as it seemed to contemporaries like de Tocqueville, a workers’ movement, a revolt of the helots, a servile war. The numbers involved in the actual fighting must not be exaggerated; they were probably not more than 20,000, one in ten or less of the workers of Paris. Their first step was to erect barricades, which cut off the poorer quarters of Paris. These were necessary because with the black powder then used it was difficult to fire from other than a standing position. Held by desperate men, with flanking fire from windows, in the narrow, winding streets of old Paris, the barricades could only be taken when cannon had been set up against them, which was a slow and dangerous process. Then, when a barricade had been rendered untenable, its defenders could move back, breaking through the party walls of the houses, to another line of defence prepared in advance.

The unresisted opening stages of the revolt were possible because of the absence of troops, which was due not to calculation but to the difficulty of provisioning them in Paris and to the lack of barracks; but once the regular troops were brought into action the result was a foregone conclusion. The general entrusted with putting down the revolt, Cavaignac, a staunch republican but also intensely conservativist, moved in infantry and artillery steadily for the kill. The army was reinforced by detachments of National Guard, volunteers from the provinces, where the hatred of Paris had reached fever pitch. Even at the time of the election of the Constituent Assembly de Tocqueville had been struck with the spirit of fraternity which sprang up between all owners of property, rich or poor, in his rural department of the Manche, and the universal hatred and terror which they experienced at the thought of the ‘anarchists’ of Paris.

In six days of bitter street fighting the rebel quarters were conquered street by street. How many of the insurgents were killed in the struggle or shot out of hand when captured cannot be estimated. The prisoners, thousands of whom were to be sent as forced immigrants to Algeria, were piled into improvised dungeons such as Flaubert describes: ‘Nine hundred men were there, crowded together in filth, pell-mell, black with powder and clotted blood, shivering in fever and shouting in frenzy. Those who died were left to lie with the others. Now and then, at the sudden noise of a gun, they thought they were all on the point of being shot, and then flung themselves against the walls, afterwards falling back into their former places. They were so stupefied with suffering that they seemed to be living in a nightmare, a funeral hallucination. The lamp hanging from the arch looked like a patch of blood; and little green and yellow flames flew about, produced by the effluvium of the vaults. Because of a fear of epidemics a commission of inquiry had been appointed. On the first steps its president flung himself back, appalled by the odour of excrement and corpses. When the prisoners approached a ventilator, the National Guards on sentry duty stuck their bayonets, haphazard,
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into the crowd, to prevent them from loosening the bars. The National Guards were in general pitiless. Those who had not been in the fighting wanted to distinguish themselves now, but all was really the reaction of fear. They were avenging themselves at once for the journals, the clubs, the mobs, the doctrines, for everything that had provoked them beyond measure in the last three months; and despite their victory, equality (as if for the punishment of its defenders and mockery of its enemies) was triumphantly revealed— an equality of brute beasts on the same level of blood-stained depravity; for the fanaticism of vested interests was on a level with the madness of the needy, the aristocracy exhibited the fury of the basest mob, and the cotton night-cap was no less hideous than the bonnet rouge. The public mind became disordered as after a great natural catastrophe, and men of intelligence were idiots for the rest of their lives.'

Victor Hugo said that in the June Days civilization defended itself with the methods of barbarism. They were a turning-point in many respects. The army, like the peasants of which its ranks were so largely composed, passed from one side of the barricades to the other in June 1848. The Grande Peur of 1789, Valmy and Jemappes, the four sergeants of La Rochelle, and a host of other memories identified the peasant with social disorder and the army with revolution. Almost at a blow the myth— for it had become a myth by 1848— was ended; the peasant became the embodiment of social conservatism and the army the bulwark of order.

