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John E. Morris

Excerpt

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CHAPTER I

EUROPE AFTER WATERLOO

After Napoleon's first collapse in 1814 the Powers of Europe sent their representatives to a Congress at Vienna to rearrange the map. The Waterloo campaign did not materially influence the final settlement. The Congress expressed the right of the Great Powers to exercise a general control and inaugurated the Concert of Europe.

It will be useful first to see what the Republic and the Empire had done, so as to understand what the Allies considered should be undone. In 1792 Louis XVI, still king in name, was forced to declare war against Austria; then in the same year when Austrians and Prussians poured into France, when the Duke of Brunswick issued a manifesto denouncing the French who had made their king a slave and driven the nobles into exile, the country roused itself, back to the wall, and the invaders recoiled from the position at Valmy. The Republic was established, and the war-cry was for the defence of Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality. Almost at once a new cry was raised; the Republic would retaliate by invading countries under monarchical rule so as to give them the blessings of republicanism and the rights of man. It was a propagandist Republic in arms to force its gospel upon Europe. And a third cry was heard very soon; the Republic wanted the

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natural boundaries of France to be hers, namely the Rhine and the Alps. Prussia, deserting the Allies, recognised the Rhine frontier in 1795, for the French armies had actually won it.

Bonaparte's campaigns of 1796 and 1797 in north Italy took the French arms far beyond the natural boundaries. His tremendous victories in 1805-07 laid all central Europe at his feet. He, as Emperor, was heir to the Republic in so far as he broke down all out-of-date medieval survivals and feudal inequalities. Where he annexed lands to France, the north-west coast of Germany, north Italy, and the Dalmatian coast, an element of personal freedom was introduced for the first time on a wide scale such as would satisfy republican ideals. Saxony and Poland may be quoted as ardently attached to him. But whether the Belgians and Dutch, the Bavarians and Westphalians, or the Italians, were so ardent, it would be hard to say. The burden of Conscription was laid upon them. They were unable, under his Continental System, to obtain British manufactured goods. In fact they were treated in the Napoleonic scheme as victims to the honour and glory of French military might, compelled to fight the battles of France and to abstain from trade, rather than as peoples liberated from monarchies by a generous and chivalrous race of crusaders. The glitter of Napoleon's imperial court, and of the minor kingly and ducal courts which mimicked it, did not blind them to the truth.

Two countries in particular, Prussia and Spain, saw that even in theory they were not invaded for their own good. The Spaniards were the first to show that peoples as well as kings were the enemies of France. The Tyrolese were not far behind them in patriotism, but were few in numbers and, being far from the coast, had no assistance from

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EUROPE AND NAPOLEON

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Britain. Then, after the retreat from Moscow, the Prussians as a people led the uprising of Germany, forcing their king in the early days of 1813 to league himself with the Russians; and indeed the Moscow disaster was brought about by the Russian peasants co-operating with their Tsar, destroying their property, and retreating before the French so as to starve them out.

Thus various problems were placed before the Congress at Vienna in 1814, while Napoleon was at Elba. Was he alone to be punished, or France as well? Were the old dynasties to be restored to the old positions, or were popular rights to be acknowledged? How were the countries most liable to be invaded by the French to be saved from future invasion? In answer to the first question the Allies treated France generously; she was not to suffer. But after the Waterloo campaign a certain amount of humiliation was inflicted, for, if she had not unanimously welcomed Napoleon back from Elba, at least a great many of her sons had welcomed him. As to the others, the chief and immediate need was to strengthen Europe against any possibility of renewed war. The various monarchs wanted compensation after the hardships they had suffered from Napoleon. The Congress could not formulate schemes of self-government for each nation saved from France; it could only restore dynasties, or award to them new lands left kingless. Monarch and people in each case had to settle popular questions at home. The result was disappointment and brooding over wrongs up to the year 1848. In fact 1792-94 were too near to 1814-15. All that the Spaniards and Tyrolese had done, all that the Prussians had suffered, could not make rulers forget that the crisis through which Europe had passed had its origin in the republican fury twenty-two years back. Liberty seemed to be synonymous

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with Jacobinical excess. And, even had such a thought not been natural, one can hardly picture any statesman at Vienna solemnly proposing the creation of a Parliament and popular franchise for each country. It is a hard truth that a nation must win its own salvation.

