THE FRENCH SECOND EMPIRE

An Anatomy of Political Power

ROGER PRICE

CAMBRIDGE

more information - www.cambridge.org/0521808308

This page intentionally left blank

THE FRENCH SECOND EMPIRE
AN ANATOMY OF POLITICAL POWER

This book is about a major historical figure, Napoleon III, and a political regime. It is both about great figures in history and the contexts–the political institutions and social networks – within which they were located.

First the book examines 'the circumstances and relationships that made it possible for a grotesque mediocrity to play a hero's part' (Karl Marx); how the disorder caused by the 1848 Revolution, and the introduction of male suffrage, enabled Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte to secure election as president of the Republic and subsequently to launch a *coup d'état*. The book then considers the ways in which power was exercised by the new imperial regime, by analysing the institutions of state and the mechanisms through which these interacted with society.

The eventual growth of opposition, reflecting alternative political loyalties, led Napoleon III to contemplate the transition from an authoritarian towards a more liberal rule, a process fraught with difficulties and social and political tension. Nevertheless, the establishment of the Liberal Empire appeared to have secured the regime's future; but at the point of success, the decision was taken to go to war against Prussia, which resulted in a catastrophic defeat and the destruction of Napoleon III's empire.

This is the most throughly researched book on the Second Empire in any language, which makes a contribution to our knowledge of a vitally important period of French history following the 1848 Revolution and the intense mid-century crisis.

ROGER PRICE is Professor of History at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. His books include *The French Second Republic: A Social History* (1972), *Revolution and Reaction: 1848 and the French Second Republic* (1975), *The Modernisation of Rural France: Communication Networks and Agricultural Market Structures in Nineteenth-Century France* (1983), *A Social History of Nineteenth-Century France* (1987), *The Revolutions of 1848* (1988), and *A Concise History of France* (1993).

NEW STUDIES IN EUROPEAN HISTORY

This is a new series in early modern and modern European history. Its aim is to publish outstanding works of research, addressed to important themes across a wide geographical range, from southern and central Europe, to Scandinavia and Russia, and from the time of the Renaissance to the Second World War. As it develops the series will comprise focused works of wide contextual range and intellectual ambition.

THE FRENCH SECOND EMPIRE

An Anatomy of Political Power

BY

ROGER PRICE

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain
Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa

http://www.cambridge.org

First published in printed format 2001

ISBN 0-511-02934-9 eBook (Adobe Reader)
ISBN 0-521-80830-8 hardback

In memory of my father, Godfrey David Price (1908–1968) and of my mother, Martha Price (1916–2000)

Contents

Acknowledgements

I have accumulated an enormous number of debts since beginning work on this history. The raw material was largely provided by the archivists and librarians of the Archives nationales; Service historique de l'Armée de Terre; Bibliothèque nationale; University of East Anglia; University of Wales, Aberystwyth; and National Library of Wales. Research grants and study leave were generously awarded by both of the universities mentioned above and further indispensable funding by the British Academy, Leverhulme Trust, and Wolfson Foundation. I am grateful to William Doyle, Richard Evans, Douglas Johnson, Gwynne Lewis, and Vincent Wright for supporting various grant applications. Christopher Johnson, John Merriman, Sylvie Eyrich, Robert Frugère, and Jane Frugère offered encouragement and friendship. Colin Heywood was brave enough to take on the task of critically reading the original manuscript. Heather Price, more than anyone, improved its readability.

I am extremely grateful to William Davies and to the Syndics of Cambridge University Press for agreeing to publish the book as well as for the constructive criticism offered by the readers appointed by the Press, one of whom did me a great favour by suggesting the subtitle. Jean Field very efficiently copy-edited the text.

Above all I have to thank Richard and Luisa, Siân and Andy, Emily and Luke, Hannah, and my beloved Heather, who make life such a pleasure.

Abbreviations

AHG	Archives historiques du Ministère de la Guerre
AN	Archives nationales
APP	Archives de la Préfecture de Police
BN	Bibliothèque nationale
DM	Division militaire
(G)OC	(General) officer commanding
jp	juge de paix
MI	Minister of the Interior
MJ	Minister of Justice
NLW	National Library of Wales
PG	Procureur général
PI	Procureur impérial
PR	Procureur de la république
TP	Travaux publics

Introduction

This is a book about a major historical figure, Napoleon III, and about a political regime – the French Second Empire. It is a book both about great figures in history and the contexts, the political institutions and social networks, within which they were located. It is a study of the exercise of power, of the institutions of the state and the mechanisms through which these interacted with the enveloping society. Part I examines the circumstances which made it possible for Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte to secure election as president of the Republic and subsequently to launch a *coup d'état*, as the prelude to an Imperial restoration. Historians have frequently presented this Second Empire as a political drama in two acts – authoritarian and liberal – focusing on high politics and the character of Napoleon III.[1] The regime's ignoble origins in a *coup d'état* and the tragedy of its final ignominious collapse in the war of 1870 have loomed large. At first the dominant trend, as republicans struggled to secure the Third Republic, was one of bitter hostility. The combination of a carefully researched political narrative with moral indignation – the construction of the 'black' legend – was exemplified by Eugène Ténot's studies of the *coup d'état*, published even before the empire had disappeared. By the 1930s and 1940s the Second Empire was described as a precursor of fascism. However, more positive assessments were also beginning to appear. Thus, from the inter-war years of the twentieth century and during the period of reconstruction which followed the devastation of the Second World War, historians' interests shifted to reflect a concern with French 'backwardness' and 'stagnation'. They looked for inspiration to the Imperial regime's 'technocratic' achievements and particularly the reconstruction of Paris, the creation of a modern transportation infrastructure, and, more broadly, the establishment of the conditions for rapid economic growth. This 'revisionism' culminated in 1990 in

[1] On the historiography see S. Campbell, *The Second Empire Revisited. A Study in French Historiography* (London 1978).

the publication of *Louis-Napoléon le Grand* written by the conservative politician Philippe Séguin, a work inspired by the search for a populist politics capable of attracting disillusioned voters from both the far right Front National and the socialist and communist left. On 13 June 1990 Séguin, at the inauguration of the Place Napoléon III in Paris and flanked by Jacques Chirac – then the city's mayor – and the Prince Napoleon, insisted that the much-disparaged Emperor had indeed been a great head of state.[2]

Narrative political history has served as an important means of understanding the period. Historians have repeatedly described the regime's growing political difficulties and the exhaustion and increasing irresolution of the Emperor. The seemingly inexorable rise of opposition has appeared to offer a clear linear vision of inevitable collapse. This perspective, however, underestimates the very real problems of regime transition once its leading figure had taken the decision to adapt to changing political circumstances through liberalisation. Moreover, whilst the study of political leadership is undoubtedly of crucial importance, so too are questions about the nature of social and political systems. Thus a more thematic, analytical approach also has its attractions. If the objectives political leaders set for themselves need to be identified, so also does the context within which they operate. Social structures and relationships, both formal and informal, regulate the ways in which political authority can be exercised, and influence the creation of a more diffuse political culture. Various factors serve to reinforce or to restrict the authority of governments. Our knowledge of the period has been enlarged considerably by social historians working at the level of the community and region. The 'top-down' vision associated with a traditional political history has been neatly supplemented by 'bottom-up' perspectives much more concerned with the experience of the rural and urban masses.

Governmental effectiveness depends in part on institutional design but additionally on personal and political relationships, on economic and social circumstances, and frequently on the impact of largely uncontrollable external events. It should be borne in mind also that governments are far from being unitary enterprises, but are frequently riven by internal rivalries which affect their capacity to define and achieve their objectives. The debate on the nature of the Second Empire, and indeed on the state in general, continues to be informed by the contribution of Karl Marx.

[2] R. Gildea, *The Past in French History* (London 1994), pp. 88–9.

In *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* he contended that 'the executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie'. It was the product of class rule at a particular stage of social development. His stress on the repressive role of the state was supplemented by an insistence on the state's employment of religion and patriotism, and on its recourse to war, as a means of reinforcing its position – an emphasis foreshadowing Gramsci's notion of hegemony. Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte's seizure of power caused problems for Marx.[3] It represented an apparent renunciation of power by the 'ruling classes' and a step back from bourgeois liberalism to absolute monarchy, to a situation in which 'the executive power with a host of officials numbering half a million, besides an army of another half a million, [an] appalling parasitic body ... enmeshes the body of French society like a net and chokes all its pores.'[4] The state had apparently achieved autonomy. However, this contradiction could be resolved by stressing that the state continued to favour the interests of some social groups rather than others. It remained the guarantor of the established social order. Marx assumed that in the longer term state policy had to remain compatible with the interests of economically and socially powerful interest groups and particularly of those from which ministers, bureaucrats, and army officers were recruited.[5] Part II will shed light on these issues by focusing on the machinery of state, on the personnel involved, on policy formulation and upon its impact. Its primary concern will be with state–society relations but viewed from the perspective of the state. Its concerns will include some of the central issues of socio-political history including the identity of those individuals and social groups enjoying privileged access to the state apparatus. After all, to a large extent 'the action of the state as an institution depends ... on the people who direct it.'[6] The first chapter will examine the institutions of the Second Empire and the roles of the Emperor himself, of his courtiers, ministers, and officials. Succeeding chapters will consider the practical workings of the machinery of government in four crucial areas – electoral management; the preservation of public order; the establishment of 'moral order;' and the creation of the conditions for socio-economic modernisation and public prosperity. They will consider the means by which state agencies sought to

[3] A. Gilbert, *Marx's Politics* (Oxford 1981), pp. 220f.
[4] K, Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* in *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, 1 (Moscow 1962), p. 284.
[5] *Ibid*., pp. 340–1.
[6] P. Birnbaum, *The Heights of Power. An Essay on the Power Elite in France* (London 1982), p. 1.

legitimise their authority and how effective they were in penetrating societies combining *archaïsme et modernité* (Corbin) and in achieving their goals.

