

Raymond J. Jirran

A. Introduction

Two hundred years after the rise to power of Napoleon, students still know his name and something about what he did, without ever having formally studied about the man. Few people have ever exercised either the authority or the power of Napoleon. For these reasons, the course goal for this topic is **to evaluate the legitimation of human rights**.

B. Mortality

The Napoleonic wars were extremely deadly. Military combativeness constituted the underlying strength of Napoleon. His genius lay in scrambling, rather than carrying out a strategic plan. This made his army constantly and immediately dependent upon him in the field.¹ Napoleon was responsible for many deaths, thereby ending and, at the same time, legitimating human rights.

Military deaths came more from infectious diseases, especially typhus, rather than from battle. For all of those killed during the Napoleonic wars, the health of Europe was quite strong enough quickly to replace the dead. By the 1840s food, rather than war, greatly limited population growth.²

After 1845 a parasitic fungus, originating in Peru, attacked crops in Europe, having a devastating effect on the populations of Ireland, Belgium, and Germany. The diets of these peoples still rely heavily upon the potato. Millions of people died. Others left, particularly the Irish, to seek their fortunes elsewhere around the world. Today, there are more people of Irish ancestry in the U.S. than in Ireland.

C. Employment

Equality and liberty are two different things. Napoleon believed in equality. Napoleon did not believe in liberty. Believing in equality, Napoleon did not reinstitute slavery. Not believing in liberty, Napoleon sent his best generals to attack Pierre Dominique Toussaint L'Ouverture in Haiti.³

Napoleon praised the French Revolution for having destroyed the monarchy and feudalism. His reason was that the Revolution made possible the rise of Napoleon. Napoleon wanted careers open to talent. Under the Empire of Napoleon, all citizens had an equal right to public employment and an equal duty to support public expenditures.

In a very profound sense, Napoleon had a right to say: "I have organized the revolution." His desire to perpetuate the Revolution, however, did not stop Napoleon from founding a nobility or a Legion of Honor. Napoleon believed good government required appealing to either the vanity or the ambition of those governed. The appeal needed to be based on hard work and courage rather than birth to a good family.

Napoleon did not realize that freedom was essential to the Revolution. Napoleon said several times that he believed that the French people esteemed equality and, especially, honor much more greatly than they did liberty. Napoleon had saved the French people from anarchy and he gave the French people great military glory. To Napoleon, nothing else mattered.

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D. Governance

Nothing that seemed defiled from before the Revolution remained after the Revolution. Before the Revolution, Blacks in the French colonies were neglected. After the Revolution, a national council made plans to bring the sacraments to the freed Blacks in the former colonies.⁴ Napoleon had the task of rebuilding the state and the government into something undefiled. Napoleon had excellent natural talent for the job.

The system of autonomous communes set up in 1790 did not work. As a result, Napoleon logically did away with all local autonomy. Napoleon divided the country into departments run by prefects; districts by subprefects; and communes by mayors. Napoleon appointed them all and is said to have known them all by name. In effect, Napoleon had replaced the intendants or comptrollers of the monarchy with his prefects, subprefects, and mayors. Because of his bureaucratic efficiency, Napoleon paid less to the tax collectors. Napoleon said: "My prefects were emperors on a small scale." Elements of the pre-Revolutionary defilement did, in fact, remain.

Napoleon intended to disband his dictatorial institutions after the war against all of Europe. His intent went unrealized. No French government has yet found the means to create strong local institutions and at the same time retain a strong national government. The combination itself, however, is possible, as witnessed in the United States and England.

The legal codes and the judiciary were elaborated under the direction of Napoleon, his most noteworthy domestic accomplishment. Napoleon founded the University of France which supervised all teaching: elementary, secondary, and higher, including even the seminaries. Briefly, Napoleon gave France her modern shape which continued until 1939, and the Second World War, much as he had molded it.

