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The second French Republic Louis Napoleon Bonaparte 1848-1852 and the second French Empire (Napoleon III, 1852-1870)

Questions to ponder

1. Account for the rise of Charles Louis Napoleon Bonaparte (Napoleon III) to power in France, 1848.
2. "Napoleon the little." To what extent is this true description of Napoleon III?
3. "Napoleon III attempted to put on his uncle's shoes but they could not fit him." Discuss the validity of this statement in reference to Napoleon III's policies.
4. Examine the steps taken by Napoleon III to consolidate his power from 1848-1870

Consider

- a. An Introduction each question by giving a brief description of 1848 revolutions in Europe.
- b. Describe the main point answering the question and then other factors
- c. The give a generalized conclusion

Summary of the Napoleon III, 1852-1870



Napoleon III, 1852-1870

Napoleon III (born Charles-Louis Napoléon Bonaparte) was the nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte and ruled France as Emperor from **1852 to 1870**. Here are some key points about his reign:

1. **Rise to Power:** Napoleon III was elected President of the French Second Republic in 1848. Unable to be re-elected, he staged a coup in 1851 and declared himself Emperor in 1852.
2. **Economic and Urban Development:** He oversaw significant modernization of the French economy, including the expansion of the railway network and the beautification of Paris under Baron Haussmann.
3. **Foreign Policy:** Napoleon III engaged in several military campaigns, including the Crimean War (1853-1856) and the Second Italian War of Independence (1859), which helped to unify Italy.
4. **Colonial Expansion:** He expanded the French colonial empire, making the French merchant navy the second largest in the world.
5. **Downfall:** His reign ended with the disastrous **Franco-Prussian War** (1870-1871), which led to his capture at the Battle of Sedan and the proclamation of the Third Republic in France.

Factors that contributed to the rise of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte to power in 1848

Several factors contributed to the rise of **Louis Napoleon Bonaparte** (Napoleon III) to power in 1848:

1. **Name and Legacy:** As the nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte, Louis-Napoleon benefited from the enduring popularity and legacy of his famous uncle, which resonated with many French citizens.
2. **Political Instability:** The political instability and chaos following the February Revolution of 1848 created a power vacuum that Louis-Napoleon was able to exploit.
3. **Populist Appeal:** Louis-Napoleon's campaign focused on appealing to the working class and rural populations, promising social and economic reforms that resonated with their needs and desires.
4. **Economic Hardships:** The economic difficulties and unemployment that plagued France at the time made his promises of stability and prosperity attractive to voters.
5. **Disunity among the Republican and Monarchists left a vacuum for Napoleon III to be elected as the president.**
6. **Napoleon III's ambition.** Louis Napoleon Bonaparte was very ambitious that he attempted several coups before he was elected president. So Masses awarded this ambition.
7. **Election Victory:** In the December 1848 presidential election, Louis-Napoleon won with **74% of the popular vote**, reflecting widespread support for his candidacy.

Power consolidation by Napoleon III

Napoleon III consolidated his power through several key strategies:

1. **Coup d'État:** In 1851, when he was unable to run for re-election due to constitutional restrictions, Napoleon III staged a coup, dissolving the Second Republic and declaring himself Emperor in 1852.
2. **Centralization of Power:** He centralized power by appointing loyalists to key positions in the government and military, ensuring control over the administration and armed forces.
3. **Economic Reforms:** Napoleon III implemented significant economic reforms, including modernizing the banking system, expanding the railway network, and promoting industrialization, which helped stabilize and strengthen the economy.
4. **Urban Development:** He initiated the massive reconstruction of Paris under Baron Haussmann, which not only improved the city's infrastructure but also helped to quell potential unrest by creating jobs and improving living conditions.
5. **Propaganda and Public Support:** Napoleon III used propaganda to cultivate public support, portraying himself as a strong and capable leader who could bring stability and prosperity to France.
6. **He built a strong royal army that protected his government.** The army helped Napoleon to keep law and order and to suppress revolution. All energetic young men were required to serve in the army for a period of at least two years or pay a fine which was used to build the army.
7. **He toured the whole country and interacted with peasant while inspecting agricultural projects.** This gave him support from the masses.
8. **He censored the press to kept opinions of his opponents/socialists from the public.**
9. **The use espionage (spy network) throughout the country to crack down any act of sabotage.** Many culprits were imprisoned.
10. **He created a broad based government to earn support.**

Napoleon III domestic policy

Napoleon III's domestic policy focused on modernization, economic development, and social welfare. Here are some key aspects:

1. **Napoleon III practiced nepotism.** He appointed relatives and friends in key government positions, army and police to maintain his dominance.
2. **Economic Reforms:** Napoleon III promoted industrialization and infrastructure development, including the expansion of the railway network, which facilitated economic growth and improved transportation.
3. **Urban Renewal:** He initiated the massive reconstruction of Paris under Baron Haussmann, which modernized the city's infrastructure, improved sanitation, and created jobs.
4. **Social Welfare:** Napoleon III implemented social welfare programs, such as the establishment of boards of arbitration to resolve labor disputes and the creation of societies of mutual assistance to support workers.
5. **Free Trade:** In 1860, he signed the **Chevalier Treaty** with Great Britain, promoting free trade and aiming to increase prosperity and decrease the cost of living.

