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Abstract

In 1851 more than 1.6 million signatures endorsed a petition for an amendment to the 1848 constitution that would have allowed Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte to stand for reelection. Following contemporary critics who claimed that the movement had been orchestrated by the government, scholars have been little impressed by this mobilization, which produced the largest petition of nineteenth-century France. By analyzing the petitions and the signatures themselves, official reports, correspondence of key actors, and the public debate, this article reappraises the campaign, making three claims: that a government-sponsored petition merits analysis in the context of the explosion of popular mobilization that followed 1848, that the depiction provided by the republicans of the participation of the administration in the campaign is partial and incomplete, and that the petitioners were not dependent and manipulated individuals but purposeful citizens who understood and supported the petition they signed. The article concludes that the campaign would not have succeeded without the genuine popularity of the president and the surfacing of a strong popular Bonapartist undercurrent.

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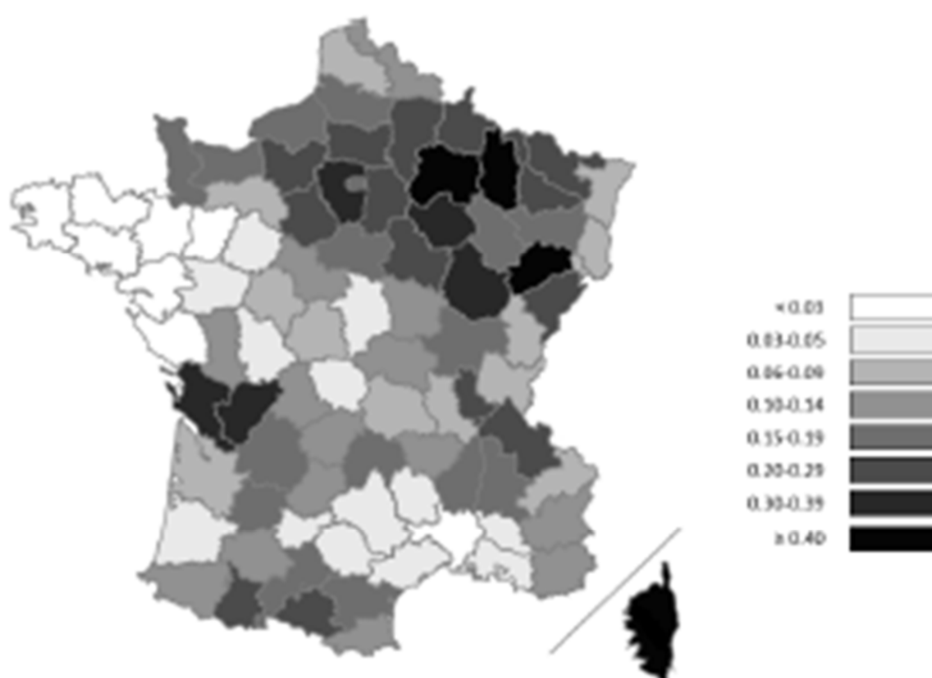
"A new phase in our political life is beginning," claimed President Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte in his famous Dijon speech on June 1, 1851; "from one end of France to the other, petitions are being signed demanding a revision of the constitution. I await with confidence the expression of the will of the country."[1] Between April and July 1851 petitions flooded the Legislative Assembly. Day after day the session began with a string of deputies registering petitions, reading aloud the provenance and the number of signatures. "The great political fact of this region this month," the attorney general of Caen informed the minister of justice, "is the circulation and signing of petitions for the revision of the constitution."[2] "Petitions," "More petitions," "Petitions!" were usual headlines in the conservative and Bonapartist press. When the parliamentary committee on the revision of the constitution handed in its final report, it had counted 1,457,832 signatures, and more were still arriving. By mid-August the campaign had collected over 1.6 million, now kept in fifty-eight boxes in the archives of the National Assembly.[3] One out of every six French adult males had signed the petition, with a regional distribution that ranged from a northeastern quadrant in which almost half of the citizenry signed, to a legitimist west in which fewer than one out of fifty men did (fig. 1). The supporters of the president claimed that there were up to 2 million signatures and that this was "the most serious," "spontaneous," and "true" expression of "the will of the French nation."[4]

Louis-Napoléon sought a revision of the constitution that would allow him to be reelected, as the constitution limited the presidential mandate to one term of four years.[5] Three years before, in December 1848, he had received 5.5 million votes, three out of every four cast, and thus had become the first modern head of state to be elected by direct universal male suffrage. In 1851 the tensions, hopes, and fears set in motion by the 1848 revolution and the proclamation of the republic were revived by the prospect of the electoral challenges of 1852, a year in which both the National Assembly and the presidency had to go to the polls. For many conservatives, Louis-Napoléon seemed the only candidate able to hold together the so-called Party of Order, a fractious coalition of conservative republicans, Orleanists, legitimists,

Catholics, and staunch Bonapartists, all loosely federated by their rejection of the ascendant republican and socialist Left.[6]

Figure 1. Regional distribution of the support to the 1851 campaign for the revision of the constitution: number of signatures by department as a proportion of the number of male French citizens. Map by the author. Calculations based on Ménager, *Les Napoléon du peuple*, 430–31. Some discrepancies have been corrected against the original numbers in Melun, *Rapport supplémentaire*.



Historians have been little impressed by the spectacular petitioning campaign for the revision of the constitution. Contemporary republican and socialist critics already belittled these petitions, claiming that the whole movement had been orchestrated by the government. "Every day," wrote Emile de Girardin in the influential daily *La presse* on May 18, 1851, "from each of the communes they send to

me in Paris one of these templates, so that *La presse* can denounce for the indignation and contempt of France all the measures of intimidation that have been put in place to get signatures."[7] According to the republican Jean Charras, this "was not a great movement of public opinion" but of "functionaries and other paid agents." The Legislative Assembly held a debate on the petitioning on July 21 and passed a resolution regretting that "the administration, contrary to its duty, used its influence to excite the citizenry in favor of petitioning."[8] Pierre de La Gorce, in his 1887 *History of the Second Republic*, highlighted that many petitions were spontaneous but agreed with the assembly that the excessive zeal of the administration had tainted the campaign. In turn, Charles Seignobos's 1921 volume on the same period consolidated the depiction of the campaign as a fraud perpetrated by the Elysée, an image that later reverberated in many local histories: "The ministry of the interior commanded the prefects. . . . The subprefects received reams of printed copies, and they shared out these to the mayors, justices of the peace, and gendarmes, who collected the signatures."[9]

The historiography on French popular politicization may have neglected this campaign as well because it sits outside history's main narratives. Peter McPhee underlined in 1992 that social historians have been more eager to focus on republican and socialist politicization than on the development of other political loyalties.[10] However, Maurice Agulhon, the leading historian of popular republicanism, ended up welcoming his disciples' correction that royalist mobilization also produced popular politicization, but the argument has only recently been explored with regard to popular Bonapartism.[11] Twentieth-century revisionist historiography also tended to overlook Bonapartism. As David A. Bell and Sudhir Hazareesingh have noted, François Furet projected an interpretative framework for the years 1789–1880 pitting republican revolutionary currents against liberal institutionalization and leaving at the margins the Bonapartist inclinations of ample sectors of French society.[12] Bernard Ménager nevertheless offered a first panorama of the popular appeal of Bonapartism, and more recent historiography provides a fresh look at popular participation in the 1851 campaign. Roger Dupuy and Chloé Gaboriaux, from different starting points, have analyzed the success of Bonapartism in providing a populist reference at the

national level, or an empty signifier, for a variety of popular understandings of self-rule. Christopher Guyver’s reinterpretation of the Second Republic, in turn, does justice to the organizational activities of the Party of Order in coordinating meetings, campaign committees, and political newspapers. Hazareesingh, finally, has underlined that the commitment to mass democracy was one of the constant tenets of Bonapartism, thus contributing to the formation of French democratic culture.[13]

An additional source of neglect of this campaign is the dualist scheme opposing state and civil society that has pervaded social movement studies, making it difficult to tackle a government-favored petitioning campaign. Yet the works of Joel S. Migdal on how states and societies constitute each other provide tools to integrate collective action by elites and nonelites, by state and nonstate actors, as elements of a continuous field. The legitimating and delegitimating discourses about “spontaneity” and “manipulation,” moreover, cannot be taken at face value, as they are part of the struggle to impose meaning on the events pervasive in modern politics.[14]

This article analyzes the 1851 campaign and makes three claims: that a government-favored petition is a sui generis form of mobilization that merits analysis in the context of the explosion of popular mobilization that followed 1848; that the republicans’ depiction of the participation of the administration in the campaign misrepresents the interplay between civil society and the state and between Paris and the provinces; and that the petitioners were not dependent and manipulated individuals but purposeful citizens who understood what they were signing. The participation of the administration was key in the petitioning campaign, but the latter would not have attained its remarkable dimensions without the genuine popularity of the president and the surfacing of a strong popular Bonapartist undercurrent.

