

Chapter One

1815-1831: The Bonaparte Dispersion

ON the morning of 17 July 1815, the second Bourbon administration, restored in France nine days earlier following the allied victory over Napoleon at Waterloo, arranged for expulsion orders to be handed in person to every Bonaparte still in France, two days after Napoleon's formal surrender to Captain Maitland aboard the *Bellerophon*. This proscriptive action had been designed principally to remove from French territory Hortense de Beauharnais, ex-queen of Holland and by then the senior Bonaparte in Paris, who was living unobtrusively at 8 rue Cérutti in a house belonging to her husband Louis Bonaparte.

The Allied Powers had tolerated Hortense's presence in the city. Although they had officially erased Napoleon's empire, Bonaparte exclusion from high office was not for them synonymous with Bonaparte expulsion from France. The Cérutti mansion had been commandeered by Karl zu Schwarzenberg, supreme commander of the combined army in France; but he had always admired Hortense and allowed her to quietly occupy some rooms on an upper floor. However, her two young sons, Napoléon Louis and Charles Louis Napoléon, had to be lodged in a smaller house on the rue Taitbout backing onto the garden.

For Louis XVIII, on the other hand, the presence in Paris of any Bonaparte was anathema. He was willing to implement a policy of general expulsion at the suggestion of the two most influential men in his administration: Joseph Fouché, quondam Jacobin regicide turned Napoleonic minister and now Bourbon minister of police; and Charles de Talleyrand, quondam bishop of Autun turned Revolutionary turned Napoleonic minister and now Bourbon minister of foreign affairs. The order was signed by Talleyrand and presented to Hortense by General von Müffling, Prussian governor of Paris since the capitulation. Those Bonapartes who had not already left France now had twenty-four hours to do so. Five days later a royal decree annulled all official appointments made during Napoleon's rule, and the First Empire was *de jure* annulled.

Ironically, the move to banish the Bonapartes was the single action that most determined the course of events leading to their eventual re-establishment. But it also had immediately fortuitous consequences for Hortense who had not been hiding from the Allies or the Bourbons at the time but from a vengeful royalist mob. Following the Restoration, the French political pendulum once again swung to the opposite extreme, and the elections to the Chamber of Deputies, held on August 14 and 21, returned a chamber in which the extreme Royalists – the 'Ultras' – were in the majority, led by Comte d'Artois, the future Charles X.

La Chambre introuvable, as Louis XVIII called it, disregarded legal and moral imperatives as Catholic nobility in the south of France conducted a brief but brutal purge of Napoleonists, Jacobins, and Huguenots in an action quickly dubbed the 'white terror'. Meanwhile, Hortense protested to the duchesses of Bourbon-Penthièvre and Bourbon-Condé – mother and aunt to Louis Philippe, duc d'Orléans – who had both previously given her their assurances that she could remain in Paris since she had been instrumental in obtaining pensions for them under Napoleon. But they had spoken incautiously: their influence over Louis XVIII was slight, and the order to leave stood. At this time the Allies were discussing the drafts for the second Treaty of

Paris and had no direct control over decisions reached by the internal ministerial organs of France. Even Schwarzenberg could not prevent the expulsion, although he provided Hortense with a small two-carriage escort under the command of Captain Eduard von Woyna, younger son of his friend General Count von Woyna who had been killed the previous year.

As the royalist revenge spread north, Hortense and her sons moved southeast on their way to Switzerland, meeting the mob shortly after crossing the Du Morvan Mountains. At Dijon the ex-imperial party was assaulted by a crowd who began to shake Hortense's coach, shouting obscenities and threats, and it was only with difficulty that the guards managed to clear a passage to a hotel and safety. The crowd, led by some officers of the Royal Guard, then attempted to break into their room. Woyna's men remained faithful to Schwarzenberg's command and prevented an attack that on the strength of the reported agitation may have resulted not only in Hortense's death but also that of her family.

The party reached Geneva at the end of the month where they lodged in the Hôtel d'Angleterre in the village of Le Sècheron, a little north of Geneva. But the canton, which had been occupied by the French in 1798 and now found itself admitted into the Swiss Confederation after one year as an independent state with its own constitution, would not tolerate Hortense for more than one day. She complained to Woyna who protested on behalf of Schwarzenberg. The canton relented, allowing Hortense to stay until the Genovese decided otherwise.

Hortense then learned the truth of what Lord Byron would very shortly afterwards say about the Genovese – that they did not at all reflect the universal Swiss attitude to neutrality and liberality. Life for her was made as unbearable as possible. On one occasion Swiss officers deliberately chose her hotel in which to hold a large banquet celebrating the fall of Napoleon and his approaching incarceration on St Helena. When Hortense left Paris the news of Napoleon's voluntary surrender to Captain Maitland aboard the *Bellerophon* had not reached the capital, and it was through this banquet that she learned the depressing truth.

Hortense did not have to endure Geneva for long, and nor did the Genovese require much encouragement to ask her to leave. Instructions from Paris obliged her to depart. Denied access to the Château de Prègny, Empress Joséphine's property which in her will had fallen to her daughter, they moved some seventy kilometres south to Aix-les-Bains in Savoy, installing themselves in a small house where, in October, the family was split up. By 1815, Hortense was estranged from her husband, who was then living in Florence, and Napoléon Louis was legally handed over to him following a ruling by a court of law that had been made known to her the previous March; custody of her third son was given over to her; their first son, Napoléon Charles, had died in childhood.

On 27 August, the combined authorities in Paris reversed their recent decision and declared that Hortense could live in Switzerland after all, but under supervision and only in the canton of Sankt Gallen. This welcome news reached her on 21 October, but the cantonal executive rejected the decision, and the Swiss Diet confirmed that no Bonaparte would ever again set foot on Swiss soil. Accordingly, on 28 November, Hortense set out with her son for Konstanz in the Grand Duchy of Baden with a visa restricting her route through Geneva, Berne, Vaud, Aargau, Zürich, and Thurgovie. Grand Duke Karl Friedrich was no particular friend, but his wife Stéphanie was granddaughter of Claude de Beauharnais, first cousin through the younger branch to Alexandre, Joséphine's first husband.

