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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 26,884 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
same month the salaries of the prefects were doubled. ‘The dictatorship with which the people has entrusted me ceases today’, declared Louis Napoleon in an official pronouncement on 30 March. It was only to cease, in the humiliation of Sedan, eighteen years later.

The possibility of failure seemed far removed at the outset. The new régime was lucky in the stars under which it was born, for the lean years in European economy were at an end and the new government was able to take advantage of a rising tide of economic activity. Shares rose rapidly in value on the Paris market. The Bank of France reduced its interest rate to 3 per cent. A triumphal tour of a regenerated France in the autumn of 1852 by Louis Napoleon was followed by the proclamation of the Empire and a plebiscite in which 7,800,000 voted yes and 250,000 no.

Even allowing for two million abstentions this was a decisive endorsement of France’s new ruler. Yet what kind of man was he very few knew. Aged forty-four in 1852, he was still almost completely an unknown quantity to the country that had entrusted its destinies to him. The son of Josephine’s daughter Hortense Beauharnais, and Napoleon’s brother Louis, the un-Napoleonic appearance of Napoleon III, as he chose to be known, and the adventures of Hortense subsequent to his birth, had led to doubt being cast on his paternity, though almost certainly without justification. He was brought up by his mother, after she and Louis had separated, among the flotsam and jetsam of the Empire in exile. It was the drifting, raffish life, in Germany, Italy, England, Switzerland, of a cosmopolitan adventurer. Queen Victoria, when she met the new Emperor, remarked that unlike Louis-Philippe, who was ‘thoroughly French’, Louis Napoleon was ‘as unlike a Frenchman as possible’, and much more German than French in character. She was a shrewd judge and meant it as praise.

The first political action of the young Louis Napoleon was in Italian, not French, politics. He joined an abortive Carbonari rising in 1851 and had to fly the pursuing Austrians in disguise. Possibly the tutorship of Philippe le

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Bas, son of the Robespierist, had aroused his youthful idealism. His first political declaration – the Rêveries politiques of 1832 – proposed the regeneration of France by a peculiar combination of Napoleon II and the Republic. Only after the death of the Duc de Reichstadt was it possible for Louis Napoleon to put forward the Bonapartist claim on his own behalf.

It is difficult to know at what stage he began to feel he was a man of destiny. Queen Victoria, when she met Napoleon III in 1855, was impressed by his genuine belief that all he had done and did was only in fulfilment of his destiny. But if a superstitious belief in his fate deceived him, it need not deceive us or lead us to underestimate his real abilities. Chance had not dealt Louis Napoleon many cards apart from his name. He was no orator and wisely chose to listen rather than speak, unlike Louis-Philippe, whose garrulity was a legend. The charm which he could exercise over other men, and even more over women, owed little to advantages of appearance. Greville describes him as ‘a short thickish vulgar-looking man’. Practically all the Bonapartes, of course, were rather vulgar. In addition, Louis Napoleon had no taste in literature or art. It would be an interesting question whether the official art of the Second Empire was, or was not, more boring, pretentious, and vapid than that of the First. That there was no originality in Louis Napoleon does not perhaps matter, for originality is not normally conducive to political success. On the other hand, like the first Napoleon he had a great capacity for picking up other men’s ideas; his mind was immensely receptive. It can hardly be denied that between his election in 1848 and the coup d’état in 1851 he played his cards with great shrewdness and beat the politicians at their own game. He had more natural generosity and humanity – when his ambitions did not get in the way – than most dictators; and his sympathy for the lot of the French working-man went beyond the mere requirements of the cult of popularity. If we say that in the last resort he had no moral scruples, this is to refer to his single-minded devotion to the quest of
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day, and he periodically resorted to Miss Howard, now created comtesse de Beauregard, and subsequently to many others. After the birth of the Prince Imperial in 1856, which nearly cost the Empress her life, marital relations ceased.

However, the succession was secured, so far as the life of one heir could do so, and the element of loyalty to a dynasty, though a very new one, could begin to play a role in politics. Bonapartism was more than mere attachment to a name. An opponent might say that it was a synthetic substitute for real political principles, a combination of inconsistent and irreconcilable objectives, of value only as propaganda. But among the supporters of Napoleon III there was one group, with which he himself had considerable sympathy, which—so far as its ideas went—could supply the Second Empire with a policy and some sort of working philosophy behind him. These were the Saint-Simonians, now more or less recovered from the père Enfantin’s aberrations. Saint-Simon as the John the Baptist of Positivism may be left where he belongs, in the classes on moral philosophy of the écoles normales. ‘It seems’, writes one normalien, ‘that his best title to fame is in having transmitted from Condorcet to Comte the idea of a positive policy founded on social science.’ A better claim may be found in the implications of his well-known parable. Suppose, Saint-Simon says, France were to lose suddenly its fifty leading scientists of all kinds, artists, architects, engineers, doctors, bankers, merchants, ironmasters, industrialists in every branch, masons, carpenters, and workers in every craft—it would immediately sink in the scale of civilization and become inferior to all those countries of which it is now the equal. On the other hand, suppose it kept all its leading men of science, arts and crafts, commerce and industry, but lost the whole royal family, all the ministers and counsellors of state, the prefects, judges, archbishops, bishops, and all other ecclesiastical dignitaries, and in addition the ten thousand wealthiest landed proprietors living solely on the income from their property—the loss would undoubtedly grieve the French, being a humane
people, but it would not materially affect their prosperity or their position in the world. In other words, Saint-Simon was asserting the primacy of the productive classes in society, of economic over political ends. It was also a protest against the dominance of the conservative propertyed classes which was established by the Revolution.

Saint-Simon died in 1825, but his disciples continued and systematized his ideas of economic progress. The problem before France, as they saw it, was stated by Michel Chevalier in *Des intérêts matériels en France* in 1838. The new ruling class, he says, has won political power only in alliance with the people. If it is not to be overthrown in its turn it will have to meet the material demands of the people. This can be done only by means of the development of credit, communications, and education. The events of 1848 went a long way towards justifying this analysis, but they also showed that the position of the propertyed classes was stronger than he supposed and that they had no intention of adopting Chevalier's remedy, or any other, except that of crude repression. They viewed the Saint-Simonian idea of the expenditure of large sums by the State to counter economic depression with horror. The Saint-Simonians themselves were not unaware of the strength of the opposition and their ideas and looked to strong government as the only means of economic and social reform. It was natural, therefore, that they should have welcomed the coming to power of Louis Napoleon, who himself had been attracted by the novelty and promise of Saint-Simonian ideas. They provided him with an economic programme, and with some of the personnel to put it into practice. The expansion of credit, railways, industry, trade, even the rebuilding of Paris, for which there had been a Saint-Simon plan in 1832 – in fact, practically all the major economic developments, and therefore nearly all the real and lasting achievements of the Second Empire – derive from the inspiration of Saint-Simon and his followers. Though on a smaller scale and in a more restricted field, Saint-Simo... might almost be called the Bentham of nineteenth-century France.

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The key to economic progress in France lay in the growth of credit, as the Saint-Simonians correctly saw. It is sometimes assumed that the Second Empire was promoted, in their own interests, by the financiers. The truth is rather, on the contrary, that the financiers were promoted by the Second Empire. The affiliations of most high finance were with the old order of Orleanism or with the conservative republic. The only names that stand out on the side of Louis Napoleon are those of the Pèreire brothers and Achille Fould. Existing banks and orthodox financiers catered mainly for the wealthy and conservative rentiers, interested principally in government loans. For the growth of industry new banks were needed. The Comptoir d'Escompte, founded in 1848 and developed with the encouragement of the Emperor, was primarily a commercial bank. Later it developed considerable colonial and Far Eastern interests. The Crédit Foncier, founded in 1852, was given a monopoly of mortgage finance, and its moderate terms facilitated the extensive rebuilding of the towns of France during the Second Empire. The Crédit Agricole dealt in farm mortgages and other agricultural finance; it ran into difficulties later, but this was after 1870. Private banks were also developed, the most famous being the Crédit Mobilier of the Pèreire brothers, Saint-Simonians, who plunged heavily in French and foreign railways, a French steamship line, and government loans. Later, in 1863, the Crédit Lyonnais was set up; conducted with the traditional caution of the Lyonnais businessmen, it has flourished to the present day.

A wave of economic expansion followed the establishment of the Empire. It was concentrated particularly on the development of railways. After a slow beginning, the companies were rationalized by being reduced to six, and the pace of construction was so accelerated that by 1869 France had nearly three times as great a length of line as in 1841. By 1870 France had almost as extensive a network of lines in operation as Germany or Great Britain. Railway development stimulated, of course, the production of coal
and iron. The consumption of coal was trebled, and the use of horse power in industry quintupled, between 1851 and 1870. The average price of steel was practically halved. The greatest of the iron-works, at Le Creusot, was bought by the Schneider brothers in 1856 when its annual production was 5,000 tons; in 1847 it was 18,000, and the increased pace of growth under the Second Empire is shown by the rise from 35,000 tons in 1855 to 133,000 in 1867. In the same period the foreign commerce of France practically trebled.

Meanwhile the growth of the French population had slackened, so that the increased wealth of the country was not swallowed up by the excess of mouths. Moreover the shift from the country to the town continued. The proportion of urban population grew from 24 per cent to 31 per cent, and this probably represented a rise in the average standard of life in the countryside, for it was the landless labourers and the poorest element there which declined most. The growth of railways, which played their part in facilitating the movement from the country, also broke down some of the traditional rural isolation.

The share of the state in providing the actual finance for this general economic development should not be exaggerated. Up to 1860 the public works programme was financed mainly by private investment. Budgetary expenses for this purpose were indeed smaller than they had been under Louis Philippe; whence those developments in which for one reason or another the private investor was not interested — roads, canals, ports — languished. The same was true of agriculture. The peasants, whose votes had established the Second Empire, were those who profited least from it. They were suspicious of all new methods; the legal structure of France protected the small proprietor in his jealous independence of any interference, and the subdivision of the land prohibited any general or coordinated schemes of improvement.

The programme of public works which Louis Napoleon inaugurated was in his mind a continuation of the policy of the First Empire. He himself wrote of Napoleon I, ‘The public works, which the Emperor put into operation on such a large scale, were not only one of the principal causes of domestic prosperity, they even promoted great social progress.’ While these motives were certainly present to the mind of Napoleon III, the propaganda value of public works was also not absent, particularly if they could be effected in full view of the public. The improvement of Paris, in continuation of the work of Napoleon I, was therefore among the first projects to be taken in hand after the coup d’état.

The need to render Paris, like all the other great urban agglomerations of Europe, habitable, was patent enough; but it would be a mistake to attribute the improvements solely to the pressure of hard facts. Reforms, in Paris as in London, did not come about by the automatic pressure of circumstances; they were the conscious achievement of the disciples of a Saint-Simon and a Bentham, and in France the result of deliberate government policy. It was not confined to the capital; at Lyon, the prefect Vasse effected an almost equally dramatic transformation.

The first attempt of Napoleon III, after the coup d’état, to promote a policy of public works was frustrated by the conservative financial ideas of the officials in charge but in 1853 one of the most energetic of the prefects was brought to Paris. This was the Alsation Protestant, Haussmann, who had hatched his administrative wagon to the rising star of Louis Napoleon as early as the presidential election of 1848. As a godson of Prince Eugène, Haussmann had almost an hereditary claim to be regarded as a Bonapartist. Forceful and cunning, ambitious, unprincipled, formidable in bulk and character, he was the ideal agent for the Second Empire in a grade a little lower than the highest. He was to be Prefect of the Seine from 1853 to 1870. Such a man did not shrink from unorthodox, but up to a point justified, financial methods. The theory behind them was simply that the new values created by the reconstruction of the older sectors of Paris would themselves pay for the work that had to be undertaken.
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The scope of Haussmann's demolition and reconstruction is amazing. He gave Paris eighty-five miles of new streets with wide carriage-ways and pavements shaded with trees. Private enterprise lined them with houses and shops, to a height and with a façade prescribed by the authorities, and in a style that represented Haussmann's idea of architectural beauty, for the Prefect of the Seine had the born philistine's conviction of his own impeccable artistic taste. Viollet-le-Duc, apart from the injury he did to Notre-Dame, was kept out of the rebuilding of Paris by Haussmann, who was neither romantic nor medieval. His passion, like that of Napoleon I, was for vistas. The place de l'Étoile looks very fine from the air; it is a pity that it is not normally seen from that angle. Napoleon III, indeed, reproached Haussmann that in his love of straight lines he neglected the needs of traffic. The new railway stations, for example, were left without adequate approaches.

The best things in the re-planning of Paris were due to the influence of Napoleon III. His memories of London inspired the creation of many squares and other open places. The Bois de Boulogne, which had been a rather dull royal forest, cut across by long straight avenues for the hunters, was given by the Emperor to the city. At the instigation of Morny a race-course was created at Longchamps; it rapidly became a fashionable social resort, the profits on which largely paid for the transformation of the uninteresting bois into a landscaped park. A similar treatment was accorded to the Bois de Vincennes on the east of Paris. Napoleon III was also responsible for the construction of the Halles, the great central market, as a functional structure of metal and glass.

Apart from the long straight roads he drove through Paris, and the vistas they afforded, Haussmann's greatest achievement was in the drainage of the city. The sewers of Paris before him are luridly described by Victor Hugo in Les Misérables. By the end of the Second Empire the visit, especially of the great sewer which Haussmann liked to call his Cloaca Maxima, was a tourist attraction. A further virtue of the sewers was that they had been built without tearing anything else down, for much of old Paris and many fine and historic buildings were sacrificed to make it a Second Empire city. A sentimental regret for what was lost, and even an aesthetic distaste for what replaced it, would neither, perhaps, be justified if a fine modern city with improved living conditions had been built. But the tradition of urbanism, the Florences of the Medici, the Paris of Louis XV, the Nancy of king Stanislaus, had now come down to the boulevard Malesherbes and the place de l'Opéra. Behind the state-prescribed façades of Haussmann's streets the builders could put up what they liked, and often new and more imposing slums replaced the older and more picturesque ones. Running water was only supplied at the option of the owner of a building, who often decided that it was an unnecessary luxury, since it involved the payment of a water rate. The function of the grand new sewers must not be mistaken: they were to remove the rain-water from the streets and prevent flooding. Sanitary, or rather insanitary, refuse still had to be carted away by an army of men at night in the traditional fashion, or sunk in cess pits, or deposited illegally in streets and gardens. Another, equally unpleasant, aspect of the city was the large area taken up by decaying bodies. Haussmann is not to be blamed for this; his plans for a great municipal cemetery outside Paris were successfully resisted by those who were determined that when they could do no more mischief there alive, they should leave their dead bodies to pollute the air and drinking water of the city.

The attention that was paid to Paris was not given to its surroundings. The Wall of the Farmers General (on the line of the present outer ring of boulevards), with its sixty gates, was now no longer the effective limit of occupation. A shift of population was taking place to the large area between this wall and the fortifications of the Orleanist Monarchy. Railway works and factories attracted a suburban population; and many of those who continued to work in Paris were drawn outwards by the cheapness of living in what
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was becoming a huge, poverty-stricken, higgledy-piggledy encampment of shacks. However, in the great enterprise of Hausmann good and bad were mixed up together, and his achievement suited his day and generation. Contemporaries who began by opposing and went on to mock his efforts, came to admire the results.

