Name

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Political Innovations and Achievements of Louis Napoleon

**Introduction**

Louis Napoleon, also known as Napoleon III, was the French president, who rose to power in 1852, which continued till his exile in the year 1870. He was the third ruler from the Napoleon family, who had a sense of responsibility towards the homeland of his father and wanted to ensure the peace, progress, and prosperity of its people. He spent a greater part of his childhood, as well as later years in exile, which made him more attached to the French land and was also an important reason of taking part in the war and winning the rule of the country. His deep attachment with French land and people, as well as the sense of responsibility towards the land, was the main reason he kept in touch with the history, social and political conditions of the country, even in exile and made a comeback after the death of his cousin and ruler of France at that time. After failed coups, he finally won the rule of France through the revolution of 1848 and became the president through the support of the majority of the male public. He was an exemplary leader who held the office, for a brief time period, however, worked hard for the progress and prosperity of its public, and rebuilt the French society through urbanization, industrialization and the economic growth. He established the reformatory national and foreign policies, which earned the country great economic and social progress. The country and its people were able to prosper under the authoritarian rule of Louis Napoleon for two decades. He was finally dethroned during the Franco-Prussian War and led the remaining years of his life in illness and exile in England. The government of Napoleon may have been the logical culmination of the revolution and not just a return to monarchy.

**Early Years of Life**

Louis Napoleon was the son of Louis Bonaparte, and his mother was Napoleon I’s daughter Hortense de Beauharnais Bonaparte. He was born in France in the year 1808. His parents were the rulers of Holland, however, after the downfall of the Bonaparte dynasty in the year 1815, the family was exiled and he lived the years of his youth in Switzerland. His mother was greatly attached to her homeland of France, as well as respected the policies and vision of her father, which was one of the main reasons that she inculcated her ideology in her son’s mind. He grew up while spending time in Germany and Italy and knowing people of his distant family, who were also the victims of exile. Moreover, he also came to know the suffering of the other exiles of the Bourbon monarchy, as well as the condition of the Italians, who were living their lives under the papal and Austrian rules. The conditions of the people and society made him reflect on the political structure of society. He joined the Carbonari party, in order to support the struggle of the Italian public against the monarchy of papal and Austrian rule. He was deeply interested in the history of his father’s land and started developing the ideology of national liberty. The new exposure in his life also made him think about regaining the control of France and continue the Napoleonic rule. The activities of the Carbonari party were not acceptable for the opposite party, who attacked them and Louis Napoleon was saved due to the intervention of his mother in the situation. The sudden death of his brother due to the outbreak of measles added to his difficulties and left him heartbroken (Barden).

**Failed Coups**

After a little time of Louis Napoleon’s brother’s death, his cousin also died who had to become the next ruler of France, according to their lineage. His death sparked a new sense of responsibility in Napoleon, who thought it was the right time to win back the rule of France. He received military training, as well as completed his education while learning about social issues and economics. In 1832, he published an article which was entitled “Reveries politiques,” in which he talked about the military and political subjects. He believed that the imperial system was the only political system which could bring back the glory, peace, and progress of France. He wanted to make the public aware of his ideology, as well as win their attention and support through his political writings. He thought that he would be able to earn the support of the military through such actions; however, he was mistaken about his ideology, which actually harmed him during his first coup. Thinking that he would be supported by the military of France, keeping in view Napoleon I’s hundred days, he attacked Strasbourg in order to reestablish the Napoleonic Empire. However, he had to face the retaliation of the local troops and was exiled by Louis-Philippe to the United States. He briefly returned to Switzerland due to her mothers’ illness, however, was exiled from there as well and finally settled in England. The unfavorable conditions of the society did not let him give up on his ideology and motive of reestablishing the Napoleonic Empire and in 1893 he published another book “Des idées napoléoniennes,” in which he presented Bonapartism as a political ideology, which had the key of resolving all the economic, social and political issues of the French society, without realized the fact that it was actually his reminiscence. He believed that reforming the industrial sector of the society by increasing the trade, as well as ensuring the freedom and rights of the general public would be the sure means of putting France back on the track of peace and progress. He made another attack on France in 1840 and was then again arrested and finally put in confinement. He again started studying and preparing for establishing his imperial rule. He also established relations with opposing parties and fled to England from his confinement. His father’s death in 1846 made him the final heir of the Napoleonic Empire and he again started making efforts to win the rule back (Sultana).

