

NAPOLEON, As Seen by His Associates

"ONE OF NAPOLEON'S MISTAKES"

VII.

THE man, probably, among all the civilian and military agents of Napoleon whose grasp seized upon the very vitals of the Napoleonic system was Joseph Fouché. When Napoleon was advised after the fashion of his time to resort to killing in order to remove certain personages, Fouché, with one notable exception, refused to be drawn into the game. But he more than once declared in tones of bitter regret: "I should have shot Fouché!"

Yet in the most perilous days of the consulate and empire Fouché, self confessed hoodler, briber, traitor and Napoleon's right arm. These are Fouché's own words for describing the intrigues which placed him at the head of the national police.

"Underhand means were the only ones that could be employed at first. The time for throwing off the mask was not yet come."

Revolving years after the event, the part he played in making Napoleon dictator of France, over the heads of rivals in the directory, he says:



Joseph Fouché, Minister of the French National Police.

"The revolution of St. Cloud would have failed had I opposed it. It was in my power to mislead St. Cloud, put Barras on his guard and enlighten Gohier and Mullins. I had only to back Dubois de Crance, the only opposing minister, and the whole would have fallen to the ground. But it would have been stupidity in me not to have preferred some future prospects to an unpromising blank."

Working himself into the secrets of counter conspirators, he says, "I informed Bonaparte of all." Even Napoleon's household was invaded by this indefatigable spy. The royalist plotters for the return of a Bourbon king employed one of their clique, the Comtesse de Guiche, to open communications with Napoleon's wife. Says Fouché:

"She obtained some interviews, and I was informed of them by Josephine herself, who, in conformity to our conditions, cemented by a thousand francs per day (\$200), instructed me in all that passed in the interior of the chateau. The nature of the conflict in which I engaged may be conceived. Luckily, I had Josephine in my interest, and the private secretary was devoted to my views. Having charge of the papers and secrets of his master, he discovered that I spent 100,000 francs (\$20,000) monthly for the purpose of keeping a constant watch on the life of the first consul. He called on me and offered to inform me exactly of all the proceedings of Bonaparte for 25,000 francs per month, and he made me this offer as a means of saving 90,000 francs per annum. I took care not to let this opportunity slip, of having the private secretary of the chief of the state in my pay, that chief whom it was so requisite for me to follow step by step in order to know what he had done and what he was about to do. The proposal of the secretary was accepted, and he every month very punctually received a blank order for 25,000 francs, the promised sum, which he was to draw out of the treasury. And I was enabled, by this means, to verify and strengthen the information of the secretary by those I received from Josephine, and vice versa. I was stronger than all my enemies put together."

Describing in detail the methods which made him master of the secrets and of the fears of France, as Napoleon was master of her destiny, Fouché says:

"It will not be doubted that I had salaried spies in all ranks and orders. I had some of both sexes hired at the rate of a thousand or two thousand francs per month, according to their importance and their services."

"I also had my foreign spies. It was in my cabinet, also, that the foreign garter, prohibited to the perusal of the French people, were collected, abstracts of which were made for my own use."

"All the state prisons were under my control, as well as the gendarmerie. The delivery of the visa of passports belonged to me. To me was assigned the duty of watching arrested individuals and foreigners. I established general commissariats in the principal towns of the kingdom, which extended the network of the police over the whole of France, and especially our frontiers."

"I will not therefore dissimulate that it was in my power to act upon the fear

or terror which either more or less constantly agitated the possessor of an unlimited power. The great searcher into the state, I could complain, censure and condemn for the whole of France. Such then was this vast and terrible machine called the general police of the empire."

"And Napoleon's minister of police did not overrate his genius and power. Vays Bourrienne, Napoleon's first secretary:

"The machinery he set in motion was so calculated that the police was rather the police of Fouché than that of the minister of the general public."

Writing of one of the famous conspiracies against Napoleon, Bourrienne says:

"I have never had any doubt in my own mind as to the secret support given to the conspirators by Fouché's police. Meneval, who served Napoleon as secretary from 1802 to 1814, says:

"Two men, or, rather, two evil geni, had attached themselves to Napoleon's fortunes. Everybody will know that I am referring to Fouché and Talleyrand. Fouché needed intrigue as he needed air to breathe."

"It might have been said that Fouché held Napoleon under the effects of a charm, for which the best reasons for dismissing him the emperor still hesitated. One day, at St. Cloud, having, according to a very usual custom of his, come and seated himself on a corner of my writing table, Napoleon said to me, after some words of no importance and with a brusque change of subject, 'Meneval, I have a mind to dismiss Fouché. I could not prevent myself from exclaiming, 'Sire, I expected this, and I am only surprised at one thing, and that is that you haven't sent him away before.' He rose slowly without answering me, took one or two turns in the study with his hands behind his back and then occupied himself with some other matter."

Dr. O'Mours reports a remark of Napoleon's at St. Helena in which he attempted to justify his relations with Fouché. Said he:

"As a man who had been a Terrorist and a chief of Jacobins I employed him as an instrument to discover and get rid of the Jacobins, Septemberists and others of his old friends. By means of him I was enabled to send into banishment to the Isle of France 200 of his old associates, Septemberists, who disturbed the tranquillity of France. He betrayed and sacrificed his old comrades."

Caulaincourt, general and ambassador under Napoleon's consulate, says, "Fouché was one of Napoleon's great mistakes," and Prince Metternich, the Austrian minister, grouping Fouché and Talleyrand, another notorious plotter in Napoleon's cabinet, says that the pair "never had any communications with one another except when they were hatching some plot against the established order of things and chances to meet."

"At last Napoleon saw his influence undermined by the ruling spirits in Paris while he was absent on the battlefield and vacated the throne of France. Among his opponents Fouché was conspicuous, and Napoleon declared at that time:

"I ought to have him hanged. I leave that for the Bourbons to do."

But the Bourbons didn't hang Fouché, although he had voted to send the king, Louis XVI, to the scaffold, a fact he once boasted of to Napoleon, saying, "That is the first service I had the happiness of rendering your majesty."

The new Bourbon king, Louis XVIII, made use of Fouché, but the escape of Napoleon from Elba and his triumphal return to Paris placed his former adherent under suspicion, and the king's agents came to Fouché's house to arrest him. Slipping out the back door, he made his way to the house of Queen Hortense, Napoleon's stepdaughter, and coolly let the Bonapartists assume that he was ready to serve their cause afresh. How he did so is revealed in his own confession:

"I wished to have nothing further to do with Napoleon, yet if he should be victorious I should be compelled to submit to his yoke. On the other hand, I had engagements with Louis XVIII—not that I was inclined to his restoration, but prudence required that I should procure for myself beforehand something in the shape of a guarantee. My agents, moreover, to M. de Metternich, the Austrian minister, and Lord Wellington had promised mountains and marvels. The generalissimo, at least, expected that I should divulge to him the plan of the campaign."

As ostensible supporter of Napoleon he obtained a copy of his plan for the Waterloo campaign and dispatched it by a woman confederate to Wellington's camp.

"At the same time I occasioned impediments on the part of the frontier which he was to pass in such a manner as to prevent her reaching the headquarters of Wellington till after the result."

So he kept the letter till the spirit of his compact with Napoleon's foes and landed that in the arms of the restored Bourbons.

GEORGE L. KILMER.

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