The Largest Petition Ever

By the mid-nineteenth century mass petitioning was part of French politics. The 1789 Revolution had enshrined it as a political right. In Restoration and Orleanist France, petitioning was exalted as a vehicle of the continuous dialogue between country and government that made representative institutions work. Petitioning, like the press, expanded the right of participation beyond the franchise and gender limits. Diverse

French campaigners, even if unsuccessful, embraced petitioning as a tool of mobilization, promoting a shared understanding of the value of wielding big numbers of signatories as a form of invoking popular legitimacy.[15] The association Aide-toi, le ciel t'aidera (God Helps Those Who Help Themselves), which was active between 1827 and 1834 and became an incubator of the liberal provincial political class, sought to empower the citizenry by encouraging the use of collective petitions.[16] Legitimists also embraced signature canvassing, and in 1833 they claimed that one hundred thousand people had subscribed to addresses in support of the Duchess of Berry.[17] The 1839–40 petition of the National Guard for the extension of male suffrage collected 188,000 signatures, while the Catholic movement petitioning for the freedom of education demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of sustained campaigning. Charles de Riancey, a member of the Catholic committee, conceded that 80,000 signatures were small fry compared with "the hundreds of thousands endorsing the Catholic petitions of England and Ireland." For him, however, the absolute number of petitioners was less important than the effect produced "by the progress of the number of petitioners": 1,000 signatures in 1844, 20,000 in 1845, and 80,000 in 1846 led him to aim at 150,000 signatures during the following campaign, a steady increase that "every statesman would have to take into account."[18]

After the 1848 revolution the number of petitions to the assembly soared. In fact, the explosion of petitioning was a shared trait of the 1848 revolutions across Europe.[19] By January 1849 the assembly had received over eight thousand individual and collective petitions dealing with all sort of issues, including the abolition of all taxes, the vote for women, the organization of work, and the teaching of atheism in schools.[20] Petitioning was part of a political culture shared across the political spectrum. After the election of Louis-Napoléon in December 1848, almost 130,000 signatures from across France urged the prompt dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, which had already produced the constitution, and a fresh legislative election that they hoped would produce a more conservative assembly.[21] Moreover, some campaigns were victorious. Charles Forbes René de Montalembert, at the head of political Catholicism and an admirer of the Irish "liberator" Daniel O'Connell, was convinced that without the drives of the 1840s Catholics would not have achieved the

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freedom of education in 1849. A conservative campaign during the summer of 1848 against the enshrinement of universal conscription in the constitution had been successful as well, and many thought that the signatures of January 1849 had been crucial for accelerating the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly.[22]

The potential for a mass drive was in the air. Bonapartist societies circulated some petitions in favor of an empire in the summer of 1850, while the Droit National–Appel au Peuple (National Law–Appeal to the People) wing of the Legitimist Party prepared its own campaign for a referendum between monarchy and republic.[23] Neither of these achieved their goals, but the democratic-socialist Left (the *démoc-socs*) was successful in launching several national drives. In the autumn of 1849, 240,000 petitioners signed against the tax on drinks. Most spectacularly, in May 1850, in just two weeks a petition collected 527,000 signatures against the restriction of universal male suffrage. This last feat is especially telling if we consider the government's repressive turn and police harassment.[24] The campaign for universal male suffrage was until that point the largest petition in France ever. In one year, however, the drive for the revision of the constitution was to triple these numbers. No other nineteenth-century French petition achieved a comparable volume.

The Provinces Take the Lead

Despite the image transmitted by the historiography, the initial impulse of the petitioning for the revision of the constitution did not come from the government. It is true that in the summer of 1850 the minister of the interior at the time, Jules Baroche, had asked the prefects to raise the issue of revision at the departmental councils, but the initiative was not followed by a call for popular petitioning.

The initiative to petition came from autonomous and scattered local leadership. Uncertainty about what would follow the end of Bonaparte's presidential term in 1852 consumed the conservative provincial press, and it is not surprising that some citizens decided to take action. As early as February 21, 1851, *L'écho de Vésone*, a newspaper of the department of the Dordogne, informed readers that several local citizens "[had] been preparing for the crusade . . . for the revision of the constitution and the prorogation of the powers of Louis-Napoléon." Their guiding example was the

January 1849 petitioning against the constituent assembly "when France made her voice heard and imposed her sovereign will."[25] A few days later volunteers set up committees in three cantons of the department, circulated the petitions, and took care of the verification of the signatures. According to the law, a local magistrate had to vouch that the signatures were of real people and that no fraud had been committed.[26] The newspaper itself became the hub of the campaign, sending printed petitions to subscribers, opening its offices for the people to sign, and publicizing the daily progress in the number of communes and citizens participating.

Finding the Dordogne in the vanguard of the movement should not be a complete surprise. Despite the local strength of the Left, which won the 1849 election, Dordogne's conservatives showed proud independence from Paris and a strong penchant for petitioning. Already in May 1848 the department had sent twenty-four petitions against radical events in Paris, three times more than the average in southwestern France.[27] The same month fifty-four communes of the department petitioned against the new forty-five-centime tax, one of the texts being supported by twelve hundred signatures.[28] In 1850, while the *démoc-socs* petitioned against the curtailment of universal male suffrage, *L'écho* promoted a counterpetition. The newspaper sent copies to its three thousand subscribers and asked them to collect "eight or ten signatures from your neighbors." Its success was limited, but the Dordogne was the most mobilized department counterpetitioning for changes in the electoral law.[29]

The "revisionist" petition championed by *L'écho* had been devised to be "acceptable for all the parties" and therefore demanded only the revision of the constitution, without indicating the content of the revision as such. The newspaper editors made it clear that they wanted Louis-Napoléon to be permitted to stand for reelection, but they hoped that a less specific call for revision would encourage Orleanists and legitimists to sign, as the reform process, once launched, might bring the monarchy back.[30]

This ambiguity of the petition, initially calculated as a strength, soon became a weakness. It is easy to believe that some monarchists supported the petition with a restoration in mind, while others pragmatically thought that, in the short run, Louis-

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Napoléon was still the safest bet against republicanism. Many citizens, however, were proud of having brought Bonaparte to the presidency, and they did not trust an ambiguous petition that could be deflected from its original purpose. Two weeks after the launch of the campaign, three communes of the Dordogne challenged the text proposed by *L'écho* and changed the wording of the petition "for the Assembly to know exactly what we want." They were not going to endorse whatever was proposed to them. Instead they signed their own clearly worded text: "The undersigned . . . considering Louis-Napoléon's enormous services to the cause of order; sure that only his reelection for the presidency of the Republic can consolidate public tranquility and make prosperity flourish, express the wish that the Constitution, which precludes the prorogation of his powers, be revised."[31]

Newspapers in neighboring departments noted and imitated the initiative of *L'écho de Vésone*.[32] While it was quite common for a local newspaper to take the lead, more unstructured local leaderships also stepped in. In the town of Serain, in Picardy, the electors met on March 17, 1851, and agreed on a handwritten text "in recognition of M[onsieur] le President, who has brought tranquility to the country by means of his firm and enlightened policies." One hundred ninety-eight names, almost the full body of eligible voters, expressed "the wish that his powers will be extended."[33]

On March 26 General de Bar caused a sensation in the Legislative Assembly when he filed the first thick packet of petitions from the Dordogne, with some deputies of the Left shouting that these were unconstitutional.[34] The brouhaha woke up the Parisian press to the potential of a petitioning campaign. The newspaper *Le constitutionnel*, now close to the president, presented the petitions as expressions of "the sovereignty of the people."[35] Petitioning committees emerged to take up the idea. In Rouen and other localities of the Parisian basin they built on the networks of the infamous Society of December 10. This was a Bonapartist mutual-aid organization for the lower classes, with chapters in several towns, named after the day Louis-Napoléon had won the presidential election. Its members, dubbed "lumpenproletarian" and "bohemian" by a bemused Karl Marx, were conspicuous in the crowds that cheered Louis-Napoléon on his presidential tours, and in brawls with socialists and republicans.[36] In the small city of Arcys, in the Aube, the subprefect was

taken by surprise by a "lemonade vendor" and other "working-class" people canvassing door to door. They had penned their own petition and requested the prorogation of the powers of the president for fifteen years.[37]

Before the organization of national committees in Paris and well before the administration stepped in, people were canvassing signatures for an extension of the president's term in many areas of France. We have evidence of this in the departments of the Aisne, Aube, Lot-et-Garonne, Haute-Vienne, Seine-Inférieure (Seine-Maritime), Charente, Marne, Isère, Ardèche, Pas de Calais, Mosselle, Dordogne, Cote-d'Or, and Deux-Sèvres.[38]

The Parisian Impulse

It was not until late April 1851 that the General Committee for the Revision of the Constitution was born in Paris. The *salonnier* Eduard de Beaumont-Vassy, Montour, a journalist, and Benjamin-Louis Bellet, the former treasurer of the Party of Order and a seasoned organizer of electoral committees, took the initiative. After discarding the idea of launching a newspaper fully devoted to revision, they instead formed a committee that could "give a considerable impulse to the petitioning."[39] They printed a first draft; circulated it to local notables, deputies, and provincial newspapers; and invited a hundred people to discuss it at an open meeting.

