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The Daily Plebiscite:
Political Culture and National Identity in Nice and Savoy, 1860–1880

by

Mark Alexander Sawchuk

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

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Professor Carla Hesse, Chair
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Spring 2011

The Daily Plebiscite: Political Culture and National Identity in Nice and Savoy, 1860–1880

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Mark Alexander Sawchuk

Abstract

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Mark Alexander Sawchuk

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Carla Hesse, Chair

Using the French philosopher Ernest Renan’s dictum that the “nation’s existence is ... a daily plebiscite” as an ironic point of departure, this dissertation examines the contours of oppositional political culture to the French annexation of the County of Nice and the Duchy of Savoy in 1860. Ceded by treaty to France by the northern Italian kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia, these two mountainous border territories had long been culturally and geo-strategically in the French orbit. Unlike their counterparts in any other province of France, the inhabitants of the two territories were asked to approve or reject the annexation treaty, and thus their incorporation into France, in a plebiscite employing universal male suffrage. The 1860 annexation has traditionally been viewed as a rare example of an uncontroversial nineteenth-century territorial realignment, an instance where French strategic and diplomatic interests aligned perfectly with the national aspirations of the inhabitants.

In fact, the annexation was always more controversial than the virtually unanimous plebiscite results indicate. The archival record shows surprisingly strong and long-lived resistance to the settlement of 1860 in both territories. Cultural tensions between French administrators and the annexed populations exacerbated separatist sentiment as the gulf between the expectations of an easy transition and the far more complex reality of the enormous administrative transformation became increasingly manifest. Unsettled and antagonistic diplomatic relationships with Switzerland (which felt entitled to territorial compensations in Savoy) and Italy (where many nationalists resented having to give up Nice) contributed to French fears that these neighboring countries would try to subvert the annexation. French administrators consistently turned to the quasi-mythical notion of “Swiss agents” or “Italian subverters” to explain the resistance that they encountered to French rule. These tensions resulted in the emergence of anti-French movements, oriented in Savoy toward nearby Switzerland and in Nice toward the newly-unified Italy. The opposition in Savoy was predominantly political and republican in character. Attracted to Switzerland’s decentralized government and political liberties, it grew stronger in the 1860’s as opposition to the Second Empire increased. Niçois opposition, by contrast, maintained an essentially ethno-national-territorial agenda oriented towards Italy, and had great affinities to the irredentism of Italian nationalists after 1861.

The catastrophic Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871 brought these movements to a head. Fears that Savoy and Nice might voluntarily detach themselves from the French state appeared very quickly after the Sedan disaster, culminating in street riots in Nice and the election of three

separatist deputies to the National Assembly, and a movement in the northern Savoy in favor of inviting Switzerland to occupy and annex territory in the Haute-Savoie. In both provinces, separatism drew strength from the unresolved tensions of the annexation as well as from the uncertain political climate of France's Third Republic. As monarchists and republicans battled for control of the state, separatism became linked to the national political struggle. Initially this was most evident in Savoy, where the pro-Swiss separatist current in Savoy remained grounded in the area's precocious republicanism. In Nice separatism maintained its Italian dimension, but gradually became marginalized and discredited when separatist leaders became involved with the conservatives. The firm establishment of the Republic by 1880 thus, paradoxically, helped to neutralize both separatist currents and finally cemented the annexation that had occurred two decades earlier.

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Abbreviations and Notes on Terminology

Citation Abbreviations

I. Archives

AN	<i>Archives Nationales de France</i>	National Archives
AD Haute-Savoie	<i>Archives départementales de la Haute-Savoie</i>	Departmental Archives of Haute-Savoie
AD Savoie	<i>Archives départementales de la Savoie</i>	Departmental Archives of Savoie
AD Alpes-Maritimes	<i>Archives départementales des Alpes-Maritimes</i>	Departmental Archives of Alpes-Maritimes
AMAE	<i>Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères</i>	Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

II. Institutions and Government personnel

AM	<i>Alpes-Maritimes</i>	Alpes-Maritimes
CCP	<i>Commissaire central de police</i>	Central police commissioner
CF	<i>Consul Français</i>	French consul
CS	<i>Commissaire spéciale</i>	Special police commissioner
DGSP	<i>Direction générale de sûreté publique</i>	General Direction of Public Security
DSG	<i>Direction de sûreté générale</i>	Direction of General Security
HS	<i>Haute-Savoie</i>	Haute-Savoie
LF	<i>Légation de France</i>	French legation
MAE	<i>Ministère des Affaires Étrangères</i>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MI	<i>Ministère de l'Intérieur</i>	Ministry of the Interior
MJ	<i>Ministère de Justice</i>	Ministry of Justice
PG	<i>Procureur Général</i>	Public prosecutor at the Court of Appeals

PI	<i>Procureur Impérial</i>	Public prosecutor under the Second Empire
PR	<i>Procureur Républicain</i>	Public prosecutor under the Third Republic
SP	<i>Sous-préfet</i>	Sub-prefect

Geographical Terms and Exonyms

In 1860, the official name of the sovereign state in northern Italy that led the movement toward Italian unification was the Kingdom of Sardinia. Then as now, the kingdom's official name was misleading, due to its extremely complicated territorial history. Constructed over a period of eight hundred years, the heterogeneous state consisted of the various possessions of the House of Savoy. At the core of the kingdom lay its oldest territories, dating from the eleventh century: the Duchy of Savoy in the northwest, and Piedmont to its east. Though territorially contiguous and dynastically linked since the mid-eleventh century, Savoy and Piedmont were geographically separated from each other by the Alps. The County of Nice, a fief of the Savoyard state since 1388, bordered Piedmont to the south. Like Savoy, it was physically divided from Piedmont by the Maritime Alps. The ruling house acquired the titular island of Sardinia in 1720, raising the state from a duchy to a kingdom. It acquired Liguria, the territory of the former Republic of Genoa, by the treaties of 1815.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the kingdom's political, cultural, and economic center lay in Piedmont, with its capital at Turin, while its titular island of Sardinia was, in fact, its poorest and most geographically isolated component. Hence, while the formal name Kingdom of Sardinia did see use in the mid-nineteenth century, the state was frequently and colloquially known in English as Piedmont-Sardinia and sometimes as Piedmont-Savoy or just Piedmont, reflecting the dominance of the state's northwestern continental territories. In French, the state was commonly referred to as both *Sardaigne and Piémont*. In both languages, the context usually made it clear that the term employed referred to the entire kingdom as a political entity, and not to the actual geographical Piedmont or the island of Sardinia. In French, the adjectival form for the state, *Sarde*, was used more consistently than the noun form. After the enlargement of the kingdom and the formal proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861, the shortened name Italy was gradually adopted.

I will conform to this standard by using Sardinia for the noun form of the kingdom rather than the more cumbersome Piedmont-Sardinia, and Sardinian for the adjectival form, unless direct quotations employ other forms.

The spelling difference in the English exonym Savoy and the French *Savoie*, fortunately, makes it possible in English distinguish between the entire territory of the former Duchy of Savoie and the two French departments, Savoie and Haute-Savoie, created from it in 1860. This distinction between the historical province and the modern department is more difficult in

French, where only the spelling Savoie is in use. The ongoing potential for confusion in the French language has led in the past century and a half to the emergence of new plural terms used to refer to the province as a whole, encompassing the two departments: *Pays de Savoie*, *les deux Savoie*, and even *les Savoie*.

In this text, Savoy will refer to the entire province as a whole. The French spelling Savoie will refer to the department of the Savoie, and Haute-Savoie to the department of the Haute-Savoie.

Unfortunately, in English as in French, there is no useful spelling difference that enables easy differentiation between the historic province, the County of Nice, and its capital, the city of Nice. The context usually enables differentiation between the two. In those cases where it is necessary to specify the distinction, I will use the terms County or County of Nice, even though they are technically anachronistic after 1860, or the term Alpes-Maritimes, the name of the department formed primarily out of this territory.

Demonyms

The terms *Savoyard* and *Savoisien* were used interchangeably in the 1860's as the demonym or gentilic (*gentilé*) referring to the inhabitants of Savoy. *Savoisien* was probably the more common of the two terms, due to the pejorative connotations associated with the term *Savoyard* in the nineteenth century. Over time, the term *Savoyard* lost most of its negative associations and displaced its rival *Savoisien*, which has almost entirely disappeared from current usage. It is still occasionally used to refer to the inhabitants of Savoy in ethnographic or anthropological contexts, as in Chambéry's *Musée Savoisien*. Since the 1980's, the term *Savoisien* has also been adopted by the tiny, contemporary separatist political movement in Savoy. For this reason, it has continued to fall out of favor in everyday use. In the County of Nice, the French almost always referred to the inhabitants as *Niçois*, the standard French noun and adjectival demonym, which remains the most widespread demonym in use. Other forms were occasionally used: *Nissard* or *Nissart*, often Gallicized to *Niçard*, is the standard term used in the local dialect of the County, derived from the name of the city, *Nissa* (rarely, *Niça*). In Italian, the similar gentilic *Nizzard* was adopted from the city's Italian name, *Nizza*. Except for *Niçard* and its various spellings, which are still used to describe the local dialect by its small community of speakers, these terms have almost entirely disappeared from standard French today.

I will use the modern terms Savoyard and Niçois as nouns and adjectives to describe the inhabitants of the territory, and Niçard to refer to the language, unless direct quotations use other terms.

To summarize, these are the exact meanings of the terms used throughout this dissertation:

Sardinia	The Kingdom of Sardinia, which formally became the Kingdom of Italy in 1861.
Sardinian	The adjectival form of the above, meaning “of or pertaining to the Kingdom of Sardinia.”
Savoy	The entire province annexed by France in 1860, formally known as the Duchy of Savoy.
Savoie	The southern of the two French departments created from the province of Savoy, with its prefecture at Chambéry.
Haute-Savoie	The northern of the two French departments created from the province of Savoy, with its prefecture at Annecy.
Savoyard	As a noun, the gentilic for the inhabitants of Savoy. As an adjective, meaning “of or pertaining to Savoy.”
Nice	Depending on context, the entire province annexed by France in 1860, formally known as the County of Nice; or, the capital and largest city of the County, and the prefecture of the Alpes-Maritimes department.
County of Nice, County	The entire province annexed by France in 1860.
Niçois	As a noun, the gentilic for the inhabitants of the County of Nice. As an adjective, meaning “of or pertaining to the city/province of Nice.”
Niçard	The local dialect or <i>patois</i> spoken in the County of Nice, with Occitan and Ligurian elements.
Alpes-Maritimes	The French department created in 1860 by joining the annexed territory of the County of Nice to the arrondissement of Grasse, detached from the western neighboring Var department. The prefecture was located in Nice.

Geographical Notes

In Savoy, the old Sardinian provinces were reorganized, with some territorial changes at the communal level, into modern French arrondissements in 1860. A few communes were transferred between the two departments.

The Province of Chambéry essentially became the Department of Savoie. It largely respected the old provincial divisions. One source of confusion was that the internal Sardinian province called Haute-Savoie, suppressed in 1860, was not within the territory that became the department of that name.

Savoie (formerly Province of Chambéry)

<u>Sardinian Province</u>	<u>Capital</u>	<u>French arrondissement</u>
Savoie-Propre	Chambéry	Chambéry
Haute-Savoie	Albertville	Albertville
Tarentaise	Moûtiers	Moûtiers
Maurienne	Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne	Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne

The Province of Annecy largely became the Department of Haute-Savoie. The main change to the old provincial division was the partition of the Genevois into two French arrondissements.

Haute-Savoie (formerly Province of Annecy)

<u>Sardinian Province</u>	<u>Capital</u>	<u>French arrondissement</u>
Genevois	Annecy	Annecy; Saint-Julien
Chablais	Thonon	Thonon
Faucigny	Bonneville	Bonneville

After the annexation, the far smaller County of Nice, which had formed one province in Sardinia, was added to the arrondissement of Grasse, taken from the neighboring Var department. The new Alpes-Maritimes department thus had three arrondissements: territory of the County was divided into two arrondissements.

Alpes-Maritimes

<u>French arrondissement</u>
Nice
Puget-Théniers
Grasse (from the Var department)

Introduction

On March 11, 1882, at the Sorbonne, the celebrated law and theology professor Ernest Renan delivered the lecture for which he is best remembered: “What is A Nation?” He famously announced, “A nation ... presupposes a past; however it is summarized, in the present by a tangible fact, namely, consent, the clearly expressed desire to continue a common life. A nation’s existence is, if you will pardon the metaphor, a daily plebiscite, just as an individual’s existence is a perpetual affirmation of life. A nation has no more right than a king does to say to a province, ‘You belong to me, I am seizing you.’ A province, as far as I am concerned, is its inhabitants; if anyone has the right to be consulted in such an affair, it is the inhabitant.”¹

Renan’s lecture has often been read as a foundational expression of what some scholars have called the “French” or more broadly “western European” version of nationalism. It is supposedly a discourse about civic nationalism based on voluntary membership and adherence to a set of shared values. This stands in contrast to a supposedly “German” or “eastern European” nationalism, based on blood and ethnicity.² In order to underscore this distinction, Renan uses the vivid metaphor of “the daily plebiscite.” The backdrop to Renan’s lecture was, of course, Alsace and Lorraine. Following Renan’s reasoning, the inhabitants of the “lost provinces” annexed by Germany in 1871 might be largely Germanic by language, culture, and the vicissitudes of politics, but they ultimately remained French by their voluntary adherence to the French nation—by their “daily plebiscite.” In using the term “plebiscite” metaphorically Renan also reminded his audience about the wrenching realpolitik of 1871: Germany had not, despite calls to do so, allowed a plebiscite to be held in Alsace and Lorraine about their incorporation into imperial Germany.³ For these reasons, Renan’s metaphor of the daily plebiscite, the daily act of choosing and reaffirming a national commitment, was doubly powerful.

In 1871 the use of a plebiscite to settle matters of territorial sovereignty and nationhood was a fairly recent invention. The French revolutionaries, and especially Napoleon I, had used the plebiscite for the first time since antiquity to justify numerous territorial acquisitions during the French revolutionary wars in Europe. During the French Second Empire of Napoleon III, who revived much of his uncle’s political system, use of the practice expanded in the European state system. One of the first modern examples of the practice took place in France just a decade prior to the loss of Alsace and Lorraine. In March 1860 France concluded a treaty with the northern Italian Kingdom of Sardinia, acquiring Sardinia’s two transalpine territories, the Duchy of Savoy and the County of Nice. The treaty was followed in April 1860 by plebiscites employing universal male suffrage, in which the vast majority of Niçois and Savoyards voted to approve the treaty.

The annexation of Nice and Savoy to France in 1860 was an essential condition for the emergence of a unified Italy. But it has the dubious distinction of being the most forgotten event of the Risorgimento. In many texts about Italian unification, the French annexation of Nice and Savoy warrants little more than a line or two. Like the sideshow in a three-ring circus, it has been largely overshadowed by subsequent events in Italy. Against the dramatic and much-mythologized backdrop of Garibaldi’s landing in Sicily, the climactic battles of Solferino and Magenta, and the emergence of a politically unified Italy after a millennium of political

¹ Ernest Renan, “Qu’est-ce qu’une nation? Conférence faite en Sorbonne, le 11 Mars 1882,” in *Œuvres complètes de Ernest Renan*, ed. Henriette Psichari (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1947) 1: 904.

² The most well-known modern discussion of this distinction is Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press), 1992.

³ Nor, it might be added, did France permit a plebiscite in 1918 when it retook Alsace-Lorraine.

fragmentation, France's acquisition of two small, poor, largely mountainous territories almost seems like an afterthought. No wars were fought in or over the territories; no strapping Red Shirts climbed dramatically over the Alps or landed on Nice's famed *Promenade des Anglais* as they would in Sicily. Yet the annexation of Nice and Savoy to France in 1860 was a singular moment in the history of French nation-building. It occurred exceptionally late by French standards. Other French provinces that are traditionally noted for their distinct regional cultures were politically attached to the French kingdom at far earlier dates: Brittany in the sixteenth century; Alsace, the Catalan territory of Roussillon, French Flanders, and Franche-Comté in the seventeenth. The French colonies of Réunion and Martinique, now overseas departments, have both been politically French significantly longer than either Savoy or Nice. Algeria had already been occupied thirty years prior to the 1860 annexation. On the other hand, if their definitive incorporation into the French state occurred only in the mid nineteenth century, Nice and Savoy spent centuries within the orbit of France.

Prehistories and an Overview of 1860

Created as an independent county out of the Burgundian Kingdom of Arles in 1003, Savoy, already tied dynastically to Piedmont in the eleventh century, was elevated to a duchy in 1416. Situated territorially west of the Alps, Savoy's extremely mountainous topography divides it into a series of valleys further organized into internal provinces, the Genevois, Chablais and Faucigny in the north and the Savoie-Propre, Tarentaise and Maurienne in the south. Repeated French incursions from the west caused the Duke of Savoy Emmanuel Philibert, in a historically fateful move, to transfer the capital of the state east of the Alps from Chambéry to Turin in 1563 to provide his kingdom with a more defensible capital. The move marked the beginning of a gradual Italianization of the dynasty. The County of Nice became affiliated to the Savoyard state in 1388, when it detached itself from Provence and transferred its allegiance to the counts of Savoy. The territory's attachment to the House of Savoy earned it the motto of *Nicaea Fidelissima*, or "Nice, the most faithful." It is also recalled in the legend of the County's own possibly mythological heroine, the washerwoman Cathérine Ségurana, who gained fame for having supposedly led the city's forces in a defensive battle against the combined invasion forces of France and the Ottoman Empire in 1543. With some 48,000 inhabitants in 1860, the County of Nice's eponymous capital was a small city by French standards, but was by far the largest urban area in either of the two provinces. Rising up into the Alps north and east of coast, the Niçois backcountry, or *arrière-pays Niçois*, presents a very different face from the capital. Rugged, remote, fractured into valleys and sprinkled with hilltop villages, much of the backcountry resembles Savoy more than it does the capital and coastal towns.

French influence increased during the early modern period, with Savoy occupied by France on four occasions from the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, notably between 1536 and 1559. But the French Revolution caused the first major reorganization of France's southeastern border. After the papal enclaves of the Comtat Venaissin and Avignon in 1791, Savoy and Nice were the first territories annexed to revolutionary France. Savoy was formally annexed to the French Republic in November 1792, Nice the following January. France lost the majority of its territorial acquisitions of the revolutionary and Napoleonic period, including the entire County of Nice, in the First Restoration of 1814, which returned the country largely to the borders of 1792. Savoy, however, was a notable exception, being partitioned between France and Sardinia. Two-thirds of the province was restored to Sardinia to create a buffer state on France's southeastern border. One-third of Savoy, including the province's two most important towns, Chambéry and

Annecy, remained in France, suggesting tacit acceptance on the part of the European Powers to the principle of French influence in Savoy. Only Napoleon's abortive Hundred Days caused the Great Powers to strip France of the rump Savoy and return it to Sardinia, truncating France to its 1790 borders. To the north, Geneva, which formally entered the Swiss Confederation in 1815 as its 22nd canton, received a number of adjoining Savoyard communes to the south and east to create a contiguous landmass joining it to its northern neighbor, the Vaud canton. To help contain French influence, the 1815 treaties required Sardinia to maintain a "neutral zone" in the northern Savoyard provinces of the Faucigny and the Chablais. Switzerland was technically entitled to occupy those territories militarily to guarantee their neutrality and preserve its own, though there was longstanding debate between France and Switzerland about the exact nature of the neutral zone. Economically, much of the same territory, and part of the northern Genevois province as well, was oriented to Geneva.

Though deprived of Nice and Savoy, successive French governments never renounced their desire to obtain these most coveted of European territories said to be necessary to fulfill France's "natural borders," though this remained a slippery and malleable construct increasingly forced to share space with the post-revolutionary conceptions of nationalism and the territorial nation-state.⁴ Savoy continued to furnish a large number of émigré workers, some seasonal and some who settled more permanently, to French cities, notably Paris and Lyon, where many found work in the city's silk industry. Political events continued to favor an ultimate separation of Nice and Savoy from Sardinia. In 1834, in revolutionary activity not unconnected to the major uprising of Lyon's silkworkers (*canuts*), the Italian revolutionary Giuseppe Mazzini convinced a Genoese former Napoleonic soldier, Jérôme Romarino, to invade Savoy with Polish, Italian, and émigré Savoyard volunteers as part of a larger-scale uprising on the Italian peninsula. The poorly-organized expedition, quickly put down by peasants, was a miserable failure. The revolutionary unrest of 1848 in Sardinia led the monarch to grant a constitution, the *Statuto*, but also signaled the increasing ascendancy of the Italian idea among Sardinian political liberals and nationalists. Inspired by the February Revolution in France, meanwhile, and encouraged by the commissioner Emmanuel Arago of the Second Republic, a second expedition of workers from the Lyon region, drawn notably from the canuts' labor organization *Les Voraces*, attempted another abortive invasion of Savoy in March 1848. During the Restoration, the County of Nice suffered economically from Sardinia's acquisition of the former Republic of Genoa, which saw Nice replaced by Genoa as Sardinia's most important port. Sardinia's 1851 abolition of the city's five century-old privilege as a free port as part of a larger customs reform led to the largest street riots in the history of the city and was a major blow to the prestige of the ruling dynasty.

Only at the end of the 1850s, however, did the question of Nice and Savoy again become a matter of diplomatic interest. By the terms of the secret Plombières agreement forged between Napoleon III and Victor Emmanuel II of Sardinia in 1858, Sardinia agreed to cede Nice and Savoy to France in exchange for French assistance in a future war with Sardinia's traditional enemy Austria. The war, with the acquisition of Lombardy and Venetia as its goals, took place in 1859. But the annexation was scrapped after Napoleon III had misgivings. Horrified by the bloodshed of the campaign, aware of increasing opposition to it at home, and worried about the possibility that Sardinia might gain a great deal more territory than originally planned, the

⁴ For a discussion of the concept of "natural borders" in French history, see Peter Sahlins, "Natural Frontiers Revisited: France's Boundaries since the Seventeenth Century," *The American Historical Review* 95, no. 5 (Dec., 1990): 1423–51.

Emperor signed a separate peace with Austria. He abandoned an enraged Sardinia before Venetia could be captured, and agreed to forego Nice and Savoy. Cavour was dismissed from office, and his successor in Sardinia tried forcibly to tighten the links binding Nice and Savoy within the Sardinian state. Meanwhile, popular uprisings deposed the monarchs of Parma, Modena and Tuscany, freed the Marches from the control of the Pope, and expressed their desire to join Sardinia. With Cavour's sudden return to power in January, 1860, Nice and Savoy once again became bargaining chips. Napoleon agreed to permit Sardinia to annex the states of central Italy in exchange for the two provinces. A secret treaty was signed on March 12 and March 14 in the two capitals; after some minor modifications, on March 24 the two governments concluded the Treaty of Turin, the formal and public instrument of the annexation.

France's acquisition of the two provinces in 1860 made strategic and geopolitical sense, fulfilling a longstanding French strategic and foreign policy goal. Napoleon III and the French government viewed the cession primarily based on the need for a more favorable strategic border in the Alps and justified the annexation using the doctrine of natural borders.⁵ Nationalism was not, however, absent from the equation. As European populations increasingly defined themselves within the framework of the sovereign nation-state, there was a growing awareness on the part of European statesmen that the principle had to be taken into consideration. Napoleon III himself publicly supported applying the principle of nationalities to the organization of European states, most obviously in Italy. Conveniently, the principle of nationalities appeared to support French claims to Nice and Savoy. Of the strategic territories coveted by successive French governments in support of acquiring France's natural borders—among them Belgium, Luxembourg, and the left bank of the Rhine, all of which Napoleon III turned his attention to later in the decade—Nice and Savoy were, by a considerable margin, the least problematic from the perspective of national consciousness. With a greater proportion of French-speaking inhabitants than Brittany, Alsace, French Flanders or indeed the Occitan-speaking areas of southern France, Savoy had long appeared so thoroughly French in character that virtually no one argued against its incorporation to France on nationalist grounds.

The County of Nice was culturally and linguistically more ambiguous. Newspapers were published in both French and Italian, but Italian was the official administrative language. The predominantly patois-speaking populations of Nice were no more French speaking than those of southern France, though the dialect, Niçard, does share linguistic features with Provençal. Still, the city of Nice was home to an important colony of wealthy and permanently settled French expatriates. They provided the city with its cosmopolitan flair, intermingling with the other European wintering elites, notably the British and the Russians, who flocked to the city's mild climate during the winter season. All things considered, in a Europe that was being progressively reorganized along the principle of the ethno-territorial nation-state, the annexation simply removed peripheral and arguably "French" territories from a kingdom that was increasingly nationalizing along Italian lines. It was therefore to the French government's advantage to deploy the nationalist argument—that Niçois and Savoyards formed part of the French nationality and wanted to be French—to bolster its traditional strategic claims.

Thus the annexation of Nice and Savoy replicated traditional modes of European diplomacy, according to which rulers could trade territories among themselves, much as they had

⁵ Paul Guichonnet, "Théorie des frontières naturelles et principes des nationalités dans l'annexion de la Savoie à la France (1858–1860)," *Revue des travaux de l'Académie des sciences morales et politiques* 113 (1960, 4th series, 2nd semester): 9–32.

for centuries. It was a politically expedient agreement made between two sovereigns. Yet it also marked the ascendance of new concerns in European diplomacy that would culminate after the First World War. These concerns discouraged the drawing of borders that, in theory at least, went against public opinion as embodied in the formula of national self-determination. As finalized, the Treaty of Turin's first article required that France and Sardinia take into account "the wishes of the populations." The following month, the plebiscites held on April 15 and April 22 in Nice and Savoy respectively, in which the populations voted massively to approve the treaty, provided the evidence Napoleon III needed to claim that their inhabitants' opinions about the annexation had been consulted. That is not to say that France encountered no European opposition to its acquisition of the two provinces. European statesmen could hardly overlook the fact that this was the first time since the end of the Revolution that France had gained European territory, and that it had happened through the efforts of a man who consciously portrayed himself as Napoleon I's heir and successor. France's traditional enemy Britain opposed the annexation, though out of stubborn and principled opposition to any French territorial expansion rather than out of concern for the aspirations of the territories' inhabitants. Though not pleased by the prospect of having to cede the territory that had produced the royal dynasty, Italian nationalists largely accepted the cession of French-speaking Savoy. But most were loathe to relinquish the more Italianate Nice, which was, ironically, the birthplace of the radical republican nationalist Giuseppe Garibaldi. The diplomatic negotiations between France and Sardinia reveal that the Italian diplomats maintained some hope that Nice could be preserved for the expanded Sardinian state.

Switzerland was a more determined enemy.⁶ Sensing danger in a territorial configuration that left Geneva as a peculiarly-shaped territorial peninsula surrounded on three sides by its powerful southern neighbor, the Swiss, assisted by Britain, invoked territorial claims to the neutral zone of the Faucigny and the Chablais. Swiss claims did encounter some Savoyard sympathy as a result of the longstanding economic ties between northern Savoy and Geneva. To reduce the attractiveness of its Helvetian neighbor, the French government agreed to grant northern Savoy an expanded free-trade Zone, similar to one already in place for the Ain department's Gex arrondissement, maintaining the longstanding duty-free relationship of northern Savoyard communes to Geneva. The objections raised by Great Britain and Switzerland to the annexation of Nice and Savoy, while not purely formal, were comparatively weak. Neither country was willing to break off diplomatic relations with France over the annexation, let alone go to war to prevent it. The magnitude of their objections and concerns pales in comparison to those engendered by other contemporary territorial readjustments. The unification of Italy and especially that of Germany during the same decade raised far more concern in international diplomatic circles and European capitals than the quiet transfer of two peripheral territories to France.

From every conceivable point of view—history, geopolitics, national and cultural identity—the annexation of Nice and Savoy appeared auspicious, logical, and consistent. The French annexation of 1860 was certainly among the most favorable and least controversial territorial realignments of the entire nineteenth century, to the point where, even in an age where teleological approaches to history have fallen firmly out of fashion, the annexation of 1860 maintains an aura of preordained historical inevitability.

⁶ See Luc Monnier, *L'annexion de la Savoie à la France et la politique Suisse 1860* (Geneva: A. Jullien, 1932).

Ease and Unease in a National and International Context

That has, at least, been the prevailing view. In the long term, the annexation *was* a highly successful one. Neither Nice nor Savoy springs immediately to mind as an especially particularistic French province; many well-respected scholars of French politics, literature and political science are undoubtedly not aware of just how recent this political fusion was. Yet a sustained study of the twenty years after the annexation reveals that the perception of ease is misleading. Over the course of the two decades following their annexation to France, Nice and Savoy each witnessed the emergence of oppositional movements or factions whose stated desire was to undo the settlement of 1860 in favor of alternative political arrangements joining their province to another European state. Separatists in Savoy, concentrated in the northern districts of the Haute-Savoie department, aspired to join their territory to Switzerland. In Nice, a pro-Italian faction expressed the irredentist desire to return their province to Sardinia, which formally became Italy in 1861. Even though these movements remained in the minority and ultimately failed to change the settlement of 1860, their appearance is a historical problem in light of the overwhelmingly favorable circumstances of the annexation. Why did opposition to the annexation, and even factions that may be described as separatist, appear in territories that should have been such unfavorable soil for them? In the restrictive political world of the Second Empire and much of the first decade of the Third Republic, what forms did that opposition take? This dissertation attempts to answer these questions. Juxtaposing the official and much-lauded actual plebiscite of 1860 to the metaphorical plebiscite of daily belonging postulated by Renan during the ensuing two decades, it shows how and under what circumstances the inhabitants of Nice and Savoy found it challenging to affirm their “daily plebiscite” of belonging and loyalty to the French nation.

In spite of their unique and historically late attachment to the French state, Nice and Savoy remain among the country’s most understudied regions. Though there have been several works about the annexation that discuss the active anti-French opposition prior to the French takeover, most have focused exclusively on the period 1858–1860.⁷ There have been some massive and impressively encyclopedic studies of the period from 1861 to 1880 that have discussed elements of the anti-annexationist opposition, notably the major crises in both provinces engendered by the Franco-Prussian conflict.⁸ Such broad approaches have, however, made it more difficult to appreciate, in full detail, the persistence in Nice and Savoy of certain forms of opposition after 1860, political behavior that lasted well into the first decade of the Third Republic. More narrowly focused, this dissertation identifies and explains the continuities of oppositional political culture to the annexation in the two provinces. With its twenty-year scope, it examines the mentalities of the generation of political actors that came of age in Nice and Savoy during and after the annexation. I reveal how the regional dynamics of political opposition established under the Second Empire were altered by the Franco-Prussian conflict and grew intertwined with the national political struggle between monarchists and republicans in the highly unstable first decade of the Third Republic. While this dissertation does rely on traditional sources of information about public opinion and political culture, I have also adopted the perspective of the late historian Susanna Barrows by seeking out and emphasizing instances of

⁷ The two standard reference works are Paul Guichonnet, *Histoire de l’annexion de la Savoie à la France*, 3rd ed. (Montmélian, France: La Fontaine de Siloé, 2003); and Paul Gonnet, *La réunion de Nice à la France* (Breil-sur-Roya, France: Les éditions du Cabri, 2003).

