BY THE SAME AUTHOR

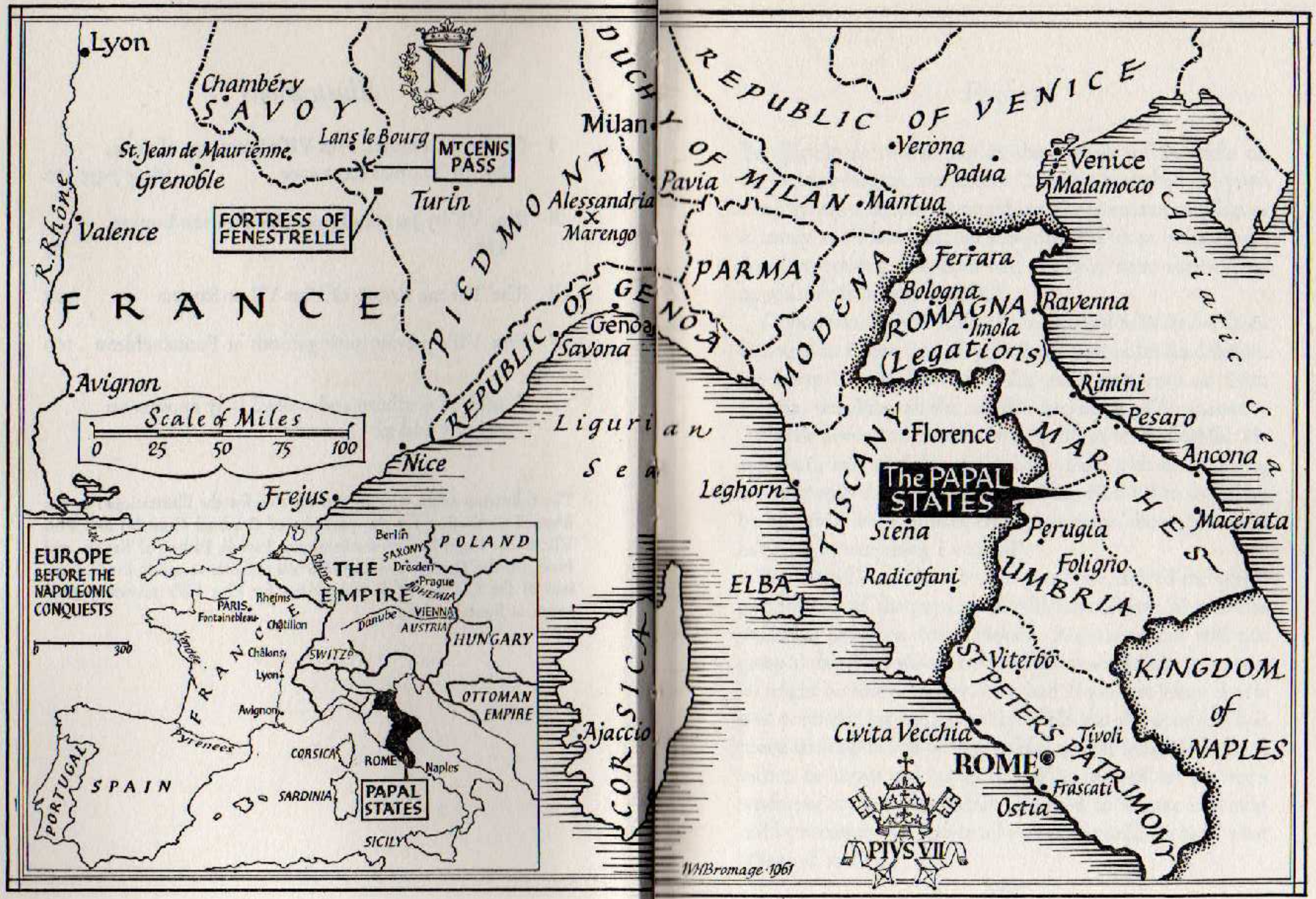
Pio Nono
Mazzini and the Secret Societies
The Catholic Church in the Modern World
Revolution and Papacy