After the meeting the committee produced a shorter version of their petition, written in the name of "agriculture, commerce and industry, and especially the working populations." "Experience demonstrates the vices of the constitution of 1848, the impossibilities and the dangers that it contains," the petition explained, and, after expressing complete confidence in the patriotism of the representatives sitting in the Legislative Assembly, the undersigned requested "that the constitution be amended." Like the original petition of *L'écho de Vésone*, the Paris committee's petition did not specify that the revision should address the reelectability of the president, again opting for the abstract formulation cherished by the monarchists. In the meanwhile, the two branches of the royal family were negotiating dynastic fusion—agreement on a candidate for the throne—thus rekindling the hopes of a restoration of the monarchy.

From May 6 onward the committee corresponded with newspapers in Paris and the provinces, asking them to publicize the petition. The committee also sent thousands of printed copies to notables all over the country, inviting them to organize local canvassing. Two weeks later, 180 delegates of the Union Eléctorale of the Parisian region, a committee that had coordinated the electoral effort of the Party of Order and crusaded against socialism, decided to use their own political machinery to contribute to the campaign. Their model petition had a very short prayer also demanding the revision of the constitution in abstract terms.[40]

As the campaign progressed, many regional and local notables activated their political networks and formed local committees following the directions from Paris. In Besançon (Doubs), seventy-eight men held a meeting, including sixteen tradesmen, eleven magistrates of the court of appeals, five property owners, five lawyers, four bankers, a former mayor, one architect, one doctor, a colonel of the National Guard, and four retired military officers. This was the usual mixture of local notables one would expect to find in an initiative of the Party of Order, but this meeting also included a printer, a carpenter, and the foreman of a local forge mill. The Besançon committee printed its own copies of the Parisian petition and sent circulars to all the mayors of the department of Doubs for them to invite the population to sign. They also printed the seventy-eight names of the local promoters, publicizing their commitment and respectability.[41]

Republicans cited the use of Parisian model petitions as evidence against the movement's claim to grassroots spontaneity. It is true that these were the petitions most commonly signed all over France during May, June, and July, but they do not amount to more than a third of the total. It is also true that many handwritten and locally reprinted texts used the Parisian models for inspiration. Nevertheless, even when petitions used printed models, the signatories discussed their content. In the village of Volkrange (Moselle), with six hundred inhabitants, locals refused to sign the petition brought by the mayor, because it did not contain the name of Napoléon. He promptly amended the text and received almost unanimous support.[42] The collection of petitions archived by the National Assembly is full of printed models with analogous insertions. Similar cases here and there convinced many local committees that it was

better to change the wording of the petition, and from late May many of them reprinted amended versions of the Parisian petition, adding the desire for the reeligibility of the president.[43] The remaining petitions had many formats. The many variations of the Paris petition suggest that the central committee had only weak control over the whole process. The long text of the discarded first version of the Parisian petition, which had circulated as a draft in early May, was reprinted and signed in several departments in June and July, which suggests that many people were not following instructions but were instead using the resources available to them to take part in the campaign.[44] Autonomous provincial poles of mobilization kept putting forward their own petitions as well. More than fifty thousand signatures from the Marne, for example, supported unconstitutional proposals for an immediate vote to extend the powers of the president, a call for a parliamentary coup that both the government and the Parisian committee wanted to avoid.[45]

Government Intervention

The cabinet followed closely the development of the campaign. Beaumont-Vassy, the secretary of the Parisian committee, had frequent meetings with Léon Faucher, minister of the interior and head of the government. Faucher believed that the campaign strengthened the possibilities of achieving the majority of three-quarters of the deputies of the Legislative Assembly needed for a legal revision.[46] Eugène Rouher, the minister of justice, also believed that the petitions communicated “a moral force with influence over the assembly.”[47] The government, however, did not put the full machinery of the administration to work on the collection of signatures. Faucher announced that the government supported the revision and asked the prefects to favor the movement, but he always underlined that making the wishes of the government known was not the same as “exciting,” “organizing,” or “intervening” in the petitioning.[48] And there are many indications that he maintained a balanced position despite the high stakes. Faucher was torn between his desire for a successful campaign and his commitment to a neutral administration, one of the values he had championed against François Guizot under the July Monarchy. He had advocated a punctilious reading of the law to repress the Left, urging the prosecution, for example, of petitions for universal suffrage that, in contravention of the print law, did not

indicate the address of the printer; but he believed that the authority of the administration would founder if it acted unlawfully.[49]

Faucher's commitment to neutrality had already been evident during the election of May 1849 when, against tradition, he had refused to spend public money to fund sympathetic journalists and did not proclaim official candidates.[50] In May 1851, when *Le constitutionnel* proposed that the forty-four thousand municipal councils were representative of the whole population and could "speak in the name of the nation" by petitioning for the revision as collective bodies, thus strengthening the campaign, Faucher ordered a halt to any such procedures that would make local councils step outside their purely administrative remit. He vigorously reprimanded the prefects who had allowed this procedure, forcing the councils to meet again and recant.[51]

As is usual in partisan politics, the republican opposition did not recognize Faucher's relative neutrality but instead focused their criticism of civil servants' participation in the campaign on him. At the same time, however, Bonapartists attacked the minister for not fully committing the administration to the cause of revision.[52] Charles Tron, a Bonapartist representative for the Haute-Garonne, complained to Faucher in a private meeting: "You have the prefects. . . . But instead you leave the initiative to people who are almost indifferent to the success of this movement."[53] Nevertheless, Faucher's restraint and legalism did not mean impartiality. Although several cases of misconduct on the part of the canvassers went to court, Faucher did not mobilize the repressive repertoire that had suffocated the *démoc-socs*' petitioning in 1850.[54] Instead, he ordered the police and the judiciary to remain vigilant against any attempt by militant republicans to intimidate canvassers or signatories.[55]

Faucher, thus, restrained from mobilizing the resources of the government at full steam. Furthermore, the image of a well-oiled administration fully at the service of the government is untenable. Public servants were not mere cogs in a machine. Some held their own views on the campaign and followed their own political preferences and networks. Others had a strong professional identity and did not want to contaminate it with politics. Many prefects, subprefects, and mayors, moreover,

did not at all sympathize with revision. Far from commanding a unified prefectural corps, the ministry of the interior presided over an administration that was divided and dislocated by political views and local circumstances. There had been eleven changes at the head of the Ministry of the Interior since 1848—Faucher himself had been minister for five months in 1849 and had reentered the government on April 10, 1851. The prefects and subprefects of the spring of 1851 were a mixed crop resulting from the several rounds of purges and counterpurges, the political preferences of the minister who nominated them, or the personal patronage of a provincial deputy. Most of the prefects had not had time to establish stable working relations with their subordinates. In fifteen departments there had been seven or more successive prefects since the 1848 February Revolution. The situation of subprefects and police commissioners was similar. Some areas were strongly influenced by the presence of the national administration, but more often than not the municipalities organized local life, the civil servants taking no notice of instructions from the center.[56] Even at the departmental level there was little knowledge of what was actually happening in most of the rural communes, in which the mayors enjoyed a reinforced prestige and autonomy thanks to the introduction of universal male suffrage.[57] The workings of the administration were fully dependent on the collaboration of local elites, mayors of every political color, court magistrates at different levels, police personnel attached to local power, and gendarmes often fiercely protective of their corps' autonomy.

