The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*

I

Hegel observes somewhere that all the great events and characters of world history occur twice, so to speak. He forgot to add: the first time as high tragedy, the second time as low farce. Caussidière after Danton, Louis Blanc after Robespierre, the montagne [democratic socialists] of 1848-51 after the montagne [Jacobin democrats] of 1793–5, and then the London constable [Louis Bonaparte], with a dozen of the best debt-ridden lieutenants, after the little corporal [Napoleon Bonaparte], with his roundtable of military marshals! The eighteenth Brumaire of the fool after the eighteenth Brumaire of the genius! And there is the same cartoon-quality in the circumstances surrounding the second imprint of the eighteenth Brumaire. The first time France was on the verge of bankruptcy, this time Bonaparte is on the brink of debtors’ prison; then the coalition of the great powers was on the borders – now there is the coalition of Ruge-Darasz in England, of Kinkel-Brentano in America; then there was a St Bernard [Pass] to be surmounted [when Napoleon defeated the Austrians in 1800], now a company of policemen to be dispatched across the Jura [Mountains to demand republican refugees from the Swiss]; then there was a [battle of] Marengo to be won and a lot more, now there is a Grand Cross of the Order

* In the title Marx alludes to General Napoleon Bonaparte’s coup d’état of 9 November 1799 (18 Brumaire VIII in the revolutionary calendar), overthrowing the ruling Directory and establishing a dictatorship.
of St Andrew [from the Tsar] to be gained and the esteem of the Berlin [newspaper] National-Zeitung to be lost.

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please in circumstances they choose for themselves; rather they make it in present circumstances, given and inherited. Tradition from all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they appear to be revolutionising themselves and their circumstances, in creating something unprecedented, in just such epochs of revolutionary crisis, that is when they nervously summon up the spirits of the past, borrowing from them their names, marching orders, uniforms, in order to enact new scenes in world history, but in this time-honoured guise and with this borrowed language. Thus Luther masqueraded as the Apostle Paul, the [French] revolution of 1789–1814 draped itself alternately as Roman republic and Roman empire, and the revolution of 1848 could come up with nothing better than to parody 1789 at one point, the revolutionary inheritance of 1793–5 at another. Likewise a beginner studying a new language always translates it back into his mother tongue; but only when he can use it without referring back, and thus forsake his native language for the new, only then has he entered into the spirit of the new language, and gained the ability to speak it fluently.

Examination of this world-historical invocation of the dead reveals a further striking distinction. Camille Desmoulins, Danton, Robespierre, Saint-Just, Napoleon – these heroes of the former French revolution, as well as the political parties and massed crowds alike – accomplished the business of the day in Roman costumes and with Roman phrases: the unleashing and consolidation of modern bourgeois society. The one [1789–1814] harrowed up the soil of feudalism and cut down the feudal crops that were growing there. The other [1848] created within France the conditions in which free competition could be developed, land sales from estates could be exploited, the fettered industrial productive power of the nation could be utilised; and beyond French borders it swept away feudal institutions in every direction, and as far as was necessary to provide an appropriate up-to-date environment on the Continent for French bourgeois society. Once the new social formation was established, the antediluvian colossi, and along with them the resurrected Romans – the Brutuses, the Gracchuses, the Publicolas, the
tribunes, the senators and Caesar himself — all vanished. Amidst a
dreary realism bourgeois society produced its true interpreters and
spokesmen in the Says, Cousins, Royer-Collards, Benjamin Con-
stants and Guizots; its real commanders were in the counting
houses, and the fat-head Louis XVIII was its political chief. Wholly
absorbed in the production of wealth and in peaceful competitive
struggle, it could no longer comprehend that the spectres of Roman
times had kept watch over its cradle. But unheroic as bourgeois
society is, it nevertheless required heroism, sacrifice, terror, civil
war and national conflict to bring it into the world. And in the
strict classical traditions of the Roman republic its gladiators found
the ideals and art forms, the self-deceptions that they needed, in
order to hide from themselves the constrained, bourgeois character
of their struggles, and to keep themselves emotionally at the level
of high historical tragedy. Thus at another stage of development, a
century earlier, Cromwell and the English had borrowed Old Testa-
ment language, passions and delusions for their bourgeois revol-
ution. When that goal was actually attained, when the bourgeois
transformation of English society was complete, [the prosaic empiri-
cist] Locke supplanted [the sorrowful prophet] Habakkuk.

Thus the resurrection of the dead in those revolutions served to
glorify new struggles, not to parody the old; to magnify fantastically
the given task, not to evade a real resolution; to recover the spirit
of revolution, not to relaunch its spectre.

The period 1848 to 1851 saw only the spectre of the old revol-
ution on the move, from Marrast, Républicain en gants jaunes, who
disguised himself as the old [Jean Sylvain] Bailly [the revolutionary
liberal guillotined in 1793], to the adventurer [Louis Bonaparte],
who covers his low and repulsive visage with the iron death mask
of Napoleon. A whole people, believing itself to have acquired a
powerful revolutionary thrust, is suddenly forced back into a
defunct era; and so that there is no mistake about the reversion,
the old dates rise again, the old chronology, the old names, the old
edicts, which had long declined to mere antiquarian interest, and
the old functionaries, who had seemed long decayed. The nation is
like the mad Englishman in Bedlam [asylum] who thinks he is living
in the time of the pharaohs and complains every day how hard it
is to work in the Ethiopian gold mines, immured in a subterranean
prison, a flickering lamp fixed to his head, behind him the overseer
with his long whip, and at the exits a mass of barbarian mercenaries who can understand neither the slave labourers in the mines nor one another, since they have no common language. 'And all this is demanded of me' - sighs the mad Englishman - 'me, the freeborn Briton, in order to extract gold for the ancient pharaohs.' 'In order to pay the debts of the Bonapartes' - sighs the French nation. The Englishman, so long as his mind was working, could not rid himself of his obsession with gold mining. The French, so long as they made revolutions, could not rid themselves of the memory of Napoleon, as was demonstrated by the [presidential] election of 10 December [1848]. Out of the perils of revolution they yearned for the fleshpots of Egypt, and the [coup d'état of the] second of December [1851] was the answer. Not only do they have the caricature of the old Napoleon, they have caricatured the old Napoleon himself as he must have looked in the middle of the nineteenth century.

The social revolution of the nineteenth century cannot create its poetry from the past but only from the future. It cannot begin till it has stripped off all superstition from the past. Previous revolutions required recollections of world history in order to dull themselves to their own content. The revolution of the nineteenth century must let the dead bury the dead in order to realise its own content. There phrase transcended content, here content transcends phrase.

The February revolution [of 1848] was a surprise attack, an ambush of the old society, and the people proclaimed this unexpected coup a world-historical deed inaugurating a new epoch. Then on the second of December [1851] the February revolution is conjured away by the stroke of a cheat, and now what seems to have been overthrown is not the monarchy so much as the liberal concessions wrung from it over centuries of struggle. Instead of society gaining for itself a new content, it seems that the state has merely reverted to its oldest form, to the shameless, bare-faced rule of sword and cross. So in answer to the coup de main of February 1848 we have the coup de tête of December 1851. Quickly won, quickly lost. Meanwhile the intervening years did not go to waste. During the period 1848 to 1851 French society learnt the lessons of experience - to be sure in a foreshortened, revolutionary way - that would otherwise have preceded the February revolution in its normal or textbook development, so to speak, if it were ever to do more than
ripple the surface. Society now seems to have fallen back behind its starting point; in fact it had first to create for itself the revolutionary starting point, the situation, the relationships, the exclusive conditions for the development of a real modern revolution.

Bourgeois revolutions, such as those of the eighteenth century, storm along from strength to strength; their dramatic effects outdo one another, people and events seem to have a jewel-like sparkle, ecstasy is the feeling of the day; but they are short lived, quickly attaining their zenith, and a lengthy hangover grips society before it soberly absorbs the resulting lessons of such Sturm und Drang. By contrast proletarian revolutions, such as those of the nineteenth century, engage in perpetual self-criticism, always stopping in their own tracks; they return to what is apparently complete in order to begin it anew, and deride with savage brutality the inadequacies, weak points and pitiful aspects of their first attempts; they seem to strike down their adversary, only to have him draw new powers from the earth and rise against them once more with the strength of a giant; again and again they draw back from the prodigious scope of their own aims, until a situation is created which makes impossible any reversion, and circumstances themselves cry out:

Hic Rhodus, hic salta!
Hier ist die Rose, hier tanze!
[There's no time like the present!]

Moreover any competent observer, even if he had not followed all the French developments step by step, must have known that the revolution was in for an unprecedented humiliation. It sufficed to hear the self-satisfied yelps of victory as ‘distinguished’ democrats congratulated each other on the benefits to follow the 9th of May 1852 [when President Louis Bonaparte’s presidency, constitutionally limited to one term, would have lapsed]. In their heads that day had become an obsession, a fundamentalist dogma, like the day Christ reappears and a reign of a thousand years commences, as in the heads of the chiliasts. As always the feeble found refuge in a belief in miracles, believing that the enemy has been vanquished when they have only conjured it away in a fantasy, sacrificing any understanding of the present to an ineffectual glorification of the future in store for them, and of deeds that they had in their hearts but did not want to bring to fruition just yet. They are the heroes
who try to deny their proven incompetence by offering each other
sympathy and banding together; they packed up their things,
donned their laurel wreaths in advance of the games, and busied
themselves on the financial exchanges with selling off piecemeal the
republics for which they had already taken care, in their quiet and
unassuming way, to nominate the government. The second of
December [1851] struck them like a bolt from the blue, and the
peoples that were willing enough to allow their innermost fears – in
an era of cowardly dejection – to be assuaged by the most vociferous
loudmouths will perhaps have convinced themselves that cackling
geese can no longer save the Capitol.

The constitution, the national assembly, the dynastic parties, the
blue [right-wing] and the red [left-wing] republicans, the heroes of
[the Algerian wars in] Africa, the thunder from the grandstand, the
sheet-lightning of the daily press, all the literature, political names
and intellectual reputations, the civil law and the penal code, liberty,
equality and fraternity, and the ninth of May 1852 – all that has
magically vanished under the spell of a man whom even his enemies
would deny was a sorcerer. Universal manhood suffrage seems to
have lasted just long enough to make its own testament in the eyes
of the world and to declare in the very name of the people: ‘What’s
worth building is worth demolishing’ [Goethe, Faust, 1].

It is not enough to say, as the French do, that their nation has
been taken unawares. A nation like a woman is not forgiven the
unguarded hour in which the first rake that tries can take her by
force. The riddle will not be solved by mere phrases that merely
state it in other terms. What needs to be explained is how a nation
of 36 millions can be taken unawares by three common con-men
[Louis Bonaparte, the due de Morny his half-brother, and the Min-
ister of Justice Rouher] and marched off unresisting into captivity.

Let us recapitulate in bold strokes the course of the French revol-
tion in its phases from 24 February 1848 to [2] December 1851.

Three main periods are unmistakable: the February period; 4 May
1848 to 28 May 1849, the period of constituting the republic or the con-
stituent assembly for the nation; 28 May 1849 to 2 December 1851, the
period of the constitutional republic or the legislative national assembly.

The first period from 24 February, or the overthrow of [King]
Louis Philippe, to 4 May 1848, the meeting of the constituent
assembly, the February period proper, can be termed the prologue
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to the revolution. Its character was expressed officially when the improvised government declared itself *provisional*, and like the government everything that was proposed, attempted or proclaimed in this period was passed off as merely *provisional*. Neither anyone nor anything dared to claim a right to exist or to take real action. The factions which had prepared or made the revolution, the dynastic opposition [*legitimists and Orléanists*], the republican bourgeoisie, the democratic-republican petty-bourgeoisie, the social democratic workers, all provisionally found their place in the February government.

It could not have been otherwise. The original intention in the February days [of 1848] was for an electoral reform through which the circle of political privilege amongst the possessing classes was to be widened and the exclusive rule of the finance aristocracy overthrown. But when it came to actual conflict the people mounted the barricades, the national guard behaved passively, the army offered no serious opposition, and the monarchy decamped, so the republic appeared as a matter of course. Every party construed this in its own way. Once their weapons had been wrested from their hands, the proletariat set its stamp upon it and proclaimed it *a social republic*. Thus the general content of modern revolution was signalled, a content which – as is always the case in dramatic prologues – stood in the most bizarre contradiction to everything that could be put into practice there and then, given the material available, the level of popular education, present circumstances and conditions. On the other hand, the claim of all the other factions taking part in the February revolution was made good when they obtained the lion’s share in government. In no period do we find a more confused mixture of superfluous phrases and practical uncertainty and helplessness, of more enthusiastic striving for innovation and of more fundamental dominance of old routine, of seeming harmony in the whole society and of deep alienation amongst the factions that compose it. While the Paris proletariat still revelled in the vision of a grand prospect opening before it, and had indulged itself collectively in earnest discussion on social problems, the old powers of society had regrouped, rallied, composed themselves and found unexpected support in the populace at large, the peasants and petty-bourgeoisie, who were all thrown onto the political stage after the fall of the July monarchy [of the Orléanist King Louis Philippe, 1830–48].
The second period, from 4 May 1848 up to the end of May 1849, is the period of constituting, founding the bourgeois republic. Just after the February days the dynastic opposition was surprised by the republicans, the republicans by the socialists, indeed all France by Paris. The constituent assembly, drawn from the votes of the entire nation, met on 4 May 1848 and represented the whole. It was a living protest against the aspirations of the February days and was to reduce the achievements of the revolution to bourgeois standards. Grasping at once the character of this constituent assembly, the Paris proletariat tried vainly though forcefully to negate it a few days after its meeting on 15 May [1848], to dissolve it, to shatter the organic whole into its individual constituent parts, as in it national reaction was posing a threat. The well-known result of 15 May [1848] was that Blanqui and associates, i.e. the real leaders of the proletarian party, the revolutionary communists, were removed from the public arena for the entire duration of the events we are considering.

Louis Philippe's bourgeois monarchy could only be followed by a bourgeois republic, i.e. if a limited section of the bourgeoisie has ruled in the king's name, so now the whole of the bourgeoisie rules in the name of the people. The demands of the Paris proletariat are utopian humbug which must be stopped. To this declaration of the constituent assembly the Paris proletariat replied with the June insurrection [of 1848], the most colossal event in the history of European civil wars. The bourgeois republic was triumphant. On its side stood the finance aristocracy, the industrial bourgeoisie, the middle classes, the petty-bourgeoisie, the army, the lumpenproletariat organised as a militia, the intellectual authorities, the church and the landowners. On the side of the Paris proletariat there was none but itself. More than 3000 insurgents were massacred after the victory, and 15,000 were transported without trial. With this defeat the proletariat moves into the background on the revolutionary stage. Every time events appear to take a fresh turn, it tries to press forward again, but with ever declining bursts of strength and always diminishing results. As soon as one of the higher social strata plots a revolutionary trajectory, the proletariat enters into an alliance with it and thus shares all the defeats which successive parties suffer. But these further blows are of ever diminishing force the more they are distributed over the whole surface of society. Its more important
leaders in the assembly and in the press are sacrificed one after another in the courts, and ever more ambiguous figures take up leadership. Amongst other things it throws itself into doctrinaire experiments, cooperative banks and workers’ associations, hence into a movement renouncing an overthrow of the old world by means of its own great resources, and instead seeks to attain its salvation behind society’s back, privately, within its own limited conditions of existence, and hence necessarily coming to naught. It seems unable to rediscover revolutionary prowess or to renew its energy from fresh alliances, until all the classes it struggled with in June are lying down flat beside it. But at least it was defeated with the honours of a great world historical struggle; not only France but all Europe trembles at the June earthquake, while the ensuing defeats of the higher classes are so cheaply purchased that they require blatant exaggeration by the victorious party in order to pass as events at all, and these events become the more disgraceful the further the losing party is from the proletariat.

To be sure the defeat of the June insurgents had prepared level ground for founding and constructing the bourgeois republic; but it had demonstrated at the same time that in Europe the question of today is something other than ‘republic or monarchy’. It had revealed that bourgeois republic means the unlimited despotism of one class over the others. It had proved that in long-civilised countries with a developed class structure, with modern conditions of production, and with an intellectual consciousness representing centuries of effort in dissolving traditional ideas, the republic signifies in general only the revolutionary way to destroy bourgeois society and not a conservative way to develop it, as for example in the United States, where there are already classes, to be sure, but they have not yet solidified, rather they are in constant flux, changing and switching their component parts; where modern means of production compensate for the relative paucity of heads and hands, instead of declining together with a stagnant surplus population; and where finally the feverish youth of material production, which has a new world to appropriate, left neither time nor opportunity for exorcising the spirits of the old.

During the June days [of 1848] all classes and parties that had united as the party of order were against the proletarian class as the party of anarchy, of socialism, of communism. They had ‘saved’
society from ‘the enemies of society’. They had made the catch-phrases of the old society, ‘property, family, religion, order’ into military passwords and had proclaimed to their counter-revolutionary crusaders: ‘Under this sign shalt thou conquer!’ From this time on, whenever one of the many parties banded together under this motto against the June insurgents seeks to claim the revolutionary high ground in its own class interest, it succumbs to the call: ‘property, family, religion, order’. Society is saved as often as its circle of rulers contracts, as a more exclusive interest is maintained against the wider one. Even the simplest demand for bourgeois financial reform, for the most ordinary liberalism, for the most formal republicanism, for the most basic democracy, is simultaneously castigated as an ‘outrage to society’ and stigmatised as ‘socialism’. Finally the high priests of the ‘religion of order’ are kicked off their Pythian tripods, hauled from their beds in the dead of night, flung into prison vans, thrown into gaols or sent into exile; their temple is razed to the ground, their mouths are sealed, their pens broken, their laws torn to shreds in the name of religion, property, family, order. Bourgeois fanatics for order are shot on their balconies by mobs of drunken soldiers, their family gods are profaned, their houses are bombarded for amusement – in the name of property, family, religion and order. Finally the scum of bourgeois society forms the holy phalanx of order and the hero Crapulinski [Louis Bonaparte] seizes the [Palace of the] Tuileries as ‘saviour of society’.

II

Let us pick up the thread once again.

The history of the constituent assembly since the June days [in 1848] is the history of the rise and fall of the republican faction of the bourgeoisie, the faction known variously as tricolour republicans, pure republicans, political republicans, formal republicans, etc.

Under the bourgeois monarchy of [the Orléanist King] Louis Philippe they had formed the official republican opposition and hence a recognised part of the political world of the time. The faction had its representatives in the legislative chambers and an influential circle in the press. Its Paris organ, Le National, was considered just as respectable in its way as the [Orléanist] Journal des Débats. This position under the constitutional monarchy accorded with its
character. It was not a faction of the bourgeoisie held together through substantial common interests and set apart by peculiar conditions of production. It was a coterie of republican-minded businessmen, writers, lawyers, officers and officials whose influence rested on the personal antipathy of the country to Louis Philippe, on recollections of the old republic [of 1789–99], on the republican faith of a number of enthusiasts, above all on French nationalism, a continuously awakened hatred for the Vienna treaties [of 1814–15] and the [restoration] alliance with England. A large part of the following enjoyed by the National under Louis Philippe was due to this hidden Napoleonic sentiment, later to emerge in the person of Louis Bonaparte as a deadly rival to the republic. It fought the financial aristocracy, as did the rest of the bourgeois opposition. Polemics against the budget, which coincided in France with the struggle against the financial aristocracy, created such a lot of cheap popularity and such rich material for puritanical ‘leading articles’ that exploitation of this was irresistible. The industrial bourgeoisie was grateful to it for its slavish defence of French protectionism, adopted on grounds more of national than economic interest, and the bourgeoisie as a whole for its virulent denunciations of communism and socialism. In general the party of the National was purely republican, i.e. it demanded a republican rather than a monarchical form of bourgeois rule, and above all the lion’s share in power. About the conditions for this transformation it was not at all clear. What was clear as daylight, on the other hand, and was publicly clarified at the reform meetings in the last days of Louis Philippe, was its unpopularity with the democratic petty-bourgeoisie, and in particular with the revolutionary proletariat. These pure republicans, as is always the way with pure republicans, were on the point of settling for a regency of the duchess of Orléans [mother of Louis Philippe's grandson], when the February [1848] revolution erupted and appointed their best-known representatives to a place in the provisional government. At the outset they naturally had the confidence of the bourgeoisie and a majority in the constituent assembly. They at once excluded the socialist elements of the provisional government from the executive commission [which replaced the provisional government], formed when the national assembly first met, and the party of the National then used the outbreak of the June [1848] insurrection to dismiss the executive commission and to get
rid of its nearest rivals, the *petty-bourgeois* or *democratic republicans* (Ledru-Rollin, etc.). Cavaignac, the general of the bourgeois republican party, commander for the June [1848] massacre, replaced the executive commission with a kind of dictatorship. Marrast, formerly editor-in-chief of the *National*, became the permanent president of the constituent assembly, and the cabinet posts, like all the other important appointments, came home to the pure republicans.

The republican faction of the bourgeoisie, which had long considered itself the legitimate heir of the [Orléanist] July monarchy, found its fondest hopes surpassed, but it came to power, not by means of a liberal revolt of the bourgeoisie against the throne, as it had dreamt during the time of Louis Philippe, but rather through a proletarian riot against capital, put down with grape-shot. What it had imagined as the *most revolutionary* event occurred in reality as the *most counter-revolutionary*. The fruit fell into its lap, but it fell from the tree of knowledge, not from the tree of life.

The exclusive rule of the bourgeois republicans lasted only from 24 June to 10 December 1848. It is summed up in the *drafting of a republican constitution* and in the *siege of Paris*.

The new *constitution* was at bottom only a republicanised version of the constitutional charter of 1830. The restricted suffrage of the July monarchy, which excluded a large portion of the bourgeoisie from political power, was incompatible with the existence of the bourgeois republic. The February revolution [of 1848] had at once proclaimed a general right to vote in place of this suffrage. The bourgeois republicans could not undo this event. They had therefore to content themselves by restricting it to include a six months residence requirement in the constituency. The old administration – local government, the judicial system, the army, etc. – was left untouched, or where altered by the constitution, the change concerned the table of contents, not the content, and the names, not the substance.

