The next two assaults against the king occurred in June and December 1836. They were carried out by Louis Alibaud, age 26, and François Meunier, age 23, both of them unemployed, socially isolated clerks. Each man, despite heavy debts to the landlord and boarding house, had compulsively spent himself into impoverishment in the days before his attempt. Each man acted alone.

The similarities ended there. Alibaud was an idealistic dreamer, a survivor of at least one ostentatious suicide attempt, who finally elevated his self-absorption onto a national stage. He became one of the pantheon of martyrs; his trial and execution gave rise to a mild sort of cult, marked by devotional poetry and graveside visitations by admirers (the police called them *alibauriennes*). Meunier was the most ardent worshipper at this altar: strange, out of step with his surroundings—a “nullity,” as not a few of his acquaintances referred to him—he was the more disturbing because of the very blankness of his personality.

Alibaud’s attempt occurred only a few months after Fieschi’s execution, and he was embraced more eagerly because of the differences between them. Fieschi fired from ambush; Alibaud was only a few feet from the king’s carriage, thus exposing himself to death or capture. Fieschi had unleashed his machine into a crowd, while Alibaud chose one of the king’s routine trips to Neuilly, when the area around the Tuileries was virtually deserted. In stark opposition to Fieschi’s bloodbath, no one was hurt by Alibaud—the king escaping merely because he nodded to the national guards on duty outside the
palace, just as the bullet slammed into the carriage behind his head. And there were personal distinctions as well: Fieschi’s short stature, stockiness, and animal vitality compared to Alibaud’s height, slenderness, and fine dark eyes; the sordidness of Fieschi’s private life in contrast to the solitary celibacy of Alibaud, who was thus free to become the object of romantic fantasies. Fieschi had introduced the practice of regicide, in a manner both crude and repugnant. Alibaud, through the sheer force of his personality, made regicide attractive. For a brief period in the late 1830s, it became the dominant external manifestation of republicanism.

Alibaud’s attempt occurred just outside the Tuileries on 25 June 1836. He made no attempt to flee. He carried a dagger (for himself, when the deed was done). He was identified immediately by gunsmith Louis Devisme, a national guard sergeant on duty at the palace, who manufactured *canne-fusils* (cane-muskets), slender enough to be hidden under a coat. He had given Alibaud several to sell, and to his horror recognized both him and the weapon. “No one will understand me,” Alibaud told his captors; “no one believes in devotion to profound convictions in this century of egoism and venality. . . . I have only one regret: it is that I did not succeed. When a man does what I have done, he makes the sacrifice of his life in advance.” When asked if he had accomplices: “The chief of this conspiracy, is my head, and the followers, are my arms.” Thus from the start he set the tone of his public performances: dedicated, didactic—and just a bit tedious. It is not at all certain that Alibaud said everything that was reported in the newspapers; he repudiated all his supposed ruminations on Fieschi, whose cell he briefly occupied. His significance, instead, lay in his image, a joint creation of Alibaud and his devoted fans.

Alibaud was born in 1810 in Nîmes. His father, once a coachman, by 1836 had become an innkeeper. Alibaud was intelligent and had a good hand; his parents had intended him for a respectable career as a clerk and copyist, until he suddenly joined the army in 1829. He was stationed in Paris during the July Revolution but deserted, willing neither to fight for Charles X nor to join the rebels against his comrades. He left the army in January 1834, accepting a clerkship with the telegraph administration only to quit almost immediately, finding the job too dull. He attempted several other pursuits without success. When his parents moved to Perpignan he went with them, studying Spanish and bookkeeping to fit himself for business in the region.

Alibaud soon was caught up in the events in Catalonia, as Polish and Italian refugees and French republicans rushed to defend the liberal cause. Many of the volunteers passed through the town and stayed at his father’s inn, and he was persuaded that his military experience would win him a prominent position; on