

NAPOLEON III AND GERMAN UNITY

[Empress Eugénie stated in her will that she left no memoirs. However, Count Fleury, a trusted confidant of the Tuileries Court, has published a book based upon his personal recollections and memoranda written by Napoleon III, which affords a fairly satisfactory substitute for such memoirs. The following is a chapter from this volume, a German translation of which is about to appear at Leipzig.]

From *Frankfurter Zeitung*, April 13
(RADICAL LIBERAL DAILY)

I FIND in the Emperor's memoranda the following statement: 'It is now generally recognized that diplomacy failed to exorcise the threatened conflict in Central Europe in 1866, and that France adopted a policy of watchful waiting until the situation assumed a positive form, in order to intervene at the proper moment in behalf of justice and moderation. I am speaking here, of course, of the war between Prussia and Austria, which was the outcome of the war which Prussia and Austria fought against Denmark. Prussia knew from the beginning that it would be unsafe to venture into such a perilous struggle as that with Austria without the support or the neutrality of France. . . .

'Prussia's lightning victory astounded the world and made a deep impression in France. No one imagined that Prussia would win so easily. Quite the contrary. Most people thought that Austria would be victorious, and that the neutral powers of Europe would be called upon to restrain its excesses as a conqueror. But it turned out otherwise; we were called upon to keep Prussia within bounds. Our government newspapers were right in asserting that our wise moderation and influence were to be thanked for the fact that the victorious army halted before the gates of Vienna, that the integrity of Austrian territories was preserved, that the inde-

pendence of the smaller South German states was maintained, and that certain concessions were secured for Denmark. Nevertheless, the terms of the Prague Treaty did not satisfy French public opinion. A militarist party had arisen in our country, which went so far as to urge me to declare war on Prussia while her forces were still upon the Danube. . . .

'Meantime, some reply must be made to the opposition deputies and newspapers, who charged the government with weakness and cowardice, and accused it of lacking courage to defend the true interests of France by force of arms. These were serious charges which, in our opinion, must not be allowed to remain unanswered, especially since it was so easy to prove them false. I replied that I supported the restoration of Great European powers, not out of weakness, but in response to my convictions; and declared with pride, that my policies and acts would have been applauded by the great man who had issued such sage counsels to his successors from his lonely island prison on Saint Helena. In private conversation at that time, and later at the opening of Parliament in 1867, I quoted the following words of Napoleon I: "One of my main purposes was to bring together and unite nations of similar character, who were geographically thrown upon each other, and who had been separated

and mutilated by government intrigues and revolutions. Such a regrouping of nations will inevitably occur sooner or later through the force of necessity. I gave the first start to that process, and I do not believe that after my overthrow and the destruction of my system, any other kind of European balance of power is possible except such a grouping into great political unities as I described." The transformations which are now occurring in Italy and Germany all look toward realizing this broadminded and farsighted plan of eventually uniting all European states into a single confederation.

'In spite of all our efforts, we were unable to silence our unconvinced and obstinate opponents within and without the legislative chamber. The government was criticized on every hand because it had not at once declared war. Men said that our international policy was limited to accepting passively whatever situation arose, and asserted that our sins of omission had seriously impaired the prestige of France. Public opinion in our country was most unstable, alternating between joy over the destruction of the Treaty of 1815, and fear of the growing power of Prussia; it wished to preserve peace, and at the same time hoped to widen our territories by a war; it was enthusiastic over the liberation of Italy, and simultaneously perturbed at the dangers which threatened the Holy See. So our government had to be very explicit as to its policies. France could not follow an ambiguous course in such a crisis. If the important transformations just then occurring in Germany endangered her interests and threatened her power, that fact must be faced courageously, and whatever steps were necessary for our security must be taken. But if France lost nothing through these changes, she ought frankly to acknowledge the fact and to exert

herself to the utmost to allay exaggerated uneasiness, and to refrain from unjustifiable criticism of men and acts, either at home or abroad, when such criticism was likely to create international friction and distrust and to embarrass the country in the course which it was resolved to follow. This is, in substance, the general line of thought which I impressed upon my foreign minister, and which was incorporated practically unchanged in a confidential circular sent to all our diplomatic representatives abroad.

