

Episode 37: Napoleon: Part II

1/5/2022

Rebecca (00:08):

Hello, and welcome to Season Two of Historically Speaking Podcast, uncommon history with an unconventional pair. I'm Rebecca Robbins.

Kim (00:17):

And I'm Kim Kimmel.

Rebecca (00:19):

I'm a singer and actor,

Kim (00:21):

And I'm a retired history teacher.

Rebecca (00:23):

He was my history teacher in college,

Kim (00:25):

And now we've been married for 22 years.

Rebecca (00:28):

Sometimes quirky, sometimes obscure,

Kim (00:31):

But this is the kind of history you'll actually want to remember.

Rebecca (00:41):

Hello and welcome to Episode 37 of Historically Speaking Podcast and a very happy New Year to all of our listeners.

Kim (00:50):

Yes. A happy New Year.

Rebecca (00:51):

Happy 2022.

Kim (00:53):

Yes. Hopefully this will be a better year than 2021 or 2020.

Rebecca (00:57):

You took the words right out of my mouth. <Laugh> Yes. Let's hope. (Yeah.) But continuing on our last topic in 2021, (right) we are returning again to Napoleon.

Kim (01:12):

Yes. To Napoleon.

Rebecca (01:13):

Part two. (Yes.) But let's set the stage of where we are.

Kim (01:17):

Well, we were in his Consulate Period, which exists from 1799 to 1804. And we covered a lot of his achievements as First Consul. The Legion of Honor creation, the Banque de France, the Concordat with the Papacy, the Code Napoleon. I mean, he does a lot of things. He also wins military victories.

Rebecca (01:41):

Would you say this is his most active period or

Kim (01:44):

I think (his greatest achievements?) most historians think it's his most productive period.

Rebecca (01:48):

Okay. (Okay.) That makes sense.

Kim (01:50):

Where he made the greatest contributions. Yes.

Rebecca (01:53):

So it's downhill from here.

Kim (01:55):

Uh, I suppose that's a way you could put it it's a long downhill. I would like to mention two things that still occur while Napoleon is First Consul before he becomes Emperor.

Rebecca (02:08):

Okay.

Kim (02:08):

The first is that from 1802 to 1803, for about a year, England and France were at peace. They actually signed a treaty called the Treaty of Amiens. I think both sides were exhausted after 10 years of war and (understandable) I believe both sides understood it was just a truce, not a true peace, but the Treaty of Amiens ended conflict temporarily between France and England. The second, and this is really important, the second really huge thing that we have not yet mentioned about Napoleon while First Consul is something that has nothing to do with Europe, but everything to do with North America. (Hmm) I am referring to the Louisiana Purchase.

Rebecca (02:57):

Oh yes.

Kim (02:58):

Yes. The greatest exchange of territory in the entire French revolutionary and Napoleonic period is the Louisiana Purchase, which turned out to be enormously beneficial to the young United States of America. Just a little background.

Rebecca (03:14):

Oh, excellent.

Kim (03:15):

Yes. I know how you love background.

Rebecca (03:17):

Ya know,

Kim (03:17):

I know. France controlled a huge area, what is now Canada. They controlled the middle area of what is now the United States between the Appalachians and the Rocky Mountains, which were originally called the Stony Mountains. And that area was called Louisiana, but France lost everything on the continent of North America and the French and Indian War. So by 1763, France had no more territory left on the continent of North America, but a year before the Treaty Paris, which ended that war, France transferred the western part of Louisiana, that is to say the area from the Mississippi River to the Rockies, to Spain.

Rebecca (04:03):

Oh, to Spain?

Kim (04:03):

It was a secret treaty . Yes.

Rebecca (04:05):

Did they get money in return for this?

Kim (04:07):

No, it was just a thank you to Spain because Spain had sided with France against England and both sides both Spain and France knew that Spain was about to lose the Floridas to Britain. And so the western portion of Louisiana in the secret Treaty of Fontainebleau the year before the French and Indian War ended was transferred to Spain. Now let's flash, flash forward to 1800.

Rebecca (04:33):

I love that.

Kim (04:33):

Okay. Napoleon as First Consul in 1800 through the secret Treaty of San Ildefonso got Spain to retrograde or retrocede this portion of Louisiana.

Rebecca (04:49):

So in other words, give it back.

Kim (04:50):

Right. To give it back to France. Now,

Rebecca (04:53):

Now why would they do that?

Kim (04:55):

Well,

Rebecca (04:55):

Just to be nice?

