1971

Pierre Joseph Proudhon and the Revolution of 1848

Lois Spear
Loyola University Chicago

Recommended Citation
https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/1231

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact ecommons@luc.edu.
Creative Commons License
This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License.
Copyright © 1971 Lois Spear
PIERRE JOSEPH PROUDHON AND THE REVOLUTION OF 1848

By

Sister Lois Spear, O. P.

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

June

1971
Pierre Joseph Proudhon and the Revolution of 1848, Sister Lois Spear, O. P. Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois. Advisor: Dr. Franklin A. Walker

The work is a study of Proudhon's political actions in 1848 based on his newspapers, the newly published third volume of the Carnets and the unpublished remainder of the "Carnets," and selected volumes from the collected works in which Proudhon recalled the events of 1848. The time span is the two years from 1848-1850, with the exception of the writings on the coup d'etat of 1851 which appears to have been a natural outgrowth of Proudhon's political thought in 1848. The purpose of the work is to determine in what way he influenced 1848 and how the revolution caused him to change his political philosophy.

During this period, he edited four newspapers, became a member of the constituent assembly, carried on an internecine feud with the members of the "Mountain"--a combination of socialists and the democratic faction headed by Ledru-Rollin--and finally was sentenced to prison for his angry prose directed against the president of the republic, Louis Napoleon Bonaparte.

In his newspapers and in the constituent assembly, Proudhon attempted to institute a peaceful "economic revolution" which would free the market exchange and allow labor to receive its fair share of production by depriving capitalists of their return through abolishing interest and money, replacing the latter with a nineteenth century kind of commodity dollar. He was hampered by a political inability which caused him to misjudge the temper of the country after the June Days; he allowed himself to become a symbol of Erostratus against which all who wished to save property, religion, and the family might rally. When his economic proposals were rejected he turned away from political action toward a popularly-instituted economic revolution,
a peaceful revolution to be achieved through education of the people and the chartering of an exchange bank. His proposals became enmeshed in struggles with his confreres of the Mountain and the president of the republic, Bonaparte. Since the nearest and most dangerous enemy was the Mountain, Proudhon used the fight with Bonaparte as a skirmish to hide his far more serious war with the Mountain. When in prison after the coup d'etat, Proudhon called upon Bonaparte as his sole remaining instrument with which to institute the revolution.

The result of Proudhon's blundering actions in 1848 was to assist Bonaparte in his bid for the presidency, for by his battles with his confreres and his inept political maneuvering, he destroyed the only faction capable of opposing Bonaparte.

Though his influence on 1848 was the dubious one of assisting his enemy to office, the effect of 1848 on Proudhon lasted throughout his life, causing him to reject entirely any attempt to solve an economic problem by using political means; to re-think his ideas on property, deciding that property--absolute possession--might be a bulwark against the encroachment of the idea of authority; to reject the concepts of universal suffrage and a constitution, for both had failed when he attempted to use them in 1848. And finally, he needed to explain why he had failed. In the process, 1848 became an historical and philosophical laboratory which was the basis of his later writings.
VITA

Sister Lois Spear was born in Estherville, Iowa and attended the local grade and high schools, graduating from Estherville Junior College in 1940 as its valedictorian. In 1944 she entered the Order of Saint Dominic at its Motherhouse in Adrian, Michigan. After making profession and graduating from Siena Heights College in Adrian in 1946, she taught in Michigan and Illinois Catholic schools, completing her master's program in history at De Paul University in Chicago in 1953.

Until entering Loyola University in 1968, she taught in Florida, Illinois, and Michigan high schools, teaching history, English and journalism. As contributing editor for Photolith and Scholastic Editor, she has published approximately seven articles on photo journalism, layout, and copy editing.

During the 1971-1972 academic year, she will be a member of the history department at Barry College in Miami, Florida.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Several libraries, through their kind lending services, have helped to make this dissertation possible: Northwestern Library, Evanston, Illinois, for opening its collections to the public, and in particular, for the use of the Lacroix edition of the collected works of Proudhon and the bulletins of the provisional government; Loyola University Cudahy Library, Chicago, for the issues of Le Moniteur and the three volumes of the Carnets; the University of Chicago Joseph Regenstein Library, for bound copies of La Révolution de 1848; the University of Minnesota O. Maredith Wilson Library, Minneapolis, Minnesota, for the use of Le Peuple; the Center for Research Libraries, Chicago, for the bound copy of La Voix du peuple and the microfilm of over 170 French newspapers of 1848, including Le Représentant du peuple; Brandeis University Library, Waltham, Massachusetts for the microfilm of the unpublished "Carnets" of P. J. Proudhon, and the Newberry Library, Chicago, for the Rivière edition of the works of Proudhon.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. THE REVOLUTION OF 1848</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. THE EDITOR OF <em>LE RÉPRÉSENTANT DU PEUPLE</em> AND THE</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. FROM THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY TO THE JUNE DAYS</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. PROUDHON, IN THE ROLE OF EROSTRATUS, AND THE</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. PROUDHON IN OPPOSITION TO LOUIS BONAPARTE</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. THE PRISONER OF SAINTE-FLÉVAGIE AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PREFACE

Pierre Joseph Proudhon, when he reached his thirty-ninth year and was already a leading social thinker, had the rare opportunity to attempt an application of his philosophy in the revolution that swept over his country in 1848. It is the purpose of this work to examine Proudhon in 1848 to determine in what way he influenced the revolution and the extent to which the events of 1848 influenced him and his philosophy. The time span to be covered, with the exception of his reaction to the coup d'etat of 1851 which appears to have been a logical outcome of his thinking in 1848, will be the years during which his newspapers were published—February, 1848 to May, 1850—for in the newspapers he clearly demonstrated his reaction to daily events under the second republic. A second reason for retaining the narrow time span is that it encompasses the recently published third volume of the Carnets, Proudhon's private account of day-to-day happenings. The remainder of the "Carnets," though available in microfilm, are difficult to decipher and must await the valuable explication of Pierre Haubtmann and his footnote explanations of obscure textual references.

In basing a study on the newspapers and Carnets, however, one quickly runs into difficulties, for during the crucial first month of the revolution, Le Représentant du peuple had not begun regular publication, and even when the newspaper began regular issues, Proudhon was often too busy to write and sign articles. The Carnets are of little help at this
time, the comments being almost exclusively notations concerning what
the provisional government was doing, followed by explosive gestures of
disapproval. For this reason, during the crucial first month of the pro-
visional government when hundreds of decrees were being issued, it is neces-
sary to look ahead to some of Proudhon's later works in order to pin together
an explanation of why he acted as he did during his "hibernation" period.

Solution du problème social [1848] is of some help, though the great concern
of the work is the explanation of his economic program. Later works, such
as Confessions d'un révolutionnaire [1849], Idée générale de la révolution
[1851], and even De la Justice dans la révolution et dans l'église [1858],
give an explanation, though probably a rationalization of his actions; yet
his own explanation of how and why he acted, even though in retrospect, is
of considerable value.

For a complete picture of Proudhon in 1848 it is essential that one
study all his works which cover a surprising amount and range of publications.
For example, La Révolution sociale démontrée par le coup d'état du 2 Décembre
[1852], contains his July 31 speech taken directly from Le Moniteur,
retaining even the hostile ejaculations from the assembly, the censure, and
Thiers' speech. Even such early works as the reply to the lenten carême
preached by Lacordaire and his defense speech before the court of assizes
of Doubs in 1841 after Propriété had been seized will be found in the col-
lection, the only missing works being the early essay on grammar which
Proudhon recalled from publication and the contract with Herzen for the
newspaper, La Voix du peuple. Fortunately, the contract may be found in
Raoul Labry's work.¹

¹Raoul Labry, Herzen et Proudhon (Paris: Bossard, 1928).
In studying the works, there are two collections from which to choose. The first is the older Lacroix edition which was hastily collected and published after Proudhon's death, in the years from 1866 until 1876. This issue, though still readable, suffers from frequent typographical errors, having been published before the time of lineotype, causing characters often to be upside down or even the wrong character to be used. Editorial comments are rare, leaving the reader, unless he is familiar with the background of the particular work he is studying, at a loss to understand some of the nuances or contemporary allusions. Of far greater benefit is the Rivière edition, published between 1923 and 1939. The editors, most of them among the circle called Amis du Proudhon, give invaluable aid with long introductions to each of the works and footnote references that clarify incidents or people for twentieth century readers. For example, Édouard Dolléans and Georges Duveau, in the introduction to *Coup*, gave over one hundred introductory pages of explanation, so that before reading the work, one understands events preceding publication and occasional insights into the reception given to the work. Unfortunately, however, the second edition of Proudhon's works is incomplete, only fifteen volumes being published, forcing one to use the Lacroix edition for at least half of the works. Three volumes of the collected works, the *Melanges*, consisting of clippings from the newspapers, have been avoided. The clippings are inaccurate, first because large portions have been deleted by censorship under the empire. Second, what remains is still incorrect as one can quickly see by comparing the article, "Le Serment," of *Melanges*\(^1\) with the article as found in

---

December 22, 1843 issue of Le Peuple. The last volumes of the collected works, published posthumously, are not especially useful. When Proudhon died in 1865, he had a large number of works sur le chantier, and his friends undertook to publish them. This was a mistake, for they contain little that had not been published earlier, and they suffer from errors in style that would have been corrected had Proudhon lived long enough to polish the works. For example, one of the worst of these works, *La Pornocratie ou le femmes dans les temps modernes* adds nothing to his thoughts on women; he had exhausted the subject in *Justice*, analyzing by name and in brutal detail, the writings of his female contemporaries. *Pornocratie* demonstrates crudities in style that Proudhon would never have allowed to remain in the work. In relating the differences between the sexes, for example, he falls back on the differences in physical strength—as displayed in combat. One thinks of the polished metaphors, the classical allusions for which he was famous! The work is so poorly constructed that the last page contradicts the first, the framework of the antinomy having been omitted. Publishing these fragments of Proudhon’s unpolished works added nothing to the man’s thought—merely degrading the style.

Another source of information is the fourteen volumes of correspondence, and here one runs into difficulties again. In editing the letters, Sainte-Beuve, Proudhon’s contemporary and sympathetic biographer, observed that the letters might one day be considered more important than the collected works. Regrettably, he was wrong, for there are serious inadequacies in the correspondence. The letters are frequently out of chronological order,
making it difficult to locate some of them. One would expect to find, for example, a letter to A. M. Javel, written in February 8, 1842, to be located in volume I of the works. It is actually located on page 371, the appendix of volume XIII. A second problem consists in the wrong dates on letters. Volume III of the correspondence contains, on page 27, Proudhon's letter to the Garnier Brothers, dated July 20, 1848, from the Conciergerie. Unless he were merely visiting the prison and wrote a letter from there, which isn't likely, it is impossible to situate him in prison at this time--eleven days before his famous July 31 speech in the assembly. Textual examination indicates that the work was probably written one year later, in 1849. But a far more serious problem with the letters is the havoc wrought by pious hands. A kind of dreamy, mild humanity hangs over them, for the violent words—a significant facet of Proudhon's writing—have been removed. What remains lacks balance. Proudhon appears to be excessively concerned with his own health, a real hypochondriac as some historians have described him. The contrast between the letters and the Carnets, Proudhon's often harsh, uncensored thought, is striking. For a balanced picture of his correspondence, then, it is necessary to take a sampling from among the many unedited letters spread through half a dozen periodicals. For example, Adolphe Court, a hostile writer, has published Proudhon's letters to Perennes, secretary for the Suard pension committee, from whom Proudhon actively solicited support for the scholarship. The Proudhon who emerges from these letters is on the defensive, proud of his self-gained knowledge, and deeply critical of his professors at the university.¹

¹"La Jeunesse de Proudhon, une correspondance inédite," Revue moderne, XLVIII-XLIX (September-October, 1868), pp. 385-423.
Another facet of the man's character, his timidity, is revealed in his letters to his tutor, Professor Droz, in which Proudhon admitted that he was fearful about going into a restaurant alone and his awkward manners made the professor's soirees almost unbearable--give some idea of the personality of the man and the resentments that undoubtedly influenced his actions during 1848.1

After all of these works by Proudhon have been explored, there still remain the "Cahiers de lecture," as well as the unpublished manuscript in the possession of Haubtmann, "Cours d'économie politique." It is the opinion of this writer that Alan Ritter places too much stress on this unpublished manuscript2--as if Proudhon, the author of fifty volumes, would hide in an unpublished treatise, an important facet of his thought. It is true that he was working frantically as the end drew near--but more out of concern for his family's security than out of fear that he had not bestowed upon the world the essence of his thought. It is reasonable to presume that the entire range of his thought is to be found among the published works.

Proudhon had many contemporaries who wrote about him and the events in the revolution. One of the most helpful is the work by his collaborator, Alfred Darimon.3 Not that the man was an accurate observer. He was not, being eager to give himself credit that he does not deserve, and his rancor against some of Proudhon's other editors makes the accuracy of some of his

---

statements questionable. And one must remember that Darimon finally broke
with Proudhon and joined Girardin of La Presse, a move that probably colored
his later observations. Yet once the bias is accounted for, the work is
helpful for it gives one an opportunity to look at the struggles going on
behind the scenes in the newspaper offices as well as a glimpse at the
internecine feuds of the Mountain.

In order to complete the study of Proudhon it is necessary to look
at the revolution in which he participated; there are innumerable accounts
by participants, along with government documents recording the work of the
assembly and the inquests into civil disturbances. The problem with the
later historiography on the subject is the amount that has been written and
the Marxian interpretation that influences a great deal of it. Since the
revolution had deep-seated economic causes, a study of these causes is most
rewarding in trying to place Proudhon in the proper context.

Several excellent works explore the economic sector. The 1956
volume of Études de la société d'histoire de la révolution de 1848, edited
by Ernest Labrousse, for example, explores the entire economic picture in
France leading up to the revolution, adding immeasurably to the understanding
of economic causes of the revolution. Daumard's monograph1 gives an analysis
of the actual state of the poor in one of the worst sections of Paris. Popu-
lation pressures and mobility and how they influenced the explosive economic
condition in the cities is explored by Charles Pouthas.2

1Adeline Daumard, "Une source d'histoire sociale: l'enregistrement des
mutations par décès le XIIe arrondissement de Paris en 1820 et 1847," Revue
d'histoire économique et sociale, XXXV (January-March, 1957), pp. 52-78.

2Charles Pouthas, La Population française pendant la première moitié
For historians of Proudhon, another important aspect of the revolution is universal suffrage and the elections. A small army of historians have studied this facet. George Fasel, for example, has analyzed the elections of April, 1848. He presents strong evidence favoring revision of the former evaluation of the constituent as composed of middle-of-the-road republicans of the variety of Le National.1 Alfred Cobban has studied the same elections to determine the influence of the government in the voting.2 Other monographs on the elections are helpful, for example, the one by R. Balland for volume XXII of Études in which he concludes that the election of March, 1850 influenced legislators to propose the May 31, 1850 electoral law.3 Theodore Zeldin's analysis of the 1849 elections, questioning the generalization that the French were, at that time, polarized into two opposing factions, is useful also.4

Since Proudhon was deeply concerned with the problem of violence among the poorer classes, several studies of the June Days give considerable help in placing him in context. Peter Stearns' work explains how industrial dissatisfaction manifested itself earlier in both the laboring and artisan


3R. Balland, "De l'organisation a la restriction du suffrage universel en France (1848-1850)," Bibliothèque de la révolution de 1848, XXII (1963), pp. 67-173.

Remi Gossez studied the military groups used in quelling the revolt, finding that the Marxian interpretation of a class struggle will not stand the test of historical analysis.

Material, then, is readily available for an analysis of Proudhon in 1848. Several historians have dealt with the topic, but as Mary B. Allen has noted, no attempt has been made to study Proudhon and his philosophy as he attempted to apply it during the revolution. Another work, by Dorothy Douglas, examines Proudhon during this period, placing him in the watershed position between the old utopian socialism and the newer "scientific" socialism. Douglas' work, however, leaves disturbing questions, particularly when she maintains that Proudhon was interested in leading his confères into "pure socialism." An analysis of Proudhon's actions in 1848 will hardly give such a coherent interpretation to his role in the evolution of French socialism. It might be more true to say that he tried to lead his confères into a kind of individual-centered (through the business contract) society which would be governed entirely by the market exchange among equals. Nor is Douglas' further observation that Proudhon did not


5Ibid., p. 36.
want the negation of sovereignty but its subdivision¹ satisfactory. Antiauthoritarianism was fairly constant in Proudhon's thought—the only acceptable kind of authority being that of each man's conscience—hardly the kind of subdivision of sovereignty that Douglas implies.

Among the other works dealing specifically with the topic is a small book by Dolléans and Puech.² The work is excellent, but its shortness precludes any definitive treatment of the subject and makes suspect the conclusion that Proudhon forced the republicans to occupy themselves with the economic question.³ When he is placed within the context of 1848, it quickly becomes apparent that most of the important figures of the day were preoccupied with the economic crisis; Proudhon was no exception. The authors approvingly quoted Charles Beslay who noted that without the pen of Proudhon, the revolution of 1848 would not have left its true imprint.⁴ This is, of course, an exaggeration, for Proudhon played a passive role during the first month of the republic admitting in his Carnets that he was ignored. During the later months, though certainly a noteworthy figure, the question of how strongly he influenced the course of events remains to be resolved.

¹Ibid., p. 44.
³Ibid., p. 75.
Le Mariage de Proudhon by Daniel Halévy is, because of its deceptive title, a lesser-known work on Proudhon in 1848. The book is a series of vignettes covering crucial moments in 1848 which succeeds in giving a striking picture of the man.\(^1\) Regrettably, there are errors of fact that one should be careful to note, for example, the belief that Proudhon won election in May, 1849.\(^2\) There are difficulties in interpretation, also—the Toast to the Revolution in October, 1848 in which Halévy claims that Proudhon had already freed himself from his mystic faith in a bank as a cure-all for the economic ills of the country and thus did not mention it in his toast.\(^3\) Yet Proudhon did not even open his subscription list for the bank until 1849, dissolving it only because of lack of monetary and moral support.

Finally, one further work should be considered—by Georges Duveau—who struggles with Proudhon's relationship with Bonaparte, but gives up without finding a solution to this thorny problem.\(^4\) His observation on Proudhon's relationship with the Mountain—that he fought them because he feared they wanted merely to substitute a different king for the one they had dethroned\(^5\)—needs further study. Proudhon gave this public reason for


\(^2\) ibid., p. 247.

\(^3\) ibid., p. 203.


\(^5\) ibid., p. 29.
his opposition, but his comments in the *Carnets* lead one to believe that personal animosities strongly influenced his actions.

A study of Proudhon in 1848 is needed and the tools are at hand for the study. It is important that he be situated in the milieu in which he lived, for within this background, one can see if he influenced or was influenced by the events swirling around him—in what way these events determined him to change his philosophy. At times the milieu dwarfed the man, as it did during the early months of the revolution when the crowds milled around the hôtel-de-Ville and no one was particularly interested in a relatively unknown artisan and writer sitting on the sidelines morbidly disapproving of what was happening around him. Even during the June Days, although he was present and participated in events, the milieu dominated the man; his position was in the background. It is only after the June Days and his July 31 speech to the assembly that he, in some measure, dominated the milieu. And even here this dominant role became entangled in fierce battles with the Mountain and with Bonaparte, battles that were not necessarily involved in his philosophic commitment at all, thus rendering a study of his philosophy in relation to 1848 at times confusing.

After this close study of Proudhon during the years 1848-1850 through an analysis of his newspapers, *Carnets*, and selected works, his contributions to 1848 and the revolution's effect upon him should become clearer. In the analysis, however, it is vital that the man be placed within the milieu, for in the measure in which he dominated the milieu and the people who were a part of it—the Mountain and Bonaparte, in particular—he could apply his social theory and thus have a marked influence on 1848 instead of allowing the revolution to influence him, markedly changing his philosophy.
CHAPTER I

The Revolution of 1848

Pierre Joseph Proudhon might have felt a revolution necessary to put his economic ideas to work. Yet he and the rest of the world were not anticipating the kind of revolution that actually broke out, first in Switzerland in 1847, and then in approximately fifty other European countries in 1848 and 1849. Revolution had been predicted by Émile de Girardin, the influential editor of La Presse, as early as 1839. Other European intellectuals of every stamp had predicted the conflagration. They had warned; they had painted somber pictures. Yet when the revolution came, it was something of a surprise. Guizot, the hated chief minister of the French king, Louis Philippe, the roi piriforme, was surprised—Guizot who is alleged to have said, "Ce pays marche à pas de géant à une catastrophe qui éclatera..."


5 Bibliothèque du centenaire de 1848 (Paris: Éditions Tel, 1948), p. 3. Philippon had been condemned in 1832 for this unflattering description of the king.
en avant de la mort du roi, si ce prince a une vieillesse longue, au quelque temps après la mort du roi. Il y aura guerre civile."¹

Tocqueville was surprised—Tocqueville, who had predicted on January 29, 1848, that the volcano would soon erupt and whose announcement was greeted by the assembly with mocking laughs.² Even Blanqui, the hoary 1'enfermé in his cell in Mont-Michel, where he had been incarcerated after the 1839 uprising, was surprised. For Blanqui, the surprise was a happy one.³

The revolution of 1848, a phenomenon covering the whole of Europe, exclusive of its furthermost extremities—England and Russia—appeared in the middle of a turbulent century in which industrialization had undermined old institutions and caused such confusion that a contemporary pamphleteer, Léon Daudet, had dubbed it the "stupid nineteenth century."⁴ The revolution burst forth with such fury that Falloux, who would later attach his name to the Falloux Law under the government of Louis Bonaparte, called it a revolution with an effect far out of proportion with its cause.⁵ Falloux may have been right. The important question is: What was its cause?

Because 1848 has been the occasion for song (Franz Liszt) and story


²Le Moniteur universel, September 13, 1848, p. 2418. Tocqueville, in the speech, referred to his famous earlier address which was printed in Le Moniteur on January 30, 1848.


(Victor Hugo, George Sand, Eugène Sue) and millions of words, the cause has been hidden under a mountain of clichés. It was a class struggle; the city of Paris revolted against the country; only the capital was the scene of disturbance; the leadership of 1848 was incompetent. Each of these clichés probably contains an element of the truth. It is necessary to look deeper for the cause.

Certainly there was a great intellectual upheaval in Europe in 1848. Its center was France—France, early home of Romanticism. There was a political upheaval also. France had already disposed of the reigning branch of the Bourbon line in 1830 and had installed Louis Philippe, a Bourbon ruler more in keeping with bourgeois ideas of high finance and laissez faire, but it was a social upheaval also. The French utopians had left their mark. Saint-Simon had died, but his faithful followers under Enfantin were searching for the female messiah—and investing in French railroads and canals. But above all, the revolution of 1848 was an economic upheaval. That young printer from the provinces, Pierre Joseph Proudhon, the young man who had written, "La propriété c'est la vol," was right when he confided in his Carnets that the economy was out of balance.

The years preceding 1848 were, for France, the beginning of a malaise which struck all phases of public life. Perhaps it was the rare calm which

often precedes imminent crisis. More likely, the malaise followed the too-rapid industrialization of the country. Yet despite the rapidity of industrialization preceding 1848, the economy had by no means reached the take-off stage defined by W. W. Rostow. The general pattern of growth was approximately the same as that of other western nations, except that during periods of prosperity, peaks were lower and depression troughs deeper.

Yet despite this handicap, growth had been decided. France, in the first half of the nineteenth century, was the world's wealthiest nation. Industrial production tripled between 1829 and 1843. The number of shops using mechanical machinery in textiles, a significant sector of French industrial economy, went from 5,000 in 1834 to 31,000 in 1846. Another industry showing the quickened industrialization was the newly-invented railroads. In 1839 the railroad from Paris to Versailles was opened, starting a period of intense railroad building in France. The number of travelers on railroads and all other means of transportation doubled between 1814 and 1848. Another area of industrialization was the postal service which by 1835 had extended as far as Italy and Levant. Receipts from the postal service increased from 64 million francs in 1830 to 126 million francs in 1847.

---


Another significant sector of the economy was the building trades. In his memoires, Stendahl said that he could find no prudent terms to describe the increasing prosperity of France; everywhere he went, he saw masons at work on a crowd of new houses.¹

Yet beneath this facade of prosperity, trouble brewed, especially in the agricultural sector of the economy. Agriculture's problem began, as it did for the whole of Europe, with the disease of potatoes, phytophthora. The potato had made a fortune for France. At the end of the Restoration period, its harvest in weight was equal to that of cheese, a favorite French commodity. In the years preceding 1845, potato consumption outdistanced this record by a third. Then the phytophthora attacked. By 1848 yield was down to what it had been before 1832. During 1846 the crisis was heightened by low production of cereals and bread crops.² The situation might have righted itself had it not been for two phenomena occurring at the same time. First, the inroads of factory industry reduced the amount of rural industry available to the peasant to help tide him over until the next good harvest. In particular, this was felt in the linen industry where the invasion of factory production spelled death to a way of life, striking down the prosperity of the agricultural sector of a large part of rural France. At the same time as rural industry was drying up, a movement toward enlarging the size of land holdings in order to compete with industry and to provide the economic basis for an industrial take-off was being laid.³

¹ Ibid., p. 226.
³ Rostow, Stages of Economic Growth, p. 6.
The poorer peasant became increasingly revolutionary in order to save the common lands from disappearing into the property holdings of the large owner. For the peasant, the 1848 revolution symbolized a return to communal holdings.¹

Inevitably the drying up of cash money and agricultural common lands led to a demographic change of prime importance in the growth of revolutionary spirit in France in 1848.² In addition to the movement of population, one must also remember that between 1840 and 1846 there was a demographic increase in the provinces. As population rose, further mobility resulted.³

The internationalization of the market and the rapid industrialization of many industries in Paris attracted many surplus workers during the years 1840-1845.⁴ Work on the fortifications of Paris provided additional work opportunities.⁵ Provincial towns saw their numbers increase proportionally also, especially in the region of the Seine-Inférieure and the Loire. In the years between 1831 and 1851 the country lost nearly a million inhabitants and the villages gained more than four million. Paris increased in size from 785,000 in 1831 to 1,053,000 in 1846.⁶ Besides the influx


from the provinces, foreign laborers, attracted by the job opportunities in France, formed small colonies in the capital and competed on the labor market.¹

The Paris which the immigrant saw was not the Paris of the wide, beautiful streets of Baron Haussmann. Paris still wore the appearance of a provincial city. In 1848 only 5,300 houses had running water, and only 15,000 carriages plied the thoroughfares. Population was still close together so that it mingled and formed that special mixture, "the people of Paris."² The poorer members of the city still lived in apartments under the mansards of old frame buildings housing the wealthy on the lower levels.³ Yet Paris was beginning to see modernization. Under the Restoration, new public vehicles, called the berline, had replaced the old ones. They were more rapid, being able to cover the route from Paris to Bordeaux in thirty-six hours in place of the old speed of eighty-six hours.⁴ The first sidewalk of English make also dated from the Restoration and could be found on rue Charles X (Lafayette). Under Louis Philippe, the first gas main was installed in 1837. Under Louis Philippe, also, the movement began of building homes on the periphery of Paris.⁵

²Pouthas, Population française, p. 171.
⁵Pouthas, Population française, p. 171.
The actual condition of the Paris poor is hard to determine with any degree of exactness. This is because, as the poor became poorer, they failed to register births, marriages and deaths since they could not afford to pay the registration fee. For example, in the twelfth arrondissement, the poorest section of Paris where the inhabitants left more babies at the Tour des enfants-trouvée, provided more sick for the Hôtel-Dieu, and counted more mendicants than any other section of the city, a general aggravation of the conditions of the poor occurred in 1847. Because the poor were unable to pay the 15 francs fee for registration, the number of marriages preceded by a contract fell from 23 per cent in 1820 to 7 per cent in 1847. The greater number of workers, approximately 70 percent, owned only the clothes on their backs.\(^1\) With poor nutrition came a decrease in the height of the average Frenchman, as Proudhon had noted in 1846.\(^2\) Out of every 10,000 young men enrolled in the army in 1840, 9,000 were rejected as unfit.\(^3\)

Terrible living conditions led to a mounting vice and crime record. As Proudhon pointed out, the number of police trials in all arrondissements in Paris rose yearly, out of all proportion with population increase.\(^4\)

It is possible that this grim picture of the Paris poor is overdrawn. Perhaps conditions had not brutalized the laboring class as Proudhon

---


insisted, the restrained behavior of the Paris mobs during the first flush days of February, 1848, does not bear out such a theory of brutalized labor.

By 1847 the agricultural crisis had reached industry. Many small industries, unable to face the competition of large industries, went bankrupt. To the laboring population, the specter of unemployment became a frightening reality. The long days of fourteen to sixteen hours were infinitely more desirable than the dreaded unemployment which hit the larger cities, such as Lyons, Rouen and Lille in early 1847. The workers adopted this significant slogan, "Vivre en travaillant ou mourir en combattant." To cheapen the cost of labor, industries hired women and children. Between 1840-1845, for 63 departments in establishments employing ten workers, the number of women employed rose to 254,871 and that of children employed rose to 131,098 as against 672,446 men.

Labor had no organization to enable it to strike to redress grievances. The old compagnonnage was still in existence, but it helped only artisans; its principal propagandist, Flora Tristan, was dead. Strikes, when they occurred during the decades following 1800, were conducted by artisans who

1 *ibid.*, p. 163.
were able to hold out for long-range goals.\textsuperscript{1} Industrial strikes were usually spontaneous, lasted only for a howling hour or two, and were intended mainly to defend the status quo threatened with further deterioration.\textsuperscript{2}

Labor stresses on the eve of '48 caused many to strike out blindly at railroads, in a luddite-like revolt at what was deemed the principal cause of the malaise. Though Proudhon considered railroads the most beautiful invention of the century, he was convinced that their effect was to enslave the population. For forty thousand kilometers of railroads, he thought, France now had a supplement of 50,000 serfs.\textsuperscript{3} In other places discontent was followed by a wave of anti-foreign sentiment. In Rouen the February revolution was greeted with cries of, "Long live the republic! Down with the English."\textsuperscript{4} Proudhon shared the nativistic sentiment, excoriating the "perfidious English."\textsuperscript{5} An outbreak of anti-semitism occurred among the peasant population, especially in the region of Alsace, for the Jews were the money lenders of the region.\textsuperscript{6}

The industrial crisis finally led to a financial crisis. By 1847 railroads, an important sector of industrial growth and job opportunity, were

\begin{itemize}
\item [\textsuperscript{1}]Peter Stearns, "Patterns of Industrial Strike Activity in France during the July Monarchy," American Historical Review, LXX (January, 1965), p. 371.
\item [\textsuperscript{2}]ibid., p. 374.
\item [\textsuperscript{3}]Proudhon, Contradictions économiques, p. 163.
\item [\textsuperscript{4}]Amann, "Changing Outline of 1848," p. 940.
\item [\textsuperscript{5}]Proudhon, Contradictions économiques, V, p. 19.
\item [\textsuperscript{6}]Soboul, "La Question paysanne en 1848," p. 60.
\end{itemize}
in deep distress. The crisis quickly spread to distribution industries. A wave of bankruptcies followed in its wake. In many cases, the bankruptcies reached down to the little man, for they involved failure to pay notes as low as from 20 to 30 francs.\(^1\) French gold began to drain from the country in order to meet foreign demand.\(^2\) The Bank of France, whose reserves stood at 225,000,000 francs on January 1, 1846, had only 80,000,000 francs in reserve a year later. Two weeks later, in January, 1847, the reserves had declined to 59,000,000 francs. To save further drainage, the discount rate was raised from 4 to 5 per cent. Panic swept the securities market, dependent on the Bank of France.\(^3\)

The uncertainty of ready cash caused the price of commodities to vary sharply. In Lille in January, 1847, a hectoliter of wheat cost 25 to 37 francs in place of the 18 to 23 francs it had cost a few months earlier. In April the price shot up to 42 francs.\(^4\) Layoffs continued.

The government's actions to meet the crisis probably helped to aggravate the situation. Between 1840 and 1846 the expenses of government had increased from 1,179,000 to 1,606,000 francs,\(^5\) necessitating increased taxation which fell heavily on the poor. One government move was the open-

\(^1\) Labrousse, "Panoramas de la crise," p. xv.

\(^2\) Marc Aucuy, Les Systèmes socialiste d'échange (Paris: F. Alcan, 1908), p. 120.

\(^3\) McKay, National Workshops, p. xxi.

\(^4\) Sée, Histoire économique, p. 233.

\(^5\) Aucuy, Systèmes socialiste, p. 120.
ing of savings banks for low-income earnings. To Proudhon, this was a ridiculous step, for the majority of the Paris poor had nothing to bank.1 Another government move was the restriction of child labor by the law of March 22, 1841, which limited the working day of children, aged 8 to 12, to 8 hours a day. The law was useless because industry was given the task of enforcing it.2 Besides, though the reduction of child labor may have had some long-range effects, its short-term effect was to limit the income of the Paris poor who needed the earnings of their children to supplement their meager income.

Mutual aid societies had been formed to give aid; often these were controlled by the government through its intermediary, the Central Philanthropic Society of Paris. These societies sometimes became centers of opposition to the government, so the authorities were inclined to withhold financial help. Because government laws dating from the Napoleonic era forbade unions among factory workers, the only societies that could be formed became secret ones.3

Here and there, enterprising individuals tried to resolve the crisis. Proudhon, who by this time was working for the firm of Gauthier Brothers in Lyons, contacted forty deputies of the government to obtain 2,000 horses which his employers could use in the transportation of wheat and thus lower the price to at least five times less than the price being quoted by specu-

1Proudhon, Contradictions économiques, IV, p. 155.


3McKay, National Workshops, p. xix.
lators around the Lyons region. Proudhon estimated that by February, 1848, the price of wheat would be reduced to 20 centimes a kilogram in place of the 40 to 50 centimes being charged in June, 1847. This would be a benefice of around 100,000,000 francs to the state. The government turned a deaf ear to the notorious author of "La propriété c'est le vol."¹

Important as were the economic causes of 1848, there is no denying that there was an intellectual upheaval as well, "a mardi gras révolutionnaire," as Proudhon later described it.² The intellectual upheaval was so great that one of the leaders of the dynastic opposition, Odilon Barrot, called the whole affair more of a debauchery of ideas than an expression of poverty and suffering.³ At the center of the intellectual upheaval were three writers—Louis Blanc, Jules Michelet, and Alphonse de Lamartine. All three writers were determined to use the revolution of 1789 as a platform to present their political and social philosophy. Lamartine's history of the Girondins coincided with the peak period of popular discontent and made the Girondists the symbol of liberal and enlightened progress.⁴ Through the pages of his history, he reminded Louis Philippe of what might happen to him if, like Louis XVI, he refused to listen to the liberal and enlightened aristocrats who were attempting to direct the government.⁵ Lamartine's

¹P.-J. Proudhon to A M. Bergmann, June 4, 1847, Vol. II: Corres., p. 255.
⁵Ibid., p. 138.
inaccuracy, (the phrase is Marc Bloch's) showed that a more accurate title of the book should have been, "Les Lamartines," (the phrase is Sainte-Beuve's) instead of Les Girondins. This fact in no way affected the poet's credibility with the masses. He became the popular figure of the day while poor socialist writers like Proudhon languished in relative obscurity and pondered over the fickleness of the French.

The only professional historian among the three writers, Jules Michelet, had published his Les Peuplés, and two volumes of his Histoire de la révolution française, before the revolution. Michelet showed France how she had dissipated her revolutionary heritage by bickering and division. In a work redolent with mystic faith in the French charisma, he summoned the middle class to once again unite France.

Louis Blanc had, by 1848, published two volumes of his twelve-volume History of the French Revolution. Far more important for the interest it aroused was his Organization of Work, published in 1839. His proposals are a part of socialist thought which will be explored in connection with the

---


2Proudhon, Carnets, II, p. 266, described it in this fashion: "Decidedly, ideas are on the move. But why is it never a question of me? Why am I thus crushed, put aside, placed in the shadow? Injustice! Injustice! Never has one seen an equal example of injustice. And they are the writers, the publicists, the journalists, the critics who render themselves culpable against me? And I have not avenged myself!"

provisional government.

Many other famous names appeared among romantics and socialists on the eve of 1848. There was Eugène Sue who had already explored the lot of the Paris poor in his mediocre work, Mystères de Paris. There was Lamennais, already excommunicated from the Catholic Church. Yet historians of the revolution of 1789 were significant in popularizing the revolution of '89, even if they did not realize that '89 had two phases: the bourgeois one of '89 and the social one of '93.¹

Proudhon, the autodidact who had devoured works by Romantic writers as well as works on economy, religion, and linguistics, feared the effect on the illiterate masses of this explosion of ideas. Though by this time his Catholic faith was dead, yet he disliked Lamennais; he had left one religion merely to take on a second, according to Proudhon, that of the deism of Rousseau. This might be all right for the well-educated Lamennais, but its effect on the masses, already overheated by the economic crisis and the revolutionary ideas that had filtered down to them, might be serious for morals already damaged by poverty.² Proudhon judged that if this class of writers had control of the government their rule would not last for fifteen days.³ In one of the boutades for which he was famous, he confided to his friend, Ackermann, that approximately three men were the plague of France


"... et je souscrirais volontiers pour une couronne civique à celui qui par le fer, le feu ou le poison, nous en délivèrait; ce sont Lamennais, Cormenin, et A. Marrast."

Proudhon's fear that the masses might be aroused by the inflammatory literature of the educated classes was well-grounded. Government documents show that the people were highly excited in the early weeks of 1848. No specific reason, such as the banquet campaign, could be held totally responsible. Proudhon rejoiced when Guizot suppressed the lectures of Quinet and Mickiewicz who had been invited by Michelet to lecture at the Collège de France.

In an unclassable position beside the Romantics and the socialists who formed part of the intellectual ferment that swept France in the forties stood Pierre Joseph Proudhon. Proudhon was in a unique position to observe events during the revolution, for he was acquainted with the entire class structure of France. As a young artisan he had made the tour de France as a journeyman printer and he understood the crisis affecting artisans. Proudhon could also claim some affinity with the intellectual elite of his time, for he had already published several pamphlets and one complete work which had made some impression, even if it were one of horror, on his con-

---

1P.-J. Proudhon to A M. Ackermann, November 15, 1840, Vol. I: Correspondance, p. 255. Lamennais represented parliamentaryism; Cormenin, Bonapartism; Marrast, opposition leadership under Le National.

2Crémieux, Février, p. 469.

3Halevy, Le Mariage de Proudhon, p. 97.

4"Mémoires sur ma vie," La Revue socialiste, XL (July-December, 1904), p. 149.
temporaries. Yet his real position, as he described it, was that of a child of the people. As a member of the Paris poorer class on the eve of 1848, he had known the nightmare of poverty; he had looked darkly at the Seine during periods of depression and hopelessness. He had vowed, in applying for the Suard pension in 1838, that he would spend his life working for the alleviation of this class, the poorest class in French society.

Proudhon's German friend, Karl Gruen, has left a rare description of the man and his milieu on the eve of the crisis. He described Proudhon's room as a typical student lodging with little furniture except for a bed and a small number of shelves. On the table were several issues of Le National and Revue d'Économie politique. Proudhon himself appeared dressed in a wollen vest and wearing his customary wooden shoes. He had:

... a face open, a forehead marvelously plastic, eyes brown and beautiful; the lower part of the body a little massive, but in harmony with the nature of the mountains of Jura; a pronunciation energetic, plain, willingly rustic ... a heart full of calm assurance, gaiety even, in a word, a man beautiful and valiant against all the world.

The Proudhon whom Gruen described so warmly had a host of close friends despite his sometimes shy and timid manner. Perhaps Proudhon's


timid nature also explains his extreme reserve regarding women. Proudhon's enemy, the police agent, Lucien de la Holde, claimed that even Venus herself might brush by Proudhon without his seeing her.¹

Proudhon's friends were attracted by his incorruptibility. Throughout his long career as artisan, journalist, writer, member of the constituent assembly, few could accuse him of dishonesty. He refused financial support during long periods of great poverty in order to keep his reputation intact.²

Though incorruptible, Proudhon was far from consistent. At times, he would lash out in violent bursts of anger against those he believed responsible for his poverty and the poverty of the poorer classes.³ A part of his contradictory character could be traced back to his provincial background in the Franche-Comté with its singular pronunciation. This explains also the slowness of gait and the hesitant manners he shared with the peasants of the Comté.⁴ Proudhon also shared the stubbornness of the Comtois, who had retained their Burgundian kings until final subjugation and integration into France.⁵

Proudhon's unique background also equipped him to be an observer of

¹Lucien de la Holde, The Cradle of Rebellions (New York: John Bradburn, 1864), p. 370. Priscilla Robertson, Revolutions of 1848, p. 20, seems not to have known who was the author of this barb.

²P.-J. Proudhon to A M. Maurice, July 20, 1864, Vol. XIV: Corres., p. 12, gives one example of Proudhon's honesty.


1848. His education included some formal schooling, apprenticeship in a printer's shop at the age of nineteen and a huge, though unsystematic range of knowledge through his own voracious reading and study, including a reading knowledge of Latin and Hebrew. Experience added to his informal education included bankruptcy of his printing shop, leaving him with a debt of 7,000 francs—a huge sum for the time. His experience with a Besançon mission, a kind of cleansing from republican heresy, caused his first doubts about his Catholic faith. His experience also included a brush with the French juridical system when his brochure on property was seized by the court. He won the case, but only because judge and jurors did not understand the abstruse language he used.

Though he was in a unique position to observe the course of events, it must not be concluded that he was uninvolved and objective. His biographer, Sainte-Beuve, observed that he had too much bile, too great an anger, too complete a plan for a future society, to be sufficiently disinterested and empiric to take coldly the pulse of the crisis.

---

1P.-J. Proudhon to A M. Bergmann, February 4, 1843, Vol. II: Corres., p. 80.

2Proudhon, Justice, III, p. 179.


4Proudhon, Justice, II, p. 328.


style, one of the best in the century,\(^1\) has frequently led to misunderstanding of his thought. A rude and savage style, as he described it,\(^2\) showed his independence of the style of writing adopted by the Romantics. Brusque and sharp, with its rich imagery and classical allusions, it was part of contemporary rhetoric. Some of the confusion in his writings came because of his desire to explore all sides of a question, to study the contradictory antinomies, as he called them. This tendency caused confused observers to say that while he declared war against property, he still defended it—while he desired a revolution, he wanted progress to be evolutionary. Other observers tried to link him to one of the political movements, for his thought appeared to be Orleanist at one time, republican at another.\(^3\) Though he was not as contradictory as a casual reading might suggest, the multiple and diverse threads of his thought had a tendency to become entangled and need clarification.\(^4\) And above all, those boutades were a fertile source of confusion. The declaration that property is robbery raised protest. First, Proudhon's critics, such as Daniel Stern, insisted that the statement was borrowed from Brissot de Warville.\(^5\) Secondly, property owners who inter-

---


\(^3\)P.-J. Proudhon to A M. Chaudy, September 22, 1861, Vol. XIV: *Corres.*, p. 207. In the letter, Proudhon complained of the different political interpretations given to his philosophy during his public life.


Proudhon told his friend, Tissot, that he found it necessary to speak in a loud and strident tone in order to be heard above the clatter of voices.¹

"Le style en sera rude et âpre; l'ironie et la colère s'y trop sentir; c'est un mal irrémédiable. Quand le lion a faim, il rugit."²

Proudhon had already published several works when the revolution broke out, each work containing the germ of his entire philosophy.³ In 1837 he published an essay on grammar. This essay was not his proudest work, developing the old idea of a primitive religion discovered through a comparison of languages.⁴ This work, so out of keeping with his anti-clerical thought, later was the subject of several lawsuits when an attempt was made to re-publish the work under Proudhon's name and to reap the notoriety that would ensue. He had published the grammar anonymously.⁵ Next he published his work on the celebration of Sunday in which he linked Moses with the

³C. Sorel, "Essai sur la philosophie de Proudhon," Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger, XVII (January-June, 1892), p. 622. The revolution of 1848 became an idée fixe with Proudhon. His comments about the revolution range through all his books. Because he, of all people, was best fitted to explain his own actions during the revolution, this work will concentrate on his explanation of how and why he acted during the revolution.
⁵Proudhon, Justice, III, p. 208. The four volumes of Justice, dedicated to M. J. Cesaire Matthieu, Archbishop of Besançon, are a reply to the scurrilous biography of Proudhon, written by M. de Mirecourt. Proudhon answered the charges leveled against him with a biographical account of his life and the events of his time. He dwelt particularly on 1848, the one time in which he was allowed to demonstrate his theories.
advancement of the cause of equality. The work was received coldly by the Franche-Comtois academicans to whom it was presented. Already, said his critics, the ears of a wolf were appearing beneath the fleece of the lamb.\(^1\) Dimanche was followed by the famous brochure, Qu'est-ce la propriété? In 1842, the third mémoire on property was seized and Proudhon was ordered to appear before the court of assizes.\(^2\) Next came the heavy and pretentious, Création de l'ordre dans l'humanité. In this work, Proudhon demonstrated the serial law which he gave Fourier credit for discovering.\(^3\) Proudhon's works had now taken on the terminology of the German philosophers he had met in Paris.\(^4\) Ordre was followed by the most dogmatic of his works, Système des contradictions économiques.\(^5\) The work began with a discourse on God\(^6\) and ended with a statement of the essential antinomy between God and man.\(^7\)

Marx, in his riposte, The Poverty of Philosophy, ripped into the philosophy of this "petty bourgeois."\(^8\) Marx carried his bitterness until Proudhon's death in 1865 when Marx observed that he was responsible for "infecting"

\(^1\)ibid., p. 45.

\(^2\)Proudhon, Carnets, I [1843-1846], p. 7.

\(^3\)P.-J. Proudhon, De la Création de l'ordre dans l'humanité ou principes d'organisation politique [1843], Vol. III: Oeuvres complètes (Paris: A. Lacroix, 1873), p. 120.

\(^4\)Stern, Histoire de la révolution, p. 47.

\(^5\)P.-J. Proudhon to A M. Bonnon, October 24, 1854, Vol. VI: Correspondances, p. 82.

\(^6\)Proudhon, Contradictions économiques, I, prologue.

\(^7\)ibid., II, p. 254.

The thought of Proudhon is so multiple and diverse that it could be compared to the many-armed Briareus who was called by Zeus to protect Olympus when it was attacked by Titans. Briareus was a favorite mythical allusion of Proudhon's, and in a way it is also a good symbol for Proudhon in 1848. He was the man with a purpose; a mathematician with a key that could unlock the doors of a new society where all labor received its just reward in free exchange with the goods of others. His mission was terrible. He knew that success would not be immediate. The sense of having a plan kept him remarkably calm in the middle of the tumult of 1848. He became disturbed only when he observed faults committed by the leaders of the revolutionary movement—faults which he felt they could have avoided if they had taken the trouble to read his works.

Proudhon's system was within the great French rationalist tradition; among his antecedents, he listed Descartes. The Proudhonian method involved a "scientific" study of the laws of society, laws which could be infallibly deduced through observation and deduction. At times, the infallible laws

---

1 Marx to Schweitzer, January 24, 1865, in Marx, *Poverty of Philosophy*, p. 166.


4 Bouglé, *Sociologie de Proudhon*, p. 159.


had a way of becoming confused with moral precepts, the method following a heavy kind of scholasticism.¹

Using this infallible system, man could look back on earlier, less-scientific ages of humanity and pick out the logic of history. Proudhon found that man had gone through three stages: religious, philosophical, and scientific. The three stages closely resembled those of Auguste Comte, Proudhon's contemporary,² and of course were common to many socialist thinkers since Saint-Simon. Movement occurred in history when antinomies faced each other in a long chain or series. These antinomies could never be resolved by a Hegelian synthesis, for that would destroy one element and injustice would result. The antinomies must be brought into equilibrium; equilibrium meant justice.³ When equilibrium was disturbed over a long period of time, evil occurred. Proudhon thought that discussion of the cause of evil was absurd—as if one could impute evil to the wind, rain, sand, and water that eroded a statue tumbling haphazardly in a raging torrent.⁴ This habit of looking at the universe as a mathematical equation that could be made to operate merely by a careful balancing of opposites linked Proudhon closely to mechanical determinism. Yet, in another way, he rejected the idea of determinism, for he insisted that all progress was the expression


² For Proudhon's three stages, see Création de l'ordre, p. 9.