The crown of France was restored to Louis XVIII, brother of the guillotined Louis XVI; "Louis XVII" was reserved for the young dauphin who had perished during the early days of the Republic. At one time there was a possibility that the French ex-Marshal Bernadotte, adopted heir of the King of Sweden and Regent for him, and declared enemy of Napoleon after the Moscow disaster, might be chosen. There was some feeling that the Bourbons should not be restored, and it may be that Tsar Alexander, who for a time supported Bernadotte, wanted to show that the Powers in crushing Napoleon had no wish to humiliate France and therefore ought not to force upon her the old dynasty. But, as at the time of our own Restoration, it must have been clear that the king *de jure* should have his chance; should the Bourbons, like the Stuarts, misuse it, then the French nation would take matters into its own hands and none would pity them. In the meanwhile *la légitimité* would stand for peace, whereas Bernadotte might prove to be ambitious and restless. France needed peace such as the true king, restored by the Allies, would find it to his interest to maintain. Moreover it was a new France over which Louis XVIII was to preside; a France of peasant proprietors and small estates, where the law of succession was as laid down in the *Code Napoléon*; a France to which the Revolution had given liberty and to which, though curtailing the liberty which had become licence and brought anarchy and bankruptcy in its train, Napoleon had given stability;

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a France which, in spite of conscription and absence of self-government, enjoyed personal freedom. The *émigrés*, those nobles and royalists who had fled in 1789 and subsequent years, some of whom were irreconcilable and had hounded on the Austrians and Prussians in 1792, and some of whom were less bitter and returned to France on Napoleon's invitation, did not regain their old privileges; they might hope to secure remission from taxation, as in the good old days before 1789, and to occupy all the highest positions in Church and State, but they had against them the solid weight of a peasantry that had become free and prosperous. The Bourbon dynasty without a privileged nobility was not really dangerous.

Whether the men of 1814 consciously argued in this manner, or whether we with a century's experience attribute to them our thoughts, is immaterial. Something of this kind, a confidence in the legitimist dynasty as the best shield against civil war and a new revolution which would bring in again a military despot, and as the best guarantee of peace for a France drained of men by long wars, must have been in the mind of the wily Talleyrand who represented *la légitimité* to the Powers.

In 1814 the Allies looked upon Napoleon rather than upon France as the enemy. But, after "the hundred days" of 1815, it was necessary to punish the country that had welcomed Napoleon back from Elba. A fine of forty millions of our money was imposed. An allied army of 150,000 men, under Wellington's chief command, was to occupy certain positions. Works of art carried off from conquered countries to adorn the Louvre were to be restored¹. Blucher and the Prussians, who indeed had

¹ For instance the bronze horses of St Mark, the restoration of which to Venice caused much excitement; yet the Venetians had

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suffered more than any other nation from Napoleon's severity, wanted to plunder in revenge, and in particular to blow up the "Jena" bridge in Paris; their bitterness was shown also in much destruction and wanton defilement of private property on their march after Waterloo into France. But Wellington set his face steadily against the reprisals of mere revenge, and our own soldiers, behaving decently in France, certainly set a good example.

It was Wellington also who protested strongly against the re-annexation of Alsace and Lorraine to Germany. Louis, he argued, would not be safe on the French throne if the provinces won by his ancestors were given up. They had been recognised as belonging to France by international treaties¹. The inhabitants, from whose ranks had come many famous Frenchmen, wished to be French, for they had learnt under France the meaning of freedom and the Revolution had created a large class of peasant proprietors, who might lose their advantages if handed back to Germany. The Tsar supported Wellington, and Austria did not care to make this a vital question. The Prussian desire for annexation was not pressed, although the argument that

carried them off as loot from Constantinople at the time of the Fourth Crusade. The French bitterly resented the loss, and probably the modern Huns justify their thieving instinct because the French of Napoleon were fond of loot.

¹ The French first obtained Alsace, less a few patches of land, in 1648 by the Treaty of Westphalia; Louis XIV seized Strasburg, hitherto a free German city, in 1681 by a mixture of fraud and force, but the Treaty of Rastadt in 1714 recognised it as his. Three bishoprics of Lorraine, Metz, Verdun, Toul, became French by the Treaty of Cateau Cambrésis in 1559; the last Duke of Lorraine, Francis, gave up the rest of the duchy in 1737 when he married Maria Theresa, and received Tuscany in exchange; it then fell to a dethroned King of Poland, and on his death to France.

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ALSACE AND LORRAINE

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German lands ought to form part of Germany appealed to Prussian minds most of all; for Prussia was directly aiming at obtaining the lead in Germany, and it was a sentimental ambition, as well as a military need in view of any future war against France, that demanded restoration, and how could the British and Russians who lived far away from Strasburg and Metz understand German sentiment? However France retained her old boundaries as in 1789. Indeed she had one actual gain, for the little papal state of Avignon, joined to her early in the Revolution, remained French. Just a scrap of Lorraine and a scrap of Savoy, recognised as French in 1814, were taken away in 1815.