Kim (04:56):

Spain at this time was in a very subservient position to France. And Napoleon also promised that if Spain retroceded, western Louisiana to France, he would ensure that the Spanish family would acquire territory in Italy. Of course he never followed through on that promise, but Napoleon didn't follow through on many promises. I might also add he cheated at cards. <Laugh>.

Rebecca (05:23):

How dare he!

Kim (05:24):

Even his own mother Napoleon's own mother chastised him for cheating at cards. So Napoleon's promises were not to be

Rebecca (05:33):

Pretty cheap.

Kim (05:34):

Well, yeah, you had to take them with a grain of salt and then some. Anyway, through this secret treaty Louisiana, that portion, which was west of the Mississippi, was retroceded to France on the condition that either France would keep it or give it back to Spain. Napoleon promised that he would never give it to a third party.

Rebecca (05:55):

Oh, I see where this is going.

Kim (05:58):

Yes. So, what happened was Jefferson was inaugurated president in March of 1801 following John Adams.

Rebecca (06:06):

Right.

Kim (06:06):

And within a short period of time of Thomas Jefferson becoming president by say May of 1801, knowledge of this secret treaty, because let's face it, diplomatic secrets get out pretty easily. Knowledge of this secret treaty came to Jefferson's attention. Now keep in mind, Thomas Jefferson had always been pro-French and anti-British. All right. He had been our Minister to France at the beginning of the French Revolution. In fact, one of the most visited places in Paris at the beginning of the French Revolution was Thomas Jefferson's residence. And he spoke perfect French. The French adored him as they did Benjamin Franklin. But even though Jefferson was a lifelong antagonist toward the British and was very pro French. Once he found out about this secret treaty in early 1801, just a couple months into his presidency, he said, if this is true, we must wed ourselves to the British fleet. Cuz he understood that if Napoleon who was extraordinarily powerful France, which was extraordinarily powerful, as opposed to a very weakened Spain controlling the huge area, which stretched up into Canada, that it would be very deleterious to American interests. So he hastened off the new ambassador to France, Robert Livingston to.

Rebecca (07:33):

Mr. Livingston, I presume.

Kim (07:34):

What's that? That's a different Livingston.

Rebecca (07:36):

Okay.

Kim (07:36):

Robert Livingston was hastened off to France to find out if this was true. And if it was true, Livingston was told to ask for passage on the Mississippi River and to buy the city of New Orleans. These negotiations dragged throughout 1802. Talleyrand at this time is Napoleon's foreign minister. By early 1803, Thomas Jefferson sent another ambassador, a plenipotentiary ambassador, James Monroe, the future fifth President of the United States to help Livingston in these negotiations. Well, Monroe no sooner arrives in Paris in early 1803 then Talleyrand approaches both Livingston and Monroe and says, how would you like to buy all of Louisiana?

Rebecca (08:30):

Now why would he offer that?

Kim (08:32):

There's a reason for this. (Okay.) Napoleon at that time had attempted to control Hispaniola. What is now the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Okay. And it was under French control and there was a great revolt against French rule on that island. It was led by a brilliant black leader Toussaint Louverture. Napoleon sent thousands and thousands of French troops to the island. They died of yellow fever in droves. It was a disaster for France. Napoleon concluded that if he didn't sell Louisiana, the British would take it anyway with their fleet. So he figured he might as well get out while the getting was good. (Okay.) And this helps to explain why Talleyrand approached Livingston and Monroe, this is while Napoleon is still First Consul in early 1803 and said, how would you like to buy all of this territory? Now, I think it's important for our listeners to understand that Louisiana territory was far larger than just the state of Louisiana and Jefferson had qualms about it, cuz there's nothing in the Constitution that allows for the acquisition of additional territory, but he buried those qualms, put the treaty before the Senate, it was passed and overnight the United States was doubled.

Rebecca (09:51):

For how much?

Kim (09:52):

Not that much. It's one of the best real estate deals in history, 15 million dollars or thereabouts that's it, it works out to a couple pennies per acre. Overnight, the United States went from being a political entity from the Atlantic to the Mississippi, to a political entity from the Atlantic to the Rockies. And this would include future states, not only

Rebecca (10:15):

And not much of area was settled, right?

Kim (10:17):

Oh, almost nothing was settled. And at the same time, Lewis and Clark would begin their expedition the whole way to the Pacific. Just about that same time, the whole Lewis and Clark expedition, we could do a whole podcast on that.

Rebecca (10:29):

Oh yeah, we could.

Kim (10:30):

Oh, yes it's endless what we can do podcasts on.

Rebecca (10:33):

It, it kind of is.