³ P.-J. Proudhon, Théorie de la propriété, Vol. XXVII: Œuvres posthumes (Paris: A. Lacroix, 1866), p. 52. This manuscript was one of those published after Proudhon's death in 1865.

⁴ Proudhon, Carnets, I, p. 39.
of a previous idea.¹ Both individuals and a collective people could destroy equilibrium. When a whole collective people did this, it was war.² The complexity of his thought left Proudhon open to the charge of confusion. He was influenced by thinkers like Fourier who tried to express in terms of contemporary scientific and philosophical terminology the nature of human psychology. Proudhon was also impressed by Kantean terminology and by the jargon of "dialectical philosophy" then in vogue. Like other socialist writers trying to emerge from obscurity, he tried to impress his readers with his profundity but what made him unique was his search for an equilibrium between contradictory elements in society.

The equilibrium of which Proudhon spoke was not a juste-milieu. He had a horror of the doctrinaires who preached this kind of manipulation by an elite.³ Once this equilibrium was established, the people, in the whole of its collective being, moved through history.⁴ This being, sui generis, constituted the fluidity and economic solidarity of society.⁵ Its movement was called progress. "... that is to say the collective and individual spontaneity evolves without obstacles, by gradual participation of citizens


in sovereignty and government." One can see that Proudhon, though he loathed the concept of collective will of man held by Rousseau, was no opponent of democracy. Because of his intense individualism, he was the greatest democrat of them all.

With his belief in the people, he also combined a belief in the efficacy of work. The movement of the collective consciousness was a movement away from all that was retrograde: government, capital, vice. Work was republican by nature; a republic was the best form of government if a people still required government. Capital and labor were synonyms, for all utility given to matter came only as the result of useful labor. When a people in the excess of its energy (warrior during earlier periods—industrial competition during the scientific period) goes to war, that war may be divine if it is fought to restore equilibrium. This is a lawful use of force. Labor will make man moral by reducing his passions, curbing his imaginative powers (a womanly characteristic) and strengthening his powers of logic.

The movement of laboring man must always be a peaceful evolution. Proudhon urged his readers to work even with a king, if possible, to achieve this movement. He drafted a sample petition to Louis Philippe to show his readers how to enlist the support of authority. This peaceful movement, Proudhon called it revolution, was a force against which no power, divine

1 *ibid.*, p. 56.
5 Proudhon, *Qu'est-ce la propriété?* p. 344.
or human, could prevail. A bourgeois king on the throne of France was part of this revolution for he humanized the monarchy and laid to rest, for all time, the feudal concept of a Divine Right king. Revolution did not include the popular concept of democracy. That was retrograde for it would establish the worst of despotisms, the despotism exercised in the name of the people.

Proudhon's concept of progress, then, meant the negation of the absolute. No more dogmatism. No future plan for how a new society would function. He contented himself with finding the general laws of progress in order to help men reach, by themselves, a state of freedom.

But the movement toward freedom could be slowed down or stopped, even pushed back, by individual manipulation. These manipulators used the concept of authority, property, hierarchy, and inequality in exchange of products. All of these measures ultimately meant a tampering with the free flow of the economy and made a laissez-faire economic structure an absurdity. Authority tried to control man by forcing him to obey its strictures on the body. Religious authority forced man to obey its strictures on the spirit. Proudhon would have none of this—he was an anarchist and an anti-theist. Authority

---


5Proudhon, *Idée générale*, p. 68.

over body and spirit must slowly die as man's collective being relentlessly advanced. Religion had had a good moral effect over man when the world was a child. In the scientific age religion was merely a synonym for the collective consciousness.

Property, not mere possession, allows the lazy to manipulate labor to its own advantage by defrauding it of the product of its collective and individual labor. The lazy proprietor who does not add to the collective labor of the whole further slows down the march of progress. Hierarchy, retrograde also, destroys man's equality and even his liberty.¹ All inequality given to man for moral, economic, or even intellectual reasons—a copyright for example—is wrong for it takes from man part of the reward for his labor.² Inequality in the exchange of products is retrograde, for it allows the owner of capital to exact interest on his money and thus to destroy the balance of the exchange by feeding off the labor of others. All of these barriers to the revolutionary movement of man must be destroyed. And in their destruction man would continue to grow in his understanding of good and evil, becoming increasingly imputable for his actions.³

The revolutionary movement must continue. The first revolution had begun the work by destroying the feudal system. No new Robespierre should be allowed to stop the progress of the second revolution which would be an economic one.⁴ Let the revolutionary wagon roll.

¹Libid., p. 72.
²Proudhon, Carnets, II, p. 51.
³Proudhon, Philosophie du progrès, p. 59.
⁴Proudhon, Carnets, II, p. 10.
Thus, finally, the logos will be manifested, and the laboring humans, more beautiful and more free than the Greeks ever were, without nobles and without slaves, without magistrates and without priests, will form together on the cultivated earth only a family of heroes, of savants and of artists.¹

Proudhon offended his contemporaries, first, by attacking the favorite plaything of all opposition groups during the July Monarchy, the newly enfranchised press.² The chief weapon of the press, after its first denunciation, was silence. Proudhon fumed when his works, Contradictions, for example, appeared and the press ignored what he considered his great work.³ Secondly, women were deeply offended, for at a time of a rising feminist movement, Proudhon relegated them to a position somewhere midway between man and animal.⁴ They reacted in attacks that continued throughout Proudhon's lifetime.⁵ Friends of women, such as the socialist triad-maker, Pierre Leroux, rose to their defense.⁶ Finally, government, whose ministers had probably never entirely read the works of Proudhon, demanded that he be brought to trial because he wrote against property. Louis Philippe's Minister of the Interior, Duchatel, whom Proudhon solicited for assistance

¹ Proudhon, Philosophie du progrès, p. 73.
³ Halévy, Le Mariage du Proudhon, p. 22.
⁴ Proudhon, Justice, IV, p. 183.
⁵ Stern, Histoire de la révolution, p. 48.
in his trial for robbery, responded over the new invention, the telegraph,
by recommending that Proudhon receive the maximum punishment possible. 1

Even those who had read Proudhon carefully and who knew the more profound works of French and German philosophers and social thinkers, were dissatisfied with the French Briareus. Though his range of knowledge was immense, Proudhon could be accused of careless reading and quoting. He confused the categories of Kant 2 and gave Hegel a Proudhonian twist. 3 He seized upon the thought of others to make it his own and his horror of the commonplace made him give insufficient or grudging credit to his sources; 4 Proudhon enjoyed the controversy he raised. His answer to his critics may not have penetrated through the cacophony of conflicting voices raised on the eve of the revolution. But Proudhon had an answer. He brushed off his German critics by claiming that they thought differently from Frenchmen, who were precise and articulate. Frenchmen "proceed, not by categories, but by facts." 5 To the larger accusation of his inconsistency and contradiction,

1P.-J. Proudhon to Editors of La Révolution démocratique et sociale, Le Peuple, December 7, 1848. The trial occurred in 1842.

2Jules Puech noted in his introduction to Philosophie du progrès, Vol. XVI: Œuvres complètes nouvelle édition (Paris: Marcel Rivière, 1946), p. 18 that Proudhon was confused even on the number of Kant's categories, as well as on the more profound thought of the man.

3Proudhon later admitted that Marx was right in saying that he did not understand Hegel. Note, for example, his letter to A. M. Crétin, July 19, 1856, Vol. VII: Corres., p. 102, in which he admitted the fact, accusing Darimon of plagiarizing, not only parts of Contradictions, but also his error about Hegel!

4Daniel Halévy, Proudhon d'après ses carnets inédits (Paris: Sequana, 1944), p. 16. Halévy thought Proudhon was more influenced by Feuerbach than by those he said were his masters: the works of Hegel and Adam Smith and the books of the Bible.

5P.-J. Proudhon to E. Girardin, November 10, 1851, Vol. IV: Corres., p. 130.
Proudhon called on his literary skill: "La société humaine, le monde morale est une haleidoscopie infinie; comment voulez-vous que je réponde être toujours parfaitement logique, consequent, adequat avec moi-même? C'est impossible."1

Proudhon was not too concerned about his critics for he felt that he alone had a plan that could resolve the rising economic crisis. His plan involved the reforming of the exchange so that men could trade the products of their labor in a market freed from the portion demanded by the owner of property, either in the form of real estate or in money. To free the market required that property owners lose all the lands they were not able to cultivate by themselves, this being accomplished by a tax on total income. The tax would not be progressive, for that would destroy incentive. It would be levied only on those who had more property than was needed for decent survival. Money and interest, inhibiting the exchange also, should be removed by the substitution, for money, of certificates of exchange representing actual commodities. The transition to the new currency would be made through an exchange bank which would slowly withdraw money from circulation. Once the exchange was freed, Proudhon thought that the entire economy would slowly recover from the crisis daily becoming more acute.

When the explosion finally occurred in February, 1848, it grew out of the political crisis rather than the economic one. A potent organ of opposition was the newspapers, two of them, in particular, carrying the major weight of opposition. Le National had suffered a major setback when its editor, Carrel, was killed in a duel with Émile de Girardin. Under the

editorship of Armand Marrast, however, it soon righted itself and began a merciless attack upon the policies of the government. In particular, it attacked the regime censitaire and the number of functionaries to be found in the assembly. It represented the liberal, dynastic opposition. A more radical organ of opposition was La Réforme. The guiding spirit of La Réforme was Ledru-Rollin, the rising young deputy from Sarthe, who espoused the cause of universal manhood suffrage. Student agitation had its organ, l'Avant garde.2 Proudhon was incensed by the campaign carried on by Le National, in particular "the monkeys of the mountain,"3 accusing the newspapers of using long words in order to impress their readers; their worst fault was to rush the masses into precipitate action4 while failing to provide a practical solution to the economic problem.

Proudhon had attempted to start a paper of his own in 1847, but the bond required by the July Monarchy, 100,000 francs, was so high that he could not raise it. His only accomplishment had been to issue a specimen number of what would later be Le Représentant du peuple, the specimen issue appearing in October 14, 1847. Proudhon's dreams of founding a paper were supported by Victor Pilhes who was trying to resusitate his paper, Le Peuple, which had been struck down by the government five years previously.5 Pilhes also pub-

---


lished a specimen number of *Le Peuple* in May of 1847, and Proudhon wished him well. Nothing came of the move.¹ When the revolution broke out, sweeping away the laws on the press, Pilhes joined Proudhon as financial manager of his paper, and Proudhon had an organ in which to air his views.

The opposition papers had had plenty of scandals to publish about the July Monarchy, but the government frowned on these revelations. Condemnations were so frequent that at Sainte-Pélagie prison special quarters were set aside for editors.² One of the scandals involved M. Teste, brought before the House of Peers in connection with an accusation of receiving 100,000 francs for a favor shown to a mining company.³ A worse scandal was that of the Duchess de Praslin who was assassinated in her hotel room and whose husband was implicated.⁴ Proudhon, with his rigid morality, was incensed at this scandal, and confided in his *Carnets* that he thought the duke should be exposed in a cage before the people of Paris.⁵

The newspaper agitation was carried into the government chambers. There were two great opposition groups, the Legitimists—whose opposition to the government had often taken the form of emigration or refusal to hold office—but who still had representation in the chamber, and a fraction of


³Ibid.


the Orleanists who decided that representation in government should be enlarged so as to make the base of government larger. These groups united under Barrot and Thiers to form a strong opposition movement. Among the other opposition groups, a number of convinced republicans de la veille, such as Ledru-Rollin, agitated for the fall of the monarchy.¹ There was little close connection with corruption among the deputies, however. Over a third of them were aristocrats, and the majority of those elected in 1846 were fairly young. Despite the claims of Marx, they had little connection with the business world.² A comfortable majority gave support to Guizot's government, but since the regime allowed only 241,000 to vote out of a population of 35 million, the voting base was very narrow indeed. The number of government civil servants, or functionaries, (200 in 1846) in the chamber reduced representation even further. The opposition began a campaign to change this electoral base.³ It wasn't a revolution that they wanted; it was just a demonstration to frighten the king and Guizot. The leaders of the opposition, Thiers in particular, may have had dreams of replacing Guizot in a new, more-stable government.⁴

Opposition which did not center directly on the king centered on his minister, Guizot. Both men's mannerisms lent themselves to caricature, as Daumier demonstrated. (Daumier's favorite bourgeois characterization was


The first extra-parliamentary move on the part of the opposition was to launch a banquet campaign in imitation of the English. The banquets began at the Chateau-Rouge on July 9, 1847. In 1847 alone they reached a number of 70 banquets with approximately 70,000 people attending.\(^1\) Cost of attendance placed them out of the reach of the poorer classes, but as the banquets continued during the remainder of 1847 and the beginning of 1848, the ordinary Parisian, and those in the provinces too, became increasingly aroused. They wanted their banquet too. Finally, *Le National* decided to extend its banquet campaign even into the poorer section of the city, the twelfth arrondissement, on February 20, 1848.\(^2\)

Proudhon brooded over what was happening. He didn't like it. First, he could not understand why the bourgeoisie disliked the government of Louis Philippe, for after all, it was their own creation. Though he personally disliked Louis Philippe,\(^3\) he thought that his government was the best kind for France at this stage in her progress. He rejoiced in the fact that France now had a monarchy freed from the control of the church; he gloried in the fact that under the July Monarchy the Catholic religion was relegated to the position of a religious sect. If allowed to develop unheeded, the government of Louis Philippe would logically give place to its opposite antinomy. If Proudhon had any criticism to make of Louis Philippe it was only that he did

---


\(^3\) Proudhon, *Carnets*, II, p. 47.
not demoralize France fast enough.¹ It did not concern Proudhon that Louis Philippe did not know that he was an agent of change.²

As for Guizot, Proudhon, who said that he made war against old ideas instead of old men, could see no fault in his rule. He agreed with Guizot's opposition to universal suffrage. Guizot had committed the blunder of keeping France at peace; Proudhon judged that this displeased the rising nationalist element.³ What else, Proudhon wondered, could be expected of a government? "Le tigre dévore parce qu'il est organisé pour dévorer; et vous ne voulez pas qu'un gouvernement organisé pour la corruption fasse de la corruption?"⁴

He had little use for the members of the chamber, terming Odilon Barrot an imbecile,⁵ and his followers blind;⁶ if their ideas found acceptance, they would impede the movement toward gradual decomposition of French society. That decomposition was needed before Proudhon's solution of the social problem could be supplied.⁷ "Lamartine dit que la France s'ennuie. Non: a France est devenu lâche, violà tout."⁸

¹Proudhon, Confessions d'un révolutionnaire, p. 48.
²P.-J. Proudhon to A M. Fleury, January 22, 1843, Vol. II: Corres., p. 75.
³Proudhon, La Guerre (Lacroix), VII, p. 79.
⁴Proudhon, Idée générale, p. 68.
⁵Proudhon to A M. Maurice, February 25, 1848, Vol. II: Corres., p. 278.
⁶Ibid.
⁷Proudhon, Carnets, II, p. 45.
⁸Ibid., p. 213.
Opposition in the chambers continued to grow. In his address from the throne on December 28, 1847, Louis Philippe spoke of the blind passions which were fomenting agitation. He was greeted with hostility. In the Chamber of Deputies, an answer to his address was discussed for three weeks, from January 24 until February 12. In the Chamber of Peers, the address absorbed eight days, from January 10 to January 18. Finally, on January 19, the Chamber of Peers, by a majority of 144 to 23, adopted a project of an address in response to the discourse from the throne. 1

By this time the people of Paris were aroused. Opposition leaders began to take fright. Tocqueville observed that the same people who had made the revolution of 1830 were now called upon to stop the 1848 one. 2 Luckily for them, the government took the initiative and forbade the banquet in the twelfth arrondissement. 3 As usual, Proudhon agreed with the government's action. He said it was stupid to publish the time, place of a banquet (as Le National had done) and then to express surprise and displeasure when the government forbade the banquet. 4 Both Le National and La Réforme tried to withdraw support from the banquet once it was forbidden, but it was too late. Paris was aroused. People began to gather; a few barricades were formed in the streets. In the chamber, empty oratory continued. The whirlwind grew daily. On the 22nd of February student demonstrations began. On the 23rd

1 Toutain, La Révolution... a Rouen, p. 11.


3 Le Moniteur universel, February 15, 1848.

4 Proudhon, Carnets, II, p. 368.
the national guard was called out. This same national guard had been invited by Le National to attend the banquet of the twelfth arrondissement in uniform, thus providing the pretext for the government's ban of the banquet.

Louis Philippe took fright when he heard the troops he was reviewing shout "Vive la réforme!" Perhaps France was capable of a revolution in the winter after all. Then came the fateful evening of February 23. It was ten p.m. The excited people had already heard of the fall of Guizot's government, but they still were not satisfied with his mere replacement by Molé. They wanted to go to the Foreign Office in the rue de Capucines to hoot the fallen Guizot. No one knows quite how it happened. Someone fired into the crowd. The sight of the bloody corpses piled on a cart with a half-nude body of a woman on top of the pile set the Paris mass ablaze. The revolution had begun.

Proudhon continued to disapprove of what he considered the senseless actions of the opposition party which had aroused the people. A year after the event, in a commemorative article for Le Peuple, he wrote:

I cried over the poor laborer, whom I considered in advance given over to unemployment, to a poverty of several years' duration; on the worker, in whose defense I had vowed myself and whom I was unable to succor. I cried over the bourgeoisie, whom I saw ruined, pushed into bankruptcy, aroused against the proletariat, and against whom the antagonism of ideas and the fatality of circumstances obliged me to combat, although I was more than anyone else disposed to plead with them. Before the birth of the republic, I wore mourning and I made expiation for the republic.2


Despite his reserves about how the revolution began, when he heard that blood had been shed, Proudhon immediately joined his "brothers" at the barricades. He helped to uproot a tree, to carry paving stones for the barricades.¹ He offered his services to La Réforme and was commissioned to prepare a sign urging the downfall of the government of Louis Philippe.² But his heart wasn't in it. He returned to his attic room to ponder on the news of the revolution, reflecting that he was the sole man in France who was not a revolutionary.³

Activity shifted to the seat of the government. Louis Philippe had already abdicated when the people invaded the assembly. The Duchess d'Orleans, her infant son and the Duc de Nemours were quickly removed from the assembly into an area of safety, and the republic was declared. Proudhon described it in this way:

At five o'clock, the republic, timid on the preceding evening, little reassured in the morning, and which, at two o'clock did not believe in itself, was proclaimed. Thus, the revolution, made by an imperceptible minority, immediately repulsed its true authors; it will be with the opposition deputies as with the 221 of Charles X who, they also, made a revolution without wishing it. They will be eliminated, and that will be just.⁴

As the sign proclaiming the republic was raised above the the Hôtel-de-Ville, scene of all radical changes in government, a worker who was helping

¹P.-J. Proudhon, Solution du problème social [March 22, 1848], Vol. VI: Oeuvres complètes (Paris: Harpon et Flammarion, N.D.), p. 13. Solution was written at white heat in response to the workers' demands that Proudhon give his solution to the social problem. It contains excerpts from earlier works and also a running commentary on the first months of the revolution.


⁴Baroness Bonde to Mr. and Mrs. Ashburnham, February 24, 1848, Paris in 1848 (New York: Pott & Co., 1903), p. 11.
to raise the sign, slipped and plunged to his death. This seemed to be an omen bearing out Proudhon's contention that the revolution was premature. On the 27th of February, the first issue of Le Réprésentant du peuple appeared.

The second French republic grew out of the intense economic malaise which began in agriculture and spread into the industrial sectors of the country. The malaise was partly caused by the failure of the potato crop and the resulting shifts in population as the poorer class moved to the city in search of work. Along with the economic problem, utopian and Romantic literature circulating in the country helped to raise hopes that something would be done to give the poor a share in the wealth of the nation. Finally, the political situation became fluid when the opposition deputies began a banquet campaign to gain control of the government of Louis Philippe. The opposition, wishing only to share in the government and not to overturn it, were unaware of the forces they were releasing when they began the banquet campaign. When they realized how serious the crisis was, it was too late to turn back, for the street fighting in the rue de Capucines had already begun, opening the way to the short-lived second republic. Proudhon, the man with a key with which to solve France's economic problems, now had a newspaper with which to educate the people and to lead the newly constituted provisional government peacefully through the dangerous economic crisis that had led to a premature revolution.

---

CHAPTER II

The Editor of Le Représentant du peuple and the Provisional Government

Ce qui était vrai pour moi hier [before February, 1848] est vrai aujourd'hui: la république du National n'y change absolument rien. Le pantin danse à l'Hôtel-de-Ville comme il y a huit jours au Palais Bourbon. La corruption est la même, l'égotisme tout aussi grand, les mystifications tout aussi plaisantes, les puffs tout aussi énormes. Il n'y a que bon et brave peuple qui, restant aussi la même, toujours confiant, toujours croyant, toujours dupe, vaille cependant quelque chose.¹

The opening days of the February revolution found Proudhon for the first time in a position to air his views about day-to-day happenings. No longer need he make gloomy notation in his Carnets; he had an organ, his newspaper, with which to open the first, the critical period of his contributions to the revolution. His criticism would not always be consistent because, as Herzen said, it would be impossible to live through this time and "whistle the same duet in A minor."² But there would be constants. Proudhon never lost his contact with the masses.³ He valued this contact and continued to take pride in his profession as a laborer, guarding his printer's livret filled with good notes.⁴ Along with his identification

⁴Baudrillart, "P.-J. Proudhon ... et son historien," p. 588.
with the masses, he also retained a strong dose of common sense which led him to disparage some of the sentiment he saw exploding around him, even to condemn the popular term, fraternity.\footnote{Proudhon, in \textit{Création de l'ordre} [1843], p. 123, expressed it in this way: "Such was always the tendency of sectarians to glorify their chiefs, glory to Jesus Christ by whom salvation has been given to the world; glory to Saint-Simon, by whom life has been comprised; glory to Fourier, by whom the social law has been revealed to us! Who then will cry, glory to common sense which adores no one?"} Essentially he was a moralist,\footnote{Doléans et Puech, \textit{Proudhon ... 1848}, p. 5.} his moralism leading him to criticize every man and movement he met. The least Machiavellian of men,\footnote{Maxime Leroy, \textit{Les Précurseurs français du socialisme} (Paris: Edition du temps présent, 1948), p. 401.} he bestowed praise or blame wherever he felt it to be deserved,\footnote{For example, in the war of the Sonderbund in 1847, Proudhon supported the Catholic cantons, for they also favored decentralization. \textit{Carnets, II}, p. 226.} even his enemies reaping a harvest of praise on occasion. But his firm belief that the February revolution was economic in origin led him to oppose every purely political movement.\footnote{Marx accused Proudhon of being an enemy of all political movements. \textit{Marx, Poverty of Philosophy}, p. 161.} The economic problem was like an algebraic equation that could be solved with human ingenuity in this last stage of human development--the age of science--if only the revolutionary leaders would free the market by destroying the power of gold through the institution of an exchange bank.

Proudhon was just waiting to be asked to apply his method, and the opportunity, at least to propagate his views, was not long in coming. On the 26th of February his room was invaded by four armed men asking when he
would give his long-expected solution of the social problem. Though in 1841 Proudhon had considered the task one befitting fifty Montesquieu's, when he was asked he was eager to comply, but the immediate concern was a newspaper in which to spread his views about the economic revolution. Solution du problème social would come later.

Proudhon's first paper was planned as a continuation of the subscription lists of both Pilhes' paper and the earlier Le Peuple (1836-1846) of Ribeyrolles, and for the sake of continuity, it would have retained the name, Le Peuple. Proudhon did not care for the title, but accepted it as a part of his collaboration with the elite group of master printers who offered their services as a voluntary gesture of good will. When the revolution broke, however, the title Le Représentant du peuple, was resumed, and it was under this title that the paper appeared on February 27. Below the masthead appeared the inscription: "What is the producer in actual society? Nothing. What should he be? Everything." The editor's format involved cramming the greatest amount of information possible into the smallest amount of space. This procedure cheapened costs, and with the new rate which made postage uniform throughout the nation, the paper could be bound

1P.-J. Proudhon to A M. Maurice, February 26, 1848, Vol. II: Corres., p. 287.

2Proudhon did not publish it until March 22, 1848.


4The specimen issue had appeared under this title on October 14, 1847.
into bundles of several issues and sent into the provinces.\(^1\) Several reasons can be given to explain why it became one of the finest socialist newspapers under the second republic.\(^2\) First, the men who volunteered their services to work on it were all, unlike Proudhon, men of action instead of theorists, skilled in the basic methods of newspaper make-up.\(^3\) Second, Proudhon's superb writing talent, his ability to probe the weaknesses and strengths of the leadership of the provisional government, his heterogeneous background and his incurably candid comments made each day's issue a surprise to its readers.\(^4\) At times, it sold up to 40 or 50 thousand copies, the extra copies being hawked on the streets.\(^5\) Remembering the French custom of sharing copies, one can imagine how large the circulation actually became and what a force the paper assumed under the provisional government.

The newspaper staff consisted of Proudhon's old associates. Victor Pilhes had opened a small shop in the rue Croix-des-Petits-Champs where he offered his help as a procurer of funds. His appointment by the provisional government as a commissioner to the Ariège helped him to make contacts in the provinces.\(^6\) Alfred Darimon joined the paper in the month of June; during

\(^{1}\)R. Gossez, "Presse Parisienne, a destination des ouvriers, 1848-1851," Bibliothèque de la révolution de 1848, XXIII (1966), p. 125. The first issue of Le Représentant du peuple was not, however, on the 24th as Gossez erroneously states.

\(^{2}\)Plamenatz, Revolutionary Movement in France, p. 89.


the first months he was content to remain as one of Proudhon's apprentices.\footnote{Darimon later broke with Proudhon and joined the staff of \textit{La Presse}.} Lucien de la Hodde offered his support; his arrest as a police agent awaited until March when the full dossier of his letters was uncovered.\footnote{Proudhon, \textit{Carnets}, III, p. 32. Hodde had actually signed the prospectus of \textit{Peuple}.} Charles Fauvety, political director; Jules Viard, managing editor; and Georges Duchène were among the list of newsmen who composed the first editorial board.\footnote{Darimon, \textit{A Travers une révolution}, p. 337.} Proudhon's organ jarred the populace, for he wore no man's collar and thus was free to flail everyone.\footnote{Erich Thier, "Marx und Proudhon," \textit{Marxismusstudien} (Tubingen: J. B. C. Mohr, N.D.), p. 122.} In his attempt to show that the revolution was an economic one and not at all like that of '89, he frightened proprietors, for they recalled his earlier works and immediately assumed that an economic revolution meant despoliation.\footnote{Darimon, \textit{A Travers une révolution}, p. 36.} His criticism of the provisional government alienated republicans. Yet he clearly posed the economic problem facing France.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 47.}

Besides posing the economic problem and its solution which, at one time, took the form of a bank proposal and at another time took the form of government decrees reducing taxes, reforming the Bank of France, and reducing interest, Proudhon also saw what could happen if the revolutionary spirit of the Paris poor were not channeled into constructive labor. Every man must work in order to rebuild France, repairing the waste caused by the
Proudhon, who had come from a poor home and who had actually known what it was like to go to bed hungry, had compassion on the poor, but he considered slogans—universal suffrage and Lamartine's broadside to European nations proclaiming the dissolution of the treaties of 1815—as sheer nonsense. More than nonsense, such slogans were dangerous to the morale of the poor, leading them to expect some immediate help from the government. Proudhon was willing to help the government resolve its economic difficulties and this led him to watch, hopefully at first, later with disillusionment, the daily decrees from Hôtel-de-Ville. By the time of the constituent elections, however, he had decided that it was useless to expect reform measures to emanate from the provisional government. He was equally convinced that the agitators who aroused the workers into demonstrating before the government buildings were even more useless, merely aggravating a dangerous situation. But until his newspaper began daily publication on April 1, he had to sit idly by and watch the accelerating financial crisis.

The financial crisis had continued and increased its pace since the closing months of 1847 with innumerable demands for withdrawals being made on banks. Treasury notes fell due and holders refused to renew them. Tax sources dried up; railroads, in dreadful straits, used up their caution money and then refused to reimburse the treasury.

Several government measures aimed at stemming the tide. Provisional government Finance Minister Goudchaux prorogued for ten days all notes falling due from February 22 to March 15 inclusive; specie fled into hiding. Another move by Goudchaux was government anticipation of pension payments from March 22 to the earlier date of March 6, but the situation only became worse. Between March 7 and 9, the new Finance Minister, Carnier-Pagès, suggested further means to help: To save treasury bullion, deposits of over 100 francs in
savings banks would no longer be redeemed in gold. Holders of treasury notes, as well as bank deposit holders, must accept government bonds which depreciated as soon as they appeared on the market. The government, to re-awaken credit, organized commercial banks and decreed that no banks need pay in specie. A last government move was an attempt to borrow 350 million francs, but only 250 million were subscribed. One of the less-well-advised moves of the provisional government, according to Proudhon, was the setting up of depots to receive voluntary gifts to the provisional government. This was a mistake, for the poor would be paying yet another tax. The government continued its outward calm and optimism, never totally revealing to the country the seriousness of the financial situation.

Because tax income dropped after the abolition of taxes on salt, beverages and periodicals, new tax sources were needed by the treasury. The government released the income from the civil list, sold crown jewels, and finally decreed an impôt of 1 per cent per 100 francs for a year on all holders of mortgages existing before April 16, 1848. Of all the financial measures of the provisional government, Proudhon probably disliked this move the most, for it was meant as a prelude to a progressive tax on luxuries. He disapproved of such a tax, because it would dry up French luxury industries.

---

1 For a complete summary of the financial state of the country, see the report of Garnier-Pages to the constituent assembly, Le Moniteur, May 9, 1848, pp. 980-82.


3 Wolf, France, p. 194.

4 Proudhon, "Comment les révolutions se perdent," Le Représentant du peuple, April 23, 1848.
And who would pay this tax? He was sure that the rich would manage to pass it off on the poor.¹ In fact, there were few of the government's financial measures that he liked. He had privately been informed that the banker, Goudchaux, had left the ministry because he did not care to reign over a bankrupt treasury.² To refuse to reimburse deposits above 100 francs in savings banks was organized bankruptcy. The government plans to reclaim dunes to build more houses was a disgrace, for too many Paris homes were already unoccupied.³ "The republic dances before an empty treasury . . . We die tomorrow."⁴

The crisis deepened with the price of gold going up to 150 francs (3 francs for every Napoleon, a twenty-franc piece);⁵ five-franc notes became unchangeable, except at the Bank of France and the wealthy began to buy bars of gold and to melt down their plate.⁶ Drainage from the Bank of France and the drying up of tax resources led the provisional government to place a 45 centimes tax on every franc of direct taxes. After this move, French peasants, especially small owners and share croppers, turned against the provisional government, adding to the restlessness of the city the dis-

¹Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 40.
²Ibid., p. 29.
³Ibid., p. 31.
⁴Ibid., p. 52.
⁵Baroness Bonde to Mr. and Mrs. Robinson, March 18, 1848, Paris in '48, p. 68.
⁶Ibid., March 14, 1848, pp. 46-7.
satisfaction in the provinces. Proudhon disliked the tax for he felt it laid an insupportable burden on the poor which would, in time, lead to a terrible civil war.\(^1\) Like Cassandra prophesying disaster but doomed to remain unheard, Le Représentant du peuple warned, through its editors, that it meant "... for the state bankruptcy; for the poor, death; for the rich, pillage; for all, civil war."\(^2\)

The turmoil in the streets continued, Paris taking on, on the morrow of the revolution to use Proudhon's phrase, the aspect of five hundred Thermopylae with trees uprooted and barricades blocking traffic. Troops wandered about without guns, for their fighting equipment had been appropriated by the people of Paris—especially the street urchins.\(^3\) Above all, there was music with the Marseillaise on everyone's lips.\(^4\) Though he did not complain at the time, Proudhon later remarked that he disliked the constant repetition of this refrain which was merely an amplification of rhetoric—similar to a harangue of Robespierre—Proudhon's bête noire. He would have preferred that Rouget de l'Isle, the writer of the song, be rewarded with a bust, not a pension, and the song be considered a part of the collective goods of the people. Rouget de l'Isle did not arouse the French revolutionary spirit; he merely profited from the revolutionary genius of the people. The

\(^1\)Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 46.

\(^2\)Charles Fauvety, "Où est le danger?" Le Représentant du peuple, April 14, 1848.

\(^3\)Journal of Comte R. Apponyi as quoted in Bouteiller, Révolution vue par le hongrois, p. 104.

\(^4\)Georges Renard, "l'Esprit de 1848," La Révolution de 1848, XXVI-XXIX (September-October-November, 1930), p. 141, calls it a "drunken exaltation." On page 148, he refers to it as a revolution that sings.
Marseillaise was a part of France's earlier revolution—the economic revolution needed no songs to herald its arrival. As Proudhon mused on the revolution of remembrance, the street crowds moved the revolution indoors.

Despite government notices forbidding further attacks on railroad property, here and there the destruction continued. Government property came under attack when the poor of Paris invaded the Tuileries, burned the royal throne, and enjoyed souvenir hunting among the goods of royalty. Proudhon, disgusted, pondered on the number of work days required to pay for the property damage, for his revolutionary thought had always envisioned a peaceful change in the economic structure and the poverty of his origin made him abhor the useless property damage. Here and there the poor of Paris still engaged in that medieval "tic" of defenestration of furniture and possessions of the royal family. But the attitude of the Paris crowds was singularly lacking in vengeance. Government requests slowly prevailed; public order reasserted itself. The Paris poor, firm in the belief that this revolution was the democratic and social one they had been promised, helped guard the homes of the rich and Renan's lecture rooms at Collège de France.

---

1 Proudhon, Les Majorats littéraires (1864), p. 64.
2 Le Moniteur, March 7, 1848, p. 555.
4 Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 10.
6 Ernest Renan to M H. Renan, February 26, 1848, Nouvelles lettres intimes, 1846-1850 (Paris: Calman-Lévy, 1923), p. 143. The citation is made to show the kind of work the revolutionaries engaged in. Other examples could be given.
The contradictory literature purporting to have solved the economic question was so confusing that, to resolve it, the illiterate suggested that Proudhon, Blanc and Leroux should be locked in a room until they could syncretize and set in order a workable plan for social reform.¹

Thus, on the day after the tomorrow of the revolution, the jargon of '89 continued, but order had been established. The ragged poor of Paris begged for the widows and children of those who had died in the three days of fighting. A forest of liberty trees replaced those uprooted for barricades,² and the city went on a spree of name changing.³ The most commonly heard words were "au nom du peuple," for the revolution of 1848 was peculiarly the revolution of the cult of the laboring man.⁴ Anyone who wished a place of prominence in the new order of things, busily scratched into his background to discover at least one hidden or forgotten manual laborer. Anyone who had participated in any way during the three days posted his placards. In despair of having its placards read, the provisional government was finally reduced to issuing a placard which noted that all government placards in the future would be printed on white paper.⁵

¹Georges Weill, Histoire du parti républicain en France, 1814-1870 (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1928), p. 215. The precise author of the suggestion is unknown; the comment is made merely to show the confusion in the minds of the unlettered, for they were of course, linking together three enemies.

²Baroness Bonde to Mr. and Mrs. Robinson, March 31, 1848, Paris in , p. 67. Mrs. Bonde may have been exaggerating when she said that 800 trees had been planted in Paris in one week.

³Le Moniteur, February 29, 1848, p. 515, gives a sample of some of the name changes.

⁴"Au Nom du peuple!" Le Peuple constituant, N.D. This newspaper is one of the many that survived for only a few issues and then disappeared.

⁵Le Moniteur, February 29, 1848, p. 515.
"Romanticism in politics" became a comic thing. Only a Proudhon could do it justice:

Everyone plants liberty trees, changes inscriptions on monuments, organizes patriotic processions; everyone chants hymns of '89 and '92; we are not in 1848! We live on our memories; one would believe, if one judged by appearances, that the revolution had been made to give us a real comedy; all of Paris is a theatre where the old revolutionary drama is replayed.²

A few weeks later he added:

Never has anyone seen a like diffusion of the gift of tongues . . . The whole world speaks like Demosthenes . . .³

Religious sentiment dominated '48;⁴ in the midst of the devastation of the Tuileries, the people formed a procession with the crucifix they found in the Queen's private chapel and took it to the church of St. Roch.⁵ Catholics joined in the religious enthusiasm, L'Univers declaring that they made the best revolutionaries.⁶ Utopian socialists, such as Leroux and Buchez, claimed a close link between socialism and the early Christian community.⁷

The thought of a religious revival was distasteful to Proudhon who

¹Renard, La République de 1848, p. 11.


³Proudhon, "La Reaction," Le Représentant du peuple, April 29, 1848.

⁴Concerning the religious content of '48, Renard, "l'Esprit de 1848," p. 143, described a popular gravure showing Jesus pointing to the word, fraternity, blazoned in the sky.

⁵Bibliothèque du centenaire, p. 67.


⁷Bertaut, 1848, p. 20. Buchez, one of the founders of Charbonnari in 1821, became a member of the constituent assembly.
had already published in his 1846 work, Contradictions économique, a critic-
ism of nineteenth century religion, the Catholic religion in particular.
Basing his study on the hypothesis of a God, Proudhon found that His at-
tributes were really the same as the "collective instinct," or "universal
reason." The actions of the universal reason, however, tended to dethrone
God by reducing him merely to a First Cause as science continued to unlock
mysteries that had formerly been accredited to Divine Providence. As man
progressed in the use of his highest faculty, his reason, the idea of a
God became less and less necessary to him, and this was good, Proudhon
claimed, for it indicated a further step in the progress of mankind.¹ In
an even earlier work, he had also decided that priests should spend less
time talking about the sacraments, more time talking about equality; less
time on the remission of sins, more time denouncing usury; less time chanting
the vespers in Latin, more time working to moralize the theatres.²

In later years Proudhon, for whom Christ appeared to have a secret
attraction, maintained that the gospel had been ruined by Christ's followers,
the real villain being Saint Paul who taught that man's soul was separate
from his body, thus opening the way to the degradation of man and his labor.³
The Christ of Renan closely resembled the revolutionary Christ, except that

¹Proudhon, Contradictions économique, IV, p. 7.
²Proudhon, Création de l'ordre [1843], p. 16.
(Paris: A. Lacroix, Verboeckhoven, 1866), p. 92. Proudhon had two empty
sheets bound after each page of the Bible he edited. Throughout his life
he made comments on these sheets, so it is impossible to determine precisely
when the comment was made.
Novelists, both men and women, were heavily represented in the revolution. The feminist movement which began under Louis Philippe fixed the nation's attention on the family and its role in society, one of its leaders, George Sand (Madame Amantine Dudevant) declaring her candidacy for the constituent assembly. Novelists such as Alexander Dumas and Victor Hugo also entered the electoral contest. Proudhon, who had earlier expressed reservations about novelists, decided reflectively after 1848 that when writers categorized the family as the basic unit of society— in place of the workshop—they led the country toward dictatorship, because the concept of the family implied the father figure whose word meant life and death over his subjects. The revolution had been made without Hugo, Dumas, and the other artists. The role of men of letters and artists was to reconcile the just and useful; because they misunderstood their role, their influence in 1848 was detrimental to the republic.

The revolution also meant the proliferation of clubs, every kind of political thought having its organization with 250 in all operating within

1Jacques Bompard, (ed) Lettres au citoyen Rolland (Paris: Bernard Gosset, 1946), p. 51. Renan's life of Christ was published after 1848, but his work is presented here to avoid the possible conclusion that his thought and Proudhon's are identical.

2Toutain, La Révolution ... a Rouen, p. 21.

3Renard, La République de 1848, p. 40.

4Proudhon, Idée générale [1851], p. 109.

5Proudhon, "Ce que la révolution doit à la littérature," La Représentant du peuple, May 28, 1848.
Paris and its suburbs alone. There were clubs for the surveillance of the government, clubs for the cleansing of functionaries, clubs of rights and duties. Above all, there were clubs for every color of socialist, communist, or just plain revolutionary thought. Blanqui had his Central Republican Society; his bitter enemy Barbès had his Club of the Revolution, numbering among its members famous names, those of Thoré, Leroux, Pilhes, Sobrier and Proudhon. Raspail had his Club of the Friends of the People, whose seances were at one time invaded by hordes of women. Cabet had an organization, the Central Fraternal Society. The number of the clubs was so great that Barbès had the happy thought of linking them together into a confederation, the Club of Clubs, under the presidency of the soon-to-be-notorious Aloysius Huber. The clubs served a purpose, for they educated a politically illiterate people and prepared them for voting. They also contributed to the confusion, giving the ordinary person a distorted idea of what the vote could

---

1 Renard, *La République de 1848*, p. 22.


3 In the celebrated quarrel between Barbès and Blanqui over the Taschereau letter implicating Blanqui as a police agent, Proudhon defended Blanqui in a short article in *Le Représentant du peuple*, April 14, 1848. Proudhon observed that Taschereau was a dynast and a friend of *Le National*, who had found it necessary to destroy a man who had become an obstacle in his path.


5 *L'Ani du peuple*, April 2, 1848.


achieve. Proudhon, though he had joined the Club of the Revolution on March 21, soon became disillusioned with all of them:

The fanaticism, at this moment, passes all bounds; I have seen them, in a meeting of 500 people, decide in five minutes, with thundering applause, the most formidable questions of political economy, questions about which I am sure that no one in the assembly knew the first word.

The removal of government controls also meant a great increase in periodicals. They assumed every name, color of ink and paper, and political hue. Each day saw a new journal emerge with a fierce name only to be eclipsed on the following day by another journal with an even more fierce name. Only the talented editors could survive the competition. While Proudhon's newspaper was still in the process of making a name for itself, the journal of Girardin, La Presse, had achieved notoriety. La Presse had begun, in 1836, what became the French version of the American penny newspaper. Hawking of extra copies and advertising made it possible to reduce the price of the journal. To attract new readers, Girardin began running popular romantic novels in installments. Girardin's political views often closely followed Proudhon's. For example, they both favored a republican form of government and some kind of credit reform, but Girardin's proposal of annual elections and a one year's dictatorship for the president of the republic came closer to the Jacobin idea of democracy.


3Collins, Newspaper Press, p. 88.
than to Proudhon's concept of a democratic and social republic.¹ (Girardin later gave his support to Louis Bonaparte.) During the early days of March it was Girardin's press, not Proudhon's, which aroused discussion. On one occasion, March 29, an angry crowd surged down rue Montmartre and destroyed the presses of the newspaper which had so strongly criticized the provisional government.²

Political groupings came through the revolution with little basic change except that some groups took on temporary protective covering. It began with the newspapers. Both La Réforme and Le National had lists prepared for prospective members of the new government even before the mob invaded the assembly and Lamartine called out the names for mob approval. Le National's list included names common to both newspapers with editor Marrast heading the column. Le Réforme came on the scene only after Lamartine had led the mobs to the Hôtel-de-Ville, so those not duplicated on the list of Le National had to be content with the position of secretaries. These latter included Blanc, Flocon, and Albert Martin.³

All the members of the provisional government shared a common dislike for each other.⁴ Beyond that dislike it is difficult to divide them sharply into political groupings. One could not separate them on the basis of republicans or monarchists, for everyone was a republican, if not of


⁴Robertson, *Revolutions of 1848*, p. 39.
the eve, then at least of tomorrow, though, as Proudhon observed, for some of the newly baptized bourgeois republicans, it required eight days to get their mouths used to saying, "Vive la république!" Marx's division of the provisional members into petty and great bourgeois is of little help. Proudhon's groupings cast more light on the real emotions behind their rhetoric about that magic word, fraternity, and reveal the deep fears of each class of society and what each hoped to receive from the February revolution. First, there was the group around Le National. Proudhon called them the successors of the doctrinaires, bourgeois who planned to dominate the new government just as they had dominated the government of Louis Philippe—they worked in a sense contrary to the revolution. The second group centered around La Réforme. They represented, for Proudhon, revolutionary Jacobinism which had led the first French revolution astray from its original orientation toward decentralization into a Robespierrean eddy of centralized tyranny. A third group followed Louis Blanc and called itself communist. This group was the worst of all, for they hoped to substitute government ownership for private ownership of property, replacing a revolution from below (the true one) with a statist one from above. The result of such a revolution would be the enslavement of the people. At times, Proudhon could see a fourth coterie in the provisional government, that of the mystic socialists who would not send


2 Proudhon, "Demonstration du socialisme, theorétique et pratique, ou révolution par le crédit, pour servir d'instruction aux souscripteurs et actionnaires à la Banque du Peuple," Le Peuple, February 19, 1849. The article summarizes Proudhon's actions during the first year of the revolution.

3 Marx, Class Struggles in France, p. 39.
anyone to the guillotine without first being shriven. He considered this
group below serious consideration.1

With the exception of Dupont (de l'Eure), Albert Martin and a few
others, Proudhon wasted little love on the individuals who made up each of
these coteries. Of the entire group, however, he saved his worst diatribes
for Alphonse de Lamartine, the poet in politics.2 Like many historians,3
Proudhon found Lamartine to be a confusing and contradictory figure filled
with pride in his own popularity and in his ability to form a well-turned
phrase.4 Lamartine may have felt himself obliged to save the French people
from communism;5 it is more likely that he merely loved the popularity he
received. Proudhon had written in 1846 that Lamartine was a bundle of
contradictions and "... une seule chose lui manque, facile à acquérir; c'est
la conscience de ses contradictions."6

Proudhon's differences with Louis Blanc were not of such an emotional
nature. The two men could have done business together had Blanc been willing.

1P.-J. Proudhon to A M. Pilhes, April 13, 1848, Vol. II: Corres.,
pp. 315-317.

2For an example of Proudhon's envy of Lamartine see his letter to


4Henri Guillemin in his work, Lamartine en 1848 (Paris: Presses uni-
versitaires de France, 1948), p. 5, gives an incomplete picture of Proudhon's
opinion of Lamartine as "complex, omniforme, indechiffrable," for this is
only one side of the antinomy of Proudhon's thought. At other times he called
the man a stupid liar, etc. See, for example, Carnets, III, p. 33.

5Wright, "A Poet in Politics," p. 624, maintains that newer historio-
graphy judges that Lamartine thought only class collaboration could avert a
tragedy and that he was called upon to play the role of conciliator.

6Proudhon, Contradictions économiques [1846], V, p. 82.
He was not. Caussidière, the police prefect, annoyed Proudhon, for he paraded about the city in the trappings of '89, frightening old women and delighting street urchins with his antics. The other members of the provisional government annoyed or pleased Proudhon in the measure that their actions fulfilled his plans for the economic revolution.

The provisional was undoubtedly a discordant group, each member trying to pull the new government down paths that would be acceptable to the group he represented. Pressures exerted, now by bourgeois property holders, now by communist leaders, now by Jacobin orators, caused the provisional government to oscillate in its policy as it struggled to keep all elements satisfied while at the same time placating the Paris crowds. The urgent necessity to restore Paris and the provinces to some degree of order forced members of the government to work together. First, there was the question of opening a route through the barricaded streets of Paris so that the national guard could at least get a supply of bread from the bakers to feed the hungry city. Then it was necessary to reassure the citizens that a government was in power and functioning, so that shops could reopen. Decrees flowed from the Hôtel-de-Ville, the number of them reaching astonishing proportions, and among them was a decree concerning the national flag.