E. E. Y. HALES

Napoleon and the Pope

THE STORY OF NAPOLEON AND PIUS VII

LONDON
EYRE & SPOTTISWOODE


Lyon
Chambéry
SAVOY
St. Jean de Maurienne
Grenoble
Lans le Bourg
Mt CENIS PASS
Turin
FORTRESS OF FENESTRELLE
R. Rhône
Valence
FRANCE
Avignon
Scale of Miles
0 25 50 75 100
Nice
Frejus
PIEDMONT
Milan
Alessandria
Marengo
REPUBLIC OF GENOA
Genoa
Savona
Ligurian Sea
CORSICA
Ajaccio
DUCHY OF MILAN
Pavia
Mantua
REPUBLIC OF VENICE
Verona
Padua
Venice
Malamocco
Adriatic Sea
PARMA
MODENA
Ferrara
Bologna
ROMAGNA
Imola
(Legations)
Ravenna
Rimini
Pesaro
Ancona
Macerata
MARCHES
Florence
TUSCANY
Leghorn
ELBA
The PAPAL STATES
Siena
Radicofani
Perugia
Foligno
UMBRIA
St Viterbo
ST PETER'S PATRIMONY
Civita Vecchia
ROME
Tivoli
Frascati
Ostia
KINGDOM of NAPLES
PIVS VII
WHBromage·1961
EUROPE BEFORE THE NAPOLEONIC CONQUESTS
0 300
POLAND
Berlin
SAXONY
Dresden
Prague
BOHEMIA
THE EMPIRE
Rhine
Danube
VIENNA
AUSTRIA
HUNGARY
PARIS
Fontainebleau
Rheims
Châtillon
Châlons
Lyon
Avignon
FRANCE
Vendée
SWITZd
OTTOMAN EMPIRE
CORSICA
SARDINIA
ROME
Naples
PAPAL STATES
SICILY
Pyrenees
SPAIN
PORTUGAL

CHAPTER I

General Bonaparte Lands

Looking back over the centuries it is only rarely that one can point to a particular occasion and say: there, at that time, in that place, a particular person did something which changed the whole course of civilization. One such occasion, no doubt, was when the Roman Emperor Constantine accepted Christianity and had himself baptized. But other events, equally dramatic, have had less permanent effect. When John Wilkes Booth shot Abraham Lincoln at Ford's theatre something cataclysmic certainly occurred; yet the course of history was not changed by the deed because, before very long, the principles Lincoln had stood for were achieved; the shooting had only delayed the reconciliation on which he had set his heart.

Historians generally have seen, in the landing of General Bonaparte on 9th October 1799, at Fréjus, in the south of France, one of those decisive occasions destined to change the course of civilization. He might so easily never have landed at all. He had sailed in a small frigate almost the whole length of the Mediterranean Sea at a time when Nelson's Navy dominated those waters. He may well have owed his survival to an unseasonable northerly breeze that kept his ship hugging the north African coast; at all events he only sighted an English ship on the last day and was able to land safely, to proceed straight to Paris, to effect his *coup d'état*, and during the next fifteen years so to revolutionize the life and institutions of most of Europe that his period of power marks the true divide between modern society and the *ancien régime*.

Had Bonaparte not landed it is possible enough that the positive gains of the French Revolution would have been lost. For though it was ten years since the Bastille had been captured, and more than six since the Bourbon king had been executed, the Revolution was still on the defensive. The allies had driven the French armies back, and the Bourbons might well have been restored, as they would be later on. Their return later would not really matter, because by then it would be too late for them to restore the past; Napoleon Bonaparte would have done too much for that to be any longer possible. But in 1799 the constructive gains of the French Revolution were quite insecure.

And another thing might have happened if Bonaparte had not landed safely: the fanatical Jacobins might have seized control. For they, like the royalists, were growing stronger. Another Robespierre might have won power and have finally extinguished French revolutionary idealism in a new bath of blood.

But Bonaparte did land safely, landed and went to Paris to keep his 'rendezvous with manifest destiny'. This small, sallow man, with the piercing eyes and the dishevelled hair, this soldier who, at the age of thirty-one, had already routed the armies of the emperor of Austria and of the sultan of Turkey, now saw himself and was heralded as a man of miracles, who would restore the French to peace, to order,

and to dominion, and give to France laws and institutions suited to sustain her new social order.

All these things he would do, and many more, before that later day, nearly fifteen years ahead, when he would be once more at Fréjus, not landing, but embarking, and trying to hide himself from countrymen who were cursing him as a tyrant.

October 1799. Since June he had been sailing from Egypt, eluding the English, calling at Corsica (to see his home, which he had last seen when he was little more than a penniless adventurer) bringing with him only a trusted few, not so much to fight his battles as to sing his story. He had left his army in Egypt and in Syria – had had to leave it there because Nelson had destroyed his ships in Aboukir Bay. But with that army (here was the song his companions were to sing) he had won the battle of the Pyramids, shooting down the proud Mamelukes, in their shining armour, on their Arab horses; for the Mamelukes, for all their splendour, had held no guns.

