

THE NAPOLEONIC LEGEND AND THE
EUROPEAN POLICY OF
NAPOLEON III

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PREFACE

This study is concerned with the discussion of the Napoleonic Legend and its effect on the European policy of the Emperor Napoleon III. The object is to determine to what extent Napoleon III used the Legend as a guide for his European policy in three major developments: the Crimean War, the unification of Italy and the creation of a united Germany. The success of the policy is also to be determined from the evidence presented.

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CHAPTER I

THE NAPOLEONIC LEGEND

The year was 1815, the setting was the grand halls of the Tuileries. Many people rushed about preparing for the last desperate gamble. Napoleon I, Emperor of the French, stood unconcerned in the middle of all the bustle discussing quietly with his marshals the impending attack against the Allied forces in Belgium when a small seven-year-old boy ran in tears into the room to the Emperor. "Sire, my governess tells me you are going to the war. Oh, do not go! Do not go! They want to kill you." Napoleon, touched by his nephew's concern, patted the child on his head and remarked to Marshal Soult, "The boy has a good heart and noble soul; who knows but he may be the hope of my race."¹

Thirty-seven years later that same boy, now grown to manhood, was hunting on the grounds of St. Cloud where, like his uncle before him, he was informed of the wishes of the French nation. Through a plebiscite the people had voiced their approval of the change of government which renewed the hereditary, dynastic Empire. The date was December 2, 1852, the anniversary of the battle of Austerlitz and the coronation of Napoleon I. Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, heir of the first Napoleon, had achieved what politicians of that day thought impossible--the return of a Bonaparte to the throne of France. The Napoleonic Legend had served its purpose.

But what was this legend, this ideal that had accomplished the impossible? Who had contributed to it to make it the dominating force that allowed a relatively unknown nephew of the Emperor to capture the hearts of France with his name? Why were the French people so receptive to the name Napoleon, a name which had once meant war, dictatorship, and tyranny? The object of this work is to define the Napoleonic Legend, as seen by Napoleon III, and to ascertain to what degree it influenced his dealings with Europe in three major developments of his age--the Crimean War, the unification of Italy, and the consolidation of Germany into a united nation state.

It is evident that Napoleon Bonaparte dominated and molded not only the Europe of his post-Revolutionary era, but his memory contributed greatly to the character of Europe of the entire nineteenth century as well. This domination resulted from the formation and perpetuation of the Napoleonic Legend, which Louis Napoleon accepted and believed as his own. Using the Legend as his lodestar, Louis shaped his actions to the dictates of the Ideal, which in turn shaped Continental Europe for twenty years. The legend had been created by Napoleon himself in exile on St. Helena where he was sent after his defeat at Waterloo. The exile symbolized the nadir of the Napoleonic destiny. The Congress of Vienna, ignoring the forces of nationalism and liberalism which began to stir the Continent, reshaped Europe along pre-Revolutionary lines, established a congress system pledged to keep peace and the status quo in Europe, and filled the void left by the destruction of Napoleon's Continental domination with reaction and conservatism. France, lover of la Glorie, was humiliated; her boundaries were diminished, the ineffectual Bourbons were recalled, and she

was isolated and watched suspiciously. The Four Powers sent Napoleon to the island in the Atlantic, St. Helena. By deporting Napoleon to that islet and denying him the title of Emperor, the men of the Holy Alliance, the champions of reaction, martyred the Emperor and created a new symbol of peace, order and liberty. The men of 1815 rendered a tremendous service to the memory of Napoleon by rescuing it from the commonplace.² The island provided an effective background for the closing scenes of his life; the solitary rock whose narrow confines conquered the devouring ambition which had tried to make Europe its dominion.³ In that scene of confinement, Napoleon concentrated, deepened, refined, humanized, and perfected himself; his real coronation, he said, was suffering.⁴ He created the picture of himself as the new Prometheus, chained to a rock in punishment for attempting to better mankind by spreading the ideals of the French Revolution.

During one of the tedious days aboard the ship taking Napoleon and his companions to their exile, the Emperor asked one of his aides, Count Emmanuel de Las Cases, "...but what can we do in that desolate place?" "Sire," he replied, "we will live on the past..." "Be it so, we will write our Memoirs, After all, a man ought to fulfill his destinies; this is my grand doctrine: let mine also be accomplished."⁵ In his greater days of glory he had been too busy being Napoleonic to find time to be a Bonapartist.⁶ But after 1815 the Emperor set forth on his last and perhaps greatest achievement--the Napoleonic Legend.

Once at St. Helena, Napoleon possessed a rare opportunity to present himself in a favorable light to the peoples of France and Europe. He was quite aware of this, as he remarked:

Our situation here may even have its attractions, the universe is looking at us, we remain the martyrs of an

immortal cause. Millions of men weep for us, and glory is in mourning. Adversity was wanting to my career. If I had died on the throne amidst the clouds of my omnipotence, I should have remained a problem to many men. Today, thanks to my misfortune, they can judge me naked as I am.⁷

He was the first to provide a portrait of himself in unblemished beauty, endearing humanity, greatness and virtue. He became a pretender to his own throne and in the position of greater freedom and less responsibility, he began redrafting and revising his own life and created his own memory. On this island he had the time to become a doctrinaire and the first Bonapartist. On those lone, hot afternoons and during those interminable nights, he dictated to his faithful aides the substance of the myth which laid the foundation of the Second Empire.

From the start Napoleon was determined to exploit his grievances and make himself into a martyr: "I have worn the imperial crown of Franch, the Iron Crown of Italy. England has now given me a greater and more glorious crown than either of them--for it is that worn by the Saviour of the World--a crown of thorns."⁸ He was quite conscious of the advantage that this memory and cause would derive from his imprisonment. He planned to excite compassion, pity and enthusiasm by the tale of his sufferings at the hands of a brutal government and inhuman jailor. If he could no longer rule the people directly, he would rule them indirectly through his memory.

Surrounding himself with willing diarists, Napoleon created his own legend in the "Campaign of St. Helena." The Emperor encouraged his companions in exile to write down his words in their journals.

"Yesterday evening," wrote General Gaspard Gourgard, "the Emperor told me that I might turn my leisure to profit in writing down his sayings."⁹ Marshal Henri-Gratien Bertrand and Louis Saint Denis did not intend to

publish their journals, but the others, Las Cases, Charles Montholon, and Dr. Barry O'Meara, did.¹⁰ From these diaries Napoleon can be seen deliberately impressing the world with what he wanted the people to believe. Most impressively from Count Las Cases' lengthy five volumes does the Emperor appear: Napoleon, the friend of the people, the savior of the Revolution, the supporter of the principles of liberalism and nationalism. Through the pens of these men a selective Napoleon came into existence. They purged his memory of all recollections of his iron will, of his authority, of his insatiable demands for sacrifices of French blood and French resources, and of the two invasions of French territory that his ambition had brought about. As a champion of democracy and the people, he had tried to organize a free France to assume the leadership of an united Europe. In the perspective of his diarists, his fall appeared as the defeat of the Rights of Man and liberty.

Napoleon designed the new doctrine to compete with the Peace of Vienna and all the ideas for which the Congress stood. If therefore became necessary to include a strong mixture of liberal ideas in the Napoleonic philosophy. The Emperor's heir had to be prepared to offer democracy to the people of France and nationalism to the people of Europe. Napoleon's duty in exile lay in demonstrating that these principles had been the policy of his house. He hastily refashioned his career to emphasize the new creeds of the day.

The doctrine of Bonapartism was designed to contradict every principle which the treaties of 1815 had been based upon. The French Revolution had been repudiated by the men at Vienna; therefore, Napoleon embraced the principles of 1789. The recalled Bourbons had

repainted the lilies on the French flag; Bonapartism had to hoist the tricolor. Napoleon portrayed himself as the child of the Revolution who had crushed the old dynasties and envisioned himself as the representative of the Rights of Man, liberty, equality, fraternity, and universal suffrage.

He felt obliged to identify with the Revolution because it was only through it that his dynasty could justifiably return to power. The gains won must be preserved. Napoleon claimed that the only safe solution to the excesses of 1789 lay in a popular monarchy, and he believed that his dynasty could provide the only successful form of government for France since it, and it alone, had the complete backing of the people. In retrospect, he boasted, "I closed the gulf of anarchy and cleared the chaos. I purified the Revolution, dignified Nations and established Kings. I excited every kind of emulation, rewarded every kind of merit and extended the limits of glory!"¹¹

At St. Helena he became the executor of the Revolution who had tamed and organized its wild forces to bring unity and security to France. Most importantly, he supervised the spreading of its ideals, which acted as a civilizing agent throughout all Europe.¹² Napoleon claimed to have preserved the moral influences of the Revolution while diminishing the fear it inspired when he said:

I retained all the Revolutionary interest because I had no need to destroy them. This was one of the sources of my strength, and it also explains why I was able to set aside the Revolutionary theories. Everyone knew that the Emperor did not and could not wish for a counter revolution....I had preserved the Revolutionary interests while banishing the Revolutionary theories.¹³

The ideal of Napoleon as a man of the people and of equality went hand in hand with Napoleon as the Savior of the Revolution. One of the

three great slogans of 1789 was equality, and Napoleon made it clear to the world that in his system every man had equal opportunity regardless of birth, age or creed. He had rewarded merit and service, and he claimed: "Wherever I found talent and courage, I rewarded it. My principle was the career open to talent, without asking whether there were any quarters of nobility to show."¹⁴

Napoleon emphasized the fact that his power came from the will of the people expressed through the use of the plebiscite. He justified his autocracy on the grounds that France had to be governed by a firm hand and will, but assented that the will had to be drawn from the strength of public opinion.¹⁵ The state which Napoleon had founded was based on the despotic power which was necessary to his own purposes and the needs of France. It substituted a regular, well organized administration for anarchy and based itself on the principle before the law, rewarded merit and governed in the interests of France. He boasted that, "Every Frenchman could say under my reign: 'I shall be a minister, a marshal of France, a grand officer of the Empire, duke, count, baron, if I deserve it; even king.'"¹⁶ He was, he said, the champion of the common man:

I am the Emperor of the peasants, of the lower ranks in France.... Thus, in spite of all that you see, the people return to me--there is a sympathy between us.... The popular fibre responds to mine; I am come from the ranks of the people, my voice has influence over them... because between them and me there is an identity of nature.... I am the man of the people, if the people sincerely wish for liberty; I owe it to them. I have recognized their sovereignty, I am bound to lend an ear to their designs....¹⁷

Napoleon claimed that he came from the people, and the people had placed the imperial crown on his head. His memory would be revered by them.

Attuning himself to the political current since 1815, Napoleon, in the process of refashioning his career to fit the interests of his dynasty and his own historical reputation, became the standardbearer of liberalism and nationalism. The Powers which overthrew him had become the arch-enemies of these dynamic new forces, and it was not hard for Napoleon to portray himself as their champion. His reign, he pointed out, had been based on equality and liberty exemplified in the liberal constitution of Benjamin Constant and the Hundred Days. Napoleon excused his autocracy as only a temporary measure: "If I had won in 1812, my constitutional reign would have begun." In discussing this with Las Cases, he stated,

Liberal ideas flourish in Great Britain, they enlighten America, and they are nationalized in France.... Liberal opinion will rule the universe.... This memorable era will be inseparately connected with my name, for, after all, it cannot be denied that I kindled the torch and consecrated the principles; and now persecution renders me quite their Messiah. Thus even when I shall be no more, I shall still continue to be the leading star of the nations....¹⁸

In governing the conquered territories of Europe, Napoleon had instituted the French law codes and the gains won in the Revolution; liberalism was thereby spread into the satellite kingdoms of the Grand Empire.

Napoleon was also portrayed as a practicing nationalist. The settlement of Vienna ignored every tenet of the doctrine of nationalism; if the European opposition to the peace treaties were to be mobilized for Bonapartism, Napoleon must be shown favoring and aiding the fashionable doctrine. His nationalism, which before Waterloo had been frankly opportunistic, became dogmatic at St. Helena. Napoleon claimed that he and his troops extended the intense brand of French nationalism

to the oppressed peoples of Europe. He saw himself as the prophet of this new religion, and he hoped that the peoples of Europe would look nostalgically back to the time when he governed their lands. "I wish to make of each of these peoples a single nations," he said,¹⁹

If Napoleon was to pose successfully as the prophet of nationalism, there had to be concrete examples showing how he had furthered his new cause. The easiest proof for his claim was Italy; Napoleon had said that he had always predicted Italian unity. He explained his successive annexation of the different parts of the peninsula as a manifestation of his desire to supervise and advance the national education of the people. For the first time in centuries the peninsula had been governed by a single plan. From the Alps to the island of Sicily, Italian lawyers had administered the Napoleonic code, feudal limitations had been abolished and young Italians had known the benefits of the French Revolution. The name Italy was restored to the peninsula, memories of Italian glory were awakened, and the Risorgimento was begun.²⁰

In one conversation with Marshal Bertrand about his desire for Italian unity, Napoleon stated that "All France,...would also be willing to make war so as to ensure the independence of Italy, because that would redound to their personal credit."²¹ He claimed that his name would always be popular in Italy; the Italians would look back on the period of Napoleonic rule as a lost opportunity for their liberation. For, Las Cases explained;

It was Napoleon's desire to create anew the Italian Nation, and to re-unite the Venetians, Milanese, Piedmontese, Genoese, Tuscans, Parmesans, Modenese, Romans, Neopolitans, Sicilians, and Sardinians, in one independent nation...: such was the immortal trophy he was raising to his glory!²²

As another example of his nationalist sentiment, the Emperor invoked the name of Germany. Owing to the political complexity of its many kingdoms, duchies, and free cities, the Emperor admitted that the task of unification would require far more time than in the case of Italy. He claimed to have merely simplified the monstrous complexity of German political geography by reducing the number of states from 250 to 31 in his Confederation of the Rhine.

