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# NAPOLEON I

## UNPUBLISHED MANUSCRIPTS

AS EDITED BY CLEMENT ROCHEL<sup>3</sup>

WORKING TRANSLATION BY SHAWN P. WILBUR.

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### I

September 8, 1859. — A conversation with Professor Altmeyer of the University of Brussels. — Barère and the *History of the Revolution* by M. Thiers. — The papers acquired by Louis-Philippe. — Courtois, author of the report on Robespierre. — Travel of M. Decazes to Belgium. — The dictator and the pretender. — The letters of Napoleon Bonaparte to Robespierre. — 9 Thermidor: *You had to have been there*. — The posthumous rehabilitation of Robespierre. — A portrait of Bonaparte on 18 Brumaire. — Hatred of the priest, the Voltairean spirit, and gallant morals. — Barère, from David's painting, the *Tennis Court Oath*. — David's opinion on Napoleon. — The French were invincible. — If there is war: the plan of the Prussians. — The military system of Belgium. — A correspondence of the *Etoile belge*. — What the historian must propose

Yesterday evening, September 8, 1859, conversation with Professor Altmeyer<sup>2</sup>, of the University of Brussels.

He spoke to me about Courtois, David, especially Barère, Thuriot de la Rosière. He has known several exiles from the Convention; he saw Sieyès, Cambacérés.

Barère's opinion on the Revolution, after the Empire, was very formally that this Revolution was useless, that the situation of the nation had worsened: *conscription, police, taxes, war* and *centralization*, all this horrified him.

He said that *they had been swept away* by events, without knowing it or understanding it.

He laughed at the *History of the Revolution*, of Thiers, said that everything was false, both about men and about things; that, in particular, he understood nothing about the *diplomatic question*. Barère had been Minister of Foreign Affairs. The Revolution, according to him, was the result of a national outburst, of a sanguine impatience. “Why,” young Altmeyer asked him, “did

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<sup>3</sup> Rochel's collection includes transcriptions from the manuscripts of Proudhon, together with notes so extensive that they leave room for only a few lines from Proudhon on quite a few pages. I have translated a significant portion of the transcriptions, as a supplement to the discussion of Napoleon's career in *The Social Revolution Demonstrated by the Coup d'Etat of December 2*, but have skipped over the notes, with the exception of two by, or mostly by, Proudhon himself. — TRANSLATOR.

you make the Revolution?" — "It was because we needed to make one, and we were cut out for it." — "Why don't you publish the materials you have collected on the foreign question?" — "There would no longer be anywhere in the world," replied Barère, "a single corner where I could rest my head." The papers were acquired by Louis-Philippe. What happened to them?... Barère and most of the exiles greeted the July revolution with transport. Louis-Philippe was for them a new Henry IV. Their inveterate hatred of the Bourbons, their praise for the Duke of Orléans-Egalité prove two things: that a party to put Louis-Philippe on the throne really existed, and that all these revolutionaries of 89-93 were really not republicans. What they wanted was constitutional monarchy.

Barère, when asked about Napoleon, replied that this man *was worthless*. His prestige came from the Italian campaign, from that of Marengo, from peace. Victory, peace, that's what we wanted. He seemed to give them, and betrayed the country by deceiving its expectations.

On Robespierre, he said, with hesitation, that people were *too severe* towards him. But here Barère was pleading his own cause. Besides, he ended up no longer being able to judge the events. The revolutionary significance of 89 escaped the men of the time; especially from the economic side. There was no pauperism in France before 89.

Courtois, author of the report on Robespierre, and depositary of all his papers. Sad subject, who died in Brussels in the hands of the priests. Under the Restoration, M. Decazes traveled to Belgium to extract from Courtois the important papers he had kept, promising him his return to France. Courtois delivered the papers and remained in exile. There were *around twenty letters* addressed by Louis XVIII to Robespierre: these were the letters that were important to have back. But Courtois did not discover any responses from Robespierre to the prince: it seems that the dictator was content to receive the pretender's communications; they were full of praise of his policy; he was congratulated on his efforts to restore order; much was expected of him. So much was said by foreign diplomats. This does not prove that Robespierre conspired to bring about the return of the Bourbons, as Thuriot virulently accused him of; and, even less, that Robespierre was *sold*. But this inevitably accuses an eminently reactionary and odious political tendency; because it was no less than the extermination of the young republican party formed by Danton, Desmoulin, Marat, and especially Gironde; it was, in 94, the counter-revolution, a lie to the people, a betrayal.

Among Courtois' papers were also numerous letters from Napoleon Bonaparte to Robespierre; they were delivered to the general, who had become all-powerful, by this unfaithful depositary, and burned immediately. Napoleon had been one of Robespierre's greatest admirers and warmest supporters. This is a trait that M. Thiers conceals.

Thuriot presided over the Convention on the day of 9 Thermidor and did nothing but ring the bell. It was to him that Robespierre addressed the apostrophe: "*President of assassins, will you give me the floor?*" Thuriot still admitted, twenty-five years later, that he had had a serious fear. He represented the dictator as an ugly scoundrel, green, venomous, with unpleasant, nasal, short-sighted speech. When asked where Robespierre could have come from this strength and this

authority, he replied: "From nothing other than popularity." Moreover, Robespierre, like Barère and Saint-Just, affected an aristocratic, neat appearance; he deeply disdained the vile multitude, which was his only strength. He would have wanted to keep his place in a more elevated world, which repelled him. On this day of 9 Thermidor, Thuriot did not know what to say: "*You had to have been there.*"

The rehabilitation of Robespierre, his posthumous celebrity, were due to two circumstances: the first, that the Revolution really seemed, upon its fall, to return to its bed; the second, that the Babouvist party took him for its idol. Babeuf, who had attacked Robespierre alive, canonized him dead. Buchez only continued this stupid tradition. The reaction was started by Robespierre himself. It was by guillotining, in turn, the Feuillants, the Gironde, the Cordeliers, the Hébertists, Barnave, Vergniaud, Danton, Hébert, etc., that he repressed the revolutionary movement, and shortened the existence of the Republic.

His diplomatic speech on European affairs, of May 7, 1794, can be considered as the monument of his ignorance and his imbecility (Cf. Jomini).

Courtois attended the session of the *Five Hundred*, on 18 Brumaire. He said that Thiers had singularly embellished reality. He painted Bonaparte, small, ugly, yellow, flat haired, dirty, with nothing to commend his person other than impudence, and speaking with an Italian accent so strong that it was unintelligible: "*J'ai avec moi lou Diou de la guerra et de la fortiouna.*" Such was the spoken language of Bonaparte. Even in 1815, he had not been able to learn to speak French. In his family, he always spoke Italian.

Thuriot, Courtois, Barère all agreed to recognize in Robespierre this priestly spirit that Michelet portrayed so well in him.

Two things, according to Altmeyer, generally characterized all these old conventionalists: hatred of the priest, the Voltairean spirit and gallant morals. This last trait is all the less surprising since this breed of 89 was of great strength of temperament and lived in combat. Barère, Levasseur, the terrible proconsul, wrote little verses for the pretty women of Belgium.

About Barère, Altmeyer says that he saw him as David had represented him, in the *Oath of the Tennis Court, taking notes*. Always and everywhere, Barère took notes. Fear, according to Barère, had made the men of the Revolution furious and bloodthirsty. The terror with which they were full, they returned to the world; Barère had kept it until the end. In Brussels, he carefully locked himself away and always trembled. It is true that the musky Marquis Barère de Vieuzac was not a hero.

David apologized for his admiration for Napoleon because he had been *the enemy of nobles and priests*. That was his OPINION: the rest no longer mattered to him. This is still how the popular judge Napoleon III. The Jesuits reign and govern: he persists in saying that the Emperor is his support against the noble, the priest and the bourgeois.

It should be noted, moreover, that everyone who had been a supporter of Robespierre became a supporter of Napoleon; there was an intimate affinity between the dictator and the emperor.

Cf. on Napoleon the *Memoirs of Rovigo* and *Madame d'Abrantès*. Napoleon appears there as a vile domestic tyrant.

Like Augustus, *in omnes arrigebat*.

The wives of his generals, whose devotion had made his fortune, Lannes, Junot, he attacked them all and brought a certain violence to them.

Madame Junot d'Abrantès clearly said that it was impossible to estimate this man.

Among the causes of its long successes, there is a singular one which deserves to be noted: it was the opinion into which the German soldiers had finally fallen that the French were invincible. Blücher recounts it in his autobiography: *Let me beat him* once, he said of Napoleon, and he is lost. The spell was broken *at Katsbach*, then at *Kulm*, etc. The victory of Leipsig was the consequence. So such became, in a short time, the confidence of the Prussians, that in 1814, Blücher, continually beaten, did not stop going forward to the unanimous cry of his soldiers *For weiter* — Forward! He said to Schwarzenberg, in a war council held after *Fère-Champenoise* (or another defeat): “Yes, yes, I am marching on Paris with my defeated army.”

Today, the Germans have no fear. They are perfectly convinced of the non-invincibility of the French. They attribute the defeats of Magenta and Solferino to Giulay's incapacity; On this point, opinion in Germany is unanimous. Emperor Franz Joseph, also having pretensions to strategy, dismissed General Hess, who had had the misfortune to displease him for having disapproved of his plan. Hence, the defeat:

*Quidquid delirant reges, plectuntur Achivi.*

Moreover, the same thing happened on the French side; the battle was fought without plan, without method; each corps did its best, and the battle was won by the courage and intelligence of the soldier. But it is clear that a higher reason would have had this peat cheap: we only lose the wait.

If there is war, the Prussians' plan, according to Altmeyer, who gets it from a superior soldier, is to let the French arrive on them, to wait for them in their fifty fortresses, to let them exhaust themselves and languish in sieges and blockades, then falling on them at the opportune moment. We will not give them the opportunity to write bulletins in which they can say “that the Prussian army has ceased to exist.”

The Prussians blame the military system of Belgium, and with good reason. With a lot of money, Belgium has few soldiers; the opposite is the case in Prussia, where, through the landwehr, with little money, they have many soldiers.

The French system may suit France, a nation of 36 million souls, but is not suitable for a small country like Belgium, where everyone should be a soldier.

In recent days, a correspondence from the *Etoile belge* reported the following anecdote: at the last solemn meeting of the Institute, Leverrier proposed to the five Academies to go, as a body, to offer their homage to the Emperor. Villemain opposed this, and then recounted that in 1814 or 1815, the Institute having gone to see the Emperor, on his return from the island of Elba, and the orator responsible for speaking in the name of the Institute having dared to say a few words about peace, the Emperor, irritated, interrupted him with a sharp kick to the behind with his boot. Quite military mores.

M. Thiers out of decency suppresses all these traits of character, which, in depicting the man and his false genius, bring out the national mystification so well.

France is subject to passions, to bouts of cerebral fever that throw it off its hinges.

The fantasia of 89, that of 93 and 94; imperial seduction; the insincere *blagology* of the Restoration; the hypocritical reaction of 1848; the cheers of 1859 are examples of this.

I fear for France. A final defeat, followed by a final invasion, which would dismember it, would destroy it.

To destroy the *idols*, *prestiges*, traditional *prejudices*; to make history both realistic and philosophical, not polished, doctrinaire, decently prepared, quasi-ideal, like classical history: this is the great service to be rendered to France and to the human race.

To treat history like psychology; revolutions like crises, illnesses, hot fevers; to analyze and examine the false great men, the false good men, the false heroes, the false geniuses; to reveal the secret and mechanics of the great popular mystifications, the contradictions of demagoguery, the misery of the tribunes, the nothingness of the jokers: this is what the historian must propose.

Individuals, parties, sects, reduced to their expression of ugliness and infirmity, then show the secret plot of events, the game of politics, the inevitability of movement, whether forward or backward.

And, above all, right soaring, invincible, victorious.

## II

Descriptive extraction of Napoleon. — Overrated man. — The characters of a little soul. — His genius is a genius for DESTRUCTION. — The man of the Revolution. — His friends; his family. — His political mistakes. — What made Napoleon a despot. — The virtue and vice of the nation. — The military talent of Napoleon. — A competition with Alexandre Dumas. — Napoleon has an empty soul. — He is gentler after his second marriage. — What M. Thiers did not see. — The supremacy of force and of the idea. — The ways of the ancient nobility. — The despotism of the masses. — Democratic expansion.

Descriptive extraction of Napoleon, through the jumble of M. Thiers:

Individual of small stature;

Wild, sculptural face, black, flamboyant eyes, black hair, baritone voice;

Mind exorbitant in all things, ignoring the limits of the possible;

Tyrannical, crude character, hated by his family, his wife, his sisters, everyone who came close to him;

Zero morality, without modesty, without love, without respect for men or opinion;

Intelligence sometimes very clear, sometimes smoky and bloated;

Habitual charlatanism, comic actor;

Fierce, violent soul, proud in success, incapable of sustaining defeat;

Compound dignity, basically zero;

No feeling of true greatness;

Pronounced antipathy for philosophy, discussion, liberty;

Original writer, but only in his sphere as a soldier;

All in all, a prodigiously overrated man, who represented no principle, served none, founded nothing on his own, knew nothing to understand, and who pushed France towards an irreparable decadence, physically and in morals.

All the characteristics of a little soul: pride, vanity, deep selfishness, complete absence of human feeling, contempt for men; precocious, intimate, universal corruption; charlatanism, boasting, contradiction, disdain for principles; pretension to make everything an instrument of rule, men, society, the homeland, justice, virtue, the Revolution, order, religion, the papacy, like force, vice, crime.

His genius is a genius for DESTRUCTION, nothing more.

But genius of destruction is a *negative* thing; it is the negation of genius. It is through the influence of this genius that Napoleon spoiled and corrupted everything he touched.

His history is nothing but a series of false enterprises, political mistakes, economic and social enormities.

It is inconceivable that he could have exerted such a long fascination on the minds who approached him.

But this fascination was only *partial*; it was carefully maintained by silence, war, and the obstinacy of the country in seeking in itself the man of the Revolution.

It follows from the history of M. Thiers, despite all the oratorical precautions, that no family was ever more given over to impudence than the imperial family.

Joséphine deceives Bonaparte while he is in Egypt; Louis, husband of Hortense, complains of having been taken as a chaperone by his brother Napoleon; Pauline is designated as a Messaline, and accused of incest with Napoleon by her sister-in-law Joséphine;

Napoleon makes love, before the eyes of his wife, to two ladies of his court — we have spoken of Lannes' wife;

Lucien, Jérôme are considered as pleasure-seekers;

And I have seen, at the Ministry of State, in the hands of M. Perron, a letter from the Emperor, written in 1814, during the last campaign, and in which Napoleon recommended to M. Meneval to monitor his brother Joseph, whom he suspected of betraying him with Marie-Louise.