The crown of them all was to be the new Paris Opera, built by Charles Garnier, inspired by the eighteenth-century Bordeaux Opera, and calculated for the gratification of a society even richer and more luxurious than the eighteenth-century mercantile aristocracy of Bordeaux, as well as for a less chaste artistic taste than that of the age of Louis XV. Within and without it was loaded with decoration in all the styles known to history. A separate carriage-way led into a private entrance to the imperial box, for Napoleon remembered the attempt by Orsini and the murder of the duc de Berry. A huge entrance hall and elaborate stairs, for the arrival and reception of foreign or French notabilities; a foyer for the circulation of the fashionable throng; an auditorium surrounded by boxes to preserve the privacy of wealth and rank or facilitate amorous intrigue; a stage as deep as the auditorium, on which the most grandiose spectacles could be presented - such was the Paris Opera, a worthy setting for the luxury and splendour of Second Empire society, where Napoleon III and his Empress might shine amidst the wealthiest nouveaux riches and the most beautiful courtesans of Paris. This was a dream picture; in 1871 the Opera was still unfinished. It was completed, with the constitutional laws of the Third Republic, in 1875.

The Second Empire was the real bourgeois monarchy, an age of plutocrats without the culture or taste of an eighteenth-century Farmer General, of fashionable priests without the religious feeling of a Lamennais or a Lacordaire, of well-disciplined scholars without the intellectual distinction of the Orleanist scholars, of glittering demi-mondaines whose possession was one of the chief forms of ostentatious expenditure and signs of worldly success. The fashionable painters and writers were even more insignificant than usual in modern times. Apart from Daumier's cartoons, Millet's paintings exhibiting the dignity of labour, and Courbet's bourgeois-shocking realism, the only painters of real distinction were the rebels of the Salon des Refusés in 1863 who, rejected by official art, founded the great impressionist school of the Third Republic. The most lasting artistic creations that belong properly to the Second Empire are the comedies of Labiche and the operettas of Offenbach. What was on a higher level represented either a survival of the romanticism of the early century, or a direct or implied protest against the new society and its standards. Victor Hugo, fulminating in exile from the Channel Isles, launched Les Châtiments against 'Napoléon le Petit'. The cult of realism that is associated with the Third Republic developed in fact under the Second Empire, which recognized its enmity when the publications of Madame Bovary and the Fleurs du Mal were prosecuted in 1857.

If we want to see the spirit of the Second Empire at its best and most triumphant, we must look at the Exhibition of 1855, organized in imitation of the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London, but representing none the less a genuine aspiration after economic progress and pride in the beginnings of achievement.

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4. L'EMPIRE C'EST LA PAIX

An age of materialism and money-making was opening, selfish and - especially after the June Days - hag-ridden with class hatred, but all classes were striving, with varying success, for the same thing - a higher standard of living. The desire for adventures, either domestic or foreign, if it ever existed, was over. Nationalist historians have represented a nineteenth-century France constantly harking back to the military glories of the First Empire. Nothing could be more misleading. There were many grievances against the July Monarchy, but its lack of bellicose ardour was not one
of the causes of the 1848 Revolution. If the left-wing republicans and socialists aroused the opposition of the nation under the Second Republic, it was not least because of the fear that they might involve France in war with Europe. Louis Napoleon had judged the desires of the country rightly when he proclaimed, l'Empire, c'est la Paix.

They had not changed by 1853, when the Russian occupation of Moldavia and Wallachia led to a Russo-Turkish War. France was involved because she claimed to be the protector of Roman Catholic interests in the Near East, and a quarrel over the custody of the Holy Places had been the occasion, if not the cause, of the Russo-Turkish war. The French Emperor was indignant at the Russian aggression and at what seemed to him a humiliation for France; but though clerical support might have been expected, the country as a whole entered the Crimean War not only without enthusiasm, but with patent reluctance. However, confused as were the events leading up to the outbreak of war in March 1854, the responsibility of Napoleon III for them was comparatively slight. Nor can he be held personally responsible for the incompetence with which the war was conducted, particularly by his British ally.

The news of the fall of Sebastopol in September 1855, after much disappointment and disillusionment, was greeted in France with an outburst of rejoicing. It was assumed to mean peace, and if it had not meant peace, opposition to the continuance of the war would have been widespread. The Peace Congress was held at Paris in the spring of 1856. It was a triumph for Napoleon III, though what France gained by the war it is difficult to say.

If the Crimean War was the result of accident, the same can hardly be said of the next war that the Second Empire was involved in. The legend of Napoleon I as the liberator of Italy, the early association of Louis Napoleon with the Italian Carbonari, and his genuine nationalist ideals, given his obstinate, fatalistic habit of clinging to the ends he had once set himself, made it certain that the Emperor would endeavour to do something for Italy. Cavour was fully aware of this and played on Napoleon III in all the ways he knew. The insane attempt by the Italian revolutionary, Orsini, to assassinate Napoleon III and Eugénie as they arrived at the Opera, which killed eight people and injured many more, was just the thing to appeal to the over-clever mind of an ex-conspirator as an opportunity to turn it to precisely the opposite ends from those that any reasonable calculation could have anticipated. Orsini, of course, had to be executed, but first he had to play the role, which his appearance and the Emperor cast him for, of the romantic patriot. Through his would-be assassin, Louis Napoleon was able to proclaim indirectly his allegiance to the ideal of Italian liberation.

The next step was the secret conference with Cavour, in July 1858, at Plombières, where, in the absence of his ministers, the Emperor reached a verbal agreement envisaging war against Austria. The Italian war, which was now planned, shows even more clearly than any of the other wars of the Second Empire, that they are not to be attributed to pressure from below, or to the French desire for glory, so beloved of historians, or to a supposed need to cement the Emperor's authority. They were the necessary result of his foreign policy, which he kept largely in his own hands, partly through belief in his star, and partly because he never fully trusted any of his ministers. This was why, says Émile Ollivier, 'he adopted the custom of dealing directly with the ambassadors on important occasions, to the exclusion of his ministers.' The meeting at Plombières was followed by a year of declarations which seemed to make war inevitable, yet which, under the pressure of French and European opinion, stopped short of actually provoking it. There is a possibility, indeed, that Napoleon was playing an insidious game of bluff, which would be characteristic of him, and hoping in the end to achieve something without war. His last-minute agreement to a European congress to discuss the future of Italy, though he pretended to those who wanted war that it was not intended seriously, casts some doubt on the sincerity of his bellicose
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gestures. The cunning of Cavour and the folly of the Austrians robbed him of the choice and in April 1859 war began.

Despite these equivocations, the Italian War was essentially the Emperor’s own. The ministers were opposed to it; the clergy and those who followed their lead, the peasantry and most of the better-off classes, were against it. Only the enemies of the Emperor, the republicans and their clientele in the towns, viewed it with favour. The Emperor had seemed to be working for war by all the methods he could, with little regard for scruple, or even for French interests, as if he were infatuated. It was the even greater folly of the Vienna government and the Austrian ultimatum that gave him the chance to bring France into the war on a temporary wave of anti-Austrian sentiment. Whatever the feelings of the peasants who furnished the mass of the troops, their departure for the war brought cheering crowds into the streets of the cities; and when the Emperor himself, leaving Paris from the Gare de Lyon, had to pass through the workers’ quarter of Saint-Antoine, there were scenes of great enthusiasm.

Perhaps as a Bonaparte, Napoleon III was expected to be, and may – though this is more doubtful – have expected himself to be, a military genius. Really, considering his total lack of military experience, the fact that he did not get his armies into a complete mess, indeed into rather less of a muddle than professional generals had done in the Crimean War, or than the Austrian generals did with the troops opposed to him, is very much to his credit. The Austrians, who had advanced into Piedmontese territory, were defeated first at Magenta, which saved Milan, and then at Solferino, after which the French and Piedmontese were on the point of invading Venetia.

It is unlikely that this luck would have lasted, and there were other considerations which called for serious reflection. Things were not turning out quite as Napoleon III had expected. Revolutions in the smaller Italian states were throwing them into the arms of Piedmont. The revolt of

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the papal province of Romagna increased the opposition of the French clericals to the war. Prussia was mobilizing on the Rhine. The Austrian forces were now in a stronger position, resting on the famous fortresses of the Quadrilateral. Solferino had brought enough glory and bloodshed for both the Emperor and his people. As after the fall of Sebastopol, only now even more so, there was a general cry for peace. All this might easily have been anticipated, but it apparently took Louis Napoleon by surprise. He reacted quickly by opening negotiations with Francis Joseph, and less than three weeks after the battle an armistice was concluded at Villafranca.

By its terms, Lombardy was to be ceded to France, for her to transfer to the Kingdom of Sardinia; but Austria was to keep Venetia, and in the Italian states which had revolted their former rulers were to be restored. Since he had failed to unite all Northern Italy to Piedmont, Napoleon could not claim the cession of Savoy and Nice to France, which had been part of the agreement with Cavour. The fact that the other Italian states were united to the Kingdom of Sardinia in the course of 1860, and that France could consequently annex Savoy and Nice, was a purely adventitious gain, but it meant that at the last minute the Emperor’s luck had held. Though some clerical and right-wing support was alienated, and the Foreign Minister, Walewski, whose sympathies were with the papal cause, had to resign, republican and left-wing opinion – which presented a much more serious opposition – became more favourable to the Empire. The real miscalculation of the Italian war lay in its effect on the European situation, but this was only gradually to be revealed.

Napoleon III was much more interested in asserting the role of France among the Great Powers than in developing imperial ambitions outside Europe. In the colonial, as in every other field, it is difficult to trace a consistent policy through the aberrations of the Second Empire. The Emperor began with a prejudice against Algeria, which he called ‘un boulet attaché aux pieds de la France’. His romanticism, or his
national ideas, or perhaps even his idealism, brought about a drastic reversal of policy in 1863, when, in a public letter to the Governor General, he condemned the confiscation of native land for the colonists. 'Today', he declared, 'we must convince the Arabs that we have not come into Algeria to oppress and despoil them, but to bring them the advantages of civilization. ... Algeria is not a colony properly speaking, but an Arab kingdom. ... I am just as much the Emperor of the Arabs as of the French.' One result of this new orientation of French policy was a drastic diminution in colonization, and attempts to introduce large-scale capitalist enterprise which failed. The government of Algeria continued to be in military hands until 1870, when a parliamentary inquiry condemned the system and the government restored the authority of the prefects.

Senegal, considered of secondary importance, had the good fortune to be governed from 1854 to 1865, with a brief gap, by one of the wisest colonial administrators France has had. This was Faidherbe, an engineer captain in 1854, who established a system of indirect rule and extended French authority inland. When he retired, he had wrested large populations from the overlordship of the Moors and sketched out the plan of an extensive and prosperous colony. He established the pattern of pacification, organization, and assimilation which was to be continued with remarkable success for many years. In 1857 the port of Dakar was founded. Attempts to develop the native agriculture of Senegal were markedly successful. A cadre of able colonial administrators was built up. Altogether, in Africa under the Second Empire we can see the beginning of the modern problems of colonial government, and tentative answers, emerging sometimes through the influence of the Emperor, and sometimes in spite of him.

In the Far East French missionaries and merchants led the way, to be followed by small expeditionary forces. An Anglo-French punitive force in 1860 occupied Pekin, burnt the Summer Palace, and looted everything it could lay its hands on, to show the superiority of European civilization.
the adoption of free trade principles. Chevalier had persuaded him to accept the plan for a commercial treaty with England before Cobden met the Emperor. It had not been a difficult task, for Napoleon III had a genuine interest in the well-being of the populace of France, and believed that a reduction in the traditionally high French tariff wall would promote it.

He kept his plans secret from those ministers who were not likely to agree with them. Walewski, who was out of sympathy both with the Italian and the commercial policy, was removed from the Foreign Ministry in December 1859. In January 1860 Napoleon published a letter to his Minister of State, Poulil, in which he announced measures for the improvement of French agriculture and industry with the aid of government loans, in preparation for the commercial treaty. Because the Legislative Body, weak as it was, would not abandon protective duties quietly, the Emperor resorted to a reduction by executive action. Cobden and Chevalier negotiated the Anglo-French free trade treaty, which was signed in January 1860. The French industrialists, fanatical protectionists, reacted with combined panic and fury. Petitions were got up; manufacturers descended on Paris to protest—those from Rouen even chartered a special train—but all to no avail. By the terms of the treaty France agreed to bring absolute prohibition of imports to an end, and to reduce her tariff to a maximum of 50 per cent within two years and 25 per cent in five years. Great Britain practically abolished all customs dues on imports from France, except for those on wines and spirits. In actual fact the French government went further than it had promised in reducing customs rates.

Commercial treaties followed with other states. In matters of trade the Second Empire was the only liberal régime France has ever known. It did not seem to harm French prosperity. The small iron works, still dependent on wood, the iron mines of the North, rapidly being worked out, were hurried to their end by foreign competition, but British competition brought down the price of iron and so stimu-

lated the growth of railways and the introduction of machinery.

On the other hand, the hopes of a period of international peace to be promoted by the adoption of a free trade policy were hardly fulfilled. In the sixties the Second Empire was entering on a period of misfortunes and mistakes. Though he had his long-term objectives, the actual policy of the Emperor always developed as a series of lucky improvisations. Now his luck was changing, or perhaps we might say that the unpaid debts resulting from earlier gambles were coming in for payment. He was less equal to them than formerly, because a disease of the kidneys and bladder was increasingly weakening him and sapping his capacity for decision.

In the fifties Louis Napoleon had built up the prestige and influence of France in European councils with considerable success. What this meant was that France was returning to the position among the Great Powers that her population, wealth, and military potential justified. It is also fair to say that for a number of different reasons the competition inside Europe was not formidable at this time, while the Emperor sedulously avoided any serious dispute with Great Britain. But in the sixties the situation began to change, partly as a result of Napoleon III's own actions. His semi-romantic, early nineteenth-century ideas of foreign policy were no longer appropriate in the harsher climate of blood and iron that was sweeping over Europe; and also it must be admitted that, in the age of Cavour and Bismarck, Louis Napoleon was out of his class.

There was another, and perhaps more fundamental, cause of the failure of French foreign policy in the sixties. France could now only maintain her prestige and keep up her relative position among the Great Powers of Europe by preparing for, and facing the possibility of, eventual war. But by 1860 the French nation had fought in ten years two more wars than it wanted. The Emperor himself had his fill of war and moreover was well-informed of the strongly pacific trend of public opinion. This was perhaps the
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decisive factor, which needs to be emphasized. Napoleon III never forgot that he had been brought to power by the masses of the people. His authority had not been created by, nor did it depend on, the army. There was no great party machine, as in modern fascist and communist dictatorships, to hold the people down. His was a personal and plebiscitary dictatorship, and what the people had given the people might take away. The Emperor was therefore almost pathologically conscious of his dependence on public opinion, and lacking the machinery - apart from a press of which the known subservience was the measure of its lack of influence - or the modern techniques for manufacturing opinion, he had often, indeed too often for the well-being of the country, to follow it. The problem was to discover what the public, in so far as a public existed, was thinking. Here the Second Empire had to fall back on the method of earlier régimes, by relying on a continuous flow of reports on the state of opinion from its own administrative agents.

