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THE POLITICS OF THE APPOINTMENT AND DISMISSAL
OF THE PREFECTORAL CORPS
UNDER THE CONSULATE AND EMPIRE

The example of the department of Mont-Tonnerre*

One of the interesting problems concerning dictatorship is the nature of political life under this type of regime; for though theoretically the plenitude of power may be vested in a leader or in a collective leadership, this does not mean that political life ceases; man being a political animal, it continues, but in a transmuted form, far different from that in a free society, where political divisions are overt. The dictatorial regime may have imposed a monopolistic ideology, or put a ban on ideology; even so, the characteristic left/right division of modern politics, the division between movement and resistance, is likely to persist, with each side finding representatives and champions among the ruling cadres. Perhaps more fundamentally, the content of political life in the abstract – competition for office, for power and influence, the rewards and penalties, the promotions and disgraces, patronage and clientage, the importance of personalities and interpersonal relationships – takes on an added significance and vitality, with the customary ideological labels and pretences being shelved or hidden, leaving political man to operate untrammelled. A premium is likely to be set on personalities in such a setting; dictatorship, with monarchy, is perhaps the most personal, or personalized, of systems of government. And finally, the tendency to private empire building within an authoritarian regime is notorious, since, without the liberal democratic process to give some consistency and regularity to the fortunes of politicians, the temptation for them to seek to secure or reinsure their positions by such informal means is overwhelming. In sum, the political life that exists under a dictatorship must of necessity be found within the regime itself, and taking on the characteristic inflections outlined here.

The First Empire in France, which may possibly be called the first dictatorship in modern European history – dictatorship in the current sense is an essentially ›modern‹ phenomenon; it must therefore postdate the French Revolution and be sought in countries that have undergone the modernization process –, ought to be of particular interest as showing all or most of these principles in operation at an early date. The nature of the regime is easily enough described: it may be summed up, like the Pilsudski regime in Poland, as a non-ideological military dictatorship¹. Not being the

* An article about ›The Nature of Parliamentary Elections under the First Empire: The Example of the Department of Mont-Tonnerre‹ will be published in the next volume of *FRANCIA*.

1 Cf. Stanislaw ANDRESKI, Poland, in: Stuart J. WOOLF ed., *European fascism*, London 1968, pp. 167–83.

regime of a party, it was compelled to construct its cadres from the materials of existing parties: Bonaparte himself said that he knew no one². Just as the French Revolution introduced a new principle of military organization, the *amalgame*, the same principle, as Louis Bergeron notes, can be said to have been adopted by the Consulate and Empire in its civil dispositions³. It aspired to be, what the July Monarchy afterwards became, the regime of all the elites of France⁴; Theodore Zeldin identifies Napoleon as the founder of Orleanism⁵. In the formation of the regime, the appointment of its key agents in local government, the prefects, was obviously of primary importance. While the effort to recruit men of ability to fulfil the functions of prefects was conspicuous, it has often been remarked how catholic the choice was in terms of the political and ideological antecedents of the appointees. The nomination of prefects, at the time of the initial batch in 1800 and subsequently, has been studied by Régnier, Aulard, Godechot, Chapman, Savant, Lefebvre and Bergeron⁶; and the work of Nicholas Richardson on the prefects of the Restoration is also relevant to an understanding of the process of appointment, which did not necessarily materially change from one regime to another in spite of political fluctuations⁷. Here our purpose is limited to an examination of how this process, and also the process of dismissal, operated within the confines of one department, and that perhaps an atypical one, a German-speaking department of the Rhineland, only recently annexed by France.

It is enough, by way of introduction to the prefectural career, to remind the reader that the prefectural corps comprised not only the prefects but also, in each department, the sub-prefects – each at the head of an *arrondissement* of the department, as the prefect was of the department as a whole – and the *secrétaire général*, the head of the prefect's bureaucratic staff. All of these officials will be examined in our department. They were all appointed by the government, in accordance with the Napoleonic scheme of rigorous centralization – the prefect directly by the head of state. There was no official ladder of promotion, so that, while the members of the prefectural corps can be assumed, broadly speaking, to have been appointed on grounds of merit, there was no system of promotion by seniority; and, as will be seen, merit, even where present, was not necessarily the only criterion for advancement. These factors gave scope for the informal procedures that we shall see at work, and emphasized the play of personal considerations in the operation of the regime. The nearest thing to a ladder of promotion that the regime presented was the practice – prevalent especially in the later years of the Empire – of appointing *auditeurs*

2 Louis BERGERON, *L'épisode napoléonien: aspects intérieurs 1799–1815*, Paris 1972, p. 69.

3 *Ibid.* p. 71.

4 Cf. René RÉMOND, *The right wing in France from 1815 to de Gaulle*, Philadelphia 1966, pp. 116–7.

5 Theodore ZELDIN, *France 1848–1945*, 2 volumes, Oxford 1973–7, volume 1 p. 507.

6 Jacques RÉGNIER, *Les préfets du Consulat et de l'Empire*, 3rd edn Paris 1913, chapter 1; Alphonse AULARD, *La centralisation napoléonienne: les préfets*, section III, in his: *Études et leçons sur la Révolution française*, 7^e série Paris 1913, pp. 113–95; Jacques GODECHOT, *Les institutions de la France sous la Révolution et l'Empire*, Paris 1951, pp. 509–11; Brian CHAPMAN, *The prefects and provincial France*, London 1955, pp. 23–5; Jean SAVANT, *Les préfets de Napoléon*, Paris 1958, chapter 2; Georges LEFEBVRE, *Napoléon*, 5th edn Paris 1965, pp. 85–6, 394–5; BERGERON (see n. 2) pp. 69 ff. See also the important revisionist article of Edward A. WHITCOMB, *Napoleon's prefects*, in: *American Historical Review* 79 (1974) pp. 1089–1118.

7 Nicholas RICHARDSON, *The French prefectural corps 1814–1830*, Cambridge 1966, chapter 2.

of the *Conseil d'État* to sub-prefectures (a quarter of all sub-prefectures were eventually reserved for them) and indeed to prefectures. In this way we see the *Conseil d'État* serving as the training ground for the administrative elite of the Empire.

The department with which we are concerned, that of Mont-Tonnerre, was situated in the southern Rhineland, with its *chef-lieu* at Mainz. The Rhineland had been occupied militarily by the French in 1794, and in 1798 had been divided into four French-style departments, of which Mont-Tonnerre was the most south-easterly one. After undergoing a succession of military administrations, the Rhineland at the time of the creation of the prefectoral system in 1800 was to be found under a civil administration, the *commissariat général*, whose function was to prepare it for incorporation in France. The first prefect of Mont-Tonnerre was the existing *commissaire général*, whose headquarters were at Mainz; separate prefects were appointed for the other three departments at the same time. The *commissariat général* was abolished in 1802, after the treaty of Lunéville (1801), which definitely ceded the left bank of the Rhine to France, and the four Rhenish departments were assimilated to the departments of the interior⁸.

The department of Mont-Tonnerre covered an area of about 5300 square kilometres, and its population in 1809 was officially 426,668⁹. It was predominantly agricultural, with a little local industry. The most notable event in the recent history of the area was the episode of the Mainz ›Jacobins‹, ideological sympathizers with the French Revolution who had collaborated with the French at the time of their first, temporary occupation in 1792 – 93 – an episode repeated many times in many parts of Europe during the revolutionary wars.

