



Scum:
Death, Destruction and Dirty Washing

by Claire Luckham, Chris Bond and the company

This is a scanned copy of the script for *Scum*, produced by **Monstrous Regiment Theatre Company** in 1976. Set in a Paris laundry and celebrating the women of the 1871 Paris Commune, this newly commissioned play - the company's first production - was written by Claire Luckham, Chris Bond and company members. Full information about the show can be found in its **Productions** page on the company's website (www.monstrousregiment.co.uk), which also provides access to Helen Glavin's recorded music for the show.

The script for *Scum* (including Helen Glavin's music and lyrics) was published in *Monstrous Regiment: A Collective Celebration*, edited and compiled by Gillian Hanna (Nick Hern Books, London 1991). We are grateful to the publisher for permission to reproduce material from this book. The following script was scanned directly from this published text, with no changes. A copy of the original typescript, on which the published text was based, is held in the Monstrous Regiment archive at the V&A's Theatre and Performance Archives.

Requests for permission to perform or translate the play should be addressed to the authors: Chris Bond via Niki Marvin at the Blanche Marvin Agency, Inc. in L.A. (nmpi@earthlink.net); Claire Luckham via info@monstrousregiment.co.uk

Scum ©1976, 1991, 2022 Claire Luckham and Chris Bond
Music and lyrics ©1976, 1991, 2022 Helen Glavin
All rights reserved

SCUM: DEATH,
DESTRUCTION AND
DIRTY WASHING

A musical celebration of the events of
the Paris Commune of 1871

by Claire Luckham and Chris Bond
with additional material
by The Monstrous Regiment
Music by Helen Glavin

CLAIRE LUCKHAM's best known play is *Trafford Tanzi* which has been seen all over the world, after starting life in 1978 in a production by the Liverpool Everyman, where several more of her plays were first staged. Her other work includes an adaptation of *Moll Flanders* and *The Dramatic Attitudes of Miss Fanny Kemble*. *Scum* was her first piece of work for the theatre.

CHRIS BOND has written over thirty shows of various shapes and sizes, as well as novels and new librettos for old operas. He has been Artistic Director of both the Everyman and Playhouse Theatres in Liverpool, and of the Half Moon Theatre in London's East End.

Scum was performed by Monstrous Regiment between April 1976 and April 1977 and later revived.

Written by Claire Luckham, Chris Bond and the company

Directed by Susan Todd

Music written by Helen Glavin

Designed by Andrea Montag

Costumes by Hilary Lewis

Performers: Chris Bowler
Helen Glavin
Gillian Hanna
Mary McCusker
Susan Todd
Roger Allam
Alan Hulse

Technician: d. Wilson

Poster/graphics: Chris Montag

Photos: Roger Perry

In subsequent versions the following also appeared:

Linda Broughton
Ann Mitchell
Ian Blower
Clive Russell

Musician: Josefina Cupido

One subsequent version was redirected by Ann Mitchell

Technician: Meri Jenkins

Administration: Sue Beardon

The scene throughout is a laundry in Paris: Things are taken off or added as necessary. The play begins in September 1871.

Lights up: a large pile of dirty washing moves: MOLE emerges from it and addresses the audience.

MOLE. Madames and Messieurs bonsoir and welcome to Paris.

City of light, gaiety, effervescence. The seat of reason, the home of culture, the cradle of civilisation and the biggest knocking shop in Europe. Well. Perhaps you have heard about our Parisienne women, yes? Perhaps you have heard about our laughing eyes, our twinkling toes? Perhaps you have heard of our glittering coutures of which I present to you such a beautiful example here this evening?

If you haven't heard about French women you must have heard about an extremely naughty dance that we've just invented called the can-can. Would you like me to tell you why it's so very naughty, yes? It is because we lift up our skirts and show you what we got underneath.

She does so, revealing her long ragged drawers.

Yes well, that's all very well but there is a war going on you know. Oh yes. We are fighting the Prussians. Why? Well frankly your guess is as good as mine. Death or glory, La Patrie, L'Honneur all that crap. Chasing the Prussians round the countryside takes our minds off rising prices something wonderful and here's the best bit. We've gone and lost our Emperor. Well he lost himself, that's to say he has gone and got himself captured, the horrible little whore-master. So we've told him not to bother coming back thanks very much, we can manage very well without him and we have gone and declared a Republic. Oh glorious day, oh wonderful 4th of September! No more monarchs, no more oppressors. Let the voice of the people command. Come on let's hear it for Liberty, Equality and Fraternity!

Republic of the People my arse. What have we got? A very clean, very respectable bunch of doctors, lawyers and merchants have taken over. And Adolphe Thiers – the greasy eminence of French politics he is – he has been lurking in the

4 MONSTROUS REGIMENT

wings of our little show here for the last forty years just waiting to come lamming in with the old law and order philosophy the minute we get a little bit restless. Now you can't call that a revolution can you eh? I mean, where's the blood? Where's the babies spitted on sticks, where's the heads rolling in the baskets? Where's the priests with their bollocks stuffed down their throats?

MADAME MASSON (*off*). Mole? Mole? Oh, oh what a night.

She comes in.

MOLE. This is our boss Madame Masson. She's a very religious woman. Believes in profit and the life hereafter.

MASSON. Oh my head. Good morning Madame Mole. I'm surprised to find you still here. Guarding my laundry. I expected you to be in the streets leading the rabble. Gone to join the revolution.

MOLE. I'm not hoiking me skirts up round me armpits just because we've swapped an Emperor for a bunch of half-baked bankers. That's not what I mean by a Republic and well you know it.

MASSON. Quite right Mole. You couldn't do with all that running around. Your rheumatism wouldn't stand it. You need steady work. Settling down. A home. You're safe here with me Mole. Yes, as dear Claude was saying at breakfast, the future looks bright. Where are those girls? They're late. Up half the night screaming through the streets with the mob I suppose. Yes Mole, as Claude was saying, this new government contains some of the most reliable men in France. If they can't save us from the Prussians, who can?

JOSEPHINE (*off*). Hey look, Eugenie. They're going into the bakers.

EUGENIE. They're shitting all over his doorstep.

JOSEPHINE and EUGENIE *tumble in.*

MASSON. You're late.

JOSEPHINE. It's the sheep. They're blocking the road.

MASSON. Sheep!

EUGENIE. They're bringing them in for the siege.

MASSON. Siege. Mother of God, what siege?

JOSEPHINE. Go and have a look, Madame.

EUGENIE. Go and have a look.

JOSEPHINE. They're everywhere. And the smell. It's worse than this place.

EUGENIE. I never want to go to the country if it smells like that.

JOSEPHINE. You're dead lucky they haven't come in here, Madame.

MASSON. There is work to be done. I'll only mark you fifteen minutes late in the circumstances. That's three centimes off your wages.

EUGENIE. Wasn't our fault -

MASSON. And it will be six if those shirts aren't in to soak quick. Josephine tackle those stains. I don't want them coming back again. A siege. If there's going to be a siege what happens next? Someone must know. I intend to find out. Keep working girls.

Exit.

EUGENIE. She's off for a few with her mate, Madame Bouquin.

MOLE. Her that owns the posh grocers. 'Purveyors of Victuals to the Quality' over the door.

EUGENIE. Makes her own sausages. Looks like one and all. Fat cow.

JOSEPHINE. I'm pissed off.

JOSEPHINE. Emile's been out all night. Went off with Marcel to celebrate the Republic. That was yesterday dinner time. Haven't had sight nor sound of him since.

MOLE. Celebrate! The Republic isn't going to make no difference to us.

EUGENIE. No. We'll be slogging here just the same.

JOSEPHINE. The Republic won't make my money go further. Emile's had no work for six weeks. He says there's no building work about now. I'm at my wits' end to feed the kids and him.

EUGENIE. Cheer up. He'll get work now the war's over. Look on the bright side eh?

JOSEPHINE. The war may be over but the siege is just beginning.

6 MONSTROUS REGIMENT

MOLE. With a siege on we'll likely all be out of a job. There's nobody going to be worrying about clean linen. At the very least Masson will have an excuse to cut our wages.

EUGENIE. Go on. You can't get lower than one franc a day.

MOLE. You want to bet on that?

JOSEPHINE. Most of Madame's customers will be packing off to their country houses. I can't see them sitting here waiting for the Prussians to blast them to smithereens.

EUGENIE. What do you say Jose? Shall we take a little trip to our country estate? Take the waters for our health?

JOSEPHINE. The only water we'll be taking is this lot of slops out the back.

EUGENIE. Food's going to be short.

JOSEPHINE. That's nothing new.

EUGENIE. Still. At least you've got your Emile to keep you warm nights. That's more than I've got.

JOSEPHINE. Men. I shit 'em. If I had my time over I'd choose careful. I'd think twice before I'd chain myself to a man and kids.

MOLE. Too late now.

EUGENIE. I was glad to see the back of my old man. He wasn't worth a light. He would have had me lumbered with a dozen by now if he'd had his way.

JOSEPHINE. We both walked the orchard and picked a crab.

EUGENIE. Too bloody true.

MOLE. In your blooming youth! I'll bet you two were as green as grass.

EUGENIE. Remember them shows Jose? Down the Vaudeville? When we was single. I had a yellow frock. Bought it with my first wages. I went up on the stage and sang.

JOSEPHINE. I remember. I tried to stop you.

EUGENIE. You was too drunk to stop me.

MOLE. You had some nerve then.

EUGENIE. I was fourteen.

JOSEPHINE. The fellers used to buzz round us like flies round a jam-pot. The terrible two we were.

EUGENIE. Water under the bridge.

JOSEPHINE. Blood more like. Here Eug, give us a hand with these cuffs.

EUGENIE. Christ my legs ache.

MOLE. Keep moving or you'll seize up.

The Laundry Song

Enter MASSON.

MASSON. Josephine, how much work is there?

JOSEPHINE. Three days.

EUGENIE. At least Madame, maybe four.

MASSON. Rubbish. Looks more like one to me. It's not enough. I'm in the wrong business I can tell you. Madame Bouquin was on her way to buy up stocks of sugar, tea, butter. This siege will mean shortage and that means higher prices. She'll make her fortune.

JOSEPHINE. It's not fair, is it.

EUGENIE. There's no justice is there, Madame.

MASSON. You're getting slack Eugenie, slack.

JOSEPHINE. It's her back, Madame.

EUGENIE. It's my back.

MASSON. I am not a charity, Josephine. I cannot afford to carry invalids.

MOLE. Try the brothels. Business is very good with all the troops in town. Lots of dirty sheets.

MASSON. Hang the washing, you.

Enter LUCIE.

MASSON. Ah Madame Deschamps! The camisoles are ready. Such beautiful lace. It's not often we have the pleasure of seeing such exquisite workmanship pass through our tubs. Is it girls?

8 MONSTROUS REGIMENT

MOLE.

EUGENIE. } Beautiful Mrs/Oh it's a real joy, (*etc.*)

JOSEPHINE.

LUCIE. I've come to ask you for a job, Madame. My husband was killed three weeks ago at Sedan. I've my little girl to keep so I thought if you could possibly give me work - I'll do anything, I'm very strong, and I'm quick. I'll soon learn -

MASSON. Monsieur killed - fighting for his Emperor. You must be proud in the midst of your loss.

LUCIE. I didn't want him to go. He was a fool, he believed the lies he read in the papers. It was a pointless futile war.

JOSEPHINE. } Blimey!

EUGENIE. } Hark at her.

MASSON. Your grief is only natural dear. Calm down.

LUCIE. Can you help me? I'll do anything, I can sew, wash, iron, anything.

MASSON. Oh Madame, look around you. What work can I offer to an educated young lady? You were a schoolteacher before you married, I remember?

LUCIE. Yes.

MASSON. A highly respectable position. Madame, I wish it were in my power to assist you but business is bad. I'm not an uncharitable woman. It's not easy for me.

JOSEPHINE. She's ever so kind-hearted.

EUGENIE. She's a real Christian.

MASSON. I'll tell you what I'll do. I could offer you perhaps two days' work. I have some quality garments for repair and my girls are not at their best in fine sewing.

LUCIE. I can sew very neatly -

MASSON. I hope so.

LUCIE. How much will I get? -

MASSON. Seventy-five centimes a day. That's all I can afford.

You're lucky to get it. Now what's your name? We don't like to be too formal here do we girls?

MOLE. Oh no we're a very friendly bunch.

LUCIE. Lucie.