For political reasons, however, Karl Friedrich was obliged to inform Hortense that he too would not allow her to remain in his territory. But Hortense, quite exhausted and now also sick, declared that she was unable to endure another long trek and begged to be allowed to remain. Karl Friedrich was sufficiently moved to reverse his decision, but this temporary respite was soon marred when Hortense was apprised of the full details of the five treaties signed in Paris on 15 and 20 November.

The 'Treaty of Alliance and Friendship', an extension of the Treaty of Chaumont signed in March 1814, contained seven articles. Article II 'for ever excluded from Supreme Power in France' any member, present or future, of the Bonaparte family. It also empowered the four signatories (Britain, Austria, Prussia, and Russia) to police socio-political movement in France in case 'the same Revolutionary Principles which upheld the last criminal usurpation, might again, under different forms, convulse France, and thereby endanger the repose of other states'. Article III stipulated that a 'line of Military Positions' should be established for 'a certain number of years' with a view to 'maintaining the order of things re-established in France'. The Allies, however, could not impose proscriptive measures against any French citizen, nor could they exclude any Bonaparte from entering their own territories. Theoretically, Hortense might have settled in England directly, but it would never have occurred to anyone that she might have wished to do so.

The following winter was spent first in a small inn, the sadly now inappropriate Hôtel de l'Aigle, and then a little house near Petershausen. On 12 January 1816, official proscription came when the Bourbon Government promulgated the General Law of Proscription against all 'undesirables' in the restored kingdom. Article IV specifically excluded any member of the Bonaparte family: 'The forefathers and descendants of Napoleon Bonaparte, his uncles and aunts, his nephews and nieces, his brothers, their wives and their descendants, his sisters and their husbands are banished from the Kingdom forever and are bound to leave it within the period of one month under the penalty incurred by Article 91 of the Penal Code'. This was made public in the traditional official paper *Le Moniteur universel* two days later.

Hortense may have been amused at the contradiction between the official legal proscription with its pointless threat that deliberately ignored the practical banishment already six months old. However, she now knew that she and her family could never return to France; she also would have known that there was no room for ambiguity in this. The *Code Pénal* had been promulgated on 22 September 1810 as a clarification of the general *Code Napoléon* of 1803. Article 91 (livre III, cap. I, section II, paragraph II) was an anti-civil-war measure incurring the death penalty for any action likely to incite internal civil strife. Clearly, this could be interpreted as liberally as required in order to be able to apply it, but there was not a little irony in the fact that the Bonapartes were being treated rather harshly by laws of their own making.

The following spring, Hortense moved into a small property near the edge of Lake Konstanz, and at last mother and son settled down. It was a life that, on the surface at any rate, resembled that of any other wealthy family. Hortense may have been an exile, but she had money, possessions, and property to the value of about 4,000,000 francs. In September, however, the French minister in Baden renewed the demand for Hortense's expulsion from the duchy, and in January 1817 the Bourbons put direct pressure on Karl Friedrich to expel her, and this time he was forced to comply.

The previous summer she had seen a property in the neighbouring canton of Thurgovie that she had wanted to buy, a run down late medieval château at Arenenberg near the village of Berlingen, also overlooking a part of Lake Konstanz. This time she was fortunate, since the canton of Thurgovie, which had once been

seized by the confederated Swiss states and had a strong republican background, defied the Diet and offered Hortense a permanent home. On 10 February, she bought the château, although she could not move in immediately on account of its dilapidated state. Through the influence of another theoretical enemy but genuine admirer, Tsar Aleksandr at the court of Munich, the family moved into temporary lodgings at Augsburg in the kingdom of Bavaria where her son could continue his education undisturbed.

Neither the Swiss nor the Allied authorities were happy about the independent decision taken by Thurgovie. For the Allies it was a question of maintaining effective surveillance under the terms of Article II. Stratford Canning, envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary to the Swiss Confederation at Berne and Lausanne since 1814, made this clear to Foreign Secretary Viscount Castlereagh on 21 February 1817:

... we have at present no adequate means of controlling either the correspondence or the movements of Madame de St Leu ... The police of the canton of Thurgovie, as in most parts of Switzerland, is too weak to be depended on. The employment of secret agents would be attended with expense, and from the remoteness of the situation would be exposed to continual failure. An avowed agent placed on the spot, and authorized to inspect her correspondence ... would doubtless be able to exercise an effectual control; but there is nothing in the protocol to justify any interference of so direct a nature.¹

The Allies took the surveillance clause in the treaty very seriously. However, although its extent and intensity were harsh and unnecessary they were careful not to overstep its justifiable limits, never turning prosecution of their duty into persecution of their 'enemies'. Furthermore, after Napoleon's death on 5 May 1821, the Allies relaxed the general policing of *La Famille*, as the Bonapartes came to be universally known.

The news of Napoleon's death travelled slowly from its origin in the middle of the South Atlantic, and it did not reach Augsburg until Tuesday 24 July when an adolescent boy, the future Napoleon III, put pen to paper and wrote a seminal letter to his mother at Arenenberg:

This death has caused me, as you may imagine, great grief ... Happily, he is in a better world than ours, where he peacefully enjoys the fruits of his good works. What grieves me very much is not to have seen him once before his death, for in Paris I was so young that it is almost my heart only that holds a remembrance of him. When I do wrong, I think of this great man. I seem to feel his shade within me, telling me to keep myself worthy of the name of Napoleon... Happily I am young, and I appear often to have forgotten this misfortune; but if my habitual gaiety returns sometimes, it does not prevent my heart from being sad, nor my having an eternal hate against the English ...²

Hortense's third son had been born on the night of Wednesday 20 April 1808 at 8 rue Cérutti (rue Laffitte), the first Bonaparte to be born during the empire. He was baptized at Fontainebleau on 4 November 1810, given the names Charles Louis Napoléon, and this is how he signed the 1821 letter to his mother. By 1830 he would drop his first name altogether, and after his elder brother's death he would reverse the order of his remaining names and sign himself 'Napoléon Louis Bonaparte'. During his presidency of France they were returned to their original order, while during the empire he was of course simply 'Napoléon'. To everyone who knew him, however, as well as to history, he was 'Louis Napoléon'.

