

FRANÇOIS-RENÉ de

CHATEAUBRIAND

ON BUONAPARTE AND THE BOURBONS (1814)

No, I shall never believe that I write upon the tomb of France. I cannot be persuaded that the day of mercy will not follow the day of vengeance. The ancient patrimony of the most Christian kings cannot be divided. The kingdom whose birth was the dying Rome's last great work will not perish. The events we have witnessed were not the work of men alone. The hand of Providence is visible throughout. God Himself marches openly at the head of the armies and sits at the councils of the kings. How, without divine intervention, are we to explain the extraordinary rise and the still more extraordinary fall of him who quite recently had the world at his feet? It has not been fifteen months since he was at Moscow, and now the Russians are in Paris. All trembled under his laws from the columns of Hercules to the Caucasus, and now he is a fugitive, on the run, without asylum. His power overflowed like the incoming tide and, like the tide, it has receded.

How are this madman's sins to be explained? We do not yet speak of his crimes.

A revolution, prepared by our moral corruption and errors, breaks out amidst us. In the name of the law, we overturned religion and morality; we renounced experience and the cus-

toms of our fathers; we defiled the tombs of our ancestors, the only solid basis for any government, to found upon uncertain reason a society with neither past nor future. Wandering in our own folly, having lost all clear idea of the just and the unjust, of good and evil, we passed through the diverse forms of republican government. We called the populace to deliberate in the streets of Paris about the great objects that the Romans discussed in the Forum after they cast down their arms and bathed themselves in the waves of the Tiber. Then they came out of their dens, these half-naked kings, soiled and beaten down by poverty, mutilated and deformed by their work, their only virtue the insolence of misery and the pride of rags. Fallen into such hands, the fatherland was soon covered with wounds. What remains of our fury and our dreams? Crimes and fetters!

Yet at least our principle was noble. Liberty must not be accused of the faults committed in her name. True philosophy is not the mother of the poisonous doctrines spread by the false wise men. Enlightened by experience, at last we have come to see that monarchical government is the only one that suits our land.

It would have been natural to recall our legitimate princes, but we believed our sins too great to be pardoned. We did not dream that the heart of a son of St. Louis is an inexhaustible treasury of mercy. Some feared for their lives, others for their riches. Above all, it would have cost human pride too much to admit that it had been deceived. So many massacres, upheavals, and miseries, only to return to the point from which we began! Passions were still high, and pretensions of all kinds could not renounce the chimera of equality, the principal cause of our ills. Weighty reasons pushed us forward, petty ones held us back, and public felicity was sacrificed to personal interest, justice to vanity.

Thus we wished to establish a supreme leader who was a child of the Revolution, a leader with the corrupt law at his origins who would protect corruption and make an alliance with it. Upright judges, firm and courageous, captains renowned for their probity and talents, had arisen amidst our travails, yet they were not offered

a power their principles would have prevented them from accepting. We despaired of finding among the French a brow that would dare to wear the crown of Louis XVI. A stranger stepped forward. He was chosen.

Buonaparte did not announce his plans openly. His character was revealed only by degrees. Under the modest title of consul, he first accustomed independent minds not to be alarmed at the power they had given him. He appeased the true French by proclaiming himself to be the restorer of order, law, and religion. The wise were tricked, the far-seeing duped. The republicans saw Buonaparte as their work and as the popular leader of a free state. The royalists believed that he would play the role of Monck,¹ and so were quick to serve him. Everyone placed his hopes in him. The brilliant victories of the brave French covered him with glory. Then he became drunk on success, and his tendency to evil began to show itself. The future will doubt whether this man was more guilty for the evil that he did than for the good that he could have done and did not do. Never did a usurper have an easier and more brilliant role to fill. With a little moderation he could have established himself and his line upon the greatest throne of the world. No one disputed the throne, for the generations born since the Revolution did not know our former masters and had only known travail and misery. France and Europe were spent. One only takes a breath after coming to rest; this rest we would then have purchased at any price. An adventurer had troubled the order of royal succession, made himself the heir to heroes, and profited in one day from the despoliation of genius, glory, and time; yet God did not wish that so dangerous an example be given to the world. Lacking the rights of birth, a usurper can only legitimate his pretensions to the throne through his virtues. In this case, Buonaparte had none in his favor but his military talents, and those were equaled, if not surpassed, by several of our generals. When Providence abandoned him and handed him over to his own folly, he was lost.

¹ George Monck (1608–70), a general under Oliver Cromwell, was the architect of the restoration of Charles II in 1660.

A king of France once said that if good faith had been banished from the company of men, it must be found in the heart of kings. This necessary quality of a royal soul was lacking in Buonaparte. The first known victim of the tyrant's perfidy was a royalist leader of Normandy. Monsieur de Frotté had the noble imprudence to attend a meeting to which he had been attracted by his trust in a promise. He was arrested and shot. A short time later, Toussaint l'Ouverture was similarly taken by treason in America and strangled in the castle where he had been imprisoned in Europe.

Soon a more famous murder disturbed the civilized world. Reborn were those barbarous times of the Middle Ages, those scenes found only in novels, those catastrophes that the civil wars of Italy and the politics of Machiavelli made known beyond the Alps. The foreigner, still not yet king, wished to have the bloody corpse of a Frenchman as a stepping-stone to the throne of France. And Great God, what a Frenchman! Everything was violated to commit this crime: the rights of men, justice, religion, humanity. The duke of Enghien was arrested in a time of peace on foreign soil and taken from the chateau of Offembourg. When he had left France, he was still too young to know it well. It was from the bottom of a post-chaise, then, between two gendarmes, that he saw the soil of his fatherland as if for the first time, and that he traversed the fields made famous by his ancestors only to go to his grave. He arrived in the middle of the night at the dungeon of Vincennes. By the light of torches, under the vaults of a prison, the grandson of the Great Condé² was declared guilty of having appeared on the battlefield: convicted of this hereditary crime,³ he was immediately condemned. In vain did he demand to speak to Buonaparte (O touching and heroic simplicity!); the brave young man was one of the greatest admirers of his murderer. He could not believe that a captain could wish to assassinate a soldier. Worn out with hunger and fatigue, he was taken into the bowels of the castle. There he

² Louis II de Bourbon, the Great Condé (1621–86) was the victor at Rocroi in 1643.

³ That is, the "crime" of having been a warrior like his fathers.

found a newly dug grave. He was stripped of his clothing and to his chest a lantern was attached so that in the darkness the ball might be guided to his heart. He wanted to give his watch to his executioners and prayed them to transmit the last tokens of his memory to his friends; they insulted him with base words. The command to fire was given. Without witnesses, without consolation, in the middle of his fatherland, only miles from Chantilly and several paces from those old trees under which the holy king Louis gave justice to his subjects, in the prison in which Monsieur the Prince was held, the young, the handsome, the brave, the last offspring of the victor of Rocroi fell dead. He died as the great Condé would have died, and as his assassin will not die. His body was secretly buried, and Bossuet will not be reborn to speak above his ashes.

It remained to the one who had lowered himself beneath mankind by this crime to affect to place himself above mankind by his designs, to give as an excuse for a sin reasons incomprehensible to the vulgar, and to make an abyss of iniquity pass for the heights of genius. Buonaparte had recourse to that miserable self-confidence that fools no one. Not being able to hide what he had done, he made it public.

When the death sentence was heard in Paris, there was open horror. One asked by what right a Corsican had spilled the most beautiful and pure blood of France. Did he think it possible to replace by his half-African line the French line that he had just extinguished? The soldiers groaned: this name of Condé seemed to belong to them alone and to represent the honor of the French army. Our grenadiers had encountered several times the three generations of heroes in the melee, the prince of Condé, the duke of Bourbon, and the duke of Enghien. They had even injured the duke of Bourbon, but the sword of a Frenchman could never exhaust this noble blood: only a foreigner could cut it off at its source.