MASSON. Isn't that a pretty name?

MOLE.

EUGENIE. } Oh yes, lovely, sweet, (*etc.*) Like a rose.

JOSEPHINE.

MASSON. Josephine don't sit there like a sack of flour. Get Lucie working and Mole, get that sewing sorted for her. Stay awake and see she does it. I'm just off to help Madame Bouquin buy in some stores. I shan't be long.

Exit MASSON.

MOLE. They're going to go halves on a ton of sugar and sell it at treble what they paid for it.

JOSEPHINE. We won't be buying it neither.

MOLE. Here. Look at this. You'll never get anything like that on your back, eh Eug?

JOSEPHINE. Oi. Don't kill yourself. You'll be worn out by two o' clock at that rate.

EUGENIE. And you'll make us all look slow, love.

LUCIE. Oh. I see what you mean. I've never done this sort of work before. It's very - interesting - to be somewhere so different.

EUGENIE. Different from what?

LUCIE. Well - a schoolroom.

EUGENIE. What a comedown eh? Schoolteacher to laundress. Think you can stand the pace? You looks done in now.

JOSEPHINE. Get comfortable girl. Take this off.

MOLE. You better get them specs off. You're all steamed up.

LUCIE. Oh yes. I can't see very well, I'm a bit short-sighted.

EUGENIE. Never mind. You won't have to look at the low company in here. Not what you're used to I daresay?

JOSEPHINE. Leave her alone. Come with me. I'll show you where to put your things.

MOLE. I expect she's got her schoolbooks in there.

10 MONSTROUS REGIMENT

EUGENIE. You want to watch out she don't give you a black mark.

JOSEPHINE. How old's your kid?

LUCIE. She's seven. Marie. She can read, she's clever but she's not strong.

JOSEPHINE. Shame. They're a burden when they're ailing aren't they? Still she'll be off your hands in a few years.

LUCIE. She's lovely. She keeps me company at home. She's all I've got.

EUGENIE. You needn't be short of company. You don't want to stay home moping for your husband. Not at your age. I wouldn't.

LUCIE. I don't mope.

JOSEPHINE. What do you do with yourself?

LUCIE. I read a lot.

EUGENIE. Oh. What fun.

LUCIE. No I enjoy it. I'm reading this terribly interesting book at the moment, by Darwin, it's called *The Origin of Species* and do you know -

EMILE and MARCEL enter.

EMILE. Greetings citizenesses! Long live the Republic!

MARCEL. Republic for ever! Whae hae!

JOSEPHINE. Where the hell do you think you've been?

EMILE. Give us a kiss, Jose.

EUGENIE. Watch it. She'll be back any minute.

MARCEL. Don't worry doll. She's parading off downtown with her mate from the grocers.

JOSEPHINE. Have you left the kids running wild again?

EMILE. Don't start, Jose.

JOSEPHINE. You make me sick.

EMILE. Jose. We've been out on very important business.

JOSEPHINE. Very urgent drinking.

MARCEL. Clock this girls. You are looking at two soldiers of the people.

EMILE. Members of the new Citizen Army.

EMILE. } We've joined up!
 MARCEL. }

JOSEPHINE. I could kill him.

EUGENIE. Oh my God.

MOLE. Blimey. Those Prussians had better watch out now.

EUGENIE. What do you want joining up now? The war's over you silly farts.

EMILE. It's the National Guard we've joined.

MARCEL. Not the sodding regular army.

EMILE. We shall defend the Republic against the Prussians and the Emperor if need be.

LUCIE. Ah. Can you tell me what tactics the National Guard are going to adopt? The regular army couldn't get rid of the Prussians could they? How are you going to do it?

MARCEL. Hello. Look what the cat's brought in. You new here darling? What's your name then?

LUCIE. I'll keep it to myself thanks.

MARCEL. Oh. She's a bit classy for this dump isn't she?

JOSEPHINE. Lay off, you.

MOLE. You going to sweet talk the Prussians into laying down their guns big boy? What's turned you two into patriots all of a sudden. Going to fight for La France now are we?

EMILE. I don't give a damn for the Emperor's France. But I'll fight for our France, our Paris. My kids, my Josie. We're the citizen's militia - to defend the people of Paris.

MARCEL. A couple of weeks of this siege and we'll have those Prussians on the run.

EMILE. The Republic's got no fight with the Prussians.

MOLE. That's your bloody trouble. You can't see a fight when it's right under your noses. All you ever eat is bread. Right? Well a

12 MONSTROUS REGIMENT

Prussian general, he likes a nice piece of sausage and a five-course meal.

MARCEL. Nothing wrong with sausage, eh?

MOLE. A sausage is a terrible thing. It's a great corrupter, a sausage is. You don't have much respect for bread eaters, not after you've stuffed a yard or two of pork down your gullet.

EMILE. Always look on the black side, that's you. Today's supposed to be a celebration. Have a drink, Mole.

MARCEL. Yeah. Wet your whistle, girls. Do you want a drink?

LUCIE. No thanks.

MARCEL. Too rough for your delicate palate, is it?

LUCIE. I don't feel like it.

MARCEL. I always feel like it.

EMILE. You make me laugh. Innocents. Do you think Thiers is going to let a bunch of armed workers stroll around Paris ready to shoot down the government if they don't like it? Not old Adolphe.

MOLE. Adolphe Thiers the Villain of our show! Aged seventy. He's one of these politicians who swears to save us from all our troubles. But when it comes down to it of course he'll drop us in it deeper than we were before.

MOLE *takes out Thiers' puppet.*

JOSEPHINE. You can't wipe your arse on a piece of newspaper without finding his name all over it.

The Thiers' song.

MOLE. The pity of it is, it's the people that's the puppet; not M'sieur Thiers.

Enter MASSON.

MASSON. Tired, girls? I could arrange a holiday. Permanently. Visitors, I see. Can I help you gentlemen or was this just a social call?

JOSEPHINE. They were just going, Madame.

MARCEL. Ah Madame. Radiant as ever I see. Me and my friend here were wondering if you could make up some uniforms for us. We just joined up, see, and we thought a nice establishment

like this, you could turn out something really smart, you know well-tailored.

MASSON. Uniforms. Who's paying exactly?

EMILE. The Municipality of Paris.

MARCEL. Four francs the jacket, three-fifty the trousers.

MASSON. They supply the cloth?

MARCEL. Yes.

MASSON. We'll see what we can do. If you'd care to go through to my salon at the back I shall come and measure you directly.

Exit EMILE and MARCEL.

MOLE. She'll be making rifles next, you mark my word.

MASSON. We must all do our duty. Well, Lucie; it appears I may be able to keep you after all. I am sure everything turns out for the best in the end. I had a most satisfactory time at the warehouse with Madame Bouquin. Most rewarding. Right Josephine, Eugenie, get those slops out the back. Get shifting Mole.

Groans and complaints.

Backs into it, girls!

Blackout: all exit. Drums.

Enter MASSON reading a newspaper. MOLE, JOSEPHINE, LUCIE, EUGENIE sewing uniforms.

MASSON. Would you credit it. My potatoes arrived this morning wrapped in this red publication. It has the effrontery to say: 'Since the 4th September our government have had no thoughts but making a peace treaty'. What do you think of that?

JOSEPHINE. Shocking.

EUGENIE. Scandalous.

MASSON. It's enough to make you change your greengrocer.

Enter EMILE and MARCEL.

MASSON. Ah gentlemen. Get the sheet for the gentlemen to change behind.

14 MONSTROUS REGIMENT

MARCEL. My, my, that's a high-class piece of tailoring.

LUCIE. She's a very high class of slave driver.

MARCEL. Feeling the strain?

LUCIE. I can stand it.

MASSON. Messieurs, your uniforms. Eyes front girls.

A sheet is held up with the men in front of it and the women behind. They try on the uniforms.

EUGENIE. Perhaps the two gentlemen would like to let us know how they find the front?

MARCEL. It's very smart.

EUGENIE. The battlefield.

JOSEPHINE. What action have you seen?

EMILE. Well. We've repaired the fortifications and now we're manning them.

LUCIE. Can you see the enemy?

MARCEL. Oh yes. We can see them.

MOLE. Are they dead or alive?

EMILE. They spend all day carrying out manoeuvres.

MARCEL. Prancing up and down.

EMILE. Watching us.

LUCIE. What do you do?

MARCEL. We man the fortifications.

EMILE. We post sentries.

MARCEL. We report all enemy movements to H.Q.

EUGENIE. Where's the fighting?

EMILE. There isn't any. We're waiting for orders.

MARCEL. And when we get them we'll break out.

MOLE. Ah! Break out! This is the Great Attack we've been hearing so much about.

MARCEL. Oh yes. We'll go over the top, charge, break through their defences and totally annihilate them.

EMILE. Well let's wait until we get some guns, eh? They're big fellers some of these Prussians.

MARCEL. We'll get guns.

EMILE. When? Have you seen anyone with a good gun? The only ones I've seen you couldn't hit the Empress's arse at five yards.

JOSEPHINE. What you going to do if the Prussians attack you?

EMILE. They're not going to attack us when they can just sit round the walls and starve us out. We've been watching them for three weeks digging themselves in. They've surrounded the city.

MARCEL. Well, I'll fight them with my bare hands.

EMILE. You might have to.

MASSON. Finished, gentlemen? Oh yes, splendid. Brush, Lucie. Doesn't he look handsome?

LUCIE. He looks a real hero.

MARCEL. Thanks.

MASSON. If I were ten years younger! I shall just fetch my receipt book for you to sign.

Exit.

JOSEPHINE. You want to watch it Marcel. She'll have your trousers off for a little alteration if you give her half a chance.

MOLE. Yeah. Is the crutch a bit tight?

MARCEL. Get Off!

EUGENIE. I know who Marcel fancies. And it's not you Mole. What you waiting for, Lucie? Prince Charming? You want to grab him while he's going.

LUCIE. I can get by without a man thanks.

EMILE. She's playing hard to get.

LUCIE. And I can certainly do without a loudmouth like that one.

MARCEL. What have I done? What have I done?

Enter MASSON.

MASSON. No work to do? If you'll just sign the book M'sieur.
Keep it official.

EMILE. I feel like a real soldier now.

EUGENIE. So do I.

EMILE. Think we'll beat those Prussians now, Mole?

MOLE. No trouble darling.

The song of the National Guard.

Exit EMILE and MARCEL.

MOLE. Aren't they wonderful? That's our citizen militia that is. They're going to save us from the Prussians. 'Be terrible Oh Patriots! Pause only when you pass by some simple peasant hut to imprint a kiss upon the brow of a sleeping child'. Lot of crap like that about, you know. Victor Hugo wrote that. Well. All they need now is a gun. They won't be getting one of course. They don't give guns to scum like Emile and Marcel. Because a gun has one great big disadvantage. It fires in whichever direction you point it. So they'll be saving the guns for the flashy dressers with the waxed mustachios, the old established regiments. The old established cowards who couldn't fight a fly with its wings nailed together.

MASSON *rings the bell.*

MASSON. I shall now go and share my husband's lunch. You may have the time - fifteen minutes mind - to yourselves. Bon appetit girls. And you Mole.

ALL. Thank you Madame.

Exit MASSON.

JOSEPHINE. I'm off.

EUGENIE. Dining at the Ritz today, Jose?

JOSEPHINE. I'll cast my eye over the menu; see what takes my fancy.

Exit JOSEPHINE.

EUGENIE. Good book, is it?

LUCIE. Mmm. Where does she go?

EUGENIE. You heard her. To the Ritz.

LUCIE. Oh come on. Where?

EUGENIE. You're so green. Where do you think? She goes out looking for scraps. In the bins.

LUCIE. That's awful.

EUGENIE. Where did you get that cheese?

LUCIE. My aunt sent it from Brittany.

EUGENIE. Before the siege started?

LUCIE. Yes.

EUGENIE. A piece of cheese that size costs two francs now. Eggs four francs each. How can Jose and Emile afford that? They've got kids. Kids don't understand about not eating. How do you get by with your little girl to feed?

LUCIE. I get by, just about. I'm lucky. I saved a bit while I was married.

EUGENIE. What you going to do when that runs out?

LUCIE. I try not to think about it. Would you like some?

EUGENIE. It's nice. Here. When your kid's better she'll be able to help you out. They always want girls for doll-dressing. She could get fifty centimes a day.

LUCIE. I can't let her go out to work. She's only a child. I want her to go to school.