'In further conversations with the same minister, I outlined certain additional ideas, which I believe were not included in the circular, but of which I still have memoranda, and therefore am able to record here. They indicate clearly my attitude at that time toward several other questions. I said that the Holy Alliance had leagued together against France after 1815 all European nations from the Urals to the Rhine. The German confederation then contained 80,000,000 people, with Austria and Prussia at its head. It reached from the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg to Trieste, from the Baltic to Trent, and surrounded us with an iron band strengthened by the five great military strongholds of the Confederation. Our own strategic situation though protected by nature, had been weakened by skillful territorial combinations. The whole military power of the Confederation could be concentrated against us at any moment. Austria and Germany had established themselves firmly on the Adige, and could, whenever necessary pour through the Alps to attack us on the south, while Prussia, set solidly on the Rhine, was the natural leader of all the North German states, which were incessantly striving toward political reorganization, and had been taught to regard France as the hereditary enemy of their national aspira-

tions and the chief danger which threatened their existence. During all these years it had been impossible for us to make an alliance with any continental power except Spain. Italy was crushed to fragments, and powerless, so that she did not count as a great power. Prussia was neither solidly enough established nor independent enough to break with her old traditions. Austria had her hands full keeping her Italian possessions in subjection, and therefore had neither the leisure nor the inclination to ally herself with France. The long period of peace had deceived us into forgetting the perils ever hanging over us from these territorial arrangements and alliances, the full effect of which would not be visible until war occurred. But all men knew that France had repeatedly owed her deceptive safety solely to the fact that she had renounced the rôle which she ought properly to play in the world's affairs. The truth was that the three great Northern nations had for nearly forty years been arrayed against us as one man, ready at any moment to strike, bound together firmly by the memory of their former defeats and victories, by the similarity of their governments, by solemn treaties, and by a sentiment of distrust toward our liberal political institutions and our struggles forward toward a more progressive civilization.

'But what do we see to-day? The Northern coalition has broken. Europe has reverted to the policy of absolute freedom in making alliances. All nations are now at liberty to do what they please, to pursue unhindered the policy which best satisfies their individual interest. Greater Prussia has disentangled herself from its alliances with the other German states, and has become a guaranty for the independence of the German Fatherland. France should not delay recognizing this new situation. With a reassuring conscious-

ness of her own marvelous unity and racial homogeneity, France cannot well oppose the great process of fusion which is now occurring across the Rhine. We should not show jealousy over this conspicuous manifestation of the principle of nationality, which we ourselves embody, and which we have traditionally championed in our relations with other governments. Now that Germany has attained the unity toward which she has so long aspired, her restlessness will cease and her old sentiment of hostility toward our country will gradually die out. By following the example of France in seeking national unity, she has taken a step which should draw us closer together and not separate us further from each other, as some people fear. I believe in the honorable friendship of Germany.'

The following quotations from the memoranda left by the Emperor Napoleon III were also written before 1870. I have selected them because they relate to the same topics as the preceding quotations and throw still further light upon the opinions therein expressed.

'Why is it that old ideas, which still influence the public mind, make many Frenchmen regard as their country's enemies, instead of its allies, nations which have now been freed from the influences and interests which made them our enemies, which are now rejoicing in a new national life, which are governed by the same principles as ourselves, and which share with us the progressive aspirations characterizing modern society? A more stable Europe, with territorial adjustments which give it greater national homogeneity, is a guaranty for the peace of the continent and can, under no circumstances, constitute a danger for France, as our critics would make us believe. . . .