1 Mémoires de Caussidière, p. 65.

2 Baroness Bonde to Mr. and Mrs. Robinson, March 10, 1848, Paris in '48, p. 38, mentions the current idea of the makers of the provisional government: "fifteen deputies in fear of their lives." Evidently a good many shared Proudhon's belief that the new government was merely a continuation of the old. See the citation beginning this chapter.

3 Le Représentant du peuple, April 30, 1848.

4 Decree of Provisional Government, February 25, 1848. Twenty-one placards of the provisional government, including this one, are in the rare book room of Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois.
The question of flags was important, for they symbolized the different groups vying for control of the government. Many of the workers behind the barricades had carried the red flag instead of the tricolor, symbol of the first revolution. The royalist followers of the fleur-de-lis temporarily renounced their flag; the bourgeois moderates reminded their audiences of the greatness of the tricolor which, to use Lamartine's expression, had made the tour of Europe before a victorious army; social reformers preached to their cohorts that the red flag symbolized fraternity.1 Proudhon reminded his readers that, although the red flag had made only the tour of the Champ-de-Mars, it had always been carried by an oppressed people when they needed some means outside official channels with which to display their grievances.2 Lamartine's oratory won out, and the tricolor was adopted as the official flag of the second republic.3 Proudhon mourned for the red flag and, rather than the government half-measure of displaying the red rosette alongside the tricolor, preferred that the red flag be used on certain occasions--such as for foreign legations--thus encouraging foreign nations to follow the French lead and institute the social revolution.4

Among the other decrees issued during the early days of the republic

1For an entire listing of what the red flag symbolized to Proudhon, see "Carnet" No. 8 (Microfilm, Bibliothèque Nationale), April, 1850, p. 53. Proudhon was aware that many feared the red flag as a symbol of destruction and wholesale slaughter. He completely disassociated himself from this symbolism of the red flag.

2Proudhon, Solution du problème social, p. 21. Solution was Proudhon's only published comments, at the time, March, 1848, on the work of the provisional government, because his newspaper had not as yet begun publishing.

3Le Moniteur, March 8, 1848, p. 563.

4Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 289.
was one placing Guizot in accusation for his conduct as chief minister of the fallen government. This was absurd to Proudhon, first, because, if Guizot were to be brought into accusation, the only judgment that could be rendered against him would have to be made under the charter of the July Monarchy Guizot had served loyally. Secondly, it was ridiculous move to be engaged in such petty, political matters when the economic crisis desperately needed attention. Another decree of the provisional government abolishing marchand-age, the practice of employers' hiring day labor through an intermediary who took his slice of the worker's pay, was more to his liking; but again, it was merely attacking one of the effects of a system rather than attacking the system itself.

The decree abolishing the pain of death in political matters was used by Proudhon as an occasion to air his views on all corporal punishment. He feared that the abolition of the death penalty in a society in which the poorer classes were brutalized by poverty might open the way to private vengeance. In a later age, Proudhon had earlier decided, when man had reached his full stature as a free human being and when the collective consciousness had reached such a stage that man recognized his duty toward his fellow men, then perhaps punishments should become more severe, for the crime would be a greater offense to the collective consciousness.

---


2Le Moniteur, March 3, 1848, p. 529.

3Proudhon, Solution du problème social, p. 22. Proudhon was contradictory on this subject. At other times, he denied to the state the right to inflict the death penalty. See Carnets, II, p. 14.

The decree making the Invalides an asylum for the sick poor struck Proudhon as a gesture which would be reversed later. Two weeks after the decree was published, Caussidiere removed its occupants.¹

On March 4, the government issued another decree--this one abolishing slavery. This proved harder to implement when the question of payment for slave owners was raised.² Proudhon considered the economic question more important than the question of slavery; if the exchange were freed and made to function equitably, then slavery would become unproductive. A political solution was useless when the situation demanded an economic one.³ A second decree concerning labor raised Proudhon's strong opposition--the decree shortening the hours of work to 10 hours in Paris and 11 hours in the provinces.⁴ This decree would cut down on the income of the poor--every man should receive an income in proportion to his labor⁵--though eventually all wages would be low. Proudhon had earlier observed that to give a man more than he earned from his labor would make him lazy.⁶ Workers like those at Lyons, for example, who received higher wages than college professors, were

¹Proudhon, Solution du problème social, p. 27.
³Proudhon, Solution du problème social, p. 30.
⁴Decree of Provisional Government, March 3, 1848 (Northwestern University).
⁵Proudhon, Solution du problème social, p. 27.
⁶Proudhon, Contradictions économiques, IV [1846], p. 120.
The economic crisis could not be eliminated by manipulating working hours with the resulting fluctuations in salary.

One of the most controversial of the decrees of the provisional government, that undertaking to guarantee to labor the right to work (only three of the eleven members of the government signed it), also set up the Luxembourg Commission under Louis Blanc to study labor conditions and to make suggestions to the provisional government. The motivation behind the creation of the commission may have been to direct Louis Blanc's popularity into harmless channels or an honest attempt to solve temporarily the unemployment problem demoralizing the Paris poor. In either case, Proudhon judged that the decree of the provisional government had been issued with the best will in the world but that it simply could not solve the problem, for it opened the way for further expansion of government and resembled too closely workers' associations. He had earlier decided that these associations were outgrowths of the medieval guilds—safely under the control of the Catholic Church—and thus protective associations meant to alleviate temporarily the lot of the worker while more firmly tying him into subjection. Still it might be possible to work with Blanc if he could be made to accept the idea of freeing the exchange in return for a temporary acceptance of the national

\[\text{\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{1}}}\text{ibid.}, pp. 129-32. Proudhon thought that the first reform should be to reduce these workers' salaries.\]

\[\text{\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{2}}}\text{Decree of Provisional Government, February 29, 1848 (Northwestern University).}\]

\[\text{\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{3}}}\text{Proudhon,\textit{ Carnets}, III, p. 20.}\]

\[\text{\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{4}}}\text{Proudhon,\textit{ Création de l'ordre,} p. 256. Proudhon insisted that religion and government were one.}\]
workshops. Workshops would encourage laziness, but Proudhon was prepared to suffer this ill effect. In time the freeing of the exchange would resolve the economic question, causing the national workshops slowly to become useless. Blanc did not respond to Proudhon's letter, though the tone was cordial enough. He reserved for his Carnets, at this time, the highly abusive descriptions of Blanc as a stupid monkey and a liar. During the period of exile forced on Blanc after the May 15 disturbance, he vented a similar abuse on Proudhon.

The actions of the provisional government so far, though they had not pleased Proudhon, did not rouse his anger or prophecies of disaster—until the government began to concern itself with the national guard, the financial crisis, and the question of suffrage in the elections to the constituent assembly. The temporary cessation of publication of Le Représentant du peuple during the months of March and early April prevented Proudhon from criticizing the government too strongly. An early decree had declared that all citizens were members of the national guard, an organization whose sup-

1 P.-J. Proudhon to M. Blanc, April 8, 1848, Vol. II: Corres., p. 305.

2 Proudhon, Solution du problème social, p. 204.

3 Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 253.


5 Proudhon's abuse of the provisional government permeates his Carnets, however, See, for example, Vol. III in which he reflects on February 24, 1848, pp. 9-26.

6 Decree of the Provisional Government, March 8, 1848 (Northwestern University).
port was needed for the success of any French government. Proudhon had earlier agreed that, if an army still remained necessary, then a people's army was the very best kind to have. Armies were, like the idle rich, unproductive, raising the cost of government without adding to the national riches.\footnote{Proudhon, Création de l'ordre, p. 316.} As March wore on it began to look as if troops were being concentrated in the capital by the Minister of the Interior, Ledru-Rollin.\footnote{For Ledru-Rollin's explanation of his actions, see Le Moniteur, May 7, 1848, p. 168.} The newly created mobile guards added to the concentration, so that to one observer, it appeared that 225,000 troops guarded the city.\footnote{Baroness Bonde to Mr. and Mrs. Robinson, March 2, 1848, Paris in 1848, p. 22.}

At the same time as the troop build-up, a decision of the provisional government of March 5 called for a constituent assembly to prepare a constitution, the assembly to be elected by all males of age 21 and over with six months' residence in their vicinity. The decree aroused Proudhon to vocal, violent opposition, for he believed that whoever preached universal suffrage as a principle of order and certitude was a liar,\footnote{Le Représentant du peuple, specimen number, October 14, 1847.} and what was worse, he led the people astray. To begin with, the will of the collective could never be determined by any kind of popular scrutin, for in a popular election one voted for his own egoistic needs, often in contradiction with the needs of the collective whole.\footnote{Proudhon, "La Reaction," Le Représentant du peuple, April 29, 1848.} Further, head counting was inadequate,
for what of the large number who failed to vote? By what law, argued
Proudhon, must the minority submit its will to the will of the majority?¹
Universal suffrage merely substituted the absolutism of a majority for the
absolutism of royalty.² The only way in which one could find the will of the
collective was through consulting it united in its own interests, the work-
shop for example, or in any place where men of like means gathered to dis-
cuss and formulate their economic needs. This consultation, he had earlier
decided, could not be correctly taken for at least another fifty years,
because men must be educated to their own best interests.³ Apprenticeship
classes in the workshop where the young worker would be given general know-
ledge of all stages of factory production would be part of the educational
process. As their education warranted, men could begin participating in
the suffrage.⁴ Any suffrage without previous education and without division
into economic functions was counter revolutionary.⁵ As he later explained in
Justice, the counter revolution had begun with Rousseau who, though he
may have added to the greatness of French literature, had also begun the

¹ Proudhon, Idée générale, p. 152.
² Proudhon, Solution du problème social, p. 47.
³ Proudhon, Création de l'ordre, p. 189. After reading the "Manifesto
of the Sixty," in 1864 Proudhon decided that the workers had most of the
qualifications needed for voting in an industrial society. See De la Capacité
politique de classes ouvrières, Vol. XXVIII: Œuvres posthumes (Paris: A.
Lacroix, 1873), preface and pp. 11, 40.
⁵ It should be recalled, from Chapter I, that although Proudhon
thought that revolutionary progress was irreversible, yet it could be retarded
by the actions of men; this was the real meaning of evil.
retrograde movement in French society,\(^1\) opening the way to Jacobin demagogues who would lead the people astray into choosing a chief—an apostasy as far as the revolution was concerned.

We have said it and we repeat it: The republic is the form of government in which all wills remain free, the nation thinks, speaks and acts as one man. But to realize this ideal, it is necessary that all private interests, in place of acting in a sense contrary to society, act in the direction of society, which is impossible with universal suffrage. Universal suffrage is the materialism of the republic.\(^2\)

The decrees streaming from the seat of the provisional government did not soothe the basic disagreement among its members. As the government hesitated, it came under the influence of the groups who besieged it, demanding concessions. One day it was the delegates from the school of medicine, supporting the government, but demanding the right to elect their own officers. Another day it was a delegation from the provinces pledging support while making its demands.\(^3\) One of the first demonstrations showing the mounting distrust of the government's policies was that of March 6 when a delegation of business men 3,000 strong came to the Hôtel-de-Ville demanding that they be given a moratorium on debts falling due for a three-month period.\(^4\)


\(^3\)Le Moniteur, March 2, 1848, p. 523.

\(^4\)Renard, *La République de 1848*, p. 34. Renard presents a socialist interpretation of this event, but it does appear that there was a mounting class tension during the month of March. The real question is whether this mounting tension can be attributed to Marxian class conflict, or if Proudhon's judgment that it was because of the provisional government's inept handling of the situation, is correct. See, in particular, Proudhon's comments in *Carnets*, III, p. 41. These comments, made on April 4, warn of civil war because of the government's failures.
The business men made no attempt to hide their resentment at concessions made to the Paris poor. In the next demonstration, that of the bear skin caps (bonnet à poil) of March 16, a stronger feeling of resentment prevailed. The protesters wanted to retain their elite company in the national guards with its distinctive head dress. The Parisian upper class laughed at the demonstration, but the workers were disturbed at an attempt to coerce the provisional government into following the dictates of an elite group.¹

Even before the March 16 demonstration occurred, the workers of Paris planned to present their own petition to the provisional government. The petition, to be read by Citizen Gérard, asked that the elections be delayed from April 9 until at least the month of May. The workers feared that the provinces would outvote them before they had a chance to educate France concerning the social republic for which they had fought in the February Days. They did not want their revolutionary gains to be lost as they had been lost after the three days of fighting in 1830. A second part of the petition was the request that the troops be moved outside the city of Paris. The workers reasoned that while the troops were in Paris, citizens would feel intimidated by them and the vote would not be free. The demonstration was peaceful enough; the workers arranged themselves by corporations and marched in long lines to the Hôtel-de-Ville.² What was awe-inspiring was the number of workers who participated in the procession, as many as 200,000 in the

¹Calman, Ledru-Rollin, p. 125.
²Le Moniteur, March 18, 1848, p. 631.
estimation of some observers. To Proudhon, it was at this moment that the provisional government became frightened of what might happen if the workers were not brought sharply under control. 1 At first, the government took a firm stand. Then, thinking better of it and also because it had become impossible to get the electoral lists ready by April 9, decided to adjourn the elections until April 23. The troops remained in Paris. 2

Another demonstration erupted spontaneously on April 16. The provisional government had decreed that the officers of the national guard would be elected by the people themselves. The working classes had fourteen officers to elect, so they were called to the Champ-de-Mars to make their selection. 3 Rumors circulated through the city that the workers planned to go further, creating another committee of public safety which would take the provisional government under its protection. 4 The workers had merely decided to defile past the government offices after electing their officers. 5 When they approached the Hôtel-de-Ville, they were surprised to find themselves in the midst of a sea of hostile national guard members shouting, "A bas le communistes." 6 The rappel had been sounded by Ledru-Rollin who feared ———

1 Proudhon, Confessions d'un révolutionnaire, p. 72.
2 Deslandres, Histoire constitutionnelle, p. 309.
4 Histoire de la révolution de Février, 1848 (Paris: Faye, 1849), I, p. 405. This account is a compilation of excerpts from Le Moniteur.
5 Guillemin, La Première résurrection, p. 249. The workers' selection of Barbès as an officer for the XI legion did not allay fears.
6 Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 50.
for the peace.¹ The workers dispersed peacefully, but the fears aroused were a presage of what was to come.

Proudhon, for his part, had little time for demonstrations. He was disquieted by the rising hostility between the bourgeois and the working classes,² blamed the provisional government and denounced them bitterly, saying that in the past two months nothing had come from them that was not an error or a lie.³ In the demonstration of March 17, he saw Louis Blanc's reaction against conspiratorial socialism of the Blanqui variety. In the demonstration of April 16, he saw Ledru-Rollin's reaction to socialists of the Blanc kind. Admitting that at first he had, like Blanc, seen sinister faces in the crowds surrounding the Hôtel-de-Ville,⁴ Proudhon later changed his mind and decided that the rising tensions were the result merely of the actions of the provisional government and not of any conspiratorial groups.⁵ The provisional government was responsible, for it had deflected the economic revolution from its natural course. The fears aroused by the demonstrations would result in the election of a conservative assembly which would continue this retrograde movement, interring the revolution under a flood of oratory.

The signal of this retrograde movement is the party of the provisional government. The lists of Le National accuse them.

¹Le Moniteur, May 7, 1848, p. 969.
²Proudhon, "La Reaction," Le Représentant du peuple, April 29, 1848.
³Ibid.
⁵Proudhon, Confessions d'un révolutionnaire, p. 78.
They have such a lack of understanding of the revolution, such a fear of the people, these amateur republicans, gentlemen of the democracy, that having scarcely arrived at power they appeal to all the mediocre of the nation. The nation has already sent its mediocrities. Their success surpasses their hopes and already they are devoured with uneasiness. They sense that their role is ended. What party is not contemptuous of them? They are so small, so narrow, so equivocal that the most piercing eye cannot distinguish between despotism and the republic.¹

Proudhon's first observations on the provisional government were no less critical than his later comments when France prepared to go to the polls to elect a constituent assembly. He had hoped to make his criticism known through his newspaper, but it had barely begun publishing during the first month of the second republic. Instead, it was Girardin's paper that attracted the attention of the nation. Proudhon, eager to grab some of that attention for himself, had quickly answered the requests of a working-man delegation, that he give his solution to the economic crisis, by setting to work on Solution du problème social. The work, containing the usual comments on the freeing of the exchange and the dethroning of gold through the creation of an exchange bank, made little impression on a largely illiterate people who preferred slogans and songs to an abstruse and wandering discussion on free credit. Proudhon's attention had been diverted, however, by the actions of the provisional government, especially its decision to permit the election of a constituent assembly through universal suffrage. He shrewdly analyzed the state of mind of the ordinary citizen, deciding that this was a serious

¹Proudhon, "Aux Patriotes," Le Représentant du peuple, May 4, 1848. The quote refers specifically to the elections to the constituent assembly, but it also gives Proudhon's final judgment on the provisional government.
mistake, for it would not be a real poll of the collective thought of the people, but merely a recording of who was the most popular person at the moment. At this stage in his thinking, he appeared to see no further danger as a result of universal suffrage and might even himself be tempted to join in the national head count.

As he stood on the sidelines hoping that he might be pushed into the political arena so that he could spread his economic plans, Proudhon disapprovingly watched the demonstrations occurring almost daily. He realized that they were dangerous to public order, sensing that beneath the facade of fraternity, fears and antagonism between the classes were growing. His final judgment was that the provisional government was responsible, and to correct the failure, it was necessary that he use every means at hand, his newspaper, even the suffrage itself—to impose his economic ideas, always in a peaceful mien, though the prose might be assassinating—to prevent a disastrous civil war.
CHAPTER III

From the Constituent Assembly to the June Days

Voila deux mois [April, 1848] que le Peuple ne travaille pas, qu'il ne fait point d'échange, qu'il n'acquit rien ... Nous courons au précipice avec une vitesse accélérée à chaque minute par l'impulsion des vieux préjugés philanthropiques, par nous hallucinations révolutionnaires, par l'impérât du gouvernement.

The terrible June Days in which civil war raged in Paris presented a complete change from the air of fraternity and direct democracy which swept the city during the early months of 1848. The three factors of the revolution—the political ferment, the economic crisis, and the intellectual upheaval—all contributed to this change which turned fraternity into hate. The converging of these elements in the struggle over the national workshops led to the June Days.

As these elements were converging, Proudhon decided that his position as an observer, even though he had a newspaper, was not enough, for the revolution was moving ahead without him, and other leaders, including his socialist confrères, were gaining recognition while he remained in obscurity. It was his urge to put his theories into practice before rising tensions led to bloodshed that determined him to depart from his earlier stand on non-government and join in the election to the constituent assembly. But not having reached a position of note in the country, he was unable to direct

1P.-J. Proudhon, "Comment les Révolutions se perdent," Le Representant du peuple, April 23, 1848.
events already out of control because of the serious economic crisis, the social upheaval, and the continuing political turmoil arising out of the elections to the constituent assembly in a national head count of all male citizens over twenty-one years of age.

When one looks at the campaign literature for the April 23 election he is struck by the numerous programs, effusions of fraternity, bizarre expressions, and enormous plans for political and social regeneration. But there were also many healthy, precise, and practical plans: compulsory education, military service for all adults with gradual reduction of the length of service, a tax on revenue and a progressive tax replacing indirect taxes.\(^1\) Election literature still stressed the cult of the worker even though a subtle shift of thought away from him had already begun. "Mon grand-père était ouvrier, mon père était ouvrier, je suis ouvrier moi-même, je suis ouvrier notaire!" declared one ingenious office seeker.\(^2\)

Religion figured high in campaign literature, Dumas declaring in his brochure to voters: "Aujourd'hui, je viens me proposer comme candidat à l'Assemblée nationale. J'y demanderai le respect for toutes les choses saintes; la religion a toujours été pour moi au premier rang."\(^3\)

The confusion of candidates was immense, forty-one standing for election in one seat at Indre, alone.\(^4\) Even Proudhon, at this early date--

---

\(^1\)Renard, *La République de 1848*, p. 43.

\(^2\)Bertaut, *1848*, p. 175.


\(^4\)Renard, *La République de 1848*, p. 43.
that grim Cassandra predicting that the elections would only lead to counter
revolution—could not suppress a vague hope that perhaps the voters would
ask that his name be inscribed on the numerous lists circulating from the
offices of the leading newspapers, from the meeting rooms of clubs, and from
the Luxembourg committee.¹

Because the voting would take place in each canton which would elect
a deputy for every 40,000 inhabitants,² the departments assumed a critical
importance in the elections. The registration of voters and the makeup of
voting lists fell under the control of prefects appointed to each department
by the Minister of the Interior, Ledru-Rollin.³ The practice of the govern-
ment's managing elections in its own interest was not new in nineteenth
century France. The prefects of the Bourbons had managed elections before,
so it was logical that Ledru would direct his prefects in the same fashion.⁴
His first move was to change all the prefects and under prefects of the old
regime. Only twelve remained after this purge, and all had taken on the
republican leanings of the Minister of the Interior.⁵ The new appointees
were often highly unpopular in the provinces where the peasants preferred
local members of the gentry, their neighbors, holding these important posts.

¹Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 31.
²Toutain, La Révolution... a Rouen, p. 26.
³For Ledru's explanation of why he sent commissioners to the depart-
ments, see Le Moniteur, May 7, 1848, p. 168.
⁴Alfred Cobban, "Administrative Pressure in the Elections of the
French Constituent Assembly, April, 1848," Bulletin of the Institute of
Historical Research, XXV (November, 1952), p. 133.
⁵Deslandres, Histoire constitutionnelle, p. 296.
Often, in his search for faithful henchmen, Ledru had to accept men of questionable ability and reputation. The man sent to Amiens, for example, turned out to be a convict; the one sent to Le Mans raised doubts as to his sanity; in one department, two delegates arrived with the same credentials and had to fight it out.¹ These unpopular appointees, dubbed proconsuls, had a strong effect on peasant voting patterns.

Ledru-Rollin's communications with his prefects added to his unpopularity and that of the entire republican cause. In a celebrated circular of March 12, he told his prefects that their powers were unlimited and that their great work was to see that the provinces were educated to the need for a republic.² The direct communications were bad enough; the information sent to the provinces by the Minister's subordinates was even worse. The inflammatory No. 16 of Bulletins de la République, written by George Sand, in which she warned that if the election results were not satisfactory to the republicans, it would be necessary to resort to the barricades, roused great opposition.³ One result of the circulars was a small, but determined effort, to get the seat of the assembly moved outside of Paris.⁴

In unofficial electioneering, Ledru-Rollin went even further than

¹Baroness Bonde to Mr. and Mrs. Robinson, March 28, 1848, Paris in 48, p. 55.
²Toutain, La Révolution ... a Rouen, p. 24.
⁴Ernest Renan to M. Renan, April 3, 1848, Nouvelles lettres intimes, p. 160.
his decrees to prefects. According to Raspail,\textsuperscript{1} Ledru fed funds into the clubs, especially into Huber's Club of Clubs, so that the club members could preach republicanism in the provinces.\textsuperscript{2} Pressure was exerted on government employees as far down the scale as the village schoolmaster who was threatened with dismissal if he did not support the list of candidates approved by the prefects.\textsuperscript{3}

Proudhon did not like the circulars of Ledru-Rollin. He had supported the unhappy minister when, in the disturbance of April 16, he had called for the beating of the rappel, and he had not as yet publicly associated Ledru with the Jacobin demagogic move he abhorred so much,\textsuperscript{4} but he judged that in the case of the circulars, they did not help the cause of the republic, merely frightening old women.\textsuperscript{5}

In a national scrutin in which the number of voters had been enlarged from 200,000 to nine million, the results were bound to be different from earlier scrutinins. Over 84 per cent of those eligible voted, a percentage which was not surpassed again under the second or third republic.\textsuperscript{6}

\textsuperscript{1}F. V. Raspail was a doctor who practiced gratuitously in the working class quarter of Saint-Antoine. In the elections for the presidency of the republic in December, 1848, Proudhon supported his candidacy, even though he was in prison for his part in the May 15 disturbance.

\textsuperscript{2}Calman, Ledru-Rollin, p. 137.

\textsuperscript{3}Cobban, "Administrative Pressure," p. 142.

\textsuperscript{4}Ledru's name was on the list Le Représentant proposed to the voters in the issue of April 22, 1848.

\textsuperscript{5}Proudhon to the Editors, April 20, 1848, Le Représentant du peuple, April 20, 1848.

\textsuperscript{6}Duveau, 1848, The Making of a Revolution, p. 96.
The fixing of the day of Pâques as the day of elections probably added to
the number of voters, rather than diminishing it. In many parishes, the
bishops had decreed that the hours of office and mass could be changed to
accommodate voters. Often the entire parish marched to the polls behind the
pastor and voted after having attended Easter services.¹ As a result, many
old names were new winners. Tocqueville won in his old department of
Normandy by 110,704 votes out of 120,000 cast.² His success and that of
other men who had been members of earlier French governments, meant a kind
of peasant revolt. They did not like a government that imposed on them the
45 centimes tax and which sent to them foreigners as commissioners.³ A
large number of clergy, the Dominican Lacordaire, for example, won election,
the provinces preferring the known to the unknown.

In Paris, however, the results were somewhat different. The members
of the provisional government safely made it back into office, the department
of the Seine returning Lamartine, Dupont (de l'Eure), and Francais Arago by
large majorities, and Louis Blanc and Ledru-Rollin by very small majorities.
(They were 24th and 27th on the list.⁴) The results were a decided turning
away from socialist policies which Louis Blanc blamed on the lies and
columnies spread against the Luxembourg committee.⁵ It is true that students

²Tocqueville, Recollections, p. 93.
³Falloux, Mémoires, p. 305.
⁴Le Moniteur, May 2, 1848, p. 923.
⁵Le Moniteur, May 3, 1848, p. 932, contains Louis Blanc's address
before the general assembly of workers' delegations concerning the elections.
from the military and technical schools, when they heard that Blanc was attempting to organize the workers so as to get them to vote for working men candidates, rushed to the Champ-de-Mars in order to circulate among the workers, warning them that such demand voting would be harmful to them. 1 Yet some socialists did win election, making the condemnation of their doctrines not so clear cut as Blanc claimed. Aude sent Barbès; Cher sent Félix Pyat. 2 Proudhon, the man who proclaimed, "Le moyen le plus sûr de faire mentir le Peuple est d'établir le suffrage universel ..." lost the election. 3 He had run in Paris, Lyons, and his home department of Besançon (Doubs), where he received only 1,270 votes out of 4,742 votes cast, the bisontins proving that they were more Catholic than socialist. 4

For Proudhon, the anarchist who felt that the best kind of government was the kind that speedily made itself useless, 5 to allow his name to be on any electoral list came as a surprise. Though he made no public statement

1 Guillemin, La Première résurrection, p. 305.

2 Bertaut, 1848, p. 183.


5 Proudhon, however, had intimated in Création de l'ordre [1843], p. 324, that man had a natural tendency to proceed to political organization before economic planning, and that this was acceptable if, once the political institutions were established, the impulsion now came from below, through the people. The editor's footnote on the same page noted that the author had later changed his mind, maintaining that the only real revolution came directly from the people, that is, from below. It is impossible to establish who made the editorial comment. It is this writer's belief that it was Proudhon himself. It appears, then, that his belief in the ineffectiveness of government was not so strong as to preclude an attempt to work with it, as this chapter will demonstrate.
at the time about the contradiction with his own philosophy, he explained later, in 1858, that he realized that some interim government would be necessary before man reached the collective state where no external force, other than that of the disapproval of the collective consciousness, would be necessary to enforce society's injunctions. He was prepared to describe what this interim society should be like and the qualifications for representatives to its government. Above all, representatives should be experts, for, to try to reach order in a society where all laws of political economy were unknown, where all equilibrium was destroyed, and all liberty compromised, required great skill. Just to realize what kind of laws could be legislated and what kind could only be discovered required considerable knowledge of mathematics, science, and human philosophy.¹ He proclaimed in his journal that, once a member of the government, a representative was no longer free to uphold one class in society, for he now represented all classes. Thus, a representative like Louis Blanc, for example, could no longer implement his plans for a workshop, but could only protect and encourage the working classes; he could not compromise his position as a representative by intervening.² Voters were free at any time to revoke the mandate of a representative who violated their trust.³ What the republic needed was men of Proudhon's stamp who were capable of understanding the

¹Proudhon, Justice, II, p. 344.
²Proudhon to the Editors of Le Représentant du peuple, Le Représentant du peuple, April 20, 1848.
³Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 45.
economic nature of the revolution.

Proudhon's speculations on the qualifications of legislators ran counter to the advice being distributed throughout the country by Minister of Education Carnot who urged voters to elect anyone of normal intelligence provided he were an honest man.¹ Many socialists agreed with Carnot, harkening back to Saint-Simon who had imagined an accident in which all royalty and civil servants had disappeared. Government continued moving smoothly, for it was no problem at all to fill their places.² This concept of administration struck the practical Proudhon as stupid, for he inquired how an uneducated proletariat could possibly create a republic.³ Some years before the revolution he argued for "demopodie"—education of the masses which would facilitate the revolution of capacity.⁴ History was merely the unrolling tablet of the collective organization, slave to plebeian, serf to proletariat. If a candidate for an administrative career must first prove that he had satisfied all the requirements for the position he wished to fill; if a candidate for citizenship had to demonstrate that he had received the required instruction; how much more would a representative need special knowledge to fulfill the unique role required of him in government?⁵

¹Ibid., p. 28.
³Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 28.
⁵Proudhon, Création de l'ordre, p. 344.
Despite his unique views of the role of a representative, Proudhon placed his name on the electoral list. In his Carnets he promised that in the election campaign, he would say precisely what he thought.\(^1\) His opportunity came in the form of a letter he addressed to the voters of Doubs. His main argument rested on the imbecility of the provisional government which he accused of fomenting class war, of disturbing the tranquility of the state, and of endangering the future of the revolution. He concluded by noting that he did not wish to reverse the provisional government nor to accuse directly any member—he merely wanted to change the direction of its politics.\(^2\)

It is difficult to understand how Proudhon, with his contempt for political action when economic action was demanded, could even offer to stand for election. Even more surprising, when as late as March, 1848, when Solution du probléme social was published, he was still denouncing universal suffrage,\(^3\) he should yet use this means to implement his own policy. He appeared to be not the least concerned by the inconsistency in his action. Several reasons could be given for his lack of concern. First, he felt his message to be so important that he was willing to make any move that might assist in spreading it. After all, to propagate his views through an elected assembly and its organ, Le Moniteur, would merely supplement his newspaper as a means of educating the people. Second, he may have felt that the provisional government had been so inept that the larger interest

---

\(^1\)Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 31.


\(^3\)Proudhon, Solution du probléme social, p. 31.
of the country, its economic development in particular, menaced by the foolish decrees from the government offices, warranted his stepping into politics in order to save the economy. Later, when the economy had righted itself, he could return to his philosophic position. Third, and closely connected with the question of the provisional government, was the threat of serious civil disturbance if the leaders did not act quickly. Proudhon, who had an honest love for his country, may have placed its welfare ahead of philosophic consistencies. Finally, there is always his own opportunistic nature, his willingness to work with even his enemies in order to get his ideas accepted.\(^1\) He probably realized also that his works had been little read by the common people and thus, few would notice that his political involvement contradicted his philosophy.

As the time of the elections approached, Proudhon's candidacy became more auspicious for his newspaper and his writings had won for him a considerable reputation. Because of the rising tensions, in many cases, this reputation became that of a man of terror, one to be feared far more than any of the members of the provisional government. Louis Blanc's followers, miffed by Proudhon's criticism of them, erased his name from the list of candidates circulated by the Luxembourg workers.\(^2\) Proudhon sensed defeat even before the day of elections dawned. One cause of his

\(^1\)For an example of Proudhon's opportunistic nature and his willingness to work with his enemies, see his 1842 letter to Considerant: Aimé Berthod, "Deux Lettres inédites de P.-J. Proudhon a Considerant," La Révolution de 1848, XX-XXI (1922-1925), pp. 19-38. The letter was written on the day his challenge to Considerant was published. See Vol. II: Oeuvres complètes, for the brochure. In the letter, he appeared to excuse, in advance, the sharp language in the brochure.

\(^2\)Darimon, A Travers une révolution, p. 38.
despondence was those who shared the electoral lists with him. In place of socialists, he said, old generals, former deputies, Dominicans, abbots, pastors, lawyers, and journalists crowded the lists, with the addition of a few workers who, taking on the thought of the bourgeoisie, would poison the cause of the proletariat.¹

After his loss was certain, on April 28, he analyzed the results, observing that instead of posing the simple question to the voters: "What is it necessary to do for the proletariat?" one posed instead the question: "Will you be a communist?" Of course, the voters had responded negatively. In his own case, a combination of priests and proprietors had defeated him in Besançon. In Lyons, it was the communists who had venged themselves on their sharpest critic by eliminating him. In Paris his defeat was caused by the still festering rancor of journalists and the men of the provisional government.² The overall picture of the elections was in the political sense of Le National, moderate and conservative, with the socialists suffering defeat.³

Proudhon was humiliated by his defeat, because he had been forced to endure a misinterpretation of his philosophy. For example, Chevalier of Journal des économistes, called him a communist; he was one of their

¹[News Summary] Le Représentant du peuple, April 22, 1848.
²Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 54.
³Ibid., p. 53.
sharpest critics. Religious men referred to him as an enemy of the family; he supported the family but thought the Catholic Church had degraded it. Socialists, thinking he was one of their own, were incensed when he criticized them; Proudhon disagreed with all of them at least some of the time.

For some time, historians, under the leadership of Charles Seignobos, have classified the constituent assembly elected on April 23, as moderately republican. Yet, in looking more closely at those who claimed to have been republican, it appears that there were a staggering number of conversions. A part of the difficulty lay in getting qualified republicans to run for office. Often there were simply no other candidates than former monarchists now professing loyalty to the republic. Only 378 seats in the assembly were filled according to the wishes of the republican organization, the Central Committee of General Elections for the National Assembly. Though republican in name, the general tone of the assembly was conservative with a large

---

1Libid., p. 49. Proudhon gave other examples of this misinterpretation. For example, he was associated with Fourier's social system which he loathed. Among the newspapers, he also noted Journal des débats, which called him a continuator of Babeuf, the communist conspirator in the first revolution. Proudhon had, of course, two years earlier condemned the communists in extremely strong language in Contradictions, V, p. 278.

2For his comments on the degradation of the family by the Catholic Church, see La Bible annotée, Vol. XXXII of Oeuvres posthumes (Brussels: A. Lacroix, Verboeckhoven, 1867), p. 166.

3The term, socialist, is used here in the Proudhonian sense of the word, meaning anyone who proposed a system of social reform, provided it was not utopian (hopelessly impractical), Christian (imposed from above) or communist.

4George Fasel, "The French Elections of April 23, 1848: Suggestions for a Revision, French Historical Studies, V (Spring, 1968), pp. 286-38. It is interesting to note that Proudhon's election prophecy and his analysis of the results—that the assembly was more conservative than republican—agrees with that of newer historiography on the subject. Wolf, France, p. 200, provides a sample of the older analysis of the assembly as moderately republican.
representation from the clergy, including three bishops. The old Chamber of Peers was represented by Molé, Montalembert, and Falloux, the latter appointing himself to the committee of labor which would play a focal role in the June Days. In general, the members of the new assembly were interested in a return to the status quo preceding February in everything except, perhaps, the return of royalty.

The revolutionary element was represented in the constituent assembly also. Continuing to imitate the National Convention of the first revolution, these gentlemen took their places on the highest benches of the assembly and called themselves Montagnards. They quickly diverged into two groups, the radicals who called themselves Jacobins, and the socialists—the distinction between the two elements being vague and often difficult to define. In general, the radicals desired even more direct democracy and a general leveling of incomes; the socialists looked more toward an overall pattern of social reform based on any one of the utopian plans circulating in contemporary France, that of the followers of Cabet, Fourier, or the Saint-Simonians, for example. Many of the socialists preferred outright government ownership of the goods of production rather than its equable distribution among all citizens. Among those seated on the topmost benches of the assembly and involved in one of the two categories were Lamennais,

1Falloux, Mémoires, p. 317.

2M. Girard, Le Liberalisme en France de 1814 a 1848; doctrine et mouvement (Paris: Centre de documentation universitaire, N.D.), II, p. 289.

3Leo A. Loubere, "The Intellectual Origins of French Jacobin Socialism," International Review of Social History, IV (1959), pp. 414-417, attempts to make the concepts, Jacobin and socialism, more precise. If he fails, it is only because the concepts were not precise in nineteenth century thought.
Ledru-Rollin, Lamartine, Félix Pyat, Caussidiere, and Victor Hugo, who though he professed to be a member of the radical party, more frequently voted with the conservatives in the new assembly.¹

A new element in the assembly was that of the laboring class, comprising approximately thirty-four members.² Two interesting members of this group were the Lyonnaise, Greppo and Benoit, both friends of Proudhon. According to Benoit, Greppo was the least lettered member of the assembly, being scarcely able to read, his correspondence and books being ghost written.³

In general, three-fourths of the assembly members would have been able to qualify for membership under the July Monarchy. There was a decided air of conservatism about the membership and a kind of anticipatory fear of new disorders in the capital. Instead of the question Proudhon believed posed to electors in the national voting,⁴ perhaps the question— if a movement occurred in Paris to overturn the assembly, what would you do?—would have been more accurate. The unspoken assumption was that a political and social war would soon be raised against that body.⁵ Universal suffrage, in

¹Biré, Victor Hugo, p. 121. Hugo, like many other leading figures in the revolution of 1848, was highly contradictory in his actions. For example, he voted for the state of siege during the June Days while at the same time talking against it.

²Duveau, 1848. The Making of a Revolution, p. 100.

³Joseph Benoit, Confessions d'un prolétaire (Paris: Editions sociales, 1968), p. 234. The confessions were written at Lyons in 1871, but not published until 1968. Some knowledge of Greppo is essential to a study of Proudhon in 1848, for he was the lone member of the assembly who refused to vote for the censure of Proudhon following his July 31 address to the assembly. Proudhon probably met both men when he worked for Gauthier Brothers.

⁴See page 86.

its first manifestation, had proved itself more conservative and conformist
than anything else.

Proudhon sensed this rising fear and his incapacity to counter-
act it.¹ He despaired of making the assembly understand the three moves that
he felt necessary to resolve the problem: the necessity to work more and to
receive a lower pay in order to produce a better market; the importance of
resolving the social question before tackling the political one, the need to
go beyond gold to the actual exchange of products in order to get circulation
moving again.² For the whole process of election, he had only contempt:
"Le bon plaisir d'une majorité électoraile ... en vertu de leur droit de
suffrage, demandent un roi!"³

On the following day he sarcastically predicted what the assembly
would do, such as declaring rules, fixing membership, and finally giving
Considerant, the successor to Fourier, ten to twelve million francs to found
a phalanstery and in this fashion to rid themselves of the social problem.⁴

Part of Proudhon's strictures on the new assembly came because of his bitter-

¹It is almost impossible to document this rising fear, for emotions
are hard to prove after an event. It is only in retrospective analysis, on
the character of the members of the new assembly, their profound respect for
property, their rhetoric, that one senses, as Proudhon did, this rising fear
as this quote concerning the constituent from "Aux Patriotes," Le Représentant
du peuple, May 4, 1848, makes clear: "... I searched for brothers, and I
encountered everywhere only conspirators! ... The bourgeois is resolved to
finish with the proletariat, who, on their side, are resolved to finish with
the bourgeois. The laborer wishes to finish with the capitalist, the salaried
worker with the entrepreneur, the departments with Paris, the peasant with the
laborer. In all hearts, the anger and the hatred; in all mouths, the menace."

²Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 41.

³Proudhon, "Aux Patriotes."

⁴Proudhon, "Séance d'ouverture de l'Assemblée nationale," Le Repré-
sentant du peuple, May 5, 1848.
ness over not being elected. He had always desired some degree of recognition for his writings, and he was stricken when he did not receive it. To have his candidacy rejected when many of his socialist conferees had been elected further wounded his sensitive ego. His observations in the Carnets lead one to believe that the recognition he would have received through winning the elections meant a great deal to him.¹ Even after his personal rancor is discounted, however, there remains some justice in his blaming political leadership for the divisions that had occurred after the February Days, as the mounting tensions demonstrated.³

Arrangements for the opening of the assembly had been laid down by the provisional government. One decree urged members to wear the dress of the Conventional of the first revolution, the white waistcoat with turned-down collar in which Robespierre was most frequently pictured.³ This decree was universally ignored, except for Caussidiere who had been wearing bizarre dress during the entire life of the provisional government. Another decree, ordering members of the government to assemble at midday at Place Vendôme in front of the Ministry of Justice, was followed, and the members then marched in a body to the new chambers temporarily erected in the court of the Palais Bourbon.⁴ Once assembled in the new quarters, the members speedily reaffirmed the earlier declaration of a republic. As soon as the signal of this declaration was transmitted to the troops stationed outside the building, the

¹Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 45.

²Proudhon expressed it in this way in Solution du problème social, p. 62, "Si la monarchie est le marteau qui écrase le Peuple, la démocratie est la hache qui le divise."

³Tocqueville, Recollections, p. 109.

⁴Le Moniteur, May 4, 1848, p. 937.
twenty-one gun salute was given by the cannons of the Invalides and the artillery responded from the Champs Elysees. After the declaration, the members of the assembly walked to the peristyle so that the people could see and applaud their new representatives. It was a strange contrast to see Lacordaire in the white robes of a Dominican friar offer his arm to Caussidiere resplendent in the dress of a Conventional.

The work of the assembly began in earnest with a debate over whether it should decree that the provisional government had merited well of the country. With little difficulty this decree passed, to the disgust of Proudhon who wanted the provisional government condemned for its handling of affairs during the interim period. A far more serious argument erupted over how the executive power should be administered, and it was here that conflict within the assembly first manifested itself. Though Lamartine had won election to the constituent by large majorities and was, for the moment, the most popular man in France, within the assembly his popularity had already begun to wane. Part of the unpopularity stemmed from his adhesion to Ledru-Rollin. This friendship had blossomed after the April 16 disturbance when Ledru had ordered the beating of the rappel. When the assembly decided to

1ibid.

2Bertaut, 1848, p. 187.

3Gabriel Mortillet, "Enquête sur les événements de Mai et Juin," Le Réprésentant du peuple, August 18, 1848. Though the article was not written by Proudhon, it did have his editorial guidance.

4Lamartine's actions are so contradictory that it is hard to assess his motives. It is possible that he hoped to establish, as under the provisional government, a kind of government of concentration representing all parties in the assembly. In this case, Ledru-Rollin was the safest member of the Left, because under stress, he had upheld the forces of order. For further discussion, see Wright, "Poet in Politics," p. 624.
elect an executive of five members, the first three were easily selected: Arago, Garnier-Pagès, and Marie, but when Lamartine's name appeared as the fourth choice, he refused to accept the post unless Ledru-Rollin was elected also. The assembly accepted Lamartine's dictates only because he was such a popular figure and they could hardly do less. The very fact that Lamartine's name was only fourth on the list of the assembly's choice for the executive shows that that body was already disenchanted with him and would be further embittered over having to accept his dictates for the fifth member of the executive commission.2

Once the prickly question of the executive was resolved, the assembly was free to set up its own internal government. A decree of May 12 declared that no strangers were allowed to enter the inclosure, the hemicycle, when the members were seated and the assembly was in session. Under no circumstances would anyone be allowed to use the tribune unless he were a member of the assembly. Another decree gave the order of the day preference over any other question that might be introduced in the assembly in the course of the day's discussion.3

The change in sentiment in the country now became apparent. The series of demonstrations before the government offices terminating in that of April 16, at which the national guard had been present, and even more

1Le Moniteur, May 12, 1848, p. 1018, notified the nation of the members of the new executive commission.

2For a further discussion of the internal dissensions in the assembly, exacerbated by the dispute over the executive commission, see Guillemin, La Première résurrection, p. 322.

3Le Moniteur, May 12, 1848, p. 1018. The assembly's decrees are important to this study, for the first two were violated in the May 15 demonstration and the order of the day was invoked on July 31 when Proudhon gave his famous discourse.
significantly, had supported the government; the assembly's disdain for the popular leader of the provisional government, Lamartine; the workers' efforts to have the elections adjourned, all were symptomatic of this change of sentiment. Popular figures, such as Louis Blanc, now began to receive nicknames such as Louis Blague; le gouvernement provisoire became le gouvernement dérisoire; Lamartine became Le Tartine, and Ledru-Rollin, le dur coquin. The attention which Proudhon began to receive reflected this change in sentiments. As his popularity rose with the workers, his notoriety became more pronounced with the vocal, wealthy classes and his old enemies, the journalists. Le Pamphlet, in particular, poked fun at Proudhon's idea of constituted value as a replacement for money, showing in its cartoons one of his followers carrying a huge telephone book giving the market value of every object in relationship with all goods on the market and consulting this huge volume whenever he wished to make a purchase. Le Pamphlet facetiously predicted that the chestnut would soon replace all legal tender and the numéraire would become an Indian slave.  

In the midst of rising popularity, Proudhon's paper maintained its general tone, pleading that France should not resort to the barricades to resolve conflicts. He reminded his readers that the revolution had been made by all classes, but now suspicion had replaced fraternity. In a favorite tactic, that of pleading for conciliation while reviling his enemies, he flailed the members of the provisional government, saying that it was they

1Calman, Ledru-Rollin, p. 150.

2"La France riche en huit jours," Le Pamphlet, May 27, 1848.
who had caused the division between classes. The conciliatory note followed:

Have pity for France, have pity for the proletariat, have pity for the bourgeoisie itself, for you cannot conceive of their tortures. Do you not see that it is their ruin which makes them furious? The ruin, the bankruptcy, the hideous bankruptcy, and the hatred, and then the poverty: That is what the exasperated bourgeoisie pursues in the blood of the proletariat.¹

Proudhon had reason to plead against a return to the barricades, for an outbreak had occurred at Rouen on April 28 when the results of the election were known and Ledru-Rollin's commissioner for the region of Seine-Inférieure, Frédéric Deschamps, was defeated. The revolt was quelled by Sonard in a brutal fashion.² A larger outbreak followed soon. This May 15 demonstration³ was planned by Huber as president of the Club of Clubs to present a petition to the assembly in favor of the liberation of Poland and its restoration to its former status among the European nations. It was different from preceding demonstrations, for the demonstrators invaded the assembly and spoke from the tribune, thus violating the assembly's rules.⁴ Huber said that the demonstration was planned as a peaceful gesture only after member clubs with large Irish, Italian, Polish, and German membership, demanded it.⁵ General Courtais of the national guard knew about the

²Senard was a lawyer who later became Minister of the Interior. He amended the censure voted against Proudhon for his July 31 discourse.
⁴Le Moniteur, May 16, 1848, p. 1051, under unofficial accounts, gives a complete description of events.
⁵"Haute Cour de Justice de Versailles, audience du 10 Octobre, 1849," Le Voix du peuple, October 11, 1849, contains a letter of August 2, 1849 that Huber wrote to La Réforme explaining his actions on May 15.
demonstration, but for some inexplicable reason, he permitted the soldiers
guarding the doors of the assembly to allow the demonstrators to enter.¹

When the mob broke in, Wolowski was in the act of presenting a petition in
favor of French support for Poland.² Because the president of the assembly,
Buchez, seemed powerless to control the disorder,³ a few of the demonstrators
managed to work their way to the tribune. Among them was Blanqui, but the
most conspicuous role was played by Huber, Proudhon's friend.⁴ Huber later
declared that he was forced into his actions because he had promised the
demonstrators that they would be allowed to file peacefully past the tribune,
two-by-two, in order to show the representatives that 300,000 people stood
behind the petition in favor of Poland. Whatever the reason, it was Huber
who declared the assembly dissolved. He then showed Blanqui, who was sharing
the tribune with him at the time, a list of what appeared to have been the
names of the new members of the provisional government. The assembly slowly
emptied of demonstrators who made their way to the Hôtel-de-Ville.⁵ There
they were easily captured by the national guards. Blanqui and Barbès were
imprisoned while Huber managed to escape into hiding.