Dependence for information on those who have a vested interest in representing the situation in the most favourable light, for naturally they do not wish to cast discredit on their own services or their efforts to influence opinion, can prove very dangerous, and leave a government - as it left Louis-Philippe and Guizot - in sublìme ignorance of their own isolation from the country. The stronger the government, the greater the danger of this. The governments of the Second Empire were weak, though the régime was not equally weak. The prefects and other officials would doubtless generally have been anxious to provide the answers that their superiors wanted if they had known what these were, but often they did not; and particularly in his later years the Emperor was genuinely trying to discover what public opinion demanded, in order to satisfy it. Sometimes, it is true, he initiated policies under the impression that they would win popular favour, and then found it difficult to liquidate them when this proved a miscalculation. But he was no longer prepared, as he had been when he assumed

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responsibility for the Italian War and the Treaty of Commerce, to swim against the tide.

When Poland revolted against Russian rule in 1863 the Emperor followed opinion faithfully in first alienating Alexander II and sacrificing what was almost a Russian alliance by protesting against the suppression of the Poles, and then exhibiting his weakness by doing nothing to follow up the protest, beyond proposing a congress. Great Britain, suspecting French ambition to recreate a Polish client state in Eastern Europe, refused to support this proposal. The next year, when Prussia and Austria seized the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, it was Great Britain that proposed the congress, and Napoleon III, in a futile hope of extracting compensation from Prussia on the Rhine, who refused his support. Neither France, nor Great Britain, of course, was prepared to fire a shot in support of the smaller nations of Europe; in these circumstances their notes and diplomatic manoeuvres could not be anything but useless gestures.

In 1866 came the Austro-Prussian War, in preparation for which Bismarck had played Napoleon III like a cynical animal trainer with a greedy but rather stupid beast, enticing him into the desired position with the proffer of a choice morsel - of not clearly specified territory on the Rhine - but all the time intending to snatch it away at the last moment. Louis Napoleon, of course, was not foolish enough to count on Bismarck's gratitude for the reward of his neutrality. He believed that Austria was the stronger of the two Germanic powers, and with his old pro-Italian and anti-Austrian obsession, gladly saw Italy join in on the side of Prussia to redress the balance and wrench Venetia from the Austrian Empire. His miscalculation was basically due to the fact that the Austrian Empire was still for him what it had been for Napoleon I, the real enemy in Europe. Prussia, on the other hand, was seen as the weak state defeated at Jena and a natural ally of France. French opinion also, as Bismarck had assured himself through his informants in France in advance of the war, was
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determined that France should keep out of it. Louis Napoleon even contemplated an alliance with Prussia and Italy against Austria; and when Thiers in a brilliant speech warned France against a policy that was setting up a united Germany and Italy as dangerous rivals to France, Napoleon went out of his way to repudiate this view and proclaim his belief in the primary interest of France in smashing the Vienna settlement of 1815. After the rapid Prussian victory, the foreign minister, Drouyn de Lhuys, and the Empress were for immediate war, and this was the moment when France might have resorted to war with the best chance. Unfortunately, although French sentiments were now anti-Prussian, the habit of sitting on the side-lines and cheering or booing without intervening in a dangerous game had gone on too long to be changed overnight. France was still profoundly pacific and Napoleon had done nothing to prepare French opinion for the necessity of resisting Prussian aggression. At the critical moment he was ill, and his strongest minister, Rouher, was opposed to armed intervention. All the Emperor could fall back on was the notorious ‘policy of pourboires’—territorial compensation to be extracted by weakness from strength—the left bank of the Rhine, Belgium, Luxembourg. What Great Britain, the German states, and the states involved in the proposed bargain, when it became known—and Bismarck saw to it that it did—thought of these proposals need not be said.

Meanwhile the French garrison, kept in Rome under pressure from the French Catholics but withdrawn in December 1866, had been brought back in October 1867. A small French force assisted the papal troops in repelling Garibaldi at Mentana. This completed the antagonization of Italy. Between 1863 and 1867 Louis Napoleon succeeded in alienating practically every state of any importance in Europe.

Outside Europe earlier colonial successes had led up to a much more ambitious scheme to undo what Napoleon III might well consider the mistake that Napoleon I had made in selling Louisiana. As always, a series of accidents seemed to mark the path of Napoleon III to the end which, when he had attained it, could be seen to have been in his mind all the time. A moderately reforming and anti-clerical government in Mexico under President Juarez having repudiated the foreign loans incurred by its predecessor, in 1862 a debt-collecting Anglo-Franco-Spanish expedition was sent to Mexico. When the other two contingents withdrew, a French force remained at Vera Cruz to experience a defeat at the hands of Juarez’ men. This, of course, had to be avenged for the sake of French honour and imperial dignity. Reinforcements were therefore sent out, which captured Mexico City and organized an Assembly of Notables. This offered the throne of Mexico to a Habsburg prince, Maximilian, put forward by Napoleon III. The Civil War meanwhile prevented the United States from opposing the breach of the Monroe Doctrine.

A mixture of motives inspired this attempt to establish a client state of France in the Americas. To the expected extension of national power and prestige was added the hope of economic gain—perhaps a persistence of the legend of the wealth of the Indies. Morny had a more personal hope of gain in the form of a commission of 30 per cent on the repayments to a great Swiss creditor of Mexico. There was strong Catholic support for a plan which promised to overthrow the anti-clerical Juarez government; at Rome the French campaign was proclaimed a crusade. The French expedition proved a much bigger military commitment than had been expected; in the mid-sixties nearly 40,000 of the best French troops were tied up on the wrong side of the Atlantic, when the balance of Europe was being changed. The situation was not improved by the fact that the French general, Bazaine, quarrelled with the other leaders of the imperial forces, married a young Mexican girl, and may have had ambitions of setting up as a ruler on his own. Guerrilla warfare dragged on with a continued drain of men and money—the adventure rapidly becoming intensely unpopular in France—until the end of the American Civil War announced the end of the French intervention in
Mexico. In 1867 the French troops were withdrawn, while Maximilian remained to be shot by the Mexicans, and his Empress went mad. It was a tragic end to a squalid and foolish adventure. Worse was to follow, but before tracing the foreign policy of Napoleon III through to the final catastrophe, it is necessary to say something of the concurrent decline of his authority at home.

5. TOWARDS THE LIBERAL EMPIRE

Little has been said so far of the politics of the Second Empire. But the impression should not be given that apart from its foreign and colonial adventures, the only thing that really counted in its history was economics. The politics of a dictatorship, like that of an absolute monarchy, normally consists of mere court intrigue. If this is increasingly less true of the Second Empire, that is because it was rather a weak and half-hearted dictatorship. The simple preservation of parliamentary forms is not particularly significant; nor can we learn much from the elections, at least in the earlier years. Dictatorships, since they cannot tolerate opposition, normally suppress it by force, as the Second Empire did in the beginning. But Napoleon III also liked to pretend that it did not exist. This belief was made easier by the fact that the majority of the nation undoubtedly supported him to the end. However, nothing less than a hundred per cent support is really satisfactory to a dictator. To secure the appearance of almost unanimous support the Second Empire relied on electoral management.

After 1852, the next elections were held in 1857. Opposition was still weak and the government was supported by just over 84 per cent of those voting (65 per cent of the electorate) as against 83 per cent in 1852. The prefects and their subordinates secured the election of the official candidates in all except thirteen constituencies; and of those who succeeded without the blessing of the Minister of the Interior eight were independents whose opposition to the régime was very mild. The remaining five were republicans, four, including Jules Favre, Emile Ollivier, and Ernest Picard from Paris, and one from Lyon. The Party of Five, as it was known, counted for rather more than its minute size might suggest, because the eloquence of Ollivier and Favre, and the wit of Picard, made a striking contrast to the dull pomposities of most of the yes-men of the prefects. But the fact that these republicans had accepted a seat in the Legislative Body was already a long step in the direction of reconciliation with the régime. The Italian War, with which they sympathized, carried them still farther. By 1859 the Emperor felt his position so thoroughly consolidated that he offered an amnesty to all political exiles with the solitary exception — and this is significant — not of any of the socialists but of the leader of the red republicans, Ledru-Rollin.

In 1860 the first step away from dictatorship and in the direction of a real parliamentary system was taken. Since the Empire was at the height of its success and under no necessity to make concessions, and the change was introduced against the advice of the ministers except Morny, it must be attributed to Napoleon III himself. His motives, as always, remain inscrutable. One possibility is that he may have found himself too much at the mercy of his ministers, having neither the expert knowledge nor the assiduity to examine and control all they said or did in his name. He now allowed the Legislative Body and the Senate to hold annual debates on the speech from the throne, in the presence of ministers who were to reply to them on behalf of the government. An official report of debates was also to be published.

In 1861 a further step was taken. The vote of the budget by sections, instead of en bloc, was conceded. Political life was reviving, and in 1863 for the first time the government went into the election faced by a real, if hopelessly divided, opposition. This only won 32 seats, 15 to the Catholic opposition and 17 to the left. The Empire still had rather over five million votes out of over seven millions, but the opposition obtained a vote of two million, compared with
under half that figure in 1852 and 1857. An ominous fact was that out of the twenty-two largest towns in France, eighteen had given a majority to the opposition candidates. Paris elected Thiers and eight republicans.

These elections had been managed by the devoted Persigny, who had followed the star of Louis Bonaparte from Strasbourg to the Tuileries. Minister of the Interior after the coup d'état, and subsequently Ambassador in London, he had returned to the Ministry of the Interior in 1860. It was characteristically inconsequent that Louis Napoleon should have put back into the key position this enthusiastic, authoritarian Bonapartist, just at the time when an attempt was being made to moderate authoritarianism. Persigny's ruthless application of the system of official candidatures in the election of 1863 could only have been justified by conspicuous and increased success. The absence of this was equivalent to failure, and the resentment that his methods aroused suggested that they were becoming anachronistic. So Persigny had to go, with a dukedom as a consolation prize.

The leading influence over the domestic policy of the Emperor for the next two years was to be that of Morny, the most brilliant, unscrupulous, and from a political point of view perhaps the ablest and wisest of the Emperor's collaborators. The duc de Morny had a special qualification for his role, since he was the Emperor's half-brother. He was the son of Hortense Beauharnais, Louis Napoleon's mother, by General de Flahaut, her lover, himself an illegitimate son of Talleyrand. This double illegitimacy was to add up to a great dignity of the Second Empire, but already under Louis-Philippe Morny had won a fortune by speculation and a seat in the Orleanist Chamber of Deputies. He, more than anyone else, perhaps even more than Louis Napoleon himself, was the architect of the coup d'état. He quarrelled with the Emperor over the confiscation of Orleanist property, which may perhaps be set off against some of his own rather dubious financial transactions. In 1854 he became President of the Legislative Body, and he believed all through that France must return to a qualified parliamentary régime, in which the position of Napoleon III would perhaps not be so very different from that of Louise-Philippe. Morny's charm, his capacity for managing men, his combination of bonhomie with the air of a grand seigneur, his dashing ways with women and with wealth, his shrewdness and essential sense of the possible, made him one of the chief assets of the Second Empire and an ideal agent for the transformation of the régime into what was to be called the Liberal Empire. Morny envisaged an imperial government freed from the incubus of the rigid authoritarians, the unimaginative conservatives; a parliamentary Empire, which should be led and managed by himself and in which the oratorical talent which he lacked should be supplied by some brilliant orator of the left, such as Émile Olivier. Among a crowd of technicians, fonctionnaires, political managers, and general second-raters, he stands out as something like a statesman. If he had lived, his ability might increasingly have supplemented the failing powers of Napoleon III. His death, at the age of fifty-four, in 1865, was perhaps the single most disastrous event for the Second Empire in a period that was increasingly filled with disasters. It postponed the coming of the liberal Empire for five years, and meant that when it did come, it should be under much less favourable auspices.

The series of disasters in foreign and colonial policy bears witness to the strength rather than the weakness of the Second Empire. In all of them, it is true, public opinion was the accomplice of the Emperor, as it had been in December 1851; but a régime with less support could not have passed through them with such immunity, nor have been so little shaken by the growing opposition in France.

This opposition was now coming as much from the right as from the left. The relations of the Empire with the Catholics had changed markedly since 1856. At the time of the coup d'état a few bishops, like Sibour of Paris, saw ultimate dangers for the Church in too close an identification with the new régime. Lacordaire despairs, but most
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Catholics welcomed it. Montalembert only hesitated for a few days; Veuillot was enthusiastic. Napoleon III paid part of the price for the support of the Church by increasing the financial contribution of the State to the Church, thus enabling clerical salaries and pensions to be raised. Legal recognition was accorded to congregations of women and a large loophole left for congregations of men. Between 1852 and 1862, 982 new religious congregations were authorized. The Panthéon was restored to religious use.

Under state patronage the Church in France grew in size and vigour. Membership of religious orders increased from some 37,000 at the beginning of the Second Empire to nearly 190,000 by the end, mostly of course women but three times what it had been in 1789. This was not a mere numerical growth; religious zeal mounted as well as numbers. The episcopate was distinguished by scholars, administrators, politicians, theologians. The lower clergy, disciplined by their training in the seminaries and their total subjection to the bishops, showed none of the dangerous independence of the eighteenth century. The laity was kept in a state of religious zeal by a well-organized propaganda. Perpetual Adoration became general and the cult of the Virgin occupied an increasingly dominant position in religious worship. In 1854 the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, supported by the Jesuits and opposed by the Dominicans, was promulgated. Visions were seen and miracles happened. In 1858 the events occurred at Lourdes that were to make it the greatest holy place of modern Catholicism. In these circumstances where all the anti-clericals of the Third Republic were to come from seems a mystery.

Perhaps they might have been fewer if the liberal Catholics of the Second Empire had been more; but these were only a tiny minority. The organ of liberal Catholicism was Le Correspondant of Montalembert; and with such collaborators as Albert de Broglie, Dupanloup, Falloux, and Lacordaire, its intellectual distinction was guaranteed. On the other side were those for whom the loi Falloux, by which clerical control of education had been greatly extended, was not enough. The law was attacked bitterly by the Intransigents, the leader of whom was the powerful Catholic journalist, Louis Veuillot. Born of peasant stock, trained as a lawyer’s clerk, as editor of L’Univers he was the voice of the Church militant and spared neither opponents nor allies. Any concession was a crime; persecution was a sacred duty. Veuillot was one of the athletes of faith: to call any happening a miracle was for him to render it ipso facto worthy of faith. The liberal Catholics were worse than infidels or heretics.

At the opposite pole to Veuillot was Dupanloup, Bishop of Orleans, a politician, a frequenter of salons and academies, and as restless and servile a controversialist as Veuillot himself. Dupanloup had most of the intellectuals of the Church behind him. Veuillot had—what was more important—Rome; and through him French Ultramontanism was identified with the religious views that prevailed at the Vatican under Pius IX. The publication of the Syllabus of Errors in 1864, if it might easily have been foreseen as the inevitable recognition of the need to condemn and ban all liberal ideas, came as a shock to the French liberal Catholics. It aroused the latent Gallicanism of the French Church.