EUGENIE. Sorry I spoke.

EUGENIE *looks for her bread which MOLE has pinched.*

Where's my bread? I had it here. I swear I did. Mole! You cow: You poxy old arse-licker. I'll do for you this time.

EUGENIE *and MOLE fight.*

LUCIE. Stop it Eugenie. Stop it. Have mine.

EUGENIE. You keep out of this. Stuck up bitch. You come in here with your cheese, chucking your bread around. Treating us like dirt. Saved a bit, have you? What do you know? You don't want for a good dress or a place to sleep. You don't know you're born. Wait till you've been slaving here on one franc a day for ten years. Then we'll see.

MOLE. She's right. Getting a bit of sense in her head at last.
Clear off. Piss off out of it.

Enter JOSEPHINE.

JOSEPHINE. What's going on? Look at your faces, you're enough to turn the milk sour. Listen if anyone should be bellyaching I should. I'm getting so thin I'll be able to crack nuts with my knees soon. Look at 'em. I watched the fat men in the cafés. You should see the menu at Maxim's - 'Cat au Vin' - 'Dog's Leg à l'Orange'. It's bad enough without us fighting each other.

LUCIE. I hear they're eating the elephants out of the zoo.

JOSEPHINE. Some people are doing all right out of this siege.
How are we supposed to live?

MOLE. We're not. That's the whole point.

Enter MASSON.

MASSON. Well. And what have we been plotting? Come along girls, look lively. Time is money. Mole? I'm giving you permission to go.

MOLE. Go?

MASSON. Yes. Monsieur tells me they are forming a women's batallion. You're always going on about the army and how you could do it better if you were a man. Now's your chance.

MOLE. Oh very nice. I'd look a treat goose-stepping along the street with my rags flapping around me ankles.

MASSON. I thought you'd jump at the chance. Mind you, with those legs you can't jump at much any more can you?

MOLE. A women's batallion indeed. Ha. Attached to the cavalry no doubt so they can ride us into battle. Charge!

MASSON. You're disgusting.

MOLE. Oh dear me no. What am I thinking of? They wouldn't let us within a mile of the Prussians. We might beat the bastards, then what? No more secret deals, no more seven course suppers for Thiers and Bismarck. Hey Josephine, now she'd make a good soldier.

JOSEPHINE. A women's army? I might join that. But not to fight the Prussians.

MOLE. Quite. Why worry about lice when you've got cancer? That's it. We're stuck. Stuck and starving. Paris is surrounded. The last train left a week ago. And guess who was on it. The mighty midget, gone to negotiate, so we're told. There's nothing to eat. You can only get rat in high class restaurants. What I wouldn't give for a nice piece of rat. Our only link with the outside world is balloons. I ask you, balloons. There's one. There's one now. That is vital. That's got a very important message in it. It names the date of the great break out, the great attack when we're going to smash through the Prussian lines. Now that is going to rally support for us throughout the world. Good luck, good luck, oh good luck! It came down in Sweden and the pilot broke his leg.

Exit MOLE.

Blackout. Sound of gunfire. Drums.

Enter JOSEPHINE and EUGENIE with logs. They are wet and tired.

JOSEPHINE. Oh no. This bloody stove's gone out.

EUGENIE *sinks down.*

Don't sit down Eugenie. I keep telling you, she's only waiting for an excuse to get rid of one of us.

Enter LUCIE: with a branch.

LUCIE. That's the last of the last trees of Paris. It's tragic.

JOSEPHINE. Never mind that. Let's get this stove lit.

LUCIE. The wood's wet.

JOSEPHINE *takes papers from MASSON's desk.*

JOSEPHINE. We'll use this.

LUCIE. You can't use that.

EUGENIE. That's her paperwork.

JOSEPHINE. So what.

LUCIE. Come on, quick.

They begin screwing up the paper to light the fire.

Enter MASSON.

MASSON. Josephine! How dare you. That is sacred, that is my paperwork.

JOSEPHINE. When we get the Commune everyone will do their own washing.

MASSON. Don't blaspheme Josephine! I will, I must have order. In my own house, in my own business. Everything in order. Everything accounted for. I shall go to heaven with the correct papers, my balance carried forward, and throw myself upon the mercy of the celestial auditor confident of double entry into the book of eternal life.

Enter MOLE: Drops logs.

MASSON. Mole, have you no feelings? My head. You've no idea what those guns sound like close to.

MOLE. We will have. Soon.

JOSEPHINE. What do you mean?

MOLE. The great break out. The great attack. The Prussians wiped us out.

MASSON. This is just a minor defeat, minor. I was with M'sieur watching the last batallions leave. You should have seen them Mole, their buttons gleaming, guns glistening in the sun, they were magnificent. If it weren't for that noise.

MOLE. Perhaps Madame would prefer it if the guns were to play a waltz?

MASSON. I want this war to finish just as much as everyone else does. I'm suffering, we're all suffering. Doesn't it move you to see my business grinding to a halt and nothing to heat the boilers with?

MOLE. Doesn't it move you to see us starving?

MASSON. I'm sick of you and your remarks. Keep them to yourself or out you go. I must lie down. There are some problems which can only be solved with a little silence.

Exit MASSON.

EUGENIE. They can't all be dead, Josie. Emile can look after himself.

JOSEPHINE. I haven't seen him for days. I'm worried sick.

LUCIE. This defeat means the siege goes on.

EUGENIE. And we're defenceless.

MOLE. All the Prussians have to do is start knocking down the walls of Paris and we've had it.

Enter EMILE and MARCEL.

MARCEL. Hello girls. Have you missed us?

EMILE. Look Josie. We've got guns. Well one between us anyway.

JOSEPHINE. Where the hell have you been? Not a word for four days. For all I knew you could have been dead. Not that I'd care.

EMILE. Give it a rest, Josie. Just once.

LUCIE. I must get back to Marie. Cover for me will you?

MARCEL. Don't let me drive you away.

LUCIE. I have to go. My girl's sick. If I don't look after her no one else will. She'll die.

MARCEL. What can I do?

LUCIE. You wouldn't know where to start.

Exit LUCIE.

MARCEL. What did I do this time? Here look Mole we got a gun at last. Yes well it's a bit old, it's a blunderbuss; what you do is you get the powder and you stuff it down the barrel like this . . . then you get the lead and you stuff that in afterwards . . .

EMILE. They don't want to know. We'll not stay where we're not wanted. Let's take our jug of wine elsewhere.

JOSEPHINE. On the piss again. No wonder you got defeated.

EMILE. Oh, you've heard. The great break out. What a bloody fiasco. Well don't blame us. We weren't there.

MARCEL. Wouldn't use the National Guard. Used the bleeding regulars.

EMILE. You should have seen them. Our lads.

MARCEL. You've got to admit they were smart.

EMILE. Magnificent sight. Trumpets and drums, hair parted down the middle, boots shining.

22 MONSTROUS REGIMENT

MARCEL. Teeth bared, nostrils flared – and that was just the horses. And the officers – left, left, left. Chaps right.

EMILE. We sat there watching them go. Three days later they marched back in –

MARCEL. Covered in glory.

EMILE. Covered in shit.

MARCEL. The Prussians had laid them out flat.

EMILE. Arses hanging out of their trousers.

MARCEL. A drunken newt could've pissed all over them.

EMILE. Funniest thing I've seen since my Josie got the measles.

General laughter and merriment.

Enter MASSON.

MASSON. You're disgusting. You're no better than animals. Have you no respect? I've had enough. Get out. Go on get out. All of you. Get out.

EUGENIE. We've worked here ten years –

JOSEPHINE. You can't just sack us –

MASSON. This is my laundry. I can do what I like. Get out. And don't come back.

Exit JOSEPHINE, EMILE, MARCEL, EUGENIE.

MASSON. Don't think I can't see you under there Mole, come out!

MOLE. Not Mole, Not your old friend Mole. You wouldn't. You couldn't have it on your conscience. A Christian woman like you . . .

MASSON. All right, all right. Shut up Mole. We can't work without fuel anyway. And if this siege goes on much longer there won't be any customers left.

Masson's Song.

EUGENIE (*off*). Mole? Mole? Thank God you're here. I've run all the way from Josie's. Lucie's there with her kid. She's in pain, she's really bad. Josie says can you get any laudanum?

MASSON. Lucie's girl? Poor little mite. Has she got clean sheets? Has the Doctor called yet?

MOLE. Where would they get the money for a quack?

MASSON. I'll pay. Eugenie, fetch Dr Gollet. If there's any query tell him Madame is paying. Run! I'll follow. Oh poor little mite.

MASSON *and* EUGENIE *exit*.

MOLE. You've got to admit it, she's all heart. You can always fool a woman with a sick kid. Even a mean old skinflint like Masson.

A howl from LUCIE, off: lights dim.

Re-enter MASSON.

MASSON. Dead. Cost me ten francs. That hole Josephine lives in. I was ashamed when Dr Gollet came, ashamed. Dr Gollet I said, please forgive these dreadful conditions. I can supervise my girls at work – but at home. Oh the smell. You really are like vermin aren't you? One thing I've learnt, there are things more important than money. Cleanliness for one. I can't wait to get home and have a bath. Then I shall prepare M'sieur's supper. There are still a few morsels left in the store cupboard. A few slices of smoked ham and the last of the brandied cherries. Yes. There are some things more important than money.

Blackout.

Drums. Night: a small area of stage is lit. Enter MARCEL shaking a collecting tin mug.

MARCEL. Guns for Paris! Guns for Paris! Give what you can brothers and sisters. Guns for Paris! Guns for the people! Give what you can for guns for the people.

VOICE OFF. Slut! You filthy little whore! Fornicating on my doorstep like an animal. I'll throw a bucket of cold water over you if I catch you here again. You whore! You're scum. Get back to the gutter where you belong. Scum.

Enter LUCIE.

MARCEL *recognises her*.

LUCIE. Don't touch me, don't. I'm so sick of being hungry. That was the first time. You've no idea, men. You go off, leave us, leave your children. All you can think about is beating the Prussians, tactics, manoeuvres, the excitement. You don't have

to listen to your child crying for its father. I used to give her pebbles to suck. We pretended they were sweets. I made a game of it. But it wasn't a game. She's dead because I couldn't feed her, house her, give her medicine. That's real. And it's real when I stand in an alley and lift my skirts for a bit of bread.

MARCEL. I didn't know.

LUCIE. Well you know now.

MARCEL. I'm collecting for guns to defend Paris. So far I've got a hundred and fifty-three francs, and a tin button.

Exit MARCEL and LUCIE.

Drums.

Enter MOLE.

MOLE. The Prussians started to bombard Paris on the 23rd of January. Our so-called leaders wanted to throw in the towel straight away. We said no. We were the ones who'd been starving, we weren't going to give in now. With us it was death or victory, there will be no surrender!

JOSEPHINE. Thiers has surrendered! (*Enter.*)

EMILE. They've chucked it in! (*Enter.*)

EUGENIE. Sold us out! (*Enter.*)

Enter MARCEL and LUCIE.

EMILE. A hundred and thirty-four days we've held out and the bastards have chucked it in.

LUCIE. What have we been starving for?

JOSEPHINE. They've given in.

MARCEL. Without a fight.

EUGENIE. Tomorrow thirty thousand Prussians will march down the Champs Elysées.

LUCIE. Just to rub our noses in it.

MARCEL. We didn't sign any armistice.

JOSE. And Thiers has handed over Alsace, Lorraine and twenty million francs.

MOLE. How much?

They stand facing each other on either side of the stage.

Enter MASSON down the middle.

MASSON. It is rather a lot of money isn't it? As the Governor of the Bank of France wrote to M'sieur Thiers: 'Where is the guiding hand, the rallying influence, the decision that sets uncertainty at rest?' Yes. Well I don't always understand what my bank manager says either. But I think this makes it slightly clearer. It's from the financiers, and it says 'You, Monsieur Thiers, will never get any financial business done until you put an end to those scoundrels, and take their guns away from them.'

Exeunt.

Enter MOLE with bucket and brush: scrubs. LUCIE and EUGENIE appear above the washing lines.

LUCIE. Eugenie! Eugenie look.

EUGENIE. What?

LUCIE. Look at Mole. She's scrubbing.

EUGENIE. So?

LUCIE. She's outside. She's scrubbing the street.

EUGENIE. Let's go down and help her then.

LUCIE. What's she doing it for?

EUGENIE. She's scrubbing out the smell of Prussians.

A black sheet is hung on the front line.