Louis Napoleon spent the next decade packing and unpacking as one tedious journey followed another. Arenenberg remained in Hortense's possession but Louis Napoleon spent more time elsewhere, first at Augsburg then Thun, in the canton of Berne, as a volunteer in the artillery under Colonel Guillaume Dufour, an old Napoleonic officer, as well as on extensive travels.

Several of the longer journeys were made to Rome, the ‘spiritual home’ of the Bonapartes, and it was there, in 1829, that history recorded its first opinion of the young prince through the pen of an Englishman. James Harris had not then succeeded his father as earl of Malmesbury; having just graduated from Oxford, he was taking the ‘Grand Tour’. The Contessa de Guiccioli had been Byron’s passion from 1819 until his death, while her father and late brother had been expelled from the Romagna in 1820 for aiding revolutionaries, to whom Byron had also lent support. Harris would eventually help the countess escape from Rome, and it was she who introduced him to Hortense:

Her house, though very aristocratic, was the resort of all the Intransigents of both sexes in politics ... Here for the first time I met ... Louis Napoleon, then just of age. Nor would anybody at that time have predicted his great and romantic career. He was a wild harum-scarum youth, or what the French call *un crâne*, riding at full gallop down the streets to the peril of the public, fencing and pistol-shooting, and apparently without serious thoughts of any kind, although even then he was possessed with a conviction that he would some day rule over France. We became friends, but at that time he evinced no remarkable talent or any fixed idea but the one I mention. It grew upon him with his growth, and increased daily until it ripened into a certainty. He was a very good horseman and proficient at athletic games, being short, but very active and muscular. His face was grave and dark, but redeemed by a singularly bright smile.³

The two men were not to meet again for another decade, but Harris’s acute impression was one that would be often repeated from London to Paris and beyond over the next twenty years. The aura of apparent mediocrity overlaying an intense conviction of greatness, all enveloped within a pall of mystery – quite deliberately cultivated – would affect different observers in astonishingly different ways. Those for whom this was an attraction would rarely be able to betray him; those immediately repelled by it would rarely be able to conquer their animosity; and those few who were undecided would rarely remain anything other than mystified by it for the rest of their lives.

At Palais de St Cloud, on 25 July 1830, Louis XVIII’s successor, Charles X, signed four special ordinances – two of highly questionable legality – approved by his Cabinet but without the concurrence of parliament. The measures were repressive, designed to restore order and confidence in a politically bankrupt administration by a swift return to autocratic rule. Instead, they precipitated the July Revolution. On 1 August, Paris found itself fully Orleanist as Louis Philippe, wrapped in the tricolour, was publicly embraced by the Revolutionary hero the Marquis de Lafayette on the balcony of the Hôtel de Ville. Two days later, Charles formally abdicated in favour of his grandson Henri. But it was too little too late, and on 7 August the Provisional Government declared the throne vacant. On 9 August, Louis Philippe was declared king of the French, head of a quasi-constitutional monarchy.

The July Monarchy was, quite simply, the uncorking of *La Légende napoléonienne*, that great magnum of *méthode champenoise* spewing out Napoleonic foam throughout the social, cultural, and – crucially – political life of France in an interminable celebration of *Lui*. France had not, of course, been a signatory to the Quadruple Alliance, and could therefore, at least in theory, legally alter its internal attitude to Napoleonic sentiments with impunity. This was made possible in practice, however, because by 1830 the Allies had long since pulled out of the country and ceased much (although not all) of their close policing of ‘Revolutionary Principles’.

For the first time in sixteen years there was no legal impediment or moral objection to open Napoleonists taking office in the governments of France – provided only that they had no Bonaparte blood in their veins. Jacques Laffite, president of the council

of Louis Philippe's second ministry in November, had been governor of the *Banque de France* under Napoleon in 1814 and sole trustee of his funds during his exile to Elba. The Comte de Bertrand, a general in Napoleon's engineers and Grand Master of the Palace, as well as fellow exile both at Elba and St Helena, found himself in charge of France's chief military academy, the *École Polytechnique*. General Gaspard Gourgaud, Napoleon's premier aide-de-camp and another fellow exile, was called on to become aide-de-camp to Louis Philippe, as was Charles d'Houdetot, former lieutenant in Napoleon's artillery. Under Laffite two more Napoleonic military men found new careers: Colonel Jean Sébastiani, hero of Dresden, as a deputy for Corsica, and Marshal Nicolas Soult, hero of the Peninsular War, as a public Napoleonic Icon, subsequently to hold ministerial power and appointed the first marshal general of France for a century. Adolphe Thiers was the first and greatest of all political Napoleonists, as well as the man who also produced the Orleanist Proclamation, launching his long career by becoming under-secretary of finances in the first ministry.

But the same July Revolution that witnessed this extraordinary uncorking of *La Légend napoléonienne* did nothing for any Bonaparte who was unfortunate enough to be still alive. During the three-day insurrection there had been vague calls of 'Vive l'Empereur!' as well as the even more provocative 'Vive Napoléon Deux!' But the revolution that in some quarters had hoped to sweep in a workers' republic exhausted itself at the feet of the Citizen King who was a compromise maintained by an increasingly large Parisian *bourgeoisie*. Hortense had the good sense to restrain Louis Napoleon from taking any active part in the affairs of France at this time. The wisdom of her caution was underscored when a royal proclamation of 11 September, published in *Le Moniteur universel* two days later, annulled all the terms of the Bourbon proscription *except* Article IV respecting the Bonapartes.