In France he was already a legendary figure, had indeed been legendary before he sailed to Egypt, had become legendary three years earlier, at Arcola and Rivoli, at Mantua and Milan, when he had been dictating terms to the Austrians and disposing of the doge of Venice and his venerable Council of Ten. So now that he had landed on French soil, and was making his way to Paris, the news of his return sent a thrill through the country, and the crowds turned out to greet him, not just because he was a legendary figure, but because France was looking for a saviour and believed that this was he. In his absence French armies had been beaten in Italy and on the Rhine, and the revolutionary government of France had become a tiresome clique of incompetent directors, who quarrelled with each other and with the Assembly, and who made fortunes for themselves by backing their inside political knowledge. The Royalists in the region of the Vendée were still in smouldering revolt, while fanatical Jacobins, who had been in eclipse since the murder of Robespierre five years ago, were frightening peaceable Parisians by talking of the guillotine again. After ten years of continuing revolution the outcome of the great upheaval could still scarcely be guessed.

Most Frenchmen were against the extremists, whether of the right or left. Neither respectable bourgeois Paris nor the peasantry wanted the Bourbons back, because both had won too much by the Revolution to want to risk having to restore their winnings. Nor did either want the Jacobins, for if the Jacobins won power again there would be too many imprisonments and executions; there would also be too few sacraments. Frenchmen wanted a man who would keep order without asking them to give up what they had won, and they wanted somebody who would avenge the recent defeats abroad and restore French honour, security, and religion. A general seemed indicated, and which of the generals could compare with the one who had just landed?

No doubt a *coup d'état* would be needed to put him into power, but Paris was used to *coups d'état*. The last two, those of 1795 and 1797, had been organized, on the military side, by Bonaparte himself, for the benefit of others. Now it

would only be necessary for him to organize one for his own benefit; one which would put himself at the head of the state.

Parisian opinion was justified in supposing that Bonaparte's military achievements already surpassed those of the other French generals, but not all Frenchmen realized that it was his superb publicity which had put the others so far into the shade. Nor did they know how good a politician he was. From Milan he had ruled northern Italy, which he called the Cisalpine Republic; from Cairo he had ruled Egypt. He had signed treaties, deposed rulers, put his own agents into power, given a new constitution to Malta. He had nearly become a Mohammedan to further his objectives on the Nile.

This last endeavour was characteristic of his methods. Believing, as he did, in God, he regarded the religions of all peoples as sacrosanct and deserving of protection. He also regarded them as useful, being less concerned for the salvation of souls than for the moral values inculcated by religion, and especially the values of obedience, order, and respect for authority. He realized that, on account of these values, religion could be a powerful source of support to a ruler; but to gain the full benefit from a people's religion it would be necessary for him to convince those whom he was ruling that their religion was also his own. So his religious versatility became remarkable. 'It was by making myself a Catholic,' he said a little later, 'that I won the war in the Vendée, by making myself a Moslem that I established myself in Egypt, by making myself an ultramontane that I turned men's hearts towards me in Italy. If I were to govern a nation of Jews I would rebuild the Temple of Solomon.'

So in Egypt he had become the champion of Allah and the Prophet. He had read the Koran. He had posed as the enemy of the pope and of Catholic Christianity; on them he blamed the medieval wars of the crusades against Islam, the wars to recover the Holy Land: 'Have we not,' he told the Egyptians, 'destroyed the pope, who preached war against the Moslems? [Pius VI had been removed from Rome in February 1798 by General Berthier.] Have we not destroyed the Knights of Malta because those madmen believed it was God's will that they should make war on the Moslems? Have we not all through the centuries been friends of the Grand Seigneur [the sultan of Turkey] and enemies of his enemies?'

Strictly speaking the answer to each of these rhetorical questions was 'No', but they served well enough as a manifesto to impress the Egyptians at the time of the French invasion. Something more might be needed to underpin a French occupation of Egypt, but if anybody could find it Bonaparte could. Why, he asked himself, should not he and his army become Mohammedans? He discussed the point with Moslem religious leaders; inquiries were made at Mecca. He discovered that it would not be easy; was his army, for instance, prepared to submit to circumcision and to refrain from drinking wine? Bonaparte saw the difficulties, but he secured a 'certificate of competence in Mohammedan religious knowledge' and an order from the appropriate religious authorities to the faithful that they were to obey him.