‘I would fain lift our international policies out of the narrow-hearted and petty ruts of an earlier age. I do not believe that the power of a nation is dependent on the weakness of its neighbors. A true balance of power must be based upon the true contentment of all European peoples. I am expressing here merely convictions which I have always held, and am repeating what have been the traditional principles governing the policy of the Imperial family. Napoleon I foresaw the changes which have now occurred in the map of Europe, and he sowed the seed of the new nationalities when he created a kingdom of Italy in the Apennine peninsula, and wiped out some two hundred and fifty little independent states in Germany. It was thus that the Great Emperor played the proud rôle of the world’s arbiter, a rôle which was by no means without honor; for he ended useless bloodshed, moderated by his all-compelling intervention the passions of the victors, softened the suffering of defeat, and, even in the midst of manifold obstacles, frequently succeeded in maintaining peace. I would be fatally misconceiving my rôle in the Europe of to-day, had I broken my promise of neutrality and suddenly precipitated France into a fearful and uncertain war — into one of those frightful struggles which spring out of race hatred, where a whole people rises as a single man to crush a rival nation equally united.

‘During the same year — 1867 — I seized the opportunity offered by several private and public incidents to advocate the same point of view, expressing myself still more explicitly in connection with Prussia. On one occasion I said: “In spite of the declarations of the government, which has never wavered in its attitude of peace, the idea has become current that every change in the domestic organization of Ger-

many must be made a source of friction and hostility between France and Prussia. We should do our best to suppress this false conception. France is ready to accept of its own accord the changes which have occurred across the Rhine, and to declare that we do not intend to intervene in political developments there which harmonize with the expressed wishes of the people of all the German states, so long as those events do not directly threaten our interests and our honor.” That was a plain statement, and left no doubt as to my personal attitude toward these mighty events. I may add that my views in these matters were shared by more than one thoughtful person in my intimate circle, although some of them later changed their minds.’

The last lines appear to have been added by the Emperor after the Franco-German War. The two following extracts may have been written prior to 1870, but apparently they were revised later.

‘The very critics who would have blamed me most if I had resorted to arms at that time — I refer naturally to the time of the Prussian-Austrian War — were the most open in expressing their disapproval and resentment at the political developments I describe above. In a word, they would have blamed me if I had made war, and they blame me now because I did not make war! . . . Thiers was one of those inconsistent men who always found fault with me and my policy. His ideas on this subject are best exhibited in a speech which he made in the Chamber of Deputies in March, 1867. In that speech, which was eagerly read both at home and abroad, this caustic opponent of the Second Empire declared that the victory of Königgrätz was the severest blow to French prestige which the

country had suffered since the disastrous days of the invasion of 1814; that the existence of another great power on the frontier of France was incompatible with the security of France; that after we had committed the first blunder of passively assisting the erection of a united state of 23,000,000 people beyond the Alps (Savoy), we had committed the still greater blunder of permitting Prussia to extend its powers and its territories, until the German Confederation was now one of the most powerful political combinations in Europe. We should have reason to regret this as soon as France was forced to mobilize its armies in order to defend the independence of the small German states which Prussia was planning to subjugate. This speech was received by the whole Chamber with enthusiastic applause. But it is always very easy to harp on the alleged weakness of any moderate international policy. Such criticism can hardly justify itself when coming from the mouth of men like Thiers, who at the very moment when the last war — the War of 1870 — was on the point of being declared, threw their whole influence into the scale to prevent a thoroughgoing reorganization of the army. If they were so opposed to our taking the field in 1870, would they not have opposed it still more had we done so in 1866? I believe there can be no doubt as to that, and consequently I do not attach much weight to their reproaches.

‘Another public man of the same type, Jules Favre, went even further than Thiers, for he stated publicly: “We should not only have vetoed Prussia’s ambition in 1866, but above all, we should have attacked both Prussia and Austria when they made their joint campaign against Denmark.”’