The winter of 1830 was once again spent in Rome with Louis Napoleon, including a fortnight in Florence with Napoléon Louis. It was now that Louis Napoleon tasted the potential that his name and position might offer him when he received from an anonymous source a direct call to enter France and establish himself in place of Napoleon's only legitimate son, the Duc de Reichstadt. The young duke was then being held in gilded captivity in Vienna by his grandfather Franz of Austria, and it was against his 'legitimacy' as Napoleon II that Article IV had been promulgated and maintained. However, out of respect for family precedence, and probably also because he was not yet ready for such an undertaking, Louis Napoleon rejected the call.

If Louis Napoleon's dreams of ruling in France were, for the time being, out of the question, at least visions of a united Italy were still possible. Both he and Napoléon Louis, as ardent Napoleonic republicans, felt that it was their duty to present themselves on the side of Italian liberty and unification. For Louis Napoleon in Rome this meant sporting the green, white, and red tricolour (offered to nationalists of the Italic peninsula by Napoleon) on his horse as a challenge to the papal flag. The challenge did not go unnoticed. Louis Napoleon had arrived in Rome in December and was briskly escorted to the papal frontier in January, joining his brother at Florence while Hortense remained in Rome. One of the most important but obscure incidents in Louis Napoleon's early life now took place, leading directly to his first visit to England, a country he of course professed to despise.

Napoleon's involvement in Italy had been relatively benign. His most important contribution to the future of the peninsula had been to demonstrate that the political unity he had imposed under a single law (the *Code Napoléon*) proved that in spite of the different theoretical aspirations of the *Risorgimento* unification was possible in

practice. Napoleon may have been a dictator and an outsider who therefore had imposed unity through force and from the outside, but he had shown that the idea worked, after a fashion. Following Napoleon's fall, the republican quasi-masonic lodges of patriots known as *Carbonari* – originally opposed to his imperial aspirations – came to regard him with more benevolent hindsight under the reactionary tendencies of Restoration Italy. There were dozens of subversive groups at this time, many unable to tell themselves apart, but they had scored a significant if short-lived victory with their involvement in the Neapolitan uprisings of July 1820 when a constitution had been forced on Ferdinand, the Bourbon king. Countess Guiccioli had probably been a carbonara, and it is likely that it was through her that the Bonaparte brothers first learned about this organization in detail.

Florence lay approximately 90 kilometres south of Modena, a papal duchy ruled on behalf of the pope by the Habsburg Francesco IV on the other side of the Apennines. A carbonaro leader, Ciro Menotti, seeing an opportunity to enlist the support of two 'names' for the organization, made the journey to the Bonapartes in January in the name of the duke, who had decided to conspire with the revolutionaries against his Habsburg masters in Austria for personal gain. The two brothers agreed to lead a part of the nationalist army in their struggle against Austrian domination in the peninsula. The revolutionary army of about 5,000 was under General Giuseppe Sercognani, a former Napoleonic officer, with each brother taking one unit each but working together. At one point they detached themselves from the main force, with Louis Napoleon attacking the town of Città di Castello north of Perugia while Napoléon Louis held out against papal troops in Spoleto, south of Perugia.

Both these enterprises were successful, although the entire insurrection of January-February ultimately failed. The *Carbonari* realized that France, whose support they had been attempting to enlist, would not consider cultivating the movement while two Bonapartes were mixed up in it. At the same time, prominent members of *La Famille* protested openly at the involvement of their young relatives. Reluctantly, Louis Napoleon and Napoléon Louis were recalled to Bologna just as they prepared to march on Rome.

However, the *Carbonari* had misjudged the ideological foundation of the French administration under Louis Philippe, and in spite of the absence of the two Bonaparte brothers France still did not come to their aid. Meanwhile, the recently elected pope, Gregory XVI, had called on Austria for direct help. At the same time, on 3 February, the duke of Modena changed his allegiance back to his Austrian cousins and arrested Menotti. On the following day, the *Carbonari* organized an uprising in Bologna, while on 5 February the duke was forced to flee from his duchy after a protest riot, taking Menotti with him.

After the general insurrection had been crushed, the duke returned to Modena where Menotti was executed at the insistence of Prince Metternich, the Austrian state chancellor. Under torture, Menotti had been forced to divulge everything he knew of the revolutionaries, and probably also the last known location of the two Bonapartes.⁴ The Austrian authorities began to hunt them, and the brothers made their way back to Bologna only with extreme difficulty. On their way through Umbria they were aided by the liberal archbishop of Spoleto, Giovanni Mastai-Ferretti, whose gift of guides and 30,000 francs undoubtedly saved their lives. It was an act of genuine charity and Christian humility in the face of his clear political and ecclesiastical duty, and one that Louis Napoleon would not forget.

On 17 March, Napoléon Louis died at the Hotel del Capello, Forli, a short distance south of Faenza, as a result of a severe contagious illness, which Louis Napoleon also

caught while attending to him. Louis Napoleon was naturally distraught, but he nevertheless became acutely aware that he had suddenly become the senior Bonaparte of the second generation after the Duc de Reichstadt, and while Napoleon's son was still under formal 'house arrest' he knew that the active burden of *La Famille* rested on his shoulders.

Hortense, a gifted survivor, anticipated the eventual outcome well. Early in March, having returned to Florence, she asked an English friend of hers to petition the British minister resident in Tuscany, George Hamilton Seymour, for a passport to London through Paris made out to an English lady travelling with her two sons. The passport was granted and issued to 'Mrs Hamilton' (taken from Seymour's own name) on the condition that the deception should be made known to the authorities on their arrival.

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To understand why Hortense had chosen England as her destination it is necessary to understand both Lord Palmerston and some early convictions of Napoleon.