Every nation has its vices. The French vice is not treason, blackness, or ingratitude. The murder of the duke of Enghien, the torture

and assassination of Pichegru,⁴ the war in Spain, and the captivity of the pope revealed in Buonaparte a nature foreign to France. In spite of the weight of our fetters, sensible to misery as well as to glory, we cried for the duke of Enghien, Pichegru, and Moreau,⁵ we admired Saragossa, and paid homage to a pontiff cast in irons. He who stole the states of the venerable priest who had crowned him, he who at Fontainebleau dared to strike the venerable pontiff with his own hand and to pull the father of the faithful by his white hairs, which he believed to be another victory: he did not know that there remained to the heir of Jesus Christ that scepter of reeds and that crown of thorns that would triumph, sooner or later, over the power of the evil one.

The time is coming, I hope, when the free French will declare by a solemn act that they took no part in these tyrannical crimes, that the murder of the duke of Enghien, the captivity of the pope, and the war in Spain were impious, sacrilegious, hateful, and, above all, anti-French actions, and that the shame of them should fall only upon the head of the foreigner.

Buonaparte profited from the horror that the assassination of Vincennes thrust upon us to cross the last step and to seat himself upon the throne.

Then began the great debauch of royalty: crime, oppression, and slavery marched step by step with folly. Every liberty died. Every honorable sentiment, every generous thought became a conspiracy against the state. If one spoke of virtue, he was suspect. To praise a beautiful action was an assault against the prince. Words changed meaning. A people who fights for its legitimate sovereign is a rebellious people. A traitor is a loyal subject. France was an Empire of

⁴ Jean-Charles Pichegru (1761–1804), a leading general during the early years of the Directory, joined the Royalists and was caught in the attempt to assassinate Bonaparte. He died in prison.

⁵ Jean-Victor-Marie Moreau (1763–1813), also a general in the Revolutionary army, was arrested for his role in Pichegru's attempt on Bonaparte and exiled to America. He died in 1813 while serving in the allied army, fighting against Bonaparte.

lies: journals, pamphlets, discourses, prose, and verse all disguised the truth. If it rained, we were assured that it was sunny. If the tyrant walked among the silent people, it was said that he advanced among the acclamations of the crowd. The prince was all that mattered: morality consisted in devoting oneself to his caprice; duty was to praise him. Above all it was necessary to praise the administration when it made a mistake or committed a crime. Men of letters were forced by threats to celebrate the despot. They capitulated and praised him, and were happy when, at the price of several commonplaces about the glory of arms, they had purchased the right to emit a few sighs, to denounce a few crimes, to recall a proscribed truth! No book could appear without its ode to Buonaparte, like the stamp of slavery. In new editions of ancient authors, the censor removed all that he could find against conquerors, servitude, and tyranny, just as the Directory had corrected in the same authors everything that spoke of monarchy and kings. Almanacs were examined with care, and conscription was made into an article of faith in the catechism. There was the same servitude in the arts. Buonaparte had poisoned those ill with the plague in Jaffa, a painting therefore showed him touching these same plague-infested men with extreme courage and humanity. This was not the way that Saint Louis healed the sick who, with a moving and devout confidence, presented themselves to the royal hands. Do not speak of public opinion: his maxim is that the sovereign should arrange it each morning. The police, perfected by Buonaparte, had a committee charged with giving direction to minds, and at the head of this committee was a director of public opinion. Deception and silence were the two great methods employed to keep the people in error. If your children die on the battlefield, do you think that the police will tell you what has happened to them? They will conceal the events most important to the fatherland, to Europe, to the whole world. The enemies are at Meaux: you will learn it only by the flight of people from the countryside. They surround you with shadows. They play on your fears. They laugh at your sorrows. They disdain what you

feel and think. You wish to raise your voice, a spy denounces you, a gendarme arrests you, a military commission judges you. They crush your head, and you are forgotten.

It was not enough to shackle the fathers; the children must also be disposed of. We saw tearful mothers run to the ends of the Empire to demand the sons that the government had taken from them. These children were placed in schools where, to the sound of the drum, they were taught irreligion, debauchery, disdain for domestic virtues, and blind obedience to the sovereign. Paternal authority, respected by the most hideous tyrants of antiquity, was treated as a prejudice and an abuse by Buonaparte. He wanted to make our sons into some sort of Mamelukes, without God, family, or fatherland. It seems that this universal enemy tried to destroy France's very foundations. He more greatly corrupted men, and did more evil to mankind in the short space of ten years, than did all the tyrants of Rome together, from Nero to the last persecutor of the Christians. The principles that served as the basis of his administration passed from his government into the different classes of society, for a perverse government introduces vice in its people, while a wise government brings virtue to fruition. Irreligion, a taste for pleasures and expenses beyond one's means, a disdain for moral bonds, and a spirit of adventure, violence, and domination descended from the throne into our families. A little more time for such a reign and France would have been nought but a den of thieves.

The crimes of our republican revolution were the work of the passions and always left us with resources. There was disorder, but not destruction, in society. Morality was injured, but not destroyed. Conscience had its remorse. A destructive indifference had not mixed together the innocent and the guilty, and thus the evils of these times could have been quickly repaired. Yet how is one to heal the wound made by a government that posed despotism as its principle, that ceaselessly destroyed morality and religion by both its institutions and neglect, that did not seek to found an order upon duty and law, but upon force and police spies, and that took the

stupor of slavery for the peace of a well-organized society faithful to the customs of its fathers and silently treading the path of its ancient virtues? The most terrible revolutions are preferable to such a government. If the civil wars produced public crimes, at least they gave birth to private virtues, talents, and great men. It is in despotism that empires disappear: by all kinds of abuses and by killing souls more than bodies, they lead sooner or later to dissolution and conquest. There is no example of a free nation that perished from a war between its citizens, and a state bent under its own storms has always arisen flourishing.

We have praised Buonaparte's administration. If administration consists in numerals, if, to govern well, it suffices to know how much a province produces in wheat, wine, and oil, what is the last penny one may levy as tax, the last man one may take, then certainly Buonaparte was a great administrator. It is impossible better to organize evil or to put more order into disorder. But if the best administration is that which leaves the people in peace, which nourishes their sentiments of justice and piety, which is frugal with the blood of men, which respects the rights of citizens, their properties and their families, then certainly the government of Buonaparte was the worst of governments.

And there were still more faults and errors in his own system! An extravagant administration swallowed up half the revenues of the state. Armies of customs collectors and receivers devoured the tolls they were charged to raise. There was not a single bureau chief who did not have five or six commissioners beneath him. Buonaparte seemed to have declared war on commerce. If some branch of industry were born in France, he would seize it, and it would immediately dry up in his hands. Tobacco, salt, wool, colonial goods, all were the object of his hateful monopolies as he made himself the sole shopkeeper of his empire. For absurd reasons, or rather by a decided distaste for the navy, he succeeded in losing our colonies and destroying our shipping. He built great vessels that rotted in our ports, or which he disarmed in order to serve the needs of his

land army. A hundred frigates spread throughout the seas would have done considerable harm to our enemies, trained sailors for France, and protected our merchant vessels, but such commonsensical notions did not occur to him. We must not attribute the progress of our agriculture to his laws, for it was due to the division of the great properties, and abolition of feudal rights, and to several other causes produced by the Revolution. Every day this restless and bizarre man fatigued a people who needed only rest by his contradictory and frequently impossible decrees. In the evening he broke the law he had made in the morning. In ten years he devoured fifteen billions in taxes, which surpasses the sum levied during the seventy-three years of the reign of Louis XIV. The spoils of the world and fifteen hundred millions in revenue did not suffice for him; he was busied only with swelling his treasury by the most iniquitous measures. Every prefect, subprefect, and mayor had the right to augment the tolls for entering a town, to levy additional pennies on the towns, the villages, and the hamlets, and to demand arbitrary sums from landowners for such-and-such supposed need. All of France was opened to pillage. Sickness, poverty, death, education, the arts, the sciences: all paid tribute to the prince. Have you a maimed son, both legs amputated, incapable of serving? The law of conscription will oblige you to give fifteen hundred francs to console you for your misfortune. Sometimes the ill recruit died prior to the examination of the recruiting captain. Do you suppose the father to be exempt from paying the fifteen-hundred-franc penalty? Not at all. If the declaration of infirmity had been made before the death had taken place, the conscript being alive at the time of the declaration, the father would have been obliged to count out the sum upon his son's grave. Should the wretch wish to give some education to one of his children, he must count out eighteen hundred francs to the university, plus a payment towards the master's salary. If a modern author cited an ancient author when the works of the latter had fallen into what was called the public domain, the censor required five sous per page of the citation. If you translated while