The republican criticism of the campaign highlighted the participation of civil servants, using it sometimes to deny the spontaneity of the mobilization and at other times to claim that when the civil servants signed, they were just expressing their fear of losing their jobs. Nevertheless, many reports, far from documenting civil servants' active participation, underline their inhibition. "Excessive scruple," "circumspection," and "coldness" toward the petitioning was reported of the functionaries in the judicial areas of Orléans, Nimes, Caen, and Rouen.[58] In Ardennes, mayors employed several rural guards to canvas for the petition, but that initiative did not stop the attorney general, a fervent revisionist himself, from condemning the inactivity of most of the civil servants.[59] Fear of losing their jobs if the republicans won the following election and the signatures became "lists of proscription" often inhibited officials'

participation.[60] In the pioneering Dordogne, *L'écho de Vésone* deplored the low enthusiasm of the civil servants and asserted that almost none of the functionaries of Périgueux, the capital of the department, had signed.[61] The prefect of Marne invited the skeptics to check the signatures, as only two of his subordinates had signed.[62] Many civil servants took part in the campaign, some willingly and some, no doubt, not to lose the favor of their hierarchical superiors, but they were a small fraction of the 1.6 million signatures.

The collection of well-documented instances of intimidation by the authorities is limited and does not justify describing the campaign as fraudulent. Using the same tactics that the governmental press had mobilized against the *démoc-socs* during their 1850 petitioning for universal suffrage, the republican newspapers and parliamentary deputies identified and repeated a handful of cases to indict the petition movement as a whole.[63] The republican press invited their readers to report any misconduct regarding the petitions, and Jean Charras collected the denunciations, but with meager results. In the Marne, where 46 percent of the registered voters signed, the prefect prompted local republicans to provide any evidence of their vague accusations against the petitioning, which echoed rumors from other parts of France. Despite their vocal campaigning, "they were unable to indicate any concrete fact."[64] The attorney general of Bordeaux investigated the claim that some children had signed, but the identification of the names concluded only that a handful of signatories were young men under twenty-one, but not children. The significance of these few cases, according to him, was not that there was fraud but that the "socialist party . . . was exercising a very close vigilance over the campaign."[65]

Some mayors assigned local policemen and rural guards to collect signatures, either in cafés or door to door, although it is difficult to measure the extension and the impact of this action. It is improbable, however, that the Gendarmerie, a national hierarchical militarized police force, was used to collect signatures, as Seignobos's classical account claimed. Charras, in his scathing denunciation of the campaign as a farce, presented some examples of Gendarmerie officers signing petitions written in the name of "Commerce, Agriculture and the Working Classes," thus misrepresenting their condition. He did not claim, however, that the Gendarmerie had been mobilized

to collect the signatures. *L'indépendant du Nord*, a socialist newspaper, made the accusation, but when prompted by the subprefect to provide any witnesses, the paper retracted the claim.[66] It seems probable that some subprefects did ask gendarmes to transport printed petitions to remote communes and to hand them to the municipality, as they would order gendarmes in December to post the notices of the coup d'état.[67] The case of one gendarme in the Tarn-et-Garonne who served eight days in prison for signing a petition for the revision, contrariwise, sent a strong message about the full neutrality many officers expected on the part of their men.[68] Clearly, there was no nationwide mobilization of the Gendarmerie in favor of the petition campaign.

The State in Society

The prefectural corps was far from being a homogeneous body as well. Some prefects were staunch legitimists and did not trust the government. Others were adventurous Bonapartists willing to go far beyond what Faucher recommended. Some salient cases of excessive intervention in the petitioning denounced by the republicans were due to administrators bypassing Faucher's orders and following the directions of their own political connections in Louis-Napoléon's entourage. Charlemagne Maupas, a rising star recently nominated prefect of the Haute-Garonne, sidestepped Faucher and reported directly to the president.[69] As early as April 28 Maupas mobilized the subprefects, asking them to inform him about the communes that would be most amenable to the petitions and to name one man in each "who could provide the élan and guide the movement." He was in favor of using the administrative machinery, as he did not trust the "chatty" Bonapartist popular militants. He also cautioned, however, that the action had to be "exercised with prudence and skill, in order not to call into question the spontaneous character that this manifestation should always maintain."[70] By the end of May, Maupas had put in place a regional organization that no longer needed his "intervention to function" and had succeeded in involving the mayor of Toulouse.[71] Maupas, however, was one of the prefects Faucher reprimanded because he was inviting the municipal councils to express their collective support for a revision of the constitution.[72]

The heavy hand of Maupas did not pass unnoticed. "Public Indignation in Toulouse" and "Policemen in Bourgeois Clothes," complained the headlines of *L'émancipation de Toulouse*, the leading republican regional newspaper. "Janus-like," joked the press, the mayor of Toulouse said that he campaigned as a private citizen, but he also mobilized the municipal workers to collect signatures. If we believe the damning reports, one plainclothes policeman toured the cafés adjusting the wording of the petition to suit the preferences of the patrons, even claiming that the signatures were in support of a railway link to Paris.[73]

In a countercampaign with imitators all over France, the republicans of *L'émancipation* combined news of the indignation of the locals with secondhand reports of episodes happening in other departments, such as civil servants declaring that they had signed the petition for fear of losing their jobs.[74] The case of the mayor of Toulouse, moreover, became one of the examples that reverberated in the rest of the country as a proof of wrongdoing that republicans hoped would indict the whole petitioning effort.[75] *L'émancipation*, however, also singled out Maupas as being "less prudent" than other prefects, noting that in the neighboring Aude the prefect had had a meeting with the justices of the peace to explain that the government favored the petition but had not even hinted that the functionaries had to act on it.[76]

Even Maupas in the Haute Garonne could not coordinate a departmental petition effort as effectively as he would have liked. In July he reprimanded the subprefect of Gaudens, where only 99 out of 233 communes had sent a petition, while in the other two subprefectures of the department at least half of the communes had participated.[77] Many communes were in the hands of the opposition, and both mayors and citizens refused to sign a petition contrary to their political preferences.[78] By the summer one out of six of the registered voters of Haute-Garonne had signed, and we may believe that Maupas's activism contributed to that result. Still, Haute-Garonne ranked thirty-third out of eighty-four departments in intensity of participation, below the one out of five of Aude, with the soft prefect, and far from the three out of five of Corse or the one out of two of Meuse.[79]

There were many limits to the influence of even the most militant prefects. They could endorse and facilitate the petitioning, but they could not take for granted

the collaboration of the local elites or that of the functionaries, and even less that of the general population. The very low rate of participation of the departments in which legitimists firmly controlled the Party of Order shows that the will of the government by itself could not produce a copious crop of signatures. Some collaboration by local elites, committees or popular societies was necessary. The seven departments with participation rates below one percent had elected legitimist representatives in 1849. In some departments legitimist activists had canvassed for the revision of the constitution in May, circulating the abstract formulation of the Parisian petitions, but most of them disengaged from the process after Louis-Napoléon's speech in Dijon, which focused the campaign on his reelection.[80]

In the Alpine region studied by Philippe Vigier, the prefects of the Isère, Drôme, Hautes-Alpes, and Basses-Alpes departments encouraged the petitioning, but only in the Isère was participation over 20 percent.[81] The Isère was the only department of the Alpine region with active popular Bonapartist associations. In fact, these had been campaigning "for a revision of the constitution authorizing the extension of the powers of the president" since mid-February.[82] Moreover, the prefect, Chapuys de Montlaville, was an energetic Bonapartist with socialist leanings, eager to tour the department displaying his attentiveness to local needs and promoting petitions. The campaign, in addition, succeeded despite the abstention of the local Orleanist notables, as they sided with Thiers against the president. According to the regional attorney general (*procureur géneral*), "the population of the countryside petitioned with ardor" thanks to the combination of the action of the prefect, the mobilization of popular Bonapartist societies, and the conversion to the cause of some influential legitimists "amazed by the echo on the masses of the Bonapartist propaganda."[83]

In the Drôme, the Basses-Alpes, and the Hautes-Alpes, in contrast, the local Party of Order supported the campaign, but the results were more meager than in the Isère. The Basses-Alpes was one of the departments singled out by the republicans for the heavy involvement of the administration in the petition movement, but there only one in eight citizens signed, a paltry result for the prefect's efforts.[84] In the Hautes-Alpes most of the mayors received model petitions, but they sat on them, and fewer than one out of every thirteen electors signed. Without organized popular

Bonapartism, the action of the administration and the support of the elites were not enough to produce enthusiasm for petitions.[85] In the Vaucluse, where the rowdy royalism of the Droit National dominated popular politics and a legitimist prefect did not promote the petition, the local canvassers managed to get the signatures of only one in twenty electors.

