

The Confessions of a Revolutionary

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[working translations by Shawn P. Wilbur]

IV.

1789 — 1830.

ACTS OF GOVERNMENT.

Children are taught morality with fables: peoples learn philosophy through the manifestations of history.

Revolutions are the apologues of nations.

History is a gargantuan and magical fable where the laws of society are taught to us in the marvelous adventures of a character alternately grotesque and sublime, worthy of both love and pity, whom the ancient Orientals called ADAM, Humanity. Adam is accompanied by a good and a bad angel: the latter, which I call Fantasy,¹ similar to Proteus, deceives us under a thousand figures, seduces us and pushes us to evil; but we are constantly led back to good by our good genius, which is Experience.

Thus, the events in which Providence likes to make us appear both as actors and spectators, having nothing definitive about them, are *unreal*; they are myths in action, great dramas that are played out, sometimes for centuries, on the vast stage of the world, for the refutation of our prejudices and the destruction of our detestable practices. All these revolutions, of which we have had the moving spectacle for sixty years, this succession of dynasties, this procession of ministries, these insurrectionary movements, these electoral agitations, these parliamentary coalitions, these diplomatic intrigues, so much noise and so much smoke, all this, I say, has had no other purpose than to make known to our amazed nation this elementary and always paradoxical truth, that it is not by their governments that the peoples are saved, but that they are lost. For more than half a century we have been watching this divine and human comedy without understanding it: it is time for a little philosophy to give us its interpretation.

¹ *Fantaisie* could also simply be rendered as *Imagination*. — TRANSLATOR

The power had lasted in France for fourteen centuries. For fourteen centuries it had witnessed the efforts of the Third Estate to constitute the commune and establish liberty. It had itself sometimes taken part in the movement, by overthrowing feudalism, and creating, through despotism, national unity. It had even recognized, on several occasions, the imprescriptible right of the people, by convoking, for the need of its treasury, the *estates-general*. But it had only watched with terror these assemblies where a voice spoke which, at times, no longer had anything divine about it, a voice which was all Reason, the voice, the great voice of the people. The moment had come to complete this great Revolution. The country demanded it with empire. The government could not plead ignorance; it had to comply or perish.

But, does power reason? Is it capable of considering the fact and the right? is it established to serve liberty?

Who made the Revolution in 1789? — The Third Estate.

Who opposed the Revolution in 1789? — The government.

The government, in spite of the initiative that it had been forced to take, was so opposed to the Revolution in 1789 that it was necessary, in order to compel it, to call the nation to arms. July 14 was a demonstration where the people dragged the government to the bar, like a sacrificial victim. The days of October, the federations of 90 and 91, the return from Varennes, etc., were only a repetition of this triumphal march, which ended on January 21.

Of course, I am far from claiming that the people, who wanted the Revolution, would not have been right to make it: I am only saying that the government, by resisting, obeyed its nature — and this is what our fathers did not understand. Instead of punishing a man, instead of condemning a form, it was the principle that had to be touched, the government that had to be offered as a burnt offering to the Revolution. It was necessary to ask, not if the dynasty of the Bourbons, if the constitutional monarchy, could serve the new interests; but if the political order, the organization of a public authority, of whatever nature, was compatible with the ideas that the Revolution had just consecrated. The federations or fraternizations that were formed spontaneously on all sides, got things started: they proved that the sovereignty of the People is nothing other than the harmony of interests, resulting from a free contract, and that the centralization of powers, such at least as it is understood and practiced by our statesmen, is the very alienation of liberties. Then, instead of returning to the political regime, we would have sought the economic regime; instead of reconstituting the Power, we would have sought the method to follow in order to see its end sooner. After the negation, the affirmation: what the People had just destroyed, it replaced, not by a patching-up, but by another institution.

It was not so, the governmental prejudice was still too powerful for the revolutionary idea to be understood in its fullness. The movement, barely begun, stopped. All the revolutionary events that we have witnessed since July 14, 1789, have had this concern as their cause.

The power, it was said, has existed since time immemorial. Government is indispensable to society. Some, such as Robespierre, foresaw the possibility of modifying its form: no one would have wanted to suppress it. The old regime officially abolished, it was believed that everything was done, and they set about restoring power, but only on other bases. Power had always, and with good reason, been posed as being of divine right: it was claimed, strange to say, that it emanated from social law, from the sovereignty of the people. People imagined, with the aid of a lie, that they could reconcile power with progress: they were soon undeceived.

Convention. — What comes from God cannot be claimed by man. The power remained what it was: the legitimate son of Jupiter could only be the bastard child of the sovereignty of the people. Louis XVI, having become, in spite of himself, constitutional monarch, was the greatest enemy of the Constitution, moreover the most honest man in the world. Was it his fault? By confirming his hereditary legitimacy, the Constitution implicitly recognized in him the right which it had claimed to abrogate; and this right was in formal contradiction with the tenor of the contract. Conflict was therefore inevitable between the prince and the nation. No sooner had the new Constitution been put into effect than the government began to obstruct the Revolution. A new convert, he could not get used to constitutional fictions. What did I say? It was in the Constitution itself that he found the means of resisting the Revolution. Another day was needed to overcome this refractory spirit, which was doing nothing less than invoking foreign aid against rebellious subjects. On August 10, 1792, the second act of the Revolution was played out between the men of the movement and those of the resistance.

From that moment, the will of the people no longer encountering any obstacle, the Revolution seemed to establish itself as sovereign. For some years the Convention, to which power had been devolved with the mission of protecting the conquered liberty and of remaking the political Constitution, lived on the energy given to it by the insurrection of August 10, the threats of the counter-revolution and the wishes of 89. As long as it fought for the unity of the Republic, the liberty of the country, the equality of the citizens, the Convention, dominated by the Jacobins, seemed great and sublime. But, admire the power of principles! Scarcely assembled to avenge the Revolution for the perjuries of royalty, these men were seized with a veritable fury for government. Measures for public safety, freed from legal formalities, had become necessary: soon the good pleasure of the

dictators was the whole of their reason; they only knew how to proscribe and guillotine. They were the power, and they acted like kings. Absolutism revived in their decrees and in their works. Yet they were philosophers!... It was necessary to react against this despotic frenzy: 9 Thermidor was a warning given by the country to the Jacobin dictatorship. As long as the people had feared for the conquests of the Revolution, for the independence of the territory and the unity of the Republic, they had tolerated the despotism of the committees. The day when the Terror became a system, when this provisional blood seemed to want to become definitive, when utopia penetrated the councils, when Robespierre, the usurper of plebeian vengeance, was no longer decidedly anything but a sect leader, on that day a crisis became inevitable. The logic of the virtuous reformer pushed him to suppress men at the same time as abuses. Moderates and ultras leagued against him; and the People let it happen. It was the power that doomed the Jacobins....

Directory. — The Convention is succeeded by the Directory. After the extremes, the means; after the terrorists, it was the turn of the *moderates*. And it will be the same as long as the political *fantasia* delivers society to the rocking blows of the parties. Now it is in the nature of all authority to blindly obey the principle that gave birth to it: the Directory, like Louis XVI and the Convention, soon provided the evidence. Robespierre's hand had seemed too rough; that of the Directory was found too weak. Whose fault, again? The Directory, born under the impressions of Thermidor, had emerged from a thought of laxity; never, despite the republicanism of Carnot, the firmness of Lareveillere-Lépeaux, the support of General Bonaparte and the *coup d'état* of Fructidor, could he adopt the attitude of a strong power and obtain respect. What the need of the moment had made him, he became in spite of himself, more and more. The Directory was summed up in Barras, and Barras was the whole corruption of Thermidor. Power, if it is not God, is a brute or an automaton: the will, the reason of individuals can do nothing about it. Raised in power, they themselves soon become what power wants them to be. Louis XIV, representative of an impossible transaction, lies to the Constitution; the Convention, created for peril, no longer includes anything but torture; its intelligence had retired entirely to the scaffold. The Directory, which had been asked to rest, fell into lethargy. When Bonaparte returned from Egypt, the Revolution was in peril, and, as always, through the incapacity of the government. So we must recognize, perhaps to our shame, that the 18th Brumaire was much less the work of the general than of the immense majority of the country. The government was no longer functioning. They changed it: that is all. The Consulate therefore established itself, like the Directory, like the Convention, like the Monarchy of 1790, for the Revolution; even if it meant falling in its turn, when by

the deployment of its principle, it managed to raise an obstacle to the Revolution. In Bonaparte the Revolution was therefore, as we have said since, once again incarnated. Was it going to be better served by this new representative of power? This is what we soon saw. Let us follow, under Bonaparte, the fortunes of the government.

Consulate — Empire. — The illusion, then as today, was to count, for public liberty and prosperity, much more on the action of the power than on the initiative of the citizens; to attribute to the State an intelligence and an efficiency that do not belong to it; to look for A MAN, in whom one could recover completely from the care of the Revolution. Fatigue, moreover, was general; we sighed for rest. The country seemed like an assembly of stockholders awaiting a manager: Bonaparte presented himself; he was elected by acclamation.

But power has its logic, an inflexible logic, which does not yield to the hopes of public opinion, which never allows itself to be diverted from the principle, and does not permit accommodations with the circumstances. It is the logic of the bullet, which strikes the mother, the child, the old man, without deviating from a line; the logic of the tiger who gorges himself with blood, because his appetite wants blood; the logic of the mole that digs its tunnel; the logic of fate. Under the Reformed Monarchy, the government had been unfaithful; under the Convention, it had been violent; under the Directory, it was powerless. Now they wanted a strong power to lead the Revolution: they were served all they could wish for. The power in the hand of Bonaparte became so strong that there was soon no place in the Republic except for the man who represented it. The Revolution, it is me said Bonaparte, his hand on the hilt of his sword. He could have said just as well: divine right, it is me. Never had a conqueror expressed power with so much truth. He wanted the pope to come and crown him in Paris, he, a soldier of fortune, as a sign of his imperial deity. Poor onlookers! We had time to groan over our foolish confidence, when we saw the head of state everywhere putting his will in place of that of the people, confiscating all our liberties one by one, provoking the uprising of Europe against us, and twice in succession to bring the foreigner to the soil of the fatherland. So against a soldier of fortune, as a sign of his imperial deity. Poor onlookers! We had time to groan over our foolish confidence, when we saw the head of state everywhere putting his will in place of that of the people, confiscating all our liberties one by one, provoking the uprising of Europe against us, and twice in succession bringing the foreigner to the soil of the homeland. So against such great evils, it was necessary to rush to great remedies. The nation, inconsistent, repudiated its chosen one. The cause of the despot was separated from that of the country. The anger was so great, the indignation so general, that we saw a people, the proudest of the earth, stretch out their arms to their invaders. The tribunes of

the people rushed to Ghent, as formerly the courtiers of the Monarchy had rushed to Coblenz: Waterloo was the expiatory altar that restored our liberty.

It has been repeated since Homer that peoples suffer from the foolishness of kings: *Quidquid delirant reges, plectuntur Achivi*. Rather the opposite is true. The history of nations is the martyrology of kings: witness Louis XVI, Robespierre and Napoleon. We will see many more.

Restoration. — Bonaparte fallen, they promised to regulate, by an effective pact, the conditions of power. We had the Charter. What was the principle of the Charter? It must be remembered.

Forgetful of the Revolution that had taken him as its leader, Bonaparte had made popular power a power of usurpation. An irreproachable magistrate as long as he was first consul, he no longer appeared on the throne except the abductor of the property of others. What happened? The Restoration posed as a *legitimate power*. It was in 1814, for the first time, that absolutism took this nickname. The Emperor did not take absolutism with him to the Isle of Elba: he left it to us with the Restoration. Now, what did we intend to restore? Two incompatible things: royalty by divine right, represented by the proscribed family of the Bourbons and the emigrant nobility; the constitutional system tried after 89, and overturned on August 10. The Charter of 1814, granted in appearance by the prince, but tacitly imposed by the country, was only a return to the ideas of 1790, violently repressed by the revolutionary agitations, which, not having had time to develop, asked to have their time.

"The declaration of Saint-Ouen of May 2, 1814," says Chateaubriand, "although it was natural to the mind of Louis XVIII, nevertheless belonged neither to him nor to his advisers: it was quite simply Time that started up from its rest. Its wings had been folded, its flight suspended since 1792; it resumed its flight or its course. The excesses of the Terror, the despotism of Bonaparte, had brought back ideas; but as soon as the obstacles that had been opposed to them were destroyed, they flowed into the bed that they had both to follow and to dig. We resumed things at the point where they had stopped: what had happened was treated as if void. The human species, carried back to the beginning of the Revolution, had only lost twenty-five years of its life. Now, what is twenty-five years in the general life of society? This gap disappeared when the severed sections of Time came together..."

Moreover, the whole of France applauded the return of its king.