Absurd as it may seem, Napoleon on St. Helena also passed as the champion of peace. He explained that peace was necessary for the regeneration of Europe. He had always wished for peace, but the dynasties of the ancien regime, particularly England, would not allow it. The aim of the Napoleonic foreign policy, as Napoleon described it, had been the reorganization of the Continent along liberal lines--a European confederation. He claimed that he had only wanted the natural boundaries, the Rhine, the Alps, and the Pyrenees, for France. He wished to secure independence for his country and the establishment of a solid European peace. Napoleon was not the aggressor, but he had been obliged to repel the coalitions of Europe which never ceased to make war upon France, her principles, and her Emperor.²³

In discussing his plan for the Continent he stated, "I intended to organize a great federative European system which I had conceived as conformable to the spirit of the age and favorable to the progress of civilization."²⁴ He explained that his policy had consisted of establishing a European association by basing it on satisfied nationalities and general interests. A common European code and courts would have been created as well as a uniform system for money, weights and

measures. The Emperor also claimed patrimony for the idea of the Holy Alliance--an alliance of nations through their kings for, rather than against, the people.²⁵

These were the ideas which were reshaped and refined to fit the new image of the Emperor. The harsh features of his rule were suppressed. Napoleon was to be remembered as the soldier of the Revolution, a misunderstood idealist whose plans for a liberal France and a new Europe were broken by a cruel destiny. They were meant to attract all of the dissatisfied people of Europe to the banner of Bonapartism.

During the years Napoleon created his Legend, Europe enjoyed a well-earned rest after twenty years of cataclysmic upheavals. Things returned to normal: soldiers became civilians again; farmers plowed under the battlefields. France remained Napoleonic without knowing it: the Bourbons swore allegiance to the existing laws, the Napoleonic Code; the government retained the same administrative system.

France was torn during the years of the Restoration between the absolutists and the democrats, Catholics and the atheists, emigres and men who had heartily supported the ideals of 1789. The threat of a White Terror aroused the peasants who feared the loss of a clerical and noble lands which they had acquired during the Revolution. The Bourbons added to this terror by searching for all known and suspected ardent supporters of Napoleon. The government greatly reduced the army, and many of the Napoleonic officers were put on half pay. These disgruntled soldiers were soon scattered all over France, spreading their hatred against the Bourbons. Despite these problems, the people settled down after the excitement and wars of the Napoleonic Era. But their

children, born between campaigns and nurtured on the glory of the Empire, reached adulthood in the 1820s during the lackluster Restoration. As writer Alfred de Musset described it:

During the wars of the Empire, while husbands and brothers were away in Germany, anxious mothers gave birth to a hectic, sickly, nervous generation. Conceived between two battles, schooled with the sounds of rolling drums in their ears, boys in their thousands eyed on another gloomily, as they tried over their frail muscles. At intervals their fathers appeared from the bloodshed, held them to the gold braid on their breasts, set them down, and took to horse again.²⁶

As the children of 1810 grew to be the adults of 1825, they remembered the glory of their fathers. Romanticism and liberalism were the sentiments of their age, and many of the young men embraced these ideas. Their politics were lightly brushed by romance as they regarded the Empire with favor. They looked upon Napoleon's plight with sorrow that such a great man as he, who had worked for the betterment of mankind, could meet such a tragic fate. But at this point the effect was merely sentimental; it was not yet a political force.

After 1815 the kings began to feel safe again and attempted to return to the pre-Revolutionary era by ignoring their peoples' national-liberal ideals. In their disappointment, the people began to wonder if they had picked the wrong side in the late struggle. They gave Napoleon all of the credit for the work of the Revolution. By the mid-1820s liberalism had assumed a Napoleonic tinge. The romantic movement underlied the growth of liberalism and nationalism, and in the course of the 1820s it became increasingly evident that romanticism was beginning to rally to liberalism.²⁷

The Legend took hold most securely among the peasants. These men found the idealized civilian life a little dull after their return.

Their thoughts began to dwell on the days of their youth when they, the devoted soldiers, followed the Little Corporal to the end of the world. These veterans became the heralds of the Legend. The peasantry, next to the army, had always been Napoleon's main support; they saw him as their bulwark against feudalism and jealously guarded his fame and glory. The Emperor was "The Man" of popular imagination. His heroic exploits were retold again and again around the hearths of France as old campaigners relived their youth while passing down his supernatural achievements to a generation who knew him only second hand. It gathered force from the flood of memoirs, which came from Napoleon's circle at St. Helena.

The Legend, which played such an unusual role in the post-Napoleonic era, had three main sources: imagination, which at the same time exaggerated his exploits and motives and simplified his vices; propaganda, Napoleon's bulletins and memoirs and the journals of his companions in exile; and, literature.²⁸

The young writers and poets of that romantic age could not help but be influenced by the dynamic figure of the transformed Napoleon. The appeal of the lonely figure on a rock in the middle of a hostile sea took firm hold of their imaginations. The reactionary spirit of the Restoration contributed to the creation of Napoleon as the bourgeois hero, and the people, led by the writers of the day, flocked to his cause. After his death in 1821, literary men like Pierre-Jean Beranger, and towards 1830 Victor Hugo and Alfred de Musset, began to praise Napoleon. Beranger, lover of liberty and hater of the priests and nobles, idealized the Emperor and made Napoleonism of the masses more universal and profound. He created, to some extent, the memories he

claimed to transcribe, but the people read the apocryphal accounts and believed in them. His simple verses, like "The Recollections of the People" and "St. Helena", both recorded and stimulated the tradition of Bonapartism in the countryside and enlisted the peasants, who felt most cruelly the return of the gentry under the Bourbons, to the ranks of Napoleonism.²⁹ The Emperor became the symbol of the freedom and brave endeavors of the past; the strange alliance between Napoleon and the liberal cause which he had attempted to erect became a reality.

Victor Hugo, another contributor to the movement, found in the Emperor a figure worthy of his romantic longings for greatness. In the novel The Country Doctor, Balzac had a veteran of Napoleon's campaigns seated in front of a fire talking about the supernatural adventures of the Little Corporal.³⁰

While in France Bonapartism came to be mingled vaguely with republicanism, patriotism and romanticism, the rule of Napoleon abroad had been regarded as revolutionary. The Bonapartist enthusiasm lay in the liberals' remembrance of him as the enemy of the hated ideals of the Holy Alliance.

In other parts of Europe dissatisfied liberals, nationalists and romantics heard the new doctrine and believed in it. Even in England, the cult of Napoleon was a powerful force. As early as 1814 Byron had likened the Emperor to Prometheus;

O, like the thief of fire from heaven,
 Wilt then with-stand the shock?
 And share with him, the unforgiven,
 His vulture and his rock.³¹

After the fall of Napoleon, Byron lamented the collapse of his greatness in his Childe Harold's Pilgrimage (1816), and attributed it to the pettiness of lesser men.³²

In Germany too, when they saw that the defeat of Napoleon did not bring on an era of freedom and peace but one of a confining police state, the writers looked to Napoleon as the symbol of their lost liberty. Heinrich Heine, who was a boy had seen the Emperor, was profoundly affected by Napoleonism. As a few, he felt greatly the loss of the French law codes in Germany at the end of the Empire. He equated Napoleon with liberalism and nationalism in his writings.³³

For those who did not read, the Legend of the Emperor slowly and surely laid hold on their lives through pictures. The staid, stiff portraits of the Empire changed to moving and dashing pictures of battlefields, marches and symbolic portraitures of Napoleon on his lonely rock. His image was seen on cheap lithographs and imperial bric-a-brac, on plates, bottles and handkerchiefs. Napoleon, Emperor of the French, stepped out of his formal surroundings and came to life as the savior, guardian and hope of his country.

Under the July Monarchy of Louis Philippe, 1830-1848, the Legend rose to a crescendo. Writers and historians wrote prolifically on the topic; Napoleonic illustrations covered the bookshop windows. The bourgeois reign of the Orleanists was very dull; To satisfy France's need for glory, the government officially fostered the cult of the dead Emperor. Louis Philippe became the chief agent of the Empire in an attempt to arouse enthusiasm for his own reign; he hoped to integrate the Empire into the mainstream of the Restoration. The government restored the Vendome Column; the Arc de Triomphe was completed and dedicated to the Little Corporal; Versailles became a museum of Imperial battle pictures. The most dramatic gesture was the fulfillment of Napoleon's will; the return of his body to the banks of the Seine

to lie in the midst of the French people. It was a spectacular event in the late summer of 1840. The caisson bearing the body of the Emperor passed thousands of cheering people on its way to the Invalides. As it passed cries of "Vive l'Empereur!" "Vive Napoleon!" filled the air. But at this time it required an effort to be Napoleonic without a Bonaparte.

As the crowd cheered for the dead Emperor, another Bonaparte, eavesdropping, heard the enthusiasm of the people and dreamed. This other Bonaparte was Louis Napoleon awaiting trial for an attempted coup against the government at Boulogne. Louis Napoleon was in his heart the heir to the fictitious Napoleon created by the St. Helena Legend.³⁴ He hoped to avenge his uncle and return a Bonaparte to power in France.

Louis Napoleon, son of Louis and Hortense Bonaparte, entered into the world in 1808 when the first Empire was at its zenith. His father was a younger brother of the Emperor and his mother was the Empress Josephine's daughter, so the young prince was intimately related to the fortunes of the Empire. When Marie Louise, Napoleon's second wife, deserted him after his defeat in 1814, Hortense and her sons became the Emperor's most intimate family. The memory of this time remained with Louis throughout his life. Louis learned the Napoleonic religion from his mother; he never doubted the Legend, and it was from the myth that he took the eighteenth-century idea that liberty was born from order, which became the foundation of his Caesarian democracy.

The death in 1832 of the Emperor's son, Napoleon II, placed in the front ranks a Bonapartist prince who had faith in the Bonapartist principles; he alone of his remaining family considered his heritage a

responsibility rather than a privilege. Even before 1832, Louis felt the great responsibility and even greater possibilities when he wrote:

It is a great grief to me that I did not even see him once before he died; for at Paris I was so young that it is really only in my heart that I retain any remembrance of him. When I do wrong, if I think of this great man I seem to feel his spirit within me bidding me make myself worthy of the name Napoleon.³⁵

After fighting with the Carbonari, a secret society dedicated to the freedom of Italy, Louis Napoleon began a series of pamphlets elaborating on the gospel of St. Helena, mixing it with the current trends of republicanism and socialism to put his name before the people. In 1832 he published Political Reflections as his first public assertion for the position of a possible candidate of the imperial heritage. He wrote The Artilleryman's Handbook in 1834 and had it distributed among ranking army officers in France to remind them that another Napoleon also prepared his way with artillery. His most significant work was Napoleonic Ideals, published in London in 1839 while he was in exile after the failure of his attempted coup at Strasbourg on October 31, 1836. From the acts and the alleged opinions of the Emperor, Louis concocted a doctrine that was somewhat arbitrary but attractive. It exploited the discontent with the government of Louis Philippe by reviving nostalgic memories of imperial glory and outlined changes in the system of government which he sincerely believed the people of France needed and wanted. A restored empire was the ideal mode of government for France, and only an emperor elected by a plebiscite expressing the national will could reconcile freedom for the people with orderly and efficient government. He said, "The name Napoleon is a complete program in itself; it stands for order, authority, religion, the welfare of the people within; without for national dignity."³⁶

After the fiasco at Boulogne on August 6, 1840, Louis' cause remained quiet until the Revolution of 1848. This upheaval gave him the chance to enter into French politics, and he was elected as a representative to the Assembly. The publicity he received presented him as a soldier who had risen to the defense of order against social chaos. Victor Hugo contributed to that idea: "He is not a prince, he is an idea. The man whom the people have just chosen is not the pretender....He is the hero who won at Jena...."³⁷

On December 2, 1848, Louis Napoleon Bonaparte became President of the Second French Republic. His call for order was vital in his victory, but even more important was the name Napoleon. His many publications had given his name a program, and this program had something to offer all classes. His rise continued, resulting in the plebiscite of December 1852, when he became Napoleon III.

Napoleon III turned sentimental Napoleonism into practical Bonapartism, which was based on French supremacy and the principle of authority.³⁸ The Legend actively guided the new Emperor--especially in his foreign policy. The first goal of Napoleon III was the re-establishment of France's place and prestige in Europe and the destruction of the treaties of 1815. That worried Europe, but the Emperor declared, "L'Empire c'est paix," to reassure the jittery Continent. The Uncle had said, "Let the people rule!" and the Nephew echoed the same sentiment. Let the people form themselves freely into national groups, and the doctrine of nationalities became a key in the policy of the new Emperor. Louis Napoleon thought of Europe as a political and economic unit; the idea was a federation. He continually attempted to

convene European congresses to settle common problems and encourage the most practical forms for international cooperation.