⁸ Jacques Lovie, *La Savoie dans la vie Française de 1860 à 1875* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963); Robert Latouche, *Histoire de Nice*, vol. 2, *De 1860 à 1914* (Nice: Ville de Nice, 1954).

popular political culture.⁹ This permits a better understanding of the concerns not just of political elites, but of ordinary Niçois and Savoyards. At a time of simultaneous repression and fitful democratization, the humble were among the participants in a wider conversation about Nice and Savoy's political relationship to France.

In a number of respects, this approach is distinct from other recent works on provincial culture, regionalism, and national identity in France. At first glance, the events of 1860 resemble the seventeenth-century events leading to the 1659 Treaty of the Pyrenees, described by the historian Peter Sahlins, that established the border between Spain and France.¹⁰ Contemporary observers also noted this parallel, in light of the French government's sustained emphasis on the need to establish a more favorable border in the southeast, one that more or less followed the trace of the Alps. While the arrangement was in its genesis, the prefect of the Ain department, which borders on Switzerland and northern Savoy, observed that "all Savoy desires to be French, that's not in doubt for anyone. France wants to take advantage of the current circumstances to sign, at long last, a Treaty of the Alps just as she signed, under Louis XIV, the Treaty of the Pyrenees."¹¹ But there are important differences between the events of 1860 and those of two centuries earlier. Though the 1860 annexation displaced a long-existing border, unlike the divided Cerdanya valley in the Pyrenees, Nice and Savoy avoided partition between two large and powerful states. The border was simply moved eastward and the two provinces ended up entirely under French sovereignty. More significantly, the prefect's comment about Savoy's "desire to be French" hints at just how different the events of 1860 were from those two centuries earlier. The diplomats of 1659 had not asked, nor would they have thought to ask the inhabitants of the Pyrenees whether they preferred to be in Spain or in France. By 1860 it had become critical for the French and Sardinian governments to assess the desires of the provinces' inhabitants, even in a reluctant, hesitant, and controlled fashion. The appeal to democratic culture and popular political participation is an absolutely critical element of this story.

My emphasis on mass politics and culture also sets this project aside from familiar works focusing on economics, the role of the state, and modernization theory. Historians such as Eugen Weber have argued that developments such as universal compulsory primary schooling, military conscription, mass literacy, and the arrival of modern transportation networks, especially the railroad, are responsible for the modernization, integration and assimilation of provincial France into a coherent national whole.¹² These agents of change undoubtedly played a very significant role; a great deal of historical discussion has, in fact, focused on Nice's unprecedented population explosion and economic growth, especially after 1870, as the capital of France's first major international tourist destination, the Côte d'Azur.¹³ These studies, however, have largely downplayed the turbulent national political story that was occurring simultaneously. *Peasants*

⁹ Susanna Barrows, "Parliaments of the People': The Political Culture of Cafés in the Early Third Republic," in *Drinking: Behavior and Belief in Modern Society*, ed. Susanna Barrows and Robin Room (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991) 87–97; and Susanna Barrows, "Nineteenth Century Cafés: Arenas of Everyday Life," in *Pleasures of Paris: Daumier to Picasso*, ed. Barbara Stern Shapiro (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1991) 17–26.

¹⁰ Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

¹¹ AN, F 1cI 129, prefect Ain to MI, 20 February 1860.

¹² Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976).

¹³ See, for example, C. James Haug, *Leisure and Urbanism in Nineteenth-Century Nice* (Lawrence, Kansas: The Regents Press of Kansas), 1982.

Into Frenchmen, for example, conveniently establishes a time period for enquiry entirely under the Third Republic, 1870–1914.

In contrast, this dissertation is less interested in state-building efforts such as the promotion of the national language. Instead, I chart the relationship between a first generation of regional political actors and the national political arena during a time of great political upheaval. In the space of the twenty years covered by this study, France witnessed the “liberal” phase of an authoritarian regime followed by its collapse, an experiment in radical federalism in the form of the Paris Commune, and a republic run by monarchists in search of an elusive sovereign. This period was difficult to navigate for all of France. It was thus especially so in two provinces that had only been part of the country for a decade. With its emphasis on the elaboration of regional political identity, my approach is probably closest to that employed by Caroline Ford in her study of the relationship of religion, provincial politics, and republicanism in Brittany under the Third Republic.¹⁴ It is, however, distinct from both Ford’s approach and that of most other scholars in its treatment of nationalism and republicanism. The two concepts are frequently so closely linked in French historiography as to be virtually inseparable. In his recent book on the emergence of nationalism in France, for example, David Bell refers continually to what he describes as “French republican nationalism,” as though nationalism in France must necessarily be republican.¹⁵ The emergence of a stable republican regime in the Third Republic is an important part of this story, but I also argue that the Second Empire made a significant, and largely unheralded contribution to French nationalism and regional integration long before the Third Republic’s legions of schoolmasters had been settled in the country’s most remote villages.

One additional feature of the annexation of Nice and Savoy that distinguishes it from previous scholarship is the fact that this incorporation took place on two bisecting axes: national and international. The great majority of the scholarly literature on nation-building in France has been explicitly and resolutely internal in focus, concentrating exclusively on the relationship between the state and local actors. Though recent research has successfully nuanced this view by exploring the contributions of the European colonial and imperial enterprise to the negotiation of culture and identity in the metropole, there have been few attempts to incorporate an *international*—as opposed to national, imperial, or the still vaguely-defined “transnational”—perspective. Yet Nice and Savoy remained profoundly affected by influence beyond their borders—particularly the key neighboring countries of Switzerland and Italy. These countries served as political “magnets,” drawing the interest and sympathy of some of the inhabitants of Nice and Savoy while strongly repelling others. Perhaps more than any areas of France other than Alsace and Lorraine, Nice and Savoy were also disproportionately affected by what I call the “other imperialism”: Napoleon III’s aggressive foreign policy. In reviving his uncle’s political system, Napoleon III resorted to a foreign policy that, had it been successful, would have reasserted French primacy in Europe and overturned some of the elements of the 1815 treaties. The annexation was the first major strategic move in what was ultimately a disastrous diplomatic record that alienated France from virtually every major European power, including Switzerland and the Emperor’s much hoped-for client state of Italy. Ultimately, the 1860 annexation cannot be fully understood without explaining both the national and international context.

¹⁴ Caroline Ford, *Creating the Nation in Provincial France: Religion and Political Identity in Brittany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

¹⁵ David A. Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680–1800* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001).

Finally, one of this project's most important elements is its comparative dimension. No explicitly comparative study of oppositional culture in the two provinces has ever been attempted. Nice and Savoy are certainly similar enough to invite a meaningful comparison. They were both ancient and peripheral territories of the same northern Italian state whose center of gravity lay on the other side of the Alps and which was turning its attention toward the Italian peninsula. Both featured predominantly mountainous, Alpine topographies and had large rural populations. The two provinces joined France by the same diplomatic instrument. In both territories, the male inhabitants were asked to ratify the treaty by plebiscite. At the same time, Nice and Savoy are also distinctive enough to permit fruitful comparison. With its deceptively "French" linguistic and cultural visage, Savoy encouraged different expectations than the predominantly patois-speaking Nice. The territorial status of the two provinces was also distinct after 1860. Savoy was divided into two departments, Savoie to the south and Haute-Savoie to the north, that largely, though not entirely, replicated the old internal divisions of Chambéry and Annecy. The far smaller County of Nice, on the other hand, was added to territory taken from an existing French department, the arrondissement of Grasse (detached from the neighboring Var department) to create the Alpes-Maritimes department. Though far smaller than Savoy, Nice featured the only major urban area in the two provinces. Thus the two territories present an ideal foundation for comparison. By simultaneously investigating both territories, I demonstrate that the cultural forms of political opposition employed in Savoy and Nice were quite similar. The territories both witnessed conflicts among the inhabitants and French administrators; both gave birth to vastly overblown fears of subversive foreign influence; and both produced separatist factions that drew inspiration from the Sardinian past and projected their hopes onto the supposedly greener pastures of another polity. But their values were profoundly different. The Savoyard separatists ultimately adopted an republican agenda, while the Niçois separatists cleaved to an ethno-cultural, pro-Italian irredentism. This divergence explains why the two movements ultimately adopted opposite strategies faced with the advent of the Third Republic in 1870.

The text proceeds both chronologically and thematically. The first chapter covers the formation of public opinion in Nice and Savoy during the critical months of January to June 1860, during which the annexation took place. This period gave birth to much of the form and content of opposition to the annexation. Chapters two to four focus on Nice and Savoy under the Second Empire, while the final three chapters discuss the turbulent decade of the 1870s. In Chapter two, I show how the cultural gulf between the inhabitants of the annexed territories and the French administrators brought in to administer the provinces led to disappointed expectations and unexpected tensions that worked against the stated goal of national assimilation. Chapter three investigates how unsettled relationships with Switzerland and Italy during the Second Empire helped keep the question of the annexation very much alive and affected the French government's perceptions of potential dangers to the 1860 settlement. In Chapter four, I maintain the themes of everyday opposition and foreign influence and apply them directly to study the Second Empire's own political evolution. This chapter investigates the emergence of separatist movements in the two annexed provinces. The catastrophic Franco-Prussian conflict and its effects on separatist politics in Nice and Savoy between September 1870 and July 1871 are explored in Chapter five. Finally, chapters six and seven demonstrate how the separatist conflict intersected France's national political struggle between monarchists and conservatives.

Compared to the fierce opposition to nation-building efforts that emerged during the 1860s in areas such as Italy's Mezzogiorno, the German states south of the river Main after 1866,

or any of the various ethnic groups within the heterogeneous Habsburg Empire, Nice and Savoy hardly appear to have been controversial territorial acquisitions. One hundred and fifty years later, it seems difficult to believe that the 1860 annexation might not have been uniformly and universally accepted by the populations of Nice and Savoy. Yet it is telling that in identifying and explaining what does or does not make a nation, Ernest Renan did not accept *any* of the historic, geographic, or cultural reasons used to justify the annexation of Savoy and Nice as definitive proof of nationhood. “Man is a slave neither of his race nor his language,” he wrote, “nor of his religion, nor of the course of rivers nor of the direction taken by mountain chains.”¹⁶ As we shall see, the April plebiscites in Nice and Savoy were but the opening salvo in the inhabitants’ daily plebiscite, in their “perpetual affirmation” of commitment to the French state.

¹⁶ Ernest Renan, “Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?”, 905–6.

Chapter 1

A Bit of Carmine or the Law of the Heart? Public Opinion and Plebiscitary Politics

On January 13, 1860, Pierre Fontaine, a liberal from the town of Magland in Savoy, leveled a bitter and stinging indictment against Napoleon III in his diary. “To judge by the conquering tendencies of the French Emperor,” he wrote, “the annexation of Savoy to France is one of these events that the future will not neglect to include in the book of *faits accomplis*. People are accessories of the territories that they inhabit. Our modern statesmen in their offices, in order to conclude a treaty or regulate a question of nationality, take out a map of the area and use a bit of carmine to trace on its surface the divisions that future centuries must respect, even though they are sullied by the most regrettable arbitrariness.” Fontaine’s condemnation of the Emperor’s diplomacy is all the more powerful considering that he wrote it over two months before the signature of the Treaty of Turin on March 24. That month, Fontaine wrote bitterly, “We will be what they make of us: French probably, Chinese, if that idea occurs to Bonaparte’s stubborn brain.”¹

Fontaine, one of the opponents of the separation of Savoy from Sardinia in 1860, correctly identified the annexation as being directed by political leaders in France and Sardinia. He viewed the displacement of the border between Sardinia and France as nothing less than arbitrary, in violation of what the inhabitants of his home province wanted. Technically, however, the first article of the Treaty of Turin made the opinion of Niçois and Savoyards a matter of international significance: it provided that the cession of Sardinian territory could occur only if this did not go against the “wishes” (*volonté*) of the population, and the two governments would have to decide among them how to “appreciate” and “certify” (*constater*) expressions of that will. Thus the treaty did constrain France to formally identify the contours of Niçois Savoyard “will.”

This chapter explores the formation of public opinion and political behavior in Nice and Savoy during the decisive months of the annexation, between January and June 1860. Historians have written exhaustive studies of this period, exploring in detail the complicated diplomacy that took place between the governments of France and Sardinia, as well as the development of public opinion.² While this chapter covers the same ground, it eschews a comprehensive approach, focusing instead on the most singular aspect of the annexation: its appeal to democratic ratification and popular participation. It also explores the initial emergence of oppositional ideologies and practices that laid the foundation for the contestation of the settlement of 1860 that appeared in the following two decades.

Diplomacy and the Problem of Universal Suffrage

On March 5, 1860, plebiscites featuring universal male suffrage were held in the central Italian states of Parma, Tuscany, Modena and Romagna to vote on their annexation to Sardinia. The plebiscites provided both legitimacy and political expediency and sealed the fate of their former monarchs, who had been deposed during the military campaigns of 1859. France, which was eager to wrap up its affairs in Italy, withdraw its troops, and receive Nice and Savoy as compensation for its assistance, supported these popular ratifications. In discussing preparations

¹ Pierre Fontaine, *Diary*, 13 January 1860, ed. Pierre Boccaccio as “Le Rattachement de la Savoie à la France raconté par un témoin,” *Revue Savoisiennne* 101 no. 3 / 4 (1961), p. 210; 18 March 1860, p. 221.

² The two standard reference works are Paul Guichonnet, *Histoire de l’annexion de la Savoie à la France*, 3rd ed. (Montmélian, France: La Fontaine de Siloé, 2003); and Paul Gonnet, *La réunion de Nice à la France* (Breil-sur-Roya, France: Les éditions du Cabri, 2003).

for the annexation of central Italy, French minister of foreign affairs, Édouard Thouvenel, specifically urged Cavour to adopt universal male suffrage as the method of voting, which he believed would “give the most ample satisfactions to the wishes of the populations and to the just mistrusts of Austria.”³ Cavour, who declared himself in favor of the most rapid solution—whatever that might be—initially hoped to extend Sardinia’s restricted voting system to central Italy. He distrusted the use of universal suffrage, even though he claimed to be sure of the results of the vote irrespective of its particular modalities.⁴ Ultimately, Sardinian monarch Victor Emmanuel II informed the French on February 25 that he had decided to allow the plebiscites in Central Italy to take place by means of universal suffrage.⁵

The positions of France and Sardinia with respect to universal suffrage were reversed when it came to Nice and Savoy. As early as February 3, the French Minister of State (ambassador) to Sardinia in Turin, Baron Charles de Talleyrand-Périgord, sent a dispatch to French Foreign Minister Edouard Thouvenel in Paris reporting that Victor Emmanuel had remarked in an interview that “the wishes of the populations must be respected on one side of the Alps as on the other.”⁶ Victor Emmanuel told Talleyrand that he “would allow the Nizzard and Savoisien populations to reach a decision.”⁷ Count Cavour naturally wished to emphasize the parallels between central Italy and the provinces that would be turned over to France. If the central Italian provinces were to ratify their annexation to Sardinia by way of universal suffrage, he reasoned, so should the provinces Sardinia looked increasingly likely to lose to France. For Cavour, the matter of public opinion was largely a face-saving political measure. At a moment when Sardinia was spearheading the movement to unify the Italian peninsula’s fragmented states, Cavour’s government had to confront the paradox that Sardinia was also, in a sense, prepared to “dis-unify” itself by handing over portions of its historic territory. By portraying the cession of Nice and Savoy to France as contingent on popular support, Cavour’s government could portray Victor Emmanuel as the benevolent sovereign, sadly bidding farewell to the Savoyards inhabiting the territory that had been the core of his state and to the Niçois located unfortunately on the wrong side of the Alps, but allowing them to “choose” and make their own destiny elsewhere.

Napoleon III was well aware of the importance of consulting, or more importantly pretending to consult, public opinion. He owed much of his own political legitimacy to the use of universal suffrage at the ballot box, having been elected President of the Second Republic by a landslide in 1848. He had also organized a plebiscite in late December 1851 to rubber-stamp his coup d’état of December 2, as well as one in November 1852 to sanction the official proclamation of the Second Empire, which occurred in December on the first anniversary of the coup. By 1860 Napoleon III had spent a decade refining these Caesarist tactics, used to provide evidence of his popular support and legitimacy. His clever application of universal suffrage to ensure the return of his official candidates to the Corps Législatif was but the most regularly scheduled example of these tactics; as the historian Matthew Truesdell has shown, the regime choreographed countless feasts, assemblies, banquets, and official visits by the sovereigns as a

³ AMAE, CP, Sardaigne, 348, no. 10, LF Turin to MAE, 10 February 1860.

⁴ AMAE, CP, Sardaigne, 348, no. 8, LF Turin to MAE, 10 February 1860.

⁵ AMAE, CP, Sardaigne, 348, telegram, LF Turin to MAE, 26 February 1860, 9:35 p.m.

⁶ He was the son of a cousin of the famous Talleyrand of the Revolution.

⁷ AMAE, CP, Sardaigne, 348, no. 7, LF Turin to MAE, 3 February 1860;.

kind of “spectacular politics,” designed to reap the benefits of publicity without actually courting the dangers of democratic politics or the vicissitudes of public opinion.⁸

But the Second Empire’s plebiscites took place after *faits accomplis*, entirely under the control of the government. So did its regularly-scheduled elections. The Emperor had no such guarantees in Nice and Savoy in early 1860. Even in territories where the inhabitants seemed to be predominantly in favor of annexation to France, universal suffrage opened the uncomfortable possibility that voters might expand their horizons unacceptably. Instead of focusing voters on their new nation, France, it might divide their loyalties; faced with a decision of such monumental import, they might consider *all* possible options for their territories, not just the option of joining France. Any popular participation in the annexation would have to be arranged in such a way that the options were carefully circumscribed, and would have to be an *a posteriori* expression of adhesion to a settled diplomatic arrangement, rather than *a priori* and consultative. As Thouvenel wrote to Talleyrand in a coded telegram, the question of the annexation could not be posed “in such a way that it might lead to a scandalous electoral struggle between Sardinia and France.”⁹

Throughout the treaty negotiations, it was Cavour who encouraged the French to grant the inhabitants of Nice and Savoy the broadest possible suffrage to sanction their annexation, while the French diplomats consistently and stubbornly fought it. In a confidential dispatch to Thouvenel on February 29, Talleyrand extensively quoted Cavour’s remarks on this subject. “We didn’t talk about this last year,” Cavour had told Talleyrand, “because at that time the question was posed on the basis of nationalities; but today that the wish of populations is or must be consulted in Central Italy, I think that it would be good to apply the same right and the same method on the other side of the Alps. Universal suffrage, in Savoy at any rate, should be favorable to the cause of annexation to France.”¹⁰ Cavour promised Talleyrand not to interfere with the results of the vote in Nice and Savoy, and in fact suggested that “to a certain extent, we can contribute to making sure that the desired results are obtained.”¹¹ The French government replied by insisting repeatedly that no parallel existed between the Italian states and Nice and Savoy. Thouvenel responded to Talleyrand’s report of Cavour’s position in the strongest terms possible: “The Emperor has never stopped acknowledging that the cession of Savoy and the County of Nice should take place with the agreement of the populations, but it would be premature to decide at this stage that this agreement should take place exclusively by way of universal suffrage.”¹² Even the two sovereigns traded notes about the “wishes of the population,” with Napoleon agreeing that the desires of the populations should “legitimate” the cession but refusing to draw a parallel to the universal suffrage now set to take place in central Italy.¹³ By early March, the official position was that France was more than willing to take into account a demonstration of the wishes of the populations of Nice and Savoy, but only if the exact method used to substantiate this demonstration remained undetermined before the signature of a treaty

⁸ See Matthew Truesdell, *Spectacular Politics: Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte and the Fête Impériale, 1849–1870* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁹ AMAE, CP, Sardaigne, 348, telegram, LF Turin to MAE, 10 March 1860, 7:25 p.m.

¹⁰ AMAE, CP, Sardaigne, 348, no. 17, LF Turin to MAE, 29 February 1860.

¹¹ AMAE, CP, Sardaigne, 348, no. 17, LF Turin to MAE, 29 February 1860.

¹² AMAE, CP, Sardaigne, 348, no. 22, draft, MAE to LF Turin, 3 March 1860.

¹³ AMAE, CP, Sardaigne, 348, telegram, LF Turin to MAE, 6 March 1860.

between Sardinia and France. The French clearly did not wish to commit themselves prematurely to any specific political process.¹⁴

The conflicts between the French and Sardinian diplomats regarding the precise wording of the secret annexation treaty is an intriguing artifact of these tensions. In a March 9 telegram from Turin to Paris reporting on the drafting of the secret treaty, Talleyrand reported that Cavour had requested some “unimportant” modifications to the draft, including “the word *cession* (cession) being replaced by *réunion* (union).” Thouvenel considered the change important enough to consult the Emperor directly on the matter.¹⁵ The original term, *cession*, locates the agency of the annexation in the French and Sardinian sovereigns and underscores its essentially diplomatic nature, whereas Cavour’s preference, *union*, focuses on the outcome of the transaction and intentionally obscures the agency accomplishing it. A union of territories could, after all, take place by the written consent of two sovereigns or by a vote, which let Victor Emmanuel—at least rhetorically—off the hook. Another linguistic point of contention was over the use of the verb *apprécier* (to assess, estimate) in the last line of Article I of the treaty: “This union will be effected without any constraint on the will of the populations, and the Governments of the King of Sardinia and of the Emperor of the French shall consult as early as possible on the best means to assess (*apprécier*) and certify (*constater*) demonstrations of this will.” According to Talleyrand, Victor Emmanuel II personally requested suppression of the term *apprécier* as, in Talleyrand’s words, “too vague and liable to give the impression that the agreement of the populations mustn’t be taken into as serious consideration as he would like.”¹⁶ The term remained in the treaty at Talleyrand’s insistence, since it would permit a more flexible interpretation of how the will of the populations was to be measured. Talleyrand told Cavour dryly: “We differ quite a bit in ‘our appreciations’ of the ways and means used to certify the agreement of the populations.”¹⁷ As this exchange indicates, France had no intention of stipulating the type of public consultation in the treaty.

Public opinion in Nice and Savoy about the possibility of political participation in a future annexation ran far ahead of what the French government was willing to acknowledge during the treaty negotiations. Even before Napoleon III had officially put the question of Nice and Savoy back onto the political agenda by his speech at the opening of the Corps Législatif on March 1, rumors spread that an annexation of Nice and Savoy to France would be put to some kind of expanded public consultation. As early as January 12, Léon Pillet, the consul of France in Nice, made a passing reference to the idea of a popular vote as he described the state of public opinion in the city. “In the current state of things, the population of Nice wouldn’t take up arms to give themselves to France,” he explained, “but if the question of annexation were put to the vote, it would be resolved the instant it was posed.”¹⁸ Pillet was using the expression “put to the vote” rhetorically, but it would not be long before the idea began to take root in the minds of ordinary Savoyards and Niçois. The selection of universal suffrage for the plebiscites in central Italy undoubtedly contributed to the notion that universal suffrage would also be employed if the governments agreed to the annexation. By the end of February, addresses sent to the Emperor from communes in Nice and Savoy to request their annexation to France began to reveal an assumption that their annexation to France would be sanctioned by the public. On March 11,

¹⁴ AMAE, CP, Sardaigne, 348, no. 15, MAE to LF Turin, 24 February 1860.

¹⁵ AMAE, CP, Sardaigne, 348, telegram, MAE to LF Turin, 9 March 1860, 3:00 p.m.

¹⁶ AMAE, CP, Sardaigne, 348, no. 28, LF Turin to MAE, 10 March 1860.

¹⁷ AMAE, CP, Sardaigne, 348, no. 29, LF Turin to MAE, 12 March 1860.

¹⁸ AMAE, CPC, Sardaigne, Chambéry/Nice 14, copy, CF Nice to LF Turin, 12 January 1860.

three days before the signature of the secret treaty, the Savoyard commune of Saint-Julien declared: “Today the separation of Savoy from the Kingdom of Sardinia is imminent and the suffrages of Savoisiens will without a doubt, in a solemn vote, ask for their union to this great and generous Nation.”¹⁹

The Sardinian administration undoubtedly worked behind the scenes to cause difficulty for France by spreading rumors about the use of universal suffrage in Nice and Savoy before the governments had agreed to it. On March 10 the governor of the province of Chambéry, Orso Serra, had a notice printed and published that all but confirmed that the populations would be called to vote on the impending annexation and choose a country of their belonging. “The government of the King...will appeal to a sincere demonstration of the population’s wishes, according to the legal form that the Kingdom’s Parliament shall establish. You will then be called between this ancient Monarchy of Savoy ... and the Nation that has so many reasons for your sympathies.”²⁰ Similar posters also appeared in Annecy. On March 10 Léon Pillet reported widespread rumors in Nice that the annexation would be preceded by a consultative vote. Pillet, like the diplomats, argued that this had to be avoided at all costs, for it would result in an ugly and brutal campaign. “If the vote will only be a matter of form, then I will rejoice and ask Your Excellency to consider these reflections as voided; if on the contrary the test of the vote must be serious, if there must be a battle between the two governments without modifying my opinions at all about the true sentiments of the Niçois population, I must inform you that it will be time to take energetic measures to counteract the attacks of the enemy.”²¹ For his part, Talleyrand became apoplectic upon learning about the Sardinian government’s proclamations and complained about this directly to a contrite, though probably secretly delighted, Cavour. Borrowing Thouvenel’s expression about “a scandalous electoral struggle,” Talleyrand demanded, “How . . . when no agreement has been established between us as to the means to choose to certify the desires of the country, do we see your governors promising the vote?”²² This incident cost Cavour deletion of the word *apprécier* in the finalized public treaty, after Talleyrand flatly refused to remove it.²³

Cavour ultimately backed down on the matter of universal suffrage in the secret annexation treaty, concluded on March 14, and Article I remained as the French preferred it. But in the ten days between the conclusion of the secret treaty and its transformation into a patent treaty on March 24, the French negotiators continued to oppose the use of universal suffrage, while Cavour and the Sardinian diplomats continued to lobby for including the exact method of voting in the public treaty. On March 20, Constantino Nigra, the Sardinian ambassador to France, summarized the French government’s position in a letter to Cavour. “The French government, not wanting to expose itself to the possibility of a possible failure, won’t allow a prior vote. It won’t even allow us to insert into the treaty a precise stipulation on the mode of certifying the desires of the populations. It wants a cession pure and simple, accorded by treaty.”²⁴ Meanwhile, as the treaty negotiations continued, Thouvenel and the other diplomats

¹⁹ AN, O 5 292, address from Saint-Julien, 11 March 1860.

²⁰ AD Savoie, Fi 39, poster from governor of province of Chambéry to inhabitants of Chambéry, 10 March 1860.

²¹ AMAE, CPC, Sardaigne, Chambéry/Nice 14, CF Nice to MAE, 10 March 1860.

²² AMEA, CP, Sardaigne, 348, no. 29, FL Turin to MAE, 12 March 1860

²³ AMEA, CP, Sardaigne, 348, no. 29, FL Turin to MAE, 12 March 1860.

²⁴ Cited in Paul Guichonnet, “Autour de l’annexion de la Savoie et de Nice à la France. Une lettre inédite de Napoléon III,” in *Piemonte Risorgimentale. Studi in onore di Carlo Pischedda nel suo settantesimo compleanno* (Turin: Centro Studi Piemontesi, 1987): 178.

contacted their agents in Nice and Savoy, putting out feelers as to the feasibility of a limited popular vote, such as having the provincial councils or municipalities vote on the annexation. Either would have allowed the government to tip its hat to the principle of universal suffrage without actually having recourse to it. Conservative and Catholic pro-annexationist notables in Savoy, who opposed universal suffrage because of its status as a foundational institution of democratic, representative politics, also favored this solution.²⁵ Recently reelected and reliably pro-French (at least in Savoy), the councils could be viewed as legitimately expressing the wishes of the population. Moreover, since the property qualification to vote in elections to the provincial councils was set at a relatively low threshold, Thouvenel argued that practically speaking, the suffrage “could be called universal.”²⁶ In a dispatch to Talleyrand on March 16, Thouvenel wrote that such a solution would fulfill the requirement of the secret treaty “without wandering from one of the bases of the arrangement, which rests on the manifestation of willingness (*vœu*).” In a revealing edit, Thouvenel originally wrote the word “vote” in his dispatch, before crossing it out and replacing it with the more ambiguous *vœu*.²⁷

A plebiscite on the annexation was not the only vote the French diplomats feared might divide the loyalties of the Niçois and Savoyard populations. As negotiations proceeded in mid-March, French attention briefly shifted to the extraordinarily bad timing of the regularly-scheduled elections to the Sardinian parliament in Turin slated for March 25. These elections meant that Niçois and Savoyards authorized to vote under the Sardinian electoral system would be electing deputies to the parliament of a state from which they were about to separate—the very parliament that would have to ratify any annexation treaty! The elections caused the French diplomats a great deal of concern, for they once again focused an unacceptable amount of Niçois and Savoyard attention on the wrong side of the Alps. Between March 19 and March 24 Thouvenel sent Talleyrand and his special foreign envoy, Count Vincent Benedetti, more than five separate and increasingly insistent dispatches directing them to lobby Cavour to push back the elections until the annexation was complete: “Insist with all your might that the elections [to the Turin Parliament] be suspended for Nice and Savoy. A question of public order permits and necessitates an exception [to the Sardinian election law]. Why court a possible scandal and create useless difficulties for ourselves?”²⁸ Cavour, concerned about the maintaining political and legal legitimacy, absolutely refused to push back the elections for France’s convenience. In both of the annexed provinces, the pro-French parties, to signal their disengagement from Sardinia and support for the annexation, recommended that the electorate abstain from the elections. The result was that most of the deputies elected publicly opposed the annexation.