2. THE TRIUMPH OF LOUIS NAPOLEON

After the June Days the Army held power in France and the Assembly survived under its protection. 'This poor Assembly,' wrote Victor Hugo, 'is a true soldier's girl, in love with a trooper.' The trooper was Cavaignac, whose principles excluded military dictatorship. He took the place

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of the discredited Executive Commission and appointed a moderate republican ministry to hold office while the Assembly completed its constitutional proposals. It did this by November. The Constitution it made was much more influenced by theory than any of the preceding Constitutions since 1789. The change in social ideals in the course of sixty years can be seen in its preamble, which— significantly enough— took the place of the former declaration of rights. The individualism of 1789, with its emphasis on rights, now had to share its claims with a recognition of duties and a new emphasis on fraternity. This may not have meant much in the France of the June Days, but even lip-service was a sign of a changing climate of opinion. Politically there had been rather less change in republican ideals. There was still the old attempt to reconcile the principles of separation of powers and sovereignty of the people. All power comes from the people, but this power must be divided: the conclusion was the election of a single chamber and a unique head of the government, both by universal suffrage and both directly responsible to the people, the one entrusted with total legislative authority and the other with all executive power.

The crucial decision as it turned out later, and indeed as it appeared at the time, was the embodiment of the executive power in the person of a President elected directly by the whole nation. The election of the President by direct universal suffrage was supported by the right and the moderates, and opposed by Ledru-Rollin and the red republicans. The fear of the tyranny of a Convention still haunted moderate opinion: de Tocqueville warned against the danger of turning the President into a mere agent of the Legislative Body. Grévy, the author of a famous amendment, admitted the danger, but saw a more dangerous precedent in the career of Napoleon I. 'Are you sure,' he asked the Assembly, 'that there will never be found an ambitious man, anxious to perpetuate his power, and if he is a man who had been able to make himself popular, if he is a victorious general, surrounded with the prestige of that
military glory which the French cannot resist, if he is the offspring of one of the families which have reigned over France, and if he has never expressly renounced what he calls his rights [there could hardly have been a more obvious reference to Louis Napoleon], if commerce is languishing, if the people are in misery . . . will you guarantee that this ambitious man will not succeed in overthrowing the republic?" The answer was given by Lamartine: If you want to do so, he said, confuse the legislative and executive powers, add the judicial and call your system by its true title — the Terror. He admitted that there were names which attracted the crowd as a mirage draws the flocks to it; but concluded, in a phrase from which his reputation has never recovered, "Il faut laisser quelque chose à la Providence." The Grévy amendment was defeated by 643 to 158 votes and the Second Republic had committed a delayed suicide.

The Presidential election followed in December 1848. Among the candidates Cavaignac was the standard-bearer of the conservative republic and Ledru-Rollin of the red republicans; Raspail and a sprinkling of other candidates represented the left-wing; and there was a name of destiny — Louis Napoleon Bonaparte.

It is time to say something of Bonapartism as a political movement in France, now that at last it was on the point of becoming one. It may seem paradoxical, yet it is probably true, that the Napoleonic Legend, while essential to the existence of the Second Empire, played only a secondary part in its creation. About the origin of the Legend there need be little dispute; it was the deliberate creation of Napoleon I, by his official propaganda while he was Emperor, and in the imaginative picture he tried to draw while he was in exile of himself and his aims. To the legend of the pacifier who suppressed the internecine strife that had been tearing France apart, the protector of religion who had brought persecution to an end, the saviour who rescued society from the Jacobins and the Terror, the administrator who gave France efficient government and restored its financial and economic prosperity, the great general and

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military hero who had made Europe into a French Empire was added an even more mendacious picture of the great champion of liberal ideals, of freedom for the oppressed nationalities of Europe, and of peace. In 1815 the facts were a little too close for all this to have very much effect, and by 1830 the Napoleonic legend was no more than a romantic survival of no political significance. It seemed so little dangerous that the Orleanist régime would not hesitate to exploit Bonapartism sentiment for the purpose of acquiring a little badly needed popularity.

The two adventures of Louis Bonaparte, at Strasbourg in 1836 and Boulogne in 1840, confirmed the belief that Bonapartism, if it was not a spent fire, was one that was too damp ever to burst into flames again. The Emperor's nephew, it is true, had shown rather more skill with the pen than with the sword. He had produced, in 1832, a volume of Récits politiques — possibly not the best title to advertise its author as a man of action. More effective for the creation of a public image of the pretender — even if only an image d'Epinal like the popular cut-outs of Napoleon and his soldiers — were an artillery manual and a booklet on the extinction of pauperism. Louis Napoleon Bonaparte's most important production was Des idées napoléoniennes in 1839. This should have been taken more seriously than it was. As with later dictators, if it had been possible to believe that Louis Napoleon meant what he said, the subsequent history of France would have come as less of a surprise to contemporaries.