At Milan, just six months after his Fréjus landing, he would show himself in a new religious guise. Talking there to the Catholic priests he was reported as saying: 'Experience has disillusioned the French and has convinced them that the Catholic religion is the one which more than any other is suited to every kind of government, and that in a special way it develops the principles and sustains the rights of a democratic and republican government. I, too, am a philosopher, and I know that in no society can a man be honest and just if he does not know whence he comes and where he is going. Reason is not sufficient to give him this light, without which every man is obliged to journey in the dark. The Catholic religion alone, with its infallibility, confronts man with his beginning and his end.'

If Bonaparte showed himself adept at adjusting his words about religion to suit the occasion he was not merely hypocritical. He believed that God had spoken in sundry ways, at sundry times, for the social benefit of sundry peoples, which was a good eighteenth-century 'enlightened' and deistic attitude. God had given to the Jews the Covenant and the Old Testament; to the Christians the New Testament; to Mahomet and his followers the Koran, and so on. But especially, of course, God had given a destiny to General Bonaparte; as surely as He had given the Wise Men a star to guide them to Bethlehem had He also put Bonaparte's career under the guidance of a star, for the good of the French, for the good of Europe, for the good of the East, indeed for the good of any people fortunate enough to live where the general's destiny might take him. That destiny was something loftier than most men could perceive, but fortunately they did not need to perceive it. All they needed was to obey the precepts of their various religions; he would see to it that their religious leaders taught them their duty, which was to obey himself.

Atheism and agnosticism were abhorrent to the general, partly because of his deistic belief in God (which he probably learnt from Rousseau), but also because he did not believe that society could survive without religion, which was the only prop to sustain morality. For the violently anti-clerical side of the French Revolution he had nothing but contempt, and he attributed the unrest in France in the year 1799 largely to the feud between the 'constitutional' and the 'Roman' clergy and to the bitter persecution that the latter still suffered. France, he considered, should be united in her religion; it offended his sense of the fitness of things that different cults should occupy her great cathedrals, on different days, teaching different truths, and worshipping different gods or goddesses. France could only be confused and distracted by such things, as she had been distracted by the actress who had stood on the altar of Notre Dame to represent the Goddess of Reason, or by Robespierre's cult of the Supreme Being. It might not be necessary that he himself should accept the traditional teachings of the Church, but it was a very good thing that Frenchmen generally should do so. The persecution which the Catholic clergy still suffered, scattered in exile in England or Italy, in the Channel Islands, on Oléron, or in French Guiana, like the fate which so many of their brethren had met under the blade of the guillotine, he regarded as a folly damaging to France. In his own phrase, it was 'worse than a crime, it was a mistake'. For how could it fail to divide and to weaken the French people? France was Catholic, he understood well enough, whatever an 'enlightened clique' in Paris might say. And from her religion stemmed her courage, her morality, her industry, her good sense, and especially her sense of order. All Frenchmen should pay their homage, however occasionally, to the traditional God of the French.

This respect for the traditional pieties Bonaparte had always felt in some degree, though he felt it more strongly now that he had returned from Egypt. Besides, he was moved by it sentimentally, and sentiment was strong in this pupil of Rousseau. He was moved by the sound of the Angelus bell, ringing from a French village steeple, because it recalled his Catholic boyhood in Corsica. In Italy, in 1797, he had often ignored the anti-Catholic orders given him by his government at Paris, and in particular he had refused to march on Rome, to turn out the pope, as his masters at Paris were suggesting. There were excellent military reasons behind his refusal, but he had reasons of the heart and judgement as well; and although he chose to boast, in the following year, to the Egyptians, that the French had 'destroyed the pope', he had in fact no admiration at all for the brutal way in which his government had later 'solved' the Roman question, after he had left Italy, or for the republic of speculators and exploiters which they had set up at Rome in the place of Pius VI. The stupidity of such barbarism made him angry. Not in that sort of way would he handle the Church or the pope. It was senseless to squander or to drive underground a religious power so pervasive when, with a little political subtlety, it could be enlisted on your side. And he had felt in much the same way when, a little earlier, he had been asked to take command of the revolutionary army engaged in trying to suppress the Royalist and Catholic counter-revolution in the Vendée. The command in question made no appeal to him and he turned it down. He knew that the men of the Vendée were inspired by their devotion to their priests, to the Mass, and to the sacraments, and he saw no sense in making war against the deepest instincts of Frenchmen.