The establishment of the Second Empire fulfilled Napoleon's prophecy:

In the course of time, nothing will be thought so fine, or strike the attention so much, as the doing of justice to me....I shall gain ground everyday in the minds of the people. My name will become the star of their rights....³⁹

Napoleon III set out to accomplish the avowed goals of his uncle and those of his own to better France and Europe. He believed in the dictates of the Legend, and sought an opportunity to right the wrongs against Napoleon and France. This opportunity came in the dispute in 1853 over the Eastern Question involving Russia, the Ottoman Empire and France and evolved into the Crimean War.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Albert Guerard, Napoleon III (Cambridge, 1943), p. 10.
- ² Octave Aubry, St. Helena, (tr. by Arthur Livingston, Philadelphia, 1936), p. 555.
- ³ William O'Conner Morris, Napoleon (New York, 1893), p. 413.
- ⁴ Aubry, St. Helena, p. 6.
- ⁵ Count de Las Cases, Memoirs of the Life, Exile and Conversations of the Emperor Napoleon (5 vols., London, 1838), Vol. I, pp. 42-43.
- ⁶ Frederick B. Artz, "Bonapartism and Dictatorship", South Atlantic Quarterly, Vol. XXXIX, No. 1 (Jan., 1940), pp. 38-39; Philip Guedella, The Second Empire (New York, 1922), p. 15.
- ⁷ H. A. L. Fisher, Bonapartism (London, 1928), p. 115; Las Cases, Memoirs, Vol. I, p. 264.
- ⁸ Felix Markham, Napoleon and the Awakening of Europe (3rd. ed., London, 1969), p. 141.
- ⁹ Lord Rosebury, Napoleon: The Last Phase (New York, 1902), p. 5.
- ¹⁰ H-G. Bertrand, Napoleon at St. Helena, The Journals of General Bertrand from Jan. to May, 1821, ed. by P. Fleuriot de Langle, tr. by F. Hume (New York, 1952); L. Saint Denis, Napoleon from the Tuileries to St. Helena, tr. by F. Potter (New York, 1922); Las Cases, Memoirs of the Life, Exile, and Conversations with the Emperor Napoleon (5 vols., London, 1836); C. Montholon, History of the Captivity of Napoleon at St. Helena (London, 1846-1847); G. Gourgaud, The St. Helena Journals of General Baron Gourgaud, 1815-1818, ed. by N. Edwards, tr. by S. Gillard (London, 1932); Barry O'Meara, Napoleon in Exile (2 vols., London, 1852; Reprint, New York, 1969); these are most of the memoir literature emanating from St. Helena.
- ¹¹ Las Cases, Memoirs, Vol. II, p. 120.
- ¹² Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, Napoleonic Ideals (ed. by B. D. Gooch, New York, 1968), pp. 16-17.
- ¹³ H. G. Bertrand, Napoleon at St. Helena, p. 121.
- ¹⁴ O'Meara, Napoleon in Exile, Vol. I, p. 64.

- ¹⁵ Armand Caulaincourt, No Peace with Napoleon; Concluding the Memoirs of General de Caulaincourt, Duke of Vicenza (ed. and tr. by George Libaire, New York, 1963), p. 192.
- ¹⁶ Fisher, Bonapartism, p. 117.
- ¹⁷ Las Cases, Memoirs, Vol. I, p. 12.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., p. 63.
- ¹⁹ Fisher, Bonapartism, p. 120.
- ²⁰ Ibid., p. 4.
- ²¹ Bertrand, Journals, p. 38.
- ²² Las Cases, Memoirs, Vol. IV, p. 106.
- ²³ Las Cases, Memoirs, Vol. II, p. 5; Bonaparte, Napoleonic Ideals, p. 98.
- ²⁴ Bonaparte, Napoleonic Ideals, p. 113.
- ²⁵ Las Cases, Memoirs, Vol. III, pp. 165-166; Bonaparte, Napoleonic Ideals, pp. 113-116.
- ²⁶ Alfred de Musset, La Confession d'un enfant du siècle (Paris, 1968), pp. 1-2.
- ²⁷ Frederick Artz, Reaction and Revolution 1814-1832 (3rd. ed., New York, 1966), p. 63.
- ²⁸ Albert Guerard, Reflections on the Napoleonic Legend (New York, 1924), pp. 167-172.
- ²⁹ Pierre-Jean de Beranger, Anthology of French Poetry (ed. by H. Carrington, London, 1900), pp. 215-219.
- ³⁰ Honore de Balzac, Le Medecin de compagnie (Paris, 1958).
- ³¹ Lord Byron, "Ode to Napoleon Bonaparte," (1814), The Works of Byron (13 vols., London, 1904), Vol. III, p. 312.
- ³² Lord Byron, The Works of Lord Byron, Vol. II, pp. 238-243.
- ³³ Theodore Ziolkowski, "Napoleon's Impact on Germany: A Rapid Survey," Yale French Studies, Vol. XXVI (Fall, 1960), pp. 94-105.

34 A short bibliography of works on Louis Napoleon include the following titles: Philip Guedella, The Second Empire (New York, 1922); Albert Guerard, Napoleon III (Cambridge, 1943); F. A. Simpson, Louis Napoleon and the Recovery of France (London, 1923); Pierre de La Gorce, Histoire du Second Empire (7 vols., New York, 1967); Roger Williams, Gaslight and Shadow (New York, 1957); Sir Lewis Namier, Vanished Supremacies (London, 1958); and J. S. Schapiro, Liberalism and the Challenge of Fascism (New York, 1949). The last two works are highly critical of Napoleon III.

35 F. A. Simpson, The Rise of Louis Napoleon (London, 1950), p. 332.

36 Artz, "Bonapartism and Dictatorship", pp. 38-39.

37 Guerard, Napoleon III, p. 49; Fisher, Bonapartism, p. 143.

38 H. W. Homans, "France Under the Second Empire", The North American Review, Vol. CXI (1870), pp. 402-403.

39 Las Cases, Memoirs, Vol. IV, p. 387.

CHAPTER II

THE CRIMEAN ADVENTURE

When Louis Napoleon proclaimed the revival of the French Empire in 1852, the rest of Europe waited attentively to see what would happen. The restoration of a member of Napoleon's dynasty to the throne of France presented a serious challenge to one of the treaties of 1815, which had been signed along with the Second Treaty of Paris on November 20, 1815, and had forbidden that exact occurrence. But no resistance came from the European Powers; the sovereign of England and then, reluctantly, the Austrian Emperor and the Prussian King addressed Napoleon III as "Mon frere," recognizing the Empire in France. Only Nicholas I of Russia remained recalcitrant and persisted in addressing Napoleon as "Mon ami".

As Emperor of the French, Napoleon III had certain specific goals in mind for France's foreign policy. Chief among them was his desire to destroy the treaties of 1815, which had humiliated France and overthrown his uncle. The dictates of the Napoleonic Legend, which Louis used as the basis of his policy, also called for the restoration of French power on the Continent. Along with these goals, the new Emperor also made a conscious effort to continue the traditional foreign policy of France, and among the "traditions" was the championship of the privileged position of Latin monks in the Holy Land.¹ In following this policy Napoleon supported the Catholic monks in a series of disputes which had

arisen over the rights and privileges as custodians of the Holy Places between the Latin and Greek monks. This quarrel ultimately led to the Crimean War, 1854-1856, which was ostensibly fought for the preservation of the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, but actually to halt Russian encroachment in the area.

For centuries France had been the legal protector of the Catholic pilgrims en route to the Holy Land, and several Latin orders had been established in Palestine to care for the shrines. But the Latin monks had neglected their duties; these were assumed by the Greek monks, who appropriated many of the privileges and were confirmed in this by several firmans, or edicts, from the Sultan. In 1840 events turned French attention eastward and made certain groups shrine-conscious. In the decade of the 1840s French claims on behalf of the Latin monks to repair certain shrines were advanced with the support of the new Pope, Pius IX. The Greek monks resented what they considered an incursion of their rights. When Napoleon reasserted the French position in the dispute between the Latin and Greek monks, he was continuing French policy in response to clerical pressure and as a bid for support from the strong Catholic party in France.² Napoleon's Foreign Minister, Edouard Droyn de Lhuys, pointed out that the clerics had made the Latin claims a question of national honor, which Napoleon felt he had to uphold or lose prestige. In 1850 the French envoy in Constantinople pressed for a settlement to restore the privileges to the Latin monks, and in 1851 the French threat to break off diplomatic relations moved the Porte to make a favorable decision. The Turks acquiesced to the French demands, but the diplomatic victory on the part of France wounded deeply the pride of Nicholas I, Tsar of Russia and Protector of the Orthodox Faith.

By December, 1852, the Russians faced a loss of some of the Greek Orthodox privileges in the Near East, and in Europe the Tsar was faced with the diminution of his influence in the face of the "upstart" Emperor whose country the conservative members of the Holy Alliance had successfully kept isolated on the European diplomatic scene for at least twenty years. Nicholas had used the rivalry between Great Britain and France to convince the British statesmen that Russian and British interests in the Near East were identical. He visited England in June, 1844, and engaged in confidential talks with the leading statesmen, Lord Aberdeen, the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel, concerning the state of the Ottoman Empire. These talks, summarized in the Nesselrode Memorandum written by the Russian chancellor on his return to St. Petersburg, culminated in a proposal for an Anglo-Russian agreement to maintain the existing order in Turkey. If anything unforeseen should happen to the Ottoman Empire the two countries would come to a previously agreed-upon understanding for a common course of action.³ A review of the circumstances of this Anglo-Russian entente is necessary for an understanding of the French posture in the Near East.

Aberdeen replied cautiously to the Memorandum, since he disagreed with the Tsar's main thesis that Turkey was crumbling to pieces. But Nicholas, on his part, assumed that he had a British commitment upon far more than Aberdeen was willing to admit. The Nesselrode Memorandum was passed from ministry to ministry in the years 1844-1852,⁴ and it continued to be the basis of Russian foreign policy towards Turkey.

At the end of 1852, Baron von Brunnow, the Russian Foreign Minister, informed Lord John Russell that Russia would back up her demands for the restoration of the Greek privileges to the Porte with aggressive

action to forestall French preponderance in Turkey. At this point the Tsar made two important advances: he opened new secret conversations with Sir Hamilton Seymour, British envoy at St. Petersburg, concerning the completion of the plans for a peaceful partition of Turkey, and early in February, 1853, Prince Menshikof was ordered to Constantinople to take up Russian negotiations with the Porte.

The conversations with Seymour began on January 9, 1853, at a palace reception beneath the glittering lights and in the midst of throngs of people. The Tsar attempted to persuade England to agree to a partition of the Ottoman Empire to avoid the chaos and confusion which would inevitably result from the unexpected and unprepared for collapse of Turkey.⁵ The Tsar dwelled on the invalid state of the Ottoman Empire and the necessity of reaching an understanding on its ultimate partition. At the second meeting he renounced the designs of Catherine the Great on Constantinople but reaffirmed Russian interest in the plight of the Orthodox Christians in the Turkish lands. As for the other states of Europe, "If England and I agree, I care little for the rest or what the others do or think....," he declared.⁶

Seymour communicated Nicholas' views to the Prime Minister with the comment that he believed that the Tsar intended to occupy Constantinople should the Empire fall. In his reply, Russell opined that the fall of Turkey was not as imminent as Nicholas had predicted and warned that forecasting the sickness of friends often caused their death. In short, he refused to do anything relative to the eventual partition of Turkey, especially in view of the friendly overtures of Napoleon III.⁷

In February of 1853, Menshikof went to Constantinople as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Tsar. Although he

was allowed a certain amount of latitude in his dealings with the Porte, his instructions were definite: he was to secure guarantees for the future. With the Menshikof Mission, the local problem of the Holy Places turned into a major European concern involving the integrity of the Ottoman Empire.⁸

Menshikof acted in a very bellicose manner upon his arrival in Constantinople and precipitated a ministerial crisis. With both of the English and French ambassadors absent from their posts, Colonel Rose and M. Benedetti, charges d'affaires for their respective countries, feared that a whole new cabinet would be formed under Russian auspices. In his alarm Benedetti telegraphed to Paris asking for the French fleet to be sent to the Aegean Sea. He also stated that Colonel Rose had ordered the British squadron to leave Malta for the open sea. Public opinion, led by an aggressive Parisian press, forced the Emperor to send the French fleet from Toulon to Salamis, but the British government, upon the Tsar's and Nesselrode's assurances, judged Rose's alarms as excessive and kept their fleet at Malta. England's refusal acted as a restraint on France; it showed Napoleon that he had to be sure of the actions of England before he made a step in the Near East.⁹

Meanwhile, Menshikof presented his demands to the Sultan's ministers. The returned English Ambassador, Stratford de Redcliffe, who had the confidence of the Turks, advised them to separate the Russian demands into two parts: those concerning the Holy Places and those which called for a Sened, or treaty, for a secret alliance between Russia and the Porte. The French and Russian representatives reached an understanding about the Holy Places in late April. But on May 5, Prince Menshikof sent another ultimatum to the Porte which demanded the

acknowledgement of a Russian protectorate over the Christian subjects of the Porte.¹⁰ This would have allowed the Tsar to interfere in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire. Upon Stratford's advice, the Turks refused. After a short delay in which he tried to intimidate them, Menshikof left Constantinople with all of the personnel of the Russian embassy.

The outcome of the mission and the military and naval maneuvers in January, 1853, drew France and England closer together to the delight of Napoleon, who had worked hard for a Franco-British entente. They regarded these actions as a potential threat to the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. Paris had been forecasting the problem since early April despite Nesselrode's pacific assurances. Public opinion in England exploded in favor of the Sultan. Keeping in mind their own Mediterranean interests, the French and British fleets were ordered to advance to Besika Bay.

The Tsar's next move was a threat. On May 31, he warned that if Turkey refused to sign the last note within eight days, Russian troops would cross the frontier, not to wage war but to obtain a material guarantee for the satisfaction of the Tsar's demands. Turkey refused, and the Russian troops crossed the Pruth River in the early part of July and occupied the Danubian Principalities.¹¹

During the next months, the main international concern was directed toward the prevention of an outbreak of hostilities between the two countries. At the invitation of Count Buol, the Austrian Premier, the representatives of France, England, and Prussia met at Vienna to come up with the basis of agreement satisfactory to the countries involved. Napoleon took the initiative by drafting a note which, with a few

changes, was adopted by the Four Powers. The Vienna Note was a vague re-assertion of the previous treaties and practically conceded that the Orthodox Church should enjoy the same rights as the Latin Churches. When Nicholas accepted it, Europe sighed in relief. However, it was not acceptable to the Porte. Stratford pushed for its acceptance even though he did not approve of it, but Turkey demanded amendments which Nicholas refused to contenance.¹² France and Britain were very disappointed that the Porte had turned down the Note after Russia had agreed to it. Clarendon, the British Foreign Minister, accused Stratford of prejudicing the situation in Constantinople, and Napoleon did not conceal his displeasure from Lord Cowley, the English Ambassador in Paris.¹³

All of this was interrupted when Nesselrode unofficially published a "violent interpretation" of the Vienna Note which confirmed to the Turkish fears for their independence by stating that the vagueness of the Note would enable Russia to interpret it in any manner in their favor.¹⁴ The diplomatic situation quickly altered in favor of the Porte, and France and England moved closer toward the alliance which Napoleon wanted so much. In September, 1853, Napoleon III recommended that the combined fleets move through the Dardanelles towards Constantinople.¹⁵ Clarendon agreed, and instructions were sent to the French and British representatives in the Turkish capital.¹⁶ Although Napoleon initiated the action, he was forced to profess a desire for peace to satisfy the overwhelming wish of the French people.