It is reasonable to ask what peculiarities, if any, from the standpoint of French administration, might be expected to be present in an area so recently annexed to France. The answer is possibly more negative than might be supposed. The department, like the Rhineland in general, had certainly in the decade before 1802 undergone severe political upheavals; it had been the scene of war, and had experienced the radical remodelling of all its institutions, civil and economic. But the same was true of metropolitan France; it, no less than the Rhineland, had passed through a revolutionary transformation. The Rhineland had not previously been part of France; but then France before 1789 had not been a cohesive state, and it might be questioned how far the *pays d'états* were integrated parts of it. As for the fact that the Rhineland was German-speaking, the same could be said of Alsace. The abolition of the seigneurial regime in the Rhineland and the sale of *biens nationaux* brought into being a society of peasant proprietors not dissimilar to that of metropolitan France¹⁰. On the whole, then, it would seem that the differences between the newly annexed

8 On administrative organization, see Rainer ORTLEPP, Die französische Verwaltungsorganisation in den besetzten linksrheinischen Gebieten 1797–1814 unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Departements Donnersberg, in: Vom Alten Reich zu neuer Staatlichkeit. Alzeyer Kolloquium 1979. Kontinuität und Wandel im Gefolge der Französischen Revolution am Mittelrhein, Wiesbaden 1982 (= Geschichtliche Landeskunde 22) pp. 132–51.

9 Figure for area from Heinrich STEINMETZ, Das linksseitige Rheingebiet unter der Herrschaft der Franzosen 1792–1813. Unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Donnersberg-Departements, Alsenz 1913, p. 9; figure for population, with discussion of the question of population, from Philippe SAGNAC, Le Rhin français pendant la Révolution et l'Empire, Paris 1917, p. 265.

10 On this question, see SAGNAC (see n. 9) pp. 259ff.

territories and the country of which they had become a part could easily be exaggerated; and the Napoleonic regime was a new regime imposed uniformly on old and new departments alike (though even the departments of the interior were not old). Everywhere its political concern was the same, to rear a new ruling class of *notables* among the property-owners in the localities. We shall see this reflected in what follows, since, while prefects were not local men, sub-prefects were commonly recruited among local *notables*. In these respects, Mont-Tonnere showed itself typical of the French Empire in general.

As long as the *commissariat général* for the four departments subsisted, the prefecture of Mont-Tonnerre could hardly be said to exist in an autonomous sense; however, technically the first two prefects of Mont-Tonnerre were the fifth and sixth *commissaires généraux*, Shée and Jollivet, who held office till September 1800 and November 1801 respectively. They can hardly be regarded as genuine representatives of the prefectural system in action, since, as has been made clear, their primary responsibility was the post of *commissaire général* – an exceptional and, as it proved, temporary office in occupied territory. So an examination of the circumstances in which they came to be appointed would not be altogether relevant to our purpose. Suffice it to say that they seem to have represented the primary concerns of French administration in the Rhineland in the 1790s: military and financial needs. Henri Shée, who was appointed *commissaire général* in December 1799, was a general, with experience of administration in the occupied Rhineland in the 1790s, to which fact he no doubt partly owed his appointment. He came of an Irish Catholic family settled in France, whose name is the same as Shea or O'Shea. He had been born in the Nord, and had been a colonel under the *ancien régime*. In all probability a crucial factor in his appointment as *commissaire général* and prefect was the fact that he was the uncle of General Clarke, afterwards minister of war and duc de Feltre, another man of Irish descent, who played a great part in the nomination of the first prefects. Jean-Baptiste-Moïse Jollivet, a native of the Yonne, had been a member of one of the Revolutionary assemblies, the Legislative Assembly – and hence, almost inevitably, a lawyer by training. He had since become a *conseiller d'État* with special knowledge of finance. The contrast in the backgrounds of Shée and Jollivet seems to have persisted in their personalities and reputations. Shée – already an elderly man: he was sixty when appointed – appears to have been an honest and well-meaning administrator, though he is also reported to have been lacking in forcefulness and application. Jollivet, on the other hand, while his competence seems not to have been called in question, was an arid, prosaic, unprepossessing character, who, both then and later, was accused of rapacity. In both cases, their office in the Rhineland seems to have been only a staging post in the course of an administrative career that continued to evolve. Shée, in spite of his advancing age, went on in 1802 to become prefect of the Bas-Rhin at Strasbourg – a frontier department on the Rhine, German-speaking, for which his experience in the Rhineland made him an apt choice, though in the event he seems to have proved a less than adequate prefect. Here again, his relationship to General Clarke was probably instrumental in his advancement; and it was probably Clarke's influence that kept him in office till 1810, long after his inefficiency had become apparent – and then his retirement was sweetened by his being made a senator. Jollivet appears to have been more capable of making his way under his own steam. After quitting the *commissariat*

général, he became in 1804 *liquidateur général* of the debt of the four Rhenish departments and in 1807 *ministre de trésor* of the kingdom of Westphalia – his career continuing in its German-oriented lucrative financial groove till its conclusion. Both he and Shée became counts of the Empire¹¹.

These men were shallow figures, whose appointments were of a routine nature, compared with their successor, appointed in December 1801, the last *commissaire général* and the first veritable prefect of Mont-Tonnerre: the celebrated Jeanbon Saint-André. The first striking thing about this man, than whom Napoleon had no more famous prefect, was the fact of his nomination. Originally called André Jeanbon, a native of Montauban and former captain in the merchant marine and Protestant pastor, he had sat in the Convention as a Jacobin, had become a regicide, and had been a member of the Committee of Public Safety in the year II, in which capacity he had reorganized the French navy. This background, distinguished though it was, made him, to say the least, a controversial choice. It is true that to some extent he had expiated his revolutionary past by undergoing a period of imprisonment during the Thermidorian reaction and then by accepting consular office under the Directory. In a letter written in 1802, he summarized his career from then onwards:

Le 1. frimaire de l'an 4 [22 November 1795] je fus nommé par le directoire commissaire à Alger. Au bout de deux ans et demi, je reçus ordre de passer à Smyrne en la même qualité. La guerre [between France and Turkey] m'y surprit, et je fus trois ans prisonnier, ou plutôt esclave en Turquie. À mon retour en France je me hâtai de me rendre à Paris où j'avais des comptes à rendre au ministre des relations extérieures. La bienveillance du premier Consul m'honora de la place de commissaire général dans les nouveaux départements du Rhin. Je me rendis sur le champ à mon poste¹².

Superficially, at any rate, the evolution of Jeanbon's career might seem to have all too much in common with those persons whom the »Moniteur« described sarcastically as scrambling for office at the time of the first prefectoral appointments:

Depuis que la Constitution a créé une quantité de places richement dotées, que de gens en mouvement, que de visages peu connus qui s'empressent de se montrer, que de noms oubliés qui s'agitent de nouveau sous la poussière de la Révolution! Que de fiers républicains de l'an VII [1798–9] se font petits pour arriver jusqu'à l'homme puissant qui peut les placer; que de Brutus qui sollicitent, que de petits talents on exalte, que de minces services on exagère, que de taches sanglantes on déguise! Ce prodigieux changement de scène s'est opéré en un moment¹³.

11 See the articles on Shée and Jollivet in [Louis-Gabriel] MICHAUD ed., *Biographie universelle ancienne et moderne*, new edn, 45 volumes, Paris 1843 [–65]; Adolphe ROBERT, Edgar BOURLOTON and Gaston COUGNY ed., *Dictionnaire des parlementaires français*, 5 volumes, Paris 1891; and [Jean-François-Eugène] ROBINET ed., *Dictionnaire historique et biographique de la Révolution et de l'Empire 1789–1815*, Paris no date [1898]; also Charles SCHMIDT et al., *Les sources de l'histoire des territoires rhénans de 1792 à 1814 dans les archives rhénans et à Paris*, Paris 1921, Introduction; SAVANT (see n. 6), *Liste des préfets*; Léon LÉVY (alias Lévy-Schneider), *Le Conventionnel Jeanbon Saint-André 1749–1813*, Paris 1901, p. 1110; Max SPRINGER, *Die Franzosenherrschaft in der Pfalz 1792–1814 (Departement Donnersberg)*, Stuttgart 1926, pp. 245 ff., 274 ff.; Alfred RAMBAUD, *Les Français sur le Rhin (1792–1804)*, 4th edn Paris 1891, p. 302.

12 Jeanbon to minister of the interior, 2 vendémiaire, year XI (24 September 1802). Archives Nationales (hereinafter abbreviated AN), F 1 b II Mont-Tonnerre 1.