Awareness of context is all important. The rulers of a nineteenth-century authoritarian state could deal harshly with opponents, but were neither willing nor able to engage in the forms of extreme and sustained brutality which were employed to ensure compliance during the twentieth century. Whilst those who had shared political power during the Restoration and July Monarchy might be willing to accept a temporary dictatorship at a time of extreme crisis, in the fashion of the Roman Republic with whose history these classically educated elites were so familiar, in the longer term they would favour a return to 'normal' and a renewed fragmentation of political power. In effect the boundaries to state action were defined partly by power centres – social groups, political alliances, institutional bodies – capable of political organisation. Stability depended upon accommodating their special interests. As a result of the introduction of manhood suffrage, greater attention than hitherto also had to be given to the concerns of socially subordinate groups, to the small businessmen, professionals, peasants, and workers, all increasingly anxious to influence state policy. Indeed, one of the central questions to be considered will be the degree to which these various groups might have lost or benefited from changes in the (unequal) balance of power. Another concern will be the ways in which state power impinged upon the various groups and how they perceived its diverse activities – as class oppression or as the benign exercise of authority. How would people react, not only to governmental activity, but also to social change on a previously unimagined scale? Whilst continuities with the past will need to be stressed, contemporaries could hardly fail to be aware of the tearing down and reconstruction of city centres, of the railway lines and telegraph wires extending their tentacles across the landscape, affecting the capacity of the government machine to penetrate society, and creating new opportunities for enrichment albeit within a far more competitive environment. More than ever before people were on the move in search of a better life. What were the relationships between economic and social change, the 'formal' establishment of manhood suffrage, and the evolution of local and national political cultures? Certainly historically based expectations conditioned individual political behaviour to a large degree. The Second Empire is of particular interest, however, because in a relatively short time radical changes in economic structures and political institutions forced people to adapt their life strategies.

The primary responsibility of every political regime is the maintenance of order. However, definitions of what constitutes 'order' and the systems constructed and methods employed to achieve this objective will vary both between regimes and, in the case of the same regime, over time, as situations and personnel change. Political repression can be regarded as a 'normal' feature of governmental activity although its intensity and form vary with both perceptions of the threats posed as well as the capacity of the administration to conduct 'police' measures. The 1848 Revolution led to increasingly intense counter-revolutionary repression. Most regimes would, however, probably prefer to exercise power through consensus-inducing forms of social control with a clearly defined moral and legal basis. This explains the importance of securing cultural hegemony through the religious or educational institutions which provide means of socialisation, designed to induce conformity to essentially conservative norms. In this context, both the criteria employed for defining potential threats and ensuing policy decisions – as between repression or concession – tell us a great deal about a regime and its relationships with the wider society. During the Second Empire the state also assumed a far more substantial economic role than its predecessors. The Emperor was determined to promote modernisation along the lines suggested by the British model. How did this perceived need to promote economic development affect the regime's agenda?

Another distinctive feature of the regime was its capacity for adaptation. Inevitably, in a society which remained profoundly inegalitarian, the scope for political mobilisation varied considerably. The Emperor's freedom of action varied to an important degree according to the willingness of elites to accept his dominant position. Efforts to reinforce his authority and appeal over their heads to the 'sovereign people,' employing such devices as the plebiscite and electoral manipulation, enjoyed only limited success. As a result some degree of agreement with, as well as substantial cohesion within the political elite, would appear to be a prerequisite for effective state action. Unlike his predecessors, Napoleon III was prepared to contemplate adapting to circumstances. Liberalisation and the institutionalisation of protest could be seen as representing either the creation of a slippery slope towards regime collapse, or else an effective method of moderating opposition and of more effectively ensuring long-term stability. The transition from an authoritarian to a liberal regime was to be fraught with difficulties. To what extent did it involve concessions freely made, and to what extent was it a response to growing pressure and the rise of opposition? To what extent did liberalisation

occur as the result of competition for power between rival elite groups and to what extent did it represent a challenge, from below, to the established social order? These questions will be at the heart of Part II and also of Part III, which concentrates on the rise of opposition. The final section (Part IV) will bring some of these threads together by means of an analysis of the interaction between internal and external politics and of the causes of military defeat and the regime's rapid collapse.

The sources for this book are many and varied, and all of them have their shortcomings. An effort has been made to consult as wide a range of sources as possible, including private papers, memoirs, administrative reports, official and private economic and social enquiries, and the newspaper press. A massive amount of information was gathered by more or less zealous and competent officials operating within the various administrative hierarchies (especially those reporting to the Ministers of the Interior, Justice, and War). Complaints about the quality of reports were frequent. There was especial concern about the unwillingness of those at the bottom of the hierarchy – mayors, justices of the peace, and gendarmes – to spare the time and effort. As always, the directly expressed views of the masses are greatly under-represented. Much of the extant information on these groups is derived from the observations of members of other social groups and is distorted inevitably by their particular concerns and prejudices. Reporters from the social elites tended to focus in particular on novelty and whatever appeared to be threatening to their interests. Government officials frequently told their superiors what it was presumed these wanted to hear, in the hope of enhancing their own career prospects. The quality of reporting obviously varied according to the skills and commitment of individual reporters. Experience suggests that the recruitment, training, and professional concerns of the judicial administration resulted in more objective and frequently more comprehensive reports than those emanating from the parallel prefectoral hierarchy. If this book has a claim on the reader, it will be based on the exceptionally wide range of primary and secondary sources employed – in critical fashion – as well as on the complex of questions raised. I hope that it adds up to a well-informed and searching study of the historical role of the Emperor Napoleon III, of the workings of the French state, and of the inter-relationships between state and society during an important period of political and social 'modernisation'.

PART I

The rise of Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte

CHAPTER 1

President of the Republic

MID-CENTURY CRISIS

In the preface to *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte*, Karl Marx described his purpose as being to 'demonstrate how the class struggle in France created circumstances and relationships that made it possible for a grotesque mediocrity to play a hero's part'. Alexis de Tocqueville similarly insisted that 'a dwarf on the summit of a great wave is able to scale a high cliff which a giant placed on dry ground at the base would not be able to climb'. The 'great wave' was the intense mid-century crisis – economic, social, and political – lasting from 1845 until 1852, and marked by widespread popular protest, revolution, civil war, and the prospect (or threat) of a démocrate-socialiste electoral victory in 1852. These were the circumstances – widespread deprivation and misery combined with disappointed expectations and social fear – that made it possible for the nephew of Napoleon I to exploit the potency of the Bonapartist legend – 'this deplorable prestige of a name' which, according to the exiled republican Victor Schoelcher, 'entirely made the incredible fortune of M. Bonaparte'[1] – by ensuring that large sections of the population were tempted to look for a 'saviour'.

At the middle point of the nineteenth century France might be defined as a transition society. Substantial continuities with the past survived. The economy remained predominantly agrarian. Within the manufacturing sector most workers were employed, using hand tools, in small-scale enterprise. However, there were clear signs of structural change, most notably with the development of growth 'poles' characterised by advanced, large-scale industrialisation and, from the 1830s to 1840s, the broader development of an industrial economy as coal and steam power came

[1] Marx, *Eighteenth Brumaire*, p. 244; A. de Tocqueville, letter to Beaumont, 29 Jan. 1851 in *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris 1959), vol. VIII, p. 369; V. Schoelcher, *Histoire des crimes du deux d' ecembre* (London 1852), p. 402.

to replace wood and water as the primary sources of energy and power, and the first railways were added to the developing road and waterway networks. Appreciating that this was a world in flux is vital to an understanding of the complex and intense nature of the economic difficulties, which from 1845 to 1847 combined the features of a traditional subsistence crisis with those of over-production/under-consumption and loss of confidence in financial markets more typical of an industrial society, as well as the fears and aspirations which informed political activity.[2]

To most informed observers the July Monarchy, created by the 1830 Revolution, had seemed secure. The various oppositions, ranging from the Legitimist supporters of another Bourbon restoration on the right, to the republicans on the left, were weak and divided. The regime's leading personalities insisted on the finality of 1830. Personalities were all important in the absence of a stable party system. Alexis de Tocqueville likened the July Monarchy to an 'industrial company all of whose operations are designed to benefit the shareholders'.[3] The historian A.-J. Tudesq has defined a social elite, of men with national power, made up of *grands notables* each paying over 1,000f a year in direct taxes (in 1840) and including landowners (65.3%); bureaucrats (11.7%); liberal professions (5.9%); and businessmen (15.9%).[4] These groups shared similar lifestyles and belonged to the same or contiguous social networks. In whatever way they are categorised, most members of this social elite possessed land as a source of both income and status, had received a similar classical education and a grounding in the law, and had served the state at some stage in their lives. Virtually all were anxious to share in lucrative new investment opportunities. Candidates for election to the Chamber of Deputies were wealthy – paying at least 500f in taxes, whilst voters, contributing 200f, were at least moderately well off. There were roughly 250,000 of them by 1846. If debate in the cities with their large electorates was politicised, in rural areas a small electorate resulted in highly personalised electoral campaigns dominated by the competition for power and status between a few wealthy families and their clienteles.[5] This was an elite possessing power through control of the institutions of state, and by means of the

[2] R. Price, *An Economic History of Modern France, c. 1730–1914* (London 1981) and *A Social History of Nineteenth Century France* (London 1987), ch. 1.

[3] A. de Tocqueville, *Souvenirs* (Paris 1964), p. 79.

[4] A.-J. Tudesq, *Les grands notables en France (1840–49): Etude historique d'une psychologie sociale* (Paris 1964), I, p. 429.

[5] *Ibid.* p. 365f; T. D. Beck, *French Legislators* (Berkeley, Calif. 1974), p. 127.

local social and economic power conferred by the ownership of property and control of access to employment and scarce resources. They supported a regime which had appeared fully committed to maintaining social order and the conditions for continuing prosperity.