citing, you would pay only two sous-and-a-half per page, because then the citation would be in the mixed domain, half belonging to the work of the living translator and half to the dead author. When Buonaparte had food distributed to the poor in the winter of 1811, it was believed that he took such generosity from his thrift, but he took the occasion to levy additional centimes and earned four millions on the soup of the poor. Finally, we saw him seize the administration of funerals. It was worthy of the destroyer of the French to levy a tax upon their cadavers. And how could one demand the protection of the laws, for it was he who did it? The *corps législatif* dared to speak once and it was dissolved. One article alone of the new code radically destroyed property. A regional administrator could say to you: "Your property is regional or national. I am provisionally sequestering it: go and plead in the courts. If the region is incorrect, we will return your property." And to whom do you have recourse in this case? To the ordinary tribunals? No, these cases were reserved to the examination of the *Conseil d'État* and pleaded before the emperor as both judge and party.

If property was uncertain, civil liberty was still less secure. What was there more monstrous than that commission named to inspect the prisons, under the authority of which a man could be detained his whole life in a cell, without instruction, trial, or judgment, put to torture, and shot at night or strangled between two bars? Amidst all this, Buonaparte each year had named commissioners for the liberty of the press and individual liberty: Tiberius never toyed with mankind to this extent.

He crowned his despotic works with conscription. Scandinavia, called a human factory by one historian, could not have furnished enough men for this homicidal law. The code of conscription will be an eternal monument to Buonaparte's reign. In it are united all that the most subtle and ingenious tyranny could imagine to torment and devour the people. It truly was an infernal code. The sons of the French were harvested like trees in a forest. Each year eighty thousand young men were cut down. Yet these scheduled deaths

were not all. The conscription was often increased by extraordinary levies. It devoured its future victims in advance, just as a dissolute man borrows against his future income. They finished by taking without counting. The legal age and the qualities required to die on the field of battle were no longer considered, and the law showed a marvelous indulgence in this regard. They went backwards towards infancy and forwards towards old age. Those who had already served were taken again, and those who had paid the indemnity were forced to march, like the son of one poor artisan, redeemed three times at the price of his father's small fortune. Sickness, infirmity, and deformity were no longer reasons for exemption. Mobile columns traversed the provinces as if they were enemy territory in order to take the people's last children. Should one complain of their ravages, the response was that these mobile columns were composed of good gendarmes who would console the mothers and return their sons to them. In place of the absent brother, they would take the brother who was there. The father answered for the son and the wife for the husband: the responsibility extended to the most distant relations and even to neighbors. Villages united in defense of their native sons. Garrisons were established on a peasant's lands, and he was forced to sell his bed to nourish himself until they had found the conscript hidden in the woods. The absurd was mixed with the atrocious. Often they demanded the children of those who were happy enough not to have had a posterity. They employed violence to discover the one who carried a name that existed only in the lists of the gendarmes, or for a conscript who had already served for five or six years. Expectant mothers were put to torture so that they would reveal where the firstborn of their wombs were hidden. Fathers brought in their son's cadavers to prove that they could no longer provide a living son. There still remained a few families whose richest children had been redeemed. These were destined one day to form the judges, administrators, savants, and landowners so useful to the social order of a great land: by the decree of the guards of honor they too were enveloped in the universal slaughter. We

arrived at such a point of disdain for the lives of men and for France that these conscripts were called *prime matter* and *cannon fodder*. Those purveyors of human flesh even once batted around the question of how long a conscript would last, some holding out for thirty-six months, others for thirty-three. Buonaparte himself said: *My revenue is three hundred thousand men*. In the eleven years of his reign, he caused more than 5 million French to die, which surpasses the number killed in our civil wars over three centuries, under the reigns of Jean, Charles V, Charles VI, Charles VII, Henri II, François II, Charles IX, Henri III, and Henri IV. In the past twelve months, without counting the national guard, Buonaparte has raised 1,330 thousand men, which is more than one hundred thousand men per month. And someone dared to say that he had only spent our excess population.

It was easy to foresee what has arrived. Every wise man said that by exhausting France, the conscription would expose her to invasion as soon as she was seriously attacked. Bled white by the executioner, this corpse, emptied of blood, could make but a feeble resistance. Yet the loss of men was not the greatest evil done by conscription. It plunged us and all of Europe into barbarism. Conscription destroyed the trades, the arts, and letters. A young man who must die at eighteen years cannot devote himself to any study. To defend themselves, the neighboring nations were obliged to employ the same methods, and thus they abandoned all the advantages of civilization. And all the peoples, falling upon one another as in the century of the Goths and Vandals, saw the miseries of those times reborn. By sundering the ties of the whole society, conscription also annihilated those of the family. Accustomed from their cradle to see themselves as victims sentenced to death, children no longer obeyed their parents. They became lazy and debauched vagabonds, waiting for the day when they would go loot and devour the world. What principle of religion or morality would have had time to take root in their heart? For their part, the fathers and mothers in that class of people no longer attached their affections or

gave their care to children they were prepared to lose, who were no longer their wealth and support, and who had become only a burden and an object of sadness. Thence that hardening of the soul, that loss of all natural sentiments which leads to egoism, carelessness about good and evil, and indifference towards the fatherland, which extinguishes conscience and remorse, which subjects the people to servitude by taking away their horror of vice and their admiration of virtue.

Thus was Buonaparte's administration of French affairs.

Let us examine the march of his government abroad, those policies of which he was so proud, and that he defined thus: *Politics is a game of men*. Well then! He lost everything in this abominable game, and France must cover his losses.

To begin with his continental system, this child's or fool's system was not the real goal of his wars, it was but the pretext for them. He wanted to be the master of the earth, while speaking only of the liberty of the seas. This insane system: did he do what was necessary to establish it? By the two great faults which, as we shall say hereafter, made his projects fail in Spain and Russia, did he not also fail to close the Mediterranean and Baltic ports? Did he not give all the colonies of the world to the English? Did he not open to them Peru, Mexico, and Brazil, a more considerable market than the one he hoped to close to them in Europe? Oh how true: the war enriched the people that he sought to ruin. Europe uses only a few of England's superfluities. The principal European nations find enough to suffice their chief necessities in the produce of their own manufacturing. In America, however, the people need everything, from the first to the last article of clothing, and 10 million Americans consume more English merchandise than 30 million Europeans. I do not even mention the importing of silver from Mexico and the Indies, of the monopoly on cocoa, quinine, cochineal, and a thousand other objects of speculation that are become a new source of wealth for the English. And when Buonaparte would have succeeded in closing the ports of Spain and

the Baltic, then he would have had to close those of Greece, Constantinople, Syria, and the Barbary coast, which would have been to attempt to conquer the world. While he was busy with these new conquests, the conquered nations, unable to exchange the produce of their soil and their industry, would have thrown off the yoke and reopened their ports. Impossible by virtue of their gigantic size, his schemes were a failure of reason and good sense, the dreams of a fool and a madman.

As to his wars and his conduct with the cabinets of Europe, the least examination destroys their prestige. A man is not great because he attempts, but because he executes. Every man may dream of the conquest of the world: Alexander alone achieved it. Buonaparte governed Spain like a province from which he pumped blood and gold. He was not content with this. He wished personally to reign upon the throne of Charles IV. What then did he do? His evil policy was to sow the seeds of division in the royal family. Then he abducted the family, in disdain for all human and divine laws. He suddenly invaded the territory of a faithful people who had just fought for him at Trafalgar. He insulted the genius of a people, slaughtered their priests, injured the pride of the Castilians, and raised up against himself the descendants of El Cid.⁶ As soon as Saragossa celebrated her own funeral mass and was buried under her ruins, the Christians descended from the Asturias and the new Moor was chased out. This war rekindled the spirit of the peoples in Europe, gave France one more frontier to defend, created a land army for the English, brought them back, after four centuries, into the fields of Poitiers, and handed them the treasures of Mexico.