Spectacular Politics and Public Opinion

As the French diplomats’ attitude toward universal suffrage demonstrates, the French government mistrusted any expressions of public opinion by the inhabitants of Nice and Savoy about the annexation that it could not manufacture, manage, and deploy itself. Until it was firmly in control of the two provinces, the government had to navigate a difficult course between encouraging useful expressions of Niçois and Savoyard desire to become part of France, in classical Napoleonic style, and discouraging public opinion that did not conform to French interests. To an extent, then, the annexation of Savoy was an exercise in extending the regime’s

²⁵ Guichonnet, *Histoire de l’annexion*, 177.

²⁶ AMAE, CP, Sardaigne, 348, no. 30, MAE to FL Turin, 16 March 1860.

²⁷ AMAE, CP, Sardaigne, 348, no. 30, MAE to FL Turin, 16 March 1860.

²⁸ AMAE, CP, Sardaigne 348, telegram, MAE to Vincent Benedetti in Turin, 22 March 1860.

established political patterns and “spectacular politics” to new territory. Fortunately, the government of the Second Empire found plenty of pro-French Niçois and Savoyards eager to guide France through these difficult waters. As early as November 1859, Joseph Jacquier-Chatrier, a former deputy to the Turin parliament for Bonneville, had begun corresponding with the sub-prefect of Gex in the nearby Ain department, Néel, informing him of the state of Savoyard public opinion in his district. Local notables such as Jacquier-Chatrier were the primary makers of public opinion; they formed annexationist committees in most of the largest urban areas, including Nice, Annecy, Thonon, Bonneville, Saint-Julien, Moûtiers and Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne. These notables maintained contacts with the prefects of the neighboring departments; the French consuls in Nice and Chambéry; and representatives of the government in Paris, including the Minister of the Interior, Billault. Napoleon III himself arranged for one of the most publicized episodes of the annexation. In a letter to Thouvenel on March 15, Napoleon III briefed Thouvenel about his thoughts on the situation in Italy and in Nice and Savoy, which included, in typical Caesarist style, a request for “deputations or the like from Nice and Chambéry that will ask for the annexation to France.”²⁹ Five days later, Paris celebrated the arrival of a deputation of Savoyard notables. Welcomed in the Tuileries, the nobles “requested” respectfully that the government annex Savoy and reject any Swiss territorial claims.

Pro-annexationists spent a considerable amount of effort in the spring of 1860 trying to influence public opinion, and their influence undoubtedly contributed to securing the annexation. But the evidence also suggests that the development of public opinion during the annexation engaged the inhabitants of Nice and Savoy, even those of very humble origins, to consider the annexation critically. For every official banquet or ceremony organized by annexationists, dozens of unofficial, unmonitored, everyday conversations occurred during which opinion took shape. Savoyards and Niçois kept up with the news about the annexation in their local cafés, taverns and *débats de boisson* (drinking establishments), where they perused the newspapers and gossiped about the latest rumors. Pierre Fontaine recorded in his diary on February 4 that the annexation had been the main topic of discussion that day in the café Jean Revuz in nearby Cluses.³⁰ Proponents and opponents of the annexation cranked out small, cheap brochures outlining arguments in favor of or against France, brochures that were available at cafés and passed around from person to person. As was the case throughout the Second Empire, officially sanctioned and supported expressions of public opinion lent support to the annexationists’ cause, but also opened up opportunities for reflection. Nowhere was this more evident than in the extraordinary letter-writing campaign to the Emperor to which pro-annexationists in both Nice and Savoy devoted much of their initial attention. Known as *addresses*, these letters were voted and signed by the municipal councils of hundreds of communes in the two provinces, expressing adhesion to the annexation and devotion to the Emperor.

Initially, towns, *syndics* (the French adaptation of the Italian *sindaco*, or mayor) or groups of individuals drafted these addresses on their own initiative, with the first sent from Chambéry in August 1859. By the spring of 1860, as the movement in favor of France began to pick up steam, notables in Nice and Savoy began to actively encourage communal leaders to sustain the momentum of pro-annexationist public opinion by announcing their “adhesion.” In Nice, Pillet pressured the “partisans” of the annexation into drafting and signing an address to the Emperor, and even helped to dictate it to several influential Niçois citizens. “I let them know,” he reported

²⁹ Cited in Guichonnet, “Autour de l’annexion,” 188.

³⁰ Fontaine, *Diary*, 4 February 1860, p. 214.

to Thouvenel, “that it was shameful for them to allow the Savoisiens to get ahead of them in the expression of their devotion to France, and that the only way to repair this fault was to sign an address to the Emperor, before the arrival of French troops. ‘This undertaking,’ I told them, ‘would have a lot more value and would be more honorable for you, if you dared to do it in the presence of the Sardinian authorities and garrison.’”³¹ To make it simpler for the more remote communes, notables journeyed from town to town, encouraging the municipal councils to vote addresses, suggesting template language and collecting the signed and transcribed addresses, which were then sent en masse to Paris. In the Ruffieux mandement, Baron Louis Girod de Montfalcon, a former deputy to the Turin parliament from La Motte-Servolex, collected addresses from all eight communes.³² In the County of Nice, Baron Cachiardy de Montfleury of Breil revealed in a letter to a friend that he and his associate, the abbé Toesca, had coordinated the signature of most of the addresses in the County of Nice’s remote Roya valley.³³ Alfred Puget, a lawyer, had copies of La Roche’s address printed and sent to all the syndics of the *mandement* (the Sardinian equivalent of the French canton).³⁴ Several other printed template addresses were also put into circulation. In some small communes, such as Pontchy in Savoy and Peillon, Breil, Berre and Aspremont in the County of Nice, local leaders managed to have the address signed by nearly every single inhabitant, including the illiterate.³⁵ Even in areas where the syndics obtained signatures only from the literate, they wanted it known that the entire commune supported the annexation. In handing over their addresses to the prefect of the Basses-Alpes during his April trip to Puget-Théniers, the syndics of local villages asked him to explain that the low number of signatures was due to the small number of people who could sign their names in the area, but that “they guarantee the unanimity of their desires.”³⁶

Once received in Paris, the addresses were reprinted in the *Moniteur Universel*, the official government newspaper, which further inspired other towns and groups of individuals to write. The campaign was so successful that some of the conservative notables opposed to the use of universal suffrage even toyed with the idea of using the addresses as a substitute for a plebiscite. Charles Bertier, an editor of the conservative, Catholic and pro-annexationist Savoyard newspaper *Le Courrier des Alpes* and one of the most influential members of Chambéry’s central annexationist committee, asked Billault, “Will we be asked to vote? Will the addresses of the [municipal] councils suffice? ... In ten or twelve days we’ll have them all.”³⁷ King Victor Emmanuel’s official proclamation dated April 1, releasing the inhabitants of the annexed provinces from their oath of fidelity to the dynasty, further increased the numbers of towns who wrote to the Emperor, as communal leaders could now express their assent without fear of being disloyal to the monarch. By April 9, the central annexationist committee in Chambéry alone had received 97 addresses to the Emperor from various Savoyard towns; many more were sent directly to the Ministers of the Interior and Foreign Affairs, or to the prefects of

³¹ AMAE, CPC, Sardaigne, Chambéry/Nice 14, CF Nice to MAE, 24 March 1860.

³² AN, F 1c1 129, letter from baron Louis Girod de Montfalcon to MI.

³³ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 346, letter from baron Louis Cachiardy de Montfleury, 24 July 1860.

³⁴ AN, F 1c1 129, letter from Alfred Puget to MI, 4 April 1860.

³⁵ AN, F 1c1 129, address from the commune of Pontchy to Emperor, 22 April 1860; regent intendant Faucigny to MI, 24 April 1860; draft, MI to intendant Faucigny, 1 May 1860; address from the commune of Peillon to the Emperor, no date; address from the commune of Aspremont to the Emperor, no date.

³⁶ AN, F 1c1 129, prefect Basses-Alpes to MI, 1 April 1860.

³⁷ Letter from Charles Bertier to MI, in Jacques Lovie, “Les agents Français et l’esprit public en Savoie de décembre 1859 à mai 1860, d’après des sources inédites,” *Revue Savoisienne* 101 no. 1 / 2 (1961): 44.

the neighboring departments.³⁸ The success of the campaign was a significant relief to those monitoring the progress of public opinion regarding the annexation. As the prefect of the Ain remarked, “The general dispositions of the country, its tendencies towards France, are more and more pronounced; the best proof of this is the movement of addresses from the communal councils that has propagated itself throughout all Savoy.”³⁹

To what extent were Niçois and Savoyards simply resubmitting the government’s own language justifying the cession, which had been widely publicized and disseminated in newspapers? Certain tropes deployed by the government recur with regular frequency in the addresses, including claims to the “French slopes of the Alps,” the assimilation to France of “customs, language and habits” and Napoleon III’s stated desire to “restore our true nationality.” Yet at the same time, the address campaign, while organized and supported by notables, meant that from the major cities of Nice, Annecy and Chambéry to the smallest and most remote towns, municipal councils were debating the annexation in a formal setting, which forced them to consider the significance of the annexation and all of its implications. A close reading of the addresses reveals the motives, concerns and perspectives of ordinary Niçois and Savoyards on the eve of the annexation. The town of Bellecombe (Savoy) used traditional religious imagery of the French sovereign to express to the Emperor the very modern reasons for its adhesion to the annexation, claiming that the commune “has a great need for your healing hand, to improve the commercial relations with the other parts of Savoy and with France.”⁴⁰ Ayn’s inhabitants (Savoy) expressed concern for the Savoyard soldiers remaining in Italy from the wars of the previous year, and asked Napoleon to “hasten the moment where we will see the valiant Savoisien soldiers return to their homes, soldiers who supported the deliverance of Italy and who have well deserved to be returned to their true nationality, to France.”⁴¹ The inhabitants of Peillonex (Savoy) expressed their hope for better governance and administration in France than they had in Sardinia: “We added that if we weren’t rich, it was not due to the climate, nor from lack of effort on our part, of love for order, but the consequence of administrative errors that have led to misfortune for the commune.”⁴² Rigaud (Nice) welcomed the French “because such an annexation signifies the return to an era of prosperity, of which this area has long been deprived,” a sentiment echoed by Bonson (Nice), which predicted that “prosperity, now nearly gone from this area, shall return.”⁴³ Even the addresses that repeated template language provide an indication of the mentalities of the humble. Five nearly identical addresses, for example, were voted, signed and dated on March 19 by the Savoyard communes of Chamousset, Montsapey, Bourgneuf, Montgilbert, and Aiguebelle in the Maurienne. Four of the five were identically worded: “The Municipal Council of the Commune of _____ gives its full and entire adhesion to the annexation of Savoy to France. It thanks His Majesty the Emperor of the French for having claimed its nationality.” But the address of Montgilbert departed from this formula and adopted a less diplomatic (not to say imperial) perspective: “The municipal council of Montgilbert, calling for the *union* of all of Savoy to France, declares with eagerness its consent to the stated union.”⁴⁴

³⁸ AN, F 1cI 129, letter, Baron d’Alexandry d’Orengiani to MI, 9 April 1860.

³⁹ AN, F 1cI 129, prefect Ain to MI, 9 April 1860.

⁴⁰ AN, F 1cI 129, address from the commune of Bellecombe, 10 April 1860.

⁴¹ AN, F 1cI 129, address from the commune of Ayn, 22 March 1860.

⁴² AN, F 1cI 129, address from the commune of Peillonex, 11 April 1860.

⁴³ AN, F 1cI 129, address from Rigaud, 31 March 1860; address from Bonson, 1 April 1860.

⁴⁴ AN, O 5 292, addresses of the communes of Chamousset, Montsapey, Bourgneuf, Montgilbert, and Aiguebelle, 19 March 1860.

In this instance, the municipal council of Montgilbert opted to employ a term that emphasized agency and consent, a change that significantly softens the tone of the document.

Anxious to receive an acknowledgement of their expressions of devotion to Napoleon III, Savoyards and Niçois scanned the pages of the *Moniteur* to see their addresses reprinted. So many addresses came flooding in to various government ministries that transmitting all the addresses to the *Moniteur* and sending written responses to the towns presented significant logistical challenges. The populations expressed disappointment and complained when they felt that their expressions of devotion had been overlooked. On April 19, Thouvenel's office told Billault that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had received a letter from the syndic of Lanslebourg, one of the Maurienne's more remote towns, complaining that his town's address had not appeared in the *Moniteur*.⁴⁵ Omissions from the *Moniteur* proved to be an even greater problem in the County of Nice, where the Emperor's envoy, Senator Piétri, informed Thouvenel that Niçois were complaining that the *Moniteur* was reprinting Savoyard addresses and neglecting theirs.⁴⁶ In this respect Baron Frédéric d'Alexandry d'Orengiani, secretary of the central annexationist committee in Chambéry, could not have been more wrong when he predicted that the flood of addresses to the sovereign would slow to a trickle once it became clear that they would not be substituted for the plebiscite. "The peasant doesn't like unnecessary literary operations," he sniffed. The flood of addresses mailed to the sovereign continued throughout the month, with Alexandry himself forwarding 23 on April 20 alone.⁴⁷ Administrators resigned themselves to the difficult task of managing such a large volume of correspondence. As the Minister of the Interior wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, "I share your opinion that there's little need to insert these new addresses in the *Moniteur*. But due to the satisfaction that the populations have showed from seeing their sentiments reproduced, I think it's a good idea to mention in the official newspaper all those that continue to be sent to the government."⁴⁸

In considering the state of Niçois and Savoyard public opinion, it must be remembered that this opinion was by definition understood to be male. The hundreds of addresses were voted and signed by the men who served on the municipal councils of the two territories. And while the diplomats discussed various options for the expression of public opinion that the inhabitants of the territories were to be permitted, there was no question that whatever the exact mode of suffrage chosen, it would be exclusively male. No one cared what Niçois and Savoyard women thought about the annexation. Yet the rare testimonies of the provinces' women indicate that they considered the annexation an event whose consequences affected them as much as it did the men of Savoy. Women's annexationist committees formed in Annecy, Annemasse, Bonneville and Moûtiers, as well as in smaller towns, and drafted their own addresses of adhesion that they usually sent directly to Empress Eugénie; Annecy's boasted well over fifty signatures. In Douvaine, a deputation of the townswomen joined the town notables for dessert at a banquet on April 15, during which they presented their address to the visiting French dignitary, Néel, the sub-prefect of Gex, who promised to forward it to the Empress. In Nice, the women of Entrevaux did likewise at a banquet for the prefect of Basses-Alpes during his visit on April 1.⁴⁹ Because women were formally excluded from the political process during the annexation, they sometimes wanted it explicitly understood that they were supporting the annexation to the extent permitted

⁴⁵ AN, F 1c1 129, MAE to MI, 19 April 1860.

⁴⁶ AN, F 1c1 129, excerpted copy of report from Senator Piétri to MAE, 27 April 1860.

⁴⁷ AN, F 1c1 129, Alexandry to MI, 9 April 1860; Central annexationist committee to MI, 20 April 1860.

⁴⁸ AN, F 1c1 129, MI to MAE, 20 April 1860.

⁴⁹ AN, F 1c1 129, letter from SP Gex (Ain) to MI, 16 April 1860; prefect Basses-Alpes to MI, 1 April 1860.

them. In introducing themselves to Empress Eugénie in an address written three days before the plebiscite, the women of Megève not only expressed solidarity with France's female sovereign but characterized their action as the feminine equivalent of voting. "All Savoisiens are about to place a testimony of their fidelity [to the Emperor] in the electoral urn," they wrote; "are members of our sex then allowed to place an homage of their love at the feet of Your Majesty?" Hinting at their disappointment at not being able to join their male counterparts in the *salle de votation*, these Megévanes referred to themselves as "spokespeople of their sex, of servants, of the poor, and of the sick in the parish of Megève"—in other words, as representatives all those who, for social or economic reasons, were unable to participate fully in the political dimension of the annexation.⁵⁰

The Currents of Opposition in Savoy

Seconded by the French government, pro-annexationist leaders in Savoy gained the upper hand in February and March. But both Sardinia and Switzerland tried to work against French influence. An anti-annexationist committee composed predominantly of prominent political liberals formed in Chambéry, encouraged by the Sardinian governor. Like Pierre Fontaine, its members shared a desire to uphold the Sardinian constitutional arrangement of 1848 and deplored the authoritarianism of the Second Empire.⁵¹ Far more worrying than Sardinia was Switzerland, which was engaging in rhetorically violent saber-rattling regarding Swiss rights to the neutralized territory established by the Congress of Vienna in the two northern provinces of Chablais and Faucigny. These demands, coupled with the threat of an economically devastating customs barrier between northern Savoy and Geneva, conjured up the possibility that the annexation might result in Savoy's dismemberment, with the Chablais, Faucigny and parts of the Genevois being annexed to Switzerland. Pro-Swiss annexationists in northern Savoy worked with agents dispatched from Geneva to collect signatures on petitions asking for the annexation of the area to Switzerland. These petitions gathered over 12,000 signatures from 60 communes in the Faucigny, 23 in the Chablais, and 12 in the Genevois. The center of this pro-Swiss resistance to the annexation was the Faucigny province and its capital, Bonneville.⁵²

Both contemporary observers and modern historians of the pro-Swiss movement in Savoy have focused largely on its economic foundations, suggesting that most of the support for annexation to Switzerland originated in the need to maintain vital economic links to Geneva. Marshall Chevalier, the French consul in Geneva remarked, "There, as in other part of Savoy, the generality of opinion would be for union to France. The dissidences that exist in this respect result from a purely economic order of ideas and there's no doubt that the guarantee of customs exemptions analogous to those that the pays de Gex enjoy would rally the great majority of the inhabitants of the Chablais and of the Faucigny to the annexation."⁵³ To resolve the problem, one of the most important pro-French campaigners, Joseph Jacquier-Chatrier, a landowner in the Faucigny, seized the opportunity to pursue a longstanding pet project: an expanded duty-free zone with Geneva in northern Savoy. He called in February for the creation of a *Zone franche* or "Free Zone" that would extend the existing, small zone of customs exemptions in the proximity of Geneva and in the Ain department's Pays de Gex to include most of the Faucigny, Chablais and the northern Genevois. In late February, the pro-French newspaper *Le Bon Sens* helped

⁵⁰ AN, F 1cI 129, address from the women of Megève to Empress Eugénie, 19 April 1860.

⁵¹ Guichonnet, *Histoire de l'annexion*, 124; 168.

⁵² Guichonnet, *Histoire de l'annexion*, 156–162.

⁵³ AMAE, CPC, Suisse, Genève, 5, no. 7, CF Geneva to MAE, 9 February 1860.

organize a new petition campaign under the rubric of “France and Zone” to prevent the possibility of a Savoyard partition.⁵⁴ Printed copies of the “France and Zone!” declaration distributed for signatures in the area focused exclusively on these economic considerations, declaring, “Without denying certain material advantages from a union with Switzerland, the undersigned declare that, in the event that Savoy is detached from the kingdom of Sardinia, they will vote for annexation to France, if this power accords to the two above-named provinces [the Chablais and the Faucigny] the customs exemptions currently in effect in the arrondissement of Gex.”⁵⁵

But in fact economics were only part of the Swiss gravitational attraction. Politics were another factor. In contrast to their southern counterparts in Chambéry, who were fighting a losing battle to uphold the existing constitutional arrangement with Piedmont, political liberals in northern Savoy were attracted to the democratic, decentralized elements of the Swiss republic. If the existing constitutional arrangement could not be maintained, they reasoned, Switzerland offered the example of a liberal, functioning democracy where freedom of the press and assembly were respected. Pro-annexationist leaders were not unaware of the liberal political facet of the pro-Swiss opposition, even if they downplayed it in favor of its economic dimension. Chevalier gestured to the existence of political opposition in a February 27 report, where he wrote of his concerns that the Sardinian government was collaborating with the Swiss to work against the annexation. “There exists in this area, as in Geneva, an ultra-radical party,” he reported, “whose agitations would support the designs of Sardinia. This party is affiliated to Swiss radicals.” He went on to report that it was believed that the Savoyard “ultra-radicals” were responsible for a seditious poster that had appeared in the streets of Geneva on February 25, decrying the annexation and protesting that only Switzerland had the right to occupy the Savoyard territory neutralized by the treaties of 1815.⁵⁶ A few days later Chevalier again developed the theme of economic interests, but conceded that pro-Swiss movement “encountered the support of the demagogic party in Savoy,” as well as the sympathy of the Sardinian authorities.⁵⁷ On March 8, Chevalier warned that in the Faucigny, “the unanimity for annexation to France would not be perhaps quite as complete as in the Chablais.”⁵⁸

Consistent with their focus on the economic aspects of the pro-Swiss movement, historians have cited the French government’s agreement in mid-March, followed by its official announcement on April 7, to grant Savoy a free-trade Zone as the key event that relaxed opinions in the Chablais, Faucigny and the northern Genevois and ensured the success of the annexation in northern Savoy by eliminating the Swiss option. With the assurance that their commercial relations with Geneva would not be disadvantaged or disrupted by a new customs barrier between France and Switzerland, the inhabitants could embrace an annexation to France without reserve. The Zone undeniably made the annexation possible and averted the possibility of a dismemberment of the province. Yet the Zone did nothing to assuage the political foundations of the pro-Swiss movement, as evidenced by the interventions of deputy Joseph-Agricola Chenal before the Sardinian Chamber of Deputies in April. Regarded as a member of the extreme left, Chenal had been consistently elected from the Sallanches electoral college in the Faucigny since

⁵⁴ Guichonnet, *Histoire de l’annexion*, 182–184.

⁵⁵ AN, F 1cI 129, printed declaration “France et Zône!”

⁵⁶ AMAE, CPC, Suisse, Genève, 5, no. 13, CF Geneva to MAE, 25 February 1860; no. 14, CF Geneva to MAE, 25 February 1860.

⁵⁷ AMAE, CPC, Suisse, Genève, 5, no. 15, CF Geneva to MAE, 1 March 1860.

⁵⁸ AMAE, CPC, Suisse, Genève, 5, no. 17, CF Geneva to MAE, 8 March 1860.

1848 and won again on March 25, albeit in an election that featured record abstentions.⁵⁹ Firmly opposed to the authoritarianism of the Second Empire, he made a series of powerful pleas before the Chamber of Deputies against the annexation on April 12 and 14. Like his fellow Savoyard Pierre Fontaine, he argued that the nationalist and strategic logic for the annexation did not legitimize a transaction that he viewed as diplomatically arbitrary. “The same language, the slopes of some rivers, a more or less open border does not suffice to legitimate the annexation of one people to another,” he remarked bitterly, “....in basing itself upon the community of a single language, Alsace would have to be returned to Germany.”⁶⁰

Chenal argued that if the Savoyard link to Sardinia could not be maintained, northern Savoy had to be permitted to choose Switzerland over France. Chenal, like many pro-Swiss campaigners, spent the bulk of his time on relatively safe rhetorical ground, highlighting the economic connections to Geneva and the strategic significance of the neutralized zone. But he did not neglect the underlying political arguments about the importance of safeguarding Savoy’s political freedoms. “Freedom of press, freedom of conscience, inviolability of the household, of one’s person, which are broad as possible [in Switzerland], do they merit no consideration in the eyes of the man watchful of his personal dignity?”⁶¹ Chenal’s interventions in the Chamber of Deputies were made in French, as the Sardinian constitution of 1848, the *Statuto*, permitted deputies from Savoy and the Aosta Valley to address the legislature in their native language. This fact has been used rather sneeringly as evidence that Chenal’s arguments had become naïve and outdated in a Europe where the national principle was triumphing over the liberal principle, and at a moment when Sardinia was divorcing most of its French-speaking territories. Yet Chenal was, in some respects, ahead of his time. His arguments in favor of organizing a state around “imagined communities” of common interest, such as political belief, rather than on communities defined in an ethno-cultural fashion, puts him comfortably in the company of Ernest Renan. In words that echoed the sentiments of both his anti-French co-citizen Pierre Fontaine and foreshadowed those of Renan, Chenal protested, “A nation, or even a fraction of a nation, can it be ceded to the benefit of another? Who would dare support such an idea? That would be a barbarian tradition from the worst days of the feudal system.... if a people belongs to itself, if a people is master of its destinies, of its territory, no one may turn it into an object of mercantilism, dispose of it like an object, assimilate it to a merchandise,” he protested. And in a surprising early formulation of Renan’s own dictum, he warned, “A nation does not live but one single day.”⁶²

The French government’s grant of the free-trade Zone did not entirely defuse the Franco-Swiss battle for public opinion in northern Savoy, which Swiss agents continued to infiltrate to try and turn opinion against France. One major episode was the Genevan radical John Perrier’s ridiculous and abortive attempt to “invade” Thonon and Evian by steamboat in the early hours of March 30, which ended with Perrier and his crew spending more time in taverns in both towns than recruiting converts to Switzerland.⁶³ Nevertheless, the activities of the pro-Swiss faction in the Chablais and Faucigny were serious enough to prompt several requests, including from the municipal council of Bonneville, that France dispatch soldiers into the region or at least station some troops on the Franco-Savoyard border from which they could be quickly deployed. One

⁵⁹ Guichonnet, *Histoire de l’annexion*, 203.

⁶⁰ *Atti del Parlamento Italiano, Camera dei Deputati*, session of 12 April 1860, 92.

⁶¹ *Atti del Parlamento*, session of 14 April 1860, 121.

⁶² *Atti del Parlamento*, session of 12 April 1860, 92.

⁶³ Guichonnet, *Histoire de l’annexion*, 208–211.

flashpoint for tension between Savoyards and Swiss were those quintessential markers of national identification: flags. On March 29 seven Swiss flags were found hanging from the Hôtel de Ville in Thonon along with anti-Bonapartist posters from the elections to the Turin parliament; the population ripped them down and tore the flags to pieces.⁶⁴ Swiss flags were also hung in Bonneville before the Sardinian election on March 25, while the French flag hanging from the church tower in Saint-Julien was stolen on the night of April 2. In another incident reported by the public prosecutor in Besançon, inhabitants of Saint-Julien were told by Swiss agents that they were required to take down their French flags until the annexation had been officially sanctioned by the Great Powers.⁶⁵

Savoy's border with Switzerland was undeniably the most active site of international tension, but it was not the only one. Troubling reports also filtered in from the easternmost Maurienne valley, known as the Haute-Maurienne, where some of the communes were worried about their geographical position so close to what would be the projected border with the new Italy. The inhabitants of Lanslebourg soon had more to worry about than a missing address: with numerous pastures on the Mont-Cenis plateau on the other side of the alpine crest, they were frightened by the possibility that the new border between France and Italy would leave their pastures in Italy, where they would be subject to likely expropriation by the Italian government.⁶⁶ In early April rumors spread that Sardinia would make a bid to simply keep the entire Haute-Maurienne, fears that were enhanced by the arrival of additional *bersaglieri* (riflemen) to reinforce the Sardinian garrison at the Esseillon fortresses, located between Modane and Lanslebourg. According to the French consul in Chambéry, inhabitants of the Maurienne had not been at all reassured by Article 3 of the Treaty of Turin, which stipulated that the Franco-Italian border would be drawn based on the vague concepts of "equity" and "the needs of defense." The continued presence of Sardinian soldiers and the proliferation of rumors so alarmed the populations of some of the communes that they sent a deputation to Paris to beseech the Emperor not to allow Sardinia to retain the area during the annexation. Upon arriving in Chambéry, the deputation met with Colonel Saget, who was able to sufficiently reassure them so that they agreed to return to Lanslebourg rather than continuing to Paris.⁶⁷ To boost morale, the intendant of Maurienne, Edouard Milliet de Faverges, sent special envoys to Bessans and Bonneval-sur-Arc, the two easternmost and most distant communes of the Maurienne, shortly before the plebiscite.

The Currents of Opposition in Nice

In spite of the problems posed by northern Savoy's political and economic position within the orbit of Switzerland, Savoy was considered by contemporary observers as the far more reliably pro-French of the two annexed provinces. Nice, on the other hand, had been considered more of a wild card from the earliest days of the annexation. The territory was predominantly patois-speaking, poorer, culturally far more "Italianate," and dearer to the hearts of Italian nationalists. During the treaty negotiations, Cavour had stated that a plebiscite via universal suffrage would encounter no problems in Savoy, but he had remained pointedly mute regarding Nice. As the historian Paul Gonnet has argued, Cavour tried to disassociate the fate of

⁶⁴ AMAE, CPC, Suisse Genève 5, no. 28, CF Geneva to MAE, 1 April 1860; letter from Félix Jordan to CF Geneva, 31 March 1860.

⁶⁵ AN, BB 18 1624 A3 4238, PG Besançon to MJ, 6 April 1860.

⁶⁶ Intendant Maurienne to regent governor Chambéry, 6 April 1860, in Lovie, "Les agents Français," p. 84.

⁶⁷ AMAE, CPC, Sardaigne, Chambéry/Nice 14, CF Chambéry to MAE, 8 April 1860.

Nice from that of Savoy in an ultimately abortive attempt to prevent its loss.⁶⁸ It was particularly awkward that the city was the beloved birthplace and hometown of Italian republican and nationalist Giuseppe Garibaldi. Reports from prefects in the neighboring French departments bore out the divided nature of public opinion in the County of Nice. The prefect of the neighboring Var department reported on March 24 what he considered to be the “true sentiments” of the Niçois population on the eve of the annexation. Except for a few peasants under the influence of their landowners, the countryside, he reported, was massively in favor of the annexation; peasants were even “confectioning” French flags out of local materials in preparation for the annexation. Also in favor of annexation to France, he claimed, were small businessmen, workers and laborers “not preoccupied with politics,” and several influential merchants. But he warned that the bourgeoisie, lawyers, those attached to the justice system, and high-interest moneylenders generally opposed the annexation and supported the pro-Italian faction. The prefect closed by saying that he believed a majority would still vote for annexation in the event of a plebiscite, but the situation was far less certain than in Savoy.⁶⁹

In February and March, the opposition to the annexation in Nice led to a series of popular, anti-French demonstrations and incidents in Nice, many of them organized or coordinated by a small number of leading anti-French individuals. One was a café owner named Jean-Baptiste Maiffret, better known by his local nickname, “Le Padre,” who ran a *guinguette*, or open-air dance hall. Pillet believed Maiffret to be a paid agent of the Sardinian government, spreading dissent and opposition to the annexation among the working classes.⁷⁰ Another was a worker named Antoine Fenocchio, a man popularly known as a chiffon salesman. In February, Fenocchio presented the city’s municipal council with an anti-annexationist address to Victor Emmanuel sporting signatures of 15 members of the working class. After the Sardinian government revoked the anti-annexationist newspaper *Il Nizzardo*’s monopoly on printing the territory’s judicial announcements, Fenocchio assumed the reigns of the crippled paper during its dying days and published a number of articles inciting the population to demonstrate against the annexation arranged by diplomats.⁷¹ Two other prominent anti-annexationists were the abbé Albert Cougnet and, of a more prominent background, count Charles (Carlo) Laurenti-Roubaudi. In early March, Cougnet was denounced to the French consul in Nice for having publicly proclaimed in front of a group of ten people that “he was sorry that he couldn’t hang Emperor Napoleon III from one of trees in the Cours Saleya and that if the French entered Nice, he would set fire to the four corners of the city.”⁷² Laurenti-Roubaudi was a member of the Sardinian Chamber of Deputies elected from the second electoral college of Nice. He and Garibaldi were both elected as the County’s deputies to the Chamber on March 25.

