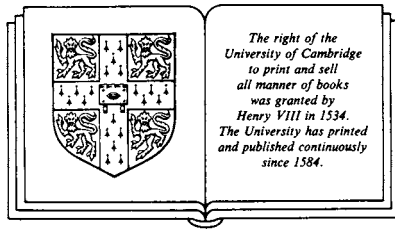


Bonapartism and
revolutionary tradition
in France
The fédérés of 1815

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Introduction

There has been nothing more dramatic in the history of France than the *vol d'aigle*. On 1 March 1815, having slipped free of captivity on the island of Elba, Napoleon landed on the shore of the Gulf of Juan and invaded France with a token force of some 1,200 men. When confronted at Laffrey by ostensibly hostile troops, Bonaparte stepped forward to offer himself as a target, forcing the soldiers to choose between himself and Louis XVIII. Past loyalties proved decisive; the troops refused to fire. Marshal Ney, having vowed to his Bourbon master to bring the Eagle back to Paris in an iron cage, proved no different. What had begun as a perilous forced march soon became a triumphal procession as peasants and workers flocked to the Emperor's side. First Grenoble and then Lyons gave Napoleon a rapturous reception. By 20 March he had flown from 'belfry to belfry', finally alighting in a Paris free of the hastily departed Bourbon king Louis XVIII. Although middle-class Parisians greeted Bonaparte with an indifference born of fear for the future, there could be no mistaking the satisfaction of lower-class Parisians with this extraordinary turn of events.¹

The *vol d'aigle* was, however, more than simply the return of a beloved leader to his adoring public, for along the route the Emperor had donned new clothing – he now appeared in the curious guise of arch-defender of the Revolution. In a series of decrees issued at Lyons, Napoleon had dissolved the Chambers of Peers and Deputies (tainted by the membership of men who had fought against the Revolution), and abolished 'feudal titles', expelled the returned *émigrés* from France and ordered sequestration of their lands. A decree pregnant with Revolutionary associations had summoned the representatives of the people to assemble in May to pass their own laws at the Champ de Mars, scene of the federation of 1790. Perhaps even more remarkable was the rhetoric Bonaparte unleashed in subsequent

¹ There are many descriptions of the Flight of the Eagle; the best remains H. Houssaye's *1815 – Le Retour de l'île d'Elbe* (Paris, 1901), pp. 200–365.

proclamations to French soldiers and citizens: 'I have come to save Frenchmen from the slavery in which priests and nobles wished to plunge them . . . Let them [priests and nobles] take guard. I will string them up from the lampposts.'²

Not unnaturally, historians have been inclined to view Napoleon's Revolutionary conversion with scepticism, interpreting it largely as a cynical device to rally support while the Emperor's position was weak, but to be cast aside when his position strengthened. A less harsh interpretation suggests that Bonaparte had simply been carried away by the fervour of silkweavers of the La Guillotière quarter of Lyons who chanted 'Down with the priests! Death to royalists!' in front of him. Whatever its cause, the Emperor's conversion was soon to prove embarrassing. When subsequently confronted by similar manifestations in Paris, Napoleon commented: 'Nothing has surprised me more on returning to France than this hatred of priests and the nobility which I find as universal and as violent as it was at the beginning of the Revolution. The Bourbons have restored their lost force to the ideas of the Revolution.'³ The Emperor had tapped a source much more powerful than he initially realised.

There was a fair measure of truth in Napoleon's assertion that the Bourbons had rejuvenated the 'lost force' of the 'ideas of the Revolution'. As the Empire crumbled in 1813 and early 1814 Napoleon sought to employ tactics similar to those of the Hundred Days but, despite some signs of the potential of appealing to memories of 1792, France generally refused to rally. Although royalism was by no means a mass movement in 1814, neither was there a great deal of opposition to the return of Louis XVIII during the initial stages of the First Restoration. The primary reaction of the French populace appears to have been one of indifference. Although the association of Bourbon government with the triumph of the Allied Powers was a grave liability, Louis XVIII could at least appeal for the support of the many Frenchmen who desired peace above all else. In short, wounded patriotic pride could have been counterbalanced by an almost universal longing for stability and prosperity and a Bourbon Monarchy could have been firmly established had the government been perceived to rule justly and well. Although the fact that the King 'granted' the Charter was a calculated insult to the ideal of popular sovereignty, the Charter did at least contain provisions indicating that past antagonisms would be forgotten

² Quoted in H. Houssaye, *1815 – Les Cent-Jours* (Paris, 1901), p. 3483. The Lyons decrees were published in the *Moniteur Universel*, 21–2 March 1815.