"It was the men of the Republic and the Empire," adds the same Chateaubriand, "who greeted the Restoration with enthusiasm... Imperialists and liberals, it was you who knelt before the son of Henry IV! Who spent his life with the autocrat Alexander, with that

brutal Tartar? The classes of the Institute, scholars, men of letters, philosophers, philanthropists, theo-philanthropists and others; they returned charmed, laden with praise and snuffboxes. To whom did Napoleon's dearest friends, Berthier, for example, show their devotion? To legitimacy. Who composed these proclamations, these accusatory and outrageous addresses for Napoleon, with which France was inundated? Royalists? No. The ministers, the generals, the authorities chosen and maintained by Bonaparte. Where was the Restoration fiddling? With royalists? No. At M. de Talleyrand's. With whom? With M. de Pradt, chaplain of the *god Mars* and mitred mountebank. Where were parties given to *infamous foreign princes*? At the castles of the royalists? No. At Malmaison, with the Empress Josephine. (*Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe.*)

The monarchy of 1790 had been acclaimed by the people, the Republic acclaimed by the people, the Empire acclaimed by the people; the Restoration was, in its turn, acclaimed by the people. This new apostasy, which the fatal prejudice of the government alone renders excusable, could not remain unpunished. With the legitimate king it was even worse than with the usurper. The Restoration, taking itself seriously, immediately set about restoring everything that the Revolution had abolished or thought it had abolished: feudal rights, divine right, birthright; — and to suppress everything that the Revolution had established: freedom of conscience, freedom of the tribune, freedom of the press, equality before taxation, equal participation in employment, etc. The Revolution is put by the Restoration in a state of siege: one claims the national goods; forming, under the name of Holy Alliance, a pact with foreign despotism; we send an army, called *the Faith*, fighting the Revolution in Spain. The legitimate government followed, as logically as can be, its principle. In short, legitimacy did so much and so well that one day it found itself, inadvertently, outside the law. Paris then erected its barricades: the knight-king was driven out, and all his followers banished from the kingdom. Now, I ask you, on whom should the responsibility for this strange outcome fall? Who had made this power? Who had acclaimed the Restoration, embraced the allies, received the Charter with happiness? When we should have died of shame, if a nation had modesty and if it could die, a monument was erected, an anniversary feast was instituted for the celebration of the *glorious days of July*, and we got back to organizing the power!

Also, we were not at the end of our trials.

New Charter. — In vain the governments fell like puppets under the mass of the revolutionary devil; the country could not recover from its ardent love of authority. People were beginning to suspect that the instincts of power were one thing, the ideas of a people another. But how to do without government? It was so inconceivable that no one even thought of asking the question. The idea had not yet arrived that society moves by itself;

that in it the driving force is immanent and perpetual; that it is not a question of communicating movement to it, but of regulating that which is proper to it: they persisted in giving a motor to the eternal mobile.

Government, it was said, is to society what God is to the universe, the cause of movement, the principle of order. *Liberty, Order*, such was the motto under which government began again, I almost said counter-revolution. We had exhausted, in the forty years that had preceded, the government of divine right, the government of insurrection, the government of moderation, the government of force, the government of legitimacy; we did not want to return to the government of the priests. What was left? The government of interests. It was the one we adopted. And, let us be fair; it was impossible in 1830 not to come to this conclusion. It was therefore welcomed by such a powerful majority that we must recognize in it the national will.

It seems, at first sight, that there is almost no difference between the Charter of 1814 and that of 1830; that the country has only changed dynasties, but without changing principles; and that the act that despoiled Charles X and transmitted authority to Louis-Philippe was only an act of popular justice towards the unfaithful depository of authority.

This would be to completely misunderstand the scope of the July Revolution. 1830 and 1848 are two dates chained to each other with an indissoluble link. In July 1830 the *Democratic and Social Republic* was conceived; February 24, 1848 was, if I may say so, only its hatching. Now, if the transition in July seemed so easy, the Revolution was nonetheless radical, as we will see.

The deposed monarchy had claimed, like that of 89, to depend only on feudal right; it affected a sort of dynastic autocracy, incompatible with the principle of the sovereignty of the people. We wanted one that fell directly within the will of the nation. The charter was no longer *granted*, but *accepted* by the king. The situations were reversed. *Here*, said Lafayette on this occasion, presenting Louis-Philippe to the people, is *the best of the Republics*.

Louis-Philippe, in fact, was the bourgeoisie on the throne; and if this innovation seemed rather mediocre to ardent minds, it was, as we shall see, profoundly revolutionary. The monarchy had just been *humanized*; now, from humanism to socialism, there is only the difference of the word. The parties would have taken a great step towards their conciliation, if they could once have convinced themselves of this truth.

To justify his fatal ordinances, Charles X had invoked art. 14 of the Charter, which, in his view, authorized the Crown to take all measures required for the safety of the State. To remove from the power any pretext of this kind was to reduce it to submission: it was stipulated that in future the king could neither suspend the laws nor dispense with their

execution. *The Charter*, exclaimed Louis-Philippe in a moment of enthusiasm, and I dare say that he was in good faith, *will henceforth be a truth*. But, O fatality of revolutions! O sad lack of foresight of poor humans! O ingratitude of blind peoples! We will presently see the dynasty of Orleans doomed by article 13, like the dynasty of Bourbons had been so by article 14. Neither Louis-Philippe nor Charles X failed in their mandate: it was for having been too faithful to it that they both fell.

The party of the priests had more than once manifested the hope of returning to its temporality, and of recovering the privileges and the influence that the Constitution of 1790 had taken away from it. It claimed to this end another article of the Charter that declared the Catholic religion the *religion of the State*. To tranquilize egoisms as much as consciences, it was decided that in future there would be no more state religion. A disciple of Hegel and Strauss, I would not have asked for it: how are we to admit a justice of the State, an administration of the State, an education, a police of the State, and reject the religion of the State? The doctrinaires did not hesitate. It was the first step towards decentralization, expressed in the wishes of the *Girondins* .

Finally, the seal was put on the reform, by decreeing: “Art. 67. France regains its colors. In future, no cockade other than the tricolor cockade will be worn.” — As if one had said: The only thing that is legitimate now, and holy, and sacred, is the Revolution. By this article, the government was declared revolutionary; the power placed beneath the feet of the people; authority subordinated, not to its own principles, but to the judgment of public opinion. A new order of things was created.

Thus, by the Charter of 1830, the ancient absolutism was struck, on the one hand, in royalty, made in the image of the bourgeoisie, of which it was no longer anything more than the agent; then in Catholicism, formerly dispenser and arbiter of the States, now salaried by the State, neither more nor less than the other religions. Until then, the power had remained in heaven: it was made, by this exorcism, to descend from the clouds and take root in the ground. It was mystical: it was made positive and real. From then on one could say that there was none for a long time. Let's face it, we were unfair to the revolutionaries of 1830. By striking Catholicism and the monarchy with the same blow, they did two-thirds of the job: we, their successors, had no other chore than to draw from these premises the legitimate consequence.

The reformers of 1830 only stopped before capital. It was capital that they had worshipped, maintaining the tax at 200 francs, capital that they had made god and government. Before this new power bowed the king, the nobility, the clergy and the people. Remove the capitalist hierarchy, all became equals and brothers. For the monarchical faith, for the authority of the Church, had been substituted the worship of

interests, the religion of property. What could be more reassuring, we thought, more inviolable? Despite the excommunication and the stake, philosophy had prevailed against Catholicism; in spite of the *lits de justice* and the bastilles, the sovereignty of the people had prevailed against the royal prerogative; it had been necessary to come to terms with all these changes and to adapt to the new mores. But what could prevail against property? The establishment of July, it was said, is immortal: 1830 closed the era of revolutions.

Thus reasoned the doctrinaires: ardent revolutionaries against the altar and against the throne, pitiless absolutists when it comes to monopoly.

GOVERNMENT CORRUPTION.

The government of Louis-Philippe is one of the most curious episodes of this long historical period, where one sees nations, abandoned to their providential instinct, wandering at random in the labyrinth of their utopias. All hatreds have coalesced against this memorable reign; all insults have been lavished upon it. I will try to restore the facts in their true light and to avenge the man who was on the throne, after Bonaparte, the most active and intelligent instrument of the Revolution.

The principle of the July government, founded by and for the middle class, was therefore property, capital. In a monarchical form, the essence of this government was *bankocracy*. This is what the wittiest of socialist writers, M. Toussenel, expressed in the title of his curious work: *The Jews, Kings of the Era*.

Every government tends to develop its principle; that of July could not fail in this law. The legislator of 1830, Capital, had said, like the Egyptian Isis: "I am all that is, all that was, all that will be. Nothing exists except through me, and no one has yet lifted my veil." Faithful to its origin, relating everything to its principle, the government therefore began to eat away at and assimilate to itself what remained of the institutions, of the ideas of the past. This was the task of Louis-Philippe, whose unscrupulous genius accomplished this work of dissolution, the prelude to the great palingenesis of the nineteenth century.

Attacked at the same time in its origin, in its policy and in its morality, the government of Louis-Philippe exhausted the hatred and the contempt of the people. And yet, fair history will say that never was a reign better fulfilled, consequently more legitimate, more irreproachable than that of Louis-Philippe.

And first of all, Louis-Philippe is the true representative of July. Who had made the three days? — The people, say the Republicans. — Yes, like Bonaparte's soldiers made Marengo. The popular masses were not in July like the militia of the bourgeoisie. They alone had prepared for fifteen years and organized the victory; to them alone belonged to dispose of the victory. Why are we talking about popular suffrage here? If the people had been consulted on the choice of the prince, since after having changed the principle of the Charter the form was retained, it is clear that the people, for whom the form trumps the substance, would have chosen Henri V. Any other candidate would have been in illegitimate in their eyes. But things could not happen like this: it was not only the Charter of 1814 that had to be avenged, it was a new principle that had to be represented

in power; and those alone who had inaugurated the principle had the quality to choose its representative. The people could not be consulted in this matter, and it was a blessing for the Revolution. It was a necessity that the government of interests appear in its turn: now the people would never have consented to take the golden calf for their God; the faithful of legitimacy would never have recognized their king in the pimp of the Malthusians. Louis-Philippe was the only man who could accept the burden of the iniquities of July. Either we must deny the legitimacy of the *glorious*; or else, if we accept the transition, we must admit the legitimacy of the bourgeois king.

As for the policy of Louis-Philippe, as for the *thought of the reign*, it is still easier to justify it. Neglect the details, and occupy yourself, as M. Guizot teaches, only with the essential facts, with those that constitute *great politics*.

What end did the bourgeoisie propose to itself in 1830, when it established, in its truth, the *constitutional* regime, the object of its desires for half a century? Look closely, and you will see that, behind this political form, necessary as a transition for the destinies of France, the bourgeoisie wanted nothing, foresaw nothing; you will see that the Charter was for them only a great negation. The bourgeoisie did not know in 1830, it still does not know in 1849, what it was pursuing through its Reformed Charter and its representative government: it only knew, and very well, what it did not want.

The bourgeoisie did not want a legitimate monarchy, born of a principle other than its will: it had just expelled this monarchy by a coup d'état.

It cared little for a classical or romantic republic, in the fashion of the Greeks and Romans, or such as was desired after February.

It did not like the Jesuits, meaning by Jesuits the Gallicans as well as the Ultramontanes. For it, the Jansenist is only a variety of the Jesuit: if it admired Bossuet, its heart was in Voltaire. It tolerated worship and paid for it; but, as if it had refused to enter into a share with God, it had outlawed religion.

It suffered neither nobility nor aristocracy, no other hierarchy than that of jobs and fortunes, conquered at the peak of labor.

It finally proved, in many circumstances, that it cared neither for regulation, nor for corporations, nor for communism; it does not even accept free trade. Free trade, in the eyes of a conservative, is one of the thousand faces of socialism.

What does this shrewd, annoying, ungovernable bourgeoisie want? If you press it to answer, it will tell you that it wants *business*; the rest is cheap. Opinions and parties it laughs at; of religion we know what it thinks; its representative regime, for which it fought so hard, causes it pity. What the bourgeoisie wants, what the bourgeoisie demands, is well-being, luxury, pleasures; it is to earn money.

And the people, on all these points, are of the opinion of the bourgeoisie. They too claim to have their share of well-being, enjoyment and luxury; they want, in a word, to be free, ready, on this condition, to believe what they will in religion as in politics.

Well! Louis-Philippe's mission, a mission given to him by the pact of 1830, was to make the bourgeois idea predominate, that is to say — let's hear it! — not to ensure labor for these, profit for those, well-being for all; not to open outlets to commerce, and to make himself the purveyor of business to the country — that would have been solving the social problem — but to propagate the morality of self-interest, to inoculate all classes with political and religious indifference, and, by the ruin of parties, by the depravity of consciences, to dig the foundations of a new society, to force, so to speak, a revolution arrested in the councils of destiny, but that the contemporary society did not accept.

Yes, HE HAD TO; and it is you, dynastics of all shades who wanted it! Ah! you recoil before this dreadful system: I adhere fully and unreservedly to the inexorable government of Louis-Philippe.

In good faith, what do you want a king to do to whom his constituents had said: You will be the corrupter of our generation; and who, by an admirable accord of nature and politics, seemed created expressly for such an era? How could he have resisted his greedy solicitors, waiting for a godsend from him, as the little birds wait for a bite from their mother? How could he have remained without pity for those souls corrupted by vice, whom the sight of virtue made suffer like purgatory?

Place yourself in the point of view of the power of July; recall for yourself the institutions and ideas that had hitherto formed the moral capital of society, which made up, if I dare say so, the armor of consciences: you will find nothing there that deserved the consideration of the Head of State, nothing that was worth the suffering of a prick on the part of the citizens, the sacrifice of the smallest enjoyment.