In 1831, Viscount Palmerston was the Tory member for Cambridge University. He had recently finished a nineteen-year stint as secretary for war and the colonies and had just begun his long term as foreign secretary under the new prime minister, Earl Grey. Liberal by nature, he had admired the French Revolution in its early days and had got to know some of its originators, coming to believe that the process of liberalizing those regimes he considered reactionary and oppressive might avoid widespread bloodshed if sufficient safeguards could be instituted against the onset of another Reign of Terror. In 1829, nourishing a deep dislike of the Bourbon monarchy, he visited Paris and predicted the forthcoming revolution, which he fully supported when it came: 'Well what a glorious event this is in France! How admirably the French have done it! What energy and courage in the day of trial: and what wisdom and moderation in the hour of victory!'⁵

The duke of Wellington, on the other hand, was appalled. He felt that the Tories, which he led, would have won the 1830 election, held soon after the accession of William IV on 26 June, if not for the July Revolution whose ideology permeated England during the period of canvassing through admirers like Palmerston.

However, when Palmerston came to office the following year his initial enthusiasm was soon tempered by the realities of the July Revolution. The natural euphoria at such a political novelty had evaporated, although by this time he had already established in his own mind where his duties as foreign secretary would lie. The promotion of European Liberalism would be the cornerstone of his foreign policy; not based on humanitarianism so much as pragmatism: he would encourage the creation of those democratic states that would be favourable towards England by being in his debt for having helped create them.

This form of elevated patriotism would be behind both his creation of Belgium and his open intervention in the liberalizing of the Iberian Peninsula. With Belgium he would provide England with a neutral zone between France and the Germanic states, and with his manipulation in Spain and Portugal he would free the peninsula from Austrian and French influence in order for them to establish closer economic ties with Britain. Whether any such internal democratic changes intrinsically benefited the native population certainly mattered to Palmerston; but not nearly as much as whether they also benefited Britain, and he never, for example, applied this form of direct or indirect interventionism to Poland.

The conservative Whig administration of November 1830 under Lord Grey, drawn in on Wellington's resignation, soon established a working understanding with what may fairly be described as its French 'counterpart', particularly between foreign secretaries Palmerston and Comte de Molé – another Napoleonist, who had served as minister of justice in 1813. However, Molé would soon prove to be one of the most Anglophobic men in French politics and was removed from office while Palmerston's notorious indiscretions ensured that Anglo-French sympathy would be relatively short-lived.

Nevertheless, it is from this date that the *entente cordiale* – a term coined and first used by Palmerston – originated. By then the Powers had annulled their obligation to help the Bourbons against 'Revolutionary Principles' under Article II of their treaty of 'friendship and alliance', and they did nothing to oppose the Orleanist takeover. Within a few weeks of the *fait accompli* of the July Revolution, Palmerston's enthusiasm was being widely shared, and Louis Philippe was officially recognized by all, great and small, other than the duke of Modena, who was decidedly small. However, although Tsar Nikolai accepted the inevitable, he treated Louis Philippe with the same contempt he would later use with Louis Napoleon, refusing to address him in the accepted protocol between reigning monarchs.

Napoleon had taken a keen interest in England and English history since 1788 when he had compiled a thick manuscript of notes based on his reading of celebrated historians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He began these with the comment that 'It is probable that the British Isles were peopled by Gallic colonies'.⁶ This was a statement of only partial historical truth, but it was one that perhaps revealed the basis of Napoleon's admiration at a time when he detested France and loved his island of Corsica as a true patriot, likening it in many ways to Britain. For him, in 1788, Britain was the great repository of freedom, filled with historical characters worthy of his respect. Napoleon admired Richard *Coeur-de-lyon* for his military skill, the Saxon rebel Hereward the Wake for his tenacity, the statesman and soldier Simon de Montfort for his stand against the abuse of royal authority, and Alfred the Great for his naval achievements. Naturally enough he regarded the Magna Carta as the foundation stone on which the entire structure of English liberty had been built.

Most revealingly, perhaps, the soon-to-be despotic First Consul alluded somewhat unsympathetically to Richard II's *coup d'état* when in 1397 he had resolved to make the crown independent of the Commons in a parliament fronted by the duke of Gloucester and the earls of Warwick and Arundel. Napoleon noted with some relish that when Arundel was hung the king himself was present. In fact Richard II, who was certainly not present at the execution, had commuted the original hanging sentence to the more merciful one of decapitation. But the point was that Napoleon had regarded Arundel as a 'martyr' who had died 'for the liberty of his country'.⁷ Napoleon ridiculed James VI & I and admired Cromwell; but, again interestingly, his respect for the 'Republic' and the Lord Protector disappeared after Cromwell's despotic actions, when, according to Napoleon, his 'early principles ... yielded to the devouring flame of his ambition'.⁸ However, Charles I was, of course, always and consistently 'a tyrant, a traitor, a monster and a public enemy'.⁹

Napoleon's youthful idealism would soon give way to the pragmatism of maturity. When his advances to Britain were rejected during the early stages of the Napoleonic Wars his Anglophilia quickly turned to Anglophobia, demonstrating that both men and women may outdo the fury of hell when 'scorn'd' (an earlier attempt of his to formally join the British army had also been rejected). Nevertheless, Napoleon's

interest in British history remained constant and reasonably perceptive, if at times technically a little shaky, and his early infatuation went a considerable way to promote his willingness to surrender to the English. The illusion of a comfortable exile in England – so dear to him – had been steadfastly maintained by Maitland aboard the *Bellerophon* even though he had secret orders to treat Napoleon as a simple prisoner-of-war.

