France's greatest hero: napoleon

Napoleon was born in Ajaccio, Corsica on August 15th, 1769. His family was wealthy and from the nobility. Napoleon was a twice emperor of France whose endeavours and personality controlled Europe for a decade. Napoleon came to power during the French Revolution. He was a complicated and controversial figure who continues to inspire devotion and opposition, and has become in some ways a symbol of France itself. His political philosophy of strong administrative power and French military victory survived throughout the nineteenth century and became well-known throughout the land. In essence, as a controversial figure it was argued through opposing forces that Napoleon can be regarded as a tyrant towards French and European society, on the contrary, it can be argued that he is a hero. Napoleon Bonaparte is considered to be a hero of his time in regards to the formation of the Napoleonic Code, being a military genius, a defender of the Revolution, through the spread of nationalism and the growth of the economy.

The name Napoleon Bonaparte brings about an image of both military conquest and great skill. At the prime of the nineteenth century, he was considered the greatest soldier of his time by most people. Napoleon used his immense range of skill to win victory for France and to bring forth the wealthiest empire the world has seen. In almost two centuries, his reputation for strategic intelligence, bold courage and leadership has continued on his legacy to contemporary society. Most of the changes Napoleon formed were unexpected by himself. He put the events into place, he was the advocate. When or where it would end was beyond anyone's capacity to discover. His rise to the heights was a great adventure. " My maxim was," he said, " la

carriére est ouverte aux talents (Carroll 7). This statement illustrates the motto that Napoleon followed throughout his life; without distinction of birth or fortune. If one was to be mentioned or referred to Napoleon in the same sentence, it would be an absolute compliment.

In 1804 the Napoleonic Code was introduced. It had a set of clear laws, applicable to all members of French society. The Code was introduced to other parts of Europe conquered by Napoleon such as Italy, Spain and Germany. The Napoleon Code was the greatest of the national reforms which gave a new civil code to France: " His Code Napoleon is the basis of law in France and much of Europe today. His centralization of France's government has been the model for countless dictatorships"(Carroll 7). Prior to the Code, laws in France were not as clear or concise. The Code stated many laws that would be beneficial to the people in French society. For example, all people were declared equal before the law, feudal rights ended, religious freedom was guaranteed, parents were given power over their children and so on. Moreover, in some parts of France a particular act might be legal in one place and illegal elsewhere. Travelers were constantly at risk, along with community arguments that were hard to resolve. Many of the most important achievements of the Revolution were reserved: " In all, the Code represented a compromise of old and new. On balance, it incorporated more of the Revolution than of the ancien regime"(66).

With the Napoleon Code, France had never been so efficiently governed. The Code was so broad that it became the model for legal systems around the world. Except, the United Kingdom, Russia and the Scandinavian countries, the Napoleonic Code is still the foundation for the civil law codes of

contemporary Europe. For instance, in the United States, Louisiana still stays true to the Napoleon Code. At the end of Napoleon's life, he said " My glory is not to have won forty battles, for Waterloo's defeat will destroy the memory of as many victories. But what nothing will destroy, what will live eternally is my Civil Code"(66). The ideas of liberty, equality and community became the foundation for many movements that have dominated politics for the past few centuries.

Napoleon, raised from the age of nine to become an officer, was therefore obsessed with the military values and culture of the French Army allowing him to establish his own army in the future. Honour, courage, sacrifice and glory were all concepts that helped determine the way in which Napoleon observed and negotiated the world and, were later imposed on French society. Napoleon associated military values with community virtues: " The army was, nevertheless, always present and not only had an impact on everyday life, but determined the nature of authoritarian rule instituted after 1800″(Dwyer 3). The army also allowed Napoleon the opportunity to create an image for himself through his military triumphs. Taking advantage of his victories, Napoleon went south and by the end of 1797, he controlled both Italy and Austria. After this he did not rest, he continued to display ambition, aggression and leadership that characterized the rest of his career. Even though Napoleon was defeated in Egypt, Napoleon returned to France and joined a revolt against the Directory. After being successful on November 9, 1799, Napoleon became the leader of France. He revised the French Constitution in 1802 and in 1804 declared himself emperor. Napoleon backed up these elaborate moves with military power. In 1800, Napoleon's

army came together by a conscription method, Napoleon invaded Austria and tried to negotiate a peace pact with the nation. Furthermore, Napoleon remains today equal with military influence and leadership. Power was Napoleon's only guide as he triumphed in achieving a title of history's most successful military commanders. After all, Napoleon ran France in much the same way as he ran the army; order and obedience were essential, allowing the values of nationalism to spread in France.