Is it religious prejudice, monarchical dignity that stops you? — But, read Chateaubriand, there is no royalist who does not smile when he thinks of his kings, no Christian who believes in the eternity of suffering, and who does not find that asceticism has had its day.

Is it the sanctity of justice, the purity of morals? — But there is no longer either morality or justice; there is no certainty of right and duty: the just and the unjust are confused, indistinguishable. I defy you to tell me what constitutes contempt of morals, adultery, perjury, theft, bankruptcy, and murder; to define for me usury, monopolization, combination, extortion, corruption of officials, counterfeit money: with the freedom of feuilletons, speeches, pictures, dances; with freedom of commerce and industry; with the arbitrariness of values and the venality of charges; with extenuating circumstances; with

the freedom of association, of circulation, of donation; with the free worker and the free woman! Not that I want, take care, to indict freedom; I only say that, under the Charter of 1830, our liberty, having neither ballast nor compass, is that of all the crimes, and our social order a perfect dissolution.

Is it at least respect for constitutional forms, fidelity to political convictions? But what is politics, with capital as sovereign? A Chinese shadow show, a dance of the dead. On what, I pray you, can opinions and votes bear? On issues of retributive and distributive justice, public morals, police, administration, property. Now, go to the bottom; you will find that free thought has dissected everything, destroyed everything; that chaos is everywhere, whichever way we turn, so that, finally, in order to preserve a remnant of peace and order in this shaken world, there is no longer any resource but arbitrariness. In this uncertainty, where reflection rationally indicates no choice, where logic proves that white and black are equal, what will decide for you, if not your interest?

So *laissez faire, laissez passer*, everyone and everything, and just wipe up your spills. Neither Christian nor Jew; neither royalist nor democrat; neither academic nor romantic; *Each at home, each for himself*; God, that is to say Fortune, for all, and intolerance only for the intolerant. He alone is a bad citizen, who does not know how to live in an environment where there is an honorable place even for thieves and prostitutes.

This is the inflexible, providential line that the Charter of 1830 prescribed for the monarch to follow. The last term in a revolutionary series, this Charter was like a judgment of Nemesis, condemning us to drink hemlock. Louis-Philippe did nothing other than present the cup to us: once the role of executioner was part of the royal prerogatives.

Of all the reproaches that have been leveled at the government of Louis-Philippe, only one, perhaps, would be serious, if it were justified: it is that addressed to the ministry Molé, who was, if I am not mistaken, the opposition's Thiers-Barrot. "We would do the same things as you," they said, "but we would do them better than you!" This is understandable: once the system has been accepted, the debate only revolves around execution. Louis-Philippe took eighteen years to demoralize France: that's too long. It has cost the country 1,500 million a year for this: it is too expensive. What a misfortune that M. Odilon Barrot was made a minister only under the Republic!

What, then, had they to reproach the man according to their heart, these paragons of virtue and honor, these principled politicians, when they accused him of being a Jesuit and of being an atheist; of speaking alternately of conservation and revolution; of mingling with the common people and caressing the nobles; to handing over childhood to ignoramuses and leaving the youth in the secondary schools without faith; of conspiring with kings and being expelled from the Holy Alliance?

Couldn't they answer:

The contradictions of my policy are the justification for this. What is God, according to you, my masters? A word. — The people? Slaves. — The royalty? A ruin. — The charter? A negation. — The revolution? A mummy. What are you yourself? Whited sepulchers. Hypocrites, you deliver me up to contempt and hatred, because I revealed your secret! Ah! You mourn your lost religion! Why did you drive out Charles X? You mourn your faded glory! Why did you betray the Emperor? You mourn your republican virtue! Why did you slaughter Condorcet, Roland, Vergniaud, Danton, Desmoulins? You groan over your humiliated monarchy, once so noble and so popular! Why did you dethrone Louis XVI? Why, after having dethroned him, did you cowardly condemn him to death, by a majority of five votes? You reproach me for doing nothing for the people! Why did you shoot Babœuf?... Shameless doctrinaires, selfish Malthusians, ungrateful bourgeois! You accuse the corruption of my reign, and you have enthroned me on the dunghill! It only remains for you to strangle yourselves in my person. Finish your work, but first know who you are, and you will know who I am.

It has been said that the February Revolution was the Revolution of contempt. That is true, but who does not see that this is precisely the secret of the marvelous destiny of Louis-Philippe?

As it was to happen to the corrupter of all principles, Louis-Philippe was the most hated, the most despised of all princes, all the more despised, all the more hated, as he had a higher understanding of his mandate.

Louis XIV reigned by the idolatry of his person; Caesar and Bonaparte, by admiration; Sylla and Robespierre, by terror; the Bourbons, by the reaction of Europe against the imperial conquest.

Louis-Philippe is the first, the only one who reigned by contempt.

Did Casimir Périer esteem Louis-Philippe? And Lafayette, and Laffitte, and Dupont (de l'Eure), did they love him? I am not speaking of the Talleyrands, the Thiers, the Dupins, the Guizots, nor of all the others who had been or wanted to be his ministers; they looked too much like their chief to think highly of him. But did we ever see, for example, the academicians, in their sessions, eulogizing Louis-Philippe, as they celebrated the glory of the great king and the great emperor? Do we see, at the theater, the actors complimenting him; the priests in church preach about him; the magistrates celebrate him in their mercuriales?... And yet these men, of which the most honorable were at the bottom of the heart of sincere republicans, had joined together to carry on the shield Louis-Philippe; and, while cursing him, they persisted in supporting him. Lafayette had said of him: *It is the best of the Republics!* Laffitte sacrificed his fortune to him, Odilon

Barrot his popularity, MM. Thiers and Guizot their most intimate convictions. Dupont (de l'Eure) asked for him a civil list of 18 millions; Casimir Périer was killed in the breach, taking to the grave the loathing of Republicans and Poles. Will you tell me the reason for so much devotion united with so much hatred?

As on the 18th Brumaire, to ensure the faltering revolution, a man had been needed; likewise, in 1830, in order to accomplish the decay of the old world, one more man was needed. Louis-Philippe was that man.

Examine him closely: he is naively, conscientiously corrupting. Himself above calumny, without reproach in his private life, corrupting, but not corrupted, he knows what he wants and what he does. An abominable destiny calls him: he obeys. He pursues his task with devotion, with happiness, without any divine or human law, without any remorse disturbing him. He holds in his hand the key to consciences; no will resists him. To the politician who speaks to him of the wishes of the country, he offers a scholarship for his son; to the priest who talks to him about the needs of the Church, he asks how many mistresses he has. Consciences fell before him by the thousands, as soldiers fell on the battlefield before Napoleon: and neither was the Emperor touched by this carnage, nor was Louis-Philippe moved by the perdition of these souls. Napoleon, dominated by a fatality that he felt without understanding it, was able to calmly give the signal which precipitated millions of men into death: was he therefore a Nero or a Domitian? Thus Louis-Philippe, father of a family, severe in his interior, master of himself, made a pact with hell for the damnation of his country: he remains without reproach before God and before men.

Let the wretches whom he corrupts abjure, for a patent, for a place, what they still believe to be virtue, justice and honor: immorality and shame are theirs.

But he, the head of state, the representative of society, the instrument of Providence, in what way is he immoral? Morality, for him, is it not to sacrifice to progress these cadaverous souls? Is it not to procure, *per fas et nefas*, the fulfillment of destinies?

Philosophy and history teach that morality, unalterable in its essence, is changeable in its form. At the house of the Christians, the moral was first to give one's goods to the community; later, to shed his blood in proof of the reality of a myth; then it consisted in exterminating, by iron and by fire, Saracens, heretics and communists. In 93, morality was the hatred of royalty; ten years later, it was the hatred of democracy: five million votes proved that such was then the opinion of France.

Now that religion is in full discredit, philosophy undecided, now that national sovereignty, represented by more or less truthful agents, stumbles like a drunken peasant: everything is confused in morality, everything has once again become arbitrary and of no

value, except for one point, which is to live well and to amass money. The moral, you see, is to have only one legitimate wife, hardly any chores, and twenty mistresses, if you can feed them; morality is to fight a duel, on pain of infamy, and not to fight, on pain of the court of assizes; morality is to provide yourself with luxury and pleasures (see the program of the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences for the year 1846) at all costs, except to escape the cases provided for in the Penal Code. My pleasure is my law, I know of no other. For us to rediscover a positive and obligatory morality, society must rebuild itself from top to bottom; and for it to be rebuilt, it must be demolished. How, once again, could the prince, precursor of this great revolution, be guilty of immorality, because he is working courageously at the only thing necessary and at this moment possible, at the discrediting of old prejudices, at social decomposition ?

Let us therefore deign to remember that, in humanity, reasons are not words, but deeds and gestures; that demonstration is experience, that noumenon is phenomenon.

Louis-Philippe was given the mission to demonstrate that the constitutional system is the negation of negations, a supreme utopia, like empire and legitimacy. Statesman, practical man above all, he does not reason; he acts. He attacks the parliamentary principle by influences; he kills the monarchical principle by a ridiculous exhibition, bourgeois royalty, the only one that existed in the century. Same method for Catholicism. Of what use are the people, who do not read, the Encyclopedia, Voltaire, Rousseau, Dupuis, Volney, Lessing, Kant, Hegel, Strauss, Feuerbach? A million volumes do not disillusion, in a century, four thousand readers: Providence does things differently. It puts religion and interest in opposition; it attacks faith by selfishness: and the demonstration is made.

Dare to say it: the moral man, because he was the man of the time, was Louis-Philippe. Let us not be afraid of this word corruption, so terrible to our unhealthy consciences: corruption was the whole morality of the government of July. The Charter had wanted it so; Providence had given us from all eternity the precept for it.

Louis-Philippe is the only man in Europe who, for nineteen years, has been constant in his role. So, until the hour set for his departure, everything has worked out for him. He escaped the bullets of the regicides, blind in their thoughts and uncertain of their blows; he conquered factions and intrigues; odious to all, he trampled them under foot, he defied their audacity. Weak himself as a sovereign, and as a prince devoid of prestige, he was nonetheless the fateful man, the one whom the world adored: the antagonism of the principles he fought was his strength.

What pettiness it takes not to understand how profound and great such a role was! What! Louis-Philippe is a despicable cheat, an ignoble miser, a soul without faith, a

mediocre genius, a selfish bourgeois, an insipid talker; his government, if possible, is still worse than him. His ministers admit it; his ex-ministers spread it; France knows it; the gamin of Paris repeats it; nobody, nobody! has for him a word of esteem. Lafayette, Dupont (from Eure), Laffite, C. Périer, have said of him in turn, borrowing to paint him the language of the halls: *Le b..... deceives us!* And that lasted eighteen years! All that was generous, vital, heroic in France was pulverized before this devastating influence; everything was gangrenous; corruption has come out of our noses and ears; and for eighteen years France was not moved. And today when he fell, today when the Republic has *crushed the infamous*, France still regrets it! Wouldn't it all be over?... No, for the honor of my country, for the respect of the French name, I cannot believe in such a power of evil. This man whom you charge with your iniquities, whom you accuse of your miseries, is in my eyes only the Attila of false consciences, the last scourge of revolutionary justice.

Breaking characters, ruining convictions, reducing everything to mercantile positivism, everything to money, until the day when a theory of money would signal the hour and the principle of resurrection: this was the work of Louis-Philippe is his glory. What I see Louis-Philippe reproached for smallness of views, petty cunning, triviality, gossip, false taste, hollow eloquence, hypochondriac philanthropy, bigoted complacency, all this seems to me sublime in irony and sense of timing. What could you hope for that is more crushing for your parliamentary and talkative regime than these speeches from the crown that say nothing, precisely because legislators with 500 francs in contribution as well as 25 francs in indemnity have and cannot have nothing to say ?

Louis-Philippe's life would be incomplete; he would have lacked something in his reign, if he had not at the end found a worthy minister. This was M. Guizot, to whom, according to the testimony of his enemies and his rivals, no passion ever approached, except that of power. Like his master, pure in the midst of the peat of his victims, this great corrupter could apply the word of the psalmist to himself: *Non appropinquabit ad me malum*, corruption does not come to me. Only he knew the *thought of the reign*, he alone was the friend of Louis-Philippe, as Apémantus was the friend of Timon. — Yes, you were sublime, oh great minister, oh great man, when, at the Lisieux banquet, you dared to reveal the secret of your power in a toast to corruption. Yes, these legitimists, these radicals, these puritans of the opposition, these Jesuits, these economists, they are vile scoundrels, slaves to their senses and their pride, and of whom you well know that with a little gold you would always be right. These moralists are the lovers of old courtesans; these artists are craftsmen of luxury and lust: the flood of their impurity passes at your feet and does not defile them. These so-called progressives, who don't have the courage of

their venality, you said it, *they don't know each other!* But you, you know them, you know the price of their virtue; and if they pretend to deny you, you still rejoice: they have reached the height of the crime; they are corrupt in bad faith.