³ Quoted in J. Tulard, *Napoleon* (London, 1984), p. 333. For the argument that Napoleon was momentarily carried away by revolutionary enthusiasm at Lyons, see G. Ribe, *L'Opinion publique et la vie politique à Lyon lors des premières années de la Seconde Restauration* (Paris, 1957), p. 38.

and that those who had gained by the Revolution could rest secure in their possessions and positions. Had this spirit of reconciliation been maintained by the Monarchy and its supporters, France in 1815 might not have mirrored Revolutionary France.⁴

Louis XVIII was not entirely the cause of renewed revolutionary *élan*. He could not justly be faulted for the aristocratic snobbery of returned *émigrés*, nor could he be expected to control the Catholic priests who refused sacraments to men who had purchased *biens nationaux* (lands sequestered by the State from the Church and *émigrés* and sold to private citizens during the Revolution). However, his government was responsible for a series of ill-considered measures which antagonised important sectors of the populace and, more importantly, gave credence to those who argued that the Bourbon Monarchy was bent upon removing liberties acquired during the Revolution. In one of his often quoted comments, Napoleon charged that the Bourbons had ‘learned nothing and forgotten nothing’ during their period of exile; it might also be noted that the mass of Frenchmen had not forgotten what life was like under the hierarchy of privilege known as the *ancien régime*, though they had learned a great deal since 1789.

It was inevitable that the Bourbon government should begin to dismantle the Imperial war machine; financial retrenchment and relations with the Allied Powers necessitated this, though it was bound to alienate officers put on half-pay. However, justification of such measures was undermined by the bestowal of high rank upon *émigrés* who previously had fought against France, if they had fought at all. Official ceremonies at Rennes honouring *chouans* who had waged civil war against the Revolution were perfectly calculated to raise questions about the prejudices of the government. Memorial services for the ‘martyrs’ of Quiberon angered the old ‘blues’ of Vannes.

Similar results were achieved throughout France by State ceremonies paying tribute to those who had died for their opposition to the Revolution; the uneasy reaction of men who had fought for, or profited by, the Revolution to these ‘expiatory’ fêtes can well be imagined. Clearly the past could not and would not entirely be forgotten, but how much expiation did the government deem necessary? Changes in government administrative personnel were not, by subsequent standards, drastic in the early stages of the First Restoration, but the process was gaining momentum. What were the career prospects of a man tainted by sinful association with

⁴ For discussion of the mistakes of the First Restoration government, see A. Jardin and A. J. Tudesq, *La France des notables: l'évolution générale, 1815–1848* (Paris, 1973), pp. 24–5. On the conciliatory element in the new constitution, see Article 11 of the Charter in J. P. T. Bury, *France 1814–1940* (London, 1985), p. 294.

the Revolution? Could talent and ability be expected to overcome the claims of a rival blessed by the purity of long-term royalism or *ancien régime* nobility? The impression of being distinctly out of favour was reinforced by legislation in the Chambers to return unsold *biens nationaux* to the *émigrés*, praising those who had refused to return to France until the King did. At least some members of the clergy were clamouring for the restoration of all *biens nationaux*; did not laws making mandatory the closure of shops on Sundays prove that the government favoured Church interests?

The dangerous impact of all such reminders of the past might have been diminished had Louis XVIII been perceived to be a strong ruler. Many Frenchmen who opposed Bourbon rule in 1815 did so not out of personal animosity to the King; they thought he was probably well-intentioned and committed to reconciliation, but they were also convinced that he was not sufficiently resolute to deny indefinitely the demands of retribution and favouritism of the ultra-royalist faction led by his brother Artois. Grotesquely fat and lazy, Louis XVIII made a poor contrast to his dynamic brother.