13 3 nivôse, year VIII (24 December 1799); quoted in RÉGNIER (see n. 6) p. 10n.

This impression would seem to be confirmed if we look at the honours he subsequently accepted from Napoleon, and evidently enjoyed (though these were the common lot of prefects as the Empire became more aristocratic): the Legion of Honour, the title baron de Saint-André (conferred in 1810). In sum, he would seem to fit only too well the pattern of those whom Chateaubriand stigmatized as ›levellers, regenerators and cut-throats... turned into valets, spies and sycophants, and even less naturally into dukes, counts and barons‹¹⁴.

A good case, however, has been made out in extenuation of Jeanbon's conduct by his biographer, Lévy¹⁵. He was by no means unusual among regicides in accepting office under Bonaparte, and not unique even among former members of the Committee of Public Safety (witness the case of Carnot). He was probably, Lévy thinks, attracted to the Napoleonic regime by two things: its authoritarianism – no Jacobin was anything if not authoritarian, no doubt partly by reason of temperamental preference, partly because he realized that the programme of his party could be implemented only by coercion; and his belief that the regime genuinely represented the continuation of the principles of the Revolution. He was, then, according to Lévy, an honest dupe of the Napoleonic autocracy rather than its knowing and unscrupulous tool. This is plausible, though the later evolution of the Empire must have strained the credulity even of one who, on temperamental grounds, was inherently disposed to support it. One need not expatiate here on the common ground between all authoritarian regimes, which means that one such regime can often inherit many of the human instruments of another in spite of ostensible ideological incompatibility. But if Jeanbon retained any of the belief in equality and social justice that he had formerly professed, he must have been gullible indeed, or else sorely disappointed, in continuing to serve what was, if Richard Cobb is to be believed, the most inegalitarian and socially unjust of French regimes.

However, since our main purpose is to examine why prefects were nominated, rather than their motives for acceptance, it is more apropos to look into the government's reasons for employing such a singular figure – whose appointment is said to have evoked protests among his Rhenish prospective *administrés*. The simplest answer is that Bonaparte wished to employ able men irrespective of their past. ›Il voulut oublier le passé‹, Pasquier said¹⁶. With this in view, he sought to recruit capable members of all parties (as we have seen, he had not altogether a free hand in the matter). As Aulard has shown, no especial preference was given to former Jacobins – in fact, the role of the moderates was far more prominent in the initial composition of the corps; but, as Lévy notes, the known authoritarianism of former Jacobins and their penchant for centralization cannot have come amiss in the case of those who proved amenable. At all events, Jeanbon was the exception rather than the rule among the newly constituted corps. It remains to examine which considerations, apart from the general principles just outlined, may have contributed to his appointment.

14 The memoirs of CHATEAUBRIAND, ed. and translated Robert BALDICK, London 1961, p. 99.

15 LÉVY (see n. 11) pp. 1099 ff.

16 Quoted in RÉGNIER (see n. 6) p. 15. For the general question of the principles underlying prefectural appointments, see the works cited above, n. 6.

Jeanbon had owed his appointment as consul general at Smyrna to Talleyrand, the foreign minister¹⁷; as we have seen, his first act on returning to France in 1801 was to report to Talleyrand in Paris. It is possible, then, that Talleyrand was instrumental in securing his nomination as *commissaire général* and prefect; it is known that the foreign minister was one of the select few who enjoyed an influence in the nomination of the first prefects in 1800. All the same, there might seem to be a contradiction in the former Jacobin and terrorist obtaining the patronage of the high priest of the moderates, had not Jeanbon already largely lived down his revolutionary past and did we not know for certain of Talleyrand's recommendation of him in 1797. Former ideological differences need not have been decisive: Talleyrand's motive in 1797 may have been the reflection that here was an able man who could be put to good use in the service of the state, and who had shown his willingness to be employed. The same may have happened in 1801. But there is no evidence, at that date or later, to link Jeanbon with the foreign minister. Indeed, there is some reason to doubt whether they were associated politically, at least on any long-term basis. It was necessary for a prefect to have a protector in government, and Jeanbon's protector was not Talleyrand but Fouché, minister of police. This was quite in keeping with their political antecedents, for Fouché too was notoriously a former Jacobin, regicide and terrorist. Jeanbon's favourite associates at Mainz were old Jacobins like himself. Fouché's perennial concern during the Consulate and Empire was to safeguard the surviving heritage of the Revolution – his motive, in view of his radical past, was no doubt self-interest as well as principle –, and this meant protecting individuals as well as defending policies. It is easy to see, therefore, how Jeanbon should have been among his protégés. But this is a powerful reason for doubting whether there was any stable connection between Jeanbon and Talleyrand, since Talleyrand was one of those moderates or conservatives in the Napoleonic regime whose influence Fouché systematically opposed, and thus ranked as an enemy of the minister of police – and Jeanbon could not serve two masters¹⁸. On the whole, then, in default of further evidence, the question whether Jeanbon was the recipient of Talleyrand's favour at any point during the Consulate must remain open.

More relevant, perhaps, is the suggestion by Daniel Robert that Jeanbon's appointment may have been connected with a project for the union of the Lutheran and Calvinist churches in the Rhineland about this time, when such schemes were being mooted in French government circles¹⁹. This was the epoch of the Concordat, when the government was in the throes of the ecclesiastical reorganization of France – of the Protestant cult as well as of the Roman Catholic. Jeanbon's background as a Calvinist pastor might have made him appear a fit choice to play an instrumental or sympathetic role in such a project of union. However, since these schemes proved abortive, they cannot have had much bearing on the subsequent course of Jeanbon's prefecture, even if they had had an influence on its inception, and in default of direct corroboration, Robert's remarks must be regarded as, at most, an interesting *aperçu*.

17 LÉVY (see n. 11) p. 1096.

18 On the political role of Fouché during the Consulate and Empire, see Louis MADELIN, *Fouché 1759–1820*, 2nd edn Paris 1903, chapters 10ff.

19 Daniel ROBERT, *Les églises réformées en France (1800–1830)*, Paris 1961, p. 87.

Since our task is to try to perceive not only why prefects were appointed, but why they ceased to hold office in a given department – were dismissed, moved on, or promoted –, it is appropriate to take note of the fact that Jeanbon retained his prefecture for twelve years, and indeed still held it at the time of his death in 1813, when he succumbed to typhus, brought to Mainz by the French troops retreating from Germany after the battle of Leipzig. None of the other three Rhenish departments could produce an example of a comparably unbroken tenure: they had on average four prefects in succession during the period of Jeanbon's rule. This long continuance in office needs explaining. Though from one point of view it could be seen as testimony to the government's confidence in the prefect in that particular post – and this explanation is no doubt essentially sound –, from another it could be regarded as involving failure to move on to higher things. A prefecture in metropolitan France evidently had greater prestige than one in the *pays réunis*, so that an ambitious career administrator might hope for a successful term of office in the latter to be followed by promotion to the former, as happened with Shée (though there was no regular pattern of promotion in the moving of prefects, nor was promotion a foregone conclusion). Mont-Tonnerre was classified as a third-class department²⁰, and Mainz, while a *bonne ville* of the French Empire, ranked among the middling provincial centres of the empire. There were certainly better postings to be had. On the other hand, there were considered to be advantages in being left where one was, since this conferred stability, and moving involved heavy expenses. Jeanbon, who was already fifty-two when first appointed to the Rhineland, may have been thought too old thereafter to learn the ropes afresh in a new locale. The essential explanation, however, of this long stay at Mainz is surely that he gave satisfaction to the government, in spite of the independent and high-handed tendencies that he showed. The expectation of forcefulness, as we have seen, may have underlain his appointment; it was amply fulfilled in his case, and this quality was the one the government most admired in an administrator. The fact that Jeanbon also earned the good will of his *administrés* through the paternalistic benevolence of his rule may have been a secondary consideration; at any rate, for him to have acquitted himself well in the unusual circumstances of a Rhenish department, with to some extent distinctive problems, cannot but have been to his credit, and have counselled his retention in a post in which he had proved successful.