Several years after Napoleon wrote down these statements, he said to me,

as we were conversing regarding Thiers and Favre, and the general subject with which we have just been dealing: ‘After the overthrow of the empire, Thiers and Favre took much credit to themselves for the consistently peaceful policy they advocated in their speeches just before the time the War of 1870 broke out. It suited them very well to forget their earlier declarations. The truth is, that, prior to 1870, Thiers had continually harped upon the inevitability of a war with Prussia. In his opinion it was merely a question of seizing the proper moment for our attack. I believe one cannot too strongly condemn his conduct, which consisted in constantly proclaiming that France had been humiliated, that the battle of Königgrätz was a second Waterloo, and that we must now give up all hope of again rehabilitating ourselves in the eyes of the world. Thiers and Favre took the lead in preaching on every conceivable occasion that Prussia was a standing threat to our Rhine frontier. It indicates a profounder misunderstanding of the French temperament than these gentlemen could have been guilty of, to excite the nation to a veritable paroxysm of outraged patriotism, and then suddenly call upon that nation to subdue its anger and to sheath its sword. Or was all this merely a stratagem of the opposition, which violated every rule of prudence and the plain demands of political honesty?’

‘Let me add here, that our journalists and other writers joined in these attacks. They are typified by the views of the well-known publicist, Prévost Paradol, who said to a member of the Court circle, and wrote in one of the most widely read books published at that time:

“The more one ponders on the subject, the more convinced one becomes that our love of peace, our temperate public policy, the honest endeavors

of our government, and all similar influences taken together, will not prevent a collision between France and steadily expanding Prussia. For our country is hemmed in by its natural frontiers, and has no prospect of being able to increase its population or its

territories. Our relative decline will put our political and military pride to a hard test." Then Paradol summarized the whole matter in the following words: "France must reconcile itself to becoming a power of the second rank, or she must fight."

RUSSIAN SELF-PORTRAYAL

[The three short articles which we print below are taken from recent Bolshevik newspapers. The first, purporting to be the conversation of an immigrant returning from America, appeared in 'Krasnaya Gazeta' of February 4, over the name M. Rapoport. The second is a translation of a letter written by a peasant, Frol Silin, to the Moscow 'Bednota,' a publication of the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party, and appeared in the issue of January 16. It is a remarkable example of an outspoken protest against some of the conditions which have forced the Bolshevik authorities to reverse their policy toward the agricultural classes. The last article, intended as a protest against public markets, is from the 'Krasnaya Gazeta' of December 29, and was signed 'Citizen Port-Yansky.']

I

His yellow knitted sports cap, new overcoat, double-breasted coat of dark-brown wool, well-creased trousers of 'mixed goods,' and shiny yellow laced boots, made him very conspicuous in the group of applicants before a table in the Provincial Land Division.

When the peasant woman, wrapped in a peasant's coat and a warm kerchief, who was asking about certain kinds of cows, and the bearded old peasant, who 'has simply got to go back to-day,' have left the table, he hands in his small white questionnaire sheet.

He is an 'American,' a Russian workman who has come from America and wishes to find farm work in a village.

'Do you want to go to the soviet of Economy at "Byezabotnoye," six versts from the station?' they ask him.

He begins to speak in English, but immediately corrects himself and says through his teeth: 'All right, I'll go.'

He is a native of Pskov province,

and has been in America since 1910. He was for a short time in Argentina; then he worked in the state of Washington, and last of all he was a farm hand near Detroit.

'I was deported to Russia,' he says. 'Of the three hundred of us who have just come, only twenty were deported by the American authorities. The rest all returned of their own free will, having registered to come back to Russia as early as April, 1920. Many of them owned homes in America, and even automobiles; but they sold everything when the chance was offered to return to their fatherland.

'The longing to go back to Russia is very strong among all Russian workmen. Their homeward migration has been particularly noticeable since the beginning of 1920, when all the Communist workmen's papers and magazines in America were suppressed.

'One of the most popular of these was the weekly *Novy Mir*, which reprinted from Russian newspapers articles by