During the Austrian wedding, Napoleon went to meet the young Marie-Louise, met her in Compiègne, *threw himself into her arms* — and stopped there for three days. This *cohabitation*, discreetly recounted by M. Thiers, confirms what I had heard, that Napoleon did not want to wait until he was married to enjoy his new wife; he almost raped her.

M. Thiers frequently returns to the quarrel between Louis and Hortense, and the lightness of it.

Barely has the divorce from Joséphine been pronounced when we see her two children, Eugène and Hortense, getting involved in the intrigues relating to the remarriage, with an indecency that the historian cannot help but note.

What a terrible family! And the entourages! Duroc, Cambacérès, Talleyrand, Fouché!

Napoleon is neither loved nor esteemed in his family;

Neither loved nor esteemed by his brothers and sisters, whom he treats like rogues capable of betraying him;

Abandoned, betrayed by Murât;

Detested by Bernadotte;

Hated early on by Moreau, Lecourbe, Masséna, Saint-Cyr, Marmont, Augereau, Kléber;

Terrribly selfish, charlatan, liar, perfidious, ungrateful, I don't know what crime he cannot be accused of. His charlatanism goes as far as immodesty.

His political mistakes are so gross, so obstinate, his tricks so shameful, so petty, that they arouse disgust. A shameless sophist, he only reasons to undermine truth and common sense.

But when we have recognized all these grievances, when we have thus condemned the culprit, we still do not have the whole truth. The prestige, the dedication, which this man preserves to the last extremity, warn that one of two things is true: either he is not as guilty as the too truthful

memoirs make him out to be, or he has as accomplices the entire nation, all its officials, all his comrades in arms.

Now, in my opinion, both are true.

What made Napoleon a despot was that the nation was really, apart from an intelligent bourgeois minority, despotic. The freedoms of 89 and 93 were dreams, postponed utopias. The French nation was never at the level of its ideas of 89.

It wanted the strong power, like Louis XIV, with a change of regime. It had it under Napoleon. The nation is *unitary, centralizing, extravagant, theatrical*, and so is Napoleon.

The whole nation was, secondly, possessed of the *spirit of conquest* (Bernadotte, Soult, Junot, Murât, who became kings like Napoleon, or affected royalty).

The nation always marches *forward*; does not know how to *retreat* any more than to *limit itself*; *sic* Napoleon.

The nation, when misfortune arrives, becomes demoralized, disgusted, abandons everything; *sic* Napoleon, after the retreat from Palestine and Saint-Jean-d'Aôre; after Spain, Moscow, Leipzig, Waterloo.

In disaster, the nation, quick to cling to the slightest hopes, comes and goes from resolution to resolution; *sic* Napoleon after Moscow, Leipzig, the capture of Paris and Waterloo.

The nation, stubborn in its self-esteem, touchy on the point of honor, incapable of taking a resolution suggested by the evidence of danger, weakness, etc.; *sic* Napoleon at the Prague conferences, at Châtillon, etc.

The nation, fertile in plans and projects, with many inventors and speculators, flits from one idea to another, from one plan to another; *sic* again Napoleon, between his plan to conquer Spain and his plan to invade Russia; in Moscow, different plans for retreat; in Dresden, *ditto*, etc.

The nation, joking, full of boasting, adept at covering the dirtiest things with beautiful words; it is Napoleon again.

The nation, *crazy for the lowest sort of politics*, rebelling against the idea of pure RIGHT, does not shy away from trickery, even lies; *sic* Napoleon with Lauriston, Narbonne, etc.

The nation delights in theatrical triumphs; prompt to make victories, from what is only surprise, to replace force with skill in a proportion that exceeds the permitted measure: in this respect, we recognize here Napoleon as its leader, and M. Thiers as his historian. See the *Victories and Conquests*, the willingness to accept the most ridiculous explanations for a defeat; the readiness to cry treason.

Napoleon, in his soul, brings together, at certain moments, all the virtue and vice of the nation.

Like this nation, emerging from 89 and remaking himself as a monarchist, he feels that he is playing a role, that he is not himself: hence his continual *posturing*, his verbiage, his charlatanism.

Outside of this role, outside of politics, Napoleon was amiable, a charming conversationalist, like the French people.



Alternately Voltairian and religious, libertine and puritan, like the French people; Machiavellian and loyal, like the French people; human and bloodthirsty, thrifty and prodigal, like the French people.

Follow and develop this parallel; show the influence of this role on the soul and conscience of Napoleon, and we will have the definitive truth.

His military talent comes from both instinct and reflection; it is the calculation of a haulage contractor put at the service of a thought of extermination. This way of waging war had never been known or well understood. Before him, we misunderstood the right: he made its violation a system.

One thing that is strongly displeasing about him is his absolute lack of greatness of soul, his character as an immoral adventurer, putting charlatanry in place of heroism and always ready to cling to an inferior position.

After the capitulation of Paris, he asked to *avenge* France.

After Waterloo, he offered to serve as a *general* and repel the enemy.

One might say Mandrin who has become king, and who, dethroned, demands at least a marquisate, less than that, a farm.

France's sin, in 1799 and 1851, has been enormous.

Under the Restoration, the country was unable to contain the crown and bring it back to common sense; we conspired against the foreign dynasty, we practiced Bonapartism.

After July, the same influence.

To insist strongly, and often, on this false, immoral character, devoid of any true nobility of Napoleon.

The history of M. Thiers, abundant in exact details, in true facts very easy to complete and rectify, is reduced to a kind of *historical novel*, competition for Alexandre Dumas.

Napoleon has an empty soul. — No genius. — The talent for war and its practice.

His ambition is impetuous, devouring the time, incapable of waiting. He thirsts for pleasures, for power, for titles, for authority, for pride, for glory.

Then, as he gets what he asks for, he becomes hungrier, more greedy, more impetuous.

Nothing satisfies him. He tires at the end rather than being satisfied: hence an apparent return, in his last years, to human feelings.

He is *gentler* after his second marriage; he becomes less severe in his palace; he loves Marie-Louise; he loves his son; he experiences conjugal love and paternal love; it refreshes him; and he seems, at times, more humanized. Then, he feels that he is in a situation to which he does not have the key; the war in Spain humiliates and punishes him; he begins to experience adversity; he sees the contradiction of men and things. He fights against an invisible genius who harasses and plays with him, and he wants to put an end to it.

From the point of view of individual morality, Bonaparte, until his divorce in 1810, was an abominable man; there is an amendment in the years that follow.

Cf. a correspondence between Sir Hudson Lowe and Lord<sup>\*\*</sup>, English minister, translated into French, at the Royal Library of Brussels. There are the most curious revelations about the immorality and charlatanism of Napoleon I.

In M. Thiers, Napoleon's faults become so palpable, so monstrous, that we first wonder if the man, far from being a great genius, was mad, and that we end up saying that the historian has not seen everything, not understood everything.

Now, what M. Thiers did not see, in his middle-ground, chauvinist-pequin wisdom, is that the thought of Napoleon is the very thought of France, launched on the path of conquest by Revolution; that this thought aims at the domination of Europe and the world, the supremacy of force and of the idea, and that any setback, any retreat, becomes a contradiction, a denial, a humiliation.

This thought, then, is that France believes in its strength, in its victories, in its right of domination; that it does not want to diminish and restrict itself, to put itself in unison with other countries. This is what gives rise to his hatred of the treaties of 1815, which impose on him EQUALITY.

When Napoleon accuses Davout, Ney, Dupont, Masséna, etc., it is the whole of France, feverish, which does not want to be wrong and becomes unjust.

Napoleon had the morality of his time and his contemporaries. He sometimes exaggerated it, because of his position. Isn't Masséna a plunderer? Soult, same? Régnier, a debauchee? So many others, insolent thugs? Junot a madman? Lassalle, a skull?

The virtues of the Republic lasted only an instant. With Moreau and Marceau everything was gone. Hoche is already a voluptuous person. Pichegru, Kléber, Desaix, Lefebvre, all dissolute. At the attack on Fort Ebelsberg, we see what *the life of a soldier* is like for Napoleon's lieutenants. Everything is already interrupted. We adopted the ways of the ancient nobility.

It is time to renew the study of history.

For too long, we saw it as nothing more than the product of a few individual desires. We must present it, present revolutions, politics and wars in their social causes.

Show that despotism is in the mass, not in the individual; explain the passions and ideas of the latter by the evolutions of the former; in this way we will have the true measure of the individual, great man or mediocrity; and his influence.

In this way *we do not demean genius*, we do not exalt the multitude, we degrade no one.

To fulfill the role of the mass and represent it with dignity, we need a mobile, malleable nature, not too personal, which has no more virtue nor philosophy than the mass, and which, remaining in the sphere and not exceeding the horizon of the mass, is however much superior to each of the individuals who compose it.

A SUPERIOR GENIUS will not be suitable for this; — a saint, a puritan, no more. Franklin, Washington would not have suited the French.

To firmly constitute the defeat of the old regime, it was necessary to carry France's weapons far and surpass the goal inside and out.

This goal was exceeded for the interior, in 93, 94 and 95; for the outside, by the Consulate and the Empire.

The Revolution, or rather the democratic republican expansion, was brought back within by the Empire and the Restoration of 1830; outside, by the fifth coalition of 1813-1814.

### III

The republican spirit and conspiracies. — The four grenadiers of the coronation ceremony. — Story by M. Beslay. — On the character, role, rise and fall of Napoleon. — Peace demanded in Prague. — The losses suffered by the allies. — At Alexander's appeal, France turns against him. — He accuses and denounces philosophy and ideologues. — France was slipping away under the Emperor. — The spirit of Napoleon. — He doesn't understand the Revolution. — He's a true Voltairian. — The imitation or restoration of the past. — Influence of militarism on the soul of Napoleon.

It is very remarkable that it was in the army that the republican spirit was preserved the longest, and that the conspiracies were there constantly.

The expedition to Santo Domingo, the abandonment of Masséna in Genoa, the trial against Moreau, the deep antipathy for Bernadotte, the disgrace of Lecourbe, and so many other facts demonstrate this.

These facts, very important for the historical truth and the characteristic of the imperial regime, are either suppressed, or barely indicated and drowned in the diplomatic and strategic jumble of Thiers.

I have it from M. Beslay, my colleague in the Constituent Assembly of 1848, who heard it told many times by his father, the deputy of the Restoration, that at the coronation ceremony, four grenadiers of the guard, placed as sentinels around the altar, were to shoot Napoleon, at the very moment he received the crown from the Pope; that the plot was discovered and the grenadiers hidden away. What a splendid idea! Napoleon shot on the altar, like Caesar!...

Fouché says nothing of this; but Fouché did not say everything; he takes care of himself first and foremost.

And then, when the fact is reduced to a simple canard of the year 1805, is that not a sign of the times? Isn't the Spanish conspiracy there? The assassination of colonel Oudet, isn't it there? Mallet, Lahore, etc., are they not there?

Discontent of generals in Spain;

Discontent in Russia (1812);

Even greater discontent in 1813;

Insurrection of the marshals in 1814; general abandonment at the end;

Augereau's familiarity; the sneers of Paul-Louis Courier.

By rereading and meditating on this story, I ended up realizing the character, the role, the rise and fall of Napoleon.

He did not have the idea of his century; he only had the character and passions of the French, their qualities and their faults. It was by this that he pleased them, charmed them, that he grew and perished.

I always imagine that if, at each of the resolutions he took, he had been able, in a meeting, to consult the masses, they would have constantly supported him.

We do not sufficiently imagine today in what a sad position the peace, as it was demanded in Prague, would place the man of 1809-1810. No doubt this peace was glorious, from the point of view where M. Thiers places himself today; it was a denial for Napoleon, whose system it changed from top to bottom, and whom it made retrace his steps.

His system, outside of which he, the man of command, no longer recognized himself:

It was the supremacy of France on the globe and, hence, his own domination;

It was a whole system of internal government, and of European constitution, according to the law of subordination; civil equality, under a despotic government; a hierarchy of states under the Napoleonic principate.

Instead, the peace offered to Prague, while giving France a very good place, nonetheless established the principle of international *equilibrium*; with this principle, that of constitutional government, which Napoleon believed dead since his accession to the consulate. It was the victory of Sieyès over him, of J.-B. Say, of Ancillon, of Stein, of the Tugendbund, of all the ideologues. We must pity France and Napoleon for having embarked on such a path, but we must honor his character for having persevered.

Another consideration that serves to explain Napoleon's obstinacy is the confidence he had in his system of war, which would also receive its refutation. He believed in successes like those of the first Italian campaign, Austerlitz, Jena, Friedland; and there were still many reasons for him to believe in it.

The proof is the losses he caused the allies to suffer, the victories he obtained, Lutzen, Bautzen, Dresden; it is the hope, preserved until the end, of isolating them again, etc.; it is the opinion, finally, that so many defections would not be followed by the defection of France itself. Prussia, Sweden, Holland, Austria, Bavaria, Saxony, etc., everything was against him. Murât abandons him; finally the French nation itself, after being for a moment intoxicated by its conquests and its power, returned to its ideas of 89, and supported the system of 1815 against Napoleon. France does not have the imperial and conquering temperament; it does not care about the universal monarchy; all it needs is *precedence*. Its vanity is content with the Rhine and the Alps. Isn't that beautiful enough? it says. What more could I wish for?

See M. Thiers everywhere. Cf. the generals of the Empire, satisfied with their titles, cords and salaries, and not worrying about the system. Cf. the kings of Holland, Spain, Westphalia and Naples, affecting, barely named, independence. Cf., on the other hand Napoleon, in the Hundred Days, aping the constitutional system and not succeeding: we will realize the antagonism of his policy with universal trends. At Alexander's call, all of France turns against him.

Consider again that after 1797 Napoleon's system was not so absurd:

1. France needed a strong power; parliamentarianism suited it poorly; it was the consecration of bourgeois privilege over the plebs; inequality of political rights (1818). As for the democracy, incapable and inept. Would it expose itself to the opposition of the 221 in 1829, or to the coalition of 1838?

2. What was the prepotency for, except for leadership? Sooner or later, we would have to put ourselves on an equal footing with the powers, and then we would receive rebuffs (Beirut treaties;

visiting rights, etc., separation from Belgium, occupation of Ancona, etc.); then it would be necessary to maintain an *armed peace*, which would cost as much as battles. Now, Napoleon wanted unarmed peace, but with the help of a victory that would assure him the Empire.