The patronage of Fouché may also have stood Jeanbon in good stead, but only for a time, since Fouché fell from office in 1810. Napoleon seems independently to have had a high regard for Jeanbon and to have given him marks of esteem²¹.

Since Jeanbon remained in office till his death, the question of his removal, which would otherwise have interested us, never arose; but though he was in every meaningful sense, as Springer calls him, the first and last prefect of Mont-Tonnerre,

20 Decree of 11 June 1810, in *Bulletin des lois* 4th series, volume 12, no. 294; cited by RICHARDSON (see n. 7) p. 150.

21 On Jeanbon as prefect, see LÉVY (see n. 11) pp. 1098 ff.; SPRINGER (see n. 11) pp. 276 ff.; SAGNAC (see n. 9) pp. 302 ff.; RÉGNIER (see n. 6) pp. 74–6, 146–7, 161–2; AULARD (see n. 6) pp. 158–62; SAVANT (see n. 6) chapter 11; and my unpublished Oxford D. Phil. thesis, *The prefecture of Jeanbon Saint-André in the department of Mont-Tonnerre*. Cf. also Auguste KUSCINSKI, *Dictionnaire des Conventionnels*, Paris 1919. Since the name is often written Jean Bon, it is as well to point out that the prefect always signed himself Jeanbon St. André, and after he received a title B. de St. André.

and died when the French Empire was crumbling, technically he had a successor, the nominal fourth and last prefect, into the circumstances of whose appointment we must therefore look. This man was Charles Philippe Alexandre d'Arberg, appointed in December 1813, shortly after Jeanbon's death. Though he never took up office, his career is of some interest for what it reveals about the Napoleonic prefectoral system in its latter stages. He was unique among the prefects of Mont-Tonnerre in that he was not a Frenchman (indeed, in the other three Rhenish departments, only one person not a Frenchman was ever appointed prefect). He was a Belgian, born at Mons in 1778, the scion of a noble family of Swiss origin whose members in the eighteenth century had held high rank in the Austrian army. Belgium having been annexed by France in 1795, he had been a French subject since the age of seventeen; indeed, since Belgium had been first, abortively occupied and annexed in 1792–3, he could almost be said to have grown up a Frenchman. Clearly he belonged to one of those families in the *pays réunis* – Mont-Tonnerre was not without examples, as we shall see – that, while being members of the local elite, chose to throw in their lot with the occupying power (perhaps through liberal sympathies, or, on account of particularism, considering one suzerain as good as another); they were thus ready to be assimilated to the elite that the Napoleonic regime was forming. This was what happened with d'Arberg. He became in 1804 an *auditeur* at the *Conseil d'État*, which we have already noted as the nursery of future administrators. In the course of the following years he undertook diplomatic missions to Prussia, Württemberg and Russia. He also accepted military appointments, saw active service in the campaigns of 1806–7 against Prussia and Russia, and by the time he retired from it had risen to the rank of major. Equally important, he received a court appointment in 1805 as chamberlain to the emperor, and soon after the Legion of Honour. Promotion to the higher ranks of administration was not long delayed. In 1811 he became prefect of the newly annexed German department of the Bouches-du-Weser at Bremen. Such had been his career at the time of his appointment to Mont-Tonnerre.

The case of d'Arberg is significant from several points of view. He had risen through the *auditorat* of the *Conseil d'État*. He was appointed prefect while relatively young, in his case thirty-two. He was a nobleman, and also a courtier. In all these respects he faithfully reflected the evolution of the prefectoral corps, including – by reason of his training in the *auditorat* – its growing professionalization²². It is particularly interesting to glimpse in d'Arberg – a Belgian appointed to two German departments in succession – a representative of an embryonic elite, almost supranational in character, that was designed to govern eventually a possibly united Napoleonic western Europe. Moreover, the reappearance of members of the old nobility was not confined to administrative functions: under the Empire, increasing numbers of them were employed in decorative offices about the court, as was d'Arberg himself – and as was his mother, who was lady in waiting to Empress Josephine. While Napoleon's motive in thus employing *ci-devant* was no doubt partly to give added tone to his court, he seems to have had a more serious purpose in mind: to effect a fusion between

22 See WHITCOMB (see n. 6) pp. 1108 ff. Whitcomb seems to have demolished the traditional view that the influx of *ancien-régime* nobles into the prefectoral corps was especially a feature of the later years of the Empire.

such persons and members of his new nobility; between the old and the new elites, that of the *ancien régime* and that produced by the Revolution, in the interests of constructing a homogeneous ruling class under the Imperial aegis. This process was pursued at the most personal level, by means of intermarriage. D'Arberg's own family was involved in this: while he himself was unmarried, two of his sisters were married to the Lorrainer generals Klein and Mouton (comte de Lobau) – both members of the Imperial nobility²³. In sum, then, it would seem that there could hardly have been a better representative of the burgeoning elite of the *Grand Empire* – the younger generation of the Napoleonic ruling class – than d'Arberg.

Whether he rose merely by virtue of his obvious personal qualifications, or had the advantage of powerful patronage into the bargain, is an open question. The combination of court office and diplomatic employment raises the possibility that he may have been a protégé of Talleyrand, foreign minister till 1807 and grand chamberlain till 1809, himself a *ci-devant*, who favoured those conservative tendencies in the regime of which d'Arberg's rise could be seen as a symptom. Moreover, d'Arberg was governor of Talleyrand's château of Valençay, where the deposed Spanish princes were detained. If d'Arberg was Talleyrand's protégé, he must have succeeded in dissociating himself from him at the time of the latter's fall from favour in 1809.

If d'Arberg's career might outwardly seem extremely prosperous, its promise was destined not to be fulfilled: it perished in the general wreck of the fortunes of the Empire. As we have already seen, he was unable to take up his post as prefect of Mont-Tonnerre, because at the beginning of 1814 the Rhineland ceased to be under the military control of the French. On 10 January he was at Verdun, and writing to the minister of the interior to explain that he had not yet been able to reach Mainz. But in fact the decay of his career had begun even before his appointment to Mont-Tonnerre. In the summer of 1813, while still prefect of the Bouches-du-Weser, he had asked for leave on account of ill health; this had been refused on the ground that such a request was inopportune at a time when his services were particularly needed – with a war on in Germany. We have here the first indication of the failure of d'Arberg's health, which was to culminate in his premature death in May 1814. Had his health been undermined on active service, and was this the reason for his relinquishing a military career and devoting himself to administration? We shall see evidence that this kind of scenario was often operative in the politics of administrative appointment under the Empire; but in d'Arberg's case we have no direct information to this effect. There was a postscript to his career, which adds a little to our knowledge of his abortive tenure of the prefecture of Mont-Tonnerre. In 1814, after the Restoration in France, his family petitioned the government for the payment of sums that they alleged had been owing to him, viz. his salary as prefect of Mont-Tonnerre (though he had never taken up his post), compensation for the expense he had incurred through having to join the French withdrawal from the Rhineland, and also arrears of salary dating from his term of office in the Bouches-du-Weser. The family argued that *il n'était nullement de sa faute, s'il n'a pu remplir les fonctions de sa place. Aussitôt que sa nomination lui a été*

23 On this subject of Napoleon's arranged marriages, in which prefects were employed as agents, see RÉGNIER (see n. 6) p. 95 n. 2.

signifiée, il s'est rendu de Liege, où il était, à Cologne pour pénétrer jusqu'à Mayence, mais le mouvement de l'Ennemi l'en ayant empêché il a suivi l'Armée jusqu'aux environs de Paris. Ce voyage lui a été très dispendieux... The outcome of this application is not stated²⁴.