The opposition to Rome was led by the Archbishop of Paris, Mgr Darboy, appointed in 1863 and destined to die before a Communard firing squad in 1871. The conflict between liberal Catholics and Ultramontanes reached its peak in 1869–70 with the Council summoned at Rome to proclaim the dogma of papal infallibility. Dupanloup agitated in press and pamphlet; Darboy tried to bring in Napoleon III against the papalists; but it was no time for the tottering Emperor to assert himself. Veuillot sent back from Rome brilliant reports for L’Univers, demolishing the enemies of the Pope. It was doubtless significant of something that the most powerful voice among the French Catholics was now that of a successful journalist. The victory of the Ultramontanes was complete.

It was during the Second Empire that the cleavage
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between the majority of French intellectuals and the Church, which had begun under Louis XIV, was renewed. Even the political alliance of the Church with the State began to wear thin before the end of the Second Empire. The Italian War alienated the sympathies of many Catholics, who manifested their dissatisfaction in the elections of 1863. The Emperor, in turn displeased, not only removed the pro-clerical Walewski from Foreign Affairs but appointed Victor Duruy as Minister of Education, to defend the interests of the lay University against the clericals and struggle for the emancipation of education from religion. Duruy cautiously modified the educational system, increasing the number of State schools and reducing the fees, as first steps towards free and compulsory education. He also introduced changes into the traditional syllabus, including a more secular education for girls. In these years, also, anticlericalism was spreading and becoming more aggressive. Among the middle classes Freemasonry, now more or less purged of the misty illuminism of the eighteenth century, was one of the chief means by which it was expressed. And because of the alliance—however strained it had become—between the Church and the Second Empire, anticlericalism was associated with republicanism.

The growing opposition, of both right and left, is much more interesting than the time-serving politicians and bureaucrats of the Empire. This should not lead us to exaggerate the size or strength of the oppositions. To the end there was no possibility that either could have obtained a majority in the country, still less have overthrown the régime. Their chief effect was in weakening its self-confidence, and in leading the Emperor, who was acutely conscious of changes in public opinion, to feel the need for concessions. Another factor in the situation was his own declining health, which both weakened his grasp and made him more conscious of the problem of the succession. As has been said, the death in 1865 of Morny, who might have been able to guide the régime into more liberal paths with the alliance of Émile Ollivier, delayed the changes which

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Napoleon probably already had in mind; but in a letter of January 1867 he announced coming constitutional reforms. They may not seem to amount to very much—the chief were that the right of interpellating ministers in the Legislative Body was to be substituted for the debate on the address, that ministers were to speak in support of their legislative proposals, and that the control of the press was to be somewhat relaxed—but conservative resistance held up the new press law for a year.

Until 1868 the press had been kept by direct or indirect methods under effective governmental control. A paper could only be published with government permission and on depositing substantial caution money to meet the fines it might incur. For any article that the authorities disliked it could be warned, and after two warnings was liable to suspension. As well as banning the publication of hostile articles, the government also circulated favourable ones, which were reproduced throughout the country by journals which wished for official support. Most of them did, for it brought advantages in the form of access to information from government sources, such as in England The Times had, and also more direct forms of favour—the publication of official notices amounted to a disguised form of subsidy and outright payments were not unknown.

The press law of 1868 ended this administrative control of the press and allowed new journals to be established without preliminary authorization. It was much more dangerous for the régime than any of the constitutional reforms. Immediately there was a proliferation of new sheets, among them the notorious Lanterne of Henri Rochefort, which reached a sale of half a million by June 1868. After three months of calculated and brilliant, if irresponsible, insults against the whole Bonapartist establishment, it was suppressed by legal action. Another episode resulting from the relaxation of the press laws occurred in 1868, when the stalwart guerante-huitard Delescluze and another journalist started a fund in their papers to erect a monument to the deputy Baudin, who had been killed in the coup d’état.
of 1851. The government made the mistake of prosecuting them. The trial provided the opportunity for a young defence lawyer, just beginning his political career, to deliver a resounding denunciation of the crime of December and all who had been accomplices of it. Gambetta had made his appearance on the political scene.

Everything seemed to be conspiring against Napoleon III in the last, unhappy years of his rule. Economic progress, which had been the great idea, and up to a point the great achievement, of the régime, slackened. There was a severe crisis in the cotton industry in the sixties, attributable mainly to the effects of the American Civil War, and to increased competition within France as a result of the development of rail transport. The silk industry suffered from a disease of the silk worm. In the vineyards the appearance of phylloxera in 1863, to become widespread after 1875, began to produce depression. The later sixties indeed belied some of the golden hopes which the economic development of the fifties had raised, though they did not undo the progress that had already been achieved.

The financial crisis was more dangerous for the régime. The Second Empire had been founded on credit, it flourished while the credit lasted, and began to break down when the springs of credit dried up. The steadily increasing threat of war undermined confidence increasingly in the eighteen-sixties. Monied men ceased to invest and left their money idle in the bank: this was known as the grève du milliard – the thousand million francs that went on strike. Those with capital to invest feared the adventurous disposition of the Emperor now that he had ceased to want adventures. With more reason they were alarmed by the deterioration in the international situation.

The great financial house which was most closely identified with the Second Empire was naturally the one which suffered most in this crisis. The Crédit Mobilier found in 1865 that its commitments had outrun its mobilizable resources. Its titles to property were still extensive, and given time and the cooperation of other financial houses it could have weathered the storm. But the adventurous methods introduced by the Péreire brothers had alienated the world of orthodox finance, which cheerfully allowed them to sink. In the course of 1867 their shares fell from 1,982 francs to 140, and their credit to the point at which the legitimist, lawyer Berryer, in a law-suit arising out of the crisis, could describe the Crédit Mobilier as 'the greatest gambling house in the world'. The Rothschilds and the more traditional bankers now took their revenge for the earlier triumphs of the Péreires; and the Emperor – for all their services to his régime – could only make a weak and unsuccessful attempt to come to their rescue. As soon as they had safely gone under for the third time, the Crédit Mobilier was refloated by rival houses. But in ruining the Péreires and launching a campaign against 'Saint-Simonian finance' the orthodox bankers had delivered a deadly blow to the already tottering credit of the Second Empire. Perhaps this was not altogether unintentional. They had been suspicious of Louis Napoleon from the beginning, and now they were beginning to believe that a parliamentary government might be more conservative and a better guarantee of property and wealth than an Emperor. As so often, we see the prefigured shape of a coming régime appearing behind the increasingly blurred outlines of the existing one.

The government that had to cope with this critical situation was one from which the paladins of the Second Empire had disappeared, but the party hacks, the official spokesmen, and – at best – the administrators remained. The Empire had not been able to renew its cadres or its leaders. Pould, uncommitted rival of the Péreires from the beginning, was at the Ministry of Finances. Hausmann ruled Paris. In 1865 Baroche added Cultes to Justice, and Rouher became joint Minister of State with Billaut, who had been the voice of the Empire in the Legislative Body. Before the session opened Billaut had died, and the chief burden was to fall on the broad shoulders of Rouher.

The question which contemporaries and historians have
asked themselves is whether henceforth Rouher or the Emperor determined the policy of the declining Empire. Ollivier called the minister the vice-emperor; the wits declared that France had not a government but a 'Rouhernement'; high officials and foreign diplomats looked to him for the best indication of the policy of the Emperor. He had been a notable servant of the Second Empire from the beginning. With a capacity for hard work and intrigue, a determination pushed to the point of obstinacy in pursuing a fixed line of action, and the rather crude cunning of an Auvergnat, Rouher rapidly made himself almost indispensable to an Emperor whose own powers were noticeably weakening. With the close collaboration of Fould and Baroche, he built up a subservient clientele in the Legislative Body. Yet he could never feel quite sure of his position: there were many rivals round the Emperor, and he could not afford to make a mistake or a concession. His position was essentially that of a political manager and an advocate rather than a statesman. He envisaged his task as one of defending a régime and implementing its policy, not of supplying the policy himself. Garde des Sceaux on the eve of the coup d'état of 2 December, Rouher had probably had a larger share in drawing up the Constitution of 1852 than anyone. He was thus committed to the Bonapartist idea from the outset, that is to a dictatorship which rested on universal suffrage – in other words to the official candidature and electoral management. By character, training, and conviction he was opposed to any liberal concessions. He could only hold his position and continue to function so long as the political system which needed him, and which he had done so much to create, lasted. The death of Morny left him free to pursue his own authoritarian tendencies, one sign of which was the appointment to the Ministry of the Interior of La Valette, who combined a heavy hand with a light head.

Yet the government of Rouher was essentially weak, as was shown when it was faced by the one really vital issue, that of rearmament. The series of military defeats inflicted on the Austrian Empire, begun – by Napoleon III's own act – at Magenta, and culminating at Sadowa, had changed the balance of power in Europe. In face of the rise of Prussia and the isolation of France, only a rapid French rearmament could redress the situation. A commission, appointed after Sadowa in 1866, revealed the weakness of the army – the exemption, in practice, of the sons of the better-off classes from military service; the reliance mainly on professional soldiers and only such as were attracted by the meagre pay and not worried by the dullness of life in barracks; the slowness to adopt the new weapon, the chassepot, which only began to be introduced in 1866. But when, early in 1867, the commission produced proposals which would have made military service less easy to avoid and created an effective reserve, there was an almost universal outcry. Government supporters in the Legislative Body feared for their seats; opponents saw a stick with which to beat the government.

Finance was the other major obstacle to rearmament. The earlier wars, colonial expeditions, the Mexican adventure, had still to be paid for. A programme of public works was needed to check the growth of unemployment. The government could not face, at the same time, extensive borrowing to modernize the army. Eventually a few relics of the proposed reforms were passed in the Army Law of January 1868, amid demonstrations of protest from the republicans in the cities, and even these reforms were not put into practice effectively. Throughout the years of increasing international tension the republicans and monarchists opposed rearmament. Napoleon III, who saw the dangers of the international situation, had not the strength either to avoid, or prepare for, the coming clash; and Rouher seems to have been pinning his hopes on a policy of peace at almost any price.

Although Rouher was the main target for the attacks of the opposition and a sufficiently large if pachydermous one, almost as fierce a fire was concentrated on another apparently permanent feature of the Second Empire. This was
the prefect of the Seine, Baron Haussmann. Like the Péreire brothers and Rouher, what particularly singled him out for attack was his close association with Napoleon III; and again the attack was launched with the aid of the Rothschilds, as well as with ammunition furnished by Fould from the Ministry of Finances. For Haussmann, to rebuild Paris, had relied on unorthodox methods of raising credit. As building costs increased, and with the slackening of economic activity, speculators who were willing to invest in the property values his new roads created became less easy to find, he was driven to more and more daring expedients to finance his operations. When all these were exhausted, in 1868 he had to come to the Legislative Body to ask for retrospective sanction for a loan amounting to about a quarter of the whole French budget. Fundamentally, the financial position of the rebuilding of Paris was probably sound, but it had been achieved by daring methods which even a parliament still largely composed of official candidates could hardly accept. Rouher, who, like Fould, had no love for Haussmann, practically disavowed him. A future minister of the Third Republic, Jules Ferry, made his mark on the political scene with a pamphlet entitled Les Comptes fantasisques d’Haussmann. The Emperor did not yet abandon the prefect who had served him so well, but the fate of Haussmann, and of more than Haussmann, was to turn on the elections of May 1869.

In this situation the wisest policy for Napoleon III might have been to attempt to raise his régime above the electoral battle. There was, after all, no serious possibility of a movement to overthrow the Empire. Legitimists, Orleansists, conservative Republicans, men of property, and peasants, the Empire was still what divided them least. Napoleon III could have afforded to leave the election in 1869 comparatively free; but Rouher could not. He flung everything he had into the struggle, though his own unpopularity was such that his support was the greatest handicap he could inflict on his own candidates. Paris, Lyon, and all the big cities produced crushing majorities against
the government. The opposition won some 3,300,000 votes (a million and a half more than in 1863) to 4,400,000 for the official candidates, and it yet remained to be seen how far the latter would be loyal to Rouher.

The Emperor, ill and exhausted, was in no state to enter on a serious struggle in defence of his minister. Persigny was warning him of the unpopularity of Rouher and Baroche; his always inconvenient relative, Prince Napoleon, was intriguing; the Legislative Body was evidently on the point of escaping from Rouher’s control.

Unwilling to resign in time, the ‘vice-Emperor’ found himself, when Napoleon at last decided to yield to the demands of the opposition, faced with the bitter task of announcing the abandonment of his own policy and the concession of the parliamentary liberties which he had consistently and uncompromisingly refused. This was the end of the Bonapartist constitution that had been set up in 1852; and the building having tumbled down in ruins, it was inevitable that its chief architect should go. The same evening Rouher tendered his resignation: Haussmann was to follow him in January 1870. It is hardly necessary to enumerate the constitutional changes that followed, they were to endure so short a while.

The year 1870 opened with the choice of Émile Ollivier, whom Morny had picked out for the role five years earlier, as head of the first and last parliamentary government of the Second Empire. Ollivier had been chosen, partly doubtless in the belief that his eloquence would help to sustain the new régime, but partly because he was an isolé, not committed to any party and therefore supported by none. He was a dazzling orator, full of good intentions, enthusiastic for the liberal Empire, and convinced of his own ability to play the role for which he had been cast. Whether this belief was right or wrong, whether the liberal Empire could have endured, or how it might have evolved, was never to be known.

The new constitution was put into formal shape in April 1870: it established government by a cabinet responsible to parliament. Evidence of the new spirit that it was intended to introduce into the political life of France was a circular of the Minister of the Interior to the prefects: ‘You will take care not to subordinate the administration to politics, and you will treat with equal impartiality worthy men (les honnêtes gens) of all parties.’ The liberal reforms were submitted to a plebiscite on 8 May and approved by 7,358,000 votes against 1,572,000 with 1,894,000 abstentions. It was a triumph for the Empire: republicans and monarchists both recognized it as such. Napoleon III had obtained practically the same number of affirmative votes as in 1852, despite a long series of misfortunes. Although the towns were the centres of opposition, it is claimed that the attachment of the workers to Napoleon III remained lively to the end of the Empire. At any rate, when they did revolt it was only after the Empire had fallen. In the early summer of 1870, though the Empire was in process of evolution, there seemed not the slightest danger of revolution.

6. THE PRICE OF DICTATORSHIP

Nemesis was to come in the shape of war, not unjustly, on an Empire that had denied its own promise that it was peace. The complicated international manoeuvres that led up to the Franco-Prussian War have been narrated many times and given various interpretations. The offer of the throne of Spain to a Hohenzollern prince, and its acceptance – after much hesitation – in June 1870, precipitated the crisis that had been threatening ever since Sadowa. French opinion was outraged, and the Foreign Minister, the duc de Gramont, a light-weight to have to deal with such a serious situation and an opponent such as Bismarck, declared that a Hohenzollern king in Madrid would be a casus belli. In spite of attempts, after the war, to suggest that Napoleon III had dragged an unwilling country into war, the evidence is strong that public opinion throughout France felt that the time had come to make a stand against
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Prussian aggression. France had been out-manoeuvred by Prussia too many times in the recent past to be in a mood to accept one more humiliation. The Empress and the court at Saint-Cloud expressed the general sentiments of the nation when they called for a firm stand, and if necessary war. The popular demonstrations in Paris were described by republican politicians after 1870 as 'organised by the police'. There seems to be no justification for this view. Nor should they be dismissed as the mere outburst of a frivolous populace. They were the natural reaction to the history of the previous ten years. Émile Ollivier himself is alleged to have declared, 'Enough humiliation: it is no longer Rouher who controls the government of France.'