After the Boulogne adventure, Louis Bonaparte's light was extinguished for the next six years by not very rigorous imprisonment in the fortress at Ham, where he was provided with the modest amenities of life including a mistress, and from which he walked out disguised as a builder's labourer in 1846. In February 1848, therefore, he was again a potential saviour at the disposal of France, only hardly anyone as yet seemed to think of him in that capacity. He made a fleeting appearance in Paris soon after the revolution but found the political climate uncongenial and
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Barrot called him "our excellent young man," and Thiers, who advised him to shave his moustache, said he was "a crotin whom we will manage." De Tocqueville, with a mixture of shrewdness and misjudgement, described him as "an enigmatic, sombre, insignificant numskull." Whatever their views of him personally, many former Orleanists, unfettered by attachment to political principles but with a keen eye on the main chance, prepared to jump on the Bonapartist band-wagon. More idealistic motives inspired Victor Hugo, who also kept a sentimental attachment to the memory of the Emperor his father had served. From the time of the Ode à la colonne his poems had done as much as any writings, except those of Béranger, to keep the Napoleonic memory alive. In 1846 he saw himself as the prophet and adviser of a liberal Bonaparte; and Louis Napoleon was not indifferent to the prestige that the support of France's greatest poet could give. After the election the poet was a guest at the first dinner given by the new President at the Élysée. The offer of the Madrid embassy tempted Hugo, with his memories of Imperial Spain, but it was not what he had hoped for. In youth he had declared, "Je veux être Chateaubriand au rién," and Chateaubriand had been Foreign Minister. Though disappointed, he continued to support the President until the 2 December added political to personal disillusionment.

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Barrot called him "our excellent young man," and Thiers, who advised him to shave his moustache, said he was "a crotin whom we will manage." De Tocqueville, with a mixture of shrewdness and misjudgement, described him as "an enigmatic, sombre, insignificant numskull." Whatever their views of him personally, many former Orleanists, unfettered by attachment to political principles but with a keen eye on the main chance, prepared to jump on the Bonapartist band-wagon. More idealistic motives inspired Victor Hugo, who also kept a sentimental attachment to the memory of the Emperor his father had served. From the time of the Ode à la colonne his poems had done as much as any writings, except those of Béranger, to keep the Napoleonic memory alive. In 1846 he saw himself as the prophet and adviser of a liberal Bonaparte; and Louis Napoleon was not indifferent to the prestige that the support of France's greatest poet could give. After the election the poet was a guest at the first dinner given by the new President at the Élysée. The offer of the Madrid embassy tempted Hugo, with his memories of Imperial Spain, but it was not what he had hoped for. In youth he had declared, "Je veux être Chateaubriand au rién," and Chateaubriand had been Foreign Minister. Though disappointed, he continued to support the President until the 2 December added political to personal disillusionment.

The beautiful Miss Howard, with whom Louis Bonaparte had lived since 1846, came over in the autumn of 1848 to add her fortune to the others that were being invested in his future, and after the election to be for a time official mistress in the Prince President's little court. Spiritual support was added to secular. The clerical party, headed by Montalembert and Falloux, was legitimist in principle but prepared to do a deal with Louis Bonaparte in the interest of clerical control of education. Because Louis Napoleon had the support of the great banker Pould, it has been supposed that the financiers and also the industrialists were among his backers; but in fact they were more firmly Orleanist than the politicians, and suspicious of both the
ideas and the associates of Louis Bonaparte. On the other hand his connexion with the Saint-Simonians brought him the support of that sect and its adherents, such as the Pèreire brothers. While the republicans remained aloof, some socialists saw hope in Bonapartism. The two great journals of the February revolution opposed the Bonapartist candidacy, the Réforme supporting Ledru-Rollin and the National Cavaignac. Louis Bonaparte had on his side Girardin’s Presse, because of its editor’s enmity to Cavaignac, the Constitutionnel under the influence of Thiers, Victor Hugo’s Événement, and a number of provincial journals. But though the Bonapartist spent as much as they could on propaganda in the press, they only had the support of a minority of papers.