The inescapable roll call of the freedoms of 1848 – freedom of the person, press, speech, association, assembly, education and religion, etc. – obtained a constitutional guise, making them invulnerable. Each of these freedoms was proclaimed as the *absolute* right of the French citizen, but always with the marginal gloss that it is unlimited so far as it does not limit the *equal rights of others* and the *security of the public*, or through ‘laws’ which were to integrate
individual freedoms harmoniously with one another and with the security of the public. For example: 'Citizens have the right to associate, to assemble peaceably and unarmed, to petition and to express their opinions in the press or otherwise. *The enjoyment of these rights has no limit besides the equal rights of others and the security of the public*’ (chapter II of the French constitution [of 1848], § 8) – 'Education is free. The free exercise of this right is to be enjoyed under conditions fixed by law and under the supervision of the state’ (chapter II, § 9). – ‘The home of every citizen is inviolable except in circumstances prescribed by law’ (chapter II, § 3), etc. etc. – The constitution therefore constantly refers to future *organic* laws which are to implement these glosses and regulate the enjoyment of these unlimited freedoms so that they conflict neither with one another nor with the security of the public. Later these organic laws were promulgated by the friends of order and all those freedoms regulated so that the bourgeoisie finds no obstacle to its enjoyment of them in the equal rights of other classes. Where it denies these freedoms wholly to ‘others’ or permits enjoyment of them only under conditions which are just so many police traps, this always happens solely in the interest of ‘public security’, that is, the security of the bourgeoisie, as the constitution prescribes. Consequently both sides can appeal with perfect justice to the constitution, the friends of order, who subverted all those freedoms, just as much as the democrats, who demanded them all outright. Each paragraph of the constitution contains its own antithesis in itself, its own upper and lower house, namely freedom in general terms, and subversion of freedom in the glosses. Hence so long as freedom is nominally respected and only its actual exercise is hindered, in a very legal way you understand, then the constitutional existence of freedom remains undamaged, untouched, however much its *commonplace* existence is murdered.

This constitution, made inviolate in so ingenious a manner, was nevertheless vulnerable in one place, like Achilles, not in the heel, but in the head, or rather in two heads as the thing developed – the *legislative assembly*, on the one hand, and the *president*, on the other. Leafing through the constitution one finds that the paragraphs in which the relationship between the president and the legislative assembly is defined are the only absolute, positive, uncontradicted, untwistable ones that it contains. Here we see the bourgeois
republicans making themselves secure. [Chapter v] §§ 45–70 of the constitution are so drafted that the national assembly can remove the president constitutionally, but the president can remove the national assembly only unconstitutionally, by removing the constitution itself. Hence it invites its own forcible destruction. Not only does it sanctify the separation of powers as under the charter of 1830, it widens this to an unendurable contradiction. The constitutional power game, as Guizot called the parliamentary squabble between legislative and executive power, is constantly played out in the constitution of 1848 at the highest stakes. On one side are 750 representatives of the people, elected by universal manhood suffrage and eligible for re-election, who form an uncontrollable, indissoluble, indivisible national assembly, a national assembly which enjoys legislative omnicompetence, has the final say in war, peace and trade, possesses sole right of amnesty, and as a continuing body is always at centre stage. On the other side is the president, with all the appurtenances of royal power, but augmented, in that he appoints and dismisses his ministers independent of the national assembly, and has all the tools of executive power in his hands, bestowing all offices and disposing of over 1½ million livelihoods, for so many depend on the 500,000 officials and on officers of every rank. The whole of the armed forces are behind him, and he is possessed of the privilege of pardoning individual miscreants, of suspending the national guard, of proroguing – in conjunction with the council of state – the elected general, cantonal and municipal councils nominated and elected by the citizens, reserving to himself the initiation and negotiation of all agreements with foreign countries. Unlike the assembly, which is constantly on the boards and continuously exposed to the glare of public criticism, he leads a secluded life in the Elysian Fields [i.e. Elysee Palace], but with [chapter v] § 45 of the constitution before his eyes and in his heart, crying out to him every day [like the ascetic Trappists]: ‘brother, one must die’. ‘Your power runs out on the second Sunday in the lovely month of May in the fourth year of your term! Then is power at an end, there is no second performance, and if you have debts, see to it that you pay them off in time with the 600,000 francs settled on you by the constitution, unless perhaps you prefer to wander down to Clichy [debtors’ prison] on the second Monday of the lovely month of May!’ – If the constitution assigns all actual power to the president, it tries to secure moral authority for the
assembly. Leaving aside that it is impossible to create moral authority through legal phrases, here again the constitution subverts itself by having the president directly elected by all Frenchmen. While French votes are divided up amongst the 750 members of the national assembly, here they are concentrated on a single individual. While each individual delegate of the people merely represents this or that party, this or that city, this or that outpost, or even just the necessity of electing any old 750 where neither the man nor the matter is closely examined, He is the elect of the nation, and electing him is the trump card which the sovereign people plays once every four years. The elected national assembly stands in a metaphysical relation to the nation, but the elected president stands in a personal one. Through its individual members the national assembly well represents manifold aspects of the national character, but the president is the spirit of the nation incarnate. As opposed to the assembly he has a kind of divine right, he is president by the people’s grace.

Thetis, the sea goddess, prophesied to Achilles that he would die in the bloom of youth. The constitution, which had its weak spot like Achilles, also had its forewarning that it would have to go to an early death. It sufficed for the pure republican constitutionalists to cast a glance from the high heavens of their republican ideals down to the base world below in order see how the morale of the royalists, of the Bonapartists, of the democrats, of the communists, and also their own discredit, increased proportionally each day as they neared completion of their great legislative masterpiece, without any need for Thetis to leave the sea and communicate this secret to them. They sought to cheat destiny through constitutional shenanigans in [chapter xi] § 111, according to which every motion for a revision of the constitution must be supported by at least three-quarters of the votes, not less than 500 members of the national assembly taking part, and in three successive debates, between each of which there must always be a whole month. At a time when they controlled a parliamentary majority and all the resources of governmental authority, they saw themselves prophetically as a parliamentary minority, and made only an impotent attempt to exercise a power, which was day by day slipping from their feeble grasp.

Finally in a melodramatic paragraph, the constitution entrusts itself to ‘the vigilance and patriotism of the people of all France and of every single Frenchman’, after it had previously entrusted
‘vigilant’ and ‘patriotic’ Frenchmen to the tender yet necessarily very painful ministrations of its own high court of justice, or ‘haute cour’, in another paragraph.

Such was the constitution of 1848, overturned on 2 December 1851, not by a knockout, but felled at the mere touch of a hat; indeed the hat was a three-cornered Napoleonic one.

While the bourgeois republicans in the assembly were busy with picking over, arguing about and voting in this constitution, outside the assembly Cavaignac mounted the siege of Paris. The siege of Paris was midwife for the constituent assembly in the birth throes of the republic. If the constitution were later dispatched from the world with bayonets, it must not be forgotten that it had to be protected with bayonets, even in its mother’s womb, and to be sure, bayonets turned against the people, and it had to be brought into the world with bayonets. The [revolutionary] forefathers of the ‘honest republicans’ had sent their symbol, the tricolour, on a tour [of conquest] round Europe. For their part they made a discovery which found its way over the whole Continent, but which came back to France with ever increasing affection, until it became a true citizen in half its départements – the state of siege. A splendid invention, periodically employed in each successive crisis in the course of the French revolution. But barrack and bivouac, which were periodically applied to the head of French society to compact the brain and render the body torpid; sabre and musket, which were periodically allowed to judge and administer, to tutor and to censor, to act the policeman and to do duty as night watchman; moustache and uniform, which were periodically trumpeted as the highest wisdom and saviour of society – were not barrack and bivouac, sabre and musket, moustache and uniform finally bound to hit on the idea of saving society once and for all by touting their own regime as best and setting bourgeois society free from the trouble of governing itself? Barrack and bivouac, sabre and musket, moustache and uniform were all the more bound to come to this realisation because they could then expect better cash payment for their enhanced services, while from merely periodical sieges and transitory rescues of society, at the behest of this or that faction of the bourgeoisie, there was little substantial gain, other than a few dead and wounded and some bourgeois smirks of friendship. Should not the military once and for all play out a siege in its own interest and
for its own benefit, and at the same time help itself to the wallets of the bourgeoisie? One should not forget, be it noted in passing, that Colonel Bernard, the president of the military commission under Cavaignac who transported 15,000 insurgents [of June 1848] without trial, is again acting at this very moment [early 1852] as head of the military commission for Paris.

Though with the siege of Paris the honest, pure republicans laid the seedbed in which the praetorians of 2 December 1851 grew strong, they still deserve praise because instead of exaggerating national sentiments as they had done under Louis Philippe, now, when they had the power of the nation at their bidding, they relinquished it, and instead of conquering Italy for themselves, they let the Austrians and Neapolitans reconquer it. The election of Louis Bonaparte as president on 10 December 1848 put an end to Cavaignac's dictatorship and to the constituent assembly.

The constitution states in [chapter v] § 44: 'The president of the French republic must never have lost his status as a French citizen.' The first president of the French republic, one L.N. Bonaparte, had not simply lost his status as a French citizen, had not merely been an English special constable, he was in fact a naturalised Swiss.

I have explained elsewhere the significance of the [presidential] election of 10 December [1848]. I will not advert to this here. It suffices to say that it was a reaction by the peasantry, which had had to bear the costs of the February revolution [of 1848], against the other classes of the nation, a reaction of the country against the town. This struck a chord in the army, for which the republicans of the National had provided neither glory nor a pay rise, also amongst the highest of the bourgeois who hailed Bonaparte as a transition to monarchy, and amongst the proletarians and petty bourgeoisie, who hailed him as a scourge for Cavaignac. I shall find an opportunity later to go more thoroughly into the relationship between the peasantry and the French revolution.

History from 20 December 1848 [when Bonaparte's presidency succeeded Cavaignac's dictatorship] to the dissolution of the constituent assembly in May 1849 marks an epoch in the downfall of the republican bourgeoisie. After founding a republic for the bourgeoisie, driving the revolutionary proletariat from the field and reducing the democratic petty-bourgeoisie to silence for the time being, they were themselves shoved aside by the bulk of
the bourgeoisie, who with some justice seized this republic as its property. However, this great bourgeoisie was royalist. One part of it, the large landowners, had held power under the restoration [of the Bourbons after 1815] and was therefore legitimist. The other, the financial aristocracy and great industrialists, had held sway under the July monarchy [1830–48] and was therefore Orléanist. The highest echelons of the army, the universities, the church, the legal profession, the academy and the press divided themselves between the two camps, though in varying proportions. Here in the bourgeois republic, which bore neither the name of Bourbon nor that of Orléans, but rather the name capital, they found a type of state through which they could rule conjointly. The June insurrection [of 1848] had already united them in the ‘party of order’. The next business was to remove the coterie of bourgeois republicans who still held seats in the national assembly. When it was a matter of holding their republicanism and their legislative rights against the power of the executive and of the royalists, these pure republicans were just as cowardly, shamefaced, dispirited, broken down, incapable of fighting, even in retreat, as they had been brutal in using physical force against the people. There is no need to relate the ignominious tale of their disintegration. It was a fade-out, not a blow-up. Their history has ceased forever, and in subsequent times, whether inside or outside the assembly, they figure as memories, memories which seem to come to life whenever the republic is merely named and as often as revolutionary conflict threatens to sink to new depths. I note in passing that the journal which gave this party its name, the National, turned in subsequent years to socialism.

Therefore the period of constituting or founding the French republic falls into three periods: 4 May to 24 June 1848, a struggle of all the classes and their allies united in February under the leadership of the bourgeois republicans against the proletariat, [with a] terrible defeat of the proletariat; 25 June 1848 to 10 December 1848, rule of the bourgeois republicans, drafting of the constitution, siege of Paris, Cavaignac’s dictatorship; 20 December 1848 to the end of May 1849, struggle by Bonaparte and the party of order with the republican constituent assembly, defeat of same, downfall of the bourgeois republicans.
Before we finish with this period we must cast a backward glance at two powers, one of which destroyed the other on 2 December 1851, and yet the two had lived as a happy couple from 20 December 1848 up to the departure of the constituent assembly [in May 1849]. I have in mind Louis Bonaparte, on the one hand, and the party of the royalist coalition, of order, of the great bourgeoisie, on the other. On acceding to the presidency Bonaparte at once formed a ministry of the party of order, placing Odilon Barrot at its head, the former leader, take note, of the most liberal faction of the parliamentary bourgeoisie. M. Barrot had finally bagged the cabinet which he had been stalking since 1830, and still better the premier post in that cabinet; but not, in the way that he had envisaged under Louis Philippe, as the ablest leader in the parliamentary opposition, but rather as charged with the task of putting a parliament to death, and as the confederate of all his arch-enemies, Jesuits and legitimists. He brought the bride home at last, but only after she had been prostituted. Bonaparte himself seemed completely eclipsed. This party acted for him.

The very first cabinet meeting decided on the expedition to Rome, which, so it was agreed, was to be conducted behind the back of the national assembly, and resources for which were to be wrested from it under false pretences. So they began by swindling the national assembly and conspiring secretly with absolutist powers abroad against the revolutionary Roman republic. In the same way and with the same manoeuvres Bonaparte prepared his coup of 2 December [1851] against the royalist legislature and its constitutional republic. Let us not forget that this same party which formed Bonaparte's cabinet on 20 December 1848 also formed the majority of the legislative national assembly on 2 December 1851.

In August [1848] the constituent assembly had resolved not to disband itself without debating and promulgating an array of organic laws to augment the constitution. On 6 January 1849 the party of order had its representative Rateau propose to the assembly that the organic laws should be abandoned and that it should resolve its own dissolution instead. At that time all the royalist representatives in the national assembly, not just the cabinet headed by M. Odilon Barrot, pestered it that its dissolution was necessary for the maintenance of credit, for the consolidation of order, for bringing
provisional arrangements to an end and for establishing a definite state of affairs; it hindered the efficacy of the new government and sought to eke out its life from sheer rancour; the country was weary of it. Bonaparte noted well all this invective against the power of the legislature, learnt it by heart and showed the parliamentary royalists on 2 December 1851 that he understood it. He quoted their own catchphrases back to them.

The Barrot cabinet and the party of order went further. They drew up petitions to the national assembly throughout all France, in which this body was most kindly requested to dissolve itself, to disappear. Thus they led the unorganised populace into the fray against the national assembly, the voice of the people organised constitutionally. They taught Bonaparte to appeal from parliamentary assemblies to the people. Finally on 29 January 1849 the day had come on which the constituent assembly was to make a decision concerning its own dissolution. The national assembly found its chambers occupied by soldiers; Changarnier, the general of the party of order, in whose hands was united the supreme command of the national guard and regular troops, staged a grand show of force in Paris, as if a battle were in the offing, and the royalist coalition put threats to the constituent assembly that force would be used if it did not comply. It was compliant and merely bargained for a very short lease of life. What was 29 January 1849 but the coup d'état of 2 December 1851, only carried out by royalists together with Bonaparte against the republicans of the national assembly? These worthy men did not notice or did not want to notice that on 29 January Bonaparte had taken the opportunity to have a portion of the troops go on parade before the Tuileries and had thus seized with avidity this first proclamation of military might against parliamentary power, alluding to Caligula. Doubtless they saw only their Changarnier.

The organic laws augmenting the constitution, like the education bill, the bill on religion, etc., were a particular motive for the party of order to cut short the lifespan of the constituent assembly by force. For the royalist coalition everything lay in making these laws themselves, and in not letting the increasingly mistrustful republicans do it. Amongst these organic laws there was even one on the accountability of the president of the republic. In 1851 the
legislative assembly was occupied with drafting such a law when Bonaparte anticipated this coup with the coup of 2 December. What would the royalist coalition not have given in their campaign in the parliamentary winter of 1851 to have found the article of accountability ready to hand, and drawn up at that by a mistrustful, hostile republican assembly!

After 29 January 1849, when the constituent assembly destroyed its last weapon itself, the Barrot cabinet and the friends of order hounded it to death, leaving nothing undone which could humiliate it, and wresting laws from its self-pitying weakness that cost it all remaining public regard. Preoccupied with his Napoleonic idée fixe Bonaparte was impudent enough to exploit this abasement of parliamentary power in public. On 7 May 1849, when the national assembly censured the cabinet for the occupation of Civitavecchia by [General] Oudinot and ordered the expedition to Rome to return to its original purpose, Bonaparte published a letter to Oudinot in the Moniteur that evening congratulating him on his heroic exploits and posing as the munificent protector of the army, in contrast to the pen-pushing parliamentarians. The royalists chuckled at this. They regarded him simply as their dupe. At last when Marrast, president of the constituent assembly, believed for a moment that the security of the national assembly was endangered, he appealed to the constitution and requisitioned a colonel and his regiment; the colonel refused, citing proper discipline and referring Marrast to [General] Changarnier, who haughtily demurred with the comment that he did not like bayonets with brains. In November 1851 when the royalist coalition wanted to mount the decisive contest with Bonaparte, they tried to go too far and to force through the direct requisition of troops by the president of the national assembly in their infamous commissioners' bill. One of their generals, Le Flô, had signed the proposed law. In vain did Changarnier vote for the bill and in vain did [the Orléanist politician] Thiers pay homage to the foresight of the erstwhile constituent assembly. The Minister of War [the Bonapartist] Saint-Arnaud answered him as Changarnier had answered Marrast – and all to the cheers of the [social-democrats of the] montagne.

Thus the party of order itself, though as yet still the cabinet, and not yet the national assembly, denounced the parliamentary regime.
And it protests when 2 December 1851 banishes the parliamentary regime from France!

We wish it a pleasant journey.

III

On 28 May 1849 the national assembly gathered in legislative sessions. On 2 December 1851 it was dispersed. This period comprises the lifespan of the constitutional or parliamentary republic. It falls into three main periods: 28 May to 13 June 1849, conflict between democrats and the bourgeoisie, defeat of the petty bourgeois or democratic party; — 13 June 1849 to 31 May 1850, parliamentary dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, i.e. of the Orléanists and legitimists in coalition, or of the party of order, a dictatorship which fulfilled itself by abolishing universal manhood suffrage; — 31 May 1850 to 2 December 1851, conflict between the bourgeoisie and Bonaparte, collapse of bourgeois rule, demise of the constitutional or parliamentary republic.

In the first French revolution the rule of the constitutionalists is succeeded by the rule of the Girondins, and the rule of the Girondins by the rule of the Jacobins. Each party leans on the more progressive party for support. When each has led the revolution to a point where there is no going further, still less of going on ahead of it, each is pushed aside by the keener ally waiting in the background and sent to the guillotine. The revolution thus follows an ascending path.

The revolution of 1848 is just the reverse. The proletarian party appears as an annex of the petty-bourgeois democrats. The proletarians are betrayed and dropped by the democratic party on 16 April, 15 May and in the June days [of 1848]. The democratic party, for its part, rides on the shoulders of the bourgeois republican party. The bourgeois republicans no sooner believe themselves set up than they shake off their burdensome friend and support themselves on the shoulders of the party of order. The party of order hunches its shoulders, allows the bourgeois republicans to topple off and heaves itself onto the shoulders of the armed forces. It fancies that it is still sitting on those shoulders when one fine morning it realises that the shoulders have been transformed into bayonets. Each party kicks back at the one pressing from behind, and leans forward on the one pushing back. It is no wonder that in this ridiculous position each
The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte

loses its balance, and after making the inevitable faces, each collapses in curious spasms. Thus the revolution follows a descending path, and it commenced retrograde motion before the last barricade of February [1848] had been cleared away and the first revolutionary authority set up.

The period unfolding before us comprises the most motley mixture of crying contradictions: constitutionalists who conspire openly against the constitution; revolutionaries who are confessedly constitutional; a national assembly which wants to be all-powerful and still remains parliamentary; a montagne that makes a career out of patience and parries present defeats with prophecies of future victories; royalists who are the founding fathers of the republic, and who are forced by the situation to maintain inimical royal houses, which they support, in exile abroad, and the republic, which they hate, at home in France; an executive power that finds its strength in its own weakness, and its respectability in the contempt that it provokes; a republic that is none other than the disrepute of two monarchies, the restored Bourbons and the July monarchy, combined with an imperial etiquette – alliances whose first proviso is separation; contests whose first law is indecision; wild, senseless agitation in the name of peace, and the most solemn preaching of peace in the name of revolution; passion without truth, truth without passion; heroes without exploits, history without achievements; development driven solely by the calendar and wearisome through constant repetition of the same tension and release; antagonisms which seem periodically to reach a peak only to go dull and diminish without resolution; pretentious interventions for show and small-minded terror that the world will end; and at the same time the saviours of the world play out the pettiest intrigues and high comedies, redeemers whose inaction reminds us less of the Day of Judgement than of the [confusions of the anti-absolutist] Fronde [rebellion amongst the nobility of 1648–53] – the whole genius of official France disgraced by the artful foolishness of a single individual; as often as it is voiced in a general election, the will of the whole nation seeks self-expression in superannuated enemies of the general interest, finding this at last in the self-will of a racketeer. If any episode in history has been coloured grey on grey, this is the one. Men and events appear as Schlemihls in reverse, as shadows that have lost their bodies. The revolution has paralysed its own
proponents and has endowed only its enemies with passion and violence. The counter-revolutionaries continually summon, exorcise and banish the 'red spectre', and when it finally appears, it is not in the phrygian cap of anarchy but in the uniform of order, in [the soldiers'] red breeches.

We have observed: the cabinet, which Bonaparte installed on 20 December [1848], his Ascension Day [to the office of president], was a ministry for the party of order, the coalition of legitimists and Orléanists. This Barrot-Falloux cabinet outlasted the constituent assembly for the republic, whose lifespan it had shortened, more or less forcibly, and found itself still at the helm of state. Changarnier, the general of the united royalists, continued to unite in his person the general command of the First Army and the Paris National Guard, and the general election [of 28 May 1849] had finally secured a large majority in the national assembly for the party of order. Here the deputies and peers of Louis Philippe met up with a holy order of legitimists who emerged from hiding after great quantities of voting papers from the nation had been transformed into admission tickets to the political arena. The Bonapartist representatives of the people were sown too thinly to be able to form an independent parliamentary party. They were sufficiently to hand to make up numbers in a general call-up against the republican forces. They appeared merely as pitiful hangers-on of the party of order. Thus the party of order was in possession of the powers of government, the army and the legislative bodies, in short: the whole might of the state, bolstered morally by the general elections which made its rule appear to be the will of the people, and by the simultaneous triumph of counter-revolution on the whole of the European continent.

Never did a party inaugurate its campaign with greater resources and under more favourable auspices.

The shipwrecked pure republicans found that they had dwindled in the national assembly to a clique of about fifty headed by generals from the north African wars: Cavaignac, Lamoricière, Bedeau. The principal opposition party however was made up of the montagne. The social-democratic party christened itself with this parliamentary name. It commanded more than 200 of the 750 votes in the national assembly and was therefore at least as powerful as any of the other three factions of the party of order taken singly. Its relative
inferiority compared to the whole of the royalist coalition seemed to be mitigated by special circumstances. It was not only the case that voting in the départements revealed that they had won a significant following amongst the rural population. It counted in its ranks almost all the deputies from Paris; the army had pledged a confession of faith in democracy in the election of three junior officers; and the leader of the montagne Ledru-Rollin, in contradistinction to all the other representatives of the party of order, had been raised to the heights of parliamentary distinction by five départements pooling their votes for him. Hence on 20 May 1849 the montagne appeared to have all the makings for success to hand, given the inevitable clashes of the royalists between themselves and of the entire party of order with Bonaparte. Fourteen days later they had lost everything, honour included.