Alas! Corruption, if it was a powerful revolutionary means in the hands of these two men, must not be the state destined for us by fate. Without that, M. Guizot would be a minister, and the dynasty of Louis-Philippe would reign forever. Capital had established itself in 1830 as the only principle that, after divine right and the right of force, had a chance of lasting; it turned out, in 1848, that the government of capital was the plague of society, *abominatio desolationis!* A parliamentary quarrel threw the great prostitute into the mud. The same bourgeois who had enthusiastically acclaimed the accession of Louis-Philippe to the throne rushed him in a fit of disgust; the public conscience had risen again against the Minister of the Supreme Wills. The people found themselves behind the ranks of the National Guard to give the catastrophe its true meaning: for eighteen years they had been waiting for this initiative of the bourgeoisie, and stood ready. Let my contemporaries deny it, if they dare, or let them get over it, if they can! But I am neither sold yesterday nor a renegade tomorrow; and I swear that the French bourgeoisie, by overthrowing the dynasty which it had created, destroyed in it the principle of property.

VI.
FEBRUARY 24:
PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT.

I wrote somewhere that society is *metaphysics in action*, a kind of logic that plays out in proverbs. What the general study of history and the more profound study of political economy had revealed to me, the events accomplished over the past two years have brought to my fingertips.

Every government is established in contradiction to that which preceded it: this is its reason for evolving, its title to existence. The government of July was an opposition to legitimacy, legitimacy an opposition to the Empire, the latter an opposition to the Directory, which had established itself in hatred of the Convention, itself summoned to put an end to the malformed monarchy of Louis XVI.

According to this law of evolution, the government of Louis-Philippe, unexpectedly overthrown, called for its opposite. On February 24 had taken place the forfeiture of Capital; on the 25th the government of *Labor* was inaugurated. The decree of the Provisional Government that guarantees the right to work was the birth certificate of the February Republic. God! Did it take six thousand years of revolutionary arguments to bring us to this conclusion?...

Here, then, is the antinomic theory confirmed anew by experience: let those who admit no philosophy in the direction of human affairs, and who relate everything to an invisible power, finally tell us how reason explains everything, even error and crime, while faith alone explains nothing?

Not only was the succession of the government of the workers to that of the capitalists logical, it was just. Capital, which had set itself up as the principle and end of social institutions, had been unable to sustain itself; we had acquired the proof that, far from being a principle, it is a *product*, and that property is not, any more than divine right or the sword, the motive and plastic force of society. After having corrupted everything, the capitalist theory had made capital itself collapse.

The facts, in this respect, were flagrant; their testimony spoke loudly. At the time of the February Revolution, commerce and industry, which had been suffering for several years, were in distressing stagnation, agriculture overburdened, the workshops out of work, the shops overflowing for lack of outlets, the finances of the State as badly treated as those of individuals. In spite of the periodic increase in the budget which, from 1830 to 1848, had risen progressively from 1 billion to 1,500 millions, the Chambers had noted a

deficit, according to some of 800 millions, according to others of 1 billion; the salaries of civil servants figured alone in this increase in expenses for an annual sum of 65 millions. The *bankocrats*, who in 1830 had made a revolution in the name of self-interest, who had promised *cheap* government, who affected the title of economists much more than politicians, the philosophers of *Debit* and *Credit* spent half again as much as the government of legitimacy, once as much as the imperial government, without being able to align their receipts and expenditures.

The proof was made. It was not *capital*, *agio*, *usury*, *parasitism*, *monopoly*, that the legislator of 1830 had wanted to name, it was *labor*. Decidedly, the so-called principle of July was as incapable of producing *Order* as *Liberty*. It was necessary to go back higher, that is to say to descend lower; it was necessary to reach the proletariat, to reach nothingness. The February Revolution was therefore logically, precisely, the revolution of the workers. How could the bourgeoisie of 89, 90, 1814 and 1830, how could this bourgeoisie, which had traversed the descending chain of governments, from Catholicism and feudalism to capital, which only asked to produce and to exchange, which had risen to power only through work and the economy, how could it see in the republic of labor a threat to its interests?

Thus, the February Revolution imposed itself on people's minds with the authority of fact and right. The bourgeoisie vanquished, I do not say by the people, — thank God! there had been no conflict in February between the bourgeoisie and the people, — but conquered by itself, admitted its defeat. Although taken unawares, and full of worries about the spirit and tendencies of the Republic, it nevertheless agreed that the constitutional monarchy was out of date, that the government had to be reformed from top to bottom. It therefore resigned itself; it was ready to support, with its adhesion, and even with its capital, the new establishment. Had it not, by its opposition, by its impatience, precipitated a reign that had become a material obstacle to its commerce, to its industry, to its well-being?... So, the advent of the Republic experienced even fewer contradictions than that of Louis-Philippe, so much did people begin to understand times and revolutions!

It is now that I claim the full attention of my readers; for, if the lesson does not profit us, it is useless to concern ourselves any more with public affairs. Let the nations go adrift: let each of us buy a rifle, a dagger, pistols, and barricade his door. Society is only a vain utopia: the natural state of man, the legal state, is war.

The government of labor! Ah! That one will be a government of initiative, no doubt, a government of progress and intelligence!...

But what is the government of labor? Can labor become government? Can labor govern or be governed? What do labor and the power have in common?

Such a question, no one had foreseen it. It doesn't matter. Led on by governmental prejudice, the people were in no hurry to do anything more than first of all to remake a government for themselves. The power, having fallen into their laborious hands, was immediately handed over by them to a certain number of men of their choice, charged with founding the Republic, and with solving, along with the political problem, the social problem, the problem of the proletariat. — We'll give you three months, they told them, and, always sublime in their simplicity, always tender in their heroism, they added: *We have three months of misery in the service of the Republic!* Antiquity and the Revolution of 92 have nothing comparable to this cry from the bowels of the people of February.

The men chosen by the people, installed at the Hôtel-de-Ville, were called the *Provisional Government*, which must be translated government without idea, without goal. Those who, for eighteen years, gazing impatiently at the development of socialist ideas, had repeated in all tones: *The social revolution is the goal, the political revolution is the means*, were embarrassed, — God knows! — when, once in possession of the means, it was necessary for them to arrive at the goal and put their hands to the task. They thought about it, I'm sure; and soon they had to recognize what M. Thiers later revealed, what President Sauzet had said before him, that the government is not made to give labor to the worker, that the safest course for them was to continue the *status quo* of Louis-Philippe and to resist all innovation, so long as the people did not impose a reform by authority.

Yet they were not lacking in intelligence, these thirty-year conspirators, who had combated all despotisms, criticized all ministries, written the history of all revolutions; each of whom had a political and social theory in his portfolio. They asked nothing better than to take some initiative, these adventurers of progress; neither did the counselors fail them. How then did they remain three months without producing the smallest reforming act, without advancing the Revolution one line? How, after having guaranteed by a decree the right to work, did they not seem to concern themselves, all the time that they were in business, with the means of fulfilling their promise? Why was there not the slightest attempt at agricultural or industrial organization? Why did they deprive themselves of that decisive argument against utopia, experience?...

How! For what! Should I say it? Must it be I, a socialist, who justifies the Provisional Government? It is, you see, because they were the government; it is because in matters of revolution initiative is repugnant to the State, as much as labor is repugnant to capital; it is

because government and labor are incompatible, like reason and faith.² This is the key to all the facts that have taken place since February in France and in Europe, and which could very well take place for a long time to come.

This is the place to expose the legal reason for the revolutionary incapacity of any government.

What makes the government by nature immobilist, conservative, refractory to any initiative, let us even say counter-revolutionary, is that a revolution is an *organic* thing, a matter of *creation*, and power is a mechanical thing or matter of execution. Let me explain.

I call *organic*, not the laws, purely conventional, that affect the most general elements of administration and power, such as municipal and departmental law, the law on recruitment, the law on public instruction, etc. The word *organic* used in this sense is quite abusive, and Mr. Odilon Barrot was right to say that such laws have nothing organic about them at all. This so-called organism, the invention of Bonaparte, is nothing but the governmental machinery. By *organic* I mean what constitutes the intimate, secular constitution of society, superior to any political system, to any constitution of the state.

Thus, we will say that marriage is an organic thing. It belongs to the legislative power to take the initiative of any law concerning the relations of interest and of public and domestic order to which the conjugal society gives rise; it is not up to it to touch the essence of this society. Is marriage an institution of absolute or doubtful morality, an institution in progress or in decline? We can argue about this as much as we want: never will a government, an assembly of legislators, have to take the initiative in this regard. It is up to the spontaneous development of mores, to general civilization, to what I will call humanitarian Providence, to modify what can be modified, to bring about the reforms that time alone reveals. And that, by the way, is what has prevented divorce from taking hold in France. After long and serious discussions, after a few years' experience, the legislator had to recognize that such a delicate and serious question was not within his province; that the time had passed for us when divorce could have entered our institutions without

² See *The General idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century*, where the contradiction between the political regime and the economic regime is demonstrated. — Paris, Garnier frères, 1851.

danger to the family and without offense to mores, and that in wanting to cut this knot, the government ran the risk of degrading precisely what it wanted to ennoble.³

I am not suspected of superstitious weakness and religious prejudices of any kind: I will say, however, that religion, like marriage, is not a regulatory issues, a matter of pure discipline, but something organic, consequently removed from the direct action of the power. It belonged, such is at least my opinion, to the ancient Constituent Assembly, by virtue of the distinction between the spiritual and the temporal, long admitted in the Gallican Church, to regulate the temporal affairs of the clergy and to remake the episcopal circumscriptions; but I deny that the Convention had the right to close the churches. I recognize all the less in the communal authority and the society of the Jacobins the power to establish a new cult, as this attempt could only succeed in strengthening the old one. Worship was organic in France when the Revolution broke out; and if, by the progress of philosophy, one could then proclaim the right to abstain, if we can predict today the extinction or the approaching transformation of Catholicism, we are not therefore authorized to repeal it. The Concordat of 1802 was not, whatever has been said, an act of consular reaction; it was a simple reparation demanded by the immense majority of the people following the vain parades of Hébert and Robespierre. — I still believe, and on the basis of the same considerations, that it was up to the Chamber of 1830 to ensure through the Charter the liberty, the respect and the remuneration of all the cults; I would not answer that it was permitted, while maintaining the monarchical principle, to say that the Catholic religion was only a religion of the majority. Certainly, I would not support today the revision, in the sense that I indicate, of article 7 of the Constitution of 1848: what is accomplished, whatever it has cost, is accomplished, and I hold it irrevocable. One could do better and more for the emancipation of the human conscience; but I would not have voted for Article 6 of the Charter of 1830.

These examples suffice to explain my thought. A revolution is an explosion of organic force, an evolution of society from within to without; it is legitimate only insofar as it is

³ On the question of divorce, the best solution is still that of the Church. In principle, the Church does not allow marriage, regularly contracted, to be dissolved; but, by a casuistical fiction, it declares, in certain cases, that it does not exist, or that it has ceased to exist. Clandestineness, impotence, a crime leading to civil death, error about the person, etc., are for it, like death, so many cases of the diremption of marriage. Perhaps it would be possible to equally satisfy the needs of society, the requirements of morality and respect for families, by perfecting that theory, without going as far as divorce, by means of which the marriage contract is no longer in reality anything but a contract regarding cohabitation.

spontaneous, peaceful and traditional. There is equal tyranny in repressing it as in doing violence to it.

The *organization of labor*, regarding which the Provisional Government was asked to take the initiative after February, touched on property and, consequently, on marriage and the family; it even implied, in the terms in which it was posed, an abolition or, if you prefer, a redemption of property. Socialists who, after so much work on the subject, persist in denying it, or who deplore that other socialists have said so, have not even the sad excuse of ignorance; they are simply in bad faith.

The Provisional Government, before acting, before taking any deliberation, must therefore first distinguish the *organic question* from the *executive question*, in other words, what was within the competence of the power and what was not. Then, this distinction made, its only duty, its only right, was to invite the citizens to produce themselves, through the full exercise of their liberty, the new facts on which it, the government, would later be called upon to exercise either a supervision or, if necessary, a direction.

It is probable that the Provisional Government was not led by such lofty considerations; it is even to be believed that such scruples would not have restrained it. It asked only to revolutionize: only it did not know how to go about it. It was made up of conservatives, doctrinaires, Jacobins, socialists, each speaking a separate language. It would have been marvelous, when they had so much difficulty in agreeing on the slightest question of policy, if they managed to agree on something like a revolution. The discord that reigned in the camp, much more than the prudence of the generals, preserved the country from the Utopias of the Provisional Government: the disagreements that agitated it took the place of philosophy.

The fault, the very great fault of the Provisional Government was not in not having known how to build, it was in not having known how to demolish.

Thus, it was necessary to repeal the laws repressing individual liberty, to put an end to the scandal of arbitrary arrests, to set the limits on detention... We thought only of defending the prerogatives of the judiciary, and the freedom of citizens was more than ever handed over to arbitrariness of the public prosecutor. It pleases the high police to convert a restaurant into a mousetrap; two hundred citizens gathered for dinner are taken away from their wives and children, beaten, thrown into prison, accused of conspiracy, then released, after the examining magistrate, who himself does not know what the police are accusing them of, convinced himself at length that there was no charge against them.

It was necessary to disarm the power, to dismiss half the army, to abolish conscription, to organize a landsturm, to drive the troops away from the capital, to declare that the executive power could not, in any case, and under any pretext, dissolve and disarm the

National Guard. — Instead of that, we occupied ourselves with the formation of these twenty-four mobile battalions, the usefulness and patriotism of which we were taught later, in June. As they were wary of the National Guard, they were far from declaring it inviolable: so the governments that were heirs to the *provisional* did not fail to dismiss it.