If, instead of having recourse to these ruses worthy of a Borgia, Buonaparte had, by a more skillful but still criminal policy, under some pretext declared war upon the king of Spain, announced himself the avenger of the Castilians who were oppressed by the Prince of Peace, caressed the Spanish pride, and handled the religious

⁶ Rodrigo Diaz del Vivar, El Cid (ca. 1043–99), the Castilian champion of the Reconquista, most famous for his conquest of Valencia.

orders, it is probable that he would have succeeded. "It is not the Spanish I want," he said in his fury, "it is Spain." Well then! the land rejected him. The burning of Burgos produced the burning of Moscow, and the conquest of the Alhambra led the Russians to the Louvre. A great and terrible lesson!⁷

He made the same mistake in Russia. If in October 1812 he had stopped at the banks of the Duna, if he had been content to take Riga and to stay the winter there with his army of six hundred thousand men, to organize Poland behind him, with the return of spring he might perhaps have put the empire of the czars in peril. Instead, he marched to Moscow by one road, without stores and without resources. He came. The victors of Pultawa embraced their holy city. Buonaparte slept for a month amidst the ashes and ruins. He seemed to have forgotten the return of the seasons and the rigors of the climate. He let himself be amused by offers of peace. He was sufficiently ignorant of the human heart to believe that a people who had burned their own capital in order to escape slavery would capitulate over the smoking ruins of their homes. His generals cried out that it was time to retire. He left, swearing like an angry child that he would soon return with an army whose *vanguard alone would be three hundred thousand soldiers*. God sent out a breath of His anger: all was lost, and only one man returned to us!

Absurd in administration, criminal in politics, what then did he have to seduce the French, this foreigner? His military glory? Well then! he was stripped of it. He was, it is true, a great winner of battles. But beyond that the least general was more skillful than he. He listens to nothing of retreats or of the tricks of terrain. He is impatient, incapable of awaiting a result that would come only as the fruit of a long military calculation. He knows only how to advance, to charge, to run, to win a victory by *blows of men*, to sacrifice every-

⁷ Chateaubriand here echoes the first line of Bossuet's celebrated Funeral Oration for Henriette-Marie de France (1669): "He who reigns in heaven and who lifts up empires, to whom *alone* belong glory, majesty, and independence, is also the only one who glorifies himself by making laws for kings and by giving them, when it pleases him, great and terrible lessons."

thing for a success, and to kill half his soldiers by marches well beyond human power without worrying about a defeat. It mattered little: did he not have conscription and *prime matter*? Many believed that he had perfected the art of war, yet it is certain that he made it retrogress towards the infancy of the art. The masterpiece of the military art for a civilized people is to defend a large country with a small army, to leave many millions of men in peace behind sixty or eighty thousand soldiers so that the laborer who cultivates his furrow barely knows that they are fighting several miles from his farm. The Roman Empire was guarded by fifty thousand men, and Caesar only had a few legions at Pharsalia. Let him now defend us in our homes, this conqueror of the world! What, has all his genius suddenly abandoned him? By what enchantment is the France that Louis XIV surrounded with fortresses and that Vauban had walled in like a lovely garden now invaded from all sides? Where are the frontier garrisons? There are none. Where are the cannons on the ramparts? They are disarmed, even the vessels of Brest, Toulon, and Rochefort. If Buonaparte had wished to leave us defenseless against the forces of the coalition, if he had sold us, if he had secretly conspired against the French, would he have acted any differently? In less than sixteen months, two billion in cash, 1,400 thousand men, all the material of our armies and our forts were swallowed up in the forests of Germany and the deserts of Russia. At Dresden, Buonaparte committed mistake after mistake, forgetting that if crimes are sometimes punished in the other world, mistakes always are in this one. He displayed the most incomprehensible ignorance of what went on in the cabinets, refused to remain on the Elbe, was beaten at Leipzig, and refused the honorable peace that was offered him. Full of despair and rage, he left the palace of our kings for the last time, and with a spirit of justice and ingratitude, went to burn the place where these same kings had the misfortune to nourish him,⁸ opposed his enemies with activity lacking all plan, suffered a final reverse, fled again, and at last delivered the capital of the civilized world of his hateful presence.

⁸ Brienne, where he had studied in military school from 1779 to 1785.

The quill of a Frenchman will not refuse to paint the horror of his battlefields. An injured man was but a burden to Buonaparte: so much the better if he died, then we were rid of him. Piles of mutilated soldiers, thrown pell-mell into a corner, sometimes remained days and weeks until their wounds were dressed. No hospital is large enough to contain the wounded of an army of seven or eight hundred thousand men, nor are there enough surgeons to care for them. The executioner of the French took no precautions for them. Often there was no pharmacy, no ambulance, sometimes not even the instruments to cut off smashed limbs. In the Moscow campaign, for lack of cloth, they dressed wounds with hay. When the hay was gone, they died. Six hundred thousand warriors, the conquerors of Europe, the glory of France, were seen to wander amidst the snows and wastes, holding themselves up with branches of pine because they had not the strength to carry their arms, and their only coat was the bloody skin of the horses that had been their final meal. Old captains, their hair and beards bristling with icicles, abased themselves to the point of rubbing to keep warm those soldiers who had some food in order to obtain the smallest part, so much were they straitened by the torments of hunger! Whole squadrons, men and horses, were frozen during the night, and in the morning these phantoms could be seen standing amidst the chill. The only witnesses to the sufferings of our soldiers in these wastelands were the bands of crows and the packs of half-savage white hounds that followed our army to devour their leavings. In the spring, the emperor of the Russians made a search for the dead: more than one hundred sixty thousand cadavers were counted; twenty-four thousand were burned in one fire alone. The military plague, unknown since wars had been fought by only a small number of men, returned with conscription and the armies of a million men and the waves of human blood. And what did the destroyer of our fathers, our brothers, and our sons do when he had harvested the flower of France? He fled! He came to the Tuileries to say, while rubbing his hands at the fireplace: "The weather is better here than on the banks of the Beresina." Not a word of consolation to the wives and tearful

mothers who surrounded him, not one regret, not one display of emotion, not a single admission of his folly. The Tigellins⁹ said: “What was fortunate about this retreat is that the emperor lacked for nothing. He was always well nourished, sheltered in a good carriage. Indeed, he suffered not at all, and that is a great consolation.” And amidst his court he seemed happy, triumphant, glorious, adorned with the royal mantle, his head covered with Henri IV’s cap. He gloated, brilliant upon his throne, striking all the royal poses that Talma¹⁰ had taught him. Yet this pomp only made him more hideous, and all the diamonds of the crown could not hide the blood that covered him.

Alas! This horror of the battlefields has come to us. It is no longer hidden in the wastes, we see it amidst our homes, in that Paris which the Normans besieged in vain almost a thousand years ago, and which prided herself on not having been conquered since Clovis became her king. To open a land to invasion: is this not the greatest and most unpardonable of crimes? We saw the rest of our sons perish under our own eyes. We saw troops of conscripts, old soldiers pale and disfigured, holding themselves up by the sides of the roads, dying of all sorts of wounds, barely holding in one hand the weapon with which they had defended the fatherland, and begging alms with the other hand. We have seen the Seine full of barges and our streets clogged with carts full of the injured lacking the first dressing upon their wounds. One of these carts, leaving a trail of blood behind, broke open upon the boulevard. Falling from it were conscripts without arms, without legs, pierced with balls and blows of the lance, crying out, and praying the passers-by to finish them off. These miserable youths, taken from their farms before they had reached their manhood, led with their farming clothes and bonnets onto the battlefield, placed as *cannon fodder* in the most dangerous places to use up the enemy’s fire: these unfortunate ones, I say, were seized by tears, and when they fell, struck by the cannon balls, they

⁹ A reference to Ofonius Tigellinus (died A.D. 69), Nero’s fawning advisor.

¹⁰ François-Joseph Talma (1763–1826), a popular actor during the Revolution, was one of Napoleon’s favorites.

cried out: Oh my mother, my mother! a heartrending cry that marks the tender age of the child just torn from domestic peace, of the child fallen at once from the hands of his mother into those of his barbarous sovereign! So much slaughter, so much sorrow, and for whom? For an abominable tyrant, a Corsican, a foreigner who was wasteful of French blood precisely because he did not have a drop of it in his veins.

Oh! Louis XVI refused to punish a few guilty men whose death would have secured his throne and spared us so many evils. He said "I do not wish to purchase my security at the price of the life of a single one of my subjects." He wrote in his testament: "I commend my son, should he have the misfortune to become king, to reflect that he should devote himself entirely to the happiness of his fellow citizens, that he should forget all hatred and resentment, and notably those which have to do with the evils and trials that I undergo; and that he can only work for the happiness of his people by reigning according to the laws." Then he pronounced these words upon the scaffold: "Men of France, I pray God that He will not avenge upon the nation the blood of your kings that will be spilled." Here is the true king, the French king, the legitimate king, the father and leader of the fatherland!

Buonaparte showed himself too mediocre in his misfortune for us to believe that his prosperity was the work of his genius. He was only the son of our strength, and we believed him the son of his works. His greatness came only from the immense forces that we placed in his hands at the time of his elevation. He inherited all the armies formed under our most skilled generals, led to victory so many times by all those great captains who have perished, and who will perhaps die even to the last man, victims of the fury and jealousy of the tyrant. He found a numerous people, enlarged by conquests, exalted by triumphs and by the movement that revolutions always give. He had but to strike his foot against the fertile ground of our fatherland and it produced treasures and soldiers for him. The peoples he attacked were tired and divided. He conquered them one by one by spilling upon each of them in turn the waves of

the population of France.

When God sends to the earth the executors of his heavenly chastisements, everything is leveled before them: they enjoy extraordinary successes with mediocre talents. Born amidst civil discord, these exterminators draw their principal power from the evils that have given birth to them, and from the terror that the memory of these evils inspires. Thus they obtain the submission of the people in the name of the calamities they have survived. It is given to them to corrupt and to weaken, to destroy honor, to degrade souls, to soil all that they touch, to desire all and to dare all, to reign by lies, impiety, and fear, to speak all languages, to fascinate all eyes, to trick even our reason, to make themselves pass for great geniuses, when they are but common scoundrels, for excellence in everything cannot be separated from virtue. Dragging after them the nations they have seduced, triumphant through the multitude, dishonored by a hundred victories, with torch in hand and with their feet in blood, they go to the ends of the earth like drunken men, pushed on by the God they disown.

When, on the contrary, Providence wishes to save an empire and not to punish it, when he employs his servants and not his scourges, when he intends an honorable glory, not an abominable renown, then far from making his servants's route easy like Buonaparte's, he opposes them with obstacles worthy of their virtues. Thus one can always distinguish the tyrant from the liberator, the ravager of the people from the great captain, the man sent to destroy and the man come to repair. The former is master of all, and makes use of immense means in order to succeed. The latter is master of nothing, and has but feeble resources. It is easy to recognize in the first traits the character and mission of the one who devastated France.

Buonaparte is a false great man: the magnanimity that makes heroes and true kings was lacking in him. Thus no one quotes him saying one of those phrases spoken by Alexander or Caesar, Henri IV or Louis XIV. Nature formed him without feelings. His head was large enough, but it was the empire of shadows and confusion. All ideas, even good ones, could enter it, but they left just as quickly.

The distinctive trait of his character was an invincible stubbornness, a will of iron, but only for injustice, oppression, and extravagant systems. He quickly abandoned the projects that might have been favorable to morality, order, and virtue. Imagination dominated him, reason did not rule him at all. His plans were not the fruit of profound reflection, but the effect of a sudden movement or hasty resolution. Changeable, like the men of his country, he had something about him of the clown and the actor. It was all an act, even the passions that he did not have. He was always on stage. In Cairo, he was a renegade who boasted of having destroyed the papacy. In Paris, he was the restorer of the Christian religion. Today he is a visionary, tomorrow a philosopher. His scenes were prepared in advance. A sovereign who could take lessons from Talma so as to strike a royal pose will be judged by posterity. He wanted to seem original, and was almost always an imitator. Yet his imitations are so poor that they immediately recall the object or the action that he copies. He always tries to say what he thinks will be a great phrase, or to do what he presumes will be a great thing. Affecting the universality of genius, he spoke of finances and of spectacles, of war and of fashion, governed the fate of kings and toll commissioners, dated from the Kremlin a ruling on theaters, and on the day of a battle, arrested several women in Paris. Child of our Revolution, he has striking resemblances to his mother: intemperance of language, a taste for low literature, and a passion for writing in newspapers. Under the mask of Caesar and Alexander, we perceive a small man, and the child of a base family. He had sovereign disdain for men because he judged them according to himself. His maxim is that they do nothing except for their interest, and that probity itself is mere calculation. Thence the system of fusion that was the basis of his government, employing both the bad and the honest man, mixing vice and virtue by design, and always taking care to place you in opposition to your principles. His great pleasure was to dishonor virtue, to soil reputations: he would touch you only to stain you. When he had made you fall, you would become *his man*,

according to the vulgar expression, and you would belong to him by right of shame. He would love you a little less, and you would disdain him a bit more. In his administration, he wanted only results to be known and never to be embarrassed by the means. The *masses* before him were everything, the individuals nothing. "The youth will be corrupted, but then they will obey me better. This branch of industry will be extinct, but for the moment I will obtain a few millions. Sixty thousand men will die in this affair, but I will win the battle." Thus lay the course of all his reasoning; thus are kingdoms destroyed!

Born to destroy, Buonaparte carried evil in his belly just as naturally as a mother carries her fruit: with joy and a kind of pride. He had a horror for the happiness of men. He said one day: 'There are still several happy persons in France; these are the families who do not know me, who live in the country, in a chateau, with thirty or forty thousand pounds in rent; I will know how to reach them.' He kept his word. Seeing his son play one day, he said to a bishop who was present: "Monsieur Bishop, do you believe that this has a soul?" Everything that distinguished itself by a certain superiority appalled this tyrant. Every reputation bothered him. He was jealous of talents, of intelligence, of virtue. He did not even love the sound of a great crime, were this crime not his work. The most disgraceful of men, his greatest pleasure was to injure those who approached him, without thinking that kings never insult anyone because one cannot take vengeance upon them, without reminding himself that he spoke to the nation most delicate of its honor, and to a people formed by the court of Louis XIV and justly renowned for the elegance of its customs and the grace of its manners. In the end, Buonaparte was but the man of prosperity. As soon as the adversity that makes virtues shine touched this false great man, the prodigy vanished: in the monarch could be seen only the adventurer, and in the hero, the newcomer to glory.

When Buonaparte chased out the Directory, he addressed this discourse to them:

“What have you done with that France that I left you so brilliant? I left you with peace, I come back to find war; I left you with victories, I come back to find defeats; I left you with the millions of Italy, and everywhere I have found confiscatory laws and misery. What have you done with one hundred thousand Frenchmen I knew, all my companions in glory? They are dead.”

“This state of things cannot last. Before three years they will have led us to despotism. But we want a republic, a republic established on the bases of equality, morality, civil liberty, political tolerance, and so on.”

Today, miserable man, we take you at your word and interrogate you with your own speech. “Tell us, what have you done with that France so brilliant? Where are our treasures, the millions of Italy, and of all of Europe? What have you done, not with one hundred thousand, but with five million Frenchmen, all of whom we knew, our parents, our friends, our brothers? This state of things cannot endure. It has plunged us into a hideous despotism. You wanted a republic, and you brought us slavery. We wanted the monarchy established on the bases of equality of rights, morality, civil liberty, and political and religious tolerance. Have you given it to us? What have you done for us? What do we owe to your reign? Who was it that assassinated the duke of Enghien, tortured Pichegru, banished Moreau, fettered the sovereign pontiff, seized the princes of Spain, and fought an impious war? You. Who was it that lost our colonies, destroyed our commerce, opened America to the English, corrupted our morals, took the children from our fathers, devastated our families, ravaged the world, burned more than a thousand villages, and filled the earth with horror for the name of the French? You. Who was it that exposed France to plague, invasion, dismemberment, and conquest? Again, you. Here is what you could not ask the Directory, and what we ask you today. How much more guilty are you than those men whom you found unworthy to reign! Should a legitimate and hereditary king have burdened his people with the least part of the evils that you have done to us, he would have imperilled his throne; and you, usurper and foreigner, you became

sacred to us because of the calamities you poured out upon us! You will still reign amidst our tombs! At last we regain our rights through suffering. We will no longer adore Moloch. You will no longer devour our children. We want no more of your conscription, your police, your censors, your nocturnal executions, your tyranny. We are not alone; the whole human race accuses you. It demands vengeance from us in the name of religion, morality, and liberty. Where have you not spread desolation? In which corner of the world has a hidden family escaped your ravages? The Spaniard in his mountains, the Illyrian in his valleys, the Italian under his bright sun, the German, the Russian, the Prussian in their smoldering villages, all demand the return of their sons whom you have slaughtered, the tents, cabins, castles, and temples that you have burned. You have forced them to come and seek among us what you have stolen from them, and to find their bloody spoils in your palaces. The voice of the world declares you the most guilty man to have walked the earth, for it is not upon barbarians or degenerate nations that you have poured out so many evils, it is amidst civilization, in a century of lights, that you have wished to live by the sword of Attila and the maxims of Nero. Lay down your scepter of iron. Descend that pile of ruins you have made of a throne! We chase you out as you chased out the Directory. Go! if you can, for your only punishment, witness the joy that your fall brings to France, and contemplate, while crying tears of rage, the spectacle of public rejoicing!”

These are the words we address to the foreigner. Yet if we reject Buonaparte, who will replace him? The king.

ON THE BOURBONS

The functions attached to this title are so well known to the French that they have no need to have them explained. To them, the king represents the ideas of legitimate authority and order, of peace, and of equal and monarchical liberty. The memories of the old France,

of religion, of our ancient ways and family customs, of the habits of our childhood, of our cradles and tombs, all of these are attached to the sacred word king. It frightens no one. On the contrary, it reassures them. The king, the judge, the father: for a Frenchmen they are all one. He knows not what an emperor is; he knows neither the nature, form, nor limit of the power attached to this foreign title. Yet he knows what is a monarch descended from Saint Louis and Henri IV. It is a ruler whose paternal power is regulated by institutions, tempered by customs, softened and made excellent by time, like a generous wine born of the soil of the fatherland and ripened by the French sun. Let us no longer hide this truth from ourselves. There will be neither repose, happiness, felicity, nor stability in our laws, opinions, or fortunes, until the house of Bourbon is reestablished upon the throne. Antiquity was more grateful than we are, and certainly would not have failed to call divine a line that, beginning with a brave and prudent king and ending with a martyr, has in the space of nine centuries counted forty-three kings, among whom we find but one tyrant: a unique example in the history of the world and an eternal cause of pride to our fatherland. Probity and honor were seated on the throne of France while brute force and trickery were upon other thrones. The noble and sweet blood of the Capets did not cease producing heroes in order to make its kings honest men. Some were called wise, good, just, beloved; others were given the names great, august, father of letters and of the fatherland. Some of them had passions that they expiated through suffering, but not one of them horrified the world by those vices that attend the memory of the Caesars and that Buonaparte reproduced.

The Bourbons, the last branch of this sacred tree, have by an extraordinary destiny seen their first king fall under the fanatic's knife and their last under the athiest's cleaver. Since Robert, the sixth son of St. Louis, from whom they descend, they have not lacked over the long centuries that glory of adversity that they have at last magnificently obtained. With what do we reproach them? The name of

Henri IV still makes French hearts tremble and fills our eyes with tears. We owe the best part of our glory to Louis XIV. Have we not called Louis XVI the most honest man of his kingdom? This family sheds tears in exile, not for their misfortunes, but for ours. That young princess whom we persecuted and made an orphan lives in foreign palaces, but every day she regrets having left the prisons of France. She could have received the hand of a powerful and glorious prince, but she preferred to unite her destiny to that of her poor, exiled, and outlawed cousin because he was French and because she would not separate herself from the sufferings of her people. The whole world admires her virtues. The people of Europe follow her when she appears in the public promenades and cover her with benedictions; and we, we were able to forget her! When she left the fatherland where she had been so unhappy, she looked back and cried. We who have been the constant object of her prayers and her love hardly knew that she existed. "I sense," she once said, "that I will have no child but France." These touching words should make us fall at her feet with tears of repentance. Yes, the duchess of Angoulême will become fruitful on the fertile soil of her fatherland! The lily grows naturally in our land: they will be born again more beautiful, watered with the blood of so many victims offered in expiation at the foot of the scaffold of Louis and Antoinette!

The brother of our late king, Louis XVIII, who should first reign over us, is an enlightened prince who is inaccessible to prejudice and a foreigner to vengeance. Of all the sovereigns who could at present govern France, he is the one that best fits our position and the spirit of the age, just as of all the men whom we could have chosen, Buonaparte was the least fit to be king. The institutions of a people are the work of time and experience; to reign one must first have reason and regularity. A prince who has in his head but two or three commonplace but useful ideas would be a more fitting sovereign to a nation than an extraordinary adventurer, ceaselessly giving birth to new plans, dreaming up new laws, believing himself to reign only when he troubles the people and changes in the evening

what he had created in the morning. Not only does Louis XVIII have the fixed ideas, moderation, and good sense so necessary to a monarch, he is also a prince who is a friend to letters, instructed and eloquent as many of our kings have been, with a broad and enlightened mind and a firm and philosophical character.

Let us choose between Buonaparte, who returns to us carrying the bloody code of conscription, and Louis XVIII, who comes forward to heal our wounds with the testament of Louis XVI in his hand. At his consecration he will repeat those words written by his virtuous brother:

“I pardon with all my heart those who have made themselves my enemies without my having given them any cause for it, and I pray God to pardon them.”

The count of Artois, of a character so frank, so loyal, so French, distinguishes himself today by his piety, mildness, and goodness, as in his first youth he made himself noticed by his great air and royal graces. Buonaparte flees, struck down by the hand of God but not corrected by adversity. As he retires from the land that thus escapes his tyranny, he drags behind him unfortunate victims bound in chains: it is in the prisons of France that he will exercise the final acts of his power. The count of Artois arrives alone, without soldiers, without support, unknown to the French to whom he shows himself. Immediately he speaks his name the people fall to their knees. They kiss the hem of his garment, they embrace his knees, and they cry out to him through a flood of tears: “We bring you only our hearts, for that is all that the monster left us with!” From this manner of leaving France, and this manner of returning, recognize on one side the usurper and on the other the legitimate prince.

The duke of Angoulême appeared in another of our provinces. Bordeaux, the second city of the kingdom, threw itself into his arms, and the land of Henri IV, transported by joy, recognized in him the heir to the virtues of the Béarnais.¹¹ Our armies have hardly seen a knight more brave than the duke of Berry. The duke of

¹¹ On March 12, 1814, Bordeaux declared itself for the restoration of the Bourbons by welcoming the duke of Angoulême, who had come north from Spain with Wellington.

Orléans proves, by his noble fidelity to the blood of his king, that his name is still one of the most lovely of France. I have already spoken of the three generations of heroes, the Prince Condé, the duke of Bourbon; I leave it to Buonaparte to name the third.

I do not know whether posterity will be able to believe that so many princes of the house of Bourbon were outlawed by a people that owes all its glory to them, without having been guilty of a single crime and without their misery having come to them from the tyranny of the last king of their line. No, the future will not be able to understand why we have banished such good princes, princes who were our compatriots, to place at our head a foreigner and the most evil of all men. One can to some extent imagine the republic in France: in a moment of folly a people can change the form of its government and no longer recognize a supreme leader. Yet if we return to a monarchy, it is the yoke of shame and absurdity to wish for it outside of the legitimate sovereign, and to believe that it can exist without him. We may modify, if we wish, the constitution of this monarchy, but no one has the right to change the monarch. A cruel, tyrannical king, who violates all the laws and deprives a whole people of their liberties, may be disposed by a violent revolution, but in this extraordinary case, the crown passes to his son, or to his closest heir. Now, was Louis XVI a tyrant? Can we put his legacy on trial? By virtue of what authority did we deprive his line of a throne that belonged to it by so many titles? By what shameful caprice did we give the heritage of Robert the Strong to the son of a bailiff from Ajaccio? This Robert the Strong seems to have descended from the second line, which in turn was attached to the first. He was count of Paris. Hugh Capet brought to the French, as a Frenchman himself, Paris, his paternal inheritance, his wealth and his immense domains. So small under the first Capetians, France grew wealthy and large under their descendants.

To replace this ancient line, we have had to seek a king, as one senator said, in a people whom the Romans would not take as slaves. It is in favor of an obscure Italian, who made his fortune by

despoiling the French, that we have overturned the Salic law, the *palladium* of our empire! How different were the sentiments and maxims of our fathers from our own! At the death of Philippe-le-Bel, they decided that the crown belonged to Philip of Valois to the prejudice of Edward III, king of England. They thought it better to condemn themselves to two centuries of war than to let themselves be governed by a foreigner. This noble resolution was the cause of the glory and the grandeur of France. The oriflamme was torn on the fields of Crecy, Poitiers, and Agincourt, but its tattered shreds at last triumphed over the banner of Edward III and Henry V, and the cry of *Montjoie Saint-Denis* silenced all the factions. The same question of heredity presented itself at the death of Henri III. The Parlement¹² then gave the famous edict that gave Henri IV and Louis XIV to France. Yet those were no ignoble heads: Edward III, Henry V, the duke of Guise, and the infante of Spain. Great God! what has become of the pride of France! She refused sovereigns as great as these to preserve her French and royal line, and she has made the choice of Buonaparte!

In vain do some pretend that Buonaparte is not a foreigner. He is, in the eyes of all of Europe and in those of all unprejudiced Frenchmen. He will be to the judgment of posterity. It will perhaps attribute to him the best part of our victories, and charge us with a part of his crimes. Buonaparte has nothing French about him, neither in his habits, nor in his character. The very traits of his visage betrays his origin. The language he learned in his cradle was not our own, and his accent, as well as his name, shows his homeland. His father and mother lived half their lives as subjects of the republic of Genoa. He himself was more sincere than his flatterers: he did not see himself as French. He hated and disdained us. Several times the words escaped from him: *This is how you are, you French*. In one discourse he spoke of Italy as his fatherland and of France as his conquest. If Buonaparte is French, it must necessarily be said that

¹² The parlements were the regional legal courts in the Old Regime. Of these, the Parlement of Paris took precedence and had the widest jurisdiction.

Toussaint L'Ouverture was more so: for in the end he was born in an old French colony, under French laws, and the liberty that he enjoyed gave him the rights of a subject and citizen. And a foreigner raised by the charity of our kings occupies the throne of our kings and burns to spill out their blood! We take care of his youth, and in gratitude he plunges us into the abyss of sorrow! Just dispensation of Providence! The Gauls sacked Rome, and the Romans oppressed the Gauls. The French have often ravaged Italy, and the Medici, the Galigai, the Mazarins, and the Buonapartes have laid waste to us. France and Italy should at last recognize one another and renounce one another forever.

How sweet it would be to rest at last from so much agitation and misery under the paternal authority of our legitimate sovereign! We have had a time to be the subjects of the glory that our arms poured out upon Buonaparte; today, now that he has stripped himself of that glory, it would be too much to remain a slave to his crimes. Let us reject this oppressor as all the peoples have rejected him. Let it not be said of us: they have killed the best and most virtuous of their kings; they did nothing to save his life, and today they spill the last drop of their blood, they sacrifice the rest of France to uphold a foreigner they detest. By what reason does unfaithful France justify her abominable fidelity? It must then be admitted that it is faults that please them, crimes that charm them, tyranny that suits them. Oh! if in the end the foreign nations, tired of our stubbornness, would consent to leave us this madman. If we were so base as to purchase by a part of our territory the shame of preserving in our midst the germ of the plague and the scourge of humanity, we must flee to the heart of the desert, change our name and our language, try to forget and make forgotten that we have been French.

Let us think of the good of our common fatherland. Let us reflect that our future is in our hands. One word can give us glory, peace, and the esteem of the world, or plunge us in the most frightful and the most ignoble slavery. Let us raise up the monarchy of Clovis, the heritage of Saint Louis, the patrimony of Henri IV. Today, the

Bourbons alone suit our miserable condition. They are the only doctors who can heal our wounds. Their moderation, paternal sentiments, and their own adversities suit a kingdom that is worn out by convulsions and suffering. Everything becomes legitimate with them; everything is illegitimate without them. Their presence alone will give birth to an order whose very source they are. They are brave and illustrious gentlemen and more French than we are ourselves. These lords of the Fleurs-de-Lys will be celebrated for their loyalty for all time. They hold so strongly to the root of our customs that they seem to be a part of France itself, and France misses them as it would air or sunlight.

If all would become peaceful with them, if they alone can put an end to our too-long Revolution, the return of Buonaparte would plunge us into frightful evils and interminable travails. Can the most fertile imagination represent what this monstrous giant would be if bound up within strict limits, no longer having the treasures of the world to devour and the blood of Europe to spill? Can we envision him closed up in a ruined and branded court, exercising his rage, his vengeance, and his turbulent genius upon France alone? Buonaparte has not changed at all. He will never change. He will always invent projects, laws, and absurd, contradictory, and criminal decrees. He will always torment us. He will make us forever uncertain of our lives, our liberty, our properties. While awaiting the chance to overturn the world again, he will busy himself with the care of overturning our families. The only slaves in a free world, the object of the disdain of other peoples, our most grievous misfortune will be no longer to sense our abasement and to sleep, like a slave of the Orient, indifferent to the cord by which the Sultan binds us when we awaken.

No, it will not be like that. We have a legitimate prince, born of our own blood, raised among us, whom we know, who knows us, who has our customs, tastes, and habits, for whom we have prayed to God in our youth, whose name our children know as well as that of their neighbors, and whose fathers lived and died with our own.

Will France be a forfeited estate because we have reduced our former princes to being exiles? Must a Corsican retain it by squatter's rights? Oh! for God's sake, let us not be found so disloyal as to disinherit our natural lord and to give his bed to the first fellow who asks for it. If we do not have our legitimate masters, to have the least Frenchman reign over us would be preferable to Buonaparte. At least let us not have the shame to obey a foreigner.

It remains only for me to prove that if the reestablishment of the house of Bourbon is necessary to France, it is no less necessary to Europe as a whole.

THE ALLIES

To consider at the outset only the reasons specific to Buonaparte, is there a man in the world who would ever wish to rely upon his word? Was it not a point of his policy and a penchant of his heart to be skilled at trickery, to regard good faith as foolishness and the mark of a small mind, and to make jokes about the sanctity of oaths? Did he keep a single one of the treaties that he made with the various powers of Europe? It was always by violating some articles of these treaties in a time of peace that he made his most lasting conquests; rarely did he evacuate a place that he had agreed to cede; and today, even now that he is beaten, he still possesses several fortresses in Germany as the fruit of his many rapes and the witnesses to his lies.