Kim (10:34):

Anyway, so the United States, this young country acquires an area that doubles the size of the United States. Okay. And that happened when Napoleon was First Consul. In May of 1804, Napoleon became Emperor.

Rebecca (10:50):

Now who decided that?

Kim (10:52):

Uh he put it to a vote to the French people and they overwhelmingly approved of it because Napoleon by this time, as we mentioned last time,

Rebecca (10:59):

Like, do you wanna make me Emperor? Yes or no.

Kim (11:02):

Yes. And it was overwhelming that they wanted to make him Emperor. And so he goes from being First Consul.

Rebecca (11:08):

I mean, what difference does it make really?

Kim (11:10):

Power wise? Not that much, but uh (it's the title), a lot of symbolism in this and so on. Now he's royalty and all of that. And in December of 1804.

Rebecca (11:21):

And he's still married to Josephine at this point?

Kim (11:23):

He's still married to Josephine. In December of 1804, December 2nd, to be exact he would be crowned Emperor and Pope Pius the Seventh would attend that ceremony in order to further validate his Emperorship. But at the precise moment, when Pius the Seventh was supposed to place the crown, the emperor's crown on his head Napoleon took the crown himself and placed it on his head. The implication of course was no one crowns Napoleon except Napoleon and Josephine was crown Empress. You know what else is interesting too? He wasn't crowned Emperor of France, he was crowned Emperor of the French. And the reason why this is important is because by that time, France was acquiring territory in Italy, even in the Balkans and so on, which would be part of the great French Empire. So Napoleon didn't want to be just Emperor of France. He wanted to be Emperor of the French Empire.

Rebecca (12:26):

He wanted it all.

Kim (12:28):

He wanted it all. It's it's an amazing event.

Rebecca (12:32):

So at this point things are going pretty well for him.

Kim (12:34):

Yeah. And he's still in his mid-thirties.

Rebecca (12:36):

Wow.

Kim (12:37):

Yeah. Wow. All right, now he's Emperor. Well, he's gotta fight more wars. Okay. (Shocking.) This is the war of the Third Coalition. So he takes on Austria at the battle of Austerlitz on December 2nd, 1805, one year to the day since he was crowned Emperor, and many historians, I think most historians, think that Austerlitz, which is located in what is now the Czech Republic, in Moravia, is his single greatest victory. This is where he shows his brilliance more than any other. I don't wanna go into the details of the Pratzen Heights and all that (good idea,) but he completely fools the Austrians and the Russians, it's a devastating defeat for the Austrians, Austrians and the Russians. And it's a great victory. And he knocks Austria out of the war. Then in 1806, Prussia comes into the war and he knocks Prussia out of the war at the dual battles of Jena and Auerstedt in October of 1806. So he's just winning any one thing after another. In 1806, many other things occur. For instance, Napoleon created something called the Confederation of the Rhine. This was a political entity of 16 German states. Mostly in western Germany. The Confederation of the Rhine was basically a satellite of France. It was just to the east of France. It was composed of 16 German states that would be aligned with France, supply troops to the French military, and so on. At the same time as the Confederation of the Rhine was created just the very next month, the Holy Roman Empire was dissolved by Napoleon (uh oh) uh oh, now the Holy Roman Empire is the First Reich in German history. It began on Christmas day in the year 800 when Charlemagne was crowned Emperor by Pope Leo III. This was a conscious attempt in the early middle ages to recreate the ancient western half of the Roman Empire, which had fallen into complete decay by the end of the fifth century. The Holy Roman Empire would last 1,006 years from 800

Rebecca (14:42):

That's a pretty good track record.

Kim (14:43):

Pretty good track record at certain points in time, especially in the Medieval period, it had some very powerful monarchs like Henry III or Frederick Barbarossa or Frederick II. But by the 18th century, the Holy Roman Empire was a shadow of its former self. And that's why Voltaire the great French philosopher said that the Holy Roman Empire was neither Holy nor Roman nor an Empire. And so this shell of what was once a very powerful entity was officially dissolved by Napoleon in August of 1806. Just one more thing that he does and Francis the Second of the Holy Roman Empire becomes Emperor Francis I of Austria.

Rebecca (15:25):

Okay. So that's a nice consolation prize.

Kim (15:28):

And as I mentioned Napoleon heated, the Prussians at Jena and Auerstedt in October of 1806 and he enters Berlin. Napoleon in Berlin. And he really punishes the Prussians. The next year in 1807 he meets another formidable adversary. This Tzar Alexander I. He meets him at Tilsit on the Neman River. In fact, they actually built a raft where the two emperors would meet one another.