The regime's most articulate critics were drawn from the ranks of the so-called 'dynastic' opposition. Although they proclaimed their loyalty to their king, opposition politicians returned to the language of 1789 to attack the dominant *aristocratie bourgeoise*. Former ministers, like Adolphe Thiers, condemned the corruption of the parliamentary process through the abuse of government influence in elections and, particularly following the opposition's dismal failure in 1846, sought to change the rules of the electoral game through franchise reform. The objective was certainly not to enfranchise the masses which, liberal politicians agreed, would lead to anarchy, but rather the wider enfranchisement of the educated, property-owning middle classes. The government was associated with scandals in high places, electoral corruption, and the use of patronage to control deputies. It was blamed for the economic crisis and for the widespread popular protest, which suggested that the authorities were unable to safeguard public order. The corrosive impact of competition for power amongst the landowners, financiers, senior civil servants, and wealthy professionals who made up the political elite was thus reinforced by the concerns of businessmen faced with bankruptcy, workers threatened with unemployment, and the mass of urban and rural consumers faced with the spiralling cost of food. The image of prosperity and order cultivated by the July Monarchy was shattered. Political agitation multiplied.[6]

It would culminate on 22–24 February 1848 in a demonstration in Paris which, as a result of ineffective government crisis management and military incompetence, turned into an insurrection and finally a revolution with the establishment of a Second Republic. To their own great surprise a small group of republicans had been able to take advantage of governmental collapse and to assume power. It was then that their problems really began. The sense of expectancy amongst the crowds in Paris ensured that even these cautious men felt bound to take such decisive steps as the introduction of manhood suffrage, conceived of as 'universal' because of contemporary assumptions that by their nature women were unsuited to roles in public life and were thus best represented by their

[6] H. Collingham, *The July Monarchy: A Political History of France* (London 1988), pp. 398–402; J. Gilmore, *La République clandestine* (Paris 1992), pp. 302–15.

men folk.[7] The economic situation remained desperate. A plentiful harvest in 1847 had stimulated recovery when, as a result of the revolution, 'confidence disappeared and work with it'.[8] The financial system was thrown into chaos as banks suspended payments and interest rates rose.[9] In Paris unemployment rose to around 54 per cent of the work force, reaching 64 per cent in the building trades and 74 per cent in furniture manufacture.[10] In Lyons up to three-quarters of silk looms remained idle.[11] National Workshops were established. Intended by the government merely as a means of offering temporary work-relief, they were seen by many radicals as the first step in a socialist re-organisation of society. In agriculture, in place of poor harvests and high prices, almost the whole period from 1848 to 1851 was to be characterised by substantial harvests of grain and wine, over-supply of markets, and the collapse of prices, creating a particularly serious situation for the numerous farmers who had incurred debts: whether to purchase land or survive the earlier crisis. The sense of malaise was almost universal.

The introduction of manhood suffrage, which at a stroke increased the electorate from 250,000 to close on 10 million, was the realisation of a dream for radicals. For the first time the entire male population of a major European state would be able to vote, to elect a Constituent Assembly. How would the masses use their new-found political power? Their political education proceeded apace in the host of newspapers, political clubs, and workers' associations created to take advantage of the new freedom. These were only the institutionalised expression of a ferment which spread into the streets and cafés. Probably only a minority of workers and peasants conceived of politics in terms of a formulated ideology. Particularly in the major cities, slogans in favour of the 'organisation of work' and the République démocratique et sociale were popular, representing the demand for state assistance in the creation of a network of producers' co-operatives to replace capitalist exploitation. The discourse in Parisian clubs like Blanqui's Société républicaine

[7] See e.g. A. Verjus, 'Le suffrage universel, le chef de famille et la question de l'exclusion des femmes en 1848' in A. Corbin, J. Lalouette, and M. Riot-Sarcy (eds.), *Femmes dans la cité* (Paris 1997), pp. 401–7.

[8] Chambre consultative de Roubaix, AN F12/7600.

[9] See e.g. Ministre de Finance to Ministre de l'agriculture et du commerce, 16 Oct.1848, AN F12/7600.

[10] Paris Chambre de Commerce, *Statistique de l'industrie `a Paris résultant de l'enqu ête faite ... pour les années 1847–48* (1851), I, p. 41; 16 June 1848 in AN F12/7600; see also Comité des constructeurs mécaniciens, 12 July 1848 in AN F12/2337–8.

[11] M.-L. Stewart-McDougall, *Artisan Kingdom: Revolution, Reaction and Resistance in Lyon, 1848–51* (Gloucester 1984), p. 58.

centrale or Barbès' Club de la révolution was frequently extreme. The latter's manifesto announced that 'we have the Republic in name only, we need the real thing. Political reform is only the instrument of social reform.'[12] The propertied classes were terrified, afraid that granting the vote to the propertiless would lead to the re-distribution of property. They feared anarchy, a blood-bath worse than the Terror of 1793. Alexis de Tocqueville was concerned about the impact of enfranchising a population characterised by its 'prodigious ignorance' and the challenge to the authority of established elites this represented.[13] Social fear helped create a sense of common interest, a sort of 'class consciousness' amongst notables, particularly in the cities and their hinterlands, where the threat appeared greatest. Democrats were to be disappointed. In the absence of organised parties the choice of candidates in most areas, and especially in rural constituencies, remained dependent on the activities of small groups of politically experienced notables. Conservative organisation and propaganda were better resourced and more effective.[14] Most of the deputies elected on 23 April – perhaps 600 out of 900 – were to be conservatives, and former monarchists, even if, reflecting a continuing crisis of confidence, they adopted the republican label. Around 300 appear to have been republicans before the revolution and only 70 or 80 would reveal a clear sympathy for measures of social reform. This was an assembly made up mainly of well-off provincial notables – landowners and professional men determined to resist the pressure of the Parisian 'mob.'

Inevitably the election results caused great dissatisfaction amongst urban radicals. They felt betrayed by the votes of those they saw as ignorant and priest-ridden peasants. In Paris itself, on 15 May, a mass demonstration in favour of social reform and support for the Polish rebels against Russian rule, which would of course have provoked a general European war, culminated in the chaotic invasion of the Assembly's meeting place and the call for a committee of public safety to levy a wealth tax to finance the immediate creation of producers' co-operatives. This strengthened the government's determination to restore order and was followed by the arrest of such luminaries of the left as Blanqui and Barbès and the closure of some political clubs.[15] According to Tocqueville, 'an

[12] Quoted by P. Bastid, *Doctrines et institutions politiques de la Seconde République* (Paris 1945), II, p. 168.
[13] Letter to Nassau William Senior, 10 April 1848, in *Oeuvres complètes*, VI (1991), p. 101.
[14] E.g. M. Bernard, 'Les populations du Puy-de-Dôme face à la nouvelle république', *Cahiers d'histoire*, 1998, pp. 207–8.
[15] M. Traugott, *Armies of the Poor. Determinants of Working-Class Participation in the Parisian Insurrection of June 1848* (Princeton 1985), pp. 24–5.

indescribable disappointment, terror and anger seized the Assembly and the nation'.[16] The National Workshops, which to radicals symbolised the hope of a better world, for conservatives increasingly came to represent the threat of renewed revolution. Men, unable to find work because of the economic crisis, were constantly denounced as 'scroungers'.[17] Thiers warned that by denying the principles of 'property, freedom of labour, emulation [and] competition' the association of workers would inevitably lead to communism and slavery.[18] On 22 June their closure was announced. They had provided work for around 117,000 workers, with a further 50,000 awaiting entry.[19] The announcement was followed by another mass insurrection. Over a thousand barricades were constructed throughout the densely populated and impoverished eastern *quartiers* of the capital. Estimates vary, but a substantial number of men and women (perhaps 20,000 to 30,000) felt sufficiently disappointed with the outcome of the revolution to risk their lives – with varying degrees of commitment and enthusiasm – to establish a regime more responsive to their needs. They believed they were fighting for justice, in defence of the République démocratique et sociale which they were convinced would transform their lives, against its 'monarchist' enemies.[20] These were not the rootless vagabonds so beloved of conservative publicists but mostly skilled workers, well integrated into their craft and neighbourhood communities. Against them were ranged the forces of 'order,' including National Guards from the wealthier western *quartiers* and members of the Mobile Guard recruited from amongst young, unemployed workers for whom institutional loyalties appear to have outweighed those of class.[21] The most important role in combating the insurrection was played by the 37,000 men of the regular army, commanded by the republican General Cavaignac, which became in the eyes of the propertied classes the 'saviour of civilisation'. Subsequently there were 12,000 arrests. The Parisian left was to be decapitated for a generation.

The conservative press depicted the events as an outbreak of mindless savagery, as a rising fought for 'pillage and rape'. The initial cry of triumph at the 'victory gained by the cause of order, of the family, of humanity, of civilisation' (*Journal des Débats*, 1 July) was followed by demands from conservatives and many traumatised moderate republicans for

[16] *Souvenirs*, p. 115. [17] *L'Assemblée nationale*, 17 May 1848.
[18] Quoted Traugott, *Armies*, p. 149.
[19] Prefect of Police reports of 23 May, 12 June 1848, AN C930.
[20] Price, *The French Second Republic. A Social History* (London 1972), pp. 162f.
[21] Letter from E. Foulquier delegate of *club des clubs* to Garde Mobile in AN C940; Traugott, *Armies*, pp. 44–5; Price, *Second Republic*, p. 185.

sustained repression (*Le National*, 29 June). For the latter the insurrection had represented an intolerable attack on popular sovereignty represented by the Constituent National Assembly. The brutal crushing of the June insurrection was thus to be followed by a long period of increasingly intense political repression, first under the republican government headed by Cavaignac. Existing legislation, in abeyance since February, could be used to eliminate or restrict the activities of political clubs, workers' associations, and the press. New measures were also introduced. Public meetings were subject to prior authorisation. Police officers could halt any discussion 'contrary to public order'. Censorship was imposed on newspapers. Having alienated many of their supporters on the left, the ruling moderate republicans more than ever were determined to prove their commitment to social order. Nevertheless, they were regarded as too moderate by conservatives, for whom republican institutions had been discredited irreparably.[22] On 4 November the Constituent Assembly approved a constitution for an essentially liberal democratic republic bereft of welfare institutions. Nevertheless, the retention of 'universal suffrage' ensured the continuation of political agitation, providing some hope to supporters of social reform and maintaining high levels of anxiety amongst conservatives. Significantly the constitution also provided for the election of a president, ultimately responsible to the elected assembly, but nevertheless provided with substantial executive power, in the interests of social order.[23]

THE ELECTION OF A PRINCE-PRESIDENT

On receiving news of the February Revolution, Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, still in exile in London, had announced to his cousin Marie that 'I'm going to Paris, the Republic has been proclaimed. I must be its master', only to be told that 'You are dreaming, as usual'.[24] Arriving in Paris on 28 February he was immediately expelled by the republican authorities. Nevertheless, in by-elections held on 4 June, and without the support of a single important newspaper, he was elected as a deputy in the departments of the Seine, Yonne, Charente-Inférieure, and Corsica, to the amazement of the political elite. Louis-Napoleon was the beneficiary of a sentimental cult of Napoleon kept alive by an outpouring of books,

[22] See e.g. letter from M. Marc to Benoist d'Azy, 2 July in R. Locke, *Les fonderies et forges d'Alais `a l'époque des premiers chemins de fer* (Paris 1978), p. 145; Bugeaud to Thiers, 29 June in BN naf 20617.