Before going any further with this parliamentary history, a few introductory remarks are necessary to avoid widespread misconceptions concerning the overall character of the epoch which lies before us. From a democratic point of view, the period of the national assembly was concerned with what the period of the constituent assembly was concerned with, a straightforward conflict between republicans and royalists. Yet they sum up the events themselves with one word: ‘reaction’, a night in which all cats are grey and which allows them to rattle off clichés like a night watchman. And indeed at first glance the party of order appeared to be a tangle of different royalist factions not only intriguing against one another to put their own pretender on the throne and exclude the pretender of the opposing party, but also uniting in a common hatred of and attacks on the ‘republic’. The montagne for its part appears in opposition to this royalist conspiracy as a representative of the ‘republic’. The party of order appears continuously occupied with a ‘reaction’ directed against the press, voluntary associations and the like, no more and no less than in [Prince Metternich’s] Austria, and executed in a brutal police intervention into the state bureaucracy, the local constabulary and the judiciary, as in Austria. The ‘montagne’ for its part is just as constantly occupied with fighting off these attacks and protecting the ‘natural rights of man’ as every so-called people’s party has been, more or less, for a century and a half. Nevertheless on closer inspection of the situation and the parties, this superficial appearance, which veils the class struggle and
the peculiar physiognomy of this period, disappears, and it thus becomes a gold mine for saloon bar politicians and republican-minded gents.

As we said, legitimists and Orléanists make up the two great factions of the party of order. Was what bound these factions to their pretenders and kept them mutually at odds – was it nothing but the lily and tricolour, the royal house of Bourbon and the royal house of Orléans, different shades of royalism? Was it their royalist faith at all? Under the Bourbons the large propertiéd interests governed with priests and lackeys, under Orléans rule it was high finance, large-scale industry, large commercial interests, i.e. capital with its retinue of lawyers, professors and smooth-talkers. The legitimate monarchy was merely the political expression of the hereditary rule of the feudal lords, and the July monarchy was likewise merely the political expression for the usurping rule of bourgeois parvenus. What kept the two factions apart was not any so-called principles, it was their material conditions of existence, two different kinds of property; it was the old opposition between town and country, the rivalry between capital and landed property. That at the same time old memories, personal antipathies, hopes and fears, prejudices and delusions, sympathies and antipathies, convictions, articles of faith and principles bound them to one or the other royal house, whoever denied this? On the different forms of property, the social conditions of existence, arises an entire superstructure of different and peculiarly formed sentiments, delusions, modes of thought and outlooks on life. The whole class creates and forms them from the material foundations on up and from the corresponding social relations. The single individual, to whom they are transmitted through tradition and upbringing, can imagine that they form the real motives and starting-point for his actions. As Orléanists, as legitimists, each faction sought to convince itself and the other that loyalty to their two royal houses separated them, yet facts later proved that it was rather their divided interests which forbade their unification. Just as in private life one distinguishes between what a man thinks and says, and what he really is and does, so one must all the more in historical conflicts distinguish between the fine words and aspirations of the parties and their real organisation and their real interests, their image from their reality. Orléanists and legitimists found themselves side by side in the republic with the
same demands. If each side wanted to carry out the restoration of its own royal house in opposition to the other, then this signified nothing but the desire of each of the two great interests into which the bourgeoisie had split – landed property and capital – to restore its own supremacy and to subordinate the other. We are talking in terms of two interests within the bourgeoisie, for large landed property, in spite of its flirtations with feudalism and pride in its pedigree, has been thoroughly assimilated to the bourgeoisie by the development of modern society. Thus the Tories in England long fancied that they were in raptures about royalty, the church and the beauties of the ancient constitution, until a time of trial tore from them the confession that they were only in raptures about rent.

The royalist coalition pursued their intrigues against one another in the press, at Ems [in Germany amongst the Bourbons], at Claremont [in England amongst the Orléanists], outside parliamentary bounds. Behind the scenes they donned their antique Orléanist and legitimist livery once again and pursued their old tournaments. But on the public stage, in high politics and matters of state, as a grand parliamentary party, they pawned off their royal houses with token acts of reverence, and adjourned the restoration of the monarchy ad infinitum, and did their real business as the party of order, i.e. under a social rather than a political banner, as a representative of the bourgeois world order, not as knights seeking fair ladies, as the bourgeois class against other classes, not as royalists against republicans. And as the party of order they exercised a more unrestricted and sterner dominion over the other classes of society than they had been able to do under the restoration or the July monarchy, as was possible only in a parliamentary republic, for only under that form could the two great divisions of the French bourgeoisie unite and make the rule of their class the order of the day, instead of the regime of one of its privileged factions. If in spite of that as the party of order they insulted the republic and expressed aversion to it, this did not happen as the result of mere royalist recollections but rather from the instinct that the republican form made their political dominion complete and stripped it of all alien appearances, but at the same time undermining its social basis in that they have to confront the subjugated classes, and to grapple with them without a mediator, without the crown for cover, without being able to
distract the interests of the nation with their secondary quarrels amongst themselves and with royalty. This results from a weakness which causes them to recoil from the pure conditions of their own class rule and to hanker after the incomplete, undeveloped and on that account less dangerous forms of dominion. On the other hand every time that the royalist coalition comes into conflict with the pretender opposing them, with Bonaparte, they believe their parliamentary might to be threatened by the power of the executive, and they have to pull out the political title to their rule; they come forward as republicans and not as royalists, from the Orléanist Thiers who warns the national assembly [on 17 January 1851] that the republic would divide them least to the legitimist Berryer, who on 2 December 1851 harangues the assembled people of the tenth arrondissement in the name of the republic as a tribune, swathed in the tricolour on the steps of the town hall. To be sure a mocking echo calls: Henri V! Henri V! [the legitimist pretender and self-styled king].

Opposed to the bourgeoisie in coalition there was a coalition between the petty-bourgeoisie and the working classes, the so-called *social-democratic* party. The party regarded themselves as badly rewarded after the June days of 1848, their material interests endangered and the democratic guarantees, which ought to have assured the exercise of these interests, called into question by the counter-revolution. Hence they drew near to the workers. On the other hand, their parliamentary representation, the *montagne*, pushed aside during the dictatorship of the republican bourgeoisie, had reconquered its lost popularity because of the struggle between Bonaparte and the royalist ministers during the second half of the constituent assembly’s lifespan. It had struck an alliance with the leaders of the socialists. In February 1849 there were banquets to celebrate the event. A joint programme was produced, joint election committees were instituted and joint candidates put up. The revolutionary sting was taken from the social demands of the proletariat, and a democratic cast was given to them; the merely political form was stripped back from the democratic claims of the petty bourgeoisie and a socialist sting revealed. In that way *social-democracy* arose. The new *montagne*, the result of this combination, contained the same elements as the old *montagne* only numerically stronger, apart from a few token workers and a few socialist sectarians. But
in the course of development it had altered, along with the class which it represented. The peculiar character of social-democracy is epitomised in the way that democratic and republican institutions are demanded as a means of weakening the conflict between capital and labour, and of creating a harmony between the two extremes, but not of transcending them both. Different markers for reaching this goal may be proposed, and it may be embellished with more or less revolutionary notions, but the content remains always the same. This content is the reform of society in a democratic way, but a reform within petty-bourgeois limits. Only we must not take the narrow-minded view that the petty-bourgeoisie wants on principle to pursue an egoistic class interest. Rather it believes that the particular conditions for its freedom are the only general conditions under which modern society can be safeguarded and escape the class struggle. Even less should one imagine that democratic representatives are all shopkeepers or their admirers. In respect of education and circumstances they could be as far removed from them as the heavens above. What makes them representatives of the petty-bourgeoisie is the fact that in their heads they do not transcend the limitations that others have not surmounted in life, that they are therefore driven to the same problems and solutions in theory that material interests and social life pose for others in practice. In general terms this is the relationship between the political and literary representatives of a class to the class that they represent.

After the exposition given above, it is self-evident that if the montagne continually contends with the party of order for the republic and the so-called rights of man, neither the republic nor the rights of man are its real goal, just as an army, which one wants to disarm and which mounts resistance, has not entered the field of battle in order to safeguard its own weapons.

When the national assembly met, the party of order immediately provoked the montagne. The bourgeoisie just then felt the necessity of getting rid of the petty-bourgeois democrats, just as a year before it had realised the necessity of putting an end to the revolutionary proletariat. Yet the situation of its adversary was different. The strength of the proletarian party lay in the streets, that of the petty-bourgeoisie in the national assembly itself. It was therefore a question of luring them from the national assembly onto the streets and making them destroy their parliamentary power themselves, before
time and opportunity could consolidate it. The _montagne_ sprang at full gallop into the trap.

The bombardment of Rome by French troops [in June 1849] was thrown to it as bait. It violated article v of the [preamble to the] constitution which prohibits the French republic from turning its military forces against the freedom of any other people. In addition [chapter v] § 54 forbade any declaration of war by the executive without the assent of the national assembly, and by its resolution of 8 May [1849] the constituent assembly had disavowed the expedition to Rome. On these grounds Ledru-Rollin introduced a bill of impeachment against Bonaparte and his ministers on 11 June 1849, and stung by Thiers into action, he let himself get carried away to the point of threatening that he would defend the constitution by any means, even fighting hand-to-hand. The _montagne_ rose up as one man and echoed this call to arms. On 12 June [1849] the national assembly threw out the bill of impeachment, and the montagne walked out of parliament. The events of 13 June [1849] are well known: the proclamation from one part of the _montagne_ by which Bonaparte and his ministers were declared ‘outside the constitution’; the democratic national guard, parading weaponless in the streets, dispersed when they met up with Changarnier’s troops, etc. etc. A part of the _montagne_ fled abroad, another was arraigned before the high court at Bourges, and a parliamentary regulation subjected the rest to the schoolmasterly supervision of the president of the national assembly. Paris was again besieged and the democratic section of the national guard dissolved. The influence of the _montagne_ in parliament and the power of the petty-bourgeoisie in Paris was thereby destroyed.

Lyons, where the signal for a bloody workers’ insurrection had been given on 13 June, was besieged, along with five neighbouring départements, a situation which continues up to the present moment.

The bulk of the _montagne_ had abandoned the avant garde, refusing to sign its proclamation. The press had deserted, only two papers daring to publish the broadside. The petty-bourgeoisie betrayed their representatives in that the national guard stayed away, or where they appeared, they obstructed the building of barricades. The representatives had duped the petty-bourgeoisie, as the alleged affiliates from the army were nowhere to be seen. Finally, instead of gaining additional strength from the proletariat, the
democratic party infected it with its own weakness, and as is generally the case with democratic heroism, the leaders took satisfaction in being able to blame the 'people' for desertion, and the people in charging the leaders with fraud.

Seldom had a charge been sounded with greater alarum than the impending campaign by the montagne, seldom had an event been trumpeted with greater certainty or further in advance than the inevitable victory of democracy. This is for certain: the democrats have faith in the trumpeting that breached the walls of Jericho. And as often as they confront the ramparts of despotism, they try to imitate the miracle. If the montagne wished to triumph in parliament, it should not have resorted to arms. If the call to arms was in parliament, it should not have behaved in a parliamentary way in the streets. If the peaceful demonstration was seriously intended, then it was foolish not to foresee a violent reception. If they had a real war in mind, then it was eccentric to put aside the weapons to fight it. But the revolutionary threats of the petty-bourgeoisie and their democratic representatives are mere attempts to bully the enemy. And if they run into a cul-de-sac, if they compromise themselves enough to force them to carry out their threats, then this will happen in an ambiguous way which avoids nothing so much as the means to an end and which hankers after excuses for failure. The thundering overture announcing the contest dies away to the faintest growl as battle is commenced, the players cease to take themselves seriously, and the affair goes flat like a burst balloon.

No party exaggerates its strength more than the democratic one, and none deludes itself with more insouciance about the situation. Since a part of the army had declared for it, the montagne was now convinced that the army would revolt for it. And on what occasion? On an occasion that had no meaning for the troops other than that the revolutionaries sided with the soldiers of Rome against the French ones. Concerning the workers, the montagne had to know that the recollections of June 1848 were still too fresh for anything but a deep aversion on the part of the proletariat for the national guard and a thoroughgoing mistrust on the part of the chiefs of the secret societies for the democratic chiefs. To even out these differences would require an overwhelming common interest to come into play. The infraction of an abstract constitutional clause could not provide this. Had not the constitution been repeatedly infringed
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according to the testimony of the democrats themselves? Had the popular papers not branded it as a counter-revolutionary botch-job? But the democrat, because he represents the petty-bourgeoisie, hence a transitional class, in which the interests of two classes are neutralised, fancies himself above class conflict entirely. The democrats admit that a privileged class confronts them, but they together with the whole rest of the nation make up the people. What they represent is the people's right to rule; their interests are the people's interests. Hence at a time of impending struggle, they do not need to examine the interests and positioning of the different classes. They do not need to weigh their own resources all that critically. They have only to give the signal, and the people will fall on the oppressors with inexhaustible resources to hand. If in the course of events their interests turn out to be uninteresting and their power turns out to be impotence, then the fault lies either with damned sophists splitting the indivisible people into different warring camps, or the army was too brutalised and too dazzled to understand that the pure aims of democracy are in its best interests, or the whole thing has been wrecked by a mere detail in execution, or else an unforeseen accident has thwarted the party this time. In any case the democrat emerges from the most shameful defeat just as unscathed as he was when he innocently went into it, with the newly won conviction that he is bound to triumph, not that he and his party have given up their long-standing views but rather the opposite, that conditions have to ripen to suit him.

Decimated and broken down and humiliated by the new parliamentary order, the montagne should not be thought particularly unfortunate. The remuneration for attendance and their official position were for many of them a source of consolation that was renewed daily. If 13 June [1849] had removed its leaders, then it opened the way for lesser talents who were flattered by this new arrangement. If their impotence in parliament could no longer be doubted, then they were justified in limiting their interventions to outbursts of moral indignation and tub-thumping oratory. If the party of order pretended to see in them an embodiment of all the terrors of anarchy, as the last official representatives of the revolution, then they could in reality be all the more insipid and unassuming. They consoled themselves, however, for 13 June [1849] with this profound twist: But if any dare to attack the general
suffrage, well then! Then we will show them what we are made of! We shall see!

So far as the montagnards who fled abroad are concerned, it suffices to note here that Ledru-Rollin, since he had succeeded in scarcely a fortnight in irretrievably ruining the powerful party that he headed, now found himself called up to form a French regime in exile; his distant figure, far from the scene of action, seemed to increase in stature proportionate to the sinking level of the revolution and the dwarfing of the great and the good of official France, so that he could figure as republican pretender for [the presidential election of May] 1852; periodically he issued circulars to the Wallachians and to other peoples whereby the despots of the Continent were threatened with his actions and the actions of his confederates. Was Proudhon wholly wrong when he called out to these men [in 1850]: ‘You’re nothing but braggarts’?

On 13 June [1849] the party of order had not only broken the montagne, it had brought about the subordination of the constitution to the majority decisions of the national assembly. And this is what it understood about the republic. That the bourgeoisie rules here in parliamentary form, without encountering any limitations in the veto power of the executive or in the power to dissolve parliament, as there are in a monarchy. That was the parliamentary republic, as Thiers had termed it [in 1851]. But on 13 June when the bourgeoisie secured its supreme power within the parliamentary chambers, did it not afflict parliament itself, as opposed to the executive power and the people, with an incurable weakness by throwing out the most popular section? By surrendering numerous deputies to the writs of the judiciary without further ceremonial, it abolished parliamentary immunity itself. The humiliating regulations to which it subjected the montagne denigrated the individual representatives of the people, and exalted the president of the republic in inverse proportion. By condemning the insurrection to maintain constitutional rule as anarchic and tending to the overthrow of society, it precluded an appeal to insurrection, should the executive power act against it by violating a constitutional provision. The irony of history had it that the general who bombarded Rome on Bonaparte’s orders and so provided the immediate occasion for the constitutional fracas of 13 June [1849], that very same Oudinot, had to be the one that the party of order offered, with fruitless
supplications, to the people on 2 December 1851 as a constitutional general in opposition to Bonaparte. Another hero of 13 June [1849], [General] Vieyra, praised from the rostrum of the national assembly for leading a gang of national guards linked to high finance to commit brutalities in the offices of the democratic press, this same Vieyra was sworn to Bonaparte and played an essential part in the death throes of the national assembly by depriving it of any protection from the national guard.

The 13th of June [1849] had still another meaning. The montagne had wanted Bonaparte out of the way through impeachment. Its defeat was therefore a signal victory for Bonaparte, a personal triumph over his democratic enemies. The party of order gained a victory; Bonaparte had only to cash in. And that he did. On 14 June [1849] there was a proclamation to be read on the walls of Paris whereby the president, quite without meaning to, fighting against it, forced by pressure of events to emerge from cloistered seclusion, intones the calumnies of his enemies against his misprised virtue, and in fact identifies the cause of order with his person whilst seeming to identify his person with the cause of order. Moreover the national assembly had sanctioned the expedition against Rome after the fact, but Bonaparte had taken the initiative. Having installed the high priest Samuel in the Vatican once again, he could hope to enter the Tuileries [crowned by the pope] as King David. He had won over the church.

The revolt of 13 June [1849] was limited, as we have seen, to a peaceful march through the streets. Hence there were no laurels to be won in combating it. At a time when heroes and exploits were scarce, the party of order nevertheless transformed this bloodless encounter into a second [Battle of] Austerlitz [when Napoleon defeated the Austrians and Russians on 2 December 1805]. Speech-makers and leader-writers extolled the army as the champion of order, versus the impotent anarchism of the populace at large, and praised Changarnier as the ‘bulwark of society’. This was a mystification that he finally believed himself. But secretly the army corps that seemed doubtful were transferred from Paris, the regiments that had voted for the democrats were banished to Algiers, hotheads amongst the troops were consigned to punishment squads, and finally the press was systematically barred from the barracks and the barracks from civilian life.
We have now reached the turning-point in the history of the French national guard. In 1830 it was decisive in the overthrow of the restoration monarchy [of Charles X]. Under Louis Philippe, every time the national guard sided with the troops, the rebellion misfired. In the February days of 1848, when it signalled passivity to the uprising and ambiguity to Louis Philippe, he acknowledged defeat and went under. Thus the conviction took root that the revolution could not win without the national guard, and the army could not win against it. Thus the army had a superstitious belief in an almighty civilian power. That superstition was strengthened when the national guard joined forces with regular troops to put down the insurrection of the June days of 1848. When Bonaparte took office, the standing of the national guard declined somewhat owing to the unconstitutional amalgamation of its command with that of the first army in the person of Changarnier.

The national guard itself now appeared to be but an appendage to the regulars, just as its command appeared to be a department of the top brass. It was finally disposed of on 13 June [1849]: not just by the partial dissolution of the national guard, periodically re-enacted all over France, and leaving only fragments behind. The demonstration of 13 June was above all a demonstration by the democratic [elements of the] national guard. They had, to be sure, confronted the army with their uniforms, not with weapons, but the talisman was precisely in the uniform. The army satisfied itself that the uniform was a length of woollen cloth just like any other. The spell was broken. In the June days of 1848 the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie were united as national guards against the proletariat, and on 13 June 1849 the bourgeoisie let the army disperse the petty-bourgeois national guards; on 2 December 1851 the bourgeois national guard itself vanished and Bonaparte merely confirmed this fact when he signed an order of dissolution. So the bourgeoisie itself smashed its last weapon against the army, doing this the moment the petty-bourgeoisie rebelled and ceased to be its vassal, and generally destroying all its own defences against absolutism once it became absolute itself.

Meanwhile in the national assembly the party of order celebrated the reconquest of a power that seemed lost only in 1848 but was recovered in 1849 free from previous restrictions, spouting invective against the republic and the constitution, cursing all future, present,
and past revolutions including the one their own leaders had made, and passing laws muzzling the press, forbidding free association and making siege controls a permanent institution. The national assembly then adjourned from the middle of August to the middle of October [1849], after naming a commission to rule in its absence. During this recess the legitimists intrigued at Ems, the Orléanists at Claremont, Bonaparte on his princely rounds, and councils of the départements in deliberations on constitutional revision — incidents which regularly recur in the periodic recesses of the national assembly, and which I will examine only when they turn out to be events. Here it is merely noted that the national assembly behaved in an impolitic way by disappearing for long intervals from the stage and leaving only a single figure at the head of the republic, Louis Bonaparte, even if a pitiable one, while the party of order caused a public scandal by separating into its royalist elements with mutually conflicting demands for restoration. Once the distracting din of parliament was silenced by this recess and it had dissolved bodily into the nation, it became inescapably clear that the republic required but one thing for true completion: making parliamentary recess permanent and replacing the republican motto 'liberty, equality, fraternity' with the unambiguous words 'infantry, cavalry, artillery'!

IV

In mid-October 1849 the national assembly went back into session. On 1 November Bonaparte surprised it with a communiqué announcing the dismissal of the Barrot-Falloux cabinet and the formation of a new one. Nobody has sacked his lackeys more unceremoniously than Bonaparte did his ministers. For the moment Barrot and Co. got the boot intended for the national assembly.

The Barrot cabinet, as we have seen, was composed of legitimists and Orléanists, a cabinet for the party of order. This was what Bonaparte needed in order to dissolve the constituent assembly, to mount the expedition against the republic in Rome, and to destroy the democratic party. In apparent eclipse behind this ministry, he had delivered governmental authority into the hands of the party of order and masked himself in the unassuming guise of a 'straw man', which the respectable 'guarantors' of the Paris press bore [under Louis Philippe, when the real editors were in prison]. Now
he cast off his larval shell, which was no longer a light covering under which he could hide his features but rather an iron mask which prevented him from showing his true face. He had appointed the Barrot cabinet to break up the national assembly in the name of the party of order; in his own name he discharged it in order to declare his independence from the party of order and its national assembly.

There was no lack of plausible pretexts for this dismissal. The Barrot cabinet neglected even the formalities that would have let the president of the republic appear to hold power alongside the national assembly. During the recess of the national assembly Bonaparte published a letter to [his military aide] Edgar Ney in which he seemed to object to the liberal policies of the pope, just as he had published a letter in opposition to the constituent assembly praising Oudinot for his assault on the Roman republic. When the national assembly approved the budget for the Roman expedition, the liberal Victor Hugo brought this letter to attention [on 19 October 1849]. The party of order drowned out the suggestion that Bonaparte's ideas could have any political weight with exclamations of disbelieving scorn. Not one of the ministers took up the challenge to defend him. On another occasion Barrot, with his usual high seriousness, alluded from the rostrum to his indignation concerning the 'abominable intrigues' that in his opinion were going on in the immediate entourage of the president. Finally, though the cabinet obtained a widow's pension for the duchess of Orleans from the national assembly, it refused to consider an increase in presidential expenses. In Bonaparte the imperial pretender was so intimately bound up with the down-and-out mercenary that his one big idea - that his mission was to restore the empire - was always accompanied by another - that it was the mission of the French people to pay his debts.