The Porte, however, seemed bent on war to appease its own public opinion, and on October 4, 1853, sent an ultimatum to Russia.¹⁷ Russia replied by a declaration of war on November 1. Although war had been

declared, there was not much military action until November 30 when the Russians mounted a surprise attack on the Turkish squadron in the Bay of Sinope. The "Sinope Massacre" was viewed by contemporary opinion in France and England as a further threat to Turkey, as a breach of promise, and as a defiance of the allied fleets anchored in the Bosphorous. It rendered the entrance of France and England into the conflict inevitable.¹⁸

The British demanded war. As The Times expressed it; "England, after peace for fourteen years, goes perhaps to restore in the hazards of combat her honor and her fortune."¹⁹ In France the reaction was different; the people wanted peace. Napoleon had to reconcile his subjects to war with an alliance with a nation whom France disliked and against a nation which she did not want to fight. But the English alliance was one of the foundations of Napoleon's policy and one he had tried to achieve since he came to power.

Throughout the period, Napoleon constantly favored dramatic action and the advance of the naval squadrons. He had increased tensions by sending the French fleet to Salamis in March and had led in the demand to move the combined fleets into the Dardanelles. Now he called for the fleets to move into the Black Sea to guarantee Turkish integrity and neutralize the Russian power. The British cabinet had to agree.²⁰

Despite his aggressive action, Napoleon was understandably reluctant to enter into a war from which France would not likely gain any material advantage.²¹ With strong public opinion for peace and the erratic response of the Bourse to the threat of war, Napoleon made a final appeal to the Tsar in a personal letter of January 29, 1854. He proposed that the hostilities should end and that direct negotiations

between Russia and Turkey begin. Nicholas replied with a taunt, declaring that the Russian armies would repeat their victories of 1812. Napoleon had hoped for better results from the letter, and was disappointed at the failure of his personal attempt to reconciliation.²² But stung by this rebuff, the French government had no other choice but to begin military preparations and to join Great Britain in the ultimatum that made war inevitable on February 27, 1854.²³

The material interests of France in the Near East at this time were limited, although as a great power she was interested in the effects which the partition of Turkey might have on the balance of power. But the issues were complicated by the personal relations of the two Emperors; each wanted to be the dominant force in European politics and each felt a grievance against the other. Napoleon needed an active foreign policy to satisfy his nation's need for glory. A victory over Russia would be revenge for 1812 and a blow at the champion of the hated Holy Alliance. While on St. Helena, Napoleon I had predicted that Russia would strike at Turkey and upset the European balance of power. Napoleon III saw that it was his duty to prevent such an occurrence.

During the course of the war these considerations seemed uppermost in Napoleon's mind. The Crimean campaign is notorious as one of the most inglorious episodes in military history. The Allies were handicapped by inadequate transportation, poor leadership, and disease. Napoleon came up with the plan to attack the symbol of Russian power in the East, the stronghold of Sebastopol, but the siege proved long and costly. The stalemate was such that Napoleon felt the need of a coup de main. In February, 1855, he announced his intention to go to the theater of war himself and assume personal command.²⁴ Everyone was

against the idea. In France his supporters feared that his prolonged absence might jeopardize his throne. Moreover, Britain would never permit him to take command of her troops. The English took advantage of the imperial visit to London in April to persuade him to abandon his plans. Napoleon bowed to the opinions of the French and English ministers and gave up the project.²⁵

Meanwhile, the Powers tried unsuccessfully to settle the war diplomatically, but a victory on the battlefield was required to break the stalemate. Finally, in September, 1855, the victory came with the fall of Sebastopol, and France favored an immediate peace.²⁶ Her armies had born the brunt of the war, and the unsettled financial situation at home reinforced the popular desire for peace. France had achieved her glory, such as it was; Napoleon's prestige in Europe had been greatly enhanced. In the country's view nothing else could be accomplished. Britain, on the other hand, favored a continuation of the war. Her forces were at least organized and ready to conduct another campaign. Moreover, national pride demanded a clear-cut English victory. But Napoleon advocated a settlement and used the threat of opening the nationalities question, which would disrupt the European equilibrium by dealing with the unification problems of Italy, Poland and the Rhine provinces--a situation which England did not want--if the British government refused peace.²⁷

Austria, who had refused to fight, again took the diplomatic initiative after the failure of her first attempt. Hoping to restore her place as the negotiator, Austria sent an ultimatum based on the Four Points to Russia on December 16, 1855.²⁸ Nicholas had died during the course of the war and had been succeeded by his son, Alexander II,

who hesitantly agreed to the formula. Paris was designated by the common agreement of all the countries concerned as the site for the peace congress, which was a great advantage for the Emperor. Napoleon hoped that the Congress of Paris would atone for the Congress of Vienna and that its settlement would replace the one of 1815.

The plenipotentiaries began to arrive in mid-February, 1856. Baron von Brunnow and Count Orlof represented Russia; Lords Cowley and Clarendon represented England. Clarendon was justifiably suspicious of a union between France and Russia and wanted to guard the fruits of victory. Baron Buol came from Austria with an ardent desire that Prussia be admitted to the Congress and the Sardinian envoy, Count Camillo Cavour, not be admitted. The minister of the Porte, Ali-Pasha, was, like his country, largely forgotten in the deliberations. French Foreign Minister Walewski was elected as President of the Congress to honor their host, Napoleon III, at the first meeting of the Congress of February 25, 1856.

The meetings were rarely long. Most of the arrangements were made in private conversations. The Emperor's fascinating personality captivated and influenced most of the plenipotentiaries. Much to England's dismay, Napoleon was visibly inclined toward Russia, although he did not want to abandon the English alliance. During the Congress, Eugenie gave birth to the Prince Imperial. Napoleon's joy knew no bounds. He had an heir to carry on the Bonaparte dynasty, and he, the parvenu, had re-established French hegemony in Europe.

The plenipotentiaries signed the Treaty of Paris on March 30, 1856. Generally, the terms were in accord with the Four Points of Vienna. They provided for the evacuation and restoration of all occupied

territories. The Porte was admitted to the Concert of Europe, and the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire was guaranteed by the Great Powers. The Black Sea was neutralized and the Danube River was open to all navigation, while the Principalities remained under Ottoman suzerainty.

Napoleon had entered into a war in which the tangible gains were negligible and for which there was little popular enthusiasm. One important victory had satisfied France's and the Bonapartist need for military glory and honor. Commercial interest in the Near East did not call for a war against Russia, nor was the personal conflict between Nicholas and Napoleon bitter enough to cause a war by itself. Although Napoleon did not deliberately provoke a war, he initiated the origin of the dispute by championing the Latin monks in the dispute over the Holy Places. The measures he had taken were dangerous, since he felt that he had to placate French opinion with striking and dramatic action. Once he took an aggressive stand, he could not back down without the loss of prestige, which was so vital for his reign. But while his actions pushed him towards war, he either personally made or supported several attempts to avert the war. He encouraged settlement through the Concert of Europe and wrote a personal letter to the Tsar in an effort to avoid the conflict. But other factors had complicated the situation, and these made war inevitable.

Napoleon gained a great deal from the successful outcome of the Crimean adventure. The war had assured his position in Europe, which had been uncertain in 1853. His influence was overwhelming on the Continent; henceforth, he was The Emperor in Europe. Napoleon was at the pinnacle of his power; he was successful abroad and popular at home,

even in Paris. No power in Europe would not welcome his alliance. The valor of the French soldier had re-established her influence on the Continent. Napoleon had caused the treaties of 1815 to be revised to France's advantage. By recognizing Napoleon as one of the leading rulers in Europe, the other rulers considered the agreement to prevent a Bonaparte from ruling France as obsolete. In discussing the problems of Italian nationality, Austrian power in the peninsula granted to her by the First Treaty of Paris in 1814 was questioned, again striking at the core of the hated treaties. Napoleon believed that the defeat of Russia avenged in part Napoleon the Great's defeat in 1812 and was a blow against the originator of the Holy Alliance. In the Emperor's view, any attack on the treaties of 1815 benefited France and his dynasty. The cost of the war was staggering, but so were the moral benefits for the Napoleonic dynasty and France. The glory and the Continental power of France figured as a key point in the Napoleonic Legend. With the successful completion of the Crimean War, the French victory at Sebastopol restored military glory to France and helped wipe out the memory of Waterloo. The significance of the conference of the Great Powers taking place in Paris escaped few; French influence was again dominant in Europe. Napoleon III was satisfied with the effect of his first important military and diplomatic venture. The dictates of the Napoleonic Legend had been followed to a successful conclusion.

Napoleon firmly believed in the advocacy of the principle of nationalities. In a separate session of the Congress on April 8, Napoleon III caused the plight of Italy to be discussed among the Great Powers. Throughout the session, although nothing concrete was

accomplished, Napoleon's whispered promise to the Italian delegate at the conference, "Tell them that my name is Bonaparte...." was a portent of things to come.²⁹

FOOTNOTES

¹A. Edythe Mange, "The Near Eastern Policy of the Emperor Napoleon III", Illinois Studies in the Social Sciences, Vol. XXV (Urbana, 1940), p. 7; J.A.R. Marriott, The Eastern Question (4th. ed., Oxford, 1940), p. 254.

²Harold Temperley, England and the Near East: The Crimea (London, 1936, Reprint, New York, 1964), p. 286; Brison D. Gooch, The New Bonapartist Generals in the Crimean War (The Hague, 1959), p. 37; Karl Marx, The Eastern Question, ed. by E.M. and E. Averling (Reprint, New York), p. 247.

³Vernon J. Puryear, England, Russia and the Straits Question, 1844-1856 (Berkeley, 1931), pp. 439-442.

⁴There are varying interpretations among historians as to whether or not the Nesselrode Memorandum was regarded as binding by the successive British ministries. Puryear, England, Russia and the Straits Question, pp. 139, 148, supports this thesis while Temperley, England and the Near East, p. 257, and G. B. Henderson, "The Seymour Conversations, 1853", History, Vol. XVIII, No. 3 (Oct., 1933), pp. 242-243, do not.

⁵The Annual Register, 1853, pp. 248-249; Pierre de La Gorce, Histoire du Second Empire (7 vols., Reprint, New York, 1969), Vol. I, pp. 151-158; Temperley, England and the Near East, pp. 272-278.

⁶The Annual Register, 1853, p. 249.

⁷Ibid., pp. 249-251; Marx, The Eastern Question, pp. 294-297.

⁸Mange, "The Near East Policy of the Emperor Napoleon III", p. 23.

⁹Temperley, England and the Near East, pp. 311-312; La Gorce, Histoire, Vol. I, p. 162; Puryear, England, Russia and the Straits Question, pp. 235-237; The Annual Register, 1853, p. 260; A. Benson and Viscount Esher, eds., The Letters of Queen Victoria (3 vols., New York, 1907), Vol. II, pp. 442-443.

¹⁰Marx, The Eastern Question, p. 28.

¹¹The Annual Register, 1853, pp. 267-268.

¹²Ibid., pp. 278. 280.

¹³ Herbert Maxwell, The Life and Letters of George Villiers 4th., Earl of Clarendon (2 vols., London, 1913), Vol. II, p. 18; F. A. Simpson, Louis Napoleon and the Recovery of France 1848-1856 (London, 1923), p. 231.

¹⁴ The Annual Register, 1853, p. 284.

¹⁵ F. A. Wellsley, Secrets of the Second Empire, Private Letters from the Paris Embassy (New York, 1929), p. 20.

¹⁶ Maxwell, Clarendon, Vol. II, p. 30.

¹⁷ The Annual Register, 1853, p. 12.

¹⁸ Mange, "The Near East Policy of the Emperor Napoleon III", p. 34; La Gorce, Histoire, Vol. I, pp. 198-202.

¹⁹ The Times, December 27, 1853, p. 12.

²⁰ Clarendon agreed to move the fleets to forestall a cabinet crisis by the resignation of Palmerston. Maxwell, Clarendon, Vol. II, p. 30; The Annual Register, 1853, pp. 500-509.

²¹ Wellesley, The Paris Embassy, p. 52; Simpson, Louis Napoleon, pp. 243-244.

²² Benson and Esher, eds., Letters, Vol. III, p. 14; The Times, February 15, 1854, p. 11; The Annual Register, 1854, pp. 243-244.

²³ The Times, February 25, 1854, p. 8 and March 25, p. 9.

²⁴ Wellesley, The Paris Embassy, p. 67.

²⁵ Benson and Esher, eds., Letters, Vol. III, p. 150; Wellesley, The Paris Embassy, p. 73.

²⁶ The Times, September 10, 1855, p. 6.

²⁷ La Gorce, Histoire, Vol. I, p. 455; Maxwell, Clarendon, Vol. II, pp. 108-109; Benson and Esher, eds., Letters, Vol. III, pp. 229, 233-236.

²⁸ The Four Points were drawn up during the negotiations in Vienna during the summer of 1855. The Points are: 1) the cessation of the Russian protectorate over the Principalities; 2) free navigation of the Danube River; 3) neutralization of the Black sea; 4) the abandonment of the Russian claims over any subject of the Porte. The 3rd. point caused the trouble.

²⁹ Simpson, Louis Napoleon, p. 62. "Tell them that my name is Bonaparte, and that I feel the responsibilities which that name implies. Italy, dear to me, as dear almost as France...."