February and March witnessed an ongoing set of competing pro- and anti-French incidents in Nice’s theaters. The demonstrations began on February 6, at a performance of a well-regarded actress, Marie Daubrun, at the city’s Tiranty Theater, also known as the “French” theater on account of its repertoire and popularity among the city’s French émigrés and pro-French population. During the intermission, the orchestra played the politically-charged “Air of

⁶⁸ Gonnet, *La réunion de Nice*, 145–155.

⁶⁹ AN, F 1c1 129, prefect Var to MI, 24 March 1860.

⁷⁰ AMAE, CPC, Sardaigne, Chambéry/Nice 14, CF Nice to MAE, 8 February 1860. Maiffret is only cited by his nickname “Le Padre” in the 1860 correspondence of the French consul, but in the prefectural correspondence of the Second Empire one document gives his name as Maiffret (sometimes spelled Meiffret).

⁷¹ AMAE, CPC, Sardaigne, Chambéry/Nice 14, CF Nice to MAE, 3 March 1860.

⁷² AMAE, CPC, Sardaigne, Chambéry/Nice 14, CF Nice to MAE, 12 March 1860.

Queen Hortense,” a romantic song composed in 1806 by Hortense Bonaparte, the mother of Napoleon III. A popular tune under the Bonapartist regime, the song elicited a chorus of bravos! and “Vive la France!” from various parts of the theater, as well as one boo that Pillet noted had come from “paradise,” the common nineteenth-century term used to indicate the uppermost seats of the theater. Though pleased by its spontaneity and pro-French tone, Pillet nevertheless worried that the anti-French faction would take the opportunity to mount an opposing demonstration.⁷³ His fears were confirmed when posters appeared the following morning announcing the organization of a pro-Italian demonstration in the evening at the Royal Theater, known as the “Italian” theater for analogous reasons. During the performance, the Italian opera company seconded the music of the orchestra with cries of “*Viva il Re!*” and encouraged the audience to join in. Afterward, one of the baritones performed the Sardinian national anthem. Pillet was dismissive of the significance of the event, portraying it as not very well attended and delighting in what he viewed as its copycat tactics and lack of spontaneity. An encore occurred on February 8. Pillet received word that Maiffret was rounding up laborers for the evening’s activities, while another opponent of the annexation intervened with the lawyers and prosecutors who feared for their job security if France, as expected, shut down the city’s Court of Appeals. The performance itself followed in the footsteps of the previous evening’s, with the Italian actors parading on stage carrying flags and crying, “*Viva il Re!*” The actors applauded the flower-crowned bust of Victor Emmanuel, and one of them, carried away by the applause, grabbed the bust in his arms, held it dramatically aloft, and had the audience salute it several times. The scene ended with the actors parading in front of the bust wearing different historical costumes, to the music of the national march. This demonstration was apparently quite well attended by curious spectators, who in Pillet’s sardonic expression, “got their money’s worth.” The performance also featured Maiffret, as expected, holding court in “paradise” with his associates, while count Laurenti-Roubaudi, seated in the box reserved for Nice’s municipal council, was giving signals to direct the applause. Another important audience member and known opponent of French rule was colonel Dayderi, a former member of the Sardinian national guard, who was seated with Garibaldi’s daughter Teresa in one of the boxes.⁷⁴

The competing theater demonstrations inaugurated a two-month popular battle for public opinion in Nice between pro- and anti-annexationists. On February 9, Pillet reported that several fistfights and quarrels had broken out in the “popular quarters” between Frenchmen and opponents of the annexation, which led several Frenchmen established in the city to warn Pillet that, should they come under attacks or be insulted by anti-annexationists, they would not hesitate to respond in kind. Pillet urged them to moderation.⁷⁵ At the café de l’Orient in the Croix de Marbre neighborhood, a man professing pro-French opinions was beaten up by five or six “ruffians foreign to the city.” The victim, who was supposedly well known as a pro-French supporter, was playing billiards when the attackers entered the café. He told them, “I can see you’re going to provoke me, but...” and was then interrupted as the crowd pushed him to the ground and assaulted him.⁷⁶ Fenocchio made the rounds of several of Nice’s taverns in early March, publicly declaring that “he was sorry that he hadn’t known about the French demonstrations at the Tiranty theater ahead of time, since if he had, he and his 500 worker pals

⁷³ AMAE, CPC, Sardaigne, Chambéry/Nice 14, CF Nice to MAE, 6 February 1860.

⁷⁴ AMAE, CPC, Sardaigne, Chambéry/Nice 14, CF Nice to MAE, 6 February 1860; 7 February 1860; 8 February 1860; Gonnet, *La réunion de Nice*, 201–213.

⁷⁵ AMAE, CPC, Sardaigne, Chambéry/Nice 14, CF Nice to MAE, 9 February 1860.

⁷⁶ AMAE, CPC, Sardaigne, Chambéry/Nice 14, CF Nice to MAE, 13 March 1860.

would have thrown these French cretins out the window, that the Emperor would soon receive a terrible punishment that only he [Fenocchio] could inflict.”⁷⁷ On March 11, the abbé Cougnet served as the officiate at a most unusual mass in the city’s Église du Vœu. Organized by Fenocchio and several other members of the pro-Italian faction, the purpose of the mass was to intercede with God so that he might “spare our beloved *patria* from the terrible future that hangs over it,” according to the convocation notices handed out in advance.⁷⁸ The historian Paul Gonnet has noted, the choice of this particular church was a symbolic one: it had only been completed and consecrated in 1853, but the decision to build it had been taken in 1832 after the city had survived a devastating cholera epidemic. The scourge, or the “disease” about to descend on Nice in 1860 was of an entirely different, Gallic nature.⁷⁹ Pillet described the demonstration as not as successful as had been hoped, with only about 300 attendees, though a group of Italian cockade-wearing participants spent the rest of the evening parading through the city carrying the Sardinian flag and waving banners proclaiming *Viva Nizza Italiana! Viva il Re galantuomo!*⁸⁰ On March 19, a French laborer was accosted in the street by three men who stopped and asked him if he was French. When he responded in the affirmative, they hit him with a club, wounding him in the head.⁸¹ In addition, a sign in the stairwell indicating the entrance to the French consulate’s offices was defaced with a number of insults to the French, while an upholsterer living in one of the arcades of the Place Masséna reported that he had heard about a dozen Italians outside his window threaten to club and beat up the French consul and other French nationals.⁸²

The theater demonstrations continued through March. On March 5, the pro-French crowd at the Tiranty theater threw a bouquet of flowers onstage to the actress Marie Daubrun to which was attached a pro-annexationist poem titled “The Wishes of Nice” composed by the writer (and her lover) Théodore de Banville. She performed the poem, to great fanfare, after receiving the theater director’s permission. At the Royal Theater, the lead actor playing the Roman general Ezio in a performance of Verdi’s *Attila* took the opportunity to substitute the expression “Leave Nice Italian” instead of the line “Leave Italy to me” in a duo with Attila.⁸³ On the night of abbé Cougnet’s mass, the spectators at the Tiranty theater were surprised when a group of drunken individuals sporting Italian cockades on their hats interrupted the performance and burst into the room, some of them heading into the seats in “paradise” and some into the orchestra, yelling out the inevitable “*Viva Nizza Italiana!*” The spectators quickly called out, “Silence!” and “Throw them out the doors!” and finally cries of “Vive l’Empereur! Long live the annexation!” But the disturbances continued sporadically for the next forty-five minutes, while the spectators complained that the police were standing by without doing anything to arrest the protesters. At 10 p.m. the Vice-Governor of the province, M. Faraldo, appeared on the scene and scolded the director for permitting scandalous scenes of disorder to occur in his theater, threatening to shut down the establishment.⁸⁴ Upset by the lack of support he felt that he was receiving from governor Montezemolo and the police, Pillet complained directly to the governor on March 17.⁸⁵

⁷⁷ AMAE, CPC, Sardaigne, Chambéry/Nice 14, CF Nice to MAE, 8 March 1860.

⁷⁸ AMAE, CPC, Sardaigne, Chambéry/Nice 14, convocation to mass.

⁷⁹ AMAE, CPC, Sardaigne, Chambéry/Nice 14, CF Nice to MAE, 10 March 1860; Gonnet, *La réunion de Nice*, 212–13.

⁸⁰ AMAE, CPC, Sardaigne, Chambéry/Nice 14, CF Nice to MAE, 12 March 1860.

⁸¹ AMAE, CPC, Sardaigne, Chambéry/Nice 14, CF Nice to MAE, 19 March 1860.

⁸² AMAE, CPC, Sardaigne, Chambéry/Nice 14, CF Nice to MAE, 19 March 1860.

⁸³ AMAE, CPC, Sardaigne, Chambéry/Nice 14, CF Nice to MAE, 5 March 1860; Gonnet, *La réunion de Nice*, 211.

⁸⁴ AMAE, CPC, Sardaigne, Chambéry/Nice 14, CF Nice to MAE, 12 March 1860.

⁸⁵ AMAE, CPC, Sardaigne, Chambéry/Nice 14, copy, CF Nice to Governor Nice, 17 March 1860.

The French government dispatched the frigate *La Foudre* to the port of Villefranche on March 21. The measure was probably taken primarily out of the government's desire to occupy the territory quickly once the finalized treaty had been signed, rather than out of concern for the unrest in the city. The presence of the sailors in the city, however, ignited another serious conflict at the Tiranty theater just a few days after the Treaty of Turin had been announced. To celebrate the news of the impending annexation, a group of pro-French elites had gathered at the theater in order to take a subscription for the poor that would be distributed the day that the French army occupied the city. They also extended an invitation to Pillet, the commander of the *Foudre* and a detachment of the crew to attend the evening's performance. Pillet and the sailors accepted, and Pillet believed the evening would go smoothly since, in an effort to prevent a renewal of the scenes in the city's theaters, he had asked Montemezolo to forbid the performance of any songs, poems or other verses in the city's theaters that had not been announced in advance. The sailors were warmly greeted at their entry to the theater; the Sardinian royal carabinieri present at the performance did not applaud with the rest of the spectators, but did not cause any other disturbances either. The pro-French contingent of the crowd sent delegates to ask Pillet for permission to ask Marie Daubrun to repeat her performance of the Banville poem. Wishing to avoid any possible incidents, Pillet graciously but cautiously refused.

Trouble began, however, when rumors spread in the orchestra section that the Sardinian carabinieri had stood by and allowed a group of troublemakers to yell "Vive Orsini!", a reference to the Italian nationalist who had very nearly succeeded in assassinating Napoleon III in 1858, from one side of the theater. The crowd in the orchestra responded by clamoring for a reading of the poem. The director of the theater mounted the stage, announcing that he was unable to change the program without the permission of the municipal authorities. When one of the editors of the pro-French newspaper, the *Avenir de Nice*, M. Phrygio, called out, "But there isn't any such authority any more!" four of the Sardinian carabinieri in the theater grabbed Phrygio by his necktie and arrested him. A group of the assembled French sailors ran to Phrygio's assistance, while a squad of armed Sardinian soldiers came to assist the carabinieri. The scene became increasingly serious as the two groups faced off, with the French sailors defiantly standing before the soldiers' bayonets. It took the intervention of the sailors' commander, who forbade his men from taking any action against the Sardinians, to defuse the situation. The theater was then evacuated. Pillet and the commander of the sailors visited Montemezolo the following morning and expressed their displeasure.⁸⁶

What motivated the pro-Sardinia faction in Nice? Unlike the pro-Swiss faction in Savoy, which could deploy economic, strategic and political arguments in favor of a Swiss solution, the pro-Italian faction cleaved firmly to the ethno-cultural nationalist principle that Nice was *terra Italiana*, an integral part of the Italian nation-state. Laurenti-Roubaudi and Garibaldi took their case, like Chenal, directly to the Sardinian parliament, though not without controversy. The two interrupted the parliament's session of April 6, with Garibaldi asking to be permitted to address the assembled deputies. Cavour, who was present, ("with anger," according to the stenographer, since this clearly interfered with his diplomatic plans) both opposed permitting Garibaldi to speak before the deputies had finished verifying their credentials. This prompted an enraged Roubaudi to shout, "I'd like to ask the Parliament if it would refuse to allow an intervention when the Austrians were at our doors, and threatened our freedom, and if it wouldn't suspend the

⁸⁶ AMAE, CPC, Sardaigne, Chambéry/Nice 14, CF Nice to MAE, 27 March 1860.

recognition of powers to work for the salvation of the threatened *patria*?”⁸⁷ Garibaldi was finally allowed to lodge his protest on April 12, shortly after Chenal had finished. He focused on the nationalist argument, arguing that the annexation to France was a violation of the national principle. “Whether my *patria* is French or not, honorable deputies, requires little knowledge of history to prove,” he remarked angrily. “My co-citizens during all of their past against the French or against the Provençaux have always been at war; whether they were ever at peace with France is not present in any fact of Niçois history..... this is our history from the beginning of time, without exception, and that is sufficient testimony of the antipathy of my co-citizens to French seigneurie.”⁸⁸

Preparing for the Plebiscites

The signature of the Treaty of Turin on March 24 marked a turning point in the development of public opinion about the annexation. Only on March 23 did Cavour give up insisting that the treaty specify the exact form of popular ratification to be used, and the text of the Treaty remained very close to that of the secret treaty. In the next ten days, with the annexation now a certainty, the French and Sardinian governments also agreed to appoint a series of interim administrators in both provinces who, though natives of Nice and Savoy and subjects of the Sardinian government, were reliably pro-French and thus acceptable to the French government. At the end of March, Charles Dupasquier, Albert-Eugène Lachenal, and Louis Lubonis took over as “regent governors” in Chambéry, Annecy, and Nice respectively; the intendants of the Chablais, Maurienne and Tarentaise provinces of Savoy were replaced by regent “intendants” at the same time. With these administrators in place to support its interests, the French government finally felt secure enough to grant the use of universal suffrage to fulfill the required “assessment” and “certification” of the territories’ inhabitants, in full-fledged, *a posteriori*, Imperial style. Once universal suffrage had been conceded, on approximately April 4, the French government turned its attention to getting the vote over with as quickly as possible, before public opinion—or international opinion, for that matter—had a chance to shift. Scheduled for April 15 in both Savoy and Nice, it became necessary to postpone the vote in Savoy by a week to the 22nd due to winter storms, but the government allowed Nice to proceed on the originally scheduled date.⁸⁹ The early date was supported by Cavour, who wanted the procedure to occur before the treaty came up for ratification in the Sardinian parliament, whose recently-elected deputies were busy verifying their credentials.

By this point diplomats and notables harbored few fears or illusions about the nature of the plebiscite. They correctly understood it as a supplementary exercise, not a consultative one, and referred to it as a “ratification,” a “consecration,” an “adhesion”; by casting their votes Niçois and Savoyards were “supporting,” “fortifying” or “complementing” what had already taken place by means of diplomacy. The wording of the question itself reflected the government’s careful circumscribing of the options. The plebiscite did not present voters with a choice between Sardinia and France, to say nothing of Switzerland; instead, the formula was a simple yes or no. As Thouvenel instructed Talleyrand in a telegram during the negotiation of the patent treaty and the accompanying secret memoranda, “Establish [with Cavour] that the question to be posed to the populations will not be that of a preference....[voters] will respond by

⁸⁷ *Atti del Parlamento*, session of 6 April 1860, 47.

⁸⁸ *Atti del Parlamento*, session of 12 April 1860, 102.

⁸⁹ AMAE, CP, Sardaigne, 349, telegram, MAE to LF Turin, 4 April 1860, 7:15 p.m.; telegram, LF Turin to MAE, 5 April 1860, 11:20 p.m.

yes or no without opposing Sardinia to France.”⁹⁰ The actual wording used in April in Savoy was “Does Savoy want to be united to France?” In Nice, the formula was slightly different and the ballot printed in both French and Italian, but it was similarly restrictive.

As a demonstration of favorable public opinion, however, the government attached significant importance to the procedure. It was explicitly intended to be the crowning expression of Niçois and Savoyard public opinion and the official fulfillment of Article 1 of the treaty. Having worked laboriously to ensure that the vote was held under appropriately controlled conditions before according the use of universal suffrage, the French government expected the result to be an equally universal affirmative vote. As Joseph-Michel Guy, the regent intendant of the Faucigny, wrote to his mayors, “We need an immense majority, the quasi-unanimity of bulletins will show Europe that Savoy is totally French at heart, and that the demands of politics are perfectly reconciled with national aspirations.”⁹¹ Concern that Cavour still had to push the treaty through the Sardinian parliament also weighed heavily on the diplomats’ minds. “The more resounding the demonstration on our side, the less difficult M. de Cavour’s task will be in front of the [Sardinian] parliament,” Thouvenel remarked.⁹² Thus the government and the pro-annexationists encouraged participation in the plebiscite while also reminding voters that their options were limited. “We’re separated without a return from Piedmont,” proclaimed the manifesto published by the annexationist committee of Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne to the inhabitants of the province. “What remains is only a choice between union to France and the uncertainties of a future no one can predict.”⁹³

To ensure the success of the operation, Napoleon III dispatched two personal envoys, Senator Armand Laity, who went to Savoy on April 4, and Senator Pierre Marie Piétri, the former Prefect of Police in Paris, who arrived in Nice on March 26. The two envoys traveled around Nice and Savoy giving instructions to the interim governors, supporting annexationist committees, and drumming up as much support for the plebiscite as possible.⁹⁴ In both provinces, their efforts were assisted by the clergy, who ensured a literally universal spread of the annexationist gospel. The archbishop of Chambéry, Alexis Billiet, confidentially told the Consul of France stationed in Chambéry that the opinion of curés was so favorable to France that not even ten curés in the entire diocese would vote against the annexation.⁹⁵ The bishop of Tarentaise, Jean-François Turinaz, sent a circular to his curés on April 7 instructing them to support the annexation as much as possible, although he gave orders that they not lecture directly from the pulpit. Curés were to allow civil authorities to use the church registers to draw up the electoral lists for the plebiscite, and were even granted permission to modify parish mass schedules on the Sunday of the plebiscite to encourage a favorable result.⁹⁶ These directives notwithstanding, many curés had no qualms about promoting the annexation during Sunday mass, recommending that their parishioners sign petitions against the partition of Savoy and later encouraging them to participate in the plebiscite. Charles Berthet of La Rochette, who was charged by the provisional governor of Chambéry with promoting the annexation in several

⁹⁰ AMAE, CP, Sardaigne, 348, telegram, MAE to Turin, 23 March 1860, 5:40 p.m.

⁹¹ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 1, Circular from intendant of Faucigny Bonneville to syndics, 17 April 1860.

⁹² AMAE, CP, Sardaigne, 349, draft telegram, MAE to FL Turin, 13 April 1860.

⁹³ AD Savoie, 2 FS 1, no. 17, manifesto from annexationist committee of Saint-Jean to inhabitants of the arrondissement.

⁹⁴ Guichonnet, *Histoire de l’annexion*, 216–221.

⁹⁵ AMAE, CPC, Sardaigne, Chambéry/Nice 14, CF Chambéry to MAE, 29 March 1860.

⁹⁶ AD Savoie, 2 FS 5, circular from bishop of Tarentaise in Moûtiers to curés, 7 April 1860.

nearby towns, reported on April 14 that the curés of Villard-Sallet and La Trinité planned to speak about the plebiscite during their sermons the following day. “All I could do was encourage them,” he reported; “I don’t think the superior authority will blame me.”⁹⁷

While Senator Laity was making his official, triumphant rounds of Savoy, the French government found agents among the 50,000 Savoyard emigrants then living in the capital willing to return to Savoy in April, armed with government funds, as unofficial emissaries of the annexation.⁹⁸ They were dispatched into the areas where the annexation had encountered the most resistance, quietly engaging in “conversions” (their term), often at dinners, banquets, and other events involving food and drink. The notables in Savoy, together with the Parisian émigré envoys, concentrated their efforts on areas reported to be the most problematic from a Swiss point of view, the Chablais and especially the Faucigny. Massez, a Savoyard emigrant living on the rue Druout in Paris, journeyed to Annecy around April 14, and wrote in a letter that the Minister of the Interior had told him that these were the two provinces where he could be “the most useful.”⁹⁹ Néel, the sub-prefect of Gex, attended a banquet in Douvaine, the most important town in the westernmost Chablais. Located on the banks of Lake Geneva, Douvaine was the most problematic and pro-Swiss area of the Chablais; it was reported that it had been infiltrated by Swiss agitators, and its mayor had been initially hesitant to support the annexation. During his visit, Néel reported a conversation that he had held with the president of the tribunal who “expressed certain fears” about the upcoming plebiscite, and “claim[ed] that about 10 syndics or so should be changed.” While working personally to acquire Douvaine for the annexation, Didier also seems to have been keeping tabs on the regent intendant, Didier. Unlike most of the other intendants, notably that of the Faucigny, Didier had not been replaced after the signature of the treaty, and had previously been associated with the liberal, Cavourian political party. “He has to get people to forget his Piedmontese past. He was only kept in place after different hesitations of which you are aware. Now he continues to be the object of some suspicions.” Didier managed to reassure Néel of his commitment to the annexation, promising the sub-prefect that “he had gone through the communes and had swept away the dissidents that there were in a few communes of the Douvaine mandement.”¹⁰⁰

The Faucigny remained the most politically problematic area of the Haute-Savoie. In observing the progress of the movement towards France, Néel noted a comparative dearth of large landowners or former nobles in the Faucigny that could help influence the pro-Swiss movement. He also identified two separate liberal parties in the area, a “radical” or “revolutionary” party that drew support and inspiration from Geneva, and a “liberal,” anticlerical party, composed of lawyers, prosecutors, and men of similar bourgeois professions who had hesitated before rallying to the Empire.¹⁰¹ One of the emissaries sent to the Faucigny was a man named Delacquis, originally from Saint-Roch. Delacquis arrived in Sallanches on April 5, where he found the public opinion in the town fairly divided. In Saint-Gervais on April 7, he invited the syndic to dinner, along with those of the neighboring communes.¹⁰² He made a short speech in

⁹⁷ AD Savoie, 2 FS 5, letter from Charles Bertet, La Rochette, to regent governor Chambéry, 14 April 1860.

⁹⁸ With such a large number of Savoyard emigrants, Paris was, as Paul Guichonnet has noted, the most populous Savoyard city in the world.

⁹⁹ AN, F 1cI 129, letter from Massez in Annecy to ? from Annecy, 17 April 1860.

¹⁰⁰ AN, F 1cI 129, SP Gex (Ain) to MI, 16 April 1860.

¹⁰¹ AN, F 1cI 129, SP Gex (Ain) to MI, 27 April 1860.

¹⁰² In addition to the mayor of Saint-Gervais, the banquet included those of Saint-Nicolas, Les Plagnes, Les Contamines, Domancy and Combloux.

favor of France and then talked about Switzerland, presumably in unfavorable terms. He reported to the French government that all of the attendees had pledged their assistance in preparing the annexation, with the exception of Saint-Gervais's syndic, who only vaguely promised to "do what he could." The syndic's secretary was even more of a problem: Delacquis claimed that he had been "sold to Switzerland." Returning to Sallanches the following day, Delacquis attended a 200-person banquet given by the local philanthropic society and generously picked up the tab. "Seeing that they had little to drink I had enough brought to put them in Good humor," he reported, which also allowed him to propose toasts to the health of the Emperor, France, and a "Regenerated Savoy." Delacquis' efforts set the stage for Senator Laity's passage through town the following day, when he purchased still more wine and treated members of the National Guard, who came, he said, to drink his and Senator Laity's health. The libations apparently worked. "It was with great difficulty that I prevented the music from accompanying me back to my hotel," he reported.

On the 10th Delacquis left for Chamonix in the eastern Faucigny, which rumor had assigned firmly to the Swiss camp. Delacquis reported that Swiss agents had offered 10,000 francs to M. Ferdinand, who owned a number of hotels in the area, which he had refused, but he believed others had taken the bribe. On April 11 he invited the syndic and the entire municipal council of Chamonix to dine with him that morning at his hotel where, "after three hours of debates, I succeeded in bringing them around to my point of view, that is to say that they promised to vote an address to the Emperor the following day and let me know that I could count on a vote in favor of France. Finally we sat down to eat and I treated them well because I was sure that I had just obtained an inspired success."¹⁰³ Not all communes proved quite as easy as Chamonix. Saint-Gervais, which Delacquis visited on multiple occasions, was a major holdout. It was not until April 20 that Delacquis reported that he had successfully enlisted the support of Saint-Gervais' judge and the town secretary on behalf of France. To assure their compliance, he treated the town syndic, the local judge, and the bell-ringer from nearby La Clusaz to drinks the night before the plebiscite. He also provided for alcohol to be served the following day during the plebiscite itself. All the alcohol did not come cheap; he spent 1,650 francs on the French government's purse during his trip through the province.¹⁰⁴ Another émigré envoy from Paris, M. Barlet, who ran a shipping agency, asked to be reimbursed in May for an expenditure of 1,150 francs.¹⁰⁵ François Renand, a prosecutor in Bonneville, claimed in a letter to a friend that he had spent 15,000 francs preparing the plebiscite in the Faucigny.¹⁰⁶

The French government does not appear to have sent Niçois émigrés as envoys from Paris to the County, probably because of the far smaller number of Niçois established in the capital. Nevertheless, French influence was still very strong in the far smaller territory of the County. The inhabitants of Puget-Théniers invited the sub-prefect of the nearby Basses-Alpes department to make a stop at Puget during his visit to nearby Entrevaux and Castellane. As in Savoy, the County's mayors also wielded substantial influence over their townsmen. In October 1860, Borriglione, the mayor of the town of Sospel, submitted an invoice for 201 francs of expenditures that he had authorized a local inhabitant, a man named Bonfanti, to make in Sospel "so that the vote would be unanimous for France." Thus Bonfanti had spent 30.75 francs on wine for Giacomo Goiron, 34.70 francs on wine and bread for Stefano Viarru, and 10.40 francs on

¹⁰³ AN, F 1cI 129, letter from Delacquis to MI, 20 May 1860.

¹⁰⁴ AN, F 1cI 129, letter from Delacquis to MI, 20 May 1860.

¹⁰⁵ AN, F 1cI 129, letter from Barlet to MI, 21 May 1860.

¹⁰⁶ AN, F 1cI 129, letter from François Renand in Bonneville, 18 May 1860.

cigars for Giovanni Imbert, as well as 19.65 francs on the intriguing if cryptic activity of “money distribution at the bakeries.”¹⁰⁷

Personal influence was usually sufficient to bring the hesitant round to supporting the annexation, at least in appearance. In the Tarentaise province of southern Savoy, after the syndic of Mâcot was denounced as insufficiently enthusiastic about the annexation by the secretary of a neighboring commune, regent intendant Despigne sent a short letter warning the syndic of the potential consequences: “The result of the votes will be known commune by commune; consequently the communes in which the citizens called to vote do not participate in the voting will be indubitably known to the administrative authority and to the Emperor.”¹⁰⁸ Néel later commented that Didier’s personal efforts in the Douvaine mandement to bring the recalcitrant or hesitant into the fold had proven entirely effective, noting that “the result showed that he was right to prefer persuasion to the more rigorous means recommended.”¹⁰⁹ Only three syndics who were known to be hostile to the French takeover were actually revoked prior to the plebiscite, in the communes of Savigny, Le Châble, and Frangy.¹¹⁰ Interestingly, all three were in the Genevois province, the northern Savoyard province that posed the least concern. The existence of an intriguing printed form letter, which informed the intended recipients that they were being replaced as syndics due to their insufficient enthusiasm for the annexation, suggests that pro-annexationists in Savoy were initially planning to fire a far larger number of syndics. Ultimately the current of opinion in Savoy was so favorable to France that the letters remained unsent.

The plebiscites had been so well prepared by the pro-annexationists that no one, in truth, expected to find many “no” ballots inside the electoral urns. A far greater danger was abstention: viewing the overwhelmingly rural populations of Nice and Savoy as disengaged peasants, annexationists were afraid that many would simply not bother to come to the polls. Annexationists were also concerned about the possibility of political abstention. In Savoy, liberal opponents of the annexation and pro-Swiss activists recommended abstention as a protest vote, notably in the last issue of the pro-Swiss newspaper *La Savoie du Nord*, knowing that voting “no” might well be impossible given the amount of control that annexationist forces had in Savoy by the end of April. The anti-annexationist faction in the County of Nice also recommended that voters abstain from the plebiscite as a mark of opposition. The specter of abstention was so great that annexationists undoubtedly took more direct measures to prevent abstentions than they did to prevent “no” votes. In the Faucigny, regent intendant Guy warned the mayors that “abstention is always the act of the bad citizen. In this instance it would be still worse; it would be an irreparable mistake,” while in the Tarentaise, intendant Despigne instructed the mayors to go door-to-door to the houses of everyone who did not vote on April 22, a practice that seems to have been generally followed throughout Savoy.¹¹¹ The pressure to produce an overwhelming majority was compounded after April 15–16, when the plebiscite occurred in the

¹⁰⁷ AN, F 1cIII (AM) 2, letter from Borriglione, mayor of Sospel to prefect AM, 25 October 1860; enclosed bill for “the total spent by the undersigned at the moment of the voting for the annexation by order of the mayor of this city,” 24 October 1860.

¹⁰⁸ Regent intendant of the Tarentaise to syndic of Mâcot, 16 April 1860, cited in Jacques Lovie, “Les agents,” 81.

¹⁰⁹ AN, F 1cI 129, SP Gex (Ain) to MI, 27 April 1860.

¹¹⁰ Paul Guichonnet, “Le plébiscite d’annexion de la Savoie (1860). Une relecture critique,” in *Chemins d’histoire alpine. Mélanges dédiés à la mémoire de Roger Devos* (Annecy, France, 1997), 400.

¹¹¹ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 1, circular from intendant of Faucigny in Bonneville to mayors, 17 April 1860; AD Savoie, 2 M 5, circular from intendant of Tarentaise in Moûtiers to syndics of the Tarentaise, 18 April 1860.