Rebecca (15:56):

Oh. So they actually met, they didn't meet in battle.

Kim (15:58):

They, they actually formally met. It was on a raft in the Neman River Alexander I and Napoleon who had been enemies reconciled with one another. Alexander was actually very impressed with Napoleon. Napoleon could be very charming and very gracious when he wanted to be. He also could be very mean and out of control. I mean, he actually would kick people at times and things like that, (charming). Yes, he had issues (I'll say), but he had great abilities. One of the major reasons why Napoleon met Alexander was not only to knock Alexander out of the war in Russia, which he did, but because of something else, and this gets to the Berlin and Milan decrees issued by Napoleon in 1806 and 1807, respectively. Napoleon's most inveterate enemy was England, he couldn't defeat them. Trafalgar had knocked out the Franco-Spanish fleet in October of 1805. I mean we've covered Trafalgar on many occasions, 33 Franco-Spanish ships against 27 British ships led by Viscount (Lord) Nelson, right. And the British didn't lose a single ship and the Franco-Spanish fleet lost 18. So Napoleon realized he was bottled up on the continent and couldn't take on the British Navy. So he decided that he would try to destroy England economically. This is known as the Continental System. The Continental System, as evidenced by the Berlin and Milan decrees issued by Napoleon said that any neutral ship that would be trading with Britain could be seized.

Rebecca (17:38):

Oh, that's huge.

Kim (17:39):

Oh, it's huge. Absolutely. It's huge. For instance, the young American nation, which was so dependent on shipping, if they complied with, if they traded with Britain, they could be seized by Napoleon's Navy. Now the British responded in 1807 with Orders in Council, which said that if you adhere to the Berlin and Milan decrees we'll seize your ships,

Rebecca (18:02):

Haha, take that.

Kim (18:04):

So, you see a nation like America. If they traded with Britain, Napoleon would go after them. If they traded with France, Britain would go after them. This led President Thomas Jefferson to have the Embargo Act enacted which said that we'll just keep all American ships in American ports and we won't trade with either. Well.

Rebecca (18:26):

That doesn't work out very well, does it?

Kim (18:27):

It didn't work out. This is probably Jefferson's work decision and talk about, you know, cutting off your nose to spite your face. But Napoleon attempted to destroy Britain economically since he couldn't destroy them militarily, especially with respect to their Navy. And when he's meeting with Alexander at Tilsit, this is all part of what Alexander agrees to. Also in 1807 at Tilsit Napoleon creates another kingdom called Westphalia. He made his brother, Jerome, king of Westphalia. He originally made Joseph his older brother King of Naples. Now Joseph will shortly become King of Spain. His brother Lewis will become king of Holland. Mentioning Spain takes me to the first of Napoleons two great mistakes. The Continental System established by Napoleon whereby no European nation was allowed to trade with Britain was not adhered to by Portugal. Portugal has always been a very tough nation though was small nation. And the oldest alliance in the history of Europe, which is still existent to this day is the Anglo-Portuguese alliance of the 14th century. (Ah-Ha) Portugal refused to go along with Napoleon's Continental System. So, Napoleon was going to show them a lesson. He invaded Portugal going through Spain into Portugal because Portugal was loyal to Britain, was loyal to England. This is the beginning of what is known as the Peninsular War, which will last from 1807 to 1814.

Rebecca (20:00):

That's a long time.

Kim (20:01):

That's a long time and the greatest work on (with such a small country). Well, the Peninsular War will also expand into fighting the Spanish, which I'll get into in just a moment, not just Portugal. Sir Charles Oman, a great English historian wrote a lot in the middle ages. He wrote a seven volume history of the Peninsular War, about 700 pages each, published between 1902 and 1930, took him 28 years to write it.

Rebecca (20:29):

That will not be on my reading list this year.

Kim (20:31):

Well, you know, it's funny, you mentioned that cuz I was thinking about getting that for you as a Christmas present.

Rebecca (20:37):

Oh well Christmas is already over.

Kim (20:39):

Oh I (maybe next year) I thought you might have just devoured volume after volume with great relish.

Rebecca (20:44):

I mean, why do that when I'm gonna just have you tell me about it <laugh>.

Kim (20:49):

In any case, this was a great mistake by Napoleon and then the next year in 1808, by the way, the Portuguese Royal family made it out of Portugal, just barely accompanied by the British fleet, with the Portuguese fleet to the Vice Royalty of Brazil, which was controlled by Portugal. So, Napoleon wasn't able to capture the Portuguese (good for them,) royal family. And the very next year he encouraged both King Charles the Fourth and his son, the future Ferdinand the Seventh to abdicate. And this is when he made his brother Joseph King of Spain.