CHAPTER III

NAPOLEON III AND THE UNIFICATION OF

ITALY, 1856-1860

The Italian Question had long been an obsession with Napoleon III. It was, in part, a matter of sentiment: he had fought for Italian liberty in 1830, and his uncle's first successes had taken place there. He believed that his position would never be secure until the hated treaties of 1815 were destroyed, and Louis Napoleon hoped to overturn the settlement of 1815 in Italy.¹ The principle of nationality had a powerful attraction to the Imperial idealist as well. He believed that of all the great powers, only France had nothing to fear from the implementations of the principle and hoped to use it as a weapon against the treaties of the Congress in Vienna. Napoleon wanted to redraw the map of Europe in accordance with the principle of nationalities, for only on this basis could a political equilibrium be achieved. The idea had come from St. Helena, and Napoleon III embraced it as one of his policies.²

As early as 1848, when he first came into power, Louis Napoleon looked for some way to help Italy. But, as he remarked to an Italian friend, "Give me time first to get things to rights in France, and then we will see what we can do for Italy."³ The long awaited opportunity came in March, 1856, at the peace conference at the close of the

Crimean War. Napoleon III was at the pinnacle of his power; his policies had brought glory to France and French hegemony in Europe. He now could see what he could do for Italy.

But another man was also actively working for the Italian cause-- Count Camillo Cavour, Prime Minister to the King of Piedmont-Sardinia, Victor Emmanuel. Cavour worked constantly for the Italian cause but realized the need for a strong ally--either France or England--and for this purpose joined the Allies in the Crimean War. Despite Austria's efforts to exclude Sardinia, Cavour attended the peace congress at Paris.

In response to Napoleon's earlier question, "What can I do for Italy?" Cavour outlined the following four simple proposals which provided the basis for an Italian program at the Congress: 1) to urge Austria to deal fairly with Piedmont by permitting the junction of the Lombardy and Piedmont railroad and regulating the police system which harassed commercial and personal relations between the two countries; 2) to obtain from her a milder rule in Lombardy and Venetia by introducing beneficial reforms in the laws and administration; 3) to force the King of Naples to cease scandalizing Europe by his tyrannical conduct, which was contrary to all principles of justice and equity; 4) to reform the Papal states by removing the Austrian troops from Romagna and establishing an independent, temporal administration of the states.⁴

Although Piedmont's place at the Congress was not specifically defined, Cavour's diplomacy assured his place. He spoke little during the regular meetings, but at the balls and receptions accompanying the Congress he worked hard to sway Napoleon and Lord Clarendon to the

Italian cause. He finally got his chance to air the Italian Question at a special session on April 8, 1856. Count Walewski opened the discussion with a mild criticism of the presence of Austrian troops in Central Italy and the corrupt state of government in Naples and Rome. Clarendon's speech, on the other hand, was extremely harsh, as he condemned the Austrian policy. The Austrian plenipotentiary, Baron Buol, was furious; Cavour was triumphant. Knowing that Clarendon's vigorous onslaught needed no further support, Cavour presented his case moderately but effectively.⁵

No concrete proposals came from the session, but the moral gain for Italy was enormous: Cavour came to be regarded as the representative of all Italy, not merely that of Sardinia, and Austria, whose whole policy had been based upon acting as the arbiter in Italian affairs, found herself suspect and discredited. Cavour phrased it in this manner before the Sardinian Chamber:

Thus, the abnormal and unhappy condition of Italy has been exposed to Europe, not by furious and revolutionary demagogues, not by party men, but by the representatives of the first nations of Europe. The second advantage obtained consists in those powers having declared that it was in the interest of Europe that the evils of Italy has been brought before the tribunal of public opinion, whose decision, to use the noble expression of the Emperor of the French, is without appeal.⁶

Cavour came away from the Congress with the realization that Napoleon III would be the only possible champion of Italy on the battlefield; from that point on, he made a military alliance with France his primary goal.

However, Napoleon might have continued with his half-formed ideas on the reorganization of Europe if a startling event had not occurred. At 8:30 in the evening of January 14, 1858, three bombs exploded as

Napoleon and Eugenie drove to the Opera. 187 bystanders were killed or wounded, but the Imperial Couple escaped unharmed.⁷ The police quickly arrested the conspirators, all Italian revolutionaries: Felice Orsini, G. Piere, A. Gomez and C. di Rudio.

As soon as the first panic had passed and Napoleon's initial outburst against England and Sardinia's willingness to harbor exiles had subsided, the Orsini plot spurred the Emperor into more practical sympathy for Italy. Napoleon saw that this offered him an opportunity to influence public opinion favorably toward his Italian schemes.⁸ He wisely directed that the conspirators should be given a fair trial, appointed able advocates to defend them, and ordered that their testimony be published. Orsini's trial became popular in Paris.

From his jail cell, Orsini wrote two dramatic letters to the Emperor. Before the assassination attempt Orsini believed that Napoleon stood in the way of the Italian cause and his death would act as a catalyst to begin the revolution. But from his cell, Orsini realized his mistake, as he wrote:

The present state of Europe makes you the arbiter of whether Italy is free or the slave of Austria and other foreigners. I would not ask that French blood be shed for Italians. We ask simply that France should not intervene against us, and should not allow other nations to intervene in the struggle against Austria... The happiness or unhappiness of my country depends on you, and so does the life or death of a nation to which Europe owes so much of its civilization. Deliver my country and the blessings of 25 million people go with you forever.⁹

Napoleon published the letters with their appeal to liberate Italy. The British Ambassador, Lord Cowley, expressed his astonishment that Napoleon should feel sympathy for the conspirator and think about pardoning him.¹⁰ But Napoleon was touched by the scene of a man dying

for his convictions, and the episode reminded him of his own youth twenty-seven years earlier--also willing to die for Italy. It strengthened the Emperor's resolve to do something for Italy. Orsini, in a very dramatic scene, died on the scaffold.

The result of the Orsini plot was to galvanize Napoleon into action. What better place than Italy to win la Glorie and in doing so, contribute to the destruction of the hated treaties of 1815.¹¹ His resentment against Austria, the symbol of the system established in 1815, made it easier. The flagrant contradictions between the terms on which he held the throne of France--the good will and support of the Roman Catholics and the peace-loving peasantry--and his desire to liberate Italy were brushed aside. Near the end of May, 1858, the Emperor sent Dr. Conneau, his physician and personal friend, secretly to Turin to invite Cavour to meet Napoleon when he went to take the waters at Plombieres in July.

The first interview took place on July 20, 1858. Cavour had come from Switzerland, and entered France secretly. He was immediately greeted by the Emperor. Napoleon declared his intention to help Sardinia fight Austria if a non-revolutionary cause which would justify the war to public opinion in France and Europe could be found. After a careful study of a map of the peninsula, they found the duchies of Massa and Carrara as a promising center for rebellion and a casus belli. Both the Pope and the King of Naples would be left alone; their people could take their own action. Napoleon insisted on this to avoid a rupture with the French clerics and the Russians, who championed the Neapolitan dynasty. Once Austria was driven completely from Italy, the country would be organized into a confederation of four states under

the honorary presidency of the Pope. The four states would consist of the Kingdom of Upper Italy under the House of Savoy, the Papal States, a new Kingdom of Central Italy perhaps under the rule of the Emperor's cousin, Prince Napoleon, and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

The question of compensation for France in the form of the acquisition of Savoy, and perhaps Nice, was important for the sake of French public opinion, although Napoleon deemed it as secondary. Napoleon believed that French security lay in liberating Italy, not in altering the boundaries. But by the acquisition of her "natural frontiers" on the southeast, France was also destroying the treaties of 1815.

Cavour was reluctant to agree to the proposed marriage of Victor Emmanuel's daughter, Clothilde, to Prince Napoleon, but Napoleon was adamant on that point, since he wanted his cousin suitably married into this ancient dynasty. Cavour finally had to agree to persuade his king to favor the plan.¹²

The agreement at Plombieres, like the Treaty of Paris, 1856, aimed at overthrowing the principles of 1815. On Napoleon's side it was very personal: this plan would exchange French for Austrian hegemony in Italy, and a successful war would strengthen the dynasty at home. His actions were in line with the doctrine of nationality, a principle which fascinated him. He had found his doctrine, and it remained for him to apply it to the reconstruction of Europe.

Plombieres provided the Emperor the opportunity to avenge the failure of Napoleon the Great. He had humbled Russia at the Crimea and "conquered" England with diplomacy. Austria remained untouched, and

Austria was the power which prevented the satisfaction of nationality in Italy. Success in Italy would provide Napoleon with multiple victories.¹³

Prince Napoleon traveled to Turin in September on the pretext of arranging his marriage to Clothilde, but in reality his mission lay in bringing the treaties for signature. The treaty called for an offensive and defensive alliance between France and Piedmont with the aim to liberate Italy from the Austrian occupation.¹⁴ Even though these negotiations were highly secret, the diplomatic circles of Europe began to become uneasy as they sensed that something was happening. Even Napoleon's own entourage, including the Empress, was terrified at the idea of a war.

In January, 1859, two bombshells were dropped by Napoleon and Victor Emmanuel which shook the diplomatic scene. At the New Year's Day reception at the Tuileries, Napoleon addressed Baron Hubner, the Austrian Ambassador, very brusquely.¹⁵ This event, coupled with Victor Emmanuel's strong speech at the opening of the Piedmontese Parliament on January 10, made it clear that war would occur in the near future.¹⁶ The marriage of Victor Emmanuel's sixteen-year-old daughter to the middle-aged rake, Prince Napoleon, offended Europe's sensibilities, but further cemented the alliance between the two countries.

As February passed, the general feeling that was inevitable grew stronger. On the fourth an anonymous pamphlet, "The Emperor Napoleon III and Italy", startled Europe. After unfolding Napoleon's political philosophy, it presented practical steps towards the satisfaction of Italian nationality. The pamphlet served as a warning to Europe as to

Napoleon's intentions, but he kept his true motives to himself. Cavour worried over the Frenchman's vacillations in the face of a strong French opinion for peace. He searched constantly for a situation which would mark Austria as the aggressor, a major stipulation for French entry into the war.

Lord Malmesbury, British Foreign Minister at the time, worked hard to avoid an open break upon the grounds that the treaties of 1815 should be respected. He was just one example of the European diplomats who insisted on the preservation of the settlement of 1815 despite the changes brought on by the Revolutions of 1848 and the Crimean War.

Napoleon's situation became more difficult at home. The slump on the Bourse due to rumors of war and the protests of the commercial classes combined with the diplomatic pressures to make him hesitate. His actions were in defiance of European public opinion and endangered his alliance with the French Catholics. The Empress, pro-Catholic, and his Foreign Minister, pro-Austrian, were adamant against his plans. In fact, Napoleon could not fail to see how his personal interests and those of France did not coincide.¹⁷

Despite the prospects which dazzled the Emperor, Napoleon feared that a war with Austria would precipitate a war on the Rhine against Prussia. Prince Napoleon went to St. Petersburg to sound out the Tsar about neutrality in case of a Franco-Austrian conflict. The entete he arranged provided that Napoleon would not alter the European equilibrium or raise tensions alarming to Russia. In return Russia promised to secure Prussian neutrality to obviate the necessity for France to maintain a second front on the Rhine frontier.¹⁸

In February Lord Malmesbury sent Lord Cowley to Vienna to find a peaceful settlement to the problem and keep the peace. But before anything positive came from Cowley's attempt, Russia, at Napoleon's suggestion, proposed a European congress to settle the matter.²⁰ Napoleon saw in the congress a method to shift the moral responsibility of the war from Paris to Vienna. He also hoped to use the congress to create a favorable atmosphere for him to go to war with public opinion behind him. Unfortunately Austria erred by refusing to treat with Sardinia until that Italian country voluntarily began to disarm.²¹ Austria played into Napoleon's hands with this demand.

At this point Cavour arrived in Paris in an effort to overcome the Emperor's hesitancy. In the two meetings he had with Napoleon, Cavour declared that Piedmont would consider the idea of disarmament only if she were admitted to the proposed congress on an equal footing with the rest of the powers. Cavour, greatly angered at the turn of events, threatened that if Napoleon backed down he would resign and publish the letters he had received from the Emperor showing his complicity. But the admission of Piedmont to the conference posed quite a problem. It would be a tacit admission that Piedmont was a great power, a thing which Austria would never tolerate. But the difficulty of trying to solve the Italian problem without the Italian power concerned also would prove fruitless.²²

Britain suggested a compromise plan for a general and simultaneous disarmament of the Sardinian and Austrian troops along the Piedmont-Lombardy border. In mid-April, Napoleon, under great diplomatic pressure from around Europe, ordered Cavour to accept this plan. Cavour had to agree. This compromise did not please Austria, who wanted

to disarm Piedmont by Austrian threats rather than by diplomatic persuasion. Thus Austria sent a stern ultimatum to Piedmont demanding disarmament. This threat, sent to Cavour on April 18, 1859, was a disguised declaration of war.²³ Austria had broken the peace.

The stern Austrian ultimatum was a grave mistake, for it isolated her from her friends and condemned her in the eyes of European public opinion.²⁴ It provided Cavour with the casus belli he had been searching for and placed the fault with Austria. The conditions of Plombieres were fulfilled: Sardinia was attacked, and the French alliance came into action. Napoleon, glad at last that the opportunity for decision and action had arrived, ordered his troops to Italy. The war suddenly became popular in Paris. France was enthusiastic for the noble and unselfish cause she was to uphold.

A detailed explanation of the Italian campaigns is not necessary here. The Emperor, with a supreme gesture of Bonapartism, took command of the French forces. The Allies' plan was purely opportunistic. They went in search of the enemy, hoping to rout him in a decisive battle. The Allies won their first victory at Magenta on June 4. The real victory belonged to the staunchness of the French soldier who beat back the Austrian attack for three hours before driving them from the plains of Lombardy.²⁵ The road was open to Milan. On June 8, 1859, Napoleon III and Victor Emmanuel triumphantly entered the city. The Emperor was hailed as Italy's hero.