Administrative intervention on its own never achieved much success for the revision campaign. The reports of the attorneys general comparing the progress of the petitioning highlighted the importance of local political preferences and of the activism on the part of both the supporters and the adversaries of the campaign. The attorney of the very rural Charente was confident that the local farmers would vote for Louis-Napoléon again in an eventual new election, but because he also thought that the rural populations were "apathetic," he did not believe that they could be mobilized for the petition. Contrary to his prediction, by mid-July more than one-third of the electors of Charente had "rushed to sign" the petition, making it the department with the sixth highest ratio of participation. The only explanation he could offer was that "the population was *napoléonienne*."[86] These reports must be appraised critically, but some attorneys tried to explain the different rate of participation between areas, highlighting the social and political peculiarities that drove the successful campaigns. What also emerges is that the administration could not make workers and peasants attached to republicanism sign, nor could it by itself produce the "electrical current" needed to make the petitioning successful.[87]

Numerous reports also underlined the importance of local initiative. Using official channels to send petitions to the mayors provided a means to reach everywhere, but the results depended on someone deciding to do something once he had a copy of the petition at hand. In Normandy the public servants were "extremely reserved." Wherever a citizen took the lead, "signatures crowded in," but in most places the petitions had just been set aside passively in one place or another, almost abandoned.[88] In contrast, in the Haute-Saône the trading class of the town of Gray drafted their own petition "in accord with popular sentiment" and organized the canvassing. Another committee started up in Vesoul some weeks later, and, "despite the abstention of many public servants," 42 percent of the registered voters signed.[89]

The petitions kept in the National Archives also reveal a strong relationship between local initiative and the campaign's local success. The departments with below-average participation, such as the Jura (8.6 percent), usually sent back to Paris only the petitions they had received from the Parisian committee, and the documentation suggests a lethargic response to Parisian encouragement. All the petitions returned from the Tarn (3.3 percent), for instance, reproduced the formulas from Paris. In contrast, the collections of the more mobilized departments, such as the Marne, Meuse, and Charente, are voluminous and varied, displaying a range of handwritten, printed, and lithographed texts, some locally composed, some amending the formulas from Paris.[90] In the Jura the single most successful example of the petition (247 signatures) was the sole handwritten one, promoted by the local tradesmen of Dole. Unlike to the rest of the petitions from the department, this one explicitly demanded that Louis-Napoléon be allowed to stand for reelection.[91]

The lack of uniformity in the campaign also suggests the uneven participation of the administration. Petitions came in all sorts of formats: single pages, multipage folders, bound volumes. Old soldiers of the imperial army collected signatures door to door, posters announced that the people could sign in a designated shop or in the town hall or that a meeting would take place to discuss the petition and collect signatures. In some petitions the signatures were spread randomly over a large page. In others they were tabled and numerated in orderly fashion, indicating the profession and sometimes even the address of the petitioners. Some decorated signatures belonged to confident writers, while many others show that the signatories could barely write their names. Following the letter of the law, mayors and justices of the peace confirmed the authenticity of most of the signatures and also attested that lists of names belonging to illiterate citizens represented their genuine support for the petition. The intervention of mayors and justices of the peace who verified lists of names, which some criticized as a source of fraud, may have been on occasion an empowering act, giving voice to illiterate people whom the revolution had transformed into citizens.

Parish meetings to discuss collective adherence to the petition were common in many parts of France. Many petitions from rural communes included a brief

statement by the mayor explaining that citizens had gathered in the town hall and that they understood the petition and agreed to it, some signing by themselves and the illiterate authorizing the mayor to list their names. When Jean Charras complained that in Corsica, a family stronghold of the Bonapartes, almost five thousand signatures had been written by about fifty individuals, a Corsican representative riposted that "in many mountainous areas the inhabitants had held a meeting in the central village, and there, in the presence of the mayor, the municipal council, and the priest, they had agreed on unanimous support for the petition, choosing some among them to write down the names for the rest."[92] This practice replicated the tradition of communal collective voting that had been one of the ways of making use of extended male suffrage since the Revolution.[93] These meetings also empowered the electors: whereas a door-to-door canvassing or an invitation to sign at a newspaper office or a shop prompted individuals to endorse a text previously decided by others, the meetings allowed them to discuss and amend the text of the petition. The available reports on some of these meetings show that quite often they were lively hustings, in which the locals discussed the movement in their own terms, rejecting petitions that were too abstract and replacing them with texts that explicitly supported the reelection of Louis-Napoléon. In Briançon a gathering of electors compared three model petitions, choosing one of them unanimously.[94]

The Limits to Manipulation

"The politicians who pretend that they direct the country, they are living an illusion," wrote the local attorney of Angoulême in his account of the petitioning: "The people . . . don't even know their names."[95] The relative power of prefects, mayors, Orleanist elites, legitimist nobility, or priests to mobilize their supposed clientele depended on local configurations of power. These arrangements had been shattered by repeated breakdowns of the legitimacy and capacity of the elites since 1789, again strained in 1848 by the February Revolution and, especially, by the introduction of universal male suffrage. Vertical relations of power were still important, but in many areas the vote for Louis-Napoléon in 1848 had already demonstrated the autonomy of the rural populations vis-à-vis the local elites.[96] Marx was just repeating a common trope when he proposed that the rural vote for Louis-Napoléon in December 1848 was an

"insurrection" after which the peasants "could not be relegated back to the passive and docile role of a chorus."[97]

The most common discussion between canvassers and potential signatories, as I have already described, focused on the tension between supporting the president and mistrusting a petition that called for the revision of the constitution in vague terms.[98] In Poitiers and Vendée, where the legitimists initially led the canvassing, the attorneys general explained that most of the rural population refused their support, fearing that their signatures would be channeled toward a restoration of Henry V, the Bourbon king in exile.[99] If the president's Dijon speech caused legitimists to disengage from the campaign, it had the opposite effect on the working classes, at least in neighboring Lyon, where workers began to accept the canvassers' invitation to sign. Their boasts that in 1852 they would vote both for the reds and for Louis-Napoléon underlined the autonomy of their views.[100] In Rouen as well, "the working populations with socialist leanings" rejected any petition demanding the revision in abstract terms but agreed to sign for Louis-Napoléon.[101] The phenomenon repeated in pockets of urban and rural opinion where voters saw both the reds and Bonaparte as alternatives to the traditional elites.[102] In Montpellier the attorney general was surprised to see working-class activists promoting the simultaneous signature of petitions for the revision of the constitution and for the return of universal male suffrage. "Both petitions are for Bonaparte" was the response he obtained from the canvassers.[103]

That the citizenry were not docile soon became evident. The prefect of Basses-Alpes sent the subprefects a model petition from Paris but conceded that they "should not try to change the minds of the countryside dwellers and the workers" who might want more specific wording to "make the reelection of the current president possible."[104] In Caen the rural inhabitants "always asked" whether the petition was "to maintain the nephew of the emperor," and the attorney was convinced that the campaign would have been even more successful if, instead of the abstract revision, the petitions that circulated in the department had directly named the president.[105]

The criticism of the administration's involvement in the petitioning presupposes that the will of the state and that of the citizenry were at odds. This was the case in many instances, with administrators clashing with people who either were

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committed republicans or mistrusted any state interference in local life. On many other occasions, however, prefects, subprefects, or locally elected mayors fully represented local preferences. For many citizens, being asked to sign was an invitation to confirm their 1848 vote for Louis-Napoléon, an idea that appears in many handwritten petitions. For many villagers, receiving the visit of a rural guardsman asking for a signature would have been not an imposition but an opportunity to take part in a campaign they were interested in. In the Limousin region, studied by Alain Corbin, the rural population had affirmed its independence with regard to the local elites by voting for Louis-Napoléon in 1848 and the *démoc-socs* in 1849. They welcomed the administration's involvement in the petitioning campaign when the latter showed that it shared their Bonapartist preferences and shunned the local notables. In many areas, therefore, the signing of the petitions forged or reinforced bonds in a community that supported both the democratically elected mayor and the democratically elected president, often in opposition to the traditional local elites. These bonds also channeled long-standing undercurrents of popular Bonapartism toward the more formalized support for the government that would later characterize the Second Empire.[106] In many regions the development of the petitioning campaign confirmed the impotence of the traditional elites. "The rural populations love Louis-Napoléon," concluded the attorney of Angoulême. "The old parties do not have any power over them anymore."[107]