We turn now to the sub-prefects. Mont-Tonnerre was divided into four *arrondissements*, Mainz, Speyer, Zweibrücken (Deux-Ponts) and Kaiserslautern. In contrast to the prefects, the sub-prefects, as elsewhere in the Rhineland, were commonly native Germans. In accordance with the general pattern of the Empire, there was no sub-prefect in the *arrondissement chef-lieu* till the later years of the regime, one being appointed to Mainz in 1811. As was normally the case with these newly created sub-prefectures, the appointee was an *auditeur* at the *Conseil d'État*, Charles de Esebeck, a young man of twenty-five (he was born in 1785). His background in many ways parallels that of d'Arberg: noble birth, the *auditorat*, early promotion to the prefectoral corps. He was a member of a prominent noble and military family of Zweibrücken (formerly a duchy of the Holy Roman Empire) – no doubt a close relative (probably a son or nephew) of Georges de Esebeck, a member of the *conseil général* of the department, president of the electoral college of the *arrondissement* of Zweibrücken and sometime mayor of that town, a man in his fifties when his relative was appointed. The translation of their German ›von‹ into the French ›de‹ (with the gallicization of their Christian names) is symptomatic, both of their identification with the French regime and of the Empire's regression towards aristocratic forms – by the later years of Napoleon's reign, the *particule* had quite returned to fashion, and was freely used by Germans of noble family as well as French. The budding career of Charles de Esebeck provides not only an example of the infiltration of *ancien régime* families into the Imperial administration, but evidence that the same process was happening in the *pays réunis* as in metropolitan France, that members of an *ancien régime* family there could receive prestigious local office, that the ladder of potential advancement to the highest office – the *auditorat* – was open to them as to native Frenchmen, and that thus a sort of supranational elite was in the process of formation. The parallel with the career of d'Arberg, in short, is striking, and there is no reason to think that these examples – from one department – were unusual. Of course, the whole phenomenon, while interesting as an aspect of the incipient integration of western Europe – Napoleon characteristically giving his attention to the production of the ruling cadres –, was short-lived, not outlasting the demise of the *Grand Empire*. Integration, be it noted, was intended to be strictly on France's terms, gallicization being expected of the participants²⁵.

It is a moot point whether Mainz or Speyer should be regarded as the most

24 On d'Arberg, see AN, F 1 b I 155⁶ (dossier Arberg); F 1 b I 147 Mont-Tonnerre; F 1 c III Mont-Tonnerre 5 (on 1814); SAVANT (see n. 6) pp. 232, 281; RÉGNIER (see n. 6) p. 139 and n. 2; Biographie nationale de Belgique, article Arberg; and cf. Georges SERVIÈRES, *L'Allemagne française sous Napoléon I^{er}*, Paris 1904, p. 230 n. 2. On his relatives see Almanach impérial, chapter III, section II (maison de l'impératrice); Jean GRELLET, *Tableau généalogique et héraldique de la maison de Neuchâtel*, Neuchâtel 1888.

25 On Esebeck, see AN, F 1 b I 159²; F 1 b II Mont-Tonnerre 1. Charles de Esebeck is not to be confused with Georges, as by Roger DUFRAISSE, *Mont-Tonnerre*, in: Louis BERGERON and Guy CHAUSSINAND-NOGARET ed., *Grands notables du Premier Empire*, Paris 1978 – fascicule 3 p. 71.

important sub-prefecture of the department. While the *chef-lieu* was by far the biggest and most important town of the department, to be sub-prefect there must have meant working under the prefect's eye, and this must have made it a suitable post for a beginner. The *arrondissement* of Speyer, on the other hand, besides being the most populous of the *arrondissements* – slightly more so than that of Mainz –, occupied the strategic eastern frontier along the Rhine, and may have been really a more responsible post; it was clearly no accident that it was governed exclusively by Frenchmen. The first of them was appointed, with the rest of the first batch of sub-prefects in Mont-Tonnerre, in May 1800. He was Jean-Louis-Martin Sadoul, an Alsatian from the Bas-Rhin-Alsatians, and also Lorrainers, were employed extremely frequently by the French government in the Rhineland, where their knowledge of German made them especially useful. He was born in 1762, and had a background in local administration before and during the Revolution – in this he was typical of many sub-prefects. He had come to the Rhineland in the year VIII (1799–1800), when he was appointed a member of the *administration centrale* of Mont-Tonnerre, having previously held a similar post in the Bas-Rhin (the *administration centrale* was the collegial administration that was shortly to be superseded by the one-man rule of the prefect). A few months later, when the prefectural system was instituted, he became sub-prefect of Speyer.

This would appear to have been a purely routine appointment, of a man chosen on account of his experience to fill a responsible post. What interests us about Sadoul is less the circumstances of his appointment than the circumstances in which he ceased to be sub-prefect of Speyer. He occupied that post up to the year X (1801–2). Thereafter it was filled for a short time by Ferdinand Forest (whose name is also spelt Forêt), formerly a member of the bureaucratic staff of the *commissaire général* (the *commissariat général* was not wound up till September 1802). Sadoul's name disappears from the annals of the prefectural corps. He is later found practising as a lawyer at Speyer. The way in which he ceased to be a member of the corps obviously requires explanation, the more so because in 1807 he addressed a petition to the emperor, requesting his recall to office and alleging that he had been cheated out of it in 1802. Sadoul, it seems, had resigned, not been dismissed for incompetence or misdemeanour – for, according to his own account, he had given satisfaction both to his superiors, Shée and Jollivet, and to his *administrés*. But he had not resigned voluntarily. He had been transferred to the sub-prefecture of Pontarlier (Doubs), and had resigned sooner than take it up. This was confirmed by Jeanbon, but their explanations of it were different. Jeanbon's was the simpler: Sadoul had refused the move because it ran counter to the personal political position he was building for himself at Speyer. That he had some such project in hand is clear from the fact that he is later found taking an active part in local politics as a member of the electoral college of the *arrondissement*. But Sadoul alleged that he had been unable to support the expense of the move to Pontarlier. Moreover, according to him, it was originally Forest that had been appointed to Pontarlier, but Forest had persuaded Jeanbon that he and Sadoul had agreed to change places – Sadoul had known nothing of any such proposal –, and Jeanbon's intervention at the ministry of the interior had resulted accordingly in Sadoul being posted to Pontarlier, and Forest to Speyer. There is no documentary evidence of such an intrigue, though what is otherwise known of the character of Forest makes the story not implausible. The personal dossiers of Sadoul and Forest as

members of the prefectoral corps, which might have thrown some light on the subject, are not extant. That Sadoul's allegation was connected with the dissensions that racked the *arrondissement* of Speyer, and to which we shall have occasion to return, hardly admits of doubt. But whether it was fabricated or embroidered for the nonce is less clear. If true, it certainly tells us something about the politics of prefectoral appointment – not in the sense of anything that had a bearing on the national politics of the Consulate, for the matter was after all a very local one, but the sort of ›pure‹ (unideological) politics that especially interests us. That such machinations could occur, in a system that was so arbitrary and at the same time so prone to personal influences, seems not improbable²⁶.

Sadoul's successor or supplanter, Forest, was sub-prefect of Speyer so briefly that he left no trace in the surviving records of the department. By the beginning of the year XII (1803–4) he appears in the »Almanach national« as *secrétaire général* of the Bas-Rhin. There he acquired a reputation for indifferent honesty, and also an undue influence over the affairs of the department, which the prefect, Shée, the former *commissaire général*, was incapable of attending to personally. Eventually, in 1810, when Shée was recalled and made a senator, Forest too lost his place. That he had kept it for so long suggests that he may have enjoyed powerful protection. General Mouton, comte de Lobau – husband of a sister of d'Arberg –, had a brother-in-law named Forêt: was this the same as the erring *secrétaire général* of the Bas-Rhin? It seems possible, in view of what we know of the capacity of ministers and soldiers during the Empire to infiltrate their protégés into administrative office: this, indeed, was one function that the bureaucracy served. According to Puymaigre, himself an official in Mont-Tonnerre, Napoleon's indulgence towards his generals and high officials resulted in the employment of many incapable and dishonest persons, poor relations of these dignitaries, and their protection from the consequences of their shortcomings²⁷.