There is a moment when Napoleon reveals his secret, the secret of his policy: it is when, after his return from Russia, speaking in the Senate, he accuses and denounces philosophy and the ideologues. M. Thiers, who reports this scene at length, understood nothing at all about it. He does not see that under the names of philosophers and ideologues, Napoleon accuses the *liberals*, the *parliamentarians*, the *economists*, the men of 89, the tail of Sieyès and Mirabeau, all those who demanded *political liberties* and *guarantees*. These men made all the evil. In fact, they criticized, fomented bad spirits, pushed for insubordination and revolt, and carried the flag of the system contrary to his own: the *constitutional* system. It was European equilibrium, the negation of militarism, free criticism of the government; it was the treaties of 1815. France was slipping away under the Emperor; it was going in a different direction from him; it could not defeat the allies, who were its friends, as it had defeated, in 93, 95 and 98, the coalition.

Napoleon has an extreme promptness of intuition and conception, rigorous logic, perfect lucidity, originality, strength, sometimes style; occasional sophistry, but very little extent; a restricted horizon; within these limits, *real superiority*.

He is not a man of genius at all, unless war involves genius. Napoleon does not understand the Revolution; he does not conceive of his century, he does not read into the future; he literally lacks principles as well as philosophy; often he seeks justice, just as often he falls into arbitrariness. He knows nothing about the laws of history, nothing about political economy; he lost religious feeling and greatly weakened the moral sense in him. He is a true Voltairian. But, in this narrow sphere, where his thought wandered, and which was, which still is that of the great majority of French people, he positively had no equal, like Voltaire, in his small ideas and his common conceptions, has absolutely no equal. Having enough intelligence to grasp the weak sides of the representative system, he did not see that this system was one of the conditions of the epoch, one of the stops of history; he did not see, even more so, that this system resulted in an increasingly realistic, economic constitution, antipathetic to his instincts, to the economic constitution. Lacking the idea of progress, he did not hesitate before the imitation or restoration of the past: he remade a *Church*, a *Concordat*, an *Empire*; he tended towards *universal monarchy*; he created a *feudalism*. He liked to hear himself compared to Cyrus, to Alexander, to Caesar, to Constantine, to Charlemagne, making no great distinction between them all and understanding only that, like them, he reigned through Victory, and that he had to remake the political unity of nations.

Influence of militarism on the soul of Napoleon: his injustices are common to him with the plebs; his ingratitude, the effect of his Machiavellianism. Cf. Villeneuve, Dupont, Junot, Masséna, Davoust, Ney, etc. There is not one of his lieutenants who, after having devoted himself to the

point of death in difficult times, has not been accused by him of serious misconduct, and vituperated.

Napoleon, in 1800, was placed between two systems: the parliamentary, political, bourgeois, narrow, *juste-milieu* system, mixed with liberty and arbitrariness, justice and good pleasure; the *imperial system*, an illogical and corrupting system.

The truth is that France, after the Revolution, had to move towards the constitution of economic right.

The imperial system, leading to prepotency, is judged; so is the *juste-milieu* system. Napoleon I and Louis-Philippe are two counterparts. We have to escape from that.

The imperial system ended as we know.

But the system of M. Thiers also led Charles X to Holy Rood, and Louis-Philippe to Claremont.

These two systems can control each other: neither is justified.

The Republic came, purely political and parliamentary: it perished both under its illogic and the weight of the questions raised. She is illogical: she is a soldier, and wants to repel the soldiers; Jacobinic, and does not want Caesar; democratic, with inequality of fortune and economic anarchy.

Everything is worn out at this time: neither principles nor morals. — What?

Remake a soul, by posing principles and creating morality.

#### IV

Action generates an equal and opposite reaction. — The role of reactor requires little engineering. — The founding dynasties. — That of Bonaparte. — Blind and brutal reaction. — The power of the conservative and property-owning bourgeoisie. — The thought that determined the Coup d'Etat. — Napoleon wants to rebuild the Western Empire. — He creates a feudalism. — War for war's sake. — No ideas, no politics. — His major undertakings: Conquest of Egypt, recapture of Santo Domingo, descent into England, etc. — "I had become a litter of glory." — Imperial grandeur and our decadence.

Every action, mechanics teaches, generates an equal and opposite reaction.

This principle also applies to society. At least this is how things have always happened there: the movement of ideas is accomplished by a continual coming and going, which moreover is constantly liquidated for the benefit of progress.

One consequence of this principle is that resistance arises in the very place where the action occurred; that where the idea asserts itself, it raises negation. Thus, after 1789, the center of reaction was not Coblenz, it was Paris; thus, the democracy of 1793 was to bring imperial despotism; thus, in 1848, socialism was to find its most ardent adversaries among the Republicans. This can serve to explain many contradictions that we attribute to popular inconstancy, and which have their source in the very nature of things.

In the world of fatality, reaction is as legitimate as action; they have no reason to slander each other, and are equal.

It is not the same in the moral world. Here, the reaction always seems odious, its actions are shamed. Witness a Galerius, a Julian the Apostate; witness the Jesuits, the Holy Inquisition, the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, romanticism. Furthermore, I do not consider the repression of offenses or the refutation of errors as a reaction. By this name I designate exclusively resistance to the free exercise of reason, to the development of liberty and right. It is up to the politician to be sure whether what he opposes as erroneous or guilty would not rather be the stuttering of a new truth, or the denunciation of some great iniquity.

The role of reactor supposes mediocre genius, a lot of passion and vehemence, no principles, no views, often not even a moral sense. Reaction cannot, without destroying itself, stop the movement that generates it, destroy its opposite and place things once again in the previous state, and is condemned to wander, to live on ambiguities, to become hypocritical, perfidious, villainous. Woe therefore to the head of state who abandons himself to the spirit of reaction! He will lose power and esteem; and posterity will confirm the judgment of contemporaries.

Just as there are founding dynasties like those of Caesar, of Clovis, of Charlemagne, there are reactionary ones: that of the Bonapartes belongs to the second category. As I do not accuse intentions, I do not slander people: I limit myself to pointing out the facts. Whether it is their fault or that of the circumstances, which I do not examine, the fact remains that the Bonapartes have played, until now, no role other than that of representatives, of agents of the counter-revolution. I



cited earlier some of their historical analogues; we can join Charles Quint and Philip II, the two great enemies of the Reformation.

It has been said, it has repeated until it cant be repeated any more, that Napoleon I had been the sword of the Revolution, and its greatest missionary. A blatant lie, reported from the island of Elba, then accredited by the long Bonapartist conspiracy, from 1815 to 1852, by the *comédiens de quinze ans*, by the ill-advised opposition made to Louis-Philippe<sup>2</sup>, finally by Jacobinic and romantic literature. Napoleon I only belonged to the Revolution, as a general, through his two Italian campaigns; as a statesman, I dare say, by nothing. From 1804 onwards, all of Napoleon's wars were wars of pure ambition, although in the eyes of the country he took great care to give them another appearance; as for his government, apart from the fact that it was forbidden, on pain of dooming itself, from removing itself from the revolutionary heritage, it was from beginning to end nothing but a blind and brutal reaction.

The democracy having been unable to establish itself either by the Terror or by the directorial constitution, and this for reasons that it is useless for me to relate, the power had to return to the conservative and property-owning bourgeoisie, the only one then capable of administering and form a government. The revolution of 18 Brumaire was above all a bourgeois revolution, conjured away by the military.

The principle of the new government was therefore a principle of reaction. If the bourgeoisie that supported the coup d'état had retained its leadership, there is no doubt that, obeying its nature, it would have tried to establish, on better bases, the constitutional regime: it is for this purpose that Sieyès was charged, by general opinion, with giving a constitution. But the constitution of Sieyès, which was basically nothing other than the charter of 1814, was spirited away by General Bonaparte, as had been the *coup d'état*; and despotism found itself legally established on the suffrage of the nation.

The entire empire, its logic, its ideas, its enterprises, its politics, its defeats, is in the thought of reaction that determined the *coup d'état*, and which, after having begun with a sleight of hand, was to end in a catastrophe.

If from democracy we return to the bourgeoisie, Bonaparte said to himself, to the third estate of 1789, why should we not go further back?... Why this privileged class, to the exclusion of all others? Why don't we recall the nobles? Why don't we create a new nobility? Why not reopen the churches, restore worship, deal with the pope? Why not reestablish monarchical power, under another name, if you like, but with its autocracy, its heredity, its honors, its splendid procession?...

Thus reasoned the First Consul. The consequence of this backwards logic would have been to reestablish the Bourbon dynasty, to restore national property, and finally to abolish the Code.

The first could pass; the second would have brought an upheaval; the third was both the denial given to the principles of the Revolution, and the reduction to the absurd of the imperial system.

Neither the emperor, nor the purchasers of national property, nor the moderate bourgeoisie who had made the Revolution could go that far. The government was therefore condemned to

remain equivocal, taking advantage of the Revolution and serving the counter-revolution; suppressing liberty through universal suffrage, defeating the two opposing forces one by the other, as Bonaparte, in his battles, after having cut the enemy army in two, crushed its fragments in turn.

He who schemes with principles will be killed by principles. Logic perverted, ideas must be distorted in turn; to put it better, they would disappear. Is it not a strange spectacle to see Napoleon, an intellect so lucid, so fertile, so firm, suddenly fall into the role of copyist, counterfeiter, plagiarist? The thought of 1789, of evangelizing peoples and carrying right and liberty throughout the earth, was changed to that of conquering it; the revolutionary Christ is replaced by a caricature of Charlemagne, of Mohammed, of Caesar.

For Napoleon, it was only a question of one thing: remaking the *Western Empire*; to this end, take Italy, Spain, dominate Germany and tame the Slavs.

He creates a feudalism with the Civil Code as a basis! He founded dynasties when the prophets of the Revolution sang that *the kings were leaving*. His marshals are his twelve peers of France. His contempt for the Constitution and the laws recalls that of Louis XIV for Parliament. He begins again with the pope the quarrels of the Middle Ages over investitures, the separation of the two powers, the temporal government of the pope, the seat of the papacy, the pre-eminence of the councils. He created an order of chivalry, which would not equal those of the Golden Fleece, the Garter, Saint-Louis and Saint-Michel. Never has a decoration been as prostituted as that of the Legion of Honor! He touches the University, to make it the vestibule of the barracks.

In the midst of this superb mess, he sits as a messiah, he speaks inspired, as a demigod. The cult of his sacred person forms an article of the catechism. But he feels the emptiness that attracts him; it escapes him to say, like Septimius Severus, the founder of the praetorian power: *I am everything and I can found nothing*. — It is because he doesn't believe in the reason of societies; it is that selfishness has materialized his soul, petrified his genius; he became, in the worst sense of the word, an atheist. *What is society?* he exclaims. *An army, an administration: the rest is dust*. So he despises humanity, a stupid species, *cannon fodder*, and prides himself on his insensitivity. *What is the life of two hundred thousand men to me?* he said to M. de Metternich.

No ideas, no politics. Those of Napoleon can be summed up in a few words: *war for war's sake*, as among the ancient peoples of the North, worshipers of Thor and Odin; *conquest* to the point of OMNIARCHY, as Fourier said. If, however, Napoleon, who, in the destitution of his soul, loved so much to look for his types in the past, had read with a little more attention the history of France and that of Europe, he would have seen: that in the evolution of humanity the same things never repeat themselves; that the messianic idea, or the universal monarchy, which he worked to remake, had died, from its first death, in the person of Augustulus, from its second death, in that of Boniface VIII; that France's possession of the Rhine was precarious; that since the transfer of the papacy, the tendency towards universal pacification had been expressed twice in France, the first in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by the party of *the politicians* demanding TOLERANCE, that is to say, the

reciprocal independence of States under the respect of a common law; the second by Henri IV and Richelieu, laying the foundations of the Treaty of Westphalia and prelude to the system of general equilibrium. He would have seen that since 1789 the trend was economic and that, in this respect, if there was a sovereign in the past whom he had to imitate by remaking and surpassing it, it was Saint Louis, the first industrial organizer. Saint Louis had tried to organize industry according to the law of his century, which was feudalism. This system had resulted in the masteries and jurands that the Revolution had just abolished: it was necessary to reorganize the public economy according to the law of liberty, equality and science, proclaimed by the Physiocrats, Turgot, and the Declaration of the Rights of Man.

Napoleon, finally, if he had studied history, would have seen that it was not in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that Diocletian's centralization had to be applied; that the kings of France, since Louis the Fat, had, by the establishment of the commons, taken civilization on a completely different path; that the despotism of Louis XIV, completing the rout of feudalism, could only be considered as a preparation for the enjoyment of all kinds of liberties: provincial, municipal, industrial, personal. He would not have built up French power in reverse, by placing the *army* first and *centralization* second: everything else was just dust in his eyes.

In his relations with other powers, he would not have taken as maxims:

1. That he had the right to declare war on any State that hindered his policy, for example by refusing the continental blockade;
2. That every victory should bring an increase to his states.

Governing the world through liberty would undoubtedly have seemed more difficult than constraining it through force; but he would have said to himself that force was infirmity of mind and cowardice of heart; that by taking the side of force he exposed himself to losing all his glory before posterity, while, by taking the side of liberty, he acted with magnanimous audacity and acquired incomparable glory.

Napoleon I had time to recognize, before dying, how miserable his policies had been, how indigent his ideas, how absurd his logic. In summarizing his history, he must have said to himself that he had failed in all the great undertakings for which he had conceived the idea and taken the initiative:

- Conquest of Egypt,
- Recapture of Santo Domingo,
- Descent into England,
- Resurrection of the Western Empire,
- Continental Blockade,
- Submission of the Church,
- Domination of Spain,
- Russian Expedition,
- Return of the Island of Elba.

His defeats are resounding: he succumbs, or, which amounts to the same thing, he causes our weapons to succumb, through the influence of his disastrous genius, in all the decisive battles: Aboukir, Saint-Jean-d'Acre, Trafalgar, Baylen, Torres-Vedras, the Arapiles, Vittoria, Kulm, Leipsig, Waterloo.

Three times he was forced to retreat, and his retreats were terrible: Bérésina, Hanau, Waterloo. What does the endless legend of the Arc de Triomphe mean in the face of these funereal names?

*I had made a litter of glory*, he wrote in his charlatanesque Memoirs, meaning by this that he had gorged himself and his men on it.

Alas! no, Sire, you have made a litter of humiliation.

All this imperial grandeur, with which the poets have lulled us, is a theatrical decoration, a pure fiction. The history of the Consulate and the Empire, apart from what the Revolution had left behind, and which we had to respect and continue, is summed up in the enterprises and disasters that I have just recalled. Bonaparte's domination lasted fifteen years: during these fifteen years, it did not have a quarter of an hour of real solidity; it vanished like a mirage.

What founded the first Empire? Nothing.

What did it cost us? Everything a nation can lose, even honor.