Rebecca (21:25):

He encouraged them? (He Twisted) sounds like a euphemism to me.

Kim (21:29):

He twisted some arms here.

Rebecca (21:31):

All the way off probably.

Kim (21:32):

And the Spanish did not want Joseph Napoleon, Joseph Bonaparte as what?

Rebecca (21:38):

Why would they?

Kim (21:39):

Yeah, why would they? So what happens is both the Portuguese and the Spanish people rise up against the French and the British eventually send a great general, Arthur Wellesley, the future Duke of Wellington to fight them. And he will lead a combined Anglo-Portuguese, Spanish force for years in the Iberian Peninsula. It is replete with battle after battle, story after story. It's a fascinating tale. You sure you don't want that seven volume Sir Charles Oman work? <Laugh>.

Rebecca (22:14):

Uh, I'll get back to you by next Christmas <laugh>.

Kim (22:17):

And Napoleon referred to it as his, as his ulcer. I, he made a great mistake going into Spain and Portugal and it will last virtually to the end of his emperorship. Napoleon in 1808, met Alexander again at Erfurt. This is the last time Alexander, this our Alexander and Napoleon will meet. Napoleon will take on Austria in yet another war in 1809 and defeat them at Wagram. Napoleon will actually enter Vienna, Napoleon's all over the place. He's in Berlin, he's in Vienna. This is one of the most extraordinary lives I've ever studied.

Rebecca (22:55):

This guy got around.

Kim (22:56):

And he wins battle after battle. I mean, the man was a military genius. By this time Josephine, it was clear, uh she could not bear any children to Napoleon. So he decided to divorce her. She agreed to it with tears, but she agreed to it.

Rebecca (23:11):

What a jerk.

Kim (23:12):

And he married Marie Louise, the daughter of the Austrian Emperor by which he would have a son, the so called Napoleon II. Napoleon also had mistress. He had a very famous (I'm shocked!) Polish mistress and so on. Yeah. Napoleon got around in more ways than one.

Rebecca (23:29):

I guess so.

Kim (23:30):

Right. Oh, by the way in 1807, he also created the small Dutchy of Warsaw because Poland had been completely extinguished in the 18th century through the three partitions of 1772, 1793 and 1795 by Austria, Prussia and Russia. So a lot of Poles admired Napoleon. He,

Rebecca (23:52):

Because he created Warsaw?

Kim (23:53):

Uh he created Dutchy of Warsaw. He was pro Polish as a counter against Russia, as a counter against Russia. And there were many Poles, many cavalry, many infantry men who fought in the French army because there was a tremendous affection there for what Napoleon did for, for Poland. So, Napoleon by 1810 is the master of Europe. I mean, he has everyone

Rebecca (24:20):

But it's not enough.

Kim (24:22):

It's not enough. And don't forget, he's still at war with, (in the Iberian Peninsula) with, with Britain, Napoleon understood that his greatest enemy were the British. And as you move into 1810, 1811, uCzar Alexander was getting very tired of the Continental System, the economic blockade of England and so on cuz it was hurting Russian commerce, and Napoleon got more and more irritated with Alexander and this comes to Napoleon's second great mistake. He decided in 1812 to invade Russia.

Rebecca (24:58):

Big mistake.

Kim (24:59):

Now folks, I gotta tell you invading Russia is one of easily, the 10 worst ideas ever, (ever) right. Because the Russians are a very courageous people. They're a very tough people. They also have a country which is vast. They suck you into their country and let you take more and more territory, and they wait until the winter hits.

Rebecca (25:22):

And then they just wait it out.

Kim (25:23):

And then, well they oftentimes attack cuz they're very good winter fighters. No question about it. Napoleon won a preliminary brutal battle at Borodino on September 7th, 1812, about a hundred miles west of Moscow. A week later, he will enter Moscow. Napoleon will come into Moscow, but as he and his troops are coming into Moscow, a great fire breaks out. We don't know who set this fire, if it was deliberate or whatever,

Rebecca (25:52):

I was just gonna say, scorched earth.

Kim (25:53):

Three quarters of Moscow was destroyed. (Wow.) I'd also like to mention this just about Napoleon's invasion of Russia. Militarily, a large army in the 18th century was 40-50,000. I mentioned this in a previous podcast, George Washington never commanded more than 20,000 troops at one time. Napoleon invaded Russia with 600,000 troops.

Rebecca (26:15):

Where did he get 'em?