The Barrot-Falloux cabinet was the first and last parliamentary cabinet that Bonaparte called into existence. Its discharge therefore marks a decisive turning-point. In it the party of order lost the lever of executive power, an indispensable position for defending a parliamentary regime, and never again recovered it. In a country like France, where the executive power has at its disposal a bureaucracy of more than half a million civil servants, so holding an immense number of individual interests and livelihoods in...
abject dependence; where the state restricts, controls, regulates, oversees and supervises civil life from its most all-encompassing expressions to its most insignificant stirrings, from its most universal models of existence to the private existence of individuals; where through the most extraordinary centralisation this parasite acquires an all-knowing pervasiveness, an enhanced capacity for speed and action which only finds an analogue in the helpless dependence and scatter-brained formlessness of the actual body politic – it is easy to see that in such a country the national assembly forfeits any real influence when it loses control of ministerial portfolios, if it does not at the same time simplify the state administration, reduce the bureaucracy as far as possible, and lastly allow civil life and public opinion to create their own organs of expression independent of governmental authority. But the material interests of the French bourgeoisie are intertwined in the most intimate way with the maintenance of just that wide-ranging and highly ramified machinery of state. Here it accommodates surplus population and makes up in the form of state maintenance what it cannot pocket in the form of profit, interest, rent and fees. On the other hand its political interests force it to increase state repression day by day, hence resources and personnel, while at the same time waging a continuous war on public opinion, suspecting independent movement in society, then maiming and laming its limbs where not wholly successful in amputating them. Thus the French bourgeoisie was compelled by its class position both to negate the conditions of existence for any parliamentary power, including its own, and to make the power of the executive, its adversary, irresistible.

The new cabinet was known as the d'Hautpoul ministry. Not that General d'Hautpoul had been granted the title prime minister. With Barrot's dismissal Bonaparte had also abolished this office which condemned the president of the republic to the legal nullity of a constitutional monarch, though a constitutional monarch without throne or crown, without sceptre and sword, without unilateral power, without unimpeachable possession of the highest office of state, and most fatal of all, without [expenses from] a civil list. The d'Hautpoul cabinet included only one man of parliamentary standing, the Jew Fould, one of the most notorious of the high
financiers. The finance ministry went to him. Check the quotations on the Paris *bourse* and you will find that from 1 November 1849 onwards French government securities rose and fell with the fall and rise of Bonapartist shares. While Bonaparte was finding friends on the *bourse* he also took control of the police, appointing Carlier as prefect in Paris.

This change of cabinet had consequences that would only emerge in the ensuing train of events. At first Bonaparte seemed to take a step forward only to be driven conspicuously back again. His abrupt communiqué was followed by the most servile pledge of allegiance to the national assembly. Whenever ministers dared to make a diffident attempt to introduce his personal whims as proposed legislation, they appeared unwilling, forced by their position to fulfil comic instructions, convinced in advance of their failure. Whenever Bonaparte babbled out his intentions behind his ministers’ backs and played up his ‘Napoleonic ideals’ [as published in a book of 1839], his own ministers disavowed him from the rostrum of the national assembly. His usurpatory lusts only seemed to come forth so that the malicious laughter of his enemies would not die away. He behaved like an unrecognised genius whom all the world takes for a simpleton. Never did he experience the contempt of all classes to a greater degree than in this period. Never did the bourgeoisie rule more unconditionally, never did it display the insignia of power with more bravado.

I do not need to tell the story of the bourgeoisie’s legislative activity here, as it can be summarised for this period in two laws: the reintroduction of the *wine tax*, and the *education act* disallowing atheism. Though wine drinking was made harder for the French, they were all the more richly supplied with the water of the living truth. Though the bourgeoisie declared the old, despised tax system in France sacrosanct by reintroducing the despised tax on wine, it tried to secure the old habits of mind that helped people to bear it by passing the education law. It is astonishing to see the Orléanists, the liberal bourgeoisie, these votaries of Voltaire and apostles of philosophical eclecticism, entrusting the supervision of French intellectual life to their sworn enemies the Jesuits. Though Orléanists and legitimists could part company over pretenders to the throne, they both understood that their joint authority required a combination
of the repressive apparatus of two eras, the July monarchy and the restoration, supplementing and strengthening the former with the latter.

Out in the départements the peasantry began to agitate, as they were dashed in all their hopes, oppressed more than ever by low price-levels for grain, and by increasing tax burdens and mortgage debts. They were answered with a witch hunt against school teachers, who were subjected to the clergy, a witch hunt against mayors, who were subjected to prefects, and through a system of spying, which subjected everyone. In Paris and the big cities [political] reaction bears the true character of the times and provokes more than it executes. In the countryside it is vulgar, sordid, petty, tiresome and badgering, in a word the gendarme. We know how much three years of a police state, blessed by the authority of the Church, must demoralise an unsophisticated population.

Despite all the passion and shouting from the rostrum that was directed by the party of order against the minority in the national assembly, its words were always monosyllabic, like the Christian who was to say: Yea, yea; nay, nay! Monosyllables from the rostrum, monosyllables in the press. Boring as a riddle whose solution you already know. Whether it was a question of the right of petition or of the tax on wine, of freedom of the press or free trade, incorporating societies or municipalities, protecting personal freedom or accounting for public money, the universal remedy recurs, one theme is always the same, the verdict is ever ready and is invariably a cry of: 'socialism'! Even bourgeois liberalism is decried as socialistic, bourgeois enlightenment is socialistic, bourgeois financial reforms are socialistic. It was socialistic to build a railway where there was already a canal, and it was socialistic to defend oneself with a stick when attacked with a sword.

This is not mere rhetoric, fashion or party tactics. The bourgeoisie saw correctly that all the weapons it had forged against feudalism were turned back on their makers, that all the educational institutions it had supported were rebelling against its own civilisation, that all the gods it had created were forsaking them. It knew that all so-called liberty and progress threatened and strained its class-rule both at the foundations of society and at its political heights, and had therefore become 'socialistic'. In these threats and strains it rightly discerned the secret of socialism, whose tendency
and aim it judges more correctly than so-called socialism knows
how to judge itself, since it cannot understand how the bourgeoisie
stubbornly resists it, even though it snivels sentimentally about the
suffering of mankind, or prophesies brotherly love and the millen-
num like the Christians, drivels humanistically about ideas, edu-
cation and freedom, or concocts a doctrinaire system for the re-
conciliation and welfare of all classes. But what it doesn’t grasp is
the conclusion that its own parliamentary regime, its political rule in
general, must now be condemned universally as socialistic. So long
as the organisation of bourgeois class rule is incomplete, and has
not taken on its purest political expression, the opposition of other
classes cannot emerge in a pure form, and where it does emerge, it
cannot take the dangerous turn of calling property, religion, the
family and public order into question, and so transforming the
struggle against state power into a struggle against capital. If it saw
‘peace and quiet’ endangered by every stirring of life in society,
how could it want to retain at the head of society a regime of unrest,
its own regime, the parliamentary regime, a regime that – as one of
its spokesmen put it – thrives on conflict? The parliamentary regime
lives by discussion, so how is it to forbid it? Every interest, every
social organisation is transformed into a generality, debated as a
generality, so how is an interest, any kind of institution, to tran-
scend thinking and to impose itself as an article of faith? The war
of the orators at the rostrum evokes the war of the printing presses;
parliamentary debaters are necessarily supplemented by debaters in
the salons and saloon bars; representatives who make constant
appeals to public opinion license public opinion to express itself
openly in petitions. The parliamentary regime leaves everything to
majority decision, why then should the great majorities outside par-
liament not want to make decisions? When you call the tune at the
pinnacles of power, is it a surprise when the underlings dance to it?

By branding as ‘socialistic’ what it had previously extolled as ‘lib-
eral’, the bourgeoisie confesses that its own interests require it to
dispense with the dangers of self-government; that in order to
restore peace to the countryside the bourgeois parliament must first
be laid to rest; that to retain its power in society intact its political
power would have to be broken; that the individual bourgeois could
continue to exploit other classes ‘privately’ and to continue in
untroubled enjoyment of property, family, religion and public order
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only on condition that his class and all the others be condemned to the same political nullity; that to save its purse it must forfeit the crown, and the sword of state must be hung up like the sword of Damocles.

In the domain of bourgeois interests in general, the national assembly proved itself so unproductive that, for example, the negotiations on the Paris–Avignon railway, begun during the winter of 1850, were still not wrapped up on 2 December 1851. Where it was not repressive or reactive, it was incurably sterile.

While Bonaparte's cabinet took the initiative, in part, to put the programme of the party of order into law, and surpassed, in part, its harshness in executing and administering it, he also tried to win popularity through silly, childish proposals, to manifest his opposition to the national assembly and to hint at a secret reserve, though conditions temporarily hindered the French people from spending the hidden treasures. Such was the proposal to grant a pay increase of four sous per day to non-commissioned officers. Such was the proposal for unsecured bank loans for workers. Cash in hand and cash on tick, that was the perspective with which he hoped to lead on the populace. Gifts and loans – here we have the only economics of the lumpenproletariat, both the refined and the common sort. And here we have the only trips which Bonaparte knew how to wire. Never has a pretender speculated so stupidly on the stupidity of the populace.

The national assembly raged repeatedly at these bare-faced attempts to win popularity at its expense, at the growing danger that this shyster, goaded by debt and unrestrained by reputation, would risk a desperate coup. The discord between the party of order and the president had taken on a threatening character when an unexpected event threw him repenting into its arms. We refer to the by-elections of 10 March 1850. These were held to fill seats vacated by deputies exiled or imprisoned after 13 June [1849]. Only social-democrats were elected in Paris. Indeed most of the votes there were concentrated on Deflotte, an insurgent in June 1848. Thus did the Paris petty-bourgeoisie, in alliance with the proletariat, take revenge for its defeat on 13 June 1849. Though it seemed to disappear from battle at the crucial time, it regained the field on a more propitious occasion with greater forces and a bolder battle-cry. Another circumstance seemed to make this electoral victory more
dangerous for Bonaparte. In Paris the army voted for one of the
June [1848] insurgents against one of Bonaparte’s ministers, La-
hitte, and in the départements mostly for the montagnards, out-
weighing the enemy there, too, though not so decisively as in Paris.

Suddenly Bonaparte saw revolution rising against him once more.
On 10 March 1850, as on 29 January and 13 June 1849, he disap-
peared behind the party of order. He bowed down, he humbly
begged pardon, he offered to appoint any cabinet it pleased on
behalf of the parliamentary majority, he even implored the Orléanist
and legitimist leaders, the Thiers’s, the Berryers, the Broglies, the
Molés, in short the so-called grandees, to take the helm of state in
person. The party of order did not know what to do with this
chance of a lifetime. Instead of boldly seizing power it did not even
force Bonaparte to reinstate the cabinet previously discharged on 1
November [1849]; it was satisfied to humiliate him with forgiveness
and to attach M. Baroche to the d’Hautpoul cabinet. As public pros-
ecutor, this Baroche had ranted before the high court at Bourges on
two occasions, the first time against the revolutionaries of 15 May
[1848] and the second against the democrats of 13 June [1849], both
times because of the outrage to the national assembly. But none of
Bonaparte’s ministers had a bigger part in the subsequent abase-
ment of the national assembly, and after [the coup of] 2 December
1851 we meet him once more, comfortably installed and highly paid
as vice-president, presiding over the senate. He had spat in the
revolutionists’ soup so that Bonaparte could slurp it up.

The social-democratic party seemed only to snatch at pretexts
for doubting its own victory and for taking the edge off it. Vidal,
one of the newly elected representatives for Paris, had also been
elected for Strasbourg. He was persuaded to give up the seat in
Paris and take the one in Strasbourg. Instead of making its victory
at the polls definitive and forcing the party of order into a parlia-
mentary showdown, instead of drawing the enemy into battle at a
time of popular enthusiasm and favourable disposition in the army,
the democratic party wearied Paris with electoral campaigning in
March and April [1850], let popular excitement wear itself out in a
game of repeated provisional ballots; let revolutionary energy sate
itself in constitutional successes, fizzle out in petty intrigues, hollow
rhetoric and illusory actions; let the bourgeoisie rally and prepare
itself; and finally, let an April [1850] by-election victory for Eugène
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Sue become a sentimental commentary on the earlier March vote and weaken its significance. In a word it made 10 March [1850] into April Fool's.

The parliamentary majority knew the weakness of its adversary [the social-democrats or montagne]. Bonaparte had left it the job of organising an attack and taking responsibility for it; seventeen grande-es worked out a new electoral law to be proposed by [the minister of the interior] Faucher, who had begged to be entrusted with that honour. On 8 May [1850] he brought in a bill to abolish universal manhood suffrage, to impose a three-year condition of residence on the electors, and finally in the case of workers to make proof of residence depend on certification by their employer.

During the electoral contest over the constitution, the democrats had fusséd and blustered in a revolutionary way, but now when it was a matter of demonstrating the importance of free elections through force of arms they sermonised in a constitutional way about public order, lofty tranquillity (calme majestueux), legal procedure, i.e. blind subjection to the terms of the counter-revolution, which paraded itself as law. During the debate the montagne shamed the party of order by adopting the dispassionate mien of the honourable law-abiding man, as opposed to its passionate revolutionism, and the montagne cut them down with the fearful reproach that they were revolutionaries. Even the newly elected deputies took care to be respectable and discreet to show what a misperception it was to decry them as anarchists and to interpret their election as a victory for revolution. On 31 May [1850] the new electoral law went through. The montagne was content to go to the president of the national assembly and stick a protest in his pocket. The electoral law was followed by a new press law completely eliminating the revolutionary newspapers. They deserved their fate. After this deluge the National and La Presse, two bourgeois papers, remained behind as the most extreme outposts of revolution.

We have seen how the democratic leaders did everything to embroil the people of Paris in a sham battle during March and April [1850], and how after 8 May [1850] they did everything to hold them back from a real one. It should also not be forgotten that 1850 was one of best years of industrial and commercial prosperity, so that Paris proletariat was fully employed. But the electoral law of 31 May 1850 excluded it from any part in political power. The field
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of battle was barred to it. The workers were pariahs once again, as they had been before the February revolution. By allowing the democrats to lead them after such an event and by forsaking the revolutionary interests of their class for transitory comforts, they renounced the honours of conquest, surrendered to their fate, demonstrated that the defeat of June 1848 had rendered them incapable of fighting for years to come and that the historical process would once again have to go on over their heads. As for the petty-bourgeois democrats who had cried on 13 June [1849], 'just one finger on universal manhood suffrage, and then!' – they now consoled themselves with the thought that the counter-revolutionary blow which they suffered was no blow and the law of 31 May [1850] no law. On 9 May 1852 [when Bonaparte’s term as president was to expire] every Frenchman would appear at the polls, ballot in one hand and sword in the other. For the petty-bourgeois democrats this prophecy was self-sufficient. Finally the army was punished by its superior officers for the elections of March and April 1850 as it had been for the one of 29 May 1849. But this time it said decidedly: ‘the revolution will not cheat us a third time’.

The law of 31 May 1850 was the coup d’etat of the bourgeoisie. All its previous victories over the revolution had had a merely provisional character. They were called into question once the national assembly had retired from the stage [for an electoral campaign]. They were dependent on the hazards of a new general election, and the history of elections since 1848 had demonstrated incontrovertibly that when the political authority of the bourgeoisie went up, its moral authority over the populace went down. On 10 March [1850] universal manhood suffrage made a declaration directly contrary to the authority of the bourgeoisie, and the bourgeoisie replied by outlawing it. Hence the law of 31 May [1850] was one of the requirements of the class struggle. On the other hand, the constitution demanded a minimum of two million votes to validate the election of the president of the republic. Should none of the presidential candidates obtain the minimum, the national assembly was to choose the president from amongst the five candidates at the top of the poll. At the time when the constituent assembly passed this law, there were ten million voters on the rolls. In its view a fifth of the electorate sufficed to validate the election of the president. The law of 31 May [1850] struck at least three million voters from the
rolls, reduced the number in the electorate to seven million, and
still retained the legal minimum of two million for the election of
the president. It therefore raised the legal minimum from a fifth to
nearly a third of the eligible voters, i.e. it did everything to wangle
the election of the president from the hands of the people into the
hands of the national assembly. Thus the party of order appeared
to have made its rule doubly secure through the electoral law of 31
May [1850], because it put the election of the national assembly and
of the president of the republic into the hands of this stable part of
society.

V

The struggle between the national assembly and Bonaparte broke
out again once the revolutionary crisis had blown over and universal
manhood suffrage was abolished.

The constitution had set Bonaparte’s salary at 600,000 francs.
Scarcely six months after his installation he succeeded in doubling
his money. This happened when Odilon Barrot extracted an annual
supplement of 600,000 francs from the constituent assembly for
so-called official expenses. After 13 June [1849] Bonaparte had simi-
lar requests put about but this time Barrot did not give them a
hearing. Now after 31 May [1850] he seized an auspicious moment
and got his ministers to propose a civil list of three million in the
national assembly. Leading the life of an adventurous vagabond had
endowed him with highly sensitive feelers for searching out the
weak moments when he might squeeze money from the bourgeoisie.
He was a real blackmailer. The national assembly had violated the
sovereignty of the people with his cooperation and connivance. He
threatened to expose this crime to the people unless it loosened the
purse-strings and paid up three million a year in hush-money. It
had robbed three million Frenchmen of their right to vote. For
every Frenchman put out of circulation he demanded a franc in
circulation, three million to be precise. Elected by six million, he
demanded compensation from the assembly for subsequently cheat-
ing him of votes. The executive commission of the national
assembly dismissed this upstart. The Bonapartist press grew threat-
ening. Could the national assembly break with the president of the
republic at a time when it had broken decisively with the bulk of
the nation on a matter of principle? Admittedly it had thrown out
the annual civil list but it had granted one-off supplementation of
2,160,000 francs. Thus it was guilty of a double weakness in grant-
ing the money and at the same time displaying an irritation that
revealed its reluctance to do so. We will see later what Bonaparte
used the money for. After this irritating sequel to the abolition of
universal manhood suffrage, in which Bonaparte switched from
humility during the crises of March and April [1850] to provocative
impudence when challenged by parliament, the national assembly
adjourned for three months, from 11 August to 11 November
[1850]. It left behind an executive commission of eighteen members
containing no Bonapartists but a few moderate republicans. The
executive commission of 1849 had included only gentlemen from
the party of order and Bonapartists. But at the time the party of
order had declared itself implacably opposed to the revolution. This
time the parliamentary republic declared itself implacably opposed
to the president. After the electoral law of 31 May [1850] this was
the only rival confronting the party of order.

When the national assembly came back into session in November
1850 it seemed that there would be a ruthless struggle with the
president, an inevitable battle to the death between two great
powers, instead of the previous petty skirmishing.

During this parliamentary recess, just as in the one of 1849, the
party of order broke up into factions, each busy with its restor-
ationist intrigues, given new impetus by the death of Louis
Philippe [on 26 August 1850]. The legitimist Henri V had even
appointed a proper cabinet which met in Paris and included mem-
ers of the executive commission amongst its numbers. Bonaparte
was therefore licensed for his part to progress through the départe-
ments of France, canvassing for votes, and airing his own plans for
a restoration, overtly or covertly, depending on the politics of the
town favoured with his presence. On this procession, necessarily
celebrated as a triumphal progress by the official gazette and Bona-
parte’s minor ones, he was continually accompanied by affiliates of
the Society of 10 December. This society dates from the year 1849.
Under the pretext of incorporating a benevolent association, the
Paris lumpenproletariat was organised into secret sections, each led
by a Bonapartist agent, and the whole headed by a Bonapartist gen-
eral. From the aristocracy there were bankrupted roués of doubtful
means and dubious provenance, from the bourgeoisie there were
degenerate wastrels on the take, vagabonds, demobbed soldiers, dis-
charged convicts, runaway galley slaves, swindlers and cheats,
thugs, pickpockets, conjurers, card-sharps, pimps, brothel keepers,
porters, day-labourers, organ grinders, scrap dealers, knife grinders,
tinkers and beggars, in short, the whole amorphous, jumbled mass
of flotsam and jetsam that the French term bohemian; from these
kindred spirits Bonaparte built up his Society of 10 December. This
was a 'benevolent society' in that all its members, like Bonaparte,
felt a need to benefit themselves at the expense of the nation's work-
ers. This Bonaparte, installed as chief of the lumpenproletariat, dis-
covering his personal interests here in popular form, perceiving in
the dregs, refuse and scum of all classes the sole class that offers
unconditional support, here is the real Bonaparte, the genuine arti-
cle, even though when in power he paid his debt to some of his
erstwhile fellow-conspirators by transporting them to [the penal
colony in] Cayenne [in South America] alongside the revolutionar-
ies. A cunning old roué, he conceives popular history and high
politics and finance as comedies in the most vulgar sense, as mas-
querades where fine costumes, words and postures serve only to
mask the most trifling pettiness. So it was [in 1830] when he pro-
cessed into Strasbourg, where a trained Swiss vulture played the
part of the Napoleonic eagle. For his entry into Boulogne [in 1840]
he put some London lay-about's into French uniforms. They stood
in for the army. In his Society of 10 December he collected 10,000
ragamuffins who were supposed to represent the people the way
that Klaus Zettel represented the lion. The bourgeoisie was playing
an utter comedy, but in the most serious way in the world, without
infringing even the most pedantic strictures of French dramatic eti-
quetter, and themselves half swindled, half convinced of the solem-
nity of their own high politics and finance; that was a time when
a swindler, who took the comedy straight, was bound to win. Only
now [in early 1852] that he has removed his solemn opponent, when
he has taken on the imperial role in earnest and with his Napoleonic
mask means to represent the real Napoleon, does he become a
victim of his own world-view, the straight comedian who no longer
sees world history as a comedy but his own comedy as world his-
tory. What the nationalised workshops were for the socialist work-
ers, what the militia was for the bourgeois republicans, the Society
of 10 December, his very own fighting force, was for Bonaparte. On his journeys, detachments were to pack the trains to improvise a crowd, raise public enthusiasm, howl a salute to the Emperor, insult and beat up republicans, all under the protection of the police, of course. On his return journeys to Paris they were to form an advance guard, forestalling or breaking up counter-demonstrations. The Society of 10 December belonged to him, it was his work, his very own idea. Whatever else he got his hands on, came to him by force of circumstances; whatever else he did, either circumstances did for him or he was satisfied to copy the deeds of others; but he became an artist in his own right when he put official turns of phrase – like public order, religion, the family and property – before the public, but kept the secret society of racketeers and con-artists, the society of disorder, prostitution and pilfering well out of sight, and the history of the Society of 10 December is his own history. But once there was an exception, when representatives of the party of order got hammered by the December-mob. And there was worse to come. Police commissioner Yon, assigned to security at the national assembly, got a story from a certain Alais and informed the executive commission that a section of the December-mob were plotting to murder General Changarnier and Dupin, the president of the national assembly, and had already found people to carry this out. M. Dupin’s panic is understandable. A parliamentary enquiry into the Society of 10 December, i.e. the profanation of the secret world of Bonapartism, seemed unavoidable. But just before the national assembly came into session, Bonaparte prudently dissolved his society, only on paper of course, for even at the end of 1851, Carlier, the prefect of police, was still pressing him in a detailed but vain memorandum to make the break-up of the December-mob a fact.