[23] E.g. J.-Y. Mollier, 'De l'orléanisme à la République conservatrice, la volonté de pouvoir de M. Thiers' in M. Agulhon *et al.*, *Monsieur Thiers d'une république à l'autre* (Paris 1998), p. 25.

[24] L. Girard, *Napoléon III* (Paris 1986), p. 83.

pamphlets, plays, songs, the lithographs which decorated so many poor homes, and, perhaps most potently, the stories told by old soldiers keeping alive the myth of a more prosperous, happy, and glorious epoch in sharp contrast to the misery and strife which appeared to accompany the Republic.[25] He had assumed the role of Bonapartist pretender following the death in 1832 of the Duc de Reichstadt, son of Napoleon I and Maria-Louisa. His claims had been reinforced through otherwise farcical attempts to seize power at Strasbourg in 1836 and at Boulogne in 1840. In 1839 he had presented his *Idées Napoléoniennes* in a pamphlet, which would sell half a million copies by 1848. In it Louis-Napoleon insisted that

> the Napoleonic idea is not an idea of war but a social idea – an industrial, commercial, humanitarian idea. If to some men it always seems to be surrounded by the thunder of combat, this is because indeed it was enveloped for too long in the smoke of cannon and the dust of battle. But today the clouds have vanished, and one can see beyond the glory of arms a civil glory which was greater and more lasting.

Imprisonment in the fortress of Ham gave him time to produce a work on *L'Extinction du paupérisme* (1844), which with its vague promises of social reform again attracted considerable interest. The year 1848 would give him the opportunity to realise the 'destiny' in which he so firmly believed.

Louis-Napoleon's electoral success stimulated a further explosion of Bonapartist sentiment. Unwilling to be associated with the growing tension and disorder in Paris, however, he resigned and returned to London, a move which coincidentally ensured that he was able to avoid compromising himself during the June insurrection.[26] He was easily re-elected anyway in five departments on 18 September. Increasingly it was becoming evident that, as a candidate for the presidency, Bonaparte was likely to attract considerable support. Tocqueville commented on the strange and disturbing procedure by which 'in the degree to which the popular movement pronounces itself in favour of Louis-Napoleon, it drags along the parliamentary leaders ... Thiers began by being violently opposed, then violently in favour. The Legitimists will hesitate until the last. Most will finish by giving way to the torrent; the tail of society definitely leads the head.'[27] Unable themselves, because of personal and ideological

[25] See e.g. B. Ménager, 'La vie politique dans le département du Nord de 1851 à 1877', Doctorat d'Etat, Université de Paris IV (1979), I, pp. 81–2.

[26] A fact on which he congratulated himself in a letter to his friend Mme. Cornu on 30 June 1848 – in AN 400 AP 41.

[27] *Souvenirs*, p. 279.

differences, to agree on a candidate likely to defeat him, conservative politicians were increasingly, even if reluctantly, drawn towards an opportunistic and qualified adherence. Bonaparte appeared to be fully committed to the restoration of order and was even prepared to promise to re-establish the temporal power of the Pope, expelled by revolution from Rome, as a means of winning over Catholic leaders.[28] Moreover, for conservatives like Molé, Barrot, and most notably Thiers, as a result of his ineffective performance in parliamentary debate and reputation as a womaniser, Louis-Napoleon appeared to be weak, a clown they could use. Marshal Bugeaud's warning to Thiers that the peasants would be voting not for a president but for an emperor went unheeded.[29] The conservative caucus gathering in the rue de Poitiers appears to have reached an unanimous decision to support Bonaparte on 4 November.[31] The only real alternative was Cavaignac. He had proved his commitment to social order in June and would attract some conservative support. However, as the former prime minister Guizot declared, 'Cavaignac is the Republic, Louis-Napoleon is a step away from the Republic.'[31] For many republicans Cavaignac was the 'butcher of June', whilst the great Emperor had defended the work of the revolution and enhanced the glory of the nation.[32] This was the strength of Bonapartism – to be able to appear as 'all things to all men', as a credo above party struggles. One Bonapartist manifesto appealed to suffering France where:

> The unfortunate die of hunger;
> The worker is without work;
> The cultivator is no longer able to dispose of his crops;
> The merchant sells nothing;
> The proprietor no longer receives his rents;
> The capitalist no longer dares to invest, lacking security

and promised that 'The nephew of the great man, with his magic, will give us security, and save us from misery.'[33]

Louis-Napoleon's electoral victory in December 1848 was to be overwhelming (see table 1).[34] Even Thiers had to admit that, if the candidate

[28] E. Beau de Lomenie, 'L'arrivée de Louis-Napoléon au pouvoir' in *L'esprit de 1848* (Paris 1948), p. 207.
[29] Letter of 4 Nov. 1848, BN naf 20617.
[30] *Gazette de France*, 5 Nov. 1848.
[31] Quoted G. de Broglie, *Guizot* (Paris 1990), p. 397.
[32] See e.g. G. Duveau, *La vie ouvrière en France sous le Second Empire* (Paris 1946), p. 56; and P. Goujon, 'Les révélations du suffrage universel: comportements électoraux et politisation des populations de Saône-et-Loire sous la Seconde République', *Cahiers d'histoire* (1998), pp. 279–80.
[33] Enclosed with report from PG Metz, 1 Dec. 1848 in AN BB18/1471.
[34] Price, *Second Republic*, pp. 208–25.

Table 1. *Presidential election, 10 December 1848*

Candidate	Votes	Share (%)
Bonaparte	5,534,520	74.2
Cavaignac	1,448,302	19.5

he had supported had been only the 'least bad' alternative, he had shown that in spite of his inexperience he was well informed and not unintelligent.[35]

In Paris Louis-Napoleon gained 58 per cent of the vote, in Lyon 62 per cent. Support for the author of the supposedly socialist *Extinction du paupérisme* was highest in the popular *quartiers* where before and even during the June Days there had been plenty of evidence of popular Bonapartist sentiment.[36] However, it was peasant support which was to remain the basis of Bonaparte's electoral strength for decades to come. According to Marx this was 'the day of the peasant insurrection',[37] and represented both a vote against the republic, which had brought tax increases instead of prosperity, and for the man of providence whose election heralded a better future. Paradoxically, whilst notables supported Bonaparte as the guarantor of social order, in some regions – especially in the south of the Paris basin, the Alps and departments in the centre like Creuse and Puy-de-Dôme – existing social tensions ensured that the peasant vote represented a questioning of the authority of these very notables. The prefect of the Isère concluded that 'for the first time, the rural vote has entered politics with its own will. Henceforth the rural element will have its full weight in the political movements of our society.'[38] According to the socialist writer Proudhon: 'France has named Louis Bonaparte President of the Republic because she is tired of parties.'[39] The Austrian diplomat Apponyi told conservative leaders that, in this situation, 'if they believe themselves able to do anything with him and to dominate him, they are badly mistaken'.[40] More dramatically, the journalist Martinelli warned that 'whether you wish it or not', Bonaparte would be 'king in opinion first, and later in reality. The logic of facts

[35] Letter of 3 Dec. 1848, AN AB XIX 3321. [36] Police report, 21 June, AN C930.
[37] 'Class struggles in France', *Selected Works*, p. 173.
[38] Quoted P. Vigier, *La Seconde République dans la région alpine* (Paris 1953), I, p. 57.
[39] P.-J. Proudhon, *Les confessions d'un révolutionnaire* (Paris 1929), p. 277.
[40] R. Apponyi, *De la révolution au coup d'état* (Geneva 1948), p. 68.

leads there. In a review some regiments will cry: *Vive l'Empereur*! The suburbs will reply to them and all will be said; we will be just like Spanish America, subordinate to the pleasures of the multitude and the soldiery. A glorious and fortunate destiny!'[41] This unique election of a monarchical pretender, of a man with complete faith in his historical 'mission' and, once having gained power, determined to retain it, had made a *coup d'état* almost inevitable.

This was the point at which the construction of 'the political system of Napoleon III' (Zeldin) might be said to have commenced. In the immediate aftermath of his election, however, the new president's behaviour was re-assuring. The appointment on 20 December 1848 of a ministry composed of monarchist notables led by Odilon Barrot, with Léon Faucher at the key Ministry of the Interior and the Comte de Falloux responsible for education, symbolised his commitment to counter-revolution. The constitution was, however, ambiguous on the question of ministerial responsibility. Barrot caused immediate offence by holding meetings in the President's absence and by withholding diplomatic despatches.[42] Gradually, and following a series of ministerial crises, Bonaparte would, by 31 October 1849, replace those ministers who saw themselves as primarily responsible to parliament with men dependent on himself. In a message to the National Assembly justifying his dismissal of the Barrot ministry Louis-Napoleon warned about the danger represented by the 'old parties,' and insisted that a 'community of ideas' between the President and his ministers was essential for the effective conduct of government, concluding: 'A whole system triumphed on 10 December, for the name of Napoleon is itself a programme. At home it means order, authority, religion and the welfare of the people; and abroad it means national self-respect. This policy, which began with my election, I shall, with the support of the national assembly and of the people, lead to its final triumph.'[43]

The Constituent Assembly elected the previous April had voted its own dissolution on 29 January 1849. Its members were aware of their growing political isolation and subject to pressure from the new government. In the elections, which followed on 13 May, the failure of Bonapartist candidates – poorly organised, divided on strategy, and unacceptable to other conservatives – seemed to emphasise the President's continued political weakness. However, especially in the provinces, the

[41] J. Martinelli, *Un mot sur la situation* (Bordeaux 1848), p. 26.
[42] Louis-Napoleon to Barrot n.d. but early 1849, AN 271AP 4.
[43] *Compte rendu des séances de l'Assemblée nationale législative* (Paris 1849), III.

electoral campaign was far more politicised than that of April 1848. A clear right–left division emerged, between a reactionary conservatism and a radical republicanism, with the centre, the moderate republicans, squeezed in between. The real victors were conservatives, with some 500 successful candidates. They had been supported effectively by Faucher and his prefects as well as by the clergy. Many peasants accepted the conservative view that socialism was a threat to their property and to the renewal of prosperity. Contemporaries, however, were struck more by the success of 200 representatives of the démocrate-socialiste or Montagnard movement, the first attempt to create a 'modern' national party,' and incorporating both democrats like Ledru-Rollin and socialists determined to defend the Republic and work for genuine social reform. It was the social fear generated by this and continued démocrate-socialiste agitation, which eventually would provide Louis-Napoleon with circumstances propitious to his seizure of power.