On 6 July 1815, the Executive Commission in Paris had given Napoleon twenty-four hours to leave France from Rochefort, the coastal town to which he had escaped. Under the circumstances the only country that would have accepted him as a free man was America, and it was there that he would have gone but for the British naval blockade in the Bay of Biscay. All those with Napoleon advised him to surrender to the English, but he required no such encouragement. When Napoleon learned what was really going to happen to him, at the end of July while anchored in Plymouth Sound, his further sense of betrayal once again confirmed him in the belief that England was the perfidious nation *par excellence*.¹⁰ It was his remarks subsequent to this that Louis Napoleon learned to accept at face value, and which by then had become, for him, a Bonaparte family conviction.

But this was not the case with Hortense, a woman of remarkable gifts other than endurance and patience, and who was unsympathetic to her son's professed hatred of *Albion perfide*. Hortense had been particularly close to Napoleon, and it was on her shoulder at Malmaison that he rested his head after Waterloo. She was well aware of Napoleon's sympathetic early attitude towards England and shared it; but, since the notes were never published and uncle and nephew had not known each other, at this stage Louis Napoleon knew only his later prejudices. It is one of the ironies of his early life that, in spite of Britain's stiff and unique resistance to his uncle, in 1831 Hortense could see in the England of the conservative Whigs and the somewhat radical Lord Palmerston the only liberal and civilized culture that might accept her, and the only nation with which France was on genuinely friendly terms.

The fact that the *entente cordiale* might – at least theoretically – actually inhibit her chances, if France objected, was outweighed by the fact that the Bonapartes were still technically French citizens and had never been excluded from British territory. Hortense knew that the basis of the *entente cordiale* did not give either country the right to dictate terms to the other. Moreover, Palmerston would never have even contemplated such a move. The tragedy for Napoleon, in 1815, was that he mistakenly believed he was placing himself at the mercy of ideological descendents of his historical English heroes; the good fortune for Hortense, in 1831, is that she was.

* * *

Louis Napoleon partially recovered at Ancona on the Adriatic coast while the Austrians continued to search for him. They finally accepted Hortense's explanation that he had escaped to Greece, and on 3 April 1831, Easter Day, Hortense left Ancona with Louis Napoleon. Carlo Zappi, a nobleman and another *carbonaro* escaping from the Habsburgs, took his late brother's place. Both were dressed as liverymen in order to pass through the Austrian lines undetected. Accompanying them were Charles Thélin, Louis Napoleon's valet, and Valérie de Masuyer, Hortense's lady-in-waiting since 29 September 1830.

Hortense's story to the authorities was that she was going to attend mass at Loreto, about twenty-five kilometres southwest of Ancona, and so to give credence to the story this they first had to do. The authorities saw nothing peculiar about this, since

Loreto was the reputed site of the ‘Santa Casa’, the alleged house of the Virgin Mary at the time of the Annunciation said to have been miraculously transported to Loreto in 1295 by angels, since when it had become a magnet for pilgrims.

However, instead of returning after mass they took a circuitous route east through Pisa, Siena, Genoa, Nice, Antibes, and Cannes, reaching Lyon on 18 April and Fontainebleau four days later. Hortense showed Louis Napoleon the font in which he had been baptized two decades earlier by Giuseppe Fesch – cardinal archbishop of Lyons and half-brother to Lætizia Bonaparte, the mother of Napoleon and all his siblings – with Napoleon and his new consort, Marie Louise, as godparents. The following day, a Saturday, the small party entered Paris. For Hortense and Louis Napoleon it was their first sight of the city for sixteen years. Still maintaining their disguises, they registered at the Hôtel de Hollande, 16 rue de la Paix, taking rooms with a view of the Place Vendôme and the *Colonne de la Grande Armée* erected to the glory of Napoleon’s armies.

Of all the Napoleonists in France in 1831 perhaps there was none more dangerous for the future of the July Monarchy than the monarch himself. Louis Philippe, chief scion of a cadet branch of the Bourbons, had commissioned two military Napoleonic paintings by Horace Vernet as the Duc d’Orléans in 1822, featuring rather prominently in one of them.¹¹ He had also appeared in an earlier military painting that had been rejected by the salon of 1822 because of its glorification of the younger Bourbon branch and the French Republican Army. Louis Philippe, who claimed that his participation in the battle proved his genuine Republican sympathies, had it exhibited as soon as he succeeded to the throne.¹² Furthermore, following an unpopular decision in the Chamber of Deputies taken in October 1830 not to petition the king and Cabinet for the return of Napoleon’s body for burial beneath the *Colonne de la Grande Armée*, on 8 April Louis Philippe ordered the statue of Napoleon to be placed back on top of the column – from where it had been blown off by the Allies in 1815 – to replace the giant fleur-de-lis the Bourbons had put there in its place.

But in spite of the increasing role Napoleon’s quasi-mythical ghost was playing in France, the timing of Hortense’s arrival in Paris was unfortunate. On 14 February, a service had been held at Saint Germain l’Auxerrois to mark the tenth anniversary of the death of the Duc de Berry, the heir to the French throne who had died a day after being stabbed by a disgruntled saddler, Louis Louvel. When it was rumoured that a crown had been symbolically placed on the bust of his son, the Duc de Bordeaux, held in the church, a mob burst in during the service, sacked it and seriously injured the priest. The mob then moved on to the palace of Archbishop Quélin of Paris and ransacked it. The following day the rioting was resumed, the palace was sacked again and this time the archiepiscopal library of rare books and manuscripts was jettisoned into the Seine.