**Rise to Power**

The revolution of 1848 emerged as the greatest hope for Louis Napoleon. He was living in England at the time revolution erupted and a new regime emerged in France. His exile ended with the fall of the previous government, so he returned to his homeland, with the hope of finally reminisce his dream of reestablishing the Napoleonic Empire. Still, it was not an easy task for him, as there were still some segments of the society which did not approve his presence in France and demanded to get him exiled again. On the other hand, some of the people who were aware of the glory of the Napoleonic Empire, as well as the ideology of Louis Napoleon, established a small party named the Bonapartist party. The party then nominated Louis Napoleon as their candidate in the next government's constituent assembly. He became successful in winning the position and took the oath. Shortly after that, he started preaching the glory of the Napoleon rule to the general public, which promising them that he was able to turn back France to its happy and peaceful times. One of his most successful political strategies, which ensured his later achievements and rise to power, was connecting with the lower segments of the society. He met with the lower class population of the society which was always neglected by the rulers and assured them that he would change the system of France. He also gave them the hope that the societal, political and economic conditions of the country would be the same for all the segments of the society and everybody would get an equal chance of making progress. He promised the general public to support their particular interests as well as maintain the peace and order of society. He was finally able to win the support of the general public and won the presidency by seventy percent votes in his favor, which was a cleat depiction as well as announcement that the French public still supported and looked forward to the establishment of Napoleonic empire (Walker).

**Winning the Presidency**

After winning the election in 1848, and the presidency, Louis Napoleon started emerging as a greater power than his party had expected him. They had only chosen him as a popular figure, who could have won them the election and had not expected that he would become the president. They were still not fearful of his increasing popularity and support among different sections of the society as they knew that his term would end in only four years. However, that one point was quite nerve-wracking for him and he utilized all his efforts to change that clause of the constitution. The members of the national assembly were strictly against his opinion and ideology and were not ready to provide him a chance of getting re-elected as the president of France and continue his rule. Being perfectly aware of his position in the society, as well as the possibilities of being stabbed in the back by his own party, he started gaining more strength and winning the support of military as well as general public by using his constitutional rights. Within no time, the Bonapartist party on which he was dependent earlier, became dependent upon him and military also supported his action, along with the general public. He forced the national assembly to change the constitutional clause of not letting a president reelected, who did not pay any heed to his demands and ultimately he had to impose a dictatorship on France, in order to change the constitution and earn the ruling seat again. This time, his coup became successful and he was also able to establish a new rule. He developed and got approved a new constitution in 1852, by plebiscite and got another one approved later that year, which declared him the next emperor of the Napoleonic empire as Napoleon III and also marked the end of the second empire (Hunt).

**Domestic Policies**

During the early years of his rule, Louis Napoleon emerged as a strong dictator and gave the orders of arresting thousands of his opponents. He also exiled hundreds of the influential members of the political parties, who were against his rule and ideology. He did not want to get any blow from his opponents, even before establishing his rule in French society. After being assured of his position and support in society and knowing the act that no one was able enough to end his rule he turned his attention towards the domestic policy and fulfilling the promises he had made with the general public, before winning the rule. He was a truthful leader, who was deeply concerned about the progress of each and every segment of the population, so he devised the new policies which would ensure the progress of not only the middle-class population but also the lower class population of the society. He also utilized the propaganda strategy in order to ensure the public that he was working for their better interest and had the potential of changing the structure of the society. He also utilized the opportunity to get awareness about the difficulties of the general public which were appearing as the basic hurdle towards their progress. Due to his willingness to taking every kind of challenge and initiative to support the needs and ensure the progress of the society, he paid great attention to the public work. One of his greatest achievements is the railroads construction which brought a revolutionary change in the life of the general public, as they were able to use it for promoting their business, as well as for traveling. He also approved the agricultural and industrial reformations and innovations in society, which increased the means of earning and progress for the general public. The French society was able to get rid of the famine due to his advanced agricultural reformations. In addition to it, he also promoted equality of men and women in the society, due to which more and more women were provided with the opportunity of getting an education, which eventually changed the social structure of the society. Another great achievement of Louis Napoleon was the reconstruction and rebuilding of Paris, for which he supported all the technical innovations as well as the inventors. He supported the reconstruction of modern Paris while giving special attention to some of the buildings which became the classic example of modern architecture, during that time of history. Another remarkable achievement of the revolutionary leader which made him close to the general public was lowering the price of bread, so each and every individual of the society could afford it, without facing any difficulty. He was deeply concerned about the labor workers, so gave the orders of the construction of sanitary housing, in order to ensure their health and wellbeing. In order to ensure the prevalence of peace and justice in society, he laid the foundation of the arbitration board. In addition to it, he granted the rights of organization and leading a strike to the French workers, so that they would communicate their issues and difficulties to the government body (Sultana).