EUGENIE and LUCIE join MOLE scrubbing.

Song: The Lament of Louise Michel

Exit LUCIE.

Enter MASSON.

MASSON. That's right, put your backs into it. Clean floor, clean start. Everything back to normal. Or soon will be, so M'sieur tells me. Ah. The aroma of good food drifting through the streets. Crisp white napkins, clean tablecloths. My sister in Dijon sent me a pot of mustard today. I haven't seen a pot of mustard in months.

Enter LUCIE.

LUCIE. They're taking the guns, our guns.

MASSON. You're late.

LUCIE. Have you heard anything?

EUGENIE. Heard what?

LUCIE. About the guns.

JOSEPHINE. What guns?

LUCIE. Our guns.

EUGENIE. What about them?

LUCIE. They're taking them.

JOSEPHINE. Who's taking them?

LUCIE. The government.

JOSEPHINE. Do you mean Thiers?

LUCIE. Yes. Thiers and the Government. Taking our guns.

EUGENIE. The ones we paid for?

LUCIE. Yes. Our cannons.

JOSEPHINE. The bastards.

EUGENIE. Why?

LUCIE. So we can't use them against them, that's why.

JOSEPHINE. Bastards.

MASSON. What is that whispering?

EUGENIE. They're taking our guns.

JOSEPHINE. Stealing them.

MASSON. Guns? What guns?

LUCIE. Thiers and the government. Taking our guns that we paid for by public subscription.

JOSEPHINE. They're stealing them.

MASSON. Stealing? Who's stealing?

JOSEPHINE. Are they taking them from Montmartre?

LUCIE. Montmartre, Belleville, La Villette, everywhere.

EUGENIE. Where have they taken them to?

LUCIE. They haven't. Yet.

EUGENIE. What's going on?

JOSEPHINE. What are they doing?

LUCIE. I don't know but the guns are still there. They haven't moved them.

JOSEPHINE. }
EUGENIE. } Why not?

LUCIE. I don't know.

Enter MOLE followed by EMILE and MARCEL.

MOLE. Get your red flag out, Masson. You'll be needing it. Come on your lot, there's work to be done.

LUCIE. Have they taken them?

MOLE. Oh yes we're taking them.

JOSEPHINE. Thiers?

MOLE. No. Us.

EUGENIE. Who?

MOLE. The people.

MASSON. What people?

MOLE. What people do you think Masson?

LUCIE. I thought Thiers was taking them.

MARCEL. He was. He sent in the 88th under Lecompte.

EMILE. The troops got the guns.

MARCEL. But they couldn't move them.

ALL. Why?

EMILE. Because they forgot the bloody horses, didn't they!

MARCEL. To move the gun carriages away.

EUGENIE. So they're still there?

MARCEL. Yes. All around them people are -

EMILE. There's a crowd gathering.

MARCEL. And some of the troops have deserted already.

MOLE. Hail Mary, kiss my arse! Masson this is it.

Loud bang off.

MASSON. I'm going to faint.

MARCEL. It's Belleville.

MOLE. I'm going to miss it.

MARCEL. It's a signal. They're rising.

LUCIE. Come on.

MASSON. Where are we going?

ALL. Forward!

Exeunt. MASSON is hustled out with the others.

Shouts off: 'Give us those guns'/'They're ours'/'Hand them over,' etc.

Re-enter MASSON running. Kneels as at confession. Stamping and shouting continue.

MASSON. Bless me Father, for I have sinned. Oh Father I don't know how, or why, or where or when, but there I was in the street. Hundreds of people were swarming up the hill in a crowd, in a bunch. Artillery men, soldiers, trying to get through but they couldn't. And the people swarmed up, over the ammunition wagons, under the wheels, under the horses. Oh, and the females, of whom I was one Father - under duress, Father - the females were at the front screaming in fury. And I'm sure Mole was there.

MOLE (*off*). Give us those fucking guns!

Exit MASSON.

Enter MOLE, MARCEL, EMILE, EUGENIE, JOSEPHINE, LUCIE, in line as if facing troops. All shout together until JOSEPHINE steps to the front.

JOSEPHINE. Well if that was a riot I reckon we ought to have them more often. I mean it was great. We were shouting and screaming. And then I found myself hanging on to the wheel of a cannon.

JOSEPHINE, MOLE, EUGENIE, and LUCIE *mime holding the cannon.*

MOLE. Hang on, Josie.

EUGENIE. Keep hold.

LUCIE. Don't let go.

EMILE. }
MARCEL. } Cut the traces.

EUGENIE. What with?

LUCIE. Give us a knife.

EUGENIE. They passed these little knives up the front. The one I had was little with a white handle. I was hacking away at the traces. We was all pressed up tight round the cannon. Mostly women, it was. All laughing and shouting and that. Anyway I managed to cut through – and the horses were off!

They fall as if suddenly releasing the cannon. JOSEPHINE scrambles up.

JOSEPHINE. We were all squashed together. It was a bit frightening, but everyone was happy and good-natured. Then we went up to the troops and started talking to them face to face.

The women speak as to troops on the other side persuading them to join them.

EUGENIE. Anyway after that the troops just sort of gave up and joined us.

MARCEL. Then we saw the 79th coming to a halt at Solferino Tower. Two officers were coming for a parley. Suddenly General Lecomte was there. There was a crowd of women and children at the top of the Rue Muller. Lecomte was giving orders to fire.

EMILE. The women and children stood their ground and began to shout 'don't shoot, don't shoot'. And then we heard the General say:

MARCEL. Make ready to fire!

EMILE. Nobody moved.

MARCEL. Take aim!

EMILE. Still nobody moved.

MARCEL. Fire!

EMILE. Nothing happened. One by one, the rifles went up in the air. The soldiers had refused to fire on their own people.

MARCEL. The General he kept shouting 'Fire! Fire!' But no one took any notice. And then he said 'Are you going to surrender to this scum?'

EMILE. And one soldier turned round and said 'Yes.' 'That's exactly what we're going to do.' And he threw down his rifle. And everyone else ran off.

MARCEL. The General was bloody livid. Puce he went. He kept shouting to the police 'Defend me. Fire! Fire!'

EMILE. Then we arrested the police. It was great.

EUGENIE. We found out afterwards it was the same everywhere. You know, when the word went round. It wasn't planned out or anything. Well I don't think it was. It was really nice, wasn't it Lucie?

LUCIE. Yes.

JOSEPHINE. And we did it.

MOLE. The scum did it.

EUGENIE. It was the nicest day I can remember anyway.

MOLE. And then Thiers and the government, they were so scared they packed up their little toothbrushes into their little bags and they all ran off to Versailles so they could ask Bismarck what to do next.

MARCEL. They left. The whole lot. The whole shower. Without fighting or negotiating or anything. Cowards.

EMILE. Three days ago I was elected to the Central Committee of the National Guard.

MARCEL. I voted for him. We're in the same batallion.

EMILE. When they left there was no one in the city to run it, you see. So we did. We did it. The Central Committee. I was put in charge of distributing the Manifesto.

MARCEL. We discussed all that and wrote it down. And this is what it is. 'We are an irresistible barrier against all attempts to overthrow the Republic. Ours is the perilous honour of defending it. We will not fail in our mission. Let them call us troublemakers, creators of dissension and disorder. Our behaviour proves beyond all doubt that these accusations are false. We are obdurate conservatives. Our aim is to conserve all

forms of Liberty for which the Republic stands. Nothing could be further from our intentions than to create violent and damaging conflict between citizens. We reach out a fraternal hand to all our fellow citizens, and to all the peoples of the world. But now that we have won back the right to control our lives we will not part with it. We will no longer put up with alienation, with monarchs, oppressors and exploiters of all kinds who have come to regard people as property, and who use them for the satisfaction of their criminal instincts. To each the rights and duties befitting the conditions of a free man. This is our programme which we loudly proclaim for all to hear.'

ALL. Long Live the Commune!

ACT TWO

EUGENIE and JOSEPHINE watch EMILE putting up a poster. They stare at it.

JOSEPHINE. What does it say Eugenie?

EUGENIE. It's about the elections. It's a message.

JOSEPHINE. What does it say?

EUGENIE. It's an address to the Citizens. To us.

JOSEPHINE. I can see that. It's on the wall for us to read. What does it say?

EUGENIE. I can't bloody read, can I.

JOSEPHINE. Oh Christ, no wonder we're so bloody helpless. How are we going to have anything to do with running this fine city when we can't even read? Try Eugenie. Surely you can read a bit. Try. Try. Go on.

Drags EUGENIE to the poster. Both try to spell out some of it. Enter LUCIE.

LUCIE. There's a big meeting in the square! There's a band and a singer.

JOSEPHINE. You can read. Here. Read that.

LUCIE starts to read. Silently.

JOSEPHINE. Out loud!

LUCIE. Oh I see. 'Citizens, our mission is at an end. We will now hand over your town hall to new and rightful representatives. Citizens, remember that the men who still serve you best are those whom you will choose from among your own ranks, who lead the same lives as yourselves and suffer the same hardships. Beware of the ambitious and the newly rich. Beware too of windbags who prefer words to deeds. And avoid those whom fortune has favoured excessively. The wealthy are rarely

disposed to considering the working classes as their brothers. We are confident that if you follow these suggestions you will at last have achieved an authentic people's representation and found representatives who will never see themselves as your masters.

Town Hall. Signed Central Committee of the National Guard.'

JOSEPHINE. That's right. Good.

EUGENIE. Except we won't be voting will we? In the baggage wagon as usual. Propping up the menfolk so they can make decisions for us.

JOSEPHINE. I'm not having that. Not now.

EUGENIE. How are you going to vote? How are you going to let your dulcet voice be heard?

JOSEPHINE. Loud and clear. I'll be down that town hall when the Commune's meeting in there. I'll be listening and I'll be asking questions too. For a start, I want to know when my daughter's going to learn to read and write. So she won't be an ignorant cow like me.

LUCIE. You're not ignorant. You've taught me how to survive.

JOSEPHINE. That's what women are good at. It's not enough. You see. I'll be standing on the town hall steps waiting to get in on the day they start.

EUGENIE. They might not let you in.

JOSEPHINE. Just let them try and keep me out. And you. Let's go and hear this band.

Exeunt.

Enter MASSON. She fills a basket with as much that is movable as she can.

Enter MOLE, with a knife.

MOLE. Going for a stroll are we?

MASSON. Mole! Oh I've had the most dreadful day, Mole, dreadful. Deserted by everything, everyone I hold dear.

MOLE. Oh dear, oh dear.

MASSON. Soften your heart, Mole. You see before you a woman alone. Monsieur has gone to Versailles with the government naturally -

MOLE. Naturally.

MASSON. And the most crushing blow. The priest - gone!

MOLE. That's just as it should be. The church following the state, bosses sticking together. Never mind. I'll stick my knife up him for you if you like?

MASSON. Mole, that knife! You have never understood, Mole, the support I get from the Church.

MOLE. Oh I do.

MASSON. The exhilaration I feel after a good confession.

MOLE. Is it like the other day? When we got the guns? That was exhilarating wasn't it?

MASSON. I am grateful for the experience of course. But if Claude should ever find out -

MOLE. You needn't worry about Claude. He's bugged off to Versailles hasn't he? You're one of us now aren't you, Margot? You're one of the workers; what you did the other day proves it. And the workers are going to take control, aren't we? Make sure the bourgeois don't drop us in it like they did the last time.

MASSON. The workers, yes, Eugenie, Josephine. And you, Mole. You must learn to govern, to take control. How wonderful, Mole. You must build yourself up for the great struggle ahead. There's some fresh bread in the kitchen, Mole. And a bottle of brandy. Will you fetch it Mole? I feel quite weak.

MOLE. I'll go. And when I come back we'll have a nice little chat about Forty-Eight and what went wrong. Shan't be long, Margot.

Exit MOLE - taking MASSON's account book from her basket.

MASSON gathers up her basket, throws in some of the good laundry.

MASSON. Who's going to miss a few pieces of lace now the world's gone mad? To Versailles! To Versailles!

Exit MASSON.

Re-enter MOLE.

MOLE. Margot! Oi, Margot? I knew she'd go the minute my back was turned. I'm just too kind-hearted, that's my trouble. What I should have done is I should have stuck my knife right up her.

I shall live to regret that. I'm like the barber's cat. All wind and piss.

Exit MOLE.