County of Nice. “Our Savoy cannot be left behind,” wrote Despine upon learning of the results in Nice.¹¹²

Predictions such as Despine’s have understandably led historians, and modern-day separatists, to question the free and fair nature of the operation. For several reasons, however, this is a question *mal posée*. The careful circumscription of the vote to a typically Napoleonic yes or no was far more important in determining the results than any ballot manipulation on the day itself. Moreover, pro-annexationists were well aware of the fact that while the European powers had consented to the annexation, international scrutiny of the results would be heavy. The French government took measures intended to shield itself from accusations of interference, which were undoubtedly being written in the capitals of various European powers (especially in Bern and London) before the vote had even taken place. On April 13, for example, Pillet sent a telegram discussing preparations for the plebiscite, which included exiling most of the French military battalions stationed in the city for day of the plebiscite, to prevent charges of intimidation or electoral interference.¹¹³

Furthermore, many Niçois and Savoyards genuinely considered the plebiscite a meaningful event. Those who were unable to take part in the plebiscite were often furious that what they saw as a right—the opportunity cast a ballot to determine their province’s future—had been denied them. Such was the case of Joseph Abolini, a native of Saint-Martin-Lantosque in the County of Nice who was living and working in the Savoyard town of Montmélian for the Sardinian administration of direct taxation at the time of the annexation. Dismayed that his name had been left off the electoral roll even though he believed he had met all the electoral qualifications, Abolini appealed directly to provisional governor Dupasquier a week before the plebiscite and respectfully asked that his name be reinstated.¹¹⁴ A more serious allegation was brought by nine men of the commune of Marcellaz in the perpetually-worrisome Faucigny, who sent a letter in May to Napoleon III complaining that their town syndic, François-Joseph Gavillet, had intentionally left them off of the electoral rolls to prevent them from taking part in the plebiscite.¹¹⁵ Accusing Gavillet of being a greedy opportunist and a “zealous partisan of Switzerland,” they even alleged that he had threatened to rig the town’s plebiscite in favor of Switzerland unless his son received free admission to the École Polytechnique in Paris. The allegations against Gavillet are probably exaggerated; of Marcellaz’s 108 enrolled voters, 106 voted in favor of France with just two abstentions. Moreover, it is unlikely that an ostentatiously pro-Swiss mayor would have been retained in an area that had been a major battleground between pro-Swiss and pro-French forces.¹¹⁶ If Gavillet did have Swiss sympathies, he balked at actually disrupting the plebiscite, or he may have had legitimate reasons for dropping the men from the electoral roll. Whatever the explanation, the rage expressed by the nine men at having been excluded from the vote on April 22 was palpable; one plaintiff, Jean-Pierre Deluermoz, was

¹¹² AD Savoie, 2 M 5, circular from the intendant of the Tarentaise in Moûtiers to syndics of the Tarentaise, 18 April 1860.

¹¹³ AMAE, CPC, Chambéry/Nice 14, telegram from CF Nice to MAE, 13 April 1860.

¹¹⁴ AD Savoie, 2 FS 5, letter from Joseph Abolini of Montmélian to regent governor Chambéry, 16 April 1860.

¹¹⁵ There are two towns called Marcellaz in the Haute-Savoie, one in the Genevois and the other in the Faucigny; the town in question was the latter, now known as Marcellaz-en-Faucigny, to distinguish it from its homonym, now called Marcellaz-Albanais.

¹¹⁶ AN, F 1cI 129, vote tallying grids for the Chablais and Faucigny.

forcibly ejected from the polling station when he tried to barge his way in.¹¹⁷ The fact that these citizens—four of whom were illiterate and could only sign their name with a mark—made repeated attempts to circumvent the obstinacy of local authorities, and invested the time and money to draft a formal complaint to the Emperor, gives an indication of the importance that they accorded to the plebiscite.

Men may have been left off of the electoral rolls for political or technical reasons, but all Niçois and Savoyard women were excluded from the vote because of their gender. A testament to the interest in political participation that the annexation had raised was the struggle of women in rural areas of both provinces to circumvent their exclusion. Fontan, a town in the remote Roya valley of the County of Nice, provides a notable example. On the Sunday of the plebiscite at about two in the afternoon, Fontan's women surprised the voters and the electoral committee by entering the *salle de votation* with flags in their hands and cockades on their blouses, ready to vote in favor of France. They were told, in the words of the *Messenger de Nice*, "that their mandate didn't extend that far," but it apparently was not without difficulty that the women agreed to leave, and only after they had demanded that their attempt to vote, and their intentions to vote in favor of France, were formally transcribed in the electoral report.¹¹⁸ It was equally important to the Savoyard women of Entremont-le-Vieux, south of Chambéry. On the day of the plebiscite while the men went to vote, the women formed themselves into a committee, led by their president Julie Mareschal, and held their own plebiscite. By a margin of 450 votes to 0, the women proclaimed Empress Eugénie their sovereign. Shortly thereafter, the women were informed that a little girl had just been born in the village. The committee resolved that the child should be christened Eugénie, and an hour later all the women of the village attended a special baptismal ceremony held in honor of the child and her imperial namesake. The women of Entremont could take legitimate pride in the fact that their 450 votes outnumbered the 443 cast by the commune's eligible male voters. And whereas the address sent by Entremont-le-Vieux's (male) municipal council on April 1 was perfunctory, unimaginatively written, and unusually sloppy, with a mistake crossed out right through the middle of the page, the women's address was beautifully composed and carefully copied by the committee secretary, Marie Chautemps. As the women wrote to Empress Eugénie, "The law of men has not called us to vote, but the law of the heart has, and we have responded."¹¹⁹

A related event, probably inspired by Entremont's women, brought 359 additional women to vote in the neighboring commune of Corbel under the guidance of committee presidents Antoinette Chavet and Victoire Félay.¹²⁰ The spectacle of women voting was unusual enough to warrant special mention in reports sent to the Ministers of the Interior and Justice by the judge of the mandement, Gaspard Naz, in nearby Les Echelles. Surprisingly, Naz expressed no ambivalence about an event that might well have been viewed as a worrying transgression of established patriarchal norms. Asked by Entremont's women to forward their address to the Empress, he enclosed it with an enthusiastic, two-page letter in which he excitedly explained that

¹¹⁷ AN, F 1cI 129, letter from Auguste Carmoz, Claude Caséy, François Châtrier, Julien Collet, Jean-Pierre Deluermoz, Bernard Laguitaine, Julien Naly, Claude Pelloux, and Joseph Pelloux of Marcellaz to the Emperor, 9 May 1860.

¹¹⁸ Gonnet, *La réunion de Nice*, 245–6.

¹¹⁹ AN, F 1cI 129, letter from Gaspard Naz to the Empress, no date but presumably 25 April 1860; address from the women of Entremont-le-Vieux to the Empress, 23 April 1860; address from the commune of Entremont-le-Vieux to the Emperor, 1 April 1860.

¹²⁰ AN, F 1cI 129, address from the women of Corbel and Entremont-le-Jeune to the Empress, 23 April 1860.

the women had “coveted” the prerogative of voting in favor of France and had therefore “resolved to participate in their own way in the great political act that was being accomplished before their eyes.”¹²¹

Though exceptional, the women of Entremont-le-Vieux were not simply imitating the men of Savoy, but were expressing an opinion about their own futures in France. For them, the key issue was the French civil code’s provisions for female inheritance, which, by entitling daughters to an equal share of their father’s estate, were far more favorable than those of Sardinia. As the women wrote in their address to Empress Eugénie, they were choosing the country that “among so many other benefits, finally renders us in the line of paternal succession the true sisters of our brothers.”¹²² This powerful statement reminds us that on certain issues related to the annexation, public opinion was by no means monolithic. Some men supported the loosening of restrictions on inheritance; an unsigned letter from a member of the annexationist committee in Chambéry, perhaps to Thouvenel, counseled the government to publicize the abrogation of Sardinian inheritance laws. A number of the pamphlets circulating in the province, such as the pamphlet prepared by Moûtiers’ annexationist committee, “To our Co-citizens of the Tarentaise,” also mentioned the right of female inheritance favorably.¹²³ Inevitably, in a territory that was still overwhelmingly Catholic and conservative, there was plenty of opposition. François Qué tend, a Savoyard lawyer in Paris from La Roche-sur-Foron who was sent by the government to bolster support in the Chablais and the Faucigny in early April, singled out the inheritance law as likely to encounter resistance from “the pride of fathers and the greed of brothers.”¹²⁴ Likewise, M. Latil, president of the annexationist committee of the Bauges mandement, reported to Senator Laity that “I’m told there are still some incorrigible *pères de famille* on the succession issue, they will have to be converted one by one.”¹²⁵ But for educated, literate women this was a strong point in France’s favor.

Amidst the general air of festivity on the day of the plebiscite, worry, dissent and opposition continued to make its presence felt in a low register. Rumors spread in Nice, and appeared to be confirmed by several telegrams, that Garibaldi, in a last-ditch attempt to save his home province from the clutches of France, had embarked for Nice on April 14 and would arrive on the 15th just in time to disrupt the plebiscite. Pillet judged that a visit from the popular nationalist might have scuttled the annexation altogether, predicting that his trip “would have reanimated with his presence the courage of these rioters who, for more than two months, had held the entire city in stalemate.”¹²⁶ In fact the only boat to arrive was a group of 45 royal *carabiniers* that the Sardinian regime had sent from Genoa. Even as the situation in Bonneville, the heart of pro-Swiss movement, remained admirably calm, the pro-French campaigner François Renand scurried off to check on how the plebiscite was going in Reignier after hearing rumors of Swiss interference there.¹²⁷ Frangy, one of the three communes in the Genevois whose mayor was revoked, also turned out to be home to one of the rare curés who did not support the

¹²¹ AN, F 1cI 129, letter from Gaspard Naz to the Empress, no date but presumably 25 April 1860; letter from Gaspard Naz to the MI, 24 April 1860; AN, BB 18 1624 A3 4238, letter from Gaspard Naz to the Minister of Justice, 24 April 1860.

¹²² AN, F 1cI 129, address from the women of Entremont-le-Vieux to the Empress, 23 April 1860.

¹²³ AD Savoie, 2 FS 5, brochure, “A nos concitoyens de la Tarentaise”; letter from Alexandry to MAE?, in Lovie, “Les agents Français,” 97.

¹²⁴ Letter from François Qué tend to MI, 1 April 1860, in Lovie, “Les agents Français,” p. 52.

¹²⁵ Letter from M. Latil to Alexandry, 19 April 1860, in Lovie, “Les agents Français,” p. 93.

¹²⁶ AMAE, CPC, Chambéry/Nice 14, CF Nice to MAE, 16 April 1860.

¹²⁷ AN, F 1cI 129, letter from François Renand in Bonneville, 22 April 1860.

annexation. During his sermon on the day of the plebiscite, the curé defiantly predicted that while everything might go well in the other communes, he was well informed of the extent of the opposition in his own town. Chatenoux-Cottin and several of Frangy's voters responded to the curé's challenge by casting their ballots openly, displaying their affirmative votes for all the spectators to see, "so that they couldn't throw the no's on top of them, if they had any."¹²⁸

In Les Echelles in southern Savoy's Savoie-Propre province, a lone dissenter, undoubtedly a liberal or radical, contributed the only ballot to be invalidated in the mandement, which read "Yes to France, no to the Emperor." Displaying more reserve than he had with the women of Entremont-le-Vieux, Gaspard Naz reported delicately, though not entirely truthfully, that this ballot "did not contain a direct response to the question posed."¹²⁹ Knowing that their livelihood would be threatened by the establishment of the free-trade zone with Switzerland, and unable or unwilling to vote "no" in the plebiscite, some of the customs agents of the Chablais cast "Yes" ballots instead of the "Yes and Zone" ballots everyone else placed in the urn (out of over 13,000 favorable ballots in the Chablais, all but 75 were Yes and Zone). There were also reports of Swiss nationals circulating in Saint-Julien, "where they limited themselves to frequenting cafés and proffering rude insults that only encouraged mistrust," in the words of consul Chevalier in Geneva. In Thonon Swiss agents supposedly left stacks of "no" bulletins in the streets of town, where they were burned by the inhabitants.¹³⁰ A painter named Hugard in Bonneville reported that some of the clock and watch makers in Cluses, site of a workshop established by king Charles-Albert in 1848, had been threatened, presumably by Swiss customers, with having their orders suspended if they voted for France.¹³¹ Rumor also had it that a peasant returning from Nice's Carras neighborhood during the voting had been insulted and knifed by an Italian coachman for wearing a French cockade.¹³²

Two more serious incidents on the day of the plebiscite—not surprisingly, along the Swiss border and in the Haute-Maurienne—testify to the simmering international tensions at the end of April. The Savoyard soldiers still under the command of the Sardinian monarch who were garrisoned at the Esseillon fortresses annoyed their colleagues from Piedmont and Lombardy, who formed the majority of the soldiers stationed there, by creating a French flag and trooping to the nearby town of Aussois to cast their votes. Upon their return to the main fort, French flag in hand, the Italians attacked the Savoyard soldiers, grabbed the flag and ripped it to pieces.¹³³ In the Chablais, the mayor and police of Chêne-Thonex, a Swiss town just across the border from the Savoyard towns of Moillesulaz and Gaillard, broke up a fight between two groups of young men who came to blows over the annexation. The first group, made up of young men from Moillesulaz and Gaillard, supported the annexation of the Chablais to Switzerland but carried the Italian flag as a mark of opposition. The second, a group of pro-French youths from Annemasse, carried the French tricolor. The mayor took a firm stance against permitting any demonstrations on Swiss territory and sent the two groups on their way, but the conflict reignited near the bridge in Moillesulaz over the Foron river, the border between France and Switzerland. It was broken

¹²⁸ AN, F 1cI 129, letter from Chatenoux-Cottin in Frangy, 23 April 1860.

¹²⁹ AD Savoie, 9 M II 7, letter from mayor of Les Echelles to Prefect Savoie, 8 September 1862; AN, F 1cI 129, letter from Gaspard Naz to the MI, 24 April 1860.

¹³⁰ AMAE, CPC, Suisse, Genève, 5, no. 43, CF Geneva to MI, 23 April 1860; AN, F 1cI 129, SP Gex (Ain) to MI, 27 April 1860.

¹³¹ AN, F 1cI 129, letter from Hugard, painter in Bonneville, to MI, 26 April 1860.

¹³² AMAE, CPC, Sardaigne, Chambéry/Nice 14, CF Nice to MAE, 16 April 1860.

¹³³ AD Savoie, 2 FS 5, letter from syndic of Aussois to regent intendant of the Maurienne, 24 April 1860.

up definitively only after a former Sardinian soldier had torn a Swiss gendarme's uniform and the unfortunate mayor had been pushed unceremoniously onto the ground.¹³⁴ These incidents were exceptions to the very orderly manner in which the plebiscite occurred, but they underline the fact that it took place in the same climate of simultaneous excitement and anxiety that had reigned in the two Sardinian provinces since the beginning of the year.

Islands of Opposition in an Ocean of Victory

The results were, as expected, hugely favorable to France, with many communes obtaining a 100 percent participation rate with all eligible voters voting "yes." The French government was entirely satisfied by the results. Some administrators were surprised by the overwhelming nature of the results. Reports of the voting from the provinces and neighboring departments, forwarded up the administrative chain of command, were liberally sprinkled with exclamation points, an exceedingly rare punctuation mark in the bureaucracy's normally staid reports. Some emphasized the "touching unanimity" of the vote; others, its perceived order, regularity, and seriousness.¹³⁵ The day after the plebiscite, the sub-prefect of Gex drafted a long and hyperbolic report to the Minister of the Interior describing everything he witnessed in the northern provinces of Savoy: "The country was exposed to all kinds of subversive nuances and armed undertakings that agitated right on the borders. France, which was in question, had no soldiers or agents. Who could ask for a freer demonstration for France, of popular wishes! What an imposing result of universal suffrage, applied for the first time in the country!"¹³⁶ Even Joseph Bard, a great pro-Swiss campaigner in northern Savoy, whom one might expect would have no qualms about submitting a negative vote, abstained from voting in Bonneville on the day of the plebiscite rather than voting no.¹³⁷ Pierre Fontaine and his father, on the other hand, remained true to their liberal, anti-authoritarian, anti-Bonapartist views by openly submitting their two negative votes, which were duly noted and officially tallied with the affirmatives.

Joseph-Michel Guy, the provisional intendant of the Faucigny, dismissed abstentions in the plebiscite as "so minimal that it's not even worth talking about," and most scholars have agreed with him.¹³⁸ As Paul Guichonnet concluded, "The recommendations for abstention launched by loyalists and by partisans of Switzerland had remained without effect, especially in northern Savoy, where the promise of the Zone had massively rallied the opponents."¹³⁹ The conclusion holds up when the results of all the communes are tallied together. Taken individually, however, the results indicate that in certain areas of Nice and Savoy opinion was not as unanimous as the overall results indicate. The numbers of abstentions among the immense majority of favorable votes and the extremely high participation rate does stand out. In northern Savoy, some communes of the Chablais and especially the Faucigny, particularly in the Reignier and Annemasse mandements, did manage to post surprising numbers of abstentions in the face of significant pressure from mayors, curés and notables to vote correctly. In Savoy, putting aside the case of Saint-Gingolph on the border with the Swiss canton of Valais, whose massive abstention (89 percent) is attributable to its exceptional status as a town with dual French-Swiss nationality, any commune that posted a greater than 10 percent abstention rate can be considered

¹³⁴ AMAE, CPC, Suisse, Genève, 5, no. 45, CF Geneva to MAE, 25 April 1860.

¹³⁵ AN, F 1cI 129, prefect Ain to MI, 25 April 1860.

¹³⁶ AN, F 1cI 129, SP Gex (Ain) to MI, 27 April 1860.

¹³⁷ AN, F 1cI 129, SP Gex (Ain) to MI, 27 April 1860.

¹³⁸ AN, F 1cI 129, regent intendant Faucigny to SP Gex (Ain), 24 April 1860.

¹³⁹ Guichonnet, "Le plébiscite d'annexion..." 400.

unusual. With over half its voters choosing not to vote—58 percent—Monnetier-Mornex posted the highest abstention rate in Savoy, with Ambilly (44 percent) and Les Esserts-Ésery (32 percent) following closely behind. Gaillard, home to some of the pro-Swiss youths who had scuffled with their pro-French rivals from Annemasse, posted a 30 percent abstention rate. Only a quarter of Archamps' voters abstained, but the town had the dubious distinction of submitting the highest percentage of “no” votes among all Savoyard communes, 10 percent, or 14 no's out of 133 voters.¹⁴⁰

The personal intervention of the Savoyards sent on mission in Savoy and of local notables also had mixed results. So much effort had been focused on Bonneville that the commune voted massively in favor of France and had a low abstention rate; as François Renand put it, “the foyer of Swiss propaganda has demonstrated that it has renounced its Helvetican errors.”¹⁴¹ Delacquis had indeed obtained an “inspired success” in Chamonix, which provided a massive affirmative vote and sent Delacquis back to Paris with two jars of local honey as a gift for Empress Eugénie.¹⁴² But the opposition that he had fought so hard to combat in Saint-Gervais did not entirely disappear: the commune posted a 10 percent abstention rate, and there were 16 no votes (4.5 percent). Despite its status as the hometown of Jacquier-Chatrier, who had been instrumental in lobbying for and securing the concession of the Zone, 28 percent of Contamine-sur-Arve's voters failed to cast a vote. Montsaxonnex, which had been described by intendant Guy as having been “worked by the Swiss party,” returned 3 no's along with a 10 percent abstention rate.¹⁴³ It is also instructive to compare the plebiscite results in the communes that had given pro-Swiss signatures. There is not an exact match between high levels of abstention and opposition and the number of signatures on the pro-Swiss petitions. Fifty-eight of the 58 registered voters in commune of Passeirier, for example, had signed a pro-Swiss petition; all 58 voted “Yes and Zone” in the plebiscite with no abstentions. But there is some overlap, notably in the Annemasse and Reignier mandements. This suggest that the Zone had overcome much, but not all, of the opposition to the annexation in the northern districts of Savoy.

The map of abstentions in the County of Nice is also suggestive. Fifteen percent of all registered voters abstained, a much higher percentage than in Savoy, which accurately reflects the greater hesitation in Nice. According to the historian Paul Gonnet, the heavy abstentions in the most remote communes of the Roya valley, La Brigue and Tende (73 percent and 43 percent), can be attributed to transhumance, the seasonal movement of people and livestock for the purposes of grazing and pasturage.¹⁴⁴ But in other communes abstentions were also quite high. Four out of the five towns in what would soon be established as the Menton canton posted heavy rates of abstention and significant no votes. Castellar, where over a third of voters abstained and an astonishing 42 percent of voters cast no ballots—58 out of 137 voters—stands apart. Half the voters abstained and 31 percent of voters voted no in Gorbio; 46 percent stayed home in Sainte-Agnès, though only 5 percent cast a no vote; Menton itself posted a 24 percent abstention rate. Abstentions were also considerable in two other Roya valley communes, Breil and Saorge (34 and 24 percent). Though mayor Borriglione's intervention resulted in a relatively low abstention rate in Sospel, two other nearby communes in the Bévéra valley, Castillon and Moulinet, posted abstentions of 27 and 30 percent, respectively. The communes in the future

¹⁴⁰ AN, F 1cI 129, vote tallying grids from the Chablais and the Faucigny.

¹⁴¹ AN, F 1cI 129, letter from François Renand to MI, Bonneville, 23 April 1860.

¹⁴² AN, F 1cI 129, letter from Delacquis to MI, 27 April 1860.

¹⁴³ AN, F 1cI 129, regent intendant of Faucigny, Bonneville, to MI, 24 April 1860.

¹⁴⁴ Gonnet, *La réunion de Nice*, 243–51.

Puget-Théniers arrondissement provided far fewer abstentions, except in the Saint-Sauveur canton, where three communes had abstention rates of over 20 percent.¹⁴⁵

The French government was not at all unhappy about the no's and the abstentions. On the contrary, the administrators were in fact rather pleased by them. The existence of negative votes could be dangled in the face of those Great Powers, notably Britain, who might have complained that the procedure had been less than entirely free and fair. intendant Despine in the Tarentaise remarked, "The rare no's, so rare that they can hardly be counted, are there only to protest in the face of Europe the freedom of the vote," while Milliet de Faverges in the Maurienne declared, "The 11 no's will suffice as proof in the face of those who contest the freedom of the vote."¹⁴⁶ If the negative votes did not require recriminations, they did elicit explanations. The sub-prefect of Gex, Néel, commented on the 10 negative votes in Margencel (Chablais) and chalked them up to "agitators" from nearby Thonon, undoubtedly with Helvetian aspirations or origins.¹⁴⁷ In the County of Nice, the municipal leaders of Castellar were so embarrassed by the commune's poor results that they composed an apology to the sovereign, which they had signed by almost all of the municipality's inhabitants, as if to prove that the sentiments of the population really *had* been unanimous in spite of the contradictory evidence furnished by the ballot box. At the very least, they put on a convincing show of appearing shocked by the commune's poor performance. "The administrators and inhabitants of the commune of Castellar protest energetically against the pressure exercised on the vote for the annexation to France, by an agitator as well as a low-ranking, low-level employee, who did their best to seed division among electors. Being today more aware of their true interests, and considering that it is truly surprising that these agitators managed to obtain the faith of some electors....," they asked to sovereign to kindly "give not the least importance to these negative votes," and recognized that it would be "the greatest misfortune for their country if their request were not welcomed."¹⁴⁸

* * *

Born out of political circumstances, the plebiscites of 1860 in Nice and Savoy—the official moments of public participation in the annexation—were creations of necessity, rather than of conviction. Their public remarks notwithstanding, the statesmen involved in the annexation were not very concerned by what the fewer than 500,000 inhabitants of Nice and Savoy wanted. Pierre Fontaine was undoubtedly correct to characterize the annexation as a *fait accompli* and the accompanying plebiscite as a consultative, adhesive vote rather than a determining vote. Italian in inspiration, the plebiscites were French, and more specifically Napoleonic in character, as the Emperor acquiesced to the use of universal suffrage only after having received sufficient assurance that they were to be adhesive rather than consultative plebiscites, and after taking the necessary steps to ensure a proper outcome. And they were provincial in execution, for pro-annexationist Niçois and Savoyards assured their success. Within the constitutional history of the Second Empire, the plebiscites of 1860 are exceptional. Unlike every other plebiscite organized under the regime, the French government had been hesitant to resort to the procedure. In spite of their odd gestation, they still took a comfortable place among the most spectacular episodes of Napoleon's "spectacular politics." In true imperial fashion, the formal handover of sovereignty from Sardinia to France in June was capped with a triumphant

¹⁴⁵ Gonnet, *La réunion de Nice*, full plebiscite results, 319–320.

¹⁴⁶ AD Savoie, 2 FS 5, regent intendant Tarentaise in Moûtiers to regent governor Chambéry, 24 April 1860; regent intendant Maurienne in Saint-Jean to regent governor Chambéry, 26 April 1860.

¹⁴⁷ AN, F 1cI 129, SP Gex (Ain) to MI, 27 April 1860.

¹⁴⁸ AN, F 1cI 129, address to the Emperor from the inhabitants of Castellar, 22 April 1860.

visit of Napoleon III and Empress Eugénie through the provinces in September. The journey of the sovereigns was celebrated with much fanfare—and quite a lot of nominations to the Legion of Honor for those who had prepared the annexation.

Yet even though the plebiscite and the other permitted forms of political expression in 1860 were carefully and precisely circumscribed following the established practice of the Second Empire, they are still critical to understanding the subsequent evolution of oppositional political culture in Nice and Savoy. As their first experience of universal suffrage and of mass political mobilization, the plebiscite initiated the inhabitants into the controlled political system of the Second Empire. It encouraged them to critically assess the alignment or nonalignment of their political, national, and economic loyalties, even if they were unable to fully express those loyalties. Though a major economic obstacle to the annexation in northern Savoy was settled by Napoleon III's concession of the free-trade Zone, the Zone did not, contrary to contemporary belief, completely remove the liberal political opposition underpinning much of the pro-Swiss sentiment in the northern half of the province. In Nice the signature of the Treaty of Turin did not destroy sympathies for the enraged Garibaldi, nor the resentment that some citizens felt at being excluded from the nascent Italian national state.

Though heavily influenced by France, the results of the plebiscites themselves delineate certain areas where the annexation had not been welcomed with universal acclaim. The traditional Faucigny province, which would soon be reorganized into the Bonneville arrondissement, provided the majority of pro-Swiss signatures as well as the greatest number of no's and abstentions in the plebiscite. The westernmost areas of the Chablais nearest Geneva, in what would become the Douvaine canton of the Thonon arrondissement, was also a problematic area. So were some of the communes of the Genevois close to the Swiss border in the future Saint-Julien arrondissement. With the Zone guaranteeing the economic livelihood of these inhabitants, much of this abstention must have been fueled by political opposition. Opposition to the annexation in the County of Nice was concentrated in the city itself and in some of the rural communes of the backcountry, especially in the Roya and Bévéra valleys closest to Piedmont.

The period of January–June 1860 also indicated many of the patterns of political opposition to the annexation that would develop over the course of the next two decades. With traditional forms of political expression all but closed to them for the great majority of the 1860s and 1870s, opponents of the annexation found other ways to express their opposition. Many of the tactics that would be deployed against the Bonapartist government were tried out during the first half of 1860. At the end of March 1860, Pillet complained about the street demonstrations in Nice, remarking, “It's more than time to call these terrorists to order, who don't dare show themselves openly but to whom the city is delivered at night.”¹⁴⁹ Prefects and administrators of the Alpes-Maritimes department would echo this refrain closely for the next twenty years. The annexation also gave birth to a persistent suspicion shared by French political leaders and administrators about the subversive influences of foreign powers in the annexed territories, namely Switzerland in Savoy, and Sardinia (Italy after 1861) in Nice. Though the governments of Sardinia and Switzerland certainly had sent agents during the critical months to influence public opinion, many of the reports of their influence originated in the realm of fantasy. But it proved difficult to exorcise fears of foreign subversion.

Public opinion about the annexation was far more diffuse than the famous “unanimity” of the affirmative votes in both areas. No vote ever had a chance of capturing the true diversity of

¹⁴⁹ AMAE, CPC, Sardaigne, Chambéry/Nice 14, CF Nice to MAE, 27 March 1860.

public opinion that the event elicited. And behind the scenes, the French government knew this. Rolland Paulze d'Ivoy, the first prefect of the new Alpes-Maritimes department, into which the County of Nice was integrated, wrote to the Minister of the Interior in July 1860 that "it's evident that we don't have unanimity here. But anyway where does it exist?"¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ AN, F 1cIII (AM) 2, prefect AM to MI, 5 July 1860.

Chapter 2
Taking Everything and Keeping Everything:
Administrative and Cultural Tension between Old French and New

On December 26, 1861, the mayor of the Alpine commune of Isola in the Alpes-Maritimes authorized a dance in the town's municipal building. The festivities celebrated the recent return home of some of its young townsmen, including Charles Alech and Emile Clari, who had been serving in the Sardinian (now Italian) army. The dance ended at the planned hour, and the local brigade of French gendarmes assigned to the area, who had been monitoring the festivities, returned to their barracks, but were quickly disturbed by the unmistakable sounds of reignited revelry. Returning to the scene, the gendarmes Currault and Servella asked the young men to return home. One of the participants, Eloi Musso, undoubtedly fired up by the alcohol he had consumed, responded by shouting insults at the gendarmes and declared that he wanted to finish his song. In response, Servella grabbed Musso and summoned him to follow him. Musso pushed Servella back, and a brawl ensued as his friend Joseph Agnelli struck Servella, probably with a stone wrapped in a handkerchief. Currault was busy attempting to restrain Charles Musso and Alech, who broke away, and the conflict became increasingly violent as seven or eight other young men from the town joined in. Servella, who defended himself with the butt of his rifle, managed to fire a single shot, which fortunately missed; Currault ran to the gendarmes' barracks for reinforcements. The scuffle only ended once Currault returned with the brigadier of the gendarmerie. Though Eloi Musso and Joseph Agnelli managed to flee the scene, Charles Musso, Alech and Clari were arrested and transferred to the prison in Nice. The culprits were condemned by the criminal court to prison sentences ranging from 20 days to two months, while the two delinquents each received six months in absentia.¹

The situation in Isola, pitting the inhabitants of a remote commune against the French government's agents of order, might have occurred in any of France's departments in the nineteenth century. Nowhere else in France, however, would the participants have been newly-minted French citizens, so new, in fact, that some had just completed military service for a neighboring power. Whereas the inhabitants of Nice and Savoy had previously hosted administrators, soldiers and civil servants from Piedmont, in 1860 they found themselves hosting Frenchmen from even more distant regions who were charged with implementing French laws, regulations, and administrative procedures in the annexed territories. Using the monthly reports sent by major administrators in the provinces, including the prefects, sub-prefects, public prosecutors and police commissioners, this chapter analyzes the content of the ordinary, day-to-day conflicts that occurred between Niçois and Savoyards and the representatives of the French administration brought in to administer the provinces during the first decade of the annexation. The majority of these conflicts did not conceal political longing for a reversal of the 1860 settlement. But they reveal how the difficult administrative transition, coupled with profoundly different cultural assumptions and expectations, gave birth to anxieties and resentment related to the annexation. These tensions ultimately helped fuel the emergence of political opposition that did have separatist aspirations.