The next important battle was at Solferino on June 24. The victory seemed to assure the early successful conclusion of the war. But the Austrian armies were still intact and further battles would be necessary to free Italy "from the Alps to the Adriatic" as Napoleon had promised.

As the Emperor visited several parts of the battlefield, he was horror stricken. The ground was covered with the dead, and the cries of the wounded filled the air.

At this point several considerations were brought to the attention of the Emperor. Not only did the sickness and death of battle unnerve him, but the news from Paris and the rest of Europe was not good: Queen Victoria voiced her suspicions concerning the future actions of the Emperor, but more alarming was the news from Eugenie that the Prussians were massing troops behind the Rhine.²⁶ All of Europe watched his success suspiciously. He also found himself unwittingly aiding the forces of revolution, as revolts broke out in the duchies of Central Italy as the victorious troops marched into Venetia.

As a result of these factors and his own limitations, Napoleon proposed an armistice to Franz Joseph on July 5, 1859. Six days later the two Emperors met at Villafranca. Napoleon rode to greet Franz Joseph, acting as a host rather than as a victor. The two men discussed the problems, and the armistice was signed. The conditions included the agreement to the creation of an Italian confederation under the honorary presidency of the Pope; Austria ceded its claim to Lombardy to France which would be transferred to Piedmont; Venetia would enter the confederation though remain a part of Austria; the Dukes of Modena and Tuscany would return to their states, and the Pope would be asked to reform the government of the papal states.²⁷

The news of Villafranca produced a panic in Italy. For the moment it seemed that, except for Lombardy, the victories of the war had been thrown away. What Napoleon had done for Italy was forgotten; only his broken promises were remembered. Victor Emmanuel was stunned when he

the news after the fact, but remained grateful for Napoleon's help. Cavour was furious; he realized that every condition essential for Italy's unity was absent from the peace terms. In a fit of rage he resigned from his posts; Victor Emmanuel, stung by his minister's sharp attacks, accepted the resignation.

However, once Napoleon had returned to France, he realized his mistake, but matters had become so complicated that there was not much he could do. His motives for wanting peace were sound, but by ending the war so soon he had dashed the hopes for complete Italian liberation, to the disappointment of Italian patriots everywhere. Napoleon recognized too that while Cavour was working for Italian unity under the Sardinian banner, he was concerned only for Italian liberty. As the war progressed, Cavour hoped to unite northern and central Italy under the House of Savoy, while Napoleon wanted to expel Austria from Italy and replace Austrian influence with French. The unity of Italy was not in France's interests, as he explained:

I do not desire her [Italy's] unity, but only her independence, because unity would involve me in internal perils by reason of Rome, and France would not be pleased to see the rise, on her flank, of a great nation that might be able to diminish her influence.²⁸

And to Prince Richard Metternich, the Austrian Ambassador, he declared:

My thought was grand and beautiful, my intentions pure and unselfish. By invading Piedmont, you gave me a good pretext to realize a desire of my life, that of giving Italy to herself. I believed that I had succeeded at Villafranca; now I see that the whole affair is more difficult than before, and I am at the end of my rope.²⁹

Part of the difficulty lay in the problem of the Central Italian states. Tuscany, Modena, Parma and Romagna had all revolted in favor of Piedmont and refused the return of their dukes. Cavour, back in

power, had set up temporary governments to prepare for their annexation to Piedmont.

Napoleon's whole policy was against permitting Sardinia to annex Central Italy. All of the traditional precepts of French foreign policy were against the formation of a strong Italian kingdom.³⁰ But he realized that a federation was impossible and nothing short of force would compel the duchies to resist annexation. The Emperor found it necessary to reverse his position. He had again turned to the solution of proposing a congress to settle the problem of Central Italy, but realized a congress would not find a successful answer. To sabotage the idea, another anonymous pamphlet appeared in December entitled, "The Pope and the Congress". This ended the idea since Austria refused to attend a congress which might further threaten the Pope.

Napoleon tacitly agreed to the annexation if a plebiscite in Central Italy decided in favor of it and if France would receive compensation in territory: Savoy and Nice would be the price for Central Italy. However regrettable, Cavour believed that the cession of Savoy and Nice to be necessary to win French consent for the annexation of Central Italy.³¹ The plebiscite in Nice and Savoy showed an almost unanimous vote in favor of annexation to France as did the vote for Central Italy's annexation to Sardinia.

The tale of Garibaldi's march and conquest from Naples to Rome cannot be told here, but by 1861 Italy was united except for Venetia and Rome. Without Napoleon's help none of this would have been possible. Sardinia would never have had the strength to fight Austria alone, and without his acquiescence Central Italy could not have been annexed. But most of Italy forgot all of that.

Napoleon lost in his Italian venture, while France gained. In acquiring Nice and Savoy he forfeited not only the good will but also the confidence and respect of England. Italy resented the cessions and remembered only the broken promises. By engaging in a war which threatened the Pope, he lost much of the support of one of the bulwarks of his reign--the French Catholics. He had hoped to replace Austrian hegemony in Italy with French influence, but succeeded instead in helping to create a strong Italian state, which had never been his intention.

But the weaknesses were not yet apparent. The unification of Italy completed what the Crimean War had begun: the destruction of the European order based on the treaties of 1815. Napoleon supposed that a new system of his own making was taking its place.³² In fighting for Italian liberty he was behaving and conforming with both the Napoleonic tradition and the Napoleonic Legend. That he should intervene to deliver Italy from Austria was consistent with his self-chosen role as the leader of the principle of nationality.³³ Despite the small cracks, French hegemony still reigned on the Continent, and Napoleon III was still The Emperor. The hated treaties of 1815 were destroyed, France was on her way to regaining her "natural boundaries." He had upheld his favorite principle and helped unite the Bonapartes' spiritual home. Napoleon seemed successful, but his greatest trial of strength lay ahead in his conflict with Prussia.

FOOTNOTES

¹A.J.P. Taylor, The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918 (Oxford, 1954), p. 99.

²Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, Napoleonic Ideals, ed. by B. Gooch (New York, 1968), p. 125.

³F.A. Simpson, Louis Napoleon and the Recovery of France 1848-1856 (London, 1923), p. 85.

⁴Mack Walker, ed., Plombieres: Secret Diplomacy and the Rebirth of Italy (New York, 1968), pp. 112-116; A.J. Whyte, The Political Life and Letters of Cavour 1848-1861 (London, 1930), pp. 191-193.

⁵The Annual Register, 1856, pp. 217-221; William Thayer, The Life and Times of Cavour (2 vols., Boston, 1911), Vol. I, pp. 381-384.

⁶The Annual Register, 1856, p. 234.

⁷The Times, January 23, 1858, p. 10.

⁸Michael St. John Packe, Orsini: The Story of a Conspirator (Boston, 1957), p. 274; Whyte, The Political Life and Letters of Cavour, p. 251.

⁹Denis Mack Smith, ed., The Making of Italy 1796-1870 (New York, 1968), pp. 230-231; The Times, March 3, 1858, p. 9.

¹⁰F.A. Wellesley, ed., Secrets of the Second Empire, Private Letters from the Paris Embassy (New York, 1929), pp. 159-160. Eugenie pleaded for a pardon for Orsini, but failed.

¹¹George Trevelyan, Garibaldi and the Thousand (May, 1860) (1909 Reprint, New York, 1948), p. 75.

¹²The Only written source for the Plombieres meeting came from the report Cavour wrote Victor Emmanuel soon after his meeting with Napoleon. Smith, The Making of Italy, pp. 238-247; Walker, Plombieres, pp. 232-234.

¹³Thayer, The Life and Times of Cavour, Vol. I, pp. 536-537; Philip Guedella, The Second Empire (New York, 1922), p. 271.

¹⁴Smith, The Making of Italy, pp. 259-260; The Times, September 27, 1858, p. 10.

- ¹⁵ The Annual Register, 1859, p. 191; The Times, Jan. 3 and 4, 1859, p. 10.
- ¹⁶ The Annual Register, 1859, p. 192; Wellesley, The Paris Embassy, p. 176.
- ¹⁷ Trevelyan, Garibaldi and the Thousand, p. 76.
- ¹⁸ Arthur Benson and Viscount Esher, eds., The Letters of Queen Victoria (3 vols., London, 1907), Vol. III, p. 421; Charles W. Hallberg, Franz Joseph and Napoleon III, 1852-1864 (New York, 1955), pp. 160-163.
- ¹⁹ Benson and Esher, eds., Letters, Vol. III, p. 414; Wellesley, The Paris Embassy, pp. 177-178.
- ²⁰ The Annual Register, 1859, p. 212.
- ²¹ Bolton King, A History of Italian Unity (2 vols., 3rd ed., New York, 1967), p. 66.
- ²² King, A History of Italian Unity, Vol. II, pp. 210-213; Benson and Esher, eds., Letters, Vol. III, pp. 416-417; Wellesley, The Paris Embassy, pp. 178-180; Ernest D'Hauterive, The Second Empire and Its Downfall: The Correspondence of the Emperor Napoleon III and His Cousin Napoleon, tr. by Herbert Wilson (New York, 1949), pp. 124-128.
- ²³ The Annual Register, 1859, p. 213; D'Hauterive, Correspondence, p. 133; The Times, May 5, 1859, pp. 9-10.
- ²⁴ Benson and Esher, eds., Letters, Vol. III, pp. 419, 423-424, 427; Wellesley, The Paris Embassy, pp. 181-182; The Annual Register, 1859, pp. 215-216.
- ²⁵ The Annual Register, 1859, pp. 240-242; The Times, June 6, 8, 11, 1859, pp. 7, 11, 9, 11.
- ²⁶ Benson and Esher, eds., Letters, Vol. III, pp. 450-453; Guedella, The Second Empire, p. 282.
- ²⁷ The Annual Register, 1859, p. 251; Benson and Esher, eds., Letters, Vol. III, pp. 452-453, 458-459; Wellesley, The Paris Embassy, p. 186; The Times, July 8, 9, 12, 1859, pp. 9, 11, 9; Whyte, The Political Life and Letters of Cavour, pp. 324-325.
- ²⁸ Pietro Orsi, Cavour and the Making of Modern Italy, 1810-1861 (New York, 1914), p. 298.
- ²⁹ Hallberg, Franz Joseph and Napoleon III, p. 213.
- ³⁰ King, A History of Italian Unity, Vol. II, pp. 98, 109.
- ³¹ Whyte, The Political Life and Letters of Cavour, p. 346.

³²A. J. P. Taylor, The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, p. 124.

³³L. B. C. Seaman, From Vienna to Versailles (New York, 1956),
pp. 70-71.

CHAPTER IV

NAPOLEON III AND GERMAN UNIFICATION,

1865-1870

The decade of the 1860s proved to be very troublesome for Napoleon III. Discontent and dissatisfaction at home were growing in reaction to both his domestic and foreign policies. In following the principle of nationality, his plan of establishing French hegemony in Italy had backfired; he had helped create a strong, united Italy instead. He had also been persuaded to back the monarchial party in Mexico, wasting French men and resources in the ridiculous scheme to set up the Austrian Archduke Maximilian as Emperor of Mexico. His hopes to liberate Poland had estranged the Russian Tsar. Nothing seemed to work for him any longer; even his health was rapidly deteriorating, which seriously undermined his capabilities. Instead of enjoying a peaceful, prosperous reign, he was running into more and more difficulties.

Even so, France still enjoyed a great deal of prestige in Europe; Paris was still the center of the Continent, and the French Imperial Court still set the fashions. In following the dictates of the Napoleonic Legend, Napoleon III had accomplished much: he had avenged his uncle's defeats, restored French power on the Continent, and brought glory and prosperity to his country. He had taken one of the tenets of Bonapartism as his own--the principle of nationality--and

applied it successfully to Italy. The other main conglomeration of states destined for unity was Germany.

Napoleon the Great claimed that he had initiated the process of unification in Germany by reducing its political complexity by reducing the number of states. The treaties of 1815 had ignored his constructive state by creating its own German confederation. If Louis Napoleon could help Germany break from the confining bonds of the out-moded confederation, he would bury the last of the hated settlement. And if he received compensation in territory along the Rhine, perhaps the boundary of 1814, for his aid he would fulfill France's quest for her "natural boundaries"--the Alps, the Pyrenees and the Rhine. The time was ripe; Napoleon III turned to the German Question.

Events were ready to be set into motion because of the actions of Otto von Bismarck, Prussian Minister President. He too sought the solution for the German Question, but his interpretation differed from the one of the French Emperor. He worked for German unity under Prussian auspices to the exclusion of Austrian and French interests.

Bismarck's first intention was to exclude Austria from German affairs when he had manipulated the Schleswig-Holstein Question to force Austria into an aggressive stand against Prussia. But in his preparation to oust Austria from German affairs, Bismarck had to be sure of French neutrality. Napoleon had always been favorably inclined toward Prussia, and his private convictions would be gratified by Prussia uniting Germany north of the Main River and French interests replacing Austrian influence among the South German states.

Bismarck met Napoleon at Biarritz on October 6, 1865. The meeting was far from being a repetition of Plombieres, however. Both the French

Emperor and the Prussian statesman were anxious to keep the future open and to avoid commitment. Bismarck was more desirous of preventing a French alliance with Austria than of obtaining one for himself. Bismarck made vague references to the Empire's future acquisition of the French-speaking lands of Belgium and Luxembourg in return for neutrality, but the essential bargain of Biarritz was French neutrality in return for Venetia for Italy.¹ Bismarck saw that Napoleon was obsessed with the idea of fulfilling the broken promises of 1859. As for Napoleon, he believed that any conflict between Austria and Prussia would improve the European balance in his favor.²

Bismarck then turned his attention to forming an offensive and defensive alliance with Italy. Italy quickly obtained Napoleon's agreement to the proposed alliance. The treaty was signed in April, 1866, and provided for a Prussian-Italian alliance for war against Austria, if war occurred within three months. The treaty assured that Austria would have to fight, since it made it impossible for her to strike a bargain.