Kim (26:17):

Well, he got them from France. He got them from the Confederation of the Rhine. He got them from allies, reluctant allies like Prussia from Austria, but he invaded Russia with this huge... Nobody had seen an army this big in history, but he enters Moscow in mid-October of 1812. Most of the city burns down. I'm sorry. He enters in September and by mid-October he decides to leave Moscow because Czar Alexander the First who he thought would negotiate with him is silent and doesn't do anything.

Rebecca (26:53):

Where is he at this point?

Kim (26:55):

He's someplace outside of Moscow. (St. Petersburg?) And he refuses to negotiate with Napoleon. So Napoleon enters Moscow in mid-September in mid-October he decides to retreat and the retreat is a disaster. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers will starve to death, freeze to death. Some will be taken prisoner by Russian troops. Napoleon eventually makes

it back to France in December of 1812 with maybe perhaps 20,000 troops (out of all of those?) Out of 600,000. Yeah, it was estimated that only one to two thousand were really ready for battle by the time to pull you makes it back, but he's still alive and he's still confident. And.

Rebecca (27:39):

How can he be confident after a big loss like that? (Uh) I mean the human life alone.

Kim (27:45):

Napoleon assembled yet another army. And as you move into 1813, you have another coalition against Napoleon, the English. Eventually the Prussians, the Austrians, the Russians and Napoleon fights some of his most brilliant battles in this 1813, 1814 period. Even though he is on the defensive even many adversaries, like Wellington said, some of his most brilliant battles were fought when he had so few troops. This, this is a man of genius. There was a great battle fought in October of 1813. It was a four day battle, October 16th to October 19th, 1813. It's known as the battle of the nations at Leipzig. Napoleon lost.

Rebecca (28:31):

Dun dun dun.

Kim (28:32):

Yes, this was the great battle at that time. And Napoleon retreated back into France. Now what's interesting here is that Napoleon was still so feared and so respected that in November of 1813, even though the disaster in Russia had occurred, even though the battle of Leipzig had occurred, there was something known as the Frankfurt proposals put forward by his enemies. They would leave Napoleon in power as Emperor. They would leave him with the natural frontiers of France, which were bigger than the ancient frontiers, which would include say for instance, Belgium. Napoleon hesitated. It was a fatal hesitation. If he had accepted this, he could have remained as Emperor of France with an expanded France, but he decided he could get an even better deal by continuing to defeat his enemies in battle. So we move into 1814, where he continues to fight battles, but eventually loses. And in April of 1814 with the Treaty of Fontainebleau, he abdicates and he abdicates...

Rebecca (29:34):

He realizes there's no place for him to go.

Kim (29:36):

His, his, his marshals, his generals told him there's no hope left. In fact, by the time he abdicated on April 11th, 1814, Czar Alexander, Frederick William III of Prussia were already in Paris. (Oh Wow.) Yeah. So Napoleon had nowhere to turn. A deal was made. There was still this great respect for Napoleon. So he would be made emperor of the little island of Elba.

Rebecca (30:03):

Oh, the Emperor of Elba,

Kim (30:04):

The Emperor of Elba. This is his first abdication. There's gonna be two of them. And he abdicated in April of 1814 and was made Emperor of Elba. Elba is a small island off the west coast of Italy. It's about 80, 90 square miles. And he was made Emperor of this small island. He could take about a thousand troops with him and so on. And the Bourbon dynasty came back in the form of Louis the 18th and was reestablished in Paris. And then the Congress of Vienna begins to occur from September of 1814 to June of 1815, where lots of things will be decided, the creation of a kingdom of the Netherlands, the German Confederation a Poland dependent on Russia, an independent city of Krakow. There's a lot of things that it dealt with the slave trade Jewish rights in Germany and elsewhere. Now Napoleon's watching all this on Elba from 1814 into early

Rebecca (31:03):

Well, he's not really watching the news.

Kim (31:06):

He's getting all this information from different sources while he's on Elba.

Rebecca (31:09):

Now, is anybody watching him?

Kim (31:11):

Yes, there was

Rebecca (31:12):

But they're letting this information come and go.

Kim (31:14):

Well, this information came to him, nonetheless in late 1814, early 1815, he got a lot of information to the effect that the restored Bourbon dynasty there was a lot of resentment about it, et cetera, even though Louis the 18th, who I think was a pretty shrewd guy. So Napoleon decides in late February of 1815, while all these enemies of Napoleon are meeting at Vienna, the Congress of Vienna, he decides to make a comeback. This is known as The Hundred Days.