¹Tocqueville, Recollections, p. 127.
²Proudhon, Confessions d'un révolutionnaire, p. 87.
³Falloux, Mémoires, p. 320.
⁴Huber and Proudhon remained friends until 1853 when they had a fall­
ing out over the 40,000 francs Jerome Napoleon offered them for their proposal
of a railroad from Besançon to Belfort. Proudhon refused the money, saying
that no one should be paid for an idea. This angered Huber. See Proudhon's
⁵"Haute Cour de Justice de Versailles."
Proudhon had no part in the May 15 disturbance, but without his knowing it, his name had been placed on the list proposed by Huber for the new provisional government. Proudhon's position had been explicit: he had strongly condemned the demonstration. Several reasons motivated this condemnation: he felt that this was a ruse on the part of the radical republicans to escape the social problem by diverting attention to a foreign war. How could the government support such a war financially when its treasury was almost empty? How could France get the army for such a war? The provinces would not send a single soldier. Besides, the French could ill afford to play the role of European Don Quixote when problems at home desperately needed resolution. He tried to extricate his friends from responsibility in the affair, saying that they acted as they did only in the interest of public safety, namely observing that this was proved by the speed with which they surrendered to the national guards when they arrived at the Hôtel-de-Ville.

During his imprisonment in 1849, Proudhon in reflective thought, found the pattern in the demonstrations. Just as April 16 had been Ledru-Rollin's reaction to Louis Blanc's kind of communism, so the May 15 demonstration had rolled further backward the revolutionary movement. Now Foreign Minister

1Woodcock, Proudhon, p. 121, is incorrect when he notes that Proudhon's name was on the list circulated by the workers on March 17. No list for a proposed government was circulated at this time. Woodcock is probably referring to the May 15 disturbance.

2[News Summary] Le Représentant du peuple, May 16, 1848. The article was unsigned, but the style and content is unmistakably that of Proudhon.

3Fortillet, "Enquête sur les événements." Neither Proudhon nor his editors made any attempt to defend Blanqui in the May 15 disturbance. In later years, however, Proudhon was saddened by Blanqui's imprisonment. See, for example, his letter of March 16, 1861 in Bompard, Lettres au citoyen Rolland, p. 134.
Bastide and Mayor of Paris Narrast, last of the republicans of the eve, had
their revenge over Ledru-Rollin and the Jacobinism his party represented.
Only the republicans of tomorrow and the doctrinaires remained before a final
twist of the wheel would lead to reaction, the last stage of the counter
revolutionary movement. At the time of the demonstration, however, his
opposition was based on its uselessness. He did not publicly strike out at
Blanc or Ledru-Rollin for their part in the disturbance.

The May 15 disturbance had a profound effect on the national as-
sembly, for both Louis Blanc and Caussidiere were implicated. As members
of the assembly, they were immune until that body should vote legal action
against them. With the permission of Buchez, who realized his own inade-
quacy, Blanc, Ledru-Rollin, and Lamartine had desperately tried to maintain
some kind of order in the assembly. Blanc was maltreated by the crowd--his
clothing torn to shreds. He denied that he had gone with the demonstrators
when they went to the Hôtel-de-Ville, saying that it was his similarity in
appearance with a certain Watrin which made observers claim that they had
seen him there. Caussidiere responded to accusations by resigning from
his seat in the assembly and running again in the elections of June 4.

1Proudhon, Confessions d'un révolutionnaire, pp. 92-3.

2The question was not resolved until the report of the inquest into
the May 15 and the June Days disturbances was discussed in an all-night
session on August 25. It was early morning before the permission for legal
action against Blanc and Caussidiere was read before the assembly. Hugo
gives a colorful picture of this extraordinary session in Choses vues, p. 261.

3Benoit, Confessions d'un prolétaire, p. 142.

4Louis Blanc, Histoire de la révolution de 1848 (Paris: A. Lacroix,
Verboeckhoven, 1870), p. 186.

5"Candidature de Caussidière," Le Courrier, June 4, 1846.
After the demonstrators had left the assembly, Courtais found himself in the presence of his angry subordinates who tore off his epaulettes and demanded that he be brought to trial for treason.\footnote{Renard, \textit{La République de 1848}, p. 54.} Anger was not restricted to the national guards. Small shopkeepers were tired of an assembly which could not even keep its own chambers free of disturbance.\footnote{Mrs. Bonde to Mr. and Mrs. Robinson, May 15, 1848, \textit{Paris in '48}, p. 137.} Lacordaire had second thoughts about the entire Left in the assembly;\footnote{Falloux, \textit{Mémoires}, p. 326.} Herzen sensed the rising hostility of provisional deputies to the laboring element of Paris represented by the suburb Saint-Antoine;\footnote{Herzen, \textit{My Past and Thoughts}, II, p. 58.} the ostracized Thiers and Darrot took heart;\footnote{Falloux, \textit{Mémoires}, p. 327.} the assembly declared Blanqui’s club dissolved.\footnote{Le \textit{Moniteur}, May 23, 1848, p. 1123.}

Though tensions had risen on all sides, the government still went forward with the celebration of the Festival of Concord on May 21. Over 200,000 members of the National guard marched in the procession, their cannons banked with flowers, pointing up the assembly’s preparedness in case of military necessity.\footnote{Tocqueville, \textit{Recollections}, p. 143.}

Proudhon reacted to mounting tensions by proposing two economic measures. The first proposal was that a provisional committee be instituted
to organize exchange, credit, and circulation among workers. Smaller committees would be set up in all the principal cities of France, the committees being entirely independent of the government. Each committee would send a representative to the central committee in Paris, and the central committee would immediately place the charter of labor in the order of the day after the chief articles of this charter had been defined by the committee. A second proposal was the publication of the proposition of a bank of exchange. The bank of exchange was not a new idea with Proudhon, the original charter having been published at the same time as the prospectus of *Le Réprésentant* on October 14, 1847, but the mounting tensions had made its adoption even more urgent.

Both proposals, the bank and the labor committee, provided no practical, concrete steps for their implementation, indicating that Proudhon was undecided, at this time, as to how to proceed with his economic plans if government were excluded from them. His loss of the elections clearly demonstrated that his so-called first step in the economic revolution from below—that of educating the people—had failed. Almost as if he had decided to give the popular mentality another chance, he decided to stand for the June elections. This time he presented a clear, precise revolutionary program, beginning with support for the family and protesting against all

---


2 The idea of a bank as a panacea for all financial ills was not unique with Proudhon. Blanc, for example, had a plan for such a bank. See *Le Nouveau monde*, September 15, 1849; Robert Owen's system included a bank. See Bourguin, *Les Systèmes socialistes et l'évolution économique* (Paris: Colin, 1913), p. 96. For another proposal see the letter of Ratignolles to Proudhon, June 7, 1848, *L'Écho du peuple*, June 8, 1848. The character of Proudhon's bank will be dealt with in chapter V when the charter was granted.
laws, civil or fiscal, whose object was to restrain or limit paternal power and the principle of heredity, in particular the laws on divorce, for they encouraged immorality. Economic reform required a union of the Bank of France and Proudhon's exchange bank with legal tender and exchange bank certificates circulating concurrently. Anyone adhering to the new bank could borrow or loan with interest rates at a maximum of 1 per cent. Anyone who did not wish to adhere could do the same with an interest rate of not more than 5 per cent, payable in money of the Bank of France, money that Proudhon was confident would slowly disappear, being replaced by the new certificates representing commodities. Not only interest, but also rents, must be reduced by 25 per cent on the basis of the average rent charged for the last twenty years. Since the condition sine qua non for the holding of property should be that the owner himself must cultivate it, all land not so cultivated had to be immediately returned to the state for distribution. After all, he reminded his readers, this was the kind of ownership--without cultivation--that he had spoken of as robbery. The salaries of all civil servants must be fixed at a maximum of 10,000 francs because the lowering of salaries was synonymous with the augmentation of labor.

The series of concrete proposals was followed by a vague recommendation. Because, if this leveling process outlined above were allowed to continue, the public economy would slowly gravitate toward communism, it could only be avoided by the government through the superior application of mutuality. The specific way to introduce mutuality was the election, by the workers in each category of industry--extractive, manufacturing, agricultural, commercial, arts and sciences--of ministers who would regulate industry
without government interference, thus reducing centralization and encouraging equality between men.\(^1\) Proudhon was noncommittal about the specific measures required to achieve this rather nebulous idea of equality since, by his own reasoning, man had not proceeded far enough along the revolutionary path to be able to choose what was good for him and equally good for society.\(^2\)

He was also vague about the problem of price fixing. He realized that with the reduction of rents and interest rates, the price of articles should be reduced when they were offered for sale, so that all could benefit from the economic reform. He proposed the creation of a mutual society of purchase and sale which would determine the actual cost of production and would see that the cost was marked on all objects offered for sale.\(^3\) No means of enforcing the society's decrees was offered.

The remainder of the program dealt with general principles, such as the necessity of reforming the courts and of providing new ones for industrial disputes, and opposition to the abolition of the death penalty. As far as cults were concerned, Proudhon noted that he believed in Christianity in the same measure as he believed in Buddhism and Mohammedanism, but since cults came right from the heart of humanity and were a form of social thought presented under a symbolic form, they should be respected.\(^4\)


\(^2\)For a description of the stage man must reach before he is able to govern himself, see *Confessions d'un révolutionnaire*, p. 192.

\(^3\)Proudhon, "Programme révolutionnaire aux electeurs de la Seine."

\(^4\)Ibid. Proudhon may have felt it necessary to make some concession to religion if he wanted to get elected.
There is barely a hint of Proudhon the anarchist in the long list of proposals giving the state a magnificent edifice of power sufficient to completely shift the entire economic base of French society, the only hint being his proposal that the police force be gradually reduced, for the police represented the state. No further reason can be given for the towering contradiction other than that he may have felt that since his earlier works were unread because of their heavy burden of dialectical discussion, there was no need to explain this profound shift in thought. Even his later discussion of the need for an interim government falls short here, for during the interim period the function of government was to slowly make itself useless, while Proudhon's revolutionary program to the electors of the Seine promised increasing government intervention.

Proudhon followed up his revolutionary program with a listing, on June 6, of the names of newspaper editors who were part of a committee to study the proposal of a bank of exchange. The list of names seems surprisingly long until one realizes that the editors had been named to the committee before being asked if they agreed to serve. On the 8th of June, the very day on which all Paris knew that Proudhon had been elected representative, Le Représentant published Girardin of La Presse's refusal to adhere to the committee of the bank. Girardin's refusal stung so bitterly that it became a symbol for Proudhon of his unique kind of revolution—a people's revolution from below. Girardin concluded with the words:

1"Adhesion a la Banque d'Echange," Le Représentant du peuple, June 8, 1848.

2Darimon, A Travers une révolution, p. 31.
There are two ways, according to me, of being a revolutionary:
from above; that is revolution by initiative, by intelligence,
by progress, by ideas! From below: that is by the revolution, by
insurrection, by force, by despair, by the paving stones!
[street barricades]¹

Proudhon responded to Girardin's condemnation by calling him an enemy of
the republic and proudly claiming for himself the position of leader of
the revolution from below--by the people.²

A strange group of people shared election with Proudhon on June⁴;
there was Pierre Leroux, the socialist, and Charles Lagrange, the man al-
leged to have fired the first shot in the rue de Capucines. Thiers returned
to office also along with Caussidiere who avenged his resignation by re-
ceiving the largest number of votes cast in the department of the Seine.
Another Bonaparte, Louis, was elected, standing eighth in the same depart-
ment.³ The divergence of political creeds represented by the newly elected
makes any interpretation difficult. Perhaps the best one could conclude was
that, with a few exceptions--Thiers, who represented a kind of conservative
and opportunistic republicanism, and Louis Bonaparte, who at this time repre-
ented a vague kind of social philosophy, and of course, the glory of his

¹Le Représentant du peuple, June 8, 1848. Girardin was not the only
editor to refuse participation in Proudhon's bank. He is mentioned only be-
cause his paper was so influential at the time. Démocratie pacifique, for
example, also refused to have any part in an enterprise sponsored by the
author of "Property is robbery." Le National, in the interest of winning
electoral seats for its favorites, at first appeared to be interested in the
bank. Later, the editors declined adhesion. Many editors expressed their
contempt for Proudhon by not responding at all.

²Le Représentant du peuple, June 8, 1848.

³Le Moniteur, June 9, 1848, p. 1303. Pierre-Napoleon Bonaparte was
already a member of the assembly.
name—the Paris workers elected social reformers. The provinces still held with moderates or with men they already knew.¹

Though happy about it, Proudhon was surprised at his own election. Later, when he was in prison, he had a moment of clarity concerning the contradiction between his philosophy and his actions. He pondered that after all he had spoken, written, and published for ten years about the decreasing role of government in society, its incapacity for revolutionary action, he was tempted to believe that his election had been through contempt on the part of the people for the doctrines he represented.²

With the June elections, the assembly reached its full size, needing no more elections to fill vacancies until after some of its members had been removed through complicity in the May demonstration and the June Days. It was this assembly which had to face the problem of the national workshops, that burning issue that caused all the elements in the February revolution, the economic, intellectual, and political, to converge in an appalling civil war.

The workshops, not of course to be confused with Blanc's workshops,³ had been created on the day after the provisional government assumed the obligation of assuring to labor the right to work. The newly created workshops were under the jurisdiction of Minister of Public Works, Pierre Marie,


²Proudhon, Confessions d'un révolutionnaire, p. 165.

³For a study of Blanc and his workshops, see Jean Vidalenc, Louis Blanc (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1848).
Thiers, the chairman, were hostile to any financial innovations.\(^1\) His status of representative had altered his reputation with his landlady, who insisted that he leave his bare attic apartment for lodgings on the first floor, as befitted a representative. *Le Représentant* continued publication, but articles signed by Proudhon became less frequent as he applied himself to the tasks of a legislator. He commented privately on the workshops as they were organized by Marie, condemning them for encouraging laziness.\(^2\) Yet he had already decided in 1840 that they might be necessary as a temporary measure in case of terrible emergency. As a permanent measure, they were dangerous, for like the policies of Cabet, Owen and Blanc, they continued the Christian idea of subjecting individual rights to the good of the collectivity.\(^3\) Dangerous as they were, he decided at the time, the workshops could not be dissolved without first giving the workers some assurance that they would not starve.\(^4\)

The discussion in the assembly showed again the strong divisions in that body. The conservative Right wanted the workshops dissolved immediately and at all costs, for they were dangerous and expensive. The socialists and radicals wanted the workshops retained, at least temporarily. The center preferred the proposal of Trélät, the new Minister of Public Works, that of closing the workshops along with a scheme for government

\(^1\) Darimon, *A Travers une révolution*, p. 40.
\(^2\) Proudhon, *Carnets*, III, p. 43.
\(^3\) Proudhon, *Qu'est-ce que la propriété?* p. 237.
\(^4\) "La Séance," *Le Représentant du peuple*, June 20, 1848. The article was unsigned.
\(^5\) Marie resigned when he became a member of the executive commission.
repurchase of railroads which would drain off the large and dangerous labor surplus into the provinces where they were less likely to cause disturbance. Proudhon did not give his final conclusion on this latter plan, because he considered it so serious that it required detailed study. True to its habits, the assembly, like any political body, was improvising each morning on an economic question that would require at least three months of study. The real question was not the national workshops, for they were merely an attempt to cure the results of an evil system. What was needed, Proudhon never ceased maintaining, was to attack the system itself by organizing work through private initiative once the exchange had been freed.

But before a decision could be reached on government purchase of railroads, the question of national workshops must be resolved. A struggle arose between the directors of the national workshops and the labor committee in the assembly. On May 17, Trélat formed his own committee to study the workshops and to report back to him. The report submitted to him on the 19th favored dissolution but recommended that it be carried out in a series of stages and that ample work replacements be provided for the men who would become unemployed by this move.

1McKay, National Workshops, p. 89.
2Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 25.
3Proudhon, News Summary, Le Représentant du peuple, May 5, 1848.
4Renard, La République de 1848, p. 65.
The assembly's committee under Falloux recommended immediate dissolution with Falloux outlining a series of ameliorations for the lot of the workers, such as creation of societies of mutual help, the protection of children in industry and the destruction of unhealthy lodgings.1 Since none of these proposals could be put into effect immediately, workers' fears were not allayed. The proposals of Falloux were typical of what Proudhon called destructive Christian charity which kept the worker in subjugation rather than providing him with a means to help himself.

Trelat now played into the hands of the assembly committee. He discharged Thomas, replacing him with Leon Lalanne, the Minister of Bridges and Highways, and spirited Thomas away to Bordeaux.2 With Thomas out of the way, only Trelat remained to challenge the authority of the committee. In a rapid, but silent move on May 30, the work of Trelat, that is of the Ministry of Public Works, was placed under the control of a special parliamentary commission composed of Falloux and other enemies of the workshops.3

Proudhon, in his Confessions, sympathetically recounted the attempts of Trelat to have some kind of propositions printed that would reassure the workers, such as encouragement to colonize in Algeria and the creation of assistance banks. Trelat's work was bound to fail, for the

---

1Falloux, Mémoires, p. 331.


3Renard, La République de 1848, p. 73. Renard, perhaps, placed too much stress on the conflicts between the executive commission whose wishes Trelat was following, and the assembly. McKay, National Workshops, p. 81, stressed the weaknesses of the executive commission. Since Renard's account is closer to that of Proudhon's, this version has been used.
assembly preferred to license an army of 100,000 rather than to help starving
workers. "Ainsi, c'était a coups de fusil que l'Assemblée nationale payait
la dette du gouvernement provisoire!" 1

With the assembly taking control of the workshops, the end was in
sight. Though the workshops were not actually dissolved until after the
June Days were over, several decrees showed that the end was inevitable.
Workers between the ages of 18 and 25 were ordered to join the army. Workers
with less than six months residence in Paris were dropped from the rolls,
and those remaining on the rolls were to be paid only by the task rather than
by the day; employers were free to draft surplus workers from Paris into
the provinces. If workers refused to comply, they would be dropped from
the rolls. 2

The workers, knowing that the end was near, began to organize in
May when a banquet of the people was set up by the Club de la Montagne.
There was a tremendous response from the workers, for whom the banquet
offered a symbolic withdrawal from the unfriendly bourgeois world into the
warmth and solidarity of the working class. A series of working class
banquets followed, one of the largest being launched on May 28 through the
offices of Le Père Duchêne, with practically all the members of the national
workshops subscribing. 3 The socialists, fearing that the banquets would only
lead to further political losses after their defeat of April 23, sabotaged the

1 Proudhon, Confessions d'un révolutionnaire, pp. 102-10. Proudhon
referred here to the perhaps aprochryphal statement of the worker, Marche,
who offered, in the name of his fellow laborers, three months of poverty
to the republic.

2 Renard, La République de 1848, p. 66.

3 Peter Amann, "Prelude to Insurrection: The Banquet of the People,"
banquets, permitting this early manifestation of working class discontent to drift, leaderless, into a last despairing stand at the barricades.  

Once again the revolution moved into the streets when the working class, sensing that the national workshops—and with them their means of livelihood—were about to be disbanded, called for mass demonstrations to take place at the Pantheon on June 22. The revolt of hunger began with the silent building of barricades by the leaderless Gavroche, by now skilled in his task. No music floated over the city as it had during the February Days—only the tocsin ringing from the tower of St. Sulpice in a weird funeral dirge for the desperate and hungry workers of Paris.

It should not be concluded that there were no attempts at conciliation. Factory owners knew that they would have to employ the same laborers after the civil war and that this cruel struggle would poison the spirit in the factory. Besides, they had respect for these men who demanded only that they might have the right to work. During the civil war, statements about arrested workers, such as, "too stupid to be an insurgent," or "not an insurgent but a drunk," showed the respect the employers felt for them. Nor should the civil war be construed as a class conflict. Workers could be found on both sides of the barricades, some rallying to the republic be-

---


2 Renard, *La République de 1848*, p. 76.

3 Gavroche was a street urchin in Hugo's *Les Misérables* who was killed fighting on the barricades, and is thus, by extension, the Paris poor.

cause they thought it was being menaced by strangers, others joining the insurgents behind the barricades for the same reason.

The national guards were equally far from homogeneous. Besides the national guards, there were also the mobile guards, a younger group of men tied more closely to the government than were the national guards, some garrisons of which were feared to be disloyal. The mobile guards also contained a percentage of laborers, yet there was great hostility between the Parisian population and this younger generation. The categories called dangerous—those with criminal records—were more likely to be found in this group.

The troop buildup in the capital had been going on for some time, the government trying to stifle fears by saying that it was necessary to preserve the peace and to protect the workers as well as property. The assembly, when it met, approved of the troop buildup, demonstrating its determination to end once and for all with workers' demonstrations.

When the first barricades began to appear in the workers' quarters, the rumor of strangers fomenting the uprising circulated in Paris and Mayor Marrast called upon the citizens to reject these enemies of the republic. The plea had no effect on the workers, but it was an encourage-

---

2 ibid., p. 449.
3 Le Moniteur, June 5, 1848, p. 1263.
4 Le Moniteur, June 8, 1848, p. 1299.
5 Le Moniteur, June 24, 1848, p. 1179. No historical evidence has been found to prove that the uprising was other than a civil war, though Doléans and Puech, Proudhon . . . 1848, p. 51, mention the presence of agents of the Legitimists and the Bonapartists.
ment for the troops from the provinces now pouring into the city. At
9 A.M. on the 24th of June the insurgés were given one hour in which to
submit to the government. They refused, and the cannonade began.¹ The
area in the insurrection included all of the suburb Saint-Antoine and parts
of suburbs Saint-Marcel, Saint-Victor, and Saint-Jacques, taking the form
of an immense half circle covering almost half of the city.² Fighting was
bitter and bloody with neither side giving way. The Archbishop of Paris,
Monsignor Affre, who had appeared at the barricades to plead for conciliation,
was caught in the crossfire and killed. A large number of officers were
wounded and two of them, Generals Négrier and Brea, died of their wounds.³

While the civil war raged and the outcome was still in doubt with
the Pantheon being swept back and forth between the government and the in-
surgents, fear swept through the city. There were stories that the in-
surgents had given poisoned whiskey to the soldiers, that they had mutilated
and then killed prisoners.⁴ Among the insurgés, stories spread also,
chiefly by word of mouth, that the wounded were being shot by the mobile
guards.⁵ In the assembly, Pascal Duprat moved that Paris be declared in a
state of siege and that dictatorial power be given to Godfrey Cavaignac.⁶

¹"Nouvelles de la journée," Le Représentant du peuple, June 25, 1848.
²Sancte insurrection des 23, 24, 25, 26 Juin 1848 (Paris: Chez tous
les libraires, 1848), p. 2.
³Ibid., p. 32.
⁴"Nouvelles de la journée," Le Représentant du peuple, June 25, 1848.
⁵Pierre de la Gorce, Histoire de la seconde république (Paris:
⁶Le Moniteur, June 25, 1848, p. 1490.
When the fighting began, Proudhon, who was busy in the assembly, had little time to publish his views. In his sketchy comments in his Carnets, he blamed the assembly for exacerbating fears by its empty discussion. Thiers entered the Carnets at this time, for Proudhon blamed him for counseling the use of cannon to subjugate the insurgents. Proudhon admired their courage in the face of a number of atrocious massacres on the part of the mobile guards, the national guard, and the army. But more than anything else, he was disturbed by the sentiment of the national assembly which would give no quarter to the insurgents of hunger, shouting senselessly that it was necessary to end it all (il faut en finir), as if, Proudhon observed sadly, it were possible to end it all.

Sixty members of the assembly had been commissioned to follow the mobile guards and report what they saw, but many other members went out on their own to see what was happening and to try to dissuade the workers from revolting. One member of the executive commission, Arago, inquired of a woman he saw at the barricades as to why she was there. "You have never known what it is like to be hungry," she responded simply.

Proudhon was another member of the assembly who visited his brothers at the barricades. On June 26, he left the assembly which had been in almost continuous session, and reached the Place de Bastille by 9:30 A.M. When questioned by the guards as to why he was at the huge barricades of the

---

1 For a distinction among the three sections of the armed forces, see Cossez, "Diversité des antagonismes," pp. 440, 445-47.


3 Renard, La République de 1848, p. 84.
suburb Saint-Martin, he is alleged to have replied that he was admiring the "sublime horror of the cannonade," adding that he wanted to satisfy his curiosity and also to check on the safety of a socialist friend.\(^1\) Allowed to go through a breach in the barricades, Proudhon walked about unscathed by the firing, interrogating the men and women he found there. He discovered that the workers behind the barricades were neither socialists, nor were they interested in the social question. They were few in number, no more than 500 defending the huge barricade of the rue Saint-Antoine, for example.\(^2\)

While interrogating the insurgents, Proudhon saw General Négrier killed not fifty steps away from him. He helped to carry the body to safety and then, realizing that he was dead, tearfully embraced his adjutant.\(^3\)

Proudhon also visited the defenders of the government; Benoit recalled having dinner with him in a restaurant on the 25th of June. Proudhon had already become a symbol of class hatred, for the two men overheard a discussion between some soldiers and the patrons of the restaurant in which he was menaced with a thousand deaths if he were captured by the soldiers. The two friends retired from the restaurant without incident.\(^4\) The relationship with soldiers at the barricades was no better. Seeing his insignia of a representative, they were friendly—that is, until they heard

\(^1\) *Rapport de la commission d'enquête*, p. 50.

\(^2\) *ibid.*, p. 337, testimony of Proudhon.

\(^3\) *Proudhon, Carnets*, III, pages 77 and 91. Proudhon noted on two occasions that Jourdan Revol had seen tears in his eyes. He was stung by the criticism of him as a kind of ogre who enjoyed the thundering of the cannon.

\(^4\) *Darimon, A Travers une révolution*, p. 151.
his name. Then they recoiled in horror.¹

Le Représentant continued publication throughout the June Days with the exception of the 26th and the 27th, when the editorial board, according to Darimon, was divided on what position it should take.² There was no need to suspend the paper, for despite the absence of Proudhon's strong guiding hand it continued to either preach conciliation or merely to report events. The issue of June 12, for example, warned of an imminent and terrible civil war, but it preached no form of violence.³ Other journals did not pursue this policy, however, and eleven in all were suspended during the civil war. Girardin of La Presse was put into prison and his newspaper offices were sealed and guarded.⁴

As the civil war ended, Le Représentant pleaded for conciliation.⁵ An even greater sorrow afflicted Proudhon, the incarnation of the proletariat to use his own terms, for in their hour of need he had forsaken the workers by entering the assembly, instead of remaining at their side, urging patience. A year after the event, his mind calmed by meditation in his prison cell, he continued to blame himself for his failure. One can scarcely doubt the sincerity of his confession:

¹Ibid., p. 54.
²Ibid., p. 41.
³The lead article, however, was certainly not written by Proudhon, for the style is turgid.
⁴Le Moniteur, June 27, 1848, p. 1501.
⁵June 28, 1848. The editors expressed themselves in this fashion: "We are broken hearted! During these three cruel days, each pistol shot, each cannon shot has resounded dolorously within us, for each man who fell was a French citizen struck by a French hand."
For me, the remembrance of the June Days will weigh eternally as remorse on my heart. I avow with sorrow, until the 25th of June I previewed nothing, knew nothing, divined nothing. Elected fifteen days previously as representative of the people, I entered the national assembly with the timidity of a baby, with the ardor of a neophyte. Assiduous, for nine hours, at meetings of bureaus and committees, I quitted the assembly only in the evening, worn out with fatigue and distaste. Since I set foot on the parliamentary Sinai, I ceased to be in rapport with the masses: forced to absorb myself in legislative labors, I entirely lost sight of current affairs.¹

Finally, the cannonade ceased. In the working class quarters great gaping holes exposed bare interiors. As if to point up the contrast, pictures often remained unbroken on lone walls standing among the debris.² The terrible contrast between the workers' section, with its gutted buildings, its pitiful poverty and the fortress-like appearance of the remainder of the city symbolized the scissions the civil war had produced. The poor of Paris no longer guarded the homes of the rich, proudly greeting all passersby as brothers. Instead they secreted themselves to dress their wounds and die, fearing to ask for medical attention because it might implicate them in the insurrection and lead to their transportation to the colonies, while outside bands of drunken mobile guards roared down the streets shouting *Mourir pour la patrie*.³

The change in sentiment between February and June appeared in each of the three facets of national life: political, intellectual, and economic.

¹Proudhon, *Confessions d'un révolutionnaire*, p. 117.

²Flaubert, *L'Éducation sentimentale*, p. 355, gives a poignant description of the workers' section when the cannonade had ceased.

³Herzen, *From the Other Shore*, p. 47. Proudhon, in his *Carnets*, III, p. 79, refers also to the drunken mobile guards who, despite their actions, were applauded as defenders of the country.
The new assembly elected by universal suffrage had shown that it was capable of dealing firmly with an insurrection. It was no longer a question of a weak and vacillating provisional government forced to bend before the demands of groups besieging it. The demonstration of May 15 had convinced the membership that a strong hand was needed if anarchy were to be avoided. During the June Days, the assembly, convinced that a multiple executive still was not strong enough, had willingly released its powers into the hands of a dictator, Cavaignac. This provided a handy way of getting rid of popular leaders, such as Lamartine and Ledru-Rollin, who might have been able to dominate an executive commission but would have to bend before a dictator representing the republic of honest men, as they called themselves. The intellectual ferment must still be brought under control, but a way was provided with a strong executive who could suspend recalcitrant newspapers as he had done in the middle of the civil war. The assembly could assist the executive by demanding a large sum of money for caution for any newspaper wishing to resume publication after the war had been won. What remained to be resolved was the economic crisis which had led to the formation of national workshops—refuge for the lazy and source of high taxes and government insolvency. Perhaps if dangerous leaders, Proudhon for instance, could be silenced or at least given the notoriety they deserved, businessmen would take confidence. What was needed was strong denunciation, by the assembly, of those who preached destruction of property, the home, and religion. Then, the frightening specter of direct democracy would dissolve itself into the old familiar pattern of bourgeois government, this time without a king.

For Proudhon, who felt he had the key to the social problem, an
occasion now presented itself to put his plans into action. He had warned the provisional government that its policies would only lead to class war. When the panacea of universal suffrage had been presented, he had angrily denounced it as a means of adjourning the social question, seeing his prophecy fulfilled in the newly elected constituent assembly that was more conservative than it was republican and concerned itself with rules and orders of the day rather than with the economic crisis. In an effort to prove that his ideas were practical, he had outlined them in his newspaper, and finally, had proposed to stand for election so that he could formulate in the assembly some concrete measures for implementing his plans. He seemed undisturbed by the contradiction of an avowed anarchist running for office, of an opponent of universal suffrage presenting himself as a candidate, of a philosopher who had predicted that government would slowly become useless now offering a grandiose plan for government-instituted reform, of a proponent of revolution from below now offering plans for a revolution from above. For some inexplicable reason, perhaps because his program had not been carefully read or because parts of it were confusing and vague, he won election to the constituent assembly. Events moved too quickly during the first two weeks in June for him to be able to present his plans to the assembly, the only result of his election being that he lost contact with the masses, to his evident and sincere sorrow. Now that the civil war was over and calm had returned to the streets of Paris, the assembly would be glad to hear of a concrete proposal that would resolve the immediate crisis while at the same time offering a long-range reform leading to a complete revolution in the economic structure of France.
Proudhon, now having an opportunity to present his economic proposals before the constituent assembly, failed to take into account the effect his being cast in the role of Erostratus 2 would have on the reception given to his proposals. His speech before the assembly being a complete failure, he next attempted to present his views through the proposed constitution and failed even more totally, though he managed to convince anyone who read his proposals carefully that he was slowly revising and making more precise his views on property. Finally, he opposed adoption of the constitution fearing that an elected presidency would assist the counter revolutionary movement, yet while combating Bonaparte's candidacy, he disrupted the Mountain by refusing to support its candidate, thus giving substantial support to Bonaparte in the elections and giving him an Erostratus (in Proudhon) against which he could hurl anathemas, gaining support from practically every class in French society.

The role of l'homme-terreur was, for Proudhon, a result of the changed

---

1 Proudhon, *Confessions d'un révolutionnaire* [1849], pp. 119-20.

2 Captain Frederick Chamier, *A Review of the French Revolution of 1848* (London: Reeve, Benham and Reeve, 1849), II, p. 149. The characterization of Proudhon as Erostratus was made by Hugo.
sentiment that had slowly evolved since the February Days. The disintegrating economic situation which made all property holders fearful of any man who preached contempt for property, the increasing restlessness of the Paris poor that ended in a terrible civil war, caused all those who believed in law and order to fear an anarchist who preached the inevitable disappearance of the state and the unlawfulness of property. Men who claimed some religious belief disliked the man who called God evil and who had urged thinking men to join him in an unending warfare against Him.¹

Seemingly untroubled by the increasing hate and fear surrounding him in the last weeks in June, Proudhon who was still too busy to write many articles for his newspaper, found time to read its editorials. When the editorial of July 1 appeared, blaming the workers for a dreadful civil war, even though they might have been duped by secret agents, he wrote to protest. There were formal and real culprits, he maintained; when a people were driven to revolt because of hunger and despair, there were no guilty ones, only victims. He appealed to his countrymen to weep for the fallen on both sides of the barricades.² In the three months that followed this letter pleading for reconciliation, he made several attempts to bring about the economic reform he felt the revolution of 1848 demanded. The attempts were failures, for he angered the assembly and his socialist collaborators, along with the republicans who attempted to form a political union with them. His

¹Proudhon described in Justice, III, p. 62, his enrollment in the Masonic lodge in which he vowed warfare on God.

²Proudhon to the Editors, Le Représentant du peuple, July 6, 1848.
final action, in the elections for the presidency of the republic in December 10, 1848, made his ostracism from all political groups complete and brought down on him the accusation that he caused the election of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte.

It is difficult to understand how Proudhon could have brought down upon himself such a large measure of public wrath, unless one remembers his love of the colorful phrase—"the sublime horror of the cannonade," for example—his political inexperience which caused his failure to gauge the spirit of the country, and finally because of his blundering efforts to help the proletariat whose suffering brought him real grief.

The first inclination that he was about to become a man of terror, the symbol of class hatred, came when President Senard\(^1\) announced to the assembly on June 28 that the civil war had finally been resolved. The proclamation read to the assembly praised the defenders of the country and protested against all savage doctrines which classified property as a form of robbery.\(^2\) After the words, "propriété qu'un vol," were pronounced, the members of the assembly turned and gazed at Proudhon. He responded by refusing to rise when the remainder of the assembly stood to proclaim solidarity with Senard.\(^3\) Proudhon explained his actions in a letter to *Le Représentant* in which he protested a deliberate move on the part of the president, supposedly

---

\(^1\)The name is not spelled Senart, as Woodcock incorrectly has it in his index. Proudhon, in his works, occasionally misspelled the name, as for example, in the June 29, 1848 issue of *Le Représentant du peuple*.

\(^2\)For the text of the proclamation, see *Le Représentant du peuple*, June 29, 1848.

\(^3\)Halévy, *Le Mariage de Proudhon*, p. 162.
neutral, to stigmatize a man of justice, peace and order—too prone to paradoxes, perhaps—as a seditious plotter seeking to destroy the peace of France.¹

Heightened feelings affected others besides Proudhon. Cavaignac, applying a press law of December 1830, refused to allow newspapers that had been suspended during the June Days to resume publication without a caution to allay costs of court action in case anything were published that might harm the republic. The lack of cash money for such a caution caused many small papers to cease publishing, among them Le Peuple constituant, organ of Lamartine, which ended publication on July 12, with its last issue encircled by a black band of mourning.²

Proudhon's editors, also, were forced to scurry about to raise the required caution. Le Pamphlet questioned how this could be done since the newspaper's philosophy did not admit of money, and property had been erased from its vocabulary.³ Why, Le Pamphlet wondered, should Proudhon's editors now complain about the caution required of newspapers. Earlier, when presses had been silenced during the June Days and one editor lay in prison, he had been mute, preferring to remain at home while fires burned down the house of his neighbor.⁴ Hostile newspapers, such as Le Pamphlet, were among

¹Proudhon to the Editors, Le Représentant du peuple, June 30, 1848. In the letter, Proudhon quoted from an article in l'Ére nouvelle of Lacordaire in which the action of the assembly was described.

²"Revue des journaux," Le Conciliateur, July 12, 1848.


⁴"La Liberte de la presse," Le Pamphlet, July 9-13, 1848.
the more immediate problems facing Proudhon's editors; the caution money could be raised later. The editors, realizing that many other newspapers were rallying to the party of order and by their editorials rousing public opinion against him, reprinted on July 3 Proudhon's defense speech before the court of assizes at Doubs in 1842 when Propriété was under attack.¹ Le Répräsentant noted that newspapers of many political persuasions had begun attacking him: Ére nouvelle, Voix de la vérité, l'Union, l'Univers, Gazette de France, Journal des débats.² The editors hoped that the reprinting of Proudhon's defense speech would answer their criticism.

While it was true that at this time other socialists and republicans were in disfavor along with Proudhon, sentiment in the country appeared to be crystallizing against him, in particular. Several reasons could probably be given for this: One was the increased circulation of his newspaper which brought nearer some of his inflammatory writings, "Le Malthusiens," for example. A second reason was that unlike many other socialists, Proudhon had few confrères to come to his aid, for in his criticism of the provisional government he had also lashed out at its radical membership. The socialists were slow in coming to his defense since Proudhon had demonstrated that he could not be depended on for support when his confrères needed it. Third, his gift for the apt phrase made it easy to quote him, and along with the apt phrase, his provincial mannerisms and his facial features lent themselves to caricature. Finally, the times called for a symbolic Erostratus and

¹The newspaper, Les Nouvelles du jour, July 4, 1848, summarized the content of the defense by saying that Proudhon argued that to abolish robbery it was necessary to universalize property, making everyone a proprietor.

Proudhon with his political ineptness was uniquely fitted for the role. \(^1\)

Another pressing problem for *Le Représentant* was government harassment. The editors noted on July 7 that the hawkers had been the object of violent attacks on the boulevards that morning when the national guards bore down on them, seizing and destroying their papers after maltreating the hawkers. The editors demanded that freedom of the press, freedom of industry, and freedom of property be preserved.

A final, pressing problem which concerned the newspaper was the poor; here Proudhon offered his views. The fifteenth of the month was approaching and that meant that rents would fall due. How could people meet expenses without jobs, their homes and possessions destroyed in the fighting? *"Le Terme"* was the result. Proudhon announced that it was no longer a question of saving the proletariat, for they no longer existed. The need of the moment was to save the small and middle bourgeoisie from starvation and ruin, the high bourgeoisie from its infernal egoism. In order to accomplish this, it was necessary to reduce the amount demanded in rents and postpone payments for at least three months. The government had been willing to take measures to save the life of the Bank of France when business was at a standstill. To do the same for the poor was not communism but pure equity. The article ended with the publication of the text of the proposed decree putting the two recommendations into effect. \(^2\)

If *"Le Terme"* created a sensation, it was only because it ran counter

\(^1\) Blanc's petite size, aristocratic features, his education, prevented him from filling the role. Ledru-Rollin, the orator, had too large a following to permit him to become a hate symbol.

\(^2\) Proudhon, *"Le Terme,"* *Le Représentant du peuple*, July 8, 1848.
to the mood of the assembly which had, following Cavaignac's resignation as dictator, re-elected him to the position under the title of president of the council. Cavaignac began systematically weeding out the national guard. Any garrison whose members had been unenthusiastic about supporting the government during the June Days was disbanded or sent to the colonies. Among civilians, anyone found with arms in his possession was subject to immediate deportation to French possessions. The punishment was so severe, the only leniency allowed being at the discretion of the members of the war council, that both Pierre Leroux and Caussidiere protested at the tribune against a move that would strike non-combatants arrested along with combatants during the civil war.\(^1\) Fear haunted the city, giving rise to ridiculous rumors. The burning of lights at a late hour in a workshop of a poor dressmaker was denounced as the signal of conspiracy. The shrill whistle of a locomotive in the night aroused terror.\(^2\)

In the midst of it all, the government prepared for a day of mourning for its dead. Tragically, the place chosen for the July 6 ceremony was the Place de la Concorde, the same square in which the Festival of Concord had been celebrated two months earlier and in which so many revolutionary celebrations had been held. Now it became the scene of a solemn Mass for the dead of the army and the national guard. Proudhon agreed that mourning was proper, but he did not hesitate to ask that those who died on both sides of the barricades be honored, for they had died in honorable combat. Like the great tragedy of antiquity in which Antigone found herself divided be-

---


\(^2\)La Gorse, *Seconde république*, p. 407.
tween duty and right, both sides had fought equally for justice:

Weep over our brothers of the national guards, weep over our brothers of the insurrection and condemn no one. Hope that justice once enlightened by the facts which have preceded, accompanied and followed the insurrection, will relax the severity of the law, and the decree of transportation, without purpose as without morality, will be revoked.¹

Proudhon's attempts at public reconciliation had no effect, so he now turned his attention to the assembly where Minister of Public Instruction Hippolyte Carnot's bill for free, compulsory primary education had been presented on June 30.² The proposal had immediately become mired in the question of property, representative Bonjean calling the attention of the members to a dangerous work by Charles Renouvier which the minister of public instruction had authorized as a text. In the work, Renouvier recognized property rights, but questioned whether there might be some limits placed on ownership when the public interest was affected, making it difficult for the rich to live in idleness and easier for the poor to enrich themselves.³ That the amendment to the education bill, an amendment which forbade the use of dangerous textbooks, was adopted by the assembly, gives some indication of the fear of property owners at this time. Proudhon failed to vote on the amendment, perhaps because of his deeper concern with what was going on outside the assembly. He was aware of the discussion on free education, for in his Carnets he noted that only parents could decide upon the kind of education their children should have. He favored education

¹Proudhon to the Editors, Le Représentant du peuple, July 6, 1848.

²For the text of the proposal see Compte rendu des séances de l'Assemblée nationale, June 30, 1848 (Paris: Imprimerie de l'Assemblée nationale, 1849).

³Le Moniteur, July 6, 1848, p. 1577.
In the home or in the workshop as long as it did not destroy the child's right to think for himself. Carnot's bill was a mistake, for it took the responsibility for educating a child away from his parents.\(^1\) Proudhon need not have concerned himself with the education bill for it was doomed to slow strangulation in the months that followed.

In the session of July 3, Cavaignac mounted to the tribune to announce the complete abolition of national workshops.\(^2\) But of more interest, economically, to Proudhon than the closing of the national workshops, was his own proposition, presented to the committee of finance on July 11. Its purpose was to relieve the pressing financial situation still weighing on the nation. The 45 centimes tax had brought little income into the treasury, for the poor were unable or unwilling to pay it. Its result had been merely to slow down the circulation of goods. A financial measure to release the brakes holding up circulation was what was needed. In later years, Proudhon explained that he meant the proposition only as a temporary measure, for to expect the government to reinstate circulation went contrary to his evaluation of what a government could do.\(^3\) In the finance committee, the measure was debated on July 15 and 17.\(^4\) The results were clear from the start—the ideas of Proudhon were rejected unanimously as dangerous and fanatical. In the discussion, Proudhon supposedly said, "Permit me the right to work and

\(^1\)Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 44.

\(^2\)Bouniols, Le Précursseurs, p. 281.

\(^3\)In Du Principe fédératif [1863], p. 55, Proudhon reiterated the temporary nature of his proposal. It is also repeated in Théorie de la propriété [posthumous], p. 38.

\(^4\)The minutes of the meeting are still preserved in the national archives. See Halévy, Le Mariage de Proudhon, p. 170.
I will give you the right to property." The statement caused great
scandal and made Proudhon's position appear equivocal for he had a reputation
for attacking property owners. It was agreed that the majority report
would be given to the assembly by Thiers on July 26. Proudhon protested
against the majority report, because his personal life was involved in it:
his defiance of God and his doctrines supposedly attacking the family.¹
He realized, he later declared in his speech from the tribune, that the com-
mittee wished to destroy in him, at one blow, the whole of socialism. His
request was refused and the personal allegations remained in the majority
report when Thiers presented it to the assembly.

Thiers, who had run for election from five areas in the June elections
and had won in Paris, was in the process of writing a book in defense of
property when he prepared the majority report.² He saw the opportunity to
present himself as the defender of property and as the vanquisher of anarchy
and insurrection. It was unnecessary to attack the economic proposals of
Proudhon; a personal attack would serve his purposes far better. No great
logical skills were needed, for property holders, both inside and outside
the assembly, agreed with him. He was preaching to converts.³ A safe
approach, after the personal attack, was to question the figures Proudhon
used to calculate the national wealth, which Thiers proved inconclusively
to be exaggerated. Despite the paucity of his arguments, Thiers received an

¹Proudhon's speech will be found in Le Moniteur, p. 1826. For
Thiers' speech, see P.-J. Proudhon, La Révolution sociale démontrée par le
Lacroix, Verboeckhoven, 1868), p. 245.

²Remusat, Thiers, p. 108. When published, in September, 1848, the
work was entitled, Defense of Property.

³Baroness Bonde to Mr. and Mrs. Robinson, July 27, 1848, Paris in
'48, p. 244.
enthusiastic response in the assembly. His timing was right, for he said exactly what his public wanted to hear; he was an experienced orator who had developed consummate skill in parliamentary debate through his earlier experience in government.¹

Had he been as consummate a parliamentarian as Thiers, Proudhon would have realized that it was a mistake to present to the full assembly a proposition that had already been rejected in committee. Yet he asked to reply, and the assembly gave him forty-eight hours in which to prepare his response.² It took Proudhon four hours at the tribune on July 31 to answer Thiers' two-hour condemnation. Victor Hugo has left a good picture of him as he walked awkwardly to the tribune in that shuffling gait peculiar to the Franche-Comtois peasant. He appeared to be a man of around forty-five years with thin, reddish-colored hair, looking bland and innocent, despite the slight cast in his eyes. He wore a black vest and coat. At the tribune, he did not speak; he read, and as he read, his huge hand creased and wrinkled the red velour of the tribune in an awkward gesture, while from time to time his free hand brushed across his forehead--gauche gestures for an orator at the historic font of French declamation, the tribune.³ At first, the assembly was quiet and attentive, straining to catch the Franche-Comtois accent with its flat vowel formation. Then, as the sense of the orator's words sank in, the

¹G. de Molinari, "M. Proudhon et M. Thiers," Journal des économistes, XXI-XXII (August-November, 1848), p. 61, described Thiers' speech as the killing of some rats in the attic while the edifice of Proudhon remained intact.


³Hugo, Choses vues, p. 258.
silence gave place to discussion, laughter, cat calls. As Proudhon droned on, the room slowly emptied of a large part of its membership. Socialists, mortified at this ungainly spokesman whom they thought was destroying their cause, already compromised by the events of June, demanded, in stage whispers, that he sit down. At other times, when the opposition from the Right became too ferocious—calling him June 23 at the tribune—the Left was silent, fearful of supporting and also fearful of condemning this man who became, at that moment, a living representation of the beleaguered proletariat.\(^1\) Through it all, Lamennais listened, his red handkerchief over his eyes as if he were crying.\(^2\)

The speech which caused such a violent reaction was, according to Proudhon, merely a suggestion that the republic do what it had done in '93 when the republic was in danger: place a tax of one-third on the wealth of the nation. In '93 the reason for the tax had been the fight against despotism and a foreign enemy; in 1848 the enemy was poverty. What was needed was to free the market so that labor could sell its wares. The market was bogged down by the exclusive monopoly of money as a representation of the value of labor. It was further enslaved by rents which allowed the owner of property to demand a return without contributing his share of the common labor. The mutual exchange of labor, the only factor giving market utility to goods, was impossible as long as the monopoly of money and interest remained, as long as property took its prelibation in the exchange. The answer to the whole

\(^1\) *Le Moniteur* included in Proudhon's speech the comments from the floor of the assembly when they could be understood. See page 1822.