The Negotiation of the Meanings of the Campaign

"Is it there, in the current state of our institutions, a means to ascertain the popular will?" Louis Veuillot asked rhetorically, while rallying the Catholic newspaper *L'univers* to Louis-Napoléon's cause: "Yes, there is one, by petitioning."[108] From Besançon *L'impartial* assured that "all the political parties [would] have to bow before the majesty of the sovereign nation."[109] Against these claims that the petitioners embodied the will of the people, the opponents of the revision of the constitution deployed a rich rhetorical repertoire to undermine its political significance, trying to depict the whole campaign as a cleverly orchestrated farce. In the parliamentary committee on the revision, Victor Charamaule argued that the printed models sent from Paris to the provinces demonstrated that "the movement was not at all

spontaneous." Montalembert and Odilon Barrot riposted with the experience of past mobilizations: Montalembert was proud of having presided for eighteen years over the board of the Catholic Association, while Barrot, a veteran of Aide-toi, le ciel t'aidera, concurred, stressing that without coordination and organization no political movement was possible.[110] The press sympathizing with the revision repeated that the people were sovereign and that, had the citizens followed the administration's orders with docility, Cavaignac would have won the 1848 presidential election.[111] The signs of spontaneous popular will, on the one hand, and of coercion and manipulation, on the other, became the contrasting proofs of the value of the campaign. We can read them today as an element of the wider debate on the norms of citizen participation that the introduction of universal manhood suffrage recast in 1848.[112]

The measurement of the success of the campaign was also problematic. The supporters of the campaign presented it as an unprecedented achievement. "France has never made its voice heard in such a magnificent manner," insisted the Parisian committee.[113] "This political manifestation is imposing," concluded the attorney general of Orléans.[114] The supporters of the campaign soon inflated the numbers to "2 million signatures," while the republican press counted the signatures for the revision and for the reeligibility of the president as belonging to different petitions, neither of them reaching a million.[115]

When the day of the vote at the assembly came, the revision won by a healthy margin, 446 to 270, but as the constitution demanded an insurmountable three-quarters threshold, the revision was defeated. Die-hard Orleanists and legitimists had sided with the Left, and thus the legalist approach of Faucher, Rouher, and others had failed. On the other hand, the Bonapartists wielded the massive subscription as the material proof of the popularity of the president and the contradiction between democracy and party politics. For them, parliamentary government was dead.

A new round of mobilization ensued, this time aimed at making the district and prefecture councils vote support for the revision during their annual meeting. The recent petitioning empowered the members of the councils. As one councillor of Saône-et-Loire said, "We demand the revision once 2 million signatures have asked for it. We demand it now that the will of the country has expressed itself with a force

hitherto without precedent."[116] Many councillors also took pains to dispel the idea that the participation in the petitions had not been spontaneous: "The [1848] revolution accomplished the electoral emancipation of the people," said the subprefect of the arrondissement of Avesnes (Nord); "to admit that millions of citizens were puppets of the civil service, signing against their will, would be an insult to national sovereignty."[117] In Saint-Dizier, a town of Haute-Marne, 320 citizens signed a remonstrance against the National Assembly's vote condemning the interference of the administration, upholding the "complete independence of their will."[118]

After the coup d'état of December 5, 1851, the petition became a landmark in the string of "political manifestations" in favor of Louis-Napoléon that justified the coup itself. "You [the people of Meuse] had understood the seriousness of the situation by spontaneously demanding the revision of the constitution," said a proclamation of the prefect of Meuse on the day of the coup.[119] Many mayors cited the petitions sent by their constituents to justify their rallying to the coup.[120] In the campaign building up to the first plebiscite, which ratified Louis-Napoléon's revision of the constitution, the tradesmen who had organized the petitioning in Gray, Haute-Saône, presented the dissolution of the National Assembly as the fulfillment of their petitions. The same message was repeated elsewhere.[121]

The following year the dithyrambic petitions for the proclamation of the empire that preceded the second plebiscite were quite different from those of the revisionist campaign, as the former were openly coordinated by the administration, without any of the restraint of 1851. In this context of apparently unanimous mobilization, numerous communes publicized how many local citizens had signed petition for the revision in 1851, wielding the numbers as a proof of their long-standing loyalty and commitment to Louis-Napoléon.[122] Nevertheless, the memory of the petitioning tended to fade. The dramatic coup of December 2 and the subsequent plebiscite soon polarized the memories of that year. Moreover, the petition numbers paled next to the 5 million votes of 1848 and the 7 million votes that in the plebiscite of 1851 ratified the coup, revising the constitution, and in 1852 assured the proclamation of the Second Empire. It was nonetheless a landmark in the French experience with popular participation in politics.

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Conclusion

The 1851 petition for the revision of the constitution was endorsed by the cabinet. The government encouraged prefects, subprefects, justices of the peace, attorneys, and other officers of the central administration to express their support for the campaign. Many of them, in addition, distributed copies of the petitions, canvassed, organized the verification of the signatures, and/or centralized the collection of signed copies before sending them to Paris. The government was part of the campaign. This activity, however, does not mean that the government *was* the campaign or that the mobilization of the administration suffices to explain the campaign's success. As Faucher himself declared, France would be a different country were his government strong enough to produce by itself 1 million signatures.[123] The workings of democracy and representation since 1848 had favored many synergies between government and civil society.

A close analysis of the campaign also reflects and refracts the enormous regional variability of the political life of the French Second Republic. Like every new regional study, this petition adds material to the "overwhelming sense of diversity and complexity" of the popular experience of the 1848 revolution.[124] This acknowledgment of regional diversity, however, should not discourage some general conclusions. First and foremost, it is safe to dispel the idea that a united social oligarchy controlled the state and used its resources to produce the campaign. The French state itself emerges as a complex, human organization, shaped both by the autonomous logics of professional civil servants and by the demands of civil society. The administration was not a highly cohesive and coercive machinery at the disposal of the government. The petition, moreover, in many cases expressed active rebellion against the Orleanist and legitimist elites. There was popular agency behind the mass success of the campaign. Bottom-up initiatives and repeated instances of negotiation of the conditions of popular participation shaped the petition drive in its origins, development, and results. People signed and canvassed, or abstained from participating, according to their own reading of the campaign. The monarchical elites who thought that they controlled the Party of Order could not harness popular

Bonapartism. "*Messieurs* the royalists, you thought you could guide us," sang the people in Aube in 1852; "we the Napoleonists, we have swept you away."[125]

From the perspective of the history of social movements, the 1851 revisionist campaign calls for scholars to consider its role in the diffusion of new forms of popular participation and the widening of access to modern forms of doing politics. It also invites us to adopt a state-in-society approach able to transcend the civil-society/state dualism in the analysis of popular politics. The traditional accounts of the history of popular participation that paid attention only to fully autonomous class or popular movements have given way to more complex and rich stories attentive to instances of popular action and politicization that do not fit easily into a main narrative of progressive popular enlightenment and autonomy. These stories, in addition, do not belong to a single thread of counterrevolutionary or conservative politicization, nor can they be dismissed as the product of elite manipulation. If we broaden the focus to the history of mass petitioning in continental Europe, the 1828 Portuguese petition requesting that the regent Miguel disregard the constitution and proclaim himself king, the 1850 Bavarian petitions against the emancipation of the Jews, the signatures in Naples that same year for the rejection of the constitution, and the 1855 Catholic mobilization against religious tolerance in Spain all combined elite and popular action.[126] Royal absolutism, anti-Semitism, rejection of religious tolerance, and support for personal rule are causes at odds with traditional narratives of the expansion of rights, but the same can be said of recent shocks produced by means of the democratic process. With their own peculiarities, these experiences belong, together with the 1.6 million French signatures of 1851 for the revision of the constitution, to the history of the politicization of the popular classes. They are important instances of the historical negotiations by which popular participation came to count as a key element of political legitimacy.

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[1] Here I am using the translation published in Smith, *Second Empire and Commune*, 73. Unless specified, the rest of the translations are mine.

[2] Archives Nationales (hereafter AN), Fonds du Ministère de la Justice, BB/30/375/1.

[3] AN, Fonds des Assemblées Nationales, C//2327–85.

[4] Lasserre, *L'opinion et le coup d'état*, 25, 35. A good selection of newspapers and politicians singing the virtues of the campaign can be found in Thirria, *Napoléon III avant l'Empire*, 478–88. See also Faucher, *Léon Faucher*, 1:281.

[5] Anceau, *Napoléon III*, 174–78.