Artois played a leading role in undermining the Monarchy; at times he seemed the embodiment of all that was reactionary about the *émigrés*. There was little sign of reconciliation in his refusal to receive constitutional bishops in Dijon and Besançon. When he did bid for popularity by promising abolition of the hated *droits réunis* (an indirect tax, particularly on beer and wine), he only caused the Crown further harm because financial necessity obliged the government to maintain these taxes. Riots in Dijon were an immediate result; perhaps more significant was the obvious lesson to be drawn concerning the value of Bourbon promises.

It has often been noted that all of this played directly into Napoleon's opportunistic hands; after all, rumours of a return to feudal obligations and the *dîme* (an *ancien régime* Church tax) were rife among the peasants who greeted Napoleon so warmly in March 1815. Had not the Emperor responded by proclaiming that he had returned 'to banish forever memories of the feudal regime, serfdom and the glebe'? Napoleon can be blamed for exacerbating tensions in France by seeking to exploit this renewed revolutionary *élan*, but it is instructive to note that he certainly did not create it. Indeed, the Emperor was greatly troubled by the spirit of independence he found even amongst his old supporters. When asked by Napoleon whether he believed there was a republican party in France, Molé replied: 'Yes, Sire, and I even believe that party to be very powerful; it has been enlarged, for some time now, by all the discontent produced by the Bourbons, by that middle class which has become so powerful and which . . . the nobility has again antagonised.' This displeased

Napoleon, but revived republicanism was not something he could afford to ignore.⁵

Support for the Imperial government in 1815 was not, however simply a result of the Emperor's exploitation of renewed revolutionary vigour. Loyalty to Napoleon amongst the rank and file of the Army remained solid; his contention that he had been betrayed but not defeated in 1814 was generally accepted. Popular Bonapartism may well have accelerated after the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo and the subsequent publication of his memoirs from Saint Helena, but there is a good deal of evidence to suggest that it was a significant force by the Hundred Days. Soldiers recently returned from the four corners of Europe had already begun their work of spreading the legend among peasants and the urban lower classes. More importantly, invasion of France in 1814, especially in the east, had made a strong impression upon those who suffered by it. In such areas, Bonapartism was not confined to the lower classes or old members of the Imperial Army. Napoleon had at least fought the *barbares du nord*, and Bonapartism had become linked with patriotism.

Popular Bonapartism has recently been analysed in B. Ménéger's *Les Napoléon du peuple* (Paris, 1988). The first author to consider seriously this phenomenon during the Restoration, Ménéger establishes the rhythm of manifestations of Bonapartism during this period and, implicitly, shows how extensive popular Bonapartism was. However, perhaps because his study commences after the Hundred Days, the author does not take much account of how the nature of Bonapartism, even at the popular level, had changed. After the *vol d'aigle*, Napoleon stood for many different, and often contradictory, beliefs and ideas. One does well to read Ménéger's work in combination with the fifth chapter of F. Bluche's *Le Bonapartisme* (Paris, 1980), which helps to explain how Bonapartism had evolved. Revolutionary Bonapartism was a curious legacy of the Hundred Days which blurred distinctions between liberals, republicans and traditional Bonapartists and ultimately gave all three groups a potential mass following. The latter aspect became especially apparent after Napoleon's death.

The extent of support for Napoleon during the Hundred Days is not easily measured and should not be overestimated. Vast areas of France, particularly in the old provinces of Flanders, Artois, Normandy, Brittany, Vendée, Languedoc and Provence, largely refused to ally. Moreover, loyalty to the government was by no means uniform in the other regions, wherein indifference and *attentisme* often appear to have been predomi-

⁵ Napoleon's declarations at Grenoble are cited in Champollion-Figeac, *Fourier et Napoléon* (Paris, 1844), p. 224. Molé's comment on republicanism is cited in G. Weill, 'L'Idée républicaine en France pendant la Restauration', *Revue d'histoire moderne*, 2 (1927), p. 323.

nant. Open revolt broke out in Brittany and the Vendée and there could be no mistaking the Bourbon sympathies of the majority of people in the Midi; yet even here Napoleon retained significant support, and before concluding that royalists were in the majority, we should recall that Napoleon fell in 1815 because of Waterloo – not because of domestic opposition to his government.