However, Ollivier was no fire-eater, and when the acceptance of the Spanish throne was withdrawn by the Hohenzollern prince, he rejoiced that peace had been saved. Napoleon III, who knew the real weakness of the French army, and had been striving by personal approaches to the other European courts to secure a Hohenzollern withdrawal, without which, he realized, he could not avoid war, also believed that peace was saved. He counted without the French need, after years of humiliation, for a victory, if only on paper; and one seemed at last within grasp. Let France demand something more secure than a mere withdrawal, something in the nature of guarantees: the Legislative Body would probably have overthrown Ollivier if he had not done this, and it reflected a widespread opinion, at least among the politically vocal classes. What the peasants thought, if they thought, cannot be known. Equally, what Ollivier would have done in the face of this movement of opinion cannot be known, for the liberal Empire was too new to permit the normal processes of a parliamentary and cabinet government to operate.

The crucial decision was taken not in parliament or by the head of the government, but at the court of Saint-Cloud, and by a little, and in every sense irresponsible, group headed by the Empress, with the acquiescence of the Emperor. The only minister present was Gramont, who telegraphed immediately after the meeting at Saint-Cloud to Benedetti, French ambassador at Berlin, instructing him to demand a personal guarantee of the withdrawal of the Hohenzollern candidature from the Prussian King, which, it was added, he could hardly refuse 's'il n'est véritablement animé d'aucune arrière pensée'. However much this may look like a deliberate attempt to snatch war from the jaws of peace, such an interpretation would be mistaken. The Empress and her entourage were still haunted by the insecurity of a dictatorial régime, which they felt to be more insecure than ever now that it had been launched on the experiment of liberalization. Only a striking diplomatic victory, they believed, could restore the tottering prestige of the Bonapartist cause. And the man over whom they expected to gain this victory was Bismarck.

The king of Prussia seems to have behaved with complete propriety, but of course refused Benedetti's demand for a declaration which would have been almost an admission of his own dishonesty. Bismarck, to whom the episode was reported, saw his opportunity and gave the press a short statement which read like a brusque rebuff from William I to Benedetti: there is no doubt that he knew what he was doing. This was the so-called Ems telegram. When it was published in France a wave of emotion swept through the country — the Empress, Gramont, Ollivier reflecting the feeling that practically all the newspapers were producing, and that was manifested on the boulevards of Paris and in the streets and squares of every town in France.

On the day after the interview at Ems, the Imperial Council met repeatedly, with the Empress present, and decided on mobilization. The Emperor was too incapacitated by illness to oppose the irresistible current of opinion, even if he wanted to; but when Ollivier reported to the Legislative Body, it was seen that the current was not quite as irresistible as it had seemed. Certainly it was resisted. The centre and the left envisaged the approaching war as an attempt to undo the concessions of the liberal Empire, which in part it was, and they had a spokesman in Thiers,
who in private had already been one of the few in France to foresee defeat, and in public denounced a policy which involved shedding torrents of blood to avenge a few insulting words. Ollivier, whatever his earlier doubts, was now carried away by his own eloquence, and — in one of those phrases with which a man can damn his own reputation for ever — declared that he accepted the responsibility of war 'with a light heart'. On 19 July war was declared on Prussia.

The blunders of Napoleon III's foreign policy ensured that France should enter the war with no allies, but on the side of the government hardly anyone, except perhaps the Emperor himself, supposed that there was any need for them. 'À Berlin' was the war-cry on the boulevards and the password of the army. There was a run on maps of Germany in the shops; it would have been unpatriotic, defeatist, and absurd to suggest that maps of France might be more useful. As recently as 1859 France had been patently the leading military power of Europe, and the revelation of defects in the French army had not affected public confidence. Yet from the beginning the French army was out-numbered, out-gunned, and out-maneuvered. The mobilization was so muddled that the Prussians, unexpectedly even to themselves, were able to take the offensive at once. The French, nominally under the supreme command of the Emperor, who was suffering cruelly from his illness and could only sit his horse in agony, experienced a series of defeats — at Wissembourg, Fröschwiller, and Forbach — in the first week of August. Alsace was lost and Lorraine invaded. The Prussian generals made their share of mistakes, but they showed more capacity for coping with the new conditions of warfare created by the railway and intensive use of artillery than did the French, conditioned by thirty years of North African warfare to the cultivation of élan and the neglect of logistics.

The conduct of the campaign on the French side was rendered even more ineffective by the Emperor's continual hesitations, and the absence of any coherent plan of campaign. After the initial defeats he was coolly pushed out of

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his nominal supreme command by the generals, who were as responsible for them as he was. In his place Bazaine became commander-in-chief. He had risen from the ranks, was known for his personal courage, and had lost the favour of the court after dubious conduct in the Mexican campaign. This was sufficient to make him the favoured candidate of the left, and public opinion practically forced him on Napoleon. But the Emperor, while he was in the field, could not avoid the ultimate responsibility for military decisions; and Bazaine was not the man to take any positive action on his own. He withdrew with a large army on Metz, where the Prussians cut him off by a victory at Gravelotte. Meanwhile, the Emperor, with Marshal MacMahon, was gathering a new army on the Marne at Châlons.

When the news of the defeats reached Paris, the Empress, left behind as regent, summoned the Legislative Body, which called for the dismissal of the ministers and generals whom it held responsible for the defeat, and the appointment of a new government chosen by the Assembly. Eugénie at least had the courage of her lack of judgement and did not yield to this. She appointed a Bonapartist ministry under General Cousin de Montauban, comte de Palikao, who took his title from a victory in China, in place of the defunct government of Ollivier. It was patent to everyone that only a military victory could save the Empire. Palikao's order to MacMahon to march to the relief of Bazaine, unjustifiable from a military point of view, was dictated by political considerations; failing this, he said, revolution would break out in Paris. In a forlorn hope, MacMahon and the Emperor led their army in the direction of Metz, where Bazaine remained in a state of inaction that was later to bring the charge of treachery on him. His motives were at least peculiar — but then he had always been what he looked, rather a peculiar individual. In their turn, MacMahon and Napoleon found themselves penned in at Sedan. Under the bombardment of the Prussian artillery a continuation of the struggle meant only futile slaughter of the encircled troops. On 1 September, beaten and broken, the
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Emperor surrendered with 84,000 men, 2,700 officers, and 39 generals.

At Paris, recently so gay with optimism, opinion was reeling under the report of defeat after defeat. The news from Sedan brought revolutionary crowds out into the streets. Eugénie and the Prince Imperial fled to England. The Second Empire disappeared: it had become such a phantom that the mob was not even concerned to take revenge on its adherents. Napoleon III was perhaps never less hated or more pitied than in his fall. The Legislative Body, to anticipate a revolutionary movement from the extreme left, proclaimed a provisional Government of National Defence. It was headed by General Trochu, already military governor of Paris, and it included the leaders of the parliamentary opposition, but not Thiers. Paris, too shrewd to allow himself to be put in a position of responsibility for what he foresaw as inevitably a humiliating defeat, Thiers undertook instead a futile mission to the courts of Europe to plead for intervention.

The usual kind of vulgar libels were produced by the Parisian journalists against Eugénie, as formerly against Marie-Antoinette. Now it was la femme Bonaparte, ses amants, ses origines. But there was surprisingly little anti-Bonapartist demonstration. Patriotism and a belief that, as in 1792, the republic would spell victory, excluded other emotions. Of course, the political machine of the Second Empire collapsed. The new Minister of the Interior, Gambetta, replaced all the prefects of the fallen regime. He began preparing for a national war. The size of the National Guard in Paris was doubled, and at the end of the month it contained 360,000 men. By this time Paris had been surrounded by German forces, which had pushed on beyond the city and occupied all France north and east of Orleans except for Paris. The Government of National Defence was now deprived of contact with the rest of the country and with its own delegation at Tours, whither Cérèseux, a venerable survivor of '48, had been sent, on the ground that he was the oldest.

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When it became evident that a more energetic leadership was needed, it was decided to dispatch Gambetta, on 7 October, across the German lines by balloon to Tours, where he assumed the functions of Minister of War along with those of the Interior. The son of an Italian immigrant and a Frenchwoman from Gascony, and born at Cahors, Gambetta was a southerner by birth and upbringing. His comparatively humble origins left their mark in his uncouth appearance and manners, which did not conceal his charm and ability or diminish his oratorical powers. In all these respects he reminded his contemporaries - and perhaps was not sorry that they should be reminded - of another great Frenchman in another time of troubles, Danton. An early career in the law led on to politics, and in 1869, at the age of thirty-one, Gambetta was elected to the Legislative Body as a member for Belleville, on the strength of the radical programme of political reform known as the Belleville programme. In the autumn of 1870, as heir of the quarante-huitards and of the Jacobins of '92, he believed that even in this crisis the republic could save France and hurl back the invader.

To second him at the improvised Ministry of War Gambetta chose the engineer Charles de Freycinet, as cool as Gambetta was excitable, but equally determined. In spite of the reluctance of the rural masses, who were now longing only for peace, the two civilians summoned from the soil of France huge new armies in a way that the generals could never have done; but to provide them with efficient officers was not possible, and to train and arm them time was needed. They had hardly begun to take the field before another military disaster occurred. Bazaine, passive in Metz, intriguing with Bismarck for the restoration of the Empire, perhaps hoping to march his troops back to suppress the republic in Paris, playing, as formerly in Mexico, an equivocal role, capitulated with 173,000 men. The only military objective left now - and it was a forlorn hope - was the relief of Paris. The army that Gambetta had formed on the Loire, under the command of a Bonapartist general with a
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reputation for ruthlessness, d’Aurelle de Paladines, won an initial victory at Couluimiers and on 7 November reoccupied Orleans. A full-scale sortie from Paris, attempting to join forces with the army of the Loire, was driven back, but already d’Aurelle de Paladines had decided that he could go no farther and had been dismissed by Gambetta. His army was now split by a German counter-attack into two forces, one led inadequately by Bourbaki, another general of the old school, pessimistic, passive, lacking like Bazaine in all the qualities of leadership; and the other with skill by Chanzy, one of the few French generals in the war who, if he was defeated, at least did not go into battle expecting it in advance. In the north-east Faidherbe was struggling ably to contain the German advance, with temporary success.

The sudden, unexpected, heroic resistance of republican France, after the imperial armies and generals had crumbled up so ignominiously, had taken the Prussian command by surprise; but when they recovered from the shock and deployed the forces freed by the capitulations at Sedan and Metz, the result was a foregone conclusion. By January 1871, Chanzy had been driven back fighting from Le Mans to Mayenne. Faidherbe was in retreat, Bourbaki, sent to the east to threaten German communications, led his army into internment in Switzerland. The delegation at Tours, no longer safe there, withdrew to Bordeaux.

Resistance was concentrated now in Paris, where, in numbers at least, there was a formidable force, well armed and gathered behind powerful fortifications. In numbers, indeed, the besieged were superior to the besiegers. Trained troops of course were lacking, though a Mobile Guard of reservists had some military value and a small volunteer body of francs-tireurs combined courage with lack of discipline. Practically the whole male able-bodied population of Paris was enrolled in the National Guard, to the number of some 350,000 men, whose duty it was to man the defences of the city. There they became simply a semi-armed rabble, demoralized by lack of military training or occupation of any kind, for the Prussians had no intention of taking Paris by storm when it could so much more easily be starved into surrender. The circle round Paris had been completed on 25 September and the beleaguered population, much larger than was estimated at first, in a fever of patriotism and hope awaited relief from without by the new armies of Gambetta, joining with a victorious sortie from within. It had little information of what was happening in the rest of France, for while balloons could carry letters out of Paris, they could not, because of the prevailing westerly winds, return.

Shortage of food rapidly made itself felt. The poorer suffered greatly, and the lower middle class, whose small shops and trades were ruined, perhaps most of all. On the other hand, luxury restaurants remained open with full menus, apart from vegetables and sea fish, throughout the siege, even if exotic dishes such as kangaroo or elephant, and humble ones like cat, had to appear on the list. As winter came on, cold was as great an enemy as hunger. The trees in the Champs-Elysées were cut down and a swarm descended on them to seize firewood, like the ragged army that daily prowled in the no man’s land beyond the fortifications to bring back roots and greenstuff. The Seine began to ice over and soldiers were frozen at their posts. From cold and hunger the death rate mounted. The quest for food became a universal occupation. Edmond de Goncourt, walking in the dusk, hears a girl murmur—"Monsieur, voulez-vous monter chez moi... pour un morceau de pain?"

Bismarck, impatient and seeing political dangers in delay, was pressing for a bombardment of Paris, believing that this would terrorize the inhabitants into surrender. The German generals resisted his pressure for some time, partly because the experiment had already been tried of bombarding Strasbourg, with marked lack of success. However, on 5 January, the weapon of terror was added by the bombardment of Paris. It lasted several hours each night for twenty-three nights. About 12,000 shells fell on the city, killing or wounding some 400 persons, helping to found the modern German tradition of war, but having little effect on the spirit of resistance in Paris.
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The extremists of the left, who had emerged from hiding or prison with the fall of the Empire, were now the leaders of republican patriotism. 'The Frenchmen of 1870 are the sons of those Gauls for whom battles were holidays,' declared Delescluze. Blanqui entitled the journal he founded *La Patrie en danger* and proclaimed the determination of the people to fight to the death and to save Paris at all costs. Believing as they did in the necessary victory of republican forces, defeat naturally was equated with treachery. When the Parisian offensive of 27 October was beaten back three days later, and at the same time arrived the news of the capitulation of Metz, the left-wing leaders called out the mob, invaded the Hôtel de Ville, and began to organize a revolutionary government. Loyal battalions were fetched up and brought the situation under control. There was a similar reaction to a final *sortie en masse* on 19 January, which failed with heavy loss. It has been regarded as an attempt by Trochu to demonstrate to the Parisians the hopelessness of the situation and so prepare the way for capitulation, but as he put himself at the head of the troops this may not be altogether fair to him. The defeat led to another march on the Hôtel de Ville, which was dispersed by the Mobile Guard. The transformation of the patriotic struggle against the invaders into a social struggle inside France was beginning. Elsewhere — in Lyon, Marseille, Toulouse — revolutionary communes had already been set up, but had been brought under control by Gambetta's prefects.

The propertied classes, who had most to lose from the continuance of the war, had long been ready to abandon the struggle. Thiers had all along believed in negotiating with the enemy, under the impression that the price of peace would be cheaper the sooner it was concluded. After the failure of the left-wing rising of 22 January the government in Paris felt safe in accepting the inevitable armistice. By its terms Paris was to capitulate and there was to be a three weeks' suspension of hostilities to allow for the election of an assembly which could negotiate a peace.