It is possible to believe that even if he had had none of this support Louis Bonaparte might still have been elected President. The populace in the large towns had no reason to vote for the victor of the June Days and the repressive and reactionary régime with which he was identified. The peasants of the countryside, who formed the great mass of the voters, were under the influence of a panic fear of red terror and confiscation of property spread by the men of order; they needed a saviour of society and who could fill that role better than a Napoléon. ‘The idea of authority is attached to that name’, wrote Barante, ‘and it is authority that they want.’ The idealism behind Ledru-Rollin, the social conservatism and official influence behind Cavaignac, were powerless against this wave of emotion. Ledru-Rollin secured 370,119 votes, Cavaignac 1,448,107, and Louis Napoléon 5,434,226; on the extreme left Raspail had a pitiable 36,920. Lamartine’s star had long since set: in all France he could only gather 17,910 votes.

The first act of the new President was to take the oath of loyalty to the Republic and swear to defend the Constitution. If he had any mental reservations he kept them to himself; he was always good at keeping his own counsel. He appointed a conservative Orleanist ministry under Odilon Barrot, which reflected the political complexion of the Assembly, left the government to them, and devoted his time to tours through France. This enabled him to exhibit his real brilliance as a propagandist, and at the same time to leave the onus of repressing the forces of the left on the Assembly. The red republicans had reacted to their defeat by drawing closer together in a nation-wide organization under the name of the Solidarité Républicaine, with central and local committees and a staunch Jacobin, Delescluze, as its secretary. The task of repression was begun with the outlawing of this society in January 1849.

The Constituent Assembly had no real justification for its continued existence now that the Constitution had been made and put into effect, but it hung on as long as it could, in a moribund condition. Finally it had to dissolve and in May 1849 elections were held for a Legislative Assembly. The conservative forces of all kinds, sometimes called the ‘party of order’ though they were too divided to constitute a real party, organized themselves for the election through a committee in the rue de Poitiers. It included legitimists, Orleanists, Bonapartists, Catholics, and even moderate republicans. The prefects, who had replaced Ledru-Rollin’s commissaires, now returned to their customary role and played a large part in the elections. Of course, the supporters of order obtained a large majority of 590 out of 750 members. The conservative republicans of the National-Cavaignac school were reduced to a small group of 70; the men of February – Lamartine, Dupont de l’Eure, Garnier-Pagès, Marie, Marrast, Carnot, and others – were rejected by the country. What was unexpected and alarming to the forces of order was the comparative success of the red republicans, with 186 seats. Ledru-Rollin came second on the Paris list. The explanation, of course, lay in abstentions from voting, especially of many of the peasantry. The total vote in the country had sunk to 40 per cent of those entitled to vote, and of these one-third had voted for the reds. Evidently the left was still far from defeated. But what the conservative forces could not achieve in the elections, the left-wing politicians in Paris managed to do in a single day.
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Undeterred by the lessons of 1848 they staged a futile attempt at revolution on 13 June 1849. Whereas in 1848 the cry had been Poland, now it was Rome. There was at least this justification for the demonstration: that a French force under Oudinot was about to overthrow the Roman Republic and reinstate the authority of Pius IX, which it did shortly after. The attempted insurrection in Paris and a number of provincial towns obtained no popular support. Ledru-Rollin and most of the left-wing deputies fled abroad, others were imprisoned; and the government and the Assembly had a fair excuse for passing more severe repressive legislation.

As well as an energetic suppression of the reds by police measures, the conservatives now began to feel that a more positive inculcation of the principles of social order was needed. The 'panic of property' which followed the June Days had weakened the anti-clericalism of many of the propertied classes and of their leaders such as Thiers. The merit of clerical education as a means of instilling the principles of social discipline and the sacredness of property into the minds of the lower orders was now more adequately appreciated. It found expression in an educational law proposed by Falloux in June 1849 and finally voted in March 1850. Meanwhile, in January 1850, had been voted the so-called 'little law' on education. This attributed the appointment and dismissal of primary teachers to the prefects, a right which they kept until 1944. The loi Falloux itself gave members of religious orders the right of opening schools without requiring any further qualification, and introduced councils with strong clerical elements to control the University.