E. Conclusion

By studying the Introduction to Napoleon; Employment; and Governance, the student is better able to evaluate the legitimation of human rights. Lex et ius, law and justice, are what is required for effective governance. With the exception of liberty, Napoleon brought them all to France. Law, however, is a practical contrariety to freedom. While justice demands freedom, the real issue is freedom for whom to do what. The French middle classes lost their freedom to govern themselves and, so, Napoleon took it. The incompatible inseparables at work here are those between violence and law. Napoleon was a master at both.

Special note is due Savoy 1792, Helevetic Republic 1798, and Cisalpine Republic 1797 on "Map 21.1 France and Its Sister Republics, 1798" on "Map 21.1 France and Its Sister Republics, 1798" on page 732 in the seventh edition of Chambers.⁵

Special attention is due to Cape Trafalgar, 1805; Waterloo, 1815; Leipzig, 1813; Austerlitz, 1805; and Borodino, 1812 on Map 21.2, "Europe around 1810," page 742, in the seventh edition of Chambers.⁶ Students are reminded to read, study, think, and prepare a comment.

Supplement

F. Governance (continued)

Napoleon should not be short-changed. Napoleon does deserve credit for bettering the central institutions of France. The Emperor Napoleon used five or six thousand officials to collect taxes. The monarchy had utilized two hundred thousand. Napoleon collected twenty-five per cent of the taxes paid by farmers to the Old Regime. Napoleon was more efficient, however, in that the state actually received twice as much revenue as it had been receiving the old way.

G. Introduction

Although military strategy continues to interest his students, the professor sees such interest as leading to the nuclear holocaust and, hence, fundamentally unproductive. Mainstream academia and the sixth edition of Chambers treats the military exploits of Napoleon from page 731-746.⁷ While that is plenty enough, an item here and an item there might profitably be added, nonetheless.

Toussaint won, though by French treachery, his life ended in a French prison. As a result of the victory of those Black freedmen, Thomas Jefferson broke a campaign promise to make the Louisiana Purchase, at a cost of about three cents per acre. Dr. Jirran regards omitting such information as this from Eurocentric texts as a sign of racism. Although Toussaint was not indexed in the fifth edition of Chambers, he appears on page 707 in the seventh.⁸

The French were not the only Europeans Toussaint defeated. First, he had to get rid of the English. Some historians have regarded the Caribbean colonies as economic mill stones around the necks of their European owners. Regarding these colonies like the money-machines they were treated as by the mother countries is more likely.

The western third of the island of Hispaniola, Saint Domingue, accounted for "some 40 percent of France's foreign trade...on the coastal plains of this little colony little larger than Wales was grown about two-fifths of the world's sugar, while from its mountainous interior came over half the world's coffee."⁹ The French abolished their slave trade in 1818, ten years after the British. The French slave system, however, managed to continue until 1848.¹⁰

The Caribbean war, which ended in 1802 with the Treaty of Amiens established British commercial and maritime supremacy over the French. The seventh edition of Chambers treats the 1801 Treaty of Amiens on page 740.¹¹ The Treaty, evidently, was written the next year. The political issue was not British control of the West Indies, but British survival beyond Napoleon.¹²

Before the Treaty of Amiens, early in the Eighteenth Century, the French West Indian colonists had developed self-governance to the point of ignoring French royal decrees not to their liking. This government was racist, limited to whites. The point is that in French, Spanish, and British America, all three, in the words of Greene, "What was legal, what was constitutional, was determined not by fiat but by negotiation."¹³ Human rights had its own agenda, apart from whoever happened to be in power at the time.

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H. Art

The Revolution had encouraged neoclassicism. Continuing in this tradition, in imitation of the Caesars, Napoleon erected triumphal arches. Newport News has a similar commemorative arch near the shipyard. Napoleon built commemorative columns and commissioned David to paint the "Coronation." This art work still exists.