Power, Bonaparte already knew, must rest on reconciliation, and the religion of a people was the first thing with which a ruler should be reconciled. And in the case of France this reconciliation would have to be made with Rome. But as he made his way, after his landing at Fréjus, up the valley of the river Rhone, towards Paris, he came upon something that showed him rather shockingly how bitter had been the quarrel between Paris and Rome, and how difficult the reconciliation would be. He had reached Valence, and there he met a forlorn group of expatriated Italian priests. They were huddled in a corner of the huge *Hôtel du Gouvernement*, an ancient fortress and now a civic centre. He induced them into conversation, and they told him how they were watching over the unburied body of Pope Pius VI which lay there in the *Hôtel* in a sealed coffin.

The leader of this group was Msgr Spina. Bonaparte rather took to him and encouraged him to tell more. So the monsignor told how, only six weeks previously, the pope had died, in sordid circumstances, in that building. The government officials had called him Citizen Pope and had treated him without respect. He had been brought over the Alps from the Certosa at Florence where the French had held him after removing him from Rome. Eighty-one years old, he had been utterly unfit to make the journey, his legs being paralysed. When he had asked to be allowed to die at Rome he had been told 'one can die anywhere'. They had meant to bring him to Paris, but by the time he had reached Valence it had been obvious that he was moribund, and he had been allowed to die in his bed at the *Hôtel du Gouvernement*. Spina had been at his side at the end, and his last hours had been peaceful; as he looked out over the Rhone towards the Alps he had murmured a prayer of forgiveness for his enemies.

Pius, Spina insisted, had been a great pope; he had reigned for twenty-four years and his earthly remains ought now to be returned with full honours to Rome. Meanwhile in this heathen city – Spina seems to have talked frankly to the general – no honours of any kind had been paid to the body of the Pontiff; the local clergy belonged to the Constitutional Church and everybody was too frightened and embarrassed to do anything.

Such was the story to which Bonaparte listened, critical, attentive, impressed. This, he decided, was *not* the way to handle the Church or her spiritual head.

'*C'est trop fort!*' he exclaimed tersely.

Then he was on his way again – to Paris.

When, a few weeks later, he had won political power, as first consul, he ordered that a ceremonial homage be paid by the magistrates of Valence to the body of the dead pope.

And when, a little later, he began to negotiate his settlemen with Rome, he welcomed Spina, sent by Rome to negotiate it with him.

CHAPTER 2

Conclave on an Island

So the pope was dead; nor had he yet been given Christian burial. His body went on lying in its coffin at Valence, and nobody knew quite what to do with it.

Nor did Europe know quite what to do with the papacy. The men of the new age, those whose thought was *de mode* at Paris, were insisting that it was the last of the popes who had died, and that the papacy would now disappear along with the superstition which had supported it.

But those with a better grasp of reality, such as Talleyrand, the French foreign minister, could see that it might be necessary to take steps to prevent the superstition from growing again. Talleyrand's own suggestion was characteristically ingenious. Might it not, he suggested, be a good idea to promote a schism in the Church? The effect of the great schism at the end of the fourteenth century had been altogether admirable in paving the way for the Reformation – why should not a new schism, with popes and anti-popes appearing everywhere, discredit finally the Church's authority? It could be arranged so easily. Even before the pope had died, Talleyrand seriously suggested to the French Government that the right policy would be to say that he was dead. Then, he pointed out, they would proceed at Rome to elect a new pope, and perhaps, since most of the Sacred College were in exile, some other group of cardinals somewhere ambassador at Rome, was coolly laying down conditions for the visit.

Uncle Fesch, an inadequate ambassador, had not warned his imperial nephew that there might be difficulties; he was no match for Consalvi, and he got flustered and angry. He was convinced that Consalvi was trying, with Roman duplicity and cunning, to use the opportunity to recover the lost northern provinces of the Papal States (the Legations of Bologna, Ferrara, and Ravenna). Trying to unmask him, he asked him why the pope didn't make it clear to Napoleon what he really wanted, namely the return of the Legations to the Papal States – the Emperor might agree to return them. But Consalvi demurred; to ask for the Legations as a condition of the visit would be to commit the sin of simony; it would be asking for payment as a condition for performing a spiritual service. Fesch was trying to put him in a false position. Consalvi was aware (Rome has a long memory) that the Frankish king, Pepin the Short, in the eighth century, had marked the occasion of his own crowning by the pope by handing over Ravenna to the papacy; so if Napoleon chose to return Ravenna, and the other two Legations, to their rightful owner, of his own free will, *after* the ceremony, the gesture would no doubt be acceptable to the Sacred College. More Consalvi would not say; certainly he would not make the return of the Legations a *condition* of the pope's going to Paris.