On a general policy of weakening the left, the President and the Assembly were able to cooperate. But Louis Napoleon soon showed the Barrots and the Thiers that he was not the puppet President they thought they had elected. In October 1849, though it still had a majority in the Assembly, he dismissed the Odilon Barrot ministry and issued a message justifying his action to the country. 'To

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strengthen the Republic menaced on all sides by anarchy,' he began, turning against themselves the chief weapon of the parliamentary factions, 'to maintain externally the name of France at the height of her renown, men are needed animated by a patriotic devotion, proof against everything, who understand the need for an undivided and strong rule and for a clearly formulated policy, who will not compromise authority by irresolution, and who will be as deeply conscious of my responsibility as of their own.' For his new ministry, therefore, he chose new men from outside parliament; and to show that it was to be a presidential and not a parliamentary government, he appointed no president of the council. He himself was to be its head.

President and Assembly, however, were still capable of receiving a shock from the country. In March 1850 by-elections were held to replace the 30 deputies condemned after the events of 13 June 1849. In the face of intense repression the democratic republicans rallied their forces once again. Despite all the efforts of the administration the left won 29 seats out of the 30, and in Paris the three left-wing candidates were returned with large majorities. In a subsequent election to fill a vacancy at Paris, the novelist Eugène Sue, now a name of terror to the respectable classes who had read his newspaper serials with avidity, was returned.

The panic of the Assembly revived: in spite of all the measures of repression, universal suffrage was still, it appeared, dangerous. In May 1850, therefore, a law was introduced to deprive of the franchise all who had suffered any condemnation by the courts – given the repressive legislation this would eliminate most of the militants of the left – and all who had not three years residential qualification in the same canton. The effect was to exclude about 3 millions out of 9½ million voters. Supported by Thiers with an unmeasured denunciation of the 'vile multitude', the law was passed in May 1850 by a majority of 433 to 241. It gave the President the opportunity to present himself once more as the defender of the rights of the people, and
his demand for the abrogation of the law, in November 1850, was only rejected by 355 to 343.

Louis Napoleon had by now attracted to himself the support of a substantial group in the Assembly. By his propaganda tours, and the fact that his star was obviously still rising, he obtained an increasing backing in the country. He particularly worked on the army, and in January 1851 felt strong enough to dismiss the republican general Changarnier, who commanded the forces, both regular and National Guard, in Paris. Despite its earlier suspicions, the world of business, fearing a renewal of disorder when the President's mandate came to an end in 1852, and dissatisfied at the rather slow recovery from the slump, was now beginning to see its best hope in the continuance of Louis Napoleon at the head of the state.

Unfortunately this was not possible, or so it seemed. The constitution did not permit the re-election of the President. To overcome this obstacle the administration organized a campaign of petitions for its revision. So energetic and so successful were the prefects, that nearly all the conseils généraux in France supported the plea for revision. The Assembly yielded to this pressure by appointing a commission to examine the question, which concluded against the proposal. A vote in July 1851 was by 446 to 278 in favour of revision, but this was not the constitutionally necessary two-thirds majority. There was a renewed flood of petitions, but now Louis Napoleon and his little group of intimates had decided to settle the matter in an extra-parliamentary way.

The support of the army was ensured by bringing over from Algeria Saint-Arnaud and other colonial generals, with no civilian prejudices in favour of republics or parliamentary methods. The Bonapartist inner circle was now fairly complete. Louis Napoleon's half-brother Morny, a gambler of genius, was the chief organizer of the coup d'état. De Maupas, a préfet à poigne, was brought from Toulouse to become Prefect of Police. Persigny, who had shared Louis Bonaparte's defeat in 1848, rightly

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joined in his coming triumph. After several postponements the coup was finally fixed for 2 December, the anniversary of Austerlitz.

On the night of 1-2 December the conspirators moved into action. Troops under an Algerian general occupied the Imprimerie Nationale, the Palais Bourbon, newspaper offices, printing works, and the main strategic points in Paris. In the mairies of the arrondissements the drums were broken, the bell-towers of the churches were guarded. The Parisians woke in the morning to find placards announcing the dissolution of the Assembly, the restoration of universal suffrage, new elections, and a state of siege in Paris and the neighbouring departments. In an Appel au peuple the President accused the Assembly of conspiracy - a nice touch - and fomenting disorder. A proclamation to the army declared, 'Soldiers! it is your mission to save the country.' Sixteen members of the Assembly and some 50 other known opponents were seized by troops in their homes. Some 300 deputies, excluded from their chamber, met in the mairie of the Xe arrondissement to protest, and were duly arrested in their turn.