Napoleon's Europe was as follows. Belgium, Holland—except for a short time when Louis Bonaparte was king,—all Germany west of the Rhine, a piece of north Germany touching the North Sea and extending to a point on the Baltic at Lubeck, Savoy, north-west Italy extending down the coast to Rome, and the Dalmatian coast of the Adriatic, were parts of France. North-east Italy was the Kingdom of Italy with Napoleon himself as king, wearing the old iron crown of Lombardy, and his stepson Eugène as viceroy. Murat, his brother-in-law, was King of Naples. Central Germany, composed of four kingdoms, Westphalia under his brother Jerome, Saxony, Bavaria, and Wurtemberg under German kings created by him and allied to him, and several duchies, formed the Confederation of the Rhine. Poland, reconstituted as the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, was under the King of Saxony. Austria, stripped of the Tyrol and neighbouring territory which he gave to Bavaria, and of the land behind Trieste incorporated with France, was nominally independent. Prussia was reduced to little more than East and West Prussia, Brandenburg,

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and Silesia, but a French garrison held Dantzic. Denmark was his ally. One point is clear; by abolishing the medieval survivals in Germany, the Holy Roman Empire, the electorates, the secular power of archbishops and bishops, the lay bishoprics in those parts of Germany where the Protestant Reformation had given church lands to prince-bishops, and by creating the Confederation of the Rhine, he gave a great impetus to the German ideal of union; similarly in Italy, by creating three main divisions and abolishing all foreign rule except his own, he first suggested a possible unity.

Of the immediate neighbours of France the question of Belgium was the most important and touched the English most nearly. The Austrians had been in occupation from 1714 to 1793, the French from 1793 to 1814. To our statesmen it was a fixed idea that no strong Power should hold Antwerp so as to create there during peace a naval base from which it could menace our shores;—Napoleon had wished to do so, and our ill-fated expedition of 1809 which occupied the island of Walcheren was aimed against the shipping of Antwerp, but throughout the long war our naval blockade of the mouth of the Scheldt made Antwerp useless to him. Now the Austrians had no ambition to regain a country so far from them; they coveted rather access to the sea by way of Venice and Trieste. No one thought of a free and independent Belgium as coming within practical politics; the mixed races, the Flemings of the western part, the French-speaking Walloons of the east, the Liégeois who used to be governed by prince-bishops, the Brabanters and Hainaulters lying between, had no bond of union, except an affection for France. Now this affection, which speaks volumes for her decency and ability to secure the loyalty of even those whom she

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HOLLAND AND BELGIUM

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had conquered, was quite sufficient in itself to make the Allies callous towards Belgian feeling. At Vienna the statesmen of the moment cared only to promote the interests of their own countries, not those of the people concerned, least of all those of small states. So the Roman Catholic Belgians were handed over to and incorporated with the Calvinistic Dutch under the House of Orange to form the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Such a strange union seemed to be the only solution then possible.

Holland had been practically part of France between 1794 and 1814. Napoleon had indeed made his brother Louis king for a short time, but he had enrolled both Belgians and Dutchmen in his armies as if they had been Frenchmen. The House of Orange was restored in 1814. But after a French régime old and now meaningless titles were dropped. "Stadholder" disappears, and a "king" of the Netherlands appears for the first time in history. In 1815 Belgian and Dutch regiments fought against France under the Prince of Orange, the new king's son and heir, and at Quatre Bras they held their ground in a way which materially helped Wellington's plans. Yet the union was unnatural. Not only was there a religious difficulty, but also, ever since the days of Philip II and Parma, the Dutch had been free, the Belgians in turn under the yoke of Spain and of Austria; the Dutch were sailors and merchants, the Belgians in pre-Spanish days had been manufacturers and bankers; the Dutch had held both banks at the mouth of the Scheldt, and had killed the commerce of Antwerp. Of course the twenty years of connection with France would do something to bring the two races together. Also, when under the same crown, the Belgians would be able to navigate the Scheldt freely, which meant that Antwerp would enjoy a commercial prosperity that she had never

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known since 1585¹. But all the traditions of Belgium were opposed to Dutch traditions.

At the other end of the French frontier the House of Savoy was restored to its old dominions as in 1792, namely the Duchy of Savoy, which lay south of the Lake of Geneva and west of the Alps; Piedmont, lying around the upper Po and enclosed on two sides by Alps and on the third by Apennines; the territory of Nice; and the island of Sardinia, from which the Duke took the title of King of Sardinia. To these were added the old rich republic of Genoa, and the strip of coast known as the Italian Riviera which had been conquered by Genoa². It was a compact little kingdom, strong out of proportion to its size because it contained the Alpine passes between France and Italy, and now stronger than of old because of the addition of Genoa. The object of the Allies was to erect a strong barrier against any future attempt of France to reconquer Italy, either by the inland passes or the coast road. As a matter of fact the Riviera is a very difficult country for an army on the march; the mountains in places fall sheer to the sea, and landslides are frequent, so that even to-day both the road and the single-track railway have to be often repaired. But Napoleon had invaded Italy in 1796 along this coast. Genoa had republican sympathy with France. Therefore the land had to be annexed to Savoy and Sardinia.

The restored dynasty had no leaning towards constitutional government. But the Savoyards and north-western Italians had enjoyed personal freedom, as had the

¹ The year when Alexander of Parma besieged and took Antwerp.

² Many a Riviera town has to-day an old fort erected by the Genoese to overawe, not to protect it; the old "freedom" of Genoa carried with it freedom to enslave.