\(^2\) Hugo, *Choses vues*, p. 259.
problem was the abolition of all usury, a symbol for all those elements slowing down circulation of goods and artificially engendering poverty. This was what he meant when he said that the right to work would destroy property. Labor should be freed so that it could bargain for a like amount of labor in the marketplace, and property would slowly be destroyed, for only property used by its owner could purchase in such a market. This could be accomplished by an impôt on revenues, operating in this fashion: all interest, mortgages, rents, debts of any kind falling due for the next three years would be reduced by one-third,¹ the one-third being returned to the state. The money would then be divided in half,² half of this portion being returned to the debtor, giving the poorer classes some reprieve while allowing the bourgeoisie to share in the economic plight of the rest of France. The remaining portion of the impôt would be used to lower taxes and to finance an exchange bank. During the three years of the tax's duration, the bank would amass 600 million francs in reserves which could be used in the slow liquidation of money, replacing it with goods of exchange, a nineteenth century version of the commodity dollar. The bourgeoisie would actually benefit from this move, for the extra money in the hands of the low-income group would increase their buying power and stimulate business.³

¹Woodcock, Proudhon, p. 133, incorrectly says that the tax affected impôts over the "past three years." If this had been Proudhon's proposal, it would have assured bankruptcy to many small businessmen!

²It is here that Thiers had his only real disagreement with Proudhon. He thought that Proudhon's estimate of the amount accruing to the government, 1,500,000 francs, was too high.

³For a discussion of the similarity of this proposal, especially in its efforts to stimulate business recovery, with the economic position of John Maynard Keynes, see Dudley Dillard, "Keynes and Proudhon," Journal of Economic History, II (May, 1942), pp. 63-76.
As Proudhon spoke, he must have become aware of the hostile comments uttered around him. Someone called out, "That's intolerable," to which President Marrast responded, "It's no more intolerable than all the rest he's said." Proudhon, angered by the lack of impartiality in the president, turned to him and scolded him for his comments.

Minister of the Interior Senard responded to another voice demanding where Proudhon had been during the June Days, calling out that he was certain Proudhon had not been at the barricades, for he was too cowardly.

Proudhon tried to answer his hecklers by saying that the right to work was incompatible with the seignorial rights of property. Those who pretended to the contrary were perhaps excellent citizens, be they phalansterians, Girondists or Montagnards, but they were not socialists. In fact, they were not even republicans. He appealed to the bourgeoisie to join with the proletariat in the liquidation of property. If they refused to do so, the proletariat would be forced to work at its liquidation without them. This brought angry retorts and Proudhon's threatening rejoinder that no power on

---

1 Senard had resigned as president of the assembly when he became minister of the interior.

2 Proudhon, La Révolution sociale démontrée par le coup d'état, p. 301. This account is a reproduction of that found in Le Moniteur, August 1, 1848, pp. 1826-30.

3 Proudhon, in his Confessions, p. 117, answered the accusation of Senard, saying that he had not been a coward in June, but like the rest of the representatives, he had been an imbecile. Too deeply involved in the trivia of parliamentary business, he had failed to cry out in alarm—like the dog that does not bark at the enemy.

4 It is significant that Proudhon addressed his appeal to the bourgeoisie. Both Confessions and Idée générale begin with a dedication to the bourgeoisie to remind them of their revolutionary past. For a discussion of the significance of this appeal, see Pierre Ansart, Sociologie de Proudhon (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1967), p. 78.
When Proudhon left the tribune, the ordinary business of the assembly should have been to consider the minority report he had given or to return to former business. Numerous appeals from all corners of the assembly demanded instead that the order of the day, motivated, be invoked. At least fifteen proposals were then presented to the assembly censuring the proposal of Proudhon as injurious to property and public morals. As the proposed censures were being read, several voices urged their rejection because they were too soft. The assembly finally agreed to vote on the censure proposed by Citizens Leblond, Langlois, Landrin, Peupin, and Bernard that the proposal of Proudhon "... is an odious attaint to the public morals, violates property, encourages scandal, and appeals to evil passions," with the amendment of Senard—that Proudhon had calumniated the February revolution—tacked on at the end. 2 When the balloting ended, 691 blue slips to 2 white slips in the electoral urns showed that Proudhon's proposition had been rejected and he had been condemned for his speech. The entire assembly, with the exception of himself and Greppo, had voted for the censure. 3 As the session ended, Thiers was

1Proudhon had made a similar threat earlier in Avertissement au propriétaires [1841], Vol. II: Oeuvres complètes, p. 91. In both cases, he appeared to have no seditious ideas in mind, merely meaning that the evolutionary movement toward justice, which he called revolution, could never be deflected from its course.

2J. Hampden Jackson, Marx, Proudhon and European Socialism (New York: Colliers, 1957), p. 70, gives a badly distorted description of July 31, stating that Thiers replied to Proudhon. Thiers was the first speaker. He states also that Thiers' motion was adopted. It was not. He gives, in the censure motion, the curious phrase, "encourages deflation," having of course, badly translated the word déflation.

3Proudhon, La Révolution sociale démontrée par le coup d'etat, p. 313.
surrounded by congratulatory friends, while Proudhon rose and walked out with Greppo. On the door sill, he met his friend, Darimon, who shook his hand. Together, they went out for a beer. ¹

The disastrous defeat of his proposal had a strong effect on Proudhon. As often happened in matters that struck him most profoundly, he was silent in his Carnets. ² It was only in later years, in May of 1861 when he learned that his pamphlet on taxation had won a prize in the contest sponsored by the Swiss Canton of Vaud, that he wrote exultingly to his friends, saying that now a small nation had joined Greppo as he stood behind the beleaguered Proudhon at the tribune; the stone which the mason had rejected had now become the head of the edifice, as Proudhon put it. ³ Greppo, according to Benoit's account, was not such a faithful supporter after all. He had only voted the way he did as a gesture of solidarity with his friend. When he realized what he had done, he at first determined to have a letter written to Le Moniteur explaining his position. Realizing that his courage was being celebrated by all the socialists in Paris, he decided to refrain from any comment and to reap the notoriety that would ensue. ⁴


²Pierre Haubtmann agrees. See his footnote, Carnets, III, p. 158.

³P.-J. Proudhon to Dr. Cretin, May 21, 1861, XI: Corres., p. 79. The prize-winning work was Théorie de l'impôt, Vol. XV: Oeuvres complètes (Paris: Narpon et Flammarion, 1876).

⁴Benoit, Confessions d'un prolétaire, p. 235.
One wonders why the socialists celebrated Greppo's courage when they also had a chance to show their solidarity with the proletariat by voting against the proposition condemning Proudhon. Many of them managed to escape from the assembly when the time for voting came near, in this way avoiding a vote that would hurt their popularity no matter which way they voted. Others openly voted their anger at a man who had publicly criticized everyone, including socialists; among them was Louis Blanc who voted with the majority.\(^1\) Proudhon considered this the traitor's kiss which delivered him to the enemy. It explains the two men's estranged relations during the remainder of their lives.

Outside the assembly comments covered a wide spectrum. Herzen was one of the few who thrilled at this man who challenged Thiers to a duel of conscience.\(^2\) Renan decided that Proudhon was a poor madman being used by the conservatives to discredit the revolution.\(^3\) Michelet called the speech barbarous, a defense of the right to insurrection.\(^4\) Greppo, now beginning to share Proudhon's position as the foremost madman of France, had his ancestry investigated by _Le Pamphlet_. The editors decided that his name was a pseudonym for the famous name of Montmorency. Greppo meant, of course:

---

\(^1\)For an example of how Blanc's vote looked to an outsider, see K. C. Marquis Normanby, _A Year of Revolution_, from a journal kept in Paris in 1848 (London: Longman, Brown & Green, 1857), II, p. 147. Normanby thought Blanc's action was ambiguous.


\(^3\)Ernest Renan to Henriette Renan, August 1, 1848, _Nouvelles lettres intimes_, p. 226.

to take, seize, or demand. The comments were not all condemnatory. Years after the event, Proudhon described how petitions had rained on the assembly from the four corners of France demanding that he be expelled from that body as an atheist. He recalled that a young girl had written to him, sending him a medal. He wore the medal, for he believed it was superhuman heroism on her part that, despite her faith, she protested against the damnation of an atheist and hoped that he could be saved. He loved, in her, the conscience of the human genre.

The July 31 discourse completed the caricature growing up around Proudhon. A sort of terror attached itself to his name and made it a thing of menace. Realizing the terror his name evoked, Proudhon christened himself the l'homme-terreur. Some of his enemies said that he enjoyed his role, and even the most impartial reading of his works gives one the notion that he felt a certain exaltation in the fury he aroused on all sides as he assumed the role of spokesman for the proletariat. The Carnets reveal a different picture, for there he repeated plaintively that he had no desire to destroy property. His fault had been to be obedient to his intellectual

---

1"Physionomies parlementaires," Le Pamphlet, August 9-13, 1848.
2Proudhon, Justice [1858], II, p. 358.
3Stern, Histoire de la révolution, p. 46.
4Proudhon, Confessions d'un révolutionnaire, p. 152.
5Stern, Histoire de la révolution, p. 57.
convictions; had he refused to heed them, he would have been culpable.\(^1\) His
gorge rising, he suggested that people who caricatured his writing should be
tried for high treason.\(^2\) The anger was of brief duration, followed by in-
tense sadness in which he protested again that it had never entered into his
thought to hurt anyone or to change any regime by violent means. In that
sense, he was no revolutionary, for his revolution consisted entirely in the
development of economic principles that would gradually reduce the great
fortunes, allowing the poor laborer to slowly acquire more, while at the
same time creating solidarity among producers.\(^3\)

There were other caricatures of Proudhon, for he lent himself well to
the subject—his round collar of a beard, the small glasses and the huge
nose.\(^4\) The times called for a devil; the devil was Proudhon. At the in-
stigation of the government, if one is to believe Proudhon, a *Histoire de
Proudhon* by Satan appeared and sold thousands of copies.\(^5\) Pious works re-
presented the cross triumphant over a writhing, defeated serpent whose face

\(^1\)Proudhon, *Carnets*, III, p. 78.

\(^2\)This was probably an allusion to the cartoon representing Proudhon
nourishing himself from the living bodies of proprietors. See footnote, page
92 of *Carnets*, III.

\(^3\)Ibid., p. 136.

pensée politique de Proudhon," *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'Êt-
ranger*, CXLIII–CXLIV (January–March, 1953), p. 21, gives Hugo's comparison
of Proudhon to a monkey and a dog.

\(^5\)Proudhon, *Carnets*, III, p. 112.
was the beaming, moon-shaped visage of Proudhon.¹

In the newspapers the vilification continued in the form of ridicule. In a mocking letter to Le Pamphlet, Célestin Vrignolet discussed his tortures at the tribune. He intimated that there would be an August revolution if the public did not prevent him from starting it, all of course, in take-off of Proudhon, his speech in the assembly and his warnings of disasters to come.² Other journals tried to take a more objective view. Le Petit hommes rouge, for example, concerned itself with the harm Proudhon had done by allowing the ignorant and the evil to feed upon his works and to arouse people when, along with the socialists of like persuasion, he should have watched over these newspapers to see that they did not take his pure thought and transform it into poison.³

In the assembly the same sentiments flourished. Ladies came to the visitors' gallery in order to have Proudhon pointed out to them as he sat beside Charles Lagrange, his legs crossed and his body slumped on his bench so that his head could barely be seen. He probably overheard their whispered comments about the appearance of the "monster."⁴ On the assembly floor, the membership followed up the suggestions of Cavaignac by demanding a caution of 24,000 francs for newspapers. Clubs might reopen only if they

—

¹L'Anti-rouge, almanach anti-socialiste (Paris: Garnier, 1851), Frontispiece. He was known as the jovial Proudhon and thus was depicted as smiling. Proudhon observed that at the time of his trial for Propriété in 1842 that spectators were surprised to find him such an ordinary person, pleasant and tranquil. See his letter to Ackermann, May 21, 1842, Vol. II: Corres., p. 41.

²Le Pamphlet, August 31-September 2, 1848.

³Le Petit hommes rouge, July, 1848.

⁴Hugo, Choses vues, p. 260.
gave a public declaration of purpose and if sessions were open to the public.¹

His efforts to help alleviate the financial crisis having reached an impasse in the assembly, Proudhon turned to his newspaper. Perhaps he might still convince the assembly that its measures were wrong, the one on clubs, for example. The decree implied that a society had no private life. If it must operate only under police surveillance, then no organization could ever discuss anything the government did not like. As far as the caution on the press was concerned, only the press of the poor would be affected. Constitutionnel, Siècle, Debats, Gazette de France could continue publication. A sum of money had become the criterion of genius, of virtue, and of patriotism.² Le Représentant, however, managed to raise the required sum. A subscription list was opened. Those who contributed a sum under 100 francs received a free subscription to the paper; contributions of over 100 francs were rewarded with newspaper stock.³ The editors had another means of financial support—the sale of the paper to an interested public—for on August 11 appeared the article entitled, "Les Malthusiens." This article, along with Proudhon's attack on Le National, probably determined the government to suppress the paper on August 21.

Proudhon had always disliked Le National, for he blamed it for causing the February revolution, premature as it was. As early as 1839 he had com-

¹La Gorée, Seconde république, p. 412.
²Proudhon [News Summary], Le Représentant du peuple, August 10, 1848.
³Le Représentant du peuple, August 12, 1848.
plained about the newspaper for making fun of him, calling him a Jesuit for the peculiar kind of scholastic argument that was his forte. At other times, in the years preceding 1848, he had accused Le National of prolonging the life of the system. At the beginning of June, the tempo of the dispute had moved more quickly when the newspaper condemned Proudhon's proposed bank. By August, the strained relations reached open feud, for Proudhon saw in the newspaper the result of a morganatic marriage with his enemy, Thiers. Le National, in wanting a leviathan state of the Hobbes variety in which war would be a necessity, had actually prophesied the national workshops. Then, when they had been adopted, they had tried to lay the blame for them on Blanc and the socialists who had never ceased protesting against them. Thus the actions of the newspaper had led the republic into the abyss of hatred and blood which were the June Days and the class hatreds in the months that followed.

The feud with Le National came at the same time as Le Représentant was involved in difficulties with the government. The newspaper had not fared so well since the publication of "Le Terme," when it was suspended by the government on July 11. At the request of Charles Fauvety, the managing editor whom Darimon blamed for the suspension of the paper during the June Days, Proudhon went to see Cavaignac to have the suspension lifted. Cavaignac refused saying that it was impossible to keep order in the city

1 Proudhon to Bergmann, December 22, 1839, Vol. 11 Corres., p. 172. In the letter, Proudhon explained some of his grievances against Le National.

2 Proudhon, Avertissement au propriétaires [1841], p. 86.

3 Le Représentant du peuple, June 19, 1848.

4 Proudhon [News Summary], Le Représentant du peuple, August 16, 1848.
with newspapers like Proudhon's in publication. The principles of the editor were so strong, he said, that if allowed to continue publishing he could do nothing but oppose the forces of order. The meeting with Cavaignac bore some fruit for on August 7, the newspaper, along with other Paris journals, was allowed to reappear. When it reappeared on August 9, an addition had been made to the masthead, reading: "What is the capitalist? Everything. What should he be? Nothing." In the same issue, the editors noted that the newspaper's name had been omitted by accident from the listing in Le Moniteur of the papers allowed to continue publishing. In the lead article, the editors reproached the socialists for joining in the general condemnation of Proudhon when his paper was banned. Only one paper, La République, edited by Eugène Barette, defended Proudhon and compared his July 31 speech to that of Mirabeau demanding the contribution of a fourth of the revenues of everyone. The editors noted that Proudhon's speech of July 31 must have borne fruit for three days later, Goudchaux announced that the state proposed to place a tax of a fiftieth on all holders of mortgages.  

Le Représentant did not remain long in publication. During the next ten days, it was seized three times, the first time because of a letter written to the newspaper on August 15 by the sculptor, Antoine Etex. In the letter, he professed the now familiar ideas of Proudhon, that property not gained by labor was robbery. The second seizure came from a letter written by an unnamed prisoner after the June Days in which he spoke of the suffering of the prisoners and the parting scenes as they left for deportation.

---

1 Proudhon, Justice, II, p. 96. Footnote by Bouglé and Jules Puech.

2 "Singular rapprochement," Le Représentant du peuple, August 9, 1848.
and forced labor in the colonies.¹ The final seizure came about as a result of the paper's own inquest into the events of May and June. Proudhon did not sign the article, but he took responsibility for it. In the article, the writer summarized the main causes of the disturbance as the struggle between two principles: privilege and equality. The secondary causes were pride and hunger. It was useless to blame it on blind forces or individual intrigue.² Though the seizures were ostensibly the result of the three offending articles, another, more powerful article probably motivated the final suppression of the newspaper by administrative decree on August 21, and that was "Les Malthusiens." The editorial was so successful that it was repeated in later issues of the paper. In all, the number of copies of this editorial reached approximately 300,000 and gave courage to Proudhon whose ego had been crushed by July 31.³ In the editorial, Proudhon associated the teachings of Malthus with the wealthy who controlled credits, publicity, religion, and even the privilege of factory labor. The people, through their spokesmen, the socialists, proclaimed themselves anti-Malthusians. To Lacordaire, a symbolic Malthus of 1848, he addressed the Biblical words of damnation. If Christ had come to Lacordaire and his associates, he would have classified these men as persecutors of the just, and Lacordaire would have been forced to crucify Christ as a seditious atheist.⁴

The last issue of Le Représentant outlined the reasons for its

¹Le Représentant du peuple, August 18, 1848.

²Gabriel Mortillet, "Enquête sur les événements de Mai et de Juin," Le Représentant du peuple, August 18, 1848.

³Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 77, footnote.

⁴Proudhon, "Les Malthusiens," Le Représentant du peuple, August 11, 1848.
the war with Le National, in particular, but also with Siècle, Constitutionnel; its sympathy for the unfortunate victims of June; its truthful representation of facts when facts were not pleasant for the party of order; and finally, the continued warnings to the common people to avoid becoming involved in collisions with their enemies.  
Thus, died the first of Proudhon's journals, a newspaper which continually surprised and irritated its readers with its unexpected attacks on everyone. The readership, by now grown to forty thousand, had come to expect that alongside the bizarre and different, the journal could still manage, by some miraculous paradox, to retain the flavor of common sense permeating all its articles like the "aroma of freshly baked bread."  

With the newspaper suppressed, Proudhon now turned his attention to the national assembly which was ready to hear the report of the commission of inquest into the June Days. The commission had been appointed on June 27, and the fifteen members had named their president, Odilon Barrot. The commission had decided to investigate, not only the June Days, but also, the May 15 and April 16 demonstration. A series of witnesses, including Proudhon, paraded before the commission and told of personal experiences usually reserved for memoires published posthumously. When the commission

1 "Troisième saisie," Le Représentant du peuple, August 21, 1848.


3 Barrot was the leader of the dynastic opposition during the July Monarchy. Although he rallied to the republic in 1848, he clearly belonged to the Right.

4 La Gorce, Seconde république, p. 417.
report was read to the assembly on August 3 by Quentin-Bauchart, it angered Proudhon, for it appeared to incriminate him along with Louis Blanc and Caussidiere. The discussion of the report was set for the evening session of August 25. At one o'clock in the morning, after a night of debate on the report, Marrast read to the assembly the letter from Procureur General H. Corne saying that there was sufficient evidence for legal action against both Blanc and Caussidiere. It was like a coup de théâtre, coming immediately after the speeches of Ledru-Rollin, Blanc, and Caussidiere, the last two named being indicted at five o'clock in the morning.

A few days earlier, on August 22, Proudhon had again tried to get his economic ideas accepted by the assembly in a proposal that the government borrow two million francs and that the Bank of France be returned to the national domain. The government would issue credit paper, called bons d'emprunt, on the basis of estimated taxes, the paper bearing interest at the rate of 1 per cent for each 100 francs. The emission would be monthly until the amount attained two million, reaching circulation through the ordinary route of credit and discount. The purpose of the loan was to augment the amount of capital in circulation and to lower indirect taxes by 100 million a year during the four years of the loan, while at the same time lowering the

---

1 Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 78.
2 Hugo, Choses vues, p. 264. La Gorce, Seconde république, sets the time at 2 o'clock.
3 La Gorce, Seconde république, p. 424.
anticipated government deficit for the years 1848-9. Any extra funds available through the loan would be used to purchase canals, railroads, and mines which the government could then operate to provide a means of income, reducing its need to tax. The second part of the proposal, the returning of the Bank of France to the public domain, meant that in time it would be converted into the kind of exchange bank Proudhon advocated. By this time, the bank of exchange had become the essential key needed for his economic revolution. The title of the new bank would be Banque Nationale de France. In time, stockholders in the Bank of France would be reimbursed for their losses. The proposal by Proudhon was sent to the committee of commerce and to the committee of agriculture, where it was buried, never to be heard from again.1

Despite the suppression of his earlier paper, Proudhon had not given up on his desire to maintain a journal, and it was not long in coming. In September, the specimen number of Le Peuple appeared, followed by the first regular issue of the paper on November 1, 1848. Part of the caution of 24,000 francs had already been raised by Vaspenter and Pilhes, managing editors.2 The remaining amount, 6,000 francs, was provided by a Breton, M. Le Baron Charles de Janze, later deputy from Cotes-du-Nord.3 The members of the editorial board came from different backgrounds. A Spaniard, Ramon de la Cerna, a Breton marine officer, Amadée Langlois, one of the inventors of

1 The proposal will be found at the end of "Manifeste du peuple," Le Peuple specimen, September, 1848, with the notation concerning the committees to which it was sent. Halévy, Le Mariage de Proudhon, p. 197, reported that the proposal was sent to the finance committee.

2 Halévy, Le Mariage de Proudhon, p. 232. Le Peuple appeared monthly until November 23, when it became a daily.

3 Darimon, A Travers une r évolution, p. 91.
homeopathy, Dr. Crétin, musician and inventor of a new way to write music, Chevet, the inventor of collodion, Louis Menard, were among the members.\(^1\) Proudhon's instructions to his new staff included a warning against favoring any sect and guarding against the temptation to resolve a difficult problem in a single stroke. Most social questions could be resolved only by slow and persistent application.\(^2\) In his Carnets, he speculated further on the purposes of the new paper: its aim would be to show that property expires by labor; he would favor the right to work, fight usury, while admitting the principle of heredity, monogamous marriage and the family. Proudhon speculated, concerning Christianity, that if he thought there were thirty real Christians in the assembly, and if they were seriously concerned with theological questions in place of being Voltairian and unbelievers, if he believed that the majority of French citizens were seriously Catholic, then he would place careful bounds on his discussion of Christianity; but since France was not Christian, he need not guard his comments about the Catholic religion.\(^3\) Most of Proudhon's private speculations found their way into the manifesto published in the specimen issue.

Following the lead of the earlier paper, the specimen issue pleaded for patience, and followed this appeal with a disavowal of membership in any sect. If one wished to know the real course of the revolution, he had only to interrogate the people, for in this way he could see which way the revolutionary impulsion led. This interrogation would show that civili-

\(^1\) Halévy, Le Mariage de Proudhon, p. 230.
\(^2\) Darimon, A Travers une révolution, p. 94.
\(^3\) Proudhon, Carnets, III, pp. 88-91.
zation had totally reversed itself, for primitive man killed in defense of his lazy leisure, while modern man killed because he could not find work. Universal suffrage, "the roaring of the multitude," had been confused with the wishes of the people who could be interrogated only in their workshops or through delegations representing each economic sector of the economy. Let accusers call Le Peuple a den of robbers; robbers would be found only among the immodest adulterers at the court of the ex-king, in the peerage, in the former chamber of deputies—everywhere except among those who labored, for it was against the robbery of the privileged that the revolution was fought. Let accusers damn Le Peuple as materialist. Where were materialistes and atheists to be found? Among those who demanded pitiless repression of those captured in the June Days, those who spoke of Providence and adored fatality, seeing in religion only a convention. Le Peuple pledged support for republicans provided they supported the paper's editorial position.1

The warning against sects was a veiled allusion to the break that was rapidly becoming a reality between Proudhon's followers and the members of the Mountain. Proudhon resented their refusal to support him after his July 31 speech; he publicly aired his irritation when he questioned the attitude of other radical newspapers during the time when his own paper was suspended. The rupture became public when Cavaignac decided to make some changes in his council. He called into the ministry two members of the regime of Louis Philippe, Dufaure and Vivien.2 The move may have been an attempt to satisfy the republicans of Le National that he was a reliable

1"Manifeste du peuple," Le Peuple, specimen, September 2, 1848.
2Alexandre Vivien had been minister of justice under Thiers in 1840. Jules Dufaure was minister of public works and deputy during the July Monarchy.
candidate for the coming presidential elections.\footnote{Darimon, \textit{A Travers une révolution}, p. 84.} He may also have been courting the organization of the monarchists assembled at their meeting place in rue de Poitiers. His earlier actions had brought his conservatism into question, for he had proposed sending commissioners into the departments in imitation of the by now suspect Ledru-Rollin, in order to ensure favorable candidates and results in the elections. He dropped this proposal when he saw the opposition it aroused. He committed another faux pas in the republican banquet at Toulouse when he permitted his agents to be present and in agreement when a toast was proposed to the democratic and social republic, the hated title used by the socialists.\footnote{Mémoires posthumes de Odilon Barrot, p. 455.} The appointment of two former ministers in the monarchy may have been one means of regaining grace with the conservative Right.

Whatever the motive, the appointment placed Proudhon in a quandary. It was Vivien who, as minister of justice, had saved Proudhon from prosecution when his first memoire against property appeared, for he had submitted it to Jerome-Adolphe Blanqui, the noted economist, who had declared it a scholarly work offering no threat to the government.\footnote{Proudhon, \textit{Qu'est-ce que la propriété?} [1840], p. 8.} The entire Left in the assembly, however, planned to vote against the appointment as a sign of opposition to any rapprochement with the former regime. Proudhon decided to abstain and made his reasons public in a letter to \textit{Le Moniteur}. A vote against the appointment of the new ministers was, he said, tantamount to a
vote in favor of the retiring Minister of the Interior Senard (Dufaure replaced him). He could never vote approval of a minister who had calumniated his name as Senard had done after the July 31 speech in the assembly. As far as solidarity with the Left went, the whole discussion was a disagreeable family quarrel among doctrinaires whose political differences were difficult to distinguish. To vote with the Left was no sign of solidarity; it was intrusion into a family quarrel.¹

The reaction came immediately. A delegation headed by Mathieu (de la Drome) and four of his colleagues of the Mountain entered the editorial room of Le Peuple, 150 rue Montmartre, demanding an explanation. Proudhon repeated what he had inserted into Le Moniteur, but the men were not satisfied, and the battle was joined between them,² reflected in the banquet planned for October 17. Proudhon had been offered the presidency of the banquet to be held at Poissonnière. He declined, proposing Ledru-Rollin as a replacement. The banquet commission could not stomach this choice, for the banquet had been organized under socialist auspices and many socialists shared Proudhon's opinion of Ledru; Lamennais was substituted. Proudhon's purpose in refusing the presidency of the banquet and in suggesting Ledru-Rollin was perhaps a move toward conciliation in order to get the entire Left to proclaim the democratic and social republic—a move to unite both the

¹Proudhon to the Editors, Le Moniteur, October 18, 1848, p. 2884.

²Darimon, A Travers une révolution, p. 85.
socialists and the republican radicals. After the disagreement over the
appointment of Vivien, the radical republicans refused to attend the banquet
unless Proudhon were excluded. 1 It was to this truncated body that Proudhon
gave his toast to the revolution, proclaiming that in turn religious, philo-
sophic, political, the revolution had now become economic—the right to
work—a revolution negating all property that was not possession, denouncing
all exchange that was not the mutual exchange of human labor, negating all
taxes which did not bestow reciprocal benefit upon the producer in place of
acting as a dead weight on the circulation of goods, destroying all govern-
ment authority that in any way reduced human freedom. 2

The battle with the Mountain came at the same time as the assembly
was trying to remount the slopes of law and order, slopes down which the
country had supposedly rolled with the social pressures that had been re-
leased in February. The decree of August 2 on clubs bore fruit with many
clubs closing because they could not bear the intense government scrutiny.
Each day newspapers suffered from new seizures, dipping into caution money
needed to keep in circulation. 3 It was in this atmosphere that the final
discussion on the constitution took place. Hugo and Ledru-Rollin protested
in the assembly against the state of siege which was still in force and
prevented any measure of free discussion on the proposed constitution. 4

1 Jacques Bourgeat, Proudhon, père du socialisme français (Paris:

2 The text of the toast will be found in Le Peuple, October 17, 1848.

3 "Le Procès des clubs," Le Peuple, November 30, 1848.

4 For Hugo's speech, see Le Moniteur, September 3, 1848, p. 2282.
The committee which drafted the constitution had been appointed on May 17. The members had been chosen by an absolute majority of the votes, so that the Mountain had only two representatives, Lamennais and Considerant, with Lamennais resigning on the day after his appointment. The chairman was Cormanin, a Bonapartist, who attempted to dominate the committee, if Tocqueville judged rightly.\textsuperscript{1} Armand Marrast, former editor of \textit{Le National}, became the secretary and the report on the work of the committee was submitted by him to the assembly on June 19. Tocqueville insisted that Marrast wrote his report in one night and that his explanation of the 139 articles making up the constitution was haphazard indeed. Tocqueville's own feelings about the constitution were summed up in the words, "We could not have been quicker, but we might have done better."\textsuperscript{2}

The discussion on the proposed constitution was delayed because of the June Days. When discussion resumed (for four sessions weekly), the parts of the proposed constitution which aroused the most discussion were the following: the right to work clause, the choice of one or two chambers in the assembly, and the question of whether the presidency should be an elective position.

The whole question of a constitution was unfortunate, to Proudhon, for a constitution implied the concept of authority emanating from universal suffrage, which was not an interrogation of the collective being, but only

\textsuperscript{1}Tocqueville, \textit{Recollections}, p. 191.

\textsuperscript{2}ibid., p. 204. For further study of Tocqueville and the constitution, see Edward T. Gargan, \textit{Alexis de Tocqueville: The Critical Years 1848-1851} (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1955).
a ruse to lead people back to the old religious concept of authority handed down from above. 1 Proudhon had already compromised his belief in the inability of government to bring about the economic revolution by allowing himself to be elected to the assembly, but he continued to take part in parliamentary discussion in order to try to direct its movement into economic channels. The first discussion on the constitution revolved around the preamble declaring France to be a republic, Proudhon calling the preamble merely a series of platitudes. 2 When the right to work proposal in Article 13, replacing the clause guaranteeing to labor the right to assistance, was proposed by Félix Pyat and Mathieu (de la Drome), Proudhon wanted to make a speech in the assembly. He was dissuaded from doing so by the socialists who felt that anything he might say would be used against the amendment, rather than for it. When the speech was later published, one could see that Proudhon was slowly revising his ideas on property, a revision which had probably begun during the period when he first ran for office. If the right to work in its fullest sense—that is work that was freed entirely from the chains of interest, unproductive taxes, the prelibation of lazy property holders—was assured, then in the market place it would slowly destroy property, 3 for value would now be equated only with human labor. Property

1 Proudhon discussed the invocation to the Supreme Being in the constitution in later, reflective thought. See Justice, III, p. 238. See also Confessions d’un révolutionnaire, Vol. IX: Œuvres complètes (Paris: A. Lacroix, 1876), p. 177, in which he discussed the idea of authority as embodied in the constitution.

2 Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 99.

3 Le Droit au travail à l’Assemblée nationale, recueil complet de tous les discours prononcés dans cette mémorable discussion (Paris: Guillaumin, 1848), p. 393, contains the text of Proudhon’s address.
not actually used in production would lose all value, be discarded, and communism would result.\(^1\) This was an evil, for the Proudhonian concept of the good society consisted in maintaining equilibrium between contraries, rather than in destroying both in an Hegelian synthesis or in the conquest of one antinomy by another through the feudal concept of force. Property, one of the essential elements in antinomy with the right to work, must be saved, freed of course, from any unproductive increments. The way to do this was not to concern oneself with the bare statement of the right to work replacing the right to assistance; what was needed was the addition of the words, "It assures and maintains the division of property by the organization of the exchange." These magic words would prevent labor from destroying property and driving the country into pure communism.\(^2\) Proudhon abstained from voting on the right to work clause which was defeated by a substantial majority.\(^3\) In his explanatory letter, he said that although he believed in the right to work--it would be a direct result of freeing the exchange--he felt that the cause could not be advanced by this amendment which was merely a useless socialist manifestation. As for himself, he did not want his vote to be at the service of any combination of men or party.\(^4\) Proudhon also saw a threat in the wording of Article 18 saying that all power emanates from the people and might not be delegated hereditarily.

\(^1\)Proudhon had prophesied this result in his May letter to the Seine voters.

\(^2\)Le Droit au travail, p. 391.

\(^3\)J. Salwyn Schapiro, Liberalism and the Challenge of Fascism (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1949), p. 344, condemned Proudhon for voting against the amendment. He appears to have not read Proudhon's explanatory letter.

\(^4\)Proudhon to the Editors, Le Moniteur, November 2-3, 1848, p. 3064.
Proudhon wanted to add, "nor for life." He was upheld by the Left, but the amendment was defeated. ¹

In the voting on the proposition of Duvergier de Hauranne demanding a two-house assembly, Proudhon joined the majority opposing it, for such an assembly would be a return to the old monarchical position. He favored the amendment proposed by Jules Grévy which would make the presidency dependent on the votes of the assembly, putting him securely under its power. Proudhon agreed with what he termed the irrefutable logic of Grévy, for a single executive with powers equal to the assembly must be avoided at all costs; it would only aid the counter-revolutionary forces sweeping the country backward into the feudal, theological age. ²

When the constitution, amended to include a one-house assembly, an elective presidency, and the right to assistance came up for vote on November 4, Proudhon voted against it because it was a constitution. Its essence was political and its final aim would be to create a presidency which would be more of a peril to liberty than a guarantee of it. ³

Proudhon's position on the constitution, however, was far from consistent with his philosophic position, for he had earlier favored the charter under which Louis Philippe ruled, considering it a half-way step toward the state of freedom—anarchy. In rejecting the constitution because its essence was political, he was condemning his own position as a member of a legislative body, for he had allowed himself to engage in political moves


²Proudhon, *Carnets*, III, p. 112.

Despite his rejection of a political solution when an economic solution was needed. Only his condemnation of an elective presidency was consonant with his philosophy—rejection of all authority. He may not have realized at the time he was voting on it that this same constitution could be used as a defense against the encroachment of executive power, and thus a means of attacking President Bonaparte.

Once adopted by the assembly, the constitution was promulgated immediately without requesting acceptance by the people. The day of November 12 was set aside for the celebration of the new constitution, one of the most ill-balanced that France has ever produced.¹

Despite his disapproval of the constitution, Proudhon was present at the festival celebrating its adoption. The Mountain abstained and Darimon recalled that Proudhon now decided that its members had forfeited their right to complain or abuse the constitution since they had not taken part in the ceremony for its adoption.² In his Carnets, however, he did not dwell on the festival, leading one to believe that he did not, at the time, condemn the Mountain for not attending. It is possible that Darimon, writing after the festival and knowing Proudhon's later stand in defense of the constitution, extended his strictures against the Mountain even to


include condemnation for not attending the festival. There is no indication that Proudhon, at this time, had cast himself in the role of defender of the constitution. Like many of his moves in 1848, the later role of constitutional defender was probably an opportunist, spur of the moment position taken as the only means at hand in the battle with Bonaparte.

During November, as the new constitution was adopted and the nation speculated on who its new president would be, a new vaudeville offering interested Parisians, especially those of the conservative variety. It was called, "La Propriété c'est le vol, folie socialiste en 3 actes et 7 tableaux," written by Clairville and Jules Cordier. The play opened with the proclamation of a republic being greeted by a chorus chanting funeral airs. In the second act, time had progressed to 1852 and faithfulness to the right to work had caused glass makers to break windows in order to repair them, dentists to pull teeth in order to keep themselves busy. The last act depicted the result: Paris, a desert. In this terrestrial paradise created by the right to work, Proudhon appeared at frequent intervals as a species of serpent with glasses, peering between the branches of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. According to Darimon, the author of the piece sent Proudhon tickets for a box seat and he and Darimon secretly went to see a performance. Proudhon enjoyed his own caricature until his attention was diverted to the leading lady, Madame Octace, whose costume was somewhat...

1Labry, Herzen et Proudhon, p. 77.
2Dautry, Histoire de la révolution de 1848, p. 233.
Proudhon decided that this was not theatre; it was pornography. He could have forced the discontinuation of the piece, for both President Marrast and Dufaure felt it insulted him in his official position as a representative. Marrast called Proudhon to the president's chair for a conference, but the play was allowed to continue, for Proudhon did not want it stopped.

With the constitution out of the way, the assembly now decided upon a vote of confidence for Cavaignac since he would soon be replaced by the new president. The resolution was adopted on November 25 to the intense anger of Proudhon. Even though the rigors of deportation had been softened somewhat by Ledru-Rollin's speech in the assembly, still there remained a great gulf between the poor and the middle class. Cavaignac, as a member of the bourgeoisie, had been one of the instigators of the fateful June Days. To vote that Cavaignac had merited well of the country was to stigmatize the June insurrection for yet another time.

The assembly's next move was to set up the machinery for the election of the president. Proudhon, who had announced his strong opposition to the establishment of the office of the presidency, was now faced with the problem of how best to combat it. Before any progress could be made, it was essential that the members of the Mountain reach an agreement. Now that

---

1 For a discussion of contemporary dress, see Jean Bourdon, "Le Costume en France avant 1848 et son évolution ultérieure," Actes du Congrès historique du centenaire, pp. 243-53.
2 Darimon, A Travers une révolution, p. 126.
3 ibid., p. 124.
Blanc was in exile, he found it fairly easy to get along with the extreme 
Left, the socialists. It was the radical republican element with whom he 
had the greatest difficulty reconciling his views, since for Proudhon they 
represented the Jacobin element that, by invoking universal suffrage, had 
caused the revolution to be deflected from its course. The prime target 
of his rancor was the leader of the Mountain, Ledru-Rollin. Proudhon had 
following among some of the more radical socialists who were opposed to 
the selection of Ledru-Rollin as a presidential candidate representing the 
united Mountain. He decided to act, and at a meeting of what was called 
the democratic electoral committee in the office of Le Peuple, the decision 
was made to support Raspaìl for the presidency, even though he was in pri-
son.¹ The choice was a logical one, for since a felon could not hold of-
vice, a vote for him became a kind of protest against the presidency.² 
The choice of Raspaìl displeased Republican Solidarity, the organization 
favoring Ledru-Rollin. This organization, speaking through La Révolution 
démocratique et sociale, edited by Delescluze, accused Proudhon of foiling 
the candidacy of Ledru-Rollin purely because he was the declared partisan 
of property.³ Proudhon's committee, under the leadership of D'Alton-Shee, 
a former monarchist who had joined the socialists, replied that this accusa-
tion was not true. Besides, if the entire Mountain agreed on one candidate, 
the man still could not possibly win election. What was needed was to drive 

¹Proudhon, Confessions d'un révolutionnaire, p. 159, recalled the 
meeting in Le Peuple's editorial room. 

²D'Alton-Shee, "Politique au peuple," Le Peuple, December 9, 1848. 

³Quote from La Révolution démocratique et sociale, in "Le Procès 
de clubs," Le Peuple, November 30, 1848.
up the number of voters and thus to swell the absolute majority needed to win the election. This could be accomplished best by having two candidates so that more people could be induced to vote.¹ Tensions between the two elements of the Mountain kept increasing and Proudhon slowly became very angry.² It needed only a spark to set the fire ablaze. The spark came about from a letter that M. E. Madier, orator of the clubs, sent to Le Peuple. In it, he complained about the squabbles taking place within the Mountain, specifically mentioning Félix Pyat³ as one of its troublesome members. Proudhon published the letter with a vitriolic comment, in which he suggested that his enemies were planning to assassinate him.⁴ The following day, he met Félix Pyat in the corridors of the assembly, and Pyat spoke harshly to him about the article. Proudhon replied by hitting him in the mouth. The blow could not have been slight, for blood gushed forth. Pyat tried to slap Proudhon's face, but he was prevented from doing so by the other deputies,⁵ so he challenged his enemy to a duel. The duel should have taken place on November 30, but the president of the assembly intervened.

On that evening and the preceding evening, several workers had slept on straw mats outside Proudhon's room, ready to force him to remain away from the duel site. On December 1, he eluded his bodyguard, met Pyat, and the

¹"Le Vote du 25 Novembre," Le Peuple, November 28, 1848.
²Darimon, A Travers une révolution, p. 102.
³Pyat had moved from his earlier position behind the moderate Le National republicans to a place of prominence in the Mountain.
⁴Darimon, A Travers une révolution, p. 105.
⁵Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 150, footnote.
two exchanged shots, both missing the target. They shook hands and the duel was resolved. It should not be understood that Proudhon favored duels because he took part in this one. He realized that ugly rumors, calling him a coward, were circulating in the assembly and if he were to be of any further use in this gathering, he would have to defend his honor. ¹ He considered his participation as surrender to prejudice that still demanded physical satisfaction for an intellectual disagreement. ²

The duel with Pyat showed how divided were the forces of the Mountain, the only group prepared to fight the election of Louis Bonaparte, the lonely figure that loomed behind all the parliamentary battles that swirled around the question of an elective executive—Bonaparte, the son of the former king of Holland and of Hortense de Beauharnais, and the unhappy conspirator of Strasbourg and Boulogne. At the news of the downfall of the July Monarchy, he had left his London quarters to return to Paris. Elected to the assembly in June from the Seine and also Charente-Inférieure, Yonne and in Corse, he forced the assembly to decide on whether to seat him. ³ Lamartine had become frightened on hearing crowds shout "Vive l'Empereur," alternating strangely with "Vive Barbès," outside Bonaparte's lodgings at the Hôtel du Rhin, and he recommended exclusion; the assembly

¹Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 165. Before the duel, Proudhon summarized his life as if he were preparing for death.

²Ibid., III, p. 156. If Ritter had read volume III of the Carnets, he could never have made the footnote observation, page 200, Political Thought, "Proudhon was far from hostile to duels and fought one himself."

followed his suggestion.\footnote{1}{Le Moniteur, June 12-13, 1848, p. 1349.} Proudhon, in his \textit{Carnets}, said that he voted against the admission.\footnote{2}{Proudhon, \textit{Carnets}, III, p. 60.} Bonaparte, in a letter to the president of the assembly, resigned, saying that he did not want his name to be a motive for trouble and disorder.\footnote{3}{"La S\'\'ance," \textit{Le Repr\'esentant du peuple}, June 17, 1848.} By this happy chance, he was not tainted by any association with the June Days. In the complementary elections in September to replace representatives who had died or had been implicated in the June Days, Bonaparte was again elected in five departments. This time the assembly validated his election and he took his place on the benches of the Mountain.\footnote{4}{Hon\'ore Farat, \textit{Persigny, un ministre de Napoleon III, 1808-1872} (Paris: Hachette, 1957), p. 82.} In the assembly he provoked no great stir, for he was a poor speaker, his German accent making it difficult to understand him. It was his nullity, obvious to the members of the assembly, that convinced many of them to support him for the presidency.\footnote{5}{P.-J. Proudhon to A. M. Javel, October 12, 1848, Vol. XIII: \textit{Corres.}, p. 375, gives a general picture of how Napoleon appeared in the eyes of the representatives.} The reunion of rue de Poitiers began to rally to his cause, taking the word from Thiers, who called him a cretin.\footnote{6}{Dautry, \textit{Histoire de la r\'evolution de 1848}, p. 252.} Some members of the Left supported him also, Girardin of \textit{La Presse} being a conspicuous example.\footnote{7}{Like Proudhon, many socialists speculated that Bonaparte could never have won with such a substantial majority had some socialists not supported him. His tract on the social question, \textit{The Extinction of Poverty}, led many to believe that he was a latent socialist.}
Proudhon had no use for Bonaparte, fearing that the magic of his name would lead France back on the route of dynastic revival. The one way to defeat him was to encourage republicans to support Cavaignac, whose orthodoxy even Le National had begun to suspect. Socialists who did not believe in government should vote for Raspail, but those who believed in the future of government, the bourgeoisie for example, should vote for Cavaignac, for he represented capital stripped of all its bagatelles, such as theology, monarchy or philanthropy. If Proudhon’s support of bourgeois candidates of the same tenor as the Louis Philippe government offended the socialists, then they should remember, he remarked, that extremes touch. Cavaignac was as anti-socialist as Louis Philippe had been anti-republican. The subject could not be pursued further for it would lead to further seizures, but Proudhon was sure his readers could get the implication.

His support for Cavaignac was probably a two-edged sword, for though he detested Bonaparte and urged support of Cavaignac as a means of defeating him, his dislike for Ledru was probably even greater, for he preached to the same audience that Proudhon wished to entice—the lower classes—and

1 Proudhon, Justice [1858], IV, p. 331. Proudhon, in this section of the work, reverted back to his autobiographical account. Proudhon’s interview with Bonaparte will be described in chapter V.

2 Dautry, Histoire de la révolution de 1848, p. 247, concludes that Le National used hyperbole in describing Cavaignac, but that beneath this studied support there was a real dislike of the general who had a mind of his own. For a modern interpretation of Cavaignac, freed from Marxist overtones, see Frederick A. de Luna, The French Republic under Cavaignac, 1848 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).

3 Le Peuple had received notification on November 28 that the article, “Le Contre-révolutionnaires en 1848,” November 26, was an attack against the decree of August 1, 1848. See Le Peuple, December 1, 1848.

he claimed to be a convert to socialism. To Proudhon, Ledru and Bonaparte represented the same thing—Caesarism—an illegitimate offspring of the feudal idea of divine right, which in turn, was linked with the Christian concept of transcendental authority. From a philosophical stance, then, support for Cavaignac was logical for the doctrinaires which he represented, in Proudhon's estimation, were at least a step ahead of the feudal stage which Bonaparte represented. From a personal stance, support for the bourgeois Cavaignac was preferable to supporting the Jacobin rival, Ledru-Rollin.

On December 10 the nation went to the polls and Bonaparte won with 5,434,000 votes, 75 per cent of electors voting. The first culprit, Proudhon thought, was universal suffrage which had foolishly been allowed to drag the country one step further on the road backward to the counter revolution. The blame for this misfortune must weigh heavily upon the radical republican members of the Mountain and Ledru-Rollin, in particular. In his public assessment of the results, Proudhon cried "small victory," for he had forced the party of Le Réforme, which now called itself the Mountain, to proclaim the democratic and social republic. In pressing the candidacy of Raspail he had also elevated socialism to the status of a political party, and finally, he had forced the enemies of socialism to reduce themselves to one clear expression. That expression was capital. Other socialists did not agree with Proudhon's estimate of his part in the elections. They

---

1 After mature thought, Proudhon remained convinced that the revolution had been lost by the Jacobin element who encouraged the candidature of Bonaparte by invoking universal suffrage. See Proudhon to M. Marc Dufraisse, April 25, 1861, Vol. XI: Corres., p. 37.