As the German conflict reached the critical stage in June, Austria felt that she had to deal with France. In the treaty between the two countries, Austria promised to cede Venetia even in case of victory in return for French neutrality. German territorial revisions were left vague, and Austria agreed to accept the creation of a new Rhenish buffer state. Austria would receive a free hand in South German affairs. Logically, such a double policy should have called for a similar agreement with Prussia, but Napoleon shied away from a definite alliance.³ France would seek a definite agreement with Prussia only

if the balance of power was threatened and she was compelled to secure her interests.

In a war between Austria and Prussia, Napoleon expected a long struggle that would exhaust both of the belligerents. The resulting chaos would call for a new order, and he would be there to step between the combatants in his role as an arbiter of Europe. Napoleon also counted on an Austrian victory, since she was supposedly the stronger of the two. The only unlooked-for possibility was a dramatic Prussian victory.

When such an overwhelming Prussian victory came at Sadowa on July 3, 1866, France was totally unprepared. The Emperor had not considered that the Prussian leadership and arms could be so superior that the road to Vienna would be open in less than six weeks. On the eve of the battle, he had accepted the Austrian offer to mediate, but after Sadowa he had to reevaluate his policy in the light of the Prussian victory. Italy and Prussia were quickly notified of his offer to mediate.

In the Council of Ministers, Empress Eugenie and Foreign Minister Droyn de Lhuys led the majority opinion which favored an active military policy. The plan was to back up Napoleon's proposed mediation by sending an army corps to the Rhine frontier. Napoleon favored the policy but before the orders were sent, he received the answering telegrams from William of Prussia and Victor Emmanuel accepting his offer for mediation and an armistice. These telegrams, the pleas from two of his ministers against the plan, and the overwhelming public sentiment against going to war convinced Napoleon against armed

mediation.⁴ This decision was important, as Bismarck intimated in his memoirs:

After the battle of Koniggratz [Sadowa] the situation was such that a favorable response on our part to the first advance of Austria with a view to peace negotiations was not only possible but seemed demanded by the interference of France. The success of Prussia compelled Napoleon to intervene for up to that time Napoleon had calculated on Prussia being defeated and in need for help.⁵

And since French mediation would not be accompanied by armed intervention, Napoleon's efforts trailed away into mere diplomacy. Bismarck dictated the peace terms--both Franz Joseph and Napoleon had no other choice than to accept them. Venetia went to Italy despite that country's poor showing on the battlefield. Austria was excluded from the Confederation Prussia established from the states north of the Main and was expelled from German affairs. Napoleon insisted on the independence of the states south of the Main, but when he asked for the "reward" for his neutrality--the boundary of 1814--it was much too late to be effective. France received nothing.

French opinion and vanity had been stung by the Prussian victory and by the Emperor's failure to preside over the readjustment in Central Europe. The process of German unification produced in Paris an anxiety bordering on panic. In light of these outraged feeling, Droyn de Lhuys convinced Napoleon to embark on a policy of compensation. The Emperor was never entirely in favor, however, of acquiring territory inhabited by Germans. He believed in the principle of nationality--not in the desirability of acquiring foreign territory.⁶ He wished to destroy the treaties of 1815, and that had been accomplished by the dissolution of the German Confederation. But, like his

acquisition of Nice and Savoy, he felt it necessary to appease French public opinion, a factor which was so vital to his reign.

In the later summer of 1866 Napoleon had to give in to the demand for compensations. His most intimate advisors insisted that French opinion resented the aggradizement of Prussia at the expense of France and must be given some material satisfaction. On July 26, 1866, Napoleon instructed Benedetti, his Ambassador in Berlin, to ask for the boundary of 1814. But the extreme anti-Prussian forces at court pushed the demands for further compensation. These were refused, as King William declared that he would not give away a single German village.⁷ At this failure Napoleon dropped the idea of compensation and its creator, Droyn de Lhuys. Benedetti was then instructed to propose two agreements to Berlin: a public treaty conceding to France the boundary of 1814 and Luxembourg, and if that was refused he was to propose an offensive and defensive alliance between France and Prussia and to ask for the right for the eventual French annexation of Belgium. In return Prussia would be given a free hand in Germany. On August 29, Bismarck received a handwritten draft of the treaty from Benedetti, which the wily Prussian kept for later use.⁸ Bismarck evaded a direct answer to Benedetti's proposals, but did say that the King would not object to the growth of the French Empire in the area of French nationality, but the Emperor would have to take the initiative.

Unable to make any progress in negotiations with Prussia, in January, 1867, France began unilateral overtures to William III of the Netherlands to buy Luxembourg. Having failed to gain the Rhine frontier or Belgium, France put greater stress on Luxembourg. This became the last attempt at compensation--a residual of the claims of 1866. The

Dutch King was willing to sell but, not wishing to offend a powerful neighbor, refused to conclude the agreement without the consent of Prussia. German public opinion was aroused by a Bismarckian news leak. In playing the role of a German nationalist, Bismarck could not allow France to oust the Prussian garrison at the Luxembourg fortress, which had been authorized by the defunct German Confederation.⁹ In a speech to the North German Parliament Bismarck attached the impending sale, and this heightened German public indignation further.¹⁰

Napoleon could not afford another diplomatic defeat. William III withdrew his offer to sell Luxembourg, and the Emperor changed his policy to insist the Prussia withdraw from the fortress. With most of his forces engaged in Mexico, Napoleon could not afford a war with Prussia despite bellicose demands for war from the Paris journals. Bismarck refused to consider withdrawing from the fortress even though the legality of the Prussian presence was in doubt. But when Russia proposed a European congress to settle the crises, Bismarck agreed.

The representatives of the Powers met in Longon on May 7, 1867. In four days a treaty was signed guaranteeing the neutrality of Luxembourg and the dismantling of the Prussian fortress.¹¹ France had compelled Prussia to withdraw from Luxembourg, but at the same time Prussia had prevented France from entering into the Duchy. Both sides felt dissatisfied, and the rulers had backed down from an armed conflict. The French and the Germans believed that the Luxembourg Treaty had merely postponed the ultimate conflict.¹²

More was at stake than possession of the Duchy. Napoleon was working to prevent the center of European gravity from shifting from Paris to Berlin. His dynasty depended on an active, successful foreign

policy, and he had not been too successful as of late. Bismarck, too was working hard, he was trying to marshal all of the forces behind the German national movement to support Prussia, and he realized that a national war against a traditional enemy, France, would be just the thing.¹³ Relations between the two countries remained tense. Until May, 1867, and the resolution of the Luxembourg question, Napoleon had hoped that German unification could be accomplished without a French humiliation; now he realized the futility of that hope.

Bismarck planned to isolate France diplomatically, but France was not ready to accept that isolation. Austria seemed the natural counterpoise for the new power in Germany. On August 18, 1867, Napoleon and Eugenie payed a visit to Franz Joseph and his queen, Elizabeth, at Salzburg, ostensibly to offer their condolences over the execution of Maximilian in Mexico. In reality, however, they met to discuss the future. During the five days of ceremony, receptions and balls, the two Emperors and their advisors "exchanged ideas on questions of general interest."¹⁴ Although the results were minimal, Salzburg became the first step toward a closer understanding between the two Powers. Their mutual need to block Berlin, their mutual ambition for influence in Germany, and their mutual suspicions of each other pushed them together.

Little came from a year spent in talks between Austrian Chancellor Beust and the French. A plan for disarmament was tried and rejected as unsuitable. Napoleon then seized upon the idea of a triple alliance between France, Austria and Italy. But in the preliminary talks in the spring of 1869, Austria seemed more interested in securing her place as a great power than in preparing any specific

action, and Italy demanded the evacuation of French troops from Rome. The final draft on May, 1869, only laid down general principles: the countries agreed to follow a common policy in European affairs and mutually guaranteed the integrity of their territories. Should war symptoms appear, they would conclude an offensive and defensive alliance. But before the treaty was signed, Italy raised her demands, and internal disorder in France claimed the attention of the Emperor.

Despite the noncompletion of the treaty, Napoleon believed that something had been accomplished. All three sovereigns considered themselves "morally" bound to it. As the fatal year of 1870 arrived, Napoleon deluded himself into thinking that he had a firm alliance with Austria and Italy against Prussia.¹⁵ He felt he had insured the essence of his foreign policy against all eventualities. Napoleon kept all of these negotiations secret.

The year 1870 brought new life to the Second Empire. A young liberal, Emile Ollivier, had been asked by Napoleon to form a cabinet in the experiment of the Liberal Empire. The Empire became a parliamentary regime, and the plebiscite of May 8, 1870, reassured the Emperor in his plans for France. The summer brought a feeling of calm and peacefulness. The tensions between France and Prussia seemingly had vanished. Lord Granville, the British Foreign Secretary, assured the Parliament that the world never had been so profoundly at peace or the diplomatic atmosphere so serene.¹⁶ The governmental officials in the various European capitals relaxed and vacationed.

But on July fourth, Paris was notified that Prince Leopold Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen had been offered the Spanish throne which had been vacant for two years. France received the news of Leopold's

candidature with nervous anger. The Paris journals wrote against it, denouncing the secrecy and regarding the project as intended to weaken French security.

Gramont, the new Foreign Minister who was violently anti-Prussian, drafted a curt note demanding to know if the Prussian government knew of the event. Berlin was practically empty of responsible officials and the answer was that the government knew nothing, which was not exactly true. Bismarck had actively pushed the candidacy himself since February; he had sent agents to Madrid with 50,000 marks in Prussian bonds to facilitate the Hohenzollern candidature.¹⁷ The Chancellor was concerned with building the new German state and increasing dynastic prestige. For these purposes he was deeply involved with it even without the knowledge of William, who was utterly against the affair. William said he would give his consent to the candidature only if Leopold agreed to it. Bismarck pushed both Leopold and his father, Karl Anton, until the Prince felt it was his duty to accept. From that point on, Bismarck declared that it was a purely family affair. That was not true, as from the start, Karl Anton sought the backing of the Prussian government.

Bismarck had expected to present France with a fait accompli which would be beyond her power to change. He looked for the diplomatic setback which would again shake the foundations of Napoleon's throne. His goal was a crises with France, desiring either to provoke a war on a French internal collapse.¹⁸ But a mistake in Madrid in the decoding of the message carrying Leopold's acceptance made it impossible to keep the news secret any longer, and Paris was notified of the candidature.

While the Prussian government denied any knowledge of the affair, Gramont asked the Prussian Ambassador to Paris, Baron Karl von Wether, to inform William, whom he was planning to visit at Ems, of the deep resentment felt by France at the news of the candidacy. Wether was visibly affected by Gramont and Ollivier's statements and by the excitement of the journals. He agreed to convey his impressions to the King. The Ambassador's oral report intensified William's concern over a matter which he had disapproved of from the start.

At the meeting of the Council of Ministers on July 6, presided over by Napoleon for the first time since the crises began, the French government tried to decide on its policy. Marshal LeBoeuf, speaking for the military, claimed that the army was ready if war was inevitable and everyone believed that war was inevitable. Napoleon assured the Council that France had allies and showed the letters from Franz Joseph and Victor Emmanuel for the first time. On that afternoon Gramont addressed the Chamber concerning the candidature crises and closed with a highly colored passage:

But we do not believe that respect for a neighboring people's rights compels us to suffer a foreign power, by putting one of its princes on the throne of Charles V, to disturb the present balance of strength in Europe to our disadvantage....We sincerely hope that event will not take place. Should it turn out otherwise, strong in your support gentlemen, and in the nation's, we shall know how to do our duty without wavering or weakness.¹⁹

The Assembly received this statement with a great deal of intensity and emotion, but the effect was disastrous, though popular. Bismarck said he was ready to demand an explanation from France concerning Gramont's speech and that he would in effect force France to choose between war or complete humiliation. Bismarck also began a press

campaign against France's reaction under the guise that it was a Spanish national question, and the Prussian government was not involved.²⁰ Bismarck increased rather than lessened tensions by that move.

Gramont asked for diplomatic support among the British, Italian and Austrian governments to bring the candidature to an end.²¹ These actions were directed mainly against Prussia but were designed to influence Madrid as well as Prussia. On July 7, Gramont ordered Benedetti to Ems to attempt to persuade William to command or advise Leopold to withdraw his candidature. The Austrian Ambassador, Prince Metternich, found Napoleon engrossed with the affair, and Eugenie looked ten years younger at the thought of a political triumph or war. The military circles at court encouraged active military resistance to the "Prussian threat." War was demanded on all sides--from both the Left and Right in the Chamber, and on every Parisian street groups of men gathered around demanding positive action.

With France on the verge of mobilization and William steadfastly refusing to order renunciation, the diplomatic pressures focused on the Sigmaringens. Karl Anton finally decided to withdraw the candidature of his son on July 11, 1870. The foreign diplomats considered the renunciation as a striking diplomatic victory for France. Napoleon was overjoyed that peace had been saved. But Gramont failed to recognize the extent of the victory. The excited martial feelings of the people remained. Gramont convinced Napoleon that further guarantees were necessary. Without the cabinet's consent he demanded that William associate himself and the Prussian government with Karl Anton's renunciation.

Benedetti met with William on July 13 while he was walking in the gardens at Ems. After discussing the renunciation, Benedetti pressed upon the King the need for a promise never to let Leopold's name come up again. Surprised at the demand, William refused, courteously tipped his hat and walked off. The King refused to see the French envoy again but sent an aide to inform him that he had received official news of the withdrawal and considered the incident closed. William then had a report of the meeting sent to Bismarck and enclosed a cryptic remark at the end of the telegram stating that Bismarck could publish the account if he wished.

Bismarck meanwhile headed for Berlin from his estates. He felt that the withdrawal was a Prussian humiliation. In a conference with the Crown Prince, he gave the impression that he thought peace was assured despite the Russian Count Gortschakoff's intimations of further French demands.²²

Von Roon and Moltke were dining with Bismarck when William's telegram arrived that evening. Bismarck immediately saw the possibilities it contained. He rapidly drew up a revised draft which was much shorter and much ruder; it appeared that William had been insulted by the French envoy and had dismissed him. As Bismarck later claimed to have remarked to the others:

If...I at once communicated this text...it will be known in Paris before midnight, and not only on account of its content, but also on account of the manner of its distribution, will have the effect of a red rag upon the Gallic bull.²³

He distributed it in Berlin and telegraphed it to the German states and most of the European capitals except Paris.