The Society of 10 December was to remain Bonaparte’s private army until he could successfully transform the official army into the Society of 10 December. Shortly after the adjournment of the national assembly Bonaparte made his first attempt at this, and to be sure with the money that he had just extorted from it. As a fatalist, he lived the maxim that there are certain higher powers which a man, and particularly a soldier, cannot withstand. Amongst those powers he reckoned first of all on cigars and champagne, cold chicken and garlic sausage. Hence he began by treating officers and
junior officers to cigars and champagne, cold chicken and garlic sausage in his residence at the Elysée Palace. On 3 October [1850] he repeated this ploy with the massed troops reviewed at Saint-Maur and on 10 October the same thing again on a still grander scale at the army’s Satory parade. His uncle Napoleon had invoked the campaigns of Alexander in Asia, the nephew the triumphs of Bacchus in the same land. Alexander was of course a demi-god, but Bacchus was a full-fledged one, and in fact the god watching over the Society of 10 December.

After the military review of 3 October [1850], the executive commission summoned the minister of war d’Hautpoul to a hearing. He promised that such breaches of discipline would not be repeated. We know how on 10 October [at Saint-Maur] Bonaparte kept to d’Hautpoul’s promise. At both reviews Changarnier had been in command as head of the army in Paris. He was simultaneously a member of the executive commission, commander-in-chief of the national guard, ‘saviour’ of 29 January and 13 June [1849], ‘bulwark of society’, presidential candidate for the party of order, the presumed [General] Monk [who restored King Charles II] for two [pretending] monarchs; up to then he had never acknowledged that he was subordinate to the minister of war, had always openly scoffed at the republican constitution, and had acted as a highly placed but ambiguous protector for Bonaparte. Now he was a stickler for discipline against the minister of war and a zealot for the constitution against Bonaparte. Despite the fact that on 10 October [1850] a part of the cavalry raised the cry: ‘Long live Napoleon! and the sausages!’ Changarnier arranged that at least those troops under the command of his friend Neumeyer would observe an icy silence whilst parading by. At Bonaparte’s instigation the minister of war punished General Neumeyer by relieving him of his post in Paris, under the pretext of making him commander of the 14th and 15th divisions. Neumeyer refused this transfer and so had to take his leave. On 2 November [1850], for his part, Changarnier posted an order forbidding the troops from engaging in political sloganising or demonstrations of any kind whilst under arms. The Elysééist papers attacked Changarnier, the papers for the party of order attacked Bonaparte; the executive commission held numerous secret sessions repeatedly proposing a state of emergency; the army seemed divided into two warring camps with two warring general staffs, one in the Elysée with Bonaparte and the other in the
Tuileries with Changarnier. It appeared that only the recall of the national assembly was needed to sound the call to arms. The French public reacted to the dissension between Bonaparte and Changarnier rather like the English journalist who characterised it in the following way: ‘Housemaids in France are clearing away the glowing lava of revolution with old brooms and bickering amongst themselves while they do their work.’

Meanwhile Bonaparte hastened to remove the minister of war, d’Hautpoul, speeding him headlong to Algiers and appointing General Schramm in his place. On 12 November [1850] he sent the national assembly a communiqué of American prolixity, overburdened with detail, redolent of order, anxious for reconciliation, acquiescing in the constitution, treating of all and sundry except the burning questions of the time. As if in passing he remarked that according to the express provisions of the constitution, the army was answerable to the president alone. The communiqué concluded with this solemn affirmation:

\[\textit{Above all France clamours for peace \ldots I alone am bound by an oath of office, so I shall stay within the narrow limits that the constitution has set for the president \ldots Concerning myself, I have been elected by the people and owe my power solely to them, and I shall always submit to their lawful will. Should you resolve on a revision of the constitution at this session, a constituent assembly will determine the extent of executive power. If not, then the people will make their solemn decision in [May] 1852. But whatever the future may bring, let us come to an understanding so that emotion, shock or violence will never decide the fate of this great nation \ldots What is always at the forefront of my concern is not to know who will govern France in 1852, but rather to use the time at my disposal so that the interim passes without unrest or disorder. I have sincerely opened my heart to you, you will answer my frankness with your trust, my good endeavours with your cooperation, and God will do the rest.}\]

In the mouth of Bonaparte – the autocrat of the Society of 10 December and the picnic hero of Saint-Maur and Satory – the language of the bourgeoisie – respectable, moderate in its hypocrisy, virtuous in its commonplaces – opened new vistas of meaning.

The grandees of the party of order did not delude themselves for a moment concerning the trust that this heartfelt effusion deserved. They had long been blasé about oaths, as they numbered
in their midst veterans and virtuosi of political perjury, and they
had not omitted to note the passage concerning the army. They
remarked with annoyance that the communique, in a long-winded
enumeration of the latest enactments, had passed over the most
important measure, the electoral law, in studied silence, and more-
over, that unless the constitution were revised, the election of the
president in 1852 would be left to the people. The electoral law
was a ball and chain for the party of order, hindering motion of
any kind, much less forward assault! Moreover by disbanding the
Society of 10 December and sacking the war minister d'Hautpoul,
Bonaparte had found scapegoats to sacrifice on the altar of patriot-
ism. He had taken the force from the impending collision. Finally
the party of order itself was anxious to avert, mitigate or conceal
any conflict with the executive that might be decisive. For fear of
losing what it had gained in the revolution, it allowed its rivals to
help themselves to the fruits of victory. 'Above all France clamours
for peace.' The party of order had proclaimed this to the revolution
since February [1848], and now Bonaparte's communique pro-
claimed it to the party of order. 'Above all France clamours for
peace.' Bonaparte had committed acts that pointed towards usurp-
atation, but the party of order committed 'unrest' if it raised the
alarm over these acts and exposed its hypochondria. The sausages
of Satory were quiet as mice when no one mentioned them. 'Above
all France wants order.' Thus Bonaparte demanded to be left in
peace, and the parliamentary party was doubly crippled by fear –
fear of precipitating revolutionary unrest once again, and fear of
appearing to its own class, the bourgeoisie, as the instigator. Since
above all France clamours for peace the party of order dared not
reply 'war' to Bonaparte's communique on 'peace'. The public,
anticipating a juicy scandal at the opening of the national assembly,
was cheated of this expectation. The opposition deputies,
demanding the executive commission's account of the events of
October [1850], were overruled by the majority. All debates that
could cause an uproar were avoided on principle. The proceedings
of the national assembly during November and December [1850]
were entirely without interest.

At last towards the end of December [1850] guerilla warfare
began over certain prerogatives of parliament. The fighting got
bogged down in small-scale manoeuvres over the power of the two
branches of government, because the bourgeoisie had wound up the class struggle by abolishing universal manhood suffrage.

A court judgement for debt had been delivered against one of the people's representatives, Maugin. Responding to the petition from the president of the court, the minister of justice, Rouher, declared that a warrant for his arrest should be issued without further formalities. Maugin was therefore thrown into debtors' prison. The national assembly flared up at news of this outrage. Not only did it order his immediate release, but it had him forcibly sprung from Clichy that very same evening by a justice's clerk. But in order to prove its faith in the sanctity of private property – and with the ulterior motive of opening an asylum in case the montagnards became troublesome – it declared that the people's representatives might be imprisoned for debt on prior consent of the national assembly. It forgot to decree that the president could also be locked up for debt. It destroyed the last semblance of the immunity encompassing its own members.

It will be recalled that police commissioner Yon, acting on reports from a certain Alais, had denounced a section of the December-mob for plotting to murder Dupin and Changarnier. On this account at the very first session the commissioners proposed a parliamentary police, funded from its private budget and completely independent of the prefect of police. The minister of the interior, Baroche, protested at this encroachment on his territory. On that they reached a shabby compromise that the parliamentary police chief should be paid from the private budget [and] appointed and dismissed by parliamentary commissioners, but only on prior agreement with the minister of the interior. Meanwhile the government had taken criminal proceedings against Alais, and here it was easy to represent his information as a hoax and to make a laughing stock of Dupin, Changarnier, Yon and the whole national assembly through the speeches of the public prosecutor. Then on 29 December [1850] Baroche wrote to Dupin demanding Yon's dismissal. The officers of the national assembly decided to retain Yon in his position, but the national assembly did not approve this, as they were frightened by their own use of force in the Maugin affair and were used to double blows from the executive for every poke they took at it. As a reward for his faithful service Yon was discharged, and the national assembly robbed itself of a parliamentary privilege indispensable
against a man [Louis Bonaparte] who does not decide by night and act by day, but decides by day and acts by night.

We have seen already how the national assembly met with striking opportunities during November and December [1850] in its great battle with the executive, but ducked out or went under. Now we see it compelled to take up the most trivial points. In the Maugin affair it confirmed the principle that representatives of the people may be imprisoned for debt, but reserved the right to apply this only to representatives it found obnoxious, and it haggled with the minister of justice over this dubious privilege. Instead of making the assassination plot an occasion to initiate an inquiry into the Society of 10 December and irrevocably to expose Bonaparte’s real role as chief of the Paris lumpenproletariat before France and all of Europe, it let the conflict sink to a point where all that divided it from the minister of the interior was which of them had the authority to hire and fire the commissioner of police. Thus during the whole of this period we see the party of order compelled by its equivocal position to dissipate and fragment its struggle with the executive into petty disputes over authority, chicanery, legal hair-splitting and demarcation disputes with ministers, and to make the silliest questions of form into the substance of its action. It did not dare to do battle when there was a matter of principle at stake, when the executive was really compromised, and the cause of the national assembly would have been the cause of the nation. By doing that it would have given the nation its marching orders, and it feared nothing so much as that the nation should get on the move. Accordingly it rejected the motions of the montagne at those junctures and proceeded to the business of the day. Having put aside the broad question of principle, the executive calmly bided its time until it could take up again on trivial, insignificant matters of merely local parliamentary interest, so to speak. Then the pent-up rage of the party of order bursts out, it tears down the backdrop, denounces the president, declares the republic in danger; but then its pathos appears absurd and the occasion for battle a hypocritical pretext or hardly worth the effort. The parliamentary storm is a storm in a teacup, the battle an intrigue, the conflict a scandal. The revolutionary classes revel in the humiliation of the national assembly, for they were just as enthusiastic for parliamentary privilege as the assembly was for their civil liberties. And the bourgeoisie outside
parliament cannot understand how the bourgeoisie inside parliament can waste its time on such trivial back-biting and so compromise public order through such pitiful rivalries with the president. It becomes confused and bewildered by a strategy which makes peace at a time when the whole world expects war, and attacks at a time when the whole world believes that peace has been made.

On 20 December [1850] Pascal Duprat [the Orléanist deputy] cross-examined the minister of the interior on the ‘gold bars’ lottery. This lottery was blessed by the Elysée, as Bonaparte and his faithful henchmen had brought it into the world, and Carlier the prefect of police had taken it under his wing, although in France all lotteries, with the exception of charitable raffles, were illegal. Seven million tickets at a franc apiece, the profits supposedly earmarked for the transportation of Parisian riff-raff to California. Partly the idea was to replace the socialist dreams of the Paris proletariat with dreams of glistening gold, and the guarantied right to employment with the seductive prospect of the grand prize draw. Of course workers in Paris did not see through the blaze of California gold to the plain old francs winkled from their pockets. But in the main it was just a straightforward swindle. The riff-raff wanting to open up the gold mines of California without the trouble of leaving Paris were Bonaparte himself and his debt-ridden cronies. They had parted through the three million authorised by the national assembly, and the cash box had to be refilled one way or another. Bonaparte had vainly launched a national subscription for so-called workers’ towns, putting himself at the head for a substantial donation. Mean-minded bourgeois awaited this with grave suspicion, and when of course it was not forthcoming, the socialist ‘castles in the air’ crashed to earth. The gold bars were a better draw. Bonaparte & Co. were not satisfied with pocketing part of the profit from the seven million over and above the cost of the prize bullion; they fabricated false lottery tickets, issuing the same number 10 on fifteen or twenty tickets, a financial scam in keeping with the Society of 10 December. Here the national assembly was confronted with the real flesh and blood Bonaparte, and not with the fictional ‘president of the republic’. Here it could catch him in open violation of the criminal law rather than of the constitution. If it passed over Duprat’s cross-examination and proceeded to the business of the day, this was not just because the motion of
confidence in the minister from [the republican deputy] Girardin reminded the party of order of its own systematic corruption. The bourgeois, above all the bourgeois inflated into a statesman, supplements his commonplace practicality with theoretical superfluity. As a statesman he becomes a higher form of existence, like the state power facing him, which can only be contested on an ethereal plane.

Because he was such a bohemian, and such a prince of thieves, Bonaparte had the advantage over bourgeois grafters of fighting dirty; once the national assembly itself had escorted him over the treacherous terrain of regimental dinners, army reviews, the Society of 10 December and finally the criminal law, he saw that the moment had come to go openly on the offensive. He was little troubled with the minor reversals sustained by the minister of justice, minister of war, minister for the navy and minister of finance, through which the national assembly growled its displeasure. Not only did he prevent ministers from resigning, and thus stop the executive from being accountable to parliament, but he was now able to complete what he had begun during the recess of the national assembly: the severance of military power from parliamentary control, Changarnier’s dismissal.

An Elyséeist paper published an order, allegedly sent during May [1850] to the first army division, hence from Changarnier, in which officers were advised to give no quarter to traitors in their own ranks, should there be an insurrection, but rather to shoot them straight away and to refuse any requisition of troops by the national assembly. On 3 January 1851 questions were put to the cabinet concerning this order. To examine these circumstances it requested a stay of three months at first, then a week, and finally a mere twenty-four hours. The assembly insisted on an immediate explanation. Changarnier rose to explain that no such order had ever existed. He added that he would always hasten to comply with any demands from the national assembly and that it could rely on him in case of conflict. It received this assurance with ineffable applause and voted its confidence in him. By putting itself under the private protection of a general, the national assembly abdicated, decreed its own impotence beside the almighty army, but the general was deceiving himself when he put at the assembly’s disposal a force that he held only at Bonaparte’s behest, when he expected protection from the parliament which needed him to be its protector.
Changarnier, however, believed in the mysterious power that the bourgeoisie had invested in him since 29 January 1849 [when he and his troops successfully intimidated the constituent assembly]. He considered himself the third governmental power alongside the other two branches of state. He shared in the fate of the other heroes or rather saints of this era whose fame consisted in the biassed reports which their own parties put about, but who collapse into ordinary mortals as soon as they are required to perform miracles. Scepticism is the deadly enemy of these reputed heroes and real-life saints. Hence their self-righteous indignation at the dearth of enthusiasm displayed by wits and scoffers.

That same evening ministers were summoned to the Elysée Palace; Bonaparte insisted on dismissing Changarnier; five refused to sign this; the Moniteur announced a ministerial crisis; and the press siding with the party of order threatened to form a parliamentary army under Changarnier’s command. The party of order had constitutional authority to take this step. It merely had to appoint Changarnier to the presidency of the national assembly and to requisition any number of troops it pleased for security. It could do this all the more safely as Changarnier was still heading the army and the national guard in Paris and was only waiting to be requisitioned together with the army. The Bonapartist press did not as yet even dare to question the right of the national assembly to requisition troops directly, a legal scruple that did not promise to be of any use under the circumstances. That the army would have obeyed the national assembly is probable, remembering that Bonaparte had to scour all Paris for eight days to find two generals – Baraguay d’Hilliers and Saint-Jean d’Angély – who were ready to countersign Changarnier’s dismissal. That the party of order would have found in its own ranks and in parliament the votes necessary for such a resolution is much more doubtful, considering that eight days later 286 of them took their votes elsewhere, and that the montagne rejected a similar resolution in December 1851 in the last decisive hours [of the parliamentary regime]. Nonetheless the grandeurs might perhaps have succeeded in spurring the mass of their party to a heroism consisting in feeling secure behind a forest of bayonets and accepting the services of an army which had deserted in order to join their camp. Instead of doing this the grandeurs betook themselves to the Elysée on the evening of 6 January [1851].
to make Bonaparte desist from sacking Changarnier by using states-
manlike phrases and scruples. He who seeks to persuade, acknowl-
edges the superiority of the other. Reassured by this, Bonaparte
appointed a new cabinet on 12 January [1851], retaining Fould and
Baroche, the leaders of the old one. Saint-Jean d’Angély became
minister of war, the Moniteur published the decree discharging
Changarnier, his command was divided between Baraguay d’Hilli-
ers, who got the first army division, and Perrot, who got the national
guard. The bulwark of society was dismissed, and while the earth
did not move, prices did go up on the stock exchange.

The party of order revealed that the bourgeoisie had lost its will
to rule in that it had rebuffed the army, which had been at its
disposal in the person of Changarnier, and had made it incontro-
vertibly accountable to the president. A parliamentary cabinet was
no longer in existence. Having lost its grip on the army and the
national guard, what means were left for retaining the power over
the people it had usurped from parliament and its constitutional
power vis-à-vis the president? None at all. All that was left was a
nugatory appeal to principles, general rules one prescribes to others
just to make one’s own actions easier. With the dismissal of Chan-
garnier and Bonaparte’s acquisition of military power, the first part
of the period we are considering, the period of conflict between the
party of order and the executive power, draws to a close. War
between the two authorities was now openly declared and waged,
but only after the party of order had lost both weapons and soldiers.
Without a cabinet, without an army, without a people, without
public opinion, no longer representing the sovereign nation after its
electoral law of 31 May [1850], sans eyes, sans ears, sans teeth, sans
everything, the national assembly was gradually transmuted into a
pre-revolutionary parlement which left action to the government and
had to content itself with whingeing after the event.

The party of order received the new cabinet with a storm of
protests. General Bedeau recalled the deference of the executive
commission during the recess and the punctiliousness with which
it refused publication of its proceedings. The minister of the interior
himself now insists on the publication of these minutes which were
of course as dull as ditchwater, uncovering nothing new and making
not the slightest impression on a blasé public. Following a proposal
from [the Orléanist] Rémusat, the national assembly retired to its
quarters and appointed a ‘commission for extraordinary measures’. Ordinary life was very little disturbed in Paris as trade was flourishing, factories were busy, grain prices were low, food was plentiful and savings banks took in new deposits every day. The ‘extraordinary measures’ which parliament had announced with such a stir then fizzled out into a vote of no-confidence in the minister on 18 January [1851] without a mention of General Changarnier. The party of order was forced to word its resolution in this way to secure the republican vote, since of all the cabinet’s measures the discharge of Changarnier was the sole one that it approved of, while it could not complain about the other ministerial actions as it had in fact dictated them itself.

The vote of confidence of 18 January [1851] passed 415 to 286. Hence it was carried only through a coalition of staunch legitimists and Orléanists together with the pure republicans and the montagne. This proved that in its conflicts with Bonaparte the party of order had lost not just the cabinet and the army but its independent parliamentary majority, that a detachment of representatives had deserted out of fanaticism for compromise, fear of conflict, from boredom, nepotism, expectation of cabinet posts (Odilon Barrot), from the base egoism that always inclines the ordinary bourgeois to sacrifice the common interest of his class to this or that private benefit. From the beginning, Bonapartist representatives only belonged to the party of order to do battle against the revolution.

The head of the Catholic party, Montalembert, had already thrown his influence into Bonaparte’s begging bowl, because he doubted that the parliamentary party would survive. Finally the leaders of this party, Thiers the Orléanist and Berryer the legitimist, were forced to admit openly their republicanism, to acknowledge that they were royalist at heart but republican in the head, that the parliamentary republic was the only possible form for the rule of the bourgeoisie as a whole. Thus they were forced in front of the whole bourgeoisie to brand the restorationist plots, indefatigably conducted behind the back of parliament, as stupid and dangerous intrigues.

The no-confidence motion of 18 January [1851] hit the cabinet and not the president. But it was the president and not the cabinet that had discharged Changarnier. Ought not the party of order to impeach Bonaparte himself? For his restorationist sympathies?
These were only added to their own. For conspiracy in the military reviews and in the Society of 10 December? They had long ago buried these matters under business as usual. For dismissing the hero of 29 January and 13 June [1849], the man who in May 1850 threatened to set all Paris ablaze in the event of insurrection? Their allies from the montagne and Cavaignac did not let them re-erect the fallen bulwark of society by sending an official message of sympathy. Indeed they could not dispute the constitutional authority of the president to discharge a general. They were only fussing because he had made an unparliamentary use of a constitutional right. But had they not made repeated unconstitutional use of parliamentary prerogative, in particular abolishing universal manhood suffrage? They were therefore constrained to work within strict parliamentary limits. This was part and parcel of a peculiar malady that after 1848 spread to a whole continent, parliamentary cretinism, which confines its victims to an imaginary world and robs them of their senses, their recollection, all knowledge of the rude external world; it was part of this parliamentary cretinism that the party of order took their parliamentary victories to be real ones and believed they had hit the president when they struck his ministers, although they had themselves destroyed the whole basis of parliamentary power with their own hands as they were bound to in battling against other classes. They merely gave him the opportunity to humiliate the national assembly in front of the nation once again. On 20 January [1851] the Moniteur announced that the resignation of the entire cabinet had been accepted. Under the pretext that no parliamentary party had a majority, as was demonstrated by the vote of 18 January [1851] won by the coalition of the montagne and the royalists, Bonaparte appointed a so-called transition cabinet while waiting for a new majority to form; not one member of this cabinet was in parliament; it was all unknown and insignificant individuals, a cabinet of mere clerks and scribes. The party of order could now wear itself out playing with these puppets; the executive no longer thought it worthwhile to be seriously represented in the national assembly. Bonaparte concentrated the entire power of the executive in his own person all the more securely and had all the more room to exploit it for his own ends, the more his ministers were reduced to mere ciphers.
The party of order, in coalition with the *montagne*, revenged itself by throwing out a subvention of 1,800,000 francs to the president which the head of the Society of 10 December had pushed his ministerial clerks to propose. This time a majority of only 102 votes decided it; since 28 January [1851] another twenty-seven votes had departed, and the dissolution of the party of order continued apace. To leave no doubt about the nature of its coalition with the *montagne* it disdained even to consider a motion signed by 189 members of the *montagne* for a general amnesty for political offenders. It sufficed for the minister of the interior, a certain Vaisse, to explain that the present calm was only apparent, but that hidden disorder prevailed, everywhere secret societies were being organised, the democratic papers were preparing to reappear, reports from the départements sounded unfavourable, Genevan exiles were directing a conspiracy beyond Lyons through the whole of southern France, France was on the brink of an industrial and commercial crisis, the factories in Roubaix were working short-time, the prisoners on Belle Isle were in revolt – a mere Vaisse creating a red scare was all that was needed for the party of order to reject without discussion a motion that would have won immense popularity for the national assembly and thrown Bonaparte back into its arms. Instead of allowing the executive to intimidate it with prospects of renewed unrest, it should have yielded a little to the class struggle in order to preserve the dependence of the executive. But it did not feel up to the business of playing with fire.