2 "Après le vote," Le Peuple, December 13, 1848.
blamed him for the election of Bonaparte. Proudhon’s enemies had a strong argument, for Le Peuple added to the confusion already developing over what a vote for Bonaparte really meant. For the peasants, it was still a vote against the 45 centimes tax and a vote in favor of the communal holdings that they expected Bonaparte to restore. Bonaparte failed to dispel the confusion deliberately saying little and allowing his agent, Persigny, to speak for him. Those voting for the name of Bonaparte could have done so for a wide spectrum of conflicting reasons, rallying even bitter enemies under a single banner.

When Proudhon spoke of casting himself on the stage in the role of a new actor in the revolutionary drama, he may have expected it to be a comedy as it had been during the February Days, a tragedy as it had been during the June Days. He hardly expected a farce of the Comedy of Errors variety. To begin with, he had completely misjudged the temper of the country, con-

1Proudhon [News Summary], Le Peuple, December 15, 1848. Proudhon listed the reasons why his enemies blamed him for the election of Bonaparte. The chief reason, he maintained, was that he had announced the result, his enemies concluding that he must have caused it.

2Soboul, "La Question paysanne en 1848," p. 50.

3It is impossible to prove conclusively that Proudhon actually was not aware of the sentiment of the country and blundered into his role of a man of terror. Halévy, Le Mariage de Proudhon, p. 199, signals his naivété, and any reading of his works would give numerous examples to prove the point. For example, the letter he wrote, supposedly to a woman of light morals, Écuyère de l’Hippodrome (Gabriel Vicaire) encouraging her to lead a virtuous life. He later found out that he had been a dupe when Gazette de Paris published the letter on August 24, 1856. For the letter, July 13, 1856, see Vol. VII: Correspondence, p. 93. Another far more tragic example of his naivété was the letter he wrote to the Comte de Chambord at the request of his father-in-law, Piégard, asking for financial assistance. Piégard was condemned to prison for the offense. See Proudhon to A. M. Boutteville, August 14, 1853, Vol. V: Correspondence, p. 211. It is his naivété, along with his mature conclusion about his actions in 1848—he thanked the judge for condemning him, saving him from further blunders—that leads one to believe that Proudhon was not seeking notoriety, that he really thought he could assist in the crisis facing his country.
continuing to present his own economic measures couched in colorful language, as if the June Days had never occurred. When, instead of thoughtful discussion, he aroused an angry assembly to condemn him, he had then taken refuge in his paper, which he now no longer hoped to use to educate the common people, but rather as a means to get back at the assembly, its conservative members, and his enemies in the Mountain. Both from his newspaper editorial room and from the assembly he had then warned of an evil approaching, an evil greater than the stagnant economy. That evil was a constitution which would give authority to an elective executive, an executive who could hurl the economic revolution back into the middle ages. In his clumsy efforts to combat this evil while still harboring bitterness at members of the assembly whom he had previously thought were his friends, he disrupted the only effective force opposing Bonaparte: the Mountain. With the Mountain divided and disorganized, Bonaparte was able to capitalize on the fears of disorder rampant in the country after the June Days. The incarnation of anarchism, Proudhon, became a symbol against which all who wished to save property, religion, and family from the specter of spoilation could rally. Proudhon helped to elect Louis Bonaparte, the anti-hero who appeared unexpectedly at the end of the last act and stole the main role in a revolutionary drama now turned farce.
CHAPTER V

Proudhon in Opposition to Louis Bonaparte

Louis Bonaparte est nommé à la présidence; Robespierre monte à cheval, la Révolution passe.¹

The election of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, for Proudhon the foremost Jacobin of them all, meant that the counter-revolutionary movement was now moving at a gallop. Bonaparte must be defeated at all costs, and to defeat him, Proudhon was willing to use every means at hand, including support for the Mountain, defense of the constitution, and even an acceptance, at least temporarily, of universal suffrage. Though his writings showed a slow shift away from political action, he was still willing, in the interest of solidarity with the Mountain, to stand for election in May, 1849. Though he had earlier opposed the constitution, he now assumed the role of its defender. Though he had earlier condemned universal suffrage while still using it to get elected, he now hinted that perhaps the suffrage, if educated—and the implication is that educated meant in the Proudhonian concept of a revolution—then it could actually be a means of instituting the economic revolution.

With these shifts in his earlier philosophy, Proudhon slowly lost interest in the business of the assembly. Only when he was forced to

fight for his parliamentary immunity to stave off prosecution for his newspaper articles, was he goaded into action. The only other business of the assembly that concerned him was involved in his personal battle with Louis Bonaparte, reflected so strongly in his newspaper. This parliamentary business concerned the defense of the constitution which the president had supposedly violated in the Roman question and in the debates over the Rateau proposition to dissolve the assembly.

Proudhon's relationship with Bonaparte, one of the most contradictory facets of his contradictory career, needs close investigation, for it provides a possible clue to the mystery of an anarchist in office; the clue being his quality of disinterested opportunism that allowed him to use any measures at hand for what he considered an ultimate good. When he was accused of bad faith for his opportunism, Proudhon replied that he would go to any length to resolve the economic problems facing France; it mattered not if the means were slightly soiled if the ends were good. This explains why he accepted the invitation of Bonaparte for a meeting on September 26, 1848. The interview had been solicited by Bonaparte. Proudhon, sensing that the meeting would compromise his position with the Mountain, did not consent to the interview until he learned that Ledru-Rollin would be there also. The meeting, arranged by the Bonapartist de Bassano, took place at Boulevard des Italians, with Proudhon, Schmelz, and Joly present, the latter replacing Ledru who said he was unable to attend. The account of the meeting in the Carnets is laconic, Proudhon commenting that the man appeared to be well intentioned, more full of the glory of his uncle than of ambition for himself. He suspected, that seen more closely, Bonaparte would
display a mediocre intellect. The conversation ranged over the topics of
the day: the question of the organization of work, finances, foreign policy,
and the constitution. To the surprise of his auditors, no matter
how radical they declared themselves to be, Bonaparte appeared to be in
smiling agreement with them. He spoke little, trying to draw out his
guests. When they spoke of the suppression of newspapers and the continuing
state of siege, Bonaparte agreed with them, blaming Cavaignac for the
fear circulating in the country.¹ According to Darimon, who said that
Proudhon asked him to make a minute of the meeting in case he might forget
what happened, it was Proudhon who was listened to most attentively when
he urged Bonaparte to respect the constitution. As his guests were leaving,
Bonaparte complimented Proudhon for the original ideas he presented and
expressed pleasure at having met him. Proudhon assured him that compliments
were unnecessary, reminding the Prince that if he truly desired to collect
the glory his uncle had received, then he must institute the economic re-
volution,² adding in his Carnets that he was annoyed with the efforts of
Bonaparte to cultivate the heads of parties.³

The secret meeting with Bonaparte caused Proudhon much pain, for
his ambivalent attitude disturbed even his supporters. When the news leaked
out, Le Langue de vipère, for example, parodied the meeting, ridiculing
Proudhon's efforts to sound out the Prince on his social ideas.⁴ Proudhon

¹Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 111.
²Darimon, A Travers une révolution, p. 74.
³Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 111.
⁴"M. Proudhon et un haut personnage," Le Langue de vipère, February, 1849.
later explained the visit in a letter to Girardin. It was possible, he maintained, that Bonaparte had a real desire to learn how the economic revolution could be instituted. Since the first republic had perished by the hands of a Bonaparte, it might one day be re-established by another Bonaparte.1 He had merely taken a long chance.

The picture presented by the Carnets is even more ambiguous.2

Shortly before the meeting with Bonaparte, Proudhon had asked himself who were the ambitious men who exploited social doctrines, answering by naming Bonaparte who had seated himself in a high position on the benches of the Mountain so that he could swoop, like an eagle, on the presidency.3

Later, when he was deeply involved in battles with the Mountain, Proudhon decided, probably satirically, that if it were necessary for them to have a king, the counter-revolutionary movement of society having regressed as far back as Danton, then he would choose Bonaparte.4

To the public, Proudhon presented himself as the president's opponent. His hard line with Bonaparte in Le Peuple may have been a move to reinstate himself with the Mountain. The attack began with a vitriolic article in which the president was named representative of the reaction.

1P.-J. Proudhon to Émile de Girardin, July 11, 1849, Vol. III: Correspondance, p. 15. Later, when he was again condemned for continuing to communicate with Bonaparte, Proudhon answered his critics by saying he'd visit the devil for the cause of freedom.

2Nicola Chiaromonte, "Proudhon--An Uncomfortable Thinker," Politics, I (January, 1946), p. 27, could not have followed all of Proudhon's tortuous relationship with the president, or he would not have said that his attitude toward him was "sufficiently clear and honest."

3Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 103.

4Ibid., p. 134.
Still smarting because of his fight with the Mountain, he reiterated that he had only tried to raise the electoral majority needed so as to make it harder for Louis Bonaparte to be elected.¹

_Le Peuple_ saved its next diatribe for December 20 when Bonaparte took the oath of office and named Odilon Barrot as the chief of state.² Proudhon observed that the first act of Bonaparte, after taking office, was to choose as president of his council of ministers a man who voted for a house of two chambers and wanted a return to monarchical government. He was not a republican, for he threatened the constitution. The president's speech, after taking the oath of office, was disturbing also, for he had called enemies of the republic all those who tried to change the constitution by illegal means, the assumption being that it was permissible to change it by legal means.³ The third concern was the action of Odilon Barrot in immediately proposing immunity for the new president. This move would make the president equal with the assembly, the first step of the new government toward the restoration of a constitutional monarchy by legal means. What Bonaparte really wanted was a coalition ministry, a coalition against that species of modern barbarism—socialism. "Courage then, Bonaparte! March, by legal ways, to the monarchical restoration, against

¹Proudhon, "Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte," _Le Peuple_, December 18, 1848.

²Farat, _Persigny_, p. 85.

³Proudhon was not the only one disturbed by the president's speech, for he had used the word, reactionary, in a pejorative sense, promising to be neither a reactionary nor a utopist. Conservatives, who felt that Bonaparte was their creature, were annoyed at this appeal to middle of the road republicans. See the comments by V. de Mars, "Chronique de la quinzaine, 31 Décembre, 1848," _Revue des deux mondes_, I (February, 1849), p. 169.
which you have taken the oath. Courage! It is a glory that you are certain to obtain; as the last of the emperors, whom contemporaries will name by derision Romulus Augustulus, you will be Bonaparte the Little, Napoleon the dwarf."

As if this attack were not strong enough, Le Peuple on the following day continued its charges with irony so cruel it could hardly be overlooked. "Forty-nine years ago, a Bonaparte performed the eighteenth Brumaire and the reign of corruption ended—a new Bonaparte installed himself on December tenth and the reign of corruption commences again."

Democracy and socialism having no greater enemy than the new president, Proudhon thrust at him a final challenge: Calumniate, intrigue, organize the counter revolution. All of these efforts were of no avail, bringing even greater sorrow on the president than on his enemies, for "... you are the serpent of the revolution, but your teeth will shatter on the steel of our consciences."²

Harsh words against the president were not enough to woo back the Mountain, disenchanted by his voting pattern over the past few months; his attitude of eternal opposition with authority made any kind of entente with the republican opposition difficult. But perhaps even more basic reasons kept them apart, one of them being a fundamental divergence on the basic ends of politics. Proudhon, who submitted all political actions to economic ends, was ill fitted to please the Mountain whose members hoped

---

¹Proudhon, "Le Serment," Le Peuple, December 22, 1848.

²Proudhon [News Summary], Le Peuple, December 23, 1848.
to control government. A second essential difference between him and the Mountain was the class from which they sprang. The majority of the Mountain were middle class who felt that because of their education and culture they were uniquely fitted to govern France. The artisan with ink on his hands and his Suard pension promise of working for the amelioration of the lot of the poorest class fitted uneasily into their company. Thus, despite government action closing in on both Proudhon and the Mountain, they continued their intra-party feud oblivious of the danger. Delescluze challenged Proudhon to a duel, his seconds, Amable Lemaitre, Sr., and Auguste Dalican, reporting in a letter to Révolution démocratique et sociale that they had presented the gage to Proudhon who had flatly refused; he had vindicated himself once by fighting a duel with Pyat and it was unnecessary to go through a second ritual to prove his courage and integrity.

The noose was closing in around the squabbling sects, for the new Minister of the Interior, Léon Faucher, informed the nation that the organization of the Mountain, Republican Solidarity, was a state within a state and as such forbidden by the decree of July 28, 1848. He had refrained from closing the offices of the club during the time of elections, he said, but by December 12, he had felt it advisable to do so. Even more crucial for the Mountain and its socialist section was the projected decree of Barrot which would bring those incriminated in the May 15 disorders before

---


2 See [News Summary], Le Peuple, December 31, 1848, for the entire account, including the letters of Dalican and Lemaitre.

3 For the text of the decree, see Le Moniteur, January 27, 1849, p. 273.
a special high court, instead of the regular courts, implicating further many members of the Mountain. On the same day, Faucher demanded from the assembly permission to take legal action against Proudhon for his articles in Le Peuple.¹

Still the fight within the Mountain rolled merrily along. This time it was with Victor Considerant, leader of Fourier's followers and guiding spirit of Démocratie pacifique. The argument between the two papers had been going on for some time before Proudhon became aware of it and stepped into the discussion in a rejoinder that was typical of the kind of selective reading in which he engaged: taking one tenet which he disliked in a man's philosophy—in this case, the relationship between the sexes—and on the basis of the one tenet, rejecting the entire philosophy. The rejection was frequently accompanied by some Biblical allusion.

He began the argument by commenting that he disliked Considerant's tone which was that of a schoolmaster disciplining a child. He disliked even more his comparison of the two journals, the one as pacific socialism separated by an abyss from the other, the savage socialism of Proudhon. Finally, he disliked the comparison of himself with an Erostratus. If his stand on Fourier's philosophy had been unclear in the past, he now wished to clarify it—he rejected all the works of Fourier, no matter under what form they were construed. In particular, he opposed his teachings on the relationship between the sexes, for it was diametrically opposed to marriage and the family. It was too late for Considerant to retreat from his

¹For a contemporary account of the assembly's actions, see V. de Mars, "Chronique de la quinzaine," Revue des deux mondes, I (February, 1849), pp. 496-97.
adversary, for his last bell had sounded and he must die without founding a school or producing anything of merit. In fact, he was dead already. What remained was to exorcise his ghost returned to the land of the living to demand alms for his soul. Proudhon would willingly recite the De Profundis and offer fifteen sous for a black Mass.¹

It was his comments upon the disputes in the assembly rather than his arguments with the factions, however, that led to the final suppression of his second paper. Suppression was inevitable, Proudhon noting in his column of daily events that the persecution had already begun. Eugène Barestre of La République had already been brought to trial, being acquitted by a friendly jury to the great scandal of the public prosecutor. Proudhon's own editors, Duchêne and Vasbenter, had already been brought to trial, Duchêne for the prospectus of Le Peuple. Vasbenter, managing editor of Le Réprésentant, had tried to help him, but he was already involved in legal actions that would sentence him, in all, to seventeen months in prison and fines of 5,200 francs. Because they had "tried to define the sense of the February revolution," eight other writers had followed the two men to prison.²

In spite of pending court cases, Le Peuple continued reporting on events in the assembly, remarking that after its decree reducing the tax on salt, this body was the only obstacle now remaining within the path of the counter revolution.³ But the article that brought down the wrath

²[News Summary], Le Peuple, December 29, 1848.
³"Le Vote d'hier," Le Peuple, January 24, 1849.
of the government was "La Guerre," which concerned the Rateau proposition calling for the dissolution of the constituent assembly, a proposition which had the strong support of Bonaparte. It was unseemly for the president to take any part in the dissolution of the assembly, Proudhon argued, for the constitution clearly gave to that body the right to dissolve itself. The constitution, once accepted, must be supported at all costs; like the earlier charter of Louis Philippe, it might be the quickest, pacific route to the new social order. Rateau's proposition and the opposition response of Jules Grévy brought into the open the duel between the assembly and Bonaparte, the personification of all reactionary forces who conspired with the monarchical coterie--the Jesuits, the absolutists--to enslave the people.1 "La Guerre," however, gave one the impression that the duel was really between Proudhon and Bonaparte, the president of the republic now being able to see clearly that Proudhon was his most outspoken critic. The government's immediate response was to seize the offending article. Undaunted, he returned to the attack on the following day. To call Bonaparte a counter revolutionary was not an invention of polemic, he wrote, it was a fact. In a full column listing of the faults of the president, he concluded that it was he alone who at that moment desired to re-mount the ashes of the throne and crown, in order to become a king.2 The vitriolic attack led to an immediate demand for legal action in the assembly, on January 27, 1849. Both Duchêne and Proudhon were held

1Le Peuple, January 26, 1849. The article was unsigned, but Proudhon, when brought to trial, said that this was an oversight, taking full responsibility for it.

2Le Peuple, January 27, 1849.
responsible, the demand being based on Article I of the law of May 17, 1818 forbidding any articles causing hatred and contempt of government and attacking the constitution. As if that weren't enough, the offenders had also troubled the public peace.¹ Proudhon replied that it was the Rateau proposition that violated the constitution, and not Le Peuple.² His comments in the Carnets are even stronger, striking out at the impudent hypocrisy of the minister in attacking him, while at the same time allowing Changarnier to build up the number of troops stationed in Paris and by tolerating, in the assembly, unconstitutional proposals.³

Members of the assembly were free from legal action, for the courts could proceed only if immunity were removed by a vote of the assembly, but in Proudhon's case, the vote lifting his immunity came quickly with only forty voices in opposition.⁴ Several reasons can be given to explain why the assembly surrendered its jealously held prerogative. It should be recalled that when Caussidiere and Blanc were in a similar position in August, 1849, Proudhon sat passively by, making no move to help them. Later, he lost the support of practically the entire Mountain by his refusal to support its candidate in the December election to the presidency. As far

¹ Le Moniteur, January 28, 1849, p. 293, gives the decree of Faucher. Herzen had noted the ridiculousness of a republic digging into old laws of the Restoration in order to find one strong enough to imprison its critics. See Labry, Herzen et Proudhon, p. 77.

² Proudhon, "Le président de la République est responsable; la proposition Rateau le rend inviolable," Le Peuple, January 29, 1849.

³ Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 164.

⁴ Ibbid., p. 171, footnote. For the text of the resolution authorizing legal action against Proudhon, see Le Moniteur, February 15, 1849.
as the remainder of the assembly was concerned, Thiers had clearly stigmatized Proudhon as an enemy of public morals and a destroyer of property. Any other member of the assembly, even a Croppa, in danger of losing his immunity, might have received sympathetic support from at least one side of the assembly; for the man of "the sublime horror of the cannonade," there was none.

Left on his own to defend himself, Proudhon replied in a speech appearing to have two purposes: first, to point to himself as the defender of the constitution against its real attacker, Bonaparte; second, to project his economic and philosophic ideas. The result was a rambling discourse, frequently interrupted and called to order by the president.

He began by arguing that he did not oppose the taking away of his inviolability as such, but that it was taken away with a hostile intent. He was the defender of the constitution, as Le Peuple had demonstrated for its readers during the past few months. All of his articles had been in that vein and against the aberrations of the executive power. If to attack the pretensions of the president was an attack on the constitution, then certainly he was culpable. The real expression of the constitution was the assembly. He had merely said that if the president lacked the support of the assembly, he should resign. This same thing had been said at the tribune by both Louis Perreé and Dupont (de Bussac). Neither had he aroused the people when he put them into two categories: those for and those against the republic. The socialists, members of the latter category, had, like the Albigensies and the Vaudois, been marked for persecution. Speak against the socialists, he said, and one would never be accused of
exciting hatred of the republic; but dare to attack the capitalists and reactionaries, and one must endure endless accusations. All the griefs alleged against Proudhon hid the real injury, that injury being the criticism of Bonaparte. It was he who should be Proudhon's accuser, and not the assembly.

Proudhon interrupted his defense long enough to bring in an accusation against Barrot and his favoring of a two-house assembly, proving Barrot to be a monarchist. Bonaparte, in appointing Barrot to office, had showed that he wished the restoration of the monarchy. The president of the assembly interrupted Proudhon, saying that it was a matter of opinion whether the desire for a two-house legislature meant an intention to restore a constitutional monarchy, but Proudhon merely repeated his charge that Barrot was not a republican. Another digression in the defense speech concerned the concentration of troops in the capital. This concentration served to underline the basic question of whether the president was equal in power with the assembly. This was why Proudhon was called anti-republican and anti-democratic, because he had seen this pretension of equality between the two powers, sustained at the tribune by the president's chief council, Barrot. Seeing this pretension, he had said to himself, "The president of the republic is not a republican."¹

In a note to Le Peuple, Proudhon corrected errors of diction that Le Moniteur had included in his speech, saying that he needed the eloquent words of a Jules Favre and the rigorous precision of a Jules Grévy to

¹For the text of the speech, see Le Moniteur, February 15, 1848, pp. 493-96.
develop his ideas. For his own part, he was no orator, perhaps a subtle move to get two great parliamentary leaders to see that, since he was the leading supporter of the assembly and defender of the constitution, they should take up his defense.

The January 29 disturbance in the capital, to which Proudhon referred, was tied up with the Rateau proposition which Bonaparte strongly supported, Barrot undertaking the parliamentary campaign. Proudhon had put his finger upon Bonaparte's stumbling block, the constituent assembly which steadfastly refused to dissolve. Bonaparte wanted to intimidate both Republican Solidarity, the group which Minister Faucher had already been closely surveilling, and also to make an impression on the assembly which was at that moment debating the Rateau proposition. The government proclamation announced that the same faction that had attacked the social order during the June Days necessitated the calling up of the national guards. In order to excuse their actions, this group accused the government of violating the constitution. Bonaparte reviewed the troops amassed in the city, responding to cries of "Vive Napoléon! and "Vive la République!" Le Moniteur did not record the other shouts of "Vive l'Empereur," but Proudhon heard them, and celebrated the event with a bitter article on Bonaparte's first campaign toward the re-installation of an empire. If Bonaparte had serious in-


2 Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 165, footnote.

3 Le Moniteur, January 30, 1849, p. 303.

4 Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 164.

tentions of forcing the assembly to dissolve it would be convenient first to silence Proudhon, the intrepid journalist who ran ahead of him proclaiming his intentions.¹

The amassing of troops was received with consternation, the assembly demanding an investigation. If there were a disturbance in the city, a disturbance necessitating the calling up of the national guard, the question was: Who caused the disturbance? Was the culprit the one named by the government or was it the government itself? The assembly considered the bulletins sent to the provinces from the department of the interior, bulletins ordering the prefects to encourage respectful petitions telling the assembly that the greatest need of the moment was its dissolution.² The government action provided a more solid basis of accusation against it than any nebulous social uprising linked with the biting and sharp comments of the socialist faction, and Le Peuple, in particular.

In his prison Confessions, Proudhon found the link between January 1849 and the movement of the counter-revolutionary forces that had begun, in March 16, 1848, the long rolling back of the economic revolution. This time it had been the reaction of Barrot and Falloux, who wanted to destroy the republic. The president, having become a symbol of the rejection of political factions by a people tired out with the squabbles of the provisional government and the constituent assembly had helped the cause. Thus the government was moving backward from the republic, through the constitutional monarchy of the doctrinaires, into the medieval concept of

¹Historians are still divided on the meaning of the January 29, 1849 demonstration. See the footnote in the Carnets, III, p. 165.

²Le Moniteur, February 4, 1849, p. 578.
divine right authority resting in one person. Weak as it was, the assembly sustained the revolution, for it extenuated power by putting it into many hands. The retrograde movement on the part of Bonaparte, concentrating power in the hands of a few, was part of the counter-revolutionary sweep.¹

As the government prepared to bring Proudhon to trial, his thinking moved gradually away from governmental initiative into independent action on the part of the people, as if realizing that his work in the assembly, his attempts at economic reform through government intervention, had been a kind of aberration from his earlier position of non-government, and a failure. He did not equate the failure with his own fumbling steps in presenting his economic proposals before the assembly. If anyone were at fault, it was the Mountain, for they had refused to support his proposals: the July 31 one and the August proposal that the government borrow two million francs. If the educated bourgeoisie making up the assembly refused to vote his economic revolution, he would return to his former position (before 1848) of non-government and enlist the poorer classes in a revolution from below, as he had earlier described it. His first move in the direction of independent action had been the founding of Le Représentant du peuple, as the first step in an economic revolution—the education of the people. The prospectus of a bank of the people had been published at

¹Proudhon, Les Confessions d'un révolutionnaire, p. 228.
the same time as the specimen issue of *Le Réprèsentant* in October, 1847, but had remained without any implementation since the assembly had declined to pass the measures Proudhon proposed. In his second non-governmental move, he decided to organize the bank of exchange on his own. Because his revolution was peaceful, it was necessary to get government consent, even though the government was not called upon to instigate the action.¹ The act constituting the bank came up before the notary on January 31, 1849. As constituted, the bank would have a capital of five million francs, divided into stocks of five francs each. According to article 10 of the statute, the bank would not begin functioning until at least 50,000 francs had been subscribed in stocks. To retain legality, it was organized as a stock company with Proudhon named as the director.² The first stocks in the new bank went to Bisontins who had subscribed, in November, 1848, five thousand francs to cover the first costs of the new bank.

It is impossible to attempt to separate Proudhon's economic from his moral ideas,³ because, though at one time, he attached an almost mystic


³This is the problem with Hoffman, "The Social and Political Theory of P.-J. Proudhon." See his chapter on the revolution of 1848 in which he claims Proudhon thought his bank would solve the entire economic problem, ignoring Proudhon's philosophy of the collective. Charles Rist, "La pensée économique de Proudhon," *Revue d'histoire économique et sociale*, XXXIII (April-June, 1955), pp. 129-65, succeeds better, for he acknowledged the existence of other facets of Proudhon's thought.
quality to the bank, making it solve all the moral and economic ills of
the country, at other times he realized that it was only one facet of an
entire economic and social situation that needed correction.¹ The bank would
be merely a first move in the right direction, showing the country what
popular initiative could do without government assistance. In opening his
subscription list, Proudhon felt it also necessary to educate the people
to the whole economic venture, and he did so by giving a short outline of
what could be a philosophy for the common man.² Following a tendency of
autodidacts, he read selectively from the works of current philosophy,
pulling out those facts that would strengthen his own argument, concluding
that his own program was the culmination of earlier programs.³

He began by explaining that the idea must always precede the
material in the first law of humanity which was progress. New ideas negated
the earlier ones just as Christianity negated the earlier idea of poly-
theism. Progress was continuous but not uniform, like the shooting star
that moves faster as it approaches the sun, the epochs of acceleration
being called revolutionary. For this revolutionary acceleration to aid in

¹See the introductory comments of Aimé Berthod, Idée générale de

²Georges Guy-Grand, "Proudhon est-il philosophe?" Revue Bleue,
LXIX (May, 1930), p. 268, discusses Proudhon's desire to develop a popular
philosophy to replace the Christian one, a philosophy close to the realities
of daily life: the family, work, marriage, death.

³Note, for example, in Création de l'ordre, his pompous explanation
of the dim gropings that slowly led up to his own discovery of the serial
law. Page 121 gives an excellent example of his selective use of the writings
of other philosophers.
the progress of society, it must be just or legitimate, pacific, and legal.

There would always be opposition to the revolution from those interests that would lose out because of progress,\(^1\) but the movement could not be stopped. Saint-Simon had opposed it, for he placed art before science,\(^2\) a move which would lead to a restoration of Papal anarchy and feudalism, compromising marriage. The school of Fourier wanted to regenerate humanity by science, but in confirming different interests by proclaiming the inequality of men by nature, the school approached Catholicism by a different route. Blanc relied upon the state to institute the economic revolution; like that of all communists, the revolution he proposed was thus illegitimate, illegal, and impractical.\(^3\) The idea of February was actually reciprocity of credit, the right to work being the same as the right to credit, for all workers were capitalists. If credit was reciprocal, it must also be gratuitous, for credit was a form of exchange.\(^4\) This was the meaning of the revolution of February, a gradual movement toward equality begun by cor-

---

\(^1\) Proudhon, "Démonstration du socialisme, théorique et pratique, pour servir d'instruction aux souscripteurs et adhérents à la Banque du Peuple," \(\text{Le Peuple, February 25-26, 1849.}\)

\(^2\) Proudhon believed that artists had a large dose of the womanly trait of imagination which would be replaced by rational thought in the new free society. He had, of course, quickly pounced upon this statement of Saint-Simon's, disregarding the remainder of his philosophy.

\(^3\) Proudhon, "Suite," \(\text{Le Peuple, March 12, 1849.}\)

\(^4\) Proudhon, "Suite," \(\text{Le Peuple, March 19, 1849.}\)
recting an error of count upsetting man's peaceful competition to sell his goods.

Judged on his own terms, Proudhon's project of a bank reduced itself to the question of gratuity of exchange. He did not accept totally the idea that labor alone creates value, realizing that a part of the value created was in lieu of the exchange; when the collectivity produces, as he explained many times, it creates more than each individual working by himself.\(^1\) This value, however, once created, could not be exchanged mutually, because of permanent capital (property) which took its supply from the collective and because of circulating capital (gold) which took a further amount from the collective wealth. The way, of course, to defeat this enslavement of the exchange was to constitute the value of exchangeable commodities. Commodities would not fluctuate in price if speculators were no longer allowed to manipulate the market.\(^2\) Each commodity would have its own value constituted in relation with other commodities on the exchange. The \textit{bons d'imprunt} would not represent gold; they would represent actual commodities.\(^3\) "It is necessary


\(^{2}\)For Proudhon's mature thought on gratuitous credit, see \textit{Justice}, [1858], II, p. 85.

\(^{3}\)It is easy to poke holes in Proudhon's underlying ideas on interest. It must be recalled, however, that these ideas closely resemble those of Keynes who wanted interest drastically reduced, whereas Proudhon would like it abolished entirely. A contemporary of Proudhon's, Jules Vrau, \textit{Proudhon et son système économique} (Paris: Dedayen, 1853) presented similar economic ideas, though he was critical of Proudhon. It is interesting to note that Keynes did not give either Vrau or Proudhon credit for influencing him. For an account of the entire economic position of Proudhon by one of his contemporaries, see A. E. Cherebuliez, "Concours de l'impôt institué par le conseil d'état du Juillet, 1861," \textit{Journal des économistes}, XXXI (July, 1961), pp. 88-99. Cherebuliez selected Proudhon's pamphlet as the winning one in the contest sponsored by the Swiss canton of Vaud.
to destroy the royalty of gold," Proudhon had written in March, 1848, "It is necessary to republicanize the numéraire, by making of each product of labor a current money."¹

Money is not, however, merely a medium of exchange; it is also a reservoir of value and interest is the price paid for time. This Proudhon failed to realize. The demand that men loan money without being given a return for the loan violates justice in its most elementary form, for the time element is a value. If one does not acknowledge it, he replaces justice with charity.²

Proudhon's certificates of exchange should not be confused with paper money, for which he had a horror. He wanted his certificates to actually represent the transfer of an equal amount of human labor. Instead of cheap money, he wanted dear money so that everyone would realize that he must become a producer. The unproductive element in exchange (that not produced by human labor) being sheared off, society could be reconstituted on its true base, equality in the exchange.

As the subscription list opened for the exchange bank, his attention was diverted to two other events taking place; the first was the final dissolution of the assembly and the subsequent elections for the new legislative body and the second was his own defense in the court action against him occasioned by his articles in Le Peuple. Because of his involvement, the editors had been allowed to direct the paper as they saw fit, causing em-

¹Proudhon, Solution du problème social, pp. 112-14.

²Rist, "La Pensée économique de Proudhon," pp. 133-34.
barrassment to Proudhon, in particular, by the article of December 25, 1848, entitled, "Noel." In the article which concerned the mother of Robespierre, the religious festival was associated with a new socialist religion which would replace Catholicism. Proudhon, in public, defended his editors, saying that the article had appeared only in deference to a socialist friend who wanted his article published since his paper had already been silenced. ¹

Proudhon noted that on the same day *Siccle* had called the socialists atheists, quoting from a passage in *Contradictions* in which the antinomy of the theological idea was demonstrated. This proved that socialists were atheists in the same measure as the objections recorded by Saint Thomas in the *Summa* demonstrated that he was an atheist. ² But he was more annoyed with socialist newspapers who enjoyed his awkward position. In particular, *Révolution démocratique et sociale* angered him, causing him to dub the paper, "*Révolution pretended démocratique et sociale,*" linking the editors with police agent de la Hodde and police prefect Carlier. ³

Despite the fact that Proudhon's name was no longer on the masthead, ⁴ issues of the paper were still seized by the government. On February 11, *Le Peuple* announced its sixth seizure, this time for an article defending those condemned in the death of Brea during the June Days. When Proudhon was condemned to prison, the confiscations continued. From his prison cell, he began

¹Proudhon [News Summary], *Le Peuple*, December 29, 1848.


³Ibid., p. 116.

⁴Darimon speculated that Proudhon had removed his name because he did not want further embarrassment from his inept editors. See page 114.
to seek confères to help him raise the caution money now becoming
dangerously low. One of the men he turned to was Girardin of La Presse,
intimating that the two papers should one day form an alliance and march
in concert, for the time of "politics of remembrance, of the grinding of
teeth" was past, leaving the field clear to men of ideas. Until such time
as a liaison between the two papers could be arranged, Proudhon asked
Girardin if he could afford to help in raising the caution money.\(^1\) Girardin
was disinterested in both proposals.

But before the government decided to clamp down entirely on *Le
Peuple*, there was an election to be held. Proposition Rateau, requiring that
the assembly be dissolved, had finally passed with the addition of an amend-
ment of Lanjuinais, deputy from Loire-Inférieure, and former member of the
dynastic opposition. The amendment set up the work to be done before the
assembly dissolved: It would decide on presidential responsibility, the
membership of the council of state, and an electoral and budgetary law.\(^2\)
The assembly did not want to accept the amended proposition, but realizing
that public sentiment favored its dissolution, decided that it must bow be-
fore opinion. The dissolution would take effect on May 26, after the general
elections to the new body, the legislative assembly, the elections taking
place on May 13.\(^3\)

*Le Peuple* commented on the dissolution of the assembly, noting

\(^2\)Dautry, *Histoire de la révolution de 1848*, p. 264.
that Lamartine had voted with the majority. The editors agreed with
Proudhon's earlier observation that Lamartine wanted to make of the revolution
only a machine for poetry, a euphemism for lies. But before dissolving
itself, the assembly made one move that would permit it to exercise some kind
of moral control over the new assembly and over the foreign affairs of the
government. It passed a resolution on May 7, 1849 prohibiting the govern-
ment from attacking Rome.

By the time of the elections of 1849 the moderate republican party
had lost prestige and thus was less of a force than the radical and conserva-

ative parties. The conservatives chose a new name for themselves, the
Liberal Union, and attempted to unite all of the Right—the Legitimists,
the Catholics, the Orleanists and the Bonapartists—the only exception being
the followers of Jerome Bonaparte, called Napoleon of the Left. The
Liberal Union appealed to the rural element of the country in particular,
with Veuillot of l'Univers working to gain adherents. The radicals had
been forced to go underground with their organization, Republican Solidarity,
after Faucher had forced them to disband. The central committee had sixty-
four members and, as president, Martin Bernard, with Delescluze as secretary.
Among its members were the most active representatives of the Mountain, Ledru-
Rollin and Félix Pyat. The government, however, controlled the prefects

2 Tocqueville, Recollections, p. 229.
3 Dautry, Histoire de la révolution de 1848, p. 269.
4 La Gorce, Seconde république, p. 15.
and Léon Faucher continued the government policy of meddling in the
elections. His directions to his prefects showed that the country was
not so clearly divided into two camps as formerly believed, for in each
camp there were a number of divisions. Faucher warned his prefects to work
by word of mouth only, to avoid the scandal of the public knowing about
government influence in the elections; there were dangers, he said, from
a white mountain as well as from a red mountain.¹

At first, Proudhon did not want to stand for election. His motives
were not clear. He may have wanted to punish the Mountain for not supporting
him earlier, for now that he was a national figure, the Mountain needed his
candidature. He may also have felt that it was a mistake to become a can-
didate since he was certain to be condemned to prison in his impending trial
and the assembly had not declared whether he could serve if he were a prisoner
for a press offense. He had also begun turning away from any participation
in government, a move that had been more strongly pronounced after the
election of Bonaparte, as if he had given up on any opportunistic measures
that might bring the economic revolution closer by government decree. These
arguments motivated him to resign, naming Guinard, a man implicated in the
June uprising, as his replacement.² His resignation raised a storm of com-
plaints, the Mountain even proposing that he be judged a traitor if he
persisted in retiring his candidature. In the interest of solidarity,

¹Theodore Zeldin, "Government Policy in the French General Election

²Joseph Augustin Guinard was a republican member of the secret
societies, becoming the deputy mayor of Paris and chief of staff of the
national guard in 1848. A member of the Left, he nonetheless rallied to
Cavaignac in June, before cooperating with Ledru-Rollin in the June, 1849
demonstration.
Proudhon agreed to become a candidate.1 Once he decided to run, he took his case to his newspaper, though he was quite clearly not so enthusiastic as he had been in earlier elections, his campaigning probably being distracted by the trial he endured on March 28 and his condemnation to prison on April 12. Even though he was a convict in hiding from the government, Proudhon's name appeared on the list supported by the Mountain along with the names of some of his greatest adversaries: Considerant, Lamennais, Ledru-Rollin, Pierre Leroux, and Félix Pyat.2

Indicative of his general attitude toward all utopian programs, Proudhon responded to a letter in Populaire concerning his relationship with the Cabetians in the forthcoming election:

I have no system, nor do I want one, for I formally repulse the proposition. We will recognize the system of humanity only when we reach the end of humanity. I do not know the way humanity is going and I am not curious to find out. All that interests me is to find the route, so that if I am able, I may be able to clear the way. On the chariot of humanity, we are all travelers, and I am the postilion.3

Proudhon's interest improved slightly on the following day when Parisians awakened to find huge yellow placards posted around the city advising Catholics of his candidature and then giving the punishment pronounced by the Church against apostasy, its kinds and in certain cases, what legal action could be taken against an apostate.4 The opposition of the Catholic

---

1 Darimont, A Travers une révolution, pp. 137-40.
2 Aimable faubourien, May, 1849.
party was sure to awaken Proudhon's fighting spirit; in order to make his candidature more acceptable to his readers, he now prepared to explain why he could support the program of the Mountain when he had been unable to support it in November, 1848. The program of the Mountain had been prepared by Félix Pyat and contained a melange of the right to work with the right to capital when capital meant the instruments of labor. The program also called for the suppression of the presidency, and the submission of the executive power to the legislative branch, freedom of the press without the necessity of caution money, the election of civil servants, the reduction of the large salaries of government officials, reform of military and judicial institutions, the abolition of all taxes on salt and beverages, the removal of the tax of 45 centimes and the return of the money collected, revision of the tax on patents, and the institution of a progressive tax on income.¹ Though Proudhon might disagree with some of the program, the progressive income tax, for example, a great portion of it incorporated his proposals, probably a move toward solidarity within the ranks of the Mountain by the selection of a program on which all could agree. In supporting the program, he explained that at least the men of the Mountain knew that it was necessary to move forward constantly in order to avoid sliding backward into the counter-revolutionary movement. In principle, the proposal of the Mountain recognized the progressive basis of interest and recognized that the universalization of property resulted from granting the right to work.²

¹Dautry, Histoire de la révolution de 1848, p. 271.
²"Sur la Programme de la Montagne," Le Peuple; April 11, 1849. The article was unsigned.
article on April 20 indicates that at least, for a brief moment, he had accepted the idea of universal suffrage even though organized on a political, rather than on an economic base. Whoever says universal suffrage, he now maintained, means the national will manifested, not for all eternity, but freely and at the moment, according to the state of progress and the needs of society. That was the republican principle; who would dare to negate it? Thus, unity, legality, and order were the direct results of universal suffrage, the eternal republican constitution of the human genre from which monarchy was only a passing deviation. It was the duty of those who protested against the constitution to submit to it now. To conspire against it was a crime, since it could be changed by legal means. Once accepted, the constitution closed off the road back to monarchy. Even more significant, if universal suffrage could create equality in the body politic, it might also be made to create it in the economic order. Some social thinkers had even said that the political revolution contained, implicit within it, the social revolution. Proudhon concluded by affirming that the republic was the form of government which would lead to unity, liberty and order, by a unique principle: universal suffrage.\(^1\)

The enigma of why Proudhon, the earlier opponent of universal suffrage, should now turn, even if momentarily, to its defense can only be answered partially. He may have hoped, in another opportunistic move,

to beat Bonaparte at his own game--gaining election for himself and his

colleagues by supporting the popular idea of universal suffrage. He may have
genuinely changed his mind, at least for a time, about suffrage, since it
had been the means by which he had been able to present his economic views
in the July 31 speech. Whatever the motive, it was a clear contradiction
of his position in February, 1848, when he had called it the "materialism
of the republic."

The further enigma of why, after chastizing Bonaparte for desiring
to change the constitution through legal means, he now turned and acknowledged
the necessity of legally revising it, has no satisfactory answer either.
His later comments lead one to believe that this was merely an opportunistic
measure, useful against the reactionary element desiring the return of a
king. He gave no explanation for the shifts in his thought, almost as if
he were unaware of contradicting himself.

On May 19 Le Peuple listed those who had won from among the twenty-
eight positions open in the Seine. The list included Ledru-Rollin, Hugo,
Pyat, Lamennais, Cavaignac, Considerant, Pierre Leroux; Proudhon, by now
in hiding from the government, had lost the election, though he lost by
little. He had 103,823 votes, the smallest number of votes given to a
winning candidate being 107,825. ¹ According to Benoit, Proudhon was ir-
ritated by losing the elections and blamed the communists for not supporting
him more enthusiastically. Benoit, who talked to him as he paraded in dis-

¹Hoffman, "The Social and Political Theory of P.-J. Proudhon," p. 174, is confused in recording that Proudhon won the election. He may have relied on the confused account in Halévy's work, Le Mariage de Proudhon, p. 247.
guise outside Care du Nord, tried to make him see that the communists
Cabet and Charrassin had obtained less votes than he had received, but
Proudhon was not satisfied and vowed that he would avenge his defeat.¹

In the new legislative assembly, the moderate followers of Lamartine
had dwindled in number to around eighty. The radical membership had in-
creased to 180 members, with Ledru-Rollin making a spectacular comeback,
being elected in five constituencies. The party of order, with 460 deputies,
was in full control of the assembly, but they were a divided group, with
probably two-thirds of them being Orleanists and one-third Legitimists.²
Out and out Bonapartists were but a handful.³ A new note appeared in the
elections, for there were a considerable number of abstentions—approximately
one-third of the electors not voting.⁴ The failure to vote may merely
indicate disinterest on the part of the voters; it may also indicate that
the opponents of government had a new organ of opposition.⁵

Proudhon's anger at not being elected, and his condemnation of
his confrères for supporting him in a lukewarm fashion may have been

¹Benoit, Confessions d'un prolétaire, p. 189.

²For an analysis of the relationship between these two groups,
see Marvin R. Cox, "The Liberal Legitimists and the Party of Order under
446-464.

³Guerard, Napoleon III, p. 99.

⁴Girard, Le Liberalisme en France, p. 188.

⁵After the coup d'état, Proudhon recommended abstention from voting,
by casting a blank ballot, as the best means of disapproving of Bonaparte's
rule. The idea seemed not to have occurred to him at this time, though some
of his contemporaries may have been advocating it.
increased because of his difficulties with his new bank and the government's continued surveillance of his newspaper. Government attacks at times took the form of petty persecution, hinting, for example, that copies of *Le Peuple* had been distributed clandestinely within the barracks of the national guard. Proudhon was equal to such an accusation, responding that he did not know if it were true since more than 20,000 copies of the newspaper were distributed daily in the department of the Seine alone. Copies could have found their way into the barracks. If they had not reached this area, from that day on, fifty copies would be placed at the disposition of the military garrisons of Paris and the suburbs and distributed free to any officer who presented himself to the offices of the newspaper in order to receive copies. The action came because the military had no right to stop distribution of *Le Peuple* or even to question it, under the reign of universal suffrage.¹

But the main government attack had come earlier, when Proudhon had been in the midst of the electoral campaign, and this attack came at the court of assizes when Proudhon's case came before it on March 28, 1849. He acted in his own defense assisted by his colleague, Madier-Montjau. The accusation that he had aroused hatred and contempt of government, attacking the rights and authority of the president, and exciting hatred and contempt among citizens, indicated the severity with which the government was prepared to deal with Proudhon, going so far as to rely on laws used by the monarchy to subdue its critics. Herzen, at that moment, decided that not only was Proudhon the sole philosopher that France possessed; he was

¹[News Summary], *Le Peuple*, March 10, 1849.
also the sole revolutionary. Proudhon lost the case, conviction carrying a sentence of three years in prison and a 3,000 franc fine, a remarkably severe punishment for a mere press offense, causing even Le National to complain about its stringency. Deciding that it would be better to go into exile than to be imprisoned, Proudhon left Paris for Brussels under the name of Dupuis, judge of the peace. In Brussels he changed his name again, this time to Leloir. Darimon accompanied him part of the way into exile, observing that Proudhon was not so fearful of being arrested as of being laughed at if he were caught inconnu fleeing from the law.

As he went into exile, Proudhon made a few fleeting comments in his Carnets indicating the way his thought was now pursuing. He noted that he must tell Darimon, who was taking over the paper, that he must cease all contentions with other socialists. He would write an article for Le Peuple stressing the necessity of fusion, for the party of the revolution must serve, not a sect, but the republic, and thus it was necessary to support the electoral choices of the Mountain even if they were distasteful.

But Proudhon was not content to remain safely in exile. Benoit

---

1 Labry, Herzen et Proudhon, p. 77.
2 Halévy, Le Mariage de Proudhon, p. 239.
3 Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 181.
4 Darimon, A Travers une révolution, p. 234.
5 Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 186.
remarked about meeting him in Paris in the evenings on the boulevards, disguised as a peasant, reading his newspaper by the light of the stars or before the elegant shopwindows of stores lighted by gas.\(^1\) Darimon told of visiting Proudhon in his hotel, rue de Chabrol, not far from Care du Nord; as he ascended the stairs to his room, he met a beautiful young woman coming down the stairs. She was accompanied by an older woman who appeared to be her mother.\(^2\) The police must have realized that Proudhon was in the city also, for the signed articles continued to appear in *Le Peuple* and they had the ring of one who was in the thick of things, not far away in a foreign country in hiding. It wasn't long before the police apprehended him, the by now famous face and glasses making him easily recognizable. On this visit to Paris, he had been engaged for eight days on some personal affairs and had planned to leave for Switzerland on the day on which he was arrested, June 6. He offered no resistance, the police taking him to Sainte-Pélagie and into the custody of Police Chief Carlier with whom Proudhon was to have further experiences.\(^3\) In his *Carnets*, he mentioned that he had slept well the first night. His co-detainees had been in good humor and they sang until 10 P.M. He noted that he needed his wooden shoes, for the floors were damp, some handkerchiefs, and his translation of Hegel, noting also, that he had had, on June 12, a visit with Abbe Montés, the chief almoner of the prisons of Paris.\(^4\)

\(^1\)Benoit, *Confessions d'un prolétaire*, p. 189.
\(^2\)Darimon, *A Travers une révolution*, p. 144.
The personal business which led to Proudhon's arrest was, of course, Euphrasie Piégard, a young factory worker whom Proudhon had seen liked, approached abruptly on the street and asked to marry him. In a subsequent letter, which he signed E. Gauthier (He was already notorious for Propriété and he did not wish to frighten the girl) he announced that he wanted a wife of exactly her characteristics, asking permission to court her. By the time of his condemnation, Proudhon had decided to marry the girl, the freest step of his life, as he later described it.

