

conversation with the person sitting opposite me, and much like the fox of the fable, I more or less held the following language:

- Q. Well, Hebrewer (this is how they are called in Germany), what do you think of our Revolution?
- A. It was made to astound the world.
- Q. Are you of German or Portuguese extraction?
- A. I am German.
- Q. Are you still waiting for the Messiah?
- A. No, he has arrived.
- Q. I have not read the news in any gazette.
- A. You did not see then that Bonaparte has seized the Holy Land?
- Q. Yes, I know that, but what does our general, who eats bacon and sausages, have in common with the Messiah? Did not Godefroi de Bouillon also seize Palestine without the Temple of Jerusalem rising from its ruins?
- A. Well, this time it will rise. There are 1,500,000 Jews in Europe who, if they must, will sacrifice their fortunes and their lives for such a glorious enterprise.

As the child of Abraham uttered these last words with passion, I feigned approval of his ideas. He told us about his hopes at great length and repeated that Bonaparte was the Messiah.

I do not know if my companion was more fanatic than the rest of his brothers, those who practise religion are all more or less so, but I have to admit that the unction with which he spoke, and even more the 1,500,000 Hebrews he put forward, singularly tickled my thoughts, especially when I thought about how one could greatly profit from these people by caressing their religious prejudices.

I will leave it to your wisdom to think about whether this idea has any value, or to laugh about it as a joke.

Source: Archives nationales, AFIII, 21 b, letter from the *commissaire* of the Nord to Merlin de Douai, 28 February 1799, in *La Révolution française à travers les archives* (Paris, 1988), pp. 426–9.

Justifying the coup of Brumaire, 10 November 1799

The proclamation, posted in Paris and reprinted in the *Moniteur*, constituted the official version of the coup. The events of 19 Brumaire which took place at Saint-Cloud were thus twisted and contorted—the angry scene in the Council of Five Hundred was portrayed as a plot



Séance du Corps-Légitimatif à l'Orangerie de St. Cloud (Apparition de Bonaparte et journée libératrice du 19 brumaire an 8. (n.º 299.)
A Paris chez Desnoyès, aux Grands Bains n.º 12.

Figure 5 The appearance of Bonaparte at the Orangerie, 19 Brumaire. In order to justify the coup of Brumaire, the myth of an assassination attempt against Bonaparte was circulated both in the print media and in anonymous popular engravings that could be bought on the streets. The attack on Bonaparte's person was meant to be equated with an attack on liberty. Source: Bibliothèque nationale de France.

against Bonaparte's life and the deputies were made out to have been armed with stilettoes: 'twenty assassins threw themselves on me and aimed at my chest.' Moreover, there was no mention made of Sieyès or Lucien Bonaparte who both played significant roles leading up to and during the coup. The proclamation is revealing not only for how Bonaparte perceived himself but for how he wanted to be perceived. He posed as someone who was above party politics, as the restorer of moderation, as a representative of the conservative wing of the Revolution.

On my return to Paris, I found division among all the authorities and agreement only on one truth, that the Constitution was half destroyed and could no longer save liberty.

Every faction came to me, confided their plans in me, and asked me for my support: I refused to be the man of one faction.

The Council of Elders summoned me; I replied to its call. A plan for a general restoration had been decided on by men whom the nation is accustomed to see as the defenders of liberty, equality and property: this plan demanded calm and independent scrutiny, free from all influence and fear. The Council of Elders resolved to transfer the Legislative Body to Saint-Cloud; it gave me the responsibility of organising the force necessary for its independence. I believed it my duty to my fellow citizens, to the soldiers perishing in our armies, and for the national glory acquired at the cost of their blood, to accept the command.

The Councils assembled at Saint-Cloud; republican troops guaranteed their safety from without, but assassins created terror from within. Several deputies from the Council of Five Hundred, armed with stiletos and firearms, circulated death threats.

The plans which should have been developed were held up, the majority were disorganised, the most intrepid speakers were disconcerted, and the futility of every wise proposition evident.

