Long Live the Revolutions: Fighting for France's Political Future in the Long Wake of the Commune, 1871-1880

Heather Marlene Bennett
University of Pennsylvania, heathero@sas.upenn.edu

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Long Live the Revolutions: Fighting for France's Political Future in the Long Wake of the Commune, 1871-1880

Abstract
The traumatic legacies of the Paris Commune and its harsh suppression in 1871 had a significant impact on the identities and voter outreach efforts of each of the chief political blocs of the 1870s. The political and cultural developments of this phenomenal decade, which is frequently mislabeled as calm and stable, established the Republic's longevity and set its character. Yet the Commune's legacies have never been comprehensively examined in a way that synthesizes their political and cultural effects. This dissertation offers a compelling perspective of the 1870s through qualitative and quantitative analyses of the influence of these legacies, using sources as diverse as parliamentary debates, visual media, and scribbled sedition on city walls, to explicate the decade's most important political and cultural moments, their origins, and their impact. Within the interplay of electoral messaging, national political culture, and factional schisms, republicans wrested control of the state away from monarchists seeking to subvert the Republic, but they also sustained bitter internal divisions over the meaning of the Republic and its relationship to the Revolution's heritage. By 1880, the Moderate republicans had triumphed over the monarchists and their republican rivals but had to vigorously defend their nascent power--much of which depended on their narrative projections of the Third Republic's foundation, the assimilation of French and republican national identities, and their claims to the revolutionary heritage. The passage of a near-general amnesty for Communards, the official adoption of La Marseillaise, the movement of government assemblies back to Paris, and the designation of Quatorze Juillet as the Republic's national holiday were not simply natural consequences of the republican political victory. Rather, the Moderates deliberately undertook each initiative to project the liberal Republic's triumph, to merge the identities of France and the Republic, and to implicitly close the revolutionary era.

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LONG LIVE THE REVOLUTIONS: FIGHTING FOR FRANCE’S POLITICAL FUTURE IN THE LONG WAKE OF THE COMMUNE, 1871-1880

Heather M. Bennett

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Supervisor of Dissertation

Thomas Childers

Professor of History

Graduate Group Chairperson

Eve Troutt Powell, Associate Professor of History

Dissertation Committee

Lynn Hollen Lees, Professor of History    Thomas Childers, Professor of History

Barbara Day-Hickman, Associate Professor of History
LONG LIVE THE REVOLUTIONS: FIGHTING FOR FRANCE’S POLITICAL FUTURE IN THE
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Once I settled on a topic and commenced the research process, I quickly became overwhelmed. Two competing thoughts came to my mind. The first was my revision of a familiar cliché: dissertating is a journey not a destination; this kept me calm as the path to this dissertation’s conclusion twisted and turned. The second was the thrill I had when listening to the course lectures delivered by the late Susanna Barrows and the engrossing conversations she and I had outside of the classroom long after I completed undergraduate studies. She made history come to life. Her enthusiasm and depth were inspiring and from this mentor I developed a deep fascination with late nineteenth-century France. I am incredibly grateful for her support in my decision to pursue the passion she ignited within me. I am equally indebted to many others who helped me along. No dissertation is completed in a vacuum, no matter how lonely the process may become; everyone is in debt to some circle of support I am no different.

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ABSTRACT

LONG LIVE THE REVOLUTIONS: FIGHTING FOR FRANCE’S POLITICAL FUTURE IN THE LONG WAKE OF THE COMMUNE, 1871-1880

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Thomas Childers

The traumatic legacies of the Paris Commune and its harsh suppression in 1871 had a significant impact on the identities and voter outreach efforts of each of the chief political blocs of the 1870s. The political and cultural developments of this phenomenal decade, which is frequently mislabeled as calm and stable, established the Republic’s longevity and set its character. Yet the Commune’s legacies have never been comprehensively examined in a way that synthesizes their political and cultural effects. This dissertation offers a compelling perspective of the 1870s through qualitative and quantitative analyses of the influence of these legacies, using sources as diverse as parliamentary debates, visual media, and scribbled sedition on city walls, to explicate the decade’s most important political and cultural moments, their origins, and their impact. Within the interplay of electoral messaging, national political culture, and factional schisms, republicans wrested control of the state away from monarchists seeking to subvert the Republic, but they also sustained bitter internal divisions over the meaning of the Republic and its relationship to the Revolution’s heritage. By 1880, the Moderate republicans had triumphed over the monarchists and their republican rivals but had to
vigorously defend their nascent power—much of which depended on their narrative projections of the Third Republic’s foundation, the assimilation of French and republican national identities, and their claims to the revolutionary heritage. The passage of a near-general amnesty for Communards, the official adoption of *La Marseillaise*, the movement of government assemblies back to Paris, and the designation of *quatorze juillet* as the Republic’s national holiday were not simply natural consequences of the republican political victory. Rather, the Moderates deliberately undertook each initiative to project the liberal Republic’s triumph, to merge the identities of France and the Republic, and to implicitly close the revolutionary era.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ........................................................................................................ III

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................................... VI

PREFACE ............................................................................................................................ IX

INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................... 1

CHAPTER 1: THE HAUNTING ............................................................................................ 22

CHAPTER 2: VISIONS OF THE PAST .................................................................................... 67

CHAPTER 3: THE EMERGENCE OF A MEDIACRACY ....................................................... 129

CHAPTER 4: THE REPUBLICAN TRIUMPH .......................................................................... 191

CHAPTER 5: REIGNITING THE REVOLUTIONARY FLAME ................................................. 266

CHAPTER 6: A REVOLUTION COMES TO PORT .................................................................... 339

CONCLUSION ....................................................................................................................... 391

BIBLIOGRAPHY .................................................................................................................... 401
This dissertation focuses on the years between the defeat of the Paris Commune in May 1871 and the first celebration of the new French Republican nation on July 14, 1880. Historians and scholars of the French Third Republic have frequently overlooked the importance of this period, dismissing it as a time of relative peace and stability. Yet these were formative years for the Republic, and their study provides great insight into the factors at work in the establishment of the fledgling regime and the Moderate republicans’ rise to power in 1879. This preface assists the reader in this examination by providing context about the roles that rivalries among different republican factions, the legacies of the Paris Commune, and the social climate of the time played in the highly misunderstood decade that gave birth to France’s longest-lasting Republic.

Republican Rivalries

One of the most important analytical components of this dissertation is exploring the divisions among the republican groups of this decade. The major fault lines that separated these factions involved two burning issues: the type of Republic each envisioned and the lengths to which they were prepared to go to bring their ideals into reality. In the last years of the Empire and the first decade of the Third Republic, three main republican camps battled for power:
### Conservatives
Conservatives theoretically opposed the Empire but sometimes supported the Emperor’s machinations—for instance, by voting “yes” for his liberal plebiscites. Conservative republicans did not support the anti-clerical agenda of their colleagues to the Left. In the 1870s, the previously Orleanist Adolphe Thiers was the epitome of a Conservative republican politician.

### Moderates
As the largest, most powerful bloc, Moderates opposed violence as a means to end the Empire. They sought to construct a liberal-constitutional regime to safeguard general republican ideals, including universal male suffrage, free press, free assembly, and laicization. After 1871, the previously Radical Léon Gambetta became the most notable Moderate.

### Radicals
Radicals were a powerful minority that ardently opposed clericalism and sought to establish a social-democratic Republic based on equal justice and social responsiveness. Some, like Georges Clemenceau, eschewed militancy, while intransigents such as Eugène Varlin and Auguste Blanqui maintained the viability of revolutionary violence as a means of change.

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**Shifting Tactics and Alliances after September 4, 1870**

After the Republic was declared on September 4, 1871, two of the new regime’s most influential politicians underwent important tactical and ideological transitions. The long-time Orleanist Adolphe Thiers accepted the Republic of 1870 but used his electoral mandate to ensure its establishment along conservative lines. Conversely, Léon Gambetta, who cut his teeth as a Radical republican lawyer under the Second Empire, moved into the Moderate camp. By mid-decade, Gambetta was arguably the most influential Moderate republican politician, and he ultimately guided this faction to power by January 1879. Such transitions contribute to the confusion about and misunderstanding of this time period. For example, Gambetta’s shift to the Moderate faction did not end royalist castigations against his supposed radicalism, nor has it led historians to consistently label him as a Moderate, despite his prominence within that faction.
Many Radicals transformed their image and adopted new strategies after the fall of the Second Empire. Some men who had taken an active part in the Revolution of 1848 and had been considered Socialists under the Empire, such as Louis Blanc, became ensconced in the parliamentary Radical bloc. Others remained more constant in their stances, like Auguste Blanqui, who had been in the vanguard of every revolution since 1830, and Eugène Varlin, who had worked to bring the labor movement under the auspices of the Socialist International during the last years of the Second Empire. Throughout the decade, they consistently supported the use of direct, even violent, action to achieve their goal of a social-democratic regime.

**Origins of the Paris Commune**

This dissertation does not focus on the Paris Commune as an event, but rather on the varying narratives of its legacies and the incorporation of these viewpoint-based assessments into competing political strategies during the decade after its demise. The historians of the Commune who have most significantly influenced this dissertation include Robert Tombs, Jacques Rougerie, Stewart Edwards, and David A. Shaffer.¹ All of these scholars have registered compelling arguments regarding the Commune’s origins, its brutal defeat, and the issues underpinning the diverse use of its legacies.

Three factors played a particularly important role in the Commune’s birth: the sense of mutual mistrust among Radical, Socialist, and Blanquist leaders in Paris and the Moderate-led Government of National Defense; the Parisian experience of the Prussian Siege and the government’s callous treatment of the post-Siege Parisian population; and the election of a monarchist majority to the National Assembly in February 1871.

Within days of the Republic’s declaration, discontent began to emerge from the working-class and progressive political circles in Paris’s north and east districts. On September 15th, the Central Committee of the Twenty Arrondissements plastered “Red Posters” informing citizens of its objectives all over the city walls. The Central Committee was a consolidation of various independently organized vigilance groups whose functions overlapped with the 20 appointed mayors of the arrondissements. Its establishment indicates that left-wing political and patriotic groups were already contesting the authority of the government six months before the Paris Commune. Moreover, its creation casts light on the division within the republican community of the time. The Red Posters made the terms of the Committee’s unrest and intentions explicit: they called for a levée en masse to meet the Prussian Siege and for a total and permanent transformation of “political, social, and economic systems.”

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2 Tombs, The Paris Commune, Op. cit., pp. 44-45: “abolition of the police and bureaucracy, election of all officials, the National Guard to be made responsible for public order, expropriation of all foodstuffs, equal rationing, distribution of weapons, and a total mobilization of the population, ‘Republican Paris being resolved, rather than surrender, to bury itself beneath its ruins.’”
The Blanquists offered even more direct affronts to the government. On October 9th and 31st, 1870, and again on January 28th, 1871, the Blanquists took part in three marches on the Hôtel de Ville to protest the official handling of the war effort. They contended that the government was only half-heartedly defending the nation while covertly making peace overtures. Beyond wounding national pride, this convinced left-wing circles that, like the first two Republics, the Third was doomed to fail because of the weakness of its Moderate republican leaders in their dealings with committed monarchists, who held an alarming share of power in the government.

For the Moderate republican leaders of the Government of National Defense, their ability to form a liberal regime after the war greatly depended on the successful continuation of the war, which only Paris wanted to sustain by the end of the winter of 1870–1871. They found themselves in a precarious position, having to “maintain the left’s support for its handling of the war effort while, at the same time, creating the conditions for an orderly, stable, and secure Republic.”

Adding fuel to this hostile flame, from mid-October onward, the government began to move itself piecemeal to Bordeaux in an effort to avoid the dangers associated with the Siege and popular uprisings. This hardly engendered support for the regime in the Parisian population, radical, revolutionary, or otherwise—all of whom were suffering through a terribly traumatic moment in French history.

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3 Shafer, p. 32.
Parisians endured a particularly harsh winter during the Siege, compounded by serious deprivations due to the Prussian blockade of the city, which prevented regular shipments of food and limited the communication between the capital and the provinces. The Prussians allowed people to exit the city, and those with means did just that, leaving behind a largely working-class population whose survival grew increasingly tenuous. The government resisted rationing food, letting market prices prevail. This led to a serious disparity in how the different classes experienced the Siege, which highlighted the realities of French social hierarchies. Food was available but expensive, meaning poorer Parisians were forced to endure bouts of starvation while witnessing their wealthier counterparts eat mouthwatering dinners in sidewalk cafes and buy copious amounts of the food that remained prominently on display in grocers’ windows.

The working-class experience of the Siege was horrific: queuing in long lines for subpar food including rats, cats, and elephants from the city’s zoo; watching their children die of malnutrition and disease; and, for many women, a desperate turn to prostitution. Parisian men could survive on the National Guard rations and their 30-sous-a-day salary, but women and children were left adrift. These traumas stiffened Paris’ patriotic resolve to defeat the invader and ratcheted up Parisian hostility toward a government that had escaped such realities by moving its offices to Bordeaux.

The Prussian bombardment began on January 5, 1871, with the understanding that Paris alone was the bulwark against peace. In contrast to Paris’ total commitment to war, some members of the government were privately pursuing a truce and the beleaguered
provinces eagerly supported this option. This divergence of opinion over the war effort instigated mutual enmity between Paris and the government, and between the capital and the provinces. In Paris, the radical and revolutionary forces perceived the government’s unwillingness to use the National Guard regiments to defend against the Siege as indicative of its class bias and lackluster commitment to France’s victory. This idea merged with popular suspicions about the political intentions of the new regime’s mixture of Moderate-republican and Monarchist leaders. Meanwhile, the provisional government’s republican leaders shuddered at the militancy and revolutionary passions underpinning the Third Republic’s 1871 declaration that it viewed itself as potentially “standing in the shadows of Jacobinism.”

The National Guard was deployed for the first and only time during the Siege on January 19, 1871—just over a week before the armistice—in an attack on the German headquarters at Versailles. According to the historian Stewart Edwards, the goal of this maneuver was “mainly to placate popular opinion as a prelude to a truce…[and] even then, either out of fear or military prudence [and class prejudice], only the bourgeois battalions were allowed to see any action.” On January 28, 1871, the French government’s now-open appeals for peace prevailed, and the armistice was signed. Radical factions organized a third march on the Hôtel de Ville that night, but it was

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4 Shafer, p. 31.
5 4,000 were killed or wounded against only 600 German casualties. Parenthetical remarks are Edwards’.
sorely under-attended. Nevertheless, Paris’ dismay at the government’s capitulation was not isolated to revolutionary circles. Many Parisians felt betrayed and viewed the government as chimera that thinly masked the reality of France’s political future: monarchical restoration. The election of the new National Assembly took place during the 21-day armistice. By that time, close to 900,000 people were relying on National Guard salaries for subsistence; approximately 42,000 Parisians, mainly babies and the elderly, had died of starvation and communicable diseases; and revolutionary intransigents had marched on the Hôtel de Ville three times. While the coup attempts were dismal failures, they alerted provincial voters to the great unrest brewing in recalcitrant Paris.

On February 8, voters elected a monarchist majority to the new Republic’s National Assembly in a single-ballot voting system under universal male suffrage. The Revolutionary Socialist Party, having campaigned on renewing the war effort and governing “without compromise with the bourgeoisie,” received 15% (roughly 50,000) of the national vote, all of which came from Paris, specifically from the working-class north and east arrondissements. Yet even in its strongholds of La Roquette, Gobelins, La Villette, and Belleville, the revolutionary-Socialist candidates won only a quarter of the

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6 On the same day a third Blanquist-led march on the Hotel de Ville occurred; it was a complete disaster with the leaders lamenting that sworn adherents never showed up.
7 It is generally known, by historians of the Commune that during the Siege of Paris when the National Guard battalions were extended, the 1.50 franc a day these men earned became a type of welfare provision. As Tombs, p. 54, points out this was a vital necessity but a paltry sum given that “by Christmas, a rat cost 50-75 centimes; an egg 2 francs; a cabbage, 5 francs; a rabbit 40 francs.”
districts’ combined votes. The Moderate republicans, who had led the Government of National Defense, became the minority faction. The Radicals fared little better; in Paris, these “pro-war” candidates and veterans of the Revolution of 1848, including Louis Blanc and Victor Hugo, won nearly all of the city’s 43 seats, but they remained the least-popular choice among republican constituencies nationwide. These results highlight the chasm that existed between Paris and the provinces at that point. ⁹

Gambetta, who had served as the war-time Minister of Interior and War, only reluctantly accepted the armistice and emerged at the top of the Paris election alongside the Radical republican Victor Hugo. But Gambetta won just one of his provincial bids: the Radical republican stronghold of Marseilles. Conversely, Adolphe Thiers, who had pushed for peace from the beginning and especially after September ⁴ᵗʰ, “finished twentieth out of 43 deputies elected in Paris” but won an unprecedented victory in 26 departments. The Assembly selected him to be the first President of the Third Republic. When the body convened for the first time on February ¹³ᵗʰ, 1871, in Bordeaux, it was firmly conservative: 400 of the 583 who took their seats were monarchists (214 Orleanist supporters and 186 Legitimists), and the remaining seats went to 15 Bonapartists, 18 Independents, and 150 republicans (whose Parisian Deputies were nearly all Radicals). ¹⁰

¹⁰ Figures for this election vary. For example, Shafer, p. 56, cites 675 elected, 400 of whom were monarchists; R.D. Anderson, in France 1870-1914: Politics and Society, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., London 1977, p. 6 and pp. 163-164, estimates that 650 were elected: 180 Legitimists, 214 Orleanists, 20 Bonapartists, 80 Center Left (conservative republicans), 110 Moderate republicans, 40 Extreme Left (Radical republican); according to Robert Gildea in Children of the Revolution: The French 1799-1914, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 2008, 768 deputies were elected. The only estimate that remains
The Monarchists won their majority by campaigning on peace with Prussia and the re-establishment of national stability, and by capitalizing on the negative rural reaction to the recent rebellions in Paris and the pro-war campaign of the Radical republicans. Their triumph, however, did not correspond to a nationwide desire for the restoration of any branch of the French monarchy. Nonetheless, the Monarchist majority, confident in its mandate, began operating under the assumption that restoration was close at hand—a supposition validated by historical precedent.

On March 1, 1871, France and Prussia signed a preliminary peace pact and confirmed the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine. Radical Deputies in the Assembly read aloud protest letters signed by members of their bloc, including Léon Gambetta. Immediately afterward, Gambetta and 27 of his colleagues resigned their seats, thereby bolstering the Monarchist majority’s power. According to the terms of the Treaty of Frankfurt, executed on May 10, 1871, France ceded two provinces to the new German state, whose greater population, natural resources, and geographic size compounded France’s post-war anxiety. Over the course of the next seventy years, the fears that the loss of Alsace and Lorraine raised regarding France’s supposed national degeneration and revanchisme would lead to France’s aggressive colonization and inform its peace terms.

consistent is the roughly 400 for elected royalists. This inconsistency is related to the multiple elections for men such as Thiers, the resignation of deputies that rejected the peace, including Victor Hugo, and Henri Rochefort, and the loss of seats by the annexation of departments according to the Treaty of Frankfurt. See Jean-Marie Mayeur and Madeleine Rebérioux, The Third Republic From its Origins to the Great War, 1871-1914, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1984, p. 8 and fn.1.
with Germany after World War I.\textsuperscript{11} But after 1871, such responses to the nation’s defeat were submerged into a different set of cataclysms: the Paris Commune and its brutal suppression.

President Thiers’ immediate post-election plans were to secure peace with Germany and end German occupation, to re-establish the nation’s financial and military power, and to restore social and political order. All of these objectives required bringing unruly Paris into line as quickly as possible. Thiers and the monarchist majority in the National Assembly were far from conciliatory toward the discontented post-Siege, post-election Parisians. As described by David Shafer and alluded to by numerous other Commune historians, “Thiers appeared determined to provoke Paris into a fight.”\textsuperscript{12} On March 11\textsuperscript{th} and 12\textsuperscript{th} of 1871, during its last session in Bordeaux, the National Assembly passed four bills that served to sustain Radical and revolutionary antipathy and generate tacit support for the Paris Commune, which erupted merely six days later.

The first bill ended the payment of the National Guards’ salaries and any further compensation to the illegitimate children and spouses of fallen soldiers. The second bill halted the suspension of rent payments and the sanctioned selling of pawned items,


\textsuperscript{12} Shafer, p. 60.
“which affected all classes except the most wealthy.”\textsuperscript{13} As Edwards highlights, this decree hit “the numerous small shop owners” (i.e., the petit bourgeois) particularly hard; as a result, while the “small manufacturers did not throw themselves into the revolutionary movement, at least they said to themselves that it was not worth defending the government.”\textsuperscript{14} The third bill declared that all overdue debts would be made immediately payable, with interest. The final bill proclaimed that the Government’s offices would be located in Versailles, the symbol of monarchical power, instead of Paris, the traditional home of the French Republics. This move was a cautionary response to the recent uprisings in Paris, but it also sent a powerful message to the people. Choosing Versailles underscored the Assembly’s monarchist bent and heightened tensions between Paris and the government. Once the bills passed, the next order of business was disarming a hostile population in Paris.\textsuperscript{15}

The government seized the armaments of only three Guard regiments: those of Montmartre, La Villette, and Belleville—the same working-class areas that had hotly denounced their regiments’ forced wartime idleness, and home to the same citizenry who frequently took part in anti-government demonstrations.\textsuperscript{16} Historians of the Commune widely regard the targeted disarmament of these three working-class areas as evidence

\textsuperscript{13} Edwards, p. 23, internal quotes cited as the post-Commune remarks of a police chief, originally located in E.P. Enquête parlementaire sur l’insurrection du 18 mars, 3 volumes, Versailles, 1872, vol. II, pp. 120-121.  
\textsuperscript{14} Edwards, p. 23.  
\textsuperscript{15} Shafer, p. 66.  
\textsuperscript{16} There were 171 cannons in Montmartre, 75 in Belleville and an unknown figure in La Villette; probably close to 300 in total.
that Thiers was deliberately seeking to provoke revolutionary forces in Paris in order to subvert their movement before it gained wider support. Thiers’ own reflections support this highly probable theory. Regardless of his intentions, the seizure of the National Guard cannons from these working-class districts was the immediate catalyst to the outbreak of the revolutionary Paris Commune.

The Paris Commune

At 3:00 a.m. on March 18, 1871, President Thiers, several of his ministers, and a regiment of 6,000 gendarmes and mobiles led by General Claude Lecomte entered Paris to seize the cannons of the National Guard regiments of Belleville and Montmartre. At 5:30 a.m., all seemed to be proceeding according to plan. The soldiers were simply waiting on sufficient horse power to remove the cannons from the neighborhood. By 8:00 a.m., however, the peaceful situation had unraveled: more National Guardsmen had arrived to safeguard the cannons; women in the growing crowd had begun fraternizing with the government’s soldiers; and the Radical republican Mayor of Montmartre, Georges Clemenceau, had failed in his attempts to negotiate between the troops of Versailles and the protesting Parisians. General Lecomte ordered his soldiers to open fire on the people. They refused. Instead, the crowd seized Lecomte. By 10:30 a.m., Thiers had fled the city, directing the army to follow. That evening, Generals Lecomte and Clément-Thomas (the detested leader of the Parisian National Guard during the Siege) were executed by a mob that included some of Lecomte’s own soldiers. By 10:00 p.m.,
the National Guard regiments and the citizens who had risen to support them had taken control of Paris.

The Central Committee of the National Guard took up headquarters at the Hôtel de Ville that night, cheered on by a riotous crowd. Eager to establish its power but hesitant to accept the overwhelming responsibility of leading a revolutionary government, the Central Committee asked the city mayors who had remained in the capital to call for elections. So began the revolutionary Paris Commune, a regime characterized by a fluctuating mix of political and economic timidity, progressive social legislation, extreme democracy, and aggressive displays of intransigence, mingled with popular festivity within the city center—now free for re-taking by the very social classes that Haussmannization had out-priced just a decade earlier.17

The Commune lasted only 72 days before the Versailles troops recaptured the city. This was not a great awakening of the working class; it was a spontaneous revolt and its initiatives were haphazard. The Commune’s leadership consisted mostly of journalists and manual laborers from the small craft industries that still dominated Paris’ economy, most of whom had no prior political experience.18 The 229,167 ballots cast in

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18 Edwards, pp. 27-28, “About eighteen members of the Commune came from middle-class backgrounds...In all some thirty members of the Commune can be classed as from the professions, or as belonging to la bohème...half of them having been journalists on republican papers. The rest included three doctors, only three lawyers, three teachers, one veterinary surgeon, one architect and eleven who had been in commerce or worked as clerks...About thirty-five members of the Commune were manual workers or had been before becoming involved in revolutionary politics...mainly craftsmen in the small workshops, [typically] copper-, bronze-, and other metal workers, carpenters, masons, house-decorators and book-binders...About forty members...had been involved in the French labour movement and most of them had
the elections that the Parisian mayors held on March 26, 1871, established the orientation of the revolutionary government. The Commune, a title that evoked the insurgent heritage of 1792 and echoed Proudhonist ideas of local autonomy, consisted of ninety-three representative seats—one for every 20,000 residents per arrondissement—elected on the basis of proportional representation. Nearly all of its members hailed from the Radical-and Socialist-republican Left: “nine were Blanquists; 14 were members of the Central Committee; 17 can be classified as militant-activists in the International; 11 were socialists…; [and] four were ‘old beards,’ veterans of the Second Republic.” Consequently, the Commune was deeply divided in ideology, which made its administrative functions disorganized and its military defense chaotic at best.

The Commune quickly took on the identity of a revolution rather than a municipal revolt. It directed city functionaries to ignore directives coming from Versailles, thereby superseding the orders of the national government. It also countermanded the National Assembly’s decrees by prolonging rent control and declaring an end to the sale of pawned items at the monts-de-piété. Furthermore, the Commune established commissions on Public Service, Finance, Welfare, War, Justice, General Security, and even Foreign joined the International.” See also Tombs, The Paris Commune, Addison Wesley Longman, Edinburgh Gate, Edinburgh 1996, pp. 111-116; and Jacques Rougerie, Procès Des Communards, Juliard, 1964, pp. 132-134.

19 Edwards, p. 28. Ultimately the Commune consisted of eighty-one members.
20 On the origins of the term Commune, see Tombs, France 1814–1914, Op. cit., p. 428; quoted section, Shafer, p. 69. See also Patrick H. Hutton, The Cult of the Revolutionary Tradition: The Blanquists in French Politics, 1864—1863, University of California Press, Berkeley 1982, p. 70: Blanquists were never an organized political party, but rather, a diverse conglomeration “of republicans who shared a common vision of the revolutionary ideal.”
Relations. From the start, the Commune was much more than a declaration of civil autonomy; it was a defensive revolution aimed at upholding a social-democratic Republic against the machinations of the Assembly’s monarchist majority and the Moderate republican minority that was pandering to it.²¹

The Commune did not limit its social and political experiments to issues that were specific to Paris. For instance, it unleashed extreme anti-clericalism: churches, religious schools, convents, and monasteries were closed; nuns were removed from their roles in hospitals and prisons; and a number of priests, including the Archbishop of Paris, Msgr. Darboy, were executed. However, its social and economic initiatives were generally “reformist rather than revolutionary, taking up demands that had been formulated by Radical and Socialist republicans and the labor movement during the preceding twenty to thirty years.”²² For instance, the Commune was protective of private-property rights, which reveals a lack of ideological coherence, namely of the Marxist variety. But it also reflects the reality that the Commune needed the support of more than its most committed adherents and sympathizers; it could not afford to alienate Paris’ middle and lower-middle classes, which were likely to balk at threats to private property. Thus, while some members advocated the nationalization of industries, the Commune’s Commission of Labor Exchange instead permitted trade unions and workers’ co-operatives to take over idle factories with the earnest promise that their owners would receive compensation for

²¹ This defensiveness is described by contemporary historians and asserted by each of the surviving Communards who later recounted their stories in historical monographs and the press.
²² Edwards, p. 34.
them if they returned. Outside of its socially progressive initiatives, the Commune was simultaneously liberating for its partisans and horrifying to its detractors.

Chief among the factors that generated censure of the Commune and anxiety regarding its legacies were its breakdown of gendered social norms, the inclusion of working men in its administration, its festivity, and the re-conquest of the city’s center by a working-class population. Conservative politicians and their constituencies quaked at the phantom of a working-class revolutionary awakening, while Moderate republicans feared that the uprising revealed militant support for a social-democratic Republic as opposed to a liberal one. Most republicans disdained the Commune because the “lessons they had learned during the Second Republic and the Second Empire” made them leery of violent confrontation, which they deemed a serious risk to the Republic’s survival. However, Radical republicans, such as Georges Clemenceau, Camille Pelletan, and Louis Blanc, refused to repudiate the Communards or their political objectives; they “sympathized deeply with the sentiments of affronted nationalism and ardent, popular republicanism which fueled the Commune” and blamed Thiers’

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23 The Commune decided on a minimum wage and agreed to preference the co-ops in its own contracts. It rejected militant calls that the workers should take control of all large factories.
government for instigating the revolt in order to crush Parisian insurgency preemptively.\textsuperscript{27} These contextual concerns are of great significance to the analysis conducted throughout this dissertation.

The Commune was too short-lived to see most of its initiatives come to fruition, but as Edwards aptly argues, “more important than any particular measure was the very existence of the Commune as a government that included a substantial proportion of working men.”\textsuperscript{28} This fact expresses an important truth. The severity of the Commune’s suppression and the Moderate republicans’ consistent refusal to amnesty its participants stemmed in large part from divisions among the republican factions: the liberal-constitutional Moderates, the social-democratic Radicals, and their revolutionary colleagues within the Blanquist and Socialist movements. During the 1870s, these tensions fueled a continuous thread of disagreement over the legacies of the Commune and the meaning of the Republic.

The Paris Commune was defeated between May 21 and 28 of 1871—days that would be known as \textit{la semaine sanglante}, or the Bloody Week. A significant debate exists within the modern historical community regarding the exact number of people who were killed during the last week of the Commune. In 1994, Tombs revised the estimate of the 20,000–30,000 deaths that he and Rougerie had put forth in the 1970s, asserting that

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Edwards, p. 37.
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the death toll was probably closer to 6,500–7,000.\textsuperscript{29} Equally established scholars of the Commune have hotly contested this revision. Despite his adjustment, Tombs still described \textit{la semaine sanglante} as the “bloodiest ‘White Terror’ in French history” and “a ‘great sweeping out’ that would restore ‘order’ by eliminating disruptive elements from society” in his 1996 monograph “France 1814–1914.”\textsuperscript{30} This dissertation is not a retelling of the Commune’s history or its suppression. Rather, it focuses on the first decade of the Third Republic, when politicians began establishing the Commune’s legacies and using them to influence battles over the Republic’s survival, republican rivalries, and voter messaging. For this purpose, it is simply enough to recall that contemporary witnesses, including the Commune’s detractors, labeled the suppression \textit{la semaine sanglante}. In doing so, they gave witness to a shockingly high death toll—a suppression so brutal that it bore its own legacy.

Defeating the Commune offered the Versailles Government an opportunity to purge the revolutionary-republican Left and communicate a doubly symbolic message to French citizens: any future uprising would meet with equally severe repression, and it

\textsuperscript{29} In \textit{Paris Libre}, Op cit., p. 257, Rougerie asserts “MacMahon, chief of [military] operations in Paris [during the Commune’s suppression] admitted 17,000; I believe the number could easily be double.”

\textsuperscript{30} Robert Tombs, \textit{France 1814-1914}, Addison Wesley Longman, Edinburgh Gate, 1996, pp. 11 and 18; on p. 19 Tombs states “at least 10,000 people were killed in Paris between 21 and 28 May, a massacre unparalleled in nineteenth-century Europe.” In February 2011, Tombs sustained the death toll estimate of less than 10,000, delivering a paper at the 57\textsuperscript{th} Annual Meeting of the Society for French Historical Studies titled “How bloody was \textit{le Semaine Sanglante}? A Revision.” Tombs’ figures were dismissed “with a devastating put-down” by Pierre Milza in 2009. In her commentary to Tomb’s paper at the same 2011 meeting for the SFHS, Karine Varley added her own caveats, including the “significant disparities between the numbers reported as killed and the numbers who were buried and the caution with which some of the sources should be treated. See \textit{H-France Salon}, Vol. 3, Issue 1, February 2011 for Varley’s and Tombs’ exchange and Pierre Milza’s rebuke, \textit{L’Année terrible: Vol. 2 la Commune}, Perrin, Paris, 1994, p. 468.
would do so at the hands of a republican government that could, and would, defeat a revolution at least as inexorably as any monarch ever had. This engendered significant support for the young Republic among rural voters, who historically abhorred the rebellious nature of the capital city.

By the summer of 1871, the Commune was just a memory. Fleeing Communards were hunted down, executed, imprisoned, or forced into exile in France’s penal colony of New Caledonia. Around 40,000 men, women, and children were arrested. There are no definitive estimates of how many Communards were able to flee or how many managed to remain in Paris, although the extent of the post-Commune hunt for insurgents indicates that the latter number must be miniscule. Marc Vuillumier estimates that 800 escaped to Switzerland and P. Martinez contends that around 3,500 were living in London by 1873. However, London and Geneva were only two of many hubs for the fleeing Communards, and self-exile, like Communard arrests, continued long after 1873. In fact, it was not until 1878 that new arrests and trials ceased to occur. Because of this prolonged persecution and the frequent amnesty proposals the Radical republicans

31 Martin R. Waldman, “The Revolutionary as Criminal in 19th Century France: A Study of the Communards and ‘Deports’”, Science and Society, Vol.37, No. 1, (Spring 1973), pp. 31-55; See pp. 35-37 for numerous primary source quotations of Adolphe Thiers specifically, in which he describes the Commune’s defeat as an expiatory purge of the ‘criminals’ in Paris and the desire to make such a purge exemplary.

introduced, the memory of the Commune and disputes over its legacies permeated civic and cultural debates and initiatives throughout the first decade of the Third Republic. These factors significantly influenced the images and voter appeals of the period’s politicians, and therefore the impact of their competing goals for the Republic’s future.

Demographics and Socio-Political Realities at the Dawn of the Third Republic

In 1871, the population of France was close to 37 million. Paris, the nation’s most populous city, was home to two-million people, 70% of whom were of the working class. The Parisians were incredibly diverse in terms of living conditions, wages, and political participation, and while most of Paris consistently voted republican, only a minute fraction was revolutionary, even on the eve of the Commune. Throughout France, the working-class population was not an industrial proletariat. Instead, the term “working class” applied to anyone who survived by his or her labor, including white-collar minor clerks, in-home piece workers, and employees in the large factories (of which only 15

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 existed, employing less than 100 people, in 1872). Even as late as 1880, the agricultural community employed the vast majority of workers.34

The reforms envisioned by French laborers, including those in the industrial sector, reflected an artisanal perspective. For all of the statistics regarding the impact of the International Workingmen’s Association on the outbreak of the Commune, the group had only 245,000 members nationwide in 1870. “In Paris [there were] 20 branches with 50 to 100 members per branch.”35 In addition, socialism and membership in the International meant something different for the French adherents. French socialism in the late-nineteenth century was more immersed in economic reformism and mutualism to counter bourgeois individualism than in class antagonism or the creation of any type of proletarian dictatorship.36 Michel Winock aptly views the Commune and the enterprises of the socialist movement thereafter in terms of the “revolutionary spirit.” He asserts that the Commune was not a manifestation of revolutionary Marxism, as its contemporary detractors alleged, but “a typical French movement, nourished on republicanism, revolutionism, and anticlericalism.”37 Furthermore, according to Michelle Perrot, “the various socialist ‘schools’ tempted the working class very little” as late as 1893.38

36 See Edwards, p. 15 where he refers to Marx’s fury over the French branch of the International for having omitted from its rule book his qualifying last clause ‘as a means’” from the line: “economic emancipation of the working-classes is the great end to which every political movement must be subordinated.”
38 Perrot, p. 3. By the general elections of 1893, the socialists won seats in the Chamber of Deputies.
Effective voter appeals that had garnered support among laborers under the Empire continued to bolster the working class’ preference for Radical republicanism and reformist agendas.

By the 1870s, such messaging was reaching a larger and more diverse (i.e., not simply urban) audience because of greater access to print media and climbing literacy rates. According to A.R. Gillis, “rates of illiteracy decreased from over 40% in the middle of the nineteenth century to just below 3% at the beginning of World War I. Males displayed higher rates of literacy throughout this period, but the gender gap was all but eliminated by 1914.” 39 Between 1871 and 1879, the audience for the French political press doubled due to such factors. 40 Jeremy D. Popkin and Jonathan Sperber have asserted that the French media began reaching out to the laboring class long before this; as early as 1848, “workers’ journalism was already a well-established and increasingly intellectual genre before the outbreak of [this media] revolution, a reflection of the more liberal press laws of the July Monarchy and the…political experience of the lower classes.” 41 Those who remained illiterate during the early Third Republic still had access to newspapers via other routes that they had employed throughout the nineteenth century.

39 See A.R. Gillis, “Institutional Dynamics and Dangerous Classes: Reading, Writing, and Arrest in Nineteenth-Century France,” Social Forces, Vol. 82, No. 4, June 2004, p. 1312. Universal and secular primary and secondary education for women, which the Commune had earnestly tried to create, was not put in place until 1881-1882; this would account for the more dramatic uptick in women’s’ literacy rates by 1914.
They could listen to a literate friend, family member, or colleague read the paper, or they could visit cafés that subscribed to newspapers based on the political proclivities of their proprietors and customers. Patrons of these establishments would read articles aloud, and the resulting debates inspired Balzac to coin the term “parliaments of the people” in 1844. In addition, political caricature remained a prominent tool for disseminating political opinions and influencing the choices of illiterate voters.

The republicans proved the most adept at using print media for mass messaging, primarily for a bourgeois and petit-bourgeois audience. As Philip Nord observes, in “the business of publishing and distributing texts, republicans outpaced all rivals…the circulation of the political press in Paris expanded from 470,000 to 640,000 in the 1870–1880 period, and republican newspapers…outsold the conservative competition by a ratio of three to one.”

In the absence of organized, well-funded, and united political parties, most of the leading politicians owned, operated, or had reliably close ties to one or more of the major press organs. Partisan reporting in the French press is therefore a major point of analysis in this dissertation. Such opinionated sources, however, require a discerning eye and significant understanding of competing factional agendas. With these

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42 Philip Nord, The Republican Moment: Struggles for Democracy in Nineteenth-Century France, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1995, pp. 207-211; Claude Bellanger et. All., Histoire Générale de la Presse Française, Vol. III : de 1871 à 1940, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 1972, p. 138: as of 1874, there were 40 dailies in Paris and 179 in the provinces, by 1882 there were 90 dailies in Paris and 252 in the provinces, indicating a growing consumption for daily newsfeeds and subsequently a highly literate populace; and, p. 174: Between 1871 and 1880, the Paris press doubled its circulation from 1.1 million to 2 million and while the provincial figures are more difficult to assess, Bellanger asserts that “it can be assumed that it increased from about 300,000 copies in 1871 to 900,000 in 1881.”

cautionary realities in mind, examining the media of the period reveals much about the political propaganda and partisan messaging at work in the 1870s. This dissertation uses the French press as part of a wide variety of sources that offer insight into the formative political divisions of this decade, including memoirs, parliamentary debates, archival documents, tourist guidebooks, and even political graffiti.

The pages that follow expose and analyze the complex origins of the Moderate-republican regime and the Third Republic’s consequential longevity. This dissertation shows how various political factions used their assessments of the Commune and their versions of its legacies to influence voters and discredit their rivals. From their schisms, triumphs, and defeats, France’s most enduring Republic took shape and the era of revolutions in France began to fade into history.
INTRODUCTION

“Ah! How beautiful the Republic was under the Empire.” This comment, made by the Radical republican journalist Edmond Durranc, stands in stark contrast to the bitter disappointment that the early Third Republic brought to many of its proponents by falling far short of the goals for which they had spent years—even lifetimes—fighting. The Third Republic, which was founded in the midst of the Franco-Prussian War and the revolutionary Paris Commune of 1871, was under the control of monarchist politicians for most of its first decade. While new nation-states were forming in Italy and Germany, France was permanently establishing its republican system of governance. During the 1870s, French republicans wrestled with royalists to ensure the Republic’s survival and prevent a restoration of the monarchy. Though united against royalists in times of crisis, the republicans were deeply divided within their own group: the Moderates favored a constitutional-liberal agenda, while the Radicals championed a social-democratic one. These divisions, which surfaced during the First Revolution and escalated during the Second Republic, played a critical role in the consolidation of France’s ironically durable Third Republic in the wake of the Paris Commune’s demise. This dissertation investigates how competing political groups leveraged their divergent assessments of the Commune’s legacy to sway their constituents and undermine their opponents. In doing so...

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so, it shows that such maneuvers were vital to the Moderate republicans’ rise to power, as well as the consequent solidification of their regime by the summer of 1880.

The Paris Commune and its defeat generated multiple legacies. These events were remembered and interpreted differently by the short-lived administration’s supporters and detractors. Manipulating the popular memory and interpretations of the Commune was a highly useful tactic in the battle for control of the French government. This controversy pervaded the civic landscape, echoing throughout the cultural projects and political debates of the 1870s. The political antagonisms that decided the fate of the Republic were intertwined with the popular perception of the Commune and its downfall. As the Moderate and Radical republicans utilized these narratives to steadily expand their electoral mandate, their rivals reacted in ways that led to such developments as the repressive social and political measures of the regime of the Moral Order (in power from 1873 until 1879) and the reentry of the Socialist republicans into the electoral fray.

Politicians in and outside of power used the Commune’s legacies to characterize themselves and to rebuke their opponents. Their interpretations of the event and its repercussions were influential in the image-making and voter-outreach efforts of each of the decade’s chief political players: the republicans, the monarchist supporters of the Bourbon and Orleanist dynasties, and the Bonapartists. As this dissertation demonstrates, these divergent analyses of the Commune also had a substantial impact on the competing republican factions’ portrayals of their revolutionary heritage. These assessments were key components of the post-1871 images of the Moderates, Radicals, and Socialists alike,
and a significant point by which they differentiated themselves and solicited votes. The Republic’s establishment of universal male suffrage meant that cultivating faithful constituencies was integral to gaining political clout. By 1880, the Moderate republicans had successfully wrested control of the government from their monarchist enemies, and were jealously protecting their power from their Radical and Socialist colleagues. They accomplished this by projecting an image of themselves as both the party of order and the truest heirs to the Revolution. This dissertation reveals that such factors drove the Moderate government’s consecration of some of the revolutionary era’s most indelible symbolic and ritualistic touchstones between 1879 and 1880.

The Moderate republican regime’s designation of La Marseillaise as the national anthem, its pronouncement of quatorze Juillet as the national holiday, and its reinstatement of Paris as the seat of government were not simply the natural consequences of the republicans’ rise to power. Rather, they were calculated responses to the Radicals and Socialists, who based their own electoral bids on their competing claims to the revolutionary heritage. Indeed, the Radicals and Socialists denigrated the Moderates for being politicians who opportunistically invoked that heritage when they were actually betraying it (in favor of a liberal regime based on the politics of exclusion). The passage of the July 1880 amnesty of the Communards and the coinciding designation of the revolutionary touchstones were undertaken by the summer of 1880 because of the looming exigency of the general elections of 1881. The Moderates employed these maneuvers to undercut the electoral appeal of the Radicals and Socialists and to convey a
powerful message: the Third Republic, with the Moderates at the helm, was the truest embodiment of the revolutionary era’s triumphant conclusion.

The underlying theme of this study is the relationship between electoral supremacy and political legacy. Controversies regarding the legacies of the Paris Commune permeated the developments that made the French nation a solid Republic. The Moderate republicans rose to power through their successful leverage of this legacy in their national electoral campaigns and their incorporation of revolutionary symbolism and ritual into the mainstream political culture.

Between 1871 and 1879, the Moderate republicans cultivated a solid constituency. A large measure of the faction’s influence stemmed from the manner in which it presented itself. It claimed to be the party that would guarantee stability while simultaneously celebrating its revolutionary past. Yet the Moderates were far from alone in these assertions. The monarchists also declared themselves to be the party of order and the Radicals and Socialists vied with the Moderates for ownership of the revolutionary heritage. During the 1870s, each of the major political groups battled for control over the Republic by using these claims, which were complicated by memories of the Commune, to encourage the development of faithful constituencies. To secure voter allegiance, they undertook competing cultural projects that were developed with electoral contests in mind.
Political ritual and symbolism were excellent tools for strengthening a party’s voting base by promoting its leadership and agenda. They were also highly useful for capitalizing on the legacies of the Paris Commune in order to garner constituent support and criticize the intentions and goals of rival factions. Even in projects designed to erode the memory of the Commune, such as rebuilding monuments that the insurgents had destroyed, the motive remained the same: to control this contested terrain in order to acquire or sustain political power.

The invocation of memories of the Commune pervaded rivalries on the cultural level, as well as the political. The Moderate republicans’ success in cultivating national electoral allegiance derived from their willingness to form temporary parliamentary alliances and their adroit use of festivity and visual media. This enabled them to project a modern image as a party that promised order while celebrating its revolutionary heritage to a national audience. By correlating the political schisms that underpinned monument constructions, festivals, and commemorations with the decade’s political debates in the legislature and the press, this dissertation reveals how the foundation of the French republican nation was substantially informed by the Commune’s legacies.

The 1870s are typically described as a calm and relatively stable decade for France.\textsuperscript{45} The defeat of the Paris Commune is often cited in support of this assessment;

\textsuperscript{45} See, for example, James R. Lehning, \textit{To Be a Citizen: The Political Culture of the Early Third Republic}, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 2001, p. 10; Guy Thuillier, “Cohabitation et crise politique: les origins de la crise du 16 mai 1877,” \textit{La Revue administrative}, 39\textsuperscript{e} Année, no. 233, September-October 1986, pp. 440-
many scholars and contemporaries point to an absence of revolutionary foment for at least a generation following its collapse. However, the following chapters make clear that the 1870s were far from tranquil. The downfall of the Commune did not silence republican or revolutionary militants, nor did it cow the regime’s surviving proponents. In France and abroad, the Communards and their supporters continued to rebuke their Moderate republican adversaries and deny that the Republic’s triumph was a manifestation of the revolutionary era’s success. Modern scholars of the early Republic often overlook or downplay this aspect of the decade. Jean T. Joughin’s *The Paris Commune in French Politics*, Philip Nord’s *The Republican Moment: Struggles for Democracy in Nineteenth-Century France*, and James R. Lehning’s *To Be a Citizen: The Political Culture of the Early Third Republic* are most representative of the works that have influenced the findings of this dissertation.46

Jean T. Joughin’s two-volume series, which was published in 1955, explores the Commune’s impact on French politics through an investigation of amnesty-politics during the first decade of the Third Republic. This series is the closest antecedent of the type of political analysis conducted in the chapters that follow, despite the passage of many decades since its publication. This lengthy time gap indicates the persistent lack of scholarly acknowledgment of the Commune’s political legacies beyond their import for

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Internationalist factions. Joughin convincingly describes the impact that the dispute regarding amnesty for the Communards had on French election results during the foundation decade, using records of parliamentary debates and the writings of the Left-wing press of the time to support her arguments. In doing so, she comes to the significant assertion that controversies over amnesty triggered the reemergence of the revolutionary Left in French electoral politics by 1878. Her contemporaries did not contest this important observation—and, surprisingly, undertook no further investigation into the renascence of the Socialists at a time much earlier than commonly believed by scholars of the 1950s.47 The research for this dissertation corresponds with Joughin’s, but also carries it further. Whereas Joughin limits her analysis to amnesty-related politics, this investigation broadens the scope of inquiry to include factional politics and political culture writ large during the 1870s.

In The Republican Moment: Struggles for Democracy in Nineteenth-Century France, Nord examines the republican struggle to create a solid regime with strong national allegiance. He analyzes the movement’s approach to culture, politics, and ideology in a quest to explain how democratic institutions took root in France during the 1870s. To accomplish this, Nord tracks the slow march of republicanism on social, political, and cultural levels. He investigates the “origins of France’s democratizing elites,” their institutions (especially the Union Nationale du Commerce et de l’Industrie),

47 For examples, see Mayeur and Rebérioux, The Third Republic from its Origins, Op. cit., p. 75; Perrot, p. 156. An important exception to this general rule is found in the work of Michel Winock but he only alludes to the renascence of the socialist movement in the late 1870s; see Winock, La Gauche au pouvoir, Op. cit., p. 10.
and their ability to engender the allegiance of French voters. Yet this seasoned historian’s familiar top-down approach neglects the rich variety of the archival sources that demonstrate important popular resistance to the republican elite. Nord rightly contests the old trope that the Republic was a stagnant product of alliances—what Stanley Hoffmann identified as a “republican synthesis” leading to a “stalemate society.” In his conclusion, for instance, Nord asks: “If the regime was so rotten, why did its institutions survive a full seventy years and its political myths and rituals even longer?” This dissertation illuminates that the Republic endured largely because of the way its political leaders modified and promoted political myths and rituals. The competing factions of the 1870s capitalized upon such propaganda and voter outreach methods for political aggrandizement in schisms that were deeply enmeshed in the conservatives’ rebuke of the revolutionary past, including the Paris Commune. Also surfacing in these realms were debates among Moderates, Radicals, and Socialists about the nature of the Republic—once it was secured from the acute threat of restoration—and their rival claims to the party’s revolutionary heritage. Nord’s investigation is typical of standard historical accounts of the early Republic in the scant amount of significance he attributes to the Commune’s legacies. Nord adroitly narrates the event and identifies its agendas, but his silence in regards to the Commune’s political influence is characteristic of historical studies that describe French politics during the 1870s.

48 Nord, p. 5.
49 Ibid., p. 250.
James R. Lehning’s To Be a Citizen: The Political Culture of the Early French Third Republic examines the Moderate republicans’ attempts to foster a non-revolutionary citizenry in the wake of the new extension of voting rights. Like Nord, Lehning is mute on the topic of the political impact of the Commune’s legacies, except with respect to the familiar acknowledgement of the debt owed to it by the revolutionary Left. However, he does illuminate an important division that the consolidated Republic faced: the antipathy between the new republican elite and the “Jacobin representation of the people, the crowd.”

Lehning locates this tension in the institutions of the time and, significantly, in the realm of political culture, “which may be read in…elections and universal manhood suffrage, newspapers, speeches, the state bureaucracy, and the streets, workshops, and cafes of Paris, the provinces, and the colonies.” Within this framework, Lehning chronicles the use of political culture by republican politicians to elicit compliance from those marginalized by the existing concept of citizenship, as defined by Lehning.

The research undertaken for this dissertation has culminated in a concurring analytical framework. Significant sites of factional debates occurred beyond France’s institutions and the walls of its government assemblies in the 1870s. However, this study extends this approach by emphasizing the primacy of the Commune’s memories and legacies within these tensions. These motifs influenced each major political skirmish and nearly every cultural and civic enterprise throughout the decade, including events as

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50 Lehning, p. 11.
diverse as the Crisis of 16 May, 1877, the Universal Exposition of 1878, and the first celebration of *quatorze juillet* in 1880. Controversies over the political impact of the Commune’s legacies buttressed each of these events, which were themselves submerged in arguments over the heritage of the revolutionary era. These conflicts were instrumental to generating electoral consent for a variety of factions spanning the political spectrum, from the royalists to the Radical republicans.

Modern investigations into the Commune’s influence during the early Third Republic frequently center on its cultural import. Even when trying to establish its political impact, scholars ultimately become entangled in cultural frameworks. Colette E. Wilson’s *Paris and the Commune 1871—1878: The Politics of Forgetting* illustrates this problem well.\(^5\) Wilson constructs a binary analysis of politicians who wanted to forget that the Commune ever took place versus the persistence of the Commune’s image in literary and artistic productions of the 1870s. Her work is a unique contribution to scholarship on the early Third Republic, particularly because of her analysis of concerted governmental efforts to bury the Commune’s existence in reconstruction projects. Wilson emphasizes the persistence of the event’s memory through an investigation of the literary, artistic, and photographic projects of the decade. Yet this choice makes her title misleading; Wilson is not concerned with the political repercussions of the Commune’s legacies, but rather with their cultural significance. Moreover, her source base consists of

the work of the artistic and educated elite and her analysis remains confined to familiar cultural considerations, without explicating the equal influence of the Commune on French political developments. This dissertation does concur with Wilson that the French populace and their government could not—and, ultimately, chose not to—forget the short-lived administration, but it goes beyond an examination of the Commune’s cultural import. In doing so, it provides a more thorough understanding of the forces that ushered in the Moderate republican government in 1879—the same forces that helped establish a republican national allegiance that allowed the French government to safely navigate through many of the turbulent episodes of the 1880s and 1890s. The marginalization of the 1870s extends to the cultural historiography of the Third Republic, as well. Maurice Agulhon, Mathew Truesdell, and Sudhir Hazareesingh have contributed insightful and path-breaking analyses of the political capital provided by cultural enterprises, particularly in the use of festivals and statuary symbolism during the years between the July Monarchy and the Second Empire, but also venturing into the Third Republic and beyond. Similarly, in the past twenty years, Jacques Rougerie, Hollis Clayson, Gay Gullickson, and Kristen Ross have imparted a clear understanding of the festivity

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52 Such episodes include the crash of the Union Générale in 1882 and the Boulanger and Dreyfus Affaires of the 1880s and 1890s.

surrounding the Commune, as well as its didactic use of culture, symbolism, and the democratization of public spaces.\textsuperscript{54}

During the 1870s, competing political actors orchestrated an abundance of celebrations and monument construction (and reconstruction), all with their contemporary rivalries in mind. This aspect of the decade is a driving focus of analysis for this dissertation. These projects were chiefly a vehicle of political maneuvering by those ensconced in power, who sought to encourage and sustain electoral allegiance in order to continue their opposing agendas of subverting or saving the Republic. Yet they also provided Radicals and Socialists with opportunities to contest the political status quo; these groups endeavored to establish their own constituencies through a counter-political culture that manifested itself mainly in the realm of what Patrick H. Hutton describes as the commemoration-based cult of the revolutionary tradition.\textsuperscript{55} Thus, a cacophony of political voices reached out to voters through campaign messaging, cultural projects, and symbolism in visual media. Such efforts were so common that the term “statuomania” emerged as a pejorative hurled by contemporaries to mock the politicized proliferation of statue construction, particularly during the 1870s. The expression was coined by Pierre Larousse, who pointed out that these monuments were erected in great haste, indicating


that meeting completion deadlines set by electoral exigencies was the true goal, rather than artistry.  

In *La “statuomanie” et l’histoire*, Maurice Agulhon concurs with Larousse’s assessment and remarks that the statuomania that characterized the Third Republic was more politically than ideologically oriented.  

Similarly, in analyzing the festive celebrations during the early Third Republic, Charles Rearick has noted the presence of a joyless revelry that often masked the sometimes depressive and unstable reality of the “belle epoch” in terms of their organizers’ intentions and the popular reactions to them, which changed over time.  

Because of such scholarship, the manner in which the Third Republic’s political leaders used statues and festivals as cultural tools to perpetuate and instill competing ideals and narratives is well understood. Yet, as Kristin Ross observed in 1988, “[t]he 1870s in France is but hastily dealt with, if not skipped over entirely in most standard, traditional histories of France.” Nearly a decade later, Olivier Ihl likewise noted: “The period between the fall of Napoleon III and the election of Jules Grévy to the presidency…ten years later, has little interested historians of fêtes.” These assessments of the lack of scholarly inquiry into the Republic’s first decade remain accurate.

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59 Ross, p. 3. Olivier Ihl, *La fête républicaine*, Gallimard, Paris 1996, p. 91. On the same page Ihl highlights the curious nature of this lacuna given the profusion of celebrations that marked nearly every decision and
This perception is only now being remedied—and at a very slow pace. Unfortunately, the silence on this issue has created a significant gap in our understanding of the cultivation of electoral allegiances and the use of competing republican narratives in France during the 1870s. Historians have overwhelmingly focused on the motivation behind the statues, monuments, and celebrations employed for state aggrandizement in the post-1880 period. Furthermore, these studies neglect the republican rivalries and the revolutionary-Left’s disputes, which were embedded in their organizations and constructions. In doing so, they overlook the fact that the use of such methods to cultivate political allegiance, in terms of the emergence of the Republic and the regime’s consequential longevity, was most decisive during the first decade of the Third Republic.

Exceptions to Ihl’s argument are found in the works of Albert Boime and Janice Best. In *Art and the Paris Commune: Imagining Paris After War and Revolution*, Boime asserts the primacy of the Commune’s influence on the cultural life of France by analyzing Impressionist—and, in an epilogue, Post-Impressionist—painters. Drawing upon these sources, he presents a convincing and ground-breaking (in its depth) demonstration of the indelible influence of the Commune on Impressionist artists. His overarching argument is that the Moderate-republican leanings of most of the Impressionists led them to seize upon the reimagining of France that took place during the event of this period. For example, Ihl describes the festivities that accompanied the liberation of the territory, the promulgation of the constitution, and “even the election of Jules Grévy in February 1879.”

1870s as a means of subverting the socially revolutionary character of the Commune, to the benefit of their fellow bourgeois-Moderate republicans. Boime’s careful contrast between Monet and Manet, for instance, unpacks the differences that existed among the competing republican camps and makes a persuasive case against historians’ monolithic characterization of republicanism during this period.

Janice Best displays greater interest in the political context operating within the realm of visual media. In *Les Monuments de Paris sous le troisième République: contestation et commémoration du passé*, Best focuses on the ideological rivalries embedded in the Third Republic’s statuomania, specifically with respect to how these monuments tie into the nation’s revolutionary past and the Commune’s legacies. Her analysis relies heavily on the debates of Paris’ municipal council, a Radical-dominated body that was frequently at odds with the initially conservative and subsequently Moderate-republican National Assembly. Examining that source base is itself an important contribution, given the paucity of scholarly inquiry into it, as is her explanation of the ability of statues to serve as sites of contention and counter-narrative rallying points. This study similarly investigates monument construction, festive celebration, and commemoration, each of which was underpinned by the legacies of the Commune. It then correlates these undertakings with the electoral campaigns that both contributed and showed resistance to the Moderate-republican faction’s rise to political power.

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This dissertation further illuminates how clashes over the Commune’s legacies influenced the cultural projects and campaign techniques through which the Moderates gained control of the Republic, the Radicals became a powerful representative minority, and the Socialists recaptured their political position as an extra-parliamentary menace to their mainstream republican rivals. In addition, this thesis pays close attention to the interplay of culture and campaigns during the fluid period of the Republic’s foundation (from before the 1875 constitution consolidated the Republic to the summer of 1880). That summer, the Moderate Republic celebrated the newly designated national holiday *quatorze juillet* for the first time in purposeful conjunction with the return of the amnestied Communards. The following chapters investigate the most significant decisions, events, and elections of these years from multiple analytical perspectives, presenting them in a loosely chronological but clearly defined thematic order. This dissertation is a comprehensive account of voter messaging in an era of mass politics in which the media often foretold reality and political factions began to solidify into the parties that would be formalized in later decades.

The pages to come will examine the establishment of the Moderate Republic through the lens of the Paris Commune’s political legacies. The first three chapters focus primarily on cultural developments and their political origins and consequences, tracking them from the summer of 1871 through the summer of 1878. For most of this period, the republicans held the minority of representational power but were steadily making inroads during by-elections and the general election of 1876.
Chapter One, *The Haunting*, shows how the Commune’s legacies emerged and their immediate social and political significance, including the beginning of what would become a decade-long campaign for amnesty for the Communards. The chapter’s analysis relies on eye-witness accounts of the *la semaine sanglante* and police surveillance records of Commune strongholds just after the regime’s defeat; contemporary social-science interpretations of the Commune, along with their applications to concurrent social and political agendas; and government debates on the early amnesty proposals.

Chapter Two, *Visions of the Past*, examines the imaging of the Commune through the pro- and anti-Commune photographs and historical narratives that flooded the consumer market during and shortly after the event. These sources expose the early perception among the competing political blocs of the usefulness of the Commune’s legacies. For these factions, the photographs and histories presented both opportunities for political gain and potential risks to their agendas.

The third chapter, *The Emergence of a Mediacracy*, focuses on political struggles between republicans and conservatives, as well as internal conflicts among republicans, which manifested themselves in various cultural initiatives. Such politicized enterprises include statue and monument construction, as well as the Universal Exposition of 1878 and the coinciding celebration of the Republic on June 30th of that year. Each of these media-centered projects occurred prior to and immediately following the republican triumph. By examining a wide array of sources, such as the writings of the French press,
parliamentary debates, and contemporary tourist guidebooks, this chapter clarifies how the struggles that took place during the 1870s over the Republic’s fate and character were enmeshed in diverse assessments of the revolutionary era and negotiated in a media-centric battlefield.

Chapter Four, The Republican Triumph, is a transitional section that shifts the dissertation’s focus from cultural and political events and messaging to electoral politics par excellence. It concentrates on the Crisis of 16 May, 1877, from its origins to its outcomes. This chapter asserts that the primary significance of the Crisis is the manner in which the republicans defeated the monarchists in the October 1877 elections, which were precipitated by the Moral Order government’s dissolution of the Chamber. Conservative politicians ran a negative campaign during these elections, attributing revolutionary ambitions—specifically, and the coming of the “next Commune” — to their republican rivals. Conversely, the republicans organized a highly unified campaign, led by the Moderates, in which they presented themselves as the protectors of order, prosperity, and peace. Simultaneously, they portrayed the Republic as the manifestation of the revolutionary era’s triumphant conclusion. As this chapter demonstrates, by 1877, linking republican candidates to revolutionary militancy and violent social upheaval no longer translated into electoral success for conservative candidates. The republicans’ campaign platforms highlighted their revolutionary heritage, but with an articulation that lauded only those legacies of the era that were the least controversial: universal suffrage, free press and assembly, and laicization. Chapter Four’s analysis incorporates such varied
sources as parliamentary and editorial debates, political manifestos, and seditious graffiti. These records validate the chapter’s assertion that the legacy of the revolutionary era—especially memories of the Commune—played a critical role in the origins and outcome of one of the most important and contentious elections in French history.

The final two chapters analyze the formative disputes among the Moderates, Radicals, and Socialists that emerged during the Crisis of 16 May and escalated after the Opportunist Republic was established in 1879. These schisms involved the nature of the Third Republic and the extent to which it upheld the legacy of the revolutionary era. While the antagonisms were familiar, they were more important than ever after 1879, when the Moderate republican regime came to power. The rivalries among these groups shaped the period’s electoral contests, commemorative politics, and vigorous parliamentary and editorial debates, as well as the continuing battles over the public’s perception of the Commune.

Chapter Five, *Reigniting the Revolutionary Flame*, reveals how the Crisis of 16 May spurred the reemergence of the Socialists in the arena of electoral politics. It then analyzes the repercussions of the political wrangling among the Moderates, Radicals, and Socialists between 1877 and 1880. Their contests manifested themselves in campaign literature, press reports, the 1879 “Socialist Workers’ Congress,” and parliamentary debates of the time. The chapter uses such sources to track the messaging and electoral appeal of the Radicals and the Socialists during and after the establishment of the Moderate Republic. These records illuminate the political capital that the factions were
able to generate by invoking memories of the Commune, as well as the role that the Radicals and Socialists played in the development of the Moderate Republic.

The title of the final chapter, *A Revolution Comes to Port*, refers to François Furet’s conclusion that “the revolution was coming in to port” when the republican government moved from Versailles back to Paris. This chapter argues that the Moderate Republic responded to the re-emergence of the Socialist factions as a representative alternative to mainstream republicanism by using legislative and symbolic gestures—such as this change in location—to strengthen its claims to France’s revolutionary heritage. In addition, it demonstrates that the regime’s leaders undercut the growing appeal of the Radicals and the Socialists by solidifying their image as the party of order and prosperity, and by merging these qualities with a less threatening iteration of the far-Left’s interpretations of the Commune and its revolutionary legacy. This strategy, which combined the political interests of very different groups, helped the Moderates rise to power by 1879 and the strengthening of their position before the next general elections in 1881. As this chapter reveals, the positions of Radicals and the Socialists thereby influenced the image and legislative priorities of the Moderate regime that they opposed. These cultural and political battles shaped not only the development of the French republican nation-state, but also its most indelible legislative and symbolic touchstones.

Taken together, these chapters offer a thorough historical analysis of the formative political and cultural developments within France during the decade that gave rise to its longest-lasting Republic. In order to merge the examination of these
developments with a cohesive investigation into the political impact of the Commune’s legacies, this dissertation relies upon a mostly qualitative and interdisciplinary assessment of sources not normally considered germane to analyses of the Crisis of 16 May or the triumph of the Moderate Republic. Such sources—including police surveillance records, contemporary social-science journals, Beadecker Travel Guides, and the voter messaging that took place during parliamentary debates and national festivals—provide invaluable insight into the widespread political impact of the Commune’s legacies and its influence on the Moderate republicans’ rise to power between 1871 and 1880. As this dissertation reveals, this period was no peaceful decade—no calm repose between revolutionary outbursts and sensational scandals. The ghost of the Commune pervaded the political maneuverings and republican images of this decade. Its legacies informed dramatic disputes over both the Republic’s revolutionary heritage and the nation’s future, and kept alive the accomplishments of an era that the mainstream political factions, the monarchist camps, and the parliamentary Radicals alike were eager to put behind them.
CHAPTER 1: THE HAUNTING

The Paris Commune of 1871 was one of France’s most traumatic experiences. The popular uprising made the phantom of working-class rebellion a nightmare reality for the majority of conservative, moderate, and rural populations and exposed some of the nation’s deep social and political divisions. The memory of the Commune and its incredibly brutal defeat during the last week of May 1871 haunted French society and politics for decades. Key among the divisions it exposed were the geographic and social isolation of the working-class population of Paris and the political rivalry between Moderate, Radical, and Socialist republicans, which had become acute during the last years of the Second Empire and in the first months of the Republic’s existence. The Commune’s utter destruction was deemed necessary by the vast majority of French political leaders and citizens, some of whom seemed to relish the opportunity to suppress the political machinations of the French working class—a group that many blamed for instigating and leading the Commune’s social-revolutionary initiatives. At the same time, the recent establishment of universal male suffrage forced politicians to carefully consider the political predilections of the working-class vis-à-vis the Commune’s legacies and the nearly decade-long campaign to amnesty its insurgents.
In 1866, the working class comprised 70 percent of Paris’ nearly 2 million inhabitants, but it was by no means an organized and politicized proletariat. Rather, this group encompassed an economically and socially heterogeneous population. While the majority of its members were manual laborers who worked in both the traditional craft industries and the new factories, the class included minor clerks, café waiters, and shoemakers. Nearly all of them lived precariously close to destitution despite an overall rise in quality of living from that of the 1830s and 40s. During the last years of the Empire, the bookbinder Eugène Varlin toiled determinedly to organize French workers into a labor movement under the auspices of the International Working Man’s Association, founded in 1864. However, on the eve of the Commune’s establishment, the organization remained fairly small and its rank-and-file members were primarily interested in economic reform, rather than political militancy. Most of them were far from revolutionary and consistently voted for republican-opposition deputies in each

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62 Berlanstein, p. 3; Edwards, pp. 14-15; and Rougerie, Paris Libre 1871, Op. cit., pp. 9-10. According to the 1866 census, following the 1860s expansion of Paris to its current twenty arrondissements, the city’s population was 1,799,980; 57% of who, according to Rougerie, were industrial workers and 12% employed in commercial industries.

63 Tombs, The Paris Commune, Op. cit., p. 14, cites that “in the 1860s there were over 450,000 male and female manual workers, 120,000 white-collar workers, 140,000 employers (mainly self-employed master-craftsmen and shopkeepers) and 100,000 servants.” The 1872 census reported that 44% of the workers were industrial laborers; but as Edwards points out, “there were probably only about fifteen factories that employed more than a hundred workers apiece and a further hundred factories employing between twenty and fifty workers.” p. 15. See also table I-I in Berlanstein which shows that in 1866, 16.5% of workers in Paris were white-collar and 61.3% manual workers; these figures did not shift by more than 3% by 1886.
election of the Empire and in the National Assembly elections in February 1871, despite the existence and active campaign of the Revolutionary Socialist party.64

The Commune’s origins, as described in the preface to this dissertation, lie well beyond working-class economic or political emancipation.65 This revolt was the product of frustrated patriotism and a nearly city-wide mistrust in the new monarchist majority of the National Government. The war-time administration’s dubious defense efforts, combined with the National Assembly’s draconian economic decrees following the peace with Prussia and its obvious antagonism toward an armed working class, instigated the revolutionary action of the Parisians and the popular National Guard regiments.66 This same antipathy toward and distrust of the monarchists engendered a sense of complacency about—and, therefore, complicity in—the insurrection among Paris’ petit-bourgeois, who chose not to rise in defense of the National Government on March 18th. Once the revolt commenced, every conservative, rural, and middle-class (i.e., Moderate) republican nightmare of working-class empowerment seemed to come alive in the

64 See Shafer, p. 4 for his description of workers joining republican clubs during the last years of the Empire whereupon they “were given political answers to their economic grievances,” with the tacit assumption that a Republic would necessarily ameliorate such plight; Edwards p. 15, where he asserts and explains the artisan mentality of the labor movement of the 1860s. See also Rougerie, Paris Libre Op. cit., p. 13 on which he rejects the notion of a French proletariat in a Marxist sense.


66 For example, on January 6, 1871 the famous Affiche rouge (“…Make way for the people! Make way for the Commune!”) was posted throughout the city of Paris; it was signed by 140 people of whom the vast majority were unknown workers; yet only the Blanquist (the most extreme revolutionaries) marched on the Hotel de Ville in 3 failed attempts to take over the government. Then on February 13, 1871 the Revolutionary Socialist party acquired only 15% of the national vote all of which was concentrated in the recently war-torn capital. This party was formed by a merger between the Parisian vigilance committees and the Trade Union Federation in hostility toward the Government’s capitulation to the Prussians; their ability to capture 50,000 votes in Paris, following the detested peace with Prussia, illuminates that it was the Government’s war effort that catalyzed the politicization of Paris workers the majority of whom still did not give their support to the Socialist party.
Commune’s social legislation, anti-clerical violence, and popular festivity—a phantasmagoric frenzy right in Paris’ reconquered center.67

From Jules Raudnitz’s series: *Le Sabbat rouge*, 1871.68

The stereograph above illustrates the type of fantasies that the period’s conservative and moderate leaders had about the Commune. The demon-like figures on the left are liberally pouring and consuming alcohol and the female monsters appear to be immodest, crazed, and in the vanguard of the revolutionary carousing. Each of these beasts

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67 Rougerie, *Paris Libre*, Op. cit., p. 19. The term “conservative” is being used to refer to all factions who hoped to subvert the Republic in favor of either the Bourbon or Orleanist dynasty, or a Bonapartist Empire.
68 This is one of many stereographs made by Raudnitz which perfectly depict the anti-Commune nightmare of working class rebellion and bacchanalian festivity.
embodies the dominant fears that seemed to come to life during the Commune, such as working-class alcoholism, the invasion of women into the public sphere, and overt class antagonism.

As a result of these anxieties, suppressing the Commune was deemed a military, political, and symbolic necessity, not only for the monarchist majority in the new National Assembly, but also for the Moderate republican minority, who looked to the rural population—ever hostile to rebellious Paris—as a vital constituency needed to secure the Republic’s survival. It is imperative to consider this context when trying to comprehend why the Commune was so brutally subdued and why this veritable purging of a significant segment of the Parisian population continued long after the *la semaine sanglante*. 
The Commune was defeated during the last week of May 1871. Over the five years following its fall, Communards continued to be arrested, court-martialed, exiled, and even executed. The first motion for granting them amnesty was proposed as early as September 1871 by a Radical republican deputy of the National Assembly, which launched a nearly decade-long campaign for the official pardon of the revolutionaries. The unending prosecution of the Communards and the perennial battle over their amnesty ensured that the Commune’s presence remained at the forefront of French politics throughout the 1870s. Court-martials continued beyond the middle of the decade, and

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69 Battle map of Bloody Week, Rougerie, Paris Libre, Op. cit., p. 254. The principal points of resistance (Paris’ eastern districts) are also the regions where the Commune found its most ardent supporters during and after the event.
those sentenced to exile were deported to Algeria and the penal colony of New Caledonia. Accounts of arrests, prosecutions, executions, and occasional escapes of Communards were widely published in French and International newspapers and were of great concern to French citizens of all political orientations. The ongoing retribution and its media coverage kept the specter of the Commune and its violent demise alive; even those who advocated sweeping the episode into history and moving forward were unable to escape its haunting presence. By 1876, “the penitentiary system in France contained 1600 persons condemned for participation in the Commune, and the number of transports [to New Caledonia] rose to about 4400.”