In his authoritative biography of Louis XVIII, P. Mansel takes up the knotty question of the relative strength of the two opposing sides. Recognising the complexity of any such assessment, Mansel confines himself to generalisations which, though probably impossible to prove in quantitative terms, have the ring of truth to them. For example, many Frenchmen continued to desire peace above all else and this was the Bourbons' long suit. Similarly, it is probably true that most women with political opinions preferred the domestic Louis XVIII to the martial Napoleon, although one could cite many examples to the contrary. But where this study leads one to take issue with Mansel's assessment is in the author's underestimation of the extent of opposition to the Monarchy during and after the Hundred Days. This opposition was not simply a matter of bellicose nationalism and careerist opportunism; though vital, to these two elements must be added the widespread revolutionary *élan* rekindled by the First Restoration. In this respect it is important to note that whether or not Louis XVIII and his ministers actually intended a return to the *ancien régime* was not very much to the point; the fact was that many Frenchmen believed this to be the case. In supporting Napoleon many believed they were taking the side of the Revolution and this was a matter of self-interest and principle; honour was by no means a royalist monopoly.⁶

Brave attempts to assess the extent of support for the Imperial government which go beyond the descriptive prove equally subject to qualification. For example, F. Bluche carefully analyses the results of the plebiscite of the Hundred Days, but it should be noted that Frenchmen were voting specifically for or against the *Acte Additionnel*: we should not jump to the conclusion that negative votes or abstention necessarily indicated royalism or opposition to Napoleonic government. Refusal to make a potentially dangerous choice was not tantamount to opposition; more significantly, descriptive accounts of the period indicate that the *Acte* often fared poorly where support for the government was exceptionally strong. The latter anomaly points to an important feature of the Hundred Days: not all those Frenchmen who supported Napoleon's government were willing to accept the *Acte* simply because it had Bonaparte's apparent approval. In short, support for the government was based not just upon Bonapartism, but also

⁶ P. Mansel, *Louis XVIII* (London, 1981), pp. 228–41, 254–5.

upon opposition to its alternative (Bourbon Monarchy) and patriotic determination to fight Allied invasion and intervention. Indeed, if there is one thing that study of plebiscites and elections during the Revolutionary and Imperial periods does teach us, it is that the majority of Frenchmen were either politically indifferent or too wisely cautious to manifest their opinions by voting. The logical conclusion to be drawn from this is that when we speak of committed Bonapartists, royalists, liberals or republicans, we must recognise that we are speaking of minority groups.⁷

To recognise that these groups were minorities is not to belittle their importance; after all, they monopolised political power and, during periods of crisis such as the Hundred Days, they could draw on significant support from men who otherwise remained uncommitted. The Hundred Days, therefore, is an exceptionally good period for testing the relative strength of these groups, but we should not forget that many Frenchmen simply refused to come down on any side whatsoever. When we find evidence of indifference to one political alternative, we should not conclude that it represents support for another.

Because Bonapartism and revolutionary tradition were linked in support of the government of the Hundred Days, it is simplest to interpret this period in terms of support for, and opposition to, the Bourbon Monarchy; such a perspective also sheds a great deal of light on the difficulties of government during the Second Restoration. Although Bonaparte departed France forever in 1815, opposition to the Monarchy remained.

Reaction to the government of the Hundred Days was extraordinarily complex and varied dramatically according to region. For this reason, an historian who focuses on the north will reach very different conclusions to those of an historian of the east. What the general reader requires is an overview which carefully weighs the strength of the claims of the competing political sides on a national level. Such an overview, if it is to be accurate, can only be gained after a great deal of preparatory analysis of how men acted and why they did so. The present study of a massive group which, above all else, opposed the Bourbon Monarchy, is a step in that direction.