The suspension of all liberty, civil and political, for fifteen years;

Four and a half million men killed on the battlefields;

Two invasions, immense equipment lost; our fortresses dismantled; our restricted borders; 700 million in war contributions; the occupation of the country, for four years, by foreign armies;

The development of English power, which seizes the colonies and keeps them, at the same time as Napoleon seizes the continent which we will have to return;

The system of standing armies, the circumscription, the fortifications of Paris, the infatuation with militarism;

Finally, the misguided, corrupt public spirit; the nation left without principles, without direction, without understanding of its destiny; the principles of 1789 replaced by imbecilic *chauvinism*; the representative system rendered useless, and by the liberals of the Restoration who abused it, without believing in it; and by the July government which depraves it, and by the country which is disgusted with it and mocks it.

Napoleon I spread, more than the old despotism had done, the taste for arbitrariness, the contempt for ideas, the cult of force. Today we reap chaos. France never lived less with its own life than under the First Empire; never had a nation been more completely enslaved to the whim of a master, more shamefully a prostitute. It is the imperial regime that has constituted us in this philosophical, industrial, commercial and colonial inferiority, from which we have until now been unable to recover. It is this regime that, after having dazzled us with the glitz of battles, prepared our decadence, by taking away, along with spontaneity, ideas, and even conscience.

Napoleon I was, it is said, fatalistic. He felt led without being able to say by what.

A little philosophy would have made him see that in fact there was something in him that was not him, of which he was the very humble, very obedient, and devoted, until death, servant and slave. This something was a spirit of reaction. Which did not prevent Napoleon from having, at his moments, a clear, brilliant, sagacious mind, from being a lover of order, full of esteem for science and ready to bow before the right, if it had been convinced that the right was a truth. Unfortunately, Napoleon had a horror of philosophy, which would have exorcised him: he treated it as *ideology*.

[...]4

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4 The untranslated chapters consist primarily of chronologies relating to the life and career of Napoleon I, very similar — and in some sections apparently identical — to those that appear in *The Social Revolution Demonstrated by the Coup d'Etat*. They will be added at some later point in the project. — TRANSLATOR.

## VIII

The principle of all warlike action. — Collective force. — Its two elements: speed and weight. — The part of circumstances and places. — The relation of the moral to the physical in military operations. — At Waterloo, Napoleon was completely demoralized. — He is beaten in advance. — Banned from nations. — His soul is *troubled*. — The counterpart of Marengo. — Napoleon's *hammer* was worn out. — The if, if, ifs, etc. — Criticisms of Colonel Charras. — Could Napoleon win? — His *campaign plan*. — Bourmont should have blown out the emperor's brains.

The principle of all warlike action is identical to that of all industrial action: it is that of *collective force*.

Collective force, like all force, is divided into two elements: *speed* and *weight*.

Victory depends on the intelligent use of these two elements.

Tactics, or the choice of positions, is itself only important because it serves to deliver more powerful and more assured blows; to make more formidable use of force.

The Waterloo campaign is an excellent demonstration of this principle.

*A priori*, Napoleon is beaten in advance and his enterprise is both madness and a crime.

300,000 men at most, of which, with the best will in the world, the French army will be composed, cannot hold out against 1 million combined, the numbers expressed.

*In fact*, 276,982 men, the strength of the French army on June 1, cannot withstand the shock of 775,000 men, the strength of the coalition.

But the troops are not *available*.

Napoleon can only have 198,130 men.

And he only has 180,000 men in line.

To win with 180,000 men, he would have to be able to attack the entire coalition army successively in detail; for example, crushing with its 180,000 men three armies of 100,000 men each.

For this, it would be necessary to be able to surprise all the bodies separately; and, to achieve such a surprise, given the distances, that it would be necessary to give men and horses wings.

However, if the Frenchman is a better marcher than any other soldier; if he is more robust and harder to fatigue; if the leader knows how to steal his steps and if he continually succeeds in deceiving the enemy; if he does not allow himself to be forced into general action with superior forces; if it multiplies on all points, assimilating distances and rest periods, it is clear that Napoleon will achieve success, perhaps conquer.

All of this also supposes a lot of stupidity, negligence, and cowardice on the part of the enemy.

That is the whole secret.

*How to use it* will depend on the circumstances and location.

Now let us see the application of this theory.

Napoleon, having to fight 775,000 men with 277,000 men, begins with Belgium, where Wellington and Bliicher are: 95,503 men + 124,074 men.

He has with him 128,088 men.

These armies of 100,000 men are big hammers to wield; and, here, a reflection arises: the more considerable the army, the more the disadvantages of movement multiply for it. It is easier, after having chosen your terrain, to await the enemy with 100,000 men, than to come and get them with an equal number, in order to scatter them, etc.

Thus, Blücher and Wellington combined are only a fraction of the coalition; and this fraction is too big: it must be divided.

However, we will only divide it in two: one of 95,000, the other of 124,000.

Each of these fractions would be defeated by Napoleon's 128,000 men, but the disproportion is too small to give satisfactory results: four victories like these will have worn out the French army. We would have to be able to further fragment these armies, without *fragmenting ourselves*, which is, as we will see, impossible.

There is a relation between the moral and the physical in military operations.

Something seems to *clip the wings*, neutralize the spirit and will of Napoleon in this Waterloo campaign.

He no longer has faith, that much is obvious; he doubts, he is afraid.

He arrives completely *demoralized*.

The people and the kings are *all* against him, hell-bent on his destruction.

He is at the bench of the nations.

He saw the first success of the Bourbons.

He had to give, following their example, a simulacrum of a constitution.

And what he is preparing is a betrayal of national sovereignty, a lack of faith in his word.

He lies, he lies, he lies!

The opinion of Paris, the Chambers, the elections preoccupy him.

He no longer feels supported and in control.

His affair is only a soldier's conspiracy.

His soul is *troubled*: from his retreat from the island of Elba, he had been able to believe in a restoration of his dynasty. Illusion of exile! Reality had shown itself to him; he felt *fallen*.

Now, here, Napoleon personifying the Empire, what he feels, the entire Empire and the army feel.

The gathering of forces is carried out poorly.

The generals are without initiative; some stand aside; the others desert; the most faithful (Soult, Grouchy), are undeceived; the passions that animate the soldiers are of bad character (irritation of old defeats, hatred of the Prussians, — *no quarter, no prisoners!* said General Roguet 1); — sentiment of right, absent.

The Emperor's secret punishments stop everything.

Could he really, as Charras claims, be more diligent on June 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18?



So we must attribute this stubborn paralysis to moral causes. Couldn't he have done better? So we must attribute everything to the necessity of circumstances which, in advance, had created a series of impossibilities in which he would perish.

This last hypothesis seems true to me and joins the other: my reason, I deduce it from the explanations given by Colonel Charras on the conduct of Grouchy on the day of the 18<sup>th</sup>.

Grouchy, so much accused, and to whom we can blame some faults, could in no way prevent the loss of the battle.

From the point where he was, Sart-les-Valhain, to Plancenoit, 28 kilometers.

Having left at noon, he would have arrived at nine o'clock in the evening — assuming that he had arrived, because he was observed by the Prussians.

Thus, delay forced by distance.

And yet, the day before, he had come to Gembloux, on Napoleon's orders, in as little time as possible.

On the 17<sup>th</sup>, when Napoleon ordered Grouchy to pursue the Prussians, he anticipated misfortune; he makes performances, etc.

The soldiers *cleaned their rifles*, made soup.

Let us assume the battle started at Mont-Saint-Jean, as it was, four hours earlier, at eight o'clock in the morning.

Wellington held out for eight hours, as he did; as a last resort, he slowly retreats into the woods.

But, at half past four, Bülow arrives; at seven o'clock, Blücher, — on an exhausted army!

It is the counterpart of Marengo.

It was then that Grouchy would have been to be desired, because he could have prevented the loss of the battle.

Let us suppose that he had then left Sart-les-Valhain and had arrived at nine o'clock, at the moment when the battle was beginning again, more terrible, between *Blücher* and *Napoleon*. We don't know what would have happened. The armies forced to stop during the night, they would have reformed, and the fight would have started again the next day.

Wellington would have brought back Hall's troops; 40,000 more men would have perished on both sides, and we would still have been beaten. Napoleon's *hammer* was worn out.

No, it is not true that Napoleon had ninety chances out of a hundred on the day of June 18.

It is not very rational to constantly suppose, in these events, the case where a particular general would have done a certain thing, etc., if we do not also suppose that the enemy general would have done a certain other thing.

No doubt if, on the 15<sup>th</sup>, the crossing of the Sambre had been carried out at noon;

If the road from Nivelles to Namur had been completely occupied;

If the English had been, *ipso facto*, completely separated from the Prussians;

If Napoleon had better known the strength of the army he fought at Ligny and, having at his disposal at that moment all his forces, he would have been able to pursue it;

If, on the 18<sup>th</sup>, he had absolutely nothing to fear on this side;  
If the battle had started at eight o'clock;  
If Grouchy could have been on the battlefield at four o'clock;  
If, if, if, etc.

Let us place ourselves on the opposite side:

If Wellington and Blücher had been better informed of Napoleon's march, they would not have so quickly ceded the road from Nivelles to Namur, and, after having fought it, would have effected their junction at will;

If Wellington had not been weakened by Hall's corps;  
If he hadn't missed Blücher, Ligny, etc.

It is here as in all human affairs.

They do not appear as a whole, in an impeccable integration; they are accomplished by a series of compensated oscillations, the first rule of which is precisely to take them into account!

Such a miscalculation on the part of the Emperor is matched by such a miscalculation on the part of the allies;

One miscalculation from the first, one miscalculation from the second;

So that in general, the result is the same as if, no error having been committed on either side, the forces had been fighting in their respective totality.

So we arrive at this equation:

Blücher-Wellington waiting = 219,000 men.

Napoleon, aggressor, expected = 128,000 men.

3 Prussians being counted as 2 French = 142,000 / 41.

Battles of the next day 16:

Blücher and Wellington had to support each other; they cannot do it.

On the other hand, part of the Prussian army, Bülow, is not in line.

From there, two causes of fragmentation, which could lead to the loss of both armies, if the French general knew how to take advantage of the position.

But he himself is also forced to fragment;

From there, battle of Quatre-Bras, without result;

Battle of Ligny, where the Prussians are beaten, but not defeated.

It is a first round.

If, on the 17<sup>th</sup>, Napoleon could pursue the Prussians; if... if...

But it is necessary to rest, resupply, etc.

On the 18<sup>th</sup>, everything that happens at Waterloo demonstrates this principle, that with equal strength, troops of equal value, there is more advantage in waiting for your enemy in the position you have chosen, than in going to seek him in the position he has chosen.

Attacks repelled from Hougomont;

From La Haie-Sainte;

From the center to the Mont-Saint-Jean plateau;

From Carrés.

Without doubt, the attacking troop, which gallops towards the enemy, and falls on him with all its mass, constitutes a great force, a sledgehammer; but it loses a lot too; and then, it is subject to becoming disorganized, that is to say, to being scattered. If it doesn't succeed on the first try, it is lost.

The troop that resists has the advantage of short movements, which are the most energetic of all.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, Napoleon was expected and known.

On the 15<sup>th</sup>, he failed to completely cut off the enemy.

On the 17<sup>th</sup>, he had to deal simultaneously with the two armies, separated from each other, it is true, but which forced him to fragment himself: nothing was done; he has 180,000 men in front of him.

On the 17<sup>th</sup>, everyone works to recover; Napoleon is heavy, moves poorly, does not move forward.

On the 18<sup>th</sup>, he attacked late, in poor conditions; and, without having foreseen it, he once again had to deal with the two armies, this time united. He is lost.

Colonel Charras seems to me to have only an incomplete idea of all this.

Napoleon should not have divided his army as he did; you had to always have everything on hand, instead of wanting to operate everywhere simultaneously.

Thus, on the 16<sup>th</sup>, he could have obtained a complete victory somewhere, either at Ligny or at Quatre-Bras, if he had had Grouchy and D'Erlon at hand.

But the difficult thing is, as I said, to make these masses move without confusion and with accuracy; and already the hammer is too heavy for his exhausted arm.

Could Napoleon win?

I say no: compensation made of the mistakes committed on both sides, the delays, the desertions, and all the accidents, he could not win.

Less than half in number and expected, he was going to an assured loss. The half-success of Ligny, the uncertainties of Quatre-Bras and of Waterloo itself; the prolongation of this last battle, were only due to the mistakes committed by the enemy generals.

His *campaign plan* is blamed.

This plan was forced; otherwise, it would no longer have been the Empire.

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<sup>5</sup> Proudhon writes in a note: "*Napoleon, as he grew older, became jaded by this tactic; he had less faith in men and his own enlightenment than in material machines; he was inclined to make increasingly considerable use of artillery.*"

Marmont gave preference to *cuirassier spearmen*.

He could not follow the example of the Convention of 1792 and 1793; and if he had followed it, it is more than doubtful whether it would have served any purpose.

The nation of 1815, tired, divided, without enthusiasm, fighting for a bad cause (that of the Empire), would not have resisted like that of 1793; and then, she would have had to deal with adversaries who were much more resolute.

Instead of going over to the enemy, Bourmont should have blown out the Emperor's brains.

## IX

The contradictions of war. — *Omniarch*. — The patching up of Bonaparte. — His personal policy is bad. — “Chimeras!... I have crushed the Revolution!...” — Military talent. — The French campaign is Napoleon's masterpiece. — M. Thiers, lying historian and unprincipled politician. — Napoleon should not have returned. — Time for him does not exist. — He was *bored* on the island of Elba. — His new policy. — THE ADDITIONAL ACT. — An opinion of Fouché. — The true physiognomy of war.

During the Wars of the Consulate and the Empire, France, although often victorious, must have lost more people than all the enemy powers combined, and this precisely because it was victorious. It is one more contradiction in war, to be added to the others: 1. the progress of the means of destruction, which cancels out the value of the soldier; 2. the cost of war, in geometric progression: two things that form a progress in reverse.

The victor, in fact, must, after victory, observe and constrain the vanquished.

(See the account of the armies employed to guard Europe under Napoleon.)

We know what Prussia lost in the Jena campaign.

But what France has sacrificed in men does not stop at the numbers of the dead and wounded in battles; there are the sacrifices of the long occupation.

It is worse for the war in Spain, and that in Russia, in 1812.

Napoleon does not appear to have made this simple calculation. The more men he has together, 800,000, 1 million, the more glorious he is!... Now, this is what reveals his weakness and condemns him.

He defines strategy, or military art: “*The art of dividing to live, and of concentrating to fight.*”

This is a great example of style to be cited everywhere.

The man of war, a man of passion and action to the highest degree, the man of force, is temperamentally averse to reflection, to ideas, to long theories.

Those who, in the profession of arms, have *philosophized* about their profession are very rare; and it is this faculty that makes them prodigies.

Napoleon seems to have been one of those men who reduce all their operations to a small number of principles. This undoubtedly gives an advantage: it remains to be seen what the philosophy of this profession is worth.