It was necessary to ensure freedom of assembly, first by repealing the law of 1790 and all those that could lead to ambiguity, then by organizing the clubs around the representatives of the people, and bringing them into parliamentary life. The organization of popular societies was the pivot of democracy, the cornerstone of the republican order. In place of organization, the Provisional Government had only to offer the clubs tolerance and oversight, while waiting for public indifference and reaction to put them to an end.

It was necessary to pull the nails and the teeth of the power, to transfer the public force of the government to the citizens, not only so that the government could undertake nothing against liberty, but also in order to wrest from the governmental utopias their last hope. April 16, May 15, did they not prove the power of the country against minority businesses? Now, there would have been neither April 16th nor May 15th, if the government, with its irresistible force, had not been like an irresistible temptation to the impatience of the democrats.

Everything was taken the wrong way the day after February. What it was not up to the government to undertake, we wanted it to do; and it is for this reason that the power has been preserved as if it had been taken from the monarchy of July, for this reason that its force has even been increased. What we had to do, we did not do; and that is why, from March 17, the Revolution was repressed, in the name of power, by those very people who appeared to be its most energetic representatives. Instead of giving back to the people their initiating fecundity by subordinating the power to their will, they sought to solve, through the power, problems on which time had not enlightened the masses; in order to supposedly ensure the Revolution, liberty was made to disappear! Nothing offered itself to the reformers of what had been seen in the great revolutionary epochs: no impulse from below, no indication of opinion; not a principle, not a discovery that had received the sanction of the people. And this people, they daily alarmed their reason by decrees that they themselves condemned. Unable to justify them by principles, they pretended to excuse them, these decrees, in the name of necessity! It was no longer, like the day before, antagonism, it was the hullabaloo of freedom and power.

So read history again, and see how revolutions come about and how they end.

Before Luther, Descartes and the Encyclopedia, the State, the faithful expression of society, handed over heretics and philosophers to the executioners! Jean Hus, the precursor of the Reform, is burnt in Constance, after the condemnation of the council, by the secular

arm. But little by little philosophy insinuated itself into the heart of the masses: the State immediately granted amnesty to the innovators, it takes them as guides and consecrates their rights. The Revolution of '89 started from the same source: it was made in public opinion when it was declared by the power. On another note, when did the state deal with canals and railways? When did it want to have a steam navy? After the multiplied trials, and the publicly recognized success of the first entrepreneurs.

It was reserved for our time to attempt, something that had never been seen before, a revolution by the power, and then to have it rejected by the nation. Socialism existed and spread for eighteen years, under the protection of the Charter, which recognized *the right of all French people to publish and have their opinions printed*. The demagogues of February had the secret, by dragging socialism into power, of stirring up intolerance against it and of proscribing even its ideas. It was they who, by this fatal reversal of principles, caused the antagonism between the bourgeoisie and the people to burst forth, an antagonism that had not appeared in the three days of 1848, any more than in those of 1830, which did not spring from the revolutionary idea, and which was to end in the bloodiest catastrophe, in the most ridiculous debacle.

While the Provisional Government, devoid of the genius of the Revolutions, separating itself both from the bourgeoisie and from the people, wasted days and weeks in sterile trial and error, agitations and circulars, a certain governmental socialism infuriated souls, affected the dictatorship, and, an astonishing thing for anyone who has not studied the mechanics of these contradictions, gave itself, against its own theory, the signal for resistance.

VII.
MARCH 17:
REACTION OF LOUIS BLANC.

QUESTION. — Given the following situation for a country:

The revolution of contempt overthrew the government established by the materialist principle of interests. This revolution, which condemns capital, thereby inaugurates and brings labor to government. Now, according to the generally widespread prejudice, labor, having become government, must proceed by governmental means; in other words, it is up to the government to do henceforth what had always been done without it and against it, to take the initiative and to develop the revolution. Because, says the prejudice, the revolution must come from above, since it is above that intelligence and strength are found.

But experience attests, and philosophy demonstrates, contrary to prejudice, that any revolution, to be effective, must be spontaneous, springing not from the head of power, but from the entrails of the people; that the government is rather reactionary than progressive; that it cannot understand revolutions, since society, to which alone this secret belongs, does not reveal itself by legislative decrees, but by the spontaneity of its manifestations; that, finally, the only relationship that exists between government and labor is that labor, by organizing itself, has the mission of abrogating government.

In this situation, a certain number of citizens, carried away by the common prejudice, and yielding to a legitimate impatience, want to force the government to advance, that is to say to start the revolution and organize labor: a very just ambition, according to prejudice, but untenable, according to philosophy and history. For its part, the government, feeling its incapacity and supported by another part of the citizens, refuses to act, or rather it *reacts* against the petitioners: a legitimate reaction, from the point of view of true democratic and social right, but supremely unjust. according to prejudice, to which the encroachments of the power unceasingly lend new force.

We ask what will become of this conflict.

ANSWER. — The only way to reconcile the parties would be to demonstrate to them the natural incompetence of the Power, and its necessary dissolution. No notice being produced, the struggle is inevitable. The force of *resistance* will therefore be in proportion to the intensity of the *movement*: moreover, if it happens that the struggle is prolonged, the revolution, instead of developing in the Government according to the direction of its original impulse, will cause it to go through a series of positions diametrically opposed to

that which, according to the wishes of the people, it should have followed. So that the more the men of the movement seek to lead the power, the more those of the resistance will make it retreat.

That's what the theory says: let us see the history.

Hardly a fortnight had elapsed since the proclamation of the Republic, when anxiety took hold of minds. According to received ideas, the government could do anything, and it was never seen to undertake anything. Those most ardent on the side of the people complained that it did nothing for the Revolution; those most trembling among the bourgeois accused it, on the contrary, of doing too much. The decrees on the hours of labor and bargaining, much more than the famous circulars of Ledru-Rollin, were of a nature to deeply alarm the bourgeois class. However, it was not so much to the Luxembourg that reactionary opinion was directed at the time, but to the Hôtel-de-Ville. The workers were not unaware that Louis Blanc and Albert had no means of carrying out their audacious projects, and that their influence on the provisional government was almost nil; but the bourgeoisie, on the basis of a few circulars that escaped from the Ministry of the Interior, imagined that the Republic was going to lay hands on revenues and property. From all sides, therefore, it was towards the government, it was towards Ledru-Rollin that apprehensions and wishes arose. Everybody looking for an opportunity, it couldn't be faulted for long; a puerile pretext furnishes it.

On March 16, a few hundred National Guards presented themselves at the Hôtel-de-Ville to protest against the ordinance that suppressed the elite companies, and consequently prohibited the wearing of fur caps. This demonstration, directed above all against Ledru-Rollin, was at the wrong address: there was then nothing in common between the political ideas of the Minister of the Interior and the socialist theories of the President of Luxembourg. But things were set in motion; destinies were about to be fulfilled.

The government stood firm against the *furry caps*: aided by a few hastily assembled patriots, it drove back the demonstration. The report had no sooner spread than the alarm was given to the suburbs. They had dared to attack the provisional government: a counter-demonstration was assigned to the next day to support it. Now this new manifestation was itself soon, as had been the first, only a pretext. In the minds of a certain number of leaders, it was no less a question of modifying the composition of the government, of forcing it to take a vigorous initiative, and, in order to give full latitude to its action, of obtaining first an adjournment more or less distant from the elections. Lists circulated from hand to hand, and Huber, my neighbor at the Conciergerie, one of the promoters of the movement, assured me that my name was on a few!... The intention of the

demonstration was therefore threefold: some, and this was the greatest number, only intended to give moral support to the Provisional Government; others demanded the postponement of the elections; the last, finally, wanted a purge. Besides, here is how Louis Blanc, witness and actor in this drama, gives an account of the event:

“As soon as it emerged from popular acclaim, the Provisional Government had to ask itself how it would define itself. Would it consider itself a DICTATORIAL AUTHORITY, consecrated by a revolution that had become necessary, and only having to render it accounts by universal suffrage after having done all the good that needed to be done? Would it, on the contrary, confine its mission to immediately convening the National Assembly, confining itself to emergency measures, to acts of administration of secondary importance?

“The council agreed with this last opinion.

“As for me, I had an opinion entirely opposed to that which prevailed, and I looked upon the adoption of the other party as bound to exercise the happiest influence on the destinies of the new Republic.

“Considering then the state of profound ignorance and moral enslavement in which the countryside in France lives immersed, the immensity of the resources that the *enemies of progress* afford to the exclusive possession of all the means of influence and all the avenues of wealth, so many impure germs deposited at the bottom of society by half a century of imperial or monarchical corruption, finally the numerical superiority of the ignorant people of the countryside over the enlightened people of the cities, I thought:

“That we should have postponed the moment of the elections *as far as possible*;

“That we were commanded to take, in the interval, and that loudly, boldly, except to answer for it on our heads, the initiative of the vast reforms to be accomplished, reserve made for the National Assembly of the right to strengthen then, *or to overturn* our work with a sovereign hand.”

We see, without my needing to remark on it, that Louis Blanc's arguments for taking over the dictatorship are exactly the same as those that the *honest* and *moderate* republicans used after him to legitimize twice in a row the state of siege, to give the dictatorship to General Cavaignac, to put Louis Bonaparte in the presidency, to declare the socialists *enemies of society*, and to create, under the Republic, such a despotism that one would be tempted to regard as a liberator the first pretender who would take the crown. Where can a nation go, when friends and enemies are sure to magnetize it alternately with the same phrases?

“My opinion was in conformity with that of the people of Paris... I learned in Luxembourg, several days before March 17, that the people of Paris were preparing to

make an imposing demonstration, with the double aim of obtaining the postponement of the elections and the removal of the troops still occupying Paris.”

What Louis Blanc says about the removal of the troops is true. The people demanded it earnestly: only Louis Blanc did not notice that this second reason contradicted the other. What did the withdrawal of the troops really mean to the people? The disarmament of the power, the impotence of the government. The people, when left to their own instincts, always see more accurately than when they are led by the politics of their leaders: they felt, and it was an old saying for them, that government is never better than when it is without virtue. *Our enemy is our master!* said old La Fontaine, the man of the people par excellence.

Here, then, was the plan of the leaders, led by Louis Blanc: first, to ask the Provisional Government to postpone the elections, in order to assure to it that *dictatorial authority*, without which, says Louis Blanc, *it could not do good*; second, to modify the composition of the government. For, and it is again Louis Blanc who admits it, there existed between the various members of the Provisional Government *serious disagreements*, incompatible with the exercise of the dictatorship: now, whoever wills the end wills the means. What good was a dictatorial authority if the government remained heterogeneous?

But who would be the dictators?...

To this delicate question, we were going, marvelously enough, to find the only answer in reaction! Listen to the faithful narrator.

“But, I admit, the idea of the demonstration itself frightened me. I found it hard to believe that more than 150,000 workmen would pass through all of Paris without causing the slightest commotion, without giving rise to the slightest disorder...”

Once in power men are all alike. It is always the same zeal for authority, the same distrust of the people, the same fanaticism for order. Isn't it pleasant to see that, on March 17, the preoccupations that agitated Louis Blanc, the secret instigator of the demonstration, were precisely the same as those that, three weeks earlier, had agitated M. Guizot?

“The people were to go en masse to the Hôtel-de-Ville to obtain the postponement of the elections. Would this great step be without danger? Until then Paris, the Paris of the revolution, had been admirable in its tranquil majesty and powerful repose; should we not see to it that it kept this noble attitude to the end...”

Tranquil majesty and powerful repose, that is to say, the abstention of the people, the obedience of the sovereign. Without that you will have the revolution, M. Guizot had said; without that you will not have the revolution, said Louis Blanc.

How, then, to *prevent the announced manifestation*? It is Louis Blanc who asks himself the question. — And *if it were true that unknown agitators wanted to cause some storm to arise from the depths of the multitude set in motion, how could their plans be foiled*? It is still Louis Blanc who foresees the case. *Agitators!* he cries. M. Guizot said: *rebels!*

The means proposed by Louis Blanc should be cited: it deserved to be proposed by M. Guizot. The revolution would have been hijacked on February 22, as the alleged dictatorship of Blanqui was on March 17.

It was necessary, says Louis Blanc, to grant the multitude what it asked for, that is to say, *the postponement of the elections* (the only thing mentioned in the petition of the delegates), putting as a condition *the integrity of the Provisional Government*. — In two words, accept the letter of the petition, and pretend not to see its spirit; to grant the adjournment, were it only for a fortnight, and to maintain the government. This is how Louis Blanc imagined deceiving the petitioners. Another time, when the people get involved in petitioning, they will know that with the power one must explain oneself clearly and categorically.