[6] Price, *French Second Republic*, 271–72. On the Party of Order, see Guyver, *Second French Republic*.

[7] Girardin, *Questions de mon temps*, 525–26.

[8] Charras in *Compte rendu des séances de l'Assemblée nationale législative*, 16:134, July 21, 1851. The resolution was proposed by Jean-Didier Baze, an Orleanist deputy, and passed by a narrow margin, 327 votes to 314, sorely exposing the internal divisions of the Party of Order, *Compte rendu des séances de l'Assemblée nationale législative*, 16:147–48, July 21, 1851.

[9] La Gorce, *Histoire de la Seconde République française*, 2:420–21; Seignobos, *La Révolution de 1848*, 283; Dessal, *La Révolution de 1848*.

[10] McPhee, *Politics of Rural Life*.

[11] Agulhon, *La politique en France*, Kindle loc. 1281; Fureix and Jarrige, *La modernité désenchantée*, 233–38; Dupuy, *La politique du peuple*.

[12] Bell, *Shadows of Revolution*; Hazareesingh, *Legend of Napoleon*.

[13] Ménager, *Les Napoléon du peuple*; Hazareesingh, "Bonapartism as the Progenitor of Democracy"; Dupuy, *La politique du peuple*; Gaboriaux, *La République en quête de citoyens*; Guyver, *Second French Republic*.

[14] Dobry, *Sociologie des crises politiques*; Migdal, *State in Society*; Jasper and Duyvendak, *Breaking Down the State*.

[15] Agnès, *L'appel au pouvoir*; Agnès, "Chartist Singularity?"; Durelle-Marc, "La naissance du droit de pétition"; Dionnet, "Le droit de pétition durant la Restauration."

[16] Barthélemy-Saint-Hilaire, *"Aide-Toi, le Ciel t'Aidera,"* 6–7, 9.

[17] AN, Fonds des Assemblées Nationales, C//2121–25.

[18] Riancey, *Du renouvellement des pétitions*, 26.

[19] Sperber, *European Revolutions*, 159–60.

[20] Fouquier, *Histoire politique pour 1849*, 293.

[21] For an example of the organizational effort inciting this petitioning in the Cher department, see Boissy, *Mémoires du marquis de Boissy*, 114–16.

[22] Montalembert, in France, Assemblée Législative, *Procès-verbaux*, 73.

[23] *L'Hermine* (Nantes), June 29, 1849.

[24] Agnès, "Chartist Singularity?," 58; Jarrige, "Une 'barricade de papiers.'" Jarrige also reports the 240,000 petitioners against the tax on drinks , but he does not indicate his sources. The same number had been claimed by the 1840 petitioners for suffrage reform, and it had the symbolic value of matching the number of electors under the restrictive suffrage laws of the July Monarchy. For the signatures against the restriction of suffrage, see *Etat des pétitions contre la loi electorale*, AN, Fonds des Assemblées Nationales, C//2300, dossier no. 684. For the harassment, see Forstenzer, *French Provincial*, 106, 271; and Merriman, *Agony of the Republic*.

[25] *L'écho de Vésone*, Mar. 6, 1851.

[26] *L'écho de Vésone*, Feb. 21 and 24, 1851.

[27] McPhee, *Politics of Rural Life*, map 7.

[28] Rocal, *1848 en Dordogne*, 2:10–11, 219–20.

[29] *L'écho de Vésone*, May 22, 1850. While the *démoc-socs* were collecting their signatures defending universal suffrage, there were collectively signed counterpetitions in eight departments. They collected 2,518 signatures, of which more than half came from Dordogne (AN, Fonds des Assemblées Nationales, C//993 P683 no. 1; Faucher, *Léon Faucher*, 2:412).

[30] *L'écho de Vésone*, Mar. 6, 1851, 2–3.

[31] *L'écho de Vésone*, Mar. 18, 1851, 3.

[32] *Le Charentais*, May 2, 1851; Breillout, "La Révolution de 1848 en Corrèze," 124.

[33] AN, Fonds des Assemblées Nationales, C//2330 no. 2542.

[34] *Le national*, Mar. 27, 1851.

[35] *Le constitutionnel*, Mar. 28, 1851.

[36] *Journal de Rouen*, Apr. 30, 1851; Marx, *Eighteenth Brumaire*, 37–38. The social composition and action of these Bonapartist societies have not been revisited by modern historiography.

[37] Report from the Gendarmerie Lt. of Arcis, May 1, 1851, report from the subprefect of Arcis, May 2, 1851, both in Archives Départementales de l'Aube, 1M474.

[38] AN, Fonds des Assemblées Nationales, C//2330; *L'écho de Vésone*, Apr. 25, 1851, 2; *Le Charentais*, May 2, 1851, 1; Fortoul, *Une page de l'histoire contemporaine*.

[39] Beaumont-Vassy, *La préface du Deux Décembre*, 21–28; Comité General pour la Révision de la Constitution—Collection de Circulaires, Apr. 28, May 6, 7, 8, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, FRBNF41634687.

[40] *L'écho de l'Est*, May 22, 1851, 1; *Journal de Toulouse*, May 24, 1851, 2.

[41] *Circulaire au sujet d'une pétition pour la révision de la constitution*, Besançon, May 25, 1851; Wattebled, [*Lettre accompagnant l'envoi d'une pétition réclamant la révision de la constitution . . . Arras, 12 juin 1851*]. Printed circulars, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, FRBNF36328645 and FRBNF31625732.

[42] AN, Fonds du Ministère de la Justice, BB/30/380/1.

[43] AN, Fonds des Assemblées Nationales, C//2330 and 2542 no. 54, Aisne, n.d.

[44] AN, Fonds des Assemblées Nationales, C//2330 and 2542.

[45] Melun, *Rapport fait*. The committee on petitions sorted the signatures and separated those petitions that demanded the revision of the constitution in abstract terms from those that supported a revision that would allow the reelection of the

president. The procedure, however, was based on identifying the heading of the petition, leading to many mistakes; a sampling of the collection shows that the mass of the provincial petitions that included a modified prayer from the Parisian committee's model, adding that they wanted the reelectability of Louis-Napoléon, were wrongly classed as demanding the revision only.

[46] Beaumont-Vassy, *La préface du Deux Décembre*, 41–44; Faucher, *Léon Faucher*, 1:281.

[47] AN, Fonds du Ministère de la Justice, BB/30/3741 no. 52.

[48] France, Assemblée Législative, *Procès-verbaux*, 77–81.

[49] Between his two spells as minister of the interior, Faucher had been the reporter of the 1850 committee on the revision of the electoral law. He reported on the petitions received against the proposal and made the clerks classify them by *ressors de cour d'appel* (the judiciary districts, each comprising between three and five departments), instead of by departments, as was the norm, thus facilitating the communication of the illegal prints to the attorneys general. AN, Fonds des Assemblées Nationales, C//993 no. 9. The result was the prosecution of eighty-five individuals, of whom "thirty-eight were acquitted before trial, twenty-eight acquitted by the jury, six condemned as guilty of falsification and seven condemned because of their offensive words" (*La presse*, May 9, 1851, 1).

[50] Zeldin, "Government Policy in the French General Election of 1849."

[51] Granier de Cassagnac, *Histoire de la chute*, 373; Faucher to Maupas, June 15, 1851, AN, Fonds Maupas, 607AP 24 no. 74. The proposal had also arrived in the hands of the Ministry of Justice. "It would be a natural means, simple and frankly national, to make known the real opinion of France by making every municipal council make a deliberation during special sessions called for that object" (letter, n.d., AN, Fonds des Assemblées Nationales, C//237 no. 2762, dossier "Conseils municipals," 1851).

[52] The republicans criticized the opacity of several meetings of groups of prefects at the end of April, which at least in part were used to discuss how to favor the petitioning (*L'impartial* [Doubs], July 10, 1851, 1).

[53] Charles Tron [letter to Charles Maupas reporting a conversation with Léon Faucher], June 22, 1851, AN, Fond Maupas, 607AP no. 24.

[54] Speech of Emmanuel Arago, *Compte rendu des séances de l'Assemblée nationale législative*, 513–14, May 8, 1851; judicial prosecution of a falsifier of signatures in Fonds du Ministère de la Justice, BB/30/375 1 Caen, Aug. 13, 1851.

[55] For the results of this vigilance, reporting two dozen small cases of harassment on canvassers or signatories, see AN, Fonds du Ministère de la Justice, BB/30/392 and 392/B.

[56] Machin, "Prefects and Political Repression."