The war was over. It was the defeat of an army in which

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were reflected all the defects of the state and society created by the Revolution and Napoleon. The army, like successive French régimes, was possessed by the blind belief in itself of an all-powerful bureaucracy, and by a corresponding inability to make adjustments to cope with the unexpected. The result was total collapse in the face of a crisis. The army also reflected the inherent social conflicts in France. The older aristocratic families had given up their traditional military role rather than serve a state which had abandoned the legitimate monarchy. The bourgeoisie saw no attractions in such an underpaid and despised profession as the army; it was able to avoid the selective service, if its sons drew an unlucky number, by the system of paying for a substitute. The officers of the army were largely drawn from the ranks and their position was the reward of bravery and brawn rather than brains. The higher command went by court favour. What the officer corps lacked in tradition and social background was not made good by the system of military education, for this was as conservative and inappropriate to a post-seventeenth-century world as all other education. When the Minister of War, Leboeuf, said that the army was ready, he spoke truth by its own standards. In fact, sunk in an insipid conservatism, the French army, a true mirror in this respect of French society, was quite unprepared to meet the challenge of a new age. It was still, for all effective purposes, an *ancien régime* army, with all its defects and lacking only some of its virtues. 'French troops', writes Mr Michael Howard, 'straggled, looted and drank as European armies had for four hundred years past.' It had to meet a German army which in comparison was an organized and disciplined military machine. The successes of the German gunners showed, Mr Howard says, that a new age of applied technology in war had begun; the disasters that befell the French cavalry showed that an old age had ended. 'The German victories, as was universally recognized, had been won by superior organization, superior military education, and, in the initial stages of the war at least, superior manpower.'
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The new armies of France, called out of the earth by the genius of Gambetta and organized by Freycinet, represented an even newer response to the problem of modern war, but in 1870 a brilliant improvisation that could not succeed. Gambetta, his policy of national defence having failed, resigned. Although he was elected by nine departments, the result of the elections was overwhelmingly against him. He recognized defeat and withdrew from France.

The electoral decree was issued on 24 January and the election held on 8 February. To bring to an end the electoral management of the Second Empire, scrutin de liste was introduced in place of single-member constituencies. The new prefects had not the influence to make the election, and in any case had been instructed not to do so. The vote was largely a plebiscite for peace and against the dictatorship of Gambetta. Many electors were prisoners or in the new armies; over 40 departments were occupied by the enemy. The population, which could only look for guidance to its local notables and clergy, returned conservative lists everywhere save in Paris and some other large towns, in parts of the east, and in a few southern departments. There were 400 monarchists, 214 of them Orleanist, 182 legitimists mostly from the west and south-west; 78 moderates who were to become conservative republicans; 150 republicans, about 40 of a radical tinge; Bonapartism reduced to a mere 20, only 4, and these in Corsica, daring to proclaim themselves as such. Some third of the new Assembly was noblesse; only 175 had ever sat in an Assembly before; their average age was fifty-three.

It was an exceptional body, elected under exceptional conditions, for a single purpose – to make peace. The shadow of things to come might have been seen in the election as President of the Assembly of Jules Grévy, the republican who had warned in 1848 against the constitutional arrangements which opened the door to Louis Napoleon. Thiers, for whom the election had practically been a plebiscite, with 2,000,000 votes accumulated in multiple candidatures and election in 26 departments, was

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the almost inevitable choice as head of the Executive. France invariably looks to those it has known for many years when a national crisis emerges. Nevertheless, an overwhelmingly monarchist assembly had begun by placing in the key positions two republicans; and Thiers's three leading ministers, Favre, Picard, and Simon, were also republicans.

But there was more than one kind of republican in the minority of the Assembly. Paris had sent a group of deputies, including Louis Blanc, Victor Hugo, Delescluze, Ledru-Rollin, Rochefort, Quinet, whose names were like a roll-call of '48. To the monarchist majority they were intolerable and in fact were so little tolerated that some eight of them resigned. The National Assembly, under the leadership of Thiers, was determined to eliminate the danger from the left, and now this meant almost exclusively Paris. A court martial sentenced Blanqui and Fourens, as leaders of the 31 October rising, to death in their absence. The former Bonapartist, d'Aurelle de Paladines, dismissed by Gambetta, was put in command of the Paris National Guard. The Assembly was brought back from Bordeaux to Versailles instead of to Paris. Finally, Thiers gave orders for the 400 guns in the hands of the National Guard of Paris to be removed on 18 March. It has been described as a deliberate provocation, which Thiers never expected to succeed in any other respect; but he did not expect his troops from Versailles to fraternize with the Parisians, and he expected the National Guard from the middle-class quarters of Paris to give his policy support. This was to underestimate the effect of two fatal measures passed by the Assembly. The first had ended the moratorium on the promissory notes through which much of the business of Paris was conducted; the second was to make rents which had remained unpaid during the war immediately payable. These decisions seemed very reasonable to the landed gentry of the Assembly, to the financiers who had speculated in paper and rents, and to Thiers. They spelt ruin to the lower middle classes of Paris.

Thiers's attempted seizure of the guns was the spark
which set off revolution in Paris. After a riot and a few murders, he ordered the abandonment of Paris by all the legal authorities. The only organized body left in the city was the moderate Central Committee of the National Guard, which found itself obliged to take over the essential services, abandoned by Thiers's orders. Naturally those who came to the front in this emergency were the stronger and extremest leaders, bred in the red clubs which had flourished during the siege of Paris. The eternal conspirator, Blanqui, temporarily not the eternal prisoner, had been the inspiring genius of the most famous of the clubs, meeting in the Halles. His club rouge has been described as 'a chapel consecrated to an orthodox classical cult of conspiracy, in which the doors were wide open to everyone, but to which one only returned if one was a convert'. Blanqui himself presided over the cult, with 'his delicate, superior, calm countenance, his narrow, piercing eyes shot across now and again with a dangerous, sinister light' – an unusually favourable picture of the conspirator described by Victor Hugo as 'a sort of hateful apparition in whom seemed to be incarnated all the hatred born of every misery'.

The Blanquists were only a tiny fraction, the rest of the Parisian rebels felt the need to legitimize their position by holding elections. A municipal government, to be known by the historic but alarming name of Commune, was elected on 26 March. The name of the Commune was a memory of the year 11, of the Jacobins of Robespierre and the sans-culottes of Hébert. It was a symbol beneath which the most opposed schools of revolutionary thought could rally. Four separate groups can be distinguished among its members – the pure revolutionaries, divided between Blanquists and Jacobins, the federalists following Proudhon, and the adherents of the First International. The conservatives or moderates returned in the first election of the Commune resigned, and after complementary elections there was a revolutionary majority of some 57 Blanquists and Jacobins, and a socialist and Proudhonist minority of about 22.

It is a mistake to regard the Commune as Marxist in

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inspiration; only one of its members can be described as a Marxist. Equally it was not a government of the working-class. Though there were 25 ouvriers, there were more than twice as many lesser bourgeois or professional men. The 'Declaration to the French People' issued by the Commune on 19 April represents the federalist tendencies of the minority. As soon as the active struggle began, the Blanquists, weakened by the absence of their prophet, who had been arrested and returned to jail as soon as danger began to threaten Paris, and the Jacobins, headed by Delescluze, took control in a temporary alliance, to be followed, as in 1793, by bitter quarrels. On 1 May they set up a Committee of Public Safety by 45 votes to 23.

The second siege of Paris began on Palm Sunday, 2 April, by a Versailles army in a wretched state of disorganization and lack of material and morale. Its first military achievement was to shoot five prisoners. The forces of the Commune retaliated with a wild sortie in the direction of Versailles, which was easily dispersed with the loss of some 1,000 prisoners captured by the Versaillais, who picked out those they thought were the leaders and shot them. Given a small measure of capacity and unity, at the outset the Commune should have been able to take the offensive with success. It had many more men and guns than Versailles, and a base in the fortified camp of Paris which could be provisioned through the neutral Prussian lines. These advantages were gradually lost. While the leaders of the Commune talked and small bodies of men defended the forts, the life of Paris, theatres, concerts, the busy traffic of the streets, went on much as usual and far more normally than during the Prussian siege. Such changes as were deliberately debated and brought about by the Commune were hardly of major importance. The old revolutionary calendar was revived and May 1871 became floral year lxxix. The Vendôme column was pulled down in a great public ceremony.

Meanwhile the military strength of Versailles was growing. On 8 May a general bombardment of the fortifications began. The forts round the south of Paris, gallantly defended
by isolated groups of men, fell one by one. On 21 May a section of the walls near the porte de Saint-Cloud was discovered to be undefended, and by nightfall the Versaillais had a large body of men within Paris. On the same day the Commune held its last official meeting, devoted typically to a trial of its own military commander. Both he and his successor had failed to secure a reasonable measure of military behaviour from the forces of the Commune. Now that Paris was at bay, the old Jacobin Delescluze proclaimed a war of the people, not conducted by staff officers and military discipline, but by the people, the bras nus. And now that all was really lost the Commune at last began to fight in earnest, in the traditional way, the only way that the people of Paris knew. It was a street battle of barricades, which was to rage for seven days across the breadth of Paris from west to east.

The Versaillais, strong in the knowledge that they were defending order and public morality, throughout the fighting showed more barbarity than the Communards. Apart from the initial episode and the actual fighting, there were practically no shootings of opponents or suspected opponents in Paris until the last stages were reached, though hostages were seized. The Versaillais systematically shot their prisoners. This was one motive of the subsequent murders of hostages that accompanied the final battle in the streets of Paris; but also, it is true, there was a group of ruthless men among the leaders of the Commune, who had not distinguished themselves in the fighting but had had their eyes on the hostages all the time. Now they had their chance, and particularly chose priests, including the Archbishop of Paris, for their victims. To the horror of the street fighting and massacres on both sides was added fire. Incendiary shells from the Versaillais, the burning of buildings by the Communards to clear lines of fire or form a barrier, destroyed much. The Tuileries and other public buildings were fired in a last act of defiance by desperate men, though the story of the pétroleuses is a mere piece of propaganda.

In its final phase the defence of the Commune degenerated into uncoordinated episodes of heroism or cruelty. Delescluze, in the dress of a deputy of '48, top hat, frock coat, and red sash, cane in hand, all being now lost, mounted a barricade to be shot. The last combat of any size was among the graves of the cemetery of Père-Lachaise; and there, on the next day, against the wall that was to become a place of pilgrimage, 147 Communards were shot. Military justice continued to take its toll. The Versaillais lost about 1,000 dead in the fighting; the death roll of the Communards was probably not less than 20,000. Thiers had won a notable victory in the class war; the illusions of 1789 and 1792 had drawn the people of Paris into the bloodiest and most merciless of all its defeats; the Second Empire had ended in disgraceful surrender, revolution and repression, blood and tears; but it was an assembly of monarchists, under a conservative republican head of state, that first provoked and then put to fire and sword the people of Paris.

7. PLUS ÇA CHANGE

The collapse of the Second Empire ends the monarchical and Bonapartist phase in French history. Yet, just as the ghost of the legitimate monarchy haunted the century after its fall, so a disembodied Bonapartism without a Bonaparte was to be a sort of Pepper's ghost, periodically appearing and disappearing on the political stage during the hundred years after the collapse of the Second Empire. Politically, it was far from clear in 1871 whether France was going on to something new or merely back to stale revivals of the past. In art and literature, also, 1871 was not a dividing line. The rebel movements of the third quarter of the century had already inaugurated what was to be one of the great ages of French painting and letters. Above all, in its basic pattern French society seemed to be, and indeed was, unaffected by the passing of an Empire.

If, having said all this, and admitting the artificiality of such divisions in history, we nevertheless have to end one
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this could also apply to the France of 1770, except that in England an agrarian revolution was already under way, while in France the ports were finer and urbanization had produced a crop of elegant provincial towns; also that France was a country with a population of over twenty millions, about three times that of Great Britain. Politically and socially there were more significant differences, but in both countries the powers of monarchy were in practice strictly limited by the influence of the aristocracy, which in turn had to respect the interests of a rising middle class.

Waking in 1870, the sleeper for a hundred years would find changes in England such as he would hardly credit. An industrial revolution that had transformed the appearance of large tracts of country, a population multiplied by five, an urgent political life, with two great parties which had brought political consciousness and activity to large sections of the community, an empire spreading to the four corners of the world: this was the England of Queen Victoria and Mr Gladstone. What was the France of Napoleon III and Ollivier?

It was a country which seemed in many ways never to have left the eighteenth century. There was an Emperor who was the effective head of the government, instead of a king who was only its nominal head; a court at Saint-Cloud instead of Versailles, with fewer old names and more ennobles; a parliament, it is true, but one which lacked the independence, for good or ill, of the juridical parlements of the ancien régime; there were still great financiers, and they still exercised some political, and even more social, power; the Church was again in alliance with the state, and again used its influence to frustrate national policies and obstruct reforms; Paris was swollen and rebuilt, its poorer population expelled to the periphery, and the city itself even more than formerly the centre of administration and government, art and letters, finance and banking. Provincial France, apart from isolated patches of industrialization, and the railways that had been driven across it under the Second Empire, remained very much as it had been a century

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volume and begin another in 1871, this is because there is, after all, something significant in the political calendar. The major changes in political institutions that resulted from the fall of the Second Empire were a determining factor in a fundamental though gradual transformation of French society, and without its opening years the history of the Third Republic would be robbed of the political developments that are essential for its understanding. There is another reason why we must make the break here. The disaster that befell the army, the unsurpassed collapse of the political system, the social stasis that burst out in the bloody class war of the Commune, all inflicted a psychological shock that, if the first result was to numb the national spirit, in the end stimulated it to new endeavour. Although, therefore, the disappearance of Napoleon III from the scene was not like that of a Louis XIV or a Napoleon I — it did not mark an epoch and hardly left a void — there are reasons for accepting the division of French history at this point and pausing to reflect on the significance of the generations that had elapsed between eighteenth brumaire and Sedan.

It is revealing to look back even earlier to 1770, when Louis XV had been making a new political experiment, as Louis Napoleon was in 1870, and consider the passage of an eventful hundred years, in the course of which France had experienced three major revolutions and moved backwards and forwards between monarchy, republic, and empire. How much during this century had French society really changed? If we imagine a Rip van Winkle who fell asleep in France, and alternatively in England, in 1770, and woke again in 1870, and ask him in which country there had been a series of revolutions, there can be little doubt what his answer would be. He would remember eighteenth-century England as a small, rural community of country towns, villages, and hamlets, with sea-ports, but with no great centre of population outside London, its communications by coach on the new turnpike roads where they existed or by pack-horse along tracks, its industry mainly carried on, in town or country, in the homes of domestic workers. Much of
earlier, administered in départements by prefects instead of in généralités by intendants. For the ordinary man the pattern of daily life, the food he ate and the way in which he ate it, his social relations, his interests, his upbringing and his formal education, had changed little; for the peasantry life had changed hardly at all.