Although the victories of the left compared badly with conservative successes, the latter were alarmed by such unexpected radical strength. Overall some 35 per cent of the votes had been cast for 'reds'. In the larger cities, support for the left survived amongst the lower middle classes and workers, groups which felt threatened by the development of commercial capitalism and inspired by the dreams of greater social justice. Even more alarming, voters in some parts of the supposedly 'incorruptible' and conservative countryside had also supported the left – in much of the Massif Central, the Alps, the Rhône-Saône corridor, and Alsace, with substantial minorities in the Midi.[44] In spite of their election victory conservative leaders were increasingly anxious, afraid that their mass support might eventually be eroded. Following by-election defeats in March 1850, they determined to change once again the rules of the political game. It was intolerable, according to the procureur-général at Rouen, that 'the communists [be offered] the possibility of becoming kings one day through the ballot. Society must not commit suicide.'[45] In May 1850 a new electoral law removed around one-third of the poorest voters from the rolls, with much higher proportions in the larger cities and industrial centres. In Paris the electorate was reduced from 225,192 to 80,894.[46] Adolphe Thiers saw this as the means by

[44] J. Bouillon, 'Les démocrates-socialistes aux élections de 1849', *Revue française de science politique*, 1956.

[45] 13 June 1850, AN BB30/334.

[46] R. Balland, 'De l'organisation à la restriction du suffrage universal en France' in J. Droz (ed.), *Réaction et suffrage universel en France et en Allemagne* (1848–50) (Paris, 1963).

which the 'vile multitude that has ... delivered over to every tyrant the liberty of every Republic' might be excluded from politics.[47] Significantly, however, Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, elected President of the Republic with massive popular support in December 1848, carefully distanced himself from this legislation.

Conservative leaders, listening to the presidential address to the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences in 1849, were reminded that the physical suppression of revolt was 'not enough'. It was necessary to 're-establish moral order to protect society and civilisation'.[48] Safety lay in punishing the wicked and in protecting those, the vast majority, who were simply weak and easily led astray. They had to be taught to respect a social hierarchy which reflected the natural and God-ordained fact that some people had more ability and moral strength than others. The task was difficult and would take time. Above all it depended on saving the younger generations through moral instruction.[49] The object of the 1833 Guizot law on primary education had been to internalise respect for social order. Now, in reaction against the proposals for free, universal, obligatory, and secular instruction previously prepared by the republican education minister Hippolyte Carnot, a committee chaired by Adolphe Thiers prepared legislation which would reinforce the dominant position of religion in the school curriculum. A notorious anticlerical, Thiers was determined to hand primary instruction over to the Roman Catholic church, accepting that it had become 'the great social rampart which must be defended at all costs'.[50]

The apparatus of the police state was also being constructed. Ever more intense action was directed at surviving left-wing newspapers and organisations. Prefects were instructed to implement the July 1849 law on clubs, in order 'to prohibit ... in an absolute manner any clubs or public meetings in which political affairs are discussed'. Relatively few political clubs had anyway survived the persecution beginning in June 1848. Political activists were harassed constantly.[51] Particular animosity was shown by the authorities towards *bourgeois* radicals perceived to be acting as 'class traitors.' Montagnard deputies were especially closely watched.

[47] Quoted J. Bury and R. Tombs, *Thiers, 1797–1877. A Political Life* (London 1986), p. 126.

[48] *Séances et travaux de l'Académie des sciences morales et politiques*, 16 (1849), p. 353.

[49] See e.g. Montalembert speech, 20 Sept. 1848, Assemblée nationale, *Compte rendu*, IV, p. 41.

[50] See G. Chenesseau (ed.), *La Commission extraparlementaire de 1849* (Orleans 1937), pp. 30–78; A. de Falloux, in Assemblée nationale, *Compte rendu*, I, 18 June 1849; Comte Beugnot, parliamentary *rapporteur*, 6 Oct. 1849, *ibid.*, II, p. 268.

[51] J. Merriman, *The Agony of the Republic: The Repression of the Left in Revolutionary France, 1848–51* (London 1978), p. 31.

When in November 1851 Martin Nadaud met between twenty and thirty *démocrates* in a café in Limoges, police spies were clearly present, and a subsequent meeting with 300 workers was dispersed quickly. In addition the homes of his known associates and those of friends and relatives were searched as part of a process by which his contacts were restricted and his influence undermined.[52] The attack on the press, so vital both as a means of propaganda and an organisational base, had begun after the June insurrection. Although censorship had not been re-introduced formally, it was an offence to attack the sacred principles of religion, the family, and property. The costs of publication were increased substantially by the re-establishment of caution money deposited to ensure that fines could be paid. The effect was to reduce the number of démocrate-socialiste newspapers. Between 12 December 1848 and the end of 1850, 335 court cases were heard against 185 republican newspapers. A local paper like *L'Egalité* of Auch (Gers) had its print run seized five times in four months (May–August 1849) for criticising the government or social system. In October it succumbed to the financial strain.[53] The distribution of the republican message through almanacs, pamphlets, and lithographs was obstructed similarly, with the peddlers who distributed this material throughout the countryside obliged to obtain licences and approval of their wares. Also under attack were the voluntary associations, which provided cover for illicit political activity. This policy drove even the more persistent activists into the back rooms of cafés and secret societies where, of course, their activities were more difficult to detect. The official response was the closure of suspect drinking places, which moreover offended against 'a moral code that rejects debauchery and protects family life'.[54] Songs, seditious shouts, the wearing of emblems like red scarves or dresses, the politicisation of funerals or traditional festivals were all prosecuted. Such acts as the symbolic execution at Vidauban (Var) of a dummy on Ash Wednesday 1850, a traditional means of expressing dissatisfaction with a member of a community, but which was now directed at the mayor and his Legitimist supporters, was followed by the arrest of those who in employing a guillotine had re-awakened memories of an earlier Terror.[55] These were the barbarians who threatened society.

The forms and effectiveness of repression reflected official perceptions of the danger, the efficiency of the agencies of repression, the scale of public support for police action, and the degree to which legal rights

[52] M. Nadaud, *Mémoires de Léonard* (Paris 1948).
[53] Merriman, *Agony*, p. 39.
[54] Prefect, 22 Jan. 1850, AN F1 CIII Gers 8.
[55] M. Agulhon, *The Republic in the Village* (Cambridge 1982), ch. 15.

were respected, as well as the left's own capacity for resistance. The future shape of opposition was determined by the surviving opportunities for political action, the manner in which local social networks and the means of mass communication facilitated organisation, the commitment and willingness of individual militants to risk prosecution, and the extent to which their propaganda inspired support. A social programme was presented, based upon a few simple, egalitarian slogans, which linked the solution of the pressing, day-to-day, problems faced by so many people to the political objectives of the démocrate-socialiste movement. As a means of escape from the burden of debt and the threat of expropriation, and of guaranteeing their dignity and independence, [56] peasants and artisans were promised cheap credit once the République démocratique et socialiste had been established and, together with propertiless workers, the right to work, free justice and education, and support for the establishment of producers' and consumers' co-operatives. These were the means of liberation offered to the *prolétariat*. Employment and the enjoyment of the fruits of one's labour were to be recognised as basic human rights. The appeal was to the *Peuple*, to the *Petits*, against the *gros* or the *blancs* – the Legitimists presented as partisans of a return to the *ancien régime*. An effort was made by the more moderate Montagnards to reassure the wealthy that their right to property would be respected. But clearly it was the *gros* who would pay for reform through progressive taxation, together with the nationalisation of the railways, canals, mines, and the insurance companies.[57] In the historical context this was a very radical programme. The ideal of a society of small, independent producers, that of the *sans-culottes* of 1793, was to be reconciled with a modern capitalistic economy.

Songs like the *Chant du d'epart* and the *Marseillaise* inherited from the first revolution along with new works like Pierre Dupont's *Chant du vote* or *Chant aux paysans* were especially effective means of inculcating slogans and diffusing a sense of unity. The first identified the democratic vote with the voice of God. Social justice was to be achieved through electoral victory in 1852.[58] Republican traditions were reinforced through appeals to the memory of the struggle against the aristocracy and the tyranny of kings. A sense of popular Jacobinism was revived, rich in symbols,

[56] See e.g. P. Jones, *Politics and Rural Society. The Southern Massif Central c. 1750–1880* (Cambridge 1985), pp. 318–22; P. Lévêque, 'Les campagnes françaises et la deuxième république. 50 ans d'historiographie', *Revue d'histoire du 19e siècle* (1997/1), pp. 83–4.

[57] See e.g. P. Dupont, E. Sue, and V. Schoelcher, *Le républicain des campagnes* (Paris 1849).

[58] P. McPhee, *The Politics of Rural Life: Political Mobilisation in the French Countryside, 1846–52* (Oxford 1992), p. 240; Price, *Second Republic*, pp. 264–5.

words, and images, in anniversaries and heroes. As repression intensified, weakening the démocrate-socialiste movement, it also encouraged a shift away from 'modern' electoral politics, from institutionalised protest, back to conspiratorial politics and the threat of violence. The more radical, although affirming in a confused and perhaps half-hearted fashion their confidence in victory in 1852, were impatient with a parliamentary system hijacked by conservative politicians. Some devoted themselves to the organisation of secret societies. They were willing to contemplate insurrection if the restrictions on voting rights were not lifted, or to head off a conservative or presidential *coup d'état*. They accepted that it might be necessary to vote with 'ballot in one hand and a gun in the other' in order to establish finally *la Vraie République*. Whatever their intentions, for many workers and peasants 1852 began to acquire millenarian overtones. The shouts of *vive la guillotine*, and songs and graffiti promising *vengeance finale* might have largely been bravado but the frequent brutality of popular language certainly frightened 'honest' citizens – all those with whom accounts might be settled finally in 1852. Where might this lead? Amongst conservatives an apocalyptic perspective of an eventual socialist electoral victory began to develop.