In the age of Napoleon, nationalism was a powerful force. Napoleon worked to eliminate legal, economic and social barriers and pursued to enhance French society with a nationalist approach. The period from 1799 to 1815 was otherwise known as the Napoleonic era which was one of great change both physically and thoughtfully. The entire continent of Europe and many of its majestic investments were completely reshaped and united with the presence of the French. The Napoleonic era brought about the introduction to a new form of unification called nationalism. French nationalism was Napoleon's greatest weapon as he rose to power: " Napoleon proved to be the impetus for a long period of relative peace and stability"(Dwyer 21).

Through peace and stability, it made it easier for Napoleon to govern, his actions had the unexpected result of causing the people within those regions to begin thinking of themselves as nations. Nationalism has made it possible for the creation of nations around the world that exist today. It unites all of humanity together and makes us feel like we are not separated by continent their country and that can make one feel better. Through the ideals of Napoleon, it has also helped to combine a lot of different people to make one's nation come together as one. In particular, if it were not for Napoleon "

to make much of divided Italy into one nation and then did the same with more than 300 small German states. He created an independent Poland as a buffer against Russia"(Carroll 78). Napoleon made most nations independent in order for their to be pride for one's culture, values, beliefs and group. Once a human being starts to think of them self as belonging to a group, it becomes evident that great things are bound to occur and become accomplished for the advancement of the group. Correspondingly, nationalism started by the French Revolution and considered by Napoleon became one of the strongest forces on this planet during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Under Napoleon's rule, the foundations of the Revolution such as laws, finance, government and society stayed in their previous and permanent places. Napoleon quickly joined the French Revolution after it made an appearance in 1789. Through the countless complaints, plans, substitutions and many revolutions between 1778 and 1804, the government of Napoleon had strengthened. It established those that appealed most strongly to the groups which supported him and whose complaints had effectively launched the Revolution (Carroll 63). Furthermore, the period of Napoleon's rule may properly be regarded as the preliminary phase of the nineteenth century reaction against liberal ideas which had made the Revolution possible: " Napoleon was the heir to and apostle of the liberal vision of the French Revolution, but he was a survivor of the Great Terror, and the most gifted…"(Murphy).

Napoleon's legacy continued to rise. From 1796 to 1797, he led a successful campaign in Italy against the Coalition. He defeated the army of the

Archduke, forcing him to sign a compromising truce. In October 1797, the Coalition signed the Treaty of Campo Formio. This treaty allowed France to control the Austrian part of the Netherlands. It continued to make him a national hero in France. France gained large amounts of territory during Napoleon's rule in the French Revolution. Napoleon also managed to lead a successful coup d'etat against the Directory. This took place on the 18 Brumaire in the Revolutionary calendar: " Within hours of assuming office, he began issuing directives and decrees"(Carroll 60). His directives, decrees and coups showed that Napoleon really cared for a liberal and equal France. He believed that it was time for a change in the way France was and that the people of France needed to have their voice heard when decisions were made for France. After all, this was an intelligent idea because it is the nation that the French people live in. Changes need to be made according to what they want and need in order to have a successful and smooth running French society. In contrast, many of Napoleon's achievements incorporated more of the French Revolution then any other French regime.

Napoleon introduced the growing state of the French economy. The foundation of the Bank of France constituted the most important reform in the area of credit. Formed on the sixteenth of February in 1800, the Bank of France was privately owned and possessed an opening investment of thirty million francs:

" the introduction of monetary and financial reforms (the Bank of France established in February 1800, three months after the coup of Brumaire), and the Concordat with the Catholic Church in Rome were all designed to create

the social, economic, and political stability necessary to consolidate and maintain power"(Dwyer 4).

In 1806, Napoleon placed the Bank of France under stricter government control than ever before and appointed new officials to manage it. The Bank of France's investments were now doubled to 90 million francs and extended its fortunate stance until 1843. Simultaneously, in 1808 the Bank of France was authorized to set up branches in other cities in order to transform it into a truly national bank(176). This shows that Napoleon not only contributed to great financial good for France but also for other nation's in the rest of Europe. Under Napoleon's rule the Bank of France also managed to revitalize the deficit of one hundred and twenty million francs for the following year(176). In this sense, the financial reforms and new institutions created under Napoleon helped to arrange the foundation for the government in all countries during the nineteenth century. On balance, Napoleon contributed to many positive establishments not only for France, but the rest of Europe.

As a heroic figure, Napoleon contributed positively to the Napoleonic Code, the French military, the introduction of nationalism, defending the Revolution and the revival of the economy. Each contribution has made Napoleon become recognized in the history of France and the rest of Europe. His ambition, opportunism and courage allowed him to take this qualities to exceptional and remarkable new levels. Napoleon can be called ruthless or very opportunistic. His conquests made France rich and ultimately brought it to great standards with other nations. He was perhaps the most important single cause of the nationalistic movements that spread through Europe

during the nineteenth century. Since Napoleon's vision was an enormous

size, he may be remembered not only as a hero, but as a great man.