Meanwhile the so-called transitional cabinet continued to vegetate up to the middle of April. Bonaparte tired and teased the national assembly with constant ministerial shuffles. Sometimes he seemed to want to form a republican cabinet with [the poet] Lamartine and [the Bonapartist] Billault, sometimes a parliamentary one with the inevitable Odilon Barrot, whose name never failed to come up when a dupe was needed, sometimes a legitimist one with Vatimesnil and Benoist d'Azy, sometimes an Orléanist one with Maleville. While he set the different factions of the party of order against one another and frightened them with the prospect of a republican cabinet and the inevitable reinstatement of universal manhood suffrage, he made the bourgeoisie believe that his honest efforts to form a parliamentary ministry had foundered on the intransigence
of the royalist factions. The bourgeoisie cried all the louder for ‘strong government’, but it found it unforgivable to leave France ‘without administration’, as an economic crisis appeared to be advancing and so recruiting socialists in the cities, just as ruinously low farm prices did in the countryside. Trade was getting slacker by the day, unemployed hands were increasing noticeably, in Paris there were at least 10,000 workers without food, in Rouen, Mulhouse, Lyons, Roubaix, Tourcoing, Saint-Etienne, Elbeuf, etc. innumerable factories were idle. Under these conditions Bonaparte could risk a restoration on 11 April [1851] of the cabinet of 18 January. Messrs Rouher, Fould, Baroche, etc. strengthened by M. Léon Faucher, who was censured [on 11 May 1849] during the last days of the constituent assembly for telegraphing false dispatches, all of the deputies (save five cabinet ministers) having voted no-confidence in him. The national assembly had therefore won a victory over the cabinet on 18 January [1851], then struggled for three months with Bonaparte, so that on 11 April Fould and Baroche could take on the ultra-moral Faucher as third man in their ministerial cabal.

In November 1849 Bonaparte had been satisfied with an unparliamentary cabinet, in January 1851 with an extra-parliamentary one, on 11 April 1851 he felt strong enough to form an anti-parliamentary cabinet, harmoniously combining no-confidence votes from both assemblies, the constituent and the national, republicans and royalists. This graded progression of cabinets was the thermometer by which parliament could measure the decline in its own vitality. By the end of April this had sunk so low that [the Bonapartist deputy] Persigny could enjoin Changarnier in a personal interview to go over to the presidential camp. He assured him that Bonaparte considered the influence of the national assembly to be completely null and had already perpetrated a proclamation to be published after the coup d’état, continuously in mind but delayed once again for contingent reasons. Changarnier imparted this obituary to the leaders of the party of order, but whoever believes that such flea-bites are fatal? And the assembly, defeated, disintegrated, rotting as it was, could not bring itself to see the fight with the grotesque chief of the Society of 10 December as other than a fight with a flea. But Bonaparte answered the party of order as Agesilaus [King of
Sparta answered King [Tachos] of Egypt: 'I may seem an ant to you but one day I shall be a lion.'

VI

In its futile endeavours to keep possession of military power and to reconquer supreme control of executive power, the party of order saw itself condemned to remain in coalition with the montagne and the pure republicans, proving incontrovertibly that it had lost its independent parliamentary majority. The mere advance of dates and ticking of the clock gave the signal on 28 May [1851] for its complete disintegration. The 28th of May marked the beginning of the last year of life for the national assembly. It had now to decide whether to keep the constitution unchanged or revise it. But constitutional revision did not only involve bourgeois rule or petty-bourgeois democracy, democracy or proletarian anarchy, parliamentary republic or Bonaparte, it also meant Orléans or Bourbon! Thus the apple of discord fell into the midst of parliament, opening up conflicts of interest and sundering the party of order into warring factions. The party of order was a conglomerate of heterogeneous social components. Constitutional revision raised the political temperature to the point where decomposition had to occur.

The Bonapartists' interest in revision was simple. They were concerned above all with the question of abolishing [chapter v] § 45, which forbade Bonaparte's re-election and any continuation of his authority. No less simple was that of the republicans. They unconditionally rejected any revision, seeing in it a comprehensive conspiracy against the republic. Since they held sway over more than a quarter of the votes in the national assembly, and constitutionally three quarters of the votes were required for a valid motion for revision and for summoning a revising convention, they needed only to tally their votes to make sure of victory. And they were.

Compared to these clear positions, the party of order found itself entangled in contradictions. If it rejected revision, it endangered the status quo by leaving Bonaparte only one way out, force, and by abandoning France to revolutionary anarchy at the deciding moment of 9 May [1852], with a president who had lost his authority, with a parliament which no longer possessed it, and with a people who thought they would conquer it again. The party of order
knew that to vote for revision in accordance with the constitution would be to vote for nothing and would have to fail constitutionally because of the republican veto. If it declared a simple majority to be binding, in defiance of the constitution, then it could hope to master the revolution only if it subordinated itself unconditionally to the sovereignty of the executive and thus made Bonaparte master of the constitution, of any revision and of the party of order itself. A merely partial revision prolonging the authority of the president would pave the way for an imperial take-over. A general revision which shortened the existence of the republic would bring dynastic claims into inevitable conflict, for the conditions for a Bourbon restoration and for an Orléanist one were not merely different but mutually exclusive.

The parliamentary republic was more than the neutral territory where the two factions of the French bourgeoisie, legitimists and Orléanist, large-scale landed property and industry, could take up residence with an equal right. It was the inescapable condition of their joint rule, the sole form of state in which the claims of their particular factions and those of all other classes of society were subjected to the general interest of the bourgeois class. As royalists they relapsed into their old antagonism, a battle for supremacy between landed property and money, and the highest expression of this antagonism, the personification of it, were their kings, their dynasties. Hence the resistance of the party of order to the recall of the Bourbons.

In 1849, 1850 and 1851 the Orléanist deputy Creton had regularly introduced a measure to rescind the decree exiling the royal families. Parliament just as regularly presented the spectacle of an assembly barring the gate through which their exiled kings could come home. Richard III murdered Henry VI with the remark [in Shakespeare’s play] that he was too good for this world and belonged in heaven. They declared that France was too bad to have the kings back again. They had become republicans through force of circumstances, and they repeatedly sanctioned the decision by the people to banish their kings from France.

A revision of the constitution — and circumstances compelled this — called into question the republic as well as the joint rule of the two bourgeois factions, and the possibility of monarchy brought back to life a rivalry between interests it had promoted in turn, and
the battle for supremacy of one faction over the other. The diplomats of the party of order thought that they could settle the struggle by merging the two dynasties, a so-called *fusion* of the royalist parties and their royal houses. The real fusion of the restoration and the July monarchy was the parliamentary republic in which Orléanist and legitimist colours were extinguished and the various varieties of the type bourgeois disappeared into the bourgeois pure and simple, into the bourgeois species. But now the Orléanist was to become legitimist and the legitimist Orléanist. Royalism, which personified their antagonism, was to embody their unity, the expression of their exclusive factional interests was to become an expression of the common class interest, the monarchy was to accomplish what only the abolition of two monarchies – the republic – could do and had done. This was the philosophers’ stone, and the learned doctors of the party of order racked their brains to produce it. As if the legitimate monarchy could ever become the monarchy of the industrial bourgeoisie, or the bourgeois kingdom the kingdom of the hereditary landed aristocracy. As if landed property and industry could fraternise together under a single crown, when the crown could be lowered onto a single head, the head of the elder brother or the younger one. As if industry could be reconciled at all with landed property, so long as landed property did not decide to go industrial itself. If Henri V [Bourbon] were to die tomorrow, the [Orléanist] comte de Paris [grandson of Louis Philippe] would not become the legitimist king, unless he ceased being the Orléanist king. The philosophers of fusion who achieved wide circulation as the question of constitutional revision came to prominence, who had created an official voice in the daily *Assemblée nationale*, working away at this very moment [February 1852], explained all the difficulties in terms of the conflict and rivalry between the two dynasties. The attempt to reconcile the house of Orléans with Henri V, begun after the death of Louis Philippe, was only played out, like dynastic intrigues in general, during the recesses of the national assembly, in the intervals, behind the scenes, more sentimental coquetry with ancient superstition than business in earnest; these now became high affairs of state and were performed by the party of order on the public stage instead of in amateur theatricals as before. The couriers flew from Paris to [the legitimist pretender in] Venice, from Venice to [the Orléanists at] Claremont, from Claremont to Paris.
The [Bourbon] comte de Chambord [known as King Henri V] issued a manifesto announcing not his own but the ‘national restoration’ ‘with the help of all members of his family’. The Orléanist [politician] Salvandy threw himself at the feet of Henri V. The legitimist leaders Berryer, Benoit d’Azy, Saint-Priest, journeyed to Claremont to persuade the Orléanists but without success. Too late did the fusionists perceive that the interests of the two factions of the bourgeoisie did not lose their differences or gain in compliance when crystallised into family interests, the interests of the two royal houses. If Henri V recognised the comte de Paris as his successor – the best outcome that fusion could achieve – then the house of Orléans would not win anything that was not already assured by the childlessness of Henri V, but it would lose everything gained in the July revolution. It would abandon its original objectives, all the authority wrung from the elder branch of the Bourbons in more than a hundred years of struggle; it would have exchanged its historical prerogative, the prerogative of modern monarchy, for the prerogative of its ancestral line. Fusion was therefore nothing other than a voluntary abdication by the house of Orléans, a resignation in favour of legitimism, a penitent retreat from the Protestant state church into the Catholic one. A retreat would not bring it to the throne it had lost but to the steps of the throne from which it was born. The old Orléanist ministers Guizot, Duchâtel, etc., who had hastened to Claremont to speak up for fusion, only represented regret for the July revolution in the first place, a despair in the bourgeois monarchy and in the monarchism of the bourgeois, superstitious belief in legitimism as the last amulet to ward off anarchy. In their imagination they were mediators between Orléans and Bourbon, but were in reality only backsliding Orléanists, and the prince de Joinville [son of Louis Philippe] received them as such. On the other hand the Orléanists who were wide-awake and wanting a fight – Thiers, Baze, etc. – convinced the family of Louis Philippe all the more easily that if any direct restoration of the monarchy were the fusion of the two dynasties, presupposing the abdication of the house of Orléans, then it corresponded entirely to the tradition of its forebears to recognise the republic straight away and to await the conversion of the president’s seat into a throne when events permitted. Joinville was widely touted as a candidate [for the presidency of the republic], the public curiously was kept in
suspense, and a few months later after constitutional revision was rejected, his candidature was announced in September [1851].

The attempt at a royalist fusion of Orléanists and legitimists had not only foundered, it had broken up their parliamentary fusion, their common republican mode, and had again split the party of order into its original constituents; but as Claremont and Venice grew more estranged from each other, their working arrangements collapsed, and support for Joinville mounted, so the negotiations between Faucher, Bonaparte's minister, and the legitimists grew more pressing and serious.

The disintegration of the party of order did not stop at its original elements. Each of the two great factions underwent further fragmentation. It was as if all the old nuances that had previously jostled and conflicted within the two circles, legitimist and Orléanist, were once again brought to life like dried infusoria on contact with water, as if they had regained enough vital energy to form their own groups and take independent positions. The legitimists imagined they had returned to the disputes [during the restoration period] between the Tuileries [where Louis XVIII held court] and the Pavillon Marsan [where the reactionary comte d'Artois resided], between [the corresponding political rivals] Villèle and Polignac. The Orléanists relived the golden age of knightly tournaments between Guizot, Molé, Broglie, Thiers and Odilon Barrot.

The section of the party of order that was eager for constitutional revision, but disunited concerning the bounds of the exercise, composed of legitimists under Berryer and Falloux on the one hand and under La Rochejaquelin on the other, and the battle-weary Orléanists under Molé, Broglie, Montalembert and Odilon Barrot, agreed the following indeterminate and sweeping motion with the Bonapartist representatives: 'The undersigned representatives, aiming to restore the nation to the full exercise of its sovereignty, move that the constitution be revised.' But at the same time they unanimously declared through their rapporteur [the legitimist historian and deputy Alexis de] Tocqueville that the national assembly did not have the right to undertake the abolition of the republic, that this right belonged only to a constitutional convention. Otherwise the constitution could only be revised in a 'legal' manner when the constitutionally prescribed three-quarters of the votes were cast for revision. On 19 July [1851], after six days of stormy debate, they
threw out constitutional revision, as expected. There were 446 votes in favour but 278 against. The staunch Orléanists Thiers, Chângarnier, etc. voted with the republicans and the montagne.

A parliamentary majority had declared against the constitution, but the constitution itself had declared for the minority, and for its decision to be binding. But hadn’t the party of order subordinated the constitution to the parliamentary majority on 31 May 1850 and 13 June 1849? Didn’t its whole previous policy rest on subordinating the articles of the constitution to majority decisions in parliament? Hadn’t it left an Old Testament belief in the letter of law to the democrats and punished them for it? But at this moment constitutional revision meant nothing but continuation of presidential power, just as continuation of the constitution meant nothing but the removal of Bonaparte. Parliament had declared for him, but the constitution declared against parliament. Therefore he carried out the will of parliament when he tore up the constitution, and he carried out the will of the constitution when he sent parliament packing.

Parliament had declared the constitution and perforce its own authority to be ‘beyond majorities’, it had abolished the constitution with its own decision and augmented the president’s power, and yet was saying at the same time that the one could not die nor the other live so long as parliament itself continued. Its grave diggers were on the doorstep. While it debated the question of revision, Bonaparte relieved General Baraguay d’Hilliers, who was indecisive, from the command of the first army division and appointed General Magnan to the post, the victor [over the workers] of Lyons [on 15 June 1849], the hero of the December days [of 1848], one of his creatures who had more or less compromised himself under Louis Philippe in connection with the march from Boulogne.

By its decision on constitutional revision the party of order proved that it could neither rule nor obey, neither live nor die, neither tolerate the republic nor overthrow it, neither stick to the constitution nor throw it overboard, neither cooperate with the president nor break off with him. Who then was it expecting to resolve these contradictions? The calendar, the course of events. It stopped pretending to have any control over events. It therefore challenged events to take control, hence surrendering to that power.
one thing after another in battling the people until it was impotent; hence the chief executive could produce a battle plan undisturbed, strengthen the means of attack, choose the instruments for it, fortify his positions, precisely because they decided to withdraw from the stage during this critical time and to recess for three months, from 10 August until 4 November [1851].

Not only was the parliamentary party divided into its two great factions [party of order and montagne] and each faction divided within itself, but the party of order within parliament had fallen out with the party of order outside parliament. The spokesmen and writers for the bourgeoisie, their publicity and press, in short the ideologues of the bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie itself, representatives and represented, were caught in mutual estrangement and incomprehension.

The legitimists in the provinces, with their limited horizons and unbridled enthusiasm, censured their parliamentary leaders Berruyer and Falloux for deserting to Bonaparte’s camp and abandoning Henri V. Their understanding, pure as their fleur de lis, encompassed original sin but not diplomacy.

Far more fateful and decisive was the breach between the commercial bourgeoisie and their politicians. They reproached them not, as the legitimists had done with theirs, for abandoning their principles, but on the contrary for clinging to principles that had become useless.

I have pointed out earlier that after Fould’s accession to the cabinet a part of the commercial bourgeoisie who had taken the lion’s share of power under Louis Philippe, the financial aristocracy, had become Bonapartist. Fould did not only represent Bonaparte’s interests on the bourse, he also represented the interest of the bourse with Bonaparte. The position of the financial aristocracy is depicted most strikingly in a quotation from its European mouthpiece, the London Economist. In its issue of 1 February 1851 there was this dispatch from Paris: ‘Now we have it stated from numerous quarters that France wishes above all things for repose. The President declares it in his message to the Legislative Assembly, it is echoed from the tribune, it is asserted in the journals, it is announced from the pulpit, it is demonstrated by the sensitiveness of the public funds at the least prospect of disturbance, and their firmness whenever the executive power is victorious.’
In the issue of 29 November 1851 *The Economist* itself tells us: ‘The president is recognised by all Europe as the guardian of order, and on all the stock exchanges.’ The financial aristocracy thus condemned the parliamentary battle between the party of order and the executive power as a disruption of order, and celebrated every victory of the president over its own alleged representatives as a victory for order. Under financial aristocracy we must understand here not only the great merchant banks and speculators in public funds whose interests we can immediately grasp as coincident with those of the state. The whole of the modern money market, the whole banking business, is interwoven with public credit in the most intimate way. A part of their business capital is necessarily put out at interest in readily convertible government issue. Their deposits, the capital put at their disposal and divided by them amongst merchants and industrialists, derive for the most part from the dividends of government bondholders. For the whole money market and its priests in every epoch, stability of state power was all the law and the prophets; how could this not be more so today when every deluge threatens to wash away the indebtedness of existing states along with the states themselves?

Fanatical for order, the *industrial bourgeoisie* was also worked up about the quarrel between the parliamentary party of order and the executive. After voting on 18 January [1851] for Changarnier’s dismissal, Thiers, Anglès, Sainte-Beuve, etc. [representatives in the ‘party of order’] received a public reprimand from their constituents in just those industrial districts excoriating their coalition with the *montagne* as high treason to the cause. If, as we have seen, the open mockery, the petty intrigues that characterised the struggle between the party of order and the president, deserved no better reception, then on the other hand this bourgeois party, demanding that its representatives let military power slip, just like that, from its own parliament to a fake-on-the-make, was not worth the efforts that were wasted on intriguing for it. It demonstrated that the battle for retaining its public interests, its own class interests, its political power, represented only the annoyance and ill-temper of an inconvenience in private affairs.

With scarcely an exception the bourgeois dignitaries of the provincial towns, the magistrates, judges, etc. received Bonaparte in the
most servile way on his tours, even when he made an unrestrained
attack on the national assembly, and especially the party of order,
as in Dijon [on 1 June 1851].

When trade was going well, as at the beginning of 1851, the
commercial bourgeoisie objected to any parliamentary struggle lest
the heart should go out of it. When trade was going badly, as it
was persistently since the end of February 1851, they intoned that
parliamentary struggles were the cause of the slump and shouted
for them to desist so that trade could pick up. The debate on consti-
tutional revision fell into just this period of difficulty. Since it was
the existence or non-existence of the state in its present form that
was at stake, here the bourgeoisie felt all the more justified in
demanding that its representatives put an end to this excruciating
interregnum and retain the status quo. There was no contradiction
in this. By the end of the interregnum they understood its actual
continuation, postponing the moment of decision to a distant future.
The status quo could only be retained in two ways: by prolonging
Bonaparte’s authority or by retiring him as constitutionally pre-
scribed and electing Cavaignac. One part of the bourgeoisie desired
the latter solution and could give its deputies no better advice than
to shut up and steer clear of the whole issue. If their representatives
did not speak, so they thought, Bonaparte would not act. They
wanted a parliamentary ostrich that would hide its head to make
itself invisible. Another part of the bourgeoisie wanted Bonaparte to
stay as president because he already occupied the position, keeping
everything in the same old rut. They were worked up that their
parliament had not openly breached the constitution and uncer-
emoniously abdicated.

The councils of the départements, those provincial representatives
of the richest bourgeoisie, meeting from 25 August [1851] onwards
during the recess of the national assembly, declared almost unani-
mously for constitutional revision, hence against parliament and for
Bonaparte.

The bourgeoisie vented its ire on its literary representatives, on
its own daily press, even more unambiguously than it did when it
fell out with its parliamentary representatives. Not only France but
the whole of Europe was astounded by the judgements enforcing
ruinous fines and shamefully long prison sentences that bourgeois

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juries brought in every time bourgeois journalists attacked Bonaparte's desire to seize power, or attempted to defend the political rights of the bourgeoisie against the executive.

I have shown how the parliamentary party of order, crying for peace, condemned itself to acquiescence, how it declared the political power of the bourgeoisie incompatible with the security and existence of the bourgeoisie by destroying with its own hand all conditions for its own regime, the parliamentary regime, in the war against other classes in society, hence the extraparliamentary bulk of the bourgeoisie enjoined Bonaparte to suppress, to annihilate its own pen and voice, its publicists and politicians, speakers and press, through its own servility towards the president, its vilification of parliament, its brutal mistreatment of its own press, so that it could pursue its private affairs in full confidence under the protection of a strong and unrestricted government. It declared unambiguously that it longed to be rid of its own political power in order to be rid of the burdens and dangers of ruling.

And this miserable, cowardly lot, which was scandalised by the merely parliamentary and literary battle for its own class to govern and had betrayed the leaders of this struggle, now dares to indict the proletariat for not rising up in a bloody struggle, a life and death struggle on its behalf! This lot, who every moment sacrifice their overall class interests, i.e. their political interests, to the narrowest and dirtiest private interests, and expected a similar sacrifice of their representatives, now blubbers that the proletariat has sacrificed the ideal political interests of the bourgeoisie to the material interests of the proletariat. It poses as an uncorrupted soul, misunderstood by an egotistical proletariat led astray by socialists, and abandoned at the decisive moment. And it finds an echo in the bourgeois world. Of course I am not referring here to small-time German politicians and intellectual low-life. I refer for example to The Economist which was still writing as late as 29 November 1851, hence four days before the coup d'état, that Bonaparte was the 'guardian of order', and Thiers and Berryer were 'anarchists', and then on 27 December 1851, after Bonaparte had silenced these anarchists, it was screaming about a betrayal of the 'skill, knowledge, discipline, mental influence, intellectual resources and moral weight of the middle and upper ranks of society' that had been committed by the 'masses of ignorant, untrained and stupid prolétaires'. The stupid, ignorant and
vulgar mass was none other than the greater part of the bourgeoisie itself.