Will we bind him so that he will not be able to begin his ravages again? And would you weaken France by dismembering her, by placing occupying soldiers within her frontiers for a number of years, obliging her to pay considerable sums, and forcing her to have but a small army, and to abolish conscription? All this will be in vain. Again I say: Buonaparte has not changed. Adversity can do nothing to him because he is not above his fortune. He plans his vengeance in silence. All at once, after a year or two of repose, when

the coalition has dissolved and each power has returned to its states, he will call us to arms, profit from our newly matured sons, rise up, free the fortresses, and fall again upon Germany. Even today he speaks only of burning Vienna, Berlin, and Munich. He cannot consent to leave his prey. Will the Russians return quickly enough to save Europe a second time? Will this miraculous coalition, the fruit of twenty-five years of suffering, be able to renew itself when all of the ties that bound it are broken? Did not Buonaparte find the means to corrupt ministers, seduce princes, awaken ancient jealousies, and even place in his debt several peoples blind enough to fight under his banners? Finally, will the princes who reign today all be upon their thrones? Might not a change in reigns lead to a change in policies? Will the powers, so often deceived, be able immediately to take up the vigilance that they have set aside? What! will they have forgotten the pride of this adventurer who treated them so insolently, who prided himself to have had kings in his antechamber, who sent signed orders to sovereigns, established his spies in their very courts, and said openly that before ten years were out his *dynasty* would be Europe's eldest? Will the kings parley with a man who committed outrages against them that even a private individual would not tolerate! A charming queen was admired by Europe for her beauty, her courage, and her virtues, and he hastened her death by the most base and ignoble outrages. The holiness of kings as well as decency prevents me from repeating the calumnies, the grossness, and the ignoble pleasantries that he uttered again and again to the kings and ministers who today dictate the law to him in his own palace. If the powers personally overlook these outrages, they cannot and must not overlook them for the interest and majesty of their thrones. They must make themselves respected by their people, break the sword of the usurper, and forever dishonor this abominable right of force on which Buonaparte founded his pride and empire.

After these considerations, we come to other, loftier ones, which alone should determine the coalition of powers no longer to recognize Buonaparte as sovereign.

It is imperative for the repose of the peoples and for the security of crowns, to the lives as well as to the families of the sovereigns, that a man who leaves the inferior ranks of society not be allowed without punishment to seat himself upon the throne of his master, to take his place among the legitimate sovereigns, to treat them as *brothers*, and to find in the revolutions that have elevated him enough force to balance his claim to the legitimacy of his line. If this example is given to the world but once, no monarch can count upon his crown. If the throne of Clovis can be given, in a civilized time, to a Corsican, while the sons of St. Louis are abroad in the land, then no king can be sure today that he will reign tomorrow. Let them beware: all the monarchies of Europe are more or less daughters of the same customs and the same time, all the kings are truly like brothers united by the Christian religion and the antiquity of our memories. This beautiful and great system, once broken, with new lines seated upon the thrones where they will make other customs, other principles, and other ideas reign: this is the end of the old Europe. And in the passage of several years, a general revolution will have changed the succession of all the sovereigns. The kings should therefore take up the defense of the House of Bourbon as they would that of their own family. What is true from the point of view of royalty is also true from the natural point of view. There is not a king in Europe who does not have the blood of the Bourbons in his veins, and who should not see in them illustrious and unfortunate relatives. We have already too much taught the people that they can shake thrones. It is for the kings to show them that if these thrones can be shaken, they can never be destroyed, and that it is for the good of the world that crowns do not depend upon the success of crime and games of fortune.

It is still more imperative to Europe that France, who is its soul and heart by her genius and her position, be happy, flourishing, and peaceful. This she can only be under her former kings. Any other government would prolong among us those convulsions that have made themselves felt to the ends of the earth. Only the Bourbons, by the majesty of their line, by the legitimacy of their rights, and by

the moderation of their character, will offer a sufficient guarantee to treaties and heal the wounds of the world.

Under the reign of tyrants, all moral laws are suspended. Thus in England, during times of trouble, they suspend the act on which the liberty of citizens rests. Each knows that he does not do right, that he walks in a false path, but each submits and lends himself to oppression. We even have a kind of false conscience in vice, scrupulously fulfilling the orders most opposed to justice. The excuse is that better days will come when we will return to the ways of liberty and virtue, and that the time of iniquity must pass, just as bad weather must pass. Yet, while waiting for this return, the tyrant does as he pleases. He is obeyed. He can drag a whole people into war, oppress them, demand everything from them without being refused. All this is impossible under a legitimate prince. Under a legal scepter the whole world enjoys its natural rights and the exercise of the virtues. If the king wishes to surpass the limits of his power, he finds obstacles on every side. All the corporations make remonstrances; all the individuals speak out; we oppose him with reason, conscience, and liberty. This is why Buonaparte as master of only one village in France should be more feared by Europe than the Bourbons with France extended to the Rhine.

Besides, can the kings doubt the opinion of the French? Do they believe that they could have gained the Louvre this easily if France did not hope to find liberators in them? Have they not seen the manifest signs of this hope in all the villages they have entered? What have we heard in France for the past six months but these words: *Are the Bourbons here? where are the princes? do they come? Oh! if only we might see the white flag!* On the other hand, the horror of the usurper is in every heart. It inspires so much hatred that in our warlike people it has even balanced what is hard about the presence of the enemy, and we would rather suffer a momentary invasion than be threatened with keeping Buonaparte for all our lives. If the armies are defeated, let us admire their courage and deplore their sufferings. They detest the tyrant as much and more than the rest of

France. Yet they have taken an oath, and the French grenadiers will die, victims of their oath. The sight of the military standard inspires fidelity. From our fathers the Franks to ourselves, our soldiers have made a holy pact and are, so to speak, married to their swords. Let us not then mistake the sacrifice of honor for the love of slavery. Our brave warriors only await to be set free from their word. Let the French and the allies recognize their legitimate princes, and at once the army, freed from its oath, will range itself under that spotless flag, the witness of our many victories, of our few defeats, and of our constant courage, but never of our shame.

The allied kings will find no obstacle to their design if they wish to follow the only party that can secure the repose of France and Europe. They should be satisfied with the triumph of their arms. We the French should only consider these triumphs as a lesson of Providence, who chastises us without humiliating us. We can say to ourselves with confidence that what would have been impossible under our legitimate princes could only have been accomplished under the reign of an adventurer. The allied kings should henceforth aspire to a more solid and lasting glory. Let them come with their honor guard to *the site of our revolution*; let them celebrate a solemn funeral on the same place where the heads of Louis and Antoinette fell; let this council of kings, their hands on the altar, amidst the French people on their knees and in tears, recognize Louis XVIII as king of France. They will thus offer the world a greater spectacle than it has ever seen, and pour out upon themselves a glory that the centuries will not be able to erase.

Yet already one part of these events is accomplished. Miracles have given birth to miracles. Paris, like Athens, has seen foreigners enter her walls who, recalling her glory and her great men, have respected her. Eighty thousand conquering soldiers have slept among our citizens without bothering their sleep, without being carried to the least violence, without even making one song of triumph heard. These are liberators and not conquerors. Immortal honor to the sovereigns who have given the world such an example

of moderation in victory! What injuries do they have to avenge! Yet they have not at all confounded France with the tyrant who oppressed them. Thus they have already met the fruit of their magnanimity. They have been received by the inhabitants of Paris as if they had been our own kings, like French princes, like the Bourbons. We will soon see the descendants of Henri IV. Alexander has promised them to us. He remembers that the marriage contract of the duke and duchess of Angoulême is deposited in the archives of Russia. He has faithfully kept the last public act of our legitimate government. He has brought it to our archives, where we will in our turn keep the account of his entry into Paris as one of the greatest and most glorious monuments of history.

However, let us not separate from these two sovereigns who are today among us from that other sovereign who made the greatest of sacrifices to the cause of kings and the repose of peoples: may he find as monarch and as father the recompense of his virtues in the tears, the gratitude, and the admiration of the French.

Men of France! Friends, companions in misfortune, let us forget our quarrels, our hatreds, our errors, in order to save the fatherland. Let us embrace among the ruins of our dear land. Let us call to our help the heir of Henri IV and Louis XIV, who comes to wipe away the tears of our children, to make our families happy once more, and to cover our wounds with the mantle of Saint Louis, half torn by our own hands. Let us consider well that all the evils we have suffered, the loss of our goods, of our armies, the miseries of invasion, the massacre of our children, the troubles and the disarray of all France, and the loss of our liberties are the work of one man alone, and that we owe the contrary benefits to one man alone. Let us then hear from all sides the cry that can save us, the cry that our fathers made to resound in misfortune as well as in victory, and that will be for us the sign of peace and happiness: *Long live the king!*