As he prepared to go into exile he was troubled about his bank. On April 12, 1849, he notified his subscribers that the bank was dissolved since he could not continue to direct it while in prison. The obstinate position of the government was another reason for dissolving the bank. Enemies of the bank immediately said it was because so little had been subscribed, only 17,933 francs—not even the 50,000 francs needed to begin operating—and Proudhon's fear that some of the members and directors, Jules le Chevalier in particular, were distasteful to the manager. Proudhon was willing to destroy the bank in order to be rid of them. Others wanted to know why the bank did not return all the money subscribed, in place of keeping 8,147 francs for the expenses of installation. Proudhon responded with an article outlining the financial status of both the newspaper

2 P.-J. Proudhon to A M. Bergmann, March 5, 1854, Vol. VI: Correspondance, p. 7.
4 Halévy, Le Mariage de Proudhon, p. 239.
and the bank, proving how precarious were the finances of both organizations. He began by listing all the gossip circulating against him—some calling him an adventurer in industry, others calling him a knave in fraudulent bankruptcy. Both Constitutionnel and La Presse had calumniated his bank, La Presse noting that the Paris workers' organization had been able to raise 914,675 francs for their bank, leading to the conclusion that few workers really supported his venture. The idea of a bank, according to Proudhon, had been of long duration, originating in the offices of Le Représentant du peuple, in August, 1848. When the newspaper had been suspended and followed by Le Peuple, the new paper inherited a deficit of 12,500 francs and the obligation to continue support of the bank project. Le Peuple's financial situation could have been worse, for had Minister of the Interior Faucher succeeded, the caution would have been 100,000 francs instead of 24,000 francs, and Le Peuple would never have begun publishing, leaving Proudhon to collaborate with Thore of Le Vraie République, which would have enjoyed an immense boon to its circulation, probably in the neighborhood of 100,000 copies becoming its daily press run. Instead, Le Peuple had been able to appear and it made an immediate profit, its prospectus selling 40,000 copies at 10 centimes each. Yet continuing fines from the government made its survival difficult, and employees, realizing that the paper was sustaining a deficit of 50 francs a day, volunteered to work without salary. To survive, the paper needed to sell 18,000 subscriptions, and in this it was successful, with its subscribers slowly rising in number to 50,000, despite constant government surveillance.

Once financially secure, Le Peuple became the first subscriber to
the bank, taking over all printing expenses. But there were additional administrative costs, such as notarization of the act of incorporation. All was going well at the time, despite expenses, and Le Peuple was clearing approximately 250 francs a day, when the whole venture was ruined by the "intelligent jurists of the Seine." The fines endured by Proudhon and his editors, as a result of losing the case, endangered the life of Le Peuple; the bank had to be sacrificed. Proudhon acknowledged that he could have delegated his powers to a lieutenant, but as soon as he intimated his intention of resigning, a number of his collaborators announced their intention of continuing the work, but under new conditions and with democratic managers. Proudhon was not quite sure of what was meant by democratic managers, but he felt certain that under such a title a whole sea of utopian ideas could seep in. This was one more attempt on the part of his enemies in the Mountain, dismayed that they had not been able to destroy him after the June Days, or yet on July 31, to crush the man who continually resuscitated himself. Under no circumstances would his project of a bank of the people be used for purposes contrary to his own.\(^1\) The public tirade matched the comments in the Carnets, Proudhon naming his enemies who were trying to destroy him through his bank, including, of course, Pierre Leroux and Louis Blanc. Among the reasons listed for dissolving the bank was the absence of responsibility, implying that treason and indiscretions had been committed, actually linking his bank with an instrument to be exploited by capitalists.\(^2\)

\(^1\) Proudhon, "Liquidation de la Banque du Peuple," Le Peuple, April 15, 1849.

Proudhon's public explanation and his unguarded comments on why he dissolved the bank—his special panacea for resolving the economic ills of French society—is highly significant, for the inference behind the explanation. It was clear that the bank was a financial failure endangering the life of the newspaper, but this was merely a happy coincidence giving a plausible excuse for dissolving it. Even the dispute with the Saint-Simonian Jules le Chevalier whom, at their meetings in the Club of the Revolution Proudhon had vainly tried to convert to his concept of a bank, was no reason for dissolution. The whole problem was the Mountain whom Proudhon blamed for all the griefs he had suffered in the assembly—July 31 and the entire June Days—to name only two events. It is significant that Bonaparte was not named; instead, it was the Mountain, leading one to speculate on who was the real enemy, the battle with Bonaparte being perhaps merely a skirmish in the larger war with the Mountain.

Despite his attempts to remain out of prison by going into exile and in spite of the difficulty prison had caused him, forcing him to liquidate his bank, Proudhon, at a later time in 1854, could speculate that his emotional frenzy during the first year of the revolution simply could not last; in treating him with such rigor by condemning him to prison, the judges had saved his life,\(^1\) though at the time he had condemned Jules Grévy for not defending him at the trial, since the real issue at stake was the constitution. It was really the assembly which was being condemned in him, because of his criticism of the Rateau proposition.\(^2\)

\(^1\)P.-J. Proudhon to A. M. Bergmann, March 5, 1854, Vol. VI: Corres., p. 6.

\(^2\)Darimon, A Travers une révolution, p. 134.
Proudhon also thanked his lucky star and Carlier that he was not involved in the demonstration of June 13, 1849, for had he been at liberty he was certain to have become involved in it, his editors being implicated. The demonstration was called on the subject of the infant republic of Italy. With Pope Pius IX in exile, and Austria threatening to re-install him in his position, the French government decided to act. The Italian republic showed that it was disinterested in any foreign help, firing on Oudinot's troops on April 30 when they appeared before the ramparts of Rome.1 After his remarkable comeback in the May elections, Ledru-Rollin decided to interpellate the government on the affair, considering that the constituent assembly had expressly forbidden government intervention in the Roman question and more specifically, because Article 54 of the constitution declared that the president might not undertake a war without the consent of the assembly. Further, Article 5 noted that the French republic respected nationalities and expected them to respect hers, that she would never employ her forces against the freedom of any people.2 When Ledru-Rollin's proposal of an act of accusation against the minister and the president of the republic was defeated by a 377 vote majority,3 he proceeded to take his campaign to the streets of Paris. The numbers collected for the demonstration were small—cholera had appeared in Paris and the workers were too busy nursing the sick to rally to the barricades. If

1Dautry, Histoire de la révolution de 1848, p. 276.

2"Declararion de la Montagne au peuple français," Le Peuple, June 13, 1849.

June, 1848 had been an army without leaders, then June, 1849 became leaders without an army.

With Proudhon in prison, the direction of Le Peuple's position in the June demonstration was left entirely to Darimon. While still at large, however, Proudhon had written several articles concerning the Roman question. Beginning with an attack on the president, whom he called an imbecile for preparing, under the appearance of legality, the destruction of socialism and the republic through his actions in the Roman question, Proudhon outlined what he thought should be the constructive work of the Mountain in the new assembly.¹ The Mountain must declare that it was impossible for them to take part in the deliberations of the assembly until the government stated itself affirmatively on two questions: amnesty for detainees—presumably political prisoners and those still in prison for their part in the June Days—and recognition of the Roman republic. Unless the declaration were acted upon immediately, the Mountain should address the voters telling them that they could not fill their mandate and inviting everyone to legal resistance, involving refusal of all taxes, all military service, all obedience.²

The revolution, he had frequently proclaimed, should be peaceful. Yet, in urging the Mountain to a program of passive resistance involving complete disruption of government and the police force, he was really calling

¹In his Carnets, however, p. 189, Proudhon predicted that the legislative assembly would be more stupid than the constituent assembly had been.

for public disorder which could only lead to violence and bloodshed, for it
should be recalled that he himself realized that, at this stage in man's
progress, he was not ready for the state of total freedom—anarchy.

This barrage he followed up a few days later with an even stronger
one in which he reviewed the progress of the revolution since February, dwell-
ing in particular on the elections of May 13, 1849 in which, he said, all
socialist and republican schools had collaborated from such diverse centers
as Le National and the Icarians. He hinted that the government, fearful of
this hydra of the many arms, at times metamorphosed into a sphinx hiding its
secrets from the government, required its combatant to be a combined Oedipus
and Hercules. The conservative party, in its fear of this hydra, had recoiled
back into the feudal institutions and even into theocracy, embarking on the
catastrophic Roman expedition. The party of movement, its strength momen-
tarily dissipated by sterile agitation, had lost out. The common terrain on
which the Mountain could reach another May 13 accord was in the demand that
the government grant general amnesty and recall the expedition to Civita-
Vecchia. Appealing to the party of the Mountain, he demanded whether they
merely wanted revolution for the sake of revolution—like art for the sake
of art. If so, they were not revolutionaries at all, merely dramaturgists,
for instead of willing the success of the February revolution, they wanted
only to satisfy their artistic fantasy, losing the revolution as Clootz and
all the comedians of the terror had lost the revolution of '92.¹

¹Proudhon [News Summary], Le Peuple, May 24, 1849.
On the day of the June demonstration, Le Peuple published the Mountain's declaration reminding the people that they were sovereign, telling them that there was a great monarchical conspiracy against the republic, and calling on the national guards to defend order and liberty, the constitution and the republic. Even though the newspaper had advocated only legal and peaceful resistance to the Roman venture, Le Peuple suffered for supporting the Mountain in a defeat that was so great that historians estimate that the republic was dead after June 13. Darimon, in reviewing the paper's stand, decided that in the entire proceedings, its position had been irreproachable. In Le Peuple's offices, several journals, including Démocratie pacifique, had met in order to decide upon a common action, many editors advising that the assembly should declare itself in permanence. Ledru-Rollin was present at these meetings and seemed to be in accord with the pacific measures proposed by the editors as a demonstration of legal resistance to the government's intervention in Rome. On the day of the demonstration, the Mountain, with Ledru-Rollin at its head, escorted by approximately 150 members of the national guard, walked below the windows of Le Peuple at around 1:30 P.M. The placards that Le Peuple had been asked to print were planned for the "News Summary" column, but at the last moment, one of the compositors pulled out the most violent ones, calling them "le corps du délit." In spite of his actions, the newspaper was not

1 "Déclaration de la Montagne au peuple française," Le Peuple, June 18, 1849.

2 Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 192, footnote.
spared from pillage by the troops once the demonstrators had been dis-
persed. The troops began with the Boule printing shop and proceeded from
there to the offices of République française, arriving finally at the
offices of Le Peuple, where they systematically destroyed furniture,
overturning boxes of print. Amadée Langlois was arrested and later re-
ceived a prison term for what was called his act of resistance. Darimon
managed to escape into hiding.¹ Le Peuple's issue of June 13 was its
last, six other newspapers being suppressed also. Siècle, La Presse, and
Le National were warned that their activities were under police surveillance.²

Proudhon's attitude toward the demonstration, as he expressed it
after the event, was somewhat different from what his newspapers professed.
Perhaps, to begin with, one should remember that he was a critic of national-
ism, accusing nationalists of seeking to deflect the economic revolution from
its course. He could not abide Mazzini who resembled another Robespierre,
"a Guelf coiffed in a bonnet rouge."³ Besides, he had secret misgivings
about the right of the Mountain to provoke a manifestation of public opinion
by calling the people of Paris to arms. The acceptance of a constitution
ensured change by legal means, destroying the right to insurrection.⁴

¹Darimon, A Travers une révolution, pp. 155-72.
p. 69. For Proudhon's mature thought on the import of the demonstration,
see Confessions d'un révolutionnaire, p. 246.
But he faced a more immediate problem. With the sending of the representatives to prison, the government again declared a state of siege; Proudhon, as its most notorious press prisoner, was moved to a place of greater safety from the former girls' school that was the roomy and comfortable quarters he had occupied in the Pavillon of Princes at Sainte-Pélagie. Now he was detained at the Conciergerie without books, papers, or other materials. In requesting that he be returned to his former rooms, he explained that his life had been one of constant labor and that to deprive him of his implements of work would cause ennui which would, in time, lead to serious illness.

As Proudhon, the pacific anarchist, petitioned the government for some alleviation of the rigors imposed on him by prison life, he had an opportunity to speculate upon the progress of the revolution after Bonaparte, "the Robespierre on a horse," had won election. His position had changed considerably, with the second of his four newspapers falling before the onslaught of Bonaparte's police commissioners after a polemic unequalled by any other opposition paper in France. Mainly through his newspaper, but also in the assembly, Proudhon shifted his position regarding universal suffrage, the efficacy of government, and the uses of authority. As far

---

1 One can get an idea of the fright and hatred Proudhon aroused in the country by reading his correspondence with an engineer on the Paris railroad asking for a job for his friend, Charles Nicolas, a manual laborer. Nicolas got the job, but he had to endure rough treatment from his fellow workers when they found out who his benefactor was, even though he had not read one word of Proudhon's works. See Proudhon's letter to M. Sauvage, February 3, 1849, in "Lettres inédites de P.-J. Proudhon," Le Contrat social, IX (March-April, 1965), p. 108.

as the suffrage was concerned, for a brief moment, he appeared to have accepted it, despite his earlier protestations, deciding that the vote of the people might actually bring on the economic revolution. The same sentiment motivated him to become a strong defender of the constitution with its clause guaranteeing universal suffrage, because the constitution could be changed. This same constitution rendered violent insurrection, which he detested, unlawful. The slow shift in his thought led to even further disagreement with the Mountain, though at times the disagreement had been sublimated to the necessity of presenting a united front against the encroachments of the president, covering huge fissures in the rugged escarpment of the Mountain. Among the differences had been Proudhon's ambiguous relationship with Bonaparte, including an interview which would haunt him later and his criticism of the actions of Ledru-Rollin and his followers in the June 13 demonstration. Proudhon had his complaints against the Mountain, also demanding why the members had been so gleeful at the failure of his bank and why they had not supported him when, in an unheard of gesture, the assembly had declared itself incompetent to decide on whether legal action should be taken against one of its own representatives. All of these unresolved disputes made any sustained resistance to the executive impossible unless the Mountain could soothe over its unresolved differences.

Now that he was in prison, in the roomy and comfortable quarters of Sainte-Pélagie where he had been returned once fear created by the June 13 disturbance had died down, Proudhon had time to reflect on the frenzy of
his actions during the revolution. With time, he could trace the entire plan of the economic revolution and the counter revolution that had followed it. Still in the habit of driving labor that had become such a part of his life that it was almost a religion, he wrote, in a mere six weeks, Les Confessions d'un révolutionnaire, easily one of the greatest works growing out of the revolution of 1848. The Confessions, in language steeped in the rhetoric of the time, repeated all the arguments Proudhon had used against his critics and in favor of his plans for an economically new base for the French economy. But beneath the rhetoric, the shift of emphasis becomes more precise: the role of the presidency and universal suffrage, not in the counter-revolutionary movement, but in the forward impulsion of the inevitable economic revolution which no power, divine or human, could stop. Man, in this forward movement (toward freedom) had progressed past constitutional monarchy, at which stage power had become corrupt, into the new stage—that of the presidency. The purpose of this new stage was to destroy power utterly, its coup de grâce being the war on the Roman republic. This final stage of power having destroyed itself by an illegal action against a sister republic, the people of France, finally realizing their mistake, would throw down, in one stroke, the whole of the reaction. This revolutionary stroke was their choice of representatives, men who, in place

---


2 Proudhon, Les Confessions d'un révolutionnaire, p. 290.

3 Ibid., p. 255.
of demanding power for progress, would demand liberty. The suffrage, then, would enter into its true role, not as an adjunct of government, but simply as a common expression of transactions and industrial guarantees in the new society that would slowly emerge out of the workshops and the agricultural communes of the nation. In a supreme effort to gain leaders for this peaceful revolution, requiring not the force of governmental authority, but the moral force of men joined together voluntarily in the business contract, Proudhon called on the bourgeoisie to lead the way. What was needed, he asserted, was not a parliamentary Mirabeau, nor a Jacobin Robespierre inflaming the ignorant into another vengeful blood bath, nor even a Bonaparte, a French version of the Caesarian urge, but a Voltaire, a thoughtful rationalist who could analyze society's problems and propose workable solutions to them.

An analysis of the Confessions shows that Proudhon was again selecting events to fit the plan, the plan being his own economic revolution. His own role, as he now saw it in retrospect, had been to warn of dangers to come. His earlier role of Erostratus, tearing down not just the temple of Bonaparte but of the entire Mountain as well; his later change-about role of first condemning, now supporting universal suffrage and the constitution, is faintly etched in Confessions, leading one to believe that behind the grandiose outline of stages in the revolutionary movement--the

1 ibid., p. 93.
2 ibid., p. 321.
3 ibid., p. 292.
need for a new Voltaire--that the unspoken assumption was that the great
nineteenth century rationalist was Proudhon himself. One thing prevented
his assuming the role of Voltaire and that was his own lack of freedom,
the very state toward which mankind, however senselessly, eternally
struggled.
CHAPTER VI

The Prisoner of Sainte-Pélagie and the President of the Republic

La prison n'est point un lieu favorable aux luttes de la libre pensée, et à l'accomplissement du devoir civique: ne pouvant faire ce que je veux, je ferai ce que je puis. Un journaliste en prison est un aigle à qui l'on a coupé les ailes: j'espère que l'indulgence de vos lecteurs tiendra compte de ma faiblesse, et que le pouvoir, malgré toute sa susceptibilité a mon égard, rendra lui-même justice à la loyauté de mes sentiments ... ¹

Even though his offense was a press one, allowing him to spend occasional days at liberty, Proudhon left Sainte-Pélagie rarely during the first months of his imprisonment, once to attend an assembly for a discussion of the business of the defunct Le Peuple, following this excursion eight days later with a second outing for his marriage. ² The prison isolation, reflected in his first articles for his new paper, La Voix du peuple, made even more apparent the shifts in his thought. The shifts involved a return to his pre-1848 position on universal suffrage, becoming again, after the coup of December 1, 1851, the cause of the misfortunes into which the nation had fallen. He still painted himself as the defender of the constitution, but now it was merely a "rag" protecting him against the president's power thrusts. Finally, in his relationship with his adversaries,

¹Proudhon, "Aux Rédacteurs de La Voix du peuple," La Voix du peuple, October 1, 1849.

²Proudhon, Justice, IV [1858], p. 3.
both Bonaparte and the parties of the Mountain, the shifts indicate that while Proudhon remained an enemy of Bonaparte, he was not above appealing to him for aid, even to casting him in the role of instigator of the economic revolution. The Mountain, in his retrospective thought, became the prime mover of the counter revolution--first, by its support of universal suffrage--later, by its refusal to support his own economic programs. One weapon in the fight with the Mountain was Bonaparte himself, for by skirmishes against him in Proudhon's peculiarly virulent prose, he hid from the public his far more serious war with the Jacobins of the Mountain.

To carry on his war, he needed a newspaper, but the two earlier ventures in publishing had left him with fewer associates and less cash on hand. His associates had suffered from being a part of Le Peuple, Georges Duchêne, for example, receiving a total of 34 years and 2 months in jail. His cash on hand had suffered from government fines amounting to 81,840 francs.\(^1\) As his finances declined, Proudhon's popularity increased, with sales of his newspaper amounting to from 50,000 to 100,000 copies on peak days.\(^2\) With the government's final suppression of Le Peuple and the failure of Proudhon's effort to collaborate with Girardin of La Presse, he was forced to look around for other financial supporters, Alexander Herzen opening his purse to him. Herzen agreed to pay the caution for a new journal, for he considered Contradictions one of the two significant works of the nineteenth century, in the same class with Feuerbach's l'Essence du Christianisme.

\(^1\) Darimon, A Travers une révolution, p. 179.

\(^2\) Ibid.
Now that he was dependent on Herzen for financial aid, Proudhon could no longer demand complete control of his paper, releasing to Herzen control of articles on foreign affairs. He agreed reluctantly and brusquely, instructing Herzen that it was necessary to raise the entire democratic and social question to the height of a European program embracing all countries.\(^1\) The remainder of the editing was handed over to Proudhon, but because of his imprisonment, the new paper's editorial position was indefinite, at times embarrassing its editor.\(^2\) Subscriptions to the new journal were not numerous, but as usual, street sales were large, often with as many as 35,000 to 40,000 copies being sold in one day. When Proudhon's articles appeared, often 50,000 to 60,000 copies were printed, the left-over copies often selling for a franc instead of a sou on the day following publication.\(^3\)

The editorial assistants were, as before, from divergent ideological backgrounds: Chevè was a Catholic; Boutteville, a Pantheist; Faure, a disciple of Pierre Leroux; Massol, a Saint-Simonian; Langlois, a former Montagnard; Arnauld Frémy, a Blanquist.\(^4\) But the prospectus which appeared on September 25, was all Proudhon. The earlier shifts—support for universal suffrage, condemned in February, 1848 but supported in April, 1849—continued

\(^1\) A copy of the contract will be found in Labry, Herzen et Proudhon, p. 92.

\(^2\) See, for example, Proudhon's comments to Darimon about his inept article, "Trahison," February 28, 1850, Vol. III: Corres., p. 146.

\(^3\) Herzen, My Past and Thoughts, II, p. 815.

\(^4\) Proudhon characterized his associates in this fashion. See his letter to A M. V., March 7, 1851, Vol. IV: Corres., p. 32.
as did his support for the constitution which he had voted against in November, 1848. But the greatest shift of all involved the principle of non-government, violated during Proudhon's hectic months as legislator—June, 1848 to April, 1849. The shift away from government had begun earlier, when he had defended himself at the court of assizes, March, 1849 while reluctantly standing for election. Now he clearly shifted away from government and toward independent action by workers educated against the enticements of Power.

But behind the shifts in thought lay one constant: rancor against the Mountain, and in particular, those who dared court government to assist them in implementing the economic revolution.

Beginning with an admission that the counter revolution reigned over Europe, the treaty of 1815 being destroyed only to be replaced by a new holy alliance of the privileged against the proletariat, Proudhon described this counter revolution as the Gordian knot, the last resource of privilege against the mounting peril of man's realization of his equality. To untie the Gordian knot, it was necessary that the revolution be reconquered by men of labor against the holy alliance of men of gold. For the victory to be complete, it must take possession of all Europe, its plan of campaign calling for respect for the constitution, since it was capable of being perfected, and the acknowledgement of universal suffrage. "Respect for the constitution then, in our eyes, implies the duty to work incessantly for its revision. We will retake economic reform by popular initiative." But in order to win in the battle, attitudes were important, for the proletariat must understand that it had nothing to expect from capital, for the people had called on capital once before, in the February revolution, to submit to the law of equality, and its members had retreated behind privileged bar-
ricades, demanding, "Come and get it." The move was understandable, for privilege never sacrificed itself willingly, requiring a higher necessity to reconcile it to its loss. Labor must permit capital to barricade itself in the bastille of its privileges, for economic revolution was peaceful. The weapons were work, the tools of unremitting labor which produced all riches, controlled all distribution and consumption. Let labor really demonstrate its desire to reach equality with capital and victory was certain, for it was impossible for privilege to endure against the expansive and acquisitive force of labor. La Voix du peuple would explain the strategy that would lead to victory, showing labor how every workshop, no matter how infeudalized, could become an impenetrable castle against lazy capital. Once routed, capital would leave the field free to labor and the impending economic revolution.

Not only must labor understand its position in connection with capital; it must also understand its relationship with government, clearly rejecting the utopian ideas that had been allowed to circulate in France to the detriment of the working class. In the first place, the economic reform in no way meant the expropriation of fortunes; those who maintained that it did were lazy cowards. The right to work, like the freedom it implied, could be won only by honest toil. If the regime of equality could be inaugurated only by robbery, then "cursed be equality." The concept of government-instituted reform must be rejected also, the great necessity of the moment being to destroy in man's spirit and consciousness the fantasy of government and faith in all measure and degree of authority. If the February revolution had slipped through the hands of the people, it was because they had wished to realize it through Power, failing to understand that the revolution, having
for its aim "the destruction of incapacity, inertia, parasitism and the spirit of reaction," then the first thing to be done was to "discipline power," placing it under the authority of reason. The men of '48 had foolishly extended authority, the center from which emanated all favors, all arbitrariness, all exploitation of man by man, and all oppression. Those who sought to organize the economic revolution by appealing to the state were either reactionaries or the apprentices of tyrants.¹ In the same measure as the organization of labor involved the defeat of capital, so the establishment of liberty meant the subordination of power. If the ideal of liberty consisted, not in going beyond a master, but solely in being allowed to choose one's master, then servitude was the eternal rule of society.

For victory in this struggle with the capitalists, then all must work, and to insure success, all workers must elevate their thoughts above the narrow sphere of governmental speculation and party passion.² Let men of little minds remain within the protective circle of power and play with their puny projects; they were destined to be crushed between the "hammer of the revolution and the anvil of the counter revolution."

Proudhon concluded his article on an ironic note about the state of the nation since June 13, 1849, when the government claimed to have destroyed anarchy and imprisoned anarchists. In this secure world of October, 1849, in this glorious regime of liberty, sixteen departments had been placed

¹The allusion is, of course, to Blanc.
²Proudhon usually ended a tirade against his enemies with an appeal for solidarity!
in a state of siege, the press had been silenced by a Draconian law, the assembly decimated, the right to association denied, the treasury deficit increased even after the re-establishment of old impôts. Not one of the great economic or political problems of the day had been resolved, nor yet one morsel of bread or one idea of morals or justice given to the poor.¹

An analysis of the prospectus makes the shift in thought clear. The first shift involved the method. Instead of working through a legislative body, La Voix du peuple would work to exterminate the governmental principle from man's consciousness. Instead of trying to pass laws, the workers must attempt to achieve solidarity in each workshop throughout Europe, using day to day measures as La Voix called them out, in order to pacifically seize the terrain from capital on the battlefield of work. Still involved with the method, the constitution, based on universal suffrage, must be respected. Proudhon's readers were invited to forget his earlier bitter comments about suffrage as the materialism of the republic. A brief comment in the Carnets, however, gives a more opportunistic interpretation of suffrage, calling it the catapult with which to demolish government and the monarchy.² Besides the decided shift in method, a new element had begun to assume a greater significance in the writings of Proudhon, and that was the idea of equality. The idea had always been present; he had even seriously questioned whether nature, or the unfairness of economic conditions, had made men unequal. Equality did not mean equal conditions

¹La Voix du peuple, September 25, 1849.
²Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 245.
in slavery, nor yet the changing of masters--proletariat replacing capitalist— but complete freedom between equals within the bounds formulated by man's collective consciousness.

Proudhon's idea of liberty was connected with his marriage on December 31, 1849, with Euphrasie Piégard, a Paris braidmaker. A part of man's struggle for freedom, according to Proudhon, was his desire to free himself from servility to the flesh, a servility not reduced but increased by the Christian idea of marriage. Instead of the Christian concept of surrendering to the flesh through lawful marriage as St. Paul had advised in saying, "It is better to marry than to burn," man should work ceaselessly to free himself from it.¹ True marriage should be a free, rational act, not out of love in the romantic meaning of the term, for true love meant the willingness to suffer and die.² For his own part, Proudhon considered his choice of a marriage partner as the most free, rational act of his life; he was sorry that he had not married sooner, in the thick of 1848.³

However important marriage was, it must not be construed that it meant equality between the sexes, a misunderstood idea of human liberty. Women, like artists, were passive beings unable to synthetize because of their lack of creative capacity.⁴ In later years, Proudhon observed this female trait in one of his daughters, who at three years, asked for the key

¹Proudhon, Amour et mariage, Vol. XXXV: Œuvres posthumes (Paris: C. Marpon et E. Flammarion, 1873), p. 89. The work was published posthumously, but it had appeared in earlier published works, in Justice, for example.

²Proudhon, Justice, IV, p. 73.

³P.-J. Proudhon to A. M. Bergmann, March 5, 1854, Vol. VI: Correspondances, p. 7. In the letter, Proudhon reviewed his life from 1847 until 1854.

to a bottle, a hat for a lamp.\textsuperscript{1} Because of woman's passive nature, equality was impossible; the marriage contract should never be understood as a mutual contract, for such a pact supposed that the contractors were complete in themselves and similar in their constitutions, clearly capable of understanding the principles of justice under which they formed contractual relationships. This "synallagmatique contract," such as Proudhon called it, was in no way the same as the marriage contract,\textsuperscript{2} for a woman was incapable of entering into such a relationship. For the past six thousand years, with the exception of Cérès, Pallas, Proserpine and Isis, no woman had had an original idea.\textsuperscript{3}

After setting his private life in order, Proudhon had also to consider his relationship with his socialist collaborators, his first concern being the defense of those accused in the June 13 demonstration, for his close friends and collaborators were involved. A second problem was his socialist contemporaries' reaction to Confessions which appeared on the newsstands in November, 1849, at exactly the same time as the June insurrectionists were being tried at Versailles.\textsuperscript{4} The first edition was sold out in five to six weeks. Proudhon then launched another, popular edition for 60 centimes, which sold poorly. Once the contemporary rhetoric is dis

\textsuperscript{1}Proudhon, Justice, IV, p. 196.

\textsuperscript{2}Proudhon, Amour et mariage, p. 220.

\textsuperscript{3}Buloz, "Le Dernier livre de Proudhon," p. 470.

\textsuperscript{4}See Daniel Halévy's introductory comments, Les Confessions d'un révolutionnaire (Paris: Marcel Rivière, 1929), p. 52.
counted, Proudhon's comments in *Confessions* were surprisingly moderate—so moderate, in fact, that Eugène Pelletan, reviewing the work for *La Presse*, prophesies: "Go, Mr. Proudhon, your eloquence increases; it will increase even more . . . and in thirty years, I submit, and even later, the daughters of conservatives will plant roses on your tomb."

In the milieu of the socialists, Proudhon was not called conservative, however, being accused of betraying the cause of socialism, for in his work he attacked his confrères when he felt they had contributed to the counter revolution now holding France in its grip. The men particularly offended were Louis Blanc, Pierre Leroux, and the economist Frédéric Bastiat, the latter with whom Proudhon would sustain a long, public argument over the necessity of interest. Leroux reproached Proudhon for being a monstrous atheist, employing against him the familiar epithet, Erostratus. Blanc saw in *Confessions* a code of tyranny by chaos and the most audacious negation of socialism the movement had ever produced. Bastiat, the Cobden of French free trade, confirmed the legitimacy and necessity of interest. Proudhon's public response to his critics was harsh and his private comments were equally so, noting that if he had been the president of the Luxembourg commission, if he had had in his hands the control of the clubs, or even the organization of Republican Solidarity, or Power (executive) or even better, if all the democratic press had supported the measures he recommended, he would have been "infallibly successful." He had not inebriated the masses

---

1 For the entire text of the review, *ibid.*, p. 53.
as Blanc had done; he had not tendered the tragueurd as had Blanqui. His fault had been to sustain, with reflection and full understanding, the antagonism of ideas, like Jupiter, taking away the reason and sense of his adversaries. This was why he now had to endure ostracism inflicted on him by the socialists, socialists such as that imbecile, Louis Blanc.¹

Proudhon's accusers responded by saying that he was not a socialist, for he destroyed socialism. He replied that he had never admitted to socialism except as a form of protestation and as a synonym for social science. The kind of socialism which the vulgar often confused with communism he formally repulsed. As far as Leroux's criticism went, there was a fundamental difference between the two philosophies. Whereas Proudhon's kind searched for equality in the equilibrium of forces, Leroux's kind searched for it in the absolute. The first understood liberty as the successive deliverance of man from all that held him in thrall; for the second it meant the power to work miracles. The real reason for attacking him was that he had revealed the mystic and governmental tendencies of some of the most noteworthy socialists, for along with negating the exploitation of man by man, he also negated the idea of government of man by man. Later, Proudhon prophesied, when he would be called upon to attack this same governmental principle in a French Caesar, then he would be absolved by the socialists. And here rested the nub of the criticism of Louis Blanc and Pierre Leroux: They defended the governmental principle, the last fortress of monopoly. Yet in spite of his frequent criticisms of them, Proudhon still invited his

¹ibid., pp. 248-50.
critics to answer him in the columns of _La Voix du peuple_ because the
Mountain was the only center around which all true republicans could unite.¹

The controversy with the Mountain was immeshed with earlier attacks
on him for his collaboration with Bonaparte. He tried to set the record
straight by demanding that Bonaparte declare himself clearly. If he were
with the reaction, as symbolized in the Papal encyclical, _Motu Proprio_,
then he should join Thiers, Berryer and Montalembert and cease fighting them.
If he were against _Motu Proprio_, then he should join with the majority favoring
the constitution, stop the trial at Versailles, and call Ledru-Rollin
and his friends to form a ministry.² Proudhon's direct challenge was the
result of Bonaparte's ambiguous position after the letter he wrote to
Marshall Ney on August 18, criticizing the Pope's actions in suppressing
the Roman republic. Proudhon applauded the letter, giving his enemies
further fuel to heap upon the fire of their resentment against the author of
_Confessions_. But his attitude was clear: There were only two parties in
the Roman question, the blacks, meaning the Jesuits who wanted the union
of the temporal and the spiritual under the Pope, and the reds, who wanted
complete separation of the two as the first step toward public liberty. It
was impossible to have an intermediate position, a juste-milieu.³ Bonaparte's

¹Proudhon, "Résistance à la révolution," _La Voix du peuple_, November 25, 1849.

²Proudhon, "Sainte-Pélagie a l'Elysée, salut!" _La Voix du peuple_, November 8, 1849.

³The comments appeared under [News Summary] for October 1, and the
article was unsigned. _La Voix du peuple_, October 2, 1849.
letter declaring that France did not intend to sacrifice her treasure and the
blood of her people to re-establish absolutism, demanding that the Pope make
concessions to political freedom, was praiseworthy. But Bonaparte must
beware, for the promoters of the Roman expedition demanded that the president
of the republic obey Motu Proprio. Unless he did so, his government would
receive no more funds, the majority in the chambers would turn against him,
Changarnier would resign, the Austrians would march on Paris, and even worse,
the high court at Versailles would reverse its decision against those im-
plicated in June. The president of the juste-milieu would be crushed be-
tween the white mountain and the red mountain. It was the same question as
had been posed in June 13, 1849: Who really violated the constitution, those
who protested against the sending of troops? The June protestors had de-
defended the president, as he explained himself in his letter to Marshall Ney,
against the absolutist coalition. The members of the national guard and the
representatives who took part in the demonstration were not culpable.¹ By
this subtlety of logic, Proudhon hoped to demonstrate that the June culprits
had only acted in defense of the constitution and of Bonapart as well.

The defense needed all the arguments it could muster for things
had not been going well with them in the trial before the high court at
Versailles. Proudhon had warned Langlois that it was urgent that he not
plead the right to insurrection. Such a move would bring down on him and
the other accused all the wrath of the reaction. Instead, he should plead
that he had been engaged in a pacific demonstration against the violation

¹The article appeared under [News Summary] for October 16, and it
was signed by Proudhon. La Voix du peuple, October 17, 1849.
Nevertheless, Michel (de Bourges) who was handling the case, insisted on pleading the right to insurrection, by this step losing the entire case for the accused at the same time as those implicated in the provinces were being acquitted.\(^2\)

As the trial progressed, one could see that Proudhon still had a vague hope that Bonaparte might be won for the cause of the economic revolution. The letter to Marshall Ney had been hopeful; Bonaparte had seen the difficulties one encountered in serving the reactionaries. If he would but seize the helm of the revolutionary movement, he could steer himself into an important place in history next to Louis XIV who had said, "I am the state," Napoleon I who had said, "I am the revolution," Louis Bonaparte by merely saying, "I am liberty."\(^3\)

After the loss of the case for the accused at the high court, Proudhon returned to his discussion with the socialists and economists, opening his newspaper, as he had promised, to articles from both Girardin and Bastiat, explaining that La Voix du peuple had been instituted as an organ of discussion, just as the earlier Le Peuple had been instituted as an organ of combat. La Voix would never be used as an organ for vengeance.\(^4\)

Of what need was it to resort to pavement and bayonettes when the pen of

---


\(^2\)Darimon, A Travers une révolution, p. 191.

\(^3\)Proudhon, "Chronique de la contre-révolution européenne," La Voix du peuple, November 2, 1849.

\(^4\)Proudhon, "Aux Rédacteurs de La Voix du peuple, La Voix du peuple, October 1, 1849."
writers could conjure up a revolution?¹

In the discussion with Bastiat which dragged on for several months and lost readership for the paper,² the two men feinted against strawmen in a veritable dialogue of the deaf. Neither considered the fact that time gives money loaned an added value,³ Bastiat urging that interest be reduced while Proudhon wanted it eliminated entirely.⁴ In his first article, Bastiat begged the question, demanding that Proudhon agree that interest on capital was legitimate before the discussion could continue. Proudhon retaliated that to admit this assumption would destroy his entire argument. Bastiat, instead of refuting Proudhon's position, presented his own. If he could argue in no clearer fashion, Proudhon would be forced to use the Thomistic, "I distinguish," for at one time interest had been legitimate, under an absolute monarchy, for example. In another epoch it had become an obstacle to progress. Centralization of credit had been impossible in earlier periods, but because it was now possible to centralize it, society owed to every man free credit and discount.⁵ The argument over interest slowly trailed off into nothingness as La Voix became more interested in the quickening tempo

¹Proudhon, "Chronique de la contre-révolution européenne," La Voix du peuple, November 12, 1849.

²Darimon, A Travers une révolution, p. 199.


⁴Ibid., p. 137.

⁵Proudhon, "Intérêt et principal," La Voix du peuple, December 3, 1849.
of the debate with other socialists, Proudhon finding it necessary to sharply attack the president in order to prove his faithfulness to the Left.

With new elections approaching, the Mountain again tried to arrange a common ground for republican union. Smarting under accusations that he had destroyed the earlier union, Proudhon replied by commenting on an article in *Le Temps* in which the editors reflected that in the combined list of the democratic socialists (dem-soc) there were many names that would be insupportable to at least one faction of the Left, for they had not expiated their errors in order to merit rehabilitation. Guessing correctly that it was an attack on him, Proudhon wondered who would assign their penance, and then questioned the basic proposals unresolved by the dem-soc: interest on capital, the question of the impôt, the efficacy of government. He explained that if his polemics had helped to enlarge the chasm separating the bourgeoisie from the proletariat after June, 1848, it was only because it was essential that the revolution be given its real significance, so that by setting forth the "terror of the social question," he could save the revolution.¹ Now that the polemics had ceased, nothing further should be allowed to divide the groups.²

The article, "Résistance à la révolution," expanded his arguments; he compared the revolution to a wagon that, no matter how hard one tried to deflect from its course, continued to roll, crushing under its wheels those who refused to jump on the running boards. Pius IX had tried to slow down the revolution, finding, to his grief, that it had passed him by. Next,

¹Proudhon, "Union républicaine," *La Voix du peuple*, November 27, 1849.

Thiers had sought to seize the reins, and they had slipped from his grasp.

Blanc, then, ordered the revolution to halt, for as president of Luxembourg and secretary of the state of progress, his permission was required before the revolutionary wagon could proceed. "Down with anarchists, individualists, equalitarians," he had said, "Respect the state." Next appeared the revelator of the triad, the apochryphal author of l'Etre universel, Pierre Leroux, who demanded death to Voltairians, libertines, atheists. His polemics, noted for their shimmering style and poverty of logic, were useless before the revolutionary wagon, for the holy man of the triad aspired only to replace the Pope as Vicar of Christ. The real revolution of February was not a question of openly robbing the rich or in stealthily robbing them by a surtax, for that would make of property a lie. Instead, it consisted in creating competition with usurious credit, thereby causing capital to lose its revenues; in other words, the revolution identified in all citizens, in some degree, the quality of worker and capitalist. What was needed was to destroy all taxes which hurt only the poor and replace them by a single tax, an insurance premium on capital. Then the state could slowly disappear, the signal for its disappearance being the arrival of liberty.

Blanc and Leroux, in demanding a state even after reaching the realm of freedom, were really advocating a new religion, for anything above a free man's head took on transcendental characteristics. Anarchy, the system of adult society, must of necessity appear, the aim of the state during the transition period being merely to lead the populace to a state of autonomy. In the state of freedom, all organization of the collective force from the outside would be impossible. By economic reform, by industrial solidarity, and the organization of universal suffrage the people would pass from the
state of unthinking spontaneity (imagination) to one of reflection and consciousness, so that, no more led by fantasy and imagination, but engaged in rational thought, they would reject all masters and all servants, needing neither delegates nor aristocrats. The kind of suffrage referred to was according to economic categories, Proudhon having returned to his earlier understanding of universal suffrage. The first step toward the goal of an adult society must be the cleansing of the leper of capitalist exploitation; the state's turn would come next.¹

This exposition was not likely to gain him supporters within the Mountain nor help achieve solidarity. Leroux, in particular, began a bitter attack on him. Proudhon responded with a public letter, asking him to refrain from personal attacks, for outside of his antediluvian fantasies (he was a Catholic) the two men held common opinions on property, government, and credit. Leroux's accusation—that Proudhon was not a democrat, a republican, a socialist, or a Christian—drew a barbed response. The only way in which one could accuse him of not being a republican was to look at him through the glass of Leroux's religious triads, he maintained. He had proved that he was a democrat by his unceasing explication of the meaning of anarchy, if only Leroux would take the trouble to read his writings. He had proved his socialism because, not satisfied with the present society, he had sought for a science to improve it. He repulsed the title of atheist, not out of hypocrisy nor from a religious sense, but because the word had an odious implication—abject materialism without respect for justice and humanity, making a law of its own egoism, a god of its stomach, a cult of surrendering

¹La Voix du peuple, December 3, 1849, supplement.
to passions. Proudhon's atheism was that of a Spinoza, a Kant, a Fichte, or a Hegel: idealism raised to its highest level. The final accusation that he was an *enfant terrible* came purely because he had had the audacity to laugh at Leroux's pretended dogmas, realizing that he preferred his beliefs to truth, charity and the republic. Leroux was a poor figure of a Frenchman, his deepest concern being to relegate Proudhon to the realm of satan of socialism, leading one of Leroux's friends, Pauline Roland, to say that the great work of socialism was to demolish Proudhon.\(^1\)

The battle with the Mountain came at the same time as Proudhon made a concerted attempt to educate his followers concerning the uselessness of the state. In a series of articles, entitled, "De l'utilité présente et de la possibilité future de l'État," he warned that those who knew what they wanted and how to command others were the ones who would win, giving as an example, the meteoric rise to power of Napoleon I.\(^2\) Then, in a peculiarly ambiguous statement, Proudhon affirmed that he believed in the peaceful abolition of the state by the state. The statement is ambiguous, for in his earlier article of December 3, 1849, one is led to believe that the only role of the state was to encourage the economic revolution which would propel itself without assistance. Now Proudhon argued that the state could begin its own dissolution through a decree reforming the Bank of France and nationalizing it. The excess money circulating, because the bank had been allowed to issue currency on the basis of its 90 million franc reserve, should be returned to the people by way of a dividend declared at the rate of


\(^2\) "Quatrième article," *La Voix du peuple*, January 8, 1850.
4 per cent per 100 on taxes for the last four years. The reformed bank would reduce all interest and discount rates to 1 per cent per 100 francs with annuities on mortgages at the rate of 5 per cent per 100. Ten million francs of the bank's reserves would be used for distribution to workers unemployed since February, 1848. Fifty million francs should also be reserved for workers' associations or for industrial needs.1

In the next article of the series, Proudhon answered his critics who said that his proposal was merely statism by another name. This was untrue, for a social science existed and slowly developed itself independent of government. As this new social science developed, civil servants must stand for election, the state being slowly absorbed into society just as the law gradually gave place to the reign of the idea behind the law. Government must be abolished because any institution tended to form its own interest groups, often contrary to the needs of the people, using its position to form more of its own creatures by multiplying the number of its employees and sinecures. As the interest groups became official, they became enemies of labor and liberty.2 In private, he was gleeful about the reception his articles had received, saying that the response had been far better than to his articles on free credit, for the idea of liberty was a simple one, whereas the idea of free credit was scientific.3

In later articles in the series, he continued to develop his ideas on how the state should support itself during its declining days. Taxes

1Proudhon, "Suite," La Voix du peuple, January 9, 1850.
3Proudhon, "De l'utilite présente et de la possibilité future de l'état, huitième article," La Voix du peuple, January 28, 1850.
should be used only to cover the expenses of the state, never being used to enslave the people by keeping them in poverty. The fairest tax was one placed on net income, for it would reduce the amount required of labor by striking almost exclusively at property; he suggested the decreeing of an impôt of 1 per cent per 100 francs on net income of each citizen.¹

After the series of articles on non-government and his debate with Leroux, Proudhon next turned his attention to Louis Blanc, accusing him of being a reactionary for his form of economic science was merely a maladroit application of the domestic economy to society. His politics were merely a bubble of competition with the politics of Flocon,² who in turn, competed with Armand Marrast, following the steps of Thiers in a steady progression back to Guizot, Royer-Collard, and all of the doctrinaires. This was why in March, 1848, Blanc had forced the reaction to Blanqui and followed it up in April by an attempt to grab dictatorial power for himself.³ By his ultra-governmentalism, Blanc had contributed more than anyone else to the defeat of democracy. Blanc, the Catiline, had only played with an antithesis of words when he talked of the master state becoming the servant state. And this "Amerigo Vespucci of socialism" had had the crass ignorance to write a book on the organization of work.⁴ In a second article on Blanc, Proudhon

¹ibid.
²Ferdinand Flocon was the editor of La Réforme.
³Proudhon was referring to the demonstrations during the first months of the constituent government, Blanc being implicated, in particular, in the April one. The socialists had upheld Blanc in public, for his part in the demonstration, saying that his enemies had tried to frame him.
reiterated that the revolution meant the absorption of the state into society, leading to the suppression of all authority and the abolition of all unnecessary taxes, the simplification of administration by its separation into functional categories (agriculture, mining, manufacturing, etc.), in other words, by the organization of universal suffrage. Blanc was typical of the contradictory accusations hurled at him. Proudhon protested, the democratic socialists accusing him of treason, the liberal economists, of inconsequence, the moderates of exaggeration. The absolutists were the easiest to understand, for they did not try to change his philosophy; they merely tried to convert him. Proudhon's sharp criticism ended on a note of conciliation, saying that as long as the bourgeois and proletariat class suspected each other, they defeated the revolutionary cause. To escape the universal ostracism that would result from such a defeat, it was necessary for all classes to strive for universal conciliation.¹

The accusations against Blanc and Leroux were, of course, merely a re-statement of the Confessions, but placed in a popular newspaper and freed from the historical and theological context, they reached a far larger audience. Again, Proudhon demonstrated that he read selectively, using one facet of a philosophy as a reason for rejecting it. In the case of Leroux, it was a religious belief. While calling on Leroux to stop his personal attacks, Proudhon was, of course, engaging in a personal vendetta of his own. In the case of Blanc, it was the governmental idea that was under attack, even though Proudhon himself had taken a brief safari into government. The pattern in the polemics is clear: Accuse your enemies of

reviling you while at the same time reviling them. After everyone's bile is aroused, plead for conciliation. If this does not work, deflect criticism with a violent attack on the president.