There were more immediate and relevant questions to be settled: if the pope came, would he be invited to crown as well as to anoint the emperor? Would the emperor reconsider with him the Organic Articles in France and Melzi's

administrative decrees at Milan? And, if the emperor insisted upon appointing to sees in France not only bishops who had been bishops under the *ancien régime*, and others who were new to the position, but also some who had been elected 'constitutional bishops' in the schismatic 'constitutional Church' of the French Revolution, would he at least see to it that these schismatic bishops formally abjured their past errors and reconciled themselves with the Holy See? – for some of them had not yet done this.

To these and other questions Fesch produced favourable replies, and at last Caprara, at Paris, was able to tell the emperor that, provided the pope was given time to settle certain affairs at Rome, and was not compelled to travel in the hot weather, and provided he was given satisfaction on the outstanding issues between Paris and Rome, he would accept a formal invitation. But the invitation would have to be brought in the proper form, and delivered with due ceremony by two French bishops.

Quickly the invitation arrived. It was borne by an aide-de-camp, and it was brief. It was more like a summons than an invitation. The Pope was told he should come at once; it was desirable that he should be on the French side of the Alps by *XII Brumaire* (3rd November). He would have plenty of opportunity at Paris to discuss outstanding issues with the emperor: Napoleon would show that good will towards the Church which he had always shown in the past. In this peremptory little note the usual courtesies of royal correspondence were entirely omitted.

Pius VII was so offended that he proposed to reject it. Fesch, who had never before seen him angry, was astonished when the pope demanded a more ceremonious invitation, and one which made it clear that a principal purpose of the visit would be to discuss the affairs of the Church. But Consalvi calmed him, Fesch explained that the emperor was in the field and this was why he had been only in a position to send as his envoy a military man; he certainly intended to discuss everything. The Pope swallowed his anger and on 2nd November 1804, he set forth with his cortege to perform the coronation, now fixed for 2nd December.

On his long journey north Pius had plenty of time to reflect on the surprising turn of events. It was gratifying, of course, that Napoleon should wish to have his new position blessed in a special way by the Church, and it was to be hoped that much good might come of it, but just why had he set such store by this coronation? Pius did not deceive himself that the new emperor was a good Catholic. Had he not posed in Egypt as the protector of Islam? Had he not said that at Jerusalem he would restore the Temple of Solomon? In Italy he might talk like an ultramontane; in France he was more Gallican than the Gallicans. And nobody had ever accused him of piety.

Evidently the proposed coronation must have political motives, but what were they? The French senate had conferred upon Napoleon the title of emperor. The people of France, in an overwhelming vote, had made this dignity hereditary to his house. It was still not clear to the pope where he himself fitted into the picture.

The papal legate at Paris, Cardinal Caprara, had correctly informed the pope that Napoleon's new title was popular in France. After years of disorder, uncertainty, and foreign danger, Frenchmen were giving their support to a man they believed could defend their territories against foreign enemies and also the conquests they had made at home at the expense of the aristocracy and the Church. They believed that under him the peasants would keep the land they had seized and the *bourgeoisie* would keep its newly won equality of opportunity and its freedom from unfair clerical and feudal privilege. Just as they had approved, with their votes, Bonaparte's position as first consul so, with their votes, they had now approved his position as emperor, believing that in that position he would be even more strongly placed to guarantee the bases of the revolutionary settlement and to defend the ideals, the usurpations, the liberties, and the vested interests created by the Revolution. Besides, it was more exciting to have an emperor than a consul.

If ever a ruler owed his position to what is called the Will of the People Napoleon did. He had won it by his success with the sword – not the sword of execution, the guillotine, used against themselves in the name of high-sounding principles – the sword Robespierre had used – but the sword of battle against the enemies of France, which had won the victory at Toulon, in Italy, in Egypt, at Marengo. They had made that man Emperor who had saved them from their enemies abroad, and who had defended the gains of the Revolution at home. They had made that man emperor who had shown that he could reconcile the new with the old – when he allowed the aristocrats to return to France, though without their privileges – and who had made peace with the Church by the concordat of 1801 without giving her back her endowments and lands, or allowing her to become, once again, the first estate of the realm. They had made that man emperor whom the revolution had thrown up to defend her. They had made him emperor 'by the Grace of God and the Will of the People'.