6. **Liberalization:** Although initially authoritarian, Napoleon III gradually introduced liberal reforms, such as freedom of assembly and the extension of parliamentary rights, to address growing opposition.
7. **Napoleon III improved education system.** Like his uncle he promoted the teaching of science subjects and suppressed the teaching of liberal subjects like history, philosophy and literature.
8. **He suppressed political freedom.**

Reason why Napoleon III staged a successful coup d'état

Napoleon III staged a successful coup d'état in **1851** for several reasons:

1. **Political Instability:** The political environment in France was unstable, with frequent changes in government and widespread dissatisfaction with the Second Republic.
2. **Popular Support:** Napoleon III had significant popular support due to his name and the legacy of his uncle, Napoleon Bonaparte. This support was crucial in gaining the backing of the military and the public.
3. **Strategic Planning:** He carefully planned the coup, timing it to coincide with the anniversary of his uncle's coronation and victory at Austerlitz, which added symbolic significance and rallied support.
4. **Control of the Military:** Napoleon III secured the loyalty of key military leaders, ensuring that the army would support his actions and suppress any opposition.
5. **Restoration of Universal Suffrage:** He promised to restore universal male suffrage, which had been restricted by the legislature, appealing to the broader population and gaining their support.

Napoleon III foreign policy

Napoleon III's foreign policy was marked by efforts to reassert French influence in Europe and around the world. Here are some key aspects:

1. **Napoleon III in 1849 restored the Pope Pius IX to his throne in Roman Empire.** The pope had been overthrown by a revolt organized among others by Giuseppe Mazzini.
2. **Crimean War:** Napoleon III allied with Britain and the Ottoman Empire to defeat Russia in the Crimean War (1853-1856), which enhanced France's prestige and influence in Europe.
3. **Italian Unification:** He supported the unification of Italy, intervening in the Second Italian War of Independence (1859) alongside Piedmont-Sardinia, which led to the annexation of Lombardy and later the establishment of the Kingdom of Italy.
4. **Colonial Expansion:** Napoleon III expanded the French colonial empire, particularly in Africa and Asia, aiming to open new markets and secure resources for France.
5. **Mexican Intervention:** He attempted to establish a French-backed monarchy in Mexico, leading to the installation of Maximilian I as Emperor, although this ultimately failed and resulted in his execution.

6. **Napoleon III carried out free trade with other European states.** In 1860 he signed a Free Commercial Treaty with Britain known as the “the Cobden commercial Treaty” through capitalist Richard Cobden.
7. **Franco-Prussian War:** His foreign policy culminated in the disastrous Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871), which led to his capture at the Battle of Sedan and the fall of the Second Empire.

Achievements of Napoleon III (1848-1870)

Napoleon III, who ruled France from **1852 to 1870**, had several notable achievements during his reign:

1. **Economic Modernization:** He oversaw significant economic reforms, including the expansion of the railway network, which facilitated industrial growth and improved transportation across France.
2. **Urban Renewal of Paris:** Under his direction, Baron Haussmann carried out the massive reconstruction of Paris, creating wide boulevards, parks, and modern infrastructure that transformed the city into a model of urban planning.
3. **Colonial Expansion:** Napoleon III expanded the French colonial empire, particularly in Africa and Asia, aiming to open new markets and secure resources for France.
4. **Social Reforms:** He implemented social welfare programs, such as the establishment of boards of arbitration to resolve labor disputes and societies of mutual assistance to support workers.
5. **Foreign Policy Successes:** He played a significant role in European politics, including the Crimean War (1853-1856) and the Second Italian War of Independence (1859), which enhanced France's prestige and influence.
6. **He promoted Science education.**

Failures of Napoleon III (1848-1870)

Napoleon III's reign had several notable failures:

1. **Franco-Prussian War:** His greatest failure was the **Franco-Prussian War** (1870-1871), which led to his capture at the Battle of Sedan and the eventual downfall of the Second Empire.
2. **Economic Challenges:** Despite economic modernization, France faced economic challenges, including financial instability and debt accumulation.
3. **Colonial Misadventures:** His attempt to establish a French-backed monarchy in Mexico with Maximilian I ended in failure and Maximilian's execution.
4. **Political Repression:** Although he initially promised liberal reforms, Napoleon III increasingly resorted to authoritarian measures, stifling political dissent and limiting civil liberties.
5. **Unfulfilled Reforms:** Many of his social and political reforms fell short of expectations, failing to address the deeper issues of inequality and social unrest.

Factors that led to the downfall of Napoleon III in 1870

Several factors led to the downfall of **Napoleon III** in 1870:

1. **Franco-Prussian War:** The decisive defeat in the **Franco-Prussian War** (1870-1871) was a major factor. The French army suffered significant losses, culminating in Napoleon III's capture at the Battle of Sedan.
2. **Military Unpreparedness:** The French military was poorly prepared for the war, lacking modern equipment and effective leadership.
3. **Political Isolation:** Napoleon III's foreign policy decisions, including the Mexican Expedition, alienated potential allies and isolated France diplomatically.
4. **Economic Strain:** The war placed a heavy economic burden on France, exacerbating existing financial difficulties and leading to widespread discontent.
5. **Rise of the Third Republic:** The defeat and capture of Napoleon III led to the proclamation of the **Third Republic** in France on September 4, 1870, marking the end of the Second Empire.
6. **Suppression of political freedom made him unpopular**
7. **Censorship of press made him unpopular**
8. **Illness weakened his physical and mental ability to assert his control on government.**

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