Forest's successor at Speyer, Edmond-Marie-Amable Verny, was appointed in September 1803. If not the best known of the sub-prefects of Mont-Tonnerre, he was the most controversial. He was born at Joigny (Yonne) in 1776, and during the Revolutionary wars served for some years as a soldier. He then became a police official at Joigny, and subsequently joined the staff of the *commissariat général* of the four Rhenish departments, before becoming sub-prefect of Speyer. His career bears the stamp of that of an authoritarian revolutionary bureaucrat, and this perhaps helps to account for the unfavourable impression he frequently made. There is no reason to believe that his type was at all unusual: the regime preferred members of the prefectoral corps to be of a military cast. He was also evidently a self-made man, a product of the Revolution, and so one of those with a stake in the regime, which gave them employment and on which their fortunes depended. In all probability, men of his type were anything but unusual in the lower echelons of the Napoleonic bureaucracy.

26 On Sadoul, see AN, F 1 b II Mont-Tonnerre 1; F 1 c III Mont-Tonnerre 1.

27 On Forest, see SAVANT (see n. 6) pp. 64, 295; on Mouton's brother-in-law, Vicomte Albert RÉVÉREND, *Armorial du Premier Empire: titres, majorats et armoiries concédés par Napoléon 1^{er}*, 4 volumes, Paris 1894–7, article Mouton de Lobau; on nepotism, Comte Alexandre de PUYMAIGRE, *Souvenirs sur l'émigration, l'Empire et la Restauration*, Paris 1884, pp. 123–4.

If thus far his career was a normal one, this is not to say that there may not have been special circumstances attending his appointment as sub-prefect. According to Jollivet, a bitter enemy of both Jeanbon and Verny, it came about as a result of an intrigue of the first order. Verny had been secretary of Rigal, a manufacturer of Krefeld in the department of the Roer, who in 1800 became deputy for the Roer in the *Corps législatif*, and later a senator; one of the most influential figures in the Rhineland. Rigal wanted to set Verny up in a good place. His chance came when Jeanbon was appointed *commissaire général*. Rigal was one of those deputies for the Rhenish departments to whom this appointment of a former terrorist occasioned disquiet, and they determined to appeal to the First Consul for its revocation. Jeanbon, informed of this, hastened to reassure them – but Rigal, at least, required a price for his quiescence. This price was first Jeanbon's employment of Verny on his staff, and then his recommending him for the sub-prefecture of Speyer. There is no corroborative evidence for Jollivet's story, but there seems nothing inherently improbable in it.

Verny, though he may thus in a sense have been imposed on Jeanbon, soon became Jeanbon's most trusted collaborator among the sub-prefects; the prefect called him *le seul de mes sous-préfets qui m'ait donné par lui-même des résultats positifs*. One surmises that they both had authoritarian temperaments that chimed well together. On the other hand, Verny, unlike Jeanbon, was accused of rapacity – no improbable charge, after service in the school for plunder that was the army of the Revolution and Napoleon. But Jeanbon consistently defended Verny against these charges; either because he genuinely believed them to be unfounded, or, more probably, because he wanted Verny's continued services as sub-prefect, or, equally probable, because he knew that the attacks were inspired by Jollivet for personal motives: they were a means of attacking Jeanbon himself. Apart from Jeanbon's wish to retain an able and congenial subordinate, his support of Verny may have been influenced by the fact that they were both freemasons. The antipathy between Jollivet and Jeanbon seems to have been both political – of a former moderate against a former Jacobin – and personal: Jollivet is said not to have forgiven Jeanbon for replacing him as *commissaire général*. The situation in the *arrondissement* of Speyer was complicated by the resentful attitude of Sadoul, who, by Jeanbon's own account, was constantly making accusations against Verny as part of his campaign to get himself reinstated as sub-prefect; he presumably did so in concert with, or with the approval of, Jollivet. The result was that the *arrondissement* was split into factions. That the ultimate target of the attacks was really Jeanbon is clear from letters that Jollivet addressed to the ministers of justice and of the interior in 1807; while referring to the misdemeanours of Verny, he made clear that, in his opinion, the real source of the wrongs that beset the *arrondissement* was the protection accorded to Verny by Jeanbon – an instance of his arbitrariness and neglect of strict justice. Jollivet, however, got nowhere with this tack: the minister of the interior made clear to him that criticisms of Verny were not to be allowed to extend to Jeanbon.

The upshot of the campaign against Verny was, in 1807, an inquiry conducted by Regnault de Saint-Jean-d'Angely and two other *conseillers d'État*. A principal charge against Verny was that, among other rapacious and oppressive acts, he had proposed to pull down the cathedral of Speyer – Speyer, under the Concordat of 1801, had ceased to be the seat of a bishop –, except the entrance wall, which was to be used for a

triumphal arch, and to turn an image of the Virgin Mary into a statue of Napoleon. This sacrilegious proposal had outraged the pious inhabitants; though, in view of the technical difficulties of making an image of the Virgin Mary look like Napoleon, Verny must be allowed to have possessed ingenuity as well as audacity. Jeanbon, however, was able to work upon the commission of inquiry and to convince it that Verny's opponents were secretly anti-French. The result was that Verny was exonerated.

In view of this striking success, it is the more interesting to look into the circumstances in which Verny ceased to be sub-prefect of Speyer – for he was superseded in January 1811. At that time it is plain that he was not sure where he stood in relation to the government, for, writing to the minister of the interior shortly afterwards, he expressed himself *Certain de n'avoir pas encouru de disgrâce, parce que j'ai la conviction de ne l'avoir pas méritée* – was this written tongue in cheek? – and reassured by an assurance that he was simply being transferred, not dismissed; but all the same he asked anxiously for another appointment as soon as one should become vacant. He must have breathed a sigh of relief when, in the following May, he was appointed sub-prefect of Wissembourg (Bas-Rhin) – a promotion (to a more important department) rather than a demotion. However, in view of the interval that elapsed before his reappointment, it is quite possible that his supersession was in the nature of a dismissal, for misdemeanours – such was the opinion of Puymaigre and others –, and that his appointment to Wissembourg represented a return to favour, either because of the influence that Jeanbon (now baron de Saint-André) could exert on his behalf, or because the government considered after all that he possessed talents and experience that it was worth while employing. In the Bas-Rhin, Verny failed to live down his controversial reputation; the prefect, the well-known Lezay-Marnésia, called him *un rebut de la Révolution auquel il ne manque aucun vice*. There would seem to have been an ideological element in the disapproval of Verny, a taint of Jacobinism about him; at all events, this seems to have been enough to put paid to his prefectoral career under the Restoration. Thereafter he was involved in the politics of the liberal opposition in Alsace. He might seem to exemplify the widespread belief that it was the worthless or criminal – or terroristic – type of administrator that was posted to the *pays réunis*. However, contemporary testimony, not least the support of Jeanbon, suggests that he cannot have been without ability; and his qualities of energy and forcefulness – not unmixed with arbitrariness – were such as the regime knew well how to use²⁸.

28 On Verny, see AN, F 1 b I 176⁸ (dossier Verny), F 1 b II Mont-Tonnerre 1, F 1 c III Mont-Tonnerre 1, CC 29, CC 35; SPRINGER (see n. 11) pp. 302–3; PUYMAIGRE (see n. 27) p. 123; ARTHUR CHUQUET, *L'Alsace en 1814*, Paris 1900, pp. 303, 463; BERGERON and CHAUSSINAND-NOGARET (see n. 25) p. 92. On Rigal, see the articles in ROBERT and COUGNY (see n. 11) and in ROBINET (see n. 11), and SAGNAC (see n. 9) pp. 257, 258. On French administrators in the *pays réunis*, see Egon Graf von WESTERHOLT, *Lezay Marnesia, Sohn der Aufklärung und Präfekt Napoleons (1769–1814)*, Meisenheim am Glan 1958 (Mainzer Abhandlungen zur mittleren und neueren Geschichte. Band 2) p. 96; RICHARD C. COBB, *The police and the people: French popular protest 1789–1820*, Oxford 1970, pp. 161 ff.; cf. KARL-GEORG FABER, *Verwaltungs- und Justizbeamte auf dem linken Rheinufer während der französischen Herrschaft. Eine personengeschichtliche Studie*, in: *Aus Geschichte und Landeskunde. Forschungen und Darstellungen Franz STEINBACH zum 65. Geburtstag gewidmet von seinen Freunden und Schülern*, Bonn 1960, p. 354 and n. 18.

