

Jan Baszkiewicz, *Anatomia bonapartyzmu (The Anatomy of Bonapartism)*, Gdańsk 2003, Wydawnictwo ARCHE, 304 pp., ill.

The history of political thought and the history of France are the main subjects the author is interested in. Jan Baszkiewicz has assigned a special place in his work to monographs dealing with the French Revolution which he views through the prism of its doctrinal achievements and the history of mentality. The fact that he has now taken up Bonapartism as his subject seems therefore to be a natural consequence of his study of the Revolution. Baszkiewicz tries to find out why a nation which had gained freedom at the cost of such great efforts and enormous sufferings gave it up after but a few years, handing over full authority to an authoritarian politician who, with greater or lesser justification, is now regarded by some historians as the precursor of 20th century totalitarianisms. He also portrays the system which Napoleon managed to build when the French people renounced their freedom.

Bonapartism is an ambiguous concept. In the opinion of some people it denotes the political system established by Napoleon; other people view it as patterns of a political system which does not necessarily have French roots; still others think that the term refers to the programme for the return of the Bonaparte dynasty to the French throne; Bonapartism also means an emotional state reflected in the cult of Napoleon, in attachment to his famous military victories and to the tradition of the Empire's glory. Baszkiewicz's monograph concerns Bonapartism in the first meaning. The book has eight chapters. The first three show the birth and evolution of the new system in chronological order; the next four analyse various aspects of Bonapartism (in France, Europe, the structures of Bonapartism and its power over minds). The last chapter presents a balance sheet of the Napoleonic system and, very briefly, the further history of various concepts of Bonapartism which survived its creator by decades, in fact by well over a hundred years.

On less than thirty pages the author concisely outlines the final stage of the Revolution, the departure from "devilish spiral of anarchy and terror" when "every royalist reaction was sooner or later followed by a Jacobin counter-reaction". It is a well known fact that the problem was not solved by the Constitution of the

Directory and, as the author rightly says, a longing for a charismatic leader always appears in times of instability and crisis. One of the few successes of that period was the favourable peace treaty with Prussia which was concluded on March 5, 1795, that is, before the adoption of the constitution of the Directory. It is worth pointing out, for this fact is usually ignored by many historians, that it was Poland which, to a large extent, bore the costs of that treaty, for after the defeat of the Kościuszko Insurrection Prussia had to focus attention on securing the largest possible part of Poland in the country's third partition.

The saviour awaited by many Frenchmen appears in the chapter aptly entitled *A good sword, but too long* which characterises General Bonaparte's political views at the time of the coup d'état of the 18 Brumaire. The next two chapters, *The dummy republic* and *La fête impériale*, present the establishment and evolution of the political institutions of the Consulate and the Empire, the increasing theatricality of public life in which electoral spectacles and solemn celebrations of Napoleon's successes were, to an ever growing extent, replacing the citizens' participation in the running of the country. The author's reflections could have as their motto the sentence on p. 120: "The principles of ruling the country were defined by Napoleon himself; they were a reflection of his personal ambitions". But Napoleon's policy was also influenced by circumstances; pragmatism predominated over vision. This was admitted by the Emperor himself. It is not surprising therefore that the system was not cohesive; nor did it promise durability.

Among the structures which supported the system of the Consulate and later that of the Empire the author mentions the large group of civil servants who made up an efficient, centralised and hierarchic administration. It follows from Miguel Bruguère's research that as far as the fiscal administration is concerned, its core consisted of officials from the time of the monarchy. Baszkiewicz does not take up this subject but it would be interesting to find out the background of the stuff in other branches of the administration, whether it too was dominated by officials who had held their posts uninterruptedly since the time of Louis XVI, the Convention and the Directory. Then there is the question of the settlement of relations with the Church. The author holds the view that the First Consul was right to reject the separation of the Church from the State, for separation would have led to constant conflicts. This theory is not fully convincing, even though all sorts of arguments can be used in its defence. The endeavours to draw the clergy into the orbit of the Empire's propaganda were only partially successful and the suppressed conflicts made themselves felt with an even greater force in the final period of the Empire.

The author discusses at length Napoleon's plan for Europe. He emphasises that it reflected the Emperor's dislike of political pluralism, the necessity of introducing law and order serving as a justification. Incidentally, dislike of pluralism is a characteristic feature not only of Napoleonic, but of all kinds of Bonapartisms. Paradoxically, the Emperor's European policy awakened the national consciousness of peoples, which, being incompatible with French hegemony, led to the collapse of the Napoleonic empire.

In his further reflections the author goes back to French questions and analyses the structure of the French state. One of the problems raised by him is the weakness of the lowest levels of power, the impossibility of finding adequately prepared candidates for mayors, for their work was strenuous, one of their duties being recruitment of soldiers. It is worth adding that one of the main reasons why it was so difficult to find candidates for mayors was that they were unpaid, that they performed their duties without remuneration.

Since the aspiration "to rule over souls" was a characteristic feature of the Napoleonic system, the author discusses political propaganda, the state's educational policy, the regime's efforts to use the Church for its own purposes, and other relevant questions. The book ends with a short chapter entitled *Balance Sheet* which presents the main features of the system shaped during the Consu-

late and the Empire and a summary picture of later attempts to apply Napoleonic political patterns.

After a long break we have been recently witnessing a growth of interest in Napoleonic times and the person of Napoleon himself. Baszkiewicz's new book is a case in point. It stands out by its high literary quality, its clear exposition of subject and the author's well balanced judgements based on a profound knowledge of the epoch.

The book has a fine cover and good typography but it is a pity that the proof-reading has not been on an equally high level. It was an excellent idea to equip the book with two effigies of napoleon. The volume opens with a picture of General Bonaparte in Egypt, a young, slim man with an upright bearing; it closes with the image of an obese, aged, stooping man on the island of Saint Helena.

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