But why was Louis Blanc, who supported the motives of the demonstration, who had developed them in the council, who had made them penetrate the masses, so reluctant to mutilate the Provisional Government? Was it only out of consideration and friendship for his colleagues? Not at all. Listen to the historian:

"These dissidences, which, from the point of view of unity of action, would have made the Provisional Government a very bad power, *constituted its originality* as a transitional government, destined to keep the place of sovereignty. Yes, *the very heterogeneity of the elements of which it was composed was of a nature to save the situation, because it tended to MAINTAIN IN EQUILIBRIUM the various forces of society ...*"

Therefore the Provisional Government, charged solely with *maintaining the equilibrium*, had no duty to direct the revolutionary movement, any more in one direction than in the other; therefore, since it was *conservative*, it was not an initiator; therefore it had nothing to do with a *dictatorial authority*; therefore the postponement of the elections was more than useless, it was impolitic. It was an attack on the sovereignty of the people; so the demonstration was absurd. This is the consequence that Louis Blanc was to draw from his own premises, and if he did not draw it, events did it for him...

"We were waiting... Suddenly, at one end of the Place de Grève, a dark, compact mass appeared. It was the corporations. Separated from each other by equal intervals and preceded by their various banners, they arrived gravely, in silence, in order and with the discipline of an army..."

"The delegates having gone up to the Hôtel-de-Ville, and one of them, the citizen Géraud, having read the petition, I saw, among the assistants, *unknown figures*, whose expression was somehow *sinister*."

They were apparently the same which have since been noticed, by honest and moderate, on the 15th of May and in the days of June. The men of the government are subject to singular hallucinations.

"I understood immediately that people outside the corporations had gotten involved in the movement (Why not? Was it only the Luxembourg corporations that were worthy of representing the people?) and that those who presented themselves as deputies by the multitude were not all really so, or at least in the same capacity. There were men impatient to overthrow, in favor of the opinion represented by Ledru-Rollin, Flocon, Albert and myself, those members of the Provisional Government who represented a contrary opinion."

The admission is decent, but naive. The dictatorship is good, as long as Louis Blanc hopes it for himself; as soon as Blanqui appears, Blanqui suspected of also aspiring to the dictatorship, Louis Blanc no longer wants it. He returns to his habits, he is doctrinaire! What a policy, that one which thus varies according to personal considerations! But let's see the end.

As is customary in such circumstances, Louis Blanc, Ledru-Rollin, Lamartine amuse the people with speeches; Sobrier, Gabet, Barbès and others sided with the Provisional Government against Flotte, Huber, Blanqui and others. Threatening voices demand a *positive* response: they are told that the Government cannot act unless it is allowed to deliberate. A man rushes towards Louis Blanc, and seizing his arm: *So you are a traitor, too!* he said to him. "Thinking of this injustice of the passions," said Louis Blanc, "I could not help smiling bitterly, and that was all." Finally, the members of the Government show themselves on the balcony, and the comedy ends in a procession.

"Such was," adds Louis Blanc, "this day of March 17, *the greatest perhaps of all the historical days in the memory of men!...*"

MM. Ledru-Rollin, Crémieux and Lamartine had the right to say that March 17 was a beautiful day, and to claim its honor. They did not want a dictatorship, and that day France was perhaps saved from the dictators. But Louis Blanc and those who, following his example, demanded the indefinite postponement of the elections, so that the government, vested with unlimited authority, would have time to *do good*, these must admit that it was a pitiful day for them. What! Here is a man convinced that dictatorship is necessary to do the good of the people; that the men in power, his colleagues, are hostile to progress; that the Revolution is in danger if we do not succeed in replacing them: he knows that the

opportunity is rare; that once escaped it never returns; that a single moment is given to him to strike a decisive blow; and when that moment arrives, he just takes advantage of it to drive back those who bring him their devotion and their arms, he turns away from their sinister faces! And you wouldn't believe that there was something in this man that, unbeknownst to him, spoke louder than his convictions?

On March 17 began that long reaction that we are about to see pass successively from socialism to Jacobinism, from Jacobinism to doctrinarism, from doctrinarism to Jesuitism, and which, if public reason does not put it in order, does not seem ready to end. It began within the Provisional Government itself, and by whom? Good God! By the very man who encouraged the movement, by Louis Blanc. I do not accuse him of it, of course; I proved in his defense that instinct had been surer in him than judgment.⁴ I would only have preferred that he not put himself in the necessity of reacting against men who, while posing their competition, only expressed his own thoughts: for any reaction is regrettable. But will I be granted that if the Republic has kept none of its promises; if socialism has remained in the state of utopia, the cause could well not be entirely in the incapacity of the Provisional Government and the bourgeois intrigues? The cause belongs to all those who would have liked to bring about the revolution by governmental means, before having brought it into the public consciousness, and who, in order to carry out this chimerical enterprise, have aroused the mistrust of the country by delaying by a day, by an hour, the exercise of universal suffrage.

⁴ Time has revealed, since the first publication of this writing, that in Louis Blanc judgment and instinct, policy and tendency, means and end, were in perfect agreement. Louis Blanc, admirer and disciple of Robespierre, is a declared enemy of freedom. His theory, which consists in submitting Labor to the Government; his recent formula: *Equality — Fraternity — Liberty*; the little-known opposition he made after February to freedom of the press, to the abolition of security and stamp duty; his eulogy of Louis-Philippe; finally, his constitutional doctrinarism, made clearer in his last pamphlet: *Plus de Girondins!* gave the measure of his deep antipathy for the Revolution.

VIII.

APRIL 16:

REACTION OF LEDRU-ROLLIN.

The governmental democracy, deceived in its hopes by its own leaders, could henceforth regard itself as eliminated. There was no longer any risk that it would regain the upper hand. The split was consummated: the demagogic and social party now had its right and its left, its moderates and its ultras. The new Jacobins imposed silence on the new Cordeliers. The country was on the alert; the bourgeoisie had only to hold itself ready, and to throw itself as a support on the side which would incline towards it, at the first symptom of contradiction.

It was not to be expected, in fact, that the opinion so loudly professed by Louis Blanc and his friends, and which has so many roots in France, would soon pass and be considered defeated; the more so as the events of each day, and the pettiness of the acts of the Provisional Government did not cease to revive it. What we flattered ourselves that we had only repressed on March 17, was not the dictatorship, which was deemed more necessary than ever; it was Blanqui. Blanqui pushed aside by the reprobation of the Luxembourg, crushed by the defamation from the Hôtel-de-Ville, it was hoped to recapture without opposition, above all without rivalry, the dictatorial omnipotence. As if just now, by pushing the man away, we hadn't condemned the idea!...

This idea lived everywhere. The Provisional Government, condemned by its nature and by the heterogeneity of its elements to confine itself to the role of conservative, was bubbling with revolution: it wanted, all the same, to revolutionize. The breath of public opinion impelling it, it endeavored to seize any initiative whatever. Sad initiative! Posterity would refuse to believe in the acts of the Government of February, if history had not taken care to record the documents. Apart from a few measures of public economy and general utility, the urgency of which time had revealed and which the circumstances demanded, all the rest was but farce, parade, nonsense and against good sense. They say that power makes witty people stupid. The Provisional Government is not the only one, since February, that has experienced this.

If the circulars of Ledru-Rollin, if the 45 centimes of Garnier-Pagès were faults in politics and finance, which we could still contest at all costs, these faults at least had a meaning, an intention, a scope. We knew what their authors wanted or did not want; they

were neither flat nor absurd. But what about those proclamations, as pointless as they were childish, in which the Provisional Government announced the trial of M. Guizot and his colleagues, abolished titles of nobility, released officials from their oaths, changed the arrangement of colors on the flag? tricolor, erased the monarchical names of the monuments, and gave them the names of so-called republicans, made the Tuileries the *Invalides du Peuple*, etc. , etc.? — The Provisional Government took its time!

In an emphatic address, it exclaimed, through the mouth of M. Lamartine: *The doors of liberty are open!* ... Elsewhere, it put *disinterestedness* on the agenda, and let everyone know that true politics is *magnanimity*. Another time, on the proposal of Louis Blanc, *it invited the people to be patient*, saying that the question of labor was COMPLEX, that *it could not be solved in an instant*, which no one except the Provisional Government had ever doubted until then.

The people had demanded the removal of the troops. A journalist, M. Emile de Girardin, better advised still, proposed to immediately reduce the army by 200,000 men. That was marching towards revolution; that was going towards freedom. The Provisional Government responded to the wishes of the people, at the same time as to the proposal of the journalist, first, by decreeing the creation of twenty-four battalions of Mobile Guards; second, by making a call for 80,000 men shortly afterwards; third, by inviting the youth of the schools to enlist in the sections. Not to mention that the troops did not move away from Paris. What the Provisional Government was taking as an initiative was only an imitation of 93. So what did it want to do with all these soldiers? June, June twice, we would learn.

As it could not by itself occupy itself with the great question of the age, and as it would, moreover, have been very embarrassed to resolve it, the Provisional Government had taken the wise course of burying it. It was to this, above all, that it applied its initiative. Thus, it appointed a commission (there is the government!) to *examine* the question of labor; another commission to *examine* the question of credit; a third commission to suppress the *scramble for seats!* The fair sex was not forgotten: an ordinance from the Minister of Public Instruction authorized Citizen Legouvé to open a course in the *Moral History of Women* at the Sorbonne. Then the Provisional Government organized celebrations: an invitation was made by its order to the minister of worship to have the *Domine salvam fac rempublicam sung*, and to call upon the Republic the *divine blessing*. Caussidiere himself, the terrible Caussidiere, had the Church of the Assumption, of which the patriots had made a club, returned to the service of worship. And you are surprised that the pope is now more master in Paris than in Rome!... Abbé Lacordaire became at the same time representative and ordinary preacher of the Republic, while the

archbishop of Paris, Affre, with a mischievous bonhomie, made the churches sing the ironic verse: *Domine salvum fac populum*, O God save this people, for they do not know what they are doing.

Moreover, the public and the press were at the height of authority. A placard demanded that the government *prevent the outflow of capital*, and that Mr. Rothschild be put under surveillance. Another proposed to sell the diamonds of the crown, and to invite all the citizens to bring their plate to the Mint; a third spoke of transporting the remains of Armand Carrel to the Pantheon. The *Démocratie Pacifique*, also taking the initiative, demanded that the smock should be adopted as the uniform of all the national guards of the republic; as *referral* and *placement offices* for the workers were organized by the State; that professors were sent to the departments to demonstrate to the peasants the superiority of the democratic form over the monarchy, etc. Georges Sand sang hymns to the proletarians; the Society of Men of Letters put itself at the disposal of the government. Why do it? That's what it didn't say, and what we didn't ever know! A petition bearing 5,000 signatures urgently demanded the *Ministry of Progress!* One would never have believed, without the February revolution, that there was so much stupidity at the bottom of a French public. One would have said it was the world of Panurge. Was Blanqui, or rather his party, so wrong to want, with a popular broom, to clean these stables of Augeas, the Luxembourg and the Hôtel-de-Ville?

All this, it is understood, did not count the workers any more than the bourgeois. The days followed each other and resembled each other, that is to say that absolutely nothing was done. The Revolution was evaporating like alcohol in the drain: soon there would be nothing left but the *laisser-passer*, a date!... The corporations of Luxembourg and the clubs resolved to return to the charge. Socialism, carried along by the mad imaginations of the neo-Jacobins, gave full play to the project. A set of decrees had been drawn up in the Luxembourg, which I did not read, since they were not published, but which could not fail to be very fine: they were decrees. The safety of the people was taken in hand: to reject it, or even to postpone it, would have been a crime. A demonstration was organized for Sunday, April 16, by the workers of the corporations: the pretext was the appointment of fourteen officers of the staff, following which they were to go to the Hôtel-de-Ville to present a petition with a patriotic offering. "It is up to us, men of action and devotion," said the petitioners, "to declare to the Provisional Government that the people want a democratic Republic; that the people want the abolition of the exploitation of man by man; that the people want the organization of labor through association." Measures were planned in advance by the men of Luxembourg, so that people unfamiliar with the demonstration would not, as on March 17, try to change its character and purpose: but we

had reckoned without Blanqui.⁵ While Luxembourg summoned the authorities to take care of the *organization of labor through association*, the clubs, recounts M. de Lamartine, and my information agrees with his, set themselves up permanently, appointed a Committee of Public Safety, and were preparing, as on March 17, to take the lead of the demonstration, and to bring about the purge of the Provisional Government.

Louis Blanc, whose thought brought everything back to the Luxembourg, on April 16 does not seem to have had a clear awareness of what was preparing: in his *Revue* of September 15, he denies the existence of a plot. I confess that while doing justice to his feelings towards his colleagues, while acknowledging the peaceful character he tried to imprint on the demonstration, I would have preferred, for the honor of his intelligence and the morality of his situation, to see him enter boldly into Blanqui's politics, instead of thwarting it constantly by a deaf and petty hostility. Everything invited him, everything excused him. From the point of view of the old dynastic opposition, which had provoked the Revolution of February, as well as of the republican party, which had so boldly executed it, Louis Blanc could undertake anything: his right depended only on his strength. Since the men whom the people had first chosen to form part of the provisional government were not acting, nothing could be simpler than to replace them with others who are acting: the mandate of April 16 would have been just as authentic as that of

⁵ When I report the presence of Blanqui in the demonstration of April 16, it is above all the party that I mean, much more than the man. It turns out that this demonstration started from the Luxembourg: some even claim that it was secretly supported by the police headquarters, and directed at the same time against the influence of Blanqui and that of the *National*. So that, according to this version, which has all the characteristics of the truth, and which moreover does not exclude the other, the authors of the demonstration of April 16, ultra-revolutionaries with regard to the Republicans of the *National* and of the *Réforme*, were nothing more than third parties with regard to the Communists, at the head of which were placed, *ex-æquo*, Cabet and Blanqui. It is therefore unlikely that the latter took any initiative in a movement that was intended, in part, to sacrifice him. But in revolution, the leaders propose and the people dispose. On April 16, as on March 17, Blanqui's friends, who were almost everywhere, at the police headquarters as well as in Luxembourg, and who were the most energetic, set the tone for the movement, and what had been premeditated to do against the two extreme fractions of the democratic party turned to the profit of the conservative reaction. When will democracy be rid of all these intrigues that destroy and dishonor it?