Rebecca (31:45):

So the troops that were watching him, guarding him

Kim (31:49):

Well there's no troops really watching him, the British Navy, had a couple ships there and so on. I mean, there was, there was very few and he had about a thousand men on Elba, but he lands in France on March 1st of 1815.

Rebecca (32:02):

So he just up and leaves?

Kim (32:03):

Yep. He just secretly ups and leaves.

Rebecca (32:05):

Nobody stops him.

Kim (32:07):

He escaped the British fleet. Yes. (Hmm) And he lands in France and he's hailed by many, including some of his former marshals like Ney who said that, no, I will, I will put Napoleon in a cage. But as soon as they met him, that charm, he had that persona he had, they decided to side with him. And so Napoleon makes his way back into Paris. Louis, the 18th flees in the baggage train of the Allies, getting out of France and Napoleon swears that he only wants peace, that he will just,

Rebecca (32:41):

Who's gonna believe him at this point?

Kim (32:43):

Right, who's gonna believe Napoleon at this time. And so the enemies of Napoleon Austria, Prussia, Russia, and Britain renew their Treaty of Chaumont that they had made in March of 1814. They swear to stay together for at least 20 years. They will not deal with him. They actually officially declare him an outlaw. Notice before

Rebecca (33:04):

So, there's like wanted posters all over Europe?

Kim (33:07):

Well, I don't know if there were wanted posters or whatever, but remember they were ready to give him France with the Frankfurt proposals of November of 1813. Now, they don't want negotiate with him at all.

Rebecca (33:17):

Why would they?

Kim (33:17):

Right. And so Napoleon decides before Russia and Austria can get their troops together. He will go after British and Prussian troops. And he goes northward into what is now Belgium. And he wins a couple preliminary victories, but at Waterloo on June 18th, 1815, the British commander Wellington and the Prussian commander Blücher defeat Napoleon in his last battle. So Napoleon met his Waterloo at Waterloo. (That's Very clever.) And he goes back to Paris. He abdicates a second time. The Prussians wanted to kill him. If Blücher had gotten a hold of Napoleon. They would've shot him. So Napoleon throws himself upon the British, who he referred to as his most inveterate and

Rebecca (34:04):

Did he and Wellington ever meet personally?

Kim (34:06):

Not that I know of, no. Uh, I don't believe. I mean, they were in the field of battle and they would've seen each other at Waterloo, but I don't think they ever personally met. I know of no evidence about that. And so this time the British are given the thankless task of dealing with Napoleon. And this time they send him not to some place in the Mediterranean, they send him to one of the most remote places on the planet, St. Helena in the south Atlantic, thousands of miles in the middle of nowhere, I mean, 1,200 miles off the African coast, a thousand miles or more off the south American coast.

Rebecca (34:47):

How did they think of that?

Kim (34:48):

I don't know. The decision at that time Lord Liverpool was the Prime Minister. It was probably discussed by him and Castlereagh his Foreign Secretary and others and they decided to send him to St. Helena. And he would remain the last six years of his life in this extraordinarily isolated place.

Rebecca (35:10):

But it was inhabited.

Kim (35:11):

Oh yes. It's still inhabited. There's about four or 5,000 people there. It's, it's part of the remnant of the British empire. It's still, it's still part it's still owned by Britain. And it's about twice the size of Manhattan. (That's A good size.) I've seen the photos and such, I mean, it looks like a beautiful place. It's quite mountainous and so on. But Napoleon was given a mansion called Longwood. He was irritated by the fact that they wouldn't call him Emperor, but only General.

Rebecca (35:39):

He should be glad that they at least called him that.

Kim (35:41):

Well, I'm absolutely convinced that if the Prussians or even the Austrians had gotten a hold of him, they, they would've shot him. So Napoleon spent the last six years of his life at St. Helena learning

Rebecca (35:54):

Did his wife join him?

Kim (35:56):

No, Marie Louise did not join him. She actually took up a lover. (Oh, There you go.) And his young son would die at the age of 21. The so-called Napoleon the Second and Napoleon would spend his last six years on St. Helena surrounded by some of his most, most faithful servants. And in 1821 at the age of 51, he would die of stomach cancer.

Rebecca (36:23):

What a life though, 51 years are like a hundred in regular people terms.

Kim (36:27):

The man packed centuries of living into half a century. He is one of the most extraordinary persons I've ever studied. I think Alexis de Tocqueville the great a French politician and author who wrote the most astute work on America ever written, I think he summed up Napoleon best. He said of Napoleon, he was as great as a man could be without morality. I think that captures Napoleon. He had great gifts. He was a genius militarily. He had administrative talents of the first order. He was shrewd.

