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0521808308 - The French Second Empire: An Anatomy of Political Power

Roger Price

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## THE FRENCH SECOND EMPIRE AN ANATOMY OF POLITICAL POWER

This book is about a major historical figure, Napoleon III, and a political regime. It is both about great figures in history and the contexts—the political institutions and social networks—within which they were located.

First the book examines ‘the circumstances and relationships that made it possible for a grotesque mediocrity to play a hero’s part’ (Karl Marx); how the disorder caused by the 1848 Revolution, and the introduction of male suffrage, enabled Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte to secure election as president of the Republic and subsequently to launch a *coup d’état*. The book then considers the ways in which power was exercised by the new imperial regime, by analysing the institutions of state and the mechanisms through which these interacted with society.

The eventual growth of opposition, reflecting alternative political loyalties, led Napoleon III to contemplate the transition from an authoritarian towards a more liberal rule, a process fraught with difficulties and social and political tension. Nevertheless, the establishment of the Liberal Empire appeared to have secured the regime’s future; but at the point of success, the decision was taken to go to war against Prussia, which resulted in a catastrophic defeat and the destruction of Napoleon III’s empire.

This is the most thoroughly researched book on the Second Empire in any language, which makes a contribution to our knowledge of a vitally important period of French history following the 1848 Revolution and the intense mid-century crisis.

ROGER PRICE is Professor of History at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. His books include *The French Second Republic: A Social History* (1972), *Revolution and Reaction: 1848 and the French Second Republic* (1975), *The Modernisation of Rural France: Communication Networks and Agricultural Market Structures in Nineteenth-Century France* (1983), *A Social History of Nineteenth-Century France* (1987), *The Revolutions of 1848* (1988), and *A Concise History of France* (1993).

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# THE FRENCH SECOND EMPIRE

*An Anatomy of Political Power*

BY

ROGER PRICE



**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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 Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
 The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK  
 40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA  
 10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, VIC 3166, Australia  
 Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain  
 Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa  
<http://www.cambridge.org>

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First published 2001

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

*Typeface* Baskerville Monotype 11/12.5 pt.    *System* L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X 2<sub>ε</sub> [T<sub>B</sub>]

*A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data*

Price, Roger, 1944 Jan. 7–

The French Second Empire: an anatomy of political power /  
 Roger Price.

p. cm. – (New studies in European history)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 80830 8

1. Napoleon III, Emperor of the French, 1808–1873.    2. France – Kings and rulers – Biography.  
 3. France – History – Second Empire, 1852–1870.    I. Title.    II. Series.

DC280.P74    2001

944.07'092 – dc21

2001025954

ISBN 0 521 808 308 hardback

Cambridge University Press

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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*In memory of my father, Godfrey David Price (1908–1968) and of my  
mother, Martha Price (1916–2000)*

## *Contents*

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>page ix</i>
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	x
Introduction	1
PART ONE THE RISE OF LOUIS-NAPOLEON BONAPARTE	
1 President of the Republic	9
PART TWO STATE AND SOCIETY	
2 Napoleon III and the Bonapartist state	41
3 The system of government	54
4 The management of elections	95
5 Preserving public order	134
6 Constructing moral order	171
7 Creating the conditions for prosperity	210
Conclusion to Part II	250
PART THREE THE RISE OF OPPOSITION	
8 The context for opposition	255
9 The forms of opposition: (1) Legitimism	272
10 The forms of opposition: (2) Liberalism	291

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0521808308 - The French Second Empire: An Anatomy of Political Power

Roger Price

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

viii

*Contents*

11	The forms of opposition: (3) Republicans in the aftermath of the <i>coup d'état</i>	318
12	The forms of opposition: (4) The republican revival	344
	Conclusion to Part III	395
PART FOUR WAR AND REVOLUTION		
13	War and revolution	405
	<i>General conclusion</i>	465
	<i>Select bibliography</i>	469
	<i>Index</i>	498

Cambridge University Press

0521808308 - The French Second Empire: An Anatomy of Political Power

Roger Price

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## *Acknowledgements*

I have accumulated an enormous number of debts since beginning work on this history. The raw material was largely provided by the archivists and librarians of the Archives nationales; Service historique de l'Armée de Terre; Bibliothèque nationale; University of East Anglia; University of Wales, Aberystwyth; and National Library of Wales. Research grants and study leave were generously awarded by both of the universities mentioned above and further indispensable funding by the British Academy, Leverhulme Trust, and Wolfson Foundation. I am grateful to William Doyle, Richard Evans, Douglas Johnson, Gwynne Lewis, and Vincent Wright for supporting various grant applications. Christopher Johnson, John Merriman, Sylvie Eyrich, Robert Frugère, and Jane Frugère offered encouragement and friendship. Colin Heywood was brave enough to take on the task of critically reading the original manuscript. Heather Price, more than anyone, improved its readability.

I am extremely grateful to William Davies and to the Syndics of Cambridge University Press for agreeing to publish the book as well as for the constructive criticism offered by the readers appointed by the Press, one of whom did me a great favour by suggesting the subtitle. Jean Field very efficiently copy-edited the text.

Above all I have to thank Richard and Luisa, Siân and Andy, Emily and Luke, Hannah, and my beloved Heather, who make life such a pleasure.



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Frontmatter

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AHG	Archives historiques du Ministère de la Guerre
AN	Archives nationales
APP	Archives de la Préfecture de Police
BN	Bibliothèque nationale
DM	Division militaire
(G)OC	(General) officer commanding
jp	juge de paix
MI	Minister of the Interior
MJ	Minister of Justice
NLW	National Library of Wales
PG	Procureur général
PI	Procureur impérial
PR	Procureur de la république
TP	Travaux publics