EUGENIE *starts to hang up red pillowcases on the line.* LUCIE and JOSEPHINE *enter: they play cards.*

EUGENIE. Do you like them? I think they're lovely. It's a treat to see a spot of colour. Had a bit of trouble getting the dye. It's so popular nowadays. Mole let me in here to do the dirty work. Gay as a lark she is. It's all legal now. The Commune has been elected by two hundred and twenty-nine thousand, one hundred and sixty-seven votes. We, the men, that is, made the big decision last Sunday. March 26th. I was worried you know, in case it went the wrong way. I'm all for people voting but it's hard when you have to stand by and watch. It's not like taking the guns. Is it? Mind you, there's no law against celebrating. I've got such a hangover. The celebrations that went on yesterday. They were something. I got the idea for these then. They had red drapes, everywhere. On the platform, round the statue of the Republic, on the bayonets. The singing was lovely. Made me feel like a girl. And that's saying something.

She joins LUCIE and JOSEPHINE.

LUCIE. There's no more soup. I don't know what we're going to do tomorrow.

EUGENIE. Sing for our supper.

Enter MOLE. She wears a red bonnet.

MOLE. What do you lot think you're doing in here, eh?

EUGENIE. Oh Mole, you do look Smart!

MOLE. Mop that lot up you bitches. Masson's gone now and she's left me in charge. Let's see some work round here for a change.

MOLE chases them.

JOSEPHINE. Come off it, Mole!

LUCIE. Will you pay us then, Mole? Will you give us a rise?

MOLE. Who's a clever girlie then. Knocked it on the head. Where would I get the money to pay you lot? I was only trying to give you a bit of a thrill. How do you like my bonnet?

LUCIE. Lovely.

EUGENIE. Matches my pillowcases.

MOLE. When you get to my age best put your head where your mouth is. If you see what I mean.

JOSEPHINE. She's got a point. We can't just sit about doing nothing for ever.

LUCIE. I've been looking round the bins.

EUGENIE. No luck?

JOSEPHINE. Half the shops are empty. There's a grocer down the hill, the one that made a packet in the siege. He's gone off to Versailles and left his assistants guarding the shop.

EUGENIE. With pickhandles.

LUCIE. Surely someone will do something?

MOLE. Don't expect the Commune to do more for you than you can do for yourselves.

JOSEPHINE. We're wasting time arguing. Why don't we go down the grocers and take the food? They're only lads. It should be shared out. We took the guns. Think of those bastards sitting on all that food. All through the siege when people were starving.

LUCIE. And children dying.

JOSEPHINE. Let's go.

EUGENIE. He won't be there will he?

JOSEPHINE. Who?

EUGENIE. The boss.

JOSEPHINE. }
LUCIE. } No.

JOSEPHINE. He's lounging about in some posh hotel in Versailles drinking champagne with Masson.

MOLE. Now Masson's gone we can do what we like with this place. What do you fancy? We could smash the place up?

She kicks a basket to EUGENIE.

EUGENIE. Give us a lift wouldn't it? All the years we've slogged here.

EUGENIE *kicks the basket back.*

JOSEPHINE. Not food though, is it?

MOLE. All right. Flog the sheets.

EUGENIE. We could get a bit for some of this stuff. There's some good lace here.

JOSEPHINE. We could buy food if we sold these sheets.

LUCIE. What do we say to the people this stuff belongs to? They're not all like Masson, up and gone.

MOLE. Property is theft.

LUCIE. We've got to find work.

EUGENIE. The only work we know is laundering. There's no laundries open to employ us so that's that.

LUCIE. We could start this one going again.

EUGENIE. It isn't ours, stupid. It belongs to -

ALL. Masson!

LUCIE. Yes but she's not here is she?

EUGENIE. So?

LUCIE. All I'm saying is why don't we work it? Make our living from it?

EUGENIE. She'd have the police on us.

JOSEPHINE. She'd have fifty fits.

LUCIE. She's gone. Why keep going on as if she's coming back? We've got the Commune now. Could you see Masson living under a worker's government? Besides there are no police.

EUGENIE. It's stealing.

LUCIE. You don't mind pinching the lace but you won't take over this place.

EUGENIE. That's different.

LUCIE. How?

EUGENIE. I could say it got lost. Stolen. Fell off the back of a cart. But people would see us working here.

MOLE. How much would you get if you flogged that lot?

EUGENIE. A few francs.

MOLE. How long would that last?

EUGENIE. A couple of weeks.

MOLE. Then what?

EUGENIE. Short life and a gay one, eh?

JOSEPHINE. That's our trouble. No foresight. Masson, she thinks ahead.

LUCIE. What else does she do?

EUGENIE. Watches us working.

JOSEPHINE. She makes sure we work.

EUGENIE. That's her job. If you can call it a job.

JOSEPHINE. We do the real work. Washing, ironing, humping tubs.

EUGENIE. All for six francs a week. Cheap at the price.

JOSEPHINE. How much do you reckon she took home?

LUCIE. We could find out. From the account books.

EUGENIE. Her paperwork.

LUCIE. She's taken them . . .

MOLE. If a job's worth doing, it's worth doing well . . .

She rummages in her drawers and fetches out the book.

Citizeness! Madame's work book. Come on then, sit down at her desk. See what she had to say about all her customers . . .

LUCIE. Shall I have a look?

JOSEPHINE. }
EUGENIE. } Yes.

LUCIE. Let's take an average week shall we? June 13th last year.

JOSEPHINE. Lots of soldiers and tourists about then.

LUCIE. Income. Eighty francs.

EUGENIE. Fifty centimes a bundle, that's a hundred and sixty -- about twenty-six a day.

JOSEPHINE. Sounds right.

LUCIE. Expenditure. Wages eighteen francs.

JOSEPHINE. That was before you came.

EUGENIE. Three of us at six francs each.

LUCIE. Wood fifteen francs.

JOSEPHINE. She swore she spent thirty on wood.

LUCIE. Soap five, oil two.

JOSEPHINE. How much does that add up to?

LUCIE. Forty francs.

EUGENIE. But you said she was taking in eighty.

LUCIE. That's right.

JOSEPHINE. The greedy cow. I knew she was bleeding us but I didn't know it was that much.

EUGENIE. I'd bleed her sodding throat if I could get my hands on her. I'd stuff a bit of Bouquin's sausage right down her windpipe.

LUCIE. For every franc she gave you lot she made two.

JOSEPHINE. Forty francs a week clear profit. How much is that a year?

EUGENIE. It's a hundred and sixty a month.

LUCIE. Twelve months - it's almost two thousand francs.

EUGENIE. Where did it go?

JOSEPHINE. Down her throat and on her back.

LUCIE. How long have you worked here?

EUGENIE. Ten years.

LUCIE. That's twenty thousand francs-worth of your labour. One could say that you've invested twenty thousand in this business. Good heavens. You could have bought your own laundry by now.

MOLE. Still think it's stealing to take over this place?

JOSEPHINE. We've paid for this stuff ten times over with our labour. All the time we've been here she's never replaced a thing.

EUGENIE. Twenty thousand francs just for one person. I don't know whether to laugh or cry.

JOSEPHINE. I think we should give it a try. Eugenie?

EUGENIE. Count me in.

MOLE. We'll have to work hard you know, harder than before.

LUCIE. But we'll be working for ourselves and each other.

EUGENIE. Will we get wages? We haven't got any soap, we can't start.

JOSEPHINE. I've seen a bit of soap left somewhere.

LUCIE. That's all we need. Enough to get us through the first week.

EUGENIE. Then we'll have money coming in.

LUCIE. We take out what we need for supplies each week, and divide the rest equally between us.

JOSEPHINE. What about wood?

EUGENIE. We've got no wood.

JOSEPHINE. I've got a table. We'll chop it up.

MOLE. I can nip down the Bleeding Heart of Jesus and borrow a couple of pews.

LUCIE. Are we all agreed?

ALL. Yes.

They begin putting the laundry to rights.

JOSEPHINE. We'd better get some work in.

EUGENIE. Start with tidying this place up.

JOSEPHINE. There's a lot of filthy National Guards about.

EUGENIE. We want to get the drawers off them.

LUCIE. I think I'll write to the Commune. Ask for a contract.

JOSEPHINE. Write to the Central Committee as well. Ask Emile for a contract for his batallion. They're a dirty lot.

LUCIE. I'll do both.

Enter EMILE with a newspaper.

EMILE. Here. This is interesting. The Commune has decreed that workshops abandoned by their owners should be taken over by the workers and run co-operatively. What do you think?

MOLE. Never work sunshine, never work.

Blackout.

Birdsong noises. Enter MASSON with parasol and picnic. She spreads a cloth in the spotlight.

MASSON. How pleasant to be out of Paris. The formal gardens here at Versailles are quite remarkable. I am meeting such nice people too. I saw the Marquis de Gallifet. Such a gallant man. Only in the distance of course. And the gowns! The one worn yesterday by Blanche d'Antigny - she is not quite respectable but she is intimate with some of France's most distinguished persons - the gown she wore had two hundred and fifty yards of material and she wore it with white camellias. Madame Bouquin said it cost ten thousand francs. Mind you, everyone here is deeply moved, profoundly concerned with what is happening in our beloved Paris. Why, only yesterday a friend told Claude, who told me, that M'sieur Thiers was preparing to take the necessary steps in the national interest. My friend heard M'sieur Thiers say 'The extremists have taken over! Have I not warned you? These brigands and criminals have shed the blood of two of my loyal supporters, Clement Thomas and General Lecomte.' M'sieur Thiers was, so the friend said, almost in tears. He's not a man who cries easily either. Then he said 'This Parisian conspiracy against the Republic compels me to shed French blood.' I fear Monsieur Thiers is far too moderate. One can expect no moderation from those thieving murdering scum. But dear Claude assures me that Herr Bismarck will send his brave Prussian troops to aid our noble French soldiers, to save Paris. Most reassuring. Claude! Wait for me Claude! I said wait!

Exit.

Blackout.

Lights come up on MOLE, JOSEPHINE, LUCIE, MARCEL, EUGENIE, EMILE, deep in thought. They wear red sashes.

JOSEPHINE. Your trouble is you think they're as soft as you are. You mark my words that little bleeder Thiers is just waiting to get his forces marshalled. They'll be on us like wolves.

EMILE. I'm not disagreeing with you Josie. But you're talking about civil war. Just be clear about that, it's civil war.

MARCEL. As far as I'm concerned they're the bloody enemy now. That lot at Versailles. Let's get that straight once and for all.

LUCIE. Just because they're savages doesn't mean we have to be. We have to be careful. We know here in Paris we know we're right but we've got to show the rest of France. We shan't do that with guns. With words and actions we show them.

MARCEL. Well I know what action I'd take. And I won't be talking.

JOSEPHINE. Where have you been? Cloud cuckoo land? The regulars are creeping back to Versailles. Bismarck is handing over the prisoners of war he took last September. Know why? So Thiers will have the muscle to defeat us, that's why.

MARCEL. We should smash him and his crew first.

MOLE. Yes. Attack. That's what we want. We should form our battallions and attack. Bombard them, shell them, attack, attack.

EMILE. You're just bloodthirsty. Let it never be said that we of the Commune fired the first shot in a civil war.

JOSEPHINE. Emile, you're a good man. They won't be so good. I say we should attack now.

MARCEL. Now while we're strong.

LUCIE. You make me sick. There's so much to be done.

EUGENIE. How can you talk about fighting when there's so much to be done?

LUCIE. The Commune has only just begun. They've decreed for a start, just a beginning, the separation of Church and State.

MOLE. Oh goody goody. No more priests to tell us what's right.

LUCIE. Do you know what that means, Mole? It means new

kinds of education, not the old schools run by nuns and priests where the only thing you learn is the catechism. It all has to be thought out and made to work. How can we put our energies into fighting? That would kill the Commune.

EUGENIE. You can't build anything good out of killing.

EMILE. Socialism goes forward without bayonets.

MOLE. } It's got bayonets against it!
JOSEPHINE. }

MARCEL. I'll fight to keep the Commune. I'll use a bayonet, catapult and stone, anything handy, mate.

LUCIE. We cannot place our energies in defence. We must build. No good talking about a new life. We've got to construct it brick by brick.

EUGENIE. I'm happy. For the first time in my life. Work makes me happy. I couldn't abide to lose that. Talk of fighting, that's blood in the gutters and death every day. We'll lose it all. We couldn't go back as it was.

EMILE. In time they'll see our ideas are just and our procedure democratic.