I took my indignation and grief to the Council of Elders. I asked it to guarantee the execution of its generous plans. I presented it with the evils besetting the fatherland which they were able to imagine. They united with me through new testimony of their steadfast will.

I then went to the Council of Five Hundred; alone, unarmed, head uncovered, just as the Elders had received and applauded me. I came to remind the majority of its wishes, and to assure it of its power.

The stiletos which threatened the deputies were immediately raised against their liberator; twenty assassins threw themselves on me and aimed at my chest. The grenadiers of the Legislative Body, whom I had left at the entrance to the hall, ran to put themselves between me and the assassins. One of the brave grenadiers (Thomé) was struck and had his clothes torn by a stiletto. They carried me out.

At the same time, cries of outlaw were heard against the defender of the law. It was the fierce cry of the assassins against the force destined to put them down.

They crowded around the president, uttering threats, arms in hand; they ordered him to declare me an outlaw. I was informed of this, and I ordered that he be snatched from their fury, and six grenadiers of the Legislative Body carried him out. Immediately afterwards, grenadiers from the Legislative Body charged into the hall and had it evacuated.

The factions, thus intimidated, dispersed and fled. The majority, freed from their attacks, returned freely and peaceably to the meeting hall, heard the propositions which were made for public safety, deliberated, and prepared the salutary resolution which is to become the new and provisional law of the Republic.

Frenchmen, you will undoubtedly recognise in this conduct the zeal of a

soldier of liberty, of a citizen devoted to the Republic. Conservative, tutelary and liberal ideas have been restored to their rightful place by the dispersal of the rebels who oppressed the Councils and who, having become the most odious of men, have not ceased to be the most contemptible.

Signed BONAPARTE

Source: *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, vol. 6, pp. 6-8.

LAW AND ORDER

Crushing the rebels in the Vendée, 14 January 1800

In order to consolidate his régime, it was important to bring the civil unrest that had torn the country apart for so many years to an end. Measures of repression were thus carried out in the provinces where 'Military Tribunals' were used to put an end to what was commonly referred to as 'brigandage'. In the Vendée, General Brune (1763–1815) was charged with annihilating the last of the Chouans. It was, of course, a continuation of the policy already adopted by the Directory, but it also fell within the logic of Bonaparte's attitude towards peoples in insurrection first expressed in Italy: an exemplary punishment had to be meted out.

To General Brune, commander-in-chief of the Army of the West

... The government will do no more than it already has done for the departments of the west.

The Army of the West is made up of 60,000 men under arms. You will pursue the brigands with energy, you will put yourself in a position to quickly end this war. The peace of Europe is dependent on its end.

... The suspension of hostilities concluded between General Hédouville and the Chouans will only last until 1 Pluviôse [21 January]. Georges, who commands the rebels in the Morbihan, is not included.

I calculate that on the evening of the 27th [Pluviôse, or 16 February] you will arrive in Angers; only remain there long enough to order the 60th half-brigade and the troops you can relieve from this department to march for the Morbihan, and then leave for Nantes.

From there, march to the Morbihan where you will find the 22nd and the 72nd. Disperse Georges's assemblies. Take his cannon, his stores of grain (he has a great quantity on the coast which he sells to England). Finally, begin to make the whole weight and horror of war come down on the rebels of the Morbihan. At the beginning of Pluviôse, make sure:

- 1 that English ships anchored off the coast of Morbihan no longer communicate with Georges;
- 2 that they see from the top of their masts the flags of the Republic disperse the brigands and destroy their hope.

Diplomatic reasons of the greatest importance make it necessary for the English to learn that considerable French forces are pursuing Georges within the first five days of Pluviôse, so that they send the news to England.

... Welcome any individual who submits, but do not tolerate any meeting of leaders; do not enter into any further diplomatic negotiations.

[Have] a great tolerance for priests; but act severely against the larger communes in order to oblige them to protect themselves and to protect the smaller ones. Do not spare communes that behave badly. Burn a few farms and a few large villages in the Morbihan, and start to make a few examples.