Today, all this is common, taught like something else, and learned on *principle*: practice is quickly acquired.

Among the moderns: *Turenne*, *Vauban*, *Frédéric II*, a few others of lesser renown, but who wrote and philosophized their art.

Among the ancients, we know little about what the great captains did. But as the Greeks philosophized about everything, there is no doubt that Epaminondas, Philip, Alexander, Hannibal, Caesar philosophized in the same way. Then, the best methods known by experience, war goes without saying, like a machine.

It is not true that Napoleon invented anything: neither oblique order, nor *mass* order, etc. Everything he did was known to all antiquity, and cannot but have been known.

Because, in the final analysis, in any battle, *we only ever triumph through* A SUPERIOR FORCE: either, when the number of soldiers is equal, the quality of the soldiers is superior on one side; or, when they are of equal quality, it is the number that wins; either, with equal number and quality, there is an advantage of land and weapons on one side; or, the terrain and the weapons also being the same, one of the armies allowing itself to be cut off, pushed at some point, one of its parts being crushed by the enemy army, which, victorious at a first point, immediately becomes so at the other. *Always force*: force of numbers, physical force, force of morals, muscular force, etc. It's a game.

The nullity of Napoleon, as a politician, is fully revealed in his last conversation with Caulaincourt at Fontainebleau.

He admits that he never had any other thought than to remake the Western Empire, to make France master of the world, that is to say himself, *Omnia*. He made these confessions after his abdication, giving himself the air of a man who had meditated on the greatest things, and whom fate prevented from accomplishing them! Charlatanry to the end, dressing up an absurdity.

Great and noble ambition, say the chauvinists!

Almost like someone who plans to conquer the sun and the moon. M. Thiers, with all his admiration, takes the trouble to refute this utopia; he shows in detail, in a general review of the Emperor's career, that from the *rupture* of the Peace of Amiens, he made *mistakes after mistakes*, and that his entire policy, from top to bottom, in general and in detail, is absurd.

M. Thiers, in summary, only gives thanks to the acts of the consular government, which he admires without reservation, and to the military talent of Napoleon, before whom he bows like the Indian before his pagoda.

Now, there is much to be said about the acts of the Consulate.

We cannot accept as lightly as M. Thiers does, among the representatives of the French Revolution, the reaction of Bonaparte, any more than that of Thermidor.

Bonaparte's patchwork comes, for him, obviously from the absence of principles; and the Revolution had principles. He mocks God and men.

Let us admit, in the Consulate, the reestablishment of credit, the financial organization, the internal pacification, the general rebirth, all things imposed by opinion, which France did itself, and for which it only asked for a sentinel who would keep watch for security — the rest, I mean what emanates from Bonaparte's personal policy, is radically bad.

The *favor* given to emigrants, in hatred of the Jacobins;

The *Concordat*;

The *Saint-Domingue expedition*; like that of Egypt;

All this is to be condemned. And so much more!

Napoleon, at Arcis-sur-Aube, said to Sébastiani, who asked him why he did not raise the nation: “Chimeras; there are no longer any nobles or priests; and *I have crushed the Revolution.*”

This does not prevent the democracy from persisting in saying that he and his nephew came out of the Revolution!...

The merits of the consulate must be singularly diminished. We are making too little of the national impulse, which manifests itself everywhere at this moment, restrains the Consul, inspires him and lavishes itself on him.

As for military *talent*, I am entirely of the opinion of the ancients, who did not exaggerate it, and constantly reported it to the government.

What constitutes the *talent* of Napoleon is exclusively this unique thought, contrary to the true laws of war, of placing himself in the middle of enemy forces, divided into more or less considerable groups, so as to destroy them successively.

It is still the combat of Horace against the three Curiatii.

The French campaign is, with *Montenotte*, Napoleon's masterpiece of this kind.

The allies, entering France at several points; their masses forced to divide, Napoleon at home: we can perfectly understand that a core of 25,000 men, which moreover continued to grow until the last moment, despite the losses, could have wreaked terrible carnage through these masses, none of which was strong enough to resist him. It is impossible for me to conceive that a historian, unless intoxicated by the smell of blood that he breathes in his imagination, could see the slightest genius there.

To carry out these successive crushings, Napoleon skillfully calculated the distances and the use of time, it is true; he is diligent, it is true; then he knows marvelously the use of different weapons, and how one must attack, in all given cases, a position, an army, a city. But all this nonetheless remains as poor in invention as it is monotonous; it is war as a wild beast, as a bandit, not as a man.

It is positive that the allies were very long in understanding this tactic of extermination; we don't even understand it very well today. So the losses they suffered were very considerable; they are much less so as soon as the armies present themselves front to front, and where force acts alone, in conditions of less inequality. It will be Wellington's eternal glory to have defeated Napoleon, with equal forces, in pitched battle<sup>1</sup>. Already, we had been able to judge at Essling, at Eylau, at Wagram itself, how much artificiality there was in Bonaparte's military art.

But all this was of no use in 1814. The more numerous the enemy masses were on our territory, the more chance Napoleon had of carrying out great massacres; but he also ran the risk of seeing these masses come together and overwhelm him. This is what happened at Soissons, and later, after the battle of Arcis-sur-Aube, at Montereau. Then he had only the resource of putting himself behind the allies, who, for their part, entered Paris.

Through laziness of mind, through disdain for truth and men, through bias of chauvinism and idolatry, M. Thiers is decidedly a lying historian and a politician without principles. Not that he

denies the material side of the facts, nor that he shows himself to be cynically absolutist in matters of politics: that is not his way. He is quite exact about the facts, he omits hardly any, he does not conceal too much, and, by talking about everything, he puts the reader on the path to the truth. But he attenuates the faults, he pleads for his hero, he strives to show, like a lawyer, that such an act was neither so guilty nor so absurd; he avoids highlighting errors, unfavorable parts, to highlight what is useful to him; finally he said that Napoleon was a great man and a great genius, and he kept the challenge. As for political acts, it is easy to see that he adheres to the detestable principle that intention saves everything, that forms are small, consequently that all governments are equal.

M. Thiers would have preferred that Napoleon not return to France; but it is rather the feeling of defeat that makes him say it than the condemnation of the enterprise in itself. So, he says that Napoleon was *bored* on the island of Elba, that's all; but he makes it clear as best he can *that he came to avenge France for the emigrants*; he covers the march of the enterprise, 240 pages for what would require 30; he pleads the cause of Ney, of Soult, of Berthier, of all these men who turn around, instead of clearly saying that they failed in honor and in their oaths; — he shows that Austria and England, that Alexander himself would very well have renounced the second invasion if Napoleon, satisfied with having expelled the Bourbons and restored his son, had declared, from the outset, that his role was over, that he no longer wanted to reign and he was going to leave for the island of Elba; but he maintains that this party would have been chimerical, etc.

As for Napoleon's new policy, his *Additional Act*, his *conversion*, he believes in all these things, judges them excellent and blames the unbelievers. And yet, it appears from his account that Napoleon was in no way converted and that he was only waiting for a victory to expel the representatives.

M. Thiers, forgetting his political past and his own maxims, declares the ADDITIONAL ACT the *best* of the *constitutions* that the French people have had: in this, we know that he is counting on the inattention or the confidence of his readers, who, finding in the Napoleonic constitution the same articles, the same declarations, the same terms, the same reservations as in the Bourbon Charter, will ask how these two acts differ. It is here that there would be reason to put the writer on trial and suspect him of a secret desire to rally to the empire of Napoleon III, only by doing things properly. M. Thiers has a taste for the arbitrary; he received the imperial prize of 20,000 francs; he finds the Constitution of 1815 sufficient; he would not lack pretexts to say that in the face of public danger, there is no reason to grant more.

What distinguishes the *Additional Act* is that, being a continuation of the constitutions of the Empire, it must be interpreted by these constitutions. Now, according to these constitutions, to which the *Act* conforms very explicitly, it is always the Emperor who *reigns* and *governs*; while according to the Charters, it is the country that governs by majorities and by ministers; while the king only *reigns*, and, following the course of opinion, only chooses ministers according to the wishes of the majority and of the country. The difference is total, radical, essential. Also during the Hundred Days, Napoleon did everything; its ministers have no governmental responsibility; he



communicates with representatives through *ministers without portfolio*, like his nephew; in a word he is the master, and, with the precautions taken, *almost absolute*.

What a wonder after that that France did not believe in his *conversion*, that Europe did not believe in his protests, nor Fouché in his good faith! Napoleon was lost in advance: this story of the Hundred Days shows him as a depraved nature, to whom any situation is unbearable other than power and the resolution taken to regain control of it. He waits neither a day nor a minute, and leaves.

It would have been possible, with all his might, for Napoleon to have succeeded in reestablishing it, if he had waited only ten months more: the Congress of Vienna dissolved, the powers separated, it would have been in his interest to believe him, at least to pretend. Then war could be avoided. But Napoleon is not one of those temperaments that know how to wait, any more than he knows how to retreat: immediately thought, immediately done. Time, for him, does not exist. This is one of the absurd sides of his *genius* which cannot live with the natural conditions of things.

And this truly ridiculous haste, which he put into carrying out his project, clearly proves that if he had returned to France in more favorable conditions, that is to say if the sovereigns, separated and returned home, had welcomed his peaceful proposals, he could not have contained himself better. Soon bored with the constitutional regime, having finished organizing his army, having 500,000 troops, plus his national guards, instead of only 300,000, sensing the favorable opportunity, he would have restarted the war for the Rhine, and finally for the supremacy. Fouché judged him perfectly: this man was never anything but a monstrous egoist, a greedy, intemperate charlatan, a soul without faith or law.

All in all, it was a good thing that he hurried as he did; the powers, still under arms, only had to turn around and the man was annihilated.

Mr. Thiers still maintains his usual and supposedly patriotic thesis: that, the man having returned, France having *laissé faire*, it was necessary to rally around him and arrest the foreigner. With this system, any usurper can legitimize himself.

But France, as much as was within her, protested. In a State of 30 million souls, where we could rally 8 million voters, there were only 1,300,000 who responded to the call.

France, in the vast majority, *abstained*. And among the voters, how many only rallied because they deemed it necessary, like Thiers! How many regretted this reappearance! When we see the Berthiers, the Neys, the Carnots, the Lafayettes, the Fouchés, lose their temper against Bonaparte and then rally, we believe that their example did not have many imitators! In reality, the return from the island of Elba was only a military conspiracy; France was not with him. Out of 8 million citizens, then enjoying their civil rights, there were not 50,000 who would have recalled him: 1 in 16. It was France that rejected Napoleon.

The entire descriptive part of the battles has to be redone. M. Thiers omits, conceals, diminishes less important combats, especially when they are favorable to the enemy; he says nothing of what he did to defend himself, the detail of which would take away much of the prominence given to the great Emperor's schemes; he dispenses with recounting the feats of arms that honor the enemy. The greatest partiality governs his narrations, through a false spirit of patriotism; and as he lies with the most good-natured air, protesting his sincerity, we can say that he lies deliberately, but for a good purpose.

What is no less serious is that he never knows how to distinguish between generals and soldiers. Everything rides on the Emperor, the Emperor has done everything; generals are only clerks; the soldiers, machines. This is not the true appearance of war, and no more of the wars of the Empire than of any other time.

Napoleon's mistakes. — The Civil Code. — ECONOMIC RIGHT is not there. — Bank of France, stockbrokers, etc. — Napoleon founded nothing, nor destroyed anything. — Political mistakes, in their relationship, are a system. — The spirit and trends of his time. — Napoleon's instinct to pillage. — He wages war for conquest. — Peace was possible after Austerlitz. — The two empires: the Slavic empire and the French empire. — The system does not succeed, and we end up with death.

Napoleon's main faults:

Santo Domingo expedition.

Restoration of slavery in Guadeloupe.

Distance from the Rhine soldiers — too republican.

Sale of Louisiana.

Fierce persecution against the *revolutionaries*.

Project to descend on England, against the feelings of the sailors.

Loss of the Battle of Trafalgar, caused by Villeneuve's exasperation.

Concordat with the Church.

Arrest of the Pope.

Destruction of ecclesiastical temporal power.

Council of Paris.

Suppression of the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences.

Arrest and execution of the Duke of Enghien.

Institution of the Legion of Honor.

Cancellation of the Tribunate.

Divorce.

Marriage with Austria.

(Domestic lewdness).

Continental blockade.

Licenses.

Tariff of 50 percent.

Invasion of Portugal.

Invasion of Spain.

Perfidies of Bayonne.

Germanic secularizations.

Union of Piedmont.

Union of the Italian Republic.

Union of the Papal States.

Union of Holland.

Swiss mediation.

Rupture of the Treaty of Amiens.

Expedition of Egypt.

Abandonment of Egypt.

Union of Oldenburg and the Hanseatic cities.

Exorbitance of consular power *Year VIII*.

Consulate for life.

Dynastic appearances.

Nepotism.

Abandonment of Poland (overexcited by it).

Concession to Russia of Moldavia and Wallachia.

Exorbitance in the conditions of all treaties, which leads to all revolts.

Dismissal of Talleyrand.

Dismissal of Fouché.

Dismissal of M. Champagny.

(*Concentrated selfishness and appalling pride*; this, like domestic immorality, is more due to HABITS than to faults.)

Mistakes committed in Spain, in which distrust, despotism, etc., have their part:

Dissemination of forces.

Disregard of the prince.

Mistakes in Russia:

Departing too late.

March forward from Smolensk.

Station in Moscow.

Indecision on the route of *retreat*.

His own abandonment during retreat.

(He only wakes up to personal danger at Beresina.)

Abandonment of the army at Smolensk.

Perpetual injustice towards his generals (Davout, Masséna, Moreau).

By marking in red ink, in a chronological table, all these *chapter heads*; in black ink the results; and in yellow ink the good resolutions: we would see that these take up very little space, in this existence of the most monstrous of despots.

Education system (nothing for the people, nothing).

Constant violation of laws and principles, either in criminal judgments or in fiscal, administrative and police measures.

Caresses feigned to the emigrants.

In view of all these misdeeds, I see to put into balance won battles, but battles whose artistic merit is always diminishing, the horror of them increasing, and from which we must except the most decisive:

Aboukir.

Saint-Jean-d'Acre.

Santo Domingo.

Trafalgar.

The retreat from Russia.

Leipzig.

Waterloo.

In Essling, Eylau, the result is undecided.

In Marengo, he owes his salvation to Desaix.

In Spain, Wellington triumphs with none of France's immense resources.

As a result, he perished like those brave weapons masters who were killed by conscripts.

Followed and reasoned plan of counter-revolution.

Complete ignorance of the Revolution and the century.

The coronation.

Through the Revolution, France had become in a way pagan. A concordat with the Church could be conceived, but a consecration, no.