Proudhon turned now to the president, noting in ironic prose, that two men warred in Bonaparte, the president and the pretender, but the president had destroyed the pretender. Had Bonaparte lost the election to a Ledru-Rollin or a Cavaignac, by some accident of the scrutin, or had the assembly declared that a Bonaparte, like Joinville or Chambord,¹ might not run for the presidency, then the way would have been open for the pretender to have arrived at the Tuileries by playing upon the imagination of the masses. As it was, his hands were tied by his oath to support the republic. Proudhon invited the president, however, to proceed with the coup d'état, for the state would quickly resign itself to this new invasion of the hated cossacks.²

If the article were harsh, what followed it was even harsher: "Vive l'Empereur!" In the article, Proudhon encouraged Bonaparte to take over the country. At the first signal of the coup, the people, calling "a bas l'impôt," would proceed to take the stock exchange by assault, burning the great book of debts and thrusting into the sea the register of mortgages. The proletariat, wiser than they had been in February, 1848, when they had actually believed in a slow, progressive, and peaceful revolution, would gladly join hands with robbery, pillage, immorality. The president need

¹Joinville was one of the sons of Louis Philippe. Chambord was the Legitimist heir to the throne.

not begin his movement toward the coup by destroying liberty trees, for their real roots were in the hearts of the people. All that was necessary for the new barbarian to do in order to assume power was to appear on the balcony of the Tuileries in his imperial costume, and society, which had begun a slow revolutionary movement toward the reform of its economic institutions through orderly development, would immediately commence, in Bonaparte's hands, its "palingenesis by chaos." ¹

These articles struck home, for Bonaparte, who may have been contemplating his coup at this time, knew that in this socialist of European reputation who seemed able to penetrate his secret thoughts, he had a real enemy. His panic reaction was to place Proudhon in complete sequestration on February 7, 1850, his door bolted and a guard stationed outside it, with the further precaution of a guard stationed in the street in order to intercept any signals from inside the prison. ² (Proudhon had been in the habit of communicating with his wife in this fashion, her apartment overlooking his prison cell.) The editors of La Voix responded by publicizing every government move against Proudhon, gaining tremendous sympathy for him from all sectors of the press, fearful of suffering a like treatment. Beginning by noting that despite all that Bonaparte had written against Louis Philippe, he had never ordered that he be placed in sequestration, La Voix then printed excerpts from other newspapers concerning Proudhon's treatment. Constitutionnel reprinted the entire text of Proudhon's article without suffer-

¹La Voix du peuple, February 5, 1850.

²"A nos lecteurs," La Voix du peuple, February 5, 1850.
Gazette de France wondered if press captivity included punishing a man for writing what he considered true and useful for the state. The treatment of Proudhon menaced the freedom of discussion of all citizens.¹ In a later issue, the editors of La Voix tried a different tactic, printing a protestation to the government for its treatment of a press prisoner, for according to the penal code, sequestration was forbidden unless decreed by a judge or if it were necessary to prevent violence to a prisoner.²

The sequestration continued with security so tight that P. Laugrand, the managing editor of La Voix who was also implicated, asked for permission to see Proudhon in order to prepare his defense and was refused.³ Pilhes tried to send his old friend a bottle of the French wine he loved so much, but Carlier refused to allow him to do so, because he feared that it hid some suspect correspondence.⁴ Newspaper discussion continued, Crédit observing that if there was one way of increasing Proudhon's reputation, it was by keeping him in secret confinement. Le National wondered at the system of persecution which, after garroting the freedom of a man, now tried to garrote his conscience. La Presse acidly recalled that the first person Bonaparte wanted to see after his return from exile in 1848 was Proudhon.⁵

¹"Deuxième jour," La Voix du peuple, February 9, 1850.
²"Sixième jour," La Voix du peuple, February 13, 1850.
³"Troisième jour," La Voix du peuple, February 10, 1850.
⁴Morère, "Pilhes ... Proudhon," p. 80.
By February 15, the pressure had been relieved somewhat for Proudhon was now able to communicate with his family, but *La Voix* was seized on the same day for an article on the French counter revolution.

Part of the reason for Proudhon's later release from sequestration was the letter he wrote to Prefect Carlier, promising him that he would no longer write political articles, confining his discussion to economic and scientific questions, for his role as a journalist was at an end.

The incurable polemicist, Proudhon, did not remain long in the role of a scientific economist, becoming embroiled in arguments over who should be the candidate for the dem-soc in the March elections. Carlier, annoyed, transferred him to Doullens in the Somme, far from his wife and friends. Démocratie pacifique recognized in this act a punishment which deprived a writer, already without freedom, of the solace of his family and friends. *Siècle* called it an action taken out of passion rather than out of equity. Carlier gave as the reason for his action, that Proudhon had broken his word. Proudhon promptly made the situation worse by trying to smuggle out a letter

---


3 Proudhon had been transferred to the Conciergerie on February 13. See his letter to the editors, *La Voix du peuple*, March 25, 1850.


to his newspaper by giving it to his brother who had permission to visit him.¹

These actions embarrassed his editors who agreed with Carlier that he had broken his word. Proudhon reacted by sending them the letter he had written to Carlier and demanding that it be published. The editors were slow in responding, Vaspenter keeping it under lock and key until he was forced to publish it on April 27 amid a flurry of newspaper seizures bringing the number to eight.² Darimon seemed disenchanted with Proudhon also, hoping that Assemblée nationale would publish the letter first so that La Voix would not be disbelieved.³ The whole affair had been peculiarly inept on the part of Bonaparte, merely giving public sympathy to Proudhon and leading to his conciliation with the Left. Marquis de la Rochejaquelin said that it was only an individual with no French blood in his veins, one nourished in the heavy atmosphere of some Swiss Canton, a barbarian among the French, who could suppose that one could encounter in all France a jury willing to condemn a man for these pages doubly signed by a Rabelais

¹Proudhon explained what had happened in a letter to A M. le Ministre de l'Interieur, April 27, 1850, Vol. III: Correspondance, p. 224. Carlier noted this peculiar quality of Proudhon's in which he used his honor lightly. Eugène Mirecourt, Lettres a Monsieur P.-J. Proudhon (Paris: Walder, 1858), noted the same characteristic in him when he asked to see Mirecourt's letter from Cardinal Matthieu in order to complete the documents he was assembling. Of course, Proudhon used the letter in order to prepare a public reply, which was Justice. See page 43 of Mirecourt's work.

²"Huitième saisie," La Voix du peuple, April 27, 1850.

³Proudhon's letter to the editors will be found in Carnets, Vol. III, p. 334.
And he was right. On the first hearing, the judge dismissed the case because of irregularity in procedure. In the second trial, he was acquitted, to Proudhon's surprise for he had been pessimistic about the outcome, fearing that the jury in condemning him would feel that they had accomplished a work agreeable to God.

In the event that he were forced to remain in confinement, Proudhon attempted to work out a system with his editors in order to escape government surveillance. He agreed, first, no longer to sign his articles, so that he could disavow them if it were necessary; the public would understand this feint. Another more complicated system that he worked out while at Doullens was apparently never used. A crude system of false names, for example, director of the company for Bonaparte, union bateliere for the dem-soc, the residence for La Voix was meant to fool Carlier. Along with these schemes to avoid censorship, Proudhon's mind raced ahead with a new work that would solve, for all time, the question of contradictory antinomies, giving a clear and decisive solution which would stop the mouths of the dem-soc utterly, a positive, progressive, mathematical system, in a word, a true science.

2Ibid., p. 212, footnote.
3Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 283.
5Proudhon was probably referring to Idée générale. See his letter to A M. Mathey, Darimon, Charles Edmond, Langlais, May 10, 1850, Vol. III: Corres., pp. 251-52.
Working alone on his new science, Proudhon was displeased with the editing of his paper, for in spite of his frequent letters to his editors, the paper's circulation decreased when he was unable to publish daily articles. He urged them to take a more energetic stand against both the reactionaries and the Jacobins, telling the latter plainly that France would never allow herself to be delivered over to a sect. Socialism, like the church, admitted all parties. Anyone who tried to localize the revolution by seizing it for one parochial faction adjourned the revolution. At other times he denounced his editors for behaving like automats, unthinkingly following his ideas no matter what the situation might be. When, for example, he had warned that the president was engaged in a politics of treason, his editors had thrust the idea into the journal like a pack of nettles, crudely crying, "treason." An editor must be able to take independent action. When newspapers, like Siècle, published proclamations amounting to an appeal for civil war, La Voix, retaining its independence even though a part of the Republican Union, must issue a protest against the irresponsible action. The proclamation of Bonaparte explaining that it was necessary to cut down some of the liberty trees because they were obstructing traffic must be opposed, for it violated the constitution.

1P.-J. Proudhon to A M. Alfred Darimon, February 20, 1850, Vol. III: Corres., p. 120.


The editors were incapable of following in Proudhon's steps, but Darimon enthusiastically carried out the last recommendation, urging citizens to tie Article 257 of the penal code, forbidding destruction of public monuments, around the liberty trees. Darimon reported that, in many cases, his suggestions had been followed.\(^1\) Proudhon's most explicit instructions were reserved for the elections of March 10, 1850 to replace deputies of the Mountain from sixteen departments who had been implicated in the June 13 demonstration. The elections assumed great importance in the eyes of contemporaries, a kind of test case for what would happen in the presidential elections of 1852.\(^2\) The real test came in the department of the Seine (Paris) where the Mountain chose Flotte, ex-transportee of June and a follower of Fourier; Vidal, former collaborator of Louis Blanc and a member of the Luxembourg commission; and Carnot, former minister of education and rallying point for all who opposed the Falloux Law which increased the role of the Church in education.\(^3\) Proudhon realized the significance of the elections also, sending daily instructions concerning how to make the Republican Union successful.\(^4\) To the consternation of the Right, all three candidates won election. This necessitated a second election on April 28 because one of them, Vidal had won in two departments and opted for the second, Bas-Rhin. The choice of a candidate for the run-off election

---


nearly broke the thin veneer of solidarity holding together the divergent parts of the Mountain.¹

Proudhon's paper rejoiced in the electoral success, predicting that now it would be impossible to stop the inexorable march of socialism, Proudhon observing that the elections had clearly posed two questions: whether the people wanted a republic or a return to monarchy and whether reconciliation between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat was possible.

He analyzed the electoral victory as a complete rejection of monarchy. The authoritarian idea still infected men's minds, as the success of the utopian writings of the Icarians and the followers of Leroux and Blanc demonstrated, but this symbolic election showed that the people had begun to move away from the governmental idea, working together and voting above class interests to gain the victory of March 10.² The question of class conciliation was so important that Proudhon reserved a second article for it. In the final analysis, he wrote, it was always the bourgeoisie who struggled for freedom against feudal institutions; the proletariat, loving the freedom they saw ineluctably displayed in the bourgeoisie, gravitated naturally toward them.

In the new society that would arise through the gradual extinction of classes, the only differences among men would be in the kinds and grades of producers. A further consequence of this movement toward freedom would be equality which would penetrate all sides of the economic question. Thus,

¹Chaunu, Eugene Sue et la seconde république, p. 46.
by affinity of needs and ideas, by the logic of facts, the revolutionary thought would slowly be generalized with socialism invading all facets of public life, antagonism between the classes disappearing as producers joined together, not in an honest and moderate republic of the reactionaries, nor yet in a Jacobin and Babouvist republic of the communists, but in a democratic and social republic such as Proudhon had advocated.¹

Behind the public words of fusion and peace, the war went on; Proudhon and Girardin had supposedly come to some semi-public agreement in order that both papers could work together, Girardin accepting the exchange bank in return for Proudhon's supporting his single-tax proposition,² but Proudhon refused to carry his support as far as upholding Girardin's candidacy for the elections of April 28. Instead, he recommended the eighty-year-old Dupont (de l'Eure) as a compromise candidate that all could agree upon, his proposal being bitterly opposed, even by his own editors. Proudhon hinted that if the democratic socialist coalition settled upon Girardin, he would give only lukewarm support, for to him the name of Girardin signified ambition, not devotion to the republic. In an ambiguous move, the dem-soc selected Eugène Sue, the romance writer, author of Juif errant and Mystères de Paris. The only explanation of the choice was that Sue was devoted, in a hazy way, to both democracy and socialism.³ In a supreme effort to con-

¹ Proudhon, "Philosophie du 10 Mars, (suite)," La Voix du peuple, March 29, 1850.

² Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 290. Proudhon's relationship with Girardin was highly ambivalent. When one recalls that Girardin's La Presse was one of the most successful newspapers of the day, it is possible that Proudhon wanted to share in some of Girardin's popularity. When his efforts were rebuffed, he turned against Girardin, but his opportunistic nature permitted later attempts at rapprochement.

³ Darimon, A Travers une révolution, p. 228.
ciliate all factions, Proudhon supported the candidature of Sue, directing his editors to tell the truth in the newspaper—that Sue was selected purely to conciliate all factions. While the editors supported Sue, Proudhon would attack the followers of Cabet, for it was essential that the bourgeoisie understand that the republic was not Icaria. Proudhon's true feelings penetrated through the heavy irony of his response to Police Prefect Carlier who addressed a short note to him on April 17 asking how it was conceivable that the dem-soc could choose Sue:

Everything is so ironic in this world that we, who try to have common sense and to give it to others are often mystified. We are not without those who, dying of hunger, defend capital, and wealthy croesus who represent poverty. Today the sublime French revolution, arrived at the age of 62, takes for candidate the most drole of pamphleteers; in two years, we will choose Paul de Kock for president of the republic.

The conservatives also recognized the importance of the election, naming Leclerc to oppose Sue. Leclerc had fought for the government during the June Days at the very doors of Saint-Denis in the ranks of the national guard, seeing his son killed at his side, his second son joining him as he assaulted the barricades. Sue, in explaining to Proudhon why he would be a better candidate than Dupont, said that because of Leclerc's candidature, the name of Dupont would lead to a re-living of the past, since he also had played a role during the first months of the republic. It would be

---


2 For the text of the letter, see Carnets III, p. 294. Paul de Kock was a French novelist and dramatist.

better to discuss the problems of the day rather than to review the struggles of the past.\(^1\) Sue won the election, 127,929 to 117,788 votes even after Proudhon again was in difficulty for his terrible article of April 19 blaming the government for the catastrophe of Angers where a battalion being sent to Africa as a punishment for its socialist ideas, drowned when the bridge under them collapsed. Proudhon warned the bourgeoisie that they would suffer a like catastrophe if they did not take the hand of the proletariat, voting for the compromise candidate, Sue.\(^2\)

The elections were over and the Mountain had won, but it was a pyrrhic victory, for the forces of order took alarm. Fearful of these new successes by the Mountain, the conservatives searched for an electoral law that would take power from the people by handcuffing universal suffrage. The law of May 31, 1850 requiring three years' residence before voting, an impossibility for the mobile French laborer, was already on the horizon as Eugène Sue and a badly divided Mountain celebrated what was, in reality, only a minor victory. The Mountain now had a new organ, Proscrit, which carried from London their vituperations against Proudhon. At the same time, La Voix was suffering from more government confiscations and Proudhon complained of receiving letters addressed to him as the "personal enemy of God."

In his prison cell, Proudhon reviewed the entire span of his tenuous relations with his confrères of the Mountain, deciding that he had been the

\(^1\)Darimon, *A Travers une révolution*, p. 230.

butt of the jealousies of Louis Blanc, a man who combined fatuity and ignorance in one person, like the two natures in Christ. The reason for Blanc's hostility was that Proudhon had used the logic of Hegel in comparing natural classifications in order to establish the direction of the economic revolution, his enemies claiming that he had slowed down the revolutionary movement because, while attacking all systems, he supported none of his own. It was true that since 1840 he had been in open hostility with both the republicans of the eve and all socialist factions. After February, 1848, the hostility had continued, for he had not the least confidence in the Mountain and none at all in Marrast. He had hoped that, with Cavaignac as president and with a moderate ministry, he could insist again on the study of the economic question, by this method leading the people to speculate on the problems of the economy. The election of Bonaparte had ruined this strategy, and Proudhon deemed it necessary to spend his time in defending the republic endangered by the election. For this reason he resolved to maneuver without council, first upholding the Left and then the Right, undermining the government while at the same time striking out at the demagogic and utopian elements in the Mountain. In the struggle to save the republic, the elections of March 10 had been a victory, but this vicotry had been placed in doubt because of the communist intrigue that took the nomination away from Dupont, destroying Proudhon's eleven-month labor in

1Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 308.
2Ibid., p. 311.
3Marrast was the president of the constituent assembly on July 31, 1848.
the cause of the economic revolution. Fortunately, the break had been repaired by Sue's letter in which he assumed the same political principles as Dupont would have espoused had he been selected as the candidate of the democrats. Proudhon, though the break had been repaired, knew he still had further work to do in order for the economic revolution to continue on its course.¹

The one avenue by which to instruct the people was fast closing in, government surveillance leading to continued confiscations until after the tenth seizure, the newspaper succumbed on May 14, 1850. The government's method of retiring Le Voix was more subtle than with the two earlier papers, the printer, M. Boulé, losing his brevet. After this punishment, depriving a man of his trade, no other printer would dare to assume control of the paper.² The fourth newspaper that Proudhon described as "killed" under him was Le Peuple of 1850, appearing three times a week from June 15 until October 13, 1850 when it disappeared because of infractions of the law on caution money.³ The editor was Vastbenter, who had been associated with the earlier papers and whom Darimon blamed for the failure of the new journal.⁴

¹Proudhon, Carnets, III, p. 319. The entry appears to have been on April 27, 1850, one day before the election of Eugène Sue. One must take Proudhon's summary with reservations, remembering that he had a tendency to find logical patterns in events, in retrospect, as Le Confessions indicates. At the time of the presidential elections, his support of Cavaignac rested only on the fact that he was an honest capitalist, unencumbered by any religious or utopian baggage.

²Darimon, A Travers une révolution, p. 245.

³Ibid., p. 343.

⁴Ibid., p. 262.
Proudhon appears to have voluntarily withdrawn from the editorship of the new Le Peuple, his infrequent articles often in sharp disagreement with its editorial position. The new Le Peuple gave Proudhon some assistance, however, by carrying the entire account of his trial for the April 19 article in La Voix, reprinting the case for the prosecution which included the offending article, a skillful way of getting the celebrated article before the public without suffering prosecution. Le Peuple served a further use in giving Proudhon a forum with which to answer his enemies, Ledru-Rollin, Charles Delescluze, and Martin Bernard who were attacking him through the columns of Proscrit, Proudhon taking the program of the exiled Mountain and tearing it slowly to pieces. The part of the program calling for war on kings and fraternity to peoples, said Proudhon, was worthless, for it provided no means for implementation.

The same was true of the protestation in favor of universal suffrage and the right to work, for they were only statements of the ends. What was needed was a concrete exposition of the means by which to achieve these ends. In the same sense, it was useless to demand free credit unless some method were devised by which to reach that goal. The part of the program calling for free association was unnecessary, for that was accepted at the present time, and everyone, Proudhon included, wanted free education. The eternal question was how to implement these amorphous demands. Proudhon remarked, in a sly dig, that the Mountain's condemnation of monopoly needed careful weighing, for it included authors' copyrights also; the Mountain had

---

1 See, for example, Proudhon's article, "A Monsieur É. de Girardin," Le Peuple, September 20, 1850.

2 "Cour d'Assises de Seine," Le Peuple, June 15, 1850.
As the last of his newspapers was about to be choked off, and with it, his sole means with which to educate the people into the path of the economic revolution, Proudhon hurled another challenge into the face of the conservatives:

Strike, torture, rob, assassinate, do what you please with my body. I will never traffic with my rights. I will not break the monument of my sovereignty for the promise of a tyrant. The constitution of 1848 is only a rag—I know it; but for a quarter of an hour this rag covered my nudity; and you wish that I exchange it against the promise of a hat!

Then, with his newspaper suppressed and himself a carefully guarded political prisoner, with publishers afraid to print any of his works for fear they would be heavily fined by the government, Proudhon's influence on the revolution of 1848 remained only in the memory of what he had said and written, leaving him to ponder what his own course had been, to rationalize his actions, to re-live the hectic period, to search for a new means to implement his ideas.

Proudhon's conduct over the past two-year span had been ambiguous. The opponent of universal suffrage, he had for a short time, appeared to support it—even if his support may have been merely in order to use this weak weapon as a means of gaining control of government in order to smash

---


3 The government surveillance was complete, Proudhon complaining that when Coup was published he was unable even to get a copy to send to Bonaparte! See P.-J. Proudhon to A. M., le President de la république, July 29, 1852, Vol. IV: Corres., p. 305.
it or to use it as a means of educating the people to non-government. An opponent of the constitution, he surprised everyone by becoming one of its strongest supporters, even calling for peaceful disobedience when he judged that the government had violated it. An opponent of all government, he gradually lost faith in any temporary use of parliamentary bodies to accelerate the economic revolution. A member of the Mountain, he disputed constantly with its members, taking its leaders individually and ridiculing one facet of their philosophy, then condemning the entire philosophy. A constant warrior against the idea of authority, his relationship with Bonaparte wavered between support when he felt the president was following the revolutionary path--his letter to Marshall Ney concerning the Pope, for example--harsh denunciations when he judged that Bonaparte was supporting the conservatives. His bitter invective frightened Bonaparte, causing him to deal with incredible harshness with his fierce artisan opponent, depriving him not only of his freedom, but also trying desperately to stop the flow of words from his pen. Bonaparte did not help his own cause in treating Proudhon so harshly, for he demonstrated before every newspaper in France what would be the fate of an intrepid and brilliant journalist if he defied the government, for Proudhon was certainly one of the great nineteenth century writers, one of the great masters of French prose, capable of being placed beside a Bossuet in the Académie Française.¹

But he had lost the battle! With his newspaper destroyed and that powerful pen silenced, his key would never fit into the lock which

would one day open the door to a free economy by striking from human labor
the shackles binding it to a life of poverty.\textsuperscript{1} Another avenue remained
to be tried, and that avenue was authority itself. Proudhon, though a man
of great personal integrity, did not feel his integrity compromised by
an appeal to his arch enemy--authority--in the person of Bonaparte himself.

Proudhon's opportunity came with an event that he had seen dimly
in December 10, 1848 and predicted with cruel irony in his newspapers:
the coup d'etat of December 2, 1851. He recounted the event in his "Carnets,"
observing that placards had appeared all over Paris, signed by the president,
ordering the dissolution of the legislative assembly, abrogating the law
of May 31, which had restricted the suffrage, and calling for a referendum
on December 14, which would give the people an opportunity to accept or to
reject a diennal presidency.\textsuperscript{2} The first reaction of the people was a kind
of satisfaction at seeing the majority in the assembly disavowed in such
a fashion. Proudhon's faith in the reasoning power of the masses, enslaved
and brutalized by poverty, as he termed it, had never been strong.\textsuperscript{3} But
he was stunned by their speedy acceptance of the inevitable, noting that it
was only the bourgeoisie who protested. In some of the most agonized lines

\textsuperscript{1}Nineteenth century social critics all had keys, a sophism leading
them to believe that the whole problem consisted in an error of count.
Correct that error and the whole economy would again run as smoothly as meshed
gears. Twentieth century economists, puzzling over a stubborn economy racing
into inflation in spite of brakes employed by computer experts who have
gaged the GNP and KNOW that the economy should be headed toward a controlled
recession, find this kind of thinking barely understandable.

\textsuperscript{2}Proudhon, "Carnets," No. 9, Microfilm, Bibliothèque Nationale,
p. 216.

\textsuperscript{3}Hubert Bourgin, Proudhon (Paris: Bellais, 1901), p. 12.
in his "Carnets," he mourned for unhappy France, observing that in the vote on December 14, many who had never taken part in politics had voted against the republic while shouting the contradictory, "Vive Bonaparte! Vive le rouge." His language was strong, "Oh ingrate and vile multitude, vile without ceasing and beyond comparison." Equally strong was his final judgment on universal suffrage, for after it had abandoned and betrayed its representatives, it had killed the republic by giving the multitude a master.2

An immediate effect of the coup and the small uprising that followed it was that Proudhon and the other political detainees at Sainte-Pélagie were deprived of all news from the outside, speculating morbidly on the noise of the cannonade. After his first condemnation of the poorer class for Bonaparte's coup, Proudhon looked around for new culprits, blaming the Mountain for its support of Bonaparte when he proposed repealing the law of May 31.3 By the time La Révolution sociale démontrée par le coup d'état du deux Décembre appeared in 1851, however, he had taken a slightly different approach, alternately explaining why the February revolution had failed (It was the fault of the Mountain) and insisting that Bonaparte had no alternative to assuming its direction. If Bonaparte allowed the counter-revolutionary forces to continue rolling back the revolution, then he would soon be in the position of a French General Monck officiating at


2Ibid., p. 220.

The re-installation of the monarchy. The only recourse for the president was to continue the movement, for those who tried to stop the revolutionary wagon would be thrust under its wheels. The revolution of February had failed because the republicans, after telling the people to be free, had then waited for an election in order to learn the national will, instead of presuming it immediately and setting about installing the new economic order. By this inept measure, they had risked losing all through the incapacity of the multitude, incapable of knowing what its needs were. If, by some stroke of fate, all the bourgeois leaders had been destroyed in the revolution, France would have had complete chaos, for it was unreasonable, after the economic and anti-governmental revolution of February, to expect six million Frenchmen to exercise political rights without any preparation. It was universal suffrage that caused the retrograde counter revolution to begin. The movement must cease, while at the same time, both proletariat and wealthy bourgeoisie must slowly work their way into the broad middle class, for equality demanded the abolition of the upper and lower limits of society. The means of reaching equality had been proposed earlier, the creation of an exchange bank which would slowly make it unnecessary to rely on money, the reduction of interest, the repeal of all unproductive taxes.

2 Proudhon, La Révolution sociale démontrée par le coup d'État du 2 Décembre, p. 9.
3 Ibid., p. 21.
4 Many of these proposals were included in Coup so that Bonaparte could find them easily, for example, the ungiven speech on the right to work, the speech of July 31 and Thiers' speech, the bank proposal.
had inherited a necessity, the necessity of abolishing feudalism, his position being comparable to that of a Robert Peel, chief of the Tories, who had been forced to repeal the Corn Laws in exact contradiction of the Tory program.¹ His election by popular scrutin on December 10 had made it clear that the people wished Bonaparte to act as an agent of the revolution.² When he seized command of the opposition to the law of May 31, he was taking command of the situation. When he worked in alliance with reactionary elements to destroy the Italian republic, he allowed the situation to control him. Bonaparte was in a position to re-institute the revolution if he were careful not to let the revolution languish as it had in February, abolishing government by the grace of God only to replace it with government by the grace of the people. The king dethroned and the people installed in his place, from the onion bulb of the vulgar masses would again spring the royal stem of the Bourbon lily. The great danger was universal suffrage, for with a people whose education was neglected, instead of being an organ of progress, it might well become the stumbling block of liberty.³ Bonaparte I had closed the first phase of the revolution; it remained for Louis Bonaparte to open the new phase, the economic one, for he carried on his forehead and shoulders the stigma of the revolution. He could not escape it.⁴

¹Proudhon, La Révolution sociale demontrée par le coup d'État, p. 43.
²Ibid., p. 44.
³Ibid., pp. 57-8.
⁴Ibid., pp. 61-2.
Thus, in a supreme act of conjuration, Proudhon called upon Bonaparte
to take up the economic revolution, a work too important to let personality
stand in the way. Any man of good will could institute the economic revo-
lution—not to do so meant disaster for France. An appeal to the state to
institute the revolution—denounced in a Blanc—was fulfilled in a Proudhon.
The detested Jacobin, "Robespierre on a horse," was now selected as the
Voltaire of a new economic order, the constitution and universal suffrage
being discarded as useless rags once they had greased the revolutionary
wagon. For the key unlocking the new economic order would work, no matter
who fitted it into the lock, and Proudhon willingly forfeited it to the
only man capable of performing that task—Bonaparte himself.

When the work appeared it raised great protest,¹ though he was merely
joining many distinguished contemporaries who tried to analyze the meaning
of the coup. Marx, in his work, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,
criticized two of the major works, those by Proudhon and Hugo, saying that
Hugo had merely published a witty and bitter invective against Bonaparte
which though clever, added nothing of value to the discussion. Proudhon,
according to Marx, in trying to represent the coup as part of an antecedent
historical development, succeeded in writing merely an apology for the coup.²

Proudhon's work undoubtedly scandalized his generation, for it seemed
that Bonaparte's great press prisoner had now decided to surrender his pen

¹See, for example, the hostile work, Barnabé Chauvelot, Proudhon et
son livre (Paris: Girard, Dagneau, 1852).

²Karl Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, trans. by
to the very cause he denounced. Despite the scandal he caused to his generation, his generation copied him; Herzen employed the same logic in his proposals to Alexander II,¹ as did Bakunin, calling on the Russian czar to direct the revolution.²

For a few weeks and months after his book was published, Proudhon's opportunistic and ardent nature hoped that a Bonaparte would do that which he had been unable to do, turn the lock opening the door to a new economic order. The pity is, not that he failed totally, but that his motives were misunderstood. But for Proudhon, the indefatigable writer and laborer, there would be other Coups. Justice and Paix³ would shock and horrify, but his own precious opportunity to influence his generation was gone forever with the failure of his organs of public education--his newspapers. It remained for him now only to tell and re-tell the story, developing and enlarging a philosophy of what really happened and why.

---
¹Labry, Herzen et Proudhon, p. 166.
²See the introductory notes of Dolléans and Duveau, La Révolution sociale démontrée par le coup d'état du deux Décembre, p. 64.
³Justice appeared in 1858, La Guerre et la paix, in 1861. Proudhon suffered a second prison term for the first work, shocked disbelief for the second.
⁴Proudhon's writings after 1851 contain numerous references to 1848. For example, as late as December, 1854, in "Carnet" No. 11, he examined his revolutionary past and again outlined what had happened during 1848. See page 82.
CHAPTER VII

Conclusion

Quoi qu'on pense des théories et des hommes qui le représentèrent en 1848, si humble que soit leur place devant l'histoire et la philosophie, il restera toujours à ce parti l'immortal honneur d'avoir posé ce problème, a la solution duquel le code civil et l'Evangile ne suffisent plus; d'avoir affirmé comme but et raison d'existence de la République, ce que M. le Préfet de Police reconnaît aujourd'hui comme but et raison d'existence de l'Empire, la transformation sociale.¹

Though Proudhon's analysis of the role he and other social thinkers played in the revolution of 1848 is open to considerable question, it is quite evident that he did play a significant role. The role was a sporadic one, beginning in February, 1848, with his disapproval of the newspaper, Le National, and the opposition parties under the July Monarchy, who, Proudhon thought, were unthinkingly leading the nation toward a premature revolution—unthinkingly leading the nation because they did not know the dire straits of the working class and the deleterious influence their writings and speeches had on a poverty-stricken people—raising false hopes that could never be fulfilled. His role of a sidelines observer slowly changed as he acquired his first newspaper, Le Représentant du peuple, using it as a platform from which to criticize the measures undertaken by the provisional government and also as a means of presenting his own economic proposals.

¹P.-J. Proudhon to A.M. le Ministre de l'Interieur, November 11, 1853, Vol. V: Corres., p. 293.
At this time it is possible, as Peter Amann affirms,¹ that his ideas had not jelled sufficiently for him to present a clear program of how his philosophy could be implemented. In any case, the opposition to the provisional government and the program he outlined in his newspaper gave him enough support to enable him to win election. Still not a prominent figure when the June Days occurred, he repented that he had become a member of the constituent assembly—not because it contradicted his philosophic stand—but because it separated him from the working class for whose well-being he had vowed to live and work. After the June Days, however, his flair for colorful words and his rhetoric in his newspaper caused him to become the man of terror—to be feared by all who wished to conserve the social order. Not realizing the effect this image would have on his attempts to reduce the economic crisis, Proudhon blundered into further difficulties each time he tried to present his philosophy—his July 31 speech, the August proposal that the government borrow money, the "Le Terme" proposal of a moratorium on debts falling due for the next three months, and his opposition to a constitution, the last named probably the one measure consistent with his earlier views on non-government.

When his proposals were rejected, he looked around for culprits, finding them in anyone who encouraged the Caesarian urge which was merely another form of the government impulse projected into popular leadership. The enemy became, interchangeably, Bonaparte whom Proudhon correctly assessed

as a man eager to regain his uncle's power, and the members of the Mountain who combined both the socialist and democratic-republican element, calling themselves Jacobins. But Bonaparte was the immediate enemy, for not only did he represent the Caesarian urge, but he could also call upon the magic of his name in order to gain from an ignorant and brutalized proletariat the votes that he needed to gain power. In his skirmish with Bonaparte, he was forced into using any implement that lay at hand. At one time it was universal suffrage, for if it could be used to get a man in office and to gain a hearing for him at the tribune, it might also be educated concerning the economic revolution. Another implement at hand was the very constitution he had earlier rejected. The constitution might, at least for a time, be used as a means of holding back Bonaparte, Proudhon casting himself in the role of defender of the constitution.

With imprisonment closing in on him and his newspaper almost choked off by government persecution, he had two problems to face: how to get his economic ideas accepted and how to defeat Bonaparte, by now president of the republic and a representative of "Power," a "medieval concept" that must be destroyed or it would slow down man's progress toward his ultimate goal: freedom in a society where he could sell his wares in an exchange no longer enslaved by the prelibations of lazy rogues. The immediate concern being Bonaparte, Proudhon made an effort to patch up his quarrel with the Mountain, at least in public, so as to present a united front. Solidarity quickly dissolved, however, when he found it necessary to strike out at "imbeciles" like Blanc and Leroux who did not understand that rejection of the authority concept was essential if socialists were to be distinguished
from the Bonapartists and all the retrograde parties of the Right. The battle with the Mountain unresolved, Proudhon turned to the lower classes, attempting as he had promised to do earlier in his newspapers, to educate them into non-government, the practical step in this direction being the exchange bank.

Once Bonaparte had successfully achieved his coup d'etat, the same questions still plagued Proudhon: Should he lash out against Bonaparte or should he seek to implement his economic principles? In an astonishing break from his earlier stand, Proudhon judged that the economic revolution was more important than stopping the Caesarian urge. Had he not often said that economic change led to political change? If he could influence the greatest Jacobin of them all to institute the economic revolution, Bonaparte would doom himself to failure once a free economy emerged. Free men would cast off rulers and their legions and Bonaparte would find himself out of power. The ultimate need was to institute the economic revolution. In the supreme act of his political life, Proudhon called upon Bonaparte to forget all the vituperations hurled at him, the entire philosophy of non-government, and take charge of the revolutionary wagon, directing it into the path of the new order. It is small wonder that he puzzled and shocked his contemporaries!

But his ideas were rejected. Part of that rejection came from the contradictory element in his writings, making it difficult to decide what his philosophy really was. He condemned government while still becoming a member of the assembly and later calling upon Bonaparte to institute the economic revolution. He described property as robbery, yet
called upon the constituent assembly to safeguard it against the encroachments of free labor in the new economic order. He condemned Leroux for his religious faith while still admitting, in his declaration to the voters of the Seine in May, 1848, that religion was a vital part of man's consciousness. He spoke against universal suffrage while allowing himself to be elected by this method. He abhorred the constitution and voted against it, later proclaiming himself its defender. He pleaded for solidarity in the Mountain while castigating individual members. He expostulated angrily when contemporaries ridiculed him for his visit with Bonaparte in 1848, later calling upon this same man to fill his own coveted role of the Voltaire of the nineteenth century economic revolution.

What can one say in defense of such actions? Part of the contradiction came because the times were contradictory. The leading figures of the day contradicted themselves, Thiers for example: first favoring Bonaparte's election to the presidency and later turning to bitter denunciation of him. Bonaparte himself played a highly ambiguous role. After all, it was he who first solicited the interview with Proudhon and his actions led many to believe, especially the poor, that a vote for Bonaparte was a vote in favor of the new economic order. A part of the contradiction can be accounted for also by Proudhon's defense reaction against the commonplace. His remarks on women, for example, were probably a peasant reaction to the feminist movement sweeping across France and the ridiculous lengths to which the successors of Saint-Simon had gone in their search for a female messiah. His
harsh and brutal style of writing was probably a reaction to the flowery style affected by the Romantic writers. His desire to impress others by the profundity of his logic was a rebuttal to the current thinking that anyone who had not received a university education or who had not come from a proper social background could possibly be fit to rule France.

Yet Proudhon in 1848 still remains a highly contradictory figure. Two further explanations can be given for this contradiction, once the sincerity of his intentions is accepted. He may have realized that the revolutionary period was an interim one and that therefore his philosophy could not reach full implementation during the time—a philosophy for the interim period being what was needed, the period during which government was slowly withdrawing from men's minds and transactions while labor relentlessly forged its freedom in the marketplace. The second reason may be simply that Proudhon was thrust into the revolutionary period before his philosophy was completely developed. Knowing the ends he wished, but not the means to reach these ends, he called upon any means at hand with which to implement his beliefs.

The interpretation of Proudhon as one trying to direct France during its interim period before the new social order arose presents insoluble problems when one closely examines his role during the revolution. He had made it clear that government must slowly withdraw as man's consciousness of his freedom slowly emerged, and during the interim period, peaceful revolution demanded that the poor, by their labor—never by robbery—wrest the tools of industry from capital. The means could never be through government, for he had deplored this idea of a revolution from above when he found it in the writings of Ledru-Rollin and Blanc. What was needed was education and self-
help. Yet, beginning in May, 1848, when he announced his far-reaching program to the voters of the Seine, one could see that what Proudhon was demanding was a great measure of government intervention during the interim period. His proposals when a member of the assembly, that government borrow money to give to the poor, for example, all demanded an excessively large amount of government meddling. The man who denounced the proposals that involved taking from the rich to give to the poor—by a progressive tax, for example—could yet ask that property owners surrender one-third of their income in order to assist the poor and help the government in setting up an exchange bank, which, once it was functioning, would deprive capitalists, large or small, of interest on their capital. The man who during the interim period saw the proletariat slowly rising to consciousness of itself as an economic group, would yet attempt to do business with a Bonaparte who crushed off this slow movement toward freedom, replacing it with the Caesarian urge leading to the coup d'etat. Proudhon, as the interim leader, must be rejected for his actual proposals would have destroyed his later philosophy of the new economic order.

A more logical conclusion seems to be the second one, that he acted impulsively and opportunistically, pouncing on any measure that might help to get his ideas working, assuming that once the ideas were accepted, the method—though not always respectable—could be discarded. This determined him to run for office in the first place. In the assembly he could educate the people further in non-government and the economic revolution and perhaps aid in the institution of free credit. All of the decrees he proposed were in this light—temporary measures to begin the transition to free credit and
to the new economic system freed from the slavery of the numéraire. Once he failed in his plans, he had to look around for culprits, and it was easy to blame the Mountain. They were the very ones who should have helped him, for he had supported them by declaring himself a socialist. Bonaparte was a figure too far away, at this point, to be a real threat to Proudhon. Instead, it was his rivals in the Mountain who really posed the threat, for their economic proposals could easily become popular, as Blanc's had become, and thus Proudhon would lose out as the real Voltaire of his time. Until he became a larger threat after the elections to the presidency in December, 1848, the battle with Bonaparte was a minor engagement hiding the far more serious war with the Mountain.

To counteract the danger posed by Bonaparte after December, 1848, Proudhon caught upon the idea of the constitution. This spontaneous gesture contradicted his earlier opposition to its adoption, but it could be rationalized, for he had approved of the charter of Louis Philippe as an interim government until authority had totally demoralized itself, leading to its rejection by an educated citizenry. But even while casting himself in the role of constitutional defender, Proudhon did not join wholeheartedly with those who were defending the constitution in the assembly. One reason was perhaps because he genuinely hated violence and disapproved of the Mountain's calling the Paris poor to the barricades on June 13, 1849 in what he could see was a hopeless display of opposition. It should be noted, however, that although he consistently advocated passive resistance to the encroachments of government, his prose was so vitriolic that it had the opposite effect. He apparently failed to take into account the effect of his words,
noting grievedly in his Carnets, how sad it was that a peaceful man of learning should be classified as a man of violence. Apparently he did not understand, or care to understand, that words can often conjure up violence even while counseling patience.

A second weapon against Bonaparte, besides the constitution, was universal suffrage itself. Universal suffrage might be a means of educating people about the economic revolution, but it could also be a catapult with which to destroy government. Why could not a Proudhon, with his gift of language, his complete and mathematical program for the new society, and his proletarian following become the real leader of France? Even a Bonaparte could fit into his economic program, for having none of his own, he posed no threat to Proudhon. In this case, the real enemy came from the Mountain and any of its leaders who combined popularity with a program for the good society. Several members of the Mountain fulfilled this description: Ledru-Rollin, Considerant, Leroux, Blanc. Proudhon had far more reason to be disturbed by these men than by the pleasing and accommodating Bonaparte whom Proudhon considered not overly intelligent. There was little personal antagonism between the two men; with the Mountain, it was different, for a real rivalry existed among its members.

It is then, within the context of the larger battle with the Mountain, that one must judge his influence on 1848 and its influence on him. As far as his influence on 1848 is concerned, the most enduring is his analysis of the men and events unrolling during the two years under study. He correctly analyzed the effect of giving the vote to the uneducated common people. They would vote a king, he judged, and he was right. He correctly
judged that the constituent assembly, elected at a time when the proprietors had already become fearful of the "fraternity" of the early months of 1848, would be a conservative body, eager to guard against civil disturbance by lashing out at anyone who dared to speak openly and fearlessly against the social order. He first incorrectly judged the June Days as a conspiracy, but then quickly correcting himself, judged rightly that this was merely a hunger revolt by the despairing poor of Paris. Unlike the rest of his confreres, he refused to condemn even the revolt and blood letting, for he realized the despairing urge that caused it. When his editors tried to sympathize with the sufferers while condemning the revolt itself, Proudhon wrote a stinging reply, for all who fought on both sides of the barricades died in an honest search for truth and justice. He was more right than his contemporaries. As a writer and chronicler of the popular mood during the revolution, Proudhon is in a category by himself, far above his contemporaries.

In his actions as a revolutionary leader, however, a decidedly different picture emerges. By his bumbling and frenzied actions, his antagonism against some of its members, he totally disorganized the Mountain, the one parliamentary group attempting to implement any kind of economic reform, even though the reform may not have been precisely to Proudhon's prescriptions. His failure to support the Mountain's choice of Ledru-Rollin for the presidency while at the same time alternately supporting Cavaignac for the bourgeoisie and Raspail for the proletariat, along with his use of colorful descriptions such as, "the sublime horror of the
cannonade," gave Bonapartists a perfect symbol against which to rally all
the defenders of order—ensuring his election to the presidency.

As a philosopher with an unworkable philosophy which he was unable
to implement even though he was a member of the constituent assembly and thus
had access to one of the most distinguished bodies France has ever produced,
his thought was quickly forgotten, given up as a hopeless jargon of contra-
dictory elements that simply would not work. Instead of having his views
accepted, and thus profoundly influencing the revolution of 1848, Proudhon's
only real accomplishment was the dubious one of assisting to the presidency
and later to the position of emperor his great opponent, Louis Napoleon
Bonaparte.

The revolution, though Proudhon was able only to leave a contradictory
influence upon it, most certainly influenced the man and his philosophy.
The greatest influence on him was to cause him, once and for all, to
reject government as a means through which to get his philosophy accepted.
Not only must government-as-means be rejected; all government must be dis-
carded, for it would only lead to the further enslavement of men driving them
backward on the counter-revolutionary route. Along with government, the con-
stitution and universal suffrage must be rejected as useless rags, for both
had failed when put to the test. The revolution also caused him to re-think
his philosophy on property. Though he had always defended the right to
possession, he now pondered whether absolute ownership might be needed as a
measure of protection against the encroachment of government. His total
philosophy on property still was not clear as he sat in his prison cell and rethought his actions in 1848, but the gradual shift toward some form of defense of property rights had already begun.

His failure to influence 1848—in any measure other than in the contradictory one of having his enemy elected president—drew him, for he wished to escape the obscurity that usually comes to men with impractical philosophies, to explain and re-explain his actions, and in the process, to establish why he had not been successful. The experience of 1848 became a philosophic laboratory for his later, full-blown philosophy. *La Guerre et la paix* took the idea of free men bargaining in a free market place as a form of industrial warfare and used this as the concluding period of man's slow progress from primitive laziness, through the epoch of medieval warfare, into the full light of the industrial contract, competition in the factory being the warfare of the future. *Theory de l'impôt* explained again why it was necessary to free the marketplace, reducing unproductive taxes, exposing the speculator who took unearned income. The idea of non-government found its conclusion in *Du Principe fédératif*, in which his concept of universal suffrage according to economic categories would be extended to the formation of spontaneous local government in conformity with the workshop. Justice would cap the whole edifice by tying together all the contradictory elements in a running commentary on his entire life in what was, ostensibly an answer to the calumnies of Mirecourt—blessed by an episcopal letter—but in reality an exposition of Proudhon's entire life and philosophy.
Without the revolution of 1848 Proudhon might never have articulated his total philosophy for it is only through its practical application that a philosophy becomes precise, with the unworkable and contradictory elements discarded. His frantic efforts to continue writing as death drew near in 1865 may have been, not an attempt to present any new ideas to the world, but rather a despairing attempt to make the world understand what the philosophy really was and that, if it failed, it was only because the times were premature. It is one of the ironies of history, that the philosopher in politics--the man who gloried in presenting the antinomies to any question--should find that in the end it was the antinomy of his great philosophic position, the gradual extinction of government, that succeeded, Proudhon, the anarchist, assisting in the installation of a second Bonaparte, the great French symbol of authority.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

PROUDHON'S WORKS

Unpublished Manuscripts


Books


Correspondence


"Mémoires sur ma vie," fragments. La Revue socialiste, XL (July-December, 1904), 146-50.

Newspapers

Le Peuple. September, 1848-June 18, 1849.

Le Peuple. September 20, 1850.

Le Représentant du peuple. October 14, 1847-August 21, 1848.

La Voix du peuple. September 25, 1849-May 14, 1850.

ACCOUNTS BY PROUDHON'S CONTEMPORARIES

Articles


Taillandier, Saint-René. "L'Atéisme allemand et le socialisme français." Revue des deux mondes, XXIV (September-October, 1848), 280-322.

Books


Documents


Decrees of the Provisional Government. February 27, 1848-June 13, 1848. Rare Book Room. Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois.


Pamphlets

Sanglante insurrection des 23, 24, 25, 26 Juin 1848 ou narration exacte et authentique de tous les événements qui viennent de s'accomplir pendant ces quatre journées avec le plan d'attaque et de défense des insurgés et le nom des chefs et principaux meneurs. Paris: Chez tous les libraires, 1848.

Newspapers


Le Conciliateur. July 7, 1848-July 12, 1848.

Le Courrier de l'Assemblée Nationale. June 4, 1848.

l'Echo du peuple, journal des intérêts moraux et matériels. June 8, 1848.

La Langue de vinère. February, 1849.

Le Moniteur universel, journal officiel de la République française. January 1, 1848-February 15, 1849.


Le Pamphlet. May 27, 1848-August 31, 1848.

Le Petit homme rouge. May, 1848-July 9, 1848.

Le Peuple constituant, N.D.

SECONDARY REFERENCES

Unpublished

Articles


------. "Prelude to Insurrection: The Banquet of the People." French Historical Studies, I (Fall, 1960), 437-444.


Berthod, Aimé. "Une nouvelle édition de Proudhon." La Révolution de 1848, XX-XXI (September-October, 1923), 277-87.

Bouglé, C. "La Première philosophie de la Proudhon." Revue du mois, X (October, 1910), 424-34.


Cox, Marvin R. "The Liberal Legitimists and the Party of Order under the Second French Republic." French Historical Studies, V (Fall, 1968), 446-64.


Morère, Ph. "Les Rapports de Filbes avec Proudhon." La Révolution de 1848, XVII-XVIII (May-June, 1922), 70-96.


Renard, Georges. "L'Esprit de 1848." La Révolution de 1848, XXVI-XXIX (September-November, 1930), 140-58.


Stearns, Peter N. "Patterns of Industrial Strike Activity in France during the July Monarchy." American Historical Review, LXX (January, 1965),

Thibaudet, A. "Proudhon, Saint-Beuve et nous." La Nouvelle revue française, XXXIII (July-December, 1929), 90-103.


Books


Toutain, Jacques. La Révolution de 1848 a Rouen. Paris: Debresse, N.D.


APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Sister Lois Spear has been read and approved by members of the Department of History.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Franklin G. Walker  
Signature of Advisor

14 May 1971  
Date