One reason why studying the Hundred Days proves so fruitful is that this period provided men with an opportunity to voice their opinions to a degree significantly greater than in the periods which preceded and followed it. A reading of contemporary journals confirms to a surprising extent Charles Beslay's contention that 'France had unlimited liberty of

⁷ For his analysis of voting for and against the *Acte Additionnel*, see F. Bluche, *Le Plébiscite des Cent-Jours* (Geneva, 1974). The point concerning abstentionism comes up repeatedly in D. M. G. Sutherland, *France 1789-1815* (London, 1985); see 'elections' in the index, p. 480.

the press; everything could be discussed; newspapers reproduced the manifestoes of enemy generals, even those that put Napoleon outside of civil and social relations.⁸ In seeking to rally public opinion, Bonaparte relaxed the old Imperial press controls and allowed discussion of subjects which had been proscribed in the previous decade. This led to much heated debate not only over what the nature of government and society should be, but also over what the Revolution meant to France. As we shall see, the attitudes of Frenchmen to the Revolution, including the Terror, were much more complex than historians have recognised.

Perhaps more significantly, as the inevitability of renewed war with the Allied Powers grew increasingly apparent, Napoleon granted freedom of association to men who wished to rally to his government at least to the extent of putting down domestic subversion. In the six weeks prior to Waterloo a federative movement, modelled upon those of 1789–91, spread rapidly across France. This movement began spontaneously; it was not the result of government initiative and although the government could seek to direct and exploit the federations it could not entirely control them. The potential utility of the federative movement rapidly became apparent to Napoleon and his ministers and, for the most part, they sought to foster it. Nevertheless, Napoleon viewed these associations with some misgiving; he was fully aware of their revolutionary precedents and potential. He was not entirely wrong in his assessment and many *fédérés*, realising that the government had need of them, were willing to exploit this position by making demands upon the government and voicing their own opinions. Study of the federations, therefore, gives us the opportunity to discover what an important part of the French community wanted in 1815.

General histories usually place the federative movement in the context of the revolutionary *élan* apparent during the Hundred Days. In line with what appears to be a general consensus that revolutionary support for Napoleon declined shortly after the *vol d'aigle*, the federations are often discussed before the *Acte Additionnel* in order to contrast a manifestation of support with a disappointing vote which supposedly indicated Napoleon's waning popularity. The problem with this approach is that it all too conveniently overlooks the fact that the federative movement developed after publication of the *Acte*. Recognition of this anomaly immediately poses two questions. Were the federations part of the revolutionary resurgence? If so, what does the federative movement indicate concerning the nature, extent and duration of Napoleon's popularity?⁹

⁸ C. Beslay, *Mes Souvenirs* (Paris, 1873), p. 50.

⁹ The misleading juxtaposition of the federative movement and the *Acte Additionnel* has most recently appeared in J. Tulard's *Les Révolutions* (Paris, 1985), pp. 286–8.

The federations brought together an extraordinarily diverse collection of political and social groups into a single movement. Men who in the past had been enemies now found themselves working together for a common cause. As one would expect of the members of such a heterogeneous group, *fédérés* gave a multiplicity of reasons for backing Napoleon's government. No two federations were exactly alike in social or political composition, nor were they entirely alike in stated objectives or commitment, but one significant element bound all *fédérés* together: resolute opposition to restoration of the Bourbon Monarchy and any return to the days of the *ancien régime*.

At least two eminent historians have pointed to the potential utility of a monograph on the federative movement; this reflects the fact that enough is known about the associations to raise significant questions. To this point, articles have been published on federations in Paris, the Côte-d'Or, Saône-et-Loire and Tarn; additional information can be gleaned from a large number of articles which, though devoted to other subjects, occasionally mention the *fédérés* in passing. So, part of the task lies in piecing these fragmentary parts into a coherent whole. Moreover, one general account of the movement has been made, but it is now very dated.¹⁰

The first thing to be noted about E. Le Gallo's analysis of the federative movement is that it constituted a single chapter in a study of the Hundred Days published in 1924. Given this context, it was natural that the author did not concern himself directly with the *fédérés* outside this period, nor could he have said a great deal about the identity of *fédérés*, given the state of research at the time. Le Gallo's account was a preliminary sketch and, taken as such, is particularly useful for the questions that it asks and does not ask.