MOLE. You haven't half learnt to put the talk on.

EMILE. Well I've had to. A communal way of organising life is the only way we shall achieve liberty. It places liberty within the people's grasp. It is in the Commune that the strength of free people resides. They must see the Commune is right, in time.

MARCEL. Who? Who must see?

LUCIE. All right-thinking people.

MOLE. } TIME?
JOSEPHINE. }

JOSEPHINE. Time! That's just what they're not going to give us. Thiers and his parasites.

MOLE. I had a dream last night. Horrible nightmare it was. I dreamt that old Bismarck said to Thiers, 'My friend, you must provoke the insurrection while you still have the power to crush it. For good.' And do you know what Thiers replied? He said 'But of course Monsieur Bismarck. That is my plan. That is precisely what I mean to do.'

JOSEPHINE. We've got the strength to crush them now, if we organise.

MARCEL. See? That bastard will even deal with the Prussians. To smash us. We fought, week in, week out; we stood against the Prussians. Now he's dealing with them. We should attack.

JOSEPHINE. Now.

EUGENIE. Blood and death, that's you. Women's sons slaughtered, all you care.

MOLE. Not so. But they're weak now. We have strength of numbers. Know what that gives us? Elbow. Strike a little terror to get and keep some, just some of our demands. It's known as a strong negotiating position.

EMILE. They will see in time that what we are doing is just.

LUCIE. And humane. And rational.

MOLE. Humane?

JOSEPHINE. Just? Them?

MOLE. Do you think they're as decent as you are? That's your trouble, too much respect for property. Look at the bank. We should be out there taking it over. Getting our hands on the money. How are we going to get on without money? Governor of the Bank of France going to give the Commune an overdraft is he?

LUCIE. Mole. I've explained all this. Money is only paper. It's only worth anything if everyone agrees to take it in exchange for goods. Do you think the business people will take money stolen from the bank?

MOLE. That's why we've got to take over the lot, businesses and all.

Everyone shouts at once.

EMILE. Stop. Everyone. Stop rowing. Jesus! We don't have to fight today. Do we? Maybe tomorrow. The sun's out, the cherry trees are all hung about with white blossom, it's May time. Birdies singing. People in the streets promenading in their Sunday best. Be happy all. Drink. Beloved Jose I respect you. I kiss you Josie.

JOSEPHINE. You're a good man, Emile.

EMILE. I kiss you all. (*Kisses all round.*)

MARCEL. You're a clever woman, Lucie. I wish I could talk like you.

LUCIE. Talking's not everything.

MOLE. 'Ere Eug. Think they'll be walking up the aisle soon? You and me can be the bridesmaids. What shall we wear? Myself I fancy the chantilly lace with pale yellow ribbons and a bouquet of camellias.

Blackout.

Lights up on JOSEPHINE, EUGENIE, LUCIE and MOLE, at a public meeting. They speak as if to a large assembly, nervously at first. JOSEPHINE bangs a gavel.

JOSEPHINE. Marriage is slavery. A woman who enters legal marriage sells herself, body, soul and property! If she's got any!

EUGENIE. It should be a crime to sell your liberty. It's a base bargain no free woman should accept – and no free city should tolerate!

MOLE. Abolish it! The women of Paris should let the Commune know their views on this!

JOSEPHINE. I earn my living. I depend on no man for my bread. I choose to live with a man because I fancy him and because we think alike.

LUCIE. Marriage makes you part of a man's possessions. He is put above you, he is your owner.

EUGENIE. If you're at the top of the dungheap, marriage makes sense. Warm bed, silk nightdress, plenty to eat – everything taken care of.

MOLE. Same as the nuns. Not a worry in the world. The Church sees you all right if you sell your daughter to be a bride of Christ.

LUCIE. That's another thing. Look at how cheap nuns sell their work, fine needlework. They can undercut any seamstress in France.

EUGENIE. Women's work is the worst paid. Maybe the employers think our husbands keep us.

JOSEPHINE. They know well enough we have to work. But they know they can get our labour cheap because we're too scared to ask for more.

LUCIE. Sisters! We should propose to the Commune that the question of female labour be discussed.

EUGENIE. This is a very important thing. We should let them know how poor the working women of the city are.

LUCIE. They're losing what little work they have with everything at a standstill.

JOSEPHINE. Hunger will soon take away their fighting spirit. The women's manufactures must be shielded. I propose the Commune should distribute work for women in all their trades. Embroidery, hat making, buttons, umbrellas, tie making –

EUGENIE. Flower making, fans, banners, beads and pearls, typography –

LUCIE. Type-setting, bookbinding, glass-blowing, painting porcelain, all the things women do.

MOLE. What about laundries!

JOSEPHINE. We work as long hours as any man.

MOLE. And get paid half the rate.

EUGENIE. We should be paid the same.

LUCIE. Thousands of women have no skill.

EUGENIE. They work for as little as fifty centimes a day.

LUCIE. They haven't enough learning to master a trade – to earn enough to keep themselves.

JOSEPHINE. We are denied education, the means to understanding. But it's beginning. Citizeness Maniere has set up an industrial school to train women and to give them a scientific education.

LUCIE. Education starts from the very first day of life. The *Journal Officiel* has published a proposal for the establishment of day nurseries for the children of women workers.

JOSEPHINE. It says we must have healthy children to build the future. It says that children will be happy there.

LUCIE. They'll have toys, carts, an aviary full of birds, painting and sculptures -

MOLE. Not religious ones either!

LUCIE. The premises to be light and airy.

EUGENIE. And the gardens used as the weather permits!

JOSEPHINE. With such a good beginning we'll see a new race of women.

EUGENIE. I daresay there'll still be plenty of men to sneer at us as incapable weaklings.

JOSEPHINE. Some of them say our minds are dull.

LUCIE. Some say that our bodies are less perfect than a man's.

EUGENIE. Men are cowards. They call themselves the masters of creation and are a set of dolts.

LUCIE. The interests of working men and women are the same. We all suffer the same privations under the same masters.

MOLE. We have petroleum, we have hatchets and strong arms to fight those masters.

JOSEPHINE. We may be simple women but we're not made of weaker stuff than our grandmothers of 1793. We should be up and doing, as they would if they were living now!

Exeunt.

Blackout.

Enter MASSON with binoculars and parasol in spotlight. She is watching something.

MASSON. Claude, beloved. What are all those people doing round the Vendome Column? They have affixed red flags to it. Red flags on our national monument to Napoleon! The symbol of France's military glory desecrated by the foul insignia of the scum insurrection! Claude, what are those curious strings descending from the Column? I see, cables. They appear to be

moving. By a what? I see. A capstan is turning and thus tightening, pulling the cables. Claude. It moved. The column. It's moving – it's gone! They have pulled down the column! Claude, imagine it. The bust of Caesar which adorned the top of the Column lying headless in the gutter! Who was responsible for this outrage? A painter? Do you mean a house painter Claude, an interior decorator? Oh. An artist. Gustave Courbet? One of those depraved depictees of modern scenes I suppose. I am too ashamed to watch any more Claude. Take me away, take me away. They shall pay for this. I'm sure Mole was there.

Exit.

Blackout.

Lights up on LUCIE and MARCEL. LUCIE is preparing a speech.

MARCEL. Go on then.

LUCIE. Well, listen then.

MARCEL. I am listening.

LUCIE. 'Today it is the duty of the Commune to the workers who created it, to take all necessary steps to achieve constructive results. Action must be taken.'

MARCEL. Fast.

LUCIE. 'And it must be taken fast. The Commune must abandon the mistaken ideas of old, and get its inspiration from the very difficulties of the situation. It must apply methods that will survive the circumstances that first led to their use.'

MARCEL. What mistakes?

LUCIE. What?

MARCEL. 'Mistaken ideas of old' you said.

LUCIE. I meant the workers of 1848 didn't think in the long term. They adopted quick solutions.

MARCEL. Go on then.

LUCIE. 'We shall achieve this through the creation of special workshops and training centres where finished products are stored and sold' –

MARCEL. How are you going to organise it?

LUCIE. I'm just coming to that bit. 'The necessary organisation for this scheme will be under the control of a committee of women appointed in each district' -

MARCEL. What about money?

LUCIE. 'The Finance Delegate will make a weekly credit available so the work of the women can be organised immediately.'

MARCEL. Is that it?

LUCIE. Yes. What's wrong with it?

MARCEL. Nothing.

LUCIE. Say if you don't like it. It's not just my ideas you know, we all discussed it -

MARCEL. You're nervous aren't you?

LUCIE. Yes. I've got to speak before the whole Commission of Labour.

MARCEL. You'll handle them, no trouble.

They kiss. Enter MOLE, JOSEPHINE, EMILE and EUGENIE.

MOLE. Roll up, roll up! The first person to guess how old I am wins a night with me! Consolation prize two nights.

EMILE. I'd say you were a fine figure of a woman when you were young, eh Mole?

JOSEPHINE. She was.

MOLE. A raving beauty I was. Raving. I could knock spots off that La Bordas any day of the week. You should have seen her, strutting about up there like a cockatoo.

EMILE. Anyway she got you singing - more's the pity!

EUGENIE. Here, you two. We've been to the Tuileries Palace.

JOSEPHINE. Seeing how the other half used to live.

EUGENIE. You should have seen it, Lucie. The chandeliers, the gold - even the walls have carpets on them.

EMILE. La Bordas sang. She was magnificent.

EUGENIE. We waited all evening for her. Then suddenly she

appeared in a long white dress with a scarlet sash. She stood there still as a statue. Then she began to move very slow, and started to sing *The Song of the People*. It gave me shivers down my spine.

MOLE. Come on, Eug, show them how she did it.

EUGENIE. No, no I couldn't.

ALL. Go on Eugenie.

EUGENIE. If you insist.

EUGENIE and MOLE *go behind the sheets.*

JOSEPHINE. Mole what did that poster say? The one on the walls of the Palace?

MOLE. 'The gold that glitters on these walls is the product of your toil.'

JOSEPHINE. 'Today the revolution has made you free. At last you claim your rightful property.'

EMILE. 'This land is yours. But retain your dignity for you are strong. And be watchful, for the tyrants must never return.'

MOLE. Ta ra! Ladies and Gentlemen, I give you, and you can keep her – straight from the sewers of Paris – Madame Eugenie!

EUGENIE *re-enters and gives her impression of La Bordas singing 'La Cannaille'. She has on a long white gown and red feathers.*

MOLE. No no, it wasn't like that. She had a shaky sort of voice.

MOLE *gets up and gives her impression of La Bordas.* EUGENIE *continues.*

JOSEPHINE. Oh no Mole, she sang much higher than that . . .

JOSEPHINE *gets up and does her impression of La Bordas. All three sing at once.*

EMILE. Girls! Have you no respect? Get out! Get out of my laundry! Get out!

Laughter and merriment.

The Scum Song.

In the last chorus of the song loud rumblings are heard of distant guns. (Drums).

EMILE. It's them.

MOLE. I told you. I told you we should have attacked.

EMILE. Let's go.

Exeunt.

Drums.

Enter EMILE.

EMILE. Soldiers of the Versailles army. We are family men. We are fighting so that our children will never have to bend, as you must, under military despotism. One day, you will have children too. If you fire on the people your sons will condemn you, as we condemn the soldiers who massacred the people in June 1848 and December 1851. Two months ago, on the 18th March, your brothers of the Paris army, bitterly resentful of the cowards who had betrayed France, fraternised with the people. We urge you to follow their example. Soldiers, our sons and our brothers, listen to these words and let your conscience decide. When the orders are immoral, disobedience is a duty. Signed: the Central Committee.

Exit EMILE.

Enter LUCIE.

LUCIE. Workers! Enough of militarism! Away with Staff Officers bespangled and gilded! Make way for the people, the bare armed fighters. The hour of revolutionary warfare has struck!

MOLE *has entered and is listening to this.*

The people know nothing of manoeuvres. But with a rifle in their hands and cobblestones under their feet they have no fear of all the monarchist strategists! To arms, citizens! To arms! If you wish that the generous blood which will flow like water be not infertile – if . . .

MOLE. He can't be as old as me. Whoever wrote that ought to be writing romantic novels.

LUCIE. It may be romantic. But it's true.

MOLE. It's daft to fight when you can't win.

LUCIE. You don't know that till you've fought.

MOLE. You may not. I do.

LUCIE. You're frightened.

MOLE. Too right I am. But what do you think I'm frightened of?