During 1851 France had in any case experienced a kind of minor economic crisis. The end of February showed a decline in exports compared with 1850; in March trade suffered and factories closed down, in April the condition of the industrial départements appeared to be as desperate as after the February days [of 1848], in May [1850] business had still not revived; as late as 28 June the portfolio of the bank of France revealed that production was at a standstill, as there was an immense growth in deposits and an equally great decline in cash advances on bills of exchange, and it was not till mid-October that a progressive improvement in business set in once more. The French bourgeoisie attributed this trade slump to purely political causes, the conflict between parliament and the executive, uncertainty with a merely provisional type of state, the horrifying prospect of 9 May 1852 [when Bonaparte’s presidential term was to end]. I will not deny that all these circumstances depressed some branches of industry in Paris and in the départements. But in any case the effect of political events was only local and insignificant. Does this need any more proof than that an improvement in trade appeared about the middle of October at the time that political conditions got worse, the political horizon clouded over and a thunderbolt from the Elysée was expected at any moment? The French bourgeois, whose ‘skill, knowledge, spiritual insight and intellectual resource’ reach no further than his nose, could otherwise have poked it into the cause of his commercial afflictions at any time during the Great [Industrial] Exhibition [of 1851] in London. While in France factories were closed down, in England there were commercial bankruptcies. While industrial panic reached a high point in France in April and May, commercial panic peaked in England at the same time. As the French woollen industry suffered, so did the English one; as French silk manufacturing, so with English; English cotton mills continued to work, but not with the same profits as in 1849 and 1850. The difference was only that the crisis in France was industrial and in England commercial; while factories in France were idle, the ones in England expanded output but under less favourable conditions than in previous years; in France exports took the major blow, and in England imports. The common factor, which was obviously not to be found within the bounds of
the French political horizon, was plain to see. The years 1849 and 1850 were a period of the greatest material prosperity, and a glut only appeared as such in 1851. At the beginning of that year it got a particular boost from the prospect of the [London] industrial exhibition. Special circumstances also contributed: first, the partial failure of the cotton crop in 1850 and 1851, then the certainty of a bigger crop than expected; first the rise, then the sudden collapse, in short, fluctuations in the price of cotton. The raw silk harvest, at least in France, turned out to be even lower than average. And finally the wool industry had expanded so much since 1848 that production could not keep up, and the price of raw wool rose out of all proportion to the price of finished cloth. Here in the raw materials for three major world industries we already have the explanation for a trade slump three times over. Abstracting from these special circumstances, the apparent crisis of 1851 was none other than the dead stop that is brought about by over-production and speculative fever as depicted in every trade cycle before they join forces for a last feverish rush through the final phase to get back to their starting point, the general economic crisis. During such interruptions in trade, commercial bankruptcies break out in England, while in France industry itself is made idle, partly through being forced to withdraw from markets where competition with the English was becoming unsustainable, partly because luxury goods are particularly hit by any slow down in business. So besides the general crisis, France had its own national one, which was defined and conditioned by the general situation in the world markets far more than by local influences in France. It is not without interest to contrast the prejudice of the French bourgeois with the judgment of the English. One of the great commercial houses in Liverpool wrote in its annual report for 1851 [as reported in The Economist]:

Few years have more thoroughly belied the anticipations formed at their commencement than the one just closed; instead of the great prosperity which was almost unanimously looked for, it has proved one of the most discouraging that has been seen for the last quarter of a century - this, of course, refers to the mercantile, not to the manufacturing classes. And yet there certainly were grounds for anticipating the reverse at the beginning of the year - stocks of produce were moderate, money was abundant, and food
was cheap, a plentiful harvest well secured, unbroken peace on the continent, and no political or fiscal disturbances at home; indeed, the wings of commerce were never more unfettered... To what source, then is this disastrous result to be attributed? We believe to overtrading both in imports and exports. Unless our merchants will put more stringent limits to their freedom of action, nothing but a triennial panic can keep us in check.

Now picture the French bourgeois, how in the midst of this commercial panic his trade-sick brain is tortured, addled, stunned by rumours of a coup d'état and of the restoration of universal manhood suffrage, by the struggle between parliament and the executive, by the guerilla warfare between Orléanists and legitimists, by communistic conspiracies in the south, by purported rural revolts in the Nièvre and Cher, by publicity from various presidential candidates, by quackish solutions from the press, by threats from the republicans to uphold the constitution and the general right to vote by force of arms, by evangelising from émigré heroes in exile who predict the end of the world on 9 May 1852, and you’ll now understand why in the middle of this unspeakable, deafening chaos of fusion, revision, dissolution, constitution, conspiracy, coalition, emigration, usurpation and revolution, the crazed bourgeois snorts at his parliamentary republic: ‘Better an end to terror than terror without end!’

Bonaparte understood this cry. His powers of comprehension had been sharpened by the growing uproar amongst creditors, who, seeing settlement day 9 May 1852 draw nearer with every setting of the sun, observed a protest in the stars against their earthly bills of exchange. They had turned into veritable astrologers. The national assembly had cut off Bonaparte’s hopes for a constitutional variance prolonging power, and the candidature of the prince de Joinville forbade further vacillation.

If there was ever an event that cast a shadow before it arrived it was Bonaparte’s coup d'état. As early as 29 January 1849, scarcely a month after his election, he had put such a proposal to Changarnier. His own prime minister Odilon Barrot had secretly denounced the politics of the coup in the summer of 1849, and Thiers had done this publicly in the winter of 1850. In May 1851 Persigny had once again tried to enlist Changarnier for the coup, the paper Messager de l’Assemblée had published these negotiations, with every parliamentary fracas the Bonapartist journals threatened a coup, and
the nearer the crisis got to them the more noise they made. In the orgies which Bonaparte celebrated every night with the men and women of the ‘mob’, each time midnight approached and flowing drink loosened tongues and excited imaginations, the coup would be fixed for the following morning. Swords were drawn, glasses clinked, representatives thrown out the window, the imperial mantle fell onto Bonaparte’s shoulders, until the next morning the spectre vanished again and an astonished Paris learned of the danger, that it had once more escaped, from vestals of little discretion and paladins of indiscretion. During the months of September and October [1851] rumours of a coup d’état came thick and fast. At the same time the shades took on colour like a touched-up photographic plate. If you look up the September and October numbers of the European press you will find word-for-word intimations like the following: ‘Paris seethes with rumoured coup. The capital will be entered by troops during the night, and the next morning will bring decrees to dissolve the national assembly, to place the département of the Seine under siege, to restore universal manhood suffrage, to appeal to the people. Bonaparte is to seek ministers for the execution of these illegal measures.’ The correspondents who bring these reports always end them with the single word ‘postponed’. The coup d’état had always been Bonaparte’s idée fixe. With this obsession he returned to French soil. It possessed him so thoroughly that he continually gave it away and blurted it out. He was so weak that he gave it up again just as often. The shadow of the coup had become so familiar to Parisians as a shade that they could not believe in it when it finally appeared in flesh and blood. What allowed the coup to succeed was therefore neither cautious discretion on the part of the head of the Society of 10 December nor an ambush of an unsuspecting national assembly. When it succeeded, it did so in spite of his indiscretion and with the foreknowledge of the assembly, a necessary, inevitable result of previous developments.

On 10 October [1851] Bonaparte informed his ministers of his decision to restore universal manhood suffrage once again, on the 16th they handed in their resignations, on the 26th Paris learned that a cabinet headed by [the Bonapartist] Thorigny had been formed. At the same time the prefect of police Carlier was replaced by [the Bonapartist] Maupas, the commander of the first army division. [General] Magnan concentrated the most reliable regiments.
in the capital. On 4 November [1851] the national assembly went back into session. It could do no more than recapitulate what it had already gone through in abbreviated form and to demonstrate that after death comes burial.

The first outpost that it lost in the battle with the executive was the cabinet. It had solemnly to acknowledge this loss by giving full credence to the Thorigny cabinet, a mere sham. The executive commission received [the minister of education] M. Giraud with laughter when he presented himself in the name of the new ministers. Such a weak cabinet for formidable measures such as the restoration of universal manhood suffrage! But that was just what it was about, to do nothing in parliament, to do everything against it.

On the very first day of the new session the national assembly received Bonaparte’s message demanding the restoration of universal manhood suffrage and abolishing the law of 31 May 1850. The same day his ministers introduced a decree to that effect. The assembly rejected straight away the ministers’ motion of urgency, and on 13 November [1851] the law itself, 355 to 348. Thus it tore up its mandate one more time; it confirmed one more time that it had transformed itself from the freely elected representative of the people into the usurping parliament of a class; it acknowledged once again that it had cut the integuments linking the parliamentary head with the body of the nation.

While the executive appealed over the national assembly to the people, through its proposal to restore universal manhood suffrage, the legislature appealed over the people to the army through its commissioners’ bill. This bill was to establish a right to requisition troops directly, to form a parliamentary army. While it thus designated the army as mediator between itself and the people, between itself and Bonaparte, while it recognised the army as the superior power in the state, it had to confirm, on the other hand, that it had long ago given up its claim to command it. By debating the right of requisition, rather than requisitioning them at once, it made evident its doubts about its own power. By throwing out the commissioners’ bill, it publicly confessed its impotence. This bill was 108 votes short of a majority, so the montagne had decided the outcome. It found itself in the position of Buridan’s ass, though not between two sacks of hay and having to decide which is the more attractive, but between two thorough drubbings and having to
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decide which is the harder. On the one hand there was fear of
Changarnier, on the other, there was fear of Bonaparte. One has to
say that the situation did not allow for heroism.

On 18 November [1851] an amendment was proposed to the law
on municipal elections that had been brought in by the party of
order itself, changing the three-year residence requirement for
municipal electors to one year. The amendment fell by a single
vote, but this single vote was immediately revealed to be an error.
When the party of order splintered into hostile factions, it forfeited
its independent parliamentary majority. Now it demonstrated that
there was no longer any parliamentary majority at all. The national
assembly had become incapable of making decisions. Its atomistic con-
stituent parts were no longer cohesive, it had drawn its last breath,
it was dead.

Finally a few days before the catastrophe, the extra-parliamentary
mass of the bourgeoisie confirmed its break with the bourgeoisie in
parliament. Thiers, a parliamentary hero with an incurable case of
parliamentary cretinism, had hatched a new parliamentary intrigue
together with the council of state, after parliament had died; this
was an accountability act to keep the president within constitutional
bounds. On 15 September [1851], at the dedication of a new market
hall in Paris, Bonaparte charmed the market women, the fishwives,
like a second Masaniello [a fisherman who led a Neapolitan rebellion
against Spanish rule in 1647] – in any case one fishwife outweighed
seventeen grandees [of the ‘party of order’] in terms of real power –
so in the same way, after the introduction of the commissioners’
bill, he inspired the lieutenants who were wined and dined at the
Elysée, and again on 25 November [1851] he enthralled the indus-
trial bourgeoisie who had gathered at the circus [in Paris] to receive
their prize medals for the Great [Industrial] Exhibition in London
from his very own hand. I present here the most significant part
of his speech as reported in the Journal des débats [on the 26th]:

With such unhoped-for results, I am justified in repeating how
great the French Republic would become if she were allowed to
follow her real interests, and to reform her institutions, instead of
being incessantly troubled, on the one side by demagogism, and on
the other by monarchical hallucinations. (Loud, stormy, repeated
applause from every part of the amphitheatre.) The monarchical
hallucinations impede all progress and all kinds of serious industry.
In place of advancing, there is only a struggle. Men are seen who, heretofore the most ardent supporters of the prerogatives and the authority of royalty, become partisans of a convention for the purpose of weakening that authority, which is the issue of popular suffrage. (Loud and repeated applause.) We see those who have suffered the most from, and who have deplored revolution the most, provoke a new one, simply to fetter the will of the nation... I promise you public order in future, etc. etc. (Bravo, bravo, a storm of bravos.)

And so the industrial bourgeoisie applauded the coup of 2 December [1851], the annihilation of parliament, the downfall of its own government, the dictatorship of Bonaparte, with servile bravos. The thunderous cheers of 25 November were answered in the thunderous cannons of 3 to 6 December [1851], and it was the house of [the industrialist] M. Sallandrouze, who had clapped to the rafters, that got clapped to bits by the most bombs.

Cromwell, when he dissolved the Long Parliament, went alone into the midst of the chamber, drew out his watch so that it should not carry on a minute past the limit he had fixed for it, and then drove out every single member with jovial banter and abuse. Napoleon, smaller than his precursor, at least betook himself into the legislative body on 18 Brumaire and read out, even if in a faltering voice, its sentence of death. As it happens, the second Bonaparte found himself in possession of an executive power quite different from that of Cromwell and Napoleon, and he sought his model in the annals of the Society of 10 December, in the annals of criminality, not in the annals of world history. He robs the bank of France of 25 million francs, buys General Magnan with a million and the soldiers bit by bit with 15 francs apiece and booze, gathers his accomplices in secret like a thief in the night, has the houses of the most dangerous parliamentary leaders broken into, and Cavaignac, Lamoricière, Le Flô, Changarnier, Charras, Thiers, Baze, etc. dragged from their beds, the main squares and parliament buildings in Paris occupied by troops, propagandistic notices stuck on all the walls early in the morning proclaiming the dissolution of the national assembly and the council of state, the restoration of the general right to vote and the imposition of a state of siege in the département of the Seine. Shortly after that he inserted a false document in the Moniteur to the effect that
influential parliamentarians had grouped themselves around him in a commission of state.

The rump parliament, consisting mainly of legitimists and Orléanists, assembled in the mairie of the 10th arrondissement and voted Bonaparte’s removal amid repeated cheers of ‘long live the republic’, harangued the gaping crowds outside to no avail, and was finally marched off by a company of African sharpshooters first to the d’Orsay barracks, later packed into prison vans and transported to prisons at Mazas, Ham and Vincennes. Thus ended the party of order, the national assembly and the February revolution. Before we hasten to our conclusion, here is a brief summary of its history:

i First period. From 24 February to 4 May 1848. February period. Prologue. Sham solidarity.

ii Second period. Period of founding the republic and of the constituent assembly.

(1) 4 May to 25 June 1848. Struggle of all classes against the proletariat. Defeat of the proletariat in the June days.

(2) 25 June to December 1848. Dictatorship of the pure bourgeois republicans. Drafting of the constitution. Imposition of a state of siege in Paris. The bourgeois dictatorship supplanted by Bonaparte’s election to the presidency on 10 December.

(3) 20 December 1848 to 28 May 1849. Struggle of the constituent assembly with Bonaparte and with the party of order in alliance with him. End of the constituent assembly. Fall of the republican bourgeoisie.

iii Third period. Period of the constitutional republic and the legislative national assembly.

(1) 28 May 1849 to 13 June 1849. Struggle of the petty-bourgeois with the bourgeoisie and with Bonaparte. Defeat of petty-bourgeois democrats.

(2) 13 June 1849 to 31 May 1850. Parliamentary dictatorship of the party of order. Completion of its supremacy through the abolition of the general right to vote, but loss of parliamentary control over the cabinet.

(3) 31 May 1850 to 2 December 1851. Struggle between the parliamentary bourgeoisie and Bonaparte.

(a) 31 May 1850 to 12 January 1851. Parliament loses supreme command of the army.
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(b) 12 January to 11 April 1851. It fails in its attempts to regain administrative authority. The party of order loses its independent parliamentary majority. Coalition with the republicans and the montagne.

(c) 11 April 1851 to 9 October 1851. Attempts at revising [the constitution], fusing [the royalist parties], suspending [presidential power]. The party of order splits into its constituent parts. The breach between bourgeois parliament and bourgeois press, and the mass of the bourgeoisie, is consolidated.

(d) 9 October 1851 to 2 December 1851. Open break between parliament and the executive. Parliament completes its death scene and fades out, left in the lurch by its own class, by the army, by all other classes. End of the parliamentary regime and of the rule of the bourgeoisie. Victory for Bonaparte. Parody of an imperial restoration.

VII

The social republic appeared as a phrase, as a prophecy on the threshold of the February revolution. In the June days of 1848 it was drowned in the blood of the Paris proletariat, but it stalked the succeeding acts of the drama as a spectre. The democratic republic then announced itself. It fizzled out on 13 June 1849 with its turncoat petty-bourgeoisie, but in fleeing it left redoubled boasts behind. The parliamentary republic and its bourgeoisie occupied the entire stage, living life to the full, but 2 December 1851 buried it amid anguished cries from the royalist coalition of 'long live the republic!'

The social and democratic republic took a beating but the parliamentary republic, the republic of the royalist bourgeoisie, went onto the rocks, as did the pure republic, the republic of the bourgeois republicans.

The French bourgeoisie balked at the rule of the working proletariat, so it brought the lumpenproletariat to power, making the chief of the Society of 10 December its head. The bourgeoisie kept France in breathless terror at the prospective horrors of red anarchy; Bonaparte sold it this future cheaply when on 3 and 4 December he had the distinguished citizenry of the Boulevard Montmartre and the Boulevard des Italiens shot through their own
windows by the drunken army of order. It deified the sword; now the sword rules over it. It destroyed the revolutionary press; now its own press is destroyed. It put public meetings under police surveillance; now its drawing rooms are spied on by the police. It disbanded the democratic national guard; its own national guard has been disbanded. It imposed a state of siege; now a state of siege has been imposed on it. It replaced juries with military commissions; now its juries have been militarised. It put public education under the influence of the church; now the church subjects it to its own education. It transported people without trial; now it has been transported itself without trial. It suppressed every impulse in society through the use of state power; now every impulse of its society is crushed by state power. It rebelled against its own politicians and intellectuals to line its own pocket; now its politicians and intellectuals have been disposed of, but after its mouth was gagged and its presses smashed, its pocket has been picked. The bourgeoisie never tired of proclaiming to the revolution what Saint Arsenius said to the Christians: ‘Fuge, Tace, Quiesce!' ‘Run away, be quiet, keep still!' Bonaparte admonishes the bourgeoisie: ‘Run away, be quiet, keep still!' The French bourgeoisie had long ago resolved the dilemma put by Napoleon: ‘In fifty years Europe will either be republican or Cossack.' Their resolution was the ‘Cossack republic'. That work of art, the bourgeois republic, has not been deformed by Circe's black magic. That republic has lost nothing but its rhetorical arabesques, the outward decencies, in a word, the appearance of respectability. The France of today [after the coup d'état] was already there within the parliamentary republic. It required only a thrust of the bayonet for the membrane to burst and the monster to spring forth.

The immediate aim of the February revolution was to overthrow the Orléans dynasty and that part of the bourgeoisie which governed under its authority. It was not until 2 December 1851 that this aim was achieved. It was then that the immense possessions of the house of Orléans, the real basis of its influence, were confiscated, and what was expected to follow the February revolution finally came to pass in December [1851]: imprisonment, exile, dispossession, banishment, disarming, humiliation of the men who had wearied France since 1830 with their pleas. But under Louis Philippe only a part
of the commercial bourgeois was in power. The other factions in it formed a dynastic and republican opposition, or stood entirely outside so-called legality. Only the parliamentary republic included all factions of the commercial bourgeoisie in the realm of the state. Moreover under Louis Philippe the commercial bourgeoisie excluded the large landholders. Only the parliamentary republic put them side-by-side, joined the July monarchy to the legitimist monarchy, and merged two eras in the rule of property into one. Under Louis Philippe the privileged part of the bourgeoisie concealed its rule beneath the crown; in the parliamentary republic the rule of the bourgeoisie, after unifying its constituent parts and extending its power to power over its own class, came out into the open. So the revolution first had to create the form in which the rule of the bourgeois class gained its broadest, most general and ultimate expression, and hence could also be overthrown without being able to rise up again.

Only now was the sentence executed which was pronounced in February on the Orléanist bourgeoisie, i.e. the most viable faction of the French bourgeoisie. Now a blow was struck at its parliament, its legal chambers, its commercial courts, its provincial representatives, its notaries, its universities, its spokesmen and their platforms, its press and its literature, its administrative income and its court fees, its army salaries and its state pensions, its mind and its body. [The revolutionary communist] Blanqui had made the disbanding of the bourgeois guard the first demand of the [1848] revolution, and the bourgeois guard, who in the February of the revolution raised their arms to stop this, disappeared from the scene in December. The Pantheon has been transformed once again into an ordinary church. With the last version of the bourgeois regime the spell, which transformed its eighteenth-century founders into saints, has at last been broken. When Guizot learned of the successful coup d’état of 2 December [1851] he exclaimed: This is the complete and final triumph of socialism! What he meant was: this is the final and complete collapse of the rule of the bourgeoisie.

Why did the proletariat not rescue the bourgeoisie? The question boils down to this: Why did the Paris proletariat not rise up after 2 December?

The overthrow of the bourgeoisie had only been decreed, but the decree had not yet been carried out. Any genuinely revolutionary
uprising of the proletariat would have put new life into the bourgeoisie, reconciled it with the army and ensured a second June [1849] defeat of the workers.

On 4 December [1851] the proletariat was goaded into a fight by grocers and traders. On the evening of that day several legions of the national guard promised to appear in the principal squares under arms and in uniform. These traders and grocers had got wind of the fact that Bonaparte had abolished their secret ballot in one of his decrees of 2 December [1851] and enjoined them to inscribe their yea or nay beneath their names in the official register. The bloody confrontation of 4 December [1851] intimidated Bonaparte. During the night he had placards posted on all the street corners of Paris announcing the restoration of the secret ballot. Traders and grocers were convinced they had achieved their aim. But it was the traders and grocers who did not turn up next morning.

During the nights of Bonaparte’s coup d’état, 1 and 2 December [1851], the Paris proletariat had also been robbed of its leaders, the commanders of the barricades, so it was an army without officers, too enlightened by its own recollections of June 1848 and 1849 and of May 1850 to fight under the banner of the montagnards; it had therefore come to a correct assessment of its own power and the general situation when it left to its vanguard of secret societies the task of saving the insurrectionary honour of Paris, which the bourgeoisie had readily given up to the soldiery, so that Bonaparte could later disarm the national guard with this cynical explanation: it was not that he feared the misuse of their weapons against him but rather that anarchists would misuse these weapons against the guard itself.

‘It is the complete and final triumph of socialism!’ This was Guizot’s characterisation of 2 December [1851]. Though the overthrow of the parliamentary republic contains the triumph of the proletarian revolution in embryo, the immediate tangible result was Bonaparte’s victory over parliament, the executive over the legislature, force without words over the force of words. The unitary power of the ancien régime is thus freed from its limitations, becoming an unlimited absolute power. In parliament the nation elevated its general will into law, i.e. the law of the ruling class was elevated into its general will. It abdicated its own will before the executive and subjected itself to the sovereignty of an alien will, to authority. The opposition
between the executive and legislative powers expresses the opposition between the heteronomy and autonomy of the nation. Hence France seems to have escaped the despotism of a class only to revert to being under the despotism of an individual, and under the authority of an individual without authority to boot. The conflict seems to have been settled so that all classes bow down equally powerless and equally voiceless before the rifle-butt.