Le Gallo was especially impressed by the popular base of the movement and believed that the Hundred Days had galvanised the masses in a way similar to 1792. The masses were led by Jacobins who saw in Napoleon an instrument by which they could achieve their own ends. Bonaparte, fully

¹⁰ Calls for study of the *fédérés* can be found in Tulard, *Napoleon*, p. 444, and D. Higgs, *Ultraroyalism in Toulouse* (Baltimore, 1973), pp. 54–5; Sutherland in *France*, p. 435, has noted that questions concerning the *fédérés* remain to be answered. The articles on federations are as follows: P. Guillaumot, 'Chalon pendant les Cent-Jours: souvenirs de la fédération bourguignonne', *La Bourgogne*, 2 (1869), pp. 165–80; K. D. Tønnesson, 'Les Fédérés de Paris pendant les Cent-Jours', *Annales historiques de la Révolution Française*, 54 (juillet-septembre 1982), pp. 393–415; J. Vanel, 'Le Mouvement fédératif dans le département du Tarn', *Gaillac et le pays tarnais*, 31^e congrès d'études de la fédération des sociétés académiques et savantes de Languedoc-Pyrénées-Gascogne (Gaillac, 1977), pp. 387–95; P. Viard, 'Les fédérés de la Côte-d'Or en 1815', *Revue de Bourgogne*, 6 (1926), pp. 22–39, and R. S. Alexander, 'The fédérés of Dijon in 1815', *The Historical Journal*, 30, 2 (1987), pp. 367–90.

aware of this, sought to restrain the associations. Joseph Fouché (as always, the wild card in the Imperial pack) played his usual double game and encouraged the federations when he thought this would embarrass the Emperor. The ultimate result was that the *fédérés* were not allowed to do all they might have done – they became pawns in a high political power struggle and their willingness to save the *patrie* from foreign intervention and royalist intrigue was sacrificed.¹¹

This bald summary of Le Gallo's account does not give sufficient recognition to his contribution in illustrating the vast extent of the federative movement, but it does enable us to isolate the main lines of investigation taken by the author. First of all, we shall want to consider further whether the associations did indeed have a popular base. Le Gallo derived his conclusion from readings of contemporary descriptions, but such sources often prove deceptive. To determine whether the associations truly did have a popular base we shall need to analyse their memberships. Moreover, as K. D. Tönnesson has correctly noted, Le Gallo did not pay sufficient heed to the role of Bonapartists in provincial federations.¹² Were the associations Bonapartist, revolutionary, or a mixture of both? Were there opposing factions within individual associations, or did the federations differ according to region? In sum, we need to know more about the social and political character of the associations and we can only learn this by identifying significant numbers of *fédérés*.

Fédérés were very active propagandists and we can use the large body of *fédéré* literature to scrutinise their opinions and ambitions. In analysing such material, however, we shall have to pay close attention to the circumstances under which they wrote. *Fédérés* clearly were exploiting the relative freedom of expression of the Hundred Days, but there were limits to how far they could go; they needed the consent and co-operation of the Imperial government and they could not afford to alienate the Emperor. This produced a certain ambivalence in *fédéré* writings and speeches, but it also led *fédérés* to search for a common ground between the Revolution and Empire which was to prove remarkably fertile.

When possible, it is best to judge men by their actions. As we shall see, *fédérés* did a great deal more than Le Gallo realised, and recognition of this in turn raises questions about the relationship between *fédérés* and the government; if the *fédérés* were active, the 'emasculatation' argument will have to be either qualified or rejected. Moreover, by identifying *fédérés* we shall be able to judge them, not simply by their actions during the Hundred Days, but also in the broader context of the period from 1789 to 1830. This

¹¹ This summary is drawn from E. Le Gallo, *Les Cent-Jours* (Paris, 1924), pp. 287–328.

¹² See Tönnesson, 'Les Fédérés', p. 395.

will enable us to view more fully the *fédérés* as men, not just as faceless members of a short-term phenomenon.

The key to close analysis of an individual federation lies in the acquisition of a membership list. Few such lists remain of course; *fédérés* had good reason to destroy their registers after Waterloo, but we have been able to uncover extensive lists of the *fédérés* of Rennes, Dijon and Paris. This is all the more fortunate since the *fédérés* of each of these places were numerous and significantly active. In using them to build case-studies, we shall seek to understand better why and how associations differed by viewing them in the context of local history, but we shall also seek to establish what all federations had in common, in order to determine the essential characteristics of the movement as a whole. In other words, we shall pose national questions at the local level, without overlooking the way in which national movements are manifested in local terms.