LUCIE. Dying.

MOLE. No. Failing.

LUCIE. Fight then. And if we all fight –

MOLE. I will. But not here. And not today.

LUCIE. I'm not giving up without a fight.

MOLE. Who said anything about giving up? Dying is giving up. If you don't have to.

LUCIE. I must go.

MOLE. Here you are then. Take me hat. It'll look a treat on you. Besides, it'll attract the bullets. Get it over quick. Before it crumbles.

Gives LUCIE her red bonnet.

LUCIE. Where will you go?.

MOLE. You know me. Everywhere and nowhere. Down a sewer. On a roof, under the ground. I'll find a place. Don't let me keep you.

They exit.

Enter EMILE, EUGENIE, JOSEPHINE, LUCIE and MARCEL. They construct a barricade from all the movable objects on the stage, very swiftly.

EMILE. First the barricade. The barricade is not designed for shelter. Its main purpose is not for you to crouch behind it.

EUGENIE. Aren't we going to fight them from behind it?

EMILE. You'll only get massacred that way.

LUCIE. If we're not to be behind it, what's it for?

EMILE. The purpose of the barricade is to prevent the enemy from moving freely.

EMILE. It doesn't need to be perfectly built.

MARCEL. It acts as an obstacle.

EMILE. Use anything. Cupboards, doors, cobblestones from the street, beams, barrels, anything.

EUGENIE. Where will we fight?

JOSEPHINE. How?

LUCIE. Where will we go?

EMILE. We'll fight from inside those houses. There and there.
Then we can pelt them from above with anything and everything we can find.

JOSEPHINE. Bits of wood, furniture, stones.

EMILE. In order to bring the enemy to a halt we'll cover the street here with broken bottles, nails, stones, anything sharp.

EMILE. We'll reserve the bombs for throwing down from up there.

JOSEPHINE. Look they've been ordered to give no quarter. We can't either, we haven't any choice.

LUCIE. They've brought us to this. Victory or death.

EMILE. Now is that quite clear? No one is to remain behind that barricade.

MARCEL. I wish we had more to fight with. They've got every weapon money can buy.

EMILE. Listen. They're fighting for their officers' pay. We're fighting for the Commune and in that we are the stronger.
In street fighting the important thing is the value of the individual fighter, not strength of numbers.

MARCEL. How could we get more guns?

JOSEPHINE. We can't, we've tried.

LUCIE. We've got everything here we can lay our hands on.

EMILE. Our aim must be to prevent them from using their guns.

LUCIE. How?

EMILE. Offer them no targets. If they can't see you they can't shoot you.

EMILE. Never fight in the open, always under cover. Not in the streets. In the houses.

JOSEPHINE. What if we get driven out of the houses by fire?

EMILE. Always find cover. When the enemy is approaching it's better to set fire to buildings rather than occupy.

MARCEL. If I go I'll take a few with me.

EMILE. Our aim should be to destroy property rather than people. War on material. We must not hesitate to destroy what we cannot defend.

JOSEPHINE. Even if it means the whole city?.

EMILE. Yes.

LUCIE. That's hard counsel.

EMILE. It's only the opposite of their kind of warfare. For them men are cheap and are destroyed without counting the cost. But property which costs a great deal is respected.

LUCIE. There is another type of action which succeeds. Like when the women and children spoke to the soldiers.

EMILE. There's not one soldier doesn't dread that moment. He's told to avoid it at all costs. His leaders know that once contact is made the fight is at an end. The main difficulty with this tactic is knowing how to bypass the officers.

JOSEPHINE. We did it once. We can do it again.

EMILE. Thiers knows that. That's why the front line soldiers are Bretons. They don't even speak French.

LUCIE. We didn't make a choice.

MARCEL. The Versailles Army are just as much our enemy as ever the Prussians were.

Characters guard the barricade/wait for attack. Strong light. Wine is passed round.

Song: Cherry Time

End of song: Drums.

EMILE. Take cover!

All scatter as the lights quickly fade to blackout.

MASSON appears in a spotlight above the lines of washing. With binoculars.

MASSON. Oh good shot! Our guns are doing excellent service. That scum. They have set Paris alight, they are destroying it. Everywhere on fire! What does it matter as long as the vermin are burnt out of their hovels. Burn them, burn them out! Those

women. I've heard of those women slipping into the cellars of our houses with their petrol bombs to blow them up. They must be denounced and shot. Stamp them out.

What sewers, what jails could have spewed out such brutes? The heart delights to see them lying in the streets riddled with bullets, rotting! The stink of their corpses is the odour of peace. The nostrils may revolt but the soul rejoices. Monsters. They recoiled before no atrocity, killing, plundering. We too have become pitiless. Cruel and pitiless. It is a pleasure to wash our hands in their blood.

Blackout.

Dim light up on EMILE, JOSEPHINE and EUGENIE, entering one by one.

EMILE. Where's Lucie?

JOSEPHINE. She'll be here.

EMILE. One, two, three, four, five, six.

JOSEPHINE. What you counting them for?

EMILE. To see how many I've got. Seven, seven bullets left.

JOSEPHINE. That's seven more than I've got.

EMILE. It'll be enough.

EUGENIE. Look at the colour of the sky. All red and purple.

JOSEPHINE. Like Masson's face on a bad day.

EMILE. Tell you one thing, I wouldn't want to do this for a living.

JOSEPHINE. Going to die doing it. Where you going, Emile?

EMILE. Thought I'd go and see if Lucie's near.

JOSEPHINE. We agreed to wait here so she'd know where to find us.

EUGENIE. I saw this young fellow today. Spitting image of my old man. Dead he was. Looked just like my Jean lying there asleep with his mouth open. Wasn't of course. My Jean must be all of forty by now. Turned my heart though. He looked so young. God, how long's this going on?

JOSEPHINE. Don't ask God for anything. You need something you'll get it here or not at all. Won't be much longer girl. God would tell you. It took him six days to make the world. It can't take Thiers any longer than that to destroy Paris.

Enter MARCEL dragging LUCIE's body.

MARCEL. I was on a roof. I saw her looking for guns. There was a platoon of soldiers coming round the corner. She had a trial. There was powder on her hands. That was it. Guilty. Up against the wall. Bang. Do you want to hear another lovely story? You remember Eugene Varlin the Bookbinders' leader? Quiet man. Busy. Self-educated, polite. They found him in the Rue Lafayette. He was recognised by a priest in plain clothes. The soldiers tied his hands behind his back and dragged him off to Montmartre. They made him run the gauntlet of a crowd that was stoning him for over an hour. Then they took him off to the house in the Rue des Rosiers where Lecomte and Thomas were shot. They've been butchering people there all week in revenge. They were going to shoot him in the garden but the Commanding Officer was there. He doesn't like to see the victims. So they took him out again. They paraded him up and down until the crowd had beaten his face to a jelly. Then they shot him at the corner of the street. An Officer stole the watch that the Bookbinders' Union had presented him with.

EUGENIE. They really hate us, don't they?

JOSEPHINE. Once you lift your head out the sand you can't miss it. We're being shot at by men who could be our brothers, sons, lovers. They've had the same struggle to eat to live we've had. How can they?

EMILE. They've been fed a lot of lies. The rest of France thinks the Commune is an excuse for the rabble to kill and loot.

MARCEL. There'll be no tears on my face when they come at me. If I give them the chance.

JOSEPHINE. Them at Versailles. I want them to know. I want them to remember every Spring when they look at the buds coming through. The lice can desert the trees but the leaves can't. We are the leaves of the tree. I want them to remember. And be afraid.

They stand facing the front with their weapons.

Lights fade.

Song: The Boulevards of Paris.

During the song a sheet is placed on the line with the number of the communard dead on it in red. The cast sit at the side of the stage as MASSON enters and begins to try and tidy the mess. She carries her parasol.

MASSON. Plenty of clearing up to do. New girls to find. Here's hoping they're better than the last lot. One must look on the bright side and hope that people learn from their mistakes. As Monsieur Thiers himself says 'The ground is littered with corpses. Let this terrible spectacle be a lesson to workers everywhere.' I asked about Mole but nobody seems to know anything. At all. Surely she must be dead. Mustn't she? I mean that's why I asked, I'd like to see her decently buried. They say most of the - corpses - are barefoot. And I can't imagine Mole ever taking - those things - off her feet. Or anyone else ever trying to. You'd have to chop - what am I saying?

To tell you the truth I haven't been sleeping too well these past few nights and . . . I realise that when you are dealing with savages like Josephine and the rest you have to take a course of action that is - unpleasant. To say the least. But I can't help wondering if one or two of our people - on the fringes - became a little over-excited. There are so many bodies. And they seem to be taking such a long time to get rid of them. It's not that I don't understand the practical problems involved. But they smell. I'm afraid. They do smell. And then there are these flies and . . . it's hot. Has been hot. I've never seen flies quite . . . Everywhere seems somehow -

Now here's a funny story. A bird fell into my parasol yesterday when I was walking. It was in the furled position you see. And I looked down and there were - a lot - of these birds. On the ground. Lying. Dead. And I shook and tried to get it out. The one in my parasol. I shook. And I shook. It wouldn't come. I stood there for quite some time. Shaking and shaking. Then Monsieur tipped it up and out it dropped. But I didn't seem able to. Silly really.

Yes. These - over-excited minority. They have shot at and succeeded in hitting, killing if you like, quite a lot. Hundreds in fact. And in some cases it would appear they haven't shot at quite the right people. And then - and then - It's entirely understandable, yes, and reprehensible too, they have tried to hide. To cover up. Out of sight. And it's simply that as Monsieur says the heat makes them swell. Grow bigger. The

bodies you see. In the Place St Jacques you can hear noises. From under the ground. They're not buried deep enough. It's as if they're trying to force their way up. And you can – I'm not making it up you can – see things. Hands and arms and limbs and things coming up. They're in the river. In the lake. One minute they're not there and then there's this terrible noise. Gas, Monsieur says. And then there they are. And there they stay. And they're big. So big. Mole – Mole must be amongst them. If I could be sure. If I could be sure she was never, ever coming back – oh, I could sleep easier then.

Song: Week of Blood.

1. Laundry Song

(Unaccompanied; for three or four voices)

Working working working working
Working working working working

Working in a laundry every day
Steam and sweat and hardly any pay
Working in a pool of rich men's grime and dirt
Washing and ironing till my body hurts.
Look at my hands they're red and raw.
My head is aching and my feet are sore.
My life is spent in dirt and grime
Will it ever change to a better time?

Working in a laundry every day
Steam and sweat and hardly any pay
Working in a pool of rich men's grime and dirt
Washing and ironing till my body hurts.
At any minute we could get the sack
Then we'd have to make a living by lying on our backs
Scrubbing all day or scrubbing all night
Is this called justice? Is this what's right?

Working in a laundry every day
Working in a laundry every day
Working in a laundry every day

Music and lyrics for all the songs by Helen Glavin ©1976, except where stated otherwise.

2. Adolphe Thiers

(Sung by MOLE. Guitar or banjo accompaniment.)

From the Place Pigalle to Rue Genais
 And the fields of Saint Jerome
 You can hear the people talking
 About Thiers that naughty gnome.

'Well I may be small in stature
 But Napoleon he was too
 And if you've got the time to spare my friends
 I've a few words to say to you.

I'm a brilliant politician
 My weapon is my brain
 I know every trick there is to know
 About the power game.

You can put your faith and trust in me
 I'm a man who's firm but fair
 If you believe in law and order
 Then you'll vote for Adolphe Thiers.

I'm a devil when in power
 I'm a challenge in defeat.'
 Don't listen to a word he says
 He's a stinking little cheat.

With words he's like a twisting snake
 As an historian he lies
 His face it's just a painted mask
 With squinty little eyes.

But the bourgeoisie they love him
 He's got the trappings of their class
 Are you impressed by his cavortings?
 'No'? Well boot him up the arse.

'I'll sell you down the river
 To that autocratic kraut
 Who knows what I'll get up to next
 If you don't boot me out.

Don't think that you can move me
 With reason or with tears
 I'm a rogue with no compassion
 Despite my seventy years.'

So -

Don't trust that little bugger
'Cos he thinks that we are vile
And he's plotting our destruction
Behind his painted smile.

So remember everybody
You'd better all beware
Of Adolphe the Mighty Midget
That scheming Monsieur Thiers.

(Repeat last verse faster.)

3. The Song of the National Guard

Some men fight for money, some for glory die
Some men fight for Jesus some for wine.