The solution proposed by the authorities was to order the National Guard to remove all visible crucifixes in the city in the hope of appeasing the largely anti-clerical insurgents. Viscount Granville, ambassador in Paris since 9 January 1831, reported that ‘A general impression prevails that the Government of Louis Philippe is in peril ... There is neither unity of counsel nor decision in conduct. The Ministers distrust each other and the King reposes in them either collectively or individually a very limited confidence’.¹³

The vacillations of Laffitte soon led to his and the Cabinet’s resignation on 10 March. Thiers soon followed as secretary-general of finances, although he remained as a deputy of Bouches-du-Rhône. The elections held on the 13 March saw the return of Casimir Périer as a conservative president of the council after his previous

resignation as chief minister without portfolio on the appointment of Laffitte. Known as the *Résistance* ministry, Périer set about opposing revolutionary activities both at home and abroad; in Paris these were, at the time, daily occurrences. Shortly before Laffitte's resignation, Granville noted that 'songs with prints of the Duc de Reichstadt are distributed in the streets, and the Constitution of 1793 with the speeches of Robespierre are also circulated'.¹⁴

What may be thought to have been the perfect opportunity for Louis Napoleon to show himself was in fact the worst. He was quite ill; the pictures were of his cousin, not himself; and, most importantly, he never wished for a civil war to be fought on his behalf, Article 91 of the Penal Code notwithstanding.

The first logical step, then, would be to make himself known to Louis Philippe. In fact, on 16 April, in Montélimar, Louis Napoleon had prepared a letter of introduction asking the king to 'open the gates of France' and allow him to enter the French army 'as a simple soldier' in the hope that one day he might die 'fighting for my country'.¹⁵ Hortense sent word to the Palais Royal that she desired an audience with Louis Philippe, but his response was to send D'Houdetot to explain that this would not be immediately possible. Instead, Périer visited the hotel on Monday, expressing his and the king's general antipathy to the Bonaparte presence in Paris, an antipathy resulting from fear of a potential disturbance. This perhaps Hortense had not expected, but she explained that she and her son were only passing through and had no intention of remaining, which was of course true. This softened Périer to the extent that he screened and approved Louis Napoleon's letter, after certain cuts, and arranged for her to have an audience with the Citizen King.

Hortense travelled alone to the Palais Royal on the day after the interview with Périer, escorted by D'Houdetot. Louis Philippe was in an awkward position, as he had of course been an exile himself, although he and his brothers had enjoyed a comfortable banishment in Philadelphia and then, after 1800, in England at Richmond-upon-Thames as guests of George III and his successive governments. Furthermore, he was erecting the statue of Napoleon on top of a column in the heart of Paris but found himself having to tell Napoleon's stepdaughter and sister-in-law that neither she nor the Great Man's nephew was exactly welcome in the same city.

Hortense was impressed by Louis Philippe's sympathetic attitude. A deal was struck by which Louis Philippe would accept Louis Napoleon's letter if the pair would leave for London and petition him more formally from there. This would put him in a better position to discuss the question with his ministers who were ignorant of their presence in Paris. However, Louis Napoleon's health took a turn for the worse and Hortense was obliged to delay her departure. Meanwhile, Périer returned to her hotel with a final condition, which was that if Louis Napoleon were eventually allowed to return to France to serve as a simple soldier he should have to change his name. But the young man who wanted only to serve, and die for, his country as a simple soldier at least wanted to do so as a Bonaparte, and not as any kind of Monsieur Smith. His letter to the king may have been sent through Périer willingly, but he no longer believed in the July Monarchy and its liberal posturing. Although bedridden, he could hear the daily and nightly disturbances outside as Périer, who had also assumed the direction of the Ministry of the Interior, tried to deal with the growing pains of the new regime. No doubt when looking at the actions of the *Résistance* ministry Hortense and Louis Napoleon remembered the *Chambre introuvable*.

Throughout the twelve days in Paris, Hortense kept her word to the king and president of the council and did not make her presence known to any of her friends.

Indeed, her few outings were at first undertaken in the hours of darkness; but on Wednesday 4 May, she went on her first daylight walk at the insistence of Masuyer, who accompanied her. What astonished Hortense most of all was the extent of the Napoleonic Legend, something she would have been largely unaware of in Augsburg, Rome, and Arenenberg. She walked into one print shop and saw dozens of beautiful portraits of Napoleon, herself, and various other members of *La Famille*. Portraits of Napoleon were visible even in the windows of private houses, and the two ladies could not resist an exhibition devoted to a single large painting of Napoleon's bleak tomb at St Helena.

When Hortense returned to her hotel Louis Napoleon's health took another turn for the worse. Dr Balancier, a physician whose practice was on the same street, was called in. D'Houdetot also arrived to explain that their extended stay must end that day, but Hortense showed him the doctor with his jar of leeches and sent D'Houdetot away to report back to Périer. Mother and son were now treated as potential troublemakers, and Périer had very good reasons for wanting them out of Paris by Wednesday night since that would be the eve of the tenth anniversary of Napoleon's death.

In fact the real troublemakers had been in Paris for a long time, and the Government knew it. Louis Blanqui, the socialist revolutionary and activist, and Godefroi Cavaignac, a Jacobin captain in the National Guard and a prominent member of the Republican *Société des amis du peuple*, had engineered, and would continue to engineer, many of the riots and disturbances of the early 1830s. This included the mainly pro-Polish demonstration directed against Russia at the Place Vendôme on 5 May.

The kingdom of Poland had been entrusted to the overlordship of Tsar Aleksandr in 1815 at the dissolution of Napoleon's duchy of Warsaw. For Polish patriots, as for Italians, the new rule was considerably worse than the previous one, and on 29 November 1830 a major insurrection against Russian domination took place in Warsaw with the aid of the Polish army. The insurrection was not completely crushed until 26 February 1832, when an imperial ukaze annexed Poland altogether. However, in 1831 Aleksandr's successor, Nikolai, was still uncertain of victory, and agitation in Paris by exiles and sympathetic supporters was vigorous. Most of the disturbances in Paris were used by Polish exiles and native republicans sympathetic to their cause to display antagonism towards the tsar, and had little or nothing to do with Louis Philippe, whatever their underlying motives. Many of them were little more than irritating. For example, on 11 March Poles gathered outside the hotel occupied by the Russian ambassador and sang freedom songs while pelting the windows with stones, breaking a few of them before being dispersed by the National Guard with ease.