Recruited from the upper classes, senior officials and judges were certainly committed to the preservation of social order. As the president of the assizes at Montpellier pointed out in January 1849 the 'holy mission of the magistrate' was both to 'assure the reign of law [and] to defend ... the religion of our fathers, the family and property' against the assaults of anarchy and mad utopian dreams.[59] The concept of the rule of law, in these circumstances, effectively served to legitimise police activity. The larger towns with resident representatives of the central administration, commissaires de police, gendarmerie and usually military garrisons were relatively easy to control. However, there remained serious limits to the efficiency of political policing. These included legal procedures, which would not allow indefinite detention of suspects without reasonable evidence. Faucher's term as Minister of the Interior was brought to a premature end by parliamentary disquiet about his apparent contempt for legality and in spite of his welcome efforts to purge the administration and improve the policing of Paris.[60] Although efforts were made to select jurors carefully, on occasion they were unaccountably sympathetic towards those accused of political crimes. The numerical weakness of the

[59] Quoted J.-P. Royer, R. Martinage, and P. Lecocq, *Juges et notables au 19e siècle* (Paris 1982), p. 68.
[60] M. Papaud, 'La répression durant le ministère de Léon Faucher' in P. Vigier *et al.*, *Maintien de l'ordre et police en France et en Europe au 19e siècle* (Paris 1987), p. 100.

bureaucracy was another problem as was the frequent negligence, and even opposition, of subordinate officials, particularly the elected mayors of the numerous small towns and villages, who served as the key intermediaries between the state and community, controlling National Guard units and the village police. These amateur officials were often reluctant to 'betray' their neighbours and afraid of reprisals if they did. As a result, repressive legislation might not be implemented and higher authority could be starved of vital information. Frequent purges were necessary and illustrate the scale of the problem. Thus between 18 April 1849 and 20 February 1851 the Conseil d'Etat agreed to revoke 852 mayors and deputy-mayors and dissolved 276 municipal councils.[61]

Increasingly, the favoured solution to all these problems was the imposition of martial law. Thus, after disorders at Chalon (Saône-et-Loire) in May 1849 during which National Guards had remained inactive, the decision to disarm this force was followed by the deployment of 5,000 troops and a house-to-house search for arms. On the eve of the *coup d'état*, eight departments were already subject to martial law – five in the Lyon area, together with Ardèche, Nièvre, and Cher.[62] In most areas and particularly in Paris and Lyon, formerly the major centres of démocrate-socialiste activity, the level of coercion and the climate of fear it engendered were sufficient to ensure a substantial political demobilisation. Much of what remained was forced underground and rendered less effective. In the absence of a permanent organisational structure, the left fragmented. Yet it survived, particularly in relatively under-policed regions of the centre and south-east in which substantial mass support had previously been built up. In such regions the domiciliary searches and arbitrary arrests and the interference in communal affairs, which characterised sporadic police repression, were likely to provoke anger and encourage affiliation to secret societies.[63] As the 1852 legislative and presidential elections came closer, rumours of socialist plots abounded.

Conservative confidence was further threatened by the tension which continued to exist within the political elites. In spite of the death of Louis-Philippe in August 1850 and the likelihood that the childless Legitimist Pretender, the Comte de Chambord, would accept the late king's grandson as his heir, Legitimists and the more liberal Orleanists remained divided by personal loyalties and differing political and social programmes. When in March 1851 Adolphe Thiers suggested that the Orleanist Prince de Joinville stand for election to the presidency in 1852, the collective

[61] Merriman, *Agony*, p. 113. [62] *Ibid*., pp. 125–9. [63] Price, *Second Republic*, pp. 266–8.

response of Louis-Philippe's sons was that they were unable to accept the terms proffered by the Legitimists and moderate republicans.[64] The well-informed English visitor Nassau William Senior recorded Tocqueville's despairing observation that 'everyone is plotting against everyone'. Although the constitution debarred him from a second term of office, the failure of royalist 'fusion' left Louis-Napoleon, as the incumbent president, in an increasingly strong position. The conservative factions, unable to agree on an alternative, were frightened increasingly by the prospect of a démocrate-socialiste electoral victory in 1852.[65] Thiers' correspondent and fellow-historian Mignet conceded that the prospect terrified everyone.[66] The *spectre rouge* was coming to seem very real. There was a growing willingness to accept ever more extreme measures to safeguard social order.

Bonaparte himself was determined not to hand over power with his historic 'mission,' the regeneration of France, unachieved. Carefully orchestrated provincial tours and Bonapartist propaganda sought to increase popular support. In a speech delivered at Dijon in May 1851 the president observed that

> France neither wishes for a return to the old order of things, in no matter what form that may be disguised, nor for ventures into dangerous and impractical utopianism. It is because I am the most natural enemy of both these alternatives that France has given me its confidence .... Indeed if my government has not been able to bring about all the improvements it had in mind, that must be blamed on the devious conduct of the various factions. For three years ... I have always had the support of the Assembly when it has been a question of combating disorder by repressive measures. But, whenever I have wanted to do good and improve conditions for the people, the Assembly has denied me its support.'[67]

Most conservative deputies had come to favour revision of the constitution to allow Bonaparte a second term of office. However, when constitutional revision was approved by the National Assembly by 446 votes to 270 this fell short of the three-quarters majority required. The president was forced to conclude that he would have to mount a *coup d'état*. This is what many conservatives had come to desire. Odilon Barrot's son-in-law, Treilhard, confirmed that almost all his acquaintances, bankers and landowners – both noble and bourgeois – whilst

[64] 'Note' from Princes d'Orléans to Thiers, n.d., but probably March 1851, in BN naf 20618.
[65] N. W. Senior, *Journals kept in France and Italy from 1848 to 1852* (London 1871), I, p. 275 – 7 July 1850.
[66] BN naf 20618.
[67] Quoted E. Ténot, *Paris en décembre 1851: Etude historique sur le Coup d'Etat* (Paris 1868).

ridiculing Louis-Napoleon's imperialist pretensions nevertheless considered him as 'the man around whom we need to rally, until things are sufficiently stable to move to a definitive form of government, which will most certainly not be his'.[68]

THE *COUP D'ETAT*

As head of the executive of a centralised state, in which officials and army officers were committed to passive obedience, Louis-Napoleon was well placed to mount a *coup d'état* on 2 December 1851. The decisive factor was the army. Success depended on moving trusted personnel into strategic positions. The new War Minister, General Saint-Arnaud, was a *déclassé* aristocrat extremely hostile to any form of democracy and with a complete contempt for politicians.[69] The *coup* was carefully planned. On 30 November a practice alert permitted a dress rehearsal in major provincial centres. Contingency plans existed to deal with a possible *guerre des rues* in the capital.[70] General Magnan, commanding in Paris, was promised a written order, in effect absolving him of personal responsibility, as were the twenty generals who swore their loyalty to the President in his office on 26 November.[71] Although senior officers were predominantly monarchist rather than Bonapartist, and some generals were unwilling to become directly involved, they would obey orders.[72] Their conservative and anti-parliamentary reflexes made it all the easier.[73] In implementing the *coup*, control over the semaphore telegraph system would allow the government a crucial time advantage in terms of the dispatch of instructions and the receipt of information.[74] Preventative arrests removed potential leaders of monarchist opposition like Adolphe Thiers and the generals Changarnier, Bedeau, and Lamoricière, as well as republicans who might organise resistance. Although directed against both the monarchist groups represented in the National Assembly and

[68] Undated letter in AN 271 AP 4.

[69] W. Serman, 'Le corps des officiers français sous la deuxième république et le second empire', Doctorat d'Etat, Université de Paris-Sorbonne 1976, p. 1291.

[70] O. Pelletier, '*Figures imposées*. Pratiques et représentations de la barricade pendant les journées de décembre 1851' in A. Corbin and J.-M. Mayeur (eds.), *La barricade* (Paris 1997), pp. 253–5.

[71] G. Bapst, *Le Maréchal Canrobert* (Paris 1896), I, p. 525.

[72] See e.g. MacMahon letter to Pélissier, 10 Dec. 1851, AN 235 AP 3.

[73] See e.g. Colonel de Beaufort de Hautpoul to Pélissier in P. Guiral and R. Brunon (eds.), *Aspects de la vie politique et militaire en France au milieu du 19e siècle à travers la correspondence reçue par le Maréchal Pélissier* (Paris 1968), p. 227.

[74] See e.g. H. Gachot, 'Le rôle politique du télégraphe à Strasbourg en 1851 et 1852: le règne des dépêches politique', *Annuaire de la société des amis du Vieux-Strasbourg* (1983), p. 122.

the radical republicans, the fact that only the latter offered resistance would give the *coup* an essentially anti-republican character. In this respect it could be seen as the culmination of a long period of repression directed at the left.

In Paris only very limited resistance occurred, due to preventative arrests, and to obvious military preparedness. The predominantly conservative deputies, including Guizot, Thiers, and Tocqueville, who gathered at the town hall of the 10th arrondissement, refused to rally to the president, but were unwilling to contemplate more than symbolic resistance to a *coup d'état* which promised to establish the strong, authoritarian government which they believed the situation demanded. As the Legitimist Paul Benoist d'Azy wrote to his father Denys, one of the four vice-presidents of the now dissolved National Assembly:

> we are caught between the regime of the sabre which has violated the constitution it was sworn to uphold and the hideous socialists. There is really no choice, and just as we supported the Republic we will accept the existing government ... if it can persuade us to forget its origins by means of energetic action against the socialists and vigorous encouragement of business.[75]

In spite of the appeals of a group of around sixty Montagnard deputies – including Victor Hugo, Carnot, Favre, Michel de Bourges, Schoelcher, and Flotte, as well as Jules Leroux and August Desmoulins on behalf of a *comité central des co-opérations* – few workers were prepared to risk a repetition of the June insurrection to defend the rights of a conservative assembly against a president who now promised to restore manhood suffrage, who presented himself as the defender of popular sovereignty, and who enjoyed still the prestige that went with the name Bonaparte.[76] Nevertheless, some seventy barricades were constructed in the rue du faubourg Saint-Antoine and the streets adjoining the rues Saint-Denis, Rambuteau, and Transnonain. The army repeated its tactics of June 1848 and again deployed large, well-supplied columns. Perhaps 30,000 troops faced 1,200 insurgents.[77] The unequal struggle was short-lived. Subsequently the official *Moniteur universel* announced that 27 soldiers and 380 insurgents had been killed, although the latter figure was inflated by the volleys fired by nervous troops at peaceful, and mainly

[75] R. R. Locke, and R. E. Cubberly, 'A new *Mémoire* on the French *coup d'état* of December 1851', *French Historical Studies* (1982), p. 584.

[76] Price, *Second Republic*, pp. 288–9.