Attack of 3 Nivôse: violation of legal procedures.

Police provocations. (Aréna and G. Cadoudal cases.)

Unjust execution of Ceracchi, Aréna, Decherville and Topino-Lebrun.

Deportation, without due process, of 130 Jacobins.

Mobile columns; arbitrary proscriptions.

Special courts.

Entry of Tronchet into the Senate (the former defender of Louis XVI).

Bonaparte makes us forget his former Jacobinism: we know that after Thermidor he was disgraced and prosecuted as a supporter of Robespierre. In the South, he had not been the least violent in society. Today he sings the palinody: apostate.

The mistakes, moreover, follow one another without logic providing any excuse for them; they remain individually faults. Thus:

Reopening of the churches.

Return of the priests (as priests).

Abolition of the oath to the civil constitution of the clergy.

Preference given to insurgents.

Concordat, etc.

Opposition in the Senate, the Legislative Body and the Tribune, precisely provoked by the man's behavior.

He responds with a violation of the Constitution, and an illegal election of senators.

Elimination of suspect members in the Legislative Body and the Tribune, in violation of the Constitution.

Withdrawal of the Civil Code, because the tribunes allow themselves to criticize it.

Forced inaction of the Legislative Body and the Tribunal.

Cowardice of the Senate and the Legislature. (We must hold Napoleon responsible, since he is the cause of it and benefits from it.)

Consulte de Lyon: — It implies a contradiction that a head of state is at the same time head of another state.

Acceptance therefore implies *absorption*: it is a fault.

Moreover, this consult testifies to a high degree of the governmental and national incapacity of Italy.

Not only is the first consul president, but he draws up the Constitution and appoints all the staff, making a mess of the constitutions and the treaties.

Gift of Tuscany, which did not belong to him, *to the court of Spain!*

*Civil Code.* — See, through Thiers' account, how Cambacérès lectured the First Consul, how he corrected his little improvisations, and what the great man put into it of his own.

Then, as in 1852 and in June, there was a competition of flatterers to promote the First Consul and transform him into a universal genius.

Moreover, the criticisms made by the Tribunal were quite weak; they generally felt that this compilation of Roman, feudal and customary right only very imperfectly expressed the law of the Revolution, but only time could highlight the defects of this Code.

Today, it is easy to see that the ECONOMIC RIGHT, which he should have formulated, is not there. What we call the *Civil Code* is, basically, only an extension or application to domestic detail of political law: the new element is not there.

However, *civil* affairs are becoming increasingly insignificant, and are overshadowed by commercial matters.

Many things which should have been found in a Civil Code are regulated by administrative means, police regulations or special laws. (Child labor in factories, vagrancy, penitentiaries, etc.)

In short, it is not the Code that can be considered a title to glory for the Emperor: *far from it.*

*Privileged* establishment of the Bank of France. It takes time to think about it.

Stockbrokers. (See *Manual.*)

Restoration of the Gregorian calendar.

Consolidated duties, or taxes on drinks; radical admission of powerlessness.

Salt tax (20 cents per kilogram).

Education by the State, with absolute prohibition on free education; the opposite of what is happening in Germany.

Confederation of the Rhine, made up of half of Germany — hostile.

The abolition of the *Germanic Empire* was only a matter of words: the equivalent remains, more powerful, in the current Germanic confederation.

Not only did Napoleon not really find anything, he has destroyed nothing.

Austria, Prussia, Russia, England, Piedmont, the Pope, the Naples and Spanish dynasties emerged stronger after 1815.

The Germanic confederation too; Holland, Poland and Italy remained the same.

But, moreover, Napoleon founded nothing; not one of his royalty held out; the only one in which he did not interfere, that of Sweden, resisted; his nephew's success is a mistake.

He could not achieve nobility.

His Legion of Honor is despised.

Its University flutters in all the winds.

His Code is broken.

Ideology *has advanced, as has political economy*; on the other hand, the Church, reestablished by its Concordat, is at the end of its rope.

Protectorate of the Emperor over the Rhine Confederation.

Clumsiness in having forgotten to return his States to the Pope when he was carving up Italy in 1806.

Dream of a new feudal *Western empire*.

The political faults, etc., of the Emperor, form, by their succession and their relationship, a whole *system*.

It is this system that has doomed him and makes people doubt the genius of man. Because it is not possible to attribute genius to a head of state who is so fundamentally, so constantly, wrong about the spirit and trends of his time.

This is why Napoleon is *a great man in reverse*.

His very glory as a general suffers, because his lack of political genius reduces him to the rank of band leader and plunderer of nations.

Affair of the *United Merchants*. — The State lost nothing; but the Company was ruined and this only as a result of Napoleon's policy.

As long as he was not victorious, everything slowed down.

Cession of Hanover to Prussia, after Austerlitz.

Humiliation of Prussia by this cession; attempted corruption of a large State, against general interests.

(Faults of Prussia and Russia, who, instead of resigning themselves and waiting for Austria to recover, continued the war alone. — Precipitation of the three States, who acted without delay and were beaten immediately.)

Napoleon's highly developed pillaging instinct, as well as the instinct for corruption. He reins in his generals, it is true; that is to say he doesn't pillage like a marauder. But he pressures the

populations, through his housing, his demands for food, his war contributions, his transfers of territory, his abolitions of dynasty.

It does not occur to him that the war, fought in the name of the Revolution, is only fought for a principle and that it is entirely defensive. He makes war for conquest 1

Artificial, renewed organization of the Greeks.

Continual imitation of forms and traditions of the old monarchy. Napoleon I much more of an imitator than Napoleon III.

*Conscription:* — pushed to the point of barbarism, to the point of human sacrifice, to cannibalism.

Mobile columns: after being sent, in 1800-1803, in pursuit of brigands, they were sent as garrisons to the families of refractory soldiers.

Conscription was the primary cause of the bastardization of the race and its corruption. The vital force diminished, the moral and intellectual force followed.

Imperial policy after 1805.

The Emperor could have made peace after Austerlitz if he had wanted. But, to make it good and lasting, it would have been necessary to stick to the *status quo* of the Peace of Amiens; even to diminish his claims in Holland and Italy, which would have been to condemn himself, and to recognize the justice of the English and Austrian claims.

The impulse given had to be followed; it was necessary to weaken the enemy. So it was just mistake after mistake.

Interference in German affairs.

Distortion of the Germanic Confederation.

Change in combinations, effects of the centuries, which opposed Prussia to Austria.

Creation of French royalty on the other side of the Rhine.

Public assignment to a feudal Western empire.

Same observation after Jena.

Peace is still possible, but on condition of leaving Prussia intact, which would have once again been condemning himself and justifying the taking-up of arms. He therefore continued the work begun, reduced Prussia to nothing: he continued the war with Russia, with whom was concluded the Treaty of Tilsitt, a treaty motivated and brought about by the previous campaigns and the advantages already consecrated, but still contested, of the peace of Amiens and Pressbourg.

Since the equilibrium could no longer exist between France and Germany, between Prussia and Austria, it had to be created by means of the two empires, between which the old Germania would remain erased: the Slavic empire and the French.

But this system does not succeed; England and Spain are there: everything must be submitted, and we end up with death.



## XI

Napoleon, very strong logician, writer, poet. — His lack of moral sense. — The idea of the century in reverse. — The restoration of worship. — Napoleon is a *great man in reverse*. — Friends of moderation. — Great men. — Their cult and the so-called humanists. — The imperial establishment condemned in advance. — Bad victories. — He fights *for himself*, for his fortune. — Is a man the *genius*? — Napoleon only knows how to move forward. — He's a great player, a virtuoso, a charlatan.

Napoleon is a *very strong logician*, it must be recognized; moreover, *writer* and *poet*.

It is his logic that explains his mistakes, because he only pursues the principle of counter-revolution; — and it is his lack of MORAL SENSE that explains the clouding of his mind.

Thus the lack of moral sense does not allow him to grasp the power of the revolutionary idea.

Once launched, he goes from fault to fault, from error to error, from contradiction to contradiction, from madness to madness.

He is a terrible logician, who has taken the idea of his century in reverse, and is leading his nation where we have seen.

Napoleon is no more a founder, a social organizer, than Voltaire is an epic poet.

His role was to be that of Washington; Nothing more, nothing less.

Napoleon's serious mistake in reestablishing the cult is that he only acts, as M. Thiers relates and discusses, by virtue of State considerations, and not at all by virtue of his own faith. So the trap was there for him.

If Napoleon had been a believer, he would have had a more developed moral sense, religion among men taking the place of conscience; — in this case, it would have saved him from many mistakes.

But without religion, without conscience, he had to perish, and he perished.

The revolutionary idea had not yet been understood, at that time, the power that religion still retained; we had not learned, finally, to create morality without religion.

No man more irreverent toward the Church than Bonaparte.

Napoleon is a *great man in reverse*. What would he have done if, taking the Revolution in its true sense, making himself its organ and model, he had loudly affirmed immanent justice, and, while accepting a temporary dictatorship, regaining power each time that it had been freely offered to him, spending his life reducing the government and creating civic liberty, tolerating religions, but putting himself above it, pushing the people to virtue, he would have clearly posed the new conscience in the face of the ancient consciousness, man in the face of God?...

He was right to reject Protestantism, but he was wrong about *the signs of the times*.

The First Consul falls out with the Revolution.

We are far from being able to accept the judgments of M. Thiers, but, at least, with him, we know well what it is about, and it is rare that he does not provide the ways to refute it.

The so-called friends of *moderation*, who, like M. Thiers, always incline to complacency towards the whims of power, do not realize that they are losing it. *Principiis obsta.*

The great men only seem great to us because we look at them from their great side. They must be measured together, on all sides, and added up.

(Cf. — *Revue germanique* of November 30, 1859: Account of the holidays celebrated in Germany, regarding Schiller's birthday. Cf. his letters to Goethe, and his Life, by A. Weil, in the *Nord*. There are petty sides in Schiller.)

The cult of great men, which some so-called humanists would like to establish today, as a religion, is a continuation of theology or religious symbolism, a remnant of idolatry.

There are no *great men*: there are men more or less approaching the abstract type; and individuals, in mass, who, through the vice of education and the misfortune of the times, fall more or less low below this type.

It is with men like paintings and diamonds, whose price increases according to a progression that far exceeds that of volume, weight, extent or real merit.

Let us suppose that we can judge, sanely and without risk of error, the intellectual value of a man by the dimensions of the brain: the average size of the brain being represented by  $x$  of conference, the one whose brain would be  $x + 1/100$  would be worth double; if by  $x + 2/100 \pm 4$ ; if by  $x + 3/100 = 8$ , etc. So that the individual whose brain presented only the difference of  $5/100$  or  $1/20$  would be estimated at 32!

EDITOR'S NOTE: These terms of equation follow pure convention, of course, and do not provide a solution in intellectual non-equivalences. Proudhon established, for the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a table that completes his thoughts:

"Twenty or twenty-five men, often less, represent an entire century. These are the sources of his life, the centers of his thought, the impulsive force of his movement. Finally, they are the ones who inspire it, excite it, make it work, sum it up. Their biography would be the whole story.

These are, for the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the following names:

Richelieu.	French.
Gustave Adolphe.	Swedish.
Cromwell.	English.
William of Orange.	Dutch.
Colbert.	French.
Vauban (engineer, economist, military writer, philanthropist).	French.
Descartes.	French.
Spinoza.	Jewish Dutch-Portuguese.
Bayle (critic, scholar, free-thinker, French refugee in Holland).	French.
Hobbes.	English.
Locke (the first who made a principle (tolerance)	English.

Galileo.	Italian.
Newton.	English.
Pascal (the anti-Jesuit and the creator of French prose, mathematician and physicist).	French.
Leibniz.	German.
Sobieski (the opponent of the Turk, liberator of Vienna and Europe in 1685)	Pole.
Harvey.	English.
Boerhaave.	Dutch.
Tournefort.	French.
Molière (comic poet, prose writer, moralist, actor, representative of Gassendi's philosophy)	French.
Bossuet.	French.
Milton.	English.

“Of these 22 names, there are 9 French, 6 English, 3 Dutch, 1 Swedish, 1 Italian, 1 German, 1 Polish.

“Besides, everyone makes their list from their particular point of view and how they see society; no two lists out of ten thousand would be found that were identical.”

Divide the *Regent*, estimated at twenty million, into twenty equal fragments, you will only have 100,000 francs worth.

The more carefully we study the history of the Consulate and the Empire, the more we realize that the imperial establishment was doomed in advance; just as the Spanish enterprise, that of Moscow, and that of Waterloo were doomed in advance and lost.

The principle of the Empire is *conquest*, a tendency towards universal monarchy.

This principle came too late; incompatible with civilization, it was an idea worn out for eighteen centuries, whose impotence had been demonstrated a second time by the impracticality of the feudal system.

Napoleon, waging war quickly, winning shoddy victories, replacing real force with prestige, accumulating conquest after conquest, without digesting any of them, must quickly end in catastrophe.

His empire is nothing but a ten-year charlatanry, which has not had a moment of stability.

No sensible man of his time had faith in him.

Pitt, first, understands that all this is *artificial*; — Wellington, even better, and proves it.

It is vain to enumerate the faults of the Emperor, and to pretend that, if he had avoided them, his empire could be firmly established. To be fair, we must enumerate the faults of the governments, and admit that, if these faults had been avoided, Napoleon would not have lasted four years. What improvidence, in fact, among all these princes, who allow themselves to be beaten one after the other! This Prussia, which allowed the Russians and Austrians to be defeated at Austerlitz and which then attacked the French army at Jena!... These Spanish generals!... This Walcheren expedition!

The finest moment of the Empire was after Friedland. It seems that it could have strengthened itself and arrived at a solid peace. Only England remained against it! But England was too much. It had to be driven out everywhere: therefore, take Portugal, Spain, Italy, Holland, the Rhine, Hanseatic cities, etc.

The *a priori* conclusion is therefore really this:

Admitting that Napoleon would have conducted affairs as well as possible; and reciprocally, that the powers would have behaved with reason and vigor, he would not last long; he was confined.

Instead, enormous mistakes were made on all sides; the faults compensate each other: there remains the inequality of forces, which always condemns Napoleon.

This is mathematical.

It is not being serious to cherish a dream like that of M. Thiers:

“Admitting on the side of the foreigner mistakes, imbecility, cowardice, division, always, on the side of France, of union, of genius, of prudence;

“France would have conquered and governed Europe!...”

This is simply going back to the times of Sesostris and Nebuchadnezzar; at those times when a civilized, numerous, rich nation found itself alone in the middle of poor, divided peoples.