But if few of these demonstrations were anti-Orleanist none was overtly Bonapartist. Some Napoleonists took the opportunity to display pictures of the Duc de Reichstadt and shout 'Vive Napoléon Deux!' But for most of the protestors Napoleon was either the epitome of France's virility as a military nation or the symbol, in his youth, of the purest form of Republicanism. Nevertheless, both Louis Philippe and Périer were wise not to want to take any chances on *le cinq mai*. There had never been such a date before, and the late emperor's nephew was lying in a hotel bedroom about one hundred paces north of the great column that had been erected to the eternal glory of the French army under its singular military genius.

However, even though Louis Napoleon was prostrated and under medical care, a virulent rumour spread that he was skulking around Paris and plotting. The rumour survived and embellished itself, claiming that he dressed down in the Quartier

Mouffetard for 'more than a month' before 5 May, and that he was arrested two or three days after *le cinq mai* before being temporarily imprisoned in the formidable prison of Sainte-Pélagie on the rue de la Clef.¹⁶ Although the administration failed to remove Louis Napoleon in time they need not have worried, as the demonstration turned out to be something of a damp squib: 'Yesterday being the anniversary of the death of Napoleon Buonaparte an insignificant mob assembled around the column in the Place Vendome; they distributed flowers and garlands – a Battalion of the National Guards were upon the spot, but the mob was dispersed by a violent shower of rain'.¹⁷

It is difficult to see what Louis Napoleon could have done in this or any other supposedly insurrectionary situation. Périer also later claimed that Louis Napoleon had been conspiring with secret Republican groups in spite of the testimony of Dr Balancier that his patient was covered in leeches that Thursday and unable to move. But being a Bonaparte was sufficient cause to be found guilty by association simply for having been near the scene of the 'crime'. D'Houdetot returned to Hortense to tell her that she and Louis Napoleon must leave Paris within twenty-four hours – that amusing temporal convention offered by blustering bullies the world over but which Hortense by then must have found anything but amusing. At 3 o'clock in the afternoon of Friday 6 May the entire party, less Zappi, left Paris once again. Louis Napoleon was not to see it for another seventeen years; Hortense would never see it again.

NOTES and REFERENCES to Chapter One

¹ *Simpson: Rise* 38-9. Louis Bonaparte had been created Comte de St Leu after his abdication as king of Holland in 1810. Hortense once saved Tsar Aleksandr's life by pushing him away from a water-wheel and he secured for her the title of Duchesse de St Leu under the terms of the Treaty of Fontainebleau. Louis would always resent Hortense's arrogance, derived from their (unhappy) marital home.

² *Jerrold* i 99-100.

³ *Malmesbury* i 33. The account is retrospective although based on contemporary notes.

⁴ 'Menotti was a young man of good fortune, well informed and of elegant manners – but he was extravagant and had imposed his property by various speculations – his house at Modena (falsely said to have been razed to the ground) was splendidly furnished and built on purpose to serve for headquarters to the Carbonari ... before his death he gave a list of all his accomplices and adherents which included half Modena' [PRO FO 27/441, Captain Alfred Hemans to Palmerston 12 Jul. 1831]. Hemans's 27-page *Sketch of the Revolution in Italy* [PRO FO 43/23 'Appendix'] does not mention the Bonaparte brothers by name.

⁵ *Webster* i 80 Palmerston to Charles Grant 17 Aug. 1830.

⁶ *Hall* 6.

⁷ *Ibid.* 13.

⁸ *Ibid.* 14.

⁹ *Ibid.* 109.

¹⁰ For the origin and evolution of the celebrated epithet '*Albion perfide*' during Napoleon's reign, so important to Louis Napoleon's early psychology, see A. D. Harvey *European Attitudes to Britain during the French Revolution and Napoleonic Era* In *History* 63 209, Oct. 1978, 356-65.

¹¹ *The Battle of Hanau* [30 Oct. 1813] and *The Battle of Valmy* [20 Sep. 1792]. In the second of these, Louis Philippe is defending the windmill being attacked by Austro-Prussian forces led by the Duke of Brunswick.

¹² *The Battle of Jemappes* [6 Nov. 1792] in which Louis Philippe is on a white charger on the extreme left.

¹³ PRO FO 27/427 (113), Granville to Palmerston 28 Feb. 1831.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* (119), Granville to Palmerston 7 Mar. 1831.

¹⁵ *Hortense I* iii 278; *Jerrold* i 183 for the text.

¹⁶ *Vandam II* 105-10. Vandam, the son of a district commissioner of the Netherlands State Lottery and an unknown Englishwoman living in France, was raised in Paris by two paternal great-uncles who had served with Napoleon. This, he claimed, explained his apparently formidable literary, artistic, and political connections. He remained in Paris until 1887 before settling in London where he produced several anecdotal books on recent French history. *An Englishman in Paris* (1892) was written as ostensibly the 'lost' memoirs of Sir Richard Wallace, the natural son of the Marchioness of Hertford, a writer and *bon viveur* raised in Paris in a life that had closely resembled Vandam's own.

¹⁷ PRO FO 27/429 (230), Granville to Palmerston 6 May 1831. There has been a tendency to exaggerate the importance of this event. Hortense barely mentioned it, saying only that she watched from her balcony as a crowd approached the column in reverential silence and crowned the eagles at its base with flowers. There was no mention of the National Guard or rainfall, although she admitted that it had rained the previous day on her walk through Paris [*Hortense I* iii 305]. Granville's account is in stark contrast to eulogistic versions promoted during the Second Empire: 'une grand agitation rénaît parmi les habitants de Paris. Dès le point du jour, des milliers de personnes s'étaient rassemblées autour de la colonne de la Place Vendôme. On approchait en silence du monument pour déposer des fleurs et des couronnes. Hortense vit cette scène des fenêtres de son appartement, et elle versa des larmes de joie et d'émotion' [*Hortense II* 439]. We may accept the British ambassador's version as being the closest to the truth.