[77] Baron Cochet de Savigny (editor of *Journal de la gendarmerie*), *Notice historique sur la révolution du mois de décembre 1851* (Paris 1852); Pelletier, 'Figures', pp. 256–7.

middle-class, civilian spectators.[78] Only short-lived demonstrations occurred in other cities. In Lille, the republican newspaper *Messager du Nord* called for resistance on 3 December. The workers who gathered on the *grande-place* that evening were easily dispersed. News of the failure of resistance in Paris discouraged further efforts.[79] In Dijon a crowd of 400 to 500 gathered outside the railway station in the afternoon waiting for news from the capital. In the meantime the local démocrate-socialiste leaders were arrested whilst waiting at a printer's for leaflets calling for resistance. As a result the militants of Beaune and other little towns in the region, who habitually followed the lead of Dijon, would also remain inactive. Their hesitation was in marked contrast with the obvious determination displayed by the authorities.[80] Troops had been concentrated in the larger towns and once their security had been assured were deployed in mobile columns in potentially disaffected rural areas. The disadvantage of this tactic was that it allowed time for insurrection to develop in some under-policed parts of the countryside.

Unexpectedly, the situation for the government was to prove much more serious in rural areas than in the cities. Thus around 100,000 men, in some 900 rural communes and small towns, mainly in the centre (Allier, Nièvre), south-west (Lot-et-Garonne, Gers), and especially the south-east (Drôme, Ardèche, Basses-Alpes, Hérault, Var), were involved in some form of protest and as many as 70,000 from at least 775 communes actually took up arms, with over 27,000 becoming involved in acts of violence. The insurgents came from regions of predominantly small-scale peasant farming in which the difficulties caused by growing population pressure on resources had been intensified by the persistent problems of market-oriented activities like vine and silk cultivation, forestry, and rural industry. Insurgent zones were not generally the most backward and isolated but were located on the plains and in river valleys where effective communications had provided access to markets in places like Béziers (Hérault) a centre of the wine trade, or the southern textile towns of Lodève, Mazamet, and Bédarieux, with their extensive hinterland links through the 'putting-out' organisation of the woollens industry.[81] In the north, north-east, west, and most of the Paris region, in contrast, there was little disorder. These were, in the main, either the economically most

[78] See e.g. L. Girard, 'La troupe face aux insurrections parisiennes (1830–48)' in Vigier *et al.*, *Maintien de l'ordre et police* , pp. 57–60.

[79] Commission mixte. Dépt. du Nord n.d., AN BB30/398.

[80] Report OC gendarmerie at Dijon, 4 Dec. 1851, AHG F1/51; see also e.g. PG Nancy for long reports on similar incidents, 22 Jan. and 1 Feb. 1852, AN BB30/381.

[81] T. Margadant, *French Peasants in Revolt: The Insurrection of 1851* (London 1979), chs. 1 and 10.

advanced regions of commercial farming in which industrial development was beginning to relieve population pressure and/or areas in which traditional elites, supported by the church, remained dominant. Of considerable significance in determining whether resistance took place was the extent to which clandestine démocrate-socialiste organisations had survived. These offered the means by which mobilisation could occur in defence of the République démocratique et sociale and the new era of security and happiness which had been promised for 1852. Only where a clandestine organisation, with a hierarchical structure based on local towns and market centres, survived was large-scale mobilisation possible. The ease with which this occurred in some areas, suggests that the notion of resisting a *coup* or, more likely, seizing the vote, arms in hand, in 1852, was a familiar one. It makes it easier to comprehend why, initially, insurgents were convinced that an easy victory was assured. If, as they were told, the same thing was happening in countless communities throughout France and the army would not resist, how could they fail? The greatest determination was to be found amongst artisan and peasant militants. Probably they were less aware of the danger than the middle-class leaders who, now that the crisis had arrived, often had to be pressed into taking action against their better judgement. The desire of these middle-class leaders to defend democratic politics was inhibited by legalism and a fear of unleashing anarchic popular violence. They would have preferred to await instructions from Paris. Bad news soon confirmed the wisdom of their hesitation.[82]

One obvious characteristic of the insurrection was its localism. Previous repression had fragmented démocrate-socialiste organisation and almost certainly prevented the development of more widespread resistance. Preventive arrests had the same effect. Typically risings occurred when *démo-soc* majorities, well organised in *Montagnard* societies, were able to dominate small communities through village and kin-based social networks, and where a shared belief in the justice of their cause, and an initial enthusiasm based on incomplete and misleading information, created contagious feelings of unanimity. Following the arrival of messages from leaders in nearby towns, gatherings of local leaders occurred in cafés or in public spaces and decided to call out their followers by ringing the alarm (*tocsin*) on the church bells or beating the *générale* on the communal drum. Emissaries were sent to outlying farms and hamlets to call or if necessary coerce the *frères et amis* into gathering, arms

[82] See e.g. M. Vigreux, *Paysans et notables du Morvan au 19^e siècle* (Château-Chinon 1987), pp. 341–4.

in hand. Frequently *bourgeois* leaders appear to have been desperate to retain control of a popular uprising they were afraid might turn into a violent *jacquerie*. At any rate, as in the Gers, where some 150 to 200 militants were able to mobilise 8,000 to 10,000 members of secret societies, large groups of young men gathered, with whatever weapons they could find, and marched off behind the communal flag and drum towards the arrondissement and departmental *chefs-lieux* apparently inspired by the belief that the same thing was happening throughout France. Such rumours were typical of the distortion caused by the oral transmission of information. Thus on 4–5 December, as the 'news' spread, columns moved off in military order, often led by National Guard officers or former soldiers, to assume authority in captured town halls and government offices. In Basses-Alpes 7,000 to 8,000 men occupied Digne, the departmental capital. At Clamecy (Nièvre) and Bédarieux (Hérault), where social relations were inflamed already, violent action was taken against gendarmes and 'men of order.' Elsewhere, 'class enemies' were frequently disarmed. In all, only nine gendarmes, nine soldiers, and four civilians were killed by provincial insurgents. The casualties were mainly on their side. Insurgent columns were no match for the military forces belatedly sent against them. Most melted away without fighting, their morale shattered. They had been assured that the soldiers would join them. Some 6,000 men marching on Béziers shouted *Vive la ligne* on encountering troops. The latter responded with a volley which killed or wounded 70. The 300 insurgents who attacked 30 soldiers protecting Crest (Drôme) were dispersed by canon fire, which left 6 or 7 dead.[83] It is hardly surprising if initial euphoria turned to demoralisation once insurgents became aware of their isolation and inevitable defeat

Misery and disappointed expectations, although major causes of unrest, had not in some deterministic sense led to insurrection. The likelihood of resistance reflected the ways in which these discontents were perceived and explained. It depended on popular conceptions of justice, informed by démocrate-socialiste propaganda, as well as on previous experience of collective action and of the costs imposed by state repression. The naïveté of the beliefs of many of the insurgents should not be allowed to detract from their very real faith in progress and the triumph of democracy. If their resistance to the *coup* had much in common with 'primitive' traditions of popular protest it was inspired nevertheless by political ideology. *La Bonne, la République démocrate et sociale* had been presented as the means of establishing an egalitarian and just society.

[83] Price, *Second Republic*, p. 307.

For many miserable people 1852 had represented hope of escape from poverty and insecurity. The under-employed rural artisans and agricultural labourers, the impoverished weavers of Bédarieux, the *flotteurs* and forestry workers around Clamecy (Nièvre) exploited by the wood merchants supplying Paris, the harshly treated sharecroppers of the Allier, and the small peasant farmers afraid of expropriation for debt, were defending an ideal of *liberté* conceived of less in terms of abstract ideals than of measures meaningful in relation to their everyday lives. They were certainly not defending the republican constitution of 1851 but rather the ideal Republic of 1852.

The insurrection was followed by a settling of accounts. Over 26,000 suspected republican militants were arrested. The authorities were able to complete the work of repression without paying too much attention to the rule of law. The fright they had received, their bitter hatred of the démocrate-socialistes and their utter inability to understand their motives is clear from the insulting phraseology contained in the police interrogation records.[84] The civil and military authorities offered a moral explanation of the insurrection in terms of the poor and ignorant being led astray by the greedy, envious, and perverted. Official policy was to concentrate on punishing the ringleaders and the more active participants. Of those arrested, 10.6 per cent belonged to the middle-class professions (including 1,570 *rentiers*, 325 doctors, 225 lawyers) and only a minority were peasants (5,423 *cultivateurs*, 1,850 *journaliers*). The majority were artisans and workers in the traditional trades (building workers, shoemakers, tailors, etc.). Peasant participation in the insurrection was undoubtedly far more significant than these figures suggest.[85] If arrested, many of the rank and file were soon released. Subsequently, and taking advantage of their personal and family contacts, many middle-class professionals were also able to secure their own release to the great disgust of the police authorities.[86] Most had been frightened anyway into political quiescence – at least for the immediate future – throwing themselves on the mercy of the authorities as the only way of protecting themselves against the essential arbitrariness of the police and military.[87] The contrast with the dream of 1852 was only too marked. What was left of the démocrate-socialiste press was closed, as were the *cabarets*, which had so often served as *rendez-vous des individus dangereux* .

[84] See e.g. sessions of Premier Conseil de guerre de la 10e Division militaire séant à Montpellier, session 25 May 1852, *Affaire de Bédarieux*, 1852, pp. 26–7.
[85] For detailed analysis see Price, *Second Republic*, pp. 292–6.
[86] See e.g. Prefect, 8 July 1852, AN F1 CIII Jura 14.
[87] See e.g. GOC 8th DM, 11 Jan. 1852, AHG F1/69.