When we follow this man in the details of the war, we see that he is less a hero than a ferocious beast. How he fights for himself, for his fortune, for his pride, for his glory! His system is to never give in, to risk everything, to use everything. When there are no more old soldiers, he takes the conscripts; when there is a shortage of men aged 20 and above, he takes those aged 18; when there are no longer the latter, he calls the *national guards*; let him do it, follow him, he will arm children under 12, women and old men. Paris taken, he does not have enough, and he proposes to surprise the allies *in the capital*, at the risk of them sacking it.

Also, while everyone around him is discouraged and exhausted, he never gets tired, which is very understandable. In all matters, the *Emperor*, supported by selfishness, passion, interest, self-esteem, does not tire; he reduces all those who serve him. “Ah! If they had known how to support me,” he said. But change the positions: put a subordinate in the place of the master, and reciprocally, you will see this great courage become disgusted more quickly than the others, because of his personality.

Mr. Thiers sees none of these things: he worships.

“To demean genius,” says Thiers, “is to demean humanity. »

What is *Genius*?

A man is the *genius*!

It is necessary to show, on the contrary, that the individual is small, fallible, sinful, always miserable; that the greatest fault is to bow down to an individual, under the pretext of heroism, talent or genius.

Man does not hold on to wealth, power and glory; he inevitably depraves himself there. Every individual, rich and powerful, is tempted by luxury, pleasure, arbitrariness, and does not resist long.

Very rare and seldom seen is the one who, powerful, glorious and rich, respects the law and liberty.

Great motive in favor of civil and political equality. — *Universal politeness and consideration.* — Let everyone respect each other; that familiarity be prohibited, anywhere other than in the family.

That is quite a revolution.

Napoleon was mad from 13 *Vendémiaire* until his death.

What we can say in his favor is that there are rare glimpses of common sense, probity, wisdom and conscience in him. In the greater part of his life and his actions, he is one who scorns mores and laws, and all kinds of principle.

M. Thiers does not clear him of these accusations:

Incestuous, lascivious;

Colossally absurd in his wars in Russia and Spain;

Incredible perfidious, base, in his diplomacy;

Of an unexampled charlatanism, when it was not of an insolence without equal;

Ultimately, a detestable man, a poor character.

How true is Bernadotte's judgment of him: "*He only knows how to move forward!*" He is lost if he is forced to retreat.

1. In the *Egyptian Campaign*, after the lifting of the siege of Saint-Jean-d'Acre, when he judges that the enterprise has failed, that there is nothing more to be done, he only thinks of coming back. He leaves the army.

At *Marengo*, he is completely stunned.

2. In *Spain*, after a run on Madrid, with great fanfare, he leaves the enterprise to his lieutenants, and, in the end, abandons it, to go to Wagram and Moscow. — He gives up the game, even if it means putting Dupont on trial, blaming Masséna and Soult, Jourdan, Ney, etc., and having his brother Joseph arrested.

3. After *Moscow*, he left the retreat at Davout then at Ney, and left the army at Smorgoni.

4. In *Leipzig*, he cannot decide to retire; he does not know how to do it, and loses the army after leaving it.

5. At *Fontainebleau*, he tries to poison himself.

6. At Waterloo, he left the army and went to hide at the Elysée-Bourbon.

No, this is not a statesman, a political leader, the representative of an idea, of a principle. — He is not even a warrior. *The hero vanishes*, in Napoleon, at the first adversity. He cannot tolerate failure or misfortune.

He is a great actor, a virtuoso, a charlatan — far too overrated by the French vanity that adored him.

He did not win the battles of Marengoi, Esling, Eylau.

He lost those of Leipsig and Waterloo.

He did not succeed either in front of Saint-Jean-d'Acre, and, consequently, in his enterprise in Egypt; neither in Santo Domingo, nor in Spain, nor in Russia; he did not know how to protect France from invasion.

There is definitely too much to retell about this man.

## XII

Napoleon strategist. — He is a *maker of plans*. — The man of action. — The high combinations. — He is not the man of *shock*. — Artist composing battles. — One of the causes that will ruin him. — What constitutes genius. — Military genius is a negative genius. — Always the same exercise. — The expenses of victorious France. — Hesitation in the face of failure. — France idolized in Napoleon.

All the soldiers thought that Napoleon, in the first rank as a strategist, was only second in tactics, that is to say in the battle itself. This is due to the fact that he is more of a *maker of plans* than a man of action, which harms the essential quality of the man of war, which is to strike *and to win, especially by arms*.

Also, the great number of generals are, above all, men of action, as if the force which is in them, and of which they are conscious, was repugnant to the work of the idea and its combinations.

Kléber, one of the first generals of the Republic, did not like the command in chief; Oudinot, Macdonald, feared the great commandments. These temperaments are the most common, the real heroes: Masséna, Junot, Augereau, Ney, Lannes, Murât, Vendamme, Kellermann, Lecourbe, Lasalle, Richepanse, Poniatowski, Marmont, Soult, and a host of others, are in this category. These are the strong. — Among the foreigners: Bagration, Beningsen, Blücher, Picton, Kutusoff, Wurmser, Radetzky, Paskevitch, etc.

Men capable of high combinations, that is to say of directing these immense armies, which only act in separate bodies, are rarer; they need office work, administrative care, a study of the places, which absorbs them, and obliges them to leave the care of the *real combat* to the men of hard struggle. There is therefore less of the warrior in these than in the others; they are its servants, they are really not its leaders. But, through the superiority inherent in the idea over force, they obtain command.

Of this number are: Dumouriez, Moreau, Hoche, Desaix, Davout, Napoleon.

Among foreigners there are only two of the same rank: Prince Charles and the Duke of Wellington; the latter still quite apart.

In Napoleon, there is a clear tendency to give everything to his combinations, to create plans after plans; it becomes a monomania for him.

He is not the man of *shock*, of personal struggle, hand to hand, the strong and valiant hero, who communicates his bravery, and carries off an entire army in his wake. He is an artist who *composes* battles, moves pawns, plays and amuses himself, who loves war for its own sake, through a strange depravity of heart, and forgets that it only has value through morality, cause and purpose.

This state of mind is one of the causes which will ruin Napoleon; and it was right to say that his military capacity seemed to have declined, as his political madness gained ground.

From Marengo, we see him preoccupied with his plans and resulting in a resounding defeat.

The passage of the Saint-Bernard is well managed and well accomplished; the glory of the First Consul was at stake; and, to ensure victory, he neglected nothing. He is not the one who makes something out of nothing. But he does not confirm the presence of the fort of Bard; and, without the path discovered in the mountain, the new Hannibal was stopped short, forced to backslide as pitifully as possible.

Arriving in Lombardy, instead of rushing to the aid of Masséna, he remained six days without doing anything in Milan, busy stretching the web in which he was to capture Mêlas' army. — Serious misconduct against the duty of the army leader and comrade-in-arms. It is nothing for him to beat the enemy. There must be ostentation, brilliance; above all, his glory must erase that of others; if necessary, they must succumb, in order to bring out more of the *great man*.

Now, we know what happened. After having so *skillfully distributed* his bodies, Mêlas arrived unexpectedly, without Napoleon knowing where he had gone; and now the Austrian, like a big bumblebee, bursts this fragile web that Bonaparte had stretched before him! Without the arrival of Desaix, everything was lost.

In Boulogne, another combination. Millions, men sacrificed for an enterprise, a combination of his own.

Nothing proves, it will be said, that the descent would not have been successful.

But there is also nothing to prove that it would have succeeded; on the contrary. In the meantime, Bonaparte was wrong, as head of the government and head of the army, to persist in an enterprise that was condemned by the most competent men in the profession, the very people he was forced to use: Admiral Decrès, Admiral Villeneuve, Admiral Ganteaume and all the sailors. He was wrong, very wrong, to do violence to convictions, to impose his will, for an idea considered crazy, which, after having caused the torment and martyrdom of the best, ultimately could not be executed.

See also Napoleon at the moment of leaving Moscow; there again, plan after plan, dropped, taken up, left again, until the moment when he shamefully abandons the care of the retreat, moves to the forefront and no longer appears!...

See the same, in the Saxon campaign, from August 10 to October 16, always coming up with the most beautiful plans, trying the execution, then abandoning it, tiring his soldiers, and finally being cornered at Leipsig, where the coalition crushes him.

Never, according to M. Thiers, did his genius shine more brightly. No doubt, but never did an army leader respond less to the needs of defense and the expectations of his soldiers. He forgets that it is not everything to say to himself: if I could take the army in this situation, then in that other, or in this one, or in that one, it would be lost. We join the enemy army where we can, as best we can, and the big concern, once it is present, is to destroy it.

Now, in this second campaign in Saxony, without the complacency shown by the allies in coming to attack Dresden, Napoleon would have suffered only failures. What positive thing does he do, from August 27 to October 16, for fifty days? Nothing. He awaits the success of his great



combinations, established on the Elbe, from Hamburg to Bautzen, and dreaming only of crushing the first army that presents itself, then of making a triumphant entry into Berlin. They harass him, they tire him, they deceive him, finally, they bring him to Leipzig, without him realizing that he has lost, through his combinations, the freedom of his movements

What constitutes *genius* is the ability to bring out a great thought, to demonstrate it, to deduce numerous and fruitful consequences from it. — The best example is the discovery of attraction. — Analysis of Descartes, differential calculus of Leibnitz, algebra of Velte, logarithms of Neper, pile of Volta, circulation of Harvey's blood, etc.

In the arts, the intimate union of beauty, truth, fiction and nature on new data.

And always, and everywhere, a goal of utility or morality to achieve. Perfection of the soul.

In war, there is neither utility nor morality of its own.

There is no *progress* without thought.

There is no *discovery* to be made, no *idea to be extracted, to be developed*; it implies contradiction, is repugnant.

Military genius is a negative genius, the genius of *destruction*, whose supreme ability consists in using industrial faculties to destroy what they have built, to kill men.

The great force of industry is the *force of collectivity*.

It is also the one whose use forms the basis of military science.

This science has not taken a step since Thermopylae. It varied with the nature of the weapons; we do not fight with the cannon and the rifle, as with the javelin, the bow and the shield. — Apart from that, no invention, no discovery. An army, a battalion, are instruments of force, nothing more, nothing less. The phalanx, the legion, the regiment, are only variations of the same tool. — The order of combat, direct, oblique, convergent, etc., are known, immutable, like the way of attacking wood with the axe, saw or crankshaft.

*To be the strongest at a given point; that's all!...*

When you read the story of Napoleon's campaigns, it is always the same thing. It is inconceivable that this man, if he has genius, would not get bored continually repeating the same exercise. Line of the Po, Ticino, or Adige; line of the Elbe or the Oder; Dresden or Verona; rivers to cross, armies to cut, their sections to crush or take; to *overtake* the enemy with speed, deceive him with false movements, steal his communications, his stores, tire him, consume him, then overwhelm him, etc.; sabots, more sabots, and more sabots!... Let us praise the heroes, I want it: *laudemus viros gloriosos*, as the Scripture says; but, please, let it be for their big heart, their love of justice and humanity, their patience, their courage, not for these professional details, as odious to follow as the work of the torturer, or the traps of the hunter. This is not what makes the poetry of war; and you killed Napoleon in my eyes, by showing me this architect of battles, who is odious to me, and whom I place well below a La Tour-d'Auvergne, a Bayard, a Vauban or a Moreau, of all those men who were the first to speak of courage, admiring only patriotism and devotion of their own profession.

Do you then want me to take a provost of arms for a great genius?

In Napoleon, something epileptic.

He lives outside of execution. Completely focused on his *combinations*, they are barely put into execution before he no longer thinks about them; they bore him; he gave birth to others, more wonderful, more beautiful.

His imagination runs over his maps, and makes him forget distances, bad weather, heat, rain, fog, unforeseen events of all kinds, which he never places high enough. A miscalculation requires repair; after having made his armies march too quickly on the map, he must make them march even faster, to make up for the lost time; he blows them out of breath, murders them.

In total, victorious France spent more soldiers than defeated Europe.

What is sad is that he plans everything for the attack, the march forward; never anything for the defense, for the reverse, retreat.

He abdicates after Moscow.

He fades after Leipzig.

He hid in Fontainebleau after the capitulation of Paris.

He fled to the Elysée after Waterloo.

He does not understand, does not admit the moral greatness of a Washington, of a Wellington.

He is small in his personal perils; — disgusting with anger after the infernal machine.

We have never seen a head of state, victim of an assassination, so lacking in dignity and calm.

Appalling selfishness; heartless, heartless: “What are 200,000 men to me!”

Remarks by Berthier, to Colonel de Montfort, during the retreat from Leipzig.

Improvvidence of a host of details in Napoleon, disposed to judge things from afar, speculatively, and to ignore realities: *sic* in the Russian campaign, at Leipzig, in Spain, etc.

Hesitation in the face of disappointment, failure. The Frenchman, quick to make up his mind when he is only walking forward, does not know what course to take when his strike fails. It is Napoleon again.

Superstition of discipline, of obedience to order, which kills everything at the critical moment: Bessières in Fuentès-d'Onoro, Saint-Cyr in Dresden, Grouchy in Sart-les-Valhain, etc.

We obey until the last moment. So nowhere are men of *anarchy* more hated than in France.

M. Thiers is therefore wrong to place the faults committed and the responsibility for the disorders on Napoleon alone. Napoleon and the French people are one.

Now, Thiers' work is explained. Its purpose is known:

To save national self-esteem by sacrificing Napoleon to it;

To glorify him, his *genius*, while attributing to him the mistakes committed;

To amuse minds, supporting chauvinism with tales of battles, feelings, regrets and completely misplaced hopes;

Commitment to save the *genius* of Napoleon, at the expense his morality, and even character. He accuses him of nothing; he glorifies him, he always crowns him: France is itself idolized in Napoleon.

### XIII

Napoleon's ideas are a real *mess*. — Corrupted by the spirit of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. — The supreme rank asserts it. — False great man. — The Revolution was too strong for the French nation. — A virgin forest where we don't like to enter. — The Revolution is the inversion of Christianity. — The French spirit. — The misguided nation. — The people eager for praise. — Napoleon legendary character. — The idea of 1789. — The right of force. — Political morality of Thiers. — Two parts in the life of Napoleon. — The misunderstanding of history. — Nations must not abdicate madly.

Corrupted early by the spirit of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Napoleon was devoid of principles and morality.

His attitude on August 10, later his Jacobinism, his role in Vendémiaire, his proscriptions of republicans, prove that in politics he was only a speculator and a charlatan.

His intelligence was great and beautiful; However, we must not hide from the fact that the supreme rank made it particularly valuable and that everywhere else it had not emerged from obscurity.

His style has only two strings: sometimes it affects the tone of command, sometimes it is declamatory. It becomes monotonous.

Napoleon's ideas are a real *mess*.

He can serve as an example of this psychological phenomenon: intelligence progresses or decreases, in man and in the nation, because of its justice.