I. 1812

Starting in July and for the next six months Napoleon led a half million men to Moscow and back. By the time the Grande Armee recrossed the Niemen¹⁴ River in Mid-December at least eighty per cent of those half million were captured, killed, starved, or frozen to death. The event is commemorated by such artistic works as Beethoven's Symphony No. 3 in E. Flat Major, Op. 55, "Eroica," Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture, and Tolstoy's War and Peace (1863-1869). Tolstoy is listed in the index to the fifth edition of Chambers but not in either the sixth or seventh.¹⁵ Although in the seventh edition, Beethoven appears for pages 677, 756, 799, 1089,¹⁶ the 1812 Overture is nowhere mentioned. The "Eroica" will be mentioned again in the January 1, 1992 edition of Topic 21, Romanticism, D. Nationalism. No other Nineteenth Century European event is as richly documented, particularly from the writings of the participants, as the return of the Grande Armee.

Russian, French, and German scholars have been interested, but not English-speaking scholars. In passing, the perceptive student will note that one of the co-authors of Chambers, Isser Woloch, is cited in the Recommended Reading on page 780 of the fourth edition of Chambers for The French Veteran from the Revolution to the Restoration (1979). In the sixth edition of Chambers Woloch is cited in the Recommended Reading on page 701 for Jacobin Legacy: The Democratic Movement under the Directory (1970). The seventh edition, page 758, also cites Jacobin Legacy as well as The New Regime: Transformations of the French Civic Order, 1789-1820s (1994).¹⁷ This means that Chapter 21, "The Age of Napoleon" should be particularly sensitive and accurate.

One reason scholars may lighten up on the foreign policies of Napoleon is because Napoleon spread many good, democratic ideas throughout Europe. Non-French scholars are reluctant to give Napoleon credit, French scholars are ashamed that Napoleon was beaten. The foreign policies of Napoleon were important.¹⁸

The ideals which Napoleon spread included the superiority of the French Enlightenment, constitutional government, political nationalism, economic liberalism, and the "provision of appropriate institutional, administrative, financial and judicial structures."¹⁹ Subject peoples frequently resisted plans to introduce the Napoleonic civil code, confiscate church property, abolish guilds, and end serfdom. While Napoleon was able to attract the social elites to his policies, the foreign masses, who did most of the suffering and dying, were unwilling to collaborate. Where Dr. Jirran refers to the masses as "gross, crass, and greedy; rude, crude, and lewd; given a chance they'll kill you and me and shoot themselves in the foot," Napoleon regarded the masses as "ignorant, normally passive, and rationally unknowable." The words belong to Stuart Woolf, the historian, not Napoleon himself.²⁰ The masses remained religious and often resorted to banditry, as in Spain, to drain the Grand Empire.

J. Conclusion

Napoleon exhibited a rare combination of truth and politics. Napoleon makes most sense when he is regarded as prioritizing politics over truth. Dr. Jirran regards Napoleon as spreading some

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important truths regarding the legitimation of human rights, even though Napoleon would not go so far as to admit political rights beyond what Napoleon permitted. This continual prioritizing of truth over politics is what continues to give greatness to Western civilization.

Comments on the Seventh Edition of Chambers, pages 726-759

In the opinion of the professor, Chambers is the most scholarly textbook on the market. Chambers well represents mainstream thinking in the history profession. The professor, however, disagrees in many significant ways with mainstream thinking. Some of these disagreements are set forth above and others in the following comments.

Page Column

Paragraph
Line

0728 last line

"...war had once again become the central motif of the Western experience."

In other words, politics determined truth. In a sense state politics substituted for church politics

0733 2 3 5

"...Admiral Horatio Nelson's fleet..."

See page 740, 1, 3, 3-4.

0735 2 1 9-11

"...government by experts stood as an alternative to meaningful parliamentary democracy for the next century."

In other words, truth dominated politics.

0744 Chronology

Amiens

Amiens is not located on:

Page

484

"Map 14.3 France in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries"

584-585

"Map 17.1 The Wars of Louis XIV"

707

"Map 20.1 Redividing the Nation's Territory in 1789: From Historic Provinces (*left*) to Revolutionary Departments (*right*)"

713

"Map 20.2 Conflicts in Revolutionary France"

732

"Map 21.1 France and its Sister Republics, 1789"

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Amiens is located at	49.54 N	2.18 E	compared with
Waterloo	50.43 N	4.24 E	
Paris	48.52 N	2.20 E	

Footnotes

¹ Claude C. Sturgill, review of Owen Connelly, Blundering to Glory: Napoleon's Military Campaigns is scholarly, though requiring only an eighth grade reading level.