Do not let your troops want for either bread, meat or pay. There are enough guilty [people] in the departments to maintain your troops. It is only by making war terrible for them that the inhabitants themselves will unite against the brigands and will at last feel that their apathy is dangerous.

Source: *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, vol. 6, pp. 109–12.

Decree limiting the French press, 17 January 1800

Military repression was followed by an attempt to censor those who opposed Bonaparte's policies. As early as February 1800, fifty newspapers were closed down, leaving only thirteen in circulation. By 1811, this number had been further reduced to four. The same thing occurred for the theatre. Bonaparte repressed both the left and the right and called on the French people to forget their differences and to think instead of the unity of the French nation.

The Consuls of the Republic, considering that a part of the newspapers printed in the Department of the Seine [Paris] are instruments in the hands of the enemies of the Republic, and that the government is especially charged by the French people to watch over their security, decrees the following.

Article 1. The Minister of Police will allow, during the entire course of the war, the printing, publication and distribution of the newspapers hereby designated: [the names of thirteen papers follow], and newspapers *exclusively* devoted to the sciences, arts, literature, commerce, announcements and public notices.

Article 2. The Minister of General Police will immediately report on all newspapers printed in the other departments.

Article 3. The Minister of Police will make sure that no new newspapers are published in the department of the Seine as well as in other departments of the Republic.

Article 4. The owners and editors of the newspapers retained by the present decree will present themselves to the Minister of Police in order to prove their qualifications as French citizens, their residence and their signature, and they will promise loyalty to the Constitution.

Article 5. All newspapers which include articles contrary to the social order, to the sovereignty of the people and to the glory of the armies, or which publish abuse against governments and nations friendly to or allied with the Republic, even when those articles are taken from foreign periodicals, will be suppressed immediately.

Source: Buchez and Roux, *Histoire parlementaire de la Révolution française* (Paris, 1834-8), vol. 38, pp. 331-2.

Bonaparte's speech to the priests of Milan, 5 June 1800

Another facet of restoring order in France was to mend the broken bridges with the Catholic Church. The following eulogy to Catholicism and the condemnation of the anticlerical policies of the Directory before a gathering of priests in Milan reveals that Bonaparte was already seriously thinking of a reconciliation between Church and State well before the process of the Concordat was set in motion.

I wanted to see you assembled here in order to have the satisfaction of telling you myself about the feelings which move me on the subject of the apostolic Catholic and Roman religion. Persuaded that Catholicism is the only religion which can procure true happiness for a well-ordered society, and strengthen the basis of a good government, I assure you that I will apply myself at all times and by every means to its protection and defence. You, the ministers of this religion, which is of course also mine, I regard you as my dearest friends. I declare that I will consider as disturbing public peace and as an enemy of the common good, and that I will punish as such in the most severe and obvious manner, and even, if I have to, with the death penalty, anyone who in the least insults our common religion, or who dares commit the slightest outrage against your sacred persons.

My formal intention is that the Christian, Catholic and Roman religion be

maintained in its entirety and that it be practised publicly, and that it enjoy this public exercise with a freedom as full, extensive and inviolable as during the period when I entered these fortunate regions for the first time. All the changes which then took place, mainly in discipline, were done against my inclinations and my way of thinking. Simple agent of a government that was not in the least concerned with the Catholic religion, I was then unable to prevent all the disorders they wanted to stir up at any price, with the aim of overthrowing it. At the moment when I have been provided with full powers, I have decided to make use of every means I believe to be appropriate to assure and guarantee this religion.