Moreover, numerous confidences have made me certain of it: from February 25 to June 26, everything, in the government and outside the government, conspired. Even M. de Lamartine. The confusion was universal. The dictatorship had no less than five or six competitors. Power being the focus of all ideas as well as all ambitions, each on his side was preparing to appeal to force. The competition of candidates alone prevented the usurpation.

February 25. To remain any longer in the *status quo* was to betray the Revolution; it was necessary to advance: unless it was absurd, the demonstration of April 16 cannot be interpreted otherwise. And if my information does not deceive me, I dare say that none of those who knowingly took part in it will disavow me.

Moreover, if the two members of the Provisional Government who sat in the Luxembourg misunderstood the role that, whether they liked it or not, the demonstration assigned to them, the people were not mistaken; let us add that the government and the national guard were not mistaken there either. The account that Louis Blanc gives of this day, tending to establish the perfect harmlessness of the demonstration, is too naive, I would even say too insulting to the intelligence of the democrats. In a few hours Paris was on its feet: everyone taking sides, some for the demonstration, some for the Provisional Government. And this time again it was the democratic faction opposed to Blanqui and the Communists that gave the signal for reaction. While Ledru-Rollin, — deceived, Louis Blanc assures us, by false reports, but in reality very keen at that time on socialism and the politics of Luxembourg, — had the recall sounded, Barbès, in the name of the club of the Revolution, to which I belonged with Pierre Leroux, and which then sat permanently, went to the government to support it and offer it our support. We didn't really know what was going on; whether it was the whites or the reds who threatened the Republic. In the uncertainty, we lined up around the Minister of the Interior, as around the flag of the Revolution. Ledru-Rollin reaped from this beaten recall a long and unjust unpopularity; Barbès, understanding, but too late, the fatality of his position, wept, it is said, tears of regret. But anti-government opinion was the strongest. Decidedly, the country did not want to allow itself to be revolutionized from above; and while Barbes, yielding to repulsions that were perhaps too personal, believed that he could only resist the fanatics of the clubs, the Bayard of democracy was on the true principles: he represented, against his own inclinations, the intimate thought of the people. The National Guards, who until four o'clock had been ignorant of the cause of the movement, only had to bother appearing to put an end to it. On the balcony of the Hôtel-de-Ville, during the procession, Louis Blanc and Albert were seen pale and dismayed, in the midst of their colleagues, who seemed to address them with the liveliest reproaches for their imprudence. In the evening the cry of *Down with the Communists!* came to testify that in France the government is placed with respect to the country under the same conditions as Figaro with respect to the censorship: it is allowed to say everything and do everything, on the condition of sharing everyone's opinion.

Louis Blanc had had the honor of the reaction on March 17; Ledru-Rollin had the honor of the reaction of April 16. As much as the first had been founded to oppose the real

or supposed dictatorship of Blanqui, so much the second was in its opposition to the dictatorship of Louis Blanc. On April 16, Ledru-Rollin was neither a socialist nor a communist; he scoffed at his colleague's theories. People's delegate to the Ministry of the Interior, responsible for order and freedom in the country, responsible for defending all interests, he could see in the demonstration of April 16 only an attempt at usurpation: he resisted. Who would dare condemn him? Surely it is not Louis Blanc.

April 16, like March 17, was none the less a failure of the Revolution; for any attack on power with the aim of using it to violate the instincts of a country, whether or not this attack is successful, is a failure of progress, a retreat. Did Louis Blanc hope to bring about the triumph, by *coup d'état* and dictatorial authority, of a system of economic reform which can be summed up in these three propositions:

1. *To create in the power a great force of initiative;*
2. *To create and sponsor public workshops at State expense;*
3. *To extinguish private industry under the competition of national industry.*

It would have been a great illusion on his part. Now, if the economic system of Louis Blanc is nothing but oppression; if the means he intended to use to apply it is only usurpation, how can the attempt of April 16 be qualified? How are we to excuse it, I do not say before conscience — the good faith of the publicist perhaps covers up intentions of the statesman — but before reason?

It was from April 16 that socialism became particularly odious in the country. Socialism had existed since 1830. Since 1830, Saint-Simonians, Phalansterians, Communists, humanitarians and others had entertained the public with their innocent daydreams; and neither M. Thiers nor M. Guizot had deigned to concern themselves with it. They weren't afraid of socialism then, and they were right not to fear it so long as there was no question of applying it at the expense of the State and by public authority. After April 16, socialism aroused all the anger against it: we had seen it, an imperceptible minority, touch the government!

What makes parties hate each other is much less the divergence of their ideas than their tendency to dominate one another. We care little about opinions; we only have anxiety regarding the power. If there were no government, there would be no parties; if there were no parties, there would be no government. When will we break out of this circle?

IX .

MAY 15:

REACTION OF BASTIDE AND MARRAST.

The idea of a sovereign, initiating and moderating power, constituted under the name of Government, State or Authority, above the nation, to direct it, govern it, dictate laws to it, prescribe regulations to it, impose judgments and penalties; this idea, I say, is none other than the very principle of despotism that we vainly combat in dynasties and kings. What makes royalty is not the king, it is not heredity; it is, as we will see below, speaking of the Constitution, the accumulation of powers; it is the hierarchical concentration of all the political and social faculties in a single and indivisible function, which is the government, whether this government is represented by a hereditary prince, or by one or more removable and elective representatives.

All the errors, all the miscalculations of the democracy come from the fact that the people, or rather the leaders of insurrectionary bands, after having smashed the throne and driven out the dynast, believed they were revolutionizing society because they were revolutionizing the monarchical personnel, and that by preserving royalty completely organized, they no longer related it to divine right, but to the sovereignty of the people. An error of fact and of right, which in practice has never been able to establish itself, and against which all revolutions protest.

On the one hand, the logic of events has constantly proven that by preserving for society its monarchical constitution, it was necessary sooner or later to return to the sincerity of the monarchy; and it is strictly true to say that democracy, for not having known how to define its own principle, has hitherto been only a defection towards royalty. We are not Republicans; we are, according to M. Guizot, *dissenters*.

On the other hand, the politicians of divine right, arguing for the very constitution of so-called democratic power, demonstrated to their adversaries that this power necessarily stemmed from a principle other than the sovereignty of the people, that it stemmed from theocracy, of which the monarchy is, as I have said, only a dismemberment. Governmentalism, please note, is not the result of a philosophical doctrine, it is born of a theory of Providence. Among the moderns, as in antiquity, the priesthood is the father of government. We must first go back to Gregory VII, then from him to Moses and the Egyptians, to find the filiation, among Christian peoples, of governmental ideas, and the

origin of this disastrous theory of the competence of the state in matters of perfectibility and progress.

Moses, persisting in making a society of deists out of an idolatrous tribe barely out of cannibalistic habits, only succeeded in tormenting it for twelve centuries. All the misfortunes of Israel came to it from his cult. A unique phenomenon in history, the Hebrew people present the spectacle of a nation constantly unfaithful to its national god, let us speak more precisely, to its legal god, for Jehovah is only a Jew by adoption — who is only beginning to become attached to it, when after having lost its territory, not having a rock where it can erect an altar, it arrives at the metaphysical idea of God through the destruction of the idol. It was around the time of the Maccabees, and especially at the apparition of Christ, that the Jews fell in love with the Mosaic cult: it was the destiny of this race to be always behind its institutions.

More than 2,000 years after Moses, almost in the same places and among the same people, another reformer was able to accomplish in one generation what Moses and the priesthood he had founded to continue his work had not been able to accomplish in twelve centuries. The deism of Mahomet is the same as that of Moses; Arab commentaries on the Koran seem to come from the same source as the traditions of the rabbis. Where does this prodigious difference in success come from? It is because Moses had, as the Bible says, called Israel; while Mahomet had been called by Edom.

Following the example of Moses and the Aaronic priesthood, the popes, their successors, also wanted to knead the naive populations of the Middle Ages according to their fierce Catholicism. The reign of this initiating papacy was for the Christian races, as the influence of the priesthood had been for the Jews, a long torture. I will cite, for the moment, only this single example: the peoples of the Middle Ages, in agreement with the lower clergy, were not averse to the marriage of ecclesiastics; the concubinary priests caused no scandal until the day when they were struck with the anathemas of the Church of Rome. But the celibacy of priests was, for theocracy, a condition of existence. Through marriage, the priest belonged more to the city than to the Church: Roman centralization was impossible. Let democracy perish, let humanity perish rather than the Pope! The will of the pontiff bent the will of the people; married priests were marked with infamy, their wives treated as concubines, their children declared bastards. To make matters worse, the question of ecclesiastical marriage, identified with that of investitures, completed, perhaps even better than the papal wrath, the depopularization of married priests. The people, like the Pope, were Guelphs; the priests, by marriage, became Ghibellines. After a long struggle, spiritual authority prevailed; but the submission was never complete, and the reprisals were terrible. From the ashes of the Albigenians came the Waldensians, from

the Hussites came Luther, that other Marius — Luther, less great for having abolished indulgences, images, sacraments, auricular confession and ecclesiastical celibacy, than for having struck Catholicism to the heart, and advanced the hour of universal emancipation.

I resume my tale.

Finally, although a little late, universal suffrage had made itself heard. The National Assembly gathered, the Provisional Government had resigned its powers, the executive commission was installed, and still nothing was being done, nothing was being prepared. The state, immobile, remained, so to speak, at “shoulder arms.”

The governmentalist democrats resolved to attempt a new effort. This time they showed themselves to be more skillful: there was no talk of socialism or dictatorship; the question was exclusively political. They addressed themselves to the dearest sentiments of the Assembly. The emancipation of Poland was the pretext for this third day. A question of nationality for a friendly people, formerly the rampart of Christianity against the Ottomans, and not long ago still that of France against the hordes of the North; a question of democratic propaganda, and consequently of governmental initiative for socialism: the emancipation of Poland, supported by the suffrage of the people, was to carry off the sympathies of the representatives, and promised success to all ideas of reform. Whether the Assembly declared Poland free (which meant war with Europe, as democratic politics desired), or whether it organized labor, as socialism demanded of it, was, for the time being, absolutely the same thing. The speeches of citizens Wolowski, Blanqui, Barbès and Raspail have proven this.

The situation made it even more palpable. To tell the government to take the initiative for the emancipation of nationalities was to say to it in other words: For three months, you have done nothing for the Revolution, nothing for the organization of labor and the liberty of the people, two absolutely identical things. Twice you have rejected the initiative that belongs to you, and labor does not resume, and you do not know what to do with all these proletarians who ask you for work or bread, who will soon ask you for bread or lead. Make of these men a propaganda army, until you can make an industrial army of them; ensure by war the government of democracy in Europe, while waiting to be able to remake the economy of societies. You are politicians, you say; you don't want to be socialists; take a political initiative, if you don't dare to take a social initiative.

The war, in a word, as a means of temporarily escaping the question of labor: that was the policy of the advanced fraction of the Republican Party on May 15.

The moment had been admirably chosen. The agenda called for the interpellations of the citizen of Aragon on the subject of Poland: one would have said that the speakers of the Assembly had planned, with those of the clubs, to organize the escalation of the

government. At the moment when Citizen Wolowski, one of the warmest partisans of Polish emancipation, ascended the tribune, the head of the petitioning column entered the courtyard of the Assembly. Citizen Wolowski, one of the most moderate and conservative men in the Assembly, friend of M. Odilon Barrot, brother-in-law of M. Léon Faucher, had unwittingly made himself that day, and without suspecting it, the advocate of neo-Jacobinism, the orator of the insurrection. Such examples should open the eyes of men who call themselves politicians, and make them understand how odious and stupid are the revenges of reactions.

Citizen Wolowski begins by summarizing, like a true member of the clubs, the platitudes that have been uttered over the past eighteen years about Poland.

“Citizen representatives, never perhaps a more serious and solemn question has been raised before you: *it can carry in its folds peace or war* .

“I do not hide from myself the difficulties of the problem, and yet I bring it before you with confidence: for I believe that *all ideas are in unison* on this great question. I will not insult anyone in this chamber if he is not entirely devoted, strongly devoted to the cause of Poland.

(We hear outside the cries of the People: *Long live Poland!*)

“France, citizens, is the heart of nations: it feels within itself the pulsations of all humanity. And it is above all when it is a question of a nation to which the name of Northern France has been rightly given; when it is a question of a people where all the ideas, all the tendencies are common with the people of France; when it comes to a people who have always supported the same cause, who have always shed their blood with you on the battlefields, that I am certain of meeting here the liveliest, the deepest sympathies. The only question that it seems to me ought to be debated is that *of the means to be taken to achieve* what we want from a unanimous agreement, to achieve more promptly *the restoration of* Poland.