Communards were tried and convicted, even in absentia, as late as June 1876, when President MacMahon finally ended the practice in a letter to his Minister of War: “Henceforth, no more prosecutions are to take place unless commanded by the unanimous sentiment of honest people.” His declaration reflects the political and social tensions that these events had engendered and hints at the negative effect that the trials and deportations had begun to have on the stability of MacMahon’s ultra-conservative regime of the Moral Order.

This chapter analyzes the establishment of the controversy over the Commune’s legacies as a lingering motif during the first half of the 1870s and asserts that they had a substantial impact on the formation of social and political propaganda, initiatives, and

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70 Prosper-Olivier Lissagaray, trans. Eleanor Marx Aveling, History of the Commune of 1871, Reeves and Turner, London 1886, p. 463. Lissagaray’s 1876 work represents one of many histories written in the immediate post-Commune period. While many of Lissagaray’s opinions are influenced by his experience as a member of the Commune, his 500 page book is full of factual information widely referenced by scholars of the Paris Commune and its aftermath.

71 Ibid.
image-making for republicans and conservatives alike. The first section focuses on identifying the Commune’s utter destruction as a driving force behind the endurance of the event’s legacies. This section presents first-person accounts of Paris during and shortly after the suppression, along with police surveillance records of working-class activity in the wake of the Commune. These sources demonstrate that the Parisian proletariat viscerally experienced the Commune’s suppression, which cemented its memory in their minds. The defeat politically stupefied but did not subjugate them. After 1871, the areas of Paris that sustained the greatest antipathy toward the conservative Government and its police agents were the same regions where the Commune had enjoyed the most support: the working-class districts of Montmartre and Belleville.

The second section analyzes the efforts—and their political implications—of many of the doctors and social scientists of this time to pathologize the social and political behavior of the French laboring class. As this section reveals, the post-Commune foray into diagnosing the revolt and its partisans recast the image of its suppression as the excising of a deadly social and political malady in order to heal the sick nation. Such analyses abounded in the nation’s medical, social, and psychological journals and illustrate an important aspect of the penetration of the Commune legacies into French life and society. For example, the literary efforts of Emile Zola were deeply influenced not only by the events of the Commune and its suppression, but also by contemporary theories regarding working-class idleness, corruption, and barbarity and the dangerous potential of the unruly masses. As the reports and recollections of contemporary
witnesses indicate, the prolonged hunt, prosecution, and punishment of the insurgents began to generate popular sympathy for the Communards. Conservatives justified the brutality of the Commune’s suppression by portraying the event as the work of alcoholics and social malcontents, thereby discouraging serious consideration of the grievances the Communards had expressed in the spring of 1871.

The final section of this chapter begins to address the emerging political tactic of invoking the Commune’s legacies, which serves as a driving analytical concern for each of the chapters that follow. The monarchists and Radical republicans quickly grasped the potential for political gain in endorsing or denouncing amnesty for the Communards, while the Moderate republicans consistently avoided entanglement in the controversy. The Monarchists refused to support an amnesty because it would imply forgiveness for insurgents on whose firm rebuke they were staking a significant portion of their political legitimacy. Furthermore, they earnestly feared that the pardoned Communards would promptly enter the political fray as fomenters of revolutionary vengeance. For the Radicals, amnesty became a defining priority due to their personal and professional ties to members of the Commune and their constituents’ growing support for the cause. This section is largely informed by National Assembly and Chamber of Deputy debates on amnesty proposals, along with the biographies and memoirs of republican political leaders who supported amnesty, such as Georges Clémenceau and Victor Hugo. These sources illuminate the immediate politicization of the specter of the Commune and Communard-amnesty proposals and rejections. This section introduces these motifs as
powerful political weapons that the competing factions of the 1870s employed in the battle over the Republic’s survival against the threat of restoration and—should it survive—the creation of a liberal versus social-democratic Republic. Taken together, the sections of this chapter reveal that the legacies of the Commune were visceral touchstones for French political and social influences and agendas, an integral component of the Republic’s foundation, and a tool by which political leaders engaged in mass messaging and national aggrandizement during the unstable beginnings of France’s third attempt at republican governance.

The Hunt: The Social and Political Reality of the Commune’s Suppression

The last week of the Commune was labeled by contemporaries as *la semaine sanglante*, which indicates that they registered the death toll of the Commune’s suppression as particularly high. As described by Edmond de Goncourt a contemporary, though no friend to the Commune, the “bloodletting was a bleeding white; such a purge, by killing off the combative part of the population defers the next revolution by a

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72 As described in the preface to this dissertation, there is an on-going dispute over the number of deaths during the last week with figures ranging wildly from (Tombs) 6,500 to more than 20,000 (Rougerie). Part of the difficulty in pinpointing an exact toll is the result of summary executions and successful and equally undetermined number of escapes to self-exile. For example, P. Martinez figures the number of refugees in London to be around 3,500 men, women, and children; however numerous people fled long after 1873 and there are no similar figures for the known refugee hub of Belgium, let alone for the more fragmented communities formed in Italy, Spain, and the United States.
This statement exposes the alarming degree to which the Commune was defeated and the political and symbolic capital that such suppression could portend. The street-to-street combat that characterized the final stand of the Communards, and the utter brutality that the French troops led by Marshal MacMahon delivered unto the Communards and even non-Communard citizens of Paris left an indelible mark on the city. Those who bore witness were not likely to forget the ghastly images of dead bodies and burning buildings that became everyday parts of the city’s landscape during and immediately after the Commune’s demise. Witnesses of the events have furnished evocative descriptions such as the following by Reverend Gibson:

We have seen from St. Denis this day a sight which we shall never forget...If we had not during the last sad few weeks seen how little comparative damage had been done by what has appeared to be a tremendous conflagration, we should have thought that all Paris was on fire...We distinctly saw a terrible fire at La Chapelle and Montmartre, which seemed to be either at La Villette or in the interior of the city in the direction of the Tuileries and the Hôtel de Ville, a smouldering [sic] fire on the right of Montmartre, apparently in the direction of Vaugirard. The heavy roll of cannon broke on our ear as we looked on the frightful sight.

Long after *la semaine sanglante*, contemporaries sited the destruction of some of Paris most important and famed buildings and monuments by the Communards as proof that

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the event’s leaders were a menace to not only contemporary France but also obliterators of the nation’s history. As these evocations make clear, witnesses were sickened by what they saw; it was gruesomeness itself that bore a legacy. In the acute period of the Commune’s defeat, however, the repression bolstered the anti-Commune sentiments held by the majority of France.

Beyond the sight and sound of cannon blasts and the heat of the fires felt throughout the city, far more gruesome, yet seemingly necessary sights and smells became all too commonplace:

The ground is strewn with dead bodies. The frightful spectacle will serve as a lesson, it is to be hoped, to the foolish people who dared to declare themselves partisans of the Commune…

This passage reveals an underlying consideration held by royalist and conservative republican politicians, such as the future Prime Minister, Albert duc de Broglie and the current President, Adolphe Thiers, that the Commune’s ruthless defeat was a necessary object lesson to deter any future revolutionaries. Yet even after the Versailles troops had successfully taken the city, the spectacle of vanquishing the Commune continued:

Whiffs of earthly odours of decomposition meet you here and there, especially near the quondam barricades, and a strong oily smell, which they say is not unhealthy, but certainly is sickening…The weather,

75 Gibson, Versailles, May 25, p. 167.
fortunately, may I not say providentially, is cool…; otherwise we might expect pestilence.\textsuperscript{76}

Indeed, nearly a month after the Commune’s defeat, Gibson writes:

As I passed the Pont de la Concorde on Monday morning last, I saw grave-diggers exhuming bodies from the quays, and two large vans in waiting to receive the putrid deposit and transport it to one of the cemeteries. It is sad indeed to see occasionally a poor fellow marched off between soldiers, for search is still being made in the houses for hidden insurgents… On Monday morning in the Rue St. Honoré I saw, conducted by a soldier, a walking figure above whose shoulders there was nothing of the ‘human face divine,’ but a mass of bruised and swollen flesh covered with blood. My blood ran cold as I passed.\textsuperscript{77}

The prevailing opinion among Parisians and provincial populations was that such suppressive severity was necessary; there was no registered outrage by the population at-large publicly or privately. Moreover, individuals from the “respectable classes” took the opportunity to vocalize their anger and fear behind the safety of the Versailles troops many times during the early summer of 1871. Dumas fils’ description of a Versailles crowd’s reaction to witnessing the transport of Communard prisoners in June of 1871 attests to this:

An instinctive crowd, ignorant, cowardly and cruel, hurled itself on the line of the prisoners, insulting both men and women, some guilty, some

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., June 7, 1871, pp. 197-198.  
\textsuperscript{77} Gibson, Paris, June 14, 1871, pp. 206.
innocent, all stupid and haggard, and trembling equally from the added hate of their soldier escorts.\(^{78}\)

It is well-documented that in the immediate aftermath of the Paris Commune, anti-Commune partisans of the Versailles Government were quenching a thirst for revenge against the violence of the Communards and their perceived gall in attempting to displace the social, political, and economic *status quo*.\(^{79}\) However, as the carnage mounted, all sides began to turn against the violence.

This transformation was poignantly recorded by the *London Times*, a newspaper not noted for a pro-Commune stance:

The burning of Paris was diabolical; the shooting of hostages “a deed without a name.” But it seems as if we were destined to forget the work of these maddened savages in the spectacle of the vengeance wreaked upon them. The wholesale executions inflicted by the Versailles soldiery the triumph, the glee, [and] the ribaldry of the “Party of Order,” sickens the soul.\(^{80}\)


\(^{79}\) This sentence is qualified because it is well-documented by Rougerie and Tombs, among others, that the Commune was quite timid in many of its economic reforms and overall demonstrated a reticence to disturb private property rights; as explained by Edwards, p. 15, prior to the Commune its future insurgents appear more antithetical to high finance than industrial capitalism. This is borne out in the case of the National Guard Central Committee seeking official sanction from the Parisian Mayors after March 18\(^{th}\) rather than acting as a sovereign body; and in the decision to allow worker co-operatives to operate dormant factories with the promise given to return the factories to their owners should they return to Paris (having fled after March 18\(^{th}\)) and in the rejection that all factories should be taken over by the co-operatives regardless of the presence of the owners.

\(^{80}\) *London Times*, June 1, 1871.
Indeed, the spectacle-like image of defeating the Communards is acknowledged by contemporaries and later scholars of the time period and topic. The cremation of fallen insurgents occurred most often at Buttes Chaumont and the executions at the Bois de Boulogne. Both of these parks are within the city boundaries of Paris which made the smell of petroleum and burning flesh along with the startling shots of firing squads a persistent reminder of the city’s recent calamities and continuing retribution. Eventually, as the gruesomeness began to turn the stomachs of even the most ardent anti-Communards, the executions and cremations were conducted out of view; leading circulation at the Bois de Boulogne, for example, to be tightly regulated: “one is forbidden to enter there, unless accompanied by a platoon of soldiers, and still more forbidden to come out again.”\(^\text{81}\)

As the year progressed, those arrested were transported to their hearing and sentencing in the early hours of the morning, in order to avoid any possible unrest. The executions that took place after 1871 were strictly removed from public view. In September 1872, the *Times* described the following procedure for executions:

As usual in such cases, the time fixed for their execution was not made known to them till the very morning of the event had arrived… Just before the word was given to the troops to fire, Deschamps, in a clear ringing voice, shouted out twice, ‘Vivre la République démocratique et sociale—à bas les traîtres!’ Denivelle cried ‘Vivre la Commune!’… It was five minutes past six when the troops began marching past with bands playing. Although the morning was exceptionally fine, there were but a few

\(^{81}\) *Paris Journal*, June 15, 1871.
spectators of the strange scene, the police rigorously refusing civilians access to the ground.82

The police kept close surveillance of the transportations and noted any related demonstrations or disturbances, but more often than not their fears of crowd disturbances proved unfounded. For example, at five in the morning on the day after the first anniversary of the proclamation of the Commune, the police documented a convoy of 58 Communards transferred by mounted Infantry guards from Saint-Lazare train station to their hearings; the officer reporting on the transport dutifully noted that their arrival and transport was without incident.83 Such an account, even on the anniversary, is typical. Perhaps this was due to the timing of their transport, the heavy guard of the prisoners, and the equally strong police presence. However, the most consistent image that these reports provide is one of a population, at least in the early 1870s, that had not rebounded from the Commune’s repression.

The workers of Paris that survived the Commune and its suppression are an elusive population to study for the years just after the Commune. Publicly pronouncing on behalf of the Commune and against the Government at Versailles risked prosecution

82 From a clip of newspaper found in Archives Nationales: 14AS, 99bis: Blanqui File: News Clippings. The name of the newspaper unknown, article titled “Execution of Communists” Paris, Sept 18. The event can be cross-referenced in Lissagaray, p. 438.
83 Archives de la Préfecture de Police (hereafter, APP), Ba 373 Amnesty. “Arrivée de fédérés à la Gare St. Lazare,” 8ème Arrondissement, M. Leclerc, Officier de Paix, 19 Mars 1872. This file contains numerous reports on Communard arrests, Court Martial transportations, and forced-exile departures. Without exception, each report takes care to note that these transports were without incident even when large crowds had gathered to witness them.
and even death. As a result, their opinions can be located in contemporary, and most often anti-Commune observers, and an unpacking of police surveillance records which themselves require double scrutiny: first because the agent would want to project an image of control over his terrain and thereby risked downplaying indications of popular discontent and second because they too were hostile to the Commune a fact that frequently creeps up in their reports. The image that these sources reveal is one of chaos, disillusion, and social isolation.

What was left of the revolutionary political circles, those who had not been in Paris during the Commune or had avoided capture, had effectively been deprived of their leadership. Moreover, the people who might have taken part in calls for vengeance or renewed action, namely in the districts of Belleville and Montmartre, appear subdued to the point of political stupor. Edmond de Goncourt foreshadowed this protracted reality in *Paris Under Siege, 1870—1871* in which he describes his visit to the Communard stronghold of Belleville just days after *la semaine sanglante*. He recalls “people drinking in cabarets with faces of ugly silence [and] the appearance of a vanquished but unsubjugated district.” Several years later, this assessment remained current. The descriptions provided by police spies listening in on conversations amongst the working

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84 P. Martinez also refers to this difficulty regarding his analysis of the secret 4th Brigade following the activities of exiles in London. See also Bernard H. Moss’s fantastic analysis of the police surveillance documents which have been combed through for this dissertation, “Police Spies and Labor Militants After the Commune,” *Newsletter: European Labor and Working Class History*, No. 5, January 1874, pp. 16-19.

85 Tombs, *The Paris Commune*, Op. cit., p. 181: “Delescluze died on the barricade...Vermorel, died of wounds; five were caught and killed by Versailles troops, most notably Varlin; and Ferré, was executed after court martial... two [were released]; 48 escaped, mainly to Britain, Switzerland, or Belgium.”

86 Goncourt, p. 313.
class and supposedly pro-Commune districts of Paris illicit an image of a population that had been restrained. For example, in August of 1873, following up on reports of government denunciations overheard in the laundry houses of Paris, a police spy reported the following assessment of the wives of Communard deportees:

All of the laundry houses of Paris were visited. The owners and their employees were not aware of the reported remarks. They assure [us] that not more since the 24th of May than before, the wives of the convicted political prisoners don’t draw attention to themselves. That does not mean that some sharp words were not said. They do their work quietly and do not appear to count on a future amnesty.\(^{87}\)

These descriptions, especially considering that they involve persons deeply affected by the arrests and trials, are a far cry from the wild women of the Commune described during and after its suppression, a description that nonetheless persisted in the press, political debates, and conservative historical analyses, as the decade progressed.

This is not to say that resistance to the quasi-Republican regime had vanished completely.\(^{88}\) Many people who had managed to escape the sweep of condemnations continued to express support for the Communards and hostility toward the severe repression meted out by the government still operating from Versailles. Their sentiments were recorded by French police agents who tracked their operations in London, Brussels,

\(^{87}\) APP, Ba 464: « Commune de Paris (1871) Amnistie ». Rapport de Préfecture de Police 2\(^{e}\) Brigade de Recherches M. Brissaud, Officier de Paix, August 9, 1873 « Propos attributés aux femmes de déportes qui fréquentent les lavoirs » 9 Août 1873. By 1873, Communard-amnesty had already been proposed twice in the National Assembly.

\(^{88}\) Republic is qualified in this sentence because monarchists held the majority of seats in the Chamber of Deputies until 1876 and until 1879 in the Senate; the first Republican President was not nominated until MacMahon’s resignation, following the Senate elections, in January 1879.
and Geneva, in the newspapers they founded from abroad, and many of them, including Alphonse Lissagaray as early as the fall of 1871, published their stories from exile. In Paris, during the last six months of 1871 insults to public authority reached the second-highest level ever recorded by the police. Two years after the defeat “approximately 20 percent of these epithets were similar to…the following explicit remembrance: ‘Do not be so proud! We know you have fled before the Prussians; you are cowards, because if you have conquered Paris, it’s because you were thirty to one.’”

The retention of hostility over the Commune’s bloody suppression and defiant expressions of support for its supposed martyrs were found all over the city walls in the form of graffiti and seditious placards. These writings increased in frequency (at least in terms of their discovery) when the anniversary of the Commune’s proclamation approached. Such messages defended and celebrated the Commune and some, like the one below, insolently expressed support for the International, especially after the law that proscribed French membership, and a social-democratic Republic:

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89 As described by P. Martinez, p. 19, fn., 7, the most important of the London journals were Qui Vive! (October 3 - December 10, 1871); Vermersch Journal (December 18, 1871 - March 20, 1872); and Union Démocratique (March 25, 1872—October 3, 1872).
“It is not enough to have betrayed and murdered the people: one year later the royalist Assembly still wants to prevent the union of anger and hate by the specter of the threat [of the Commune]. To the law on the International, [we] respond by the formation of secret societies, and be sure that with continued efforts, we will achieve our goal, the great Social Revolution”

Similarly, it was frequent to find “Vive la Commune” scribbled on city walls in red pencil; laments such as: “Vive la Commune. Honneur aux bons Ferré, Rossel, Crémieux & Dombrowski, qui sont morts pour la Commune;” or more violent diatribes: “Mort aux gendarme ! mort aux gardiens de la Paix ! et aux traites en aux Versailles ! et à Thiers ! Vive la Commune ! et l’Internationale ! et le Comité Central! et la République Rouge!”

Upon their discovery, police agents quickly removed or covered them up, but their reappearance throughout the decade indicates a sustained hostility against the Commune’s suppression and an unrelenting allegiance to the causes and movements ascribed to it. Furthermore, the very act of writing such diatribes exposes a willingness to

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91 APP. Ba 476, “Placard Injurieux”, 1872—1875. Picture, April 1872; “…Honneur aux bons Ferré, Rossel, etc.,” June 17, 1872 found in the neighborhood of Bercy in the 12th Arrondissement; “…Mort aux gendarme,” March 14, 1872, found on city walls in the 11th Arrondissement. A similarly graphic placard was found affixed to Thiers’ home in Paris on May 20, 1873: “Peuple de Paris: Cette maison est le prix de ton Sang.” These are merely a representative sample of the copious holdings of such sedition that can be found in this rich collection.
express hostility and seditious political opinions even if carried out anonymously and surreptitiously:

These documents reveal at least a nucleus of a population that, while stunned and cowed remained present and un-subjugated. Such messaging sustains the assertion that for everyone who had borne witness to the tragic event and survived its defeat, the ongoing court-martials stoked embers of mourning and the flames of hostility.

For supporters of President MacMahon’s Moral Order government, in power from May 1873 until January 1879, such sedition and the on-going arrests and transports helped to sustain a visceral antipathy towards the apparently unrepentant Communards.93

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92 Ibid. According to the accompanying report the coded message was unable to be deciphered although the black fabric and red lettering along with the word “Assassin” in reference to General Ducrot make its origins evident. The piece was found affixed to several city walls in the Nécker quarter of the 13th Arrondissement, this one was pulled down in front of a crowd of thirty “curiosity” seekers. General Ducrot was a commanding general of the 4th Brigade of the Army of Versailles during the Commune’s suppression and at the time (1872) a conservative member of the National Assembly.

93 However as the content of the APP Ba 476, carton “Placard Injurieux,” 1872—1875 and that for 1875—1899 make clear such seditious graffiti was not limited to pro-Communard defamers, in fact throughout the
This perspective was an integral aspect of a growing bourgeois-anxiety about the insubordinate lower classes, all of whom were likened to the Communards and more generally the monolithically-described “crowd”, and their potential for menacing the order imposed by the Versailles Government in May of 1871. In this light, it becomes clear that the Court Martials were a powerful tool used to maintain the conservative and especially rural fear of insurrectionary Paris, a sub-population that apparently required MacMahon’s diligence to eradicate, something so pervasive that it took five years of hunting to root out.

**Pathologizing Political Behavior: Crowd Fear and Mass Politics**

While the fate of the Communards was being discussed within the political and judicial arenas, their vanquished uprising became part of a wider obsession regarding social ailments and a pervasive bourgeois-fear of the working classes which was increasingly becoming an independent political identity and a solid constituent base for the Radical republican faction. The experience of defeat in the Franco-Prussian War and the intrepidity displayed during the Paris Commune, “turned the frustrations of liberal supporters of the ‘juste milieu’ to outright pessimism, and encouraged their continued evolution toward the right wing of the political spectrum.”94 Social science theories of the irrationality of collective behavior and national degeneration, which were frequently decade there were just as venomous and violent scribbling that asserted anti-Commune, anti-Republic, and pro-restoration diatribes.

94 Nye, p. 21.
ascribed to unruly women, alcoholism and diseases (physical and mental) of the poor, flooded the reading market, testifying to the fact that France was eager to make sense of the nation’s recent calamities.\textsuperscript{95} Fortified by their professional credentials, French physicians, psychologists, and social scientists, including Hippolyte Taine, ascribed France’s cyclical revolutionary turns to the alcohol-fueled degeneration of its working classes:

Now one can understand the bestial and savage faces of the workers in the uprising, the thefts, the massacres, and the arsons; the insanity, imbecility and idiocy which affected such large numbers of them; their vicious instincts, their lack of morality… in short, it is not surprising to see that each new revolution brings an increase of atrocities and degeneration.\textsuperscript{96}

The sense of national degeneration was not a new phenomenon after 1871 nor was it unique to France. However, “it took national defeat by Prussia and the Paris Commune to

\textsuperscript{95} Susanna Barrows, \textit{Distorting Mirrors}, Op. cit., p. 46 for her description of “the seemingly bizarre triangle of crowds, alcoholics, and women.” Between 1840 and 1875, there were 346 publications on women, their illnesses, alcohol, and alcoholism; between 1876 and 1885, there were 467 and between 1890 and 1886 there were 201. On the circulation of “moral contagion” theories that proliferated in France after the Commune, see Jan Goldstein, “‘Moral Contagion’: A Professional Ideology of Medicine and Psychiatry in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century France” in Gerald L. Geison ed., \textit{Professions and the French State: 1700—1900}, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 1984, p. 182.

seal the importance of the word [degeneration] in historiography, social diagnosis, [and] cultural critique.”

In the first three years after the Commune, “Doctors Lunier, Bouchereau, Magnan, and Laborde published accounts in the important medical journal *Annales medico-psychologiques* purporting to prove the pathology of the Commune.” The standard characterization of the Communard that emerged from these reports and readily affirmed by the majority of conservative France projected an image of an irrational dipsomaniac, not a disciplined political agitator. Thereby alcoholism could be equated with revolution and the continued prosecution of the Communards could be assimilated to medical notions of cure by extraction. As a result, former Communards and social degenerates were cast as the product of a social sickness which doctors and social scientists became determined to investigate and root out.

As Inspector-General of France’s prisons and insane asylums and a founding member of France’s Temperance Society, Dr. Lunier took care to observe and document ex-Communard asylum patients and provided “detailed family trees of the debauched

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99 As described in the following chapter, Maxime du Camp’s, *Les Convulsions de Paris*, exemplifies the sustainment of this characterization among anti-Commune historians of the event.
ancestry of armed children seized at the end of the uprising.” By perpetuating this image, “any painful discussion of social, economic, or political origins of the Commune could be dismissed and the “Communards vision of social justice,” could be cast aside as “the wild hallucination of a dipsomaniac [or degenerate]… On a conscious and unconscious level, the new myth of the proletarian drunkard provided comforting resolutions to the anxieties of the men of order.” This characterization, coupled with a generalized fear of “the crowd” meant that after the Commune, anxieties proliferated about public ceremonies in which the lower classes might be part of, or worse constitute, the crowd of spectators and participants.

The government took care to designate a military and police presence for all public events to prevent or intervene in any possible political unrest that they feared the moment might give rise to. The occasion of Adolphe Thiers’ funeral in 1877, for example, seemed to warrant a police and military presence of more than three thousand armed men. During and after such events, the police and press, regardless of political affiliation, were always certain to take note of the behavior of the masses. Le Siècle correctly foreshadowed the mood: “All of Paris will be in the adjacent streets calm and respectful determined to repress whoever, by hatred of the Republic, would dare to cause


disorder.” The journalist was correct. There were no disruptions caused by monarchist or extreme-Left enemies of the Republic, and the few workers that showed animosity, simply by refusing to remove their caps, were quickly admonished by the crowd itself. On each public occasion throughout the 1870s, the crowd was commended for its comportment.

Despite the composure of spectators during such events, social scientists, psychologists and physicians continued to highlight their potential for violence. The notion that violent social unrest was a pathological condition was widely published about and pontificated. Gustave le Bon, the most widely-read propagator of such treatises, specifically determined to use these theories as a didactic tool for politicians grappling with the new rules of mass politics. First published in 1895, *Psychologie des foules* represents a culmination of the previous decades’ obsessions. Rather than being a forerunner of this area of social science, Le Bon’s contribution should be understood through his agenda to merge science with democratic politics. A considerable portion of his book deals specifically with the irrationality of crowds and their propensity toward violence. He echoes the work of his peers while specifically seeking to address

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103 As chapter four makes clear, this comportment should hardly be ascribed to a generalized silence from Left-wing detractors during this time in which campaigns for France’s most vitriolic election were being carried out.
104 For Thiers’ funeral see APP, Ba 1283: Police Surveillance of Thiers’ Funeral; *Le Siècle* September 8 – 10, 1877; *La Presse* September 8 – 10, 1877; *La Figaro* September 8 -10, 1877; and *La Gaulois* September 8, 1877; for the Fête Nationale 1878 see *La Gaulois*, June 30, 1878; *Le Petit Parisien* June 30, 1878; and *Journal des Débats Politiques et Littéraires* June 30, 1878. This selection provides analysis from several political perspectives, the radical Left as well as the monarchist Right.
105 Nye, p. 3: “his aggregate reading public probably rivaled that of many contemporary novelists.”
contemporary politicians. Le Bon writes: “knowledge of the psychology of crowds is today the last resource of the statesman who wishes not to govern them…, but at any rate not to be governed by them.”\textsuperscript{106} He also gives the statesmen concrete instruction on how to take control of the crowd for their own purposes: “when it is wanted to stir up the crowd for a short space of time, to induce it to commit to an act of any nature…, the crowd must be acted upon by rapid suggestion.” the leader should provide concise messages, “the more destitute of every appearance of proof and demonstration, the more weight it carries.”\textsuperscript{107} Le Bon’s suggestion is thus to use rhetoric and immediacy in order to direct the crowd. These ideas were already in practice throughout the 1870s and 1880s and can be identified in the political messaging of politicians across the spectrum.

The Presidency of Adolphe Thiers and especially that of his successor MacMahon gave political expression to the pathology of revolutionary political behavior and the unrelenting fear of the lower classes among the upper and middle classes. Their presidencies were marked by a successful invasion into the private sphere of the working classes in efforts to control the new political landscape of mass politics in the post-Commune era. An example of the institutionalization of such invasions is the “loi Rousell” of 1874. Ostensibly aimed at protecting French youth, it “extended governmental surveillance to include the everyday activities of France’s ordinary people… aimed at a kind of total control over individual and collective behavior which

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid, p. 141.
might have been unthinkable before the Commune." The law was first introduced by Dr. Théophile Roussell and established surveillance of wet nurses by local committees and medical inspectors. The legislation provided a new means of monitoring the private lives of the working classes and should be viewed in light of France’s loss of the Franco-Prussian War and the pervasive sense of national degeneration, in the wake of the War and the Commune. During the early 1870s, the government relied heavily on the Imperial decree of 1851 that placed all drinking establishments under the direct control and supervision of the prefects of police giving them the right to immediately shut down any establishment suspected of political orientation or engagement. The 1870s also witnessed the passage of the first law against public drunkenness and in the debates that preceded the law, the Commune figured prominently.

A number of temperance societies were founded which sent missionaries into the working-class districts of Paris to advocate against drinking and in favor of conforming to the social norms of the Moral Order. While there were some figures that sought to look beyond the simplistic explanation of alcoholism as the cause of the social unrest demonstrated during the Commune, the majority of Parisians and French broadly adhered to the curtailment of freedoms and supported the conservative social turn, specifically in light of the Commune.

Contemporary writers, psychologists, social scientists, and conservative politicians in this period tended to view the Communards as an irrational crowd eager to

109 Haine, p. 12.
express violent and unfounded hostility. For example, there is a strong analytical proximity between, Taine’s account of the Revolution which he chose to analyze only after the experience of the Commune, and contemporary social science theories of crowd behavior, working-class alcoholism and violent women. Only a small minority chose to show a more nuanced view of the Parisian working class.

Emile Zola wrote *L’Assommoire* in 1876, which solidified his place in France’s literary community. He chose to write this story after becoming radicalized by the politics and social mores of the Moral Order. Zola’s intention was to expose the nuanced reality of working-class lives as dependent upon heredity and milieu. This was at a time when the ultra-conservative Moral Order regime consistently raised the specter of the Commune and assimilated it to the supposed bestial ravings of an unfortunately enfranchised population in an effort to thwart the republicans’ electoral advance. Conversely, according to Zola, whose political sympathies were solidly republican and increasingly Radical, the Commune was “a futile, hopelessly idealistic rebellion of those who had ‘real’ and ‘serious’ grievances.” This view assimilated neatly with the republican assessment, especially the Radicals’. However, Zola’s tragically realist depiction of the rise of the anti-heroine, Gervaise Macquart, and her fatal descent into the

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110 Barrows, *Distorting Mirrors*, Op. cit., p. 74: “Upon completing De l’Intelligence, Taine had expressed the hope that if his health and stamina endured, he would next examine ‘the emotions and the will’. Other things intervened…the spectacle of the Commune—to which Taine was a witness—prompted him to change his subject to ‘contemporary France’ and its nefarious origins.” Barrows cites Hippolyte Taine, *Sa vie et sa correspondance*, Hachette, Paris 1905, « Letter to Mme. H. Taine, » April 4, 1871, p. 90.

111 *L’Assommoir* was serialized in *Le Bien public* in 1876 and published as a novel of the Rougon-Macquart series in 1877.

abyss of alcoholism projected a sense of inevitable debauchery associated with poverty. This included alcoholism and general waywardness. As a result, it unwittingly perpetuated notions of working-class depravity and defeatism, thereby helping to perpetuate the Third Republic’s general lack of ameliorating social legislation. The analysis of medical professionals, such as Dr. Lunier, Zola’s literary efforts, Taine’s pseudo-scientific historical analysis, and the emergence of formal crowd psychology and sociology theories were significantly generated as part of the anti-Commune legacy. They were part of, and validations for, a wider and politically motivated effort to understand, control, and manipulate “the crowd” following the seeming depravity of the lower classes attributed to the Commune. This was hastened by the fact that the (frightful) masses were politically activated through universal-male suffrage.

The Commune as a Political Pawn: social control and early amnesty politics

After 1871, the specter of the Commune was consistently raised as a legitimating source for initiatives designed to control voters and the social life of the nation. Writing in June 1871, Jules Favre, a conservative republican and Thiers’ Minister of Foreign Affairs, wrote that it was not enough to detest the Commune and to prosecute the Communards, it was essential “to introduce into the laws the severities which social necessity demands and to apply these laws without weakness are novelties to which
France must resign herself. For her, it is a matter of safety.” This statement from a republican Minister (albeit conservative) goes far in illuminating republican political complicity with the restrictive social policies of the Theirs, and especially, the MacMahon regimes. Throughout the 1870s, restrictions on the public sphere came after lengthy debates which included repeated references to the Commune and the Communards.

Once the Thiers government took control of the capital city, a series of measures were initiated in an attempt to restore order and maintain control. In addition to maintaining Martial Law, in place since the Prussian siege, throughout France, Thiers initiated a purge of all public establishments that had supported the Communards or that allowed denigrating remarks against the government. Police prefects were thus charged with the surveillance and repression of all sites wherein “obscene songs, smutty sketches, and all other items that might compromise morals or the public order” where tolerated. On August 7, 1871, Thiers introduced a bill making membership in the International Workingmen’s Association a crime. This became law after it was strongly recommended in the report made by the Commission of Inquiry on the causes of the Commune which cited it as the chief culprit in the spread of socialist ideas through free press, popular sovereignty, and public education. On December 28 of the same year, a decree banned any materials that might disturb the public, and this opened the door to severe press

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113 Journal officiel de la République française, June 1871, 1259 : 1 (cited as Journal officiel hereafter).
114 Archives Nationales, F7 12705 – 6.
115 National Assembly, Années, Volume IX, p. 88.
regulation. That February, in light of the parallel identity of Communard and alcoholics, the National Assembly enacted the first French law against public drunkenness; with “a complex gradation of fines for each new infraction, [which] gave the police a means of minutely monitoring working-class café behavior.”

After MacMahon became president in May of 1873, a more stringent curfew on drinking establishments was added to the martial law already in place. MacMahon went on to maintain martial law in 42 of France’s 90 departments throughout his presidency and refused to lift it during times of election, despite the Prussian occupying forces having set an example of this during the National Assembly election of February 1871. Republican politicians and journalists were opposed to these restrictions and some of them voiced concern, most notably Victor Hugo who refers to these measures in the introduction to his collection of poems, *L’année terrible*. Republicans largely complied with the restrictions in the effort to position their image as being the best representatives of order and stability, especially in the eyes of rural voters, as they set their sights on the Moral Order’s defeat through electoral conquest. Once republicans secured political control over the Republic, they undid much of the work of the Moral Order but for most

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117 This meant closure between 8 and 9 P.M., in the countryside and 10 or 11 P.M., in most cities. For a detailed account of the purging of cafes and bars during the Moral Order period in relation to the specter of the Commune see Susanna Barrows, “Parliaments of the People: The Political Culture of Cafes in the early Third Republic,” in Susanna Barrows and Robin Room eds., Drinking Behavior and Belief in Modern History, University of California Press, Berkeley 1991, p. 89.
118 Victor Hugo, *L’année terrible*, Eugène Hugues, Paris 1872. In his introduction, Hugo wrote: “Martial law is part of that Terrible Year, and it still reigns… the moment will pass. We have the Republic; we will have liberty.”
119 These electoral conquests are analyzed throughout each of the following chapters.
of the decade their focus was on obtaining that power and here too the legacies of the Commune, specifically the issue of Communard-amnesty, played an important role.

Official attempts to amnesty the Communards began to be made by members of the National Assembly as early as September 1871. Amnesty proponents reasoned that it would be far more comprehensive than a pardon because the latter would leave those not yet apprehended, due to their self-exile, un-protected and therefore still problematic for the life of the nation. Furthermore, pardon implied guilt and for the most progressive pro-amnesty proponents, such as Georges Clemenceau and Louis Blanc, this was unacceptable. The first amnesty bill was introduced by Henri Brisson, a committed adherent of the republican Left and was signed by forty-eight members of the republican opposition. Brisson’s argument to the National Assembly in support of his measure involved the following rhetoric: “is it only in France… that liberal governments do not feel sure enough of themselves to clear the atmosphere by forgetting about our differences?”120 Such a question highlights the insecurity of the early Republic, a fact that would lead to continual efforts to renegotiate the memory of its contentious origins. At the same time, it was misleading because each time the issue of amnesty was brought before the political consciousness of France controversial memories of the Commune were resurrected.

On all sides, the issue of amnesty was not about forgetting the past; but rather using public memory to legitimatize one agenda over another. Conservative republicans

including Adolphe Thiers and Jules Simon and the forces of the Moral Order consistently rejected amnesty, citing the threat returning Communards posed to the Republic and to the social order. Politicians of the Moral Order such as Eugène Caillaux, Duc de Broglie, and Camille de Meaux, used the various amnesty proposals to validate their claims that social and political calamity was always just a republican vote away from disrupting France once again. It fit the bill for their political messaging through which they sought to maintain electoral consent to govern and even to restore a monarchy if and when the right moment presented itself.

For the Moral Order government, the Commune became a rhetorical symbol for the threat that the working classes seemed to pose for order and morality. Amnesty was resisted in-part because to absolve the Communards of guilt for criminal offenses, would deprive the men of the Moral Order of a powerful fear-based political weapon. If the Communards became citizens and the Commune forgiven, much of the legitimacy of the Moral Order might be effaced. The issue of amnesty, for the monarchist conservatives ultimately became an integral campaign tool. Conservatives solicited votes among the anti-Communard constituents by consistently assimilating republicans with the Communards and arguing that any republican electoral success “threatened the very foundations of present society… [it would necessarily herald a return] to the acclamations of amphsted supporters of the Commune.”

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121 Duc de Broglie, originally quoted in Mayeur and Rebérioux, p. 18. He is specifically arguing against any victory for republicans during the 1873 elections by-elections for the National Assembly.
Throughout MacMahon’s regime, monarchists on all sides relied on the specter of the Commune in their political machinations. Any association with the Commune or support for amnesty provided the politicians of the Moral Order with leverage that could be used to circumvent the mounting electoral support for republicans. For example, upon being appointed Prime Minister, under MacMahon’s presidency, Duc de Broglie, took advantage of press laws still in effect from the Second Empire to prosecute Assembly member Arthur Ranc, a journalist briefly sitting in the government of the Commune before excusing himself, in less than a month, in opposition to the Commune’s revolutionary ambitions. Having already been elected to the National Assembly in February of 1871 the Radical deputy for Lyon was targeted in June 1873. Ranc was denied parliamentary immunity, tried for having participated in the Commune and ultimately given a death sentence, though he prudently fled to Brussels before being arrested. A similar a fate and course of action transpired for his fellow deputy Melvil-Bloncourt in 1874. For conservatives and their constituencies, social order was being preserved and the political status quo being restored by stamping out any remains of the Communards, even amongst members of the government, not by amnestying them; on the contrary, by prosecuting them as criminals.

This was a tactic reliant upon the conservative narration of the Commune as a criminal insurrection and how it had menaced the nascent regime and French society. In a report for the National Assembly that definitively ended all debates on amnesty in May 1874, Emile Carron argued that amnesty was out of the question that it would only
“encourage unhealthy ambitions, inspire the déclassé with culpable expectations, [and] revive criminal hopes everywhere.”122 In response to the committee’s calls to end the period of arrests and prosecution by court martial, he cited that “the record of the military courts was excellent; and the special Commission on Pardons was doing its work conscientiously and thoroughly, so that amnestying was, in fact going on all the time.”123

For republicans, the issue of amnesty, much like the Commune itself, exposed major rifts that had been in development since 1789. The schism within the republican camp was fundamentally an issue regarding the role of the state. Essentially there were two republican agendas, one that was liberal and proposed a laissez-faire state and the social-democratic side that sought an interventionist state. The liberals (i.e., conservatives and moderates) maintained that once a Republic and its accompanying institutions of free press, assembly, and secular education were secure, social and economic problems would naturally be ameliorated. The Radical republicans demanded an interventionist state that would enforce the egalitarian nature that both sides claimed to support.

The experience of the Terror had stained the term “Republic” with connotations of violent radicalism, and the June Days of 1848 added to this the stigma of working-class militancy. The Second Empire inadvertently renewed support for a liberal Republic by strengthening the material and social security of the middle class and subduing organized labor, while at the same time suppressing the political freedoms that the invigorated middle class wanted: freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and

122 National Assembly, Annèxes, Volume XXXI, pp. 436 – 49.
123 Ibid.
unfettered universal male suffrage. By 1871, the schism between republicans was so deep that their only point of unity was the emergence and survival of the Third Republic. The republican division over the orientation of the Republican State, which had been an important factor in the outbreak of the Commune, resurfaced during the political battles of the early 1870s, including those in which the issue of amnesty played more than a symbolic role.

Amnesty was a problematic topic for Moderate republicans, who consistently won the majority of republican electoral victories. The Moderates, led by Léon Gambetta, assessed exonerating the Communards as a serious risk because it could alienate the rural vote, which they knew was vital for the Republic’s survival. Furthermore, it threatened to endanger their establishment of a liberal Republic by paving the way for the reappearance of the most extreme-Left candidates. In the latter half of the decade, the idea of an amnesty began to gain support among French voters, notably in the provinces—and not just the historically Radical strongholds of Lyon and Marseilles. In Paris, the momentum was most apparent after the Radicals’ general election campaign of 1876.\(^{124}\) It then became a major topic of debate in subsequent elections. Whenever amnesty was discussed, the Radicals insisted that such an act could provide valuable healing for a divided nation. They contended that it would mend the wounds of the past and enable

\(^{124}\) This growing support is reflected in the steady electoral gains made by the Radical republicans (who specifically campaigned on the issue throughout the 1870s) and in the surveillance reports that describe popular opinion in support of amnesty as having gained traction: “The question of amnesty, at least partially, has gained some momentum, especially in the presence of the resolute attitude of the Radicals.” APP, Ba 464, « Commune de Paris » (Année 1876) Amnestie, file 66, Paris March 9, 1876.
everyone to move into the new era as a united, republican nation. No matter how often they cited such eloquent goals, however, amnesty was above all a means of drawing and identifying political lines.

The issue became a matter of opportunity for the Moderates. Indeed, this republican faction was ultimately labeled “Opportunist” because of its fluctuating stance on amnesty. An article published in 1876 in the Left-leaning newspaper *Les Droits de l’homme* identifies the political choices offered to French voters at the time: Legitimists, Orleanists, Bonapartists, and Republicans. However, the author (himself a refugee Communard-supporter) asserts that the voters actually have another option: to side with the Opportunist, “that tender-hearted candidate who, deeply touched by the evils of the civil war and full of solicitude for the families it has deprived of their means of support, declares that he is a partisan of an amnesty, but that he reserves to himself the right to vote it ‘at the opportune time.’”¹²⁵ This is an accurate assessment of the Opportunist republican stance on amnesty throughout the 1870s—one that the career of Léon Gambetta exemplifies.

Gambetta, who was considered a Radical of the Jacobin tradition during the Second Empire, served as the Minister of War and the Interior in 1870 and 1871. He retreated from France following the monarchists’ victory in the February 1871 elections and while the Commune was in control of Paris, and vociferously denounced the regime during and after its suppression. His political acrobatics regarding the issue of amnesty

¹²⁵ *Les Droits de l’homme*, February 11, 1876.
provide the best representation of Opportunism in this period. After 1871, Gambetta assumed a position of neutrality on the matter, never taking a definitive stance in his campaign speeches or in his newspaper, *La République française*. Pro-amnesty supporters generally assumed that Gambetta was against amnesty, at least while the republicans were in pursuit of full political control. His political opponents on the Left frequently leveled this accusation against him. Gambetta’s refusal to clarify his position reveals the growing support for amnesty among solidly republican voters and his understanding that openly supporting it could alienate rural voters. He urged his fellow republicans to avoid the topic during the campaigns of 1876. Even after the Radicals proposed delaying the amnesty that they had promised during their campaign—with the tacit agreement that the Opportunists would support it—Gambetta and his followers remained mute. After taking his seat in the Chamber of Deputies, he abstained from voting or registering an opinion on the two amnesty bills that the Radicals Hugo and F.V. Raspail simultaneously introduced in the newly elected Senate and Chamber on March

126 See APP, Ba 464 Commune de Paris (1871), Amnestie : files 64 – 68 for police reports on political debates in which Gambetta’s equivocation was discussed; *Les Droits de l’homme*, March 15, 1876 regarding his dispute with amnesty supporters and fellow Deputies Georges Clemenceau, Edouard Lockroy, and Olivier Ordinaire; and *La République française*, March 24 1876 for the Gambetta’s editorial piece that explicitly demonstrates his ambiguous position.

127 APP, Ba 464, file 61, Rapport du Préfet de Police, February 25, 1876 : « Les députés de Paris (radicaux) veulent tenir leur promesse de déposer tout de suite une proposition d’amnistie. Les modérés essayent de les dissuader tout au moins d’ajourner. Les radicaux consentons si ’on promet d’appuyer la demande à l’époque convenue ; mais les modérés refusent de s’engager… ». The Chamber election returned a clear Republican majority (340 to 155 for the combined votes; of the 371 Republican wins, 98 were for the Radicals). As in the Senate, Opportunists dominated the republican wins. Clearly Gambetta’s politics were effective.
21, 1876.\textsuperscript{128} His silence was deafening for the prospect of amnesty. By the mid-1870s, Gambetta’s politics were firmly and unapologetically in the liberal camp, and he was in full pursuit of the rural vote. This meant that he doggedly tried to avoid the topic of amnesty, which the Radicals carried on their mastheads.

Radical candidates framed their political messages within the context of confidence in a social-democratic Republic that was inclusive of French citizens from all points of the spectrum. The issue of amnesty fit well within that framework. In addition, many of the Radicals had strong relationships with the Communards, some having even briefly participated in the event. In this burgeoning era of mass politics, the Radical message engendered the sustained support of their working-class constituencies, which the men of the Moral Order feared and detested. By advocating on behalf of amnesty for the Communards, Radicals were also able to dilute some of the attraction that socialism continued to hold within the urban strongholds of Paris, Lyon, and Marseilles. This became particularly important after 1877, as Socialist candidates began to make serious electoral bids with some success, especially in the symbolic sense.

The Commission of Inquiry into the causes of the Paris Commune had explicitly linked the event to the internationalist Left. The Socialists received this association positively and cultivated it throughout the 1870s. Their involvement in the Paris Commune, which the public generally viewed as a Socialist uprising, afforded them an

\textsuperscript{128} In 1876, Raspail was an eighty-two year old Radical deputy representing Marseilles. He was a veteran of the revolutions of 1830 and 1848, and mostly recently sentenced to two years imprisonment in 1874 for printing “politically objectionable” material: a eulogy for Charles Delescluze (a fellow-veteran of 1848 and a leader in the Paris Commune who died fighting in the last week).
enduring celebrity that was enmeshed in stories of proletarian bravery and martyrdom in the face of the overwhelming force of the Versailles (i.e., the bourgeois) Government. This image translated into political purchase among urban workers, particularly in local elections after 1877. In London, Brussels, and Switzerland, Communards formed refugee societies as early as the fall of 1871 in order to aid each other in exile and to provide relief for those captured and deported by the Republic. Throughout the 1870s, they published a variety of attacks against the Versailles Government of Thiers, President MacMahon, and the timidity of republicans on the issue of amnesty. Many times, this meant denouncing republicans as charlatans for cultivating working-class votes based on their support for amnestying the same Communards with whom they had refused to join arms in 1871.

Even for this diverse group of the extreme-Left, however, amnesty was a controversial topic. Early on, a sense of unity existed among the surviving Communards on the subject of amnesty. Elisée Réclus, an anarchist participant in the Commune, expresses this harmony aptly in a letter he wrote to his wife while in hiding (prior to his ultimate arrest): “I wish to be only as free as my comrades, without any conditions, and without my wounded honor’s being compromised…. I will not be indebted to generosity for my freedom.”129 The united front that many Communards initially expressed unraveled as time progressed. In 1872, division began to surface, specifically over disagreements as to why the Commune had failed, leading exiled Communards such as

Bernard Landeck to cry: “No amnesty for those who would again compromise the people by their divisions and their malice... for all the leaders of the vanquished Revolution... for the inept leaders who lost the Revolution!”\textsuperscript{130} In fact, some Communards urged their compatriots to reject an amnesty altogether. They argued that the government of Versailles had no right to grant such a thing, declaring that that very words “grace, amnesty, [and] clemency repulse us because for us, they are synonymous with treason.”\textsuperscript{131}

Despite such divisions, these groups had an important impact on the elections and campaigns for amnesty that took place throughout the 1870s, thereby influencing the political development of Republican France. For the most part, the exiled Communards lent an important element of support to the Radicals, especially during the 1876 elections. Their persistence in reaching out to voters within France through risky public speeches and the transmission of their publications from abroad gave the surviving Communards a voice in the nation’s affairs. This provided an acutely emotional factor to the amnesty campaigns that the Radicals led during the decade. It elevated the appeal for amnesty beyond the rationale of confidence in the French nation; amnesty became a moral imperative that elicited genuine sympathy for the exiles and their families among a growing segment of the French electorate. This mounting compassion is an important, yet commonly underestimated, factor in the demise of the Moral Order.

\textsuperscript{130} La Fédération, journal révolutionnaire, socialiste, française – anglaise, London, September 28, 1872. La Fédération was a newspaper published in French and English by Communards in exile in London.”

Gambetta’s avoidance of the amnesty issue was infuriating but ultimately useful for the Radical republicans. In the general elections of 1876, it enabled them to differentiate themselves from their political opponents on the far-Left, who were still recovering from defeat and living mostly in exile. The two amnesty bills of 1876 were the first items on the agenda when the Chambers reconvened after the Easter recess. Unsurprisingly, they sparked vigorous debates. In the Chamber, Radical Republican Georges Clemenceau delivered an impassioned parliamentary speech in support of these latest attempts:

The people whom you are afraid of alarming, will be sufficiently reassured if you tell them that there is nothing to be alarmed about in the amnesty. But if your politics are hesitant and uncertain, if you are only half successful, when you present yourselves before the electors in 1880, the year to which the monarchists will postpone the elections, your opponents will not lack the political ammunition to use against you even if you have refused the amnesty a hundred times. I ask you to have confidence in your country, I ask you to have confidence in yourselves; you cannot give more striking proof of confidence in yourselves and in your stature than by voting for the amnesty…. I ask you to take account at the same time of the so-called lower classes, who must also be reconciled and conciliated. I tell you that it is only through the reconciliation of all classes and all citizens that you will achieve the social peace we all want. 132

By striking a conciliatory tone to advocate on behalf of the amnesty, Clemenceau was able to satisfy his constituents in the working-class district of Montmartre by validating their need for recognition as accepted and important members of the citizenry. He also

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placed his political opponents on the defensive: he not only equated a vote against amnesty to a lack of confidence in the Republic, but also angled for the support of the more affluent classes by framing his appeal in terms of social peace.

Both amnesty bills of 1876 were soundly defeated that May. Despite the impassioned pleas of the Radicals and even a petition drive to drum up voter support, the members of the Chamber overwhelmingly voted against it (392 to 50, with 58 abstentions), and the Senate rejected it almost unanimously.\footnote{The petition was organized by the newspapers \textit{Les Droits de l’homme} and \textit{Le Rappel}.} The failure of the bills on March 18 and May 22 coincided with the anniversaries of the proclamation of the Commune and the Bloody Week. This was no accident; Hugo, who proposed it in the Senate, had purposefully chosen this date for its poignancy. Yet his decision backfired because it only increased the radical tenor of the idea, which made the Opportunists even more leery of supporting it.\footnote{APP, Ba 464, file 71, Rapport du Préfet de Police, March 13, 1876.} Although only the most naïve of spectators had believed the bills would pass, their defeat was bitterly received by voters who had gone to the polls specifically to elect candidates campaigning on amnesty.\footnote{Ibid., file, 119 May 23, 1876.} Over time, these disappointments grew into a mass movement with sufficient electoral influence to bring a Radical Republic into existence in 1899. But this eventuality was never certain and, in the interim, other proposals would prevail. The lesson that amnesty supporters took from the 1876 votes was that the issue required the support of the majority of French voters, which
they could gain only through clever presentation and an amelioration of the controversies surrounding the Commune’s legacies.

Amnesty was a defining issue for politicians from all sides of the spectrum and was one of the many factors that influenced the emergence and character of the Moderate republican regime. The quest to ensure the survival of the Republic and the conflict regarding its orientation meant a continuous battle over its heritage and contemporary image. The Third Republic was established in an age of mass political participation—one in which politicians and social scientists were keenly aware of the vicissitudes of the populace and their potential to bring great power or great peril. In this era, the media began to foretell reality. In both the civic and cultural life of the early Third Republic, political actors of all ideologies continuously strove to narrate the past, each in an attempt to influence the present and the future. Thus, the historicizing of the Commune was inextricably tied to important contests over controlling its interpretation and its legacies.
CHAPTER 2: VISIONS OF THE PAST

The politicians of the early Third Republic realized that they would have to employ new techniques in response to the nationwide expansion in political participation and the increasingly important role of the French media. The stories and images that the media passed along to the people could dramatically sway voter allegiance. Thus, each of the major political parties of the 1870s seized any opportunity to convince the citizenry that their interpretations of the past were the most accurate and that their plans for the nation’s future were the most desirable. In particular, they sought to control memories of the Commune and its defeat, which held great emotional currency in a Republic that was still reeling from those events. Photographic representations and reflective monographs proved to be very effective tools in the effort to historicize the Commune.

This chapter analyzes the imaging of the Paris Commune by examining the profusion of photographs and historical narratives that flooded the consumer market both during the regime and soon after its downfall. The first section focuses on the proliferation of photographs of the Communards and the Commune’s dramatic last week, with an emphasis on the divergent narratives they imparted, consumer interest in them, and the politics behind the government’s eventual decision to suppress their sale. In the nineteenth century [especially after the events of 1870–1871], photography became a means of witnessing and reflecting “the social and political values and history of
France.” Both anti-Communards such as Eugène Appert and more neutral contemporaries like André-Alphonse Eugène Disdéri produced and published these photos, and the images they captured reflect their differing assessments of the regime and its downfall. Similarly, consumers collected them for disparate reasons: as cherished images of heroism; as dangerous revolutionary propaganda; or as graphic displays of savagery and barbarism that condemned the insurrection and forewarned against any future attempts of that nature.

The authorities understood the importance of these interpretations, and their censorship of Commune-related photographs reflects their desire to control the memories of the event. Anti-Commune images, which often depicted the Commune’s execution of hostages or the incendiary destruction of Parisian buildings, homes, and monuments, were considered useful sources of visual propaganda. The government hoped that such pictures would validate the severity of the Commune’s suppression and serve as a didactic tool to discourage any lingering support for the insurrection, thereby mitigating the perpetuation of its legacy. However, as it became clear that these photographs were popular and cherished commodities of Commune sympathizers, their potential dangers began to outweigh their benefits. Officials responded by forbidding their sale in an effort to efface the memory of the Commune—much like their attempt to erase its physical legacy by reconstructing Paris’ damaged monuments and buildings.

While these photographs had the mere potential to influence public opinion, the published histories of the Commune were specifically written with such an agenda in mind. The second section of this chapter examines the multiplicity of historical narratives published by both the anti-Commune historians, such as Maxime du Camp, and the Communards themselves, including Hippolyte Prosper Olivier Lissagaray. This section gives specific attention to the privileging of the anti-Commune perspective within France and the efforts of the defeated regime’s partisans to combat this message. The propagation of this viewpoint took place not only through published histories, but also through campaign speeches and Assembly debates involving the issue of amnesty. The French press reprinted these speeches and debates, which significantly increased their power. The anti-Commune narrative characterized the Communards as barbaric, criminal, and alcoholic malcontents whose insurrection was without political purpose or validity. Conservatives were not alone in spreading this opinion. Moderate republicans, sometimes tacitly and often overtly, used it to defend themselves against the conservatives, who had launched a rhetorical campaign that linked the republicans to the Communards in an attempt to subvert the Republic in favor of a restoration. Conversely, the veritable neglect of pro-Commune histories by republican politicians and intellectuals—especially the Radicals, who were in the vanguard of the movement to provide amnesty to the Communards during the early 1870s—assisted, inadvertently or not, in the privileging of the anti-Commune perspective.

Taken together, these sections enable an analysis of the competing political viewpoints and agendas operating during the Republic’s foundation years, which were
submerged within the photographs and historical narratives of the time and employed by a myriad of political leaders in their quest to actualize their goals for France’s future. During its first decade, the Third Republic’s survival was far from certain. Rival political factions with widely different objectives were battling for control of the Republic. The conservative majority in the National Assembly, composed of monarchical and imperial aspirants, was intent upon ending the Republic and restoring the monarchy. Republicans, both Moderate and Radical, were united in their desire to secure the Republic’s longevity but divided over the character the Republic would assume if it survived. For each of the political groups, the photographs and histories of the nation’s recent traumas provided opportunities for political gain while posing risks to their endeavors.

To accomplish their goals, the Legitimists, Orleanists, Moderates, and Radicals all propagated competing national foundation narratives that reflected their divergent assessments of France’s political history, including the Paris Commune. The conservatives employed negative photographic and monographic representations of the event to bolster their efforts to justify the Commune’s severe repression, to link the identities of the Communards with that of the republicans, and to prevent the passage of a general amnesty. For the republicans, the very assessment of the Commune was a source of great division; the Moderates and the Radicals took divergent stances on the revolutionary past and the Republic’s fulfillment of revolutionary ideals. The Commune acted as a foil in these disputes, which was particularly problematic for the Moderates. During the 1870s, the Moderate republicans were intent upon generating a new image for themselves—one that positioned the group as the guarantors of order and national
prosperity. Photographs of destroyed public and private property and historical narrations of debauched, alcohol-fueled republican revolutionaries posed a substantial threat to maintaining that modern image. The Moderates were therefore quite willing to downplay such accounts and to censor such photographs.

In the wake of France’s defeat in the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune, political identities were being reformulated and solidified. As each of the factions vied for a majority of the national electorate’s allegiance, the politicians and writers of the time considered photographic and historical recollections of the nation’s recent upheavals to be highly influential in terms of public opinion. Thus, contemporary political exigencies informed the treatment of these commodities: their sanction or censure, and their celebration or marginalization. As varying groups fought over the survival and the character of the Republic, the regime’s heritage and contemporary image remained in constant dispute. The photographs and histories generated during and immediately after the Commune preserve this battle in striking detail.

Camera Obscura: Visions of the Commune and its Legacy

The determination to record the Paris Commune, for posterity’s judgment and contemporary influence, began with photographs taken while the event was unfolding and after its suppression. Throughout the period of the Commune, numerous photographs were made of Communards mounting their barricades. Baudelaire famously hated photography, citing it was artifice, not art and many agreed that the photographers’
presence during the Commune was itself an appeal to the baser elements of society. Anti-Commune social analysts, such as Maxime du Camp, sneered at such acts, concluding that the Communards couldn’t resist the vain impulse to record their deeds, and then “as insignificant actors,” view themselves again in the faded fineries of their successful role.\footnote{Maxime du Camp, \textit{Les Convulsions de Paris}, Vol. II, “Episodes of the Commune,” Hachette, Paris 1879, p. 328.} Apparently the impulse to review the spectacle of the Commune was also prolific, “contemporary accounts had them cluttering the windows of engraving and stationary stores [and] displayed proudly over the mantelpieces of homes in the \textit{faubourgs}.”\footnote{Jeanne M. Przbyski, “Revolution at a Standstill: Photography and the Paris Commune of 1871,” \textit{Yale French Studies}, No. 101, 2001 p. 55. See also Du Camp, \textit{Les Convulsions de Paris} Vol. II, Op. cit., p. 328.} For the most part these were staged reenactments or foreshadowing of the actual moments of defense and insurgency, a fact that undermines the contemporary assumption that they could be used by historians of the Commune as factual documentation.\footnote{Ernest Lacan, « Le Moniteur de la photographie: revue international des progrès du nouvel art, » October 16, 1871. Source originally located in Wilson, Op. cit., p. 118. Wilson aptly highlights that Lacan not only saw historical utility in these photographs, but also how they would be “a very useful aid for future generations in the teaching of moral lessons.”} Nevertheless, photographic images of the Commune and Communards are an incredibly rich source of commentary and like the Commune exists poignantly at the juncture between France’s revolutionary past and the Republic’s turn toward the modern age.
Figure I. Anonymous, Barricade 18 March 1871.

Figure II. André Adolphe Eugène Disdéri, Destruction of the Vendôme Column during the Paris Commune, May 1871.
The images above are three of the most indelible of the Communards. The first conveys their prideful intransigence during the outbreak of the Commune, the second depicts them in a moment of revelry just after destroying the Vendôme Column, and the third graphically displays their uninspiring demise in May of 1871. In addition to pictures of the insurgents, there were also images of the supposed extreme destructiveness of the Communards.
In their recollections, the Communards frequently vacillated between two positions. On the one hand, they defended the actions of accused incendiaries by insisting that these fires were a military tactic used during a very real war. On the other, they blamed the
government of Versailles for setting most of the blazes as a means of hiding their penetration into the city and their ferreting out of survivors.

This discrepancy hints at the multiplicity of interpretations that Commune-era photographs could validate. For the anti-Communards, this presented a narrative opportunity for condemnation of the event and justification for its awful suppression. Likewise, the photographs were potentially risky because of the same measure of narrative assistance that could be used by Communard sympathizers in their efforts to mitigate the negation of the ill-fated event and to defend its partisans. Prior to the Commune’s defeat, both types of photographs, insurgents and landscapes, were already in circulation. Indeed, both sides, the Communards and the government of Versailles, used these images for propagandistic and logistical support. For the Communards, many of the photographs enabled a search for fallen comrades and self-revelatory impressions of the power they had been able to wield. For the government of Versailles, the images enabled the capture of numerous insurgents after the deluge of the *Semaine sanglante* and served as a galvanizing weapon of propaganda to sustain anti-Communard sentiments as the Versailles troops re-took the city. During, and especially after the Commune, these photographs were considered incredibly influential by the authorities at Versailles and their detractors who began to rebuild their lives in Paris or forge new ones in exile. This was a new medium for propaganda and historical documentation, and its emerging use as a tool of war, whether tactical or ideological, was only just becoming apparent.
The photographs of the Commune preserve the event and the participants engaging in insurgency and well-rehearsed revolutionary street theater. The Commune was, after all, a self-conscious restaging of the revolutionary tradition and an effort to bring many of the unfinished goals of 1793 and 1848 to fruition. Communard photographs, like those of the American Civil War, were among the first attempts to document history in the eye of the beholder. Not only did many insurgents take an opportunity to pose for posterity, but the government of the Commune in Paris employed photographers as a means to investigate the identity of fallen national guards men and the “authorities of Versailles made photography profitable in the identification and documentation of the Communards’ operations.” The Communards’ choice to record their actions and intentions with the emerging technology of photography is salient. It underscores the universal desire for the insurgent to be unequivocally acknowledged and the representational politics of both the barricade and the photograph. By taking a stand in front of the lens, the Communards were not only enjoying the novelty of the modern age’s new technology, they were also instantly recording a memoire and their historical moment; a choice that had mortal consequences for many of them long after the semaine sanglante. For the Versailles Government, the utility of the photograph for social control was immediately recognized. As Maxime du Camp conceded, “the experience in

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140 Interestingly, it is well documented that the photographs of fallen soldiers of the American Civil War were often counterfeited as images of fallen Communards.
142 Przybyski, p. 62.
this regard was not in vain,” from that time on, a photographic studio was installed at the Prefecture of Police.\textsuperscript{143} The legacy of these images exists in the politics involved in narrating the Commune during the early Third Republic and the foundation of the modern police mug shot.

After the Commune’s suppression in May 1871, Ernest Eugène Appert gained exclusive rights to reproduction in exchange for photographing Communards as they were processed in the Versailles prisons. In this capacity, Appert recorded famous and often cherished images of Louis Michel, Félix Pyat, and Louis Rossel among hundreds of others.\textsuperscript{144}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{image}
\caption{Figure VI. Appert, Louise Michel.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{144} For surviving Communards and their families, the photographs of their fallen comrades would have been cherished commodities indeed. Louise Michel is known to have always carried Appert’s image of her friend Marie Ferré.
Taking his lens beyond the prison yards, Appert recreated some of the more horrific moments of the Commune and its aftermath. In his 1871 series *Crimes de la Commune*, Appert staged a number of scenes designed specifically to promote the anti-Commune perspective of the conservative government. These included the execution of Archbishop Darboy and other hostages and the executions of some of the more notorious Communards, including Louis Rossel, using hired actors and then pasting the photographed faces of the real persons into place; even gluing “a tiny white blindfold” over the eyes of Rossel’s image taken in the prison yard just a few months prior. In Appert’s *Crimes of the Commune* series, he provided visual images of some of the most scorned factors of the Commune.

Figure VII. Appert, *Crimes de la Commune*: Assassination of 62 hostages, 26 May 1871 at 5 (in the evening), 83 and 85 rue Haxo, Belleville.

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145 Przybyski, p. 67.
For example, in Figure VII above, the crowd of executioners includes women, highly armed and in position for the kill, giving a visual to the wide-spread derision against the Commune’s collapse of traditional gendered social divisions and alluding to dreaded persona of the pétroleuse. Moreover, as Figures VIII demonstrates, Appert’s photographs not only recorded the initial violence meted out to the captured Communards, but are themselves a re-perpetration of that violence and shrewdly demonstrate the proportional threat that would be incurred by future insurgents. These photographs were among the
post-Commune commodities to be purchased by consumers still craning their necks at the wreckage of the recent past.146

While Appert’s work clearly sustained the anti-Communard critique of the event as both horrifying and defeated, others were less clear. The photographs of fallen Communards, many of which were published anonymously, and those of André-Alphonse Eugène Disdéri (figure III above), the Désastres de la guerre series by J. Andrieu, and the 109 photographs taken by Bruno Braquehais, which were bound into an album for commercial sale, were often considered to be objective documentation, if not “propaganda, which generally denounced the reprisals against the Communards.”147

146 The Musée Carnavalet in Paris has a very small display of images and souvenirs from the Commune consisting of Archbishop Darboy’s posthumous painting and a number of bricks and stones inscribed with “Vive la Commune” that were purportedly barricade-souvenirs. They are acutely reminiscent of the commodification of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, yet they are not dated or described in terms of their acquisition and origin and therefore not included for analysis in this chapter; however they do indicate other areas of research yet to be pursued in terms of the memory, legacy, and the commodification of the Commune.

147 Swinnan, P. 36. It is important to note that J. Andrieu the photographer was not the same person as Jules Andrieu the Communard who, after Semaine sanglante fled to London and returned to France in the 1880s taking an active role in Gambetta’s ministry and died in 1884.
Figure IX. Anonymous, Chapel of the Tuileries (Palace) after the fire.

Figure X. J. Andrieu, Desasters of the war, The Tuileries, main façade, 1871.
Figure XI. Braquehais, Vendôme Column after its Destruction, 1871.

Figure XII. Young victims of the Versailles: two dead children, Phothèque des musées de la ville de Paris, France.
The difference in these photographs versus those of Appert’s is not only conveyed by the images the photographers chose to capture, but also, in the titles of their series, whereas Appert chose *Crimes de la Commune*, for example, J. Andrieu’s *Desastres de la Guerre* demonstrates impartiality and a sense of the overarching trauma endured by Parisians between 1870-1871, in other words *l’Année terrible* in its entirety and does not single out the Commune for rebuke.

The images of the destroyed buildings, dead children, and the pre-defeat joviality of the Communards imparted a vastly different characterization of the Communards and the event. In Braquehais’ numerous group photographs of the Communards, a sense of gaiety is displayed. In figure XI, for example, the men in the upper left corner appear happy, even welcoming, the shaking of hands by the men just below displays fraternal camaraderie, and the comingling of men from different socio-economic milieus complicates the anti-Commune characterization of the insurgents as working-class imbeciles. The inclusion of the children in the photograph’s right-center hardly supports the anti-Commune characterization of alcoholic savages any more than the matronly woman to their right invokes the dreaded image of the *coquette pétroleuse*. Moreover, by capturing images of the Communards as they lay dead in their coffins, Disdéri enables a glimpse of the insurgents that was far from menacing, rather they appear defeated and vulnerable and like the images of the children (figure XII), possibly victimized by the circumstances of life generally and their historical moment particularly. The posthumous image of the children would not have sustained the assessment that the brutality involved
in the Commune’s suppression was necessitated and immediately conjures the sentiment of one London Times reporter that “the ribaldry of the ‘Party of Order’ sickens the soul.” Furthermore, Andrieu’s landscape images of Paris in ruins, reflects the fetishizing of destruction and ruins that many contemporaries took part in.

Many of the destroyed buildings that Andrieu captured were already sources of denigration, specifically among people who tended toward republicanism in their political outlook. For example, rather than capturing the “massacre” of clerical hostages, the destroyed chapel of the Tuileries Palace (figure IX) imagines the destruction of clericalism and monarchism in one shot, the necessity both of which were propagated by republican candidates and representatives. The popularity of the photographs of the Commune, its partisans, and the ruins it left in its wake is unquestioned. The wide spread interest in these photographs and the duality of the narratives they sustained or mitigated meant for authorities that their continued sale would need to be controlled and, ultimately, prevented. While exact figures that might detail their sales and their buyers’ demographics are unknown, their proliferation is evidenced by the recollections of contemporaries who described them as occupying prominent places in many gift shops, books stores and kiosks, in the decision to ban them, and in the court cases that ensued by

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148 London Times, June 1, 1871.
sellers who decided to ignore the ban indicating that the legal and financial risks were worth the expected profits.\textsuperscript{149}

Immediately after the Commune, the photographs of Paris in ruins, dead Communards, and the “thousands of carte de visite portraits of those deemed to be responsible for the destruction…was seen as a deterrent to further insurrection.”\textsuperscript{150} Very quickly, however, it became apparent that “quite the reverse was true and that Communards were fast acquiring a reputation as heroes and martyrs.”\textsuperscript{151} This was politically dangerous for the conservative majority in the National Assembly because their condemnation of the Commune as a criminal insurrection, led by unruly dipsomaniacs was not wholly accepted by the French population and especially not by constituencies in Paris where the Commune had found its most ardent supporters. As mentioned in the previous chapter, during the summer of 1871 insults to police, with references to their treatment of the Communards, accelerated after the Commune, and at same time Radical republicans had already begun what would become a near ten year battle to grant the insurgents a general amnesty.

While Communards were being ferreted out from hiding and executions were mounting, domestic and international opinion began to turn against the severity of the

\textsuperscript{149} A grocer named François Morin, for example, was arrested in October 1872 and ultimately convicted and fined 100 francs for selling a brand of tapioca pudding with Appert’s photographs on the inside package as a promotional stunt. This is a telling example of not only the effort to remove images of the Commune from the public eye, but also “their continued mass distribution in unexpected commercial ways.” English, p. 68.
\textsuperscript{150} Wilson, p. 176.
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid.
Commune’s suppression. As described by Edmond de Goncourt just days after the Commune’s defeat, the Belleville had “the appearance of a vanquished but unsubjugated district.” As early as June, 1871, while executions of the Communards were still prevalent, the *London Times* wrote that the “wholesale executions inflicted by the Versailles soldiery, the triumph, the glee, [and] the ribaldry of the ‘Party of Order,’ sickens the soul.” Furthermore, as described by William Scott Haine, “Parisians remained remarkably bold in their allegiance to the Commune, despite [or perhaps because of] the ferocity of the Versailles troops, their itchy trigger fingers, and their often drunken propensity to flaunt their victory.”

On September 13, 1871, Henri Brisson introduced the first amnesty bill in the National Assembly which was signed by forty-eight fellow deputies including Léon Gambetta. This amnesty would apply to anyone “convicted or prosecuted for political crimes or lesser offenses, at Paris and in the provinces, during the past year.” Jean T. Joughin, explains Gambetta’s support as a reaction to the investigation of “his own actions since September 4, 1870 [as head of the Government of National Defense], by a hostile assembly.” However, this is also a reflection of the fact that Gambetta’s radicalism, witnessed in the 1860s and embodied in his support for the Belleville Manifesto of 1869, had not yet been displaced by his turn toward the Moderate camp. In

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153 *London Times*, June 1, 1871.
an era of universal (male) suffrage and with by-elections providing an opportunity for republicans to win seats in the Assembly, proposing such a bill reflects an awareness of constituent opinion. This is an important contextual component of the September amnesty bill and Gambetta’s support, especially in light of his later antipathy towards amnesty proposals. By signing on to Brisson’s bill, the deputy from Belleville was not merely registering a rebuke to “a hostile assembly,” he was also representing the opinions of his constituency in order to retain their electoral support.