* * *

Two 1861 Case Studies: Isola and Aime

The judicial condemnations of Musso, Alech and Clari proved controversial in Isola. Many of the town's inhabitants blamed the violent nature of the conflict on the gendarmes,

¹ AN, BB 24 653-673, S 62 1749, PG Aix-en-Provence to MJ, 24 April 1862.

particularly Servella, whom even the judicial authorities conceded should have acted with greater “prudence” and “moderation.” Well before the conflict, Servella had acquired a reputation in Isola for intolerance and inflexibility, traits fully in evidence on the night of the conflict. As the authorities noted, “Finding himself in the presence of young men excited by wine and dancing, [Servella] should have limited himself to noting the existence of the contravention rather than trying to proceed to an arrest, which the number of adversaries and the night made very difficult.” Moreover, the entire gendarmerie seems to have been compromised by the fact that the gendarmes’ brigadier had insinuated himself in some purely local disputes, and had inevitably made a number of enemies. Shortly after the tribunal’s sentence was handed down, Agnelli’s grandfather Jean Vera wrote a brave and remarkably candid letter to Napoleon III requesting a pardon for his grandson. He explained that the revolt had not been premeditated, and that the young men had certainly drunk too much, but that the conflict was also due to “ignorance of the new laws that govern us, and a police service that isn’t too flexible compared to what we were used to under the *ancien régime*.”² Whether intentional or inadvertent, Vera’s use of the terminology *ancien régime*, language normally reserved to refer to the French government before 1789, underlined the extent to which the inhabitants of Isola experienced the new police services of the Empire as dramatically different from what they had known under Sardinia. Vera also informed the sovereign of an unfortunate and rather embarrassing fact: that the festivities had been organized to celebrate the return of the young men from Sardinian service and, in his words, “in honor of their new flag.”³ Thus an opportunity to commemorate Isola’s passage from the Sardinian regime to the French had resulted instead in alienating some of the inhabitants from the French regime.

Vera and his fellow townsmen’s assignment of blame to the gendarmes would shortly be reinforced. On a spring evening in the following March, a drunk Servella—who was off duty—attacked three of Isola’s townsmen with his saber, gravely wounding 49 year-old Dominique Guiberti in the nape of the neck. Servella then fled on foot across the Italian border. Isola’s special police commissioner was deeply troubled by the event. He attributed the gendarme’s behavior in part to his unrequited love for a local girl. But the real source of conflict was, in the commissioner’s estimation, Servella’s continued “excess of zeal, his demanding attitude, that was destined to bring him sooner or later to a sorry end.”⁴ This second incident significantly complicated the resolution of the initial case. Public opinion understandably linked the two incidents.⁵ Following this second incident, the five defendants involved in the December fight—including Agnelli and Eloi Musso, who had in the intervening months turned themselves in to judicial authorities in Nice—submitted a collective request for a pardon to the government. They placed the blame for the quarrel firmly on Servella, and while they refrained from criticizing the French justice system, they questioned the soundness of their condemnation, arguing that it had been based too heavily on Servella’s now seriously compromised account of the events. “In effect,” they wrote, “we only defended ourselves against this madman and we were condemned because justice would never presume a gendarme would be capable of behaving so shamefully.” As if to underline the stakes involved in reducing their punishment, the men dangled the

² AN, BB 24 653-673, S 62 1749, PG Aix-en-Provence to MJ, 24 April 1862; Petition of Jean Vera to the Emperor for a pardon for Joseph Agnelli, 28 February 1862.

³ AN, BB 24 653-673, S 62 1749, PG Aix-en-Provence to MJ, 24 April 1862; Petition of Jean Vera to the Emperor for a pardon for Joseph Agnelli, 28 February 1862.

⁴ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 346, CS Isola, to prefect AM, 19 March 1862.

⁵ AN, F 1cIII (AM) 2, copy, prefect AM to MI, DGSP, 18 March 1862.

tantalizing promise of favorable public opinion in front of the judicial authorities, writing that “we will have, from this act of justice, from this benevolent act, an eternal memory, and the inhabitants of our country, newly annexed to France, will feel profound recognition.”⁶

That the festival in Isola was organized to celebrate the return of some of the town’s young men seems beyond doubt, but were the men partying in Isola really celebrating their change of nationality? Their claim is perhaps too convenient to be true, but it nevertheless served as a powerful point of departure from which to mount a plea for clemency in response to a French officer who had clearly abused his authority. In reviewing the five men’s request for the pardon, the judicial authorities at the appellate court in Aix-en-Provence tried to balance the seriousness of the crime against the need to conciliate public opinion. The public prosecutor had no intention of recommending a cancellation of the sentence altogether; the crime was too serious, and he worried that canceling the court’s sentence would weaken its authority in the newly-annexed territory. But the case threatened to inflame competing French and Italian loyalties, as Alech and Clari had only recently been discharged from the Sardinian army. As the public prosecutor noted, “by no means may hostility between former Italian soldiers and the French gendarmerie be tolerated.” The public prosecutor also blamed Servella’s poor judgment in the situation and acknowledged the need to dispel the opinion that the court had relied too heavily on his testimony. Ultimately, the prosecutor decided to suggest halving Agnelli and Eloi Musso’s sentences to three months. In the meantime, the prefect of the Alpes-Maritimes appointed in early 1861, Denis Gavini, determined to prevent a repeat of these incidents, requested the transfer of the Isola brigade of gendarmes to nearby Saint-Etienne-de-Tinée.⁷

The town of Aime, in the Savoie department’s Tarentaise province, witnessed an almost contemporaneous conflict that raised similar concerns to those in Isola. On December 17, 1861, the brigadier of the gendarmerie in the Tarentaise, Chemin, issued a citation to innkeeper Pierre-Antoine Ligeon for failing to properly register travelers staying at his establishment. Chemin also cited several carriage drivers who had broken haulage regulations by parking their carriages in front of the inn, as well as some townsmen who were drinking in the establishment outside of the hours prescribed by the regulations.⁸ An infuriated Ligeon retaliated by dashing off a letter of complaint directly to the Minister of War. He described the gendarme as too exigent and demanding, “one of those men who is led astray by his youth and ambition, and whose excess of zeal leads him to exceed his responsibilities.” In his complaint, Ligeon acknowledged that the transition from the Sardinian regime to the French had not been without difficulties, but he blamed these entirely on the town’s gendarmes. “It’s been 18 months since we have been part of the great French Empire. The inauguration and application in our country of the administrative forms and French laws have encountered some material difficulties, but never had to fight the obstinacy of the populations,” he declared innocently. He then made an appeal for administrative flexibility and sensitivity, in much the same vein as Jean Vera’s. “The government intended for this transition to be gradual, and for this reason chose administrators and employees that must, as much as possible, show consideration for the interests and habits of citizens. It is painful to see our commune so poorly divided, especially considering the harmony that exists in other

⁶ AN, BB 24 653-673, request for pardon from Charles Alech, Emile Clari, Charles Musso, Eloi Musso, and Joseph Agnelli to Emperor, 1 April 1862.

⁷ AN, BB 24 653-673, S 62 1749, PG Aix to MJ, 24 April 1862; Petition of Jean Vera to the Emperor for a pardon for Joseph Agnelli, 28 February 1862.

⁸ AD Savoie, 9 M III 13, no. 5, gendarmerie, 26th legion, company of Savoie, arrondissement of Moûtiers, 31 January 1862.

neighboring cantons. The brigadier is so alienated from the sympathies of the population and travelers that we are afraid another regrettable conflict will occur.”⁹

Yet Ligeon’s bitter recriminations against the gendarmes were not, in fact, shared by all of his fellow townsmen. Even before Ligeon had dispatched his note to the Minister, the incident’s implications in the small town so disturbed another resident of Aime, Doctor Usannaz, that Usannaz wrote his own letter to the authorities, lauding Chemin’s conduct and warning the government not to believe whatever denunciations might be in the offing. “Someone has spread a sinister rumor in Aime. . . . This rumor is that the gendarmerie’s station in Aime should be removed, beginning with its brave brigadier, M. Chemin, an honest man. He fulfills his duties scrupulously, without partiality, and frightens away the scum, the swindlers, he succeeded in stopping those who were always partying and disturbing the peace, and reestablished good order. If, unfortunately, they removed the gendarmerie of Aime, or even just this brigadier, who is loved and esteemed by the Napoleonists [sic] and all upstanding men, the heretofore frequent thefts, perturbations, and complete disorder would immediately return to the commune,” Usannaz cautioned. The doctor’s letter indicated that some of Aime’s townsmen appreciated the gendarmes’ service in Aime since the annexation, and fully supported their efforts to reign in what the doctor characterized as “excesses” and lawlessness. Usannaz associated the free-for-all, uncontrolled behavior that he had described with the Sardinian regime and argued that mayor Ligeon was acting under the pressure of “those who are still sighing after the old Piedmontese aristocracy.” This was a telling remark: Usannaz employed the term “Piedmontese” not necessarily indicate an actual Piedmontese native or speaker of that language, but rather to designate members of the comparatively ineffective former governing class.¹⁰

Shortly after the New Year, the administration began investigating the incident, dispatching the sub-lieutenant commander of the gendarmerie in the Moûtiers arrondissement to Aime. The sub-lieutenant reported that Ligeon was visibly uncomfortable during their interview. Reluctantly, Ligeon declared that he had nothing personal against Chemin except “that he wasn’t conciliatory enough regarding simple police infractions (the police of cabarets), and those regarding haulage, that he wasn’t sufficiently tolerant of the young, that he was too severe, that his zeal and severity wore out and indisposed the inhabitants of Aime against him,” in the officer’s words. Ligeon’s story was refuted by prominent members of the commune and elites of the canton, including the local justice of the peace, the public prosecutor, and Ligeon’s own mayoral adjunct. The adjunct bluntly told the gendarme that Chemin had been directly responsible for reestablishing law and order in the commune. “Before the annexation we’d had neither police nor gendarmes for more than 15 years; delinquents, troublemakers, revelers and rowdy sorts had complete freedom of action, no one said anything to them. But since M. Chemin’s firmness and energy has cut that short and he’s kept an eye out on all those who’ve retained tendencies to disorder, that’s why they’re complaining about him.”¹¹ Ligeon’s reputation was hardly of the same caliber as Chemin’s. Two months earlier, the sub-prefect in Moûtiers had praised Chemin’s accomplishments in Aime, while signaling Ligeon as unqualified for his position as mayor, and noted that he would encourage Ligeon to resign. Ligeon was also known to have publicly complained about a recent prefectural decree restricting drinking hours during religious services, saying that “they shouldn’t stop us from going drinking during

⁹ AD Savoie, 9 M III 13, copy, letter from Mayor of Aime to Minister of War, 27 December 1861.

¹⁰ AD Savoie, 9 M III 13, copy, letter from Dr. Usannaz of Aime to ???, 22 December 1861.

¹¹ AD Savoie, 9 M III 13, gendarmerie, 26th legion, company Savoie, arrondissement Moûtiers, 31 January 1862.

vespers.” Faced with the mounting evidence against Ligeon, the sub-lieutenant concluded that the mayor had written the denunciation out of spite, to obtain a more lenient replacement for Chemin. Reports from the other gendarmes and Usannaz’s letter both suggested that Ligeon had acted under pressure from other townsmen.

The interview clearly frightened Ligeon. By way of repentance, he handed the departing sub-lieutenant a letter formally retracting his earlier denunciation. But even in his retraction, Ligeon could not resist taking a swipe at Chemin’s “excess of zeal which seems misplaced in the time of transition Savoy is currently undergoing.”¹² In a final coda to the already complex incident, the investigating sub-lieutenant—despite having witnessed a vindictive attempt to ruin his colleague’s career—expressed some unexpected sympathy for Ligeon’s complaints. He privately confessed to his superior a belief that Chemin should be performing his duties with more sensitivity and tact. He then related a recent incident that in many respects replicated the Isola affair. During the November feast of Sainte Cécile, the musicians of Aime had organized a banquet in the town’s newly-purchased municipal building. Ligeon had retired for the evening after the conclusion of banquet, but had authorized the remaining revelers to stay and dance until eleven in the evening. Chemin, unaware that the mayor had granted permission to stay late, had unceremoniously broken up the festivities a half-hour earlier, asking for the names of those who had organized the festivities in order to issue them citations.

The Challenges and Expectations of French Governance

These two case studies, one from Nice and the other from Savoy, illustrate many of the thorniest challenges faced by the French government and the inhabitants of Nice and Savoy in the first decade after the 1860 annexation. The massive administrative overhaul occasioned by the annexation was a heavy task, a burden that was also shared by ordinary Niçois and Savoyard functionaries who found themselves in the position of having to haul themselves abreast of an entirely new set of administrative procedures. Savoie’s first prefect, Hippolyte Dieu, remarked on multiple occasions about the backbreaking workload faced by both the retained Savoyard civil servants and the newly-arrived French employees. “It’s clear that since the annexation, the functionaries and agents of all types have had to manage work out of proportion to that in the other departments, not only due to the inherent difficulties of organizing and integrating the new administration with the old, but also because of the lack of or insufficiency of necessary information and the difficulty they have in procuring this information.”¹³ At one point, Dieu even suggested that the government provide special compensation to those Frenchmen employed in the department and working towards the transition in order to boost morale.

In the early years of the annexation, the implementation of certain laws encountered particular difficulties. The Isola and Aime incidents were both examples of the difficulty that the agents of order encountered in regulating and managing taverns, cafés, and *débites de boisson*, to say nothing of the impossible task of halting their proliferation. Referring to the ubiquitous *débites* in his canton, the police commissioner of Bonneville in the Haute-Savoie remarked in 1867 that “judicial authority would probably have nothing to do if it weren’t for this scourge.”¹⁴ In an episode that closely mirrored the events of Isola and Aime, nine men were arrested for

¹² AD Savoie, 9 M III 13, signed letter, mayor of Aime, 10 January 1862.

¹³ AD Savoie, 9 M II 4, draft report for grid, 12 December 1860.

¹⁴ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 19, grid report CS Bonneville to prefect HS, no date or month, 1867.

rebelling against the gendarmerie in the village of Arith (Savoie) in the spring of 1862 when the café patrons refused to leave at closing time.¹⁵

Another area of particular sensitivity was that of forest management. As the historian Tamara Whited has shown, the French government realized that it had an incipient environmental disaster on its hands regarding management and exploitation of forests and began to step up enforcement throughout the country in 1860, the very year of the annexation.¹⁶ Thus it was understandable that the French government initially feared that the brutal murder in 1861 of a rural guard in Saint-André (Savoie) was a retaliation against the exigencies of the French forest regime. The victim had recently issued a citation to the perpetrator for having illegally pillaged wood in a communal forest. The sub-prefect of Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne, Faverges, discouraged this interpretation of the crime, citing instead the generally “brutal” character of the perpetrator.¹⁷ Nevertheless, Dieu’s report to the Minister of the Interior reveals the prominence of forest management concerns for the department. “Before the annexation, there were considerable abuses in forest management that we have had and still have much difficulty to repress. The theft of wood, among other habits, had passed into the customs of the inhabitants; it’s no longer tolerated today and those who lived from it are discontent.” A line edited out of the prefect’s final version of the report further noted, “a part of the population regrets the free-for-all of the Sardinian regime. They dread the active and severe surveillance of our guards, but would never commit such a crime.”¹⁸ Forests were also a key problem in the mountainous backcountry of the Alpes-Maritimes. In 1867, prefect Gavini reported that the Niçois had filed numerous complaints against the forest administration. The government dispatched an inspector to the department to investigate the complaints.¹⁹

And, of course, the transition to the French tax and customs regimes were hardly likely to be welcomed with enthusiasm. Aimé-Louis Bouverat, a carpenter originally from Scionzier (Haute-Savoie), made the unfortunate error of taking out his frustration about some local payments on the police commissioner of nearby Cluses. Bouverat, who was both an epileptic and drunk at the time, claimed he was not subject to the taxes. The commissioner informed Bouverat that he was not the competent official to judge or receive the claim, causing Bouverat to burst into a cascade of insults. The commissioner ended the conversation by escorting Bouverat out of his office, but the man continued screaming in the streets, attracting a crowd, and eventually the commissioner arrested him. Bouverat was so resistant that he tried to grab the commissioner’s throat and also punched him squarely in the stomach. The Bonneville court sentenced him to two years of imprisonment for insults and assaults to a police commissioner. The severity of the punishment was intentional: the court noted that it had chosen the punishment in part in order to use him as an example “in a country where drunkenness is the common vice of the inhabitants, and gives rise daily to scenes and fights that too often go unpunished.”²⁰ Bouverat’s own request for a pardon, sent to the Emperor in February 1862, once again sounded the familiar plea for patience, tolerance and flexibility so commonly raised by the inhabitants of the annexed departments. “It is your prerogative, Sire,” he pleaded, “to soften the severity and the

¹⁵ AD Savoie, 9 M II 4, draft report for grid, prefect Savoie to MI (Feb. 15 to Feb. 28), 4 March 1862.

¹⁶ See Tamara L. Whited, *Forest and Peasant Politics in Modern France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

¹⁷ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, SP Saint-Jean to prefect Savoie, 29 September 1861.

¹⁸ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, draft, prefect Savoie to MI, DGSP, 12 October 1861.

¹⁹ AN, F 1cIII (AM) 1, grid report, prefect AM to MI, 1 April 1867.

²⁰ BB 24 653-673 PG Chambéry to MJ, 16 March 1862.

inflexibility of laws in certain cases.” In this case he was referring to the laws that enabled the judges to levy such a heavy prison sentence, but the statement repeated nearly word-for-word Jean Vera’s own pleading for leniency for his son during the Isola incident. In the event, even the commissioner who had been attacked submitted a letter in support of Bouverat’s early release from prison.²¹

In the fall of 1861, François Poncet of Pognier (Savoie), claimed that he had overheard the Emperor and the imperial family denounced in a private conversation during a fair in the town of Coise. When the central police commissioner of Chambéry went to interview Poncet and confirm his story, his suspicions of Poncet’s veracity were immediately aroused, for Poncet “appeared very embarrassed” and only repeated what he had overheard after much hesitation. Poncet told the commissioner that he had heard the men complaining that it wasn’t fair that they were paying higher taxes under the French regime than they had before the annexation, but he declined to repeat his earlier statement that the conversation had ended with a denunciation of the sovereign. When the police commissioner quoted from Poncet’s original denunciation, Poncet reacted evasively by declaring that the public scribe to whom he had dictated his denunciation must have added the remarks about the Emperor without his consent. Asked to provide the name of this scribe, Poncet feigned ignorance of his name and whereabouts.

The policeman’s investigation showed that while the five accused men all had high reputations among their co-citizens, their accuser Poncet was known for having dissipated a minor inheritance and had previously claimed to be a victim of injustice under the Sardinian regime, blaming his creditors for expropriating his inheritance. The police commissioner concluded that Poncet had denounced the five men “in order to attract the attention of the Imperial family to his situation.” At the same time, the police commissioner acknowledged the possibility, if not the probability, that the men in Coise actually had been complaining openly about their taxes. The fair had brought together citizens from many of the communes in the region; including Poncet, the six men had hailed from three different local villages. “We can’t make a crime out of those who express this dissatisfaction, all we must do is explain the situation to them. The slightest act of repression in this respect would be unfortunate,” the commissioner claimed.²² Poncet was ultimately also let off without punishment because the Minister of the Interior’s security division preferred to hush up the matter rather than allow the details of the alleged denunciation to be made public.²³

From the French government’s official perspective, the implementation of these laws, regulations and procedures was designed to reform “abuses,” those vestigial administrative practices that might have been permitted under Sardinia but could not be tolerated now that Nice and Savoy were in France. The administration therefore expected some degree of resistance on the part of the populations, particularly where lax discipline, indifferent oversight, or lucrative special interests had held sway. Speaking of the Alpes-Maritimes in 1863, the public prosecutor of Aix-en-Provence remarked, “The abuses tolerated under the Sardinian regime had their partisans, and that the rigorous oversight of the French administration, the execution of police measures, the application of fiscal and forest laws, have necessarily had the effect of creating individual dissatisfaction.”²⁴ Niçois and Savoyards who ran afoul of the French system

²¹ BB 24 653-673 Request for pardon of Bouverat, no date, received by the commission of petitions, 14 February 1862.

²² AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, CCP Chambéry to prefect Savoie, 29 September 1861.

²³ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, MI, DGSP, to prefect Savoie, 16 October 1861.

²⁴ BB 30 370 3, PG Aix to MJ, 9 January 1863.

inevitably, like Vera, Bouverat, and Ligeon, emphasized the importance of the transition period and of “flexibility.” To be fair, some administrators did try to keep in mind the remarkable distinction between the less diligent Sardinian and the centralized French governing style that Jean Vera had gestured to in his letter to the Emperor. As prefect Dieu conceded in 1862, “Unaccustomed to the precise and rigorous rules of our administration, everything worries and offends [the Savoyards] if we’re not careful to provide and frequently repeat suitable explanations. Under the Sardinian regime, the laws and police regulations were very flabbily and often poorly executed; now, to ensure their full and exact execution, we must act with prudence and measure; and not act ruthlessly when contraventions are the result of old habits that won’t simply disappear overnight; and especially not to exaggerate the severity of our regulations by the ways they are implemented.”²⁵

Yet resistance was not the only reaction. As the testimonies of Dr. Usannaz and many of his co-citizens demonstrate, many of the inhabitants of Nice and Savoy welcomed the stricter but better governance of the Second Empire. Even as some in Nice and Savoy complained about the strict enforcement of law and order by the new French government, others dissented and begged the government to do more. Some of the most zealous administrators were none other than those Niçois and Savoyard elites who had been so thoroughly involved in promoting the annexation. After the forest guard incident in Saint-André, sub-prefect Faverges in Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne, the Savoyard former intendant who had been instrumental in preparing and supporting the annexation in 1860, warned his superior against easing up any of the new forest restrictions that were assumed to be the motive for the killing. “Our *montagnards* are too logical to fail to understand that the forest administration is defending them,” he wrote.²⁶ Many of those Niçois and Savoyards who took on new administrative functions after the annexation eagerly threw themselves into the task of working to integrate their province into the national whole. They inevitably found themselves bewildered by their tasks or stymied by local factions in their efforts to govern. When this occurred, they turned to the first French official whom they believed could intervene and make their words carry the force of law—and make their decisions prevail in the face of the recalcitrant.

The County of Nice had been French less than six months when mayor Barraia of the small hilltop village of Berre wrote to the Prefect, explaining that his commune was virtually ungovernable and asking for assistance. “It may be due to good faith or malice; to *bonhomie* or the fact that laws are not obeyed in this area; or due to the negligence of my predecessors, but the fact is that during the night here, the young men especially, have always sung in the streets, gone to cabarets and nightclubs, on holidays, even during the parish mass and the vespers, and leave drunk; this leads to fights, disputes that get everyone stirred up, outrages, and insults.” He recounted that the previous Sunday, several residents of Berre had refused to go inside when asked to disperse, and instead, “long accustomed to disobeying their superiors,” had simply redoubled their noise, and screamed insults at the mayor and his adjunct. He requested that the government send gendarmes to monitor the commune on Sundays and holidays.²⁷ Though the prefect sent Barraia an encouraging response, promising to support him and informing him that he could call on the gendarmes in the canton for assistance if necessary, Barraia’s troubles worsened.²⁸ A few weeks later, Barraia sent a follow-up letter elaborating on his continued

²⁵ AD Savoie, 9 M II 4, draft grid report, prefect Savoie to MI (1–15 December 1862), sent 16 December 1862.

²⁶ AD Savoie, 9 M II 4, SP Saint-Jean to prefect Savoie 29 September 1861.

²⁷ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 346, letter from mayor of Berre to prefect AM, 24 October 1860.

²⁸ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 346, draft, prefect AM to mayor of Berre, 7 November 1860.

difficulties. This time, he laid the blame on village factions allied to his mayoral predecessor, Pierre Barraia d'Alexandre. Deploring the state of affairs, Barraia complained:

How could [Alexandre] make himself respected, feared, and obeyed by the inhabitants when his children were always the first to cause problems? In the cabarets, the first to make noise, to get into fights? In the streets, at all hours of the night, singing, making noise, disturbing the peace and quiet of inhabitants? Under the authority of their father, they have taken on a certain predominant and presumptuous spirit, which causes them to scorn all authorities, and I've heard them even say this with my own ears. In talking to his pals, he said 'Fie! Are you afraid of him [speaking of the mayor]? Let's sing, have a good time, do what we want. In our village we've always indulged our caprices, and we're going to let this little man tell us what to do? If he decides to stop us from doing what we want, it's his misfortune, he'll pay for it.'

Mayor Barraia may well have been the target of other village factions. He explained that other young men related to members of the municipal council were participating in acts of "libertinage" and "demoralization." Reporting an incident that suspiciously resembles the later brawl in Isola, Barraia wrote, "They say that there's nothing to fear from the mayor, and pay no attention to the police. Last Sunday the young people had a public ball without my permission, saying that they're allowed to dance without authorization." On one evening, the young men had shouted insults right outside of the door of his house. When he went out the following morning, he found that the young men had rampaged through his land, tearing down trees and scattering the figs laid out to dry. In closing his letter, Barraia warned the prefect about the area. "This is a demoralized country. We need a good police commissioner, or things will continue poorly." Following up on his previous request for greater surveillance, he asked that the Prefect assign him a "zealous" police commissioner and two rural guards, and also asked that he arrange for the gendarmes of the canton to patrol the town undercover on Sunday nights. He also wanted "an decree from the prefect for this town, that recalls the principal attributions of mayors, and adjuncts, that cites the articles of the penal code that determine penalties and police contraventions, and especially all those that contravene regulations legally made by municipal authority." He asked that the decree be printed up "in bold letters to send to the mayor and affix to the door of town hall."²⁹

Like Barraia in Berre and Usannaz in Aime, a group of men from Grésy-sur-Isère (Savoie), identifying themselves as "heads of families and landowners" wrote to prefect Dieu shortly after the French takeover in 1860 begging for better and more widespread police surveillance. "It's easy to understand how a station of carabinieri is necessary in the capital of any mandement, to maintain order, for the constant and efficient surveillance at all hours, and notably on days when there are many people about, such as days with fairs, markets and military conscription. The mandement of Grésy needs such a station even more than others; its strong, robust, rowdy population, left to itself, brings itself frequently to excesses that lead to consternation and inspire the greatest fear. There aren't any feast days or Sundays when there aren't fights that always end with blows, by even more worrisome threats as there's no immediate means of repression." The authors of the letter then shared the story of a recent outrage that had underscored the need for more agents of public order. A young girl from Montailleur, accompanied by two men and passing through Grésy at night, had encountered a

²⁹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 346, letter from mayor of Berre to prefect AM, 26 November 1860.

gang of ten men who chased away her escorts and brutally raped her.³⁰ Things also began poorly in Peille, another hilltop town in the backcountry of the County of Nice, for the sitting mayor Jean-Baptiste Robini, who was engaged in a power struggle against Séraphin Blanchi, the mayoral adjunct appointed in October 1860. At nine in the evening of October 7, some of Blanchi's sons performed a *farandole* dance outside of Robini's house, accompanied by cries of "Long live the adjunct, down with the mayor, down with the cuckold!" The crowd then retired to a number of taverns, including that of Henri Boglio, where a riot broke out shortly before midnight. Since the town had no police commissioner, mayor Robini got out of bed, went over to the inn and ordered everyone to go home. When the young men refused to pay attention, he invoked the legal force of the government by donning his mayoral sash. "With this official motto I summoned them in the name of the law to retire. But instead of obeying my order, they made fun of me, and saying that I had no right to do anything or to say anything, and if I wanted to complain to the authorities, I should have paid them."³¹

Women also appealed directly to the highest French authorities for assistance where they felt that local authorities had failed them. In 1861 a woman named François Millo, of the Niçois hilltop village of Coaraze, wrote and asked for help for her daughter Adélaïde. The young woman, she claimed, was being constantly harassed by the young men of the village. "Since June 24, the feast day of Coaraze, they have blamed her, spread rumors about her, and did everything they could so no young men would ask her to dance; since then, they've continued to talk about her as though she were a whore," Millo reported despondently. Adélaïde's problems were compounded by the role that she had played during a recent visit prefect Gavini had made to the area. As part of the administrator's welcome to the commune, the young woman had ridden her mule to the top of the Ferrion mountain and had presented Gavini with a bouquet of flowers. This prompted the town's young men to spread fresh rumors about Adélaïde's supposed amorous activities with the prefect's cook. According to Millo, the young men were going about town saying, "Poor thing, well, what do you expect, it did her good, she gave in to her carnal desires with the prefect's cook, and she'll pop out a half-cook and half-prefect!" They went on to proclaim that other members of the Prefect's retinue had also indulged in amorous interludes with the young woman, and that "only a bandit would want her for a husband." Françoise Millo shared her colorful tale with the hope of obtaining at Gavini's hands the intervention that she claimed had not been forthcoming from Coaraze's mayor, whose only response had been, "It's child's play, you have to let young people have their fun." To ensure Gavini's interest in a local conflict, Millo explained that the young men were now denigrating the prefect's own authority in a bawdy song that they had composed about Adélaïde and were now bandying about joyfully in town. She clearly believed that the highest representative of the French government in the department would take her side once he learned that he occupied a central place in a dirty local ditty, whose verses included the following gems:

She doesn't regret the visit of a prefect
She was courted and kissed by a cook.

What a beautiful day, complete with a prefect

³⁰ AD Savoie, 9 M III 14, letter from landowners and heads of families in Grésy-sur-Isère to prefect Savoie. Though I could not decipher the date given on this petition, it probably dates to the second half of 1860. Dieu was the prefect between 1860 and 1863, but the writers use a number of Sardinian terms, such as *mandement* and *carabiniers*, that suggest unfamiliarity with French administration.