Recently, historians of the period 1789–1815 have emphasised the fragmentation of the revolutionary movement from 1789 onwards. Such interpretations stress that the general *élan* apparent at the outset of the Revolution was destroyed by subsequent confiscation of Church lands, imposition of the civil constitution of the clergy, execution of Louis XVI, expulsion of Girondin deputies from the Convention, centralisation and more exacting administration of government under the Committee of Public Safety, and recourse to Terror during the reign of Robespierre. Even ardent *sans-culottes* lost heart as the Jacobin bourgeoisie wrested control from them and excluded them from power. The ranks of the counter-revolution steadily increased and republicanism was discredited. *Thermidor* saw the fall of the more radical exponents of the Revolution and, indeed, by the time of the Directory, a *coup d'état* had to be staged against resurgent monarchists. Intermittent attempts to resuscitate Jacobin clubs ultimately failed, despite a widening of membership which allowed the lower classes to participate. The road was well paved for Napoleon who, by *Brumaire* 1799, began the process of creating order from the chaos produced by the Revolution.

Napoleon, in his twin quests for national unity and personal hegemony, moved rapidly to consolidate his position against dissenting elements of both the Left and Right. The few remaining Jacobins and members of popular societies who dared criticise his government were harassed into silence by ruthless police persecution. Royalist resistance collapsed with the pacification of the west and the signing of the Concordat. Moreover, repeated military victories brought Napoleon unrivalled popularity amongst the masses and his provision of order and legal codes gained him the allegiance of the middle classes. He exploited this popularity by recourse to plebiscite, thus cynically using a democratic device to strangle

political liberty. The political institutions he created, while allowed to be useful, were ultimately subservient. The Republic became an Empire with an hereditary monarchy, and rigid press censorship drove the Revolution further from the minds of Frenchmen. All that remained was vague obloquy, a fear of anarchy and terror.

Not one to rest on his laurels, Napoleon launched a series of measures and policies which would further reverse the work of the Revolution. Aristocratic *émigrés* were invited to return and retake their positions of local authority – provided they served, or at least did not overtly oppose, the new Charlemagne. Napoleon thought that men raised in the traditions of courtiership were the best of servants. A new social hierarchy was constructed which included the Legion of Honour and hereditary titles. But Napoleon took care not to alienate the middle classes, as entry into the new social élite would be based upon merit – service to the state, especially in the field of battle. Thus Napoleon created a new France in an image reflecting both the *ancien régime* and the Revolution, but better run than either. France was maleable; few complained so long as Bonaparte provided order and a prosperity based upon victory and plunder.

Ultimately Napoleon fell because of his incessant war-mongering. Bourgeois France began to wonder when he needlessly chose to engage French troops in a campaign to place a Bonaparte on the Spanish throne. An economic policy based upon the exigencies of war, the Continental System, proved unworkable and in combination with the English blockade furthered the devastation of maritime ports begun during the Revolution. Remorseless conscription and increasing tax demands decreased Bonaparte's popularity amongst the masses. His treatment of the Pope alienated a significant sector of the clergy. Napoleon's extraordinary good fortune with grain harvests came to an end in the second decade of his rule, necessitating recourse to a version of the Revolutionary price maximum. This exacerbated the growing discontent of the middle classes and when Imperial armies completed their disastrous retreat from Moscow, Napoleon found the support of Frenchmen, especially the governing classes, insufficient to repel invading Allied armies. Despite one of Bonaparte's greatest military campaigns, Paris rapidly fell to the Bourbons. France was exhausted.

This general interpretation is compelling and ultimately convincing because of its internal logic. But, as with all such broad interpretations, it must be rigorously scrutinised in the light of subsequent historical research. Study of the federations indicates that certain parts of it have been markedly overstated.

Creation of monarchical and hierarchical social institutions and rigorous enforcement of new laws perhaps could have altered public opinion