Modern philosophers have endeavoured to persuade France that the Catholic religion was the implacable enemy of every democratic system and of every republican government. Hence the cruel persecution the French Republic carried out against the religion and its ministers; hence all the horrors which that unfortunate people were delivered up to. The diversity of opinion which, during the revolutionary era, reigned in France on the subject of religion has been one of the sources of this disorder. The experience opened the eyes of the French and convinced them that of all religions there was none that adapted itself, like the Catholic religion, to diverse forms of government, which more greatly favours, in particular, democratic republican government, better establishes rights and throws more daylight on principles. I too am a philosopher and I know that, no matter what the society, no man can pass for just and virtuous if he does not know where he comes from and where he is going. Reason alone will not give us any definite information about that. Without religion, we walk constantly in the shadows and the Catholic religion is the only one which gives man certain and infallible enlightenment about his nature and his final end. No society can exist without morals; there are no good morals without religion; only religion, then, can give the State a firm and lasting support. A society without religion is like a ship without a compass. A ship in that case can neither assure its route nor hope to enter port. A society without religion, always agitated, perpetually rocked by the shock of the most violent passions, itself experiences all the furies of a civil war which precipitates it into the abyss of evil, and which, sooner or later, infallibly leads to its ruin.

France, learning from its misfortune, has finally opened its eyes; it has recognised that the Catholic religion is like an anchor which alone can fix it in its agitations and save it from the efforts of the tempest. It has, as a result, recalled religion to its bosom. I cannot deny that I have contributed a good deal to this great work. I can assure you that churches have been opened in France, that the Catholic religion is regaining its former brilliance, and that the people look with respect on those sacred pastors who return, full of zeal, amid the abandoned flock.

Do not let the manner in which the late pope was treated inspire you with fear. Pius VI owed his misfortune in part to those to whom he had given his confidence and in part to the cruel policies of the Directory. When I am able

Some reservations in Paris

Yes, on condition that Napoleon's heirs are like him.

I vote yes—to the exclusion of women and their descendants.

Yes, a hundred times yes, for the title, because one cannot honour and love too much our leader, but no, for ever no, to heredity which for me renders power odious.

Source: Archives nationales, BII 815A and B.

A hostile response from Troyes

I consider the reign of law like the reign of people whose will the law expresses, but the reign of one man seems to me irreconcilable with the reign of the whole. Napoleon Bonaparte deserves all possible honours. I even believe him to be worthy of the title emperor, but will his successors, in inheriting his glory, also inherit his character, his courage, his virtues? I say then no and I will not say otherwise, unless the immutability of the laws which constitute the Republic one and indivisible, equality before the law, civil liberty, the liberty of the press, the liberty of conscience, in one word Liberty, can be demonstrated without any possible doubt and unless an institution which is wise, strong and immutable can guarantee the inviolability of these laws. I mean to strongly oppose everything that tends to violate them, an opposition to the idea of despotism. Such is my wish.

Source: Archives nationales, BII 683A.

GOVERNING THE EMPIRE

The Civil Code, March 1803–March 1804

Napoleon brought to completion a project dear to the hearts of the revolutionaries, the drafting of new law codes. The Civil Code was the most important of a number of codes (civil procedure, commercial, criminal, penal, rural) because it institutionalised equality under the law (at least for adult men), guaranteed the abolition of feudalism and, not least, gave the nation one single code of law replacing the hundreds in effect in 1789. Although not of his making, Napoleon nevertheless presided over more than half of the one hundred sessions of the Council of State that took place over the three years it took to finalise the code, thereby imprinting it with his own personal values. There was nothing unusual about them, however. They were widely accepted throughout France. The Code thus institutionalised the subservience of women in marriage and of workers in their places of employment. Divorce was still allowed (it had been established in 1792), but under conditions that were very unfavourable to wives.

BOOK I OF THE RIGHTS AND RESPECTIVE DUTIES OF HUSBAND AND WIFE

212 Husband and wife mutually owe each other fidelity, succour and assistance.

213 The husband owes protection to his wife, the wife obedience to her husband.

214 The wife is obliged to live with her husband, and to follow him wherever he may think proper to dwell: the husband is bound to receive her, and to furnish her with everything necessary for the purposes of life, according to his means and condition.

215 The wife cannot act in law without the authority of the husband, even where she shall be a public trader, or not in community, or separate in property. . . .

217 A wife, although not in community, or separate in property, cannot give, pledge or acquire by free or chargeable title, without the concurrence of her husband in the act, or his consent in writing. . . .

TITLE VI OF CAUSES OF DIVORCE

The husband may demand divorce for cause of adultery on the part of his wife.