³¹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 346, mayor of Peille to PI Nice, 10 October 1860.

She was courted and especially by a cook.

This girl lost her honor.
She lost it the day of the festival.

Justice from *Baissa* won't put them in prison.³²

Knowing that the Prefect might not be able to decipher the song in patois, Françoise Millo patiently explained the full significance of the lines to him. “You see, M. le Prefect,” she wrote, “they talk about you also, and in the last couplet they ridicule justice, and your power. To give you an idea of that, I'll explain the last verse: you dined, M. le Prefect, on the *Ferrion* mountain, in a site known by the name of *Baissa*.” Millo's complaint was powerful enough to elicit a visit from the local gendarmerie. Ultimately, the incident ended there, as the administrative authorities decided that the local conflict was too minor to merit further intervention—the Prefect's chef's reputation notwithstanding.³³

One of the reasons why certain laws and restrictions proved hard to implement was the power of municipal politics. Particularly in small towns, mayors might have been otherwise willing to enforce French legislation and procedures, but were understandably reluctant to make themselves unpopular—and possibly lose their positions—by insisting on strict conformity to French rules. The police commissioner of Bonneville (Haute-Savoie), for example, complained in 1867 that the suppression of débits de boisson in the arrondissement was foundering because mayors were afraid of “personal vengeance” and simply turned a blind eye to the problem.³⁴

Cultural Obstacles

Ultimately, Frenchmen, Niçois and Savoyards alike had a mutual interest in promoting the annexation through the introduction of French laws, procedures and regulations into the two provinces. The majority of the annexed populations accepted the need for Nice and Savoy to become fully integrated into the French governing system. But this common goal was frequently hampered by the cultural tensions engendered by the arrival of French administrators into the two provinces. Both Frenchmen and the inhabitants of the annexed territories tended to assign certain negative character traits to each other, which greatly hindered the government's official desire for an “assimilation” or “fusion”—two frequently used terms—of the two populations.

The French often considered the populations of Savoy to be typical mountain-dwellers: penny-pinching, suspicious, insular, needlessly stubborn, fiercely autonomous, overly sensitive and proud—all qualities unlikely to advance the introduction of French laws and regulations into the province. Some found them unfairly demanding, wanting only the benefits of the annexation without having to make any sacrifices: this was a mentality described by an irritated Senator Laity during his trip through the province in April 1860 as “taking everything and keeping everything.”³⁵ Sometimes these supposed qualities could be attributed to the aftereffect of years of poor Sardinian governance. Prefect Dieu viewed Savoyard whining as the result of the former government's downright negligence. “There is, especially in the bourgeoisie of the towns, a

³² AD Alpes-Maritimes, 4 M 77, letter in the name of Françoise Millo, signed by Pierre Millo, to prefect AM, 19 August 1861; two other letters from Françoise Millo to prefect AM.

³³ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 4 M 77, handwritten note in file.

³⁴ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 19, grid report, CS Bonneville to prefect HS, no date or month, 1867.

³⁵ Senator Laity to MI, 15 April 1860, in Paul Guichonnet, “Un épisode décisif de l'annexion : La Mission du Sénateur Laity en Savoie (Avril 1860),” *Revue Savoisienne* 95 (1955): 139.

susceptibility to every word and outrageous demands. The more they're given, the more they want, and they complain to get more. Under the Sardinian regime, they only got anything through persistent requests, and this method has to some degree entered into local habits," he wrote in 1862.³⁶ Even the offhanded comments in the periodical reports filed by administrators provide clues into French civil servants' perceptions of the annexed populations. In his March report of 1868, the special police commissioner of La Roche (Haute-Savoie), discussing the adjudication of the rectification of the road from Les Bornes to La Roche, remarked offhandedly, "it's due to the good state of the roads that the Savoyards have deigned to accord a few sympathies to the French regime."³⁷ The choice of the emotionally-laden terms "deigned" and "a few sympathies," with their distinct connotations of imperiousness, suggest the prevailing belief that such sympathies were exceptionally rare. And in his August 1863 report summarizing the state of public opinion, the sub-prefect of Moûtiers wrote that public opinion "seems even to have taken another step towards condescending to the directions of superior authority, even in the Bourg and Moûtiers cantons where the spirit of independence has even more sway."³⁸ That the sub-prefect—himself a Savoyard native—used the word "condescending" and deplored the "spirit of independence" endemic to the area suggests the extent to which the government's employees viewed the stubborn and haughty character of the inhabitants.

Cultural misunderstandings plagued the annexation from its earliest days. For a man whose imperially-ordained mission was to secure the adhesion of Savoyards in the Faucigny and the Chablais to the annexation, Senator Laity on several occasions made a number of remarkable cultural missteps during his brief stay in the province. His behavior during the trip had made it painfully clear that he had done little preparatory research about Savoy prior to his arrival. In his memoirs of the annexation, Hector Laracine, the editor of the conservative, Catholic *Courrier des Alpes* in 1860, described Laity as "getting himself up to speed about a country about which he clearly didn't know the first thing." Laracine also remembered that Laity had asked him, "M. Laracine, how much of Savoy is French speaking?" Laracine's deadpan response: "All there is of it."³⁹ Cultural disconnect probably explains Laity's perceptions of the Savoyard population as apathetic and disengaged prior to the plebiscite, and his repeated complaints about it. Ignoring the warm receptions he had received in towns throughout Savoy, Laity wrote on April 18, 1860, "The apathy of the populations of this country is hopeless," and lamented that the only way to ensure a unanimous vote would be to carry the electoral urn to every inhabitant's house in turn.⁴⁰

With remarks such as this, Laity had managed to infuriate and seriously offend a man who should have been among his closest allies, the Savoyard regent intendant of the Maurienne and future sub-prefect of Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne, Milliet de Faverges. Laity must have said something inflammatory to Faverges about the local population, for shortly after the plebiscite Faverges wrote to Charles Dupasquier, the provisional governor of Chambéry, "I cannot forgive M. Laity for the misplaced tone of discontent, because he judged my Mauriennais too quickly."⁴¹

³⁶ AD Savoie, 9 M II 4, draft, grid report, prefect Savoie to MI (1–15 December 1862), sent 16 December 1862.

³⁷ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 310, CS La Roche to prefect HS, 23 March 1868.

³⁸ AD Savoie, 9 M II 4, grid report, SP Moûtiers to prefect Savoie, 4 September 1863.

³⁹ Hector Laracine, *Mémoire*, in *1860: La Savoie choisit son destin*, ed. Maurice Messiez (Chambéry, France, Société Savoisienne d'Histoire et d'Archéologie, 2009), 226.

⁴⁰ Senator Laity to MAE, 18 April 1860, in Guichonnet, "Un épisode décisif," 140.

⁴¹ Letter from regent intendant of Maurienne to regent governor Chambéry, in Jacques Lovie, "Les agents Français et l'esprit public en Savoie de décembre 1859 à mai 1860, d'après des sources inédites," *Revue Savoisienne* 101 no. 1 / 2 (1961): 88–9.

When the plebiscite results were published, revealing that the Maurienne had voted as strongly in favor of the annexation as the rest of Savoy, the still rankling and defensive Faverges evidently interpreted the results as a vindication. “Even though the Maurienne supposedly lacked enthusiasm,” he wrote smugly to the interim governor in Chambéry, making an obvious reference to Laity’s comments, “it’s precisely because [the Maurienne] was less enthusiastic that its vote was only more serious, more thoughtful, more convincing.... France and the Emperor have forever true and good Frenchmen in Maurienne.”⁴² Hector Laracine also recalled that Laity’s insensitivities had spoiled one of the moments that should have been among the most triumphant. A delegation from Chambéry’s municipal council visited Laity’s hotel on April 23 to bring him the good news of the historic capital’s overwhelmingly favorable vote. Laity followed the announcement with a disastrous impromptu speech that ended with the statement, “Now that Savoy has ceased to exist, there is no longer a Savoy, vive la France!” In Laracine’s recollection, “it was like a shower of ice-cold water, perfectly calculated to chill enthusiasm.” Afterwards, the newspaper *Le Courrier des Alpes* actually had to edit Laity’s speech to soften its tone before reprinting it, and the authorities hurriedly put together a banquet at the theater to give Laity another opportunity to pronounce a more conciliatory speech.⁴³

Laity was certainly not the only Frenchman to arrive in Savoy with an unflattering portrait of the province’s inhabitants. As early as October 1860, Annecy’s police commissioner sent a special report to prefect Petetin warning him that he had noticed an unfortunate tendency of the French administrators to make fun of or belittle the Savoyard population. “Though they’re just joking around, I’d like to think, they ridicule the inhabitants of the area, and don’t even hesitate to say things in public that offend (for no discernable reason) those natives who hear them. Up until now, this has not led to any regrettable event, but it’s come to my attention that the Savoisiens (the young especially) are very susceptible as you know, and they believe that their national pride has been insulted, and may not be able to withstand such sarcasms for long.”⁴⁴ The police commissioner clearly shared the perception that the Savoyards were oversensitive, but argued that this presented real dangers during a critical period of transition. “Some malicious people are looking for, and might take advantage of any opportunity that might come along to cause hatred of the imperial government,” he warned. “[The administrators have enough to do here without creating more problems by antagonizing the population.”⁴⁵ Petetin, himself a Savoyard, acknowledged that this was a major concern, and responded by asking the commissioner to do his own part by privately mentioning his concerns to the different heads of the service. “We can’t act publicly; so we must act as much as possible in private.”⁴⁶

Savoyards and Niçois maintained their own share of prejudices towards the French, frequently accusing them of being arrogant, rude, overzealous and capricious. One of the more persistent prejudices in Savoy was the widespread idea that the majority of the jobs in the civil service were going to Frenchmen rather than to Savoyards themselves. In numerous reports of the decade, administrators complained that a common Savoyard pastime was counting the number of Frenchmen in the civil service and comparing it to the number of Savoyards. As Chambéry’s public appellate prosecutor perceptively noted in 1863:

⁴² AD Savoie, 2 FS 5, letter from regent intendant Maurienne to regent governor Chambéry, 26 April 1860.

⁴³ Laracine, *Mémoire*, 228.

⁴⁴ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 18, CP Annecy to prefect HS, 17 October 1860.

⁴⁵ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 18, CP Annecy to prefect HS, 17 October 1860.

⁴⁶ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 18, draft, prefect HS to CP Annecy, 18 October 1860.

[Under the Sardinian regime] all the administrators of Savoy were *par force* Savoisiens, as only a few very high administrators were sent by Sardinia and if they sent few, they took even fewer Savoyards since there were few sufficiently familiar with the Italian language. Furthermore all the Savoisien deputies voted together in the opposition. Politically today Savoy has no longer remained oppositional, but it still seems that it's supposed to be governed by Savoisiens. French administrators, thanks to their language and also, to a small degree, to their French spirit are much more welcome to the country than Sardinian functionaries, but much less welcome than Savoisien administrators.... Moreover they compare the numbers of French functionaries sent into Savoy and the Savoisiens sent into *l'ancienne France*.⁴⁷

The public prosecutor returned to this theme in many of his reports of the decade, remarking in 1868 that the populations continued to believe that “entrusting some [positions in the civil service] to foreigners is tantamount to stealing from them.”⁴⁸ Though perhaps exaggerated, the complaint may not have been, in fact, an unfounded one, as many of the government's administrators felt that the only way to ensure the progress of the transition was to continue to send Frenchmen of red-blooded, old-French stock into the annexed territories. In 1865, the Haute-Savoie's prefect Joseph Ferrand asked the Minister of Finance to send specially-selected bureaucrats into his department. “There's still a lot to be done in Savoy, M. le Ministre,” he wrote in a frustrated, though not defeated tone, “from the point of view of the moral annexation [of Savoy]. Due to the difference in their characters, in their customs, in their prejudices and in the tendency of the Savoyards to consider the French foreigners, the complete fusion of the indigenous and French populations has encountered obstacles that are far from being overcome. Under these conditions it seems to me that there's a significant political interest that the Government send to this department, for the most important positions, exclusively functionaries from *l'ancienne France*, chosen with particular care, and likely to obtain, in their residences, a certain influence that will contribute to spreading, little by little around them, French ideas and customs.”⁴⁹

In the Alpes-Maritimes, there was less direct complaining that Niçois employees were losing their jobs to Frenchmen. Ironically, in Nice such complaining would have been understandable: France had shuttered both the County's Court of Appeals—formerly the province's Senate—and the city's branch of the University of Turin immediately after the annexation. Yet the department did play host to a strange and related corollary, the rumors of a “Corsican conspiracy.” This theory held that prefect Gavini, originally from Corsica, was packing government registers with other Corsicans, to the exclusion of employees from other parts of France and especially of Niçois. The rumors required enough consistency to prompt the Minister of the Interior to inquire directly in November 1863 whether they had any foundation. “I've received complaints that most of the jobs in your administration are being granted to men of Corsican origins,” he wrote, “and that many of those you have selected leave much to be desired in terms of their morality and aptitude.”⁵⁰ The height of the problem occurred in 1864

⁴⁷ AN, BB 30 375 2, PG Chambéry to MJ, 31 December 1863.

⁴⁸ AN, BB 30 375 2, PG Chambéry to MI, 31 March 1868.

⁴⁹ AN, F 1cIII (HS) 2. copy of letter from prefect of HS to Ministry of Finances, 27 January 1865. Underlines in the original.

⁵⁰ AN, F 1cIII (AM) 2, draft, MI to prefect AM, 17 November 1863.

after a young supernumerary was murdered by the Corsican tax collector of Villars.⁵¹ The public prosecutor in Aix admitted afterward that he didn't know whether the accusations of Corsican influence were founded, but that the critiques had gained strength following the assassination.⁵²

The Persistence of Particularism

Over the course of the decade, much of the opposition or resentment to the annexation in Savoy and Nice grew out of this difficult, if inevitable combination of cultural and administrative resistance. When provoked or frustrated, under the influence of alcohol or simply burdened by weight of the work required to tie the two provinces to the rest of the country, both governors and governed alike took refuge in the comfort of insults, epithets or other remarks that impugned national loyalties and levels of civilization. These quickly became grafted on to the initial conflicts, and often resulted in exacerbating them. In 1866, the rudeness of a French schoolteacher in Quintal (Haute-Savoie) a M. Rassat, so infuriated a local tax collector, M. Veuilland, that Veuilland stormed into the school inspector's office to complain, yelling, "I've just been in Quintal, I saw your clown of a teacher, and I don't understand why you have such men teaching, you should send them to a penal colony." He then launched into a tirade against Rassat that quickly threatened to become violent. "If this manager had been my height, I would've blown his brains out; I had five or six revolvers on me," Veuilland yelled, pulling out one of his weapons and waving it about. "And he isn't the first I'd teach a lesson to, I'm just as brave as the French, although they love to boast. I'm no idiot; I'm a relative of M. Dunan, the councilor of the prefecture, of M. Pissard, the deputy, I'm a licensed lawyer; I'm the first tax collector of the department; I've been cited in the agenda, I'm more capable than 50 of your teachers, and now I'm being ridiculed by a clown, a boy, some ass on whose behalf I've sent over 100 letters of recommendation since I taught him. I know French much better than those who're trying to teach it to us."⁵³

Soldiers, gendarmes, policemen and other agents of public order—who were responsible for ensuring the proper functioning of the police state in rural areas—inevitably provoked a disproportionate share of conflicts in both Nice and Savoy. In early September 1861, townsman Victor Emmanuel Brunet of Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne claimed that for some time, soldiers from the garrison had been charging through his vineyards and destroying his crops even after he had asked them not to trespass on his property. With the consent of the sub-prefect, Saint-Jean's police commissioner accompanied Brunet to the lieutenant commander of the detachment to file a complaint. The lieutenant commandant, after listening to the complaints, asked the two men to return the following morning, September 5, to see if they could identify the culprits at the morning reveille. Brunet singled out three soldiers whom he recognized, and claimed that they had ignored his requests that they stay off his property. He also embellished his tale, claiming that they had at one point loosened a bayonet and said, "We're going to skewer you like a frog." He further accused them of having accosted him on September 3 by coming up to him and muttering, "If it were ten at night right now, boy, we'd throw your ass in the water."⁵⁴

Not surprisingly, the soldiers protested their innocence and fired off a series of counteraccusations. They accused Brunet of having insulted them—and the French army

⁵¹ AN, BB 30 370 3 PG Aix to MJ, 2 April 1864.

⁵² AN, BB 30 370 3 PG Aix to MJ, 2 April 1864.

⁵³ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 76, no. 1365, Academy of Chambéry, department HS, inspection of primary schools of Anney, to the Academy inspector, 19 March 1866.

⁵⁴ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, CP Saint-Jean to SP Saint-Jean, 5 September 1861.

generally—on numerous occasions. They also accused Brunet of unsavory behavior. On one occasion, they claimed, he had approached the sentinel stationed on guard duty in front of the bishop’s residence, and had remarked, “Hey, you’re good looking, it’s clear you’re from Paris.” They also claimed that Brunet had run after them on a public road, threatening them with a large club.⁵⁵ The defendants’ story was backed up by a number of other soldiers. Forced to choose between Brunet’s allegations and those of his men, the commander sided with his troops. He had Brunet arrested and brought to the gendarmes’ barracks, much to the delight of the troops, who punctuated his ignominious departure with cheers and jeers. The captain of the gendarmerie quickly freed the indignant prisoner, but not before agreeing to draw up a formal complaint against Brunet and forward it to the prosecutor.⁵⁶ Saint-Jean’s police commissioner, who had not foreseen this outcome, was terribly embarrassed by Brunet’s arrest. He described Brunet as a mild-mannered, honest, upstanding citizen whose only concern had been to protect his property. Brunet, the commissioner claimed, had not wanted to get the soldiers into trouble with their superior officer; he had only decided to complain about the soldiers’ behavior on the advice of the commissioner and sub-prefect. Faverges also sided with Brunet, and threw himself energetically into the task of damage control. “The public prosecutor shares my opinion that this affair should be hushed up because of the imprudent arrest of Brunet, which would give too much support to legal recriminations in a legal debate,” he wrote, signaling that a town notable had already made known his willingness to take up the case on Brunet’s behalf.⁵⁷ The prefect’s correspondence on the matter, on the other hand, showed that he had believed the soldiers rather than the police commissioner or Brunet, whom he characterized as lacking in common sense and generally “violent and bitter towards everyone because of the ruin into which he has fallen.”⁵⁸

Tensions from the Brunet incident had not yet abated when, on September 10, a second incident occurred in Saint-Jean, again involving the sentry in front of the Episcopal palace. It began innocently enough, when one of the bishop’s employees casually asked the sentry, Le Bossier, to keep an eye out and prevent the local children from interfering with the course of a nearby stream that ran into the gardens of the palace.⁵⁹ Though the request—made by a civilian—was unusual, Le Bossier dutifully intervened when, shortly thereafter, a boy began playing with the stream. Le Bossier first yelled at him to leave, and when that failed to have an effect, tried to attract the child’s attention by throwing some pebbles near him. He finally went right up to the child, stamping his feet to frighten him off. As fate would have it, the child was mentally disabled and deaf, and was so startled by Le Bossier’s approach that he toppled headfirst into the stream.⁶⁰ His cries brought his parents running, and in the confusion the boy’s father,

⁵⁵ In his monthly report dated 6 October 1861, the prefect reported that “a road worker (*cantonnier du service vicinal*) was chased by a landowner armed with a cudgel, for having stopped the landowner from building a dam to collect rainwater, which would have impeded traffic and degraded the road.” This seems to be the same incident recalled by the soldiers. AD Savoie, 9 M II 4, draft grid report, prefect Savoie to MI, 6 October 1861.

⁵⁶ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, CP Saint-Jean to SP Saint-Jean, 4 September 1861; SP Saint-Jean to prefect Savoie, 7 September 1861.

⁵⁷ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, SP Saint-Jean to prefect Savoie, 7 September 1861.

⁵⁸ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, draft, prefect Savoie to MI, DGSP, 21 September 1861.

⁵⁹ A later version of the story reported by the prefect held that the soldier had been asked to prevent children from turning on the tap of a nearby fountain, which probably created a stream of water that flowed into the episcopal garden. AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, draft, prefect Savoie to Marshall Count of Castellane, 4th army corps in Lyon, 21 September 1861.

⁶⁰ The archival materials characterize the young boy as a “half-cretin” and mute, though the story would seem to indicate that he was also deaf.

who had not actually witnessed the incident, verbally threatened Le Bosser and accused him of having struck and maltreated his son.⁶¹ The lieutenant commander of the detachment, Hervé, who did not believe that Le Bosser had mistreated the child, ultimately punished Le Bosser to eight days' prison for having obeyed an order given by a civilian.

The soldiers involved in the conflict were extremely upset by the way that this incident had unfolded. They felt that Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne's inhabitants were finding the least pretext to find fault with, if not directly provoke, the soldiers. In relating what had happened, Hervé sarcastically concluded, "And so a mountain was created out of a molehill." He reported that he had given "severe" instructions to his soldiers to respect the inhabitants of Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne and their property. But he also signaled that the military was not prepared to take the exclusive blame when they were being baited by the local populations, writing that "it is also indispensable that malevolent, malicious or disgruntled inhabitants not be permitted to provoke our soldiers."⁶² The soldiers' frustration was compounded by the lackluster support they had received from the civil authorities, whom they felt had sided with the population over themselves. Of sub-prefect Faverges' handling of the incident, Hervé remarked, "I was truly stunned to see the role in which this official of high esteem had been cast by the malevolence of some of the inhabitants."⁶³ The general commanding the subdivisions of the 22nd infantry line blamed both Faverges and Saint-Jean's mayor for going directly to the commander of the detachment based on hearsay, instead of questioning the child. When news of the incidents reached him, Marshall Castellane, the commander of the 4th army corps, writing from Lyon, offered his assurance that any soldiers that were provoking civilians rather than protecting them would face exemplary punishment. He also sentenced the commander of Saint-Jean's detachment to 8 days of imprisonment, and imprisoned Le Bosser as well as the chef de poste for an additional eight days.⁶⁴

The presence of soldiers and gendarmes in the Maurienne continued to cause problems throughout the spring of the following year. In January 1862, three French soldiers, Jean Tharassary, François Barielles and François Darrigues, were drinking in the widow Rambaud's cabaret. Two of the party were from the Basque country and began singing songs in Basque, to the annoyance of some of the other patrons but to the delight of the father-in-law of the stationmaster, himself a Basque. He went over to the soldiers, introduced himself, and bought them several rounds of drinks. After his departure, the soldiers continued singing, and Tharassary became progressively drunk. Mme Rambaud, who was beginning to shut up the establishment, politely told them, addressing Tharassary in particular, that it would soon be closing time and that they needed to be on their way. The soldiers told her stubbornly that they had permission to stay, but nevertheless began to get their things in order to leave. As he did so, one soldier, drunk and clearly taking out his frustration on her, turned to his friends and ungraciously tossed out the magic epithet: "You know, it's really annoying to sit here being molested by these Savoyards." Given the context, one can only imagine the tone of disdain in which the remark, and the word

⁶¹ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, copy, lieutenant commander of the detachment to Colonel Martineau, commander of the 54th line, 12 September 1861.

⁶² AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, general commanding the 3rd and 4th subdivisions of the 22nd line to prefect Savoie, enclosing letter from Hervé to his colonel, 13 September 1861.

⁶³ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, copy, lieutenant commander of the detachment to Colonel Martineau, commander of the 54th line, 12 September 1861.

⁶⁴ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, general commanding the 3rd and 4th subdivisions of the 22nd line to prefect Savoie, enclosing letter from Hervé to his colonel, 13 September 1861.

Savoyard, had been uttered. An altercation quickly followed as two other patrons, Cozlin and Deplante followed the soldiers to the exit and pushed them out the door “a bit brusquely.” The ensuing fistfight was only broken up by the arrival of two gendarmes, who sent the soldiers on their way.⁶⁵

This particular incident shows the pitfalls associated with the two terms that were then in use to designate the inhabitants of Savoy. In the mid-nineteenth century, the term *Savoisien* was probably more widespread than that of *Savoyard*. The latter term carried distinctly negative and at worst outright pejorative connotations. The suffix *-ard* generally has a negative connotation in French, and the term Savoyard came to be used to designate poor, uneducated and rustic émigrés to French cities, undoubtedly because a large proportion of these émigrés did hail from Savoy. Like emigrants from other regions of France, Savoyard emigrants in French urban areas tended to specialize in certain trades. Savoyards were highly associated with chimney-sweeping, to the point where chimney sweeps were often simply referred to as Savoyards regardless of their actual origins. In reality this was a tragic association, as many chimney sweeps were exploited child laborers. For all of these reasons, when Frenchmen used the term Savoyard in Savoy, it could be extremely offensive, essentially an epithet or provincial slur. In 1861, Annecy’s police commissioner commented specifically on the trouble posed by the use of the word. He explained that the French used it out of carelessness, ignorance or laziness rather than out of malice, but its use still needed to be discouraged. “French employees attach no importance to what they’re saying, and elsewhere this wouldn’t even be noticed,” he wrote to prefect Ferrand. “But here we need some reserve, especially because the word *Savoyard* pronounced in a certain way, singularly evokes the susceptibility of your charges, who always consider this locution as an injurious epithet.”⁶⁶

On the night of February 16, 1862, another conflict linked to both the ongoing tensions with the gendarmerie and the term Savoyard occurred in Saint-Michel-de-Maurienne, just a few kilometers southeast of Saint-Jean. Some unknown individuals used a long metal pole to snap the wooden flagpole on the façade of the gendarmes’ barracks and then absconded with the French flag. In his first report to the prefect about the matter, sub-prefect Faverges confessed, “I’m afraid that certain Savoyards, dissatisfied under any regime, might be behind this scandal.”⁶⁷ As in Saint-Jean the theft of the flag was a dramatic expression of already-existing tensions between the gendarmes and Saint-Michel’s inhabitants. Investigations into the incident revealed, for example, that on one previous occasion, a young gendarme who was in the middle of an argument with a man in a café had arrested a third observer who had unceremoniously butted into their conversation. But the tensions between the two groups were significantly worsened by the behavior of the wife of the brigadier of the gendarmerie. She had earned a reputation as a thoroughly unpleasant woman who constantly made rude and insulting remarks to the locals, “whom she calls Savoyards with disdain.”⁶⁸ According to de Faverges, the trigger-happy gendarme had been disciplined, while various solutions to the problem of the brigadier’s family situation had also been proposed, including putting him up for retirement, or allowing him to continue working but moving his wife out of town until he retired. The sub-prefect explained,

⁶⁵ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, cantonal police commissioner Saint-Jean to prefect Savoie, 15 January 1862.

⁶⁶ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 18, CP Annecy to prefect HS, 13 August 1861.

⁶⁷ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, letter, SP Saint-Jean to prefect Savoie, 18 February 1862.

⁶⁸ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, draft, prefect Savoie to MI, DGSP, 23 February 1862. Underline in the original.

“People just wanted him get rid of his wife until [his retirement], if he had possessed a sufficient fortune to enable him to set up two households.”⁶⁹

In drawing up their formal report of the incident a few days later, the gendarmes stationed in Saint-Michel strongly suggested that a local conspiracy was preventing the true culprits from being discovered. “From certain anonymous comments, it seems possible that the culprits are known, but no one wants to provide any indications as to who they are; all we’re hearing is that they’ll soon be discovered, and meanwhile people are allowing suspicion to fall on non-French subjects.”⁷⁰ The commander of the 26th legion of the gendarmerie of Savoie was infuriated by the efforts of Saint-Michel’s municipal leaders to downplay the significance of the incident. “The population seems to condemn the incident, but the authorities of Saint-Michel have rejected the idea of their involvement. Moreover they prefer to characterize this as a farce, some type of game, an unfortunate joke by some drunkards who don’t understand the gravity of their actions.”⁷¹ While the commander did not believe that the population were rejecting their French nationality by stealing the flag, he did believe that it had been an act of defiance against the gendarmes. Summarizing what many French officials felt about their interactions with locals in the first years after the annexation, the commander of the gendarmerie complained,

These people, like all those of Savoy, are sensitive beyond all reason, and spoiled by years of excessive tolerance. They tolerate rules with difficulty. There are very few official reports that don’t result in recriminations. For most infractions, people find excuses, or at the very least attenuating circumstances that they want the gendarmes to take into consideration. But proceeding in such a fashion would negate all repression, and it has been impossible for the gendarmerie, in spite of its great desire to promote public opinion, to take these considerations into account. And so the gendarmerie is accused of excessive rigor.⁷²

The Maurienne incidents all share some common features. It is not hard to imagine Brunet criticizing the entire French army in public after finding some of its members trooping through his fields, nor the sarcastic tone in which Brunet had then goaded the officer stationed in front of the episcopal residence for his “Parisian” good looks, emphasizing the soldier’s status as a transplant from the distant capital. For his part, the sentry at the bishop’s palace, Le Bosset, must have been frustrated that his own willingness to do a favor for the bishop’s servant had resulted in a week’s imprisonment. Nor is it difficult to picture the disdain with which the brigadier’s unpopular wife and the Basque soldiers had castigated the locals as “Savoyards” and the anger aroused by her behavior. What is interesting is the rapidity with which both Savoyards and Frenchmen took refuge in provincialism and insularity, and resorted to impugning each other’s national or provincial origins.

This was behavior that might easily slide from mere frustration with regulations or personalities into quasi-political opposition, as an incident in Annecy demonstrated. On the night of August 12–13, 1861, the gendarmes in Annecy came across a seditious poster nailed to a tree, in handwritten letters carefully disguised to look like typographical characters. The poster read: “To arms, brave Savoyards, the French government, not satisfied with exploiting us with all its filibusters, wants to rob us of our loyalties; let us return France’s crown of iron and take back our

⁶⁹ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, SP Saint-Jean to prefect Savoie, 20 February 1862.

⁷⁰ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, gendarmerie, 26th legion, company of Savoie, arrondissement Saint-Jean, brigade 25, 20 February 1862.

⁷¹ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, no. 132, gendarmerie, 26th legion, company of Savoie to prefect Savoie, 10 May 1862.