While Belleville’s support for the Commune, even after its defeat, would not have depended on photographs of the vanquished Communards, these images certainly sustained it. Moreover, they risked encouraging such posthumous support among other constituencies that had been less invested in the event. With the popularity of the photographs rising at the same time that sources as varied as the London Times, Edmond de Goncourt, and Police records reflect a backlash against the severity of the event’s suppression, limiting public exposure to the photographs, like the decision to limit the executions from the general population, became a priority for the conservative majority in Versailles.157 Moreover, in the wake of defeat, politicians, from all sides of the political spectrum, were eager to present France as a unified nation, a goal that was jeopardized by the continued popularity of images that not only reminded national and

157 As described in Chapter one, as the year (1871) progressed, those arrested were transported to their hearing and sentencing in the early hours of the morning, in order to avoid any possible unrest and executions that took place after 1871 were strictly removed from public view.
international audiences of France’s disunity but also, as witnessed in Belleville, helped to prolong it.

The first step to censoring images of the Commune was taken by the Paris police as early as May 1871, when they began to apply a law established under the Second Empire in Article 22 of the Decree of April 17, 1852. This required all images to be authorized by the Ministry of Interior or a departmental prefect prior to sale or distribution.\footnote{158} The enforcement of this law diminished the wanton sale and distribution of Commune related images in Paris, over the protests of many merchants and peddlers, while at the same time officials continued to sanction those of overtly anti-Communard photographers such as Appert. With thousands of photographs still being sold legally and on the growing black market, however, the Ministry of Interior expanded the Paris controls to limit sales nation-wide. In his instructions to local officials, the Minister of Interior directed them to “exercise the most rigorous surveillance at this time; do not limit yourself to requesting the exhibition of the permit, but search the packs, boxes, and wagons of the peddler.”\footnote{159} Despite such efforts, the market for the images proved too tempting. Likewise, the restrictions led to protests and conflicts. Merchants, for example, argued that to stop selling them would be detrimental to their business, while photographers that had gained permission from the Ministry of Interior, such as Appert, used the restrictions to seek prosecution against those who reproduced their works.

\footnote{158} Failure to acquire authorization prior to selling or distributing the photographs risked a sentence of one month to a year in prison and a 100 to 1,000 franc fine.
\footnote{159} APP, Ba 1621, Presse et Censure, October 15, 1871.
illegally, and, persons falsely identified as Communards filed law suits citing public
defamation.\textsuperscript{160} As a result, General Ladmirault, the Military Governor of Paris took
advantage of the power he still had since the state of siege to issue a decree that banned
the photographs from the city of Paris on December 18, 1871, including Appert’s and
others previously given permission, stating that “especially forbidden are portraits of
individuals under prosecution for their participation in the insurrection.”\textsuperscript{161}

The decision to ban the photographs was politically motivated, with the intent of
diminishing any lingering sympathy for the insurgents. As Donald English notes, “the
images that were said to ‘disturb the peace’ included those scenes depicting the actions
by the Commune, its defenders, committee meetings or demonstrations by the
Communard government, and all the images of the repression by Versailles.”\textsuperscript{162} In fact
the only images that the decree ignored were ones deemed “purely artistic” such as those
of the ruins and fires. This decree became nationwide after November of 1872. The
censorship was an effort to stem the tide of legal proceedings against copyright
infringement and mistaken identity. Yet the decision to allow the continued sale and
distribution of the landscape portraits of Paris in ruins should also be understood as a
means of controlling the image of France and curtailing the glorification of the
Communards among significant segments of France’s working-class population. By

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{160} For example, Pierre Petit was successfully sued by one of his former subjects, Henri Dombrowski and
ordered to pay his former subject 3,000 francs because of his willful selling of Dombrowski’s image as that
of the fallen Communard Ladjislas Dombrowski a fact which became known to Henri when “he saw his
image displayed in several shop windows labeled as the dead Communard general.” English, p. 66.
\item \textsuperscript{161} \textit{Gazette des Tribunaux, « Chronique »}, December 31, 1871, p. 911.
\item \textsuperscript{162} English, p. 68.
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permitting only those images that showed the wreckage of Paris, the government implicitly sanctioned an official narrative of the Commune’s destructive power and its transgressions against private property. Simultaneously, the continued availability of these photographs and the symbols embedded within them validated the brutal defeat of the regime and the ongoing efforts to capture and punish its fleeing insurgents. After all, the images of the Communards and their machinations represented “important alternative visions to the Republic at a time when numerous French citizens, newly enfranchised, were being alienated…as such they are fundamental photographic contributions to the politics of protest.”163 The decision to ban them, which was affirmed by most republican politicians, was an effort to “socialize the disparate classes of France into a single nation,” by removing the image of disunity.164 The sanction given to the aestheticism of the ruins “was yet another attempt by those hostile to the Commune to deny the political and social causes underlying the uprising by depicting the events of May 1871 as apocalyptic and tragic.”165 With this image, politicians could campaign on a platform of rebuilding France and restoring the nation’s grandeur from the wreckage of the Paris Commune and defeat in the Franco Prussian War.

In the case of Commune-related photographs, the narrative intent, with the exception of Appert, was often a question of the audience’s interpretation; an audience

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163 Ibid., p. 20.
164 English, p. 20.
that was much wider than that for written publications because while literacy rates were rising, they were still far from universal. This was not the circumstance for the Commune’s contemporary historians. On the one hand, the genre of historical non-fiction was not popular thus the messaging they were undertaking was twice removed from the general population: first by literacy barriers and second by the genre itself. On the other hand, these writers were explicit in their narrative agendas, even when they made claims to the contrary, and their writings were accordingly celebrated or ignored by authorities. For writers such as Maxime du Camp, the Commune was an awful lesson of the dangers of political empowerment of people that lacked the social and educational acumen to handle such responsibility and verification of the need to limit their political participation. For Communards, such as Lissagaray, the Commune provided an important lesson on the failings of revolutionary movements which could be corrected for the future, and an example of the barbarism of the authorities and the duplicity of mainstream republicans which should call into question their fitfulness to govern in the name of the Republic and the triumph of the revolutionary past.

The lesson to be learned: Competing narratives and agendas

The Paris Commune of 1871 left an acute memory of crisis in its wake and “it immediately provoked durably important ideological interpretations…so much so that it
has often been suggested that the Commune’s myth is more important than its reality.”

The proliferation of historical narratives of the Paris Commune during the first decade after its defeat should be viewed as competing efforts to efface, condemn, or rehabilitate the memory of the event within the context of contemporary political exigencies and the opportunities presented by an increasingly literate mass consumer society. The writers sought to construct histories of the recent past in a way that could inform a present and future in line with their politics. Opposing narrations published by Maxime du Camp and Prosper Olivier Lissagaray provided the most resilient interpretations of the Commune and thus are of primary consideration in this section.

Certainly, there is an important distinction to be made between popular historical accounts, such as Lissagaray’s *History of the Paris Commune of 1871*, versus those of professionals such as Hippolyte Taine, emanating from the French academy. Professional historians of the so called “École Méthodique” chose not to “overemphasize their religious or political preferences...they were not ideologically flexible; they were simply...”

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168 Du Camp’s *Les Convulsions de Paris*, was in print until 1905 and in addition to later writers such as Lucien Ness (1914) and Henri D’Alméras (1927) borrowing heavily from Du Camp’s assessments, the longevity of his anti-Communard perspective can be witnessed in Frank Jellinek’s perception that readers in the 1930s needed to be warned against reading Du Camp without critical analysis and Paul Lidsky’s 1999 assertion that *Les Convulsions* remains “the Bible of anti-Communard literature.” Similarly, Lissagaray’s *History of the Commune* is described by Robert Tombs as “still after more than a century arguably the best general history of the Commune.”
ideologically distinct as individuals, and they tried not to let their ideological
entrenchment influence their work.”¹⁶⁹ Nonetheless, nineteenth-century historians
including positivists such as Hippolyte Taine, “all claimed that historical narrative is
close to poetry, a form of free verse which is used to describe past events in a language
which is both easy to understand and which does not bore the reader.”¹⁷⁰ Taine even
asserted “history is art,” and as Hayden White describes, historians of that time were
concerned with producing images of history free from abstraction.¹⁷¹

This meant that, like the realism developed by contemporary novelists, many
historians, popular and professional, used a narrative style that blurred the distinction
between historical and fictional genres, a practice that also made the authors’ ideological
position, even when they claimed to be “free from all bias,” much more persuasive.¹⁷²
Indeed, there was a great amount of creative license in how the history of the Commune
was recalled. Many authors, including professionals such as Taine and Du Camp,
contrived dialogue they could not possibly have witnessed, with the understanding that
such narration, made the historical account more accessible to the reader. In the last
decades of the nineteenth century, the importance of the historical discipline was
increasingly recognized as one that had a political role to fill.¹⁷³ Taine’s conservatism, for

¹⁶⁹ Isabel Noronha-DiVanna, Writing History in the Third Republic, Cambridge Scholars Publishing,
Newcastle, 2010, p. 5.
¹⁷⁰ Wilson, p. 93.
¹⁷¹ Hayden V. White, Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe, The Johns
¹⁷³ Noronha-DiVanna, pp. xviii-xix.
example, is a well-established fact and the vitriolic anti-revolutionary perspective expressed in *Les Origines de la France contemporaine*, must certainly be understood within the context of its post-Commune completion and publication. Taine is rarely explicit in his references to the Commune of 1871, but his brief reflections are only slightly less colored by his ideological suppositions, than Lissagaray’s overtly opinionated pro-Commune narrative. Maxime du Camp initially made a similar choice to obscure the Commune from his historical narration; however, after mid-decade, in light of changing political circumstances, he published a four-volume series focused squarely on the Commune that was rife with a level of condemnation that matched, if not surpassed, Lissagaray’s pro-Commune partisanship.

Du Camp’s *Paris, ses organs, ses fonctions et sa vie dans la seconde moité du XIXe siècle*, published between 1869 and 1875, is a six-volume collection written prior to the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune. The publications of volumes III and IV were delayed by the events of that year; however, they were not revised in the aftermath. According to Du Camp, the goal was simply to describe Paris under normal conditions, not its life during the terrible events of 1870 and 1871. The choice to leave the image of France intact might illustrate the effort to assuage the embarrassment of defeat and territorial loss, the Commune, and its tortuous conclusion. It can also be read as the narrative equivalent to the rebuilding of the Vendôme Column and other sights destroyed.

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174 Noronha-DiVanna, pp. 62-64. See also Susanna Barrows, *Distorting Mirrors*, Op. cit., pp. 74-75; as hinted at by Barrows, Taine was remarkably silent (publically) on the Commune and chose to focus on the Revolution instead; a typical choice for this self-professed “pathologist of French society.”
during the Commune and its defeat—an effort to efface the memory of *l’année terrible*. This was an agenda aimed at guiding the national narrative and image to fall in line with Du Camp’s conservative ideology, expressed not only in his contempt for the Commune but also in his warnings against universal suffrage. Just as Ernest Lacan envisioned the historical value of the Commune photographs, Commune “historians” constructed their narratives with an educational utility in mind.

Maxime du Camp was not a professional historian, yet he employed an appeal to factual data that gave his account an impression of reliability—one that implies the growing expectation of professionalism in such narrations. Du Camp’s four-volume series *Les Convulsions de Paris* relies upon contemporary documents to trace the origins, machinations, and fate of the Commune. Although he explicitly asserts that the work is not a history of the Commune *per se*, he is quick to highlight the factual basis of his analysis and his ability to speak with restraint whenever the documents in question do not quite support his convictions. He assures the reader that, despite the indignation that often overwhelmed him as he wrote, he was able to remain impartial, impressed by the need for simple honesty in his task.

Du Camp intended *Les Convulsions du Paris* to be a follow-up to *Paris, ses organs* in which he could combat the pro-Commune narratives. His account affirms the anti-revolutionary perspective that the Commune was “a violent, chaotic, drunken spree,

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175 The following chapter describes and analyzes the rebuilding of the Vendôme Column.
without political meaning or justification,” and presents the insurgents as “a disgusting sub-proletariat of criminals, madmen and drunks.”

Du Camp’s work is full of literary devices that would encourage a confidence in and an emotional reaction to his analysis among the lay readership. He speaks directly to his audience and refers to the Communards as “traitors to the wounded nation”—an epithet that was sure to conjure images of France’s humiliation and defeat, thereby inciting vitriolic contempt for the partisans on the eve of their amnesty. Conversely, he describes the victory of the Versailles Government as the “victoire de la légalité.” Such a tome was sure to earn the support of conservative politicians who were trying to curb the growing republicanism of the late 1870s, and is a salient example of the use of history to support the viewpoint of the ruling class.

Published between 1878 and 1880, Les Convulsions was both caustic and timely. Contemporaries described Du Camp’s narration of the Commune as a polemic. Although Du Camp denounced this characterization, he betrays his bias with such remarks as “the facts of the Commune escape politics and belong exclusively [to the field of] criminality.” The publication of the series occurred amid the republicans’ conquest of political power, which began in 1876 and culminated in the election of Jules Grévy to the presidency in February 1879. In fact, the appearance of its first chapter in Revue des Deux Mondes came just two weeks prior to the Crisis of 16 May, which was the direct

178 The final volume for Les Convulsions was completed in November 1879.
result of intense political warfare between the government of the Moral Order and republicans in the Chamber and Senate.\textsuperscript{181} Du Camp’s decision to critique the Commune in a four-volume series—a departure from his initial tactic of diminishing it through silence—should be understood as a response to shifts in popular perceptions of the Commune and the political agendas submerged within the anti-Commune histories. During this period, conservatives held a majority in the National Assembly. In echoing and propagating the party’s portrayal of the Commune as an explosion of the alcohol-infused vituperation of malcontents, writers like Du Camp and Taine were reacting to the rising appeal of republican candidates and the persistence of the Radical republicans’ initiatives to generate popular support for amnestying the Communards.

Despite the impact of these anti-Commune narratives, republicans secured a majority in the Chamber during the October 1877 elections, which the Crisis of 16 May precipitated.\textsuperscript{182} The next general elections were just a year away, and republican electoral appeal showed no signs of abating. Furthermore, the call for amnesty was becoming increasingly popular, as demonstrated by the success of Radical candidates who ran on amnesty-focused campaign platforms in by-elections and local races.\textsuperscript{183}

\textsuperscript{181} Chapter 4 focuses on the origins and impact of this political crisis.
\textsuperscript{182} During the 1876 general elections republicans won a majority of seats in the Chamber of Deputies and near parity with conservative factions in the Senate. This election marked the beginning of the political triumph which culminated in the election of Jules Grévy in February 1879; in less than a year a near general amnesty for the Communards was passed. These developments are analyzed in-depth in the chapters that follow.
\textsuperscript{183} These elections are analyzed in chapter 5.
Anti-Commune histories sought to dilute, if not demolish, the growing electoral appeal of pro-amnesty politicians by insisting that the return of the insurgents would result in renewed revolutionary upheaval. To that end, Du Camp cites the numerous journals and pamphlets that the exiled Communards wrote, especially those threatening revenge and promoting a revolutionary agenda: “one day will come, you know this, where we will once again be masters of [Paris]. There will be no more grace, [no] more mercy for the killers of June 1848 and May 1871.”184 Du Camp plays on the fears of his audience by declaring, “those who are free [in exile], those who are detained have the same ideal: to destroy a whole class of society that they were expelled from by laziness.”185 In addition to sustaining the negative characterization of Communards, this argument was germane to the political and social dialogue in France at that time, particularly among republicans.

Workers were an integral part of the Radical republicans’ electoral base throughout the 1870s. The faction’s methods of appealing to this constituency were at odds with the Moderate republicans’ persistent denial of the existence of social and class tensions. Furthermore, during the Crisis of 16 May, the revolutionary Left re-emerged as a vociferous threat to mainstream (Moderate and Radical) republicans. After 1877, the Socialist candidates began to target, not unsuccessfully, working-class and progressive

185 Ibid., p. 402.
peasant constituencies by running candidates on amnesty-based platforms. Conversely, Gambetta and the Moderate republicans refused to acknowledge class distinctions in campaign and legislative speeches as part of their effort to unite the nation under the republican (tricolor) banner, which they insisted negated social hierarchies and inequities. By presenting the Commune in terms that raised the specter of class discord and revolutionary violence, Du Camp targeted the nerve center of the republican disputes over both the general character of the Republic and the specific issue of amnesty. At the same time, his dire warnings ratcheted up the anxiety that conservative politicians and voters felt about amnesty and the growing republican electoral majority. In this way, Les Convulsions not only influenced the contemporary political climate but also helped sustain the anti-Commune narrative amid growing support for the return of the Communards.

Du Camp’s December 1880 election to the French Academy, which was assured by Duc de Broglie and Dumas fils, underscores the importance of his perspective to conservatives. Despite his reliance on counter-factual and manipulated data and his use

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186 The first publication of Jules Guesde’s L’Égalité appeared on November 18, 1877. Blanqui was run as a pro-amnesty socialist candidate in two elections in 1878 and despite his failures ran successfully the following year. The re-emergence of the revolutionary Left, most notably the socialist factions, is a driving analytical concern for chapter 5.  
187 This labeling is peppered throughout the six volume series.  
188 As Barrows, Distorting Mirrors, Op. cit., asserts, there was a marked political contrast between the conservative French Academy whose opinions du Camp validated and publicized and the universities which, especially after the establishment of the Sorbonne’s, “Chair of the History of the French Revolution” propagated and taught a distinctly republican historical perspective; see p. 91 regarding the first chair, Alphonse Aulard’s warning, for example, that “at the Sorbonne, a candidate for the diploma in historical studies or the doctorate would disqualify himself if he cited the authority of Taine on any
of bias-laden omissions, Du Camp was admitted to the conservative body purportedly on the strength of his historical analysis. In fact, the French Academy declared that “Les Convulsions displayed…all the scholarly credentials and gravitas demanded of a historical account and…the text served to consolidate the constructed anti-Communard memory of Paris and the Commune.”\textsuperscript{189} Similarly, the philosopher Elme-Marie Caro reminded his audience in his speech welcoming Du Camp that “while humanity may forgive and politics may forget the past, it is history’s task to remember and to act as the conscience of the nation and the human race in general.”\textsuperscript{190} Such a statement was a rebuke of the recently approved amnesty and an affirmation of the conservative commitment to sustaining the anti-Communard sentiment, even as the government re-embraced the insurgents.

Du Camp’s narrative provides a synthesis, rather than the establishment, of the anti-Commune narration; his assertion that the revolt was the work of alcoholic social malcontents and an expression of working-class antagonism was hardly new.\textsuperscript{191} When the last volume was published, President Freycinet’s Moderate republican government was in historical question.” Original quote located in Alphonse Aulard, Taine, historien de la Révolution Française, Armand Colin, Paris 1907, p. viii.

\textsuperscript{189} Wilson, p. 125.

\textsuperscript{190} Elme-Marie Caro’s speech reproduced in Discours pronounces dans la séance publique tenue par l’Académie française pour la réption de Maxime du Camp, le 23 décembre 1880, Firmin – Didot, Paris, pp. 52 – 53; Source originally found in Wilson, p. 125.

\textsuperscript{191} This is frequently misunderstood by scholars of the Commune and its aftermath. For example, see Wilson, p. 20: Les Convulsions “was a key text in the construction and promulgation of the reactionary memory of the Commune.” Another example is found in Shafer, p. 107: “Though a stylistic disaster, Les Convulsions earned Du Camp a spot in the Académie Française…, and perhaps because of this, his work succeeded in establishing a definition of the Commune upon which others would build;” and p. 112: “Maxime du Camp established the tone for anti-Communard versions of” the event.
the process of ending a near-decade-long division over amnesty within the republican ranks. Consequently, republican messaging efforts did not incorporate Du Camp’s work. Indeed, by the time the first volume was published in 1878, and particularly after 1880, it was contrary to the Moderates’ rhetorical campaign to lay claim to the impending amnesty. It was for exactly this reason that his text endorsed the existing conservative denouncement of the Commune and its partisans. His acceptance to the Academy on the strength of his historical narrative gave Du Camp’s assessment an added level of authority that helped validate his opinions to French citizens beyond the boundaries of academia.

Because each volume of *Les Convulsions* cost 7 francs 50 centimes, they were largely bought by individuals from the upper class, people with a healthy appetite for anti-Commune prose, and large institutions, such as the new historical library of Paris. *Les Convulsions* also had to compete with similar and opposing accounts in a saturated market for Commune histories. Throughout the four-volume series, Du Camp continuously juxtaposes his purportedly factual historical analysis with the allegedly inaccurate work of the Communards and “*les apologistes de la Commune.*” He

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192 The political underpinnings of the near-general amnesty’s passage in June of 1880 are analyzed in Chapters 6.

193 The new library was inaugurated in 1874 and established in 1880 at the Musée Carnavalet, in order to replace the Bibliothèque de Paris, destroyed by the fires that consumed the Hôtel de Ville in the last days of the Commune. The destruction of books, public records, and other archival material was considered by Du Camp as one of the most heinous acts, all of which he attributes to the Communards. Much like Lacan saw the Commune photographs as invaluable for their historical accuracy, Du Camp asserted that his *Paris, ses organs,* was an attempt to restore some of the capital city’s history that was forever vanquished by the Communard incendiaries.
admonishes that “the slander they have printed in their little books and spread in abundance [is] not believable,” declaring that such writers had to be delusional to think that their works would gain “the credulity of the masses.”¹⁹⁴ This is clearly a mixture of opinion and hope, because many of the pro-Communard accounts were also being circulated in France. They must be considered a factor in the growing atmosphere of forgiveness that ushered in the passage of general amnesty during the same year that the fourth volume of *Les Convulsions* was published.

Immediately after the Commune, many of its partisans fled to exile and worked to combat the negative image of the Commune as one of drunken folly and insidious violence. Numerous pamphlets, circulars, and published articles came into France surreptitiously and were widely available to the French public seeking to make sense of the cataclysm. The Communard journalist, Prosper-Olivier Lissagaray entered the contentious market of commodified history early on with a short book titled *Les Huit Journées de mai derrière les barricades* published in Belgium in September 1871. The purpose of this piece, according to Lissagaray, was to provide the “true story of the days of May [that] have so far only been told by the victors. We had hoped that some connection from behind the barricade would protest against the ridiculous accounts. After four months, no one raised a voice. It is a duty, we believe, to provoke an

Over the course of the book, Lissagaray recounts the events of the *Semaine sanglante* from the Communard perspective. Like Du Camp, Lissagaray adopts a narrative fashion that claims to provide an eyewitness account of all the events of that last week of the Commune. Like his counterparts, Lissagaray conjures up dialogue and applies a literary style sure to not only maintain the reader’s attention, but hopefully to secure their concurrence with the pro-Commune perspective.

According to Lissagaray, and many other pro-Commune writers, the goal in writing their histories was to show the “other side” of the story and to generate sympathy with the plight of the fallen and exiled or to at least mitigate the contemptuous view of the Communard as criminal. In contrast to Du Camp, who declared that he chose not to chronicle some of the more heinous acts of the Commune in consideration of the sensitivities of his readers and as a consequence of the repugnance it generates for himself, Lissagaray provides gruesome details of the ill treatment of fallen communards, describing their demise in a way that elicits a sense of tragic martyrdom. His description of the death of Raoul Rigault is an excellent example of his literary efforts to mitigate conservative contempt for the Communards:

Taking such a figure was too important for Versailles [he] was put to death immediately. But he disdained to ask for a respite that he himself would not have granted. In a clear voice he responded ‘*Vivre la Commune!* A bas les assasins!’ At once he was cornered against the wall and executed by firing squad. His body, dressed in black trousers and an officer’s tunic open and revealing a black waistcoat, was abandoned for

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twenty-four hours at the entrance of la rue Royer-Colard, lying in a pool of mud and blood. His head, framed by the hair and beard where the blood had coagulated, was terrible to see. The entire left side of the wound where the left eye and the brain mingled in a blackish mixture; the right eye opened [and] haggard maintained a terrible fixity. Not until ten days after was his body delivered by soldiers and buried in the Montmartre Cemetery. His end will be counted as brave….But those who [are all powerful] will be forever responsible for the acts of their dictatorship. Not far from where he died the army massacred forty national guard prisoners in a street near the Pantheon.196

The close connection Lissagaray makes between Rigault’s death and the “massacre” of forty unidentified national guardsmen personalizes the treatment of the thousands of Communards whose executions were often obscured when they became mired in statistical accounting or essentialized in epitaphs such as “apostles of absinth,” both of which served to distance their humanity as they became vilified figures in a tally sheet. The persistence of the conservative assessment precipitated a follow up to Les Huit Journées de mai derrière les barricades; in 1876 Lissagaray published a complete history of the Commune.

Lissagaray’s more prolific monograph, History of the Paris Commune of 1871, was published on the eve of the republicans’ initial political triumph and at the height of the Moral Order’s power. With this book, Lissagaray continued to combat the anti-Commune narrative and the conservatives’ caustic characterization of the Communards as drunken and barbaric. More than this, he used the book to hold mainstream republicans

196 Lissagaray, Les Huit Journées de mai, Op. cit., p. 91 – 92. At 24 years old, Rigault was one of the youngest members of the Commune. He served as chief of police for the Commune.
up to unrelenting scrutiny and spun his analysis in a way aimed at deconstructing their claims to the revolutionary past and their professions of loyalty (namely on the part of the Radicals) of fidelity to its social-democratic ideals. This monograph remains the most significant of the Communards’ narrations due to its wide readership and continued relevance for historians of this period. The book is “passionate, caustic, often unreliable, coloured by his own views, friendships and enmities, yet detailed, documented and readable.”

Most importantly, and what Tombs does not specify, is that this book, more than any other, consolidated and helped to propagate the pro-Commune narration, specifically that the origins of the Commune were grounded in a belief that the new Republic was in danger of being subverted and that the Communards were seeking to rescue it from monarchists as well as the same republicans who had betrayed the Second Republic after June 1848. More immediately, however, Lissagaray was seeking to influence public opinion in a way that would facilitate the success of the on-going amnesty proposals. In order to achieve these goals, promoting a more sympathetic understanding of the Communards, calling into question mainstream republican fidelity to the Revolution’s legacy of social-democratic ideals, and generating popular support for Communard amnesty, Lissagaray needed to reach a readership beyond the already committed adherents of the extreme Left.

In order to reach beyond a readership of committed Communard supporters, Lissagaray was keen to declare his professionalism. He claims to have avoided hyperbole.

at all costs and continuously relies on “official” (i.e., government) documentation to support his claims. In his preface, Lissagaray asserts that “for the past five years [I] have sifted evidence [and] not ventured upon a single assertion without accumulated proofs.” This was essential to Lissagaray because the victor is always “on the look-out for the slightest inaccuracy to deny all the rest.” With that in mind, Lissagaray provides numerous footnoted citations and a thirty-three page appendix in which many documents are reproduced. Moreover, Lissagaray argues that he “knows no better plea for the vanquished than the simple and sincere recital of their history…he who tells the people revolutionary legends, he who amuses them with sensational stories, is as criminal as the geographer who would draw up false charts for the navigators.” With such assertions, Lissagaray was hoping to avoid being cast aside as just another intransigent, romanticizing his insurgency and/or lamenting his defeat in the vacuum of exile. Based on the multiple publications of his text, and its early translation into English and German editions, he did reach and has sustained a large readership. Indeed, while Du Camp takes aim at all Commune “apologists,” Lissagaray is clearly his main target which

200 Ibid. In the preface to her English translation of Histoire de la Commune, published in 1886, Eleanor Marx Aveling asserts that “Lissagaray’s [monograph] is the only authentic and reliable history as yet written of one of the most memorable moments of modern times.” She concedes that “it is true Lissagaray was a soldier of the Commune,” but as proof of his professional reliability, she writes “but he has had the courage to speak the truth [and did not attempt] to hide the errors of his party…and if he has erred it has been on the side of moderation.” See pp. v-vi in the 1886 English edition.
201 Le Quillec, p. 253. Histoire de la Commune was republished in 1896, multiple times during the twentieth century and remains in publication today. In 1894 it was published in German and after its English translation in 1886 has, like the French editions, been repeatedly republished ever since.
implies the popularity of Lissagaray’s work and the rivalry between their competing narrations of the event and the impact authors hoped to have on contemporary politics.

One of Lissagaray’s essential aims when writing *History of the Paris Commune of 1871* was to reframe the image of the Communard in a way that exceeded his earlier work and mitigated the castigation that the event was no more than a phantasmagoric Bacchanalia. In contrast to these dismissals, Lissagaray makes a diligent effort to detail the progressive social and political initiatives that operated during the Commune and the legal avenues they took in order to meet the pressing needs of Parisians still recovering from the Prussian siege. These accounts were implicitly intended to be evidence of the Communard’s clarity of purpose and scrupulous actions. Yet in his quest to present a reliable and balanced history of the Commune, he is also highly critical of his fellow Communards, not for their ambitions, but for their inability to carry them out. Whereas Du Camp focuses his analysis on the personalities of the Communards and their machinations with the government of Versailles, consistently devolving into a critique of the Communards lack of political gravitas and acumen, Lissagaray describes the Commune from a structural and ideological perspective and is intent on exposing its partisans’ political sophistication and humanitarian ambitions.

Lissagaray begins by reminding the reader of the “three hundred thousand persons without work, without resources of any kind, [who] were waiting for the thirty sous upon which they’d lived for the last seven months” and then details how on the day after the Commune’s proclamation, “Varlin and Jourde, [Communard] delegates to the finance
department, took possession of that Ministry.” 202 He recites their inability to open the “coffers” due to the keys being in Versailles, their unwillingness to illegally force the locks, and their supplication to the Rothschild Bank which ultimately gave them a credit of one million francs that were immediately, according to Lissagaray, “distributed in all the arrondissements.” 203 Similarly, in chapter eighteen of his History, Lissagaray describes how the city’s inhabitants were provisioned. Not to miss an opportunity to contest the anti-Commune narration of the forthrightness of the government of Versailles, Lissagary remarks that the city was provisioned “through the neutral zone, where M. Thiers, however anxious to starve Paris, could not prevent a regular supply of food.” 204 In the same chapter he details the existence and labors of the Commune’s “four delegations—Finance, War, Public Safety, [and] Exterior [which] required special aptitude [and] the three others, Education, Justice, and Labour and Exchange, [which] had to propound the philosophical principles of this revolution. All the delegates save Frankel, a workman, belonged to the small middle-class.” 205 The last clause is a noteworthy example of Lissagaray’s attempt to nuance the demographics of the Commune and to demonstrate the Communards’ serious efforts to govern.

The image that Lissagaray presents is a sharp contrast to the carnavalesque revelry described by the Commune’s detractors and his is one that recent historians

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203 Ibid., p. 106.
204 Ibid.
perpetuate.\textsuperscript{206} Whereas Du Camp, for example, never describes the four delegations in terms of their origins or intentions but rather mentions them within the context of their delegates’ personalities and machinations, Lissagaray is devoted to illuminating the Commune’s administrative operations and their intentions. By Lissagaray’s account, the Communards were quite interested in the social questions of their day and quite capable of managing the government and bureaucracy. In fact, most historians agree that this is potentially one of the weaknesses of the Commune; that is to say, rather than securing their position in the battle field they were held up in committees which themselves lacked effective leadership. Lissagaray provides ample evidence of the Commune’s comparative lack of military strength and capable leadership: “compared with the Finance department, that of War was a region of darkness and utter confusion.” Likewise, he denounces the Commune’s maintenance of the Place Vendôme as being “in the teeth of common sense” and decries that “attempts at creating a central park of artillery, or even learning the exact number of ordinance pieces, were made in vain.” In conclusion, he states, “in this concert without a conductor, each instrumentalist played what he liked, confusing his own score with his neighbors.”\textsuperscript{207}

Such chaos was confirmation for anti-Commune narrators like Du Camp who asserted that alcoholism and socio-political irrationality were to blame for the


Commune’s defeat. In contrast, Lissagaray states “in the midst of all these faults, the humanitarian idea revealed itself; so thoroughly sound was this popular revolution.” To illustrate this point, Lissagaray describes the commission created to organize secular primary and professional education and another for the education of girls in order to:

To teach children to love and respect their fellow-creatures, to inspire them with a love of justice, to teach them that they must instruct themselves in the interests of all, such are the principles of morality on which the future communal education will be based.[Going further he writes that the municipality of the seventeenth arrondissement declared that] The teachers of the schools and infant asylums will for the future exclusively employ the experimental and scientific method, that which always starts from facts, physical, moral, and intellectual. But, [he bemoans,] these vague formulas could not make amends for the want of a complete programme.

Indeed, the Communards as presented by Lissagaray, earnestly sought to re-make society in a way that ensured a secular education, and an equitable quality of life. Their faults, according to Lissagaray, are to be found in their inability to carry their goals to fruition during the two months of opportunity that they had. This he argues was not because a lack of revolutionary purpose, sincerity, or seriousness, but because of ignorance among the leaders, which he insists is “to a great extent… the offspring of past oppression.”

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208 Ibid., p. 225.
209 Ibid., pp. 231 – 232. Lissagaray goes on to lament that the Education Commission’s “work consisted in announcing the opening of a school on the 6th of May [and that the commission delegated to the education of women was] named on the day the Versailles entered Paris.”
210 As evidence of this ignorance he writes: “During the two months they had in their hands the archives of the bourgeoisie since 1789. There were the Cour des Comptes [a judicial board of accounts] to disclose the mysteries of official jobbery; the Council of State, the dark deliberations of despotism; the Prefecture of Police, the scandalous undercurrents of social power; the Ministry of Justice, the servility and crimes of the
Lissagaray was seeking to provide a thorough and balanced history of the Paris Commune and with that to reshape its memory and legacy in such a way as to affect contemporary politics including the issue of amnesty and the machinations of the republicans who were in the process of taking control of the Third Republic vis-à-vis monarchist and imperial conservatives. To that end, he is forceful in denouncing some of the most widely accepted charges levied against the Communards by his anti-Commune counterparts.

His analysis of the role of women during the Commune and the burning of Paris during its final days are particularly salient. In the few times that the role of women is considered, Lissagaray presents them as tragic heroines, who on March 18 “were the first to act…, hardened by the siege—they had a double ration of misery—[and] did not wait for the men.”\(^{211}\) His assertion that the Siege had hardened them is a telling qualifier to their notorious aggression on the day of the Commune’s proclamation. Even in a rare passage in which he explicitly acknowledges their insurgency they are represented as noble and devoted mothers and wives:

This woman, who salutes [the communard] or accompanies them, she is the true Parisienne. The unclean androgyne, born in the mire of the Empire, the Madonna of the pornographers, the Dumas \(fils\) and the Feydeaux, has followed her patrons to Versailles or works the Prussian

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mines at St. Denis. She, who is uppermost, is the Parisienne, strong, devoted, tragic, knowing how to die as she loves. A helpmate in labour, she will also be an associate in the death-struggle.212

The role of women in the Commune was a significant source of anxiety for the anti-Commune conservatives and analysts who saw their contribution as evidence of the Communard intention to destroy traditional gender divisions in society.

In the French and international press the anti-Commune narrators famously denounced these women as “les pétroleuses,” the instigators of fires that destroyed Paris’ monumental buildings, which was an image that merged with their contention that Communard women were debased, wild, and, most likely syphilitic prostitutes.

Figure XII. Bernard, 1871; Figure XIII. LeCerf, Emancipated Woman Enlightening the World, 1871.

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212 Ibid., p. 207.
The conservatives perpetually highlighted the role of the “pétroleuses” in their diatribes against the Commune. They did so not only to rebuke the upheaval of gendered norms attributed to the Commune, but also to criticize and degrade the entire event. Such conservative narrative constructions sought to link the Commune’s supposedly ignorant, wild, and morally depraved women (as depicted in Figures XII and XIII above) to its members and working-class adherents in general. It thereby helped validate the conservatives’ denigration of the Communards’ agendas and initiatives.

Lissagaray contests this important assessment. His narration inverts the anti-communard perspective by placing the Parisian prostitute in Versailles, and similarly accuses the anti-Communard women of working for the Prussians. Moreover, in Lissagaray’s account of the fires that engulfed Paris during the last week of fighting, the women of the Commune are significant in their absence. In his concluding remark, his image of the woman barricader is transformed when he writes to the women directly: “women, you whose devotion sustains and elevates [the exiles’] courage, let the agony of the prisoners haunt you like an everlasting nightmare.”\(^{213}\) Not only does this statement belie the fact that many of the captured Communards were women, it also reifies Lissagaray’s image of the women of the Commune as that of supporters to, rather than partners with, the insurgents and thereby casts them in a more traditional and thereby less threatening role.

Lissagary’s defense of the burning of Paris was also in direct contrast to Du Camp’s conclusion that this was evidence of social envy and popular imbecility. According to Lissagaray:

What men this handful of combatants, who, without chiefs, without hope, without retreat, disputed their last pavements as though they implied victory! The hypocritical reaction has charged them with the crime of incendiarism, as if in war fire were not a legitimate arm; as if the Versailles shells had not set fire to at least as many edifices as those of the Federals; as if the private speculation of certain men of order had not its share in the ruins. And that same bourgeois who spoke of ‘burning everything’ before the Prussians, calls these people scoundrels because they preferred to bury themselves in the ruins rather than abandon their faith, their property, their families, to a coalition of despots a thousand times more cruel and more lasting than the foreigner.\(^{214}\)

In this tone, which is repeated throughout his 465 page history of the Commune, Lissagaray diligently works to provide a context for the decisions and events that were used in the Commune’s aftermath to denounce the event and its partisans as immoral and unforgivable. In fact, he frequently turns the anti-Commune critique on its head, for example by denouncing the partisans of Versailles as appeasers to the Prussians, in contrast to the frequent denouncement of the Commune as an embarrassing show of disunity in front of the victorious foreign enemy. Moreover, he reverses the republicans’ anti-Commune stance by asserting that the Commune’s very existence was an effort to save the Republic from the monarchist ambitions of its political leadership. This argument is significant, because not only did it proclaim that the Commune was integral

to the survival of the Republic, which cast the Commune in the role of its protector, but also because it was used by Lissagaray in his quest to influence republican politics, even from exile.

Lissagaray was intent on countering the republican appeal to a would-be socialist constituency through their advocacy of amnesty. He asserts that the betrayal of the extreme Left gave Thiers’ the ability to crush the Commune in the name of the Republic. His contempt is palpable and he repeatedly argues that the Commune was initially proclaimed not to destroy the Republic that was declared on September 4, 1870 but to protect it from a monarchist coup. Chapter 23 is subtitled “M. Thiers’ Policy with Regard to the Provinces—The Extreme Left betrays Pars,” and in the introductory paragraph Lissagaray rhetorically asks: “On 19 March, what remained to M. Thiers where-with to govern France? He had neither an army, nor cannon, nor the large towns…A word and a handful of men. The word was Republic; the men, the recognized chiefs of the Republican party.” He goes on to assert that it was in his quest to defeat the Commune that Thiers courted the Republic:

Though the dull rurals barked at the mere name of the Republic, and refused to insert it in their proclamations, M. Thiers, more cunning, mouthed it lustily, and distorting the votes of the Assembly, gave it out as the watchword to his underlings. Since the first risings all the provincial officials had the same refrain: ‘We defend the Republic against the factions.”

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216 Ibid., pp. 271 – 272.
With passages such as this, Lissagaray alludes to a notion that the Republic exists because of the Commune by way of the negative integration that its suppression created.

Moving beyond this provocative foundation narrative, Lissagaray focuses the reader’s attention on contemporary political concerns. In a particularly vitriolic rebuke against Gambetta and his associates, Lissagaray writes, “Opportunism is not of yesterday’s growth. It was born into the world on 19 March 1871, had Louis Blanc and Co. for godfathers and was baptized in the blood of 30,000 Parisians.” He goes on to chronicle Thiers’ invocation to the republican elite to help in safeguarding the Republic:

M. Thiers met them in their lobbies, told them they held the fate of the Republic in their hands, flattered their senile vanity, and inveigled them so successfully, that, from the 23rd, they served him as bottle holders. When the small middle-class republicans of the provinces beheld the profound Louis Blanc, the intelligent Schoelcher, and the most famous grumblers of the radical vanguard fly to Versailles, and insult the Central Committee [of the Commune], and, on the other hand, received neither programme nor able emissaries from Paris, they turned away, and let the flame enkindled by the workmen die out.

By reprimanding the Commune for its lack of political leadership and media savvy Lissagaray tries to honor his promise to provide a balanced perspective while at the same time he illuminates the manner in which the conservative Republic became a weapon against the social-democratic Republic envisioned by the Communards and purportedly supported by the Radicals.

217 Ibid., p. 274.
218 Ibid., p. 272.
The remainder of this highly evocative chapter is spent on exposing the machinations of the Opportunist and Radical republicans who, in 1876, were enjoying electoral success in the absence of a truly oppositional labor party. It was in consideration of their election campaigns that Lissagaray writes to the French voters not to be become facile constituents. He reminds the reader that the court-martials continued for years after the Commune was defeated and that even as of 1876 only a few prisoners of New Caledonia had seen their sentences reduced and given full pardon, that in fact “the Caledonian reservoir remained intact.”

He takes aim at Opportunist and Radical republicans, incensed by the irony that the Commune was being used by its detractors for political gain and reminds the voters that after the elections of 1876, when amnesty was once again voted on by the Chamber of Deputies, the results were “396 noes against 50 ayes… [and] Gambetta did not vote.” Indeed he writes that during the general election of 1876 “the Radicals, tears in their eyes and their hands on their fraternal hearts, pledged themselves to ask for a free and complete amnesty; even the Liberals [Moderates] promised to ‘wipe out the last traces of our civil discords,’ as the bourgeoisie is wont to say when it condescends to have the paving-stones cleaned which itself has reddened with blood.”

Lissagaray scolds republicans for not supporting the Commune but also for their collusion in its misrepresentation. He alludes to the contemporary misrepresentations of

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220 Ibid., p. 463.
221 Ibid., p. 459.
the Commune by the republican press and anti-Commune historians by highlighting their role during the event. According to Lissagaray, the press was directly responsible for numerous denunciations during the last days of the Commune. His accusation is remarkable for its explicitness and detail, “some journals had the specialty of false orders; false autographs, of which the originals could never be produced, but which were…admitted as positive evidence by the courts-martial and honest historians.”²²² In a mock dialogue between the Communards and the republican elite, he writes:

What! the whole Bonapartist and rural press may inundate the departments with infamous articles, in which they affirm that at Paris murder, violation and theft reign supreme, and you are silent!.... M. Thiers may assert that his gendarmes do not assassinate the prisoners; you cannot ignore these atrocious executions, and you are silent! Ascend the tribune; tell the departments the truth, which the enemies of the Commune conceal from them. But our enemies, are they your enemies too? A useless appeal, which the cowardice of the Left knew how to elude...One only, Tolain, asked for an explanation...Louis Blanc, Schoelcher, Greppo, Adam, Langlois, Brisson &c., the Gérontes and the Scapins, sanctimoniously contemplated their bombarded electors, and, fully aware of the facile forgetfulness of Paris, dreamt of their future re-election.²²³

By writing their own histories, the Communards and their supporters labored to prevent such forgetfulness and even in exile sought to induce republican constituencies to adopt a more critical perspective of their candidates, who were at that moment campaigning largely on the issue of amnesty for the Communards they, according to Lissagaray,

²²³ Ibid., p. 275.
betrayed in 1871. The use of pro-Commune narrations for contemporary political exigencies continued long after Lissagaray’s first attempt.

In the aftermath of the 1880 amnesty, many exiles returned to France and continued the work of nullifying the anti-Communard perspective using their personal narrations to impact contemporary political alignment. *La Commune*, written by Louise Michel, presents a salient example of the continuation of these endeavors. Michel was one of the most notorious women of the Commune whose epithets included the Red Virgin, the High Priestess of Anarchy, and the Angel of Petrol. Her celebrity status was manifest upon her return to Paris from New Caledonia in November 1880, when a crowd of 8-20,000 people excitedly and, for authorities, anxiously awaited her arrival at Saint-Lazare station.\textsuperscript{224} Her prestige was apparent as she was immediately greeted there by leading Radical and Socialist Deputies and journalists; including, Georges Clemenceau, Louis Blanc, Olivier Pain, Clovis Hughes, and Henri Rochefort who personally paid for her expenses during the next several years.\textsuperscript{225}

After the amnesty, Michel was a highly sought after celebrity of the revolutionary Left, doggedly pursued by police spies (more than one followed her daily activities for the remainder of her long life) and journalists. Upon her return, she was pressed by every faction of the Left, Radicals, Blanquists, Socialists, and Anarchist circles alike, to speak

\textsuperscript{224} Reports on the number of spectators to Michel’s return vary widely; Edith Thomas, translated by Penelope Williams, *Louis Michel*, Black Rose Books, Montréal 1980, p. 168 estimates between 6-8,000 people; *Le Figaro* figured it was closer to 20,000.
\textsuperscript{225} Thomas, p. 174.
at their public meetings; to energize their base a fact that led to unsettling competition. For example, “Clemenceau drew on their old friendship and asked her to join the campaign he was leading against Opportunism…; Anarchists and collectivists who hoped to carry her off for themselves, looked with great disfavor at his friendship with a “moderate.””\textsuperscript{226} She remained loyal to her personal friends while striving to stay above the factional fray, consistently asserting “I want the focal point to be not my own personality, but the Social Revolution and the women of that Revolution.”\textsuperscript{227} Indeed, she was a self-described anarchist, but never refrained from insisting that anarchism, socialism, feminism, etc., were all constituent parts of a larger movement: the Social Revolution, which, she argued, should never be lost sight of through doctrinal intransigence. As a consummate orator with a sensational Communard history: unyielding before the War Council, refusing early personal amnesty, and enduring long penal servitude in New Caledonia, Michel would ultimately “become a prisoner of her public image. She was the incarnation of the Social Revolution, and her fame crossed national boundaries.”\textsuperscript{228} Michel propagated her social and political views through journalism and a never-ending round of speaking tours in and outside of France, ceaselessly seeking to spur the social revolution.

Her first speaking appearance in 1880 was at the Salle Elysée-Montmartre at a meeting organized by the Social Study Circle of the eighteenth arrondissement.

\textsuperscript{226} Ibid., p. 171.
\textsuperscript{227} \textit{L'Intransigeant}, November 12, 1880.
\textsuperscript{228} Thomas, p. 187.
audience of over 2,000 including workers, amnestied Communards, and reporters packed a room filled with symbolic touchstones of the Commune and the Social revolutionary movement: Marianne draped in a red kerchief and sash, black and red flags, and a kiosk selling copies of the anarchist paper, *Ni Dieu ni maître*. This choice reflects Michel’s over-arching and life-long commitment to the Commune, its legacy and its “martyrs”, but also the social-democratic Republic it aspired to. For example, during the speech she asserted:

> It is not enough to be the party of liberty, equality, fraternity; we must also be the party of justice;” and we shall fight those who oppose us and social justice…We must put an end to an age when mothers go mad with grief and children die.\(^{229}\)

These arguments are in direct continuity with the principles she and others espoused in 1871 and which she endeavored to clarify by writing her own account of the Paris Commune in 1898 at which time her influence remained high among the extreme Radical and revolutionary circles.

*La Commune* was published just one year before Alexandre Millerand became the first socialist Minister in Pierre Waldeck-Rousseau’s cabinet. Millerand’s inclusion tipped off serious controversy within the socialist movement ultimately leading to the emergence of the opposing socialist parties, *Parti socialiste français* and the *Parti socialiste de France*. While these events are beyond the scope of this dissertation, a brief

\(^{229}\) *Le Citoyen, La Marseillaise*, November 23, 1880; quote originally found in Thomas, pp. 172-173.
analysis of her post-amnesty narration enables a useful illustration of the perpetuation of the Commune’s legacy among revolutionary intransigents. Writing after the republican triumph and at the time when Radical republicans began to displace the Moderate-republican political mandate, Michel’s *La Commune* also provides an expedient contrast to Lissagaray’s earlier narrative.\(^{230}\)

Michel perpetuates Lissagaray’s account that the Commune was initially established to protect the Republic from monarchist aspirations and in protest to the capitulation to the Prussians. Indeed, she recalls that on September 4, 1870, “we thought we would have with the Republic victory and freedom. Anyone who spoke of surrender would have been crushed.”\(^{231}\) Like her contemporaries, she goes on to recount how quickly this image of Republican France faded in the wake of the Prussian Siege, the capitulation, and the uncompassionate treatment of the people of Paris by the new Republican government. However, unlike her contemporaries she is not concerned as much with the past *per se* as with what that past can induce for the future.

Michel, like Lissagaray, denounces the image of the villainous Communard and similarly asserts that “the dead on the side of Versailles were a minute handful, each one of which [had sacrificed thousands of victims and that] on the side of the Commune, the victims were without name and without body,” scoffing that “the official lists

\(^{230}\) Radical republicans held a majority in the Chamber for most of the time period between 1899 and 1914 and they held a majority in the Senate after the World War I.

acknowledged 30,000 but 100,000 would be” closer to the truth. With such tracts she affirms the pro-Commune narration of the projected image of the Versailles Government as depraved in contrast to the anti-Commune imagery of the Communard criminal. But unlike Lissagaray, Michel was writing as an anarchist in the post-amnesty period. Thus in contrast to Lissagaray, who was a committed (albeit Socialist) republican, Michel presents the Commune as the martyred first awakening to the revolutionary potential of the French working-class population. With passages in which she exclaims: “as if anything could prevent the eternal attraction of progress! You cannot kill the idea with cannon fire….the end hastens more as the real idea appears, powerful and beautiful, more than all the fictions which preceded it,” Michel sought to induce with print the same revolutionary action she worked for throughout her life.

Michel, who converted to anarchism *en route* to exile in New Caledonia, was less concerned with penning an un-biased account of the Commune that might mitigate the negative image of the event and its participants; instead, her mission was to incite the next revolution. For Michel, “past and future were indissolubly linked.” La Commune represents the retention of the revolutionary dream among Communards in the aftermath of the amnesty. Her publication was an attempt to propagate the myth of the Commune with the goal of igniting the next revolutionary movement. By 1880, the republican narrative of the foundation of the Third Republic and the Commune’s place within that

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232 Michel, p. 11.
history had begun to take hold. The republican perspective affirmed and “sympathized with the Commune’s republicanism, but disapproved of its revolutionary acts, [it] accepted the Versailles Assembly as the legal authority, but deplored its royalism which [like Lissagaray,] they blamed for the crisis.” In *La Commune*, Michel is up front about the revolutionary agenda at work in her recollections.

In the preface she asserts that “this time is the prologue of the drama where the axis of the human societies will change…I especially sought in this book to revive the drama of 71.” She concedes that the “Commune at the present time is a point for history; the facts, at this distance of twenty-five years, take shape…in their true perspective [but] in the distances of the horizon, the events are piling up in the same manner today with this difference, that then, above all France awoke, and that today it is the world.” This perspective is representative of her affinity with internationalism in its anarchist form. For Michel, the time was at hand to not only avenge the “slaughter” of the Communards, but to endeavor revolutionary change once more. Indeed her narration, unlike Lissagaray’s, is intimate and sometimes emotional. According to Edith Thomas, this was Michel’s writing style in general; Thomas highlights for example that Michel would follow “a perfectly reasonable statement—‘We wish all to receive a state

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236 Michel, p. 10.

237 Ibid., p. 9.
education’—with a relapse into her preferred maudlin terminology: ‘May the fields no longer run with blood and muddy streets no longer throng with prostitutes.’”\textsuperscript{238} However, La Commune seems to have been written in a particular state of catharsis. For example, Michel describes “advancing in the writing [of the book], I loved to relive that time of the struggle for freedom which was my real life.”\textsuperscript{239} With such a passage she imparts a sense of only momentary dormancy for in her final sentence she writes “the hour has come, for a free and just humanity, it has grown too old to return to its bloody cradle.”\textsuperscript{240} Writing in the last years of the nineteenth century, Michel believed that so-called final struggle for the French proletariat was close at hand; she envisioned revolution on the horizon.

In fact, the political realities of France were unknown to Michel upon her return from New Caledonia. Moreover, “the persons who had risen to power and influence in radical circles had no interest in relinquishing their position to any legend.”\textsuperscript{241} She was an ambiguous figure with the revolutionary parties. She proclaimed herself to be an anarchist, but resisted the idea of terror, always advocating instead for “a spontaneous uprising of the people.”\textsuperscript{242} Her loyalty was to a utopian future; a future that never came for Michel or any of the internationalists that advocated revolutionary change for France.

Between the suppression of the Paris Commune and the return of the amnestied insurgents, Moderate republicans worked diligently to transform the political culture of

\textsuperscript{238} Thomas, p. 83.
\textsuperscript{239} Michel, p. 221.
\textsuperscript{240} Ibid, p. 460.
\textsuperscript{241} Lowry and Gunter, pp. x – ix.
\textsuperscript{242} Ibid, p. x.
the nation. They were successful in their endeavors to erode the traction for a revolutionary movement, as envisioned by intransigents like Michel. By 1880, the Moderate republican’s regime had appropriated the revolutionary tradition so effectively that its leaders deemed the presence of the Communards to be a manageable risk. As the following chapters describe, the key to this accomplishment was mitigating the Commune’s memory by reclaiming the capital city’s image and presenting France as a nation that had fully recovered, both domestically and internationally—that was “herself again.”

As the eager market for Commune-related narratives and photographs reveals, the event featured prominently in the nation’s perception of its recent past. Many leaders and social analysts of the time initially sought to disassociate the memory of the Commune from the national political narrative. They feared the effect that its persistence might have on the imagination of the French working class. In addition, they were concerned that a display of national disunity would further weaken a defeated France in the international community. Such concerns are apparent in the historical narrations that present the Commune as a criminal insurrection or an aberration in the normal life of the nation. But historical narration extends beyond the pages of monographs; it is also inscribed in city landscapes, brought to life in commemorations, and implied in national presentations. In France’s case, these ambient devices were borne out by the December 1871 decision to

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ban all photographic representations of the Commune, the rebuilding of the Vendôme Column by January 1875, the presentation of France to the international community during the Universal Exposition of 1878, and the national celebration staged in Paris on June 30, 1878.
CHAPTER 3: THE EMERGENCE OF A MEDIACRACY

Edmond de Goncourt coined the term “Médiocraté” on September 4, 1870, using it to disparage the competence of the political leaders that presided over the birth of France’s newest Republic. Pierre Larousse echoed that sentiment when he described the rampant construction of statues in the years following 1871 as a veritable “statuomanie.” While he acknowledged their important role in uplifting the French people after disaster, Larousse asserted that the statues were built with so little care that one could only consider them a celebration of mediocrity. However, “Mediacracy” is perhaps a more appropriate label for the Third Republic’s media-focused political character—a product of the era of mass politics in which it emerged. Throughout the Republic’s existence, monuments, fêtes, and expositions, whether ostensibly political or not, were uniformly seized as venues ripe for political messaging by actors with competing agendas and ideologies from all shades of the political spectrum. Politics during the first decade of the Third Republic operated firmly within the context of this “Mediacracy.” Both the conservative government leaders and their republican rivals sought to garner consent through the symbolic use of public spaces and cultural events. During the 1870s, each of the leading political factions—the monarchical and imperial conservatives and the Moderate and Radical republicans—used visual culture and festivities in their competing efforts to secure control over and determine the future.

governance of the new Republic. Their distinct perspectives came through in their
divergent celebrations and expressions of modern France as a recovered, united nation.

This chapter explores examples of Mediacracy during the period prior to and
immediately following the republican victories in the Chamber elections of October
1877, with a particular focus on the Moderate republicans’ media engagement as they
were poised for victory. Each of these events displays intricate connections to the
legacies of the Commune, as well as claims to the Revolution’s heritage that Moderate
republicans were simultaneously emphasizing and seeking to tame. The first section
describes the French festive tradition and the political use of culture and visual media
during the early Third Republic. Most scholars who study the Third Republic’s festivity
and “statuomania” limit their analysis to the period following the establishment of the
Moderate republican regime in 1879. The general neglect of earlier years has resulted in a
misunderstanding of the foundation of the Third Republic. This section begins to close
that gap in knowledge by examining earlier expressions of Mediacracy within the
conservative and republican political rivalries of the 1870s. In doing so, it clarifies the
importance of such endeavors to the republicans’ grasp of political power and the
consequential longevity of the Third Republic.245

The next section analyzes the reconstruction of the Vendôme Column and the
reburials of the first victims of the Commune, Generals Lecomte and Clément-Thomas,

245 Conservative is being used as a reference to Legitimists, Orleanists, and Bonapartists.
on December 27, 1875. These events occurred on the very eve of the first general elections following the Republic’s consolidation under the 1875 constitution. MacMahon’s Moral Order regime conducted both of them, but with very different intentions and in very different manners. This section pays specific attention to the Column’s history of construction and deconstruction, the legacies of the Commune, and the impact that the rebuilding and the reburials had on political rivalries and aggrandizement prior to the republicans’ first major success in the general elections of 1876.

The final section focuses on the Universal Exposition of 1878 and the coinciding celebration of the Republic during the Fête of June 30th. Both took place during the height of the battle between republicans and conservatives for control of France’s political fate. The Exposition came after the 1877 republican electoral victory but prior to MacMahon’s resignation—in other words, in the midst of the republican rise to power and its resulting political tensions. The purpose of the Exposition was to announce France’s recovery from its defeat in the Franco-Prussian War and its unity after the downfall of the Paris Commune. The official theme of the Exposition was “Paix et Travail” (“Peace and Work”). This image of a resurgent France gained wide acceptance, yet deep conflict lurked beneath the façade. The republicans and conservatives were engaged in a heated battle for the Republic’s survival and significant political fissures were resurfacing among the republicans. This section closely examines these political realities, which contemporary observers and participants often obscured—and which
modern historians have marginalized by focusing on the cultural impact of events like these without connecting them to the nuanced political contests that both generated and were affected by them. The Fête of June 30 is an excellent example of this interplay. This celebration of the Republic occurred during the Exposition at the insistence of the republican majority in the Chamber and was a moment in which republican revelry was at its highest point since the birth of the Republic in September 1870. During the festival, the republican-conservative rivalry was palpable. With conservatives controlling the Senate and MacMahon doggedly holding on to his presidency, such an event was quite subversive despite being officially sanctioned. The republican élan is evident in this fête, but so too is the triumph of the Moderate republican faction over their Radical counterparts, even on the heels of an electoral victory that propagated an image of republican unity.

**Festivity and Statuary: Constructing the Past According to the Present**

The use of festivals and visual culture for aggrandizement and the cultivation of loyalty had, by the 1870s, a long history of being used by French governments to varying degrees of success. During the early Third Republic, celebrations, monument construction and reconstruction were carried out in abundance by competing political actors with contemporary rivalries in mind. Analyzing the inauguration of Emmanuel Frémiet’s statue of *Joan of Arc*, the reconstruction of the Vendôme Column, the Universal Exposition of 1878, and the Fête of June 30, within the context of contemporary political rivalries and concerns, mitigates a significant lacuna within the
existing historiography. Moreover, examining these constructions and events, greatly assists in locating the political impact of the Commune’s legacies in the symbolic realm of political culture. This chapter alternates between two analytical perspectives: the legacy of the Commune as an influential factor of not merely French culture, but as a more immediate and impactful feature of French politics during the Republic’s most insecure period, and the successful attempts of the Moderate republicans to absorb the revolutionary legacy in a way that privileged a liberal national foundation narrative which consequentially helped the legacy’s perpetuation.

At the beginning of the Third Republic, much of what conservatives and republicans understood about and expected from statuary constructions and festive celebrations was informed by their experience in opposition under the Second Empire. During the Second Empire, the use of commemorative and visual culture reached a climax and demonstrated a significant impact in terms of garnering and retaining political power and popular allegiance. Louis Napoleon Bonaparte’s reign lasted for twenty one years, a feat not accomplished by any monarch in the post-Revolutionary era. As Mathew Truesdell has shown, this longevity was owed “not to military might or personal charisma,” but rather to “a canny politics of image and what we might call today ‘marketing’ which he pursued, in large part, through spectacles.”

Bonaparte’s fête Impériale, however, was not the only vision on the offer during his reign. Opposition groups also engaged in this type of spectacular politics; in fact, the republicans’

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246 Truesdell, p. xvii.
“oppositional festivity reached a crescendo in Paris after the liberalization of 1868 and helped to make [them] the most dynamic political force of the day” thus presaging republican supremacy in mediacratic-political tactics.\textsuperscript{247} The experience of the Second Empire also influenced the monarchist-Right who, even as their electoral majority began to wane, took care not to ignore the political capital that could be gained by operating within a context of Mediacracy.

The elections of February 1871 resulted in a solid conservative majority with 400 of the 768 deputies being royalists including two of Louis-Philippe’s sons. The majority of votes were given to candidates who promised to sue for peace, reflecting the electorate’s war-weariness. However, between January 1872 and May 1873, republicans won 31 of the 38 by-elections, thereby steadily eroding the conservative majority. In the face of growing support for republican candidates the Moral Order rushed to embrace Mediacracy tactics. This is witnessed in the completion of Emmanuel Fremiet’s equestrian statue \textit{Joan of Arc} at Place des Pyramids in 1874 and the sanction given to building the Sacré-Coeur in July of 1873; just two months after MacMahon replaced Theirs as President.\textsuperscript{248} Both of these endeavors were informed by conservative memories of the Commune and carried out in an effort to assert the Moral Order’s conserving agenda through their appropriation of public space and the propagation of their

\textsuperscript{247} Ibid., p. 174.
\textsuperscript{248} Construction on the Basilica of the Sacré-Coeur began in 1875; the same year as the Vendôme Column’s reconstruction was complete. A more in-depth analysis of the Sacré-Coeur is provided in the following chapter.
condemnation of the Commune, which they assimilated to the revolutionary past and contemporary republicanism.

Frémiet’s statue ultimately served as a rallying point for conservative manifestations. The statue became “the first commemorative monument of the new Republic” and despite it being commissioned by the conservative-republican Jules Simon in 1872 as a means to “express France’s valor and resilience," its unveiling in 1875 was carried out as a Moral Order initiative.249 As the initiative for the statue passed into conservative hands, it was reconceived as a symbol of liberation for restoration to shine as a golden reminder of past monarchal glory.250 Yet the Comte de Chambord’s intransigence, displayed in his speech on October 29, 1874, meant that when it was unveiled, several months later, the monarchists were indeed commemorating a dream.251

250 Sergiusz Michalski, Public Monuments: Art in Political Bondage 1870—1997, Reaktion Books, London 1998, pp. 14-15. As Michalski highlights, “Bishop Dupanloup of Orléans, who was the driving force behind the Joan cult, was also the chief mediator between the” Bourbon and Orléanist factions.
251 Brown, p. 46. This is the speech in which the Comte de Chambord stubbornly insisted he would only rule under the white flag of the Bourbon dynasty.
The crusading statue depicts a uniquely militant version of Joan gazing not at the heavens but rather, confidently focused on and marching her mount in the direction of the Tuileries Palace from the site of its installation at Place des Pyramids. The statue’s subject, pose, and the timing of its inauguration in 1874 are all loaded with references to the contemporary political context and the Commune. At the time of the statue’s construction and unveiling, the prospect of an impending restoration—even if not under the leadership of Comte de Chambord—was the strongest it had been, and would ever be, since the Republic’s declaration. As described by Michalski, “Joan’s pose, and the role the statue was to play, can be understood properly only when we recall her mission: to

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252 After 1874 many other militant depictions of Joan were constructed, especially in her homeland of Lorraine, Mathurin Moreau’s statue, La Bourgogne à Jeanne d’Arc, located at the summit of Ballon d’Alsace and constructed in 1909 is particularly illustrative of later, and equally militant, depictions of Joan. At the 1909 inauguration the statue faced Germany; in 1959 it was turned to face Alsace.
liberate and enter French cities on behalf and in the service of her legitimate monarch.”

The statue’s place was chosen because it was “near the site where [Joan] was wounded during battle against the English invaders.” However, the location and orientation enabled another symbolic meaning: Joan is charging toward the burnt out remains of the Tuileries Palace—on of the only sites the Communards never contested setting ablaze.

In this light, the statue can also be read as a permanent conservative rebuke to the Commune, and specifically its destructive capacity.

At the statue’s February 19th unveiling, political fissures were palpable. The unveiling came less than a month after the Republic’s constitution narrowly passed with a majority held with the sway of just one vote. During the months of February and March that followed, the constitutional laws on the Senate and the organization of government were voted upon following serious partisan battles. Underpinning all of this was the fact that through by-elections, Bonapartism was demonstrating an uptick in popularity and the Prince-Imperial had just come of age precipitating plans for Bonapartists to make a pilgrimage to Chislehurst in his honor. Thus the unveiling of Frémiet’s statue served as a flashpoint where political and ideological rivalries might explode into violence.

253 Michalski, p. 15.
254 Boime, p. 67.
255 They also did not deny setting fire to Adolphe Thiers’ home.
256 This was thanks to the Wallon Amendment to the Constitutional Law which stipulated the president of the Republic would be elected by the Senate and the Chamber. The amendment passed 353 to 352 and effectively consolidated the Republic.
257 By-elections between October 1873 and February 1875 resulted in the election of sixteen republicans to the National Assembly but also six Bonapartists against only one monarchist.
In the 1870s multiple political factions from the Right and Left had adopted Joan of Arc as a national symbol. By the dawn of the Third Republic Joan’s republican-inspired image as “heroine of national liberation and as a victim of the treachery of church and crown,” was being displaced as Catholics began to “reclaim Joan as a saint and martyr whose humble origins and patriotic credentials could be exploited to enhance the church’s appeal in rural communities.” This contestation over Joan’s image was itself symbolic of the religious and social tensions between republicans and conservatives during the Republic’s foundation. The unveiling in 1874, was unofficial and not publicized. According to McWilliam and Best, the lack of ceremony and publicity was “ostensibly to avoid offending the German government.” However, the conservative government was generally reluctant to stage ceremonies that invited potentially unruly masses to participate; moreover in light of contemporary political and ideological debates over Joan’s legacy, the possibility that an inauguration ceremony might lead to political violence probably influenced the decision to mute the unveiling at least as much if not more than diplomatic concerns regarding the German government. Indeed, only 150 attended the inauguration and the only skirmish came when “an animated discussion of France’s recent defeat prompted police intervention” but the mere kerfuffle was hardly

259 McWilliiam, p. 394.
260 McWillliam, p. 395; Best, p. 127.
noticed by the press. After the inauguration of Fremiet’s statue, the importance of Joan of Arc began to fade within the republican cache of symbolic martyrs. On May 30, 1878 the conservative-Right’s appropriation of the statue, as a site for counter-demonstrations against republican authorities, began in earnest.

By 1878 republicans held a majority of seats in the Chamber following the Crisis of 16 May. May 30, 1878 was Voltaire’s centennial, coinciding with the Universal Exposition during which republican triumphalism was prominent. However, the centennial also coincided with Joan of Arc’s martyrdom and, as a rebuke to the republican display of reverie for the Enlightenment and anti-clerical principles embodied by Voltaire and pursued by the republicans who were apparently taking control of the Republic, a counter-demonstration at Frémiet’s statue was planned. In contrast to celebrations in honor of Voltaire, the counter-demonstration at Frémiet’s statue was banned. This reflects the shifting locus of political power from monarchical to republican factions and consequently the republicans’ ability to carry out mediocratic-politics even more effectively.

During the majority of the first decade of the Third Republic, republicans retained their oppositional role against the regime in power. Throughout this period, Moderate republicans worked to cultivate the allegiance of as broad a constituency as possible meaning they reached out to voters who transcended socio-economic borders. To this

261 According to Le Gaulois, February 21, 1875, which was the only journal to report on the skirmish, among unnamed members of the crowd, “the generals of 4 September were not sparred, and Garibaldi particularly was strongly attacked by the crowd” in relation to his support for the Commune.
end, they presented themselves as the political leaders that would protect the needs and desires of agricultural and small town communities and maintain a peaceful and prosperous nation. But they also engaged in an important campaign to singularly claim France’s revolutionary heritage. Each of the republican factions were legitimately and undeniably “children of the Revolution” and this heritage, especially in the wake of the Commune, was controversial and a potential political liability. During the 1870s, the conservative regime persistently denigrated that past in their political speeches, parliamentary debates, and journalism seeking to negatively unite the nation behind the banner of restoration. Unable and unwilling to denounce their revolutionary origins, republicans, but especially the Moderates propagated a counter-narrative of the revolutionary past and the Republic’s revolutionary origins wherein they distanced themselves from the Terror and the Commune but upheld the liberal tendencies of the pre-1793 period, the July Monarchy, and the early phase of Second Republic. While this narrative had been engaged by the Moderate republicans under the Second Empire, by the 1870s, this aspect of their political messaging was an effort to provide historical legitimacy for their contemporary republican political agenda, a way of countering the growing popularity of the Radicals and a means by which to effect the closure of the revolutionary era by upholding its triumph as embodied in the liberal Republic that their electoral success would secure.262 With martial law in place in Paris until 1876 and the nation-wide restriction imposed by MacMahon’s Moral Order party on free assembly and

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262 See, Shafer, pp. 16-26
press, these campaigns were necessarily waged by taking advantage of the levers of culture and visual and commemorative media. This led republicans to seize moments deemed ripe for political messaging, such as the funerals of key republican figures.

The use of funerary reverie for political aggrandizement and subversive messaging has been extensively researched and analyzed, most notably by Ben-Amos.\textsuperscript{263} Such politically advantageous cultural expressions were part of the republicans’ media-based electoral and national narrative messaging conducted during the Moral Order’s repressive regime which the elections of October 1877 had yet to completely demolish. Ben-Amos describes the republican use of funerals in terms of giving “luster and legitimacy to a republican form of government born in revolution and opposition to the Catholic Church.”\textsuperscript{264} His analysis enables the deduction—it is never explicitly stated—that this long-honed tool (the public funeral) was a practice that was beneficial to the permanent reclamation of public space as a means to effect the republicanization of the nation. Ben-Amos’ account sheds minimal light on intra-republican rivalries that these events hosted and impacted and when he does it is not until the case of Hugo’s funeral in 1885, which was long after such rivalries had begun to be politically impactful. Furthermore, with the exception of Thiers’ funeral in the summer of 1877, he neglects to examine their relation to electoral campaigns, but Thiers’ funeral provides only the most


obvious (and most cited) correlation. In fact, these funerals were frequently used as tools through which the different republican factions tried to differentiate themselves in front of the voting public. When Thiers was buried, this rivalry was muted which was in accordance with the campaign of the 363. Conversely, François-Vincent Raspail’s funeral just four months later, which Ben-Amos does not analyze, witnessed significant factional contestation.265

F.V. Raspail’s funeral took place when republicans were seeking to gain a Senate majority and the republican unity, vociferously claimed in 1877, was disintegrating. His funeral provides an excellent example of how such moments were used to propagate a specifically temperate republican image and at the same time were flashpoints of intra-republican rivalries and events during which the revolutionary Left began to bring their perspectives before the court of public opinion. By the time of his death, Raspail had a long history of arrests, trials and imprisonment for violent political action. However, Raspail had not been politically active in the time leading up to and during the Commune.266 This, coupled with his dual status as a celebrated man of science, meant that in 1878, Raspail’s political history could be appropriated by the Moderates who

265 By choosing not to analyze Raspail’s funeral, Ben-Amos perpetuates a lacuna in historiography of death, funerals, and their politicization. In fact, Dawn Dodds’, “Funerals, Trials, and the Problem of Violence in 19th Century France: Blanqui and Raspail,” Doctoral Dissertation, Cambridge, 2010, is a welcome contribution to this field and as she describes, even Raspail’s biographers have been curiously silent in regard to his funeral. The exception to this rule is the work of journalist Jean-Pierre Bédéï and his wife Patricia in François-Vincent Raspail, Alvik editions, Paris 2005. In her own account, which is based on extensive archival and journalistic research, Dodds does not contest the assessment made by Bédéï. See Dodds, p.16 regarding the absence of scholarly analysis on this remarkable figure’s funeral.

266 However, both Raspail and his son were imprisoned under the Third Republic for advocating on behalf of the amnesty. One of his sons, in fact, was still being held when his father’s funeral was carried out.
obscured his violent past and highlighted instead his status as an elected official of the Third Republic, his life-long dedication to science, and his work to alleviate the lives of the poor. Nonetheless, Gambetta chose not to attend the funeral and instructed his followers to do the same, reflecting his political estimation that attending the funeral of such a radical figure, despite the event’s moderate tone, might endanger the republican electoral élan. In 1878, the republican Republic had yet to be achieved. Republicans held a majority in the Chamber but had yet to capture the Senate and Presidency. From the Moderates’ perspective, the republican movement couldn’t suffer republican division or an overt association with militant republicanism. Yet, as a Radical republican, Raspail’s funeral was potentially useful with respect to projecting republican unity; “with certain strategic omissions, [his legacy] could be sculpted into the exact kind of material the republicans wanted to claim the Third Republic was made of.”