**Foreign Policies**

Setting the things right at the domestic front, Louis Napoleon turned his attention towards the foreign policy. He wanted to extend the ideals of French society to other parts of Europe, however, faced defeat in every attempt. After facing defeat at the European front, he turned his attention toward other parts of the world and one of his greatest achievements in this regard was extending and strengthening the control of the French regime over Algeria. He also established and strengthened the French foundations in Africa, while finally moving towards China and India. He developed the trade route with these countries and promoted international trade. He also earned some progress in Italy, while failing again and again in Britain, which also led to his failures in Mexico. At the end, when Russia attacked Britain during the Crimean war and failed in its attempt to win the control, the European powers sought cooperation and alliance with France. It finally provided the opportunity of increasing the French influence in England, as well as other parts of Europe. While attending to the international affairs and foreign policy, Louis Napoleon became a little ignorant towards the domestic issues, which ultimately erupted as bigger issues of the society. The working class of French society got entangled in a conflict with the middle class due to the economic deterioration and growing unrest. He tried to resolve the situation by providing the leverage to both of the classes in the form of freedom of assembly, coalition, and liberalization. However, all of that went in vain and made him realize his fault of not paying more attention towards the domestic affairs and becoming too enthusiastic of expanding his rule to other parts of the world (Hunt).

**The Franco-Prussian War**

The eruption of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 proved to be the last blow to the rule of Louis Napoleon. After establishing the alliance with England and winning greater influence over its land, he shortly had to face the rise of Prussia in Europe. Prussia won control over Austria and gained the position of taking greater control over Britain as well. He started a war with Prussia, which is called as Franco-Prussian War. The war turned the tables for Louis Napoleon as he lost the influence on England, which was won by Germany, which also emerged as a greater strength till the end of the First World War. As a result of its victory in Europe, the German forces were able to attack France as well, which they won and arrested Louis Napoleon. After being captured by the German forces, he was once again exiled to England, which marked the end of the second rule of France and leads the foundation of the third republic. Louis Napoleon did not accept his defeat even at that time, however, the things turned unfavorable for him forever, when he fell ill seriously. He had been ill throughout his reign, however, kept it a secret from the opposing forces, in order to avoid any kind of state action against him. However, his illness got worse after his last exile to England. He planned to get his surgery and then prepare to win his rule back, however, his health kept deteriorating at quite a fast pace and he finally died in 1873, shortly after getting his surgery (McMillan).

**Conclusion**

Louis Napoleon, also known as Napoleon III was one of the most revolutionary leaders of the French regime. He left his life of leisure and ease in Switzerland, in order to follow the teachings of his mother, which were actually based on the ideology of her own father. He felt deeply connected to the French public, as well as felt the sense of attachment towards the rule of French society, as he wanted to the reestablish the Napoleonic Empire. From the early years of his youth, he was able to understand the history as well as social, economic and political progress of the French society, which made him more concerned about the progress and prosperity of the French public. He tried to establish his rule again and again and finally succeeded in his third attempt. He ensured the social, political and economic progress of all the classes of the French society by revolutionizing the industrial and agricultural sector. He also played an important role in developing the railroads and reconstructing modern Paris, which are considered his great achievements. The domestic policies and strategies of Louis Napoleon had ensured the success of his regime, however, his involvement in the foreign affairs, which was actually the lust of gaining more power and control, proved greatly unfortunate for him, as he lost everything and marked the ending of the Napoleonic empire in the French society.

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