By the Grace of God.

Therein lay the rub. What did they mean? And how did they harmonize that grace with the Will of the People? That was a point of some interest to the pope, who had tussled with the same problem as bishop of Imola.

No doubt to the French senate, which adopted the phrase when it proclaimed Napoleon emperor, the phrase meant little enough. Lawyers, philosophers, often sceptics, those amongst them who were Christians had been mostly supporters of the revolutionary 'constitutional Church', which drew its principle of authority from the Will of the People, by election. Grace to them – if it existed – was something to which the Will of the People could lay claim, as of right, for God – if He existed – had given authority to the People.

But it was not thus that Napoleon understood the matter. To Napoleon the Grace of God was something quite different. It was that grace which had been bestowed upon his predecessors, the Bourbons, when they were anointed with the holy oil of Rheims. It was that grace which gave divine right to his European rivals, now his 'brother monarchs', the Hapsburgs at Vienna, the Hohenzollerns at Berlin, and the Romanovs at Saint Petersburg. It was that divine elixir which raised rulers above other mortals, enabling them to secure unquestioning obedience and devotion; it was their

distinguishing mark, the mystical sign which made them members of that inner select circle that ruled the world, and which the Corsican parvenu longed to enter. Assuredly that grace must come from above, not from below. What would a Hapsburg or a Romanov say if you told him you owed your crown to the people? And he, Napoleon Bonaparte, was now entering the little select circle of the hereditary rulers. He had 'come up the hard way', won his entry by the strength of his sword and the votes of the French people, but there was no longer any need to dwell on that. He had earned in battle the right to become a ruler by the Grace of God, just as Clovis or Charlemagne – names now often on his lips – had earned the same right with their swords.

But the crown that his prowess had gained for him was not of earthly provenance. And now that he had reached the summit it would be better not to throw the spotlight on the ladder by which he had climbed. So he showed no anxiety to make known the result of the plebiscite. Rather, he deliberately waited to do so till the time of his coronation, when the mundane matter of the number of favourable votes recorded for him would be lost to sight behind the brilliance of the religious ceremony. He would have men think of him not as elected, but as emperor by the Grace of God. Let them forget the real source of his power, 'the Will of the People'.

No real ruler, then, in Napoleon's view, ruled save by divine right; the Bourbons had enjoyed it, and anything the Bourbons had enjoyed he could have. But evidently there were difficulties. Francis II, for instance, at Vienna, the Holy Roman Emperor, whom he had twice compelled to sue for peace after defeating his armies in the field, was only likely to regard him as a man of violence, a modern Attila, until he could persuade him, with very cogent reasons, to regard him as something better. Would the Hapsburgs be impressed by a coronation ceremony performed by French clergy, notoriously subservient to their new ruler, having been nominated by him? Indeed, would such a ceremony, performed not by the ancient Gallican Church, but by bishops who owed their power to the first consul, carry as much conviction as had the anointing of the ancient line of the kings of France at Rheims? Must not his coronation suffer by comparison? And worse, would he not seem, if he were crowned at Rheims, to be copying the Bourbons, to be leading France back into the *ancien régime,* rather than forward into something that transcended the glories even of the *roi soleil*? He was emperor, not king, he was the successor of Charlemagne, not of Louis XVI; a ceremony was needed which fitted his new European status, whose significance Europe could not mistake. There was only one possible answer. Charlemagne had been crowned by the pope. He, too, must be crowned by the pope.

This plan seemed to him an obvious one. He foresaw no difficulties with Rome about it. By the concordat of 1801 he had restored the Catholic Church in France, if not to her previous position as the first estate, or to her exclusive position as the established Church, at least to most of her great buildings, though without the lands that had supported them. To him it was due that Mass was said once more throughout the land, and openly, that priests could go about their business

unmolested and supported by a small stipend from the state, that the hierarchy, though shorn of some of its powers, was re-established in a decent and orderly manner, that the persecution and the schism of the previous decade were over. Surely Pius VII could never be grateful enough for all this? Besides, the pope ought to regard it as a great honour and a signal distinction for the papacy if he were invited to come to Paris to perform the coronation.