On the morning of 2 December the savoury of society, accompanied by his generals, rode out from the Élysée. In a city occupied by 50,000 troops there was little danger, but also, to his disappointment, little enthusiasm. There were even some slight hostile demonstrations, but the day passed with no sign of resistance. On 3 December, however, Victor Hugo and a few republicans formed a Committee to organize opposition. A barricade was erected in the faubourg Saint-Antoine and on it a deputy, Dr Baudin, was killed. His name was not forgotten. The danger was slight for the masses were on the side of the dictator. When Flaubert's hero asked a worker if they were not going to fight, he received the answer, 'We're not fools enough to get ourselves killed for the bourgeoisie! Let them settle it themselves!' They did in their way. On 4 December more barricades appeared, manned by a few hundred republicans who had not forgotten 1848. The generals were determined
to have done with this nonsense: 30,000 troops, with artillery, musket, and bayonet, were let loose against the resistance, which was crushed in a few hours. Only a few hundred were killed, either in the fighting or shot when taken prisoner. The most dramatic episode occurred on the boulevard Poissonière, where the soldiers, in a state of natural excitement, fired several volleys into a large crowd of passive onlookers. It was not a very glorious beginning for the Second Empire.

3. A BOURGEOIS EMPIRE

It was difficult to make a coup d'État without breaking some heads as well as an oath, and so Louis Napoleon had found, doubtless to his regret for he was a humane man. If he could have obtained the power and glory by honourable and peaceful methods he would certainly have preferred them. In addition he had to begin with repression, not so much because the feeble resistance in Paris and a few minor movements in the provinces needed repressing, as because unless there were some repression there would hardly have seemed any reason for a coup d'État. Altogether 26,664 arrests were effected throughout France. Of those arrested, 9,000 were transported to Algeria and 239 to Cayenne, 1,500 expelled from France, and 3,000 given forced residence away from their homes. Soon after, a commission of revision freed 3,500 of those sentenced, and by 1859, when an amnesty was offered to all the remainder except Ledru-Rollin, the number still penalized was only 1,800. The Second Empire might have been astonished at its own moderation and one would have expected it easily to live down the slight splashes of blood that accompanied its birth-pangs. Somehow it did not, and even the Emperor never quite put them out of his mind.

One of the first steps of Louis Napoleon was to confiscate the extensive property which Louis-Philippe, with almost excessive paternal affection, had collected for his large

family as well as for himself. It was used to make grants to societies for mutual aid, for constructing workers' dwellings, and so on; but it looked a little too much like bribery with stolen property, even for a number of Louis' supporters. His enemies called it, 'le premier vol de l'aigle'.

Such comments showed a bad spirit. It was desirable that the country should envisage recent events in the proper light; so by a decree of 17 February 1852, largely the work of Rouher, the press was brought under a more severe control than it had known since the First Empire. No journal dealing with political or social questions was to be issued without the permission of the government; the caution money was heavily increased; the list of press offences was enlarged and penalties strengthened; those accused of press offences were to be tried without a jury; after three warnings by the Minister of the Interior to Paris journals, or by a prefect to provincial ones, a journal could be suspended by administrative action and in the last resort suppressed.

The general clauses of a new constitution did not need long discussion, for Louis Napoleon regarded himself as invested with the constituent power by the plebiscite that had confirmed his seizure of power. The President was to have, as before, the nomination of all officials, from top to bottom, as well as of the Senate, the Conseil d'État, the High Court of Justice, and the Ministers. There was to be a Legislative Body, elected by universal suffrage in single-member constituencies, in which the prefects and sub-prefects, experts at electoral management, the majority of whom had passed over from the service of Louis-Philippe to that of Louis Napoleon, could make certain – by all the traditional devices – that only the official candidate had much chance of succeeding. The result of the elections that were held in March 1852 was a foregone conclusion. Four legitimists, one independent, and three republicans (who refused to sit) were elected; the remaining 253 members were official candidates, chosen by the administration to uphold the Bonapartist cause in the constituencies. The labourers were not considered unworthy of their hire: in the