[57] Vigier, *La Seconde République dans la région alpine*, 2:232–34; Chevallier and Couailhac, "Présentation," 9.

[58] AN, Fonds du Ministère de la Justice, BB/30/382/1, 386/1, 387/1.

[59] AN, Fonds du Ministère de la Justice, BB/30/380 Metz, July 4, 1851.

[60] AN, Fonds du Ministère de la Justice, BB/30/375 Caen, May 15, 1851.

[61] *L'écho de Vésone*, July 14, 1851, 2.

[62] Marne, Conseil Général. "Procès-verbal des délibérations, séance de 25 Août 1851", 88.

[63] Faucher's damning report on the 1850 petition for universal suffrage can be read as a mirror template for the criticism that the 1851 revisionist campaign received (Girardin, *Questions de mon temps*, 604; Faucher, *Léon Faucher*, 2:409–23).

[64] Marne, Conseil Général. "Procès-verbal des délibérations, session de 25 Août 1851", 86–89.

[65] Attorney general of the court of Bordeaux to the Ministry of Justice, May 21, 1851, AN, Fonds du Ministère de la Justice, BB/30/392/A 130 nos. 12, 14, 15.

[66] Gasc, *Souvenirs*, 115; Gossez, *Le département du Nord*, 369.

[67] Houte, *Le métier de gendarme*, 56.

[68] AN, Fonds du Ministère de la Justice, BB/30/388/1 Toulouse, July 6, 1851.

[69] Vigoureux, *Maupas et le coup d'état*, 46, 57; Maupas, *Mémoires*; Levasseur, "Un épisode du second ministère de Léon Faucher"; Faucher to Maupas, Apr. 26 and May 2, 1851, AN, Fond Maupas, 607AP, nos. 53–55.

[70] Maupas, *Circulaire confidentielle aux sous-préfets [de Haute-Garonne]*, Apr. 26, 1851, AN, Fond Maupas, 607AP, no. 44; Brémond, *Histoire du coup d'état dans le département de la Haute-Garonne*; *Journal de Toulouse*, May 8, 1851, 1.

[71] May 24, 1851, AN, Fond Maupas, 607AP, no. 79.

[72] [Faucher to Maupas], May 15, 1851, AN, Fond Maupas, 607AP, no. 74.

[73] *L'émancipation de Toulouse*, Apr. 23, 1851; attorney general of the court of Bordeaux to the Ministry of Justice, May 21, AN, Fonds du Ministère de la Justice, BB/30/392/A 130, nos. 12, 14, 15.

[74] *L'émancipation de Toulouse*, Apr. 23, May 19, June 7, 1851.

[75] *L'univers* (Paris), June 7, 1851, 1.

[76] *L'émancipation de Toulouse*, May 19, 1851, 2.

[77] Maupas to the sous-préfet of Gaudens, July 12, 1851, AN, Fond Maupas, 607AP, nos. 121 and 152.

[78] McPhee, *Les semailles de la République*, 350–60.

[79] Ménager, *Les Napoléon du peuple*, 431.

[80] AN, Fonds du Ministère de la Justice, BB/30/385 Poitiers, May 31, 1851.

[81] Vigier, *La Seconde République dans la région alpine*, 2:300–301.

[82] AN, Fonds des Assemblées Nationales, C//2327.

[83] Vigier, *La Seconde République dans la région alpine*, 2:231, 245–47, 300–301; "ardor" and "amazement" in Massot, *Rapports*, June 10, 1851, 207–8.

[84] Speech of Charras in *Compte rendu des séances de l'Assemblée nationale législative*, Vol. 16: 132, July 21, 1851.

[85] Ménager, *Les Napoléon du peuple*, 431; Vigier, *La Seconde République dans la région alpine*, 2:245–49, 300–302; Massot, *Rapports*, 210–11, 222–23.

[86] AN, Fonds du Ministère de la Justice, BB/30/374/1.

[87] AN, Fonds du Ministère de la Justice, BB/30/374/1 Bordeaux, June 30, 1851.

[88] AN, Fonds du Ministère de la Justice, BB/30/381/1 Rouen.

[89] AN, Fonds du Ministère de la Justice, BB/30/372, June 7, 1851.

[90] AN, Fonds des Assemblées Nationales, C//2354 Meuse.

[91] AN, Fonds des Assemblées Nationales, C//2347 Jura, no. 2762.

[92] *Compte rendu des séances de l'Assemblée nationale législative*, 16:138, July 21, 1851.

[93] Crook, "Elections and Democracy"; Garrigou, *Histoire sociale du suffrage*, 65–79; Guionnet, *L'apprentissage de la politique moderne.*

[94] Massot, *Rapports*, 222.

[95] Extract from the report of the prosecutor of Angoulême, reproduced in AN, Fonds du Ministère de la Justice, BB/30/374/1.

[96] Deluermoz, *Le crépuscule des révolutions*, 67.

[97] Marx, *Les luttes de classes en France*, 55–56. Other contemporary analyses similar to Marx's are reported by Vigier, *La Seconde République dans la région alpine*, 1:325.

[98] Attorney general of the court of Metz to the Ministry of Justice, May 21, 1851, AN, Fonds du Ministère de la Justice, BB/30/392/A 130.

[99] AN, Fonds du Ministère de la Justice, BB/30/385 Poitiers, May 31, 1851.

[100] AN, Fonds du Ministère de la Justice, BB/30/379/1 Lyon, July 3, 1851.

[101] AN, Fonds du Ministère de la Justice, BB/30/387/1 Rouen, June 1, 1851.

[102] Corbin, *Archaïsme et modernité*; Deluermoz, *Le crépuscule des révolutions*; Bercé, *Croquants et nu-pieds*, 233.

[103] AN, Fonds du Ministère de la Justice, BB/30/380/2 Montpellier, July 7, 1851. Similar trends were observed in Burgundy (Lévêque, *Une société en crise*, 370–72).

[104] Instructions annexed to the letter from the prefect of Basses-Alpes (Desaubiers) to the subprefect of Barcelonette, May 13, 1851, reproduced in *Compte rendu des séances de l'Assemblée nationale législative*, 16:132–33.

[105] AN, Fonds du Ministère de la Justice, BB/30/375 Caen, July 8, 1851.

[106] Corbin, *Archaïsme et modernité*, 2:830.

[107] AN, Fonds du Ministère de la Justice, BB/30/374/1.

[108] *L'univers*, July 21, 1851.

[109] *L'impartial*, May 12, 1851.

[110] France, Assemblée Législative. *Procès-verbaux de la commission de révision de la constitution*, July 5, 1851, 72–73.

[111] *L'impartial* (Doubs), July 27, 1851; *L'univers*, July 21, 1851.

[112] Garrigou, *Histoire sociale du suffrage*, 145–87.

[113] Quoted in *L'impartial* (Doubs), July 27, 1851, 1.

[114] AN, Fonds du Ministère de la Justice, BB/30/382/2, July 7, 1851.

[115] *La presse*, July 8, 1851. The classification produced by the committee and reported by *La presse*, as explained in n. 45, was flawed, severely underestimating the number of signatures explicitly demanding the reelectability of the president.

[116] Saone-et-Loire, Conseil Géneral. *Rapports et déliberations*, 1851, 119.

[117] Gasc, *Souvenirs*, 131. Similar ideas are expressed in *L'Aube* (Troyes), July 25, 1851, 2.

[118] AN, Fonds des Assemblées Nationales, C//2384, Aug. 1851. For Haute-Saône, see Toulouse, *Un département*, 164–65.

[119] Décembre-Alonnier, *Histoire des conseils de guerre de 1852*, 247, 333.

[120] Archives Départementales de l'Aube, 1M579 and 1M581.

[121] Boullenot, *Aux habitants du canton de Bligny-sur-Ouche*, Dec. 15, 1851. Printed notice, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, FRBNF36453011.

[122] Archives Départementales de l'Aube, 1M581; Toulouse, *Un département*, 222.

[123] *Compte rendu des séances de l'Assemblée nationale législative*, 16:134, 147–48, July 21, 1851.

[124] McPhee, *Politics of Rural Life*, 9.

[125] "Messieurs les royalistes / Qui croyaient nous mener / Les Napoléonistes / Vous donnent du balais" (M. Bouillon, "*Chanson nouvelle en honneur à Louis Napoléon Bonaparte*," Arcis, Imprimerie de Frémont, 2, Archives Départementales de l'Aube, 1M576).

[126] Harris, *People Speak!*; Palacios Cerezales, "Ejercer derechos"; Lousada, "A contra-revolução e os lugares da luta política."