Moreover, as a republican with nothing but the issue of amnesty to connect him with the Commune, honoring Raspail lent the Moderates a good measure of popular support.

During Raspail’s widely attended funeral on January 13, 1878, only two orators made reference to his revolutionary past: Louis Blanc, his friend and comrade from 1848, who used it to assert the closure of the revolutionary era and Emile Gautier who was not

267 Dodds, p. 179. To that effect, Dodds asserts that the projected image of Raspail was one of a man who left a successful career in the church, fought “heroically in 1830, but accepted no favors from Louis-Philippe,” was the “first to pronounce the Republic in 1848 and was a dedicated advocate of universal [male] suffrage,” had lived in exile during the entirety of the Second Empire, “suffered alongside the people of Paris during the siege; not tarnished by involvement with the Commune, but had suffered prison for defending it in print and was actively involved in the amnesty campaign.” The fact that Raspail was not politically active, unlike Blanqui, during the time leading up to and during the Commune, was an important factor in the ability of Moderates to court his legacy.
invited to speak, but seized the platform in order to make a bid for amnesty and to promote the “immortality of Rasapil’s example” as inspiration for future social revolutionaries. In his unsanctioned speech, Gautier alluded to the Communards stating that like Raspail, they were merely guilty of “having loved the Republic too much…that it fell into the hands of the younger generation to honour this forefather…, by gathering up the flag of social revolution from the blood of its martyrs and raising it on Raspail’s half-opened tomb.”

Gautier’s impudence reflects the revolutionary Left’s impatience with mainstream republicanism and their growing unwillingness to stifle their opinions for the sake of republican unity in the name of safeguarding the Republic. Despite Gautier’s uninvited and revolutionary oration, Raspail’s 1878 funeral was far from a call to collective action. Instead, the sanctioned speeches were moderate and the funeral was repeatedly compared (by the republican press) to Thiers’ funeral staged just four months prior, as a further example of the republicans’ ability to govern a peaceful nation.

Despite the moderate tone of the sanctioned eulogies and the tranquil comportment of the crowd, the conservative press excoriated the funeral. As Dodd’s aptly points out, the conservatives’ denunciation of the event should be understood within the context of the Moral Order’s declining electoral appeal in contrast to the recent affirmation of the republican majority in the Chamber. Conservative journalists specifically lamented the exploitation of the event to promote anti-clericalism. For example, *Le Français* decried “the absence of prayers, the bouquets of immortelles, the

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268 Emile Gautier in *Le Réveil*, January 14, 1878.
delegation of freemasons, and cries of ‘Vive la République!’” According to the conservative journal, this “amounted to a revolutionary atmosphere.” The apparent pro-amnesty sentiment of the attending crowd was also a source of conservative contempt. The pro-amnesty view was clarified in Gautier’s unsanctioned speech as well as by Bouchet, who “reminded the crowd that one of Raspail’s sons was still living in exile after having been condemned for promoting amnesty,” recalling Raspail’s own recent imprisonment for “suggesting, in the name of national unity, the republicans forgive and forget the civil conflict that marked the Commune.” But such a remark was incredibly moderate compared to the radical and revolutionary sentiments on display at several previous and future funerals of Radical and revolutionary leaders, including Victor Noir’s in January, 1870 and Blanqui’s in January, 1881. Furthermore, the conservative journalists did not distinguish between sanctioned speeches such as those of Blanc and members of the Raspail family versus Gautier’s. This of course would have nuanced the republican position on amnesty and negated the on-going conservative campaign to assimilate the republican and Communard identities. Instead, by castigating the funeral’s anti-clerical tenor and its amnesty supporting participants, the conservative press was sustaining the electoral messaging of the Moral Order.

The funeral officially ended with Raspail’s son Benjamin’s directive: “after this calm and imposing ceremony, all that is left, citizens, is for us to draw inspiration from the sentiments of François-Vincent Raspail, and to work for the complete triumph of

269 *Le Français*, January 15, 1878; originally cited in Dodds, p. 187.
270 Dodds, p. 187 and footnote 266 above.
Indeed, Louis Blanc’s “message that Raspail’s association with political violence belonged to the heroic—but finished—past” of republican militarism, became the dominate motif in the republican press’ recollections of the day.

The following month, Blanc underscored the closure of the era of militant republicanism at the unveiling of the monument to Ledu-Rollin on the thirtieth anniversary of the Second Republic by paying “homage to [the 1848er’s] advocacy of universal suffrage which embedded the Republic not by riot but by fraternal popular will.”

For Rollin’s funeral, the family insisted upon respecting his stated wishes; the event did not host the type of republican political orations witnessed at so many others. Blanc’s pronunciation before the monument, inaugurated three years after his death, enabled the opportunity to pontificate on republican values enshrined in their safeguarding universal suffrage during the promulgation of the 1875 constitution. Within less than a year before the 1879 Senate elections, but after the republicans had reaffirmed their electoral mandate in October 1877, the timing of the monument’s construction and the pointedness of such a pontification should not be under estimated by attributing them to Rollins legacy alone.

Whether during the monument inaugurations, reburials, or funerals, electoral messaging was of paramount importance to the events’ organizers. As previous scholars have made clear, these moments served as venues through which to propagate competing ideologies and political agendas. At the same time, acute electoral concerns were

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271 Le Rappel, January 9, 1878.
significant and these events, such as the case of Thiers’ funeral in 1877, could be quite beneficial to more explicit electoral addresses. The following sections, are devoted to the most outstanding examples of politics operating within the context of competing Mediacracies wherein statuary construction and fêtes, designed to symbolize France’s resilience and recovery where venues in which the character of France’s reconstruction and political consolidation were being negotiated.

**Demolition of the Past: Reburials and Reconstructions**

During the Commune, the city of Paris was not only a literal battle ground but also a symbolic one. The demolition of some of Paris’ most famed and important buildings such as the Hôtel de Ville, the Tuileries Palace, the Palace of the Legion of Honor, the Palace of Justice, as well as more than two hundred homes, including that of Adolphe Thiers, were among the events most lamented by the Commune’s detractors. Arguably the most significant act of destruction was the toppling of the Vendôme Column on May 16, 1871. This was carried out as one of the last acts of the Commune just days before the Versailles troops entered Paris. The Column’s destruction was important because of the symbolism involved in both the Column itself and the act of tearing it down.
This tortured column, in fact, had a long history of destruction and re-construction with the figure on top often changing to reflect the leadership or intended spirit of governance. The column was erected during Napoleon Bonaparte’s reign as the Colonne d’Austerlitz in commemoration of his 1805 victory in that battle and modeled after Rome’s Trajan Column. In 1814 Napoleon I’s statue at the top of the column was destroyed and replaced by a statue of Henry IV in celebration of the Bourbon restoration. The *Fleur-de-lis* took Henry IV’s place when Louis XVIII fled the capital during Napoleon’s “*cent jours*.” Then, in 1830 Louis-Philippe replaced this symbol once again with the figure of Napoleon I, this time donning a frockcoat and hat, in reflection of his “bourgeois monarchy.” During the Second Empire, Napoleon III changed the statue of his great uncle to one more commemorative of the great days of the First Empire with Napoleon wearing the attire of a Roman Emperor. Hence, this monument had endured a
long struggle in battles for public space and national commemoration. It’s no surprise then that it would become a target for the latest revolutionary upheaval in 1871.

According to the Communards, the entire Column was torn down as a symbolic blow to a “monument to barbarity, a symbol of brute force... a permanent insult to the vanquished by the victor.” The day after it was destroyed, the revelry continued in the pages of the *Journal Officiel*: “the date of 26 floréal will be glorious in history, because it consecrates our rupture with militarism, that bloody negation of all human rights.” In reflection from exile, Lissagaray asserts that the demolition was an “inspiration, popular, humane, profound, showing that a war of classes was to supersede the war of nations, [adding without apparent irony, that it] aimed at the same time a blow to the ephemeral triumph of the Prussians.” At the same time, the Column’s destruction had a more immediate catalyst and intention than the generalized notion of asserting human rights or antimilitarism. According to one Communard witness, its toppling was a symbolic statement of the demolition of the contemporary French State and society: “I saw the Vendôme Column fall, it collapsed all in one piece like a stage décor on a nice bed of trash...This colossal symbol of the Grand Army—how fragile, empty, miserable! It

seems to have been eaten out from the middle by a multitude of rats, like France itself, like its old tarnished glory.”

Kristin Ross convincingly assimilates the Commune’s attack on social and political verticality with their demolition of the Column. Furthermore, she concurs with Jacques Rougerie that the Commune itself was a response to the Second Empire’s years of social and political (not to mention geographic) marginalization of workers who, in tearing down the Column, signified one of the most important underpinnings of the Commune: the retaking of the city’s center by the “exiles” who had been displaced and subjugated under the Empire. The demolition of the Column was indeed a “final spectacle of memory and resistance played out in a ceremony of destruction…bringing down an idol to proclaim a euphoric new order, shattering bronze to rupture time and history… [it was] an act of anti-commemoration.”

According the Janice Best, many of the rebuilding projects and new statuary constructions testify to the Third Republic’s endeavor to reestablish order and legitimacy, often times, by “emphasizing historical continuity.”

Rebuilding the Column, and restoring Napoleon I in the Roman attire commissioned by Napoleon III, was an act that not only effaced the recent past but also

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276 Communard Louis Barron, quoted in Ross, p. 7.
277 Ibid., p. 5.
glorified the days of monarchical governance that the conservative majority strove to resurrect. Therefore, even if one considers the Column’s restoration within the *longue durée* of French history, it necessarily, as the conservative regime intended, ruptured the reality of continuity. Furthermore, David A. Shafer astutely points out a fact that scholars who describe the Column’s reconstruction often ignore which is that the destruction of the Column was not an original idea.\(^{281}\) The Column was hardly a sacred monument for the legitimists and while Orleanists may have retained some of their conservative-liberal adherence to the cult of Napoleon, it had been seriously eroded by the advent of the Second Empire and its recent demise.\(^{282}\) Similarly, “upon the fall of the Second Empire …even Moderate republicans like Jules Simon suggested more suitable uses for the Column’s bronze,” in fact, prior to the Prussian siege, Courbet’s “spirited campaign to destroy the entire column” was hardly controversial.\(^{283}\)

The multiplicity of political factions that had no great admiration for the Colonne d’Austerlitz, testifies to some of the misunderstandings regarding the Commune’s origins and the royalist initiative to reconstruct the imperial monument. The Commune did, as Rougerie asserts, have significant origins in the social, political, and geographic

\(^{281}\) Shafer, p. 167. Shafer; cites Edwards, p. 301. Boime is a great example of this misunderstanding. On p. 22, Boime writes “perhaps the Third Republic’s obsession with effacing the traces of the Communard presence is best seen in its unexpected outrage at the toppling of the Vendôme Column—the beloved symbol of none other than the Bonapartists.” In addition to the outrage being a surprise because the monument was Napoleonic, the unexpected shock should be considered incongruous because of the variety of political factions that supported such an action prior to the Communards carrying it out.


\(^{283}\) Shafer, p. 167.
displacement of substantial segments of the French working classes and petit-bourgeois during the Second Empire. Yet it was also the manifestation of intra-republican rivalry, between Moderate, Radical, and Socialist-republicans, which had begun to resurface during the last liberal years of the Second Empire.\textsuperscript{284} None of the republican factions were partial to the Column’s continued presence yet the fact that it was the Communards who took the initiative to tear it down, gave the act an unacceptable legacy. This is also why royalist leaders of the early Republic endeavored to rebuild it. As surely as the Column’s destruction was a symbolic manifestation of demolishing French social and political verticality, the rebuilding of the Column was an equally important act for the government of the Third Republic. For republicans and royalists alike it was the reclamation of the city’s center for the privilege of its pre-Commune inhabitants and an effacement of the ostentatiousness of the revolutionary-republican faction, which neither the Moderates nor the Radical republican factions were opposed to in the early 1870s.

The decree for the re-building of the Column was passed in May 1873, just after MacMahon replaced Thiers as the President. For the conservative leaders of MacMahon’s government, this was indeed part of the physical erasure of the Commune’s legacy; and just as the Communards sought to shatter history, these politicians endeavored to rebuild the past. Taking the initiative to re-build a Napoleonic monument, the Moral Order government, in control of the Republic, no doubt exemplifies Ross’ assertion that “an awareness of social space, the example of the Vendôme Column makes clear, always

\textsuperscript{284} See Truesdell, pp. 184-185, wherein these rivalries were witnessed during Victor Noir’s funeral in 1870.
entails an encounter with history—or better, a choice of histories.” Yet, the rebuilding of the Column, undertaken by royalist leaders, regardless of MacMahon’s personal military history under the Second Empire, had far less to do with honoring the Napoleonic past or the Grand Army, rather its restoration had more immediate concerns in minds of the French voting citizenry.286

Rebuilding the Column and the funeral procession for Generals Lecomte and Clément-Thomas from the Invalides to Père-Lachaise cemetery provided an opportunity, on the eve of the general elections, to make a conservative-reclamation of Parisian public space, a fact that was made explicit by the conservative press. The rebuilding, which was completed in December 1875, especially in light of its coinciding with the reburials of the first victims of the Commune, was primarily an act of negative commemoration of the conservative Republic’s physical suppression of the Commune and its symbolic erasure of its legacy. Indeed, according to contemporary press reports, on December 27th, several thousand people of the “orderly class of citizens,” came to marvel at the installation of Napoleon’s bronzed statue.287 As described by Le Figaro, the only act of sedition carried out during the statues’ placement was the unfurling of a white flag, much to the surprise

285 Ross, p. 8.
286 It should be recalled that MacMahon, despite his legitimist-political orientation, had not only commanded French forces in 1870—1871, he had previously been awarded the Cross of the Legion of Honor while serving in Algeria, he led the French army’s attack on Malakoff during the Crimean War and was given the title of Marshal of France and Duke of Magenta by Napoleon III for his leadership in Italy in 1859.
287 The Morning Post, December 29, 1875.
of the reporter who had apparently expected, if anything, the appearance of a red flag.\textsuperscript{288}

In recalling the funeral procession for Generals Lecomte and Clément-Thomas, \textit{Le Constitutionnel}'s coverage uniquely mingled the reburials with the statue’s installment:

there, in the midst of great dignitaries of State, surrounded by many troops, they were lifted from the bloody disgrace their tormentors [subjected them to]… the procession passed through the entire city…where the red banners of the Commune and the immortelles of the free-thinkers had cynically triumphed, the national flag and the religious draperies took their revenge… After five years spent in mourning and concern, terrorized by an insignificant minority…it will give…confidence in the mandate of the conservative cause all the strength it had lost.\textsuperscript{289}

This was the newspaper’s leading article that day, which itself was a rare place of prominence not given in most of the other newspapers and it uniquely merged the impression of the statue’s installment with the reburials. The fact that the (unnamed) author took this opportunity to venomously describe the meaning of the day’s event in terms of conservative reclamation of social and cultural predominance and the restoration of confidence in the conservative mandate should come as no surprise given the forthcoming elections and the newspaper’s Bonapartist sympathies.\textsuperscript{290}

\textsuperscript{288} \textit{Le Figaro}, « C’était hier la journée des expiations , » December 28, 1875.
\textsuperscript{289} \textit{Le Constitutionnel}, December 28, 1875.
\textsuperscript{290} Bellanger, p. 201-202. According to Bellanger, the editor, Gibiat, “was of Bonapartist temperament, however, flirted with Thiers, [then] seemed to rally to the monarchy in September-October 1873, then, in 1874 and 1875, it began, under the pen of its new editor, d’A. Grenier, to come closer to the Republic of the center Left.” All of these political reorientations are entirely in keeping with machinations of Bonapartist politicians during the same period, lending confidence to the assertion that as of December 1875 this was still, very much so, a Bonapartist journal.
The timing of the Column’s completion both with respect to the reburials and the Christian holiday, gave a permanent physical expression to the maintenance of the city center’s conservative social, political, and moral order. Consider, for example, the choice to construct the expiatory Basilica of the Sacré-Coeur on the high hills of Montmartre which not only demonstrates the reclamation of what Ross describes as social and political verticality, was also intended to be a permanent rebuke of the actions taken by the recalcitrant population of this peripheral arrondissement. This was a penitent monument, designed to expiate the sins of the Communards. Conversely, the Vendôme Column, which reoccupied one of the most conservative spaces in the center of Paris, symbolically reclaimed that space for conservative respectability and rather than to expiate, it was designed to uphold a glorious military past.

The re-burials of generals Lecomte and Clément-Thomas and their juxtaposition with the capping of the rebuilt Column with Napoleon’s bronzed statue, provides an important element of the contemporary political context that has been underappreciated by historians. In *Molding the National Memory: The State Funerals of the French Republic*, Avner Ben-Amos provides a brief account of the reburials and he highlights their association with the Column’s inauguration but does not take the political context of the promulgation of the 1875 constitution or the forthcoming general elections into account. Similarly, Boime juxtaposes the rebuilding and reburials but also, makes no mention of the political context, choosing like Ben-Amos to remain confined to cultural and ideological considerations as though politics and culture are mutually exclusive, or as
if national memory construction and ideological edification were the only elements at
stake in funerary or other cultural initiatives. Furthermore, despite the sub-title of his
monograph, Brown never mentions the rebuilding or the reburials. More recently, David A. Schafer analyzes the rebuilding of the Column in terms of the use of visual media to
influence perceptions of the Commune but does not make the connection between this
agenda and electoral messaging.

The reburials and the statue’s reconstruction occurred just under a year after the
Republic was narrowly consolidated by the January 1875 constitution, and on the very
eve of the first general elections. These events occurred at a time when anti-Commune
sentiments were still intense, and therefore potentially exploitable, among the electorate.
At the same time, this was the election cycle in which Radical republican candidates and
deputies had become insistent upon pushing for a general amnesty for all
Communards. The reburials and the reconstruction were components of the Moral
Order’s rhetorical campaign to assimilate the political agenda of all republicans to that of
the Communards as a negative warning about the supposed revolutionary intent of all
republican factions. The events should be viewed as constituent parts of the Moral

291 Boime, pp. 22-23.
292 This lacuna is also found in Mary McAuliffe’s, Dawn of the Belle Époque: The Paris of Monet, Zola,
Bernhardt, Eiffel, Debussy, Clemenceau, and Their Friends, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Ltd.,
Lanham 2011, p. 41.
293 The following chapter analyzes the impact of republican victories during by-elections and the Comte de
Chambord’s intransigence as factors in the conservatives’ decision to promulgate the long-awaited
constitution. The Senate was elected in January 1876 and the Chamber was elected in February.
294 Not only did Naquet, a Radical deputy in the National Assembly only recently introduce a new bill for
general amnesty, this was also the election in which the Radical republican members of the Seine’s
Electoral College adopted the Laurent-Pichant program, which demanded an end to martial law and general
amnesty for all Communards, as an integral part of their platform. This is considered at length in chapter 5
of this dissertation.
Order’s on-going electoral campaigns. While later scholars might not appreciate the connection between such events and acute electoral exigencies, in an era of mass politics, and with an incredibly important election just one month away, contemporary politicians certainly did. The conservatives’ use of Mediocracy and therein their projections of an alternate vision of France’s history, one that was counter-revolutionary, pious, and not republican were grounded in the context of their ideological contestations against the republicans, but more acutely, carried out with an immediate electoral outcome in mind.

The political climate during the winter of 1875—1876 was incredibly contentious. The last session of the National Assembly occurred between November 4th and December 31st. Within that time frame “conservatives rushed through an astonishing amount of legislation, which included their controversial bill authorizing the establishment of Catholic institutions of higher education.” On the other end of the spectrum, On December 20th, the Radical deputy, Alfred Naquet, who would soon be embroiled in a heated electoral battle against Gambetta, introduced a new general amnesty bill for “all political crimes and lesser offenses committed since September 4, 1870.” The bill was quickly voted as out of order but not before it tipped off a serious uproar in the Assembly. Within this divisive context, the 75 life-senators were elected. In the

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296 National Assembly, Annales, Volume XLIV, p. 27. Naquet ran against Gambetta for a seat in the Chamber to represent Marseilles and lost. This highlights the rivalry between the Radicals and the Moderates prior to their brief coalescence against the Moral Order regime which was tipped off by the Crisis of 16 May the following year.
aftermath of serious ideological acrobatics wherein Bonapartists, led by Raoul Duval, and the most extreme members of the legitimist factions, the Chevau-léger led by La Rochette, colluded with republicans, led by Gambetta, at the expense of the center-Right, generally, but more pointedly, against Broglie and Buffet. Furthermore, as the winter break was approaching, one of the most contentious issues was decided, against the wishes of the republican minority; a joint bill to relax press controls and lift the state of siege was not to be disjointed and was ultimately rejected, meaning the general elections would be carried out under martial law. This was a condition that the Prussians themselves lifted for the February 1871 elections and illustrates the degree to which the Moral Order regime sought to retain social and political control on the precipice of their electoral decline. By Christmas Eve, MacMahon along with most other members of government, as well as the Imperial Prince, Jerôme, had returned to Paris in time to take part in constituent meetings, the reburials of generals Lecomte and Clément-Thomas and to venture a glimpse at the newly rebuilt Vendôme Column. The official closure of the National Assembly would not occur until December 31st but the election season had already been declared open by the Minister of Interior on December 10th.

The venomous political situation in which the Radicals were continuing to promote amnesty, the conservatives, when not fighting amongst themselves, were giving serious sanctions to the clerical contingent, and the men of the Moral Order were accurately perceiving a fight for their political lives on the immediate horizon, is made

298 Grubb, p. 247.
abundantly clear when reading contemporary news reports.\footnote{299 The rejection of both Broglie and Buffest in their quest to secure life positions in the Senate, along with the republican contingent which was much stronger than MacMahon’s cabinet had anticipated, meant that the Senatorial elections were viewed as paramount to the retention of their position and thereby the possibility of a restoration in the future. For a representative sample, see \textit{Le Figaro}, \textit{L’Univers}, \textit{Journal des Débats}, \textit{Le Constitutionnel}, \textit{La République Française} and \textit{La Presse} December 26-29, 1875.} The press reports on the reburials and the Column were submerged between vociferous accounts of the on-going political battles and what \textit{Le Temps} referred to as \textit{fièvre électorale}.\footnote{300 \textit{Le Temps}, December 26, 1875.} For the most part, the accounts of the events were sterile and matter-of-fact, if not simple reprints of the official description. However, political alignment certainly colored some of the impressions, especially in the case of more politically pronounced journals such as \textit{Le Constitutionnel}, \textit{La Presse} and \textit{Le Figaro}.

On December 27, \textit{Le Figaro} published a lengthy diatribe written by Saint-Genest in which he laments the lack of ceremony involved in the column’s reconstruction. In the article he asserts:

\begin{quote}
If we were a different people, it [the columns completion] would be an immense event, an immense expiation. Expiation for all the [acts carried out between] the men of September 4$^{\text{th}}$ up to the pirates of the Commune who should be arranged at the base of the column so every French person can shout to them while passing: Wretches, return our honor! … but the government ordered that [the completion] was done in darkness and silence…and he was right to act this way; he had [good] reason since the Colonne d’Austerlitz no longer belongs to France… it belongs to [the Bonapartist] faction, and to speak of it would be to play into the hands of that faction’s game.\footnote{301 Saint-Genest, \textit{Le Figaro}, December27,1875.}
\end{quote}

While the assertion that the Column’s completion was carried out in darkness and silence was a gross overstatement, Saint-Genest highlights a significant incongruity, why was
there no re-inauguration ceremony, why was the reconstruction not celebrated? On the one hand, the government rebuilt the Column “in exactly the same style as before, [which] was meant to efface the Commune from history by removing all visible signs of it from Paris.” Its reappearance without fanfare was a subtly symbolic cleansing of recent events; as though they had never occurred. Furthermore, to have staged a great a re-inauguration ceremony would have opened the possibility for a republican counter-demonstration and potentially generated a debate on the merits of the Commune’s action, especially in light of the multiplicity of pre-Commune advocates of tearing it down. On the other hand, Saint-Genest gets right to heart of the electoral context when he states that to mention it or celebrate it would be to play into the hands of Bonapartist factions. Similarly, *La Presse* underscored potential political gains in their lengthy description of the reburials of Generals Lecomte and Clément-Thomas.

Generals Lecomte and Clément-Thomas were killed before nightfall on the first day of the Commune, despite being under the protection of the Paris National Guard following Thiers’ retreat from the capital. Lecomte had led the 6,000 Versailles troops into Paris on March 18th, under Thiers’ orders to claim the cannons at the Butte of Montmartre. General Clément-Thomas however, was not involved in the Army’s mission that day. Rather, the unpopular former commander of the Paris National Guard was

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302 Edwards, p. 41; emphasis is Edwards’.
303 The murderous mob that seized them included some of Lecomte’s own soldiers. Both were summarily executed by a hail of bullets.
spotted wearing civilian clothes in the vicinity of the melee that afternoon.⁹⁰⁴ According to the Communards, and later scholars, Lecomte was killed for having ordered his troops to fire on the crowd on the morning of March 18th, whereas Clément-Thomas was killed in retribution for his part in suppressing the insurgents of June 1848. Their deaths were immediately referred to, by conservatives and republicans, as martyrdoms. Commemorating their deaths offered propitious images to each of the mainstream factions. For example, Clément-Thomas, the self-described Moderate republican could stand as a useful foil against conservative castigations that all republicans were in league with the Communards; the republicans who attended his reburial perceived a useful tool of propaganda.

In contrast to the Column’s reconstruction, the reburials occurred with great publicity and pageantry. As described by the Moderate-republican newspaper, *La Presse*:

> The [Generals’] funeral took place yesterday with great pomp… All the reactionary papers, which stop at nothing for election purposes, are exploiting this sad ceremony and shamelessly take advantage of the mournful circumstance to agitate, once more, at the eve of the elections, their famous red specter. The Bonapartist papers distinguish themselves above all… It’s a lost cause. All these outdated clichés can still impress those in Versailles; but France can no longer be moved… Its good sense does not confuse the Republic with the Commune, the republicans with the assassins of 18 March, the slaughterers and the incendiaries of May. At the funeral that was celebrated at Invalides there were many Left-wing deputies; the people representing the republican opinion insisted on protesting in such a way [to demonstrate] their sympathy for the two victims and their feeling against the coward killers. Let the Bonapartist papers present the republicans as the friends of the Commune…, the

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⁹⁰⁴ Shafer, p. 62.
[country] knows where the true friends of the Commune are [based on the reports of the War Council].

La Presse was particularly keen on denigrating the Communard-republican assimilation, which conservatives, as the following chapter will make clear, repeatedly asserted. In messaging that painted republicans as Communards, conservatives sought to raise the specter of revolution and social degeneration as being the necessary outcome of the growth of republicanism. Conservatives muddled the distinctiveness between men such as Jules Simon, who repeatedly rejected the multiple amnesty proposals, with that of the Radicals such as Louis Blanc or Victor Hugo, who were repeat proponents of the amnesty bills and, quite literally, friends of the Communards. Simply taking part in the reburial ceremony enabled republicans to belie such a crude characterization. For example, La Presse did not explicitly point out these intra-republican distinctions. This is indicative of the Moderate-republican quest to project a unified image of republicans, especially before the next Senate elections, and to represent the republican movement in a way that was as distant as possible from any supportive association with the still-widely condemned event. However, Le Figaro’s and La Presse’s coverage converge with respect to the political context of these events being of primary concern.

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305 La Presse, December 29, 1875.
306 Indeed, Hugo even provided safe shelter for the Communards who fled captivity in Brussels.
307 Furthermore, although Clément-Thomas may have been popular among Moderate republicans, he presented a source of controversy for the Radicals. Like Le Constitutionnel, this was La Presse’s leading article for the day’s publication which also demonstrates their keenness to project an anti-Communard image during the height of the campaign season.
Le Figaro and La Presse position the Bonapartist factions as the most auspicious political actors seeking benefit by the Column’s reconstruction and the reburials of the Commune’s first victims. As true as this assessment may have been, the journals’ denigration of Bonapartist opportunism should be considered within an electoral context. The electoral support given to Bonapartist candidates between 1873 and 1875 in reverse proportion to candidates from either of the monarchist factions meant that for republican and monarchist candidates and journalists, the Bonapartists were considered an immediate threat to their electoral chances and thereby to the political future of the French nation each side was seeking to secure. The recollections of foreign correspondents, reveals yet another aspect of the days’ events.

Whereas La Presse and Le Figaro both highlighted the political exploitation of the funeral, an exercise in hypocrisy on the part of La Presse given the republicans’ own use of funerary manifestations, the Paris correspondent for The Standard brings to light a different perspective and one not tendered by any in the French journals that have been reviewed. According to their Paris correspondent who witnessed the events:

Two features came under my notice which I did not think prudent to mention in my dispatch … that nothing could have been more disgraceful than the behavior of the police in the churchyard and at its gates, it would in all probability never have found its way across the Channel…. [At the cemetery, around 500 persons entered after troops and mourners had left] but they were prevented from getting near it by a strong body of policemen, whose roughness and language were most insulting…. I have no hesitation in saying that the behavior of M. Léon Renault’s satellites was eminently calculated to bring about a breach of peace.  

308 The Standard, December 29, 1875. Renault was, at the time, the prefect of police; in reference to the reticence to write this account in his dispatch, as Prime Minister, Buffet had the right to intercept wires and
While this might have been hyperbolic and/or designed to embarrass the recovering French position, it also hints at the level of social and political control being pursued by the government of the Moral Order. This control was particularly manifested by the Column’s unceremonious completion, which reflects an unwillingness to cede political capital to the Bonapartists despite the Column’s reconstruction.309 Conservatives took the calculated risk of resurrecting the Column because it provided the quickest effacement of the Commune in relation to other damaged sites. Furthermore, in light of the Moral Order’s scandalous conduct during the Crisis of 16 May, the accusation of provocation, while not corroborated in the French press, is also entirely plausible.

Based on contemporary accounts then, the capping of the Column with Napoleon’s statue was a muted affair and not only was the completion carried out without ceremony, it was (and perhaps because of this factor) hardly reported on. Conversely, the reburials of generals Lecomte and Clément-Thomas, whose legacy none of the competing political factions could definitively claim, witnessed an immense amount of grandeur and, comparatively, greater attention in the press.

 dispatches submitted to the Home Office prior to transmission. Given the tight control of political press, that had only recently been reaffirmed, the correspondent was being prudent; this could also explain why none of the French press reports describe police belligerence, even [or especially] the Left-wing journals. 309 According to one contemporary observer, the Bonapartist, Evariste Bavoux, Fremiet’s statue and the Column’s reconstruction were indicative of the nation’s recovery following the disasters of 1870—1871. Evariste Bavoux Les monuments à Paris: La colonne Vendôme et Jeanne d’Arc, Paris 1871, p. 21; quoted in McWilliam, p. 395.
These differences are entirely in-line with rhetorical campaign of the Moral Order government. Whereas effacing the physical reminders of the Commune’s existence, as quickly as possible, was a paramount concern, the Vendôme Column was chosen more out of necessity than affinity. This is made evident when the forthcoming elections and the Bonapartists’ calculated maneuvering during the election of the life-Senators is borne in mind. A muted completion of the Column enabled the Bonapartist faction only a diminished occasion in which to bask in any sort of post-humus glory. On the other hand, the reburials of the Commune’s first victims provided a spectacular event by which to give corporeal form to the characterization of the Communards as criminal malcontents and murderous incendiaries rather than intransigent political actors. The reburials were carried out as a potentially politically profitable affair in which to underscore the criminality of the Communards, during legislative election campaigns in which the Moral Order government consistently assimilated the Communards with contemporary republicans. The impact of these events on the general elections can never be quantified, but they should be considered as integral parts of the conservatives’ election efforts. The 1876 legislative elections gave rise to the startling, if ephemeral, success of Bonapartist factions, but foreboding results for the conservative factions as a whole.

In the January 1876 Senatorial elections, the monarchists retained their majority but the victory was still-born. The royalist factions combined could claim 119 seats and the Bonapartists won 40, much to everyone’s surprise. In fact the general elections marked the peak of the Bonapartist resurgence. Indeed by the Chamber elections that took place between February and March, Bonapartists won more seats than either of the
royalist factions. However it was the republicans, particularly by the Chamber elections, who came out on top. Conservative republicans, such as Jules Simon and Albert Grévy, alongside Gambetta’s Republican Union candidates added 92 seats to the 55 already held by republican-life-Senators and won 360 seats in the Chamber. The general elections of 1876, which closed within three months after the Commune’s victims were reburied and the most spectacular evidence of its destructive power was effaced, were certainly a surprising coup for the Bonapartists yet the Moral Orders’ propaganda efforts failed to capture the type of emotional allegiance that republicans did when they took similar steps. Certainly the privileging of the rural vote, the diminished representation for “red” cities including Paris and Lyon and the very nature of the Senate’s indirect voting system were all factors in the conservatives’ Senatorial victories; however, so too was their propaganda which included the Column’s somewhat muted reconstruction and the reburials which occurred with great pomp and fanfare.

In terms of effacing the memory of the Commune and asserting the image of a France that was at once stable and embracing of an illustrious past, the rebuilding of the Column was, to some measure, successful; at least with regard to the battle “over the meaning of physical space of the revolutionary city” during the 1870s. The rebuilding of the Column was carried out with comparative swiftness largely because it was an integral symbol of the conservative regime’s restoration of power and France’s glorious

310 After the February 20th and March 5th ballots closed, conservatives had won 150 seats combined, 75 of which belonged to Bonapartists.
311 Lehning, p. 61.
military past. Moreover, “since the Tuileries palace…was not [and would never be] rebuilt, and the reconstruction of the destroyed Hôtel de Ville went on until the 1880s, the column’s restoration was intended to symbolize the re-establishment of the ‘public moral order.’”\textsuperscript{312} At the time, the Column’s reconstruction was not only welcomed by most of the French population and conservative politicians, but also by tourists grateful to have a reprieve from their tour of Paris in ruins.

Immediately after the Commune’s demise, “tourists flocked to the eerie beauty of the burnt-out ruins, as though Paris were a modern Pompeii.”\textsuperscript{313} According to contemporaries, as early as June 1871, people from the provinces, including many who had fled Paris during the time of the sieges, descended upon the city in awe: “‘To the ruins of Paris!’ The pleasure trains have begun, Paris is overflowing with people. The provinces—curious but not angry—are coming to see the burned capital.”\textsuperscript{314} Indeed, tours of Paris in ruins were so prolific that numerous guide books were hastily published

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\textsuperscript{312} Michalski, p. 14. The two inaugurations of the Hotel de Ville occurred in 1882 for the exterior’s completion, which like the Vendôme Column was replicated exactly as it appeared prior to the Commune, and a greater inauguration ceremony was held on July 13, 1883 for the completion of the interior, which was given a complete renovation.


\textsuperscript{314} Augustine-Malivina Blanchecotte, \textit{Tablettes d’une femme pendant la Commune}, Didier, Paris 1871, pp.321-322. Blanchecotte was one of many contemporaries to describe Paris in ruins and to marvel at the irresistible impulse to view a phantasmagoric image of the city by domestic and international tourists, Blanchecotte was a self-described woman from the working-class which she asserted gave her a more objective view of the event and its aftermath, however her account was similar to others in its anti-Communard perspective. See also, Georges Bell (pseudonyme for Joachim Hounau), \textit{Paris Incendie. Histoire de la Commune en 1871}, E. Martmet, Paris 1872; Théophile Gautier, « Une visite aux mines, »\textit{Tableaux de siège : Paris, 1871—1871}, Charpentier, Paris 1871. These accounts and others are analyzed by Lee, Daryl. “The Ambivalent Picturesque of the Paris Commune Ruins,” \textit{Nineteenth-Century Prose}, Vol. 29, No. 2, Fall 2002, pp. 138-161.
to accommodate consumer interest. By early June of 1871, the famous London travel agency of Thomas Cook began to provide trips designed specifically to tour the ruins of Paris and its environs. The rebuilding projects of the early Third Republic undercut this macabre genre of sight-seeing. *Dickens’s Dictionary of Paris* writes: “most of us know that this column was pulled down by the Communists in 1871, and was afterwards so well restored that it now presents exactly the same appearance as before its downfall.”

The *Baedeker Guide* of 1884 asserts that “for several years after the war, many of the public works were necessarily suspended, but the municipal authorities have done their utmost to remove all traces of the Communist outrages.” Thus, while the Commune remained at the forefront of political journalism, debate, and legislation, the conservative leaders of the early Third Republic sought to efface its physical traces and in its place assert their authority. Such acts were reassuring to a population still coping with their defeat in war and the destruction of revolt. Of course, Commune sympathizers did not rejoice at the column’s reconstruction. Lissagaray lends his voice to this group when he writes:

> One of the first acts of the victorious bourgeoisie was to again raise this enormous block, the symbol of their sovereignty. To lift up Cæsar on his

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318 Karl Bædeker, *Paris and its Environs*, 1884 p. xxiii. In the 1872 edition the following entry for the column is made: “it was taken down by the Commune in May 1871, but as the fragments still exist, its reconstruction is contemplated.” p. 46.
pedestal they needed a scaffolding of 30,000 corpses. Like the mothers under the First Empire, may those of our days never look upon this bronze without weeping!\textsuperscript{319}

As the guidebooks attest, Lissagaray’s hope that the Column would hold a counter-memory was not entirely in vain. In 1874, Karl Baedeker states:

It would of course be beyond the scope of the Handbook to record all the momentous events of 1870 – 71, to describe the sieges of Paris by the Prussians and by the French, to give an account of the Communist insurrection, or to enumerate in detail the terrible disasters and revolting crimes which characterized the second ‘Reign of Terror’ in May [20\textsuperscript{th} – 28\textsuperscript{th}], 1871. Frequent allusions, however, to these events will be found in the Handbook, and these may be here supplanted by a brief enumeration of the buildings, public and private, which have suffered most severely.\textsuperscript{320}

With each entry for a monument or location touched by the events of the Commune, the authors are careful to remind the reader of its history. Describing the not yet rebuilt Vendôme Column Baedeker does not describe its history of construction and destruction, rather he cites it was built by Napoleon I “in imitation of the Trajan’s column…it was taken down by the Communists in May, 1871, but is now in process of being re-erected, the fragments having been preserved.”\textsuperscript{321} In the Dickens entry for the Palace of Justice, the author writes “very much of it had to be restored after the willful destruction by the

\textsuperscript{321} Baedeker (1874), p. 71.
Communists in May 1871.” Thus, the rebuilding projects didn’t have quite the obliterating narrative outcome its proponents had envisioned. Despite the efforts to wipe away its physical traces, and even in the new monuments built to commemorate the Republic, the moment of the Commune remained etched into the city’s sites of memory and reflection.

The rebuilding of the Column did not dissolve the Commune’s legacy. Instead, it served to remind France and the international community of the Third Republic’s triumph, a fact which ironically served republican interests despite the mission having been pursued and carried out under the direction of MacMahon with an eye toward restoration. As the republicans gained political power, rebuilding efforts largely gave way to new constructions designed to herald the republican triumph and significantly, to present the Third Republic as the final victory of the Revolution. In the interim, however, the battle for France’s political future continued and was largely fought, during the 1870s within the domain of France’s politicized mediocrity, using political culture, propaganda, and the promotion of the Republic as the engine of stability and peace.

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322 Dickens, p. 181.
323 This is also borne out by the reclamation of sites of the Commune which for the most part occurred during the twentieth century. Some examples include the placement of the plaque inscribed with “Aux Morts de la Commune 21-28 Mai 1871” on the Mur des Fédérés (1909); the re-designation of the city land located just below the Basilica of the Sacré-Cœur from Square Willette to Square Louise Michel (1927) and more recently the French Senate’s commission of the installment of another plaque in the Jardin du Luxembourg where other summary executions took place during Semaine sanglante which reads: “Le Sénat en hommage aux insurgés de la Commune de Paris fusillés contre ce mur le 25 mai 1871,” (2003).
Recovered and United Revelries: Presenting Modern France

During the legislative elections of 1876 and 1877, republicans from all sides campaigned with a message of peace and “maintaining the status quo between monarchists, who would disrupt the government yet again,” and the revolutionary Left who revered the Commune.\(^{324}\) For their part, conservatives themselves “rarely made explicit references to the War.”\(^{325}\) Politicians that did reference their war-time experiences “found that this strategy was by no means a guarantee of success.”\(^{326}\) A prosperous and stable France was what voters wanted in 1876 and especially in October 1877.\(^{327}\) Recognizing that revanche was politically unprofitable in terms of securing elections or uniting (even if negatively) the nation, behind a white or tricolor banner, politicians from all sides of the political spectrum estimated that France’s best option in terms of generating national unity, political allegiance, and, at the same time, international esteem, was to present, to the French and the foreigner, a peaceful, prosperous and united nation. 1878 was the first year in which this image could effectively be presented.\(^{328}\)

\(^{325}\) Ibid., p. 286.
\(^{326}\) Ibid., p. 289. In her research in the departments of Hérault, Sarthe, and most importantly, Meurthe-et-Moselle, Chrastil found that “of the twelve candidates [from these departments] who mentioned their service during the war over the period 1876 – 93 [nine military, three civilian], only four won.”
\(^{327}\) The Crisis of 16 May which generated the 1877 elections will be analyzed in depth in the following chapter.
\(^{328}\) The official state visit of the Shah of Persia in 1873 is a noteworthy exception, specifically because a partisan theme was absent especially in contrast to the fêtes and expositions that came after.
At the Universal Exposition of 1878 very different versions of modern France were being projected. One version presented France in the process of recovery and restoration, including a possible political restoration; another version highlighted a confident and specifically republican nation. This tension existed during the Universal Exposition of 1878 and especially during the Fête of June 30, even if it went unnoticed or was consciously obscured by contemporary observers, so happy to see France herself again.

In the early 1870s, intellectuals and politicians began to debate about the efficacy of national celebrations and the messages that they should impart. France had a long history of festive commemoration and national celebration. For the French, the term fête encompasses a “fuller emotional experience of joy and celebration.” As Charles Rearick points out, “in the old tradition of offering more circuses than bread, the kings’ public fêtes were intended to benefit the rulers as much as the public, ‘they tighten the peoples’ ties to their princes and make them forget, for a brief time, the misfortunes and cares inherent in their weak humanity.’” In the 1870s, republicans sought to resurrect the tradition of national fêtes and commemorations as a means to assuage the political divisions and to unite the French people under the banner of republicanism in a way never accomplished before.

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One of the earliest contributors to these discussions was economist Henri Baudrillart who asserted in 1873 that the festivals of the new Republic should avoid the “character of frivolous banality” which he perceived in the past; instead the Republic should look to create ones that imbue “utility and moral grandeur.”

This assertion echoed the ones made at the end of the Second Empire by Jules Michelet and originally it found purchase among republicans.

In July 1872, Gambetta had similarly asserted “a free nation needs national fêtes. But in order that these fêtes have a morality and meaning, that they be worthy of liberty, they must be spontaneous.” However, by mid-decade, as their electoral success was mounting, republicans began to work for the establishment of an annual national celebration. This, it was perceived, would enhance the appeal of republicanism and republican candidates because it echoed popular sentiment and was projected to mitigate apprehension “that the spontaneity of gay crowds will break out of its playful bounds and that celebration will become contestation.”

Just as civil burial ceremonies were perceived, by republicans, as important tools by which to create a national consensus for their contemporary agenda based on their particular version of the revolutionary past, so was the impetus of establishing a national holiday. This is made evident by the fact that republicans were advocating for a national holiday, quatorze juillet most vociferously, even before their successful grasp of political control.

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332 Jules Michelet, Nos fils, Librairie internationale, Paris 1870.
The recent memories of the Commune’s festive early days were too acute to leave any openings for disaster.\textsuperscript{335} Instead, following in the tradition of Rousseau, Robespierre, and David in the eighteenth-century and Comte as well as Michelet in the nineteenth century, the republican proponents of a national celebration advocated for “the careful engineering of festivities to educate, unite, and morally uplift the people, especially by presenting symbols of historic greatness, the glories of science, and orderly progress.”\textsuperscript{336} These were precisely the themes on display during the Universal Exposition of 1878 and the national celebration held on June 30\textsuperscript{th}, both of which were undertaken to announce the recovery of France and the successful return to her place among great nations. Both also served to display the Third Republic’s political stability and, specifically with the June 30\textsuperscript{th} national celebration, to promote the Republic’s longevity. No other cultural moment in the 1870s better demonstrates the tension between the will to forget Paris’ tormented past and the persistence of its presence and no other moment better highlights the rehabilitation of the Commune prior to 1880 within France’s Mediacracy.

Anxieties about popular participation and unruly crowds in Paris were prominent before and during the Exhibition of 1878, whose official theme was “Paix et Travail.” The police were instructed to apply special surveillance and caution in the districts where the Commune had found its most ardent supporters.\textsuperscript{337} Nonetheless, as noted by even conservative newspapers, the crowd was peaceful and arrests made during the Exhibition

\textsuperscript{335} This trepidation was keenly prevalent among conservative factions, which would partly explain the menacing police presence described in relation to the reburials of Generals Lecomte and Clément-Thomas.

\textsuperscript{336} Ibid., p. 439.

\textsuperscript{337} AN, F12 series: Exposition Universelles, file 3262.
were related to petty crime and public drunkenness, not political agitation, despite it coinciding with the anniversary of the Semaine sanglante.

There were groups within France that urged their followers to boycott the Exhibition, they included catholic groups, parishes, and the Socialists. The Catholics were outraged by the lack of religious sentiment. For example, the opening day did not commence with a prayer as all past Exhibitions had. This was viewed as yet another step toward the public separation between church and state, which the republicans were outspoken about pursuing. The Socialists, via their press organ: L’Égalité, labeled the Exhibition “L’Exploitation Universelle” and lobbied for its working-class readers to avoid celebrating such a capitalistic display of materialism. The socialist antipathy, however, was largely muted when after seven years of solemnity it appears, based on the attendance figures, that workers were not persuaded to stay away. This is something that republicans took care to ensure by offering free admission on several days throughout the Exposition as a means to educate them, by example, on the values of citizen comportment and the liberties the republican system provided them; even while “bartering their social heritage” by forging a liberal Republic.338 Gambetta, in fact did not miss the opportunity to impress upon a workers’ delegation the following declaration of liberal and nationalist republicanism:

There is only one thing that the government owes everyone: justice. Since everyone is his own master, it is proper that everyone should make himself happy or unhappy by the good or bad use of his liberty. The State limits itself to the guaranteeing of equal rights to all, rich and poor...What we want is not an aristocratic, or bourgeois or plebian republic, but a national one.339

The workers participation was a means to promote a sense of unity in a deeply divided nation wherein social divisions were considered supremely important. The Universal Exposition and the June 30th national celebration were valued, among numerous other factors, as a way to overcome, at least temporarily the isolation of social groups when in “the heightened shared feeling of celebration, the crowd would become the united living France” expressing “joyful reverence in the ‘religion of la patrie.’”340

The Universal Exposition began on May 1, 1878 and was ultimately attended by more than 16 million visitors, nearly double the numbers for France’s previous World’s Fair held in 1867, more than the figures for Austria’s hosting in 1873, and surpassing Philadelphia’s in 1876. Throughout the Exposition, Paris appeared healthy, economically prosperous, and harmonious. By all accounts, the sense of unity and pride that the organizers hoped the Exposition would induce among the French population was achieved. As reported by L’Univers Illustre:

The first of May, the solemn opening day of the exhibition, will remain for all the French, especially for the Parisians, an ineffaceable memory…the emotion was profound and unanimous…this was not just an ordinary festival, a simple deployment of pageantry, it was the whole country who claimed to live, after seven years of silence and resignation…Streets, boulevards, [were] filled with a huge but calm and tranquil crowd. Some sought to forget the sorrows of the past, to rekindle memories of the festivals of their youth…what a lesson this evening! It must not be lost…we can drive out of our minds the petty disagreements which seemingly if deeply separate us and remove all traces of our civil discord as quickly as we repaired the disasters of our material losses.341

The overwhelming attendance figures, which enabled the 1878 Exposition to be the most successful World Fair to date, demonstrates the interest among the French and the foreigners in experiencing a recovered and apparently stable France. During the Exhibition, the modern marvels of electricity and engineering took prominent places in the Palace of Industry with the recently completed head of Auguste Bartholdi’s Statue of Liberty displayed just outside.

Having repaid its five billion franc war indemnity early in 1873, and with a keen sense of tactful diplomacy, the Republic invited German artists, to participate. However, depictions of the Franco-Prussian War, like images of the Commune, were not allowed. In this way France projected an image of itself scrubbed clean from defeat and civil turmoil and necessitated a focus on a resurgent republican France.

The Exhibition was a political triumph for France. Paris was once again the capital of modernity and in the vanguard of cultural expression. Despite the Exhibition being a financial loss of 28,704,765 francs, “most people and government officials agreed
that the price paid for the confirmation of confidence in the new Republic was not excessive.” George Augustus Sala was a frequent visitor to Paris and no stranger to its political vicissitudes having been present during the revolution of 1848, the outbreak of the Franco Prussian War, and the Paris Commune. In 1878 he wrote: “Paris [is] Herself Again—comelier, richer, gayer, [and] more fascinating than ever. And happier? Que sais-je? That is no business of mine.” Yet beneath the jubilant veneer, political fissures were widening. The Exposition of 1878 and the national celebration staged on June 30th, despite all projections of national unity, were also battle grounds for promoting competing political agendas and ideologies. This is most apparent with respect to the dichotomous symbolism between Vive la France! sung as part of the Exposition’s inauguration ceremony and La République, a new statue inaugurated on 30 June in honor of the national celebration.

Vive la France! was written by Paul Déroulède, the zealous republican nationalist who was injured while fighting to suppress the Commune in 1871 and in the 1890s founded the revanchist organization League des Patriots. The song imparts a message of French resurgence that is ripe with militarism and revanche. In verses such as “Gravelotte and Borny are not defeated; the living have avenged the deaths of Champigny…And starving Paris never faltered,” France’s resilience is presented in far from reassuring

tones. The hymn was delivered in the presence of MacMahon and should be understood as an act of defiant patriotism. It was less than subtle and also inconsistent with the muted revanchist politics of the 1870s and the Exposition’s theme of peace. It is, however, perfectly in line with MacMahon’s image as a war hero and a way in which France could acknowledge its losses in 1870—1871, and at the same time projects an important image of resilience and strength while the nation occupied the world’s attention in 1878. The fate of the song is prescient with respect to the victory in the war for the Republic’s future, fought within the realm of representational media. In an article published on May 2nd, Le Petit Parisien, recalled “we wondered what military music would replace the Marseillaise, which is not officially the national anthem…the new military march: Vive la France! is destined, it seems to replace the Marseillaise for the [ceremonies] of tomorrow.” This was not to be the case. The song, published in Chants du Soldat which went through numerous publications, became a popular military song and during the 1890s a revanchist rallying-cry. However, in 1880 after securing their political success, republicans designated the Marseillaise, the famous song of the Revolution as France’s national anthem. This is a fact that highlights the republicans’ victory in the battle for symbolic representation and national identity. In 1878, flush from their victory in the October 1877 election yet prior to their conquest of the Senate and

344 Paul Déroulède, Chants du Soldat, cent-seizième édition, Calmann Lévy, 1883, p. 6.
345 Le Petit Parisien, May 2, 1878.
346 See Chapter 6, regarding the 1879 designation of the La Marseillaise as the French national anthem.
MacMahon’s resignation, republicans engaged in this contest by inaugurating a statue of the Republic on June 30\textsuperscript{th}.

After their requests to hold the national celebration on July 14 in commemoration of the storming of the Bastille, republicans accepted the offer to hold the celebration on June 30; an otherwise completely innocuous date. Jean-Baptist Auguste Clésinger’s statue, \textit{La République} was inaugurated during the day’s opening ceremony.

Figure V. Auguste Clésinger, \textit{La République}, 1878 Paris, Universal Exposition.
The statue depicts a seated, Athena-like republic, holding an unsheathed sword in one hand and the 1875 constitution in the other. During the inauguration, Emile Marcère, the Moderate republican and Minister of Interior gave a rousing speech in which he recalled the history of republican declarations followed by monarchical restorations. In the course of his speech Marcère proclaimed the Third Republic to be “beyond the era of revolutions!” Then, in reference to Clésinger’s statue he proclaimed “here [is our Republic], under the form given to it by the great artist, and with the attributes that we desire for ourselves. She is noble and simple, calm and strong, she is sitting and reposed.”

Clésinger’s La République is a clear embodiment of the political tensions operating just under the surface of the Fête’s and Expositions veneers. The statue’s vision of a fortified yet reposed and constitutionally bound republican France is a significant contrast to the image presented by Déroulède in Vive la France! at the inauguration of the Exposition presided over by MacMahon. It is also precisely the type of imagery that Moderate republicans looked to in their efforts to edify and council the newly enfranchised in regard to citizen comportment. That is to say, remain within the boundaries of the law, celebrate France’s glorious past, and work to strengthen her future through unity and patriotism. This was a liberal-republican allegory, not the Phrygian capped Marianne of the Radicals or the bare-breasted faubourienne of the Communards.

Clésinger’s *La République* reflects the electoral majority of the Moderates and presents their vision of the character that the Republic should assume. As described by journalists from all political persuasions, the crowd lived up to the republicans’ expectations and the statue’s vision. According to the *Journal des Débats, Politiques et Littéraires*, “never had a fête given less of an appearance of a protest party” and even to the end it never degenerated into one.\(^{350}\) Instead, the Journal’s author highlights that “the attitude and

\(^{349}\) The image on the right, in which Thiers pushes on Jules Favre and General Trochu, is described by Agulhon as the “popular Republic” appearing in “the iconography of the Commune, as shown on a postcard,” *Marianne Into Battle*, Op. cit., p. 143.

\(^{350}\) *Journal Officiel de Débats Politiques et Littéraires*, July 1 – 2, 1878, p. 1.
conduct of the Parisian population did not belie the serious and pure design the sculpture Clésinger had given to the Republic.”\textsuperscript{351}

To add to the tone of reciprocal comportment and largess, factors relating to the rehabilitation of the Commune, and its absorption into the mainstream of republican political culture, were intentionally juxtaposed with this celebration of the Republic. As reported by the *Times of London*:

> Twelve hundred and sixty nine Communists, who had earned indulgence by ‘contrition, submission, and diligence,’ have been allowed remission or commutation of punishment in honor of the fête. Since the present [Republican] Cabinet took office 800 prisoners had previously been objects of clemency, 435 of them receiving a full pardon.\textsuperscript{352}

By granting the pardons in honor of the *fête*, Republicans tied the politics of the Commune directly to a celebration honoring the Republic, on a day initially designed to commemorate the Revolution. Acts of clemency were traditionally granted during times of national celebration. However, this should be viewed as less a reflection of Moderate-republican sympathy than a conciliatory nod to the Radicals at a time when the republican unity on display during the Crisis of 16 May, was dissolving and Radicals were once again campaigning on amnesty-led platforms. With the Senate elections on the horizon, Moderates were certainly keen on retaining a united front so as to appeal to as broad a constituency as possible.

\textsuperscript{351} Ibid.
To that effect, in addition to the acts of clemency, the admission price was reduced from 1 franc to 25 centimes, which ensured the inclusion of the lower classes in the day’s events. With this inclusion, republicans were seeking to “create a new representation of the Parisian crowd: it was not to be reduced to isolated individuals, but transformed into an assembly of peaceful citizens.” Such gestures, coupled with the silence from the men of the Moral Order, would result in another republican electoral triumph in the 1879 Senate elections and served to mitigate the vitriol still being expressed, throughout France, for the Commune. These were acts of forgiveness and inclusion, carried out in order to demonstrate confidence in the Republic and to signal the Revolution’s conclusion.

The fête was an immense success. The date’s lack of historical legitimacy did not deter its proponents either. On the contrary, some argued it was successful because the date did not require a recollection “that could offend anybody; the unanimity of patriotic enthusiasm was complete.” As noted by Olivier Ihl, the unveiling of the statue was the boldest initiative of the organizers who sought to unify the nation, specifically under the republican banner while avoiding explicit references the Revolution which might have created controversy. A military parade through the city of Paris commenced after the inauguration of Clésinger’s statue. The use of a military parade as a means to celebrate the Republic was an important symbolic representation of the regime’s power and the

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353 Lehing, p. 61.
354 This election, along with the Crisis of 16 May are analyzed in the following chapter.
355 Ihl, La fête républicaine, Op. cit., p. 110. This quote is attributed, by Ihl, to a partisan of the fête, Bessonet-Favre.
parade route itself testifies to the organizers’ avoidance of provocative sites of commemoration for the Revolution of 1789. The parade consisted of a torchlight procession of mounted republican guards, cavalry, and military bands that departed from the butte Montmartre, reaching the Place d’Étoile by the Avenue du Bois-de-Boulogne then completing the march down the Champs-Élysées.

Figure IX.356

This path evaded the notorious sights of the 1789 Revolution, including the Place de la Bastille at the corner of rue Saint-Antoine and Boulevard Beaumarchais. Yet the living memory of the Commune would certainly have been recalled both in the choice to commence from Montmartre and in the route along the Avenue du Bois-de-Boulogne where burials, executions, and cremations of Communards took place for weeks after May 1871. Moreover, the sites for fireworks displays, designated by the Minister of Interior, included the Bois-de-Boulogne and Montmartre as well as Place d’Italie, where insurgents of the June Days of 1848 were famously captured and Place du Trône, a notorious site of execution by guillotine during the Reign of Terror. All of these “lieux de mémoire,” however, were implied and certainly not made explicit. With the main events of the celebration taking place in the capital city’s conservative center, the memory of the Revolution was indeed muted at best.

In 1878, forging a republican body politic was the primary, and ultimately successful, objective for the organizers of the national celebration and many aspects of the day’s celebration were foreshadows of quatorze juillet which became the official national holiday in 1880. Thus while references to the Revolution were oblique, and phrygian bonnets officially forbidden, the historical flag of republican France, the tricolor was everywhere, on buttons, hats, umbrellas, and hanging from windows in every district; they festooned the entire city, an image preserved by Claude Monet in two paintings.

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357 On July 14, 1880 Place du Trône was renamed Place de la Nation where, on the centenary of the Revolution, Aimé-Jules Dalou’s statue Triumph of the Republic was inaugurated.
358 Ihl, p. 110.
inspired by his impression of the day.\textsuperscript{359} At night the fireworks directed over the fountains of the Tuileries Garden were immense; even while the Palace, irreparably destroyed during the Commune, was “kept out of sight behind a vast orchestra stand.”\textsuperscript{360} As the Paris correspondent for the \textit{Times of London} reported, “Montmartre… [had] never been so thronged and excited since it was the theatre of the Commune outbreak.”\textsuperscript{361} While the central location for the celebration was the Champ-du-Mars, each arrondissement was instructed to create a celebration tailored to the whims of their locale at their own expense.\textsuperscript{362} Despite it being illegal, the \textit{Marseillaise} was sung throughout the day, “in open defiance of MacMahon,” who boycotted the entire celebration.\textsuperscript{363}

The decisions of MacMahon and many other conservatives to publicly boycott the celebration reflect their failure, on the eve of their demise, to effectively gauge the public mood. More than two million people participated in the \textit{fête} in Paris, and the conspicuous absences of MacMahon and other monarchists “arguably rendered [them] even more unpopular with the greater part of the electorate thus precipitating their electoral defeat and MacMahon’s own resignation on 5 January 1879.”\textsuperscript{364} The republicans, on the other hand, carried the day and continued to ascend to the highest political offices of the nation.

\textsuperscript{359} Claude Monet, \textit{Rue Saint Denis, fête du 30 juin 1878} and \textit{Rue Montorgueil, fête du 30 juin 1878}.
\textsuperscript{360} Wilson, p. 55.
\textsuperscript{361} “The Paris Fête” \textit{The Times of London}, Paris, June 30 1878.
\textsuperscript{362} Ihl, p. 108.
\textsuperscript{363} Wilson, p. 55
\textsuperscript{364} Ibid., p. 83.
The overwhelming successes of the Universal Exposition and the *Fête du Juin 30* symbolically marked the political turning point that had already occurred in May and October of the previous year. After 1878, calls for more festivals and commemorations were frequent and republicans began to celebrate the revolutionary past with unbridled passion, relying on the media to spread this atmosphere throughout the nation. June 30 did not become an annual celebration, however, for “no such new and arbitrary date could stir passions the way revolutionary *journées* could, and no *journée* had advocates as insistent as those for July 14.”³⁶⁵ But before they could preside over the first celebration of *quatorze juillet* in 1880, the republicans had to continue making electoral gains, working all the while to cement a French identity that was explicitly republican and founded upon its revolutionary heritage. This was a risky undertaking because of the competing claimants to that heritage, including the partisans of the Commune and the revolutionary Left. The battle over this heritage, like the battle for the Republic’s survival, was fought “on the terrain of symbol and ritual.”³⁶⁶ This was the safest course for all sides; “after all, on what better terrain [could they] challenge authority and address the public without at every turn winding up in jail?”³⁶⁷ Events like the Universal Exhibition and the *Fête du 30 Juin* offered the republicans much-needed opportunities to present an appealing image to the populace as they struggled to establish their strength.

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³⁶⁷ Ibid.
As Philip Nord asserts, “the republican [political] culture—with its myriad public rituals, rich iconography, and statue mania—may have acquired the patina of a cherished and consensual national patrimony,” but it “was improvised, the outgrowth of skirmishes between republicans and the party of order.” Indeed, the republicans were involved in a multi-front battle. They had to fight the monarchists, largely during the early and mid-1870s, over the survival of the Republic. At the same time, the different republican factions were at odds with one another regarding what type of regime they wanted to build. Would the Moderate ideal of a liberal government prevail, or would the Radicals successfully implement a social-democratic approach? Furthermore, even as the threat to the Republic’s existence waned following the conservatives’ electoral defeats between 1876 and 1879, new problems emerged. As the chapters below will reveal, the conflicts among the republican groups only intensified after the reentry of the revolutionary Left during the height of the Crisis of 16 May. The Left loudly proclaimed its impatience with Moderate-Radical cohesion and the politics being played with Communard amnesty, which had been campaigned upon and proposed just as often as it had been denigrated and rejected. Before such issues could be resolved, however, the Republic still needed to be made republican. It is this endeavor that the next chapter examines.

CHAPTER 4: THE REPUBLICAN TRIUMPH

Between 1876 and 1879, the republicans gained political control of the Third Republic. The elections resulting from the 1877 Crisis of 16 May gave voters the opportunity to definitively demonstrate their allegiance to a republican system of governance by reaffirming their approval of the republican majority in the Chamber of Deputies. In spite of the conservatives’ heavy repression of the republican campaign and the absence of a truly secret ballot, the republicans were able to defeat their monarchist rivals. The Crisis of 16 May illuminates the success of mainstream republicans in earning the support of a majority of the voting population. It also reflects the waning influence that the specter of the Commune had in terms of the conservative hold on the Third Republic. The republican campaign was effective because it presented the group as a cohesive party of order that would safeguard the social and political status quo and secure France from foreign entanglements. Traditionally, this was a role ascribed to conservatives. Indeed, the Moral Order government’s campaign employed the same message, but the republicans were the ones who successfully leveraged it to capture the confidence of the voting majority.

This chapter focuses on the influence of the Commune’s legacies during the Crisis of 16 May and the subsequent campaign politics of the October 1877 election. It reveals

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369 French voters were not given envelopes to conceal their ballot choices until 1913. As this chapter and previous studies make clear, the 1877 elections were subject to incredible voter suppression and outright fraud.
an important shift in public perception: by 1877, the association of republicanism with revolution did not translate into an electoral victory for conservative politicians. In addition, it shows how the mainstream republicans defeated their monarchist rivals and established the Moderate republican regime. They built their victory upon a prominent display of party unity and a careful integration of the Republic’s revolutionary heritage into their narrative. The temporary unification of the Moderate and Radical factions was the result of their perception of the election’s dual significance. To begin with, the Republic’s survival, or at the very least the power of its parliament, was in jeopardy. Secondly, defeating the government’s candidates at the polls would hasten the demise of the Moral Order regime. In order to coalesce for victory in this important race, the republicans muted their differences—which meant absolute silence on the issue of Communard amnesty.

During their campaign, the conservatives attacked the republicans as harbingers of revolutionary violence and social upheaval, and for being “friends of the Commune.” This message was an integral part of their appeal to voters and necessitated a rebuttal from the republican camp. However, the republicans had to tread lightly; their claims to the revolutionary heritage and their perceptions of the era’s gains were controversial and potentially divisive. To meet this rhetorical challenge while maintaining their campaign’s unity, the republican candidates chose to embrace the elements of the Republic’s revolutionary roots that divided them the least: universal suffrage, constitutionalism, and the defeat of clericalism. This choice, while tactically sound, facilitated the Moderates’
accession to power at the expense of the Radicals. After all, the party was focusing its efforts on privileging and publicizing the Moderate narrative of the revolutionary legacy.

The Crisis of 16 May is usually described in relation to the defeat of French monarchism, its long-term consequences for presidential powers of dissolution, and the declining political influence of the Catholic political contingent. However, as historian Guy Thuillier correctly points out, the historiography of the Third Republic generally neglects studying the Crisis itself. The analysis of this chapter agrees with Thuillier’s assessment that the origins of the Crisis were rooted in the Moral Order’s gross miscalculation of the voting majority’s allegiance and priorities, which gave its rivals an opportunity for political gain. It also concurs with Thuillier’s related assertion that the Crisis arose out of a tacit agreement among political leaders “not to soothe, not to minimize [the political] problems, [but] to raise them.” Yet this chapter diverges from Thuillier’s analysis on an important point that sheds new light on the Crisis’ long-term consequences. While contemporaries may have argued that the Crisis was without cause (i.e., constructed), the notion that “the government lived, more or less, at peace with the Chamber” is misleading. This chapter reveals the impact of a proliferation of problems.

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372 Ibid., p. 441.

373 Ibid., p. 440.
that were surfacing at the time—ones that went well beyond Church-State conflicts, which many scholars, including Thuillier, overvalue in terms of locating the Crisis’ origins. In doing so, they underestimate the power of these other issues, particularly the continued political relevance of the Commune. The legacies of the Commune greatly informed the rhetoric and machinations of the Moral Order government, both before and during the Crisis.

The first section of this chapter provides a narrative analysis of conservative and republican actions in the years and months leading up to the Crisis of 16 May, 1877. After a brief comparison of republican and conservative image-making and agendas at the middle of the decade, it offers an analysis of the Moral Order’s pre-1877 cultural and political tactics. The construction of the Basilica of the Sacré-Coeur, for instance, exemplifies the duality of the Moral Order’s approach to combating the growing popularity of republicanism. This section clarifies that the Moral Order government’s sanguine cultural initiatives were, in fact, efforts to conserve France’s traditionally religious social and political character as part of its long-term restoration agenda. Yet these endeavors operated alongside political maneuvers that reflected pessimism. The government feared its republican adversaries and attempted to weaken them through legal suppression, harassment, and character assassination. After the 1876 republican electoral victory, political repression became the primary tactic of the Moral Order, largely in response to the growing popularity of the Radical republicans and their persistent (and, to conservatives, repugnant) calls for Communard amnesty.
The second section analyzes the political impasses that culminated in the fall of two Ministries and precipitated the Chamber’s 1877 dissolution. It relies largely upon parliamentary and editorial debates, which reveal that the specter of the Commune and the republicans’ revolutionary heritage were key weapons that the Moral Order government wielded to undermine the authority of the Chamber’s republican majority. This section demonstrates that the parties’ competing versions of the Commune’s legacies and the politics of Communard amnesty were integral components of the parliamentary vicissitudes that triggered the Crisis of 16 May.

The chapter’s third section analyzes the Crisis and the subsequent campaigns for the October 1877 Chamber elections. It incorporates private interviews and recollections of the leading politicians of the time to reveal the atmosphere of mutual hostility and mistrust that pervaded the political arena after May 16th. The section’s examination of the October election investigates the different parties’ voter appeals from multiple sources. It focuses mainly on the campaign rhetoric of the conservatives and the republicans, in which schisms over the Republic’s revolutionary heritage and the ghost of the Commune loomed large. Correspondingly, this section utilizes sources that reveal popular political contempt for the Moral Order government, often registered on city walls through graffiti and the manipulation of official campaign posters. These reflect the powerful momentum that popular opinion could generate on its own; regardless of pleas for calm and order from the republican campaign, these dissidents were intent upon sending a loud message to the conservatives. One can also find significant campaign rhetoric in the Chamber
debates that took place during this period, which were frequently published in their entirety and therefore widely available to the public.\textsuperscript{374} The primary purpose of many such debates and speeches was to galvanize voters, especially after the 16\textsuperscript{th} of May. They were designed with the forthcoming elections in mind, and should be read as campaign rhetoric as much as legislative addresses and exchanges. The section concludes with a brief analysis of the outcome of the republicans’ victory in October 1877 and their consequential moves to further erode the royalists’ authority and political power.

This chapter makes clear that the significance of the Crisis of 16 May extends beyond the decline of political relevancy for royalist conservatism. It shows that this decline was itself affected by factors relating to the origins of the Crisis—factors that have not previously been considered. The catalysts of the Crisis are intertwined with controversies surrounding the Paris Commune’s political legacies and the Republic’s revolutionary heritage. Its outcome—namely, the defeat of the monarchists—demonstrates that the Right could no longer attain victory by invoking the Commune as a negative campaign tactic. The parliamentary republicans retained their control of the Chamber in October 1877 because the majority of French voters identified with their

message of order, stability, and peace, and had ceased to equate republicanism with revolution and disorder.

**Before the Triumph: Mounting tension between conservative and republican factions**

Republican unity, which was loudly proclaimed during the campaigns for the October 1877 elections, was not simply the product of responding to the conservative challenge. It was used by Opportunists, who led the campaign, to cast the radical edge as an abating part of the movement. To effectively meet the challenge from the monarchist-Right, Opportunists and Radicals glossed over their differences and generated a campaign that focused solely on agendas that all republicans could support: the primacy of universal suffrage, free press, laicization, etc. Communard amnesty and any other issues that divided republicans were muted.375 This strategy sustained the republican electoral mandate, but it also simplified the way in which this period is discussed and analyzed by contemporary scholars; particularly the marginalization of the Commune as an important political motif throughout the 1870s.376

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376 The legacy of the Commune is not considered as a contributing factor in the origins of 16 May in any historical account of the Crisis; and Thuillier’s study in which Commune-related politics are similarly not considered. Only Joughin’s quite dated study (1955) of amnesty-related politics between 1871 and 1880 asserts the importance of its legacy but this is never in terms of the Crisis of 16 May particularly, but rather in terms of French politics in general during this period.
During the 1870s, memories of the Commune were indelible parts of the fabric of the young Republic. As the previous chapters have described, its legacy was inscribed in the pages of social-scientific journals, negotiated in popular photographs and historical monographs, and lingered in public monuments and national celebrations. While each of these “realms of memory” could, and often were, used for various political agendas, the Commune also occupied a prominent place within the political arena *par excellence*. It was referred to, debated, denigrated, and used so much, in fact, that it is not hyperbolic to argue that it was one of the most prolific points of reference throughout the decade.

As republicans gained seats in the National Assembly through by-elections during the early 1870s, the political battle between republicans and monarchist-conservatives intensified. Within these contests for power, conservative politicians ceaselessly propagated an image of republicans as revolutionaries; in an attempt to assimilate republicans to the Communards and thereby raise national fears of revolutionary action brewing in Paris. For example, in the Chamber debates of May 4, 1877, Gambetta accused the French clergy of a lack of patriotism, rhetorically asking “today search, examine the horizon, pass the French episcopate in review! Where is Monseigneur Darboy?” to which Paul de Cassagnac responded: “You killed him!”\(^{377}\) This exchange is illustrative primarily because it was well known then, just as it is by historians today, that Gambetta not only did not participate in the Commune, but he also consistently eschewed

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the event and the actions of its partisans. At the same time, Gambetta’s own reference to Msgr. Darboy, Paris’ Archbishop who was killed as a hostage during the last days of the Commune, is itself evidence of the ubiquitous referencing of the Commune in political dialogue. During the campaign for the October 1877 election, conservatives proudly propagated their support of clericalism and traditional social hierarchies and, as evidenced by their campaign messages, pinned their hopes on the notion that voters could be induced to vote for Moral Order candidates because of this conservatism and the assimilation of republicanism with the specter of social upheaval and political violence. The Moral Order’s campaign messages were loaded with references to the Commune and the prospect that voting for the republican side would herald a return of that revolutionary menace. Despite their best, or most dubious, efforts in October 1877 and again in 1879, the majority of voters rejected their excitations. While a nation-wide rejection of political violence and general condemnation for the Commune remained, the republicans had successfully convinced the voting majority that they were the new party of order and peace and the strongest bulwark against political and social disorder.

The republicans never disavowed their revolutionary heritage and by the mid-1870s they were clarifying what that meant to their constituencies and explicitly propagating the idea that the revolutionary era was over and therefore the notion of such threats emanating from the republicans’ (whether Moderate or Radical) was nothing more
than reactionary hyperbole. For example, in 1872, Léon Gambetta, the leader of the Moderate republican faction in the Assembly, asserted that glorious (as opposed to defeated and humiliated) France was “revolutionary France, that emancipatory France, pioneer of the human race, that France of a marvelous activity and, as they say, that France, mother to the universal ideas of the world.” Similarly, when running for a seat in the Chamber in 1876, Georges Clemenceau, the leader of the Radical republican bloc in the Chamber, told his target constituency in Montmartre that “the aim we set ourselves is to complete the great renewal of 1789;” which he specified to mean the reestablishment of “social peace through the development of justice and social progress.” Among republicans, this was an innocuously general assessment of the Revolution’s goals and the ideals that should inform the republican enterprise by the mid-1870s.

The very act of referencing 1789 as a harbinger of ideals that the new Republic should uphold, in terms of comportment and initiative, validated conservative’s fears of republicans as revolutionary and the need to combat the insidious electoral appeal of republican politicians. Chaffing under the growing consolidation of the Third Republic, monarchists worked to reverse what they saw as the socially dangerous gains made by republican revolutionaries since 1789. In the 1870s this meant an unwavering condemnation of the Commune of 1871 and efforts to assimilate the Commune with

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378 Although the Blanquists, who were closely associated with the Radicals, still actively called for revolution, it was generally understood that this was a minority voice as compared with more mainstream Radical-republicanism being espoused by politicians such as Georges Clemenceau and Louis Blanc.
republicanism in general. The effort to construct the Basilica of the Sacré-Coeur, for example, designed as an expiatory monument in light of the “sins” of the Communards and, more implicitly, the secular and republican agenda, was in line with their condemnation of the event and a promotion of the religiously conservative society they sought to protect against their contemporary republican political rivals.\textsuperscript{381} But before the monarchists in the National Assembly could make progress, they needed to displace the new Republic’s most ardent, if unlikely, champion, Adolphe Thiers.

Thiers’ fall from power came on the heels of his success in securing the last reparations payments to the Germans eighteen months ahead of schedule which meant an early departure of German occupation forces. This heightened Thiers’ national popularity to the chagrin of legitimists and intransigent Orleanists who did not seek to follow in his embrace of the Republic. Thus, as soon as his political cache proved unnecessary \textit{vis-à-vis} the German occupation and his political popularity too dangerous to his political rivals, he was isolated on the Right by steadfast monarchists and on the Left by Moderate republicans who now perceived an opportunity to take his place; the Radicals, who never ceased to revile the leader of the 1834 repression of the Lyon silk weavers and, more recently, the Bloody Week massacres, remained silent as Thiers buckled under political pressure.

Marshal MacMahon, the commander-in-chief of the Versailles troops during the Commune’s suppression, became President on May 25, 1873, the same night that Thiers resigned. The immediate catalyst for Thiers’ resignation came from a vote of no-confidence, following a ministerial crisis, which was carried by only 14 votes, all of them from Moderate republicans.\textsuperscript{382} However, the event was long in the making due to a series of political stalemates involving taxation, military service, and decentralization of power. Political intrigue was the fundamental root to what many contemporaries referred to as MacMahon’s legal \textit{coup}. By 1873, Thiers’ conversion to republicanism (albeit highly conservative) was considered a primary threat to the monarchists’ efforts to subvert the Republic; accordingly he needed to be outmaneuvered in order for a restoration to have any hope of success. Thiers’ May 1873 resignation was hailed by monarchist politicians and their supporters as a first step in this direction. Indeed, as described by British journalist and witness to the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune, Ernest Vizetelly, in the winter of 1873 – 1874 Parisian high-society pontificated about and celebrated the notion of an impending restoration on a near-nightly basis: “…many Royalist houses which, under the Empire, had entertained very little, were now well to the front. Paris was infinitely invaded also by Counts and Barons who had formerly dwelt in the provinces, but had hastened to the capital in the hope of witnessing the Kings’

restoration.” Ernests Vizetelley similarly describes that even after the passage of the 1875 constitution, “the world of the salons, the clubs, and the Bois still clung to the hope that France would soon have a monarch. Although the Republic was now definitely constituted it was only the masses that took it au sérieux.” Yet in an era of mass politics, the under-appreciation of the last clause was fatally impactful for the politicians of the Moral Order. On the heels of their 1873 parliamentary victory, MacMahon’s Moral Order regime began to pursue political and cultural endeavors in line with their long-term goals with an eye toward conservative populism.

The task of building the Basilica of the Sacré-Coeur, which towers over Montmartre today, was one of the first initiatives taken up by MacMahon’s government of the Moral Order. This monument is the physical manifestation of French Catholic, royalist, and anti-revolutionary sentiments that the Revolution of 1789 ignited among adherents to the cult of the Sacred Heart. From the beginning, the Basilica was a conservative rejoinder to the French revolutionary era broadly and the Commune most acutely; its value as a cultural weapon in a political battle whose outcome depended on

384 Vizetelley, p. 192.
385 See chapter two for additional details of the Moral Order’s other cultural projects, including the Fremiet’s statue of the Joan of Arc and the reburials of Generals Lecomte and Thomas.
386 The cult of the Sacred Heart began in the 1680s when Marguerite-Marie Alacoque, “beset by visions transformed the worship of the Sacred Heart into a distinctive cult within the Catholic Church.” This movement acquired a redemptionist quality when Marguerite-Marie wrote to Louis XIV in 1689 “claiming to bring a message from Christ, [and asking the King] to repent, to save France by dedicating himself to the Sacred Heart…” David Harvey, “Monument and Myth,” Annales of the Association of American Geographers, Vol. 69, No. 3, September 1979, pp. 362 – 381; and Raymond Jonas, France and the Sacred Heart: An Epic Tale for Modern Times, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2000.
the allegiance of the voting public was acutely appreciated. A religious revival had begun to take hold of Catholic France after 1871 and with MacMahon in power after 1873, his regime pursued strict censorship and social controls along with the official sanction and patronage given to the Catholic contingent; not only as a result of the regime’s conservative sympathies, but pointedly in an effort court a conservative constituency. Patronizing the construction of the Basilica of the Sacré-Coeur provided a fortuitous opportunity by which to give the Moral Order agenda physicality and to encourage a reconnection between the patrie and its Catholic and monarchical roots.

The cult of the Sacré-Coeur was bound up with the campaign to restore a Christian Monarchy; hence the natural alliance between proponents of the Basilica’s construction and supporters of the Moral Order. The long history of the Basilica’s construction, which was ultimately the result of mostly private funding and religious populism, is an example of the multi-faceted impact of the Moral Order’s defeat and the social and cultural transitions necessitated by the republican Republic’s triumph. Indeed, Jonas is correct to assert that “it is difficult to imagine such a church being built on that site and on such a scale outside of the special circumstances” of the period of the Moral Order. However, this is not only because the “Church of the National Vow encapsulates a moment in the 1870s when France was overwhelmed with the sense that only massive and collective moral failure could explain its fall,” but also because the Basilica was a
cultural tool used by the Moral Order to symbolically combat republicanism’s popular appeal.\textsuperscript{387}

On June 29, 1873 30,000 people including 50 members of the National Assembly, journeyed to the Butte Montmartre and vowed to build the Basilica on that site. On July 23\textsuperscript{rd} the Assembly voted in favor of building the expiatory monument, as a national endeavor. However, by spring of 1875, when the inaugurating stone was ready for placement, republicans were gaining electorally, not in spite of their anti-clerical stance, but, in-part, because of it; and the Radicals were specifically mounting a resistance to the on-going project. By 1875, the growing opposition to the monument was so hostile that the Pope intervened by declaring the day of the inauguration an international day of dedication to the Sacred Heart for all Catholics everywhere; nonetheless, because of the political climate, the ceremony was muted and forty years would pass before the monument was finally complete.\textsuperscript{388} The controversy over the Basilica’s construction encouraged the Moral Order to increase their use of more direct methods to combat the growing appeal of republicanism.

MacMahon’s regime heralded a conservative turn that was not confined to the symbolic realm of political expression. In fact, the Moral Order’s impact on French

\textsuperscript{387} Jonas, p. 242.

\textsuperscript{388} Jonas, p. 204. In the planning phase for the 1875 ceremony, the controversy over building the monument, between its republican opponents and its Catholic and conservative champions, was inflamed by the “intemperate remarks by a speaker before a meeting of the \textit{Cercles catholiques} about how the ceremony would mark the burial of the ‘principles of 1789’ [forcing] Guibert to rethink the event.” The monument was completed in the summer of 1914.
politics and society was extensive. E.B. Washburne, the American Foreign Minister in France, described the Moral Order’s assumption of power, in terms remarkably similar to Vizatelly, as “not only a political but a social revolution... all the Reactionists and Royalists who had been in the bush for the last three years, came out of their retreat to retake their places in society.”389 Upon his election, MacMahon outlined the mission of his regime: “with the help of God, the devotion of our army [which he had recently been in command of]..., and the support of all loyal citizens, we shall continue the work of liberating our territory and of re-establishing moral order in our country.”390 They moved with haste.

In the first month of MacMahon’s presidency, some twenty prefects were dismissed or replaced by men loyal to the new regime and over the course of the year, repressive measures accumulated quickly, as did individual persecutions. One prominent means of announcing the conservative agenda of the Moral Order regime was to overturn prior rulings of clemency for some high-profile Communards. This was a manifestation of the Moral Order’s anti-revolutionary stance but it also provided the opportunity to rekindle conservative passions which might translate into electoral gain especially when

389 Washburn p. 292. In the U.S. political context Washburn was a radical republican and an early proponent of emancipation; his Recollections are not entirely without bias and generally he appears to have had an affinity toward the conservative to moderate republicanism of Thiers and Gambetta. His Recollections, however, provide a valuable inside view of the political machinations and opinions of political leaders and factions including those of the conservatives and when considered alongside other sources his account of events are factual.
390 See McAuliff p. 44 for original source.
such revocations of commutation were publicized and directed against well-known figures.

On August 10, 1873, Henri Rochefort’s case concerning his involvement with the Commune was re-opened. Originally sentenced to deportation for life, Hugo successfully pleaded to Thiers that his failing health and illustrious literary career should translate into his sentence being carried out within France. In 1873, Hugo again pleaded on Rochefort’s behalf in the press and in person to Duc de Broglie—a fellow member of the Academy and MacMahon’s Prime Minister—but to no avail. Instead Broglie revoked Thiers’ clemency, much to the acclaim of the conservative press and he was deported to New Caledonia. Similarly, Broglie took advantage of the Empire’s press laws, leading to the Radical Deputy Arthur Ranc’s prosecution for having briefly participated in the Commune. In light of Ranc’s recent election to the Assembly for Lyon, his death sentence probably had more to do with political exigency and conservative image projection than his brief participation in the Commune. The regime then moved on to other measures to curtail Republican political messaging by forbidding any lauding of the revolutionary past, banning celebrations of 14 July, and purging busts of Marianne from town halls throughout the nation. In spite of these tactics, republic candidates continued to win political favor. The 1874 by-elections resulted in the entrance of another

391 Rochefort escaped from New Caledonia in 1874 and continued to defame the government in his writings from a safer distance in Brussels.
392 This episode is also mentioned in Chapter one. Ranc escaped his sentence by fleeing into exile in Brussels.
393 Mayeur and Rebérioux, p. 19 -20.
sixteen republicans to the National Assembly, along with six Bonapartists, and only one monarchist.

By 1875, the republican surge was becoming an alarming trend for the monarchists. Between 1872 and 1875, there were sixty-five by-elections with nearly each one going in favor of the republican candidate. Moreover, these elections demonstrated that republican electoral strength was no longer based solely in the large industrial cities and town, but rather that it had also taken root in provincial and rural areas, regions that as recently as 1870 and 1871 had supported Bonapartists and Imperial plebiscites and monarchist candidates. The successive republican victories and the unexpected uptick in Bonapartism led monarchists, heretofore persistent in delaying the promulgation of the Republic’s constitution, to fear that deferring the constitution any longer might mean a return to Bonapartist populism or a more radical Republic and one that would be more difficult to subvert in the future. The Republic’s constitution narrowly passed on January 30, 1875.

The consolidated Republic’s first general elections were held in February and March 1876. During the campaign, republican messaging consisted of an electoral appeal that combined “a promise of small property to all, a reasoned progress, a secular [but not 

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394 See Nord, The Republican Moment, Op. cit., p. 440 regarding Bougoing, Napoleon III’s former equerry’s, election; see also, Charles Sowerine, France Since 1870, Culture, Politics and Society, Palgrave, New York 2001, p. 28. By 1874, the monarchists were discouraged about the possibility of successfully restoring monarchy at that moment in France; they were leery of the populations’ reaction should the Comte de Chambord reclaim the throne, specifically because of his insistence on re-asserting the prerogative of hereditary monarchy by replacing the latter with the white flag of the Bourbon dynasty.
a-religious] and self-governing future.” Just as critical as the message, was the republicans’ grassroots tactics, which became the standard in campaign strategies henceforth. This enabled republican politicians to simultaneously campaign for office and to promote the Republic’s solidification to rural constituencies. The efficacy of this type of grassroots campaigning was validated when the votes were cast. Once again, republicans demonstrated their growing national-popularity, obtaining 360 of the 532 seats in the Chamber and 93 of the 225 elected seats in the Senate; thus, their majority in the Chamber was complete and they made serious headway in the Senate. Conservative anxiety over the growing appeal of republican candidates reached a frenzied state after the 1876 elections. As described by Auguste Laugel, “the panic is great in the conservative world…people are alarmed, they see the country on a rapid

396 Given their experience with clandestine political organizing, the republicans’ ability to use grassroots tactics effectively is unsurprising. For a detailed description of the 1876 campaign strategy see Nord, p. 135. See also Sudhir Hazareesing, “The Société d’Instruction Républicaine and the Propagation of Civic Republicanism in Provincial and Rural France, 1870 – 1877,” The Journal of Modern History, Vol. 71, No. 2, June 1999, pp. 271 – 307, especially pages 272 – 273 regarding the importance of republican pamphlets and brochures, “which [because of their easily absorbed and distributed content] became the privileged method of conveying the republican message to the countryside during these years.”
397 The Senate, as opposed to the Chamber was elected indirectly; this privileged the rural vote. The conservative-monarchists had campaigned separately during this election which had a negative impact on their bid for the Chamber’s majority but enabled them to carry 132 of the 225 seats in the Senate. Taken together, the life Senators and those elected meant a nearly even split in the Senate with 151 conservatives and 149 republicans.
398 See Goguel, Géographie des Élections, Op. cit., cartes No. 2 and 3, pp. 19 and 21 for a comparative geographic mapping of the rise of republicanism in regions that in February 1871 had voted solidly [en totalité] for conservative candidates and by February-March 1876 had begun to defect significantly to republican candidates; indeed, whereas in 1871 conservatives won total victory in 12 departments, in 1876 only Belfort was won en totalité and Haute-Marne was lost completely.
descent towards Radicalism which nothing can stop.” Moderates made up the overwhelming majority of the republican victories. However, in their writings and public pronouncements, the monarchists still seeking to subvert the Republic, made no distinction between the rival republican factions.

Following the republicans’ 1876 victories in the general elections, MacMahon and his ministers moved their offices from Versailles to Paris. The political calculation behind this decision is irrefutable. In Paris, the historic epicenter of revolutionary and republican politics, MacMahon took up residency in the Élysée Palace while requiring the legislative bodies, where republicans were gaining seats, to maintain their offices and sessions in Versailles. Moreover, MacMahon maintained martial law in 42 of France’s 90 departments, making it easier for his regime to control its opponents’ voter outreach. This meant that “republican newspapers all over the country were either suppressed or their sale forbidden on the street;” and public officials and newspapers were suspended merely for braving attendance to a republican rally or reporting on the speeches of prominent republican figures. For example, Lucien Verdet, a Municipal Councilor in the town of Oyonnax was prosecuted by the regime for having delivered a eulogy at a civil

400 Of the 360 seats held by the republicans only 98 were occupied by Radical republicans and they won only 15 seats in the Senate.
401 Washburne, p. 298; Washburne specifically recalls the suspension of one mayor “because he had listened to a speech from Gambetta without protesting its sentiments; [and] Le Siècle…was forbidden to sell its papers on the street and in many of the departments, simply because it published an extract” of one of Gambetta’s speeches.
(republican) funeral.\textsuperscript{402} Such repressive measures hardly stemmed the tide of growing republicanism among French voters or the resolve of their elected representatives.

Despite a conservative Presidency and a conservative majority in the Senate, the 1876 elections were unmistakably an expression of republican allegiance among the majority of voters. Under the circumstances, MacMahon appointed a republican Prime Minister, Jules Dufaure, a solid republican in 1876 but a man who had previously served as a minister under Louis-Philippe. It was hoped, by the men of the Moral Order, that Dufaure would be able to temper the supposedly radical element of the lower house. Instead, Dufaure fell from power just nine months later following a Chamber vote of no-confidence.

\textbf{Into the Deluge: Origins of the Crisis of 16 May}

From the beginning to the end, Communard amnesty issues plagued Dufaure’s ministry. Radicals in the Senate and Chamber pushed the issue the furthest which only increased the government’s concern that the nation was slipping into the hands of Commune supporting revolutionaries, a characterization that they ascribed to republicans

\textsuperscript{402} See also Sowerine, pp. 27 – 28, where he points out that “even the most moderate of reformers” were repressed, in relation to the 1875 ban on Léon Richer and Marie Deraismes Association pour le droit des femmes, despite the fact that the association had already suppressed itself by cancelling its 1873 feminist congress upon MacMahon’s assumption of power.
as a whole. During the campaign for the February elections, Radicals ran on a platform that included promises to bring forth an amnesty. Holding true to their campaign promises and personal convictions, on March 21, 1876 Victor Hugo and F.V. Raspail simultaneously introduced amnesty bills in the Senate and Chamber. At the same time, a petition in favor of amnesty began circulating in Paris and surrounding areas. In a truly grassroots effort, large shops in Belleville and Ménilmotant invited customers to sign it “en masse,” as did flower vendors, and at private parties, invited guests were presented with the petitions. By May 8, 1876, police agents reported that one signature gatherer on Avenue Parmentier asserted that he had overseen the gathering of between 21,000 and 30,000 signatures. Even if such figures were inflated, the grassroots activism on behalf of Communard amnesty was significant enough to merit numerous reports between police agents and the Prefect and demonstrates a growing popular support for amnesty.

In Versailles, both the Raspail and the Hugo bills were rejected, nearly unanimously in the Senate and by 392 to 50 in the Chamber. While the Senate’s conservative majority might explain the rejections, the Chamber’s decision was more of a

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403 Between 1871 and 1876 nine amnesty proposals were made; six of these were presented in 1876 alone, which indicates growing confidence among Radical republicans following the republican victories in the general elections. Partial amnesty proposals: Andrieux (1876), Bethmont (1876), Houvey (1876), Bertauld (1876); and general (complete) amnesty proposals: F.V. Raspial (1876), Hugo (1876).

404 APP Ba 464, “Commune de Paris (1871) Amnestie” piece 384 – 385, report of May 7, 1876. The origins of this petition could not be found and there is no mention of this type of local activism in any of the secondary sources consulted for this dissertation. This is a curious lacuna for scholars dedicated to understanding the popular political sphere during the mid-1870s. The fate of the petition is also unknown as it is never mentioned in the Chamber or Senate debates; it is highly probable, given the repressive nature of the Moral Order regime that it was wholly cast aside and other than the reports located in the Archives of the Prefect of Police, this type of popular activism has been swept into “the dustbin of history.”

405 Ibid., piece 404.
reflection of the Opportunists’ attempt to distinguish their political moderation vis-à-vis the Radicals and also to appear conservative enough to maintain their budding alliance with liberal-minded Orleanists. Having elected Radical republicans who had largely campaigned on bringing forth an amnesty, their constituencies were furious. As described by one police agent, “the rejection of the amnesty law has caused a stir of artificial emotions in the popular neighborhoods, probably prepared by the leaders. I judge by induction of what was happening in the cafés of Montmartre and the Batignolles where discussions were very [lively] and threatening…; [moreover,] constituents of Gambetta have organized a private meeting in which he will be invited to come and explain his abstention on the vote for amnesty…if he declines it will be considered a lack of faith and the [meetings delegates] will invite voters to suspend the mandate given to him.”

This was not the last time the amnesty issue would arise for the Moral Order and menace Dufaure’s ministry.

In the hopes of ending a controversy that divided the republicans, on May 26, 1876, Louis Gatineau introduced a bill for the cessation of Communard prosecutions. This was not the amnesty that the Radicals had promised, but a compromise between the far Left and a large contingent of the Republican Union, Gambetta not included. The Gatineau bill became the catalyst to Dufaure’s resignation which illuminates the extent to which Commune-related politics were politically impactful during the 1870s.

407 Chamber of Deputies, Annexes, session ordinaire 1876, II, 86. The Bill’s sponsors included 139 members of the Chamber of Deputies, all of whom were republican.
The government had promised a similar bill prior to May 1876; with the notion that this should be considered in relation to Gatineau’s proposal, the issue was put on hold until the fall. In the interim, Radical Deputies such as Raspail, Clemenceau and Blanc began to recoil from their colleagues in Gambetta’s moderate-dominated Republican Union especially after the rejection of Hugo’s and Raspail’s amnesty proposals. This division is an important fact to consider because it validates the argument that the Commune was the major fault-line between the Opportunists and the Radicals in the 1870s and because it bellied the Moral Order’s attempts to essentialize all republicans into the Radical pro-Communard camp, thereby hoping to reignite allegiance to the conservative regime.

In June 1876, MacMahon wrote a letter to the Minister of War that detailed his position on Communard tribunals. In this letter, he advised not a cessation of prosecutions, but a withdrawal of their exposure to the public: “I think that we ought to let all acts connected with the fatal insurrection of 1871 fall into oblivion.”408 The letter was published the following day in the *Journal Officiel* and was accompanied by a “presidential decree dated June 24, of pardon, commutation of sentence, or reduction of penalty for 87 Communards.”409 MacMahon’s attempt to take matters into his own hands, while the Chamber awaited debate on a bill covering the same issue, raised an issue of

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408 Joughin, p. 118. Quoted letter originally found in the *Journal Officiel*, 4593: 1 – 2.
409 Ibid., footnote 11.
legislative encroachment by the President; thus began the constitutional controversy culminating in Dufaure’s fall from power and the Crisis of 16 May.\footnote{La République Française, June 30, 1876.}

In response to the publication of MacMahon’s letter, many Republicans, led by Raspail, joined together to submit a motion of interpellation to the government on July 3. Gambetta’s controversial moderation, and break from his earlier radicalism, was displayed in full when, on July 4th he ascended the tribune before Raspail’s interpellation proposal could be debated, and diverted the Chamber’s attention to another matter. Gambetta viewed Raspail’s motion as something that might precipitate the Chamber’s dissolution, an event he perceived the republicans were not ready for.\footnote{For Gambetta’s analysis, see Léon Gambetta, Lettres de Gambetta, 1868 – 1882, 10 Vols., Grasset, Paris 1938, Lettre, no. 279 and Discours, Op. cit., Vol. V, pp. 261 – 289; for a transcription of Gambetta’s speech in the Chamber see Annales, Chambre, Vol., III, pp. 209 – 217.}

As a result of Gambetta’s filibuster-like response, “by the time Raspail got to the floor to speak in behalf of the interpellation, the Deputies were exhausted [and] voted without debate to postpone any discussion of the interpellation until a committee report on the Gatineau bill had been submitted.”\footnote{Joughin, p. 118. The transcripts of the day’s event can be found in Chamber of Deputies, Annales, session ordinaire 1876, Vol. III, pp. 209 – 219.} Between the rest of July and the fall of 1876, the Radicals increased their demands for the Gatineau bill and continued to stump for a general amnesty. Their efforts included privately lobbying republican politicians, attacking the government’s policies in Chamber speeches, and reaching out to the voting public through the publication of articles and pamphlets in support of amnesty for the Communards.
The Radicals’ tactics were consequential. To take a broad view, they contributed to growing popular support for amnesty and Radical republican electoral success; and for the moment, they prompted Gambetta to finally take a public stand on the issue of amnesty although not the one they had hoped for. By the fall of 1876, Gambetta’s Belleville constituency was chaffing under his opportunism. On October 26, 1876 he spoke before a gathering organized by the electoral committee of the 20th arrondissement. His appearance was greeted with shouts of “Vive l’Amnistie!” While affecting an empathetic tone he unequivocally denounced any support for a general amnesty denying “that the Commune had any political significance, [and maintaining that it had been] ‘a sort of convulsion of misery, famine and despair.’”413 However, he concluded his speech by calling for a strengthening of republican unity to meet the challenge of “the worst recrudescence of the reactionary party since 1815.”414 In this speech, Gambetta exposed his antipathy for a general amnesty in 1876 but he did go on, given the reality of popular support, especially among his own constituents, to reverse his position on the Gatineau bill after a compromise was reached.415 Dufaure, however, was not persuaded. At the Chamber’s opening session on November 3 he delivered a speech in favor of MacMahon’s executive prerogative in addressing the on-going prosecutions. This was far more than an issue regarding Communal prosecution; this was a matter of the

413 Joughin, p. 124 and L’Homme libre, October 29, 1876.
414 L’Homme libre, October 29, 1876.
415 The compromised bill that the Chamber voted on included a ten year statute of limitations and the cessation of prosecutions except for those charged with murder, arson, or theft who would henceforth be tried by a jury rather than the military tribunal and those condemned in absentia would be guaranteed a jury trial if they surrendered themselves.
Republic’s locus of power. Gambetta’s post-compromise support, then, should be viewed in light of the impending constitutional crisis and the republican challenge to the Moral Order’s position on executive authority.

On November 6, 1876 the Chamber voted in favor of the Gatineau bill by more than a two-thirds majority.\textsuperscript{416} By the time the bill reached the Senate, Dufaure had modified his position; speaking before the Senate he argued in favor of the bill, stating that the Council of Ministers “could not complain if the chambers insist upon giving adherence to the principles which have been expounded in the letter of the President of the Republic.”\textsuperscript{417} On December 1, 1876 the Senate rejected the compromise on the Gatineau bill. Dufaure resigned after a vote of no-Confidence by the Chamber. Clearly, Dufaure was caught in the middle of a hostile debate that centered on the locus of power under the Third Republic; he had failed in his mission to navigate safe passage for both himself and the government.\textsuperscript{418}

The political impasse regarding the fate of the Communards, legislative privilege, and executive power was now reaching a fever pitch. Republicans in the Chamber and Senate were united against any further encroachments on legislative power and deeply committed to combatting what many assumed was a pending coup d’état. Outside of Versailles, however, the Radicals were increasingly intransigent regarding their stance on

\textsuperscript{416} The Chamber affirmed the cessation of military trials but rejected the article relating to new jury trials offered to those sentenced in absentia.

\textsuperscript{417} Senat, Annales, session extraordinaire 1876, Vol. II, pp. 18 – 19.

\textsuperscript{418} Following the Prime Minister’s resignation the rest of the cabinet followed suit.
the Commune. For example, in 1876 the Parisian Municipal Council, dominated by Radicals, voted in favor of including 30,000 francs to the 1877 budget “for the aid to the families of political prisoners.”419 This was perceived as alarming evidence of the growing confidence among Radical politicians and their subsequent willingness to be more assertive. In the meantime, MacMahon needed to appoint a new Prime Minister and with the Chamber’s republican majority having issued a warning of no-confidence should a minority Council be chosen. As a result, MacMahon selected a Council nearly identical to the one he was replacing by choosing Jules Simon as the new Prime Minister.

Between Simon’s December 1876 appointment and his May 16 resignation, Radical-republican politics ratcheted up the anxiety and stiffened the resolve of the politicians of the Moral Order and their supporters to stamp out republicanism by any means. Once again, the Commune was exerting its posthumous influence. Despite the ministerial crisis that came as a result of the Gatineau bill, MacMahon’s letter, and Dufaure’s resignation, Communard deportations continued as late as December 28, 1876 and so too did the Radicals’ denunciations of the Moral Order government. On January 1, 1877, L’Homme libre printed an article written by its editor, the Radical Deputy, Louis Blanc, in which Blanc championed the cause of amnesty stating “we could not let these holidays pass without thinking with emotion of the victims of our civil discords, the cessation of whose afflictions has not been dependent upon us…the apostles of a

419 Paris, Municipal Council, Procès-verbaux, meeting of December 20, 1876. Given the contemporary political climate, this was clearly not only an act of benevolence, but also a politically calculated move.
relentless policy... continue to seize without pity the humblest soldiers of an insurrection which almost belongs to history.”420 Henri Rochefort, having by then escaped from New Caledonia and living in Brussels, was “writing [pro-Amnesty articles] regularly for Les Droits d’Homme,” a newspaper owned by two radical members of the Parisian Municipal Council, in which he unabashedly “hurled insults at MacMahon in the name of the men of March 18.”421 That year, the anniversary of the proclamation of the Commune was celebrated not only in Paris but also in “several of France’s industrial cities with clandestine banquets and meetings.”422 For the exiles, these moments validated hopes that they might soon return home, for MacMahon and the politicians of the Moral Order the events were proof that radicalism and revolutionary sentiments were penetrating too deeply and must be considered imminent threats to their conservative agenda.

The issue of amnesty was an omnipresent political factor in the days and months prior to the Crisis of 16 May. Indeed, during this period, “every sitting of the Chamber of Deputies verged on riot...and whatever the topic of debate, sooner or later the attacks took up the subject of the Commune.”423 As Prime Minister, Simon was charged with providing a balance between a hostile Chamber dominated by republicans and an ultra-conservative government. But tensions continued to mount, and in Versailles, broader issues soon displaced the problem of amnesty. Simon’s task proved impossible. Despite

420 L’Homme libre, January 2, 1877.
421 Joughin, p. 131. The Radical municipal councilors were Yves Guyot and Sigismond Lacroix. In 1883, Lacroix replaced the seat left vacant by Gambetta following his untimely death.
423 Ibid., p. 134.
divisions between the republican factions—most acutely over the fate of the Communards—they were united in defense against the Moral Order and, like their enemies on the Right, the republican camp was on edge; they were preparing to fight against a possible coup d’etat or at least the Chamber’s dissolution. This unity was greatly enhanced by the same issues that precipitated Simon’s resignation only five months after coming to power: clericalism and press controls.

Clericalism, which had already been a key division between republicans and monarchists, became an acute issue for the French government in January 1877, when the Italian chamber passed a bill that empowered the Italian state to prosecute priests that were agitating on behalf of the Pope and the restoration of his powers in Rome. In France, militant Catholics organized Catholic Action committees and petitioned MacMahon to use any resources at his disposal in order to liberate the Pontiff. Simon intervened by dissolving the committees and directing the prefects to repress the petitions that menaced domestic and international peace. Many republicans, including Gambetta, considered this an opportunity to publically strike out against the political influence of the French clergy and simultaneously the dangers of the Moral Order’s clericalism in terms of diplomatic relations and the maintenance of peace on the continent. By finding common cause with the Italian state and Bismarck’s Germany, republicans had another

424 In March Pope Pius IX called on behalf of Catholic clergy everywhere to bring the Pontiff’s case before their congregations and to encourage them to petition their governments to intervene on his behalf.
source by which to validate their claims to be the true party of peace. With this opportunity in mind, republican deputies from all factions met on April 30th and unanimously decided to interpellate Simon’s Ministry on what other measures it would take to curtail clerical activism. Between May 3rd and May 4th the Chamber debated on the interpellation.

On the first day of the Chamber debates Simon defensively asserted that the majority of French bishops were acting with moderation and counseled against any further suppression of their action. He added that if necessary, the government would call the episcopate to order, using all the powers that the Concordat provided. This was not enough for his republican colleagues, especially the Radicals who openly denigrated the continuation of the Concordat itself. In Gambetta’s May 4th speech, he likened clerical agitators to Moral Order politicians exclaiming “we are in the presence of an army which has a general [the Pope] and which maneuvers as disciplined armies do;” citing the clerical infiltration of high society and government offices, he famously concluded “clericalism! There is the enemy!” Immediately after the speech the Chamber voted in favor of repressing clerical agitation via the interpellation by 304 to 113.

While the Italian state was seeking to limit clerical influence, so too was Bismarck’s Germany.

In response to Simon’s suspension of the committees and his instructions to the prefects, some clerical leaders stepped up their campaign. The Bishop of Nevers, Mgr de Ladoue wrote a fiery letter to MacMahon on the 7th of April rebuking him for not coming to the Pope’s rescue. He went on to publish the letter and circulated it to mayors and judges in his diocese.

On the heels of this political defeat, Simon was isolated again when the Chamber opened discussions on a potential alteration of the 1875 law dealing with press offenses. Republicans wanted to assure jury trials rather than summary jurisdiction for all press related offenses, with the tacit understanding that juries had a better track record of acquitting. The Moral Order viewed this potential change as another step on the Chamber’s radical path. In these sessions, Broglie defined radicalism in neo-Burkian terms as “the spirit which seeks to make of the Republic not only a form of political government, substituting the election of the head of State for heredity, but also the instrument and the symbol of a great social transformation…. the spirit which wants the Republic to have as a necessary complement and natural consequence the suppression of all the great institutions which the past has bequeathed to us, and which are the honor of our history.” The monarchist anxiety over the growing influence of republican’s revolutionary ideas—whether real or imagined—must be understood in terms of the government’s role in the Crisis of 16 May.

Simon, having promised the President that he would not support any changes to the 1875 law, opposed the republicans in the Chamber. On May 15, the votes on the press bill were tallied; the proposed change was affirmed by 377 to 51. Simon had no choice but to record the Chamber’s decision and pass the bill to the Senate. That evening

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428 This was not the first time the issue of press restriction had come before the Chamber; that February, the Radical Deputies, Clemenceau, Floquet, Naquet and Barodet, had introduced an amnesty bill for all press-related offenses committed to date and after a raucous debate the issue was set aside for later review only to be submerged in the deluge of 16 May.

MacMahon wrote a scathing letter to his Prime Minister, although it neither asked for nor “demanded Simon’s resignation, as everyone assumed, and technically he did not dismiss him; the letter’s preemptory tone made Simon’s continuation in office difficult, if not impossible.” The following day Simon resigned; thus began the Crisis of 16 May.

Aux Urnes Citoyens! The Crisis of 16 May and the campaigns for the October elections

The news of Simon’s resignation reached most the Ministers and Deputies of the Chamber while they were taking part in the funeral procession of Ernest Picard. That night, some 300 Deputies met at the Grand Hôtel; upon arrival, they were greeted by hundreds of people whose presence solidified the republicans’ hopes for popular support. During the meeting, Gambetta, flush with popular acclaim, introduced the motion for a collective republican response to Simon’s resignation and the impending formation of a new Ministry and/or dissolution of the Chamber; it was voted on without debate and passed unanimously. After the meeting, as Gambetta was exiting the building, Blanc leaned in to ask where he would be sleeping that night. The political

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430 Grubb, p. 275.
431 Washburne, pp. 338 - 339. According to Washburne, “the streets were filled with people during the evening, and I was reminded of the attoupements which I frequented when I first arrived in Paris in 1869. The great center of interest at the Grand Hôtel was Gambetta, who was greeted with immense applause.”
climate leading up to this night was hostile and chaotic; with memories and personal experiences of 1851, many feared that this was the beginning of a coup d’état.

In the months, and even years, leading up to the Crisis of 16 May, many republicans anticipated and propagated that the government of the Moral Order was preparing for a coup d’état that would end the Republic for good. This was an inversion of the Moral Order’s argument regarding republicans and their revolutionary agenda; however republican fears regarding a potential coup were not unreasonable. In November 1873, with no apparent successor in sight, a “proposition of the reactionary elements in the Assembly [moved] to prolong MacMahon’s powers and term of office to seven years…after a heated debate, it was carried on November 19, 1873, by a majority of sixty-six.” Many republicans saw extending the President’s powers and term, in conjunction with the early purges of prefects and mayors, as a circling of the wagons around the President’s goals and policies including restoration. The conservative press increased republican anxiety. For example, La Défense Sociale et Religieuse, attacked Simon as being weak in the face of radicalism and accused the republicans of shepherding a return to “religious and political Jacobinism, atheism and the Commune,” concluding that the government had “a legitimate right of resistance.” Such rhetoric exposes the assimilation of the revolutionary-republican identity and validates the notion

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434 Washburne, p. 301. The idea was initiated by the Bonapartists hoping that the prolonged time would mean “the Prince Imperial would have reached his majority.” Many on the Right were vociferously opposed to this, not only because of its Bonapartist origins, but because the so-called “Septennate” would only prolong the existence of the Republic; however, with the voting élan clearly in the republicans’ favor they ultimately accepted it as a stop-gap measure.

435 Grubb, p. 267.
that MacMahon’s regime might have been gearing up for a *coup*, an act that had significant historical precedent. Simon’s 1877 dismissal coming so soon after Dufaure’s, “was regarded everywhere as [the] veritable *coup d’état*” that seemed to have been long in the making.\(^{436}\)

Anxiety over the President’s preparation for a *coup* led republicans to take precautions. Despite some republicans who attacked him as being nothing more than MacMahon’s pawn, Simon himself had, “already removed most of the prefects of the Moral Order”\(^{437}\) by the spring of 1877. Similarly, Gambetta monitored the political sentiments of the military very closely, in light of MacMahon’s relationship with that body. Despite the laws designed to de-politicize the institution, the military’s role in past revolutionary circumstances was not underestimated.\(^{438}\) In February of 1876, on the eve of that year’s republican electoral victory, a memorandum was prepared for Gambetta that detailed the political leanings of the French military.\(^{439}\) Knowing that the officers had

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\(^{436}\) Washburne, p. 338. On the same page, Washburne recalls his visit to Thiers’ home where he encountered “large numbers of men distinguished in politics who were in the highest state of excitement… [and] regarded the MacMahon letter as a serious event, threatening alike the peace of France and Europe, and as a defiance flung in the teeth of Germany and Italy.”


\(^{438}\) Prior to becoming President, MacMahon had been in charge of the French military. By a law passed in 1875, soldiers on active duty were disenfranchised and unable to serve as Deputies in the Chamber; however they were eligible for the Senate. Gambetta and the Minister of War (at the time) General de Cissey supported this law.

\(^{439}\) These documents are discussed in fantastic detail in François Bédarida, “L’Armée de la République : les opinions politiques des officiers français en 1876-1878, » *Revue historique*, July – September, 1964, pp. 119 – 164. This article is, admittedly quite dated, however the information is valuable especially in light of the failed quest to access the documents personally and then to find more recent analysis of the sources. Bédarida explains that the first was made prior to the republican victory of 1876 and another after their victory in October 1877. The second memorandum reveals the continuation of anti-republican sentiment among the officers and advises the new Republican government “would be unwise to keep near, general officers, superiors, and subordinates which are notoriously hostile.” See Bédarida, p. 121.
rallied to the Empire in 1851, the quest to secure this information by Gambetta was certainly an attempt to gauge their attitudes should a new a coup be attempted. More than half the generals were counted as anti-republican but Gambetta and his associates remained cautiously optimistic about the role of the military, should such an event transpire. On May 1, 1877 Gambetta remarked to a police agent that he monitored the army’s political sympathies closely and although he admitted to the anti-republican sentiments of the majority of officers and colonels, he insisted that new appointments were making inroads. His sureness was bolstered by a supreme confidence in the French voters that he assumed would rally to defend the Republic based on recent electoral successes and the republican press campaigns.

The republican press was equally combative in propagandistic denunciations of its enemy’s intentions. Republican journals charged the Moral Order with plotting to subvert the constitution and the Republic but maintained the same confident tone that republican politicians expressed themselves. For example, in January 1877, Hugo’s Radical republican journal, Le Rappel, confidently registered a foreshadowing rebuke against the Senate, a body the Radicals had opposed creating in 1875: “let the Senate continue as it has begun if it likes...for the day of revision will come for it as the day of dissolution has come for the Assembly whose shadow it is. If it is stupid enough to be contrary to the country and offend all that is modern France, it will not kill the Republic,

440 APP Ba 919, report of May 2, 1877. Gambetta specifically remarked that Gallifet (commander of the 15th division at Dijon) was “now definitely one of ours” and that General Pajol and a staff commandant Darras had been in supportive communication with him.

441 See Bellanger, p. 158 for the role of the press during the Crisis of 16 May.
it will commit suicide.”

MacMahon’s impulsively written letter and Simon’s resignation on May 16th therefore merely set in motion a collision course.

On May 17th, as the Deputies arrived to take the train from Saint-Lazare station to Versailles, they were again greeted by an immense crowd. The spectator seats in the Chamber of Deputies were packed and the police and military presence was conspicuous. Gambetta was the first to ascend the tribune and began his highly publicized speech by introducing the republican motion to make ministerial responsibility to the parliamentary majority explicit citing that this was the aim of the constitution of 1875 and will of the voting majority. Throughout his speech, Gambetta highlighted the national public sentiment against the President’s actions, thereby holding up the democratic intention of the Republic’s constitution and recalling the popularity of republican politicians at the polls, both of which were to become key components in the Republican campaign for the October election. The President was accused of having a ready-made government already formed and seeking to return France to the ancien régime. In concluding his characteristically passionate appeal Gambetta warned:

With the Constitution in hand and the country behind you, ask whether it is the intention to govern with the Republican party in all its shades or if, on the contrary, by recalling to power men who have been three or four times rejected by popular vote, it is intended to impose on this country a dissolution which would mean consulting France anew... if the decision is for dissolution we shall go back in confidence to the country that we

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442 Le Rappel, January 3, 1877.
know, that we appreciate, who knows that it is not us who are troubling peace at home and disturbing it abroad. I repeat that the country knows that it is not us, and if dissolution occurs, a dissolution that you engineered, that you caused, take heed lest it become angry...[and] the country say: Dissolution is the prelude to war! Those who had such an object in mind would be criminals.\footnote{Ibid., p. 22.}

Therein, Gambetta casually rebuffed the notion that all republicans held radical and revolutionary sentiments; in fact, he inverted the accusation by citing that it was the partisans of the Moral Order who were gunning for revolutionary change and that in doing so they could be deemed criminals by the French people. He upheld republican claims to being the party of domestic and foreign peace \textit{vis-à-vis} the monarchists. His forecast that dissolution might become a declaration of war was dangerously provocative.\footnote{Bury, p. 403.} Dangerous, but also effective; contained within his speech were nearly all of the components of the republican campaign when dissolution did come and elections were held that October, including a clarion call to defend the Republic.

The dissolution was not immediately declared. After Gambetta’s speech on May 17\textsuperscript{th}, the Chamber voted on the republican motion passing the interpellation by 349 to 147. That evening, the President held his usual weekly reception at the Élysée Palace which Washburne attended to gauge which groups would make a supporting appearance. He was struck by “great disproportion of military men, whose glittering uniforms were seen by thousands... [and] a large number of the class who had not been there before, the
Legitimists and Bonapartists, who crowded in to offer their congratulations to the President... [and] many members of the Diplomatic Corps, all of whom seemed to regard the situation as one of extreme gravity."\textsuperscript{448} The following day, MacMahon announced the appointment of a new Ministry composed entirely of men on the extreme-Right, with Broglie, again chosen as Prime Minister. This was “a ministry whose sympathies were with the clerical and monarchical tendencies of government, and which were in every way opposed to liberal tendencies,” and thus entirely contrary to the sentiments of the majority of the votes as reflected in the most recent elections of 1876.\textsuperscript{449} The Senate’s support for the Chamber’s dissolution was essential, consequently, four out of nine, were Senators.

The composition of the new Ministry was just what the republicans had expected, but still the dissolution did not come. Instead, Oscar Bardi de Fourtou, the new Minister of Interior took the tribune to read a defensive message from the President regarding his actions of 16 May and then announced the prorogation of the Chamber until June 16\textsuperscript{th} (the maximum length that was allowed for such an action by the constitution), citing the intent of letting passions cool. This was a play for time intended to prevent the Chamber from introducing an immediate motion of no-confidence in the Broglie Ministry and to provide a period during which resources could be martialed after the hasty decisions that

\textsuperscript{448} Washburne, p. 340.
\textsuperscript{449} Ibid. Taking the portfolio of Justice, Fourtou was given the strategic (in terms of the forthcoming election) office of Minister of Interior, and Decazes (retained) as the Minister of Foreign Affairs; The other Orleanists were Eugene Caillaux (Finance) and Auguste-Joseph Paris (Public Works). Brunet (Public Instruction) was the one Bonapartist; Vicomte de Meaux (Agriculture and Commerce), General Berthaut (War) and Vice Admiral Gicquel des Touches (Navy) rounded out the group for the Legitimists.
had precipitated the Crisis. Thereafter, republican unanimity was as unmistakable as their historically grounded rebuttal. Republican Deputies repaired to the Hôtel des Réservoirs straightaway, “like their predecessors who went to the Tennis Court in 1789.” At this meeting the Deputies drafted a manifesto directed to the voters of France. It called for the same calm reception to the President’s decree that prevailed when Thiers was outmaneuvered in May 1873. It then framed the terms of the forthcoming republican campaign; the Broglie ministry and MacMahon were labeled the “government of combat” and sternly denounced for rejecting the republican will of the national electorate.

363 Deputies signed the manifesto, which henceforth was popularly referred to as the “Manifesto of the 363.” In the declaration, the republicans strategically placed their constituencies on the defense and the onus of rebuffing MacMahon’s machinations on their shoulders. According to the manifesto, the government was rejecting their votes and thanks to universal (male) suffrage, they were empowered to thwart such machinations by exercising their rights at the polls. This cast the vanquished republican Deputies as defenders of the population whose rights and expressed will were being trampled. For example they wrote: “France wants a Republic, she said so in February 1876... the nation will rise [to demonstrate] through its coolness, its patience, [and] resolve, that an incorrigible minority cannot snatch the government for itself.”

The manifesto also pointed out that the decision negatively impacted business interests and thereby also

jeopardized the success of the upcoming Universal Exposition. This was a type of rhetoric traditionally derived from conservative messaging and demonstrates the moderate tone of social, political, and economic stability that republicans were projecting by the mid-1870s.\textsuperscript{452} With the confidence that would become a republican-campaign hallmark they continued: “regardless of the national community’s anxieties France will allow neither deception nor intimidation, it will withstand all provocations, all challenges.” The manifesto concluded with a direct appeal to the voters:

As for us, your representatives, we now come into direct communication with you, we urge you to decide between the political reaction and adventures that suddenly puts into question everything that was so painfully won for six years, and the wise, firm, peaceful, and progressive policies that you have already consecrated. Dear citizens, this new test will not last long: in five months, France will speak; we have the certainty that it will not fail. The Republic will emerge stronger than ever by the popular ballot, the parties of the past will finally be defeated….France will face the future with confidence and serenity.\textsuperscript{453}

With these messages republicans, led in the 1877 campaign by the now solidly Moderate Gambetta, were transforming their image away from being the party of movement and radical change to being the party that would safeguard the political and financial status quo.\textsuperscript{454}

\textsuperscript{452} Hippolyte Gautier, \textit{Carnet d’un journaliste pendant le seize-mai : La Résistance Dans les Départements}, C. Marpon et E. Flammarion, Paris 1881, p. 69-70. Gautier describes the events from a moderate republican’s perspective, idealizing the national unity and perseverance of legality in the face of an oppressive regime that he often characterizes as demagogic; however his analysis reflects the majority of the voters’ opinions, as evidenced by the October election and he re-prints numerous letters of protest that are incredibly valuable for scholars interested in this Crisis.


\textsuperscript{454} This was a public image that Moderate republicans retained after the Crisis and by which they sought to differentiate themselves against the Radicals and the Socialists.
On the same day, after the regular Senate session, all the republican Senators met and unanimously voted to issue a declaration of support for the republican Chamber, denouncing the government’s actions on 16 May and the composition of the new Cabinet as contrary to the voting majority’s desire. The statement firmly asserted “we will not join any enterprise against republican institutions.” These declarations of republican solidarity and denunciations of the government’s actions, especially at a time of “profound national peace,” became the essential mantra of republican campaign messaging.

Between the publication of the Manifesto and the June 16 reconvening of the Chamber, the campaign to elect a still un-dissolved Chamber was well underway. Republicans and their monarchist enemies remained undeterred in their mission to politically annihilate each other. The month of prorogation was opportune for the republicans, it gave them a chance to prepare for the debates that would ensue after the Chamber was re-convened in June and, more importantly, it enabled a month of republican campaigning while the Deputies still enjoyed parliamentary immunity. This fortuitous month witnessed a renewal of their grassroots campaigning as republican Deputies and Senators went directly to the voters encouraging and animating supporters in reunion and banquet toasts throughout the nation. Their pronouncements were subsequently published in republican newspapers under the title Parliamentary

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456 Ibid.
Protestations.\textsuperscript{457} At the same time, republican voters reached out to their representatives by writing letters and sending addresses to their Senators and Deputies thereby mirroring their representatives’ unity and commitment to the political process.\textsuperscript{458} This reflects the confidence of these voters in the Republic’s representational capacity and an ability to take advantage of its channels of political communication.

On the other side of the campaign, the Moral Order regime stepped up its repressive measures. As Minister of Interior, Fourtou “ordered a watch on cafes and cabarets where meetings were held and instructed the prefects to be severe in their licensing and control of newsvendors.”\textsuperscript{459} Purges continued and at a quicker pace in order to reverse Simon’s appointments: “62 prefectural changes were made within 24 hours and within the month 484 prefects and sub-prefects, 184 magistrates, 83 mayors and 381 justices of the peace were replaced.”\textsuperscript{460} Fourtou was effectively stacking the deck on the government’s side so that when dissolution occurred they could proceed with the legal harassment of republican campaigners that was to become a hallmark of their campaign. The monarchists, however, were much more divided than the republicans; many hoped to avoid dissolution which a supremely confident Gambetta was now gunning for.

Before the Chamber reconvened, Washburne was granted an interview with Gambetta, the “acknowledged leader of the Republican party in France”\textsuperscript{461} On the subject

\textsuperscript{457} See H. Gautier, Chapter 5, « Les Réponses au Seize-Mai, » especially pp. 75-78.
\textsuperscript{458} Ibid., pp. 76 – 78.
\textsuperscript{459} Bury, p. 408.
\textsuperscript{460} Ibid., p. 407.
\textsuperscript{461} Washburne, p. 341.
of dissolution, Gambetta boasted that he “had no fears...he felt the utmost assurance as to what would be the result of new elections... [insisting that] republican opinion was then so deeply rooted in every part of France that nothing short of a perfect reign of terror could overcome it, and this was beyond the power of the government to produce.”

In reference to Fourtou’s efforts to suppress anti-government sentiments in cafes and other public spaces, Gambetta laughed stating “to want to stop Frenchmen from talking is like wanting to stop Americans from taking action.” Gambetta concluded the interview by predicting the Moral Order’s defeat and its impact:

Taking everything into consideration, the coup d’état of the 16th of May will have profited the country. Its immediate effect, it is true, is to strike down at one blow the great material and business interests of the country. The loss to France will be fifty millions of francs per day, but, on the other hand, it will give to the French people a solemn opportunity to affirm, in profound peace and in a quiet and orderly manner, its determination to live under republican institutions, by calling for a new election. The marshal would, in fact, submit himself to the verdict of the nation. If he is ready to abide by its decision, the republicans are; if the people support him, we will submit. But we do not fear such a result. Never has a more general and unqualified condemnation been passed upon any government than that which the French people will visit upon the unwarrantable policy which the irresponsible advisors of the marshal have induced him to pursue.

462 Ibid.
463 Ibid., p. 342.
464 Washburne, p. 342. Although Gambetta had, earlier, remarked “we are not on the eve of a coup d’état, he and all republican politicians, after 16 May now openly used the term. This was not a coup d’état, if anything it was a coup de main, but more likely, it was an impulsive move on the part of MacMahon who did not appreciate the magnitude of the letter’s impact. Republicans knew as much; however labeling it a coup d’état was effective propaganda and the epitaph has stuck. The myth of 16 May, that “a reactionary Right...deliberately violated the constitution was subsequently constructed and even attempted a coup d’état, a coup thwarted only by the republicans...heroic defense of the Republic,” greatly enhanced voter support of the Republic and has become the mainstay of the event’s interpretation by historians. See Grubb, pp. 249 – 250 and Gabriel Hanotaux, Histoire de la France Contemporaine, 1871 -1900, Ancien Libraire Furne, Société D’Édition Contemporaine, Paris 1906, Vol. III, p. 724. This was certainly a moment when the strength of the 1875 constitution was challenged and interpretations of it were quite fluid; however, it can be argued that MacMahon sought to stay within its parameters as evidenced by the month long
Washburne’s interview with Gambetta was followed by one with Thiers. Thiers agreed with Gambetta’s remarks and stated that “as to the dissolution…, it was the wish of all those opposed to the coup d’état of the 16th of May that it should take place, as they were desirous of trying titles with the MacMahonists before the country.” On June 16th the Chamber was reconvened and Fourtou took the tribune to read a message from the President wherein he once again defended his actions on May 16th and then announced the intention of dissolving the Chamber. Since the 16th of May, all debates in the Chamber and from the politicians sitting in Versailles were not simply points of debate within the walls of government but were, more than ever, designed to be heard and acted upon by voters with the pending elections in mind. Hence, when the announcement of dissolution was (finally) pronounced, it was greeted by vociferous denunciations by republicans in the Chamber, who, despite having privately confessed to wanting the dissolution, now struck a defensive chord, hoping to induce the electorate to follow suite. The announcement of the intent of dissolution, however, could not stave off the debate on the motion for interpellation which was also scheduled for that day.

In the presence of a crowded Chamber, Fourtou took to the floor to defend the government against the Chamber. In his speech, he committed a serious campaign blunder by stating: “the men who form the government today were elected in 1871 and prorogation, the seeking of the Senate’s consent for the Chamber’s dissolution, the engagement in an open election, and MacMahon’s resignation following the Moral Order’s defeat.  

465 Washburne, p. 343.
formed a part of the National Assembly of which it can be said that it was the pacifier of the country and the liberator of the territory.\footnote{Ibid., p. 344.} At once, Gambetta jumped to his feet and, pointing to Thiers, decried “There! There is the liberator of the territory!” Thereafter, according to Washburne, “an estimated three hundred deputies were on their feet, all pointing to M. Thiers, clapping their hands and cheering...during the whole demonstration [Thiers] never moved a muscle.”\footnote{Washburne, p. 345.} At that moment, Thiers’ alliance with the Republican campaign was sealed and, thereby, the republicans’ association with national liberation. The interpellation debate lasted for another three days and on June 19\textsuperscript{th} the republican motion of no-confidence passed by 363 to 158. Republican solidarity was confirmed and on June 22, so was the Chamber’s dissolution, when the Senate affirmed MacMahon’s request by 150 to 130 votes. The government did not announce the dates for the elections until late August, but campaigning was already long-underway.

The Moral Order’s campaign was plagued by a lack of ideological and tactical coherence, a fundamental underestimation of the political agency of ordinary voters, and the depths to which republican political, social, and cultural ideals had penetrated the political orientation of the national electorate.\footnote{See Tombs, \textit{France 1814—1914}, Op. cit., p. 441 regarding the conservatives’ underestimation of the firmness of opinion in ordinary voters. See Grubb, pp. 314 – 316 for excellent details on the topic of conservative disunity. Indeed, even from the start, many conservatives in the Chamber and Senate were shocked by what they referred to as MacMahon’s \textit{coup de tête} on 16 May and his appointment of a minority cabinet whose members received by them with a lukewarm reception.} At the time, however, this was not perceived by Broglie who was now charged with leading the conservative camp to electoral victory. Submerged within the conservative camp were Legitimists, Orleanists,
Bonapartists, and although unsolicited, clericals; all of whom, in varying degrees, abhorred electoral politics. Moreover, their constituencies were unprepared for the type of political battle being waged. Broglie was right to assess that “people [strolling down the Champs Élysées] would be made for a coup d’état rather than for the effort we are going to ask of them.”

He was a legalist, like MacMahon, meaning he wanted to avoid the type of extralegal measures of repression that some conservatives were demanding not because he perceived a permissive campaign would lead to a conservative victory, but because he saw the campaign as the first round of a longer struggle. Instead, what occurred was a type of legal harassment. As described by Camille de Meaux, a staunch supporter and cabinet minister of the Moral Order government, “we did not claim to change the legally established regime; we proposed only to employ all the means at our disposal to defend and maintain the endangered social order.”

Accordingly, republican campaigners and politicians, despite taking pains to avoid provocation, were repeatedly harassed under the laws whose parameters were stretched to the limits of interpretation.

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469 See Stephan Kale, *Legitimism and the Reconstruction of French Society, 1852 – 1883*, Louisiana State University Press, 1992 regarding the disunity among royalists and their ultimate failure in bringing forth a restoration. Broglie advised that clergy not be mobilized to support the conservative campaign because it would only assist to energize republicans who were stumping on the issue of clerical agitation. Nonetheless, the clerical contingent were outspoken in their support of the government’s candidates, much to the embarrassment of the campaign itself.


471 For example, throughout the campaign, conservative journals including *Le Figaro*, *Le Pays*, and *La Defense Sociale et Religieuse* repeatedly insisted on such action as did his fellow-ministers; Fourtou and Caillaux specifically advocated that Broglie work with them to inhibit universal suffrage. See Grubb, pp. 293 and 316.

472 Meaux, p. 316. Meux also famously remarked, after the October elections, that “we were monarchists and the nation was not.”
Hence the government’s administrative purges during the month of prorogation and the rampant prosecutions that ensued after dissolution was announced.

The conservative’s lack of ideological coherence created a campaign which was presented in two ways. On the one hand, it was presented as a defensive battle to protect the nation from a revolutionary menace, which most voters did not perceive they needed protection from and which MacMahon’s constitutionally questionable actions on 16 May had undermined from the beginning. On the other hand, the campaign became a dual between two competing figure heads: MacMahon and Gambetta. MacMahon was an ideal presidential candidate in 1873, when monarchists still held the majority within the National Assembly and castigations of republicans as revolutionaries still met with electoral success. However by 1877, this was no longer the case (as the October elections would soon make clear) and MacMahon’s image as a military leader and unquestionable conservative was little competition for Thiers’ and Gambetta’s popularity and the republican campaign’s ability to intimately engage voters. MacMahon was an awkward public speaker and, more often than not, he appeared to disdain the very people whose votes he needed in order to win the battle.\(^{473}\) It is one thing for a candidate to be unknown, still another for him to be disliked, but in an election that is based on universal (male) suffrage, it is potentially fatal for a candidate to be perceived as one who is

\[^{473}\text{See Grubb, p. 309. Grubb’s chapter on this election, “The Campaign” provides an excellent description of not only the awkwardness of MacMahon and Broglie on the campaign trail, but also the manner in which the government’s legal harassment of the republican campaign and its supporters backfired on the conservative campaign. It made the “government’s strictures seem all the more arbitrary and indefensible;” a fact that alienated voters and lends validity to Grubb’s insistence that “the Right lost the elections as much as the Left won them.” See pp. 303 and 306.}\]
contemptuous of an integral segment of the French constituency, let alone the popular outreach required to win their votes. As a result, propaganda supporting MacMahon reverted to, on the positive side, upholding his military record, and negatively on Gambetta’s supposed radicalism and a play on national fears of revolutionary ferment by maintaining their rhetorical assimilation of republicans with the Communards.

In campaign posters and pamphlets distributed nation-wide, MacMahon’s candidates were rarely presented as positive choices. Instead, the republican opposition took center stage in negative attacks with MacMahon’s candidates upheld as bulwarks against social dissolution and another Commune; the antithesis of the messages emanating from the republican campaign. For example, in a two page pamphlet written by Alphonse Karr, the celebrated conservative journalist and one time editor of *Le Figaro*, voters were urged to question the integrity of Thiers and Gambetta and their recent alliance; Karr then posited: “suppose [the republicans] are the winners in the election—the most advanced and corrupt will throw the others out of the window, as has always taken place in similar circumstances” concluding by warning voters of the peril that would befall the nation should republicans emerge victorious. He asserted that if they did not vote, or did not vote for MacMahon’s candidates, then it was not Thiers, Gambetta “nor even M. Naquet whom you deliver to France…it is in Vallés, Cluseret,

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474 The rampant prosecutions of republican journalists, candidates, and campaigners only compounded this perception of the President and the men he was campaigning for, a fact that the republicans capably exploited in their own propaganda.
and Pyat, etc., that you will entrust our destiny." These messages were repeated in other departments throughout France.

On the first day of voting, October 14, voters in the department of Tarn-et-Garonne were greeted by a front page advertisement that was full of familiar messages:

If you want Peace, Order, and Stability; vote for the candidates of the Marshal...the 363 surely lead you to war because they are the candidates of the Revolution and the candidates of Bismarck....

You have a choice

Between the candidates of Gambetta, the madman, the 363, the republicans who promise a violation of the constitution, a change in the established order of things, Amnesty, Disorder, War, or the candidates of MacMahon who assure Stability, Order Peace, Prosperity. Hesitation is not possible and no abstentions, without weakness, without division, you will vote for the government, for the candidates of the Marshal.

This piece highlights an important commonality between the monarchist and republican campaigns. Both struck a defensive chord, foreshadowing the domestic and diplomatic perils that would come should their opponents be victorious. For example, the German position was used by both sides, in different ways. Republicans often reminded their

475 Alphonse Karr, « Aux électeurs: Appel en faveur du Maréchal de Mac-Mahon, » 2 page election pamphlet of 1877. Source found in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Françoise Mitterrand (BNF). Thiers’ republicanism was questioned by reminding the reader that he had killed many republicans « in the streets of Paris » in 1832 and again in 1871; Gambetta was criticized for not only being a friend to the Communards but then abandoning them to “hide” in St. Sebastian. Simon and Hugo were held up to similar scrutiny. The precedents that Karr used, when referring to the most advanced / corrupt factions taking the lead after a victory, was the case of the Montagnards versus the Girondins in 1793. In fact, contained within this brief appeal were nearly all of the campaign scare tactics used by the conservative at the time including an unabashed warning of murderous reprisals that would certainly ensue should the republicans be victorious, and this time without the Prussians to stop them.

476 APP Ba 579, “14 Octobre, Élections législatives générales,” File 400, piece 474. According to Goguel, who credits the information in carte no. 4 to Maurice Sorre, 45-52.5% of registered voters in Tarn-et-Garonne selected MacMahonist candidates on October 14th; in 1876, only one conservative candidate was voted in this department. Goguel highlights that his 1877 figures are derived from those published in October, therefore prior to the numerous invalidations that would later ensue.
voters of the Catholic contingent contained within the conservative camp and warned of the probability of the war that would ensue if the MacMahonists were successful: France would go to war against Italy and Germany in defense of the Pope and surely would be defeated in this two-front battle. Conservatives highlighted, in this poster and others, France’s unique position as a democratic Republic surrounded by hereditary monarchies and the diplomatic disadvantage that the nation subsequently faced. In this manner, the republicans were accused of being aligned with Bismarck (because of their common view of the Pope’s position and Russia’s intervention in the Balkans) and the conservatives were accused of plotting with the Kaiser to subvert the nascent Republic. The common root of such messages is that each side vied for the role of protector to the Republic’s stability.

After Thiers died in September, the conservatives exploited the moment to highlight that he was the only tempering force within the republican camp and his passing should signal that the republicans will be more radical, even revolutionary, upon their re-election. For example, the Moniteur du Cantal declared:

M. Thiers is dead! M. Gambetta is condemned! …If you want the Commune with Gambetta and his followers, that is to say the amnesty of

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477 Bismarck himself did vie for the republican victory: on June 18 he instructed Bülow, the German foreign minister, to “mobilize the German governmental press in such a way as to convince the French electorate that it would be choosing war if it voted for Broglie and his colleagues…on September 6 he told his ambassador in Paris, Hohenlohe, that it would be necessary ‘to assume a somewhat menacing attitude’ while the French elections were in progress…” on 11 October…Bismarck’s own paper Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung..., declared that Italo-German negotiations then in progress were tending towards a mutual agreement in case the two countries found themselves faced by a clerical and therefore aggressive France after the general elections.” Bury, p. 437; internal quotes from Prince Chlodwig Hohenlohe-Schillingsfuerst, Memoirs of Prince Chlodwig Hohenlohe-Schillingsfuerst, ed. F. Curtius, Vol. II, London 1906, p. 198.
the criminals, the incendiaries and ‘fusillards’, the closure of the churches, the removal of all officials… the terror with drownings like those of Carrier and the guillotine… vote for the 363!478

Thus, right up to the end, the Right upheld their warnings of the republicans’ revolutionary intent and Communard support; to avoid dissolution of the social and political status quo, or worse, a return to the Reign of Terror, voters were urged to vote for the government’s candidates. But their campaign remained fraught with problems, mostly stemming from disunity.

On July 3rd the government announced it would adopt official candidates; this immediately turned badly for their campaign. In the first instance, this was a trademark policy of the Second Empire, one in fact that Broglie had opposed, and moreover, far from assuaging conservative disunity, it increased it. When the official candidates were announced in late July, 240 of the 490 candidates were Bonapartists, 125 were Legitimists and the rest declined affiliation. With the majority of slots going to Bonapartists, republican castigations of an impending coup could be propagated with even more plausibility. By the late nineteenth-century, conjuring fears of an impending

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478 This was originally published in the Moniteur du Cantal, then republished as proof of the conservative camp’s hyperbolic campaign, by the République Française, September 23, 1877. The reference to Gambetta’s condemnation was in regard to the government’s prosecution of him for defamation by delivering a controversial speech in Lille in which he stated “when France has spoken with her sovereign voice, believe me, Gentlemen, it will be necessary to submit or resign.” The République Française was similarly prosecuted for having published the speech. He and the manager of the newspaper were sentenced to three months in prison; they appealed and the appeal was still awaiting a hearing when the elections occurred and the new Cabinet, formed in December, dropped the case. This is another incident in which the repressive measures taken by the government backfired; the public at-large was vocally sympathetic to Gambetta and the newspaper during the September hearings. See Gambetta, Discours, Vol. VII, pp. 207 – 230 for the complete speech delivered on August 15, 1877.
coup could motivate the electorate as much as the threat of revolution; indeed, even more so as evidenced by the Moral Order’s defeat that October.\textsuperscript{479} The official list led to bitter in-fighting among conservatives that resulted in many Orleanist candidates and others grouped vaguely as “conservative” to disaffect from the united effort in order to run independently.\textsuperscript{480} Thus the conservative campaign dissolved into stop-gap measures designed to repress republican messages and harass republican supporters.

It is well known among historians of the 1877 Crisis that during the summer campaign even stricter enforcement of press restrictions and public assembly were “enforced in a blatantly partisan manner.”\textsuperscript{481} This led to the government seizure of some 72 brochures; the prosecution of 421 persons for press offenses; the closure of 2,067 drinking establishments; and the prohibiting or dissolution of 344 societies, masonic lodges, agricultural committees, among other associations. Moreover, 2,227 condemnations were carried by the correctional courts of which 424 were for libelous offenses to the President, 415 for outrages to public authority, 165 for printing ‘false news’, 216 for minor offenses involving booksellers, 114 for ‘seditious cries’, and the closure of 2,218 cafes; all of which were outside of Paris which reflects the importance of the provinces not only in terms of the pending electoral votes but, broadly, for the

\textsuperscript{479} Indeed, as pointed out by Grubb on p. 316, the appointment of men such as Paul de Cassagnac, Rouher, Raoul Duval, Janvier de la Motte, and Maupas, republicans were handed an excellent source of evidence of the government’s intention of overturning the Republic as it was these men, more than most, who were “outspoken proponents of reaction and hatred of the Republic.” This also made the Right’s campaign professions to want to save the Republic from Radicals and revolutionaries seem just as suspicious as 16 May and the June dissolution.

\textsuperscript{480} See Grubb, p. 316.

\textsuperscript{481} Grubb, p. 300.
retention of this area’s more conservative influence on national politics. However, government agents did take care to suppress propaganda in Paris as well and some of these efforts have been preserved for historians in the Archives of the Prefect of Police.

During the campaigns for the October election, negative campaign propaganda was rife from the conservative and republican camps, but the political atmosphere outside of campaign and newspaper offices and beyond the walls of government was also contentious; indeed, it was vitriolic. It has been said that the cafes of nineteenth-century France were “the parliaments of the people,” and in numerous ways this assessment is absolutely valid. The research for this dissertation has distilled an addendum: the city walls were their Official Journal. The Archives of the Prefect of Police in Paris contain a copious amount of public opinion registered in the form of graffiti, the manipulation of official campaign posters, and hastily drawn scraps of paper pasted to windows and storefronts. Therefore, in addition to what Susanna Barrows tells us about the crude laments against the Moral Order campaign in drinking establishments, the city walls also speak volumes. It is telling, although unsurprising, that among the cartons labeled

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482 See ADS D4U9, cour d’Appel for trials between May and November 1877; APP Ba 884, dossier 1, Minister of Interior’s (Fourtou) letter to prefect of police, November 14, 1877 regarding the absence of café closures in Paris and Maurice Block, Dictionnaire de l’administration française, Second Edition, Berger-Levrault, Paris 1881, p. 229 for the closure of the 2,218 café closures in the provinces during the campaign.

483 Haine, p. 10. In 1851, Alexis de Tocqueville “dreaded that ‘the parliament of the people’ might literally take over the National Assembly.” Honoré de Balzac first referred the cafes as “parliaments of the People” in his 1844 novel Les Paysans. Under the Third Republic, Gambetta referred to them as “salons of Democracy” and the epitaph has been sustained by contemporary scholars of French sociability including Suzanna Barrows who used the label as the title phrase for her chapter in Drinking: Behavior and Belief in Modern History: “‘Parliaments of the People’” Op. cit., this chapter is particularly focused on the period of the Crisis.

“Placards Injurieux/Obscène” the fullest is the one containing graffiti found, removed, or covered up by the police in 1877.

That year, the vast majority of the insults were directed at the politicians of the Moral Order and especially toward MacMahon. It might be assumed that the comportment of the Moral Order constituents did not lend itself to such crude expression; but during the years prior to the Crisis of 16 May, in fact up until 1876 there was a veritable even battle being waged on city walls in un-publishable print between royalists, Bonapartists, and anti-Communards on one side, and partisans of 1871 on the other. It could also be argued that the disproportionate amount of sedition in 1877 was reflective of the political crisis itself especially given the disparity between pro-republican versus pro-conservative postings that the file contains. However, vitriolic laments were scrawled on city walls by supporters of MacMahon’s regime as well, indeed some were explicitly violent such as “I hope to see the republicans facing the guns,” but comparatively, these were far and few between. 485 This reflects the repression of pro-republican appeals during the election and ultimately the majority that voters would give to republicans that October and should, therefore, be interpreted as a rudimentary source of pre-election popular opinion polling specifically because of the inconsistency between 1877 and the previous years.

485 APP Ba 579, file 163000 “Élections Générales à la Députation 1877” piece 85, police report of July 28, 1877.
The venomous attacks on MacMahon and the Moral Order government were prolific. In Paris these messages were found not only in the working class neighborhoods of Montmartre and Belleville, but also in the affluent areas of the city’s center. For example, on May 20th one police agent found strips of paper affixed to presidential posters in support of MacMahon and his recent actions in Versailles that read “Lies and Lying” and on another presidential poster plastered against the national library, a note read “Mac-trop-Con”. Nor was it uncommon to find such derisions posted as caricatures:

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APP Ba 477, « Placards Injurieux / Obscène, » 1875 – 1895, file Année 1877. These were found in the second arrondissement and promptly removed. Mac-Trop-Con, can be translated as a play on MacMahon’s name: “Mac-too much of an asshole” and/or “too stupid, dumb, idiot, jerk, etc.”

Ibid. On Left: “Marchal de MacMahon Duke of Magenta, king of the pigs;” On Right: a mock campaign poster: “Nose of a valiant soldier, loyal to the sword, Monday, October 15, 1877.” The caricature is of MacMahon with Sedan appearing as a blemish on his over-sized nose in reference to MacMahon’s blundering leading to the Emperor’s capture in September 1870.
Some messages were found keyed into plank fences that called MacMahon a traitor. In fact, it was common to find Moral Order posters, especially those featuring his image, defiled by hand written notes calling him “Duc de Sedan” and “Assasin”; in posters that featured the images or signatures of MacMahon, Broglie and Fourtou next to each could be found “imbecile, canaille, and vieux béta!” As the summer progressed the exclamations became more violent with the scrawling of statements such as “Mort à MacMahon” and musings that MacMahon should have died instead of Thiers.

The republican campaign was insistent that their supporters display the utmost calm and legality. This fact, coupled with the haste with which most of these messages were obviously written means it is safe to assume that the republican campaign had no part in these defamations and that they were organic expressions of political discontent posted by individuals acting on their own initiative:

488 APP Ba 477, « Placards Injurieux / Obscène, » 1875 – 1895, file Année 1877. Vieux béta, in reference to Fourtou, can be read as « old idiot » it was also common to see him referred to as an old shark: « vieux requin ». 489 Ibid.
The impact of such activism cannot be properly determined; yet it was an important act of popular sedition that should be taken into consideration in order to understand the political moment in its entirety. These messages illuminate the fact that while the republican campaign rhetoric maintained an argument based on reason and a generalized defense of the revolutionary heritage, popular venom could take on a momentum all its own.

A key example of this divergence between official campaign propaganda and popular initiatives is that while the republican campaign itself was mute on the issue of amnesty, the population could not be muzzled. That year, for example, supporters of the Commune and its survivors risked prosecution of sedition to publically observe the

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490 Ibid
anniversary of *le Semaine sanglante* by prominently displaying placards, such as this, in their café and store windows.

Some (more violent) messages, such as “manger de sang,” similarly inferred a sustained backlash against MacMahon for his suppression of the Commune. These sources reveal the ongoing defiance of Commune sympathizers. They also indicate that, for some, the election precipitated by 16 May did not revolve around monarchical restoration, the perils of foreign war, or defending the Republic’s institutions and constitution. Rather, certain voters viewed it as an opportunity to avenge the blood-letting of May 1871. While this differed from the republicans’ perception of the election, it nonetheless benefited them that October.

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491 APP Ba 477, « Placards Injurieux / Obscène, » 1875 – 1895, file Année 1877.
The republicans’ campaign for the October 1877 elections was informed by their successful bids in February 1876. In both elections, republicans conducted a centrally organized grassroots effort that was carried out mostly in the provinces. The common theme of the republican campaign was defense of political and individual liberties and the republican majority that voters had only recently elected. In their propaganda, republicans embraced their revolutionary roots while maintaining that the era was over and the Republic should be celebrated as the Revolution’s triumph. Never throughout the existence of the Third Republic was republican unity so evident and so prominently proclaimed. They presented themselves simply as “the 363”, whose numbers they sought to increase; their watchwords being peace, liberty, and prosperity.

Republican candidates were able to propagate an image of being peace-keepers because of Thiers’ association with national liberation; because republicans had been steadfast against French involvement in the East, not least of which included the most recent Russo-Turkish War (which began that April); and because of their refutation of the Pope’s entreaties, which itself guaranteed peace with its southern neighbor. Submerged within such self-assessments was the insistence that should a foreign war occur, it would necessarily be disastrous for the newly reconstituted and recovering nation. Thereby, the

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492 See Chrastil, pp. 286 – 288 regarding the attempts made, from the Moral Order and republican camps, to “convince voters that they represented the side for peace.”
republicans claimed to be the most patriotic candidates, preoccupied as they were with sustaining France’s reemerging status among great nations.\textsuperscript{493}

Republicans adroitly portrayed conservatives as violators of the 1875 constitution by ceaselessly denouncing MacMahon’s appointment and campaign defense of a minority Cabinet and his dissolution of a Chamber that clearly held the majority of the nation’s allegiance. In this way, conservatives were accused of being the true party of revolutionary action. For the first time in modern French history, the republicans successfully (as evidenced by their retention of the Chamber’s majority in that October’s election) reversed the historical rebuke against republicanism as a harbinger of foreign and domestic conflict and henceforth persistently campaigned as the protectors of domestic and international peace and the party of political order and social stability.\textsuperscript{494}

Republican’s solicited votes through campaign propaganda that appealed to voters: domestic and foreign peace, patriotism, defense of the Republic and its recently elected representatives, liberty, and financial prosperity. In one campaign piece, for example, republicans cleverly highlighted their opposition to clericalism by offering a civic catechism which at the same time reinforced their message that a vote against the republicans was a vote against the nation citing that war would be the unavoidable outcome:

\textsuperscript{493} Numerous campaign posters, for instance, foreshadowed the negative impact that a conservative victory would mean on the forthcoming Universal Exposition.

\textsuperscript{494} After 1877, this image was projected most vociferously against Socialist candidates, whose factions were perceived more than any other groups of the revolutionary Left, as the primary political threat to republicans; exempting, of course, the alarm generated from the politically heterogeneous Boulangists.
Why are you a republican? I am a republican because my interest, truth, [and] patriotism command me… Why does patriotism command you to be a republican? Because the Republic alone can guarantee peace, and a new war today would certainly be the ruin of all and perhaps the ruin of France. What are the events that could lead to a war? First the return of the Empire, Second the restoration of the Monarchy. Why would the return to the Empire lead to war? …. Because Napoleon III’s successor, to remain on the throne, would need to seek a new adventure, revenge for Sedan.$^495$

The piece goes on to describe that under a restoration, whether Legitimist or Orleanist, the new monarchy would come to the Pope’s aid against Italy and Italy would align with Germany “against us.” The section ends with the person stating “I conclude that any man who loves his country and his family, who wants to work in peace will not see his house and field devastated by invasion [and his] children devoured by war, must defend the Republic by his vote…”$^496$ In this piece, then, all of the republican scare tactics related to a restoration and the peril of a foreign war are present as well as the equating of republicanism with patriotism.

In other campaign materials, they took on the association between republicanism, revolution, and social decline, which was so integral to conservative propaganda. Moderate and Radical republicans had quite divergent views regarding the Republic’s revolutionary heritage and which periods of the revolution (i.e., which gains) should be solidified. Yet, during the 1877 campaign, each faction evidently deemed unity

$^{495}$ APP Ba 579, File 163000, piece 72, « Petit Catéchisme Électoral, 1877. » The republican motto: “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity,” was printed at the top of this poster.
$^{496}$ APP Ba 579, File 163000, piece 72, « Petit Catéchisme Électoral, 1877. »
paramount to success. During the campaign, Radical insistence on Communard amnesty fell silent just as all other divergences between Radical and Moderate republicans were glossed over. In this way, the republican camp did not try to disassociate their image from the revolutionary heritage, as asserted, by Rachel Chrastil. On the contrary, they played up their revolutionary origins and insisted that with the advent of the Third Republic the most general (or seemingly innocuous) gains should be safeguarded and enjoyed. In Gambetta’s final electoral address, for example, he declared that at stake in the election was “both the existence of universal suffrage and the very future of the French Revolution and the principles it had promulgated for the world.”

In one of their cheekier pieces, the republican camp re-wrote the lyrics to the Marseillaise and distributed the new anthem via posters, pamphlets and published their new song in republican journals. The revised anthem began:

Debout! cités républicaines,  
Le jour du vote est arrivé !  
Tressaillez, collines et plaines :  
L’étendard du people est levé ! (bis)  
Un ciel d’azur, plein d’espérance,  
Nous promet un heureux destin ;  
La voix puissante du tocsin  
Annonce l’éveil de la France !  

Refrain

Chrastil, pp. 283 – 284. While Chrastil is specifically referring to their disassociation from the Revolutionary wars, she also states they sought to distance themselves from the “revolutionary fervor of the Commune.” It is true that by muting calls for amnesty during the 1877 campaign, the 363, including the Radical contingent, were seeking to separate their image from the most recent and volatile revolutionary outburst, in no way were the republicans disavowing the efficacy of the revolutions and the revolutionary gains made throughout the nineteenth century.

In a more formal fashion, a six-page pamphlet titled “Simple Réponses au Manifeste Électoral Présidentiel” was published and nationally distributed. It contained the reprinted words of the well-known journalist John Lemoinne, and was used as a direct assault against the notion that the Revolution(s) should be condemned and that the republican association with that history constituted proof of their ongoing revolutionary intentions:

Patience our day is coming! It comes. Before a month, the French people…will have the opportunity to respond…when they wake in the morning…[should the Moral Order candidates be victorious] they will wonder what year we are in…was the French Revolution an invention of historians and novelists? Are we under Louis XIV, who said: “I am the state” or under Louis XV, who said: “After me, the deluge!”…Immortal epochs of 1789, of 1830, of 1848, of 1870, indestructible protests of liberty for all against the power of one, are you fables?

In this piece the gains of the revolutionary era are described in these terms:

Through all of the revolutions which have for a century repeatedly changed the face of France, at the bottom of all the changes of government and dynasties, there was a constant idea, persistent, unchanging: the

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499 APP Ba 579, folder 163000, piece 226, Joachim Ferran, “La Marseillaise de 1877.” At the end of the three-page song sheet the reader is informed that copies can be found in “all libraries and the offices of all republican journals throughout France.”
country’s desire [is] to govern itself. That is to gain and ensure that freedom, which is the heritage of all citizens….

These words underscore the defensive and broadly national tone taken by the 363 Deputies in June. In this piece and others, the republicans proudly took ownership of the revolutionary heritage while casting it as inclusively as possible; appealing not simply to republican partisans, but to “all French citizens” who were beseeched to protect what “they” had, “for nearly a century” been fighting for.

Such a populist assessment of the Revolution’s partisans was, of course, unqualified. However, by embracing that heritage and pointing out the 1876 Chamber majority, the Moderate-led campaign could simultaneously defend against negative attacks from the conservative candidates and remind voters that a majority of them had not only elected the revolution’s progeny, but, thereby, positively affirmed this assessment of the revolutionary era, including its closure. In this way, one of the most important and contentious elections in French history, should also be viewed as contributing to the Moderate-republican narration of the revolutionary era, the Third

500 APP Ba 579, folder 163000 1877 General Elections, piece 227, “Simples Réponses au Manifeste Électoral Présidentiel » John Lemonnie is quoted from Journal des Débats, September 20, 1877. It was common practice for republicans to omit 1871 from the list of inspiring revolutionary moments; at the same time the omission was not made in the minds of many radicals, only overlooked in favor of the exigencies of the moment.

501 Ibid. The republican campaign piece concludes with this patriotic insistence: “French [citizens]! The country is waiting with full confidence for the manifestation of your sentiments. After many trials France wants stability through the maintenance of institutions, order within liberty, peace in the Republic and through the Republic. You assure us of these gains. You will hear the voice of the national conscious which does not address itself to any party, but to all the French guided by a love of their country.”
Republic as the triumphal conclusion of that period, and the permanent and (so far) irreversible binding of the image of the nation to that of a Republic for the first time in modern French history.  

In October 1877, voters came out in support of the republican politicians who had staked their claim on defending the Republic and thereby, according to them, domestic and international peace, prosperity, and social progress. As the first day of voting approached, “the clerical and Bonapartist newspapers published anarchist manifestos that were generated by the Crisis with accompanying comments intended to terrify the voters and prove to them that the only way to escape the petrol of the Communard was to vote for the candidates of MacMahon; Le Gaulois, among others, printed the manifesto in large letters adding a facsimile of the official stamp of the French Federation [that read] ‘those citizens who vote on Sunday against the Marshal will be committing the crime of Lèse-Patrie.’” Nevertheless, the republicans were immensely successful, winning 317 seats to the monarchists 199. On the first ballot alone, republicans gained a clear majority with only fifteen of the total 531 contested seats requiring a second vote. The

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502 The obvious exception here is the Vichy Regime; whose circumstantial origins and dependence on the Nazi Regime should mitigate its use as a rebuttal to the assertion above.
503 James Guillaume, L’Internationale: documents et souvenirs, 1864 – 1878, Vol. IV, Paris, 1905 – 1910, p. 282; Le Gaulois October 14, 1877. The anarchist manifesto and the publication of it in Le Gaulois are also very briefly mentioned in Joughin, p. 149 who cites Alexandre Zévaës, De la semaine sanguine au Congrès de Marseille, 1871 – 1879, Paris 1911, p. 10. This manifesto and other revolutionary Left declarations are discussed in the following section.
504 See Goguel, Atlas Historique, Carte nos., 213 and 214 for a geographic comparison of republican votes (he does not differentiate between Moderates and Radicals referring to both as Extreme Left) in 1876 and 1877 which demonstrate a decline in republican victories in 1877 from the previous election. In Géographie des Élections, Goguel cautions that (conservative election) fraud and administrative pressure must be taken in to account when trying to analyze conservative victories in the October elections.
importance of the election to the national constituency was registered by the voter turnout: 80.6%, a six point rise from the February 1876 election; in fact, the largest number since 1848.\footnote{Mayeur and Rebérioux, p. 30; Bury, p. 435. While they did not, as Gambetta so confidently predicted, return or increase the 363, their majority was irrefutable. See also, Duclert, La République Imaginée, Op. cit., p. 152; and Goguel, Atlas Historique, Carte nos., 209 and 210, p. 114 for a comparative geographic analysis of electoral abstentions in 1877 and 1881.} In Paris, only one conservative candidate won, the Orleanist Touchard. The conservative warnings of the revolutionary calamity that would follow upon a republican victory were apparently unpersuasive and unfounded.

During the campaign, Gambetta had repeatedly asserted that after October Mac Mahon must either submit to the national will, by designating a majority cabinet, or admit defeat by resigning. In the immediate aftermath of the October votes, Mac Mahon did neither. In fact, initially, he and his ministers continued the fight, despite a growing national outrage against them. The Union National du Commerce et de l’Industrie (UNCI), mobilized a demonstration of 1,800 business men in Paris in protest,” when MacMahon refused to meet with them, “the UNCI sparked further business protests against the Rochebouët ministry.”\footnote{Stephan E. Hanson, “The Founding of the French Third Republic,” APSA 2009 Toronto Meeting Paper, p. 43. This information has also been published in chapter 4 of Hanson’s Post-Imperial Democracies: Ideology and Party Formation in Third Republic France, Weimar Germany, and Post-Soviet Russia, Cambridge University Press, 2010. See also, Nord, The Republican Moment, Op. cit., pp. 59 – 61.} On December 5\textsuperscript{th} and 6\textsuperscript{th}, “petitions began to pour in from the provinces [with] textile towns—Elbeuf, Lille, Lyon, Saint-Etienne-[taking] the lead, in a matter of days the petition campaign had engulfed the entire nation.”\footnote{Ibid., pp. 60 – 61; and APP Ba 485, Pétitions, reports of 6 and 9 December 1877, and from the same dates, Le Siècle, Le Rappel, XIX Siècle, etc. The Rochebouët was Broglie’s immediate successor.} According to police reports, Parisians waited anxiously on the electoral results from the
provinces; after the results were known, rumors of a conservative coup circulated and there was wide-spread derision against MacMahon, voter suppression, and illegal voting.508

The rumors about a possible armed coup that MacMahon might lead, following the elections, were fueled by his reluctance to respond to the clear electoral mandate. As Nord points out, “only now [referring to the petition drives], after having considered and rejected plans for a military action, did MacMahon capitulate.”509 It was not until December 13th that MacMahon relented, re-appointed Dufaure and a new ministry was formed, one that was reflective of the republican majority in the Chamber. His submission came not only because of the nation-wide petitions denouncing his intransigence after October, but also because of the continuation of support that republicans were enjoying. On November 4, 1877, the partial renewal of the departmental General Councils was voted (based on universal male suffrage) and republicans won 113 seats, Broglie himself lost his bid in the department of Eure. The electoral tide had definitively turned in the republican’s favor.

In the first days of the new Chamber’s convocation, the usual formalities ensued of verifying the powers of those recently elected, Grévy was named the new President of

509 Nord, The Republican Moment, Op. ct., p. 61; Duclert, La République Imaginée, Op. cit., p. 152. See also APP Ba 579, file 500, folder 16300 , piece 13, report of Yves regarding the Senate’s prior confirmation of General d’Surelle de Paladines having given an “honest and energetic” declaration of reassurance that “the army would firmly and resolutely retain its role and not lend a hand to a coup de force.”
the Chamber, and Gambetta was, once again, named president of the Budget Committee. It was clear from the start that the campaign against MacMahon’s presidency and the conservative Ministry continued. During that first week, the republican Deputies voted to create a Committee of Eighteen; it was given the power to act on behalf of its members and deliberations were secret. On November 12th the Committee of Eighteen, represented by Albert Grévy, introduced a resolution for the establishment of a Commission of Enquiry into the charge that the government had exerted illegal pressure upon the elections since 16 May.

Over the course of the ensuing debates, Broglie, who was initially re-appointed Prime Minister by MacMahon, rose to defend the government. Ferry, arguing in favor of the Enquiry, “delivered a sweeping indictment of Broglie, Fourtou, and all MacMahonians ‘for having played with the Constitution, with public peace, and the patrie itself… [asserting that their actions between 16 May and the October elections should and must be investigated, and that the Enquiry was justified] by the need to expose for posterity and history the criminals.’” Broglie and a significant number of voters saw things differently. Indeed, the republicans won, but their victory was not a landslide and Broglie relied on this knowledge when he defensively asserted:

510 The members of the committee were: Bethmont, Louis Blanc, Brisson, Horace de Choiseul, Clemenceau, Jules Ferry, Floquet, Gambetta, Germain, Goblet, Albert Grévy, Lepère, Lockroy, Mdier de Montjau, de Marcère, Antonin Proust, Léon Renault and Tirard.
511 Chambre des Députés, Débats, November 14, 1877. Quote originally found and verified in Grubb, p. 327
You have succeeded in seducing the frightened masses from their dearest interests of security and family…I do not know if that is what someone called the other day the emancipation and virility of universal suffrage: what I do know is that there are 3,600,000 Frenchmen who have not given in to that deviation and who are happy to find still standing the powers that were there before, remaining to protect them against the despotism of a new Convention. And now vote or do not vote your inquest, call or do not call your interested witnesses: as the Government, we protest in the name of the law: as citizens, we deny the validity of it before the equity of history and the justice of the county.512

People had come from all over France to witness these exchanges, which terminated in a vote in favor of establishing the Commission of Enquiry and a condemnation of the government by 312 to 205. Still refusing to submit, Broglie turned to the Senate, asking that his Ministry be confirmed. Instead, the Senate cited that, constitutionally, they could only affirm a second dissolution, and while it did not vote on whether they would approve or disapprove of the Enquiry, the Senators did vote in favor of officially recognizing the Chamber’s decision. The following day Broglie and his ministers resigned.

On November 23, 1877, MacMahon replaced the Broglie Ministry with one that consisted of many non-parliamentary officials and the staunchly conservative, but

512 Ibid., November 16, 1877. Tombs argues that the republican victory was “not overwhelming: a large minority of the electorate—over 3 million, to the republicans’ 4 million—voted for the Right,” France 1814—1914, Op. cit., p. 441. However, Goguel’s caution against reading these figures as a sign of voter approval versus voter intimidation and suppression should be taken into consideration when reading assertions like Tombs’. 
obscure, General Gaëtan de Rochebouët, was named Prime Minister.\(^{513}\) Gambetta chided that it was a Ministry of spite with no future.\(^{514}\) The Chamber refused to pass a budget, and instead on November 24\(^{th}\), carried a vote of no-confidence in the new Ministry. On December 13\(^{th}\), under the weight of state-wide petitions, daily derision in all of the republican journals, the Senate’s faltering support, and electoral reality, MacMahon re-appointed, the conservative republican, Dufaure, who accepted on the condition that he be able to choose the Ministers of War, Foreign Affairs, and Navy. MacMahon initially resisted but soon found he had exhausted his resources. The Presidents of the Chamber and Senate urged him to choose a ministry reflective of the republican majority and the latter, D’Audiffret, specifically informed him that the Senate would not support a second dissolution or the dispersal of parliament by force.\(^{515}\) This ended the Crisis of 16 May in logistical terms.\(^{516}\) Dufaure was appointed as Prime Minister, he was given full power to appoint his own ministers, and the Chamber confirmed his cabinet. The final blow to the Moral Order regime came in a letter that MacMahon was forced to sign on the condition of Dufaure accepting the nomination. It was written by three members of the Ministry “and formally approved by Gambetta:”

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\(^{513}\) This type of non-parliamentary ministry was not repeated again until 1934, again, in a time of crisis. At the time, the composition was alarming for other reasons: Welche, the new Minister of Interior had been Fourtou’s prefect and Rochebouët, had been one of the officers who executed Louis Napoleon’s coup in December 1851. See Bury, p. 450.

\(^{514}\) Gambetta, *Lettres*, No. 346, letter to Princess Troubetzkoï, November 23, 1877. His actual words were “C’est un ministère de dépit, pour finir, sans avenir.”

\(^{515}\) Bury, p. 453

\(^{516}\) Contemporary newspapers consulted for this section all relate the same consensus: Dufaure’s Ministry marked the end of the Crisis of 16 May. See, for example, *Le Temps* December 15, 1877 and *Journal des Débats Politiques et Littéraires*, December 14, 1877.
The elections of 14 October have once again demonstrated the country’s confidence in Republican institutions. In conformity with parliamentary rules, I have formed a Cabinet chosen from the two Chambers and composed of men who are resolved to defend and maintain the institutions by sincere application of the constitutional laws. The national interest requires that the current crisis [be] abated…the exercise of the right of dissolution…cannot be erected into a system of government. I thought it was my duty to make use of this right and I accept the country’s response. The constitution of 1875 established a parliamentary Republic… These principles, derived from the constitution, are those of my government. The end of this crisis will be the beginning of a new era of prosperity. All the public powers will contribute to its development. The agreement brought about between the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies which is now certain of regularly attaining the end of its term, will enable the completion of the great legislative labors demanded by the public interest. The Universal Exposition will soon open; trade and industry will take off again, and we shall give to the world fresh proof of the vitality of our country.517

This was an embarrassing admission of personal defeat, but more importantly, it was a statement that set a precedent for a weak executive and at the same time confirmed the authority of the legislature. Henceforth, no other president of the Third Republic dared to dissolve the Chamber, despite the constitutional power to do so. For the republican majority, MacMahon’s acquiescence definitively concluded the republican triumph and confirmed the success of their years of establishing a non-revolutionary republican constituency, as reported by Le Temps, Gambetta’s interpretation of the end of the Crisis was one of pride and contentment on these terms:

How should I be dissatisfied when I see so grievous a crisis so happily ended? It is the first victory gained by the legislative power over the

517 Le Temps, December 16, 1877. Regarding the letter’s origins, see Bury, p. 460.
proceedings of personal power, and that without any revolution, riot, or even disturbance. That is a new event in our history and all due to Democratic institutions. If you are not satisfied, you are very hard to please.\textsuperscript{518}

With the Dufaure Ministry in place, but before the Senate elections of 1879, republicans moved quickly to consolidate their power and ferret out politicians of the Moral Order and their supporters.

Just five days after becoming Minister of Interior, Marcère began to politically repress the Moral Order by replacing (via dismissal and retirement) eighty-two prefects and initiated a public works program to boost business interests and subsequently retain their support with the forthcoming Senate elections in mind. To address the nation-wide outrage against voter suppression and harassment, almost seventy elections were invalidated citing cases of local administrative or clerical manipulation and, significantly, the by-elections, Vaucluse’s most notably, resulted in republican victories.\textsuperscript{519} On January 5, 1879, Senate elections were held and for the first time, republicans acquired a majority in the upper house: 66 of the 82 open seats were won by republican candidates. Elections for municipal councils the next day resulted in more republican victories. On January 30th MacMahon resigned. Jules Grévy became the first solidly republican President on February 4, 1879, and Gambetta was appointed President of the Chamber.

\textsuperscript{518} Le Temps, December 17, 1877.
\textsuperscript{519} Goguel, Géographie des Élections, p. 22, the four conservatives elected in Vaucluse that October were each invalidated and republicans won in the ensuing by-elections.
In terms of French political history, a significant consequence of the republican victory in 1877 was its effect on the solidification of the French and republican identities. During the Crisis, voters were inundated with appeals that either proclaimed or denied that the republicans harbored revolutionary intentions. But the conservatives’ fear-based campaign was to no avail. In October 1877, the majority of voters demonstrated their agreement with the republican campaign message that the nation’s order, stability, and peace were safest in republican hands. This was a remarkable moment of transition for French republicanism and the definitive point at which the Moderate republican regime took hold. After the Crisis, the battle between monarchists and republicans gave way to an intensified rivalry among Opportunist, Radical, and Socialist republicans, with each faction relying on competing narratives of the republican victory and divergent estimations of the work still needed to be done to complete the Revolution’s triumph.

The Commune was a ubiquitous point of reference for conservative politicians within the Chamber and editorial debates leading up to the Crisis of 16 May, and it featured prominently in the campaigns for the October 1877 elections. Raising the specter of revolution and social instability was the conservatives’ desperate attempt to mitigate the republicans’ growing national appeal. The failure of this approach reveals that attributing violent, revolutionary intentions to mainstream republican politicians was no longer an effective campaign strategy for conservatives. Despite this shift in public perception, however, manipulating the legacies of the Commune remained a powerful political tool. Disputes over its partisans’ amnesty continued to cause great division
among republicans. These were formative motifs in the political arena in which the Moderate republican regime emerged, and they created a weak spot that its enemies would exploit to challenge its leadership.
CHAPTER 5: REIGNITING THE REVOLUTIONARY FLAME

The revolutionary Left returned to the French electoral arena during the Crisis of 16 May. Although the party did not place its own candidates on the ballot for the October election, it worked to persuade republican voters to reject the claims to leadership of “the 363.” The Leftists claimed that the Moderates had betrayed the Revolution’s legacy—that the primary focus of the 363 was not to ensure the Republic’s survival, but to safeguard their control of it. After the republican victory in October, the Socialists took an even more aggressive stance. They began campaigning for office as alternatives to the mainstream republican factions in 1878. The Socialists’ platforms centered on amnesty, and while they did not achieve great electoral success, they did win significant symbolic battles that alarmed and consequently influenced the new Moderate republican government.

By January 30, 1879, the Moderate republicans had firm political control of the Third Republic on both the national and the local levels. Once in power, they worked to solidify their mandate through pork-barrel legislation and laicization, and they continued to use cultural initiatives for national republican aggrandizement. As the previous chapters have described, this goal was at the core of their civil funerals, their commemorations, and even their election campaigns. Such occasions were steeped in symbolism and served a dual purpose. Not only did they bring electoral success, but they also propagated a post-revolutionary image of republicanism in which the Republic represented the triumph of the revolutionary era. The Moderates used these rituals and
events to cultivate a faithful voter base in order to ensure their Republic’s longevity. Defining republicanism and narrating the revolutionary era, however, were no simple tasks. The Moderates had to contend with the competing accounts of the Radicals and the revolutionary (but not anti-republican) adherents of the extreme Left, particularly the Socialist factions. Each of these groups held different perspectives on both topics and all of them proclaimed themselves to be the true progeny of nearly a century of revolutionary action and intent. These battles over the Republic’s character and claims to the Revolution’s heritage were inextricably linked to the legacies of the 1871 Commune and intensified after the republicans came to power. This chapter examines these republican schisms in the realms of amnesty-related politics and political culture between 1877 and 1880, revealing how these battles influenced the formulations of republican political identities and the solidification of the Moderate republican regime.

The first section examines the revolutionary Left’s opposition to the campaign efforts of the 363 during the summer of 1877. It relies on sources as varied as parliamentary debates and revolutionary manifestos. The section shows how the Crisis of 16 May generated a caustic rebuke of the leadership of mainstream republicans by the extreme Left. This analysis is uniquely informed by an investigation of the 1877 summer

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520 This chapter analyses the political tension between the socialist factions of Jules Guesde and Ernest Roche and parliamentary republicans including the Opportunists and Radicals. The other most prominent factions during the period under consideration were the Blanquists, who frequently merged with the Socialists especially in their electoral bids during the last years of the 1870s, and the Anarchists who opposed parliamentary engagement and whose numbers even by the late 1880s, never reached beyond a few tens of thousands. See Alex Butterworth, *The World That Never Was: A True Story of Dreamers, Schemers, Anarchists and Secret Agents*, Pantheon Books, New York 2010, p. 222.
campaigns from the perspectives of the Communards in exile and the revolutionary circles that began to reach out to voters during this election for the first time since the Commune’s defeat.

The second section analyzes the Opportunists’, Radicals’, and Socialists’ competing visions of the social and political character that the Republic should assume after the republican consolidation of power in 1879. These disputes were subsumed into wider conflicts over the Moderate Republic’s relationship to the revolutionary past and the Paris Commune’s place in that history. This section focuses specifically on the political agendas that depended upon these divergent assessments of the revolutionary era and their use in contemporary politics.

The third section provides an analysis of the electoral gains that the Socialist candidates made between 1879 and 1880. These men generally ran on amnesty-based platforms and urged voters to elect representatives whose policies would reflect the needs of their particular social and economic classes. Such campaigns, including the multiple bids to elect Blanqui, widened and intensified popular support for a general amnesty to a far greater degree than the Radical candidates had achieved. Likewise, they enabled a conterminal propagation of revolutionary doctrines and appeals to action, the galvanizing effect of which is seen not only in Socialist electoral victories but also in the militant tone on display at the 1880 Congress of Marseille.
The chapter draws to a close by examining the emergence of Commune commemorations, the strike wave of April–May 1880, and the continued electoral conquests of the revolutionary Left. These developments made the rekindling of revolutionary passions undeniably palpable. The section concludes with the implications of the Freycinet Government’s electorally motivated decision—at the insistence of Gambetta, who until that spring had painstakingly avoided the amnesty controversy—to propose a general amnesty for all of the Communards, regardless of the nature of their convictions.

**Republican Schism: Repercussions of 16 May**

The republicans’ “campaign of the 363,” which took place during the summer and fall of 1877, spurred a deepening hostility toward the parliamentary republicans among their rivals to the Left: the intransigent amnesty proponents, the Socialists, and the Commune partisans. These groups claimed that the unity on display between the Opportunists and the Radicals ran deeper than the exigencies that 16 May had precipitated—that these republican politicians were, in reality, indifferent to the plight of the working class and to the survivors of the Commune. The Communards living in exile and the new far Left groups forming in France were leery of the long-term political intentions of the 363 and critical of their performance to date. The efforts of these detractors apparently made little difference in the outcome of this election, in which the
republicans emerged victorious. They do, however, demonstrate a surge in antipathy for the united front that the republican politicians seeking election were presenting, as well as the circulation of a different political discourse by activists of the far Left. Prior to 1877, the differences between the Moderates and the Radicals were widely acknowledged, often to the credit of the latter. Once they secured electoral victory, however, the two groups became far less vocal about their quarrels. The far Left viewed the 1877 battle between the monarchists and the republicans as a chimera; they argued that both the conservatives and the mainstream republicans of all stripes were opportunistic dissemblers. To them, both of these camps had nothing to offer working-class voters other than empty promises and continued exploitation.

The fate of Communard amnesty was pivotal to the support, or lack thereof, of the far Left’s opposition to the 363. In Chamber debates leading up to the Crisis of 16 May, the majority of republicans, with Gambetta in the lead, met conservative accusations of being pro-Communard revolutionaries by denouncing rather than empathizing with the Commune and its participants, much to the dismay of the exiles and their supporters in France. During the summer election, the banished Communards wrote extensively about their disapproval of what they deemed to be republican cowardice and hypocrisy. They derided the Radical republicans’ 1876 promises to voters that they would seek an amnesty, stating that Gambetta’s remarks on June 16, 1877, revealed the truth: “the majority [of republicans in the Chamber] has not only not amnestied the Commune, but it
has excoriated it!"\textsuperscript{521} \textit{Le Travailleur}, for example, published the following rebuke from Communard exiles in Geneva:

[Y]ou must be told that even those who voted congratulations to the Army after the massacres in Paris now commend the Commune to the young people, all the while deploring its excesses. They know that this is the only way they can get many votes in the cities. A declaration doesn’t cost them anything. They on occasion proclaim themselves Socialists if that is what they have to do.\textsuperscript{522}

After the republican triumph between 1877 and 1879, Left-wing opponents of the Moderates and Radicals consistently derided the republican majority’s abandonment of the amnesty issue upon coming to power, as well as their inaction on less controversial liberties.

The treatment of the nascent French labor movement, which was severely suppressed during the summer of 1877, further elevated this tension. The first national labor conference was held in Paris in October 1876. A month later, Jules Guesde returned to Paris from exile and immediately resumed his journalistic activism. He founded \textit{L’Egalité} in November 1877, on the heels of the republican victory. As new labor unions formed in the early part of the decade, the movement appeared poised to emerge as a viable alternative to mainstream republicanism for working-class voters.\textsuperscript{523} The Crisis of 16 May curtailed all of these activities. Labor leaders and journals were persecuted, the


\textsuperscript{522} \textit{Le Travailleur}, “Correspondence” June, 19 1877.

\textsuperscript{523} After the congress, the number of trade unions grew in Paris and the provinces. See \textit{L’economiste français}, November 18 and December 23, 1876.
government dissolved all unions in July, and workers rallied to defend the Republic by voting for the 363. Nonetheless, proponents of the far Left sustained their opposition to the mainstream republicans campaigning under the 363 banner. Henceforth, they used their derision of the politicians of the 363 to distinguish themselves in the eyes of French workers and voters.

In July of 1877, during the height of the campaign period, one of the most thorough attempts to discredit the republicans came from a group that labeled itself the “Radical Socialist Republicans” in the form of a manifesto written directly “to the republican voters of France.” This text pointed out all of the factors that the group believed should diminish the mandate of the 363. In the first place, the Radical Socialist Republicans argued, it was the policies “and excessive concessions” of the 363 that had led to the Crisis of 16 May; “under the pretext of saving the Republic, they [had] helped with the advent of the current government,” and their success in the October elections would “only lead to the weakening and perhaps ruin of Republican France.” They went on to argue that “the 363 [had] ignored their promises, especially about the amnesty, freedom of the press, assembly and association, the reduction of military service, the

524 This suppression came despite republicans and conservatives in the press and legislature having praised the 1876 congress as moderate and acknowledged its disavowal of violence and strike in favor of cooperation and negotiation alongside the fostering of greater class-consciousness among workers.
525 APP Ba 579, folder 400, piece 410, Elections de 1877, « Manifeste de la Démocratie Républicaine Socialiste de la Seine : Aux Électeurs Républicain de France. »
526 « Manifeste de la Démocratie Républicaine Socialiste de la Seine : Aux Électeurs Républicain de France »
voluntary suppression of the religious budget, etc.” The group dismissed the campaign promises and rhetoric of the 363 as mere artifice, and asserted that the greatest point of unity among these politicians was their universal abandonment of the principles upon which they had once campaigned. The time had come, they declared, for republican supporters to make a different choice in October:

They do not feel the need to coalesce to pass laws they promised to vote on and repeal those that are contrary to the freedom of press, [and] assembly… they did not raise an affirmative vote on civil liberties… [but] these are the least of our legitimate claims; considering that they have trampled humanity, and one of the most glorious principles of democracy, [by] rejecting the amnesty they promised, mostly in professions of faith to the voters. Considering that all of these concessions can lead us to a catastrophe [to] which the events of May 16 would be [only] a prelude,…those who by their weakness led to this brilliant result “the dissolution of the Assembly” should not merit the white siege of voters, despite their discourse and compelling appeal called “the Manifesto of the 363”…. Considering that the policy [of concessions and moderation] has outlived its results and proofs, all citizens are entitled to demand serious guarantees of those who have failed in their duties and commitments…. Considering that no matter what, the rest, the name of the President, the institution is always the same, personal power, by the sole fact of its existence which was [always] fatal to the Republic and to France, may recover more alive and more menacing. [We] invite all citizens, by way of justice and truth, to [accept] the view that it is not enough to vote for the 363 to win the Republic, but to replace those who are not really Republicans…with others who actually are. In doing so, the number of Republicans elected will be the same and we will have [steadfast] representatives, instead of having a majority that make concessions fatal to democracy and the social cause…. The Democratic Republican Socialist of the Seine estimates that based on these principles, France will make a big step toward the triumph of law and thereby capture the freedoms necessary for a republican nation, because it will be able to strongly affirm

527 Ibid.
that to the people alone belongs the right and the duty to give orders and never to receive. Long live the democratic and social Republic!\footnote{528}{« Manifeste de la Démocratie Républicaine Socialiste de la Seine : Aux Électeurs Républicain de France »}

This manifesto contains most of the primary arguments that the far Left and the Radicals would use against the Opportunists after 1877, and that the Radicals would employ to rise to power in the decades that followed.\footnote{529}{Despite the Radicals being lumped in to this critique, they often fell back on their previous opposition to the Opportunist factions and their long-term struggle to pass the amnesty in defense against their Socialist detractors.} As they battled one another, the Socialist and Radical candidates of the 1880s and 1890s would echo these far Left demands: full freedom of press and assembly; broad civil liberties; annuling the Concordat and enacting a complete separation of church and state; reducing military service from five to three years; ending the exemption from military service for members of religious orders; and eliminating the Senate and the Presidency.\footnote{530}{Stone, especially chapters 2 and 3; Tony Judt, Socialism in Province, 1871 – 1914: A Study in the Origins of the Modern French Left, Cambridge University Press, London 1979; and Bernard H. Moss “Producers” Associations and the Origins of French Socialism: Ideology from Below,” The Journal of Modern History, Vol. 48, No. 1, March 1976, pp. 69 – 89.}

The Radical Socialist Republicans’ attacks against the 363 were themselves disparaged by other far Left groups, who argued that manifestos such as this did not go far enough. The contemporary anarchist leader James Guillaume, for example, lauded a different manifesto that presented a more extreme stance. It was written by Paul Brousse, published in September by anarchists associated with the “French Federation of the
International,” and posted “clandestinely in the principal cities of France.”\(^{531}\) This manifesto asks:

> What purpose is served, workers, [by] knocking down the government of *curés* and dukes, if you install in its place the government of lawyers and the bourgeoisie? Consider that among those who you would bring to power, there are men whom your fathers placed [in control] in February 1848 and these men shot your fathers in June. Remember that among the men who you would vote for in October are those who shot your brothers in May 1871! No, if the barricades [are set up] in public places, if [the conservatives] are victorious, it should not be to ensure governments, but a principle; not men, but the Commune!\(^{532}\)

This manifesto, then, was much more direct not only in its support of Communard amnesty, but also in its defense of the Commune. It focused on denouncing the mainstream republicans’ historical betrayal of the social revolutionary cause, rather than their legislative failures under the Third Republic. These writings reveal that the Crisis of May 16 and the events that precipitated it spurred the far-republican-Left to distance themselves from the label “republican,” not because of the form of government that it represented, but because the mainstream republicans had neglected the working class and had placed the Republic’s very existence in peril.

Guillaume bitterly recalled the manifesto of the Radical Republican Socialists, which was published by the *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne*, and the anarchist backlash against it. Its detractors derided the manifesto as the work of “pretend

\(^{531}\) Guillaume, p. 282.
\(^{532}\) Ibid.
Socialists” who were not “even as advanced as the radical bourgeoisie of Switzerland…[but, nonetheless, made] the pretense of speaking on behalf of the Parisian proletariat.”\(^{533}\) Based on the content of the earlier manifesto, this reaction was more a case of Left-wing rivalry than a critique of the principles that the Radical Socialist Republicans had espoused. Evidently, both groups had reached the limits of their tolerance for the political status quo of the mainstream republican politicians. Despite the government’s severe efforts to repress their voice, the far Leftists seized this election as an opportunity to reach out to working-class voters, replacing their earlier denouncements of the monarchists with systematic critiques of the republicans.

The Crisis of 16 May and the elections that followed ignited an explosion of impatience with and hostility toward parliamentary republicans among partisans of the far Left. According to the Left-wing manifestos, these republicans were largely responsible for their own predicament because of their willingness to acquiesce to conservative demands, despite having promised their constituencies otherwise.\(^{534}\) However, this extreme view ignored the fact that republicans did not control the Chamber until 1876, and had yet to win a majority in the Senate. It disregarded the numerous amnesty proposals that several Deputies and Senators, including Brisson, Raspail, and Hugo, had already introduced. This level of zealotry illuminates the far-Left’s exasperation, ignited by the Crisis of 16 May, regarding the republican gains that had

\(^{533}\) Guillaume, p. 282.

\(^{534}\) A similar manifesto, for example, denounced the moderate and radical republicans campaigning as the 363. It was published by the anarchist Jurassian Federation, and signed by Louis Pindy. See Guillaume, p. 282. This manifesto was also published in *Le Gaulois*, October 14, 1877.
preceded the Crisis of 16 May and the republican actions following the party’s victory that October. While such manifestos did not lead to any electoral gains in 1887 for the political hopefuls who signed them, they do show that the far Left viewed the Crisis of 16 May as the final proof that moderation and opportunism had failed to produce the results its proponents had pledged and had actually endangered the Republic itself.

Although 1877 was truly a mainstream republican triumph, the Crisis energized the revolutionary Leftists, many of whom began to appeal to voting workers, urging them to reject the republican’s disingenuous promises and reminding them that, due to universal (male) suffrage, they were an important source of political power. Beginning in 1877, they argued that mainstream republicanism had outlasted its usefulness. It had helped create a Republic, but had fallen well short of the social-democratic principles of the Revolution.

In the aftermath of the republican victories of 1877–1879, republican politics flourished in the legislative assemblies and in French political culture. All republican factions registered their agendas with greater insistence and confidence. For the Moderates, this meant pursuing their bedrock initiatives, such as laicization and freedoms of the press and public assembly, more forcefully. Similarly, the Radicals sustained their growing electoral momentum by increasing their demands that the Republic follow a social-democratic path. At the same time, the Crisis and the establishment of the

535 See Duclert, La République Imaginée, Op. cit., pp. 154 and 166 – 168. In 1880 the imperial decrees limiting the number and political activity of cafes were lifted; press restrictions were lifted and the right of
Moderate republican regime in 1879 triggered the opposition of the Socialists. Emboldened, they began to position themselves as the most socially committed republicans and to insist on the need for distinct political representation for the French workers and progressive peasants. The issue of amnesty, which the Radical republicans had championed for nearly a decade, passed into the hands of Socialists; with it went a growing number of working-class votes.

The Socialist factions honed their arguments against mainstream republicans during the 1877 elections. Their denunciations of the 363—most vociferously of the Radicals for abandoning their principles to join this unified campaign—continued after the republican victory. The clarion call of the renascent Socialists was for a general amnesty, but they also embedded within this message an important claim to political legitimacy based on their assessment of the revolutionary heritage and contemporary political exigencies. They appealed for amnesty not in terms of forgiveness, which the Radicals advocated, but in terms of characterizing the Communards as the truest republicans: real patriots who had been willing to die to in order to defend the young Republic against its monarchist enemies. On November 18, 1877, Jules Guesde published the first issue of his Socialist newspaper L’Egalité. His inaugurating article was one of

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assembly was re-established in 1881; labor unions were sanctioned in 1884. Laicization became a cornerstone of the Moderate and Radical platforms beginning in the 1880s and culminating in the first years of the twentieth-century. Moreover, republican-initiated cultural events and pork-barrel legislation were pursued with renewed vigor after the 1877 victory. The Universal Exposition of 1878 and the expansion of France’s rail services are both examples of republican political and cultural efforts, after 1877, sustain their electoral mandate. Sowerine, p. 31, and Maurice Agulhon, Marianne into Battle, Op. cit., p. 171.
the first attempts to propagate this line of reasoning among a national electorate. Guesde applauded the triumph of legislative power over executive activism, but took the opportunity to point out that the Deputies were now, more than ever, capable of re-opening “France to the Frenchmen who, six thousand leagues from their homeland, beneath the jailers’ clubs, [were] paying for their crime of not having believed the Republic safe in the hands of men who, on two occasions, had tried to strangle it violently.”536 If they did not do so, he implied, the Deputies would prove their hypocrisy on the issue of amnesty.

Thus, the 1877 elections intensified the rivalries among the Moderate, Radical, and Socialist factions. They clashed over their competing claims to the revolutionary heritage and their divergent views about the character that the established Third Republic should assume. These groups vied for the support of solidly republican constituencies in order to acquire political power and to promote their assessments of the revolutionary past and the Republic’s fulfillment (or lack thereof) of that era’s goals. The realms of symbolism and political culture remained the primary battlegrounds in this contest. Republican triumphalism, so clearly on display at the Universal Exposition, included the unveiling of Clésinger’s Une statue de la République and Marcère’s sanctioning of the singing of the La Marseillaise during the presentation of the piece. Such moments exemplify the mainstream republicans’ efforts during this time to shape the French culture according to their view of republicanism. In the midst of this rivalry, the

536 L’Égalité, November 18, 1877.
Moderates and, more acutely, the Radicals were also waging electoral and political-cultural wars with Socialist factions. As the following sections and the final chapter explain, these conflicts would inform legislative outcomes and test the loyalty of republican constituencies.

**Contesting the Republic’s Character: Is the Revolution Complete?**

The disputes between claimants to the French Revolutionary heritage were grounded in contestations over a liberal versus social democratic Republic, political representation, and a debate over whether or not the Revolution was complete at all. For the Opportunists, the liberal Republic, which solidified after January 30, 1879, was the ultimate manifestation of the Revolution’s triumph. Accordingly, nothing further needed to occur: laicization could now be carried out, universal (male) suffrage was secure and at the same time limited to the election of the Chamber of Deputies; moreover, they were loath to acknowledge, let alone alter, France’s social reality and hierarchies through legislative initiative. In essence, they settled comfortably within the conservative political scaffolding created by the 1875 constitution including the existence of, and limited suffrage for, the Presidency and the Senate.537

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537 Lehning, pp. 20 – 23 for the origins of the moderate republican view, represented by figures such as Jules Grévy, on the role of universal suffrage under the Second Republic and pp. 33-34 for the divergence between Opportunists and Radicals with respect to the application of universal suffrage under the Third Republic.
According to the Radicals, the Third Republic fell short of the goals that men and women had died trying to realize over the course of the past century. They sought to transform the Republic into one that had a social-democratic character and sought to initiate legislation that would mitigate the social inequities that they deemed dangerous to the healthy life and future of the republican nation. They did not, however, seek to enforce social equality like the Socialists and, much like the Opportunists the Radical resisted the idea of class-based political divisions. The Radicals did not propagate any need for revolutionary action. In fact, they concurred with the Opportunists that the era should, definitively, be deemed over because of the strength of the Third Republic. Instead, they sought institutional and constitutional revisions such as administrative decentralization and the abolition of the Senate, and legislative activism for political and social ailments, such as the creation of an income tax and legal protection for workers.

During the late 1870s, the Socialists found common cause with the Radicals in terms of the desire to affect a social-democratic comportment for the Republic. Like the Radicals, they advocated against the existence of the Senate and the Presidency. However, they continued to advocate revolutionary action to bring these changes about. While it is certainly true that the Socialists often worked within the Republic’s institutions and annually campaigned for office rather than constructing barricades, their support for future revolutionary action was never wholly abandoned even as it became a rhetorical political device grounded in strike-action, non-violent and symbolic protest and transformed into calls for a parliamentary revolution. Submerged within the divergent
perspectives of the revolutionary past and its legacy for the Third Republic was the controversial memory and legacy of the Paris Commune, to which each faction, Opportunists, Radicals, and Socialists alike, ascribed significance.

The Paris Commune was the product of numerous and competing political and social agendas. Yet, by 1880 the Commune was widely understood to have been a Socialist revolutionary event despite the fact that it had only scant Socialist representation. This narrative inaccuracy was made possible, in part, because of the Commune’s vagueness in terms of a unified agenda and clearly articulated doctrines. These factors, combined with the conservatives’ insistence that the Commune had been a Socialist revolution, and the formal adoption of socialism among many of the Communards during their years in exile, meant that when Socialists laid claim to the Commune’s legacy, their assertions were uncontroversial.


539 This characterization was first described by Karl Marx while the Commune was in existence and was supported by French Socialists themselves; but on a nation-wide scale, it was initially understood as such because of the 1871 report of the Commission of Inquiry into the causes of the Commune which asserted that its partisans had been influenced by the spread of socialist ideas which subsequently led to the law banning membership in the International for French citizens. In the 1970s a revision of this assessment emerged. For revisionism on the Commune’s socialist origins, see; Edwards, pp. 9-10 in which he carefully describes the Commune as “too short to carry out any permanent measures of social reform, [but] long enough to create the myth, the legend, of the Commune as the first great workers’ revolt…which was to inspire Communists, Socialists and Anarchists alike in the period up to and even after the Russian Revolution of 1917.” In Insurgent Identities: Class, Community, and Protest in Paris from 1848 to the Commune, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1995, Roger V. Gould provides this assessment: “Examination of patterns of insurgent participation reveals that the [Commune] depended crucially on the neighborhood-based solidarity of residentially recruited National Guard battalions…class was not a very important dimension of collective identity between March and May of 1871,” pp. 154-155; Gould’s emphasis. In The Paris Commune, Op. cit., Robert Tombs provides an in-depth description of the basis (or lack thereof) of the claim that the Commune was a socialist uprising, see pp. 78-80 and 91-98.
Throughout the 1870s the Commune was a contentious point for republican claimants to the revolutionary heritage. For Opportunists, struggling to project a moderate and peaceful political image against conservative propaganda that assimilated all republicans into a category of militant revolutionaries, the Commune was an event that they never ceased to denounce and above all tried to distance themselves from. Radicals, such as Hugo, Clemenceau, and Lockroy, on the other hand, had been participants in the Party of Conciliation during the event and the sole proponents of a general amnesty until the mid-1870s. They would not disavow their earlier, well-publicized, perspectives on the Commune’s origins and its place within their revolutionary narrative. As a result, the Socialists competed with the Radicals, more than any other group, in terms of taking ownership of the event’s narration and incorporating it into that of the revolutionary era.

Incorporating the Commune into their account of the revolutionary legacy was designed to help validate Radical and Socialist competing claims to being the most legitimate political representatives of the working class. The Radicals’ narration of the Commune and its place within the French revolutionary tradition began during the event itself, propagated most effectively by Camille Pelletan and Victor and François-Victor Hugo, mainly through the Hugo’s *Le Rappel*, which maintained publication throughout the Paris Commune and was the most widely read journal of the far Left during the 1870s. According to the Radicals, the Commune was an anachronistic event fueled by
“sentiments of affronted nationalism and ardent, popular republicanism.” That is to say, Radical republicans sympathized with many of the stances that the Commune’s leaders took but, drawing upon lessons from the past century and especially of the Second Empire, they abhorred the violence of the Commune as counterproductive, indeed, threatening to the survival of the Republic which the Communards claimed to be protecting.

F.V. Hugo, who articulated, better than anyone, the idea of the Commune as an anachronism, and the intention of the Radicals after the event was suppressed, described the Radical agenda for the 1870s and 1880s most succinctly: “Let us remember that our ancestors were innovators…they were the offspring of their own inventions…Let us follow their example not by imitating them…[but through the creation of a] new politics [that will mitigate] the great social and economic problems which our fathers did not resolve.” With these perspectives in mind, The Radical republicans worked during the Commune to conciliate the forces between the Central Committee and Thiers’ government in Versailles and afterward repeatedly initiated amnesty proposals. This duality—not participating in the event, but also working to amnesty its partisans—became problematic for the Radicals’ narrative and agenda after the Socialists entered the mainstream political fray after 1877. The tension between celebrating the revolutionary past, while not perpetuating its legacy, was an especially difficult factor for Radical

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540 Stone, p. 61.
541 Stone, p. 63, quote originally found in Le Rappel, May 7, 1871.
republican politicians whose emphasis on popular sovereignty and social concerns were often at odds with their disassociation from the Jacobinism, mired as it was, in the legacy of the Terror and popular insurrection.

For the Socialists, however, the two prospects were not necessarily mutually exclusive, even while they were gaining entry into the parliamentary political arena. Judith Stone points out that Hugo’s journal, *Le Rappel*, sought to appeal “to that socially heterogeneous political category of Parisian republicans which associated students, young professionals, and small retailers, as well as artisans and workers [and its articles] called for the unity of the ‘people’ as opposed to the interests of a particular class.” This is also true for Radical politicians and yet completely antithetical to the Socialist agenda. The point is an important one because it was the cornerstone of the Socialist denunciations of the Radical politicians beginning during the Crisis of 16 May and between 1877 and 1880 it was deeply enmeshed in their appeals for a general amnesty. This is not considered by Stone, yet it greatly enhances our understanding of the formation of political identities and formal political parties in the last decades of nineteenth-century France; in other words much earlier than the emergence of the powerful SFIO. With respect to the Radicals, however, Stone is right to assert that “the securing of the amnesty was linked to issues of how republicans should remember and how they should forget so as to secure the stable future of the Third Republic.”

542 Ibid., p. 66.
543 Stone., p. 92.
Consequently, as the momentum for amnesty began to mount after 1877, the Radical Republican and journalist, Camille Pelletan, described the Commune as “a movement of Parisians who were hardly revolutionaries and whose clearest objective was municipal liberty, [something which the Radicals continued to advocate for]; desperation, patriotism, and the circumstances of a terrifying year had driven the Communards…. [It was an expression] of collective madness brought on by extreme deprivation.” This too was antithetical to the Socialist account of the event and their arguments in favor of amnestying its participants.

The Socialist politicians who used electoral politics in order to drum up a popular mandate for a general amnesty described the Paris Commune as a Socialist-led revolution whose partisans were not simply engaged in saving the new Republic from its monarchist enemies but in creating the type of government through which a social-democratic Republic would necessarily take shape. Far from describing the Communards as misguided and desperate, the Socialists, along with all other groups of the revolutionary Left, heaped praise upon them as conceptually sophisticated, patriotic, and democratic. Rather than excusing their actions, the revolutionary Left argued that they should be honored and respected and that an amnesty should come not out of mercy, but rather as reparation of the injustice meted out to these French heroes since May of 1871. By laying claim to the Commune’s legacy and articulating its narrative as romanticized story of working class heroism and political maturation, the event came to transcend the context

544 Ibid., p. 93.
of 1871 and became a contemporary symbol and foundation myth of working-class consciousness and independence. During their electoral campaigns, based on amnesty-led platforms, Socialist politicians assimilated the conditions and desires of the French working-class of the late 1870s with those of the Communards in 1871; they projected an image of an on-going struggle that a general amnesty would greatly assist not conclude. Such appeals are readily apparent in the articles of *Le Prolétaires* and *L’Egalité* before and after the Senate elections of 1879 and in reference to the numerous amnesty bills presented in the same year that republicans consolidated their political control of the Third Republic.

**Socialist Amnesty-Campaigns and Their Appeal**

Communard amnesty was an issue that haunted politicians of the Third Republic throughout the 1870s. In the nine years between the suppression of the Commune and the 1880 amnesty, thirteen amnesty proposals were made.\(^{545}\) An important factor in their rejections was the idea of pardon. A Commission on Pardons had been set up in June of 1871 and was repeatedly asserted as the solution to the amnesty problem by monarchist and conservative republican Deputies of the National Assembly, even while moderate republican journalists denounced the body as a conservative juggernaut.\(^{546}\) The

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\(^{545}\) This figure includes the partial amnesty proposals made by Brisson (1871), Pressensé (1871), Naquet (1875), Andrée (1876), Bethmont (1876), Houvey (1876), Bertault (1876); and general (complete) amnesty proposals made by F.V. Raspial (1876), Hugo (1876), Blanc (1879), Hugo (1879), Marcou (1879), Marcou (1880).

\(^{546}\) National Assembly, *Annales*, Vol. VI, p. 84 in which it is reported that republican journals were publishing denunciations “containing in the coarsest form the most violent insults” against the Commission
promulgation of the 1875 constitution meant a dissolution of the Commission on Pardons, but the general support for using pardon as a means to address the issue of amnesty was underscored by the constitutional law of February 25 – 28, 1875 which established that the executive, without restriction, would have the sole right to grant pardon but that an amnesty could only be enacted by legislation, in other words by majority support, a majority that was non-existent in 1875.

Beginning in 1876, Radicals approached the amnesty problem through electoral campaigns used systematically to drum up popular support for a general amnesty.\textsuperscript{547} However, their stumping for amnesty was not a nation-wide endeavor. In an effort to expand the provincial Radical-republican base, this tactic was pursued only in Paris and it met with limited success. During these elections, Radical candidates ran in opposition to the Moderates, led by Gambetta. Support for a complete amnesty became a requirement for Radical senatorial candidates when the Radical Republican members of the Seine’s Electoral College drew up their platform which in essence was identical to “Laurent-

\textsuperscript{547} Désiré Barodet, the Mayor of Lyon whose position was terminated because of his overt radicalism during the Moral Order’s take over in 1873, won a significant victory in his campaign for the National Assembly in April 1873. His campaign platform included a demand for dissolving the National Assembly, drafting the Republic’s constitution, ending martial law, and passing a general amnesty. All leaders of the republican factions, including Gambetta endorsed him. In their endorsement, the Democratic Republican Congress of the Department of the Seine highlighted that a vote for Barodet was a vote for amnesty. Yet this was an isolated case, not the generalized Radical strategy that began in 1876. Nonetheless, his endorsements which included Moderates, such as Cazot (future Minister of Justice) and Lepère (future Minister of Interior), significantly illuminate the vacillation of most republicans on the issue of amnesty. After 1873, for example, Gambetta would never again endorse an amnesty-candidate, a factor which he increasingly viewed as dangerous to the prospects of a republican political take-over. See \textit{La République française}, April 27, 1873 regarding the endorsement of the Democratic Republican Congress of the Department of the Seine.
Pichant program” that demanded an end to martial law and the passage of a general amnesty. In contrast, Gambetta insisted that voters reject the Radical candidates precisely because of their amnesty-based electoral campaigns, reasoning that “the triumph of extremists in Paris would perhaps cost the Republican party twenty nominations in the provinces.”548 The Gambettist position won out and, for the majority of the men elected, pardon rather than amnesty became the standard approach to the issue, meaning a retention of the stigma of criminality anti-Communards had linked to the event, no restoration of civil rights, and no recognition of the atrocities committed by the Versailles government, especially during the last week of fighting. On January 30, 1876 only fifteen Radicals were elected to the new Senate and republicans as a whole remained the minority.

In the race for the Chamber, the Moderates maintained their antipathy toward the Radicals, despite monarchist accusations that the factions were one in the same. Yet the Radicals stepped up their insistence on a complete amnesty, hoping that the nature of popular voting for the lower house would be to their advantage. This defining feature of Radical republicanism was still confined to candidates in Paris and these politicians were mostly rejected. Republicans won a majority in the Chamber; however, of the 371 seats won by republican candidates only 98 were held by Radicals, an inconsequential figure for republican bloc voting and subsequently quite decisive in terms of the diminished prospect of passing a general amnesty in the near future.

548 L’Année politique 1876, pp. 16 – 17, Meeting of January 26, 1876.
In 1876 Communard-amnesty was not a popular issue. To safeguard the 1875 constitution and thereby the Republic itself, mainly by winning the votes of the provincial electorate was the priority most validated by the election results. Yet Radical candidates and their supporters laid important groundwork for the passage of the general amnesty just four years later. Amnesty was given priority of place in their electoral appeals, which necessarily kept the issue in the forefront of politics during the mid-1870s, just as their journalists and the amnesty proposals introduced in the National Assembly had done in the early 1870s. Moreover, it was during the 1876 elections that the enduring label “Opportunist” was first used, by Henri Rochefort, in a pejorative reference to Moderate republicans, specifically in relation to their stance on the amnesty.\textsuperscript{549} In the 1876 Senate race, Victor Hugo published an address to fellow senatorial electors in which he championed the Communards as republican patriots, a characterization that began to gain traction with voters after 1877 and an important factor in the growth of popular support for the amnesty.\textsuperscript{550} Moreover, the adoption of the Laurent-Pichant program by the Radical Republican members of the Seine’s Electoral College, was a landmark move in the history of the amnesty because it was the first time such a pronounced position was required in order for a candidate to be considered by delegates to the electoral college. For candidates running for seats in the most conservative preserve of the new French Republic, the assertion was a bold move to make in 1876 and, having broken that ground, 

\textsuperscript{549} Les Droits de l’homme, February 11, 1876.
\textsuperscript{550} Victor Hugo, « Lettre de Victor Hugo, le délégué de Paris, aux déléguées 36,000 communes de France, » Paris 1876.
they could not retreat without losing a significant measure of integrity in the eyes of their constituents.

In 1876 voters affirmed their support for the Republic and the reservations regarding Communard-amnesty. While committed amnesty-supporters such as Blanc, Clemenceau, Barodet, Brisson, and Benjamin Raspail won their coveted seats they were already well-known figures, a factor that influenced their success probably more than their vocal support for amnesty might have helped or hindered it. Conversely, Emile Acollas, a relatively unknown candidate who was popular among the Communards but not a participant in the event, made general amnesty the cornerstone of his campaign to the Chamber of Deputies from the VIth arrondissement of Paris and he lost, in a landslide, to Denfert-Rochereau a Moderate Republican who was equally outspoken against a general amnesty. Thus even in Paris, simply supporting amnesty was not enough to achieve electoral victory and could in fact lead to defeat. This reality changed dramatically after the 1877 republican triumph, stemming directly from the Crisis of 16 May.

The Crisis of 16 May muted all amnesty support on the part of Radical politicians as they closed ranks behind the banner of the 363 in order to defeat their common—monarchist—enemies. This was opportune for the nascent French Socialist groups who, during the summer of 1877, began to mount resistance against the republicans, Opportunists and Radicals alike. After the republican triumph of October 1877, Socialist groups within France determined that universal suffrage, so strenuously emphasized and
lauded as the true source of political power by mainstream republicans, would be used against these politicians as a tool to strong-arm them into passing an amnesty. By tenaciously campaigning for national and local offices, Socialist candidates made amnesty into a populist issue among working-class voters to a much greater degree than the Radicals had been able to. In the short-term, this led directly to the passage of the 1880 amnesty and in the long-term their campaigns began a trend of defection from mainstream republican candidates, thereby expanding the Socialist component of political representation, especially on the local level. This expansion was deeply influenced by their co-optation of the Commune’s legacy as the salient event used to validate their claims to the revolutionary heritage.

In 1878, Socialists undertook a nation-wide effort to elect figures to political offices at all levels of political power and insisted, like the Radicals had done before them, that a vote for their candidates was a vote for Communard-amnesty, and unlike the Radicals, a validation of the event itself. The Radicals’ failure to actualize their amnesty promises and their pronounced union with the Opportunists after 16 May meant that by 1878, the Socialists candidates could, with some validity, denounce their commitment for amnesty as nothing more than campaign rhetoric without integrity. By doing so, the Socialists enjoyed—albeit initially slight—electoral success, enough at least to alarm their republican rivals. The progressive success of the Socialists in making amnesty their prerogative and with that a more populist issue than ever before, can best be glimpsed in
the case of the numerous campaigns to elect Auguste Blanqui in nearly every election after 1877.

In 1878, Blanqui was serving a life sentence in the prison of Clairvaux; his most recent condemnation having been directly related to his association with the Commune. This conviction along with his unmarred status as an uncompromising, well-known, yet vaguely doctrinaire revolutionary meant that he could be adopted by the socialist leadership as the most poignant figure in their battle for amnesty. In January and again in July of 1878 Blanqui was run as a Socialist candidate and journalistically supported by Jules Guede’s journal, L’Egalité. Initially this was an effort to secure his personal liberation but by the spring of 1878 his candidacies were permanently married to the notion that a vote for Blanqui was a vote for complete amnesty.\textsuperscript{551} The 1878 campaigns were dismal failures in terms of securing his election let alone his release from prison; however, by the summer of 1879 their efforts produced astounding results that effectively alarmed the Opportunistic and Radical republican leadership culminating in Blanqui’s release and within less than a year the passage of a near general amnesty for the Communards.

The significance of the failed 1878 bids is in the narratives that emerged from the campaigns. In the January effort to elect Blanqui as a Deputy from Bouches-du Rhône, Blanqui as a figure head for the renascent Socialist movement emerged: “in order to

\textsuperscript{551} See Joughin, pp. 160 – 169 for a detailed description of these campaigns and their electoral outcomes.
enable universal suffrage to amnesty the old Socialist fighter.” 552 Blanqui was not a Socialist, despite his deep ties with the movement’s leaders, and the amnesty being referred to would extend far beyond his personal liberty. After Blanqui’s candidacy was announced as a replacement for the recently deceased Denfert-Rochereau in Paris’ VIth arrondissement L’Egalité asserted “to vote for Auguste Blanqui means to protest effectively in favor of an amnesty, so ardently desired, so long in coming;” moreover, the paper argued that a “vote for Blanqui was a vote for the ‘social revolution.’” 553 Blanqui only won 618 votes against Hérisson’s 8,931 but the electoral results were, to reiterate, less important than the impact that this third electoral bid had on the voters themselves.

On June 25, 1878 constituents of Gambetta’s district of Belleville unanimously affirmed a resolution adopted by voters at a similar meeting held on June 5 to run Blanqui in every election possible until he was elected and added the assertion that “Blanqui’s candidacy is a striking declaration in favor of full and immediate amnesty.” 554 Moreover, just days before the election, voters in Paris’ third arrondissement pledged to support Blanqui in the following terms “in the face of the refusal by those who have been elected to enact a general amnesty, it is the right and the duty of the voters to amnesty piecemeal, individually, all victims of the tricolored reaction.” 555 This is a remarkable statement for constituents who less than a year before had rallied to the 363 and their tricolor banner despite their pronounced disengagement from supporting or even discussing the amnesty.

552 L’Egalité, March 10, 1878.
553 L’Egalité, May 19, 1878 and Joughin, p. 165, footnote 32.
554 Ibid., June 30, 1878.
555 Ibid., July 7, 1878.
It illustrates the impact of the Socialist narrative that emerged from the Crisis of 16 May; an influence that was becoming apparent in regard to working-class voters. Nonetheless, the chasm between amnesty support and electoral victory was still wide as evidenced by Blanqui’s defeat in that election. In less than a year, however, the bridge seems to have been built.

The campaigns to elect Blanqui to the Chamber as a Deputy from Bordeaux between April and September of 1879 demonstrate the pervasion of the Socialists’ growing appeal stemming directly from their unabashed reverie for the Commune, their unmitigated stance on the amnesty and the failure of Opportunist and Radical republicans in power with respect to properly gauging public opinion on the Commune and support for its partisans’ repatriation. In April of 1879, the Republican Union candidate, editor of *La Gironde*, and close friend of Gambetta, André Lavertujon was forced into a run-off against Blanqui, even while the latter was still in prison. On April 20th, Blanqui won the second ballot with 6,801 votes against Lavertujon’s 5,330. During this campaign, amnesty was, more than ever before, a defining issue. The Chamber had only recently passed a much derided partial amnesty and Blanqui’s candidacy was billed as “an act of reparation, an act of justice and humanity, it would not only be a candidacy of principle, but would also and above all be a candidacy of protest against the grimace of amnesty which the Government has just voted for the men whose greatest crime was to have been

556 *La Gironde*, April 26, 1879.
vanquished in defending the interests of the people.” The Chamber of Deputies subsequently disqualified Blanqui’s election by a vote of 372 to 33 citing his incarceration, but at base was a mounting resistance from Opportunist and many Radical republicans against the rise of Socialist political rivals. Blanqui was subsequently released, largely because of the work of Clemenceau, and ran again in the Bordeaux election set for August 31st.

Blanqui’s freedom negated his acute appeal as a martyr, just as the republican government’s toleration of the far Left’s anniversary pilgrimages served to blunt their ability to stir support for revolutionary action. In August, he ran against the Radical republican, Adrien Achard whose candidacy was billed as a struggle against “the empirical theories of Socialist revolutionaries.” Achard was an official candidate of Gambetta’s Republican Union which threw their entire weight behind his campaign. Nonetheless, Blanqui won 3,929 votes against Achard’s 1,852; a majority but not large enough to prevent a second ballot. During the campaign for the second ballot, Achard was once again held up as the candidate that would safeguard the Republic “against the

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557 *Le Prolétaire*, April 5, 1879. These were the endorsement remarks of Ernest Roche, who had been nominated as a candidate for the same election but declined to run in deference to Blanqui, delivered at the Salle du Petit Fresquet in front of an audience of some fifteen hundred people. The passage of the partial-amnesty will be described in detail in the pages that follow.

558 Etienne Ginestous, *Histoire Politique de Bordeaux Sous La 3e République*, Imprimerie de Bière 1946, p. 82. Ginestous political history of Bordeaux remains the most in-depth study of the region to date and is highly valuable despite the passage of time since its first publication. He specifically asserted that Blanqui’s release negated his “halo of martyrism”.

revolutionary Socialist principle."\textsuperscript{560} On September 14, Achard won by a slim margin: 4,703 to Balnqui’s 4,542.\textsuperscript{561} Thus, by the summer of 1879, it required four elections before Blanqui could be defeated; this was a pronounced transformation from his 1878 bids. His celebrity cannot be ignored as a factor in his electoral popularity but neither should it be overestimated.

Blanqui conjured sentiments of hostility and fear as well as reverie depending on the audience and the fact that he won more than once in what had, theretofore, been a solidly, albeit Radical-leaning, republican region against the likes of well-known republican candidates indicates the growing electoral appeal of the revolutionary Left in the aftermath of the 1877 political crisis, the establishment of amnesty as a populist issue, and the electoral backlash against its use as a partisan political tool. While the Blanqui campaigns were being carried out, republican politicians struggled to control the growing impact that the amnesty problem was having in the political sphere.

By January of 1879 it was becoming clear to republicans in power that the initiative for the amnesty was slipping out of the Radicals’ hands into the preserve of the revolutionary Left, with the Socialist groups in the forefront of the movement. With this shift, amnesty became more than an end-goal for its new proponents, it was now a tool by which Socialists could win elections and allegiance to mainstream republicanism could

\textsuperscript{560} Ginestous, p. 83.
\textsuperscript{561} See the biographical sketch of Achard in Gaston Cougny and Adolph Robert, Dictionnaire des Parlementaires français, comprenant tous les membres des assemblées françaises et tous les membres français depuis le 1\textsuperscript{er} mai 1789 jusqu’au 1\textsuperscript{er} mai 1889, avec leurs noms, état civil, états de services, actes politiques, votes parlementaires, etc., Bourloton, Paris 1891.
be diminished to the benefit of more intransigent groups of the revolutionary Left. Because of the prolonged nature of the amnesty campaign, the perception of republican failures culminating in *seize mai*, and the post-1877 republican suppression of their Left-wing political rivals, the extreme Left began to articulate an unapologetic revolutionary doctrine on a massive scale. In their electoral campaigns, publications, and political speeches, they demanded a complete revision of the Third Republic wherein major industries would become nationalized, property would be collectivized, and extreme democracy would be ushered in by dissolving the Senate and/or making every branch of the government subject to universal suffrage. The republican mismanagement of the amnesty issue, after their takeover of power, intensified and inadvertently assisted the efforts of the extreme Left.

Following the 1879 Senatorial elections, Dufaure’s government narrowly dodged a vote of no-confidence and responded with a bill that would extend the possibility of pardon for those convicted in *abstenia* and the possibility of restoring their civil rights.\(^{562}\) On the heels of this proposal, the Radical leaders, Blanc and Hugo introduced two new bills for complete amnesty with two Opportunists, both of whom had a history of supporting general amnesty already, lending their support.\(^{563}\) On February 11 the new Waddington Government introduced a partial amnesty bill that privileged the executive’s share of power by designating that anyone pardoned (an executive prerogative) would

\(^{562}\) President MacMahon resigned following these elections, on January 30, 1879 and was replace by Jules Grévy who served until 1887 when he was forced to resign as a result of the Wilson Affair.

\(^{563}\) The two non-Radical signatories were Henri Brisson and Eugène Spuller.
automatically come under the jurisdiction of the partial amnesty.\textsuperscript{564} To these proposals was added, on February 17, the report of the committee on the Dufaure bill, read by Louis Andrieux, a representative of the republican majority in the Chamber; that is to say, an Opportunist member of Gambetta’s Republican Union. Amnesty was clearly a pawn of partisan power jockeying and none of the bills alleviated the hostility of the revolutionary Left or their growing constituencies.

The competing proposals were not defended in a manner designed to rehabilitate the Commune or to strip away the official condemnation of the Communards. On the contrary, each of them preserved the republican government’s disapproval of Communards’ actions and, save the Hugo and Blanc bills, retained the option of limiting their civil rights. Moreover, none of the characterizations of the Commune, which were expressed in the various defenses, aligned even close to that which the Socialists and other revolutionary groups were espousing with progressive and impactful success among their working-class targets. Without surprise, the Blanc and Hugo bills were defeated and the Andrieux bill passed overwhelmingly with support coming from the Opportunist majority, but also, from the Radicals.

The passage of the March 1879 partial amnesty bill was designed to end the growing social unrest stemming from the amnesty controversy; instead it greatly intensified hostilities and brought the longevity of personal political careers into

\textsuperscript{564} Waddington replaced Dufaure as Prime Minister in February 1879 following Dufaure’s resignation. Waddington, a former Orleanist, was chosen by President Grèvy as a means to thwart Gambetta’s power.
jeopardy. In the arguments supporting the bill, the Government asserted that its intention was “to wipe out...the memories of the past..., to which a new era, calmer and happier, is going to succeed.” The Commune was described as “that revolt which history will never amnesty” and the recipients of the partial amnesty designated as “those of our fellow citizens who—misguided men rather than criminals—lent their hands, without being entirely aware of what they were doing, to this crime of lèse-patrie.” Those who deserved the government’s “mercy and forgiveness” would be pardoned and then, perhaps, amnestied. In this way the criminal label gave way, but to one equally unfavorable in its patronizing characterization of the Communards as naive and/or misguided pawns, driven by the desperate context of the Prussian siege, rather than a comprehensive political intent. At the same time, those excluded by the bill were deemed master criminals, whose condemnation was deserved and their repatriation considered a dangerous prospect: “the leaders and the principal authors of the crime, [would continue to share in the] just reprobation which remains attached to the Commune.” In this way, the republican majority that passed the partial-amnesty bill failed to take seriously the intentions of the partisans of 1871 and more importantly, failed to properly gauge popular opinion of the event in 1879.

The partial amnesty bill became law on March 5, 1879 and was almost immediately denounced by the Socialists, some Radicals, and the Communards.

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567 Ibid.
568 Ibid.
themselves—amnestied and excluded alike. Far from assuaging the social discord that the prolonged amnesty problem had created, the partial amnesty opened the way for much more hyperbolic denunciations of republicans in power. When the amnestied deportees and exiles began to return in the fall of 1879, their emaciated physical state and the stories they had to tell made the government’s half measure appear all the more inadequate. As a result, the partial amnesty, which passed largely because of arguments that cited public sentiment did not favor a full amnesty, made the Government’s opinion of the national mood appear out of touch. Just two months later, Blanqui’s election in Bordeaux was invalidated by the Chamber, the two decisions, the March 5th bill and Blanqui’s invalidation, combined with and the repression of other Socialist candidates and Socialist journalists that came during the Summer and Fall of 1879, ratcheted up the Socialist hostility toward parliamentary republicans to a fever pitch and served to validate their denunciations of the so-called “tri-color reactionaries” in the eyes of their target constituents.

In the May, while the Chamber was deciding upon the validation of Blanqui’s election, Ernest Roche wrote a series of articles asserting “the people have nothing to expect from their those who govern them…it is much less the question of a man than of a principle: is the expression of the people’s will to be respected?”569 Going further a petition to President Grévy was circulated within Parisian workshops that announced Blanqui as a true republican and denounced the republican regime for abandoning its own

569 Le Prolétaire, May 10, 1879.
principles: “to keep the elected Deputy of Bordeaux, this pure Republican, in the
dungeons of the Republic for one instant longer would be a flagrant violation of all the
laws of justice and humanity, an insult to universal suffrage, a betrayal of your
Republican antecedents.” When the invalidation passed, *Le Prolétaire* listed the twelve
Deputies of the Seine who had voted against Blanqui and added “we’ll see in 1880 [sic]
how many of these twelve survive the election.”

Thus the Socialist pleas for justice and respect to the voters’ will became
warnings of electoral but also revolutionary recourse. Prudent Dervillers, for example
wrote “if after this action annulling and declaring illegal the free and spontaneous
manifestation of Bordeaux, the workers persist in believing in the efficacy of the ballot, if
this technique must always remain the only lever by the aid of which they hope to
transform their status as wage-slaves into that the free possessors of their strength and
work, it will be in order to doubt the intelligence of the people and the liberation of the
great human family…to make an exact accounting for themselves of the forces which the
Revolution has at its disposal” the voters of Bordeaux will return Blanqui once again in
the 1881 general election. By 1879, according the Socialist opposition, the actions of
the republicans in power betrayed their class-bias and their willingness to betray their
revolutionary heritage in favor of retaining individual power.

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570 Ibid, May 24, 1879. Blanqui’s elected was invalidated in June by a Chamber vote of 354 to 33 and while
Clemenceau, Lockroy, and Blanc were among the nays, long-time supporters of full amnesty were,
importantly, among the majority: Spuller, Brisson and even Floquet. See Chamber of Deputies, *Annales*,
session ordinaire 1879, Vol. VI, pp. 88-91 for this vote.
571 *Le Prolétaire*, June 7, 1879.
572 *Le Prolétaire*, June 7, 1879.
Parliamentary republicans were denounced on three points in particular. The first and most acute was for violating the people’s will: Blanqui’s electoral invalidation figured prominently and was joined by the invalidation of other Socialist candidates and Communard recipients of the March 5th partial amnesty in October of 1879. The second point was the accusation of flagrant hypocrisy in their partisan distribution of justice: the lack of retribution to the men of 16 May (Broglie, remained in the Senate, for example) vis-à-vis the amputated justice represented by the March 5th bill figured prominently and was subsumed in denunciations of the partisan prosecution of press and assembly offenses, which were recognizably akin to the political machinations of the Moral Order government. Some examples of the republican government’s partisan repression include the circular sent by Le Royer, Minister of Justice, to the procurators-general that gave them immense discretionary power to arrest anyone suspicious of or verified to have denounced the government and to send “to the courts all speeches, writings, or citations which might appear to you to be contrary to the law and subject to repression.”573 As a result, Emile Chausse and Alphonse Humbert were arrested on October 20th and 23th, 1879 (respectively).574 Humbert, who had recently been elected to the Municipal Council from the XVth arrondissement of Javel, was sentenced to six months in prison and a fine

574 In 1878, Chausse ran, unsuccessfully, for a Municipal Council seat in the XIth arrondissement of Paris. The 1878 campaign was significant, despite Chausse’s defeat, because, like Blanqui, Chausse ran as a Socialist candidate, sponsored by “the Republican Committee of Democratic-Socialist Workers, which asserted the principle that the interests of the working class in politics could not be defended except by a workingman.” Joughin, p. 157. Chausse’s arrest in 1879 stemmed from his March 18, 1879 article in Le Prolétaire, “The Anniversary of March 18: Atonement”. He was sentenced to a year in prison.
of 2,000 francs for “outrage to justice and apology for acts designated crimes” largely stemming from a speech he had given at the funeral of Captain Gras, a recently pardoned Communard, who died just days after returning to France. Furthermore, Humbert’s election was subsequently annulled on the technicality that he had not satisfied the six months residency required by any candidate.\textsuperscript{575} The newspaper \textit{La Marseilaise} was similarly prosecuted and its editor was imprisoned for one month and fined 5,000 francs for reprinting Humbert’s speech. That Fall several mayors of the Midi were removed from office for having participated in meetings organized around Blanqui’s post-invalidation speaking tour.\textsuperscript{576}

The third most frequently raised charge was that of duplicity: supplicating for working-class votes by promising to enact total amnesty and then failing to pass any of the bills that were introduced. Against such machinations, the Socialists urged workers to vote against the Opportunists and the Radicals; not against the Republic but in favor of the Social Democratic Republic that only they could generate. The Marseilles Congress of October of 1879 and the subsequent foundation of the French Workers (Socialist) Party were the direct consequences of the government’s blunders and the manifestations of the in-roads that Socialist leaders were trying to make among the working-class voting demographic.

\textsuperscript{575} Five years later, Humbert won that seat again.

\textsuperscript{576} For all of these cases see \textit{L’Année Politique}, 1879, Vol. 6, pp. 288-289 for the speech delivered by Humbert at the funeral, p. 292-293 for the prosecution of Humbert and \textit{La Marseillaise}, p. 298-299 for the mayoral removals and some of the speeches given at the Blanqui meetings.
Part of the growing appeal for Socialist candidates was based in the expansion of their narration of the Revolutionary era to include the 1871 Commune and their tandem absorption of event as a foundational moment in their movement. Just after the Chamber passed the partial-amnesty bill in February, A. Levy, writing for Le Prolétaire declared: “since you force us to it—we will restore the historical truth; we will rub the noses of the reactionaries of 1871 in the messes they have made…By your selfish policy, you foment unrest and revolution.” These statements encompass the entire focus of the Socialists’ electoral and amnesty campaigns resulting from the March 5th law. With the Government and the republican majority in the Chamber and Senate continuing to characterize the Commune as a criminal event and ceaselessly pointing to the atrocities committed by the Communards without recognition of the blood-letting caused by the government in Versailles, the quest to “restore historical truth” became paramount, in speeches and publications the Socialists worked to rehabilitate the Commune, in doing so they propagated a new narrative and one that specifically privileged themselves and their constituencies.

In their electoral appeals and journalism, Socialists described the Commune as the heroic struggle of the French “proletariat” against the bloody suppression of “bourgeoisie”. While the Communard intention of saving the Republic against a monarchist or Bonapartist restoration was sustained, the event, under the Socialist narrative, was above all hailed as the great awakening of the French working class. This

577 Le Prolétaire, February 22, 1879.
enabled Socialist leaders and politicians to construct a mutual identification between the on-going sufferings of the non-amnestied Communards with the plight of the French working-class: both victims of “bourgeois” treachery and both subject to the mercy of “pretend republicans” whose betrayal of their insurgent roots must not be forgotten by the true heirs of the revolutionary tradition. By assimilating the two identities, the persecuted Communard and the subjugated worker, Socialists began to create an in-group bias that helped to launch them into political relevancy after the Commune and before industrialization and serious economic decline. The rooting of French Socialism during the late 1870s and early 1880s should be understood as akin to the nationalization of republicanism as pursued by the Opportunists and Radicals: a fundamentally emotional phenomenon generated by cultural and electoral political activism with the legacy of the Commune operating as an integral and, by its prominence, a unique, factor of constituent engagement.\(^ {578}\)

The Socialist narrative was significantly validated by the Communards themselves among whom the partial amnesty backfired most prominently. Far from assuaging hapless participants in the 1871 Commune, the March 5\(^{th}\) law generated disgust and hostility from recipients and the excluded alike. Letters denouncing the condescension of the government’s offer of mercy poured into France from the exiles and the deportees. Before the partial amnesty passed, Jules Joffrin wrote a letter from London

\(^{578}\) See Stone, p. 88, where she describes the “emotional nature” of the Radicals’ commitment to “create a deep and passionate commitment to the Republic” which was expressed most clearly through cultural politics occurring “outside daily parliamentary negotiations, administrative actions, or even electoral campaigns.”
that was subsequently published by *Le Prolétaire* arguing that “it is monstrous that citizens like Trinquet, Dacosta…and so many others remain in penal servitude, and for the fact alone that these citizens waged implacable war against the Empire and do not understand a Republic which differs in no respect from monarchy.” ⁵⁷⁹ After it passed, the exiles in London and Geneva responded with three similar attacks: denouncing the government’s condemnation of the event, expressions of Communard-solidarity with many of the partial-amnesty recipients refusing to accept the government’s offer, and calls for tactical cohesion among amnesty supporting voters in France.

Elisée Réclus, for example, who during the legislative debates on the partial-amnesty bill, was held up as the quintessential embodiment of the deserving recipient of the proposed bill, refused the offer when it came. Indeed, Réclus wrote that “I would be a vile man if my first word was not a word of solidarity, of respect, and of love for my companions in exile, and for those more heavily struck than I who still people the prisons or cells of New Caledonia…” ⁵⁸⁰ Similarly, Rochefort described the partial amnesty and the appeals on his behalf as “a dose of castor oil [taken by] the sick man…but they feel sick at their stomach.” ⁵⁸¹ Armand Moreau went even further by declaring “no one has the right to bind me…I repulse any sort of compromise.” And when he was pardoned nonetheless he wrote of his acceptance in the following terms: “let them be aware of the

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⁵⁷⁹ *Le Prolétaire*, March 8, 1879.
⁵⁸⁰ *La Révolté*, April 5, 1879.
⁵⁸¹ *Le Prolétaire*, March 15, 1879.
fact that between them, the Versailles, and us, the Communards, there are 35,000 dead.”

The exiles also reached out to voters in France. From London, Emile Landrin wrote that the exiles “expect nothing from the men who hold forth at Versailles, but everything from the workers. And you, workers… you who constitute power, would you betray our expectations?” In Geneva the exiles adopted a resolution to reject the partial amnesty and remain in exile describing the government’s decision and its characterization of the Commune as “corrupting overtures;” the resolution passed by a vote with 55 of the 72 refugees in favor and the text was sent to New York and all major European cities “and to all Republican newspapers in France and abroad.” That May a number of letters written by an exile in Genevea and also published in *Le Prolétaire*, laid out the generally accepted agenda for amnesty supporters in France and recipients of the partial amnesty: “continue what some have begun so well, to undermine the Opportunists and to lift the masks with which these political comedians have covered themselves since the Revolution of September 4, 1870…the amnestied of March 5 will be the pioneers of the Revolution and the precursors of those whom Opportunism has just been endorsed for the votes of Republican-Socialists by excluding them from the individual pardon.”

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582 *La Révolté*, August 9, 1879.
583 *Le Prolétaire*, March 29, 1879.
584 Joughin, p. 237; and *Le Révolté*, April 5, 1879.
The exiles of New Caledonia were just as indignant. Like the socialists in France, their anger stemmed from three points in particular, the negative characterization of the Commune imbedded within the law and emanating from the debates, the fact that amnesty for the pardoned would be granted on a case by case basis and subject to the government’s arbitrary authority, and the republican betrayal, especially on the part of the Radicals because of their campaign promises and their continued manipulation of working class sympathies. Louise Michel, for example denounced the work of her friends in France seeking to have her included as a recipient of the March 5th bill by writing to President Grévy: “I categorically disavow not only the step taken by Madame Célestine Hardouin, but also all those which could be made or have been made on my behalf by wrongly inspired men. I envisage no other return to France except that which would bring back all those who have been deported and all those who have been transported in connection with the Commune, and I will not accept any other.”

Nathalie Le Mel responded similarly: “I would have been happy to see my country again and all the affections which I left behind there, if my friends had enjoyed this same satisfaction.”

Having been at the mercy of Radicals until 1877, in terms of amnesty, the Socialists were a welcome transfer of leadership in the campaign for amnesty. Moreover, while it is true that the Commune was not a Socialist revolt or the great awakening of the workers that Socialists would later describe, eight years in exile had impacted the

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586 The letter dated Noumea, July 25, 1879 was published in Le Prolétaire on September 30, 1879 and in La Révolté on October 4, 1879. See also APP Ba 1183 Dossier Louise Michel, File 1869—1879, and Anne Léo Zévaës, Louise Michel, Au Bureau d'éditons, Paris 1936, p. 19.

political identity of the Communards. Louise Michel claimed to have converted to anarchism *en route* to New Caledonia, and Paule Mink remained a militant Socialist-feminist until her death. For the exiles in London, in close association with Karl Marx and his colleagues that brand of Socialism left an indelible mark much like Mikhail Bakunin influenced the exiles of Geneva. Upon their return to France in 1879 and 1880, many of the Communards took a place within the various internationalist groups, thereby validating the revolutionary factions’ pre-amnesty claims to have been in the *van guard* of the Commune all along. Following the passage of the partial-amnesty, the exiles in London formed a Committee of the Excluded designed to publicize the names of the Communards excluded from the March 5th bill and also to raise relief funds on their behalf. Subscriptions for aid the amnestied and non-amnestied were already in circulation throughout France and, like the electoral campaigns, these subscriptions were designed to aid the Communards while also propagating the issue of amnesty among French voters.

The Socialists responded to the partial amnesty with calculated intransigence that met with electoral success. Blanqui’s election in Bordeaux came just a month after the passage of the partial amnesty, having only received 618 votes in a Parisian election less than a year earlier, his vote tally of 6,801 in Bordeaux that April was certainly influenced by popular hostility to the partial amnesty which the Socialists took care to generate and maintain. During that campaign and especially its invalidation, Socialists denounced republicans in power as out of step with popular opinion and in violation their own long-cherished valuation of universal suffrage. The Socialists’ campaigns for political office
and a general amnesty were greatly assisted by the presence of the returning
Communards. On October 12, 1879 Dr. Marmottan Bouteiller a former—albeit
conservative—elected member of the Commune, running on an amnesty platform, was
elected to the Municipal Council for the Les Basins district; Alphonse Humbert also a
former Communard was elected to the Municipal Council of Javel; Louis Garel won a
seat in the Municipal Council of Lyon on October 26; and in Lille Chéri Dumez who ran
as a “Socialist Worker” on an amnesty platform won a seat in the Departmental General
Council against a “reasonable” republican candidate. The Socialists were clearly
gaining traction among voters, especially in their bids for local offices. At the Marseilles
Congress of 1879, the relationships between the renascent Socialist movement, the
surviving Communards, and the amnesty controversy became unmistakably clear.

On October 20, 1879 the Marseillaise Congress opened with a unanimous vote to
take the name “Socialist Workers’ Congress.” This set the stage for the more militant
orientation taken by this Congress, a gathering that was also more politically focused in
comparison to the one held in Lyon the previous year. The over-arching concern of the
Congress’ delegates was the creation of a workers’ political party, not anti-republican,
but one intended to provide French workers and peasants political representation that was
more dedicated to their needs and concerns than either of the mainstream republican

588 L’Année Politique, Vol. 6, pp. 292-293.
It was hoped that such a party would lead to a separation between republicans and these constituents and enable a re-orientation of the Third Republic to one that was more social-democratic. This was a serious concern, especially for the Opportunists who had worked, since 1871, to forge a unified republican political party. However, by 1879, the lack of social progress, partisan political repression, and the failure to pass a general amnesty after years of electoral promises, had made it clear to the Socialist delegates, the Congress’ majority, that a workers’ party was necessary and mainstream republicans, including the Radicals, should no longer be trusted to prioritize the needs of France’s most socially and economically vulnerable constituents.

Unlike at the Lyon Workers’ Congress of 1878, amnesty figured prominently at Marseilles. Whereas in 1878 the need for labor representation was acknowledged it was similarly understood that the Congress’ concern was for labor relations a theme they divorced from politics as though the two issues were mutually exclusive. Moreover, the delegates of the Lyon Congress resolved that labor candidates would yield to republican candidates should the Republic’s survival be at stake and not only was amnesty not on the agenda, but when it was introduced nonetheless, the item was quickly voted as out of order precisely because it was considered a political matter. At the Congress of Lyon in

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589 While class-based rhetoric relating to the emancipation of labor was the dominant theme of the delegates, it was frequently coupled with assertions that a workers’ party would also assure the economic independence of the peasants; in fact the Congress incorporated the slogan of the outlawed International, “The Land to the Peasants—The Factory to the Worker” which was emblazoned in gold letters against a red backdrop behind the rostrum at which Jean Lombard delivered the Congress’ opening address. 590 See Joughin, pp. 158-159 for a description of the Lyon Congress with respect to the issue of amnesty and its domination by the Radicals. See Steven K. Vincent, Between Marxism and Anarchism, Benoît Malon and French Reformist Socialism, University of California Press, Berkeley 1992, pp. 75-76 for a succinct comparison between the Lyon Congress of 1878 and the Marseilles Congress of 1879.
1878, there remained willingness to yield to Radical republican candidates and their platform because of the proximity of the Congress to the Crisis of 16 May. By 1879, with the Republic firmly in controlled by the republicans, the chasm between these groups had widened significantly and the collegiate tone was entirely absent.

Jean Lombard delivered the opening speech of the Marseilles Congress which was the first time the Commune was invoked. The intent was to underscore the same narrative, propagated throughout France in the months leading up to the Congress, that the Commune was first and foremost a rising of the workers to demand social and economic redress, and staking of a claim to the Republic declared on September 4. As described by Lombard, the Commune’s defeat “did not make the social question disappear in the tomb were thirty thousand of our brothers lie sleeping.”

The agenda for the October 27th meeting was the consideration of “Direct Representation for the Proletariat in Elected Bodies;” in each of the speeches delivered in favor of founding a new workers’ party, the three main denunciations of the Opportunist regime were raised and the Radicals were held up to unrelenting scrutiny on the basis of their frequent deferment to their moderate colleagues. The failed partial-amnesty and the partisan repression being perpetrated by the governing Opportunist majority and sanctioned far too often by the Radical minority figured prominently within supporting arguments.

Several speeches delivered at the Congress on the 27th are particularly illustrative of the arguments made against the sincerity of mainstream republican politicians in their

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claims to be reliable representatives of “the people” and the need to form a separate workers’ party in order to revise the Republic along the lines of the Revolution’s social-democratic ideal. At the core of each of the supporting speeches was the issue of defining what republicanism meant and the manner in which the Third Republic should be oriented. Eugène Bestetti, a recipient of the partial amnesty and a delegate from the Parisian Chamber of shoemaker syndical, denounced Gambetta as the “high priest of Opportunism” and then singled out one of the three sources for Socialist hostility to mainstream republicans, that of duplicity:

What do we see as the elections draw near? Our enemies, the bourgeois cunningly approach the workers…[extending] a velvet hand to them; we have proof of it not only as I have said with reference to Sieur Gambetta, but also by the example recently furnished us by the recanting of the 363…They all, having accepted full amnesty in their platforms, or promised to vote for this great question of humanity, have deceived their constituents by the pretty promises in their professions of faith; promises which have ended up with the refusal to vote a full and complete amnesty and in the enactment of what we are all familiar with—that bastard amnesty which repatriates one part of the victims of military courts and excludes the other, whom they condemn to die beneath the calcinating sky of New Caledonia…Ah! It is true that they have amnestied [those] criminals of May Sixteenth.\textsuperscript{592}

To the charge of duplicity, Balthazar Solomon, delegate of the workers of Chambery, highlighted the use of amnesty as a political pawn. For example, Solomon asserted “universal suffrage is a revolutionary principle that the bourgeoisie has seized, with its usual skill, and made accessible to all the needs of its cause…The Chamber of Deputies

\textsuperscript{592} Congrès ouvrier socialiste de France, troisième session, \textit{Séances}, Marseille 1881, p. 537.
will, at present, refuse to give us a full amnesty, in order to accord it to us on the eve of its dissolution, or of its separation, exclusively to force an election and to hold it on the very principle of plenary amnesty.” The solution Solomon offered was to “conquer all electoral offices, conquer universal suffrage. Let us by all means possible achieve the revolution in parliament...Citizens [addressing men and women], if, as we hope, the Congress accepts our resolutions, we can affirm, according to [our sources], that if the elections are held” in 1880 we can count on 90 electoral victories, if they are held as expected in 1881, “we can rely on a Socialist majority in Parliament. That day the Revolution will have made a big step and our demands will no longer remain a dead letter.”

Fourniere’s speech was the most celebrated and also the most damaging to the Radicals’ image. During the course of his address Fourniere singled out Hugo and Blanc referring to them as “pretend radicals” citing Blanc’s letter of denunciation for the Commune in the Journal Officiel in August 19, 1871, he then charged “And Monsieur Louis Blanc today runs after these dear amnestied whom he has insulted and reviled...[and added] now this harmful man wants to remake himself a political virginity and place himself at the head of the Socialist party.” Fourniere ended his speech with a rousing plea for workers to rally to the Socialists so these elected officials can clear a path by which “this old shack called the social structure” can be destroyed “and if there is

593 Ibid., p. 548.
594 Ibid., 549-550.
595 Congrès ouvrier socialiste de France, troisième session, Séances, Marseille 1881, p. 556.
resistance, the soldiers will be ready to march under the banner of equality, and then woe to the reactors, [from] whatever side they come…Let us prepare to demolish everything in order to build society anew…Long live equality through the social revolution!”

Picking up on the theme of a parliamentary revolution, Ernest Roche defined the Republic in revolutionary terms and expressed the necessity for a sincere Socialist candidate. According to Roche, he “would prefer to send to the Chamber a bourgeois revolutionary like Blanqui then an Opportunist worker like Tolain…the Republic is the political form that assumes the revolutionary idea. It is [very] important that the candidate be a candidate of principle…” After laying out the basic agenda for the direction he envisioned the Socialist movement should take, Roche followed up with this is not a program “but the march of the Revolution.” Roche was followed by Antoine Bic, who reinforced the mantra that mainstream republicans had compromised too many principals in the name of the Republic, but in reality as a means to safeguard their personal power. For example Bic asserted: “the Tartuffe has doubled as a Rodin…formed a union of the Left, not to have a majority whose effort would benefit the workers, but to conserve the monarchist’s prerogatives to the detriment of their republican electors. From this union…the 363 was the majority” many of whom, he reminded the audience, had promised during the Crisis of 16 May and on the eve of the October 14 elections “a plenary amnesty, the indictment of the Ministry of 16 May, and many other reforms that

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596 Ibid., p. 559.
597 Ibid., p. 587-588.
598 Ibid., p. 592.
we are still awaiting, [and instead] have let the crime of December 2 be perpetuated [and] perfected by the Government of M. Thiers.**599 In conclusion, he pleaded “in the name of our sufferings…I ask you to take into consideration [the formation of a distinct workers’ party]…and soon we will march under the banner of the Socialist Republic.”**600 Each of these appeals made the Socialist agenda clear: to generate a social-democratic Republic through the electoral conquest of a political party that would be markedly distinct from either of the republican factions. Such a party would, as Radical delegates to the Congress pointed out, necessarily splinter the already fractious republican camps. This is something which the republicans in power, especially the Radicals, viewed as mortally dangerous to their own prerogatives and perhaps even to the Republic. Yet these defensive arguments in favor of republican unity had been in circulation even before becoming the cornerstone of their political campaign following the Crisis of 16 May and, according to the Socialists, such defensive measures which, they argued, provided no tangible benefits to the workers and the peasants had long since lost their validation.

Between the close of the Marseilles Congress and the special fall session of parliament, the Government continued its futile efforts to root out Socialism by prosecuting the movement’s leaders. Just as before, these steps only calcified the revolutionary-Left’s intransigence and bolstered their popularity. On November 4 Humbert’s election was invalidated. In a matter of days, when the General Council of the

599 Congrès ouvrier socialiste de France, troisième session, Séances, Marseille 1881, p. 593-594.
600 Ibid., p. 595.
Seine passed a resolution in favor of a general amnesty, it was immediately annulled. On November 6 Achille Leroy was arrested for having published a brochure titled “Urgent Social Reforms” that contained his poem *The Song of the Proletaire*, he was ultimately convicted for having, in this poem, insulted officers of the French army. On November 22 two Italian Anarchists who had been involved with the organization of the Marseilles Congress were expelled from France which generated vociferous denunciations from the Socialist presses.

Socialist leaders and more importantly, working class voters met the Government’s repressions following the Marseilles Congress with outrage. A mass protest meeting was held at the Salle des Ecoles on November 30, while the Government’s special session was being carried out, during which a resolution was passed indicating that the on-going repressions were only serving to make the movement more militant: “there is nothing to hope for from peaceful progress.”

When the fall session opened, the Radicals, having been denounced so completely during the Marseilles Congress, took a pronounced oppositional stance against the Government and their Opportunistic colleagues. As a result of the success of Socialist and amnestied candidates at the polls, and the caustic condemnation of the such seemingly impeccable leaders such as Blanc and Hugo at the Marseilles Congress, the Radicals in parliament determined

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601 *Le Prolétaire*, December 6, 1879.
they “would not accept any platform in common [with the Government or parliamentary Opportunists] which did not have full amnesty as the first item.”  

Louis Blanc intended to introduce a bill for plenary amnesty but even before the session’s opening the Waddington Government dug in and vowed to resist any further steps toward amnesty. The Fall session was marked by serious partisan divisions stemming from the growing popular demand to enact a general amnesty and rooted in republican defensiveness, especially on the part of the Radicals, against their castigations by the Socialists and the Socialists subsequent electoral bids. All of this culminated in the December resignation of Waddington and a shuffle within the Ministry. In less than a year, a general amnesty was proposed, by the Freycinet Government, and passed for all but 14 participants in the Commune.

This was the direct consequence of the apparently growing working class support for an amnesty, but also, because this support was generated by factions that also preached the efficacy of violent insurrection barring an unsuccessful parliamentary revolution. Indeed, the Socialists were showing signs of becoming more and more influential among voters of the working class and they had an eye fixed on the peasants as well; the upswing of electoral success for Socialist and amnestied candidates, the formation of the Federation of the Party of Socialist Workers, which came directly from the proceedings of the 1879 Workers’ Congress, and the expressed agenda to politically

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602 L’Année politique 1879, p. 328.
defeat republican supporters of the partial amnesty, in the general elections of 1881 were each cause for concern, taken together it was becoming a perfect nightmare for mainstream republicans. Having worked, since 1870, to secure the Republic’s survival and their own positions of leadership, parliamentary republicans, including the Opportunists and the Radicals, viewed the uptick in Socialist victories in local elections and the working class attendance at Socialist rallies and banquets as threatening enough for Gambetta himself, for whom the term Opportunism was coined, to declare in favor of amnesty as a means by which to directly undercut the popular élan of the increasingly united Socialist factions a unity that was forming in reverse proportion to the dwindling coalescence of republicans in government.

During the time between the November special session and Waddington’s resignation, the Radicals in the Chamber took a significant accounting of the draconian repression meted out by Waddington’s regime, measures which they only forcefully opposed after their own condemnations by Socialists at Marseilles in 1879. On December 4, the Waddington Ministry won a vote of confidence. On the heels of this failed interpellation, Lockroy introduced another motion of interpellation, this time against the Minister of Justice “on the application of the law on amnesty.”603 During the speeches in favor of the interpellation, Lockroy charged that “the law has not been carried out in the sense in which it was voted.”604 Furthermore, he accused the Government of playing

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604 Ibid., p. 128.
“politics after your fashion the day you allowed the Duc de Broglie to return, indemnified, to the Senate.”  

He then took account of why the amnesty continued to be resisted by asking “what is the material danger? You wouldn’t dare say seriously that [it is] fear of a revolution!” No, Lockroy answered rhetorically, and contended that “it is the spread of wrong doctrines that you want to prevent…. [The Ministers were acting, in the interests of the regime they wanted to protect] as customs inspectors for the French mind.” Indeed, he continued, the true intention of the partial amnesty was to “exclude…not the men who are guilty, but those who have political influence…those who one day or another could canvass for a political mandate” but the people, charged Lockroy, have not been convinced that their exclusion is necessary. On the contrary, because of the on-going resistance, “a current in favor of the amnesty has gathered…, and you are letting it gather, letting it grow stronger up to the eve of the municipal elections, the very eve of the general elections.” Clemenceau followed Lockroy in support of the interpellation.

Clemenceau highlighted Blanqui’s invalidation and that of Humbert’s as evidence that the Government was operating out of fear, personal and political, and that their measures were contrary to republican principals, not least of which was a sustained belief

605 Ibid., p. 130.
606 Ibid., p. 131. In 1871, Louis Blanc made a similar argument against the National Assembly’s decision to ban the International following the report of the Commission of Inquiry into the origins of the Commune which asserted the spread of Socialist ideas as the main cause, in his Assembly speech against the bill, Blanc cited that suppression has never been able to kill ideas. See National Assembly, Annales, Vol. VIII, p. 195-199 for Blanc’s speech.
in the importance of respecting universal suffrage. He echoed the Socialists’ charges against all republicans, including the Radicals, emanating from the Marseilles Congress arguing that the Government’s vow to never forgive and forget the Commune was dangerous. “I am telling you that if you forget nothing, your adversaries will remember!”  

Moreover, by continuing repressions against the Socialist press and leaders, the Government only validated the Socialist denunciation against the moral integrity of the Republic itself.  

Returning to the amnesty, Clemenceau concluded “If you had enacted the amnesty—the real amnesty, like that which the Convention adopted a few months after Quiberon-you would have taken a truly Republican step, a step which only the Republic is strong enough to accomplish…But on this point, as on others, you have lagged behind the monarchy.”  

The interpellation motion failed and the Socialists continued to make electoral in-roads, demonstrating the validity of Lockroy’s and Clemenceau’s claims and increasing the anxieties of parliamentary republicans in regard to their mandates after the 1881 general elections.

This fear was not baseless. As highlighted by L’Année Politique, even more serious than the recent elections of Socialist candidates in Paris, “is that other constituencies are following [the capital city’s] example. In Lyon an amnesty [recipient] M. Louis Garel was elected to the Municipal Council. In Lille, even in the quiet country of Flanders, an election to the General Council ended with the defeat of a reasonable

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609 Ibid., p. 143.
610 Ibid.
611 Ibid.
republican candidate by the appointment of a Socialist Workers’ candidate who naturally inscribed plenary amnesty on his program.” As Lockroy’s interpellation motion was being debated, voters at a meeting in Sèvres chose Hippolyte Bouffenoir subsequent to his acceptance of a platform that bound his mandate to supporting full amnesty. Moreover, a by-election for the Chamber of Deputies was being held on December 21 and at Orange, a recipient of the partial amnesty, Maurice Lachâtre was invited to run, but declined in favor of Humbert, following the latter’s recent invalidation. In both cases the conduct of the republican Government and amnesty were conspicuously prominent issues.

By February 1880, during the Parliament’s regular winter session, continued resistance to amnesty was viewed, even among the moderate Republican majority, and ultimately Gambetta himself, as matter of mortal consequence for the Republic. Its passage on July 11, 1880 was ultimately insisted on by Gambetta as necessary for the survival of the Republic but under this veneer Gambetta’s personal political survival and his effort to retain republican parliamentary unity was clearly a priority. On January 22, 1880, Blanc introduced, as intended, the newest bill for plenary amnesty. Blanc explained the need to pass the amnesty in humanitarian terms but also political survival: “to put an end as soon as possible to those prolonged sufferings…, [and] to cut short

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612 L’Année politique 1879, p. 292.
613 That January Gambetta had been re-elected to the Presidency of the Chamber, but this time by a very slim majority: out of 308 votes cast he received 259; conversely in 1879 he was elected with 314 votes out of 338, his mandate was clearly fading. In June, the election of Trinquet, to the Parisian Municipal Council from Gambetta’s Belleville district further underscored Gambetta’s declining popularity, this time among his own constituents.
without delay a dangerous situation." Similarly, in supporting arguments, Blanc rhetorically asked “Is it not so that [the partial amnesty] has provoked some terrible agitations? Is it not so, that it has provoked demonstrations at the polls of such a nature as to move public opinion profoundly?” Then, he declared that the Communards were sincere republicans; this is an image that Socialists had been projecting throughout their campaigns. This assertion was a remarkable one to be made in the Chamber because by identifying the Communards as republicans, it opened the door to incorporating the Commune into the narrative of the republicans’ revolutionary era. Following this characterization, Blanc posited “is it therefore in order to save the Republic that you do not want these republicans here?”

Antonin Proust joined Blanc and picked up on the theme that supporting the amnesty was politically expedient for republicans and the Republic. According to Proust, “in the eyes of the electorate, that is in the eyes of universal suffrage, [amnesty] has acquired [a new] importance.” Proust went on to analyze amnesty in terms of the Republic’s international standing: “do you think it is good for the Government of the Republic to create the impression of a government which is so little master of its present that it still needs recourse to the regime of proscription?” He then forewarned that the longer the Government delays the passage of a complete amnesty, “the bigger the

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616 Ibid., pp. 161-163.
617 Ibid., p. 169.
618 Ibid., p. 171.
difficulties will become.”619 Proust pointed out that he himself had a history of voting against amnesty, citing it was “always tied up with the question of the stability of the Government” but now, in 1880, he supported it because the amnesty had become “the cause of the Government” to which he later added “I recognize that [the Government] has the power to raise the question when it shall judge it opportune” indicating that that time was now.620 Therein, Proust spelled out the truth of the amnesty’s final passage; it was carried out at the most opportune time, as decided by the leading Opportunist, Gambetta.

While Blanc’s bill was being debated and ultimately rejected, Socialist agitation was on-going, taking place in the pages of their newspapers, at voter rallies, neighborhood fetes, benefits to aid the non-amnestied and orphans of the Commune, and welcome receptions for the partial-amnesty recipients.621 At the polls most workers continued to demonstrate a preference for Radical republicans, but these candidates also steadfastly claimed to support amnesty, all the more so since this had been the one factor all observers could agree upon with regard to the Socialists electoral victories. This ability to retain dominance of the working class vote indicated that with adroit political maneuvering the nascent Socialist movement could be successfully repelled and the mainstream republican positions saved.622 That is to say, working class support for the

619 Ibid., pp. 168-171.
621 See Joughin, pp. 315-317 and 323-324. These efforts were carried out in Paris and in the provinces.
622 For example on December 21, Humbert placed second against Alphonse Gent; however, as described by one Deputy, Gent’s success was only assured after his campaign circulation of the Journal Officiel proving that he had voted in favor of the 1879 Blanc bill and therefore Humbert’s claim to being the only amnesty candidate was qualified, in each case, however, support for total amnesty was the electoral litmus test, a
Socialists, their narratives of the Commune, and their demands for a social revolution, were increasing but could be blunted without recourse to anti-republican machinations such as press restrictions and mounting electoral invalidations. If the republicans in parliament could reclaim the prerogative of the amnesty, theirs and the Republic’s moral integrity could be salvaged and thus their political mandate secured for the future.

When Blanc’s amnesty bill was rejected in February the voting returns were notable in terms the impact of the amnesty controversy on parliamentary coalitions. While only 47 members of the Republican Union voted against the Blanc bill, 73, including some of Gambetta’s closest political allies, joined their Radical colleagues in supporting it. Gambetta abstained from voting. However, the time was rapidly approaching, and he understood this well, when the Government, would have to take the matter into its own hands in order to mitigate the traction that revolutionary political factions were having as a result of their fostering of the cult of the Commune, which had demonstrated success at the polls and seemed to presage an politically unstable if not violent near future for the young Republic. The commemorations of the March 18 proclamation of the Commune and Bloody Week combined with a wave of strikes that May worked paradoxically to both heighten these fears but also provide the political space through which the Government could take mitigating action.

fact that republican Deputies such as Madier de Montjau, appreciated completely. See Chamber of Deputies, Annales, session ordinaire 1880, Vol. II, p. 17 for the electoral returns and ibid, pp. 177-178 for Madier de Montjau’s speech regarding amnesty’s role in Gent’s election.
Long Live the Social Revolution

The March 18, 1880 celebration of the proclamation of the Commune was celebrated throughout France more energetically than ever before. Five banquets were held in Paris alone and they were joined by similar celebrations in the provincial towns of Cette, Bordeaux, Marseilles, Béziers, and Reims. The Socialist’s absorption of the Commune’s legacy and their domination of the cause of amnesty, by 1880, was made clear by announcements that these banquets were being held “to the triumph of the proletariat” and by declarations such as the one expressed by the Workers’ Syndical Chambers and the Group of Revolutionary Collectivists at Reims: “by refusing to enact the amnesty, those who govern us have just proved, once more, that if the worker wants to enjoy the Revolution, he must count only on himself.” At these gatherings, the humanitarian imperative was hammered upon, but this was a familiar theme. commemorating the proclamation of the Commune had been on-going since 1872, led by radical republicans, most notably Greppo, in an attempt to drum up financial charity for the refugees and their families always based within humanitarian (that is to say charitable) appeals. What was unique in 1880 was the contemporary political considerations that dominated the commemorative gatherings.

During the March 18 celebrations, there were repeated calls to vote out of office the amnesty’s detractors, propaganda heralding the efficacy of the social revolutionary

623 *Le Prolétaire*, March 27, 1880; *L’Égalité*, March 24, 1880.
agenda, and the advancement of the notion that far from a failed uprising, or the end point of the Revolution, the Commune was the dawn of a new revolutionary era. At the gathering organized jointly by the Committee on Propaganda of the Workers’ Union, the Central Socialist Committee for Aid to the Amnestied and non-Amnestied, and the Committee on festivals of the Syndical Union of the Workers of the Seine, the audience, estimated be up to twenty-five hundred persons heard such cries as “it is disgraceful to be represented by the Deputies of Paris who cowardly abandoned us” and “Down with Gambetta!” the latter of which drew enormous repetition form the crowd.\textsuperscript{624} March 18, however, merely set the pace and announced the direction that popular politics would take over the next three months. On April 4\textsuperscript{th} another demonstration of the revolutionary-Left’s unity took place at Père-Lachaise cemetery on the anniversary of Gustave Flourens’ death which ended in multiple arrests and the consequent denunciations of the republican regime. Then there were the strike waves of early May which culminated in the first-ever openly commemorated anniversary of \textit{le Semaine sanglante} on May 23, 1880.

In April and May of 1880 forty thousand workers were on strike in Lille, Roubaix Tourcoing and Armentières.\textsuperscript{625} At the same time in Reims, some seven thousand weavers, whose strike had begun in late April, had succeeded in closing nearly all the spinning and weaving mills. By the middle of May, dyers, carpenters and bakery workers joined the

\textsuperscript{624} This speech was written by \textit{Le Prolétaire}’s A. Levy and read to the crowd by Poulard (Levy was too sick to attend); it was reprinted in \textit{Le Temps}, March 20, 1880.

\textsuperscript{625} Robert Gildea, \textit{Children of the Revolution}, Op. cit., p. 320; see also Perrot, p. 160 where she states that in Roubaix that May was a “modest” 12,000 to 20,000 workers that marched through the streets.”
spinners and weavers. The proliferation of workers that went on strike that Spring, the length of their strikes, and the solidarity they displayed were a result of the work of the revolutionary Left, the Socialists most specifically, who, through the cult of the Commune, had acquired a galvanizing hold on French labor. As described by Perrot, in the case of the strikers in Reims, the striking workers carried tricolor flags and planted liberty trees. In other words, they were not militant and not anti-republican. Nonetheless, the Government’s overwhelming use of force dispersed the strikers and sufficiently demonstrated the commitment that would be required by labor demonstrations, but it also provided more fodder for denunciations by socialist candidates. That spring hostility of the strikers and the revolutionary Left was growing and this was steeled by the on-going returns of the pardoned and the amnestied which coalesced in the organizing of the commemoration of \textit{le Semaine sanglante}.

The initial intention for the May 23\textsuperscript{rd} demonstration was for workers to gather at Place de la Bastille and then proceed to Père-Lachaise cemetery where a red wreath would be placed at the eastern wall where some of the last of the Communards had been

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\begin{itemize}
\item[626] According to Gildea, Ibid, pp. 320-321, “the thinking in government circles was that ordinary workers were interested only in jobs and pay, and that strike action was fomented by agitators, often from outside the working-class communities, drunk on half-baked socialist ideas.” This was the same notion that led to the March 21, 1884 law, proposed by Ferry, which legalized trade-unions with the declaration that “the strike is industrial war, the union is social peace.” For Ferry’s remarks see Paul Robiquet ed., \textit{Discours et Opinions de Jules Ferry}, Vol. VII, Paris 1898, speech at Saint-Dié, p. 92.
\item[627] Perrot, p. 190.
\item[628] See Joughin, pp. 357-361 for a detailed description of the government’s show of force in each of the strikes; see also Perrot, p. 190.
\end{itemize}
shot and buried. This symbolically tied the Commune to the Revolution of 1789.\footnote{Madeleine Rebérioux, « Mur Des Fédérés : Rouge « sang craché » Nora, Les Lieux des mémoires, Op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 619-649.} Should there be a wide attendance, the organizers were convinced it would demonstrate the unity of the Socialist factions in terms of opposing the liberal Republic, their counter-narrative of the revolutionary era, and thereby demonstrate the power they could exert in the contemporary political arena. The first proponents for commemorating the Commune’s “martyrs” were the Socialist groups in Paris who, at a meeting on April 24\textsuperscript{th} adopted a resolution that set the intended tone: “We are of the opinion that the workers, in honoring their dead, honor the principles which guided them in their social vindication and which must guide the Socialist Workers’ Party in the coming of its liberation.”\footnote{Le Prolétaire, May 1, 1880; See also, Le Temps, May 11, 1880 which provides a description of the day’s intended itinerary and the government’s interdiction of the commemoration.} It is no surprise that the Socialists were invested in the idea of commemorating not merely the proclamation of the Commune but its brutal defeat because this would help to infuse the worker-Communard imagery with an emotive disdain and bitterness that the commemoration of the Commune’s proclamation did not. Nor is it surprising that the idea was initially formulated during the commemoration (and suppression) of the death of Flourens, as a move by which to demonstrate the sustainment of the movement despite its physical suppression by authorities.

The roots to the May 23 commemoration were the edification of the workers in regard to the brutality that the bourgeoisie was capable of meting out along with the perceived propagandistic value for the cause of amnesty and the election of Socialist
Workers’ Party candidates who could carry out the social revolution by capturing power through the polls. The legacy of this day lies in the symbolic show of revolutionary unity that the commemoration continues to impart. In 1880, this unabashed political agenda signaled to the Government, the need to end the demonstration before it could begin. The government’s preparations for the Sunday commemoration were taken seriously. Following the declared intention to commemorate the day openly, the Freycinet Government issued a statement that it was proscribed and warned that force would be used if necessary. Having recently witnessed what force could mean to the Republican regime, many groups withdrew their support.

The public commemoration of la Semaine sanglante on May 23, 1880, was a solemn affair for the thousands that braved attendance at this first publically honored observance of the anniversary of la Semaine sanglante. The police seemed, according to police and press reports, to have greatly outnumbered the commemorative mourners and thereby greatly deflated their intended impact of the demonstration. Nonetheless, as Rebérioux points out, the first public commemoration was intended to be confrontational, not necessarily physically, but symbolically; as a show of unified force and

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631 This legacy can be seen in both the popular front’s march to the Mur in 1936 and the march to the Mur by François Mitterrand and Georges Marchais in 1973 the year after the announcement of the Common Program.  
632 Rebérioux does not give any figure for the numbers in attendance. Le Figaro, which was the only mainstream press to provide a detailed report on the day’s events, claimed two million persons were present at Place de la Bastille, Stewart Edwards, p. 10, writes “25,000 had responded, despite police attacks, to the socialists’ appeal for the first demonstration at the ‘Wall’ of the Père-Lachaise cemetery;” yet he provides no source for this figure.
The event underscored the scission between the Socialists and the Radicals which had been prominently on display at the Marseille Congress and demonstrated by their divergent response to the government’s interdiction of the commemoration. In contrast to the Socialists, the Radicals acquiesced to the Government’s interdiction and abstained for participation as they had originally intended to do; citing the familiar argument that nothing should be made available as fodder for parliamentary resistance to the amnesty. As a result, the numbers of participants were greatly diminished. Yet this day began a tradition which was, at the time, an integral symbolic gesture for the renascent socialist movement in terms of revising the legacy and memory of the Commune and demonstrating unity among revolutionary groups in opposition to the repressive republican regime.

Throughout the 1870s the day had been observed by Commune sympathizers and survivors but 1880 was the first time a public commemoration had been announced and organized which reflects the contemporary political climate of revolutionary impatience. The political message of the day was perfectly represented by the first of the participants to arrive on the scene. Two men, one carrying a bouquet of immortelles and the other a bust of the Republic donning the red Phrygian cap approached the center of Place de la Bastille and circled the July Column mournfully. The layers of symbolism represented by this opening act would not have been lost of the “curiosity seekers” nor the participants.

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633 According to the Paris correspondent of The Standard (London), May 24, 1880, p. 5, the number of participants was sufficient enough to conclude that “the insurrectionary army is much stronger than is generally imagined.” Or, indeed, admitted.
The immortality of the martyrs and their cause represented by the traditional funerary flowers; the quest to forge a social republic, as announced by the Phrygian capped bust of Marianne; the choice to meet at the Place de la Bastille united the legacy of the Commune with the entry of “the people” in the Revolution; and the mournful circling around the July Column could be read as an homage not merely to the dead of the Commune, but to the martyrs of the July and 1848 revolutions who were buried below. The mainstream press all but buried the day with scant, one paragraph, accounts nuzzled safely between headlines of parliamentary actions and foreign affairs. When it was described at length such as in *Le Figaro* it was done in a bizarre mixture of mockery and patronizing empathy, which privileged the conduct of the police in reverse proportion to that of the participants.

The participants in the May 23 commemoration were armed with wreaths and bouquets of red and yellow immortelles and, prior to the day, the dominant Socialist press

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635 Outside of *Le Prolétaire* and *L’Egalité*, only *Le Figaro* gave a detailed and reflective account. See, for example, *Le Temps*, May 23 – 24, 1880, wherein on the 23rd there is only mention that a demonstration would occur and on the 24th only the events at Place de la Bastille are narrated; see also *La Presse*, wherein the event is announced on the May 23, 1880 publication and there is no mention of the day on the 24th; *Le Petite Parisien*, M. Andrieux’s paper, provides only one paragraph of narration on May 24, 1880; and *Journal des Débats Politiques et Littéraires*, May 24, 1880 which placed their one paragraph narration of the day conspicuously close to the electoral results for Blanqui’s first ballotage in Lyon.

636 *Le Figaro*, May 24, 1880, an example of the mocking tone the report takes: “On s’attendait à un drame, c’est presque une comédie que nous allons raconter.” However, there is genuine sympathy for some of the visitors to Père-Lachasie, typified by this passage: “Un peu plus loin une femme vêtue de noir donnant le bras à un jeune garçon d’une douzaine d’années, et distribuant des immortelles rouges aux passants, est invitée par les gardiens de la paix se retirer. Elle refuse. Trois fois on l’éloigne, trois fois elle s’obstine à revenir. Finalement on l’arrête. Le pauvre enfant la suit en pleurant. Elle se retourne, et du ton du père des Horaces, lançant son fameux: « Qu’il mourût! » Je te croyais un homme. Va-t’en! Un seul incident vraiment touchant. Quelques minutes après trois heures deux vieillards, le mari et la femme s’approchent du chemin du ronde. La femme tient une main cachée sous son tablier de toile bleue. A une moment elle sort cette main qui tient une couronne, la dépose doucement sur une touffe d’herbes, puis elle repend le bras de son mari, et s’en va. Pauvres gens! Leur fils a du mourir là.”
organs declared the peaceful intentions for the day with statements such as “demonstrations ought to keep a peaceful character” and “the more we are revolutionists … the less we could lend ourselves to skirmishes without meaning and without objective.” Nonetheless, the men and women who gathered at Place de la Bastille were met by troops garrisoned at each street connected to the roundabout and, depending on the personalities of the officers they came into contact with, the participants were, more often than not, forced to surrender their wreaths and flowers and several were arrested when they resisted and their flowers were torn apart. The dominant perception of the day in the mainstream republican and conservative press was in-part similar to the Socialist accounts. While *Le Temps*, *La Presse*, and *Le Figaro* praised the police for showing restraint, they also sustained the Socialist claim that their presence was overwhelming *vis-à-vis* a relatively calm and somber crowd.

On route to Père-Lachaise, those in the procession were heard shouting “Vive la Commune!” and, without prompting, the crowds of witnesses repeated the cry. This was Belleville, mourning, unrepentant, and rapidly defecting to Socialist politicians. Once at the cemetery, the participants were granted entry but here too, ten more arrests were made and wreaths of mourning confiscated, following several hours wherein participants furtively tried to lay their immortelles along the Wall, some even tying them to nearby trees, only to dart away once noticed by the police who were instructed not to let the

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637 *Le Prolétaire*, May 15, 1880 and *L’Égalité*, May 23-26, 1880; in reflection of the outcome of the day *L’Égalité* asserted that it was the police not the mourners that provoked confrontation and then referring to grandeur of Thiers funeral cited that if anything *this* had been a provocation to riot.
participants come into contact, and certainly not pronounce in front of, with the Wall which was still pierced with bullet holes.

In the days following the demonstration, the Socialist press denounced the heavy-handedness of "gardiens de la paix;" insisting once again that such a show of force and the interdiction itself were akin to monarchist machinations and surpassing of the Second Empire’s repression of public assembly.\(^\text{638}\) They were joined by the Radicals when the Municipal Council of Paris passed a motion of interpellation against the Prefect, Andrioux, and Clemenceau issued an interpellation proposal against the Minister of Interior.\(^\text{639}\) The Government steadfastly defended their conduct and nothing came of these denunciations and motions. However, the day had hosted another monumental event, the first placing of Blanqui in a by-election held in Lyon. These events, combined with the March 18 commemoration of the proclamation of the Commune, the memorial demonstration for Gustave Flourens in April, and the strikes of May were undeniable evidences of the infiltration of the Socialist narrative that cast the Commune as the great awakening of the French workers, and demonstrations of the growing support for Socialist candidates and platforms. Moreover, although Blanqui lost in the second ballot,

\(^\text{638}\) See the *Le Prolétaire*, May 29, 1880 article “The Proletariate Cannot Disarm”, in which J.B. Clément not only assimilates the Republican government with the Second Empire, but also, accuses the Government of provoking a riot during the May 23 demonstration: “A demonstration was to have taken place..., and these same men rushed to avail themselves of the practices of the Empire. They needed a riot… [Hence] they instructed their chief turnkey (Andrieux) to prepare one for them.”

\(^\text{639}\) At the same time that the Municipal Council was symbolically interpellating Andrieux, ten Deputies of the Seine, led by Clemenceau, issued a motion of interpellation for the Minister of Interiorbut this too came to nothing; Clemenceau’s speech generated only 28 votes of support for the intended interpellation. See Chamber of Deputies, *Annales*, session ordinaire 1880, Vol. VI, pp. 473-77 and pp. 482-483 on the roll call vote. This gesture was also reported by *Le Temps*, May 30, 1880.
the sigh of relief was incomplete and short-lived. The republican candidate, Ballue, who defeated Blanqui, had also run on a platform demanding full amnesty and on June 13th the Socialists won a significant victory when the Communard Trinquet, who was still serving a hard labor sentence in New Caledonia, placed first to represent Gambetta’s Belleville constituency in the Parisian Municipal Council, and, significantly, he won he won against an Opportunist candidate that Gambetta himself campaigned for.640

Trinquet’s victory was a significant one for the Socialists, even more so than Blanqui’s might have been. Trinquet, unlike Blanqui, was a member of the Commune and one of the few workers to have been elected, he was also among the last of the fighters in the twentieth arrondissement that he represented. During his trial Trinquet, unlike some of his co-defendants, was unrepentant; rather, like Louise Michel, among others, Trinquet, the shoemaker, stood by his actions and flaunted his convictions asserting that as an elected member of the Commune, “I have paid for [my actions] with my person; I was on the barricades, and I am sorry I was not killed there…I am an insurgent; I do not deny it.”641 By 1880, Trinquet was the embodiment of the ideal Socialist candidate, as described by Roche, at the Congress of Marseille, and a Communnard hero. Thus, Trinquet’s victory that June symbolized a victory for the Communards specifically and for the Socialists in general. His election provided

640 See Alice Bullard, Exile to Paradise: Savegrey and Citizenship in Paris and the South Pacific, 1790—1900, (Jurists: Profiles in Legal History), Stanford University Press, Stanford 2000, p. 244. Trinquet won 37% of the votes on the first ballot, on June 20th; he won a clear victory (2358) against his opponent, Letalle (1897). See Le Figaro, June 21, 1880.

evidence that their campaign for amnesty, which relied upon the election of their candidates as a means to force the parliamentary republicans into passing the amnesty was still viable as of the Spring of 1880. Furthermore, because he won the day after the Freycinet introduced the government’s bill for full amnesty, every side viewed his victory as proof that Socialist candidates were gaining traction with voters even beyond the issue of amnesty.

The Crisis of 16 May stimulated the reentry of the Socialists into republican electoral contests. Thereafter, they grew more strident in their condemnations of the Moderate regime and the parliamentary Radicals. The thrust of the Socialists’ rebukes stemmed from their competing claim to the revolutionary heritage and their negative assessment of the contemporary regime’s accomplishments and agendas. By 1878, the Socialists began to regularly put forth candidates who embodied the social-democratic movement and were well-known participants in social revolutionary events. Their victories were of great symbolic importance.

By 1880, the Socialist bids for representative power were intricately bound to the party’s mutual identification with the Commune and the revolutionary heritage. In order to stay politically relevant in the lead up to the general elections of 1881, they needed to demonstrate that an amnesty would pass only through their efforts at the polls and the righteous march of revolutionary justice that the Socialists alone could ensure—not through bourgeois benevolence and humanitarian impulses. In this brief amount of time, the Socialists had become an alarming force in the national political scene. Their power
stemmed less from quantifiable electoral success than from their symbolic electoral triumphs and the threat their growing appeal posed to the Moderate republican regime. The government’s sensitivity of this danger led to a dramatic about-face on the issue of amnesty in June 1880, as well as heightened efforts to promote a persuasive Moderate narrative of the revolutionary past and to project the idea that the revolution was complete. In this way, the Socialists and the Commune’s political legacies influenced the solidification of the Moderate regime.

While the Socialists toured the country giving speeches and staging mass demonstrations and commemorations in which they denounced mainstream republicans as betrayers of their revolutionary heritage, the Opportunists and the Radicals were hard at work, as well. They undertook important symbolic and legislative action to demonstrate their commitment to the legacy of the Revolution and to uphold the Third Republic as its successful embodiment. By establishing strong links between the Republic and the most powerful emblems of the revolutionary tradition, they were able to domesticate the revolution’s legacy and assert their more measured account of the era’s history and successes.
CHAPTER 6: A REVOLUTION COMES TO PORT

The Socialists relied on two major issues to position themselves as a vociferous alternative to mainstream republicanism, especially vis-à-vis the Radicals, by 1880. One of their most effective tactics was promoting their counter-claim to the Revolution’s heritage by establishing a close relationship with the Commune’s narrative and legacies. But their ability to call into question the Republic’s responsiveness and sensitivity to working-class concerns was equally important. Failures on the part of mainstream republicans, most prominently with respect to Communard amnesty, made such allegations viable in 1880. The Moderates’ revolutionary identity was vulnerable to attack for a number of reasons: the politicking surrounding the amnesty question; the republican repression of the revolutionary Left through press and assembly restrictions and election invalidations; and the continued political influence of the monarchist-Right, even after the Crisis of 16 May. At the end of the 1870s, the legacy of the revolutionary era continued to evoke immense feelings of pride among voters, especially in working-class and progressive-rural constituencies, which translated into political capital for committed republicans. Thus, the Socialists’ budding appeal was worrisome, not necessarily because of their electoral gains between 1879 and 1880, but because their successful use of such memories had the potential to increase their power in the near future. The Socialist message sustained the option of violent insurrection and explicitly called for a parliamentary revolution that would bring a social-democratic orientation to the Third Republic. In light of the revolutionary era’s history of fratricide and rapid
political reversals, the Moderates did not underestimate the threat that the Socialists represented.

This chapter focuses on the Moderate government’s response to the re-emergence of the revolutionary Left, particularly the Socialist factions, as a representative alternative to mainstream republicanism. This response included strategic legislative and symbolic gestures that were designed to dampen any new revolutionary fervor. The first of the chapter’s two sections begins with a brief analysis of Gambetta’s reaction to Trinquet’s election. Léon Gambetta was arguably the most influential political leader in the spring of 1880, and Trinquet’s victory in Gambetta’s district of Belleville was a symbolic blow to Gambetta’s prestige. Moreover, it was a worrisome show of Socialist influence in the very region where the Commune had originated. The focus of this section then widens to an examination of the passage of a near-general amnesty on July 11, 1880, and demonstrates that the Freycinet Government’s decision to propose this legislation was directly related to contemporary political concerns. Chief among these were the desire to undercut the Socialists’ political appeal by removing their most popular position and an eagerness to end the republican divisions over the amnesty controversy.

The next and final section of this chapter focuses on the official legitimization of the Revolution’s most meaningful symbols. The government’s decision to move the parliamentary chambers back to Paris, the designation of La Marseillaise as the national anthem, and the first celebration of quatorze juillet were all undertaken with specific goals. Through these efforts, the republicans sought to announce the Third Republic’s
triumph, to establish the closure of the revolutionary era, and to rebuff the revolutionary Left’s denunciation of mainstream republican leaders as betrayers of the heritage they so loudly proclaimed. This section devotes the majority of its attention to the official recognition of *quatorze juillet* as a national holiday in 1880, with the earlier symbolic legitimizations incorporated within this analytical framework. These acts had a domesticating effect on the Revolution’s legacies. At the same time, they validated the image of the Third Republic as a representation of the era’s triumphs, because their emergence as national emblems came from mainstream republican initiatives. As this section reveals, one must examine these symbolic steps within the context of the paramount contemporary political rivalries and situations. They were not merely the natural consequences of the Third Republic’s consolidation, but part of the reason for its success. By closing the revolutionary era, which *quatorze juillet* explicitly was designed to symbolize, the mainstream republicans took a significant step towards the assimilation of the once mutually exclusive identities of France and the Republic. In the long term, these acts of domestication facilitated the process of national republican aggrandizement. In the short term, they significantly diminished the growing appeal of revolutionary political factions at precisely the time when the most celebrated “heroes” of their movements, the Communards, were returning to France as citizens, with all of the rights that status conferred.
The Republican Absorption of Revolutionary Revival

Based upon the events that followed Trinquet’s first placing in the ballot of June 13, 1880, it is clear that the Opportunist majority, led by Gambetta, deduced that popular support for Socialist candidates, and their tacit propagation of the need for social revolution, required direct action. The immediacy with which the amnesty’s passage was pursued after June 13th was inspired by the impending general elections of 1881. Even before Freycinet proposed the amnesty on June 19th, Gambetta, in an effort to draw as much preliminary parliamentary support as possible remarked during a private meeting on June 16th that passing the amnesty before the general elections was a “political necessity.” It would, Gambetta argued, settle the matter and thereby “clear all the sentimental phraseology of all species of Socialists away from the terrain of the general elections, so as to bring into focus the true platform of the various parties.” This statement along with Freycinet’s arguments before the Chamber, on June 19th, illuminates the republican deduction that Socialist candidates were successful solely because of their outspoken campaign for a general amnesty and by removing the issue they could stop the revolutionary movement’s progressive penetration into French political life while at the

642 See C. de Freycinet, Souvenirs, 1878—1893, Delagrave, Paris 1913, pp. 133-135 for Gambetta’s attempts to convince the Prime Minister of the amnesty’s political imperative in the days leading up to the June 13th election and pp. 136-137 for his decision to support Gambetta’s pleas for a plenary amnesty subsequent to June 13th.
643 L’Année politique, 1880, p. 243. This was a meeting that took place in Freycinet’s office at the Quai d’Orsay; the presidents of the Chamber and Senate were present along with fifty other parliamentary leaders including past supporters and rejecters of amnesty bills, Hébrard, director of Le Temps and a former senator who supported the Andrieux bill and Jean Casimir-Perier who delivered the opposing report on Blanc’s 1880 amnesty proposal. See also, Le Figaro’s account of this meeting, published on June 18, 1880.
same time absorbing the popularity that amnesty supporters were apparently enjoying at the polls.

When Trinquet won on June 20th, the Socialist press went wild and their analysis validated the Opportunists’ deepest concern. According to *L’Égalité*, Trinquet’s success verified that “in M. Gambetta’s arrondissement, the voters have declared themselves not only for the amnesty, which the Government—its hand forced by events—has just rallied to, but moreover for the Revolutionary-Socialist ideas which the name of this worker, a former member of the Commune, and in a penal colony for eight years, represents.” For the Opportunists, passing a plenary amnesty forthwith was paramount as a means to restore the faith of working class republican voters, not least of which included Gambetta’s Belleville constituency, moreover, it might also assuage the accusation that the once revolutionary force of the republicans had gone over to the side of repression and reaction. By becoming the amnesty’s most fervent parliamentary proponents, the Opportunists would vindicate the republican narration of the revolutionary past as complete and, it was hoped, mitigate republican factionalism and the defection of working-class voters to Socialist candidates and thereby revolutionary doctrines.

This impetus was readily perceived by all political opinions as summarized succinctly by *Le Figaro*: “it is positively Gambetta who today has the appearance of having bestowed the amnesty upon France…he is monopolizing the popularity of [the

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*645 L’Égalité, June 23, 1880; Le Prolétaire, June 26, 1880.*
issue and thereby] getting rid of the little war which was being waged on this question against his Opportunism, [and reconquering] Belleville, which was half lost." Indeed, the moderate republican majority sought to capture the political capital to be gained by passing the amnesty. Not only to maintain their electoral dominance, but also to suppress the penetration of revolutionary sentiments within working class constituency so as to maintain the liberal orientation of the Republic. They did so at the same moment when the Socialists were reveling in their most important victory and purposefully on the eve of the first republican celebration of the Revolutionary era’s triumph, and thereby conclusion.

On the day before Trinquet’s June 20th election, Freycinet proposed the Government’s plenary amnesty bill to the Chamber of Deputies. This came after numerous closed-door meetings between Gambetta and Freycinet and with representatives of the various parliamentary political coalitions. *Le Temps*, keeping abreast of these political acrobatics and the stakes in play with the Government’s motion, also completely revised its stance on the issue and began their own propaganda campaign designed to illicit its readers’ support for the general amnesty in such a way as to be favorable to the image of the moderate majority. As a result of these factors, the

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646 *Le Figaro*, June 20, 1880. During the Chamber’s debate on the amnesty bill Paul de Cassagnac made a similar argument that Gambetta only recently became the amnesty’s most ardent champion because “he knew perfectly well that his popularity was tied up with the outcome of this question” which if he did not assume personal responsibility for “a barrier [would go up] between him and his constituents.” See Chamber of Deputies, *Annales*, session ordinaire 1880, Vol. VIII, pp. 204-210 for Cassagnac’s speech.

647 *Le Temps* director, Hébrard, had supported the partial amnesty as a Senator in 1879, but it was precisely because of its limitations. It was a significant transition of opinion for this conservative republican
mainstream press imbedded the news of Trinquet’s election alongside more in-depth articles in which the amnesty proposal of the moderate republican government was analyzed at length. In the articles, the moderate narration of the amnesty’s final passage was formulated with the conclusion that it was the sage and wise decision of the republican moderates to “erase the last traces” of nearly a decade of political divisions surrounding the issue. In this capacity, the mainstream press began to both prepare the nation for the amnesty’s imminent passage and narrate its success to the favor of mainstream republicanism vis-à-vis the revolutionary factions.648

The articles in Le Temps, Le Petit Parisianne, La Presse, and even Le Figaro, some of the most widely circulated newspapers in France, were recapitulations of the arguments in favor of the bill that had been pronounced during private meetings with parliamentary leaders and by Freycinet before the Chamber on June 19. In repetition of the bill’s explanatory memorandum, the mainstream press maintained a general condemnation of the Commuñard as criminal and the amnesty was considered as an act of clemency, not one of justice, which the Socialists had been agitating for. According to the popular journal La Presse, this was lamentable considering the determination of the Radicals (the article, tellingly, made no reference to the Socialists efforts) over the past

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newspaper to begin publishing numerous articles in support of a general amnesty, “without limitations” just a year later. On the day of Trinquet’s election, Le Temps described the amnesty as a republican imperative, citing the forthcoming national holiday as the perfect occasion on which to grant clemency, because of the historical precedent associated with granting such measures on days of national celebration and because “would not it be better to let some time elapse between the return of the Commune’s leaders and the [general] elections of 1881?” Le Temps, June 20, 1880.

648 Ibid.
nine years and also “it was perhaps not necessary to say that the exiles who [will] return to France have committed heinous crimes” that they can be dangerous and that the police might need to quell unrest, such statements, especially in an explanatory memorandum, smacked of government belligerence and besides, “everyone knows that the police will perform as before the amnesty [and] imprison citizens who disturb the public tranquility.”\textsuperscript{649} On the contrary, according to \textit{Le Temps} and President Freycinet, it was specifically the pacified composure of Paris during the May 23 commemoration coupled with “the good sense of the people of Lyon in the recent election” that they were attempting to safeguard by taking the matter of amnesty into their own hands; in other words, the Government was honoring the will of the people because of their comportment and apparent respect for the Republic’s laws and institutions.\textsuperscript{650} Accordingly, “the intransigent policy cannot claim any great part in this…result” because it was precisely the population’s rejection of intransigence that inspired the Government’s necessary confidence prior to proposing such a sweeping clemency.\textsuperscript{651} Thus, despite the inconvenient fact of Trinquet’s popularity in Belleville (along with the other socialist victories of 1879—1880), the amnesty was becoming assimilated with mainstream republicanism.

\textsuperscript{649} \textit{La Presse}, June 21, 1880, “Amnistions le Cabinet”
\textsuperscript{650} \textit{Le Temps}, June 21, 1880. See also Chamber of Deputies, \textit{Annales}, session ordinaire 1880, Vol. VIII, pp. 147-148. In Freycinet’s opening remarks before the Chamber on June 19th he cited “the unshaken calm of the Parisian population in the presence of seditious indictments [the commemoration of \textit{la semaine sanglante}]…, the elections as Lyons, which was the triumph of legality, … and the nearness of the national festival of 14 July” as being propitious to the promulgation of a general amnesty.
\textsuperscript{651} \textit{Le Temps}, June 21, 1880. See also \textit{Le Petit Parisien}, June 21, 1880, « La victoire de l’opinion » in which the author similarly contends that it was the French population, “by its attitude, its calm, [and] its perseverance, [that] has vanquished the last hesitations of an undecided Ministry.”
The republican press’ analysis of Trinquet’s victory was sparse, and often spun in such a way as to validate the government’s decision to take on the passage of amnesty as a means to undermine the Socialists, especially before the 1881 general election. As analyzed by *Le Temps*, Trinquet’s election was “proof that amnesty was only a pretext” for the Socialists’ revolutionary agenda, “the proof is that after the filing of the amnesty proposal [his] candidacy was maintained.”\textsuperscript{652} Similarly, *Le Petit Parisien* asserted that it had initially abstained from commenting on Trinquet’s victory because of the delicate situation presented by the Government’s amnesty proposal which had the effect of “changing everything” and subsequently, the journal argued, Trinquet’s election, which had the goal of “opening the government’s eyes” to the popularity of amnesty, is now of little significance; thereby obscuring the duality of the Socialist’s campaigns in popularizing the cause of amnesty but also encouraging a class-based political orientation for working-class voters. Then the article shifts the focus back to the amnesty which is presented as a republican cause and argues that Trinquet’s success might have an adverse effect of the bill’s passage, that it was unnecessary and concludes by pleading to “all our friends, all who have in their hearts the amnesty’s success, all those who [have been] fighting with us for several years” for this purpose, “to not give [the credit of] this joy to the enemies of the Republic.”\textsuperscript{653} In this way, republican journalists recast the Socialists’

\textsuperscript{652} *Le Temps*, June 21, 1880.

\textsuperscript{653} *Le Petit Parisien*, June 21, 1880. The front page of this edition was emblazoned, in large black letters: “Le Projet d’Amnistie”. The article on Trinquet’s election was comparatively minute and dominated by considerations of the amnesty bill. The short article began in the bottom right hand corner of the first page, with no headline, and concluded in the upper left-hand corner of the second page; this illustrates the
amnesty-campaigns as unnecessary and perhaps even dangerous for the new bill’s passage, the success of which, it was maintained, had nothing whatsoever to do with the efforts of these revolutionary factions.

Two of the most common journalistic reflections on the Government’s amnesty bill were also two of the most important in terms of repairing the Opportunist image. The first, which has already been hinted at, was that introducing the plenary amnesty was evidence that the republican regime respected popular opinion. This was an important assertion in light of the 1879—1880 election invalidations and incidents of repressing public assembly rights, which the Socialists had zealously publicized. Thus even while prefacing that “we cannot applaud [the Government’s motion]. It is what it should be. It is as we requested…repeatedly,” La Presse went on to acerbically state “it is good that the Government publicly recognizes that it has a duty to yield to [public] opinion. It is good that it yields and undertakes” by this show of obedience to always in the future act in “reflection of the national will.” The other journalistic commonality was that the credit for the bill’s introduction should be understood as belonging solely to the Opportunist majority. For example, Le Temps began its analysis on the bill by stating “the Government, in making this decision was obedient to political considerations it was hard to ignore…the amnesty is a measure that interests the highest degree of public order;”

manner in which Trinquet’s success was buried amid self-congratulatory republican analysis of the amnesty’s immanent passage.

654 See Chapter five.
655 La Presse, “Amnistions le Cabinet,” June 21, 1880; see Bellanger, p. 213 for La Presse’s antagonism with the Freycinet Government.
and “It is the thoughtful, far-sighted, republican majority, which has made a total amnesty, without distinction or exclusion, possible. It is therefore, not to the Radicals, but to the moderates [Opportunists] that the men of 1871 owe their return to France.” These statements were sometimes moderated by references to a new found republican consensus on the efficacy of general amnesty; more often than not, these claims to unity were pronounced by the Opportunists, none more so than by Gambetta himself.