Rebecca (37:03):

So why would you say he had no morality?

Kim (37:06):

Oh, he would lie regularly. He would betray people. He would even with his own family, all right? I mean, he'd deposed his own brother Louis who was king of Holland. He had nothing to do with Lucian who wouldn't support him who was another brother. Napoleon was not someone who could be trusted. <Laugh> I think he lacked the moral touch of a George Washington and Abraham Lincoln and so on. If he had had the moral touch of an Abraham Lincoln, oh my God. He could have gone down as.

Rebecca (37:39):

Well, if he would have had that moral touch, he would've never done half of what he did.

Kim (37:43):

Perhaps. There's no one quite like Napoleon in history. And once again, one of the most interesting things about him is he fights some of his greatest battles when he's on the defensive in 1813, 1814. They're absolutely brilliant. They're studied to this day Napoleon's strategy and tactics. And he was also a master of logistics. He knew how to feed his army. He knew how to equip his army. He could get from place A, to place B faster than anybody else and would surprise his enemies many times as he did at Austerlitz in December of 1805, the man is inexhaustible. A person could spend the rest of their life studying Napoleon.

Rebecca (38:21):

So what is his legacy?

Kim (38:23):

His legacy is mixed. I mean, he did many great things like the Code Napoleon and educational reforms. Some of his achievements are really laudable. For instance Napoleon was not a snob, no matter how low you were born, if you showed ability, he would raise you up very high. (That's Impressive.) Yeah, no, he's a, he's really a mixed bag. I mean, and some of the things he destroyed, like a lot of futile aspects, et cetera, it was good that he destroyed it. But

Rebecca (38:55):

And some of the Bonaparte's ended up in Philadelphia.

Kim (38:58):

That's right. Joseph Bonaparte, King of Spain, formerly King of Naples ended up in Philadelphia, right there at Eighth Street, close to the Walnut Street Theatre. So one of his brothers Jerome lived to 1860. (Hmm.) And his mother outlived him by 15 years. There is no one quite like Napoleon in history.

Rebecca (39:17):

But that's probably a good thing.

Kim (39:19):

Probably a good thing. Yes. Just from a sheer intellectual standpoint, the man is extraordinary.

Rebecca (39:25):

Well, I'm glad we did this two part series.

Kim (39:27):

I'm glad we did it too.

Rebecca (39:29):

Cuz we certainly could not have crammed it into one.

Kim (39:31):

I don't think so. No. And there's a lot of things I left out. (I'm Shocked.). Shocked you say. <Laugh> So what are we covering next?

Rebecca (39:41):

I think next we have something completely different.

Kim (39:44):

Yes, I think we do.

Rebecca (39:45):

And something I really don't know much about.

Kim (39:46):

Well, this is the Scopes Monkey Trial (which I've heard of) in the 1920s, Clarence Darrow Williams Jennings Brian, teaching of evolution and all of that.

Rebecca (39:56):

Would you say it changed the world?

Kim (39:58):

Well, I think Napoleon changed the world. I'm not so sure the Scope's Monkey Trial changed the world, but it was a pretty big event.

Rebecca (40:05):

At least in America.

Kim (40:06):

Yeah, well maybe even outside of America, but certainly in America. Yeah. Well, does that does that do it?

Rebecca (40:12):

I think that wraps it up.

Kim (40:14):

Okay then.

Rebecca (40:15):

So again, happy New Year, everyone. And I hope this is a healthy, happy and very prosperous year for all of you.

Kim (40:24):

Yes. I hope 2022 is a better year than 2020 or 2021.

Rebecca (40:28):

Has to be.

Kim (40:29):

Well, not necessarily. <Laugh>.

Rebecca (40:32):

Always the optimist

Kim (40:33):

On that, optimistic note.

Rebecca (40:34):

All right, everyone. Thanks for listening and until time.

Kim (40:37):

All right. Goodbye.

Rebecca (40:39):

Well, friends here we are at the end of the podcast, be sure to check out the links in the show description to find some of the resources we used for this episode. Also, if you've enjoyed listening, please head over to Apple Podcast and give us a virtual high five by leaving us a five star review. We'd really appreciate that. And if you'd like to connect with us directly, you can find us at historicallyspeakingpodcast.com or follow us on Instagram at [@historicallyspeakingpodcast](https://www.instagram.com/historicallyspeakingpodcast). That's it for today. And again, thanks for sharing part of your day with us. And remember if you wanna know what the future holds, study the past.