⁷² AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, gendarmerie, 26th legion, company of Savoie to prefect Savoie, 22 February 1862.

immortal crown.”⁷³ With this statement, the poster’s author seemed to be casting aspersions on France’s treatment of Savoy, accusing the government of “exploiting” Savoyards and “filibustering,” and perhaps expressing dissatisfaction with the pace of reforms or the arrival of the benefits supposedly resulting from the annexation. The author also accused the French of “robbing” Savoyards of their loyalties and asked Savoyards to “take back our immortal crown,” a reference that gestured, if not to Italy, then certainly to the House of Savoy and Savoyard autonomy. The gendarmes downplayed the importance of the poster, claiming that it was clearly the work of a madman.”⁷⁴ Annecy’s police commissioner wrote to prefect Ferrand and told him that this was not the first time that such posters had appeared. He believed that the writer of these posters was taking revenge for the behavior of French administrators by trying to humiliate them. He reported that anonymous writings printed in Geneva and attacking the former prefect, Petetin, including his private life, had circulated in the area earlier in the year. Other anonymous letters using similar expression and style had been received by lower-level employees. “It’s the sick imagination of some individuals who, following the annexation of Savoy to France, have lost their positions, or had to cease illegal exploitations, but they are rare exceptions,” he concluded.⁷⁵ But the commissioner recognized the need for caution and prudence. “It is desirable that all public functionaries remain reserved regarding the inhabitants, and never fall into these critiques—however lighthearted, but inevitably misinterpreted by the inhabitants—that characterize our national spirit.”⁷⁶

Concerned that a new proclamation that Annecy’s mayor had distributed might invite further acts of mischief, the commissioner decided to post a police agent surreptitiously near every single one of the posters. At midnight on the evening of August 14, two men approached the poster tacked up at the angle of the Rue Filaterie and the Rue de Grenette, in the very center of Annecy’s old town. They looked around quickly for observers and split up. The man who remained, twenty-six year-old François Falconnet, went up to the municipal poster and pretended to read it, then quickly licked a small scrap of red paper with the word “stolen” on it and stuck it up onto the poster, covering the word “returned”—in reference to Savoy’s return to France.⁷⁷ The police agent immediately emerged from hiding and detained Falconnet, who tried unsuccessfully to flee. When brought up in front of his handiwork, Falconnet tried to grab his alteration from the poster to destroy the incriminating evidence, but the agent was too quick for him. The police commissioner then walked through the entire town checking the posters on the walls to make sure that Falconnet or his friends had not managed to make other alterations. Upon returning to the corner of the Rue Grenette, he found eleven other scraps of red paper identical to the first tossed on the ground, where Falconnet had dropped them in his unsuccessful attempt to flee.⁷⁸ As with the previous day’s poster, Falconnet’s alteration on the mayor’s proclamation recast the nature of the Franco-Savoyard relationship. Instead of the official narrative of Frenchmen and Savoyards working together to advance a common interest and future, Falconnet

⁷³ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 12, report no. 358, Gendarmerie, 26th legion, company of HS to prefect HS, 14 August 1861.

⁷⁴ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 12, report no. 358, Gendarmerie, 26th legion, company of HS to prefect HS, 14 August 1861.

⁷⁵ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 18, CP Annecy to prefect HS, 13 August 1861.

⁷⁶ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 18, CP Annecy to prefect HS, 13 August 1861.

⁷⁷ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 18, CP Annecy to prefect HS, 15 August 1861. The archival file does not have a copy of the original poster, but the context of the report makes it fairly clear that the substitution of the term “stolen” for “returned” was in reference to the annexation.

⁷⁸ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 18, CP Annecy to prefect HS, 15 August 1861.

and the other anonymous discontents portrayed the French brutalizing the Savoyards: France had “stolen” Savoy, which had not merely “returned” to the fold.

In Nice, too, conflicts about power and authority frequently escalated into conflicts with a notable regional dimension. Mirroring the situation in Savoy, the years 1861 and 1862 witnessed an unusual number of incidents between the population of Nice and soldiers, customs agents and gendarmes of the city. On at least two occasions in 1861, sailors from the ship *Montebello* docked in the bay of Villefranche were involved in conflicts with the population. On the evening of November 11, the sailor Ernst Leuret and one of his friends were leaving the brothel in the rue Emmanuel Philibert on their way to another in the rue Saint-Roch. As they entered the rue Victor, they passed by four civilians, one of whom muttered under his breath, “Look at the pigs from the *Montebello* passing.” Though the insult was pronounced in Niçard, Leuret had no difficulty understanding it; walking up to the young men, he asked them if they were referring to himself and his friend. When he received an affirmative reply, Leuret retorted, “Although I’m alone, and there are four of you, I forbid you to repeat that insult.” At that point, one of the four young men, wearing a cap with a red turban, pulled a pistol loaded with buckshot out of his pocket and shot Leuret in the chest.⁷⁹ The injury was, fortunately, not fatal.

As in Savoy, fault did not always lie with the Niçois. The rowdy behavior of the soldiers and sailors stationed in or on leave in Nice frequently tried the patience of the city’s inhabitants. Thirty-seven year old Niçois sharecropper Joseph Bonifassi was returning to Villefranche from Nice on the evening of June 26th, 1861, when he was waylaid by four soldiers of the 90th infantry line. Without saying a word, the men beat him up until another passing soldier ran over to protect Bonifassi, while the four others fled on foot. The following evening, the same four soldiers appeared at a nearby café operated by M. Tordo and ordered a meal of bread, wine and cheese, followed by cigars, but left without paying. Later that evening, they banged on the door of Pierre Massa’s café and demanded that he bring them something to drink. Speaking from the window, Massa’s wife told them indignantly that it was too late in the evening and refused to open the establishment to them. The soldiers retaliated by throwing stones at the door, breaking a pane of glass and calling Massa an asshole and his wife a whore.⁸⁰ Villefranche was again the scene of difficulties on the evening of New Year’s Day 1862, when Jean Fubetto, a Piedmontese laborer, was attacked by a soldier in the street named Louis Philippe. Philippe yelled at him, “Frenchman by force!” and sliced at his head with a saber, leaving him senseless on the ground and covered in blood. The soldier was immediately imprisoned.⁸¹ “Frenchman by force” was an extremely offensive comment. By attacking the agency of the Niçois in the annexation—an agency that had been so symbolically demonstrated by the nearly-unanimous plebiscite—the royally-named Louis Philippe had insinuated that the Niçois weren’t quite up to French standards. The expression appears to have been widespread, at least in Villefranche. The following year, two soldiers of the garrison were drinking in M. Jaquemur’s café and picked a fight with some young men sitting at the next table by shouting over to them that they were “Frenchmen by force.”

⁷⁹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 346, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 12 November 1861.

⁸⁰ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 346, gendarmerie, arrondissement Nice, brigade Villefranche no. 24 to prefect AM, 27 June 1861; gendarmerie, arrondissement Nice, 9th brigade, 30 June 1861, to prefect AM; CS Villefranche to prefect AM, 30 June 1861.

⁸¹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 346, CS Villefranche to prefect AM, 2 January 1862. The commissioner misdated the event 1861; it actually occurred in 1862.

When the soldiers left the establishment, the young men, eighteen year-old Thomas Bermond and nineteen year-old Antoine Constanzo pelted them with stones.⁸²

The March 1862 arrest of Ludovic Gerbolin at the port of Nice for insulting and attacking soldiers is a particularly interesting illustration of the relationship between governors and governed because the city's police commissioner and the director of the custom service in Nice presented two quite different versions of what had led to Gerbolin's arrest. Yet both versions of the incidents indicate that one of the catalyzing factors of the disagreement was the exchange of insults between the soldiers and the Niçois population about regional particularism. According to the version reported by police commissioner and the soldiers of the 90th infantry line, three sailors from the cruiser anchored in the port of Nice were attacked on the evening of March 7 shortly after coming ashore. The principal aggressor, Ludovic Gerbolin, a thirty-year-old locksmith, had been born in Nice but had opted for Italian nationality after the annexation. On catching sight of the struggle, the sergeant on guard at the post at the port, Alfred Lamouroux, went over to assist the sailors, and eventually succeeded in arresting Gerbolin, who shouted, "Vive Garibaldi, the French are pigs, crooks, scum!" As Lamouroux led his prisoner back to the post, a group of individuals threw stones at them, though none tried to free Gerbolin. Lamouroux responded by waving his bayonet at the crowd, and to intimidate them shouted "Fire!" This succeeded in dispersing the crowd. When searched, Gerbolin was found to be in possession of an impressive dagger that he claimed to have purchased during a trip to Calabria. The police commissioner of Nice characterized Gerbolin as "displaying, on every occasion, the most hostile sentiments towards France."⁸³

When the soldiers reported the incident to their superiors and to the central police commissioner, they faulted the nearby brigade of customs agents for not coming to their assistance. The director of the customs service in Nice sent a stinging rebuttal, claiming that his agents had not intervened because the incident was far less serious than the soldiers had reported. He included a report by three customs agents and their captain, Custor, with their version of events. The customs officers' version of the incident reported that six sailors from the cruiser had disembarked onto the west pier at the port. There they had chatted with customs officer Fenouille, who was on guard duty at the nearby customs office, as well as the group of sailors. The sailors were in a bad mood, complaining to Fenouille that some local youths had just thrown stones at them, for the third night in the row, and that as they had never had any problems with the inhabitants of Nice they did not understand why they were being so targeted. After they had finished chatting, four of the sailors left the area, and shortly thereafter four Niçois youths ambled onto the pier. The two remaining sailors, according to Fenouille, were responsible for igniting the conflict. Still irritated by the treatment they had received on previous nights, they lashed out at the young men, "referring to the Niçois in a rude manner." According to Fenouille and his colleague Riboulon, the sailors said accusingly, "Since you're now French like we are, why can't you behave like Frenchmen? If you want, say the word, we'll take you on two against two and teach you a lesson." One of the youths angrily replied, "There are Frenchmen who aren't much better than certain Niçois." It was at this point that the army sergeant on guard, Lamouroux, intervened, asking the sailors and civilians alike to disperse. When neither group paid him any attention, Lamouroux went back to his post for reinforcements and arrested

⁸² AN, F 1cIII (AM) 2, copy, CS Villefranche to MI, DSGP, 2 February 1863.

⁸³ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 346, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 18 March 1862. By this date, the central police commissioner Lordereau had arrested five of Gerbolin's suspected cronies in the assault.

Gerbolin even as the other three Niçois fled on foot. From this point, the account of the soldiers and the customs agents diverged mainly in terms of the perceived gravity of the events.⁸⁴

From the perspective of the customs director, the customs agents had not intervened because the soldiers had not been in any real danger. But the two versions of the incident were in agreement on several points. First, with the exception of Gerbolin himself, the youths involved were quite young. The customs agents characterized the youths who had descended from the rue Emmanuel-Philibert as being fifteen to sixteen years old. The day after the incident, the city's central police commissioner arrested five of Gerbolin's accomplices, all of whom were between the ages of seventeen and twenty-one. Except for Gerbolin and one other participant, Pastorelli, the rest were French nationals, and all came from the ranks of the artisanat; three were coopers, and Pastorelli and Gerbolin were locksmiths. Second, the precipitating factor of the incident was an argument between these youths and the sailors, during which the national character of the Niçois had been impugned. Whether showering stones or pebbles at the sailors, and later at the soldiers represented a serious challenge to French authority or was simply an example of youths amusing themselves, the annoyed sailors interpreted it as being "un-French." Neither the police commissioner nor Gavini had any difficulty accepting the most confrontational version of the incident, which also placed the blame on the Niçois youths rather than on the French sailors. A few days later, Gavini chose to report the more confrontational version of the events to his superiors in Paris. He closed his report by suggesting that whatever the outcome of the trials, the two men who had opted for Italian nationality, Gerbolin and Pastorelli, be expelled from French territory. Gerbolin was sentenced to two months of prison, while five of the other suspects received five to six days' imprisonment, and one was acquitted. Gavini asked for a warrant for Gerbolin's expulsion from France on April 16.⁸⁵

Tensions between members of the armed forces and the Niçois population continued to create difficulties in 1862. In May, a fistfight pitted two soldiers of the garrison, Raby and Miroy, against two young workers, one of them named Rolland. The soldiers claimed that the young men, while passing the soldiers, had said "These French shits, look how they embarrass themselves!" The soldiers then dared them to repeat their words. Rolland denied that he had made the remark, but, angered, he fired back, "If you think I said that, let's go to the beach, we'll take care of you!"⁸⁶ After some passing bystanders broke up the fistfight, Raby ran after Rolland with his bayonet, and though Raby did not succeed in catching him, Rolland was eventually arrested by the gendarmerie.⁸⁷ Another incident took place on March 30, when three drunk grenadiers threatened some Niçois locals, calling them "cowardly rogues, scum, *misérables*," while one of them unsheathed his saber.⁸⁸ On the evening of November 9, 1862, police officers Pinchenat and Kropp broke up a fight in Mme. Barralis' brothel in the rue Emmanuel Philibert. The two succeeded in clearing the establishment of most of its patrons, but client, a man named Caliste Malotti, stubbornly refused to leave. Instead he grabbed Pinchenat by the collar and

⁸⁴ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 346, copy, report of captain of the customs service, annotated and completed by a report of the divisional inspector, 18 March 1862.

⁸⁵ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 346, draft, prefect AM to MI, DSGP, 20 March 1862; note from CCP, 4 April 1862.

⁸⁶ AN, F 1cIII (AM) 2, copy, prefect AM to MI, DGSP, 8 May 1862; AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 346, report no. 338, gendarmerie, 16th legion, company AM to prefect AM, 6 May 1862.

⁸⁷ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 346, report no. 338, gendarmerie, 16th legion, company AM, to prefect AM, 6 May 1862; 1 M 347, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 5 May 1862. The police commissioner's report presented a slightly different version of the insult: "Hey, look at these French shits passing."

⁸⁸ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 346, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 31 March 1862.

pushed him unceremoniously onto the street. The two agents drew their swords to protect themselves, and Kropp ran for reinforcements. Three men were arrested, including Malotti, who sustained sword wounds to his nose and head, and his brother Celestin.⁸⁹ At their trial on November 28, Malotti's lawyer, Frédéric Faraut, made a number of rhetorical jabs against the French police and administration, declaring that "Kropp and Pinchenat are cowards, murderers, assassins, the government gave them swords to protect the laws and not to assassinate the Niçois." The remark was so outrageous that Vice-President Gazan had to call Faraut to order, while the presiding substitute, M. Calmels de Pontin, in his summing-up, publicly denounced Faraut's comments.⁹⁰ The police commissioner reported that Faraut had established a reputation for attacking France and its institutions, often in his debating circle, to the point where members were now avoiding the circle altogether to avoid entering into debates with him.

Opposition to the agents of French administration did not necessarily lead to violence. Sometimes mere humiliation or complaining sufficed. In M. Liautaud's inn in Saint-Martin-d'Entraunes (Alpes-Maritimes), doctor Florentin Salicis, put out by the terrible state of the roads he had just traversed between Guillaumes and Saint Martin, had little complementary to say about French administration. "The French government is nothing at all, and its employees are all good-for-nothings; they're good at staying at home and taking to the bottle, but are incapable of functioning," he sniffed. Having detained Salicis, the arresting gendarme noted that Liautaud had tolerated this speech passively without interrupting it or informing the authorities, and suggested to his superior that they shut down the establishment for a time as an example to others.⁹¹ In 1862, a minor scandal occurred in Sospel when two French officials, M. Batallier, a tax collector employed by the direct taxation administration, and M. Bocanano, an employee of the highway and roads service, found that they could no longer stand to live in the house they were renting from M. Vassal-Henri Casoni, and moved out. Casoni was apparently a nightmarish landlord: due to his financial situation he refused to make the necessary repairs to the apartment, and Bocagnano's room was so damp that he took to living in a hotel even though he had paid Casoni three months' rent in advance. Deprived of his tenants, Casoni took public revenge. He put up a poster that declared, in large letters, "Entry forbidden to the French employees residing in Sospello, B and B." Hung in a staircase on the first floor on a column situated between the doors of the apartments, the poster attracted significant attention from passersby. It did not help the situation that Sospel's mayor was living on the second floor of the house.⁹² In Breil, the French schoolteacher, M. Langard, was locked in a battle to the death with abbé Louis Toesca.⁹³ Toesca constantly insulted Langard and even taught the town's schoolchildren insults to hurl at Langard. Calling Toesca "the most evil and malicious individual of our commune," the mayor, Baron Cachiardy de Montfleury, reported that Toesca's exhortations had completely destroyed Langard's moral authority in the classroom. He connected this communal conflict to the ongoing difficulties encountered by French administrators such as Langard in the County. "This system of insults, which has been going on for some time now, has greatly harmed French employees; up

⁸⁹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 357, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 17 December 1862.

⁹⁰ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 357, CCP to prefect AM, 17 December 1862.

⁹¹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 343, gendarmerie, 16th legion, company AM, arrondissement of Puget to SP Puget, 16 April 1862.

⁹² AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, CS Sospel to prefect AM, 18 October 1862 and 21 October 1862.

⁹³ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 346, letter from Cachiardy de Montfleury to prefect AM, 14 June 1865.

until today good sense and mistrust have exposed these lies, but I anticipate that one day or another, their patience at an end, their anger will erupt on the shoulders of Sr. Louis Toesca.”⁹⁴

The French administration had expected some degree of opposition to the implementation of its procedures. But the magnitude and persistence of the tensions seems to have been unexpected. To some extent, the French government was a victim of its own rhetoric. Having justified the annexation on the basis of nationality and having portrayed Nice and Savoy as essentially French in language, customs and aspirations, the French were unprepared for the complexities of their acquisitions. The government remained particularly concerned by the perceived provincial insularity of Niçois and Savoyards. Complained prefect Ferrand of the Haute-Savoie in 1867, “to be entirely fair to most of the functionaries, it has to be said that if their main goal is to perpetrate the annexation, to operate the most complete fusion, they encounter in general from the inhabitants a coldness and even a defiance that discourages them.”⁹⁵ The public appellate prosecutor in Chambéry dismissed those Savoyards who were “complaining without any foundation that Savoy has been treated as a conquered country.”⁹⁶ In the Alpes-Maritimes, Gavini pondered the relationship between Niçois provincialism and the annexation, trying to decide whether it was a symptom of a deeper longing to reverse the 1860 settlement. While cautioning against attaching more importance to the problem than it deserved, he shared his feeling that “the Niçois, above all, is Niçois, never Italian; and today that he’s become French he feels the need to display his regrets for his former *patrie*, to which he does not, however, want to belong again. It must be hoped that the innumerable benefits that the area has been showered with since the annexation will conquer at some point this spirit of resistance that is easier to understand than qualify officially.”⁹⁷ He repeated this assessment the following year. “the Niçois is a *frondeur* (troublemaker) by character, he’s really neither French nor Italian, he’s Niçois. When the destinies of his country were linked to that of Piedmont, there was no sarcasm he wouldn’t address to the Italians, criticizing everything that they did or didn’t do. Now that the country has become French, the Niçois, whose character hasn’t changed, continue to engage in a bit of opposition. In the depths of their hearts, they have reason to be satisfied with the current state of affairs, I’m persuaded that the majority would not return voluntarily under the domination of their former *patrie*, which they certainly love, but from a distance.”⁹⁸

* * *

As generations of scholars such as Eugen Weber have shown, conflicts ignited by the transplantation of French administrators into local communities occurred to varying degrees in most French departments during the nineteenth century. What made Nice and Savoy distinct was the fact that elsewhere, the interference of the state in local affairs had taken place more gradually. The transition in Nice and Savoy after 1860 was both immediate and abrupt. For all the annexation’s rhetorical emphasis on “reuniting” Nice and Savoy to France—reacquainting the two provinces with their Napoleonic past and bracketing the Sardinian restoration of 1815–1860—several generations of Niçois and Savoyards had become familiarized with Sardinian governance. As their addresses to the sovereign in 1860 had demonstrated, the inhabitants of Nice and Savoy did want better and more assiduous government from France. But this improvement in governance inevitably came at the cost of reducing the relative autonomy Nice

⁹⁴ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 346, letter from Cachiardy de Montfleury to prefect AM, 14 June 1865.

⁹⁵ AN, F 1cIII (HS) 1, report, grid format, prefect HS to MI, 1 March 1867.

⁹⁶ AN BB 30 375 2, PG Chambéry to MJ, 2 October 1864.

⁹⁷ AN, F 1cIII (AM) 1, grid report, prefect AM To MI 3 August 1868.

⁹⁸ AN, F 1cIII (AM) 1, grid report, prefect AM To MI, 3 March 1869.

and Savoy had enjoyed under the Sardinian regime. In many cases the French state represented a threat to entrenched interests, a situation made worse by the unfamiliarity of the newly-annexed populations with the procedures of the French administration. At the same time, many Savoyards and Niçois accepted the transition enthusiastically, appealing to French authorities to enforce and cement their newfound authority and promote their personal ambitions.

The tensions between Niçois and Savoyards and French administrators during the first decade of the annexation were largely due to differences of perspective. They did not necessarily indicate a serious reappraisal of the annexation, or any fundamental desire to overturn the settlement of 1860. Complaining about the overzealousness of the new administration, its disappointing sluggishness in producing the hoped-for benefits of the annexation, or its mixed record in promoting personal advancement, was by no means incompatible with a general acceptance their province's future in the French state. Nevertheless, these incidents did have an effect on public opinion and morale, and contributed to maintaining a certain level of mutual distrust between the Frenchmen and the annexed populations. Government employees' reports of public opinion fluctuated from the most expansive optimism about the progress of the annexation to the depths of despair.

Administrative opposition and cultural particularism also helped reinforce political currents or tendencies that did maintain a revisionist political agenda. As the protestant, pro-Swiss anti-annexationist Grégoire Hudry-Menos warned in the pages of the *Revue des Deux-Mondes* in 1862, "The former local autonomies that make up France didn't melt down in one day, and among those that have been put successively into the crucible of the great nation, there isn't perhaps a single one more refractory than Savoy. We must even fear that the precipitation with which the assimilation of Savoy to France is proceeding might have the consequence of returning it to its traditional role of passive resistance."⁹⁹ And a decade after the annexation, the public appellate prosecutor in Chambéry warned his superiors about continued signs of stubborn and resistant provincialism:

To give you an idea of the exclusiveness of the area, I will tell you that when the Empress visited Savoie last year, the daughters of French employees in Chambéry, even those permanently settled in Savoy, were not permitted among the young girls who gave a bouquet to Her Majesty; the circle of *chevaliers tireurs* under the presidency of the Marquis de Serra refused to welcome the soldiers of the garrison simply because they are French and there are no obligations that require them to do so. The Academy of Savoy recently awarded a prize to the author of the best work published within the past year on Savoy. The brochure of Rurnier on the Chartreuse of Saint Hugon was chosen over the three volumes of M. de Saint Genix on the history of Savoy purely because M. de Saint Genix wasn't born in Savoy, because his history was written with independence and he didn't limit himself to praising everything about Savoy.¹⁰⁰

One might assume that at this time this report was composed, in April 1870, with Napoleon III planning to hold a plebiscite to sanction the changes in the Empire's structure, and with foreign relations with Prussia already strained, the public prosecutor in Chambéry would have had more pressing concerns. But this was a visible, uncomfortable reminder of the work that remained

⁹⁹ Grégoire Hudry-Menos, "La Savoie depuis l'annexion," *Revue des Deux-Mondes* 32, no. 2, tome 42 (15 November 1862): 386.

¹⁰⁰ AN, BB 30 390, PG Chambéry to MJ, 4 April 1870.

after a decade of annexation that supposedly 99 percent of Savoy had wanted. For the public prosecutor, the unfair representation of Savoyard and French girls in an homage to the empress was more immediately frightening than the seemingly unthinkable prospect of war or imperial collapse.

Chapter 3 **The Myths and Realities of Foreign Subversion**

In June, 1860, just days before the formal handover of Nice and Savoy to France, two Savoyards from the town of Aussois, near the Sardinian government's Esseillon fortresses, were walking on the road through the Maurienne valley on their way to the provincial capital at Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne. They had the misfortune to encounter a squad of Piedmontese soldiers from the forts, who were engaging in target practice. Due to the shape of the road, the two travelers were forced to walk between the soldiers and their targets. While the commanding sergeant instructed his soldiers to hold their fire and allow the two men to pass, the service officer cried out in Piedmontese, "Keep firing! Let them go to France if they aren't happy!" at which the soldiers tauntingly fired bullets around the frightened travelers, who ran for their lives.¹

Compared to the multiple and bloody wars of Italian and German unification of the same decade, the annexation of Nice and Savoy resembles a nineteenth-century "velvet divorce," to borrow the phrase commonly applied to the 1993 dissolution of Czechoslovakia. France had, of course, contributed soldiers, arms, and ultimately blood in the first Italian war of unification in 1859. But those battles had occurred entirely on Italian soil, far from the rugged mountains and valleys of Nice and Savoy. This, coupled with the consensual legitimacy provided by the plebiscite, has tended to reinforce the conclusion that the international dimension of the annexation was relatively straightforward and essentially settled by June 1860. Yet for the populations who experienced this change, such as the travelers in the Maurienne, this comparatively bloodless reorganization of European territory was experienced as nothing less than perilous. The annexation left France with inherited problems related to Nice and Savoy's adjacent neighbors, Switzerland and Italy. Neither country had been pleased by the prospect of French territorial aggrandizement, and public opinion in both countries was hostile to France. During the following decade, Swiss and Italian hostility, and French concerns about the two countries' perceived intentions toward the annexed territories, caused the French government to keep a vigilant watch on the two provinces for signs of foreign interference that might jeopardize the annexation.

* * *

Post-Annexation Conflict on the Franco-Swiss Border

France's diplomatic relationship with Switzerland, already mediocre on the eve of the annexation, became one of mutual hostility after 1860, as the liberal republic to Savoy's north licked its wounds and engaged in rhetorically-violent saber-rattling regarding the annexation's violation of its perceived rights to the old provinces of the Chablais and the Faucigny. Swiss worries about the annexation, as we have seen, were due to the strange shape of the border that it inherited from the annexation. The canton of Geneva was now a strangely-shaped appendage incongruously penetrating into French territory, surrounded on three sides by France, both "old" (the Ain department) and "new" (the Haute-Savoie). The annexation intensified Swiss fears that the French might move to annex the canton of Geneva and, in so doing, complete the revision of the 1815 treaties that had stripped France of its Swiss gains, especially Geneva and territory belonging to the former Bishopric of Basel. It is important to note that this fear, though greatly exploited by Swiss political leaders, was not entirely unreasonable. Throughout the 1860s, during which Napoleon III was doing his best to flex French diplomatic muscle in Europe and

¹ AN, F 1cIII (Savoie) 2, gendarmerie, 26th legion, company of Savoie, arrondissement Saint-Jean to MI, 7 August 1860.

even in Mexico, ordinary French administrators occasionally indulged in a surprisingly casual belief that it was only a matter of time before Geneva was made a part of France. Curiously, they rarely alluded to any kind of military occupation or forced annexation. Rather, it was simply felt that French-speaking Geneva, surrounded by France since the annexation, would naturally gravitate towards the Empire.

Yet in spite of the mutual Franco-Swiss hostility over the annexation of Savoy, France's concession of the free-trade Zone to the Haute-Savoie guaranteed the persistence of generations-old cross-border exchanges and the continued flourishing of economic links between northern Savoy and Switzerland. Most of the economic activity of northern Savoy continued to be oriented towards Geneva, and border traffic remained heavy, ensuring that Swiss and Savoyards were in regular contact with each other. The first half of the decade was therefore a period of unusual difficulty along the border. As the French administration took over in the Haute-Savoie, tensions between French and Swiss nationals continued to simmer, and reports trickled in from Geneva that the political conflict and anti-French rhetoric was beginning to manifest itself in incidents and attacks on the French and Savoyard populations settled in or passing through the canton. As early as the summer of 1860, the French consul in Geneva, Marshall Chevalier, had signaled possible problems between Savoyards and Frenchmen on the one hand and Swiss on the other as a result of the tensions arising from the annexation.

Savoy had been French for all of nine days when the first such incident occurred. On June 23, a M. Chautemps, a businessmen from Valleiry in the Haute-Savoie, was trying to transport a shipment of French salt from Pougny (Ain), a French commune on the north side of the Rhône close to the Swiss border town of Chancy, to the Savoyard town of Vulbens.² The tension between France and Switzerland as a result of the annexation derailed Chautemps' plans to simply transit through Swiss territory in the extreme southwest tip of the canton of Geneva. Vulbens' mayor claimed that the Swiss customs agents—in spite of the free-trade Zone established by the annexation—would not allow them to transport the salt through Swiss territory, “a new measure that they have invented out of bad humor towards France.” Instead, Chautemps arranged to have the salt ferried across the Rhône, avoiding Swiss territory altogether. While Chautemps' men oversaw the unloading of the salt on a river island close to the mouth of a stream called the Vosogne, two Swiss gendarmes and the rural guard of Chancy approached. They claimed that the merchandise was being unloaded on Swiss, not Savoyard territory, and proceeded to seize 53 sacks of salt, then called for wagons from Chancy to transport the salt back to the village. The delay afforded Chautemps with the opportunity to send for reinforcements from Valleiry, whose numbers convinced the Swiss gendarmes to beat a hasty retreat back to Chancy. Vulbens' mayor was incensed by the incident, writing to the prefect of the Haute-Savoie, Anselme Petetin, that “the Swiss, perhaps because they own the land where the loading takes place, will say that this island belongs to the canton of Geneva, but this is not so; the Vosogne is the dividing line between the two countries.”³ The French gendarme dispatched to report on the incident confirmed, after carefully inspecting the site, that the salt had never left French soil. But he reported the curious conversations that he had just had with Chancy's mayor and some of its citizens, who claimed that they did not know how far the territory of their commune extended.⁴ They would apparently learn the position of its borders

² Though the archival documents do not give his name, this was probably Jean-Marie Chautemps, the mayor of Valleiry during annexation and the father of the future Third Republic deputies Alphonse and Émile Chautemps.

³ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 53, mayor of Vulbens to prefect HS, 24 June 1860.

⁴ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 12, report no. 27, gendarmerie, 26th legion, company HS to prefect HS, 4 July 1860.

very quickly: just a week after the incident, the mayor of Chancy complained to Switzerland's Federal Council that France had violated Swiss territory by permitting three French gendarmes armed with rifles and sabers to escort Chautemps to the city hall of Chancy, where he was to face smuggling charges.⁵

At the end of July, Marie Darthaz, a laborer from Saint-Cergues, traveled to the Swiss town of Collex-Bossy, in the canton of Geneva, to visit his son François, who was hiding out for a month to avoid a prison sentence imposed on him by a court in Saint-Julien. The two enjoyed a few drinks in a local bar, and then made their way to Geneva, where they continued to indulge in drinks at the Café de l'Ancre in the Eaux-Vives quarter, then a suburb of Geneva. Trouble occurred when father and son began "chatting noisily" about the Emