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The Eighteenth Brumaire
of Louis Bonaparte

KARL MARX

This pamphlet, a stylistic masterpiece, shows Marx in his most brilliant form as a social and political historian, treating actual historical events—those leading up to Louis Bonaparte's coup d'état of December 2, 1851—from the viewpoint of the materialist conception of history. In a preface to the second edition, he himself said it was the intention of the work to "demonstrate how the class struggle in France created circumstances and relationships that made it possible for a grotesque mediocrity to play a hero's part." Since Louis Bonaparte's rise and rule have been seen as a forerunner of the phenomenon that was to become known in the twentieth century as fascism, Marx's interpretation of it is of interest, among other ways, as a sort of prologue to later Marxist thought on the nature and meaning of fascism.

The Eighteenth Brumaire was written by Marx in late 1851 and early 1852, and originally appeared in 1852 in a magazine entitled Die Revolution, published in New York. The most important sections—the first and the last—appear here.

I

Hegel remarks somewhere that all great, world-historical facts and personages occur, as it were, twice. He has forgotten to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce. Cauissiède for Danton, Louis Blanc for Robespierre, the Mountain of 1848 to 1851 for the Mountain of 1793 to 1795, the Nephew for the Uncle. And the same caricature occurs in the circumstances in which the second edition of the Eighteenth Brumaire is taking place.1

1. On the Eighteenth Brumaire (according to the calendar introduced in the period of the first French bourgeois revolution), or November 9, 1799, Napoleon I carried out the coup d'état whereby as First Consul he concentrated supreme power in his hands: in 1804 he declared himself emperor. By "the second edition of the Eighteenth Brumaire," Marx means the coup d'état accomplished by Louis Bonaparte, the nephew of Napoleon I, on December 2, 1851. The "Mountain" refers to the Social Democratic bloc in the National Assembly. [R. T.]
terror, of civil war and of national battles to bring it into being. And in the classically austere traditions of the Roman Republic its gladiators found the ideals and the art forms, the self-deceptions that they needed in order to conceal from themselves the bourgeois limitations of the content of their struggles and to keep their passion at the height of the great historical tragedy. Similarly, at another stage of development, a century earlier, Cromwell and the English people had borrowed speech, passions and illusions from the Old Testament for their bourgeois revolution. When the real aim had been achieved, when the bourgeois transformation of English society had been accomplished, Locke supplanted Habakkuk.

The awakening of the dead in those revolutions therefore served the purpose of glorifying the new struggles, not of parading the old; of magnifying the given tasks in imagination, not of taking flight from their solution in reality; of finding once more the spirit of revolution, not of making its ghost walk again.

From 1848 to 1851 only the ghost of the old revolution walked, from Marrast, the républicain en gants jaunes, who disguised himself as the old Bailly, to the adventurer who hides his trivially repulsive features under the iron death mask of Napoleon. An entire people, which had imagined that by a revolution it had increased its power of action, suddenly finds itself set back into a dead epoch, and, in order that no doubt as to the relapse may be possible, the old data again arise, the old chronology, the old names, the old edicts, which have long become a subject of antiquarian erudition, and the old henchmen, who had long seemed dead and decayed. The nation appears to itself like that mad Englishman in Bedlam, who fancies that he lives in the times of the ancient Pharaohs and daily bemoans the hard labour that he must perform in the Ethiopian mines as a gold digger, immured in this subterranean prison, a dimly burning lamp fastened to his head, the overseer of the slaves behind him with a long whip, and at the exits a confused mass of barbarian mercenaries, who understand neither the forced laborers nor the mines nor one another, since they have no common speech. "And all this is expected of me," groans the mad Englishman, "of me, a free-born Briton, in order to make gold for the old Pharaohs."

"In order to pay the debts of the Bonaparte family," sighs the French nation. The Englishman, so long as he was in his right mind, could not get rid of the fixed idea of making gold. The French, so long as they were engaged in revolution, could not get rid of the memory of Napoleon, as the election of December 20, 1848, proved. From the perils of revolution their longings went back to the flesh-pots of Egypt, and December 2, 1851, was the answer. They have not only a caricature of the old Napoleon, they have the old Napoleon himself, caricatured as he would inevitably appear in the middle of the nineteenth century.

The social revolution of the nineteenth century cannot draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future. It cannot begin with itself, before it has stripped off all superstition in regard to the past. Earlier revolutions required world-historical recollections in order to drag themselves concerning their own content. In order to arrive at its content, the revolution of the nineteenth century must let the dead bury their dead. There the phrase went beyond the content; here the content goes beyond the phrase.

The February Revolution was a sudden attack, a taking of the old society by surprise, and the people proclaimed this unhope for stroke as a world-historic deed, opening the new epoch. On December 2, the February Revolution is conjured away by a card-sharp's liberal concessions that were wrung from it by century-long struggles. Instead of society having conquered a new content for itself, the state only appears to have returned to its oldest form, to the shamelessly simple domination of the state and the cowl. This is the answer to the coup de grâce of February 22, given by the coup de tête of December 1848, easy come, easy go. Meanwhile 1851 French society has made up, and that by an abbreviated method, for the studies and experiences which, in a regular, so to speak, text-book development would have had to precede the February Revolution, if the latter was to be a disturbance of the surface. Society now seems to have create for itself the revolutionary point of departure; it has in truth first to the relationships, the conditions, under which modern revolution alone becomes serious.

Bourgeois revolutions, like those of the eighteenth century, storm each other; men and things seem set in sparkling brilliant ecstasy is the everyday spirit: but they are short lived; soon they have attained their zenith, and a long depression lays hold of society before it learns soberly to assimilate the results of its storm and stress period. Proletarian revolutions, on the other hand, like those of the nineteenth century, criticise themselves constantly, interrupt themselves continually in their own course, come back to the apparently accomplished in order to begin afresh, decide with unmerciful thoroughness the inadequacies, weaknesses and paralyses of their first attempts, seem to throw down their adversary only in order that he may draw new strength from the earth and rise again more gigantic before them, recoil ever and anon from the indefinite

2. The bourgeoisie was allied with the new nobility against the monarchy, the feudal nobility, and the ruling church.
3. Republican in yellow gloves.
4. The day Louis Bonaparte was elected president of the republic.
prodigiosity of their own aims, until the situation has been created which makes all turning back impossible, and the conditions themselves cry out:

Hic Rhodus, hic salta!
Hier ist die Rose, hier tanze!  

For the rest, every fairly competent observer, even if he had not followed the course of French development step by step, must have had a presentiment that a terrible fasce was in store for the revolution. It was enough to hear the self-complacent howl of victory with which Messieurs the Democrats congratulated each other on the gracious consequences of May 2, 1852. In their minds May 2, 1852, had become a fixed idea, a dogma, like the day on which Christ should reappear and the millenium begin, in the minds of the Chilists. As ever, weakness had taken refuge in a belief in miracles, had fancied the enemy overcome when he was only conjured away in imagination, and lost all understanding of the present in a passive glorification of the future that was in store for it and of the deeds it had in petto, but merely did not want to carry out as yet. Those heroes, who seek to disprove their demonstrated incapacity by mutually offering each other their sympathy and getting together in a crowd, had tied up their bundles, collected their laurel wreaths in advance and were just then engaged in discounting on the exchange market the republics in partibus, for which they had already thoughtfully organized the government personnel with all the calm of their unassuming disposition. December 2 struck them like a thunderbolt from a clear sky, and the peoples that in epochs of pestilential depression gladly let their inward apprehension be drowned by the loudest bawling will perchance have convinced themselves that the times are past when the cackle of geese could save the Capitol.

The Constitution, the National Assembly, the dynastic parties, the blue and the red republicans, the heroes of Africa, the troops...

5. “Hier ist die Rose, hier tanze!” The words are from a story by Aesop about a braggart who claimed he could produce witnesses to prove he had once made a remarkable leap in Rhodos, to which claim he received the reply: “Why cite witnesses if it is true? Here is Rhodes, leap here!” That is, “Show us right here what you can do.” The German paraphrase of the Greek quotation (Rhodos means rose) was used by Hegel in the preface to his Philosophy of Right.

6. The day on which new presidential elections were to be held. Louis Bonaparte would have had to retire on this day, as the constitution did not permit anyone to be elected for the presidency for a second time, except after an interval of four years.

7. The adherents of an ancient Christian sect, who believed in the second coming of Christ and in the establishment of the millennium, a thousand years of paradise on earth.

8. In reserve.

9. In partibus infidelium: literally, “in the country of the infidels.” An expression often used by Marx and Engels to describe émigré governments formed abroad without regard to the real situation in a country.

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Order from the platform, the sheet lightning of the daily press, the entire literature, the political names and the intellectual reputations, the civil law and penal code, the liberté, égalité, fraternité and the second of May 1852—all have vanished like a phantasmagoria before the spell of a man whom even his enemies do not make out to be a magician. Universal suffrage seems to have survived only for a moment, in order that with its own hand it may make its last will and testament before the eyes of all the world and declare in the name of the people itself: Everything that exists has this much worth, that it will perish.

It is not enough to say, as the French do, that their nation has been taken by surprise. A nation and a woman are not forgiven the unguarded hour in which the first adventurer came along could violate them. The riddle is not solved by such terms of speech, but merely formulated in another way. It remains to be explained how a nation of thirty-six millions can be surprised and delivered unresisting into captivity by three high class swindlers.

Let us recapitulate their general outlines the phases that the French Revolution has gone through from February 24, 1848, to December 1851.

Three main periods are unmistakable: the February period, the period of the constituting of the republic or of the Constituent National Assembly, May 4, 1848, to May 29, 1849; the period of the constitutional republic or of the Legislative National Assembly, May 29, 1849, to December 2, 1851.

The first period, from February 24, or the overthrow of Louis Philippe, to May 4, 1848, the meeting of the Constituent Assembly, the February period proper, may be described as the prologue of the Revolution. Its character was officially expressed in the fact that the government improvised by it declared itself to be provisional and, like the government, everything that was instigated, attempted or enunciated during this period, proclaimed itself to be provisional. Nothing and nobody ventured to lay claim to the right of existence and of real action. All the elements that had prepared or determined the Revolution, the dynastic opposition, the republican bourgeoisie, the democratic-republican petty bourgeoisie and the social-democratic workers, provisionally found their place in the February government.

It could not be otherwise. The February days originally intended...
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that of removing Blanqui and his comrades, that is, the real leaders of the proletarian party [the revolutionary communists], from the public stage for the entire duration of the cycle we are considering.

The bourgeois monarchy of Louis Philippe can only be followed by the bourgeois republic, that is, if a limited section of the bourgeoisie formerly ruled in the name of the king, the whole of the bourgeoisie will now rule in the name of the people. The demands of the Paris proletariat are utopian nonsense to which an end must be put. To this declaration of the Constituent National Assembly the Paris proletariat replied with the June Insurrection, the most colossal event in the history of European civil wars. The bourgeois republic triumphed. On its side stood the aristocracy of finance, the industrial bourgeoisie, the middle class, the petty bourgeoisie, the army, the lumpenproletariat organised as the Mobile Guard, the intellectual lights, the clergy, and the rural population. On the side of the Paris proletariat stood none but itself. More than three thousand insurgents were butchered after the victory, and fifteen thousand were transported without trial. With this defeat the proletariat passes into the background of the revolutionary stage. It attempts to press forward again on every occasion, as soon as the movement appears to make a fresh start, but with ever decreased expenditure of strength and always more insignificant results. As soon as a part of the social strata situated above it gets into revolutionary ferment, it enters into an alliance with it and so shares all the defeats that the different parties suffer one after another. But these subsequent blows become steadily weaker, the more they are distributed over the entire surface of society. Its more important leaders in the Assembly and the press successively fall victims to the courts, and ever more equivocal figures come to the fore. In part it throws itself into doctrinaire experiments, exchange banks and workers' associations, hence into a movement in which it renounces the revolutionising of the old world by means of its own great, combined resources, and seeks, rather, to achieve its salvation behind society's back, in private fashion, within its limited conditions of existence, and hence inevitably suffers shipwreck. It seems to be unable either to rediscover revolutionary greatness in itself or to win new energy from the alliances newly entered into, until all classes with which it contended in June themselves lie prostrate beside it. But at least it succumbs with the honours of the great, world-historic struggle; not only France, but all Europe trembles at the June earthquake, while the ensuing defeats of the upper classes.
are so cheaply bought that they require bare-faced exaggeration by
the victorious party to be able to pass for events at all and become
the more ignominious; the further the defeated party is removed
from the proletariat.

The defeat of the June insurgents, to be sure, had now prepared
and levelled the ground on which the bourgeois republic could be
founded and built up, but it had shown at the same time that in
Europe there are other questions involved than that of “republic or
monarchy.” It had revealed that here bourgeois republic signifies
the unlimited despotism of one class over other classes. It had
proved that in lands with an old civilisation, with a developed for-
formation of classes, with modern conditions of production and with
an intellectual consciousness into which all traditional ideas have
been absorbed by the work of centuries, the republic signifies in
general only the political form of the revolution of bourgeois society
and not its conservative form of life, as, for example, in the United
States of North America, where, though classes, indeed, already
exist, they have not yet become fixed, but continually change and
interchange their elements in a constant state of flux, where the
modern means of production, instead of coinciding with a stagnant
surplus-population, rather supply the relative deficiency of heads
and hands and where, finally, the feverishly youthful movement of
material production, that has a new world to make its own, has left
neither time nor opportunity for abolishing the old spirit world.

During the June days all classes and parties which had united in the
Party of Order against the proletarian class as the party of anarchy,
of socialism, of communism. They had “saved” society from “the
enemies of society.” They had given out the watchwords of the old
society, “property, family, religion, order,” to their army as pass-
words and had proclaimed to the counter-revolutionary crusaders:
“This sign you will conquer!” From that moment, as soon as one
of the numerous parties which had gathered under this sign against
the June insurgents seeks to hold the revolutionary battlefields in
its own class interests it goes down before the cry: “Property, family,
religion, order.” Society is saved just as often as the circle of its
rulers contracts, as a more exclusive interest is maintained against
a wider one. Every demand of the simplest bourgeois financial reform,
of the most ordinary liberalism, of the most formal republicanism,
of the most insipid democracy, is simultaneously castigated as an
“attempt on society” and stigmatised as “socialism.” And, finally,
the high priests of “religion and order” themselves are driven with
kicks from their Pythia triads, hauled out of their beds in the
darkness of night, put in prison-vans, thrown into dungeons or sent
into exile; their temple is razed to the ground, their mouths are

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scaled, their pens broken, their law torn to pieces in the name of
religion, of property, of family, of order. Bourgeois fanatics for order
are shot down on their balconies by mobs of drunken soldiers, their
domestic sanctuaries profaned, their houses bombarded for amuse-
ment—in the name of property, of family, of religion and of order.
Finally the scum of bourgeois society forms the holy phalanx of
order and the hero Crapulinsky installs himself in the Tuileries
as the “sovereign of society.”

VII

On the threshold of the February Revolution, the social republic
appeared as a phrase, as a prophecy. In the June days of 1848, it
was drowned in the blood of the Paris proletariat, but it haunts the
subsequent acts of the drama like a ghost. The democratic republic
makes its appearance. On June 13, 1849, it is dissipated together
with its petty bourgeois, who take to their heels, but in its flight it
blows its own trumpet with redoubled boastfulness. The parlia-
mentary republic, together with the bourgeois, takes possession of the
entire stage; it lives out its existence to the full, but December 2,
1851, buries it to the accompaniment of the cry of terror of the roy-
alists in coalition: “Long live the republican!”

The French bourgeoisie offered resistance to the domination of
the working proletariat; it has brought the lumpenproletariat to
domination, with the chief of the Society of December 10 at the
head. The bourgeoisie kept France in breathless fear of the future
terrors of red anarchy; Bonaparte discounted this future for it when,
on December 4, he had the eminent bourgeoisie of the Boulevard
Montmartre and the Boulevard des Italiens shot down at their win-
dows by the army of order, whose enthusiasm was inspired by li-
quor. It apotheosised the sword; the sword rules it. It destroyed the
revolutionary press; its own press has been destroyed. It placed pub-
lc meetings under police supervision; its salons are under the super-
vision of the police. It disbanded the democratic National Guard;
its own National Guard has been disbanded. It imposed the state of
siege; the state of siege has been imposed on it. It supplanted the
junes by military commissions; its juries are supplanted by military
commissions; it subjected public education to the priests; the priests
subject it to their own education. It transported people without

6. The hero of Heine's poem, Two
Away. In this character, Heine ridicu-
les the spendthrift, Polish nobleman
("Crapulinsky" comes from the French
word crápele—gluttony, greediness). Here
Marx means Louis Bonaparte.
7. The residence of the head of the
government in France.
trial; it is transported without trial. It suppressed every stirring in society by means of the state power; every stirring in society is repressed by means of the state power. Out of enthusiasm for its purse, it rebelled against its own politicians and men of letters; its politicians and men of letters are swept aside, but its purse is plundered now that its mouth has been gagged and its pen broken. The bourgeoisie never wearied of crying out to the revolution what Saint Arsenius cried out to the Christians: "Fuge, tace, quiesce!" Flee, be silent, keep quiet! Bonaparte cries to the bourgeoisie: "Fuge, tace, quiesce!" Flee, be silent, keep quiet!

The French bourgeoisie had long since found the solution to Napoleon's dilemma: "Dans cinquante ans l'Europe sera républicaine ou cosaque." It had found the solution to it in the "république cosaque." No Circe, by means of black magic, has distorted that work of art, the bourgeois republic, into a monstrous shape. That republic has nothing but the semblance of respectability. The present-day France was contained in a finished state within the parliamentary republic. It only required a bayonet thrust for the bubble to burst and the monster to spring forth before our eyes.

The immediate aim of the February Revolution was to overthrow the Orleans dynasty and the section of the bourgeoisie that ruled during its reign. This aim was only attained on December 2, 1851. The immense possessions of the house of Orleans, the real basis of its influence, were now confiscated and what had been expected after the February Revolution came to pass after the December coup—prison, flight, dismissal, banishment, disarming, derision for the men who since 1830 had wearied France with their renown. But under Louis Philippe only a part of the commercial bourgeoisie ruled. Its other sections formed a dynastic and a republican opposition or were altogether disfranchised. Only the parliamentary republic accepted all sections of the commercial bourgeoisie into its sphere of state. Under Louis Philippe, moreover, the commercial bourgeoisie excluded the landowning bourgeoisie. Only the parliamentary republic set them side by side, with equal rights, married the July monarchy to the Legitimist monarchy and fused two epochs of property rule into one. Under Louis Philippe, the favoured section of the bourgeoisie concealed its rule under cover of the crown; in the parliamentary republic the rule of the bourgeoisie, after it had united all its elements and extended its realm to be the realm of its class, revealed its uncovered head. Thus the revolution itself had first to create the form in which the rule of the bourgeoisie could obtain its broadest, most general and final expression, and therefore could also be overthrown without being able to arise again.

a. "Within fifty years Europe will be republican or Cossack."

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Only now was the judgment, passed in February, executed on the Orleanist bourgeoisie, that is, on the most vital section of the French bourgeoisie. Now it was defeated in its parliament, its bar, its commercial courts, its provincial representative bodies, its notaries, its university, its tribunal and its tribunals, its press and its literature, its administrative revenues and its court fees, its army pay and its state incomes, in its mind and in its body. Blanqui had made the disbandment of the bourgeoisie the first demand on the revolution, and the bourgeoisie guards, who in February offered the revolution their hand in order to hinder its progress, vanished from the scene in December. The Pantheon itself becomes transformed into an ordinary church. With the final form of the bourgeois regime the spell is likewise broken which transfigured its initiators of the eighteenth century into saints.²⁹

Why did not the Paris proletariat rise in revolt after December?
The overthrow of the bourgeoisie had as yet only been decreed; the decree had not been carried out. Any serious insurrection of the proletariat would at once have put fresh life into the bourgeoisie, would have reconciled it with the army and would have ensured a second June defeat for the workers.

On December 4 the proletariat was invited to fight by the bourgeoisie and the small shopkeepers. On the evening of that day several legions of the National Guard promised to appear, armed and uniformed, on the scene of action. For the bourgeoisie and the small shopkeepers had found out that in one of his decrees of December 2 Bonaparte abolished the secret ballot and enjoined them to record their "yes" or "no" in the official registers after their names. The resistance of December 4 intimidated Bonaparte. During the night he caused placards to be posted on all the streets of Paris, announcing the restoration of the secret ballot. The bourgeoisie and the small shopkeepers believed that they had gained their end. Those who failed to appear next morning were the bourgeoisie and the small shopkeepers.

By a coup de main during the night of December 1 to 2, Bonaparte had robbed the Paris proletariat of its leaders, the barricade commanders. An army without officers, made disinclined to fight under the banner of the Montagnards by the memories of June 1848 and 1849 and May 1850, it left to its vanguard, the secret societies, the task of saving the insurrectionary honour of Paris, which the bourgeoisie had so spinelessly surrendered to the soldiers that, later on, Bonaparte could sneeringly give as his motive for disarming the National Guard—his fear that its arms would be turned against itself by anarchists!

²⁹ The sentences in square brackets were omitted by Engels from the third German edition because of censorship restrictions.
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provincial independent powers in order to create the bourgeois unity of the nation, was bound to develop what the absolute monarchy had begun—centralisation, but at the same time the extent, the attributes and the agents of governmental authority. Napoleon perfected this state machinery. The Legitimist monarchy and the July monarchy added nothing but a greater division of labour, growing in the same measure that the division of labour within bourgeois society created new groups of interests, and, therefore, new material for state administration. Every common interest was straightway severed from society, counter-posed to it as a higher, general interest, snatched from the self-activity of society’s members and made an object of governmental activity from the bridge, the school-house and the communal property of a village community to the railways, the national wealth and the national university of France. The parliamentary republic, finally, in its struggle against the revolution, found itself compelled to strengthen, along with the repressive measures, the resources and centralisation of governmental power. All the revolutions perfected this machine instead of smashing it. The parties that contended in turn for domination regarded the possession of this huge state edifice as the principal spoils of the victor.

But under the absolute monarchy, during the first revolution, and under Napoleon, bureaucracy was only the means of preparing the class rule of the bourgeoisie. Under the Restoration, under Louis Philippe and under the parliamentary republic, it was the instrument of the ruling class, however much it strove for power of its own.

Only under the second Bonaparte does the state seem to have made itself completely independent. As against bourgeois society, the state machine has consolidated its position so thoroughly that the chief of the Society of December 10 suffices for its head, an adventurer blown in from abroad, elevated on the shield by a drunken soldiery, which he has bought with liquor and sausages, and which he must continually ply with sausage anew. Hence the downcast despair, the feeling of most dreadful humiliation and degradation that oppresses the breast of France and makes her catch her breath. She feels herself dishonoured.

And yet the state power is not suspended in mid-air. Bonaparte represents a class, and the most numerous class of French society. That the small peasants.

Just as the Bourbons were the dynasty of large landed property and just as the Orleans were the dynasty of money, so the Bonapartes are the dynasty of the peasants, that is, the mass of the French people. Not the Bonaparte who submitted to the bourgeois parliament, but the Bonaparte who dispersed it is the chosen of the
peasantry. For three years the towns had succeeded in falsifying the
meaning of the election of December 10 and in cheating the peas-
ants out of the restoration of the Empire. The election of Decem-
ber 10, 1848, was consummated only by the coup d'etat of Decem-
ber 2, 1851.

The small peasants form a vast mass, the members of which live
in similar conditions, but without entering into manifold relations
with one another. Their mode of production isolates them from one
another, instead of bringing them into mutual intercourse. The iso-
lation is increased by France’s bad means of communication and by
the poverty of the peasants. Their field of production, the small
holding, admits of no division of labour in its cultivation, no appli-
cation of science and, therefore, no multiplicity of development, no
diversity of talents, no wealth of social relationships. Each individu-
al peasant family is almost self-sufficient; it itself directly produces
the major part of its consumption and thus acquires its means of
life more through exchange with nature than in intercourse with so-
ciety. The small holding, the peasant and his family; alongside
them another small holding, another peasant and another family. A
few score of these make up a village, and a few score of villages
make up a Department. In this way, the great mass of the French
nation is formed by simple addition of homologous magnitudes,
much as potatoes in a sack form a sackful of potatoes. In so far as
millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that
divide their mode of life, their interests and their culture from those
of the other classes, and put them in hostile contrast to the latter,
they form a class. In so far as there is merely a local interconnection
among these small peasants, and the identity of their interests be-
gets no unity, no national union and no political organisation,
they do not form a class. They are consequently incapable of enforcing
their class interest in their own name, whether through a parlia-
ment or through a convention. They cannot represent themselves
they must be represented. Their representative must at the same
time appear as their master, as an authority over them, as an unlim-
ited governmental power that protects them against the other
classes and sends them the rain and the sunshine from above. The
political influence of the small peasants, therefore, finds its final
expression in the executive power subordinating society to itself.

Historical tradition gave rise to the faith of the French peasants
in the miracle that a man named Napoleon would bring all the
glory back to them. And an individual was found who gives himself
out as the man because he bears the name of Napoleon, in conse-
quency of the Code Napoléon, which lays down that la recherche

5. Inquiry into fatherhood is forbidden.
6. In Cevennes (Southern France, Lan-
cedoc), at the beginning of the eigh-
teenth century, there was an uprising
of peasants under the slogans, “Down
with taxes! Freedom of faith!”

4. The French code of civil law, promulgated on March 51, 1804.

7. The Vendée peasantry was the most politically backward of the time of the first French bourgeois revolution; it supported the royalist counter-
revolution.
the peasant class, it held fast to the conditions that form the birthplace of this peasant religion. The bourgeoisie, to be sure, is bound to fear the stupidity of the masses, as long as they remain conservative, and the insight of the masses, as soon as they become revolutionary.

In the risings after the coup d'état, a part of the French peasants protested, arms in hand, against their own vote of December 10, 1848. The school they had gone through since 1848 had sharpened their wits. But they had made themselves over to the underworld of history; history held them to their word, and the majority was still so bound that in precisely the reddest Departments the peasant population voted openly for Bonaparte. In its view, the National Assembly had hindered his progress. He had now merely broken the fetters that the town had imposed on the will of the countryside. In some parts the peasants even entertained the grotesque notion of a Convention side by side with a Napoleon.

After the first revolution had transformed the peasants from semi-villeins into freeholders, Napoleon confirmed and regulated the conditions on which they could exploit undisturbed the soil of France which had only just come into their possession and stoke their youthful passion for property. But what is now causing the ruin of the French peasant is his dwarf holding itself, the division of the land, the form of property which Napoleon consolidated in France. It is precisely the material conditions which made the feudal peasant into a small peasant and Napoleon into an emperor. Two generations have sufficed to produce the inevitable result: progressive deterioration of agriculture, progressive indebtedness of the agriculturists. The "Napoleonic" form of property, which at the beginning of the nineteenth century was the condition for the liberation and enrichment of the French countryside, has developed in the course of this century, as the law of their enslavement and pauperisation. And it is just this law which is the first of the "idées napoléoniennes" which the second Bonaparte has to uphold. If he still shares with the peasants the illusion that the cause of their ruin is to be sought not in this small holding property itself but outside it in the influence of secondary causes, then his experiments will burst like soap bubbles when they come into contact with the relations of production.

The economic development of this small holding property has turned the relation of the peasants to the remaining classes of society completely upside down. Under Napoleon, the fragmentation of the land in the countryside supplemented free competition and the beginning of big industry in the towns. [Even the favouring of the peasant class was in the interest of the new bourgeois order. This newly-created class...was the many-sided extension of the bourgeois regime beyond the gates of the towns, its realisation on a national scale.] This class was the ubiquitous protest against the landed aristocracy which had just been overturned.

[If it was favoured above all, it, above all, offered the point of attack for the restoration of the feudal lands.]

The roots that this small holding property struck in French soil deprived feudalism of all nutriment. Its landmarks formed the natural fortifications of the bourgeoisie against any coup de main on the part of its old overlords. But in the course of the nineteenth century the feudal lords were replaced by urban usurers; the feudal obligations that went with the land were replaced by the mortgage; aristocratic landed property was replaced by bourgeois capital. The small holding of the peasant is now only the pretext that allows the capitalist to draw profits, interest and rent from the soil, while leaving it to the tiller of the soil himself to see how he can extract his wages. The mortgage debt burdening the soil of France imposes on the French peasantry payment of an amount of interest equal to the annual interest on the entire British national debt. Small-holding property, in this enslavement by capital to which its development inevitably pushes forward, has transformed the mass of the French nation into troglodytes. Sixteen million peasants (including women and children) dwell in hovels, a large number of which have but one opening, others only two and the most favoured only three. And windows are to a house what the five senses are to the head. The bourgeois order, which at the beginning of the century set the state to stand guard over the newly arisen small holding and manned it with laurels, has become a vampire that sucks out its blood and marrow and throws them into the alchemistic cauldron of capital. The Code Napoléon is now nothing but a codex of distrainments, forced sales and compulsory auctions. To the four million (including children, etc.) officially recognised paupers, vagabonds, criminals and prostitutes in France must be added five millions who hover on the margin of existence and either have their haunts in the countryside itself or, with their rags and their children, continually desert the countryside for the towns and the towns for the countryside. The interests of the peasants, therefore, are no longer,

9. In the plebiscite that ratified the coup d'état, by voting Bonaparte back as President with a huge majority.
1. The Convention. The revolutionary representative assembly of the first French bourgeois revolution. It was convened in September 1792, after the overthrow of the monarchy and the establishment of the republic. After the expulsion of the Girondins (May 31–June 2, 1792), the majority of its members were Jacobins—the representatives of the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie.

2. The sentences in square brackets on this and the following pages were omitted by Engels from the third German edition because of censorship restrictions.
as under Napoleon, in accord with, but in opposition to the interests of the bourgeoisie, to capital. Hence the peasants find their natural ally and leader in the urban proletariat, whose task is the overthrow of the bourgeoisie order. But strong and unlimited government—and this is the second “idée napoléonienne,” which the second Napoleon has to carry out—is called upon to defend by force this “material” order. This “material order” also serves as the catchword in all Bonaparte’s proclamations against the rebellious peasants.

Besides the mortgage which capital imposes on it, the small holding is burdened by taxes. Taxes are the source of life for the bureaucracy, the army, the priests and the court, in short, for the whole apparatus of the executive power. Strong government and heavy taxes are identical. By its very nature, small holding property forms a suitable basis for an all-powerful and innumerable bureaucracy. It creates a uniform level of relationships and persons over the whole surface of the land. Hence it also permits of uniform action from a supreme centre on all points of this uniform mass. It annihilates the aristocratic intermediate grades between the mass of the people and the state power. On all sides, therefore, it calls for the direct interference of this state power and the intervention of its immediate organs. Finally, it produces an unemployed surplus population for which there is no place either on the land or in the towns, and which accordingly reaches out for state offices as a sort of respectable aim, and provokes the creation of state posts.

[Under Napoleon this numerous governmental personnel was not merely immediately productive, inasmuch as, through the means of compulsion of the state, it executed on behalf of the newly arisen peasantry, in the form of public works, etc., what the bourgeoisie could not yet accomplish by way of private industry. State taxes were a necessary means of compulsion to maintain exchange between town and country. Otherwise, the owner of a dwarf holding would in his rustic self-sufficiency have severed his connection with the townsman, as in Norway and a part of Switzerland.]

By the new markets which he opened at the point of the bayonet, and by the plundering of the Continent, Napoleon repaid the compulsory taxes with interest. These taxes were a spur to the industry of the peasant, whereas now they rob his industry of its last sources of aid and complete his powerlessness to resist pauperism. And an enormous bureaucracy, well-dressed and well-fed, is the “idée napoléonienne” which is most congenial to all the second Bonaparte. How could it be otherwise, seeing that alongside the actual classes of society, he is forced to create an artificial caste, for which the maintenance of his regime becomes a bread-and-butter question? Accordingly, one of his first financial operations was the raising of officials’ salaries to their old level again and the creation of new sinecures.

3. Montalembert, the head of the militant Catholic Party, spoke of the discussions on the repeal of universal suffrage, on the necessity of undertaking a Roman expedition “within France—meaning support of the Roman Pope and the Catholic clergy. Mars, on the other hand, is speaking of an expedition against Rome in the sense of a struggle against the clergy. 4. Bailiffs.
the hallucinations of its death struggle, words that are reduced to phrases, spirits reduced to ghosts. But the parody of imperialism was necessary to free the mass of the French nation from the weight of tradition and to work out in pure form the opposition between the state power and society. With the progressive undermining of this small holding property, the state structure erected upon it collapses. The state centralization that modern society requires arises only on the ruins of the military-bureaucratic governmental machinery which was forged in opposition to feudalism.

[The demolition of the state machine will not ender centralisation. Bureaucracy is only the low and brutal form of a centralisation that is still afflicted with its opposite, with feudalism. On coming to despair of the Napoleonic Restoration, the French peasant parts with his belief in his small holding, the entire state edifice erected on this small holding falls to the ground and the proletarian revolution obtains that chorus without which its solo song in all peasant nations becomes a swan song.]

French peasant relationships provide us with the answer to the riddle of the general elections of December 20 and 21, which bore the second Napoleon up Mount Sinai, not to receive laws, but to give them.

[To be sure, on those fateful days the French nation committed a deadly sin against democracy, which is on its knees and prays daily: Holy universal suffrage, intercede for us! Naturally, the believers in universal suffrage do not want to renounce a miraculous power that has accomplished such great things in regard to themselves, which has transformed Bonaparte II into a Napoleon, a Saul into a Paul and a Simon into a Peter. The spirit of the people speaks to them through the ballot-box as the god of the prophet Ezekiel spoke to the powerless bones: "Hæc dicit dominus dei ossibus suis: Ecce, ego intromittam in vos spiritum et vivetis." "Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live."

Manifestly, the bourgeoisie had no choice but to elect Bonaparte. [Despotism or anarchy. Naturally, it voted for despotism.] When the puritans at the Council of Constance complained of the dissolve lives of the popes and wailed about the necessity of moral reform, Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly thundered to them: "Only the devil in person can now save the Catholic Church, and you ask for angels." In like manner, after the coup d'état, the French bourgeoisie cried: Only the chief of the Society of December 10 can now save bourgeois society! Only theft can now save property; only perjury, religion; only bastardy, the family; only disorder, order.

As the executive authority which has made itself an independent power, Bonaparte feels it to be his mission to safeguard "civil order." But the strength of this civil order lies in the middle class. He looks on himself, therefore, as the representative of the middle class and issues decrees in this sense. Nevertheless, he is somebody solely due to the fact that he has broken the political power of this middle class and daily breaks it anew. Consequently, he looks on himself as the adversary of the political and literary power of the middle class. But by protecting its material power, he generates its political power anew. The cause must accordingly be kept alive; but the effect, where it manifests itself, must be done away with. But this cannot pass off without slight confusions of cause and effect, since in their interaction both lose their distinguishing features. New decrees, that obliterate the border-line. At the same time, Bonaparte looks on himself as the representative of the peasants, and of the people in general, against the bourgeoisie, who wants to make the lower classes of the people happy within the frame of bourgeois society. New decrees, that cheat the "true socialists" of their statecraft in advance. But, above all, Bonaparte looks on himself as the chief of the Society of December 10, as the representative of the lumpenproletariat to which he himself, his entourage, his government and his army belong, and for which the prime consideration is to benefit itself and draw California lottery prizes from the state treasury. And he makes good his position as chief of the Society of December 10 with decrees, without decrees and despite decrees.

This contradictory task of the man explains the contradictions of his government... the confused groping hither and thither which seeks now to win, now to humble first one class and then another and arranges all of them uniformly against him, whose practical uncertainty forms a highly comical contrast to the imperious categorical style of the government decrees, a style which is copied obsequiously from the Uncle.

Industry and trade, hence the business affairs of the middle class, are to prosper in hot-house fashion under the strong government. Granting of innumerable railway concessions. But the Bonapartist lumpenproletariat is to enrich itself. Trickery with the railway concessions on the Bourse by those previously initiated. But no capital is forthcoming for the railways. Obligation of the Bank to make advances on railway shares. But, at the same time, the Bank is to be exploited for personal ends and therefore must be coaxed. Release of the Bank from the obligation to publish its report weekly. Leonnine agreement of the Bank with the government. The people are to be given employment. Inauguration of public works. But the public works increase the obligations of the people in respect of

5. Meaning an agreement by which one gets the lion's share.
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bisogna prima far il conto sopra gli anni." 2 Lest they make a mistake in the years, they count the minutes. At the court, in the ministries, at the head of the administration and the army, a crowd of fellows pushes forward, of the best of whom it can be said that no one knows whence he comes, a noisy, disreputable, rapacious Bohème that dresses itself in gallooned coats with the same caricature of dignity as the high dignitaries of Souloque. One can visualise clearly this upper stratum of the Society of December 10, if one reflects that Veron-Crevel is its preacher of morals and Cranier de Cassagnac its thinker. When Guizot, at the time of his ministry, utilised this Cranier on a hole-and-corner newspaper against the dynastic opposition, he used to boast of him with the quip: "C'est le roi des drôles," "he is the king of buffoons." One would do wrong to recall the Regency of Louis XV in connection with Louis Bonaparte's court and clique. For "often already, France has experienced a government of mistresses; but never before, a government of hommes entretenus." 3

Driven by the contradictory demands of his situation, and, at the same time, like a conjurer under the necessity of keeping the public gaze fixed on himself, as Napoleon's substitute, by constant surprises, hence of executing a coup d'état en miniature every day, Bonaparte throws the entire bourgeois economy into confusion, lays hands on everything that seemed inviolable to the revolution of 1848, makes some tolerant of revolution, others desirous of revolution, and produces actual anarchy in the name of order, while at the same time he divests the whole state machine of its halo, profanes it and makes it at once loathsome and ridiculous. The cult of the Holy Coat of Treves 4 he duplicates at Paris in the cult of the Napoleonico imperial mantle. But if the imperial mantle finally falls on the shoulders of Louis Bonaparte, the iron statue of Napoleon will crash from the top of the Vendôme column.

6. Persons drawing income from bonds and investments. 9. General Staff.
7. Retail. 1. "It is the first flight (theft) of the eagle." Vol means flight and theft.
8. Wholesale.