In most regions the *coup* was received with indifference or positively welcomed. Amongst notables, initial objections to the replacement of a liberal parliamentary regime by a Bonapartist dictatorship soon ceased. For a wide cross-section of the population, after long years of crisis the promise of strong government was very attractive. The acts of resistance to the *coup* seemed to confirm its necessity as a means of preventing socialist revolution, of avoiding 'a dictatorship of brigandage and blood' (*Courrier de la Drôme et de l'Ardèche*, 9 Dec. 1851). According to the new Interior Minister, the Comte de Morny, the insurrections were clear evidence of 'the social war which would have broken out in 1852'. An editorial in the *Courrier du Tarn-et-Garonne* is equally revealing in admitting that its author had not previously believed official warnings about secret-society activity – 'we thought in our naïve way that, apart from the very natural excitement of the election, the year 1852 would pass by very quietly ... But when we saw the peasants of Var, Ardèche, Basses-Alpes up in insurrection, then we did see the real menace to the country.' (18 Dec. 1851). Conservatives had been badly frightened by grossly exaggerated accounts of 'red' atrocities, of the murder and mutilation of gendarmes, rape and pillage, and the official presentation of the risings as a form of mindless *jacquerie*. Now they thanked God for their deliverance. The church itself gave thanks in solemn *Te Deums*. According to the Bishop of Nancy in an address to the President, the 'triumph of your cause ... is that of France and Religion ... God wishes to use you for his own purposes.'[88] Salvation seemed to be offered by the police state. Although the *coup* was undoubtedly an illegal act, which caused widespread terror and considerable suffering for many of those arrested, as well as their families,[89] it nevertheless hardly bears comparison with the brutality of twentieth-century dictatorship. This was 'dictatorship' understood in the Roman sense by a classically educated elite, as a short and exceptional period when the rule of law was suspended. Bonaparte himself subsequently confirmed this at the opening session of the new Corps législatif on 29 March 1852 when he announced that 'the dictatorship that the people had conferred upon me ends today'.[90] Martial law, which had been imposed on thirty-two departments, had ended two days previously.

Of course this did not end the process of repression. A complex of old and new laws, and especially their more rigorous enforcement, effectively

[88] 10 December 1851, AN AB XIX 173.

[89] See e.g. V. Wright, 'The *coup d'état* of December 1851: repression and the limits to repression' in R. Price, *Revolution and Reaction. 1848 and the Second French Republic* (London 1975).

[90] Procès-Verbaux de la séance d'ouverture de la session et du Corps législatif pour l'année 1852, AN 400 AP 93.

deterred political opposition. The authorities remained nervous, responding in exaggerated fashion to drunken outbursts and gatherings of 'suspicious' persons.[91] In many communities tension survived. When the prefect of the Hérault visited the graves of murdered gendarmes in Bédarieux, the streets were lined with silent and hostile workers. Government supporters remained frightened and intimidated.[92] Village mayors, the essential representatives of 'authority' at local level were instructed to display greater firmness.[93] Lists of political suspects were to be maintained in each department and regularly updated, to facilitate arrests should these ever be judged to be necessary. Detailed military contingency plans were prepared to deal with mass insurrection in Paris and Lyon.[94] Surveillance of the press and of former militants and their likely meeting places continued. Domiciliary searches, for concealed arms or subversive literature, were frequent. The wearing of red clothing could still lead to arrest.[95] Control of the press was a major preoccupation. Conservatives blamed its corrupting influence for much of the disorder since 1848. The new press law of 17 February 1852 codified the legislation introduced since 1814 – prior authorisation, caution money, stamp duty, suspension, etc. – and reinforced the discretionary powers of the administration, forcing editors to engage in rigorous self-censorship if their newspapers were to survive.

On 20 December 1851 a plebiscite was held to sanction the extension of the Prince-President's authority. The electorate was asked to vote on whether 'the people wish to maintain the authority of Louis-Napoleon and delegate to him the powers necessary to establish a constitution'. This appeal to popular sovereignty was to be a characteristic of the new regime. Louis-Napoleon was determined to secure a large majority as a means of legitimising his actions. It was made clear to all officials that their continued employment depended upon enthusiastic campaigning. The basic theme was the choice between 'civilisation and barbarism, society and chaos'.[96] In place of the era of disorder which opened in 1848, a new period of order, peace, and prosperity was

[91] See e.g. GOC 9th, DM 26–31 March 1852, AHG F1/69.
[92] AN F1 CIII Hérault 15. [93] See e.g. prefect, 3 April 1852, AN F1 CIII Saône-et-Loire 13.
[94] See G. Carrot, *Le maintien de l'ordre en France depuis la fin de l'Ancien R´egime jusqu'à 1968* (Paris 1986), II, p. 560.
[95] E.g. PG Montpellier, 26 April 1852, AN BB 30/403.
[96] See e.g. anon, *La solution donnée par le Président de la R´epublique aux sinistres complications politiques qui pressaient la France avant le 2 décembre 1851, peut-elle être considérée comme définitive?* (Paris 1852), AN AB XIX 687 Collection Duménil.

promised. At the same time every effort was made to eliminate signs of opposition. The result was predictable. Coercion was employed but primarily the result was due to the immense popularity of the Prince-President in the countryside. He was perceived to be the only safeguard against renewed revolution and additionally offered protection against the restoration of the *ancien régime*. The strength of latent Bonapartist sentiment was clearly evident. Even areas which had voted 'red' in 1849, like the Nièvre and Cher, were distinguished now by their ardent Bonapartism.[97] Nationally, 7,500,000 voted 'yes', 640,000 'no', and 1,500,000 abstained. Ominously, opposition was concentrated in the major cities. In Paris, 132,000 voters registered their approval, whilst 80,000 rejected the proposal and 75,000 did not vote. Rejection was evident especially in the working-class *quartiers*. In the industrial Nord significant opposition was registered in Lille, although in the mining and metallurgical centres of Anzin and Denain 79 per cent and 84 per cent respectively of an overwhelmingly working-class electorate voted in favour. Two forms of opposition manifested themselves: a vote 'no' mostly in areas of strong republicanism and amongst the middle classes and skilled workers in the towns of the east and south-east which had not been involved in the insurrection and thus managed to avoid the most intense repression; and abstention, particularly in parts of the west and Provence where popular Legitimism survived. Many Legitimists voted 'yes', as did many former republican supporters either in the perceived interest of social order or from fear of official reprisals.[98] The conservative newspaper *L'Union bourguignonne* typically warned that 'those who vote NO declare themselves accomplices in the crimes of the demagogues' (16 Dec. 1851). The future Marshal Niel represented senior army officers in expressing both unease about the arrest of conservative deputies and the workings of the military courts, and the belief that 'in present circumstances, a reasonable man cannot vote *non*: that would be to side with the bandits'.[99] The representatives of big business also welcomed the *coup* as the essential means of restoring confidence and as a prelude to a renewed wave of investment. Relieved of their terror, the upper classes celebrated carnival in 1852 with great enthusiasm.

[97] See e.g. B. Ménager, *Les Napoléons du peuple* (Paris 1988), pp. 112–14; F. Bluche, 'L'adhésion plébiscitaire' in F. Bluche (ed.) *Le prince, le peuple et le droit. Autour des plébiscites de 1851 et 1852* (Paris 2000).

[98] Price, *Second Republic*, pp. 321–3; Bluche, 'L'adhésion plébiscitaire', and L. Tilmant, 'Les gens du nord: l'illusion d'une résistance et la réalité de l'adhésion' in Bluche, *Le prince*.

[99] J. Lacombe de la Tour (ed.), *Correspondance inédite* (Paris 1912), p. 208, letter of 17 Dec. 1851.

CONCLUSION

The introduction of manhood suffrage in 1848 represented an important stage in mass politicisation. It had encouraged widespread political mobilisation. In spite of subsequent repression, it was during these years that the idea of the republic gained precision and mass support. This had aroused fear of social revolution. The *coup* had, however, smashed republican aspirations. For the second time a Bonaparte, supported by the army, threatened to destroy a republic. Indeed, within a year, in far less dramatic circumstances and following another carefully orchestrated campaign, a second plebiscite (on 21–22 November 1852) was held. In October, in a widely publicised speech made at Bordeaux, the Prince-President had promised peace, order, and reconciliation. Returning to Paris he was welcomed at the Gare d'Austerlitz by enthusiastic crowds and processed to the Tuileries Palace along boulevards strewn with flowers, passing under a succession of triumphal arches. In all, 7,824,000 voters approved the re-establishment of the hereditary empire which was proclaimed on 2 December, the anniversary of the Battle of Austerlitz.

The political solution to the threat of revolution has often been described as Bonapartist. As Marx suggested, this involved abdication of political power on the part of both traditional elites and their liberal bourgeois competitors for power, in return for protection of their vital interests – most notably private property, the basis of their social power – by the state. According to Marx, the new regime was 'not like its predecessors, the legitimate monarchy, the constitutional monarchy, and the parliamentary republic, one of the political forms of bourgeois society, it is ... its *ultimate* form. It is the state power of modern class rule.'[100] Gramsci's prison notebooks suggested a variant of this – *Caesarism* – 'in which a great personality is entrusted with the task of "arbitration" over a historical-political situation characterised by an equilibrium of forces heading towards catastrophe.'[101] Once organised opposition had been crushed using military force, that is, 'the manifest use of violence,' a shift occurred to 'the pervasive use of administrative power'[102] employing growing numbers of civil servants, policemen, clergy, and schoolteachers. The popularity of the head of state was enhanced by the 'invention' of ritual and by the provincial tours, facilitated by railway travel, which

[100] K. Marx and F. Engels, *Writings on the Paris Commune* (New York 1971), pp. 37, 46.
[101] Q. Hoare and G. N. Smith (eds.), *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (London 1971), p. 219.
[102] J. Gledhill, *Power and its Disguises. Anthropological Perspectives on Politics* (London 1994), p. 19.

sought to 'personalise the bonds between ruler and common folk'.[103] Subsequently, and more dangerously the Emperor, invariably wearing military uniform, would pose as the symbol of national unity and as the supreme warlord. This resurgence of the monarchical state in the second half of the nineteenth century was exemplified daily by its judicial and police activities and glorified in school, church, and in the developing mass media. These were measures more appropriate to the emerging mass society created by industrialisation and urbanisation. In practice, much of the support offered to Bonaparte was conditional. Thus the liberal Catholic Comte de Montalembert insisted that 'To vote against Louis Napoleon is to support Revolution ... To vote for Louis Napoleon, is not to approve everything he has done, it is to choose between him and the total ruin of France.'[104] The independence of the state would continue to be circumscribed by the power and influence of social elites and its own recruitment of key personnel from within their ranks. The dominant positions they retained would thus ensure that they preserved the 'ability to set the terms under which other groups and classes would operate'[105] and the likelihood of a revival of opposition to the Bonapartist regime.

[103] D. Barclay, *Frederick William IV and the Prussian Monarchy 1840–61* (Oxford 1995), p. 12.
[104] *L'Univers*, 14 Dec. 1851.
[105] G. Domhoff, *Who Rules America Now?* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1983), p. 2.

PART II

State and society