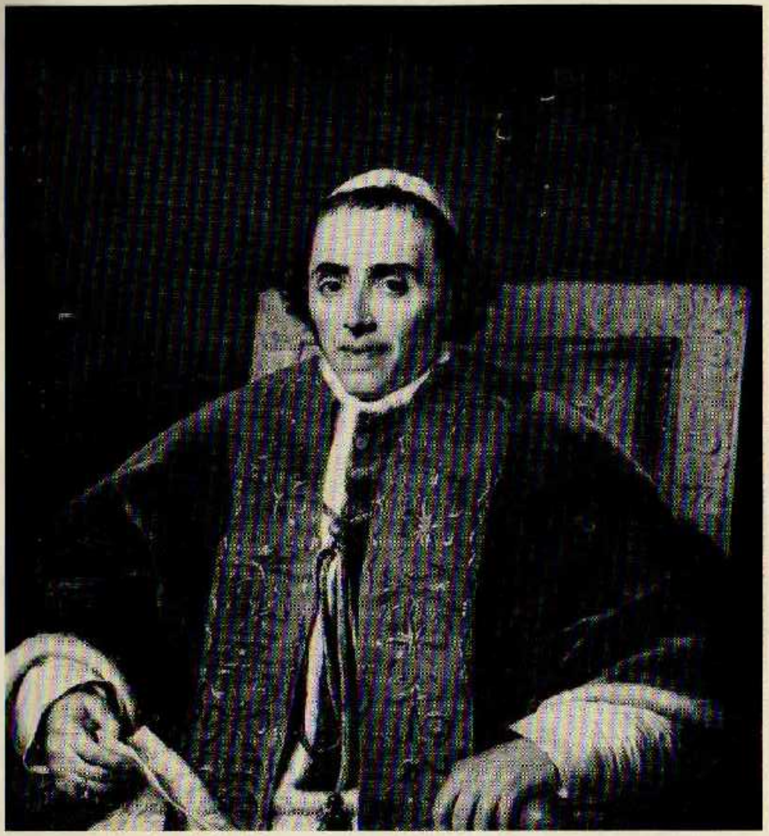
Napoleon anticipated no difficulty with the pope. He was aware that popes had done nothing of the sort for more than a thousand years, that even Charlemagne had gone to Saint Peter's for his coronation. But surely the pope would realize that it was unthinkable that he, Napoleon, should behave in so 'ultramontane' a manner as to travel to Rome for his coronation? Besides, he hadn't time. The pope had plenty of time to come to Paris. Pius VI had travelled to Vienna to confer with the Emperor Joseph II; his successor could now visit Paris to show that he was Father of the French as well as of the Austrians.

No difficulty was expected from Rome; any trouble, it was supposed, would come from anti-clerical Jacobins at Paris, or from the more extreme remnants of the constitutional Church in France. But on the whole the visit might be expected to be popular at Paris; even the *savants,* the philosophers, and the sceptics should, it was thought, be impressed, after their kind, by seeing the ceremony performed by the pope.

So when eyebrows were raised at Rome, questions were asked there, and conditions made, the new emperor grew angry. *Parbleu!* Could not the pope see the immense honour that the invitation conferred upon him? Did he not understand the advantages that must accrue to himself and to the Church from this visit? Let him come and let him hurry. It would be a good thing to have the ceremony on 15th August, the Feast of the Assumption, a feast and holiday much associated with the Bourbons. Or, if that were too soon, at least on 9th November, the anniversary of his own *coup d'état of XVIII Brumaire,* which had made him first consul in 1799.

But neither date proved possible. At the beginning of November, when the pope was said to be at last about to leave Rome, the best that could be hoped for at Paris was that he would arrive in time for a coronation on 2nd December.

Papal progresses move in a leisurely manner; it had taken Pius VI nearly four weeks to make the journey from Rome to Vienna. But on the occasion of this journey to Paris it was necessary to make much better time, not only on account of the exigencies of an impatient Napoleon, but in order that the Mont Cenis might be crossed before the onset of the winter snows. So on All Souls' Day, after saying his Mass in the *confessio* of Saint Peter's (at the altar before which Canova's famous kneeling statue of Pius VI would soon be placed), Pius VII entered his carriage and, with Cardinal Leonardo Antonelli as his companion, rode straight across the Tiber and out through the Flaminian gate. Several coaches had started the day before; the whole party comprised more than a hundred persons, including six cardinals. Even so it was less imposing than the emperor had wanted



II. Pius VII by Jacques Louis David in the Louvre, 1805