Paris heard the news soon enough. Napoleon and his ministers realized that Bismarck was intent on forcing a war on France. The excited crowds yelling "A bas la Prusse!" "A Berlin!" in the streets, the impatient deputies in the Chamber, the agitation of the war party at Court applied pressures on the regime that it could not withstand. The Parisian journals demanded war and correctly echoed the sentiments of the nation; Ollivier lost control of policy in the face of a public demanding war.²⁴

The French cabinet met at the Tuileries on July 14 and ordered mobilization. On July 15 Gramont and Ollivier presented to the Chamber their request for money to cover the mobilization costs. These requests amounted to a declaration of war. The formal declaration of war reached Berlin four days later on July 19, 1870.

France went to war with a sick Emperor, over-confident generals, no allies, an unprepared army, and a great deal of enthusiasm. Prussia went to war with competent generals, an excellent army, the jubilant Bismarck and a great deal of enthusiasm. As a result of the war, Napoleon III lost his Empire, and William gained his.

France was eager for a showdown with Prussia to regain the prestige she lost after Sadowa. Empress Eugenie and the Court party, Gramont at the foreign office, the war ministry, Bonapartist leaders in both houses of parliament, together with a powerful segment of the press, all believed that only the total humiliation of Prussia--by diplomacy or by war--could save the weak regime. The pain-racked Emperor was torn between the Bonapartist desire for a military triumph that would magically solve all of his problems at one blow, and the hope for peace. But he was tired, sick and irresolute. He allowed himself to be

swayed by the cockiness of the people around him, losing the very thing he had dedicated his entire life to achieving--the restoration of a Bonaparte to the throne of France.

FOOTNOTES

¹F. A. Wellesley, ed., The Secrets of the Second Empire, Private Letters from the Paris Embassy (New York, 1929), p. 299.

²A. J. P. Taylor, The Struggle for Mastery in Europe (Oxford, 1954), p. 159; L. B. C. Seaman, From Vienna to Versailles (New York, 1959), p. 105.

³Hermann Oncken, Napoleon III and the Rhine: The Origins of the War of 1870-1871, tr. by E. Zeydel (Reprint, New York, 1967), p. 54; Otto Pflanze, Bismarck and the Development of Germany--The Period of Unification 1815-1871 (Princeton, 1963), pp. 292-293; Maurice Paleologue, The Tragic Empress, A Record of Intimate Talks with the Empress Eugenie 1901-1919, tr. by H. Miles (New York, 1929), p. 103.

⁴E. Ann Pottinger, Napoleon III and the German Crises, 1865-1866 (Cambridge, 1966), pp. 157-158; Wellesley, The Paris Embassy, p. 311; Lynn Case, "French Opinion and Napoleon III's Decision after Sadowa", Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. XII (1949-1940), pp. 441-461.

⁵Otto von Bismarck, Bismarck: The Man and the Statesman, tr. by A. J. Butler (2 vols., New York, 1899), Vol. II, pp. 26-27.

⁶In Napoleon III and the Rhine, Hermann Oncken makes a lengthy accusation that all of the trouble between Napoleon and Germany was due to Napoleon's desire to acquire the Left Bank of the Rhine. Although Oncken uses weighty documentation to back up his thesis, I must agree with E. Ann Pottinger, Napoleon III and the German Crises, that his goal was not to win the Rhine provinces but a desire to see German reorganization in a manner to suit France.

⁷The Times, August 10, 13, 14, 1866, pp. 10, 12, 7; The Annual Register, 1866, pp. 202-203; Paleologue, The Tragic Empress, p. 111.

⁸Pierre de La Gorce, Histoire du Second Empire (7 vols., Reprint, New York, 1969), Vol. V, pp. 67-69.

⁹The Times, April 10, 16, 1867, pp. 10, 10.

¹⁰The Annual Register, 1867, p. 224; La Gorce, Historie, Vol. V, p. 171.

¹¹The Times, May 14, 1867, p. 7; The Annual Register, 1867, pp. 224-226; La Gorce, Histoire, Vol. V, pp. 191-194.

- ¹²Charles Lowe, Prince Bismarck (2 vols., New York, 1886), Vol. I, p. 442.
- ¹³Bismarck, Bismarck, Vol. II, pp. 57-58.
- ¹⁴The Annual Register, 1867, p. 229; La Gorce, Histoire, Vol. V, pp. 234-236.
- ¹⁵Paleologue, The Tragic Empress, pp. 50-51, 57.
- ¹⁶The Annual Register, 1870, p. 93; C. J. Bartlett, "Clarendon, the Foreign Office and the Hohenzollern Candidature, 1868-1870", English Historical Review, Vol. LXXV (April, 1960), p. 276.
- ¹⁷Harold Temperley, "Lord Acton on the Origins of the War of 1870, With Some Unpublished Letters from the British and Viennese Archives," The Cambridge Historical Journal, Vol. II (1926), pp. 69-73.
- ¹⁸Pflanze, Bismarck, pp. 448-449; William Halperin, "The Origins of the Franco-Prussian War Revisited: Bismarck and The Hohenzollern Candidature for the Spanish Throne," The Journal of Modern History, Vol. XLV, No. 1 (March, 1973), p. 87.
- ¹⁹Michael Foot, "The Origins of the Franco-Prussian War and the Remaking of Germany", New Cambridge Modern History, Vol. X (1960), p. 590; The Annual Register, 1870, p. 155; The Times, July 7, 1870, p. 12.
- ²⁰Moritz Busch, Bismarck: Some Secret Pages of His History (2 vols. New York, 1898), Vol. I, pp. 26-27.
- ²¹W. Mosse, The European Powers and the German Question (Reprint, New York, 1969), p. 382; S. William Halperin, "Visconti-Venosta and the Diplomatic Crises of July, 1870", The Journal of Modern History, Vol. XXXI, No. 4 (December, 1959), pp. 295-296.
- ²²A. R. Allison, ed. & tr., The War Diary of the Emperor Frederick III, 1870-1871 (Reprint, Westport, 1971), pp. 4-5; Lawrence Steefel, Bismarck, The Hohenzollern Candidacy, and the Origins of the Franco-German War of 1870 (Cambridge, 1962), p. 174.
- ²³Bismarck, Bismarck, Vol. I, p. 101.
- ²⁴E. A. Crane, ed., Memoirs of Dr. Thomas W. Evans, The Second Empire (New York, 1905), pp. 179-181; Theodore Zeldin, Emile Ollivier and the Liberal Empire of Napoleon III (Oxford, 1963), pp. 177-178; La Gorce, Histoire, Vol. VI, p. 301.

CHAPTER V

THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF NAPOLEON III AND THE NAPOLEONIC LEGEND

Napoleon Bonaparte spent the greater part of his life controlling the destinies of the people around him. When he was sent to St. Helena after his final defeat in 1815, he could no longer rule the people directly. As a result, he created the Napoleonic Legend to rule them indirectly through his memory. In formulating the Legend he refashioned his life to exalt his accomplishments and minimize his faults. Napoleon portrayed himself as a man of the people, savior of the Revolution and lover of peace. He claimed to have sought to reorganize Europe according to the principle of nationality and to have wanted to establish a European federation of states.

His goal in the development of the Legend was to create a situation which would make it possible for his heir, another Bonaparte, to return to the throne of France and the leadership of Europe. This aim was accomplished when his nephew, Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, became President of the Second Republic in 1848 and later Emperor of the French in 1852.

Louis Napoleon had been captivated by the Legend early in his life. He found the Napoleonic career worthy of emulation, and his uncle's policy had been worthy of success, for he was a great man, and "a great man can be directed only by great conceptions."¹ Louis was convinced

that his uncle's programs were good for France and for Europe. He decided that he had to avoid the mistakes of the first Napoleon but follow the essential Napoleonic principles.

The guidance provided by this program served as his "star" for, like Napoleon I, Louis believed in his destiny to accomplish great things. As Queen Victoria reflected after the visit of the Imperial Couple to London in 1855: "He is evidently possessed of...a great reliance on what he calls his Star. He has invariably been guided by the belief that he is fulfilling a destiny which God has imposed upon him..."² He realized, however, that he had to adapt the Napoleonic principles to his new age, but wanted to use his power to resume the work of Napoleon I. He planned that the Second Empire would pick up where the First had left off. He used the ideas of the Napoleonic Legend as the foundation of his foreign policy.

Louis Napoleon also claimed to be a man of the people. As guardian of the Revolution he reinstated universal manhood suffrage to gauge the wants and needs of the people through plebiscites. His main backers were the peasantry, who felt the appeal of his call for order and glory. To satisfy France's need for glory he knew that he had to embark upon an active and successful foreign policy to re-establish France's hegemony on the Continent and break the Diktat of Vienna.

Once in power, Napoleon III used the principles of the Napoleonic Legend as the goals of his foreign policy. Foremost of these was the desire to re-establish French power on the Continent and break the treaties of 1815, which had forbidden a Bonaparte to remount the French throne, reduced the French borders, isolated her diplomatically, and humiliated that proud nation. He wanted to avenge his uncle by

weakening the two countries he blamed for Napoleon's fall, Russia and Austria. As a man of the nineteenth century and an advocate of the Legend, Louis Napoleon embraced the principle of nationality and hoped to reorganize Europe to satisfy the national desires of Italy and Germany to France's satisfaction. Believing in his uncle's wish to form a federation of European states, he looked for opportunities to call for conferences to deal with common problems in preparation for the federative ideal. Napoleon sought to obtain for France her "natural boundaries" and to give France the glory and triumph she deserved as the first nation in Europe.

From the time he came to power, 1848, to the year he lost his Empire, 1870, Napoleon III sought to reconcile the contradictory goals of his policy: he was a Bonaparte who embraced the army and military tradition but claimed that "L'Empire c'est paix," an ardent French patriot who would subordinate national interests to help create united nations on the northern and eastern borders, and a man who followed traditional foreign policy at the same time he worked for the new principles of nationality and European-wide cooperation. It was because of these contradictions that Napoleon III had difficulty in reconciling his aims and eventually lost his throne.

These conflicts of interests did not seem to overly bother Napoleon, for he was more European in his thinking than French. As F. A. Simpson aptly describes the Emperor:

No ruler of France--none perhaps of any European country--was so cosmopolitan in his training and outlook as Napoleon III. None certainly was less French. Essentially he was an international figure: too good a citizen perhaps of Europe to be the ultimately successful ruler of any one country in it. The dreams and broodings of South Germany, the sleepy dignity of the Dutch, the slow speech and kindness of England, the

secretiveness and fatalism of the Italy he so loved-- these were his, and a compassion for the people and a humanitarian idealism that were not peculiarly French.³

He did achieve much in following the Napoleonic Legend, but it also contributed to his downfall. In the Crimean War he re-established French hegemony in Europe. He secured his own place on the throne, overturning the section of the settlement of 1815 which forbade the return of a Bonaparte as ruler of France. He allied France with the major enemy of Napoleon I, England, and humiliated the victor of 1812 and the champion of the Holy Alliance, Russia. Napoleon rejuvenated France with fresh military victories and glory. As the arbiter of Europe, he convened a European congress to settle the common problems of the day, including the question so dear to his heart, Italian nationality.

His next major diplomatic accomplishment was again guided by the dictates of the Legend, the liberation of Italy from the Austrian yoke. In fighting for Italian liberty, he further damaged the hated settlement of 1815 by humiliating and weakening the power of Austria. More importantly, to his mind, he had furthered the cause of nationalities in the peninsula. The acquisition of Nice and Savoy was mainly to satisfy French opinion, but this also completed France's drive for her "natural boundaries" to the Alps. But his Italian adventure also brought problems that he never successfully resolved. He had intended to liberate Italy, not to unite her, but his military successes started the unification process which had joined all of Italy, except Venetia and Rome, by 1861. Instead of furthering French influence in Italy, he had helped create a united nation on her southeastern flank, which was totally against the traditional interests of France. He

also alienated an important source of his support in France, the Catholics, by threatening the temporal power of the Pope.

From 1860 on, his interpretation of the Napoleonic Legend caused him more harm than good. Napoleon had alienated the Italians by retaining the French troops in Rome; he lost the support of the Russian Tsar by supporting the Polish uprising in 1863; he wasted men and resources in the chimerical attempt to establish the Austrian Maximilian in Mexico. By the time his greatest trial approaches in the form of Bismarckian Prussia, the Emperor was a physically tired and sick man who clung irresolutely to the contradictory policies of French hegemony and the principle of nationality. Growing internal opposition coupled with his mistakes in foreign policy made it imperative that he retain complete control of the situation at precisely the time that it was impossible for him to do so. He was not able to withstand the resolute determination of Otto von Bismarck, the fickle public opinion of France to which he had to cater, the ineptitude of the people around him, and his own conflicting desires. In the end his world collapsed when he surrendered the French forces at Sedan on September 2, 1870.

When Louis Napoleon lost his Empire, he lost his reason for being. He, like Napoleon I, had followed his star to the end of his destiny, and died in exile three years later. He had followed the Napoleonic Legend as far as anything which was basically a lie could take him. Napoleon III had accomplished much for France; he restored her place as the first nation in Europe; he re-established her glory and her fame. But in the end the innate contradictions within the Legend itself surfaced to contribute to the fall of the Second Empire.

FOOTNOTES

¹Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, Napoleonic Ideals, ed. by B. D. Gooch (New York, 1967), p. 40.

²A. Benson and Viscount Esher, eds., The Letters of Queen Victoria (3 vols., London, 1907), Vol. III, pp. 155-156.

³F. A. Simpson, Louis Napoleon and the Recovery of France, 1848-1856 (London, 1923), p. x.

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