About the appointment of Verny's successor, Jean-André Sers, we are especially well informed; for in background and experience he was an almost perfect example of the Napoleonic elite, and typified its processes of promotion. He was of bourgeois and Protestant family – the bureaucratic product of a bourgeois dynasty, Richardson calls him; the son of Pierre Sers, a merchant at Bordeaux who had been a member of the Legislative Assembly and a Girondin, ultimately became a senator and count of the Empire, and who was an old friend of Jeanbon. The younger Sers began his administrative career while still in his teens, in the prefectural bureaucracy at Mainz under Jeanbon's aegis; in 1810 he became a first-class *auditeur* at the *Conseil d'État* and in January 1811, at the age of twenty-four, sub-prefect. Jeanbon had applied for a sub-prefecture for him in 1808 or 1809; he was appointed to Speyer, by his own account in his memoirs, to console Saint-André for the loss of Verny. His appointment is thus an excellent example not only of the career structure within which the up-and-coming members of the Napoleonic elite made their way, but also of the strong element of patronage in that system and the way in which it was bound up with family and personal connections. All this was fully within the intention of the system, which was to do with the formation of a ruling class, and interpreted a class as being largely a hereditary entity; the lack of educational provision for the masses under the Napoleonic regime – the only thing that might have opened career opportunities to them – is notorious. Sers's career at Speyer, which seems to have been successful – for he was evidently a good and conscientious administrator –, was necessarily terminated by France's loss of the Rhineland in 1814; but this caused hardly a ripple in the onward evolution of his administrative career, which fulfilled all its early promise: able and well connected, he was never out of employment, in spite of the political vicissitudes of France, and became a prefect under both the Restoration and the July Monarchy. In the narrower context of the politics of Mont-Tonnerre, we can say that his appointment at Speyer represented a success for Saint-André – after a possible temporary setback, the removal of Verny – in that he was thereby able to keep the second most important sub-prefecture of the department in the hands of a protégé²⁹.

Next in importance to Speyer among the *arrondissements* we may place Zweibrücken, a former ducal capital. It is of interest to us chiefly on account of the number of times the sub-prefecture became vacant, and hence of the ample opportunities it gives for the process of sub-prefectoral nomination to be studied. In addition, what is significant about Zweibrücken is the extent to which the French were able to fill the sub-prefecture with former officials of the *ancien régime*. About this, however, there is not really anything unusual: Karl-Georg Faber has shown that a high proportion of native Germans who served under the French in the Rhineland had held office under the *ancien régime*. Whether or not they had ideological sympathy with the French Revolution, it was as much in their interest to preserve their careers as it was in the interest of the French to have qualified men to employ. At all events, this principle was conspicuously present at Zweibrücken. The first sub-prefect, appointed in 1800, was a

29 On Sers, see AN, F 1 b I 173¹⁵ (dossier Sers), F 1 b II Mont-Tonnerre 1, F 1 c III Mont-Tonnerre 1; Baron Henri SERS and Raymond GUYOT ed., *Souvenirs d'un préfet de la monarchie. Mémoires du baron Sers 1786–1862*, Paris 1906; ROBERT and COUGNY (see n. 11); ROBINET (see n. 11); SPRINGER (see n. 11) p. 303; RICHARDSON (see n. 7) pp. 15, 36, 37; BERGERON and CHAUSSINAND-NOGARET (see n. 25) p. 89.

former estates-steward to the duke (and ennobled by him), Henry Besnard – a German, though his surname is French. (The Christian names of these German officials are given here in the French form in which they appear in the documents.) He had served the French in a local administrative capacity at Zweibrücken in the 1790s, and at the time of his appointment to the sub-prefecture was in his mid-fifties. Though he was no doubt appointed on account of his local background and experience, he failed to give satisfaction as sub-prefect because of ill health and consequent incapacity, which eventually compelled his retirement in 1805 – and he retired only to die³⁰.

The sub-prefecture was vacant for about half a year while candidates for the succession were sifted. No fewer than ten persons were in the running, each supported by the recommendation of an influential patron. The army was well represented in the claims advanced on this civilian office. One candidate was a major, invalided out of the army, and recommended by a fellow Alsatian, Marshal Kellermann; another was the son of one general and recommended by another; another had a general for a brother. The prefects of the neighbouring departments of the Rhin-et-Moselle and the Sarre sought the office for subordinates of theirs. Besnard's son was also a contender, but Jeanbon thought the post beyond his capacity. Jeanbon's own choice was a strong man, a police official at Zweibrücken. It is noteworthy from these proceedings not only that a sub-prefecture was regarded as a prize to be competed for, but also that none of the applicants was an existing member of the prefectoral corps, which was thus very much open to the aspirations of outsiders or their patrons; the informality of promotion procedures, already noted, clearly gave scope for this. On this occasion, the decisive recommendation turned out to be that of Senator Rigal. His client, Chrétien-David Sturtz, was appointed in March 1806.

Sturtz was clearly the strongest of the candidates, in terms of background, experience and status. He was already of a very mature age, having been born in 1753. He was a local man, and had held judicial office under the *ancien régime*. He had served in the French administration in the Rhineland in the 1790s, and had become a police official at Zweibrücken. The combination of *ancien-régime* experience with evident willingness to serve the French probably made his candidature especially compelling. Moreover, in 1802 he had been chosen as one of the original deputies of Mont-Tonnerre in the *Corps législatif*. His brother, Fortuné-Charles-Guillaume, was a magistrate, and ultimately succeeded him as deputy.

Sturtz was not sub-prefect for long. In 1807 he was chosen to serve a further five-year term in the *Corps législatif*, and opted to resume his seat there. Thus the sub-prefecture of Zweibrücken became vacant again; but this time the new appointment was swifter. The candidates were whittled down to three, of whom seemingly the most imposing was a young man named O'Donnel, of a military family, a relative of General Clarke, a client of the prefect of the Roer (Alexandre de Lameth, former prominent member of the Constituent Assembly and former prefect of the Rhin-et-Moselle), and recommended not only by him but by two members of the Imperial

30 On Besnard, see AN, F 1 b II Mont-Tonnerre 1; SPRINGER (see n. 11) pp. 91, 301; FABER (see n. 28) p. 374 n. 48; Roger DUFRAISSE, *Les notables de la rive gauche du Rhin à l'époque napoléonienne*, in: *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 17 (1970) pp. 761, 762 nn. 2 and 8.

family, the queens of Holland and Naples. However, the prize went not to him but to another Frenchman, appointed in April 1807, Joseph Jannesson. He was an Alsatian, born at Saverne in 1779, had been a soldier, and had recently been a member of the *conseil de préfecture* of the Haut-Rhin. He owed his appointment to the influence of his brother-in-law, General Mouton, afterwards comte de Lobau, aide-de-camp to the emperor. He is said not to have been popular, perhaps partly because the particularistic inhabitants of Zweibrücken would have preferred a German. At the end of 1810, after Holland had been annexed to the French Empire, he became prefect of the newly created department of the Ems-Oriental (formerly East Friesland) at Aurich. After the Restoration he was pensioned off from the prefectural corps³¹.

For a third time Zweibrücken was without a sub-prefect. The half-dozen candidates proposed for the appointment included the mayor of Zweibrücken (the acting sub-prefect), the younger Besnard again, officials from neighbouring departments and, as usual, a soldier. But Chrétien Sturtz, nearing the end of his second parliamentary term, was again in the field. Even before Zweibrücken became vacant, he was on the lookout for a sub-prefecture. This time he was able to adduce the support of General Gudin, whom he may have got to know in Paris. Evidently as soon as he heard of Jannesson's transference, he applied for the sub-prefecture, for himself or his son-in-law, an advocate at Mainz. He was not disappointed: he was reappointed in July 1811. This phenomenon of the same man being appointed twice to the same sub-prefecture, together with the pleasure with which his return was evidently received, suggests that he was an official with whose services the French could hardly dispense; though his influential contacts may also have helped. An otherwise highly successful career was clouded towards its close by the circumstances in which the French regime in the Rhineland ended: in December 1813 he asked to be superseded, on the ground that his age and failing health made him unable to cope with the acute problems posed by the military situation. But this did not prevent him from holding judicial office in the Palatinate after the peace³².

If the French government, in appointing sub-prefects to Zweibrücken, flattered local susceptibilities by appointing Germans (except Jannesson), the same was equally true in Kaiserslautern, the poorest and least populous of the *arrondissements*. The first sub-prefect, Charles-Louis-Adolphe Petersen, was born in the Palatinate in 1746, of a family of Danish origin, was a magistrate at Speyer under the *ancien régime*, and was one of the 'Jacobins' who supported the French in 1792–3. During the second French occupation, from 1794 onwards, he was never out of office, and before being made sub-prefect was a member of the *administration centrale* of Mont-Tonnerre. His administrative career was thus long and noteworthy, and his record of consistent devotion to the French cause would equally have qualified him for the post to which he was nominated. He was evidently a competent administrator, for he kept his post for

31 On Jannesson, see AN, F 1 b I 164² (dossier Jannesson); F 1 b II Mont-Tonnerre 1; SAVANT (see n. 6) pp. 244–5; SPRINGER (see n. 11) p. 301.

32 On Sturtz, see AN, F 1 b I 173²¹ (dossier Sturtz); F 1 b II Mont-Tonnerre 1; F 1 c III Mont-Tonnerre 1; CC 29, CC 35; ROBERT and COUGNY (see n. 11); FABER (see n. 28) pp. 366 and n. 28, 367, 383; SCHMIDT (see n. 11) pp. 6–7; SPRINGER (see n. 11) pp. 91, 301–2; BERGERON and CHAUSSINAND-NOGARET (see n. 25) pp. 90–1. The lists of candidates in 1806, 1807 and 1810–11 are in F 1 b II Mont-Tonnerre 1.

eleven years. He was certainly ambitious: after his retirement from the sub-prefecture, he contrived in 1813 to get himself elected a member of the *Corps législatif*. What is more to our purpose here, his ambition extended to his family: his successor as sub-prefect, in July 1811, was his own son, Jean-Guillaume, a young infantry-captain, born in 1786, who had already been decorated with the Legion of Honour; Petersen reportedly obtained the reversion of the subprefecture for his son by personal application to the emperor, pleading that his health had been ruined on active service. This report is perfectly credible: we have already seen how many military applicants there were likely to be for a sub-prefecture, and there is some reason to believe that such offices were sometimes used as consolation prizes for military men whose careers had been prematurely ended by wounds or sickness. That civil offices should be so used is not surprising under a militarist regime, in which the greatest influence was wielded by the army. And the quasi-hereditary transmission of office within a prominent local family was perfectly consonant with the Empire's policy of basing itself, in its civilian aspect, on *notables*; the Petersens were the sort of people it wanted to cultivate³³.

The remaining members of the prefectoral corps in Mont-Tonnerre were the two successive *secrétaires généraux*, François-Ignace-Antoine Fiesse and Jacques Ruell – both Frenchmen, as befitted this important post, and both, apparently, professional administrators. Fiesse was an Alsatian, born in 1757, and before the Revolution had been a priest, like many other future Revolutionary and Napoleonic officials. In 1807 he was chosen deputy for Mont-Tonnerre in the *Corps législatif*. His successor as *secrétaire général*, Ruell, was born in 1766 and had originally been a teacher³⁴.

It remains to come to some sort of judgment on what the history of the prefectoral corps in Mont-Tonnerre between 1800 and 1814 can tell us about the politics of prefectoral nominations and movements in the French Empire as a whole. The number of prefects in Mont-Tonnerre was few, and adequate indications have been given in our discussion of them of the reasons for their appointment. During the period when the prefectoral system genuinely operated, from 1802 onwards, it may be said that the appointment of Jeanbon Saint-André was as good an example as any offered by the Consulate of the regime's employment of able men irrespective of their past. D'Arberg's appointment equally well reflected the policy on prefectoral nominations of the Empire in its later phase. With the more numerous sub-prefects, the picture is slightly more complex. The main lines, however, are reasonably clear. Apart from the fact that most of the sub-prefects in this German department were German, there were other features that may be taken as more representative of the Empire as a whole. We have seen how sub-prefectures were regarded as a legitimate object of the employment aspirations of persons from outside the prefectoral corps, and from outside the department in question; appointments being made by the central

33 On the Petersens, see AN, F 1 b I 170¹¹ (dossier Petersen); F 1 b II Mont-Tonnerre 1; CC 30; ROBERT and COUGNY (see n. 11); SPRINGER (see n. 11) pp. 42, 91, 115, 163, 300–1, 308; FABER (see n. 28) pp. 357, 358 n. 21, 374 n. 46; SERS (see n. 29) p. 50; BERGERON and CHAUSSINAND-NOGARET (see n. 25) pp. 85–6.

34 On Fiesse see AN, F 1 b I 147 Mont-Tonnerre, F 1 b II Mont-Tonnerre 1, F 1 c III Mont-Tonnerre 1; CC 29, CC 35; ROBERT and COUGNY (see n. 11). On Ruell see AN, F 1 b I 147 Mont-Tonnerre; BERGERON and CHAUSSINAND-NOGARET (see n. 25) p. 87.

government, it was natural that each should be, momentarily, an issue in national politics; at the same time, and for the same reason, the system of place-hunting was truly national in scope. The applicants usually came from the bureaucracy and the army. The backing of an influential official, a politician or a general seems to have been essential to success. Thus the nominations were closely bound up with the patronage systems operated by the leading figures of the regime – the tendency to private empire building noted at the outset. What is distinctive about the Empire among authoritarian regimes is the large role played by the military, but even here there are parallels in more recent times. At all events, nomination was dependent upon far more complex factors than the ostensibly simple ones of merit and seniority. The intervention of the influence of national figures must have reduced the influence of the prefect in deciding on these local appointments. The prefect, for his part, seems to have been swayed by the wish not only to have able subordinates but also to obtain, or retain, the services of a political ally or personal friend or dependant, and thus to keep out a potential opponent – for we have seen how faction-ridden the local politics of Mont-Tonnerre were. Jeanbon, while successful in this respect at Speyer, failed to get his nominee in at Zweibrücken in 1806, though there is no reason to think that Sturtz was anything but a neutral and acceptable choice from his point of view. What stands out, however, in spite of these local considerations, is how centrally oriented the whole process was – inevitably so, for the reason stated a moment ago. Prefectoral nominations, therefore, lent themselves to the role of tool in the politics of personal influence, patronage and – hence – power within the body of the regime. The prefect himself, as we have seen, was likely to be, if not the nominee, at least the protégé of a minister; and so, unless his personal ability or services were outstanding, as may have been the case with Jeanbon Saint-André, his own position, and indirectly that of his allies or clients in subordinate posts, ultimately depended on that central, Parisian protection. Within that framework, subterranean ideological differences and tensions may have operated; but the rationale was ultimately naked power, and also personal political survival. From one point of view, this working of a centralized bureaucratic autocracy must have represented the subjection of the localities to the politics of the capital in a way unheard of during the *ancien régime*. On the other hand, the role of personalities ensures the outbreak of fissiparous tendencies even within the most centralized and ostensibly monolithic regime. It may be at this level alone that any sort of pluralism survives.