But the revolution is thorough-going. It is still preoccupied with journeying through purgatory. It does its work methodically. By 2 December [1851] it had completed half its preparatory work, and now it is completing the other half. First it developed parliamentary power so that it could be overthrown. Now that this has been attained, it is developing the executive power, reducing it to its purest expression, isolating it, confronting it as sole challenger in order to concentrate all its powers of destruction against it. And when it has brought this second half of its preparatory work to completion the whole of Europe will jump up and cry: Well grubbed up, old mole!

This executive with its enormous bureaucratic and military apparatus, with its widespread and ingenious machinery of state, a complement of a half million officials alongside an army of another half million, this fearsome parasitic body, which traps French society like a net and chokes it at every pore, arose at the time of the absolute monarchy, accelerating the decline of feudalism. The political prerogatives of landowners and municipalities were transformed into so many aspects of state power, the feudal dignitaries became salaried civil servants, and the variegated pattern of conflicting medieval authorities became the disciplined layout of state power with centralised functions in a factory-like division of labour. The first French revolution had the job of centralisation, breaking down all separate local, territorial, municipal and provincial powers in order to create a civil unity in the nation as begun by absolute monarchy, but at the same time it had to develop the extent, aspects and operatives of governmental power. Napoleon perfected this machinery of state. The legitimist and July monarchies contributed only a further division of labour, growing in proportion as the division of labour created new interest groups within bourgeois society, hence new objects for the state to administer. Every common interest was detached from society and counterposed to it as a higher, general interest, torn away from the independently generated activity of
individuals within society and made into an object of governmental administration, from bridges, schools and community projects in a village up to railways, national public works and the national university of France. Finally in its struggle with the revolution the parliamentary republic found itself compelled to strengthen the apparatus and centralisation of governmental power with repressive measures. All upheavals perfected this machinery instead of destroying it. The parties that grappled in turn for power regarded possession of this immense edifice of state as the chief booty of the victor.

But under the absolute monarchy, during the first revolution [1789–99], under Napoleon [1799–1815], bureaucracy was only the means of preparing the class rule of the bourgeoisie. Under the restoration [1816–30], under Louis Philippe [1830–48], under the parliamentary republic [1848–51], it was the instrument of the ruling class, however much it also strove for power in its own right.

Only under the second Bonaparte does the state seem to have achieved independence with respect to society and to have brought it into submission. The independence of the executive comes through clearly when its head no longer needs ingenuity, its army no longer needs glory, and its bureaucracy no longer needs moral authority in order to justify itself. The state machine has established itself so firmly vis-à-vis commercial life that the head of the Society of 10 December provides sufficient leadership, a soldier of fortune swooping down from abroad, elevated to leadership by a drunken soldiery that he bought with grub and drink and at which he has to go on chucking sausages. Hence the shamefaced despair, the feeling of terrible humiliation, degradation, which weighs down upon France and suffocates her. France feels dishonoured. Just as under Napoleon there was scarcely any pretext for freedom, so under the second Bonaparte there was no longer any pretext for servitude.

But state power is not suspended in mid-air. Bonaparte represents a class, indeed the most numerous class in French society, the small-holding peasants.

Just as the Bourbons were the dynasty of large landed property and the Orléans the dynasty of finance, so Bonaparte is the dynasty of peasants, i.e. of the mass of the French people. Not the Bonaparte who knuckled under to the parliament of the bourgeoisie, but the Bonaparte who disbanded it, is the chosen one of the peasantry. For three years the cities were successful in falsifying the meaning
of the election of 10 December and cheating the peasantry out of
the restoration of the empire. The election of 10 December 1848
has been fulfilled only through the coup d'état of 2 December 1851.

The small-holding peasants form an immense mass whose mem-
bers live in similar conditions but without entering into complex
relationships with one another. Their mode of production isolates
them from one another, instead of bringing them into complex
interactions. This isolation is reinforced by the terrible means of
communication in France and the poverty of the peasants. Their
site of production, the smallholding, does not allow any division of
labour in its cultivation, no application of science and therefore no
diversity in development, no diversification of talents, no wealth of
social relationships. Each individual peasant family is almost self-
sufficient, producing the greatest part of its consumption directly
and getting its means of subsistence more in brutal exchange with
nature than in relationships within society. The smallholding, the
peasant and the family; alongside them another smallholding,
another farmer and another family. A few score of these make a
village and a few score villages make a département. Thus the great
bulk of the French nation is formed by simple accretion, much as
potatoes in a sack form a sack of potatoes. In so far as millions of
families get a living under economic conditions of existence that
divide their mode of life, their interests and their culture from those
of other classes and counterpose them as enemies, they form a class.
In so far as there is merely a local interconnection amongst peasant
proprietors, the similarity of their interests produces no community,
no national linkage and no political organisation, they do not form
a class. They are therefore incapable of asserting their class interests
in their own name, whether through a parliament or constitutional
convention. They cannot represent themselves, they must be re-
presented. Their representative must also appear as their master, as
an authority over them, as an unrestricted governmental power
which protects them from other classes and watches over them from
on high. The political influence of peasant proprietors is ultimately
expressed in the subordination of parliament to the executive,
society to the state.

Through historical tradition it has come to pass that the French
peasantry believed in a miracle, that a man of the name of Napoleon
would bring them back their former glory. And there came an
individual who presented himself as such a man because he bore the name Napoleon, in accordance with the Napoleonic Code which stipulates: 'All inquiry into paternity is forbidden.' After twenty years of bumming around and a string of grotesque adventures, the prophecy was fulfilled and the man became emperor of the French. The idée fixe of the nephew was realised because it coincided with the idée fixe of the most numerous class of the French.

But, it may be objected, what about the peasant risings over half of France [in late December 1851], the raids on the peasantry by the army, the mass incarceration and transportation of peasants?

Since the time of Louis XIV France has not experienced a similar persecution of the peasantry 'for intriguing with demagogues'.

But let us be clear about this. The Bonaparte dynasty does not represent the revolutionary peasants, but rather the conservative ones, not the peasant who reaches beyond his social condition of existence, the smallholding, but rather the one who wants to shore it up more firmly, not the country people who want to overthrow the old order under their own steam in conjunction with the towns, but rather the exact opposite, those who are stupidly locked up within the old order and want to see themselves saved and preferred along with their smallholdings by means of the ghost of an empire. It represents peasant superstition, not enlightenment, prejudice not judgement, the past not the future, the modern Vendée [royalist revolt of 1789–94], not the modern Cévennes [anti-feudal revolt of 1702–5].

Three years hard rule under the parliamentary republic had freed a part of the French peasantry from Napoleonic illusions and revolutionised them, albeit only superficially, but the bourgeoisie repressed them forcibly whenever they tried to do anything. Under the parliamentary republic the modern consciousness of the French peasantry fought with the traditional one. The contest advanced in the form of an incessant battle between schoolmasters and the church. The bourgeoisie defeated the schoolmasters. For the first time the peasantry made efforts to act independently against government machinations. This showed up in the persistent conflict between mayors and prefects. The bourgeoisie removed the mayors. Finally, during the parliamentary republic, peasants from different parts of France rose up against their own monstrous offspring, the army. The bourgeoisie punished them with states of siege and
foreclosures on property. And this is the bourgeoisie that now whines about the stupidity of the masses, the vile multitude that has betrayed it to Bonaparte. It has greatly strengthened the fervour for empire amongst the peasant class; it conserved the conditions which are the breeding ground of this peasant religion. In any case the bourgeoisie is bound to fear the stupidity of the peasant masses so long as they remain conservative, and the insights of the peasantry as soon as they become revolutionary.

In the uprisings after the coup d'état a portion of the French peasantry mounted armed protests against its own vote of 10 December 1848. Since 1848 they had schooled their wits. But they had enrolled in the underworld of history, and history kept them to their word, and the majority was still so prejudiced that even in the reddest of départements the peasant population openly supported Bonaparte. In its view the national assembly had hindered his progress. He had now merely broken the fetters which bound the will of the countryside to the towns. Here and there they entertained the grotesque idea that a constitutional convention could co-exist with a Napoleon.

After the first revolution had transformed the semi-feudal peasantry into freeholders, Napoleon confirmed and regulated the conditions in which they could exploit their newly acquired land in France and satisfy their new found passion for property undisturbed. But what is now causing the ruin of the French peasant is his smallholding itself, the division of the land and soil, the form of property which Napoleon consolidated in France. These are the material conditions which made the French feudal peasant a small-holding peasant and Napoleon into an emperor. Two generations were sufficient to produce the inevitable result: further deterioration of agriculture, further indebtedness of agriculturists. The ‘Napoleonic’ form of property, which at the beginning of the nineteenth century was the condition for the liberation and enrichment of French country dwellers, has developed in the course of a century into the law of their enslavement and pauperisation. And it is just this law which is the first of the ‘Napoleonic ideals’ which the second Bonaparte has to uphold. If he still shares with the peasants the illusion that the cause of their ruin is to be sought, not in small-scale property, but outside it in the influence of secondary factors, then his experiments will be smashed on the relations of production.
like soap bubbles, cutting that illusion off from its last hiding place and at best making the disease more acute.

The economic development of small-scale landed property has fundamentally turned round the relationship of the peasantry to the other classes of society. Under Napoleon the parcelling out of land and soil complemented free competition and the beginnings of large-scale industry in the cities. Even the preferment of the peasant class was in the interest of the new bourgeois order. This newly created class was the complex expansion of the bourgeois regime beyond the gateways of the cities, its realisation on a national scale. This class was the ever present protest against the recently overthrown landed aristocracy. If it was preferred over all, it was also suited above all as a point for the restoration of feudalism to attack. The roots that small-scale property had struck in French soil deprived feudalism of all nourishment. Its boundary stones formed a natural fortification for the bourgeoisie against any reprisals from its former overlords. But in the course of the nineteenth century the place of feudal orders was taken by urban usurers, the place of feudal obligation attached to the land by the mortgage, and the place of aristocratic landed property by bourgeois capital. The smallholding of the peasant is only a means for capitalists to draw profit, interest and rent from the soil, leaving to the farmer himself how to extract his wages. The mortgage interest weighing on French soil imposes on the French peasantry an interest burden equal to the annual interest on the whole of the British national debt. In this slavery to capital, as it inevitably develops, small-scale landed property transforms the bulk of the French nation into a nation of troglodytes. Sixteen million peasants (women and children included) dwell in hovels of which the greatest number have only one opening, others only two and the best of the lot only three. Windows are to a house as five senses are to the head. The bourgeois order, which at the beginning of the century made the state a sentry over the newly emerged smallholding and manured it with laurels, has turned into a vampire which sucks out its blood and brains and throws them into the alchemist’s vessel of capital. The Napoleonic Code is now but a code for foreclosures on property, public auctions and forced sales. To the four million (including children, etc.) official paupers, vagrants, criminals and prostitutes in France must be added five million people who hover on the margin of existence.
and either house themselves in the countryside itself or continually desert the countryside for the cities or the cities for the countryside, together with their rags and their children. The interests of the peasants are therefore no longer in accord with the bourgeoisie, as under Napoleon, but in deadliest opposition to the interests of the bourgeoisie, to capital. Hence the peasants find their natural allies and leaders in the urban proletariat whose task is the overthrow of the bourgeois order. But strong and unlimited government – and this is the second ‘Napoleonic ideal’ which the second Napoleon is to carry out, has the job of defending this ‘material order’ by force. This ‘material order’ also serves as a catch-phrase in all Bonaparte’s proclamations against peasant unrest.

Besides the mortgage which capital imposes on it, the smallholding is burdened with taxes. Taxation is the source of life for the bureaucracy, the army, the church and the court, in short the whole apparatus of executive power. Strong government and heavy taxes are identical. Small-scale landed property by its very nature provides a basis for an all-pervasive and numerous bureaucracy. It uniformly levels people and relationships over the whole surface of the land. Hence it also permits uniform action from a sovereign centre to all points. It destroys the aristocratic middle levels between the mass of the people and the state power. Hence it calls forth from all sides the direct intervention by this state power and the direct use of its agents. Finally it produces an unemployed surplus population which can find a place neither in the country nor in the towns and hence seizes on state offices as a kind of respectable charity and promotes the creation of state employment. Under Napoleon these numerous government personnel were not just directly productive, since in fact they provided for the newly arisen peasantry through state coercion in the form of public works, what the bourgeoisie could not yet provide through the means of private industry. State taxation was a necessary means of coercion to maintain exchange between town and country. Otherwise the smallholder, by becoming a self-sufficient peasant, would have broken off any connection with the towns, as happened in a part of Switzerland, [and] in Norway. Napoleon repaid the forced taxation with interest when he opened new markets with the bayonet and plundered continents. This was a spur to peasant industry, though they now rob his industry of its last source of help and break down the last barriers to pauperism.
And an enormous bureaucracy, well decorated and well fed, is the 'Napoleonic ideal' which appeals the most to the second Bonaparte. How could it be otherwise since he is compelled, alongside the actual classes of society, to create an artificial caste for which the maintenance of his regime is a bread-and-butter question. Consequently one of his first financial acts was to raise official salaries once again to their old level and to create new sinecures.

Another 'Napoleonic ideal' is the dominance of the Church as an instrument of state. But while the newly developed smallholding was naturally religious in its accord with society, in its dependence on the powers of nature and in its subjection to an all-high protecting authority, it becomes naturally irreligious when riddled with debt, at odds with society and authority, and driven past its own limits. Heaven was just a beautiful annex to the narrow strip of land just acquired, especially as it makes the weather; it becomes an insult as soon as it is offered as a substitute for the smallholding. The priest then appears as but the anointed bloodhound of the earthly police – another 'Napoleonic ideal' – whose duty under the second Bonaparte is not, as it was under Napoleon [I], to spy on the enemies of the peasant regime in the cities, but to spy on Bonaparte’s enemies in the country. Next time the march on Rome [to put down an insurrection] will take place in France itself, but in a sense opposite to that of M. de Montalembert [who advocated a war on socialism].

The culmination of the ‘Napoleonic ideals’ is the predominance of the army. The army was the point d’honneur for the smallholding peasantry; it transformed them into heroes, defended their new possessions from outside threats, glorifying their recently acquired nationality, plundering and revolutionising the world. The dazzling uniform was its own national dress, war its poetry, the smallholding, extended and rounded off in the imagination, was its fatherland, and patriotism was the ideal form of their sense of property. But the enemies against whom the French peasant now has to defend his property are not the cossacks but the bailiffs and tax collectors. The smallholding is no longer in the so-called fatherland but in the mortgage register. The army itself is no longer the flower of peasant youth, it is the fetid bloom of the peasant lumpenproletariat. It consists in the greater part of place-holders, substitutes, as the second Bonaparte is himself only a place-holder, a substitute for
Napoleon. It performs its deeds of valour in hunting down peasants like game, in police duties, and if the internal contradictions of his system drive the head of the Society of 10 December over the French border, the army will reap no laurels after skirmishing but rather take a beating.

It’s plain as day: ‘all Napoleonic ideals’ are ideals of the undeveloped smallholding in its heyday, but for the smallholding that has outlived this, they are an absurdity. They are merely hallucinations of its death struggle, words transformed into phrases, ideas into spectres, befitting dress into preposterous costumes. But the parody of the empire was necessary to liberate the bulk of the French nation from the weight of tradition and to work out in pure form the opposition between state and society. The demolition of the state machine will not endanger centralisation. Bureaucracy is only the low and brutal form of a centralisation which is still afflicted with its opposite, feudalism. When, disappointed with the Napoleonic restoration, the French peasant will cease to believe in the smallholding, the whole edifice of state erected on this smallholding will collapse, and the proletarian revolution will obtain the chorus without which its solo becomes a swan song in all peasant countries.

The condition of the French peasantry solves the riddle for us of the general elections of 20 and 21 December [1851] which led the second Bonaparte up Mount Sinai, not to receive the laws but to give and execute them. Anyway in those fateful days the French nation committed a mortal sin against democracy, which falls to its knees and prays daily: Holy Universal Suffrage, pray for us! The believers in universal manhood suffrage naturally do not want to dispense with the miraculous power which has brought great things to pass for them, which has transformed Bonaparte II into a Napoleon, a Saul into a Paul, and a Simon into Peter. The spirit of the people speaks to them through the ballot box as the God of the prophet Ezekiel [37:5] spoke to the dry bones: ‘Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones: “Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live.”’

Evidently the bourgeoisie had no choice other than to elect Bonaparte. Despotism or anarchy. Naturally they voted for despotism. When the puritans complained at the council of Constance [1414–18] about the dissolute lives of the popes and moaned about the necessity for moral reform, Cardinal Pierre d’Ailly thundered at
them: ‘Only the devil himself can save the Catholic church, and you are demanding angels.’ In the same way after the coup d'état the French bourgeoisie cried: Only the head of the Society of 10 December can save bourgeois society! Only theft can save property; only perjury, religion; bastardy, the family; disorder, order!

As an executive with independent power, Bonaparte felt that it was his vocation to safeguard ‘bourgeois order’. But the strength of this bourgeois order is in the middle classes. Hence he sees himself as the representative of the middle class and issues decrees on that basis. However he is only where he is, because he has destroyed the political power of this middle class, and does it again every day. He therefore sees himself as the enemy of the political and literary power of the middle class. But because he protects its material power, he generates its public, its political power anew. The cause must therefore be kept alive, but the effect where it is revealed must be dispatched from this world. But this cannot happen without some slight confusion of cause with effect, since both lose their distinguishing characteristics when they interact. There are new decrees that muddle the boundary lines. Bonaparte sees himself opposing the bourgeoisie as the representative of the peasantry and of the people in general at the same time, wanting to please the lower classes within bourgeois society. There are new decrees that rob the ‘true socialists’ of their administrative brainstorms in advance. Above all Bonaparte sees himself as head of the Society of 10 December, as representative of the lumpenproletariat, to which he himself, his entourage, his government and his army belong, and for which the chief concern is how to do well oneself and to extract prizes for the California lottery from the national treasury. He vindicates himself as head of the Society of 10 December with decrees, without decrees and despite decrees.

The contradictory tasks that face this man explain the contradictions of his government, the confused poking about to try to win over and then to humiliate now this, now that class, turning them all equally against himself; and his uncertainty in practice forms a highly comic contrast to the peremptory and categorical style of governmental decrees, a style obediently copied from the uncle [Napoleon]. So the speed and recklessness of these contradictions is supposed to imitate the complicated doings and quick-wittedness of the Emperor.
Industry and commerce, the occupations of the middle class, are to flourish in this hothouse regime of strong government. They are granting an innumerable number of railway concessions. But the Bonapartist lumpenproletariat is to enrich itself. So there is insider trading with the railway concessions on the stock exchange. But this draws no capital for the railways. So the bank is obliged to make advances on railway shares. But at the same time the bank is to be exploited for a certain person and therefore must be cajoled. So it is released from the obligation to publish a weekly report. Then the government makes a heads-I-win-tails-you-lose deal with the bank. The people are to be provided with employment. So instructions are issued for public works. But the public works raise the tax burden of the people. Hence the taxes are reduced by attacking the rentiers through the conversion of 5 per cent bonds to 4\frac{1}{2} per cent. But the middle class must again receive a sweetener. Hence the doubling of the wine tax on the people, who buy it retail, and halving of the wine tax for the middle class, who drink it wholesale. Disbanding of real workers' association, but promises of future miracles of association. There is to be help for the peasantry. So there are mortgage banks to increase their indebtedness and promote the concentration of property. But these banks are to be used to garner money for a certain person from the confiscated estates of the house of Orléans. But no capitalist wants to agree to this condition, which is not in the decree, and the mortgage bank remains a mere decree, etc. etc.

Bonaparte would like to appear as the patriarchal benefactor of all classes. But he cannot give to one without taking from another. At the time of the Fronde [1648–53], it was said of the duc de Guise that he was the most obliging man in France, because he had transformed all his property into credits that his partisans were obliged to repay to him, and so Bonaparte would like to be the most obliging man in France and transform all his property, all the labour of France, into credits to be repaid to himself. He would like to steal the whole of France in order to be able to give it back, or rather to be able to buy France back with French money, for, as the head of the Society of 10 December, he has to buy what is to belong to him. And all the institutions of state, the senate, the council of state, the legislative chamber [under the new constitution of 14 January 1852], the legion of honour, military decorations,
wash-houses, public works, railways, the general staff of the national guard excluding common ranks, and the confiscated estates of the House of Orléans become a saleroom. Every place in the army and in the governmental machine is up for sale. But the most important thing in this process of taking France in order to give it back is the percentage which goes to the head and members of the Society of 10 December during the transaction. The witty countess L[éhon], the mistress of the duc de Morny [half brother of Louis Bonaparte], characterised the confiscation of the Orléanist loot in this way: ‘It’s the first flight [vol = theft] of the [Napoleonic] eagle.’ That fits every flight of this eagle, which is more like a raven [that feeds on carrion]. Every day he and his hangers-on call to each other as the Italian Carthusian called out to the miser who made a show of counting up the money on which he would be drawing for years to come: ‘You are counting up your goods, but you should first be counting up your years.’ So as not to get the years wrong, they count the minutes. A gang of louts are pushing their way into the court, the ministries, the chief offices in administration and the army, of whom the best to be said is that no one knows where they come from, a noisy, foul, rapacious crowd of bohemians, crawling into gold braid with the same grotesque dignity as [the emperor] Soulouque’s stuffed shirts [in Haiti]. The higher stratum of the Society of 10 December can be clearly discerned by reflecting on the fact that [a philistine such as] Véron-Crevel preaches its morals and [the journalist] Granier de Cassagnac its wisdom. When Guizot made use of this Granier at the time of his cabinet [during the 1840s] for a provincial rage against the [legitimist] dynastic opposition, he was wont to boast of him with the quip: ‘He’s the king of the fools.’ It would be an injustice to recall the regency [of the duc d’Orléans 1715–23] or [the reign of] Louis XV [1723–74] in conjunction with Louis Bonaparte’s court and clique. For ‘France has often had a government of mistresses, but never before a government of kept men’ [as Mme Girardin, the editor’s wife, put it]. And Cato who took his own life so that he could walk in the Elysian Fields with heroes! Poor Cato!

Driven by the contradictory demands of his circumstances, and having to keep in the public eye as a substitute for Napoleon, hence executing a coup in miniature every day, Bonaparte, like a conjuror who has to come up with constant surprises, brings the whole bour-
geois economy into confusion, violates everything that seemed inviolable during the revolution of 1848, makes some tolerant of revolution and others desirous of it, and produces anarchy in the name of order, while stripping the halo from the whole machinery of state, profanes it, and makes it loathsome and laughable. He replicates the cult of the holy tunic of Trier in Paris as the cult of the imperial mantle of Napoleon. But when this imperial mantle falls at last onto the shoulders of Louis Bonaparte, the bronze of Napoleon, high on the column in the Place Vendôme, will plunge to the ground.