On the eve of Trinquet’s election Gambetta gave two speeches. One was in Père-Lachaise in support of his protégé, Latelle, in which Gambetta was ominously shouted down by cries of “Vive Trinquet! Vive l’Amnistie!” The second speech had, tellingly, nothing whatsoever to do with his preferred candidate, but rather was one in support of the amnesty. This was Gambetta at his political best, already deftly maneuvering past the foreseen failure of his candidate; positioning himself at the helm of the amnesty’s imminent passage. Speaking before Bellevillois workers who had taken it upon themselves to make a free and secular primary school in their neighborhood, Gambetta praised their efforts as being consistent with true republican values but the bulk of his speech was clearly intended to capitalize on the amnesty bill so as to mitigate the on-going defection of his constituency to revolutionary candidates:

My dear fellow citizens…I have saved the best memories of the times we spent together. You have already learned the good news. I will confirm it. The amnesty was proposed to the Chambers by the government…One is often faced with difficulties that are not always understood. You know that

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656 Le Temps, June 21, 1880.
I can count on obstacles, but once I take a step forward, I never go back. It was [because of] respect for legality that the conviction was made [so] gradually in the mind for the issue of amnesty, and it will always be so for all progress. Remember there is always one thing that all sincere republicans must have in their heart to observe; that is respect for the law. (Applause coupled with shouts of Vive l’Amnistie!) A long time ago we would have had the amnesty, if on both sides, one had shown oneself to be wiser and more skillful. But what good is it to recriminate? Resume your games and welcome together once again the Republic.657

Gambetta’s speech ended amidst cries of Vive la République! Vive l’Amnistie! Vive Gambetta! His message of republican respect for law and order went over well with this crowd, as did his vague reference to the possibility that amnesty could have passed earlier had its proponents engaged with more skill, and even casting off a nearly decade long battle by rhetorically asking something that could be read as “why grumble?” Such statements flew in the face of the Socialists’ and the Communards’ descriptions of misery and depravity they had suffered over the past nine years and by which they were beginning to enjoy electoral success.

Because the amnesty was coming, and no one abreast of parliamentary politics expected the government’s bill to fail, the emotion-laden hostility toward republican machinations surrounding the issue was effectively beginning to dissipate. Not enough to prevent Trinquet’s success the following day, but without a doubt it had a stabilizing effect within working-class communities to the favor of mainstream republicans, especially the Radicals. Its coinciding with the first celebration of the national holiday

was an important factor in that stabilization. Indeed, prior to leaving the ball, Gambetta took the opportunity to underscore the intended impact of the general amnesty coinciding with the first celebration of the national fête, at least in terms of the audience before which he was pronouncing:

I could not leave without saying...I am charmed and grateful for the welcome you have given me. The celebration today is only a prelude to the fête of 14 July. You will celebrate [that day] with even more enthusiasm [when] you greet those who reenter the country and there will be no space in the heart [except] feelings of brotherhood and unity. The [national holiday, which will] confuse the people, the army, and the government in a common brotherhood, will be a truly national party and affirm that France is ready to resume its role in the history of the progress of the working world, because it must not be forgotten that our fathers, who were conscious of the role for France, did not [simply] proclaim the rights of citizens, but the rights of Man.\textsuperscript{658}

This statement, which prominently proclaimed the Third Republic’s revolutionary origins, was clearly intended to inspire the Bellevillois constituency’s confidence in the mainstream republican agenda as were the amnesty’s ultimate passage and the first national celebration of 14 July.

**Domesticating the Revolution’s Legacy**

On July 11, 1880 a near-general amnesty passed for those convicted of crimes in relation to the Commune.\textsuperscript{659} During the Chamber and Senate debates over the

\textsuperscript{658} Le Figaro, June 21, 1880.
\textsuperscript{659} All but 14 men were included in this bill.
Government’s bill the amnesty was described by proponents in political terms as necessary in order to close a divisive chapter in the Republic’s short history, as an expression of confidence in the young Republic, and “a pledge that the Government feels itself in a position to spike any attempt at disorder…[a] policy of moderation, wisdom, and firmness which—to the present—has guaranteed the moderate regular progress of our republican institutions.” It was deemed necessary to remove the issue as a potential stumping point before the 1881 general elections and, according to Gambetta, as a means by which the true political platforms of the myriad factions could come to lights. In reference to Trinquet’s election Gambetta remarked that it was an example of the amnesty’s ability to strengthen the power of an otherwise marginal political faction: amnesty “is the last tactic of a party whose sole and indispensable weapon you are going to shatter in its hand.”

Gambetta’s assessment was that by removing amnesty as a rallying call for the Socialists the working class would remain—or return to—the mainstream republican fold and that to be most effective, it needed to be enacted before the July 14 celebration. On that day, the Republic’s new tricolor flag would be distributed to the republican army “in front of the country itself…, in front of the Executive, in front of the nation represented by its faithful mandataries [sic], in front of [the] Army…, you must close the book on these ten years and put the tombstone of forgetfulness on the last traces of the Chamber’s Committee report.  

660 Chamber of Deputies, Annales, session ordinaire 1880, Vol. VIII, pp. 201-202. This quote is from the Chamber’s Committee report.  
661 For the full transcript of Gambetta’s speech before the Chamber, see Chamber of Deputies, Annales, session ordinaire, 1880 Vol. VIII, 210-214.
Commune… [and make unequivocal] that there is only one France and one Republic."\footnote{662}

This was a direct attack on the competing agendas for the Republic’s orientation and an unapologetic declaration of political intent to transcend republican and revolutionary discord through symbolic acts that consigned one revolt to oblivion and celebrated a singular narrative of the Revolution’s triumph and the Republic’s heritage. In this manner Gambetta was insisting that the amnesty, combined with the national holiday, would have a unifying effect on the national conscience; it would begin a new era of republican unity and mitigate the factionalism that characterized not simply the past ten years of the Third Republic but nearly one hundred years of republican schisms. Immediately following Gambetta’s speech the vote was taken; the Government’s general amnesty bill passed with 312 votes from all members of the Republican Union, all Radicals, and even some Bonapartists, including Cassagnac; the 136 nays came, as was expected, almost entirely from the monarchist and Bonapartist camps.\footnote{663} The bill then passed to the Senate where things turned sour.

During the Senate debates, the monarchists attacked the bill along with the designation of July 14 as the national holiday by assimilating the atrocities committed by

\footnote{662} Chamber of Deputies, \textit{Annales}, session oridinaire, 1880 Vol. VIII, 210-214, for Gambetta’s speech before the Chamber and pp. 204-210 for Paul de Cassagnac’s opposing arguments. Gambetta’s incorporation of the Trinquet election into his pro-amnesty speech was necessitated by Cassagnac’s opposing argument during which he held up the Communard’s success as proof that passing the amnesty would maintain revolutionary ardor rather than mitigate it has evidence by the effects of the partial amnesty, “if there has been anything new, that something has been an aggravation of the revolt, not an increase in pacification.”

\footnote{663} Ibid., p. 214.
the revolutionaries in 1789 with those of the Communards of 1871. In defense of the bill, Freycinet continued to hammer on the theme of the amnesty’s political imperative reminding the Senators, in words remarkably—if not ironically—similar to Lissagary’s that “in all of the big cities and in much of the countryside, [and] the Departments of the Midi, hardly an election has been held without the question of an [of amnesty] having been put to the voters by the candidates.” The Senate was unmoved. When it came to the vote on the amnesty bill, the Senate rejected it by 133 to 145. After several rounds of negotiating amendments it ultimately passed the Bozerain amendment, which granted amnesty to everyone excepting those convicted of arson or murder. This version was quickly rejected by the Chamber. The substitute bill that was finally settled upon by both Houses granted amnesty to “all individuals convicted of taking part in the insurrectionary events of 1870 and 1871 and insurrectional events [thereafter] who are or will be, before July 14, 1880, subject to a decree of pardon, [and thenceforth they] will be considered amnestied, with the exception of individuals” condemned to death or forced labor “for crimes of arson or murder.” The law provided amnesty for these latter individuals in cases where their sentences had, before July 9, 1880, been commuted to “deportation, detention, or banishment;” it also specified that this amnesty applied to the qualified whether they had paid for their crimes or not and those that had paid would not receive

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664 While the amnesty committee was deliberating the July 14 bill was being debated by the Senate which ultimately passed it by 173 to 63. See Senate, *Annales*, session ordinaire 1880, Vol. IX, p. 124.
restitution.\textsuperscript{667} This was the most sweeping \textit{grâce} the Communards had and would ever receive with only 14 individuals excluded. For this very reasons it was denounced almost immediately by enemies of the government.

The amnesty bill that became law on July 11, 1880 was based on the condition of prior pardon and it was not a general amnesty for \textit{all} participants in the Commune. Whereas the monarchist and Bonapartist press accused the Government of bowing to revolutionary forces, the revolutionary Left accused the government of trying to ignore them.\textsuperscript{668} During the Senate debates, for example, \textit{Le Figaro} published a long article oozing with reactionary fear that the forthcoming amnesty was giving Socialist revolutionaries in France and the Communards soon to return, moral encouragement that will naturally lead them “to engage in physical revenge [for the Commune’s defeat] and to seek the realization of their [revolutionary] program by violent means.”\textsuperscript{669} The article concludes with the politically wounding assertion that “in the last year, the demonstrations that have occurred should have made [the republican majority] think [like] the conservatives, but this has not been the case, as we have already seen, the republican press associates with the revolutionary press and the Socialist committees fuse with the Republican committees to praise and celebrate the heroes that burned Paris and shot the hostages.”\textsuperscript{670} Conversely, for the Socialists, the amnesty law was a mutilation of

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\textsuperscript{667} Ibid., p. 259.
\textsuperscript{668} For the conservative response to the amnesty debates and passage see especially \textit{Le Figaro}, June 30 and July 4 and 10, 1880 and also \textit{Le Siècle}, June 28, 1880 and \textit{Le Gaulois} July 10, 1880.
\textsuperscript{669} \textit{Le Figaro}, “Les Révolutionnaires en France,” June 30, 1880, pp. 4-5.
\textsuperscript{670} \textit{Le Figaro}, “Les Révolutionnaires en France,” June 30, 1880, pp. 4-5.
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justice and an infuriating insult to their impact given the verifiable influence that their
efforts had made, through their commemorative demonstrations and at the ballot box, on
the promulgation of the law.

The revolutionary Left had spent a considerable amount of time and resources to
rehabilitate the memory and legacy of the Commune which, because of their association
with the event and its survivors, lent an important amount of political capital to their
candidates and thereby their political agendas. For the Socialists the promulgation of the
law validated the workers’ engagement and illuminated the real power they could wield
against bourgeois politicians and the efficacy of the socialists’ doctrines. The Socialists’
amnesty campaigns were having a galvanizing effect on the French working-class
electorate and reorienting their political identities to one founded in class. By the
condemnatory terms under which the amnesty passed and by the singular credit given to
the parliamentary republicans, the revolutionary Left correctly deduced that passing the
amnesty was nothing more “than a campaign maneuver” of the Opportunist majority; but
they were optimistic.

Due to the long delay during which parliamentary leaders had played politics with
the lives of the men and women in exile, the republicans in power, according to the
Socialists, had shown themselves to be without morality and principals. The law’s 1880
passage was, consequently, deemed beneficial because “as long as the amnesty had not
been granted, there was common ground between bourgeois Radicalism and proletarian
Socialism, and a clean, sharp separation between the two classes would not otherwise be
possible at the time of the elections… but now we are going to be able to go to the ballot box with one exclusive concern: to liberate, to amnesty the nine million French wage slaves locked up in the penal colonies of capitalism." Therein, the Socialists also began their campaign for 1881 by retaining the Communard-worker assimilation and equating the necessity of the former’s amnesty with that of the latter’s.

The Socialists’ optimism regarding the 1881 general elections was perhaps purposefully overstated and, in hindsight, naïvely optimistic. The galvanizing effect of their amnesty campaigns and the defection of previously solid republican constituencies to Socialist candidates was, despite republican efforts to claim otherwise, precisely what Gambetta and the majority of parliamentary republicans sought to thwart by taking over the amnesty’s passage. Yet the June 30th article in *Le Figaro* picked up on an important problem that mainstream republicans were seeking to overcome. Because of their electoral successes and attendance estimates at their rallies and meetings, it was apparent that the amnesty was gaining progressive popular support and that through the Socialists’ activism, the characterization of the Commune and the assimilation of the Communard’s sufferings to that of the French workers had found a welcome reception among a significant constituency. The republicans could not afford to ignore this source of political capital any more than they could neglect the growing appeal of revolutionary doctrines that asserted the primacy of social divisions which was in direct confrontation

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671 L’Égalité, June 23, 1880.
672 *Le Temps*, June 19, 1880, “Journée Parlementaire du Jeudi 17 Juin”. See also, Chamber of Deputies, *Annales*, session ordinaire 1880, Vol. VIII, pp. 147-148 for Freycinet’s speech before the Chamber in which he advocates for the amnesty by asserting “the nearness of the national festival of July Fourteenth.”
with the Opportunist’s unrelenting denial of such chasms. Furthermore how could republicans welcome back unrepentant Communards and, at the same time, mitigate the potential fill-up these men and woman might give to revolutionary factions? By removing the Socialists’ “indispensable weapon” and immediately following that act by the staging of the Republic’s first national holiday with the specified intent of unifying the nation around the liberal Republic they controlled.

The 1880 inauguration of quatorze juillet meant the monopolization of the Third Republic’s foundation narrative by mainstream republicans and particularly the moderates’, at a most opportune time. Just over a year before the next general election, celebrating the new national holiday was an event through which to engage the populace in republican patriotic nationalism in a way that celebrated popular political participation, the triumph of the Republic, and above the others, the first component to the illogical republican motto: “Liberty”.\textsuperscript{673} July 14, 1880 was an official assertion of republican national identity founded in “a common understanding of the past, embodied in a set of political rituals and symbols and a distinct and relatively coherent representation of recent French history—in other words [it was the inauguration of] a common memory.”\textsuperscript{674}

\textsuperscript{673} Mona Ozouf, “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity,” in Pierre Nora, edited and translated by Lawrence D. Kritzman, Realms of Memory, The Construction of the French Past, Vol. III: Symbols, Gallimard, Paris 1992, pp. 91 and 110. As Ozouf reminds us, Paul Bert, a stalwart Gambettist, made this explicit in his L’instruction civique à l’école: “to be a republican is to be bound and determined to live up to the motto of our Republic by making liberty the greatest of goods, acknowledging that equality cannot exist without merit, and accepting that fraternity is solidarity through thick and thin.” While debates regarding the valuation of each of the three terms of the revolutionary and republican triad persisted, the point here is to illustrate that, for the moderates, Liberty was revered above all.

\textsuperscript{674} Hazareesingh, “Conflicts of Memory: Republicanism and the Commemoration of the Past in Modern France,” French history, Vol. 23, No. 2, June 2009, p. 196.
collective memory parliamentary republicans were seeking to generate on 14 July 1880 was one of revolutionary republican unity, wherein the distinction between the Republic and France collapsed just as, they hoped, the day would have a mitigating effect on the recent appeals for sharper class and political divisions.

In this respect, the day, like all other instances of republican cultural activism—emanating from the republican camps—Opportunist and Socialist alike—looked “forward, not backward.” During the day’s celebration in 1880, parliamentary republicans were indeed looking forward, to the 1881 general elections. In “Bastille Day: From Dies Irae to Holiday,” Christian Amalvi focuses significant attention on the day’s meaning with respect to the discord between republicans and monarchists, which was at a fever pitch following the passage of the first of the Ferry laws and the correlating expulsion of the Jesuits. According to Judith Stone, this is done at the expense of intra-republican tensions surrounding the day’s official designation. Yet they both give a cursory consideration to the first official celebration of 14 July in 1880 as a cultural

675 Ibid. See also Charles Rearick Pleasures of the Belle Époque, Op. cit., p. 7, whereon he highlights the propitious circumstances that enabled the sense of beginning: “France was coming out of an economic slump that from 876 to 1879 had brought the highest prices for necessities during the last thirty years of the nineteenth century…. the army that the Germans defeated a decade before had renewed itself…the redistribution of flags… [marked] the military recovery from the shame and humiliation of 1870” and the amnesty had been granted.
676 See Committee report, Chamber of Deputies, Annales, session ordinaire 1880, Vol. VIII, pp. 201-202 and Joughin, pp. 447-448. The favorable report from the Chamber committee on the Government’s amnesty proposal urged the passage of the general amnesty as necessary by specifically citing the 1881 general elections and the forthcoming national holiday.
678 Stone, p. 90, footnote 80.
device for mainstream republican political hegemony vis-à-vis the renascent revolutionary Left. Similarly, Philip Nord describes the celebration of *quatorze juillet*, the official recognition of *la Marseillaise*, and the elevation of the Phrygian cap to the status of official symbol in terms of “skirmishes between republicans and the party of order” without consideration of the political battle republicans were engaged in by the revolutionary Left, nor a reflection that by 1880 moderate republicans *were* the party of order, an identification that French voters validated in October 1877.679

These choices are made because of the persistence of the narrative that in 1879—1880 “apart from the conquests of a few town halls, the various brands of Socialism scarcely counted on the political level. The workers and progressive peasants remained loyal to the Radicals”680 However, this truth is only assured in historical hindsight by the knowledge that in 1881 the moderate’s triumphed at the expense of the Radicals and most certainly the Socialists. The electoral results certainly demonstrate that in the fall of 1881 the Opportunists were successful but the reason for their success was partially, yet crucially, the result of their political and cultural engagement with the Socialists, especially in regard to the Third Republic’s revolutionary heritage and the narration of the era’s closure.

Between 1879 and 1880, the Socialists had demonstrated progressive electoral success based on amnesty platforms and provocations to forge a social-democratic

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680 Mayeur and Rebérioux, p. 75.
Republic, by revolutionary force if necessary. The notion that Socialists “scarcely counted on the political level” ignores the contemporary political reality that they had significantly impacted the politics of amnesty and that while, at that time, workers and “progressive” peasants maintained an electoral affinity to the Radicals, the Socialist’s élan was growing, not abating, and their denunciations of the Third Republic as merely a bourgeois triumph and their calls for class-based political representation were being propagated on a national scale and were in direct opposition to the image of republican social harmony that the Opportunist regime projected. Contemporary politicians, therefore, took them quite seriously as a political threat whose importance might continue to increase unless it was impeded. While there would be another fête nationale prior to the 1881 general elections, because of the polarizing actions taken by the government in relation to the extreme Right and Left between 1879 and 1880, this was the year in which it was most necessary to unequivocally assert the triumph of the (Opportunist) Republic and the end of the revolutionary era.

In the spring of 1880, when the Raspail bill was introduced, republicans were facing reinvigorated intransigence on both extremes of the political spectrum. On February 27, 1879, just after the republican political takeover, the first of what would become known as the Ferry Laws were adopted. During the parliamentary recess in the spring of 1880, the Government superseded the conservative Senate and passed the decrees of March 29th, enabling the enactment of Ferry’s bill including the controversial Article Seven by which unauthorized religious orders—most notably the Jesuits—were
given notice that they were to be expelled from France within the next three months.\footnote{Vizetelly, pp. 235-237. By 1880, because of Ferry’s initiative, members of the clergy had been excluded from the Upper Council of Public Instruction, university degrees were able to be granted by “State Facilities alone,” and by the terms of Article Seven, “nobody should henceforth be able to direct any public or private educational establishment of any kind, or even to exercise the teaching profession, if he belonged to any unauthorized religious associations.” This was the clause that led directly to the expulsion of the Jesuits which tipped off “fierce warfare…between the reactionary and the democratic newspapers.” Indeed, while Raspail’s bill was being debated the French press was preoccupied by the government’s anti-clerical action, the amnesty, and reactions to both. See also, Evelyn Martha Acomb, The French Laic Laws and the First Anticlerical Campaigns of the Third French Republic, Octagon Books, 1967; and Barry Herman Bergen, “Molding Citizens: Ideology, Class, and Primary Education in Nineteenth-Century France,” Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia 1987, pp. 159-163.} These acts served to intensify and militarize Catholic opposition to the Republic, which would naturally benefit the monarchists in 1881.

On the opposite end of the political spectrum, the Socialist’s amnesty-campaigns had begun to make serious in-roads within France’s working class electorate. While confiscating the prerogative of passing the amnesty undercut the acuteness of the Socialists’ appeal, the condemnatory language embedded in the law and on display during the parliamentary debates and the years of delay and politicking over the issue might not be readily forgotten by working-class voters whose affinity with the Communards was being cultivated by the revolutionary Left. A mutual identification that did not cease to be propagated after 1880 and, in the campaigns leading up to 1881, voters would be constantly reminded of such machinations by the politicians and journalists of the extreme Left and the returning Communards themselves. In effect, by June of 1880 when the Senate confirmed the decision to designate 14 July for the nation’s holiday, the mainstream republicans, but especially the Opportunists who held the majority, were quite aware that their hold on power might be subject to revocation in a
little more than a year because of the polarization of opinion resulting from the
confluence of the anti-clerical educational reforms and the politics surrounding
Communard-amnesty.

The 1880 inauguration of *quatroze juillet*, then, should be understood in the
context of these acute political controversies, but also in terms of the broader campaign to
narrate the Third Republic as the triumphant manifestation of the Revolution’s success
and the end of the revolutionary era. *Le Siècle*, reflecting on the day’s success, asserted
“it is necessary that the Revolution has reached its natural coronation, the Republic; it is
also necessary that the Revolution has victoriously crossed the uncertainties and storms
that surround the birth of all new regimes, that it has reduced its enemies to impotence,
that it feels itself strong in the present, and sure of the future. That hour has arrived.”682
The overwhelming show of popular support for the holiday and thereby the Republic in
1880 was validation of this claim. Indeed, only the national holiday, whose relevance and
potency had sustained after nearly a century of revolution and reaction could meet this
narrative need on a nation-wide and particularly emotive scale in which the French
population were not only witnesses to the Republic’s propaganda, but, because of the
directive that festivities be organized on an incredibly local basis, were also unwitting
propagators, both to themselves and to enemies of the regime.683

682 *Le Siècle*, July 14, 1880.
683 See Ihl, p. 335 This phenomenon was rendered by Alfred-Philippe Roll in his *Le 14 juillet, inauguration
du monument à la République* wherein republicanism is no longer a mass movement but the identity of a
nation and in the celebration, “la conscience individuelle s’informe et s’exprime sous le regard de l’autre.”
July 14, 1880, was the apogee of a series of republican efforts taken after their assumption of power to solidify allegiance to the Third Republic generally, and mainstream republicanism specifically. That same year, “Marianne, wearing her Phrygian cap, took up residence at the Hôtel de Ville (which was still under reconstruction); her name has been synonymous with the Republic ever since.”\textsuperscript{684} Earlier, and more importantly, on July 23, 1879 Article 9 of the 1875 constitution was repealed and the chambers moved back to Paris from Versailles. This move is typically described as indicative of the sense of security felt by the Government regarding the Republic’s longevity and their ability to subdue any disturbances originating in the revolutionary city. For example, Joughin writes that it “showed the republican majority less beset by fears of the people than before.”\textsuperscript{685} The theme of confidence is similarly found when Stone writes “by 1880 regular elections had taken place, republican majorities were returned, and the National Assembly had left Versailles for Paris.”\textsuperscript{686} Furthermore, Furet rests his assertion that “the French Revolution was coming into port” on a comparison between the hostile crowd forcing such a move in October of 1789 and “the deputies and senators [of 1879 who] followed the same route…as representatives of the people.”\textsuperscript{687} However, while the government might have been confident that it could meet challenges

\textsuperscript{685} Joughin, p. 278 on the same page, Joughin further asserts that “to listen to the arguments of those who sponsored the move [the bill was introduced by Le Royer, Minister of Justice], there was no longer any need to fear revolution in Paris.”
\textsuperscript{686} Stone, p. 88.
arising from the revolutionary capital, the decision was certainly an offensive move aimed at preempting revolutionary foments and a means by which to strengthen, through symbolism, popular allegiance to the revolutionary legacy and the contemporary majority’s mandate.

During the Senate debates on the bill, Jules Simon explicitly articulated this point whilst debating an intransigent opponent of the bill: “you (Buffet) believe, and you continually say that if we go to Paris, the threat of revolution becomes greater; we, on the contrary, think that when we shall be in Paris, the threat of a revolution will be less.” It was not that the republicans were assured that another revolutionary outburst would not occur, but rather, that being in Paris would prevent it. The bill’s (mostly) Legitimist opponents frequently highlighted the Revolution of 1789, especially the journées of 1793, and they raised the specter of the Commune, in their arguments against the bill, pointing out that the government’s absence from the capital had never mitigated the escalation of revolutionary hostility, in fact, it potentiated it. Furthermore, by moving the government back to Paris, Simon had argued earlier, “the last traces of the year 1871 will…be effaced.” With the military detail designated to safeguard the chambers, especially their presidents, the government would be able to safely, and more effectively gauge popular opinion while, at the same time, striking a pose of confidence and

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689 Ibid., p. 91.
accessibility which was profoundly important in terms of the Republic’s representational and democratic image.690

The 1879 decision to officially recognize the revolutionary hymn, la Marseillaise, as the national anthem enabled the same authentication of republican homage to the revolutionary tradition. This too had the deflating effect that officialdom necessarily has on the power of popular insurgent symbolism. Thus, the once revolutionary emblem, or rallying cry, was drained of its potential to insight rebellion, let alone revolution. In “La Marseillaise,” Michel Vovelle asserts “it is perhaps rather facile and superficial yet nonetheless legitimate to conclude that the official adoption of the song as France’s national anthem, as the private property of the Third Republican bourgeoisie and official music suitable for any occasion, deprived it of the distinctive flavor it once possessed for the masses.” Yet his conclusion “what began as a revolutionary battle cry had become an instrument of national pride in the Age of Imperialism,” while incontrovertible,

690 Ibid., see p. 19 regarding the military detail accorded by the bill to protect the chamber representative. These included special protection for the chambers’ presidents and measures to limit public interference: “any summons made by publicly delivered speeches, or by written or printed placards or handbills at a rally on a public way fare which has the purpose of discussing, drawing up, or presenting petitions, declarations, or address to the chambers...whether or not the call shall have had an effect, will be punishable with the penalties prescribed by Paragraph I of Article 5 of the law of June 7, 1848.” Such precautions, along with Simon’s pronouncements in the Senate, illuminate the inaccuracy of the narrative that the move was indicative of government’s supreme confidence even accepting such rhetoric as “we have neither the same laws, nor the same customs, nor the same conditions of government, nor the same social situation” which in the past have precipitated disturbances in the revolutionary city.
neglects another meaningful consideration that this was precisely what the Republicans in power were seeking in undertaking such official recognitions.692

In the last years of the 1870s, the memory of the Revolution sustained deeply emotional and partisan perspectives, particularly in light of the Paris Commune. There were numerous claimants to the Revolution’s heritage, including the extreme Left, factions of which continued to incite revolutionary action to fulfill what many saw as the Revolution’s unfinished goals and denounced the Third Republic as nothing more than the triumph of the bourgeoisie. Officially sanctioning and executing the national holiday was an important step to take in conjunction with the move back to Paris and the official adoption of *la Marseillaise*. Each of these moves were carried out with contemporary political rivalries in mind and with the imperative of symbolically signaling the end to the revolutionary era in a way that privileged the mainstream republican narrative of the Third Republic’s origins and domesticated the memories ensconced in these symbols to undercut their potential to sustain contemporary revolutionary movements.

These official sanctions enabled parliamentary republicans to sustain the contemporary social capital associated with a revolutionary heritage and at the same time project an image of a post-revolutionary political reality at a time when the revolutionary Left was beginning to enjoy a broader base and on the eve of the Communards’ return. In legitimating such symbols, mainstream republicans were motivated by the desire to

692 Ibid.
sustain the allegiance of not only moderate and conservative republican voters but reacquire the unflinching support of French working class. This is not to say that July 14, 1880 was simply a cynically contrived manifestation of republican campaigning. In fact, it was homage to the Republic’s heritage in the sincerest and most universal sense possible and an official recognition of the day’s commemoration which republicans had been observing semi-clandestinely since 1872, but its contemporary political utility was a paramount consideration for all parties involved in its emergence, in that year specifically.

*Quatorze juillet’s* duality as a commemoration of the storming of the Bastille in 1789 and the 1790 *Fête de la Federation* meant that the designation of this holiday enabled the celebration of the Revolution’s supposed democratizing and also unifying legacy. This biformity provided the space in which, it was hoped, Moderates could engage in the day’s revelry without fear that it was a celebrating insurrection, conservative opinion might be made more amenable toward the Republic, and workers could take part in the commemoration of an event they identified with more readily than any other that marked the republican calendar of commemoration. These intentions are evident in the organization of the day’s main events: the military’s review, oath of loyalty to the Republic, and distribution of flags at Longchamps, and in the popular

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693 Rearick, *Pleasures of the Belle Époque*, Op. cit., p. 4; and Ihl, p. 111. For example, Ihl highlights the lack of enthusiasm for the May 30, 1878 centenary ration of Voltaire as a factor in settling on July 14th for the national holiday the “symbolic primacy” of which “was the result of intense mobilization” on the part of the republican press, especially the Radicals whose efforts also included the 1879 Municipal Council (dominated by the Radicals) competition for a monument to the Republic which was unveiled during the July 14, 1880 celebration.
neighborhood celebrations that were independently organized according to the tastes of the local residents and accompanied by fireworks displays ignited from six locations in the capital city alone.

The military emphasis announced the Republic’s character of order and stability and recalled the revolutionary union of the “army and the nation [which] have only one heart and one soul,” the distribution of the tricolor flags symbolized the army’s role as defenders of “the honor, territory, and laws of the French Republic,” and the oath of loyalty made that explicit.\textsuperscript{694} This was an important factor for the regime in power. Not only did it honor the revolutionary role of the national army, but it symbolized the military’s loyalty to the Republic, even over the objections of many officers, and at a time when monarchist and religious opposition to the Opportunist regime was acute.\textsuperscript{695}

The government’s decision to have the departments and even the arrondissements organize their celebrations independently gave symbolic expression to the Revolution’s democratic legacy and demonstrated allegiance to the Republic as manifested on a local basis which, when taken together, became national and seemingly organic. This image of 14 July had been asserted by Gambetta as early as 1872 when he described the storming of the Bastille as something undertaken by soldiers and workers, bourgeois Parisians, and

\textsuperscript{694} La République Française, July 14, 1880.
\textsuperscript{695} See Amalvi, “Bastille Day: from Dies Irae to Holiday,” in Nora, Op. cit., p. 133 where he describes that many officers “took part only under duress.”
provincial peasants standing together in “moral Federation.” The Radicals keenly supported this aspect; they were insistent that the holiday promote a mood of social harmony and an underscoring that July 14, 1789 marked the beginning of popular sovereignty, just as July 14, 1880 symbolized the Third Republic’s commitment to this revolutionary achievement. Such a focus was in line with the Radical’s broader democratizing agenda and a means by which to rebuff Socialist denunciations that they were betrayers of the Revolution’s social and democratic legacy. Contemporaries keenly understood this. Writing in La Justice, the day after the Chamber approved the Raspail bill and three days after Blanqui’s defeat in Lyon, Ernest Roche made this point and the direct correlation between the amnesty and the fête nationale explicit: “the best way to celebrate the anniversary of this immortal date, when the people of Paris, in a sublime burst of political genius and patriotism, opened the era of democracy, is precisely [by] proclaiming the plenary amnesty. Without it, we decreed the public rejoicings in vain…; the painful memories of the past will still hover over the great republican city that for centuries [has] shed its blood for national emancipation, for justice, for popular rights.”

The purposeful conjunction of the celebration of the storming of the Bastille with the amnesty of the Communards was carried out with doubly propitious intentions. The confluence meant an implicit incorporation of the Commune into France’s revolutionary history, yet one that acknowledged the Commune as the era’s tragic and misguided

697 Ernest Roche, La Justice, June 9, 1880, “L’Election de Lyon et L’Amnistie”.
bookend. Contrary to the preemptory castigations of the conservative-Right, neither the amnesty nor *quatorze juillet* celebrated insurrection especially not that of the Communards. As intended, the dominant narrative of the amnesty remained one of clemency and fraternal forgiveness. Moreover, just as June 30, 1878 had an aspect of forgetting a recent crisis, the conjunction of the celebration and the amnesty was designed to facilitate an obfuscation of the violent and divisive Parisian uprising and 10 years of national discord regarding fate of survivors and the event’s legacy. The amnesty was meant to end an incredibly contentious controversy that had plagued the Third Republic since the spring of 1871 while the celebration of the Revolution’s triumph on July 14, 1880 was designed to herald a new chapter for modern France. The new era would be one in which its republican governance was supported by not only urban and traditionally republican strongholds, but also by *la France profonde*, unified in allegiance to the Third Republic which the national celebration would symbolize. This might mitigate conservative and revolutionary opponents of the regime and, should the day be extensively embraced, it would demonstrate to the regime’s antagonists, extensive and socially diverse allegiance to the Third Republic and, by association, the Opportunist regime.

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698 A simple glance at any of the conservative press organs between the passage of the Raspail bill and the day after the *fête nationale* shows such fears and castigations. For example, on July 12, 1880 *Le Figaro* published this remark: “the 14th July is less the festival of the army than the triumph of the Commune.” Furthermore, an editorial in *Le Figaro*, July 15, 1880 describes the day as a commemoration of “some heads on the ends of pikes.” Even earlier, August Vitu, writing in response to the Parisian Municipal Council’s proposal to designate July 14 for the national holiday, conservatives countered “one does not celebrate liberty by carrying severed heads around on pikes… [and the day] reminds us not only of the triumph of insurrection but above all of scenes of carnage and cannibalism that actually outstripped the Terror for which they laid the groundwork.” *Le Contrepoison, extrait du Figaro du 21 mai 1878*, p. 4.
The 1880 celebration of *quatorze juillet* was an immense success in terms of wide-spread participation and the conveyance of the precise homage to the Great Revolution that the republican organizers were seeking to impart. In compliance with official directives, every arrondissement and canton took part in one form or another. The entire city of Paris was bathed in the tricolor, Municipal busts of Marianne were prominently displayed, and plaster mock-ups were paraded through cantons like a cherished saint by local celebrants throughout France. Dancing, drinking, and revelry, in general, went on well into the early hours of the morning and *this*, not the disturbances many had feared, had echoes in the provincial towns. The most grandiose celebrations, however, took place at Place de la Bastille (naturally), but also at the new Place de la République, which was inaugurated on that day along with a plaster mock-up of the forthcoming “Monument to the French Republic.”

The monument and the place perfectly embodied the political agenda for the day’s celebration. The Morice brothers had narrowly won the 1879 Municipal Council contest against the recently amnestied Communard sympathizer, Jules Dalou, whose more leftist-inspired and Phrygian-capped Marianne appeared without the qualifying olive branch extended so prominently by the Marianne of the Morice brothers’ monument. The Place de la République replaced the old Place Château d’Eau and the connecting Avenue des Amandiers was renamed Avenue de la République.

699 The Place de la République replaced the old Place Château d’Eau and the connecting Avenue des Amandiers was renamed Avenue de la République.
700 Michalski, pp. 19-20 and D. Imbert, “Le Monument des frères Morice, place de la République,” in Thérèse Burollet ed., *Quand Paris dansait avec Marianne: 1789—1989*, exhibition catalogue: Musée du Petit Palais, Paris 1989, p. Dalou’s statue “Triumph of the Republic” in which Marianne is depicted on a global march accompanied by labor, freedom (riding the lion), and justice, was unveiled at Place de la Nation—a choice which itself propagated the indivisibility between the nation and the Republic—on
Morice brothers’ statue was surrounded by the republican trinity and bronzed renditions of the revolutionary events between 1789 and 1792, thereby displaying precisely the non-radical phases of the revolutionary era that the government sought to emphasize in 1880. Moreover, “the only unconventional element,” the lion in the foreground, guarded nothing more than the ballot box, i.e., the sole source of popular political expression that the liberal Republic would officially recognize.

The Place de la République is conveniently situated in the heart of the working-class East Paris. According to Maurice Agulhon, the choice of place for the statue “could be justified if need be by arguing that the monument would then be as close as possible to the Republic’s most ardent defenders,” the people of the working-class neighborhoods. However, as with the other symbolic steps described above, this should be understood as an attempt to edify this constituency, at this particular time, in terms of civic comportment. The working classes, especially in the capital city, were actively being supplicated to by the factions of the renascent revolutionary Left to reject the Republic in its liberal orientation, and not without electoral consequences. Choosing this site for the statue underscored, to this population, in particular, the Republic’s respect only for September 21, 1889, the same year as the Revolution’s centennial but on a date specifically commemorating the declaration of the First Republic, and on the eve of a significant loss for the Boulangists. The Second unveiling occurred at an equally perilous time for the Republic, November 19, 1899 on the heels of Dreyfus’ presidential pardon, and witnessed by a quarter of a million people including more than sixteen hundred workers and Socialists who were allowed to openly carry their red flags because of the easing of tensions on the Left caused by the anti-Dreyfusard Right. See Michalski, pp. 22-24. It bears highlighting that Dalou was commissioned to construct the tombs of Blanqui, Amouroux, Floquet, and Victor Noir, among others.

701 Moments from 1789, 1792, 1830, 1848, and the Third Republic’s declaration in 1870 are depicted.
legality in terms of popular political expression, symbolized by the lion guarding nothing more than the ballot box. This meant that the Opportunist government’s symbol of the Republic’s triumph, and the revolutionary gains it would safeguard, would be prominently displayed on this day and forever thereafter at ground-zero in the battle over the Revolution’s legacy and contestations over the type of Republic it gave rise to.

Because of the confluence of this celebration of the Revolution and the return of some of the Communards, there was heightened fear that the day could end in violence and that any “troubles in the capital might have echoes in provincial cities.” As a result, police surveillance was prolific, yet just as with nearly all other moments of potential insurrection, the crowds were not menacing, in fact they were jubilant. Indeed the day “may be said to have opened the belle époque.” In the republican press (naturally) but also in police reports the day was an overwhelming success in terms of popular participation. Not only was there an outpouring of popular revelry, but also the crowd “had policed itself with good taste and tact.” La République Française noted that the two million people of Paris participated without disturbance” and Le Siècle described its admiration that despite conservative fears the Luxembourg Palace had not burned and “the people of Paris and the four or five thousand citizens drawn from all the

703 APP Ba 471, pc. 921, Rapport du cabinet, 13, July 1880. As described in chapter one, this period witnessed remarkable and persistent anxiety over “crowd” participation and comportment in political-cultural events.
705 APP Ba 471, pc 305, Le Siècle, July 16, 1880; see also Le Rappel, July 17, 1880.
departments have been so prodigious in their calm, good sense, and political wisdom.\textsuperscript{706} In fact, French society projected exactly the image that the Government had hoped for leading the \textit{Journal des Debats} to conclude “the Republic is established, and is so uncontested that people no longer bother to acclaim it: the passionate acclamations of yesterday were a defense and even a war cry that today has no reason.”\textsuperscript{707} This is not to say that dissonance had disappeared under the tricolor banner of the republican nation, there were many that held the day’s celebrations in contempt. However, incidents of symbolic counter-narration and dissidence by monarchists and partisans of the revolutionary Left were sporadic and easily subdued.\textsuperscript{708}

At the Place de la République police reports of a gathering of some 2,000 persons include details about various groups of youth parading with Phrygian caps and holding red flags yet shouting, without the qualifiers of “social” or “democratic”, “Vive la République!” Other youths adorned in tricolor flags and touting banners announcing themselves as “Les Enfants de Montmartre” climbed on to the plaster statue and with the favor of the audience sang the \textit{la Marseillaise} with overheard shouts of “Vive la Republique! Vive l’Amnistie!” There were several recorded shouts of “Vivre la

\textsuperscript{706} \textit{Le Siècle}, July 16, 1880. The reference to the Luxembourg Palace was in light of the Radical and revolutionary-Left’s conviction that in order for the Republic to be truly democratic and representative the Senate (along with the presidency) should be abolished.

\textsuperscript{707} \textit{Journal des débats politiques et littéraires}, July 15, 1880.

\textsuperscript{708} For descriptions of the conservative Right’s protests, which were equally fragmented and obscured by the outpouring of national participation, see Amalvi, “Bastille Day: from Dies Irae to Holiday,” in Nora, Op. cit., pp. 12-124 and 129-131; and Lehning, p. 66. APP Ba 471 contains numerous police reports of seditious cries and the unfurling of white and red flags in opposition to the tricolor which blanketed the city of Paris on July 14, 1880; however, based on the police reports and in concurrence with Amalvi, these were isolated incidents that the police chose, more often than not, to ignore; when flags were confiscated it was accomplished without violence or serious resistance.
Commune!” and *Le Figaro* described the singing of seditious songs by men in the 17th arrondissement “smelling of petrol,” a tellingly descriptive report from this conservative journal. For the most part, by their non-menacing presence and participation alone, these groups were yielding to the official narrative of the Revolution’s triumph and, thereby, to the Republic in 1880.\(^{709}\)

Each of the factions of the revolutionary Left, including the Socialists, had called on their supporters and target constituencies to boycott the day in remembrance of those fallen at the hands of the, self-congratulatory, Republic in 1871. On the day after Raspail introduced the bill, A. Le Roy wrote “we (the proletariat) have nothing to commemorate except our defeats, and the two most recent [and] most painful ones we owe to the bourgeoisie.”\(^{710}\) Guesde and his followers within the Parti Ouvrier very publically boycotted the day citing that “Its Bastille’s were still to be taken.”\(^{711}\) Leading up to this decision, on July 5\(^{th}\), the Socialist Committee for Aid to the Amnestied and Non-Amnestied held a private meeting during which a counter commemoration was planned. The organizers, including Perrin and Nathalie Le Mel joined Guesde and Labusquière to advocate against a boycott and in favor of a counter-commemoration “since it had been the proletariat which took the Bastille, [thus a] Socialist fête on July 14” should be carried out. In case, a boycott or a counter-demonstration, retribution for the repression of the

\(^{709}\) APP, Ba 471: “Fête Nationale 1880”, for reports of seditious (red) flag displays see pieces: 6, 17, 311, 313, 319, 358; piece 1 describes shouts of “Vive la Commune”; piece 266 describes unsuccessful socialist boycotts.

\(^{710}\) *Le Prolétaire*, May 22, 1880.

\(^{711}\) *L’Égalité*, July 14, 1880.
May 23 commemoration of *Semaine sanglante* was repeatedly asserted as a primary motivating factor. The meeting adopted a resolution that a wreath be carried to Pere-Lachaise and laid at the Mur des Fédérés. The Workingmen’s Union of the Seine formally boycotted the day, in contrast to the more conservative Union of Workers’ Syndical Chambers. As explained by A. Levy, “our adhesion had necessarily to be made dependent upon the voting of the plenary amnesty [however,] the softness of the Deputies and the duplicity of the Government” ushered in a mutilated justice and then condescended to stage this national commemoration; “being bourgeois, they are trafficking in the proletarians’ right. And they invite us to their fêtes!” As Joughin bluntly states, “words, in short were all that the Socialists could use on this July 14th.” Indeed, there was no widespread boycott, no massive [or even moderate] counter-demonstrations. The local Socialist committee of the twelfth arrondissement might sell red carnations, a few red flags might have been unfurled, Trinquet’s lithograph might have sold for 25 centimes, but all of this was drowned in the republican effervescence on display throughout France on that day. Moreover, the neighborhoods who had so deeply supported the Commune—Belleville, Montmartre, Batignolles, etc., displayed

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712 APP, Ba 471, piece 83; *Le Figaro*, July 6, 1880.
713 Joughin, p. 479.
714 *Le Prolétaire*, July 14-17, 1880, and July 24, 1880; Joughin, p. 479.
715 Joughin, p. 473.
some of the most jubilation of all and were joined in their revelry by some of the recent returnees.717

Not only did Commune sympathizers participate in the day’s celebrations but some former Communards did too, thereby lending their celebrity to buttress the Republic’s revolutionary origins while also requisitioning the Commune’s place within that heritage. Henri Rochefort, who arrived in Paris on July 12 to an enormous reception at the Gare du Nord, was certainly not forgiving of the nearly decade long exile he had endured and he was estranged from most of his former political allies who had abstained from the Commune, most notably, Gambetta. However, while Rochefort founded the aptly titled *L’Intransigeant* on July 14, 1880, its first publication was full of positive descriptions of national holiday and Rochefort himself did not boycott the day, even if he did not seek to participate in any official capacity. This was akin to most of the recent returnee’s actions in regard to the celebrations thereby enabling the validation of the republican projections of national concord and affability. Gambetta went to great lengths to propagate this image, thereby positioning himself in such a way as to absorb as much political capital associated with the returnees as possible without alienating more moderate and conservative republican constituencies. Thus it was that on July 14, 1880, André Gill’s banner that depicted Gambetta shaking hands with a recent returnee was

717 For these sporadic counter-demonstrations, see Joughin, p. 480.
hung, pointedly, across the rue Rochechouart in the ninth arrondissement.\textsuperscript{718} Indeed, the same man who in 1871 refused to enter the capital city to help mediate a resolution alongside Clemenceau, Gambetta, who for nearly ten years avoided the controversy inherent in the amnesty, who, as late as 1879, abstained from voting on the amnesty, emerged in the summer of 1880 as the man who brought the amnesty\textsuperscript{719}

On July 14, 1880, Gambetta delivered the following address to his Belleville constituency:

It is not a discourse I want to address to you; it is the expression of my thanks, of my recognition for the admirable organization of this festival, which encloses with dignity the series of patriotic rejoicings of our immortal Paris. You understood, and you understood it all unanimously… that after ninety-one years of persistent fight, one day finally was to rise for the fatherland, a day where, in a unanimous momentum, all the French…would come together from one end of the territory to the other, and acclaim, indissoluble, France and the Republic. And it is here, on these heights which one so often denounced with the apathy or the fear of ignorant fellow citizens, which it was advisable to give the spectacle of the immense congress of the population of Belleville abandoning itself, in the middle of order and the most perfect calm, to the joy which fills up all hearts. It is Belleville in effect, that it was advisable to give the brightest refutation to these diatribes, to these perfidies, which has overpowered us for ten years, and which always announces the end of the week [as] the fall of France and the government that we have created; a government which, from now on is established on the consent of all the French people….\textsuperscript{720}

\textsuperscript{718} \textit{Lanterne}, July 16, 1880, «La Fête dans les arrondissements». Gill also placed an arc de triomphe at the beginning of avenue Trudaine that satirized the Republic’s treatment of the Communards, see APP Ba 471 pc 300.


This statement might easily be interpreted as Gambetta’s rhetorical projection of a united France, one in which the Republican and national identity were indissoluble. Such a conclusion would be salient but also superficial. At work in this speech was not only a projection of unity and republican triumphalism, but also an assertion that, with the amnesty and with the commemoration of quatorze juillet, social harmony reigned supreme. The Communards were no threat, their misguided indiscretions had been forgiven, they were repatriated citizens of a welcoming Republic and Belleville, home of the Commune’s most ardent defenders, was at peace with itself and more importantly with the Republic as it was in 1880. In this speech, as in so many others, Gambetta perfectly embodies the political acrobatics involved in the Third Republic’s national aggrandizement and the machinations behind their cultural efforts to forge national republican unanimity via the demystification of the revolutionary tradition.

Such maneuvers were not ignored by the Leftist opponents of the republican regime. However, their failure to garner more than a handful of victories in 1881 signifies that while such machinations might have kept militant hostilities enflamed, they were validated as efficacious for the nation writ-large. The fête nationale did mark the beginning of a new era in modern France, an era that historians often refer to as the period when the Third Republic was consolidated; an era of social harmony and republican national unity made possible by the amnesty and the celebration of the Revolution’s success as embodied by the liberal Third Republic. Anticipating the day’s success, the moderate republican journal, Le Petit Parisien, supported the liberal imagery
and intent for *quatorze juillet* by highlighting the juxtaposition of the amnesty and the national holiday as the determining factors for the apparent end of the revolutionary era and dawn of national republican unity:

> The desire of France was that the date 14 July served as the final point to the history of 18 March, and that the national solemnity which prepares itself, is marked by a great law of appeasement and harmony, recalling the union of all the French on the Champ de Mars of 1790.  

In this way moderates implicitly sanctioned the identification of the Commune as part of the era ignited by the Great Revolution while at the same time paying homage to republican concord of 1790 and, according to their view, of 1880. *Le Siècle* was positively elated in its conclusions of the day’s success when it described the celebrations of July 14, 1880 as having “the most beautiful character and deepest significance…no more families in mourning, no more traces of our discords! What divided us so profoundly is forgotten. Today the Republic really comes into its own.” The outpouring of patriotic republican nationalism on display throughout France on July 14, 1880 exceeded all expectations, which enable the memory of that day in 1880 to be one of a new dawn, wherein the Commune was officially forgiven and thereby drained of its defensive appeal, and republican national unity was the paramount recollection.

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721 *Le Petit Parisien*, “Le Dénouement De L’Amnestie,” July 12, 1880, p. 2. The Champ de Mars was the site where the official ceremonies for the Fête de la Fédération were held in 1790 during the Revolution.  
722 *Le Siècle*, July 14, 1880.
It was within this context of liberal republican triumphalism that most of the Communards returned after July 1880. While Rochefort arrived on July 12th, there were many, including Benoît Malon and Jules Vallès, who returned on the national holiday, thus literally entering amidst the Third Republic’s most self-congratulatory hour. After July 14, more surviving ex-militants began to return, and to take their place within French society, culture and politics, as citizens of the Third Republic. The conservative journals, without surprise, published tracts filled with gloomy predictions about the Communards’ return. Conversely, the Republican newspapers still sailing on the popular spirits of *quatorze juillet* highlighted the union of all French citizens, which the amnesty and the national holiday were meant to symbolize. Yet the returning Communards were not wholly reconciled to the Republic that had persecuted and imprisoned them for nearly a decade. Most still clung to their earlier ideals and many endeavored, once again, to affect revolutionary change.

Numerous returnees became leaders in the Radical-Left, Socialist, Blanquist, and Anarchist circles that began to re-acquire momentum, and this time immutably, with the economic depression of the 1880s and 1890s. Louise Michel, for example, returned from New Caledonia only to spend the rest of her life in and out of prison due to her continued engagement in radical politics. Others, however, sought to use the contemporary situation to bring change from within. For example: Charles-Ferdinand Gambon returned from Switzerland to win election as a Radical candidate to the Chamber of Deputies in 1882; Henri Rochefort was elected to the Chamber as a Blanquist in 1885; Paschal Grouset
won election as a Socialist Deputy from the 12th Arrondissement in 1893; and Félix Pyat returned from London to become a Republican Deputy in 1888. The amnestied ex-Communards entered a new political culture, one in which the Republic had triumphed, and the mainstream of politics were moderate but solidly republican, sagely working to solidify the assimilation of national and Republican identities, most notably in the realms of laicized education and republican patriotic political culture.

The Communards returned to France with a level of popular and political celebrity that often benefitted republican and of course Socialist politicians; this was the case whether the returnee was reconciled to the Republic or not. One such occasion was provided in September 1880, by the return of one of the most famous of the Communards, Louise Michel. Thousands of people were present when her train arrived in Saint-Lazare station, among them were Henri Rochefort, members of the Chamber of Deputies including Clemenceau and Louis Blanc, and former Communards including Oliver Pain and Gustave Arnold. Upon her arrival she was publically embraced by Rochefort and Clemenceau and after a brief speech to the crowd was driven to the home of family in Montmartre. Journalists and police surveillance reports describe the crowd as peaceful, nearly all of them sporting red boutonnieres and other than random shouts of

723 AN, F7 Police Files: 12505 “Louise Michel.” There are conflicting reports to the Minister of Interior; some estimate that 4,000 people were at the station; others place the figure at 8,000. Louise Michel is a salient example of how even when Communards returned, resolutely revolutionary, their political celebrity could still lend legitimacy to the Republic. Michel would go on to spend the rest of her life in and out of French prisons and self-imposed exile due to her ardent support of anarchism. The friendship between Michel and Clemenceau was genuine but it would be naïve not to also acknowledge the political opportunity that by 1880 he and others would derive by taking part in honoring her return in a very public fashion sure to gain the political approval of their working class constituents.
“Vivre l’Amnistie! Vivre la Révolution Social!” the participants were generally in good spirits.⁷²⁴

Serving as proponents of the various amnesty bills but also taking part in these celebrated returns even publicly embracing these revolutionaries, helped politicians such as Clemenceau and Louis Blanc to maintain their political credibility among working-class voters. Thousands of people came out to celebrate the Communards upon their returns and banquets and parties given in their honor frequently accompanied the arrivals. The crowds that these returns generated provided an audience eager to hear the speeches of the Communards, which were often accompanied by ones given by the politicians and party leaders that had come to greet them. The political clout that the Commune and the surviving Communards held among the working class, especially in the capital city, was well-understood by politicians seeking to represent them in national and local governments. Political parties of the far Left were (and remain) by far the most fervent in their claims to the Commune’s heritage but republicans, Opportunists and Radicals alike, also drew on its potency, either through individual relationships or by their association with the amnesty, which after 1880, even Gambetta could claim.

None of the advocates for the amnesty and quatorze juillet were naïve to the fact that these events set the stage for the 1881 general elections. The timing of these moves meant that when the first of the amnestied returned, they did so amidst a celebratory

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⁷²⁴ Ibid.
mood of national fraternity and faith in the existing Republic’s institutions as displayed by the vast majority of French voters. In less than a year, these voters would be called upon to choose whether to safeguard the mandate of the leaders who granted the amnesty, who gave them the national fête, and who were ushering in the era of free and secular education; versus the those who were calling for revolutionary action in order to emancipate the proletariat, a category of persons who were neither dogmatic in such self-descriptions nor entirely amenable to the idea of constructing and perhaps dying on a barricade for causes that, in light of the amnesty’s passage might also be achieved through peaceful means. Moreover, without the amnesty, there was no issue that generated even remotely the same level of emotional resonance as the return of loved ones and heroes could.

In 1881, the voters chose to maintain a Moderate republican majority, electing only one socialist to the Chamber.725 In the municipal elections, the Radicals sustained their hold on local power.726 These races have “not gotten the most ink, they do not seem marked by any major conflict and are distinguished by a great calm.”727 After all, the Moderates had followed a largely uncontroversial path during the year between the first celebration of quatorze juillet and the first election on August 21, 1881. However, important changes were afoot in France during this time—ones that were carefully

725 Antoine Prost, Vocabulaire des proclamations électorales de 1881, 1885 et 1889. Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 1974, p.31. The Opportunists majority was sustained with 407 elected; the Radicals and extreme-Left won 50 seats, and “the monarchists of all kinds, Bonapartists, liberal Catholics and other conservatives, [were] represented by 90” victories combined.
726 Ibid.
727 Ibid.
designed to influence electoral outcomes. On June 30, 1881, the Moderates safeguarded free assembly through a law that permitted public meetings prior to authorization or the formation of a committee. On July 28, 1881, they took another step toward secularization by abolishing the requirement of denominational declarations by cemeteries. And on July 29, 1881, the press restrictions of the Moral Order period, which the republicans had used so freely against their revolutionary rivals in 1879 and 1880, were lifted. These developments greatly assisted the Moderate republicans in preserving their power by strengthening the legitimacy of their heritage. On the eve of the general election, the Moderates were able to demonstrate a commitment to uncontroversial republican values. Similarly, during the July 14, 1881, celebrations—a mere month before the elections that would secure their legislative control—they were, once again, able to use these values to proclaim that the Third Republic embodied the Revolution’s triumph.

This combination of symbolic festivity and strategic legislation enabled the republicans to quell the rising appeal of revolutionary groups and played a key role in maintaining the Moderates’ mandate in 1881. Indeed, during the 1881 election campaigns, terms like “revolution” and even “socialism” were downplayed; the dominant theme of the Left (including the Socialist Left) was that of institutional reform.728

728 See Prost, pp. 32-33 wherein he describes that within his sample two candidates are given as “Radical Socialists” do not mention the words socialists, collectivist, or communist in the text of their program. This can be understood as the Radicals’ absorption of the nascent popularity for socialist doctrines, yet carried out with a taming effect. See pp. 38-39 where he describes the virtual absence of the term revolution, parliamentary or otherwise. While there were surly intransigent candidates, not represented in Prost’s sample that might have employed such terms they were, based on the elections’ results, rejected. See also p. 41 where he describes the frequency of juridical themes emanating from the Left-wing republican camp...
Whereas the Socialist speeches and electoral addresses of 1879 and 1880 commonly asserted the efficacy of revolutionary action, the party’s candidates favored reform-based terminology in 1881. These linguistic choices reflect the Socialists’ assessment of their target constituency’s mood. Prior to the amnesty, the working classes were beginning to engage with revolutionary political factions and vote for their candidates; in 1881 and for several years thereafter, this zeal gave way to contentment with reform.\(^729\)

Mainstream republicans, Opportunists, and Radicals alike were successful in domesticating the Revolutionary tradition without creating dissent among republican voters, regardless of their factional preferences. The celebration of *quatorze juillet* beginning in 1880 encouraged individual and community participation, which validated the mission to bind the national and republican identities under a patriotic tricolor banner. Thus, while Leftist factions like the Guesdists and the Blanquists were urging revolutionary action to subvert the liberal Republic, the Moderate majority was symbolically and legislatively proving its commitment to the French revolutionary past. The republicans were forging a future in line with revolutionary goals while glossing over the multiplicity of revolutionary perspectives that emerged from the events of 1789. By 1880, a revolution had, in fact, come to port: the liberal revolution. While the

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\(^729\) See Berlanstein, pp. 156, where he describes the dominant historical understanding that it was not until the Panama Canal Scandal, the demise of Boulangerism, and the Fourmies massacre that socialists were able to gain 17 seats “compared to 14 for the Radicals” in the Chamber elections of 1893; and p. 162 where he similarly describes how not until 1912, “did the SFIO fully replace radicalism in the bannlieu.”
Radicals still stressed the need to fulfill the Revolution’s social and democratic impulses, they did so within the context of existing institutions and never questioned the universal resonance of symbols like *la Marseillaise* and Bastille Day for all republican-minded citizens. For the Radicals, there was no question that the Third Republic was the triumphant (if incomplete) manifestation of the Great Revolution. Yet the factions to the left were hard at work spreading competing emblems. By 1880, other anthems, such as *La Carmagnole*, had begun to replace *la Marseillaise* as a rallying cry among French workers, just as the red flag was displacing the tricolor and other “holidays” were eliciting deep emotions and political sentiments while *quatorze juillet* faded in significance.\(^{730}\)

The 1881 victory of Gambetta and his cohorts should then be understood as one in which the domesticating influence of the Third Republic’s official adoption of revolutionary symbolism played an important role. This tactic was particularly useful for courting the working class vote. The Socialists were targeting this group at the end of the 1870s, with some alarming successes. Yet, in 1881, the vast majority sustained the mainstream republican mandate. The symbolic initiatives and republican legislation that the Moderates undertook between February 1879 and July 1880—most prominently, the near-general amnesty of 1880—managed to tame the revolutionary impulses that had begun to resurface.

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In essence, the republicans warded off revolution by celebrating the revolutionary era as complete. For Gambetta and his followers, this meant a delicate balancing act between embracing the Republic’s revolutionary origins and downplaying its radical and violent phases.\textsuperscript{731} Thus, \textit{quatorze juillet}, as presented by the government in 1880, commemorated the pre-Radical phase of the Revolution. The holiday lauded “the philosophy of the subjective rights of individuals and the forward march of historic reason toward a positive age,” and the Moderates strengthened this message through laicization and the embrace of open political expression via freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and universal suffrage.\textsuperscript{732} The Moderates also buttressed their claims to the revolutionary heritage by consecrating the Revolution’s most cherished symbols: \textit{la Marseillaise}; a government seated in Paris; the storming of the Bastille; the republican army; the tricolor; and even the Phrygian cap, which was so politically toxic immediately following the Commune’s defeat. Touting a revolutionary legacy and incorporating the era’s symbolic touchstones into the daily lives and emotive world of the populace was a winning strategy. It domesticated the renascent appeal of the revolutionary-Left as embodied by the Socialists’ progressive successes, and made the call for rebellion increasingly anachronistic in terms of contemporary logistical reality. This domestication was therefore influential in maintaining the Moderate majority; the

\textsuperscript{731} See Furet, \textit{Revolutionary France}, Op. cit., p. 526 where he asserts that for Gambetta and his followers “it was necessary to base political action on both 1789 and the criticisms of 1789.”

\textsuperscript{732} Ibid.
widely accepted verdict among the French people was that the Third Republic was the Revolution’s triumph made manifest.
CONCLUSION

On May 1, 1890, Jules Guesde and thousands of other anarchist and Socialist leaders, celebrities, and adherents took part in France’s first May Day celebration. They envisioned the day as a spectacular show of working-class solidarity, and most of its organizers and participants wanted the demonstration to be a peaceful one. Nevertheless, the specter of a working-class uprising seemed to be alive in this manifestation, sparking fear in royalists and republicans alike that the event would descend into violence. Ten days prior, Louise Michel had remarked to an interviewer: “There is no good ‘demonstration’ without me.” Michel and a small segment of the day’s supporters, such as the anarchist militant Sébastien Faure, hoped that the occasion would ignite the next revolution. Officials suspected that such people would take steps to make this dream a reality. Thus, Michel and Faure sat in jail during the event, having been preemptively arrested the week before.

Despite the anxieties of the new men of order, the platform of the 1890 May Day demonstration was succinct and reformist: securing the eight-hour work day. Yet Sadi Carnot’s government had just survived the test of General Boulanger and was still grappling with militant strike waves and the influx of Socialist Deputies following the general elections of September–October 1889. In this context, May Day seemed to portend the birth of the next Commune. The government’s repressive attempts to deter

733 La Cocarde, April 20, 1890.
violence harkened back to the Commune’s suppression. In the weeks leading up to May Day, police surveillance agents fanned out, transcribing conversations in working-class cafes, intercepting mail, and infiltrating syndicate meetings, all in an effort to gauge the mood and intentions of likely participants. On May Day, the Bourse de Travail, the Banque de France, and the Stock Exchange were all closed. The Senate remained open but under heavy guard, with 38,000 troops garrisoned in Paris (the highest number since the Commune), and all twenty commissariats sent hourly reports to the Préfecture de Police. Clearly, the government was geared to quell violence, but the day disappointed conservative alarmists and contemporary witnesses, such as Edmond de Goncourt, who were craning their necks to watch the next Commune erupt. Throughout the event, the crowd displayed “perfect tranquility,” and by 2 p.m., the delegates of the May Day Committee had peacefully delivered their petitions to the Chamber of Deputies.

Imbedded in the images of the day were the speakers’ appeals to formal political channels, the organizers’ emphasis on non-violence, and the tranquility of the crowd. While the next May Day celebration would witness violent cataclysms emanating from its anarchist participants, the annual event never triggered the next Commune that contemporaries, conservative and republican alike, were still bracing themselves to meet. The first May Day in 1890 and the republican regime’s excessive show of preemptive

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735 The day was observed in 138 other departments throughout France and in Paris, out of the estimates one to three hundred thousand demonstrators, only several hundred were arrested; based on the police reports and secondary literature, these arrests were the result of isolated incidents of provocation between individuals and police officers.
force demonstrates the degree to which the ghost of the Commune and its legacies continued to affect the Republic’s political landscape, even nineteen years after its crushing defeat. As this dissertation has shown, much of the Republic’s ability to weather such storms stems from the manner in which the Third Republic was established and defined during the 1870s.

Disputes over the fate of the Republic and its character were being negotiated throughout the early Third Republic and were influenced significantly by the legacies of the Paris Commune. These conflicts manifested themselves in parliamentary debates and legislation, electoral campaign messaging, monument constructions, and national festivals. During the 1870s, the Republic’s survival was tenuous and vulnerable to attacks from many sides. Despite the standard historical assessment, this was not a “strangely silent decade,” nor did the defeat of the Commune vanquish “powerful Left-wing critics.” While granting that the decade’s political schisms influenced the Monarchists’ decline in political relevancy, this dissertation has shed significant light on a different facet of the period: the effect of the memories Commune in the context of rivalries between Moderate, Radical, and Socialist republicans. The Commune’s legacy was submerged within battles over the meaning of the Republic and its relationship to the revolutionary era’s heritage. These disputes had an impact on republican factional images and voter appeals, and influenced electoral outcomes.

The trauma of the Paris Commune and its brutal suppression left an indelible mark on France, with legacies that emerged from the ashes in Paris while fires still raged. These ideas immediately informed and validated the social science and medical communities’ assessments of working-class discontent and spurred efforts to prevent any further revolutionary outbursts by pinpointing the Commune’s pathology and the maladies of political and social dissidence. Similarly, the Commune’s harsh defeat helped to encourage provincial confidence in the Republic. Yet it also created a backlash among devotees of the Commune and significant segments of the population who either sympathized with its partisans “from a distance” or were not ideologically entrenched in either the pro- or anti-Commune camps. In September 1871, the Radical republicans introduced the first of thirteen amnesty proposals, touching off a nearly decade-long campaign on behalf of the exiled Communards. This movement, like the legacies of the Commune and its suppression, stirred significant controversy and had a noticeable impact on French politics, culture, and electoral outcomes. As pro-and anti-Commune perspectives consolidated, they informed long-term assessments of the event. Contemporary politicians understood that such memories had an impact on public opinion and electoral allegiances. They could reinforce contempt for the event, validate its severe repression, and rebuff the amnesty of its partisans through efforts like Eugene Appert’s photomontages and Maxime du Camp’s narrations. Conversely, they could use images like those of Bruno Braquehais and narratives like those of Alphonse Lissagaray.

to mitigate the view that the Commune was a working-class frenzy and to generate empathy for its partisans, support for their amnesty, and electoral gains for those advocating on their behalf.

The mainstream political factions appealed for votes by promoting opposing accounts of France’s revolutionary past and fashioning strong post-1871 images. The primary battlefields for these endeavors were cultural projects, such as monument constructions and national celebrations, and campaign politics. Throughout the decade, political rivalries permeated cultural initiatives, including the rebuilding of the Vendôme Column and the Universal Exposition of 1878. These enterprises presented a recovered and united image of France. They helped to raise the Republic’s international profile and undercut the macabre and potentially embarrassing tourism that focused on Paris in ruins. Moreover, they served as ripe opportunities for voter messaging and factional propagandizing.

This dissertation sheds light on the correlation between the Commune’s legacies and competing political claims to the revolutionary tradition and heritage, as well as the incorporation of these motifs by politicians who used culture and symbolism to attract electoral support. For example, the Moderate (or Opportunist) republican response to the Socialist renaissance of 1879—1880 included the passage of a sweeping amnesty (for all but fourteen of the Communards), the official adoption of la Marseillaise, the government’s move from Versailles back to Paris, the embrace of Marianne with her Phrygian cap, and the designation of quatorze juillet as the Republic’s national holiday.
All of these actions were politically motivated. They were not simply the natural consequences of the republicans’ victory over their monarchist rivals in 1879, but an important part of the Moderate republican strategy. The Moderates took these particular steps at this particular time as a result of the electoral rivalries that existed between opposing republican groups on the eve of the 1881 general elections. Each was designed to project the Moderate Republic’s triumph and, implicitly, the closure of the revolutionary era. The official incorporation of the Revolution’s most powerful symbols was a purposeful ploy to rebuff the Socialists’ denunciation of mainstream republican leaders as betrayers of the revolutionary heritage, which called their leadership into question. This strategy helped the Moderates to retain their mandate in the 1881 general elections and to brace themselves against the potential political purchase that the returning Communards might provide to the Socialist candidates.

The conclusions of this dissertation open many new paths of analysis regarding the opening decade of the Third Republic. The startling, if ephemeral, uptick in Bonapartist electoral success during the mid-1870s is a contextual component of this dissertation’s inquiry. However, this paper does not comprehensively analyze the Bonapartists’ political and cultural machinations in the same depth as those of the monarchist and republican groups. This choice is related to their rapid decline after the middle of the decade, especially following the death of the Prince Imperial in 1878. A different investigation could be made of the political rhetoric embedded in the Bonapartists’ stance on Communard amnesty and the Republic’s relationship to the
revolutionary past. Such a study would be a welcome counterpoint or complement to this dissertation’s exploration of the republicans’ electoral success. It might produce, for example, a more comprehensive understanding of the degree to which the Bonapartist resurgence was related to concurrent projects like the rebuilding of the Vendôme Column or the commission of Fremiet’s statue of Joan of Arc. Chapter Three touches upon this topic, but mostly in relation to the factions on which this study focuses: the monarchists and the republicans.

Further examination of the Commune’s influence on provincial voter appeals would produce great insight into how, if at all, characterizations of the event were altered to accommodate the political proclivities of constituencies as diverse as workers in Lyon and Catholics in the Midi. The research on the conservatives’ electoral appeals during their campaigns following the Crisis of 16 May reveals that their rhetoric largely revolved around characterizing the republicans as Communard sympathizers. The conservatives consistently warned French voters that a victory for “the 363” meant a return to the violence and social upheaval of 1871. Yet this strategy did not yield a new conservative mandate in the Chamber, as they had hoped. Apparently, the majority of the voters discounted these dire warnings, even in the provinces. A study focusing on how republicans, especially the Radicals, presented their opinions of the Commune and the legacy of the revolutionary era to provincial voters would greatly flesh out the scope of the political influence of these issues on the establishment of the Third Republic. The same exploration of the various Socialist groups would be of similar benefit.
The renaissance of the Socialist movement during the late 1870s was rooted in the legacy of the Commune and its impact on republican politics and divisions. The decade’s amnesty debate is a strong manifestation of this relationship. According to Susanna Barrows: “By the mid-eighties…strikes, demonstrations, and anarchist terrorism were patent signs of disaffection…. Politics in these years was measured not only by the ballot box or by the affairs of Parliament, but also by the ‘street’ and by the crowd.”

This dissertation demonstrates that such tactics were at work as early as the 1870s; actions in the street, diatribes overheard in cafes, and scribbles on city walls speak volumes about popular sentiment in those years. Systematically tracing such political behavior and seditious messaging outside of Paris in the wake of the Commune would greatly strengthen the modern understanding of popular politics, the political influence of the Commune’s legacy, and the Commune’s larger impact during this extraordinary decade.

By 1880, the Socialist movement had acquired a new foothold in French politics. To expand its base, the party relied on other symbols than those that official recognition had domesticated. Its use of the red flag, the *Carmagnole*, and Mur des Fédérés, where a different pantheon of heroes had been buried, reveals that the modern Socialists played upon the legacies of the Commune to build a more resonant image. Because the populace generally assumed that the Commune had been a Socialist revolution, memories of its

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severe repression lent a “halo of martyrdom” to the resurrected Socialist movement.\textsuperscript{739} Such emblems engendered an emotive appeal that, during the 1870s and the early 1880s, proved more powerful than political appeals that were grounded in Marxist rhetoric, scientific socialism, and the evils of bourgeois capitalism. After the 1870s, the Socialists had enough electoral power that they no longer needed to rely so viscerally on the Commune’s legacy.

For the duration of its hold on power, the Moderate republican regime continued to vacillate between repression and the politics of exclusion, on the one hand, and liberalization and tolerance, on the other. This dissertation illuminates the political influence of the Commune’s legacy on the republicans’ rise to power. This effect is evident in their post-1880 initiatives, as well. It played a role in the passage of the free press law of July 1881 and, conversely, the government’s preemptive suppression of the May Day of 1890—a public but peaceful event that revolved around the desire for an eight-hour workday.

In the decades after the Republic solidified, the Radicals maintained their tenuous alliances with both the Opportunists and the Socialists. The Moderates continued to pursue limited republican reforms, such as eliminating lifelong senate terms while preserving the upper chamber, and secularizing the school system while sustaining the Concordat. In other words, they upheld the most general and specifically liberal

\textsuperscript{739} See Etienne Ginestous, \textit{Histoire Politique de Bordeaux}, Op. cit., p. 82 where he describes Blanqui’s release from prison as having removed his halo of martyrdom.
revolutionary legacies while at the same moving inexorably into the colonial pursuit of international power and grandeur. Such discordant political machinations of these “children of the Revolution” display the continued influence of the Commune’s political legacy and the debates that surrounded it, as well as the extraordinary political and cultural precedents set in the first decade of its wake.
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