If we ask the reason for the intense conservatism of such a politically revolutionary country as France, we must first look at its economy, its way of earning and spending. The Second Empire, under the inspiration of the Saint-Simonians, had inaugurated a minor industrial revolution, and in particular endowed France with a railway system. This was a sign of new things stirring, like the rebuilding of Paris by Haussmann, and of Lyon by Vaisse. But it was attributable to the inspiration of Louis Napoleon himself, with a small group of advisers, and forced through against the opposition of the established powers of France society, just as had been the lesser efforts at economic progress of the Orléanist régime; the main financial and business interests of France seemed to have a vested interest in social conservatism and economic backwardness. The powerful Bank of France, whose two hundred regents formed the central citadel of wealth, had been given the task, from its Napoleonic beginnings, of guarding against social or economic change. A stable currency, unaffected by wars or revolutions, was one proof of its success. Industry was similarly guarded against experiment or change. In the nineteenth century it was impossible to keep technical improvements out entirely, or to prevent the appearance of some large-scale enterprises. But these were exceptional, and until Napoleon III forced through, against bitter opposition, his new commercial policy, a rigid protectionism shielded French industry from competition and the compulsion of progress.

However, industrialists and financiers and commercial men were not a dominant factor in French society. Men of property and rentiers were the main constituents in the structure of the French upper classes. Their ideas were supplied to them by professional men and writers who were equally conservative in their intellectual formation. They were men of property on the Forsyte model, interested in the accumulation of land and houses, or the collection of government bonds, in which they had a pathetic faith, playing for safety as they thought, and content with modest gains so long as no risks were taken. Ordinary business they rather despised. England in these days was still damned, in Napoleonic phrase, as a nation of shopkeepers. 'La France', Michelet truly said and he meant it as praise, 'n’a pas d’en marchande.' The French élite in the nineteenth century was an élite of bourgeois, but their aim was to be, as in the eighteenth century, bourgeois vivant noblement.

The ideal of a stable, unchanging society seemed one that was capable of achievement at the time. The pressure which, in the eighteenth century and the earlier part of the nineteenth, produced social unrest and forced speculation about ways to remedy it, the pressure of population on a country already over-populated in relation to its productivity, had slackened. Above all, France remained rural, the masses of the nation scattered in small country towns, villages, or hamlets, where a class of peasant proprietors, however lacking in worldly goods or the amenities of life they may have been themselves, were acutely conscious of their interests as property owners, intensely suspicious of anything which seemed to offer the threat of change in the pattern of French agrarian society.

Thus a revolution had laid the foundations of an intensely conservative society, nor is this difficult to understand. The classes which consolidated their victory in the Revolution were the peasant proprietors in the country and the men of property in the towns, neither with any vision beyond the preservation of their own economic interest, conceived in the narrowest and most restrictive sense. A Church devoted – apart from an occasional easily crushed rebel – to the interests of the wealthy propertied classes provided the moral justification for their wealth, and spiritual sanctions against those who would attack it. The small Huguenot minority was, if possible, even more devoted to the protection of the
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interests of property than the great Catholic majority. A powerful, centralized administrative structure and judicial system, recruited almost exclusively from the upper sectors of society, strengthened the defences of the existing order. If this was bourgeois society, it was an economically reactionary and backward bourgeoisie that it represented, having nothing in common with the inventors and entrepreneurs, the ruthless financiers, the cut-throat competition of the builders and makers of industrial capitalism. The society which emerged in France from the revolutionary decade and was stabilized by Napoleon, under whom the pattern was fixed which it was to keep with little change for the next three-quarters of a century, was a far more static society than the one which had entered the Revolution with such high hopes.

It was also a society torn by periodic gusts of violent and bloody political disturbance. The paradox is not in the political instability, but in the fact that this also is evidence of the conservatism of society stuck with an unfinished revolution on its hands, one which it seemed under the compulsion to try to re-enact periodically, not because of any social necessity, but because it was now part of the national tradition, a set pattern of behaviour that had to be repeated whenever the coincidence of political and economic crises provided the appropriate stimulus. Then, while some took up the traditional revolutionary stances, others dreamed of reviving the counter-revolution. But since the balance of society remained essentially unchanged, when the smoke had cleared away and the turmoil died down, it was seen that nothing fundamental had changed. Different actors might now be in the front of the stage, but they were still performing the same play.

For this reason the revolutions of 1830, 1848, 1870, though not the frustrated revolution 1871, each in turn gave the impression of being the result of a chapter of accidents. This is in fact what they were, but it does not mean that they were of no importance and had no effect on national history. What they did was successively to remove most of the

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political, and in some cases even the administrative personnel of the previous régime, sometimes only temporarily, but sometimes permanently. In addition, they destroyed the reputations and prospects of many of the leaders of revolution themselves. Seldom has a great nation been so wasteful of its élites. Regularly, generation after generation, those who had acquired political or administrative experience were thrown on the scrap-heap of a usually remunerative retirement.

What kept France going, apart from the stability of its social structure, was the rigid framework of a centralized administration, staffed in all its higher levels by the sons of the same propertied class that controlled the nation's economy. So long as their property and their jobs were safe, they were prepared to serve any régime. France has often been taken as the awful example of a country whose politics have been blighted by the curse of ideology. The strong, but unfortunately not silent, men in our universities who advocate a highly principled lack of political principle, and have tried to deny the legitimacy of rational thought about ends and means in politics, have looked to France to illustrate the danger of having ideas in politics, whereas Great Britain shows the virtue of a happy empiricism, not sickled over by the pale cast of thought. Historically, this is the most arrant nonsense. The interplay between rational political thinking and empirical politics, which was a dominant feature of British political life for four centuries, was lacking in France. The influence of Rousseau on the French Revolution is a legend. The theocrats may have been too lunatic, and the doctrinaires too rational, but the failure of the Restoration was nothing to do with either, any more than the July Monarchy or the Second Republic were influenced by the Utopian Socialists. Benjamin Constant and de Tocqueville were both distinguished political thinkers, but if they were recognized as such, and had any practical influence, it was in England not in France.

In nineteenth-century France political life was the expression of the most blatant materialism. France between 1799
and 1871 was a working model of the instability of a political system without moral and ideological bases. The Napoleonic Empire naturally had none; it was a war dictatorship, with no more principle behind it than the Golden Horde, probably a good deal less. The Restoration came to a nation which had already made many compromises with the revolutionary and Napoleonic state, and could not return to the ancien régime, which anyhow had already lost its intellectual justification before it met its violent end. The revolution of 1830 merely demonstrated that France could not recover an age that was lost, and that 1789 was irreversible. The raison d'être of the July Monarchy was to protect the interests of property, and when Louis-Philippe was no longer able to do so, after a brief interval Louis Napoleon took up the task. With Saint-Simonian inspiration, the Second Empire came a little closer to grips with the problems of French society. If it had not been for the disaster of the Franco-Prussian War, the Liberal Empire might have survived and merged into a parliamentary régime not so very different from that of the Third Republic. But it could only have done this by giving some real content to the principle of the sovereignty of the people to which it paid lip service, and this meant in effect the Republic.

If the Revolution had any ideological basis it was the sovereignty of the people; and if this idea had any honest meaning (which is doubtful) it was universal suffrage. Again it will be enlightening to draw a comparison with England. Once the theoretical democrats of the revolutionary period—never very influential in practice—had been defeated, the extension of the franchise in Great Britain had been argued mainly on practical, utilitarian grounds, as a means of winning improved conditions of life for successive layers of the population. In France politics and economics were curiously separated. The case for universal suffrage was argued as a political right of the individual, a sort of magical gesture. Sovereignty of the people became an incantation, a secular religion. It had its prophets, chiefly concerned with their own spiritual sanctity, its dervishes, prepared to suffer or inflict any pain in the service of the cult, and a political priesthood, anxious above all that no doctrines should be taken so seriously as to endanger vested interests.

Electoral management for a time succeeded in controlling the popular vote, but even in a restricted franchise the electorate sometimes refused to be managed, as the history of the Restoration and the July Monarchy showed. The only alternative, since the one-party state had not yet been invented, was the Bonapartist plebiscitary dictatorship. Beyond this we need not ask what Bonapartism was: it was the party of the men with property and jobs, as Orleanism had been before it, and as Legitimism had tried with less success to be during the Restoration. There was no Bonapartist, just as there was no Orleanist ideology. French politics between 1815 and 1870 was a Namierite paradise, with no Burke to distort the play of self-interested political intrigue, a model machine for the demonstration of politics as a self-sufficient activity.

The trouble is that real life will keep breaking in, disturbing the happy meaninglessness of the Namierite or Oakeshottian political game, in which every ladder has its corresponding snake and the game is never-ending, for it has no goal just as it had no beginning. Unfortunately, as we discover in the last resort, and sometimes even earlier, it cannot always be kept on the level of a game. So the history of nineteenth-century France showed. There were vital issues, which politicians and fonctionnaires might try to ignore, but which periodically took charge of the players; and then the ladders soared to the skies and the snakes devoured their victims.

The instability of French politics did not just arise out of the throw of the dice. There were real issues at stake. One of these was religion. To what extent religion—in the West has ever been a cement of society is a matter of doubt. In France it certainly was not so in the century of the religious wars, or in that of the persecution and destruction of the Huguenots, or when the Jansenist controversy was bedeviling Church and state. The Revolution created a new
religious schism which was dangerous because the anti-clerical minority was large and influential. The constant attempts of the Church to use the machinery of the state to recover its influence over society, to interfere in secular matters and especially to control education, built up an anti-clerical opposition, which was not conciliated by the rise of a proselytizing spirit and a militant ultramontanism which aroused national and Gallican hostility as well. Although many unbelievers in the propertyed classes were prepared to accept the power of the Church as a means of keeping the lower orders in the station to which God had called them, they could not enthusiastically support clerical influence over government. They were glad enough to have their daughters brought up in purdah and general ignorance by nuns, but they wanted a better education for their sons. As for the lower orders, whom religion was supposed to be keeping in a state of proper respect, they were steadily being alienated by a Church which seemed to be devoted exclusively to the protection of the interests of the rich. After 1794, however, anti-clericalism never offered a serious threat to the Church in this period, while clericalism was never strong enough to put the clock back to the seventeenth century as it might have liked. This conflict, therefore, produced tension in society, but no dangerous cleavage as yet.

The class conflict, which was not unconnected with this one, was more immediately alarming. Its nature must not be misunderstood. It was not the class conflict of a modern industrial society, with organized labour waging war for improved conditions and higher wages. Only in Lyon was there, on a small scale, something like this pattern. In the country and France remained overwhelmingly rural – the peasant proprietors, with no vision beyond their commune, were more concerned to guard their own petty privileges against the rural proletariat than to envisage anything better for themselves. As men of property they could always be called on to rally to the defence of property against the “anarchists” of Paris. Only in the capital was there a suffi-

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ciently large proletariat to offer a real threat to the established order and here it was in the form of an unorganized horde, living in depression and degradation, capable – as in 1789 – of being called out by political leaders in the interests of a change of régime, but not capable of conceiving or fighting for a programme of economic reform to better its own conditions. The Parisian populace was a threat, in fact, not to the social system, which seemed irrefragible, but to political stability.

It is true that in this intensely conservative society ideologies proliferated. Their numbers and their wildness bore witness to their remoteness from practicality. An ineffective left-wing now acquired the tradition of irresponsibility which comes from the divorce from political power, and which the right had inherited from the frondeur aristocracy of the ancien régime; while the various parties of the centre, sunk in a squalid defence of their vested interests, squabbled, and sometimes fought, for power and places and the rewards that went with them.

The picture is a depressing one, of a society which had forgotten most of the ideals inherited from the age of the Enlightenment and the earlier days of the Revolution and from which all who held to these, or to newer ideals, felt themselves alienated. Despairing of political and economic life, finding little solace in religion, they turned to art and literature and inaugurated the tradition of a divorce between these and society, the mutual contempt of the artist and the bourgeois. Instead of a mirror in which were reflected the highest values of contemporary civilization, the arts in France became a protest against a society which rejected them and which they rejected. Victor Hugo with the victims of justice and property in Les Misérables, Daumier in his drawings of the Orléanist bourgeoisie – lawyers and men of affairs, with greed, envy, malice, and all uncharitableness written in their countenances, Flaubert and the empty life of the Paris rentier or the provincial lady of fashion, Courbet painting the cold, pinched faces of poverty or the leer of success in Church and state – in these there
was conscious social comment; in Gautier and others a turning away from contemporary society to art for art's sake, a rejection of bourgeois values, of the moral and religious phrases that provide the alibi for unfeeling hearts, and of the repetition of stereotypes that was a substitute for thought in obtuse heads. To those who could not accept gross and philistine standards the life of the rich was a spiritual void and that of the poor a material hell. In a sordid cult of dirt, drugs, and debauchery, the artist sought an artificial paradise, which yet in a Baudelaire could reach to the heights of poetry.

The vie de Bohème was a conscious protest against bourgeois values, but it was a pathetically unavailing protest. The aristocracy and bourgeoisie of the eighteenth century had kissed the rods that chastised them: Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, the Encyclopedists were their idols. Orleanists and Bonapartists just ignored their critics. The age enclosed by the two Napoleons, looked at from the point of view of the high hopes of the Enlightenment and 1789, is bound to seem disappointing and disillusioning. The achievements of the Frenchmen of that age were unimpressive even to themselves, and they remain unimpressive in retrospect. The exciting new developments of the nineteenth century passed France by. In an age of change the French nation appeared to have chosen stagnation without stability. The more the kaleidoscope of its politics changed, the more France remained the same.