The wife may demand divorce for cause of adultery on the part of her husband, where he shall have kept his concubine in their common house.

SECTION II OF THE PROVISIONAL MEASURES TO WHICH THE DEMAND OF DIVORCE FOR CAUSE DEFINED MAY GIVE CAUSE

267 The provisional administration of the children shall remain with the husband plaintiff or defendant in divorce, unless it shall be otherwise ordered by the tribunal, at the request either of the mother, or of the family, or of the imperial proctor, for the greater benefit of the children. . . .

SECTION III OF EXCEPTIONS AT LAW AGAINST THE SUIT FOR DIVORCE FOR CAUSE DETERMINATE

272 The suit of divorce shall be extinguished by the reconciliation of the parties, whether occurring subsequently to the facts which might have authorized such suit, or subsequently to the petition for divorce. . . .

297 In case of divorce by mutual consent, neither of the parties shall be allowed to contract a new marriage until the expiration of three years from the pronouncement of the divorce.

298 In the case of divorce admitted by law for cause of adultery, the guilty party shall never be permitted to marry with his accomplice. The wife adulteress shall be condemned in the same judgement; and, on the request of the public minister, to confinement in a house of correction, for a determinate period, which shall not be less than three months, nor exceed two years. . . .

302 The children shall be entrusted to the married Party who has obtained the divorce, unless the court, on petition of the family, or by the commissioner of government, gives order, for the greater benefit of the children, that all or some of them shall be committed to the care either of the other married party, or of a third person.

Source: Bryant Barrett (ed.), *The Code Napoleon*, 2 vols (London, 1811), vol. 1, pp. 47, 49, 57; vol. 2, p. 358.

Napoleon on governing Italy, 5 June 1805

Napoleon's son-in-law, Eugène de Beauharnais (1781–1824), was named Viceroy of Italy at the age of 23. He is considered to be one of Napoleon's most capable and enlightened rulers. Napoleon's instructions to Eugène on how best to govern the Italian people give an interesting insight into his attitudes towards politics. The key word seems to be mistrust.

By entrusting you with the government of Our Kingdom of Italy, We have given you proof of the respect your conduct has inspired in Us. But you are still at an age when one does not realise the perversity of men's hearts; I cannot therefore too strongly recommend to you prudence and circumspection. Our Italian subjects are more deceitful by nature than the citizens of France. The only way in which you can keep their respect, and serve their happiness, is by letting no-one have your complete confidence, and by never telling anyone what you really think of the ministers and high officials of your court. Dissimulation, which comes naturally at a maturer age, has to be emphasised and inculcated at yours. If you ever find yourself speaking unnecessarily, and from the heart, say to yourself: 'I have made a mistake', and do not do it again. Show respect for the nation you govern, and show it all the more as you discover less grounds for it. You will come to see in time that there is little difference between one nation and another. The aim of your administration is the happiness of My Italian peoples; and the first sacrifice you will have to make will be to fall in with certain of their customs which you detest. In any position but that of Viceroy of Italy you may boast of being a Frenchman: but here you must forget it, and count yourself a failure unless the Italians believe that you love them. They know there is no love without respect. Learn their language; frequent their society; single them out for special attention at public functions; like what they like, and approve what they approve.

The less you talk the better: you are not well enough educated, and you have not enough knowledge to take part in informal debates. Learn to listen, and remember that silence is often as effective as a display of knowledge. Do not be ashamed to ask questions. Though a viceroy, you are only 23; and however much people flatter you, in reality they all know your limitations, and honour you less for what they believe you to be than for what they hope you will become.

Do not imitate me in every respect; you need more reserve.

Do not preside often over the State Council; you have too little experience to do so successfully—though I see no objection to your attending it, while an assessor acts as president, from his ordinary seat. Your ignorance of Italian, and of legislation too for that matter, is an excellent excuse for staying away. Anyhow, never make a speech there: they would listen to you and not answer you back: but they would see at once that you are not competent to discuss business. So long as a prince holds his tongue, his power