² William. McNeill, Plagues and Peoples (New York: Anchor Books, 1976), p. 229.

³ While the index to the sixth edition of John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, Jr., From Slavery to Freedom, (New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, 1988), page 575 lists "Toussaint L'Ouverture, Pierre Dominique," Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary (1986) has "Toussaint-Louverture . . . orig. Francois-Dominique Toussaint." Dr. Jirran does not know what to make of the difference.

⁴ The Catholic Historical Review, ?? , (January 1982): 27; The American Historical Review 1/88? re bishops

⁵ Note Lyons, 1793; Valmy, 1792; Jemappes, 1792; Fleurus, 1794; Ligurian, 1797 on "Map 21.1: The Revolutionary Republics: 1792-1799" on page 844 in the fifth edition of Chambers; Savoy 1792, Helevetic Republic 1798, and Cisalpine Republic 1797 on "Map 21.1 France and Its Sister Republics, 1798" on page 676 in the sixth edition, 732 in the seventh.

⁶ Map 21.2, "Europe: 1810," page 854, in the fifth edition of Chambers; page 685, in the sixth edition, page 742, in the seventh edition

⁷ Mainstream academia and the fifth edition of Chambers treats the military exploits of Napoleon from page 874 to 863; the sixth edition, 675-688, the seventh edition 731-746.

⁸ Page 652 in the sixth, 707 in the seventh.

⁹ David Geggus as quoted in Franklin W. Knight, "The Haitian Revolution," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 105, No. 1 (February), page 107-08 as cited in Jaime E. Rodriguez O., "The Emancipation of America," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 105, No. 1 (February 2000), footnote 23, page 138.

¹⁰ Franklin W. Knight, "The Haitian Revolution," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 105, No. 1 (February 2000), page 114.

¹¹ The fifth edition of Chambers treats the 1801 Peace of Amiens on page 851; the sixth the Treaty of Amiens on page 683, the seventh on page 740.

¹² Richard B. Sheridan, review of Michael Duffy, Soldiers, Sugar, and Seapower: The British Expeditions to the West Indies and the War against Revolutionary France in The American Historical Review, Vol. 95, No. 2 (April 1990), pages 487-488.

¹³ Greene, "American Revolution," page 95 as cited in Jaime E. Rodriguez O., "The Emancipation of America," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 105, No. 1 (February 2000), footnote 20, page 137.

¹⁴ The Niemen River is the Nemen River after it turns south, in Lithuanian S.S.R. on the "Contemporary Europe" map on the inside back cover of the fifth edition of Chambers. In the sixth edition, that river appears on the inside front cover "Physiography of Europe" map.

¹⁵ Page 682 in the fifth edition, but not in either the sixth or seventh.

¹⁶ In the fifth edition, Beethoven appears for pages 755, 883, 960-961, in the sixth, 626, 700, and 795; in the seventh, 677, 756, 799, and 1089.

¹⁷ In the fifth edition of Chambers Woloch is cited in the Recommended Reading on page 864 for Jacobin Legacy: The Democratic Movement under the Directory (1970). In the sixth edition of Chambers Woloch is cited in the Recommended Reading on page 701 for Jacobin Legacy: The Democratic Movement under the Directory (1970). The seventh edition, page 758, also cites *Jacobin Legacy* as well as *The New Regime: Transformations of the French Civic Order, 1789-1820s* (1994).

¹⁸ James Frigugletti, review of Stuart Woolf, Napoleon's Integration of Europe, in The American Historical Review, Vol. 97, No. 4 (October 1992), page 1206.

¹⁹ Stuart Woolf, Napoleon's Integration of Europe, page 12, as cited in the review by James Frigugletti in The American Historical Review, Vol. 97, No. 4 (October 1992), page 1206.

²⁰ Stuart Woolf, Napoleon's Integration of Europe, page 187, as cited in the review by James Frigugletti in The American Historical Review, Vol. 97, No. 4 (October 1992), page 1206.