(Cries from outside redouble: *Long live Poland!*)

“France does not fear war; France, with its army of 500,000 men, with the national guard, which is the entire people, does not fear war; and that is why she can speak firmly to the nations; it is for this reason that she can *impose her thought, her IDEA*, without having recourse to what was to be the last reason of the monarchy.

“France, by her strength that no one can dispute, France *will use this truly republican policy*, which above all has confidence in the power of the IDEA, in the power of justice.

(New cries are heard: *Long live Poland!*)

“The Polish question is not only, as one would have us suppose, a question of chivalry. In the question of Poland, reason confirms what the heart inspires. *The People, with*

admirable instinct, got straight to the CRUX OF THE MATTER; they understood perfectly that, in the restoration of Poland, there will be found the firmest basis for peace and freedom for the whole of Europe.

(The cries increase in intensity. The speaker breaks off. He resumes):

"I say that popular thought has admirably grasped the knot of the question, and has solved it by linking *the idea of the resurrection of Poland to the idea of liberty* .

"The restoration of Poland is the only guarantee of a lasting peace and the *definitive emancipation* of the peoples.

"The world has understood what has always been the glorious destiny of Poland, the mission to which she has always devoted herself. When she was alive, Poland was the shield of civilization and Christianity; and when, after the partition, we thought we had killed her, even though she was not dead, but was sleeping..."

(A terrible rumor interrupts the orator: the people invade the hall.) (*Excerpt from the Moniteur universelle.*)

On February 22, 1848, I was heading along the Quai d'Orsay, on the side of the Chamber of Deputies. Paris had risen like one man, the bourgeoisie in the vanguard, the people in the rear. The opposition was quivering, the ministry trembling. What! Italy had awakened, the Sunderbund was defeated, the treaties of 1815 torn up, the Revolution had resumed its glorious march in Europe. Only France showed herself to be reactionary! Remember, M. Thiers had said, that if we are for the July Monarchy, *we are above all for the revolution!* An indictment was about to be filed, by M. Odilon Barrot, against the ministers. At this moment I met M. Wolowski. — Where are we going, I said to him, "and what does M. Barrot claim?... — That is precisely, M. Wolowski responded to me, what I just asked: *My dear Barrot, where are you leading us?...*

Eighty days later, Citizen Wolowski had taken over the role of M. Barrot. Wouldn't I have had the right to say to him: *My dear Wolowski, where are you leading us?*

We know the rest. The National Assembly was literally carried off, cast into the street. For an hour Paris thought it had changed its government. But we do not know so well what made the demonstration abort: that is what is important to make known.

Already, on the very basis of the Polish question, the Republicans in power and their friends had again become singularly cold. Intervention in favor of Poland, or, what amounts to the same thing, war with Europe, seemed to them to be what it was in fact, universal socialism, the Revolution of Humanity through the initiative of the governments. Like all newcomers to business, they had felt their chivalrous feelings vanish before the sad reality of the facts. In this same meeting of May 15, one of the most

honorable men of the party, M. Bastide, then Minister for Foreign Affairs, had declared that in the eyes of the Executive Commission, the emancipation of Poland was *a question of European sovereignty, on which the French Republic was not entitled to pronounce on its own*; and that to call the arms on a matter of this nature was to undertake an inextricable war, and to begin again, for the benefit of a nation, what the Holy Alliance had done in 1814 for the benefit of a dynasty.

Thus, on the very question that served as a pretext for the demonstration, the democracy was divided; what would it be, when we realized that it was not only a question of Poland, but of Europe? That European and social revolution was the end, and intervention in Poland the means? The cause of the petitioners was lost in advance: it sufficed, to bring about an irresistible reaction, that the thought of the movement should manifest itself in all its truth. This was soon to happen.

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The demonstration, quite spontaneous in its origin, and organized, it seems, against the wishes of the leaders of the clubs, had ended up involving the popular notables. Blanqui shows himself: terrified spirits see in him the mediator, — what am I saying? — the future beneficiary of the movement. Barbès, to ward off this threatening dictatorship, and already believing everything lost, throws himself into the revolutionary flood. He seizes the rostrum: *It is in your interest, all of you*, he shouts to those who protest against his vehemence. *I ask that we give the floor to the delegates of the clubs to read their petition.* The petition is read. Blanqui, brought to the rostrum, speaks. He calls for the punishment of the bourgeois guard of Rouen, talks about labor and a host of things foreign to Poland. That was the conclusion of Wolowski's speech. Barbès outbids Blanqui, and proposes a billion in taxes on the rich. Finally Huber, by a sudden inspiration, for which he alone claimed all responsibility, pronounced the dissolution of the Assembly, and decided the part in favor of Barbès. The representatives retire: Barbès and his friends go to the Hôtel-de-Ville; Blanqui and his following do not appear there. What followed was only a stampede: the National Guards, recalled with great difficulty, encountered no resistance. The people had passed like a stormy rain. Finding, apparently, that those who talked so much about acting were only talkers like the others, and hoping for nothing from all these governments that were stirred up like cobblestones, they had gone, the Assembly dissolved and the session adjourned, to rest from the emotions of the day.

The demonstration of May 15, entirely parliamentary at the beginning, raised, apart from the question of labor, which dominated everything, two other very serious questions: a constitutional question, namely, whether, in a Republic, the right to make peace and to declare war belongs to the government; a political question, whether, in the particular

circumstances in which the French Republic found itself, three months after the February Revolution, it was useful or not for the country to go to war?

The demonstration of May 15, by a double error, resolved these two questions in the affirmative. By pushing the Government to war, in order to serve the wishes of the democratic minority, the men of May 15 justified in advance the expedition to Rome, undertaken by the government to serve the interests of the conservative majority.

As for the very cause that it claimed to serve, on May 15, by a war of propaganda, the truth is that this cause would have been more quickly, more surely lost by intervention than by peace. The government of July could have, with infinitely more advantages than the Republic of February, brought aid to Poland; its armies would not have dragged in their train this formidable social question, with which the republican government was so miserably embarrassed. A State has no power except that which it draws from within: if the interior life is wanting, it will be in vain that it will endeavor to act without; its action will turn against itself. After the February revolution, the internal question was everything: the republican party did not understand it enough, nor did it understand the full gravity of its position. The government was without money, without horses, without soldiers; the discussions of the Constituent Assembly revealed that the army available after February was not 60,000 men. Commerce shouted thank you, the workman was out of work; we did not have, like our fathers of 89 and 93, 45 billion of national goods on hand: and we were talking about going to war!

Let us admit that, despite all these difficulties, the Executive Commission and the National Assembly, obeying propagandist inspirations, had sent an army beyond the Alps, another to the Rhine, that they had supported, provoked the insurrection of the Peninsula, dragged along the German democracy, rekindled the torch of Polish nationality. At the same time the social question was posed in Italy and throughout the Germanic Confederation. And since this question was nowhere understood and resolved, the conservative reaction began immediately, and after a European February, we would have had a March 17, an April 16, a May 15, and European June days. Do you believe that Hungary, which, towards the end of 1848, through a very culpable selfishness of nationality, offered to Austria to march on Italy, do you believe, I say, that Hungary, once satisfied, would have supported the democratic movement? Do you believe that Mazzini, who in 1851, in the name of I don't know what religiosity, protested against socialism and its anti-theistic and anti-governmental tendencies, would have favored the Revolution?... It would have been the same everywhere: the liberal, but not yet socialist portion of countries that we would have liked to emancipate would have rallied to the governments: and what would our situation have been then! It is painful to say: it would have been

exactly the same with regard to all of Europe as it has just been in the affair of Rome, with this difference that in the latter were victors, and in the former we would have inevitably been vanquished.

For my part, convinced of the uselessness even more than the impotence of our arms for the success of the revolution, I had not hesitated to pronounce myself, in the *Représentant du Peuple*, against the May 15 demonstration. I did not believe that France, embarrassed by this fatal question of the proletariat, which could not, did not want, should not suffer adjournment, was in a position to dodge the solution and carry the war anywhere. Moreover, I considered the means of economic action, if we knew how to use them, as much more effective with respect to foreign countries than all the armies of the Convention and the Empire, while an armed intervention, complicated with bastard socialism, would arouse against us all the bourgeoisies, all the peasants of Europe. Finally, as for what concerned the nationalities that we had to safeguard, I was convinced that the attitude of France would be for them the best safeguard, the most powerful auxiliary. Rome, Venice, Hungary, succumbing one after another to the news that democracy has been defeated in Paris, are proof of this. The election of December 10 was for the insurgent peoples like the loss of a great battle; June 13, 1849 was their Waterloo. Ah! If at this moment liberty succumbs, it is not because we have not rescued it, it is because we have stabbed it. Let us not seek to justify our faults by our misfortunes; the Revolution would be triumphant in all parts of Europe if, instead of wanting it through politics, we had wanted it through social economy.

Despite my publicly expressed opposition to the demonstration of May 15, I was appointed, at the Hôtel-de-Ville, to be part of the new government. I do not know to whom I was indebted for this perilous honor, perhaps to my unfortunate compatriot and friend, Captain Laviron, who went to Rome to consummate his martyrdom. But I cannot help thinking that if, on the morning of May 15, I had published a quarter of M. Wolowski's speech, I would infallibly have been arrested that evening, taken to Vincennes, brought before the court of Bourges, and then locked up in Doullens, to teach me to have exact ideas about the policy of intervention and neutrality. O political justice! Dealer in false weights! What infamy there is under the pan of your balance!

Thus the reaction unfolded with clockwork regularity, and became generalized with each convulsion of the revolutionary party.

On March 17, it had begun against Blanqui and the ultra-democrats, on the signal of Louis Blanc.

On April 16, it continued against Louis Blanc, to the drumbeats of Ledru-Rollin.

On May 15, it continued against Ledru-Rollin, Flocon and the men represented by the *Reforme*, by Bastide, Marrast, Garnier-Pagès, Marie, Arago and Duclerc, who formed the majority of the government, and had the *National* as their organ. The reaction, it is true, ostensibly struck only the most energetic democrats, seized pell-mell and confounded in the same raid: Barbès, Albert, Sobrier, Blanqui, Flotte, Raspail, General Courtais, and soon Louis Blanc and Caussidiere. But if Ledru-Rollin and Flocon were not attacked in their persons, their influence perished on May 15, as that of Louis Blanc had perished on April 16. In political reactions, the insurrection and the power under which it arrives are always united.

Soon we'll see the republicans of the *National*, last of the day before, fall in their turn and give way to the Republicans of the following day. After these will come the doctrinaires, who, seizing, by means of an electoral coalition, the government of the Republic, will believe they are recovering a usurped heritage. Finally, the reactionary fortune giving a last turn of the wheel, the government will return to its authors, to the Catholic absolutists, beyond whom there is no further demotion. All these men, obeying the same prejudice, will in turn fall martyrs and victims, until finally Democracy, recognizing its mistake, overthrows all its opponents from universal suffrage, choosing as its representatives men who, instead of demanding progress from power, demand it from liberty.

On May 15, the era of political revenge begins for the February Revolution. The provisional government had pardoned the attempt of March 17, pardoned that of April 16... The National Assembly, despite Flocon's warnings, did not pardon May 15. The vaults of the keep of Vincennes received these sad victims of the most execrable prejudice, Blanqui, Barbès, half of whose life has already passed in state prisons! The most unfortunate of all was Huber, who, after fourteen years in prison, barely brought to light, returned to seek a life sentence, in order to respond to a demagogic calumny. What was the crime of all these men?

In 1839, Blanqui and Barbès, acting in concert, and counting on the adhesion of the people, undertook, by a bold *coup de main*, to put an end to the scandal of the war of the portfolios, which, from the first year of the reign, afflicted, dishonored the country. Were they wrong, these men, to appeal to the people, to the majority of the citizens, to universal suffrage, in a word, regarding the shameful cabals of the regime at 200 fr.? The appeal could not be heard: ten years' imprisonment made the two conspirators atone for their attack on the monopoly.

In 1848, Blanqui, the indefatigable initiator, carried away by one of those whiffs of the multitude that the most influential tribunes cannot resist, made himself, before the

hesitant National Assembly, the organ of a thought that everything told him to be that of the people, which had been shared for eighteen years by the majority of the bourgeoisie. Barbès, misled by terror, opposes Blanqui by exaggerating his proposals, and, for the third time in three months, becomes a reactor, to save his country from an imaginary dictatorship. Suppose for a moment these two men agree; suppose that the dissolution of the National Assembly, pronounced unexpectedly by Huber, had been prepared, organized in advance, who can say where the Revolution, where Europe would be today?....

These are those whom the dread of the countryside imagines as malevolent geniuses unleashed on the earth to set the world ablaze; these are the men whom the constitutional system for eighteen years has made its expiatory victims, and who were not to be the last. M. de Lamartine, in one of his poetic hallucinations, said, in the middle of the National Assembly, that he had once approached Blanqui, as the lightning rod approaches the cloud to extract the exterminating fluid. By dint of dreaming of ogres and giants, M. de Lamartine ended up taking himself for Little Poucet.⁶ But it is not entirely his fault that our story since February has been like a fairy tale. When will we stop playing throne and revolution? When will we truly be men and citizens?

⁶ A character in a fairy tale by Charles Perrault.