Yet, looking forward, it will be seen that this could not have been the whole story. The First Republic succeeded to a great age of reform, and sadly misused its heritage. The Third Republic was to come into a much less promising inheritance and great things were to be made of it. But if this can be said, then there must be a different way from that which I have adopted of summing up the France of the monarchies and the empires. Under the frozen surface of sterile egoism we should detect the early shoots of the creative achievements of the Third Republic. These beginnings have been passed over slightly or not mentioned in this volume. They can be brought in more appropriately later, when they were coming to fruition. For the moment, in 1871, there was little enough evidence of a more hopeful future. It was the end of an unattractive chapter in the history of France. It was not the end of the whole story.
### CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

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<td>1808</td>
<td>May. Joseph Bonaparte King of Spain</td>
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<td>July. Capitalation of Baylen</td>
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<td>August. Vimiero</td>
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<td>Convention of Cintra</td>
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<td>December. Napoleon invades Spain</td>
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<td>1809</td>
<td>January. Corunna</td>
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<td>March. Invasion of Portugal</td>
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<td>April. Austrian offensive</td>
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<td>Disgrace of Talleyrand</td>
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<td>May. Annexation of Papal States</td>
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<td>Imprisonment of Pius VII</td>
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<td>July. Wagram</td>
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<td>October. Peace of Schönbrunn</td>
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<td>1810</td>
<td>Divorce of Josephine</td>
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<td>April. Marriage of Napoleon to Marie-Louise</td>
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<td>Disgrace of Fourché</td>
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<td>Mme de Staël's <em>De l'Allemagne</em></td>
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<td>September. Lines of Torres Vedras</td>
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<td>1811</td>
<td>Economic crisis</td>
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<tr>
<td>1812</td>
<td>24 June. Grand Army crosses the Niemen</td>
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<td>September. Borodino</td>
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<td>14 September–14 October. Occupation of Moscow</td>
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<td>October. Malet plot in Paris</td>
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<td>27 November. Crossing of Beresina</td>
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<td>14 December. Ney recrosses Niemen</td>
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<td>1813</td>
<td>May. Lützen</td>
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<td>Bautzen</td>
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<td>June. Vittoria</td>
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<td>August. Dresden</td>
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<td>October. Leipzig</td>
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<td>Wellington crosses the Pyrenees</td>
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<td>1814</td>
<td>January. Allied invasion of France</td>
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<td>February. March. Negotiations at Châtillon</td>
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<td>31 March. Capitalation of Paris</td>
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<td>6 April. Abdication of Napoleon</td>
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<td>10 April. Toulouse. Defeat of Soult by Wellington</td>
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<td>11 April. Treaty of Fontainebleau</td>
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<td>1 May. First Treaty of Paris</td>
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<td>2 May. Declaration of Saint-Ouen</td>
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1814 4 June. Constitutional Charter of Louis XVIII
      September. Congress of Vienna meets
1815 2 March. Napoleon lands at Fréjus
      20 March. Napoleon enters Paris
      16 June. Ligny and Quatre-Bras
      18 June. Waterloo
      22 June. Second abdication of Napoleon
      8 July. Second Restoration
      Government of Talleyrand-Fouché
      White Terror in Midi
      August. Election of Chambre introuvable
      September. Talleyrand and Fouché resign
      Richelieu ministry
      November. Second Treaty of Paris
      December. Execution of Marshal Ney
1816 September. Dissolution of Chambre introuvable
      Election of new Chamber
1817 November. Occupation of France ended
      December. Richelieu replaced by Decazes
1819 de Maistre’s Du Pape
      Gérard’s La Révolte des Méduses
      1820 February. Assassination of duc de Berry
      Recall of Richelieu
      September. Birth of comte de Chambord
      Death of Napoleon
      Revolutionary movement of the Charbonnerie
      December. Fall of second Richelieu ministry. Ultras take over government
1822 March. Plot of four sergeants of La Rochelle
      September. Villèle President of the Council
1823 April. Expedition into Spain
1824 March. Elections return an Ultra Chamber
      June. Dismissal of Chateaubriand
      Delacroix’s The Massacres of Scio
      September. Death of Louis XVIII
      Succession of Charles X
      1825 Law against sacrifice
      Indemnity to émigrés voted
      May. Coronation of Charles X at Reims
1827 Victor Hugo’s Cromwell
      October. Battle of Navarino
      November. Elections
      1828 January. Government of Martignac
      1829 August. Polignac government
      1830 Victor Hugo’s Hernani
      Berlioz’s Symphonie Fantastique
      June. Elections
      July. Capture of Algiers
      25 July. Four Ordinances
      29–30 July. Revolution in Paris
      31 July. Duke of Orléans accepts lieutenant-generalcy of France
      2 August. Abdication of Charles X
1831 Victor Hugo’s Notre-Dame de Paris
      Stendhal’s Le Rouge et le Noir
      February. Anti-clerical riots
      March. Casimir-Périer ministry
      August. French expel Dutch from Belgium
      October-November. Revolt in Lyon
      1831–2 Cholera epidemic
      1832 Death of duc de Reichstadt
      May. Attempt of duchesse de Berry to rouse Vendée
      Death of Casimir-Périer
1833 Guizot’s education law
      1834 Revolt in Lyon
      Massacre in rue Transnonain
      Lamennais’ Paroles d’un croyant
      Balzac’s Le Père Goriot
      Louis Blanc’s L’Organisation du travail
      1835 July. Fieschi bomb plot
      Gautier’s Mademoiselle de Maupin
      Vigny’s Chatterton
      1836 Attempt of Louis Bonaparte at Strasbourg
      September. Government of Molé
      1838 Rachel plays in Racine
      1839 Revolt of Abd-el-Kader
      March. Fall of Molé
      Louis Bonaparte’s Les Idées napoléoniennes
      1840 Re-burial of Napoleon in the Invalides
      Attempt of Louis Bonaparte at Boulogne
      March. Government of Thiers
      Mehemet Ali crisis
      October. Fall of Thiers

Chronological Table

1827 December. Fall of Villèle
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1829 August. Polignac government
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- 1849 Ministry of Guizot
- Proudhon's Qu’est-ce que la propriété?

1851 Entente cordiale of Aberdeen and Guizot
1852 Comte's Cours de philosophie positive completed
- Sue's Les Mystères de Paris
- Death of duc d'Orléans
- Guizot's railway law
1842-6 Railway mania
1844 Pritchard affair in Tahiti
- Dumas' Le Comte de Monte-Cristo
1846 Escape of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte from Ham
- October, Spanish marriage

- 1847 Economic crisis
- Capture of Abd-el-Kader
- July-December. Campaign of banquets
- 24 February. Abdication of Louis-Philippe
- Provisional Government set up
- Proclamation of Universal Suffrage
- Abolition of slavery
- 16 March. Demonstration of bonnets à poil
- 17 March. Left-wing demonstration
- 23 April. Election of Constituent Assembly
- 15 May. Demonstration of the clubs
- 22-26 June. June Days
- Government of Cavaignac
- 4 November. Constitution of Second Republic
- 10 December. Election of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte as President
- Government of Odilon Barrot
1849 April. Expeditionary corps sent to Rome
- May. Election of Legislative Assembly
- 13 June. Attempted rising in Paris
- July. Fall of Roman Republic
- October. Dismissal of Barrot Ministry
1850 March. Loi Fellows on education
- Left-wing victories in by-elections
- May. Law restricting franchise
1851 July. Legislative Assembly fails to accept constitutional reform

Chronological Table

- 1851 2 December. Coup d'état
- 14 December. Plebiscite
1852 January. Constitution
- 20-21 November. Plebiscite on Empire
- 1 December. Proclamation of Empire
- Foundation of Crédit Foncier and Crédit Mobilier
1853 January. Marriage of Napoleon III and Eugénie
1854 March. War with Russia
- September. Siege of Sebastopol
1854-55 Faidherbe in Senegal
1855 Paris Exhibition
- September. Fall of Sebastopol
1856 Peace Congress in Paris
1857 Prosecution of Madame Bovary and Les Fleur de Mal
- Port of Dakar founded
1858 January. Orsini bomb plot
- July. Conference of Napoleon III and Cavour at Plombières
- Vision at Lourdes
1859 Construction of Suez Canal begun
- Amnesty
- April. War of Italian Unification
- June. Magenta
- Solferino
- July. Armistic of Villafranca
1860 Annexation of Savoy and Nice
- Free-trade treaty with Great Britain
- Anglo-French occupation of Pekin
- Expedition to Syria
- First Constitutional changes
1861 October. Expedition to Mexico
1862 Annexation of Cochín-China
- French troops remain in Mexico
1863 Revoit of Poland
- Renan's Vie de Jésus
- Salon des Refusés
- Manet's Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe
- May. Legislative elections
- Fall of Persigny
- Rouher Minister of State
1864 Schleswig-Holstein War
- Maximilian proclaimed Emperor in Mexico
- Papal Syllabus of Errors
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1865
Death of Morny
Educational reforms of Daru

1866
Austro-Prussian War
French troops evacuate Mexico

1867
January. Letter of Napoleon III announcing constitutional changes
February. Proposals for rearrangement
Crisis of Crédit Mobilier
June. Execution of Maximilian
November. Garibaldi repelled at Mentana

1868
May. Press laws relaxed

1869
Flaubert's L'Éducation sentimentale
Suez Canal opened
May. Elections
Election of Gambetta on Belleville programme
Government of Ollivier

1870
May. Plebiscite on constitutional changes
June. Hohenzollern acceptance of throne of Spain, subsequently withdrawn
July. Ems telegram
July. French declaration of war on Prussia
August. French defeats
Fall of Ollivier
June. Surrender of Napoleon III and MacMahon at Sedan
September. Government of National Defence set up
September. Paris besieged
October. Gambetta arrives at Tours
October. Capitulation of Bazaine at Metz
November. Victory at Coulmiers
Reoccupation of Orleans by French

1871
19 January. Failure of sortie en masse from Paris
28 January. Armistice
8 February. Election of Assembly
Government of Thiers
March. Terms of peace ratified by National Assembly
16 March. Troops fail to remove guns from Montmartre
28 March. Election of Commune
May. Treaty of Frankfurt
21 May. Versailles enter Paris
28 May. End of the Commune

Further Reading

The fullest general history of France in the nineteenth century is still Lavisse, Histoire de France contemporaine (1920–22); reference to specific volumes will be made later. There are useful bibliographies in these, in the volumes of the Peuples et civilisations series, in Gordon Wright: France in Modern Times, 1790 to the Present (1962), and in Clio: V. Villat: La Révolution et l'Empire, ii. Napoléon (1966); L'Époque contemporaine, i. Droz, Genet and Vitalenc: Restauration et révolutions 1815–1848 (1933). Excellent general histories, in less detail than Lavisse, are J. P. T. Bury: France 1814–1940 (2nd ed. 1951); Histoire de la France pour tous les Français, G. Lefebvre: de 1774 à 1815, C. H. Poultas: de 1815 à 1879; and M. Reinhard's finely illustrated Histoire de France ii. de 1715 à 1946; J. Vitalenc: Le Premier Empire, la Restauration; L. Girard: Le Régime de Louis-Philippe, La Révolution de 1848, Le Second Empire. A selection of works on special aspects of French history since 1799 follows.

The best short account of French constitutional developments is given in the Introduction to the earlier editions of Duckitt, Monnier et Bonnard: Les Constitutions et les principales lois politiques de la France depuis 1789. M. Delamarché: Histoire constitutionnelle de la France depuis 1789 jusqu'à 1870, i (1912) is long and rather arid but it contains useful material that cannot easily be obtained elsewhere. An interesting sketch of right-wing movements, perhaps unduly schematized, is R. Remond, La Droite en France de 1815 à nos jours (1954). An essential book for understanding the operation of parliamentary institutions in France is D. W. S. Lidderdale's The Parliament of France (1951).

French historians are only now beginning to work on the economic history of nineteenth-century France. J. H. Clapham's Economic Development of France and Germany, 1815–1914 (4th ed. 1936) is an able survey on the basis of the material available when it was written. The trade policies of France are traced by S. B. Clough in France, a History of National Economics, 1769–1939 (1939), a useful book though written to a theme which does not necessarily command acceptance. An account of religious developments is given by C. S. Philips in The Church in France, 1792–1907 (2 vols. 1929, 1936), and more recently in the series edited by Fliche and Martin, especially La-Crise révolutionnaire 1789–1848 by J. Leclen. The study of the interaction of Church and State in France by P. H. Spencer in The Politics of Belief in Nineteenth Century France.
Further Reading

another, and on all those who impinged on it from his marshals to his mistresses, are so many and so detailed that the effort to pick out particular volumes for mention here has had to be abandoned. The histories already referred to will provide an introduction to the voluminous Napoleonic bibliography.

The counter-revolution and the opposition to Napoleon has been served much less well, but its importance for the future intellectual development of France is indicated in F. Balsam’s Le Mouvement des idées dans l’émigration française, 1790-1815 (1924). There is now an excellent history of the evanescent but unduly deprecated régime that followed the catastrophe of Napoleon, in G. de Bertier de Sauvigny’s La Restauration (1955). Sympathetic to the Catholic and royalist ideals of the Restoration it is therefore perhaps a little hard on parliamentarians like Decazes and Villèle.

The July Monarchy lacks any good recent general history and even specialized studies are comparatively rare. Competent accounts of the reign of Louis-Philippe are the volume in Lavisse by S. Charléty, La Monarchie de juillet (1921) and P. de la Gore, Louis-Philippe 1830-1848 (1931). A useful light on the politics of the reign is thrown by S. Kent in Electoral Procedure under Louis-Philippe (1937). The economic and social problems of a still mainly pre-industrial society have not been adequately studied, but indications are to be found in C. H. Pouthas, La Population française pendant la première moitié du XIXe siècle (1956), L. Chevalley’s authoritative La Formation de la population parisienne au XIXe siècle (1950), the same author’s stimulating Classes laborieuses et classes dangereuses à Paris pendant la première moitié du XIXe siècle (1958), and J. B. Duroselle’s Les Débats du catholicisme social en France 1822-70 (1951).

With the Second Republic and the Second Empire we come to a period in which our problem is not to find titles to include, but rather to know what to omit. The best history of the Second Republic is the volume in Lavisse by G. Scignobos, La Révolution de 1848 et l’Empire (1921), which reflects a great deal of archival research, unfortunately – for lack of reference – all to be done again. One traditional misinterpretation was eliminated by D. G. MacKay in The National Workshops, a Study in the French Revolution of 1848 (1933); and something to rescue the reputation of Ledru-Rollin from excessive contempt was achieved by A. R. Calman’s Ledru-Rollin and the Second French Republic (1922). Karl Marx’s Class Struggle in France 1848-50 was a brilliant analysis for its time.
but is naturally inadequate by the standards of modern economic history. F. A. Simpson’s *Louis Napoleon and the Recovery of France 1848–56* (1930, 3rd edition 1956) is well written but lacks the research that might have given it more lasting value. The same author’s *Rise of Louis Napoleon* (1939) is brilliantly written and amusing but very slight, and H. A. L. Fisher’s *Bonapartism* (1914) is somewhat misleading. Louis Napoleon’s own *Des idées napoléoniennes* (1839) is essential for the understanding of the Second Empire. Karl Marx’s *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* is a brilliant piece of contemporary history.

Among general histories of the Second Empire the volumes by Seignobos in Lavisse are probably still the best. A. L. Guérard’s *Napoléon III* (1943) is a bright account and J. M. Thompson’s *Louis Napoleon and the Second Empire* (1954) is of value as a study of the personality of Napoleon III. A thoughtful introduction to the economic policy of the Second Empire is H. N. Boon’s *Rêves et réalité dans l’œuvre économique et sociale de Napoléon III* (1936). There is a thorough and well-documented study of the Chevalier-Cobden commercial negotiations in *The Anglo-French Treaty of 1860* (1936) by A. L. Dunham. D. H. Pinkney’s *Napoleon III and the Rebuilding of Paris* (1958) is a well-balanced account based on original sources. A competent life of the rebuilders of Paris, derived from printed materials, is *The Life and Times of Baron Haussmann* (1957) by K. M. and Brian Chapman. L. Girard’s *La Politique des travaux publics du Second Empire* (1953) is authoritative. On the other side of the medal is the detailed but impressionistic *La Vie quotidienne en France sous le Second Empire* (1946) by G. Duveu. The membership of the legislative assemblies is sketched by T. Zeldin in *The Political System of Napoléon III* (1958), which combines the brilliance and the narrowness of the Namier approach. A revealing picture of political life under the Second Empire can be obtained from biographies, such as R. Schnerb’s thorough and penetrating *Rouher et le Second Empire* (1949). There are many studies of the foreign policy of Napoleon III. One of the most illuminating, which uses the reports of the procureurs, is L. M. Case, *French Opinion on War and Diplomacy during the Second Empire* (1954). The Franco-Prussian War belongs as much to European as to French history and has an extensive literature of which *The Franco-Prussian War* (1961) by Michael Howard is now authoritative. A detailed though rather anti-French account of *The Siege of Paris 1870–1871* (1950) is by M. Kranzberg. The attempt of France to fight back after the collapse of the Empire is well described by J. P. T. Bury