Barely having come to power, Bonaparte showed his contempt for right: he worked for the counter-revolution and made everything an instrument and a stepping stone. During the Consulate, while still young, his intelligence was sustained; but the eclipse begins with the breaking of the peace of Amiens; the darkness thickens in Bayonne; in Russia, he is nothing more than a false prophet, a hideously selfish fanatic; in Fontainebleau, a desperate man who fails himself; at Waterloo, a helpless man, and at Saint Helena, a liar.

Thus he was punished for his hatred of ideologues.

In total: FALSE GREAT MAN.

He does not have the genius of his century, like Alexander, Caesar, Constantine, Clovis, Charlemagne, Gustavus Adolphe, William of Orange. And what is a so-called conqueror whose prowess is, at the beginning and at the end, only disasters?

Napoleon's power began with the Egyptian campaign, undertaken at his instigation, and by him alone. Now, see:

Aboukir, Saint-Jean-d'Acre; Santo Domingo, Trafalgar; Baylen.

These are the beginnings.

Bérésina, Leipsig, Toulouse, Paris, Waterloo.

Here are the finales.

Overall, the victories in Spain are matched by just as many defeats.

To Friedland responds Eylau; — defeat at Wagram, Gross-Aspern;

At Marengo, if he wins the second round, he loses the first, etc.

At the end of his life, his war system being completely mechanical, no longer having anything spontaneous, unforeseen, sudden, created about it, the enemies guessed it, foresaw it, and defeated it.

The Revolution was too strong for the French nation; there was only one man capable of leading it, and that was Mirabeau. Now, this man was reviled by his contemporaries, unrecognized by the bourgeoisie, suspected by the plebs, odious to the nobility and the clergy, hated by the court, which did what it could to corrupt him, and only succeeded in paying his debts by giving himself a master.

After Mirabeau, I don't see anyone. Sieyès, a contemplative metaphysician, who only knows how to keep silent, take care of his life, and, having come to power, gives way to Bonaparte, in return for a compensation of one million; the constitutional party, Monnier, Malaret, etc., timid bourgeois, too eager to offer their services to the court; the Gironde sees the Revolution as an artist, not enough as a statesman; the Jacobins, Robespierre, little people who begin to guillotine their opponents; Danton, lazy, second after Mirabeau, but at a great distance from Mirabeau; Marat, frenzied, who had excited Voltaire's bile as much as his pity. No need to talk about the rest.

After Mirabeau, everything becomes *weakness* and *disarray*.

Bonaparte judges that things have gone astray; he removes political liberty and national autocracy from the Revolution, and he is applauded by the masses.

After 1815, a complete lack of understanding of the situation. France is at the level of the singer: for years we have hoisted Béranger on a pedestal; the fact proves that the country had descended.

Was the Revolution itself understood?

The Revolution as an idea, its bundles of ideas, is still a virgin forest where few French people like to penetrate.

We are stammering about the date of 1789, that is all. But no one says what 1789 was, in principle, and in terms of consequences. 1789 is summed up in one fact, constitutional monarchy.

Certainly the theory of constitutional government came out of 1789. If the English were ahead of us in the application, if they were more faithful than us in the application, I believe that we have surpassed them in the very intelligence of the institution.

But constitutional monarchy is not all of 1789.

1793 is also in 1789; universal suffrage is there, and so is the *economic revolution*.

The Revolution is the inversion of Christianity; it is a creation of society; it is better, certainly, than an abolition of feudal rights and privileges, it is the limitation of royal authority.

I have said, elsewhere, that France did not even understand its Revolution and rejected it in the end. The same can be said of the French spirit, which it has abandoned since the same time.

The French spirit is a spirit of clarity, finesse, precision, elegance, hardly poetic in itself; cheeky, sarcastic, and not even taking eloquence entirely seriously.

It lives entirely in Rabelais, Montaigne, Maigt, Malherbe, Boileau, Racine, Corneille, Molière, La Bruyère, La Rochefoucauld, Voltaire, Montesquieu, Fénelon, Massillon, Regnard, Beaumarchais, Paul-Louis, Brillat-Savarin, etc.; — Chamfort and Rivarol are the exaggeration.

A spirit of assimilation, of clear exposition, of fine and acute mockery; who wants to recreate themselves in the things of art, not idolize them, nor devote themselves to them.

However, that spirit is lost today.

A new school was formed, inaugurated by powerful masters, but which led us to the renunciation of ourselves.

It is the school of Rousseau, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Mirabeau, Raynal, the Revolution, the romantics, Lamartine, Chateaubriand, Lamennais, George Sand, Victor Hugo.

The extreme limit of eloquence, according to the French mind, is Bossuet and Buffon. There, there is nothing that is not always reasoned, just, calm, full of majesty and self-possession.

But sensitivity and passion entered French eloquence with Rousseau, Bernardin, Mirabeau, the great orators of the Revolution, the Restoration and Louis XVIII. There is the deviation.

Likewise, in terms of novels, our type is *Gil Blas*, *Telemachus*. The deviation, the anti-French novel, begins with *Héloïse* and *René*.

In poetry, our verse is limpid, light, above all elegant; verse in which the color, the metaphor, the poetic trouble, everything in short, is hidden as much as possible, to reveal only the pure idea, rendered with a precision that the measure of the verse and the rhyme make more marked and more concrete.

The French idea took a geometric verse, similar to it, and which conveys it.

Everything else, droning verses, imitative verses, periodic verses, enjambments, bad meter, is anti-French.

Add that the nation is sober *with* poetry, as it is sober *in* its poetry; that it does not need too much, and not often; that, if we saturate it, it no longer recognizes itself, becomes repelled and disgusted.

Boileau, Molière, Racine, Voltaire above all, in *La Pucelle*, Gresset, Parny are the true French poets.

Apart from these, nothing more, except a few couplets from the Voltairian school, Béranger.

I therefore say that France has lost its genius, its SPIRIT, and, I am afraid, without return. We don't resuscitate these things. We do not bring back the spirit, when it has evaporated. We have only one hope left: to produce with dignity, and in good terms, good science, sound morals, true history, dramas and novels, as best we can, if we can.

This deviation from the French spirit first did the greatest harm to a crowd of excellent minds that national injustice disdained, such as Volney and Fréret. Diderot has been restored to honor in recent times, thanks to his enthusiastic tirades and his Salon articles: for the rest, little known.

The French spirit disappearing, the nation became talkative, boastful; not being able to have wit, we made satire: *Iambes* de Barbier; — unable to reach the comic, we indulged in the buffoon, the silly and the ignoble (the dramas of Henri Monnier, *Robert Macaire*, *Vautrin*, etc.).

The great historical school of Guizot and Thierry has fallen with M. Thiers, — whose narration is interminable, prolix and anti-philosophical, — M. Thiers, the Alexandre Dumas of history.

In a nation thus misguided, denatured, what can a writer be who, obliged moreover to speak the language of his time, having the spirit neither of Voltaire nor of Mirabeau, nevertheless strives to make his contemporaries understand what the thought of 1789 was, to give its theory, to deduce the entire system of human right, with regard to ancient right!

Anything this man says will generally be unsympathetic; as a result, everyone will become hostile to him.

Two facts serve to demonstrate the change that has occurred in minds and morals.

The first concerns Napoleon.

Napoleon appears to be a great warrior; he is adored by the soldier like a God, threatened by the people; but, during his lifetime, held as suspect by the bourgeois and the scholar who had no confidence in him.

Napoleon belongs to the school of Rousseau, a school of sentences, of effect, of dramaturgy. He charlatanizes and beats the cash box, throws smoke and mirrors, makes a fuss; moreover, a man without ideas, without principles, without faith or law, and with a selfishness that exceeds the limit assigned by Satan.

Napoleon, we can say, apart from his great battles, had, in 1814, not succeeded at all, except with the soldier and the masses. We distrusted him, we had no faith in his genius, we impatiently supported his despotism: it took the Bonapartist era of fifteen years to make him fashionable. Lettered, enlightened people ended up granting him the title of great man, but with what reservations!... It is agreed; we repeat that he was great: *in petto*, we consider him a *robber*, an insane person, M. Thiers first and foremost.

As for the people, who read nothing, Napoleon passed into the status of a legendary character: it was just what was needed to bring back his dynasty.

The second fact is the new character of the French people, the ancient Gallic people.

Certainly, we are still the same race, the sons of our fathers, the pure and legitimate blood of the Gauls of Brennus, of Vercingetorix; but we no longer think the same way.

I suppose that our ancestors, even without going back further than Henry IV or the Maid, would have believed that we were making fun of them, if they had been praised in the way that we have seen practiced today; they would have wondered if they were being spoken to seriously,

and, to the blows of the censer, would have responded with points of irony about themselves that would have disconcerted the courtier.

Today, the people are eager for praise, for adulation; they hate the truth, if it is even a little painful to them. What they ask is that we exalt them, that we adore them, that we tell them that they are the people-god, the people-christ, the people-king; that we only speak of them in Pindaric style, that we idolize them in everything they do, in the massacres of September as in the storming of the Bastille, in the Terror as in the farandoles of the federations, in the coronation of the Emperor and in the guillotine of Louis XVI.

The people like to be told — this dates especially from Robespierre:

“You are great, O people! you are virtuous, sublime, magnanimous.

“You make and unmake kings.

“You break down thrones and raise them up again.

“You drive the divinity out of its temples, and you bring it back there.

“You slaughter the nobles and the priests, and you recreate them, if you wish.”

This is the style in which the people like to be spoken to, when one wants to be welcomed by them. Yet they would not always be grateful for dithyrambs: they are far above that!

The French people, although others dispute this prerogative, like to consider themselves as the messiah, the word of God, having the Pope as vicar and the Emperor as lieutenant.

It pleases them to make soldiers and princes, and it gives them principalities.

They marry their Emperor, an upstart, to the daughter of the Caesars.

He travels across Europe in triumph, like the mythological chariot of the fatted ox travels through the capital on the day of mardi gras.

The people are infallible in their inspirations and just in their judgments. The whole policy is to know how to consult one's soul, to solicit one's instincts, to prevent one's growth and spontaneity.

Humiliate before them, before this sovereign, the rag, whose skull is emptier than its stomach, everything that can be considered great on earth, that makes them smile. They understand you, as long as you declaim, as long as you *pindarize*; they have a boastful speech and a nimble tongue, but hardly any brains.

Also, they do not want to know anything, because they decide on everything, within their sovereign competence.

How they blossom, how their nostrils swell, and what a superb set of false teeth they show, when you depict the jubilation of the rich, and after having excited their appetite you conclude by asking for a tax on the honors of the century!... But talk to them about the need to work, to moderate their desires, to seek through diligent practice of right, science, public and domestic virtues, the equalization of fortunes; tell them that without these their victories are mystifications, and their sovereignty a figure that the rhetoricians call untruth, they no longer understand you, they hate you!



No, it is not enough to just talk to be accepted; to express oneself clearly in order to be understood: intelligence is only a more or less developed instinct, more or less conscientious regarding itself, but it always resists, and tenses, and rears up, and polices itself, against that which violates its habits, its prejudice, its faith, its vision, which is also instinct.

When a just and strong idea takes hold of a people, when it makes them speak and want in unison, the result is an incomparable clarity that illuminates the world, and whose drive is irresistible, a rare phenomenon, but one that we lived for a moment in 1789. When, on the contrary, a multitude takes the wrong idea proposed to it, there is an eclipse: the nation becomes like a dark abyss.

Sometimes the idea only gives a momentary push. The people do not digest it; then there is a relapse, a return of the race to its instincts.

In 1789, the French nation shone across Europe, which was ready to follow it. The revolutionary glare has brought about all the triumphs of France.

Then, this light grew weaker. The French nation had not understood itself; it was the allies who, in 1814 and 1815, had to open its eyes for it.

Ask the French people, today, what the idea of 1789 was; what they wanted by making the Revolution!... They are unable to answer.

The obfuscation began with the popularity of Robespierre. Mirabeau dead, Sieyès dead, Danton and the Girondins guillotined, we found ourselves in the night...

If the right of force is nothing, the allies were wrong to form a coalition against France in 1814 and to bring it back to its limits: *status quo*. But then also France was wrong to abuse its force against the smaller States, which it had successively incorporated, Belgium, Holland, Piedmont, Lombardy, etc.

So the war from 1792 to 1815 was a struggle of brigands. Is it France that is wrong? Here are 30 million men ostracized by nations. Is this Europe? Even worse.

If right is nothing in war, how can we excuse ourselves, console ourselves at the same time, for the defeats of Aboukir, Trafalgar, Baylen, the Arapiles, Vittoria, Leipsig, Waterloo? Corsairs or martyrs, no middle ground. Can we accept this dilemma? Neither for France, nor for Europe!

The *right of force* implies as a corollary that the two belligerent powers are, for everything else, equal in right, except the difference in forces. With this right, honorability is preserved for the vanquished as well as for the victor; there is honor in defeat as well as in triumph.

What morality in the policy of Thiers, Paradol and others, who always aim for the Empire and regret having lost it, without any consideration of right!

There are two parts to the life of Napoleon I. By the first, he is quite simply the leader of a social movement, bourgeois; by the second, he is a political speculator who only acts under his own inspiration.

In the first role, supported by moral forces, he succeeds.

In the second, he only makes mistakes, gross blunders, and falls.

His *genius*, in both cases, is reduced, it must be said, to zero; because, in looking for the whole, he understands nothing in a clear and complete way. He mixes everything, confuses everything, exaggerates everything.

Lots of wit, liveliness, penetration, sagacity, passion; of genius, none at all.

I agree that we can, through analysis, demean the work of the greatest minds, by showing that each of the parts that compose it is reduced to a simple proposition, to the application of an elementary law.

But this method of denigration can only succeed in the case where it attacks a radically null work, AS TO ITS WHOLE, whose result, goal, meaning would be false and absurd.

It is true, for example, that Newton's entire system is based on a series of simple propositions; but this set is regular.

However, the entirety of the Napoleonic work is false, vain and absurd.

The large parts of which it is composed are the same.

What is the point, after that, of showing well rendered, well expressed *details*?

Napoleon, as he appears to me in Thiers, has a deplorable effect on me.

Is it the writer's fault? Oh, no! The writer is what he wanted to be, intelligent about the exact subject, faithful; there is nothing false in him except the admiration that never abandons him.

There is a misunderstanding that this story gives rise to, and which must be dispelled.

We do not hesitate to proclaim the genius and greatness of Alexander, of Caesar; — but, I hesitate before Napoleon.

If my criticisms are right, a great lesson will emerge for the conduct of the human race.

This is because, contrary to what Béranger recommended to us, nations must get rid of their cult of individualities, and, while remaining just and indulgent, not madly abdicate.

END.