CHORUS:

But when you've come up from the gutter you've been fighting to
survive

Each day is a battle just to stay alive.

They can kill us with a bullet and not listen to our pleas
So we'll use any tactics to keep the people free.

We'll save you from the Prussians, on us you can rely
'He's got the guts', 'He's got the brains', and we're not afraid to
die.

CHORUS:

'Cos when you've come up . . .

We're not the Emperor's warriors or knights of chivalry
We're the soldiers of the people, we control our destiny.

CHORUS:

Cos we've come up from the gutter . . .

(Repeat second half of Chorus.)

4. Masson's Song

Verse 1.

Single sheets, double sheets
 Had a spot of trouble sheets
 Coarse sheets, silk sheets
 Whiter than milk sheets
 Heavy sheets, light sheets
 Covered in shite sheets
 I'll take them all
 I'll take them all
 'Cos this is the tightest spot I've been in
 Don't give me speeches, give me dirty linen.

CHORUS:

Why can't we all
 Sit down and talk together
 Oh why can't we be one happy family?
 Why can't we all agree upon a plan
 That's fair to all and ends up helping me?

Verse 2.

Filly shirts, lace shirts
 Button out of place shirts
 Blue shirts, red shirts
 Stripped off from the dead shirts
 I'll take socialist chemises
 Who cares about diseases
 I'll take them all
 I'll take them all
 But if you want to talk politics I must insist
 That you write them at the bottom of your laundry list.

CHORUS:

Why can't we all etc . . .

Verse 3.

Woollen socks, cotton socks,
Decomposing rotten socks
Small socks, big socks
Stinking like a pig socks
Darned socks, holey socks
I'd even take 'La Mole's' socks
As it is now and was in the beginning
I put my trust in God and dirty linen.

Music by Helen Glavin, lyrics by Chris Bond copyright 1976.

5. Blow Winter Winds

(Unaccompanied song for solo voice.)

Blow O winter winds
And fall more, O snow.
Beneath your icy veil
We're closer to the dead
Endless be the night
And shortened will be the day
In winter we are as one with
The cold friends we mourn.

Music by Helen Glavin – copyright 1976. Lyrics, a poem by
Louise Michel, a Communard

6. Scum

In the old French city
There lives a race of people
With iron in their souls
And fiery hearts
They have no palace
Their sons are born on straw

They are the scum
 And I'm one of them
 They are the scum
 Well I'm one of them.

Workers of the city
 Dressed in rags and clogs
 Strong arms with nervous hands
 Toiling night and day
 They do not ask for pity
 Just listen to their cry

They are the scum
 And I'm one of them
 They are the scum
 And I'm one of them.

Music by Helen Glavin – copyright 1976. Lyrics from an original song of the Commune translated by Gillian Hanna, adapted by Helen Glavin.

7. Cherry Time

When it's cherry time
 And the gay nightingale and the mocking blackbird
 Are having a good time, are having a good time.
 Pretty ladies have sadness in their heads
 And lovers have sun in their hearts
 When it's cherry time
 The mocking blackbird will sing more sweetly.

When it's cherry time
 If you fear the griefs of love
 Avoid beautiful women, avoid beautiful women.
 But I don't fear the cruel pain
 So I live each day in sorrow
 When it's cherry time
 You too will fear the griefs of love.

64 MONSTROUS REGIMENT

But cherry time is very short
We stroll along in dreaming pairs
Gathering earrings, cherries of love
Dressed all the same
Hanging under the leaves like drops of blood
O cherry time is the time to dream.

I will always love cherry time
Though it's made an open wound in my heart
And Lady Fortune having caused me such pain
Can never soothe me.
I will always love cherry time
And the memory that I keep in my heart.

Music by Helen Glavin – copyright 1976. Lyrics: an original popular song sung by the Communards on the barricades. Translated by Gillian Hanna and adapted by Helen Glavin.

8. The Boulevards of Paris

1.

On the boulevards of Paris in 1871
Pink and white cherry blossoms come out in the sun
The ashes of the fire are cooled by the rain
But the blood of the people
 the blood of the people
 the blood of the people
Flows down to the Seine.

2.

All the barricades of Paris are smashed to the ground
Let's sing a sad lamentation for the death all around
O sisters and brothers, please do not dismay
For the Commune of Paris
 the Commune of Paris
 the Commune of Paris
Has shown us the way.

3.

On the boulevards of Paris in 1871
 The Versailles soldiers have made the blood run
 But the streets where the blood flows will never be the same
 For the scum of the earth
 the scum of the earth
 the scum of the earth
 Will rise up again.

La la la la/la la la la/la la la la . . .
 The scum of the earth!

9. The Week of Blood.

Verse 1.

Apart from informers and the police
 All you see on the streets now are old men in tears
 Widows and orphans crying in misery
 Left all alone, they weep in despair
 The Commune is in for a slaughter
 Is there no way to stop the flood?
 The talk is of war and everyone's shaking
 And the streets are running with blood.

CHORUS:

But we are ready and waiting
 This terrible time must come to an end
 And then you'd better beware
 When we the poor take revenge
 When we the poor rise again.

Verse 2.

They're tracking us down now and chasing us up
 They're stabbing and shooting just anyone
 The mother that's shielding her little daughter
 Or the baby in the old man's arms
 The hardships we knew in the Commune
 Have given way to massacre
 Must we be hunted by these bastards
 These lackeys of kings and emperors.

CHORUS:

But we are ready and waiting . . . etc

Verse 3.

Tomorrow informers will still walk our streets
Proud of their record, they don't want to be missed
Wearing their pistols slung on their shoulders
Services given with a Judas kiss.
But we have nothing to eat
No work, no weapons to fight
We're going to be ruled by police and informers
Killers and priests to tell us what's right.

CHORUS:

But we are ready and waiting etc . . .

Verse 4.

O when will the people break free from their chains
Will we be always in misery
The masters of war have the upper hand
Till the time comes we take it away.
Till then that pack of wolves
Can think that we are scum.
O when will we have a people's republic,
We can't wait for that day to come.

CHORUS:

But we are ready and waiting etc . . .

Music and lyrics are from an original song of the Commune.
Lyrics translated by Gillian Hanna. Music and lyrics adapted by
Helen Glavin.

I. Laundry Song

Work Song

Verse 0 Work-ing Work-ing Work-ing Work-ing Work-ing work-ing work-ing

Work-ing in a laun-dry ev-ry day

Steam and sweat and hard-ly an-y pain

Work-ing in a pool — of

rich men's grime and dirt

Work-ing and iron-ing fill my bo-dy hurts.

Look at my hands, they're red and raw my head is aching and my feet are sore, my

life is spent in dirt and grime. Will it ever change to a bet-ter time.

© Stefan Glavin .

2. Adolphe Thiers.

Spoke Sung in
Music Hall style

Can gusto

Verse ① From the Place Pigalle to Rue Genais and the fields of St Jerome, you can
Verse ②

1st X 2nd X

hear the people talking a-bout Thiers that naughty game.

I'm a brilliant poli-ti-cian, My

When-pon is my brain, I know ev-ry trick there is to know, but the power game.

③ Adolphe Thiers

3. The Song of the National Guard

lively

Verse 1 Some men fight for money, some for glo-ry. Some men fight for Je-sus, some for wine. But when you've come up from the gutter you've been fighting to sur-vive each day is a battle, just to stay a-live, they can kill us with a ball and bat list-en to our plea, so we'll use any tactics, to keep the people free.

© Helen Glavin

4. Masson's Song

Allegro

Single sheets, double sheets, had a spot of trouble sheets, coarse sheets, silk sheets, more than milk sheets, heavy sheets, light sheets, covered in white sheets.

Chorus

I'll take them all, I'll take them all, for this is the tightest spot I've been in. Don't give me your heavy wearing linen. Why cant we all, sit

down and talk to ge-ther, Oh why cant we be on happy fu-mi-ly. Why cant we all a-

green upon a plain, that's fair to all and ends up helping me. ②
Verse: walls, socks, rotten socks, decomposing rotten sock

Small socks, big socks, stinking like a pig socks,
Darned socks hairy socks, let e-ven take 'em Moke's socks, as it is now and was in the beginning,

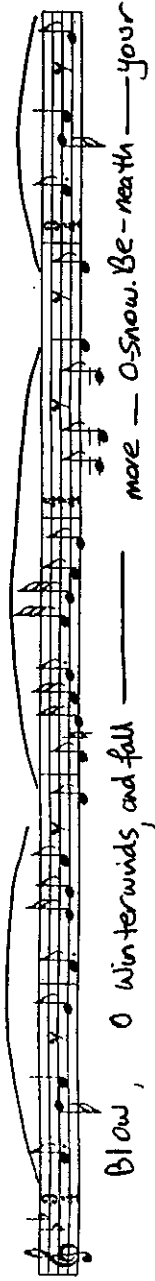
mull
I put my trust in God and —, dir — ty, lin — en.

of John Glavin ©

5. Blow Winter Winds

a poem by Louise Michel, a Communard

Freely



Blow, O winterwinds, and fall ——— move — O snow. Be — neath — your



icy — veil were clo — ser, to the dead ———. Endless be the night — and



shortened will be the day, In winter we are as one — with the cold — friends we mourn.

John Glavin ©

6. Scum

Con Gusto

Verse 1 In the old French ci-ty, There lives a re of people, with iron in their souls, ad fier-y hearts, They

Chorus
have no palace, their sons are born on straw. They are the Scum —, Well I'm one of them, They are the Scum —, Well I'm

one of them.

Helen Glavin ©

7. Cherry Time

Lyrical - Moderato

verse ① When its cherry time — and the gay nightingale and the meek-ing black bird

—, are having a good time — — — — — are having a good time — — — — — pretty

la dies have madness in their heads — — — — —, and lov-er-haus un — — in their hearts — — when its cherry time

— — — — —, The meek-ing black bird all sing — — — — — more sweetly — — — — — But cherry time is very

short — — — — —, we stroll a long in dream — — — — — ing pairs — — — — — ga thering ear-rings — — — — — cherries of

love ——— Pressed all the same ——— ,
 hanging under the leaves ——— , like drops of
 blood ——— , Oh cherry time is the time to dream ———
 ——— I will always love cherry time ——— , though its
 made an open wound in my heart, and La-dy Fortune, having cast the whip pain ——— , can ne-ver
 soothe me ——— . I will al-ways love ——— , Cherry time ——— ,
 ——— , and the memory that I keep ——— , in my heart ———
 © Helen Glavin.

8. The Boulevards of Paris.

Moderato (Hurdy Gurdy style accompaniment).

Handwritten musical notation for the first line of the piece. It features a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 3/4 time signature. The melody is written on a five-line staff. The lyrics 'On the boulevards of pa-ris' are written below the staff, with a horizontal line under 'ris'. A circled '1' is written below the staff, indicating the start of the first verse. A bracket above the staff groups the notes for 'ris'. The tempo and style are indicated as 'Moderato (Hurdy Gurdy style accompaniment)'.

in eighteen seventy one

Handwritten musical notation for the second line of the piece. It continues the melody from the first line. The lyrics 'Pink and white — cherry blossoms' are written below the staff, with horizontal lines under 'white' and 'blossoms'. A circled '1' is written below the staff, indicating the start of the first verse. A bracket above the staff groups the notes for 'white'.

Come out in the

Handwritten musical notation for the third line of the piece. It continues the melody from the second line. The lyrics 'Sun. The ashes of the fire' are written below the staff, with horizontal lines under 'Sun' and 'fire'. A circled '1' is written below the staff, indicating the start of the first verse. A bracket above the staff groups the notes for 'Sun'.

are cool

ed by the

rain. — But the blood of the people —, the blood of the

people —, the blood of the people —, Flows down —,

— to the Seine —. La La La La La, La La La La La La La

La La La La La — The scum of the earth!

Opfer Glavin ©

9. The Week of Blood.

Freely

Verse 1 A-part from inform-ers, and the pal-ice - all you see on the sheet is now, a cold man in tears, Widows and

orphans cry in mi-se-ry - left all alone - they - weep in des-pair The Commune is in for a

slaughter, have we no way - to stop the flood? - The talk is of war, and ev-ry one's stak-ing - And the

Chorus

streets - are running with blood - But we are ready and wait - ing, this terrible time - must come to an

end - , and then - you'd better be ware - , when we the poor, take re-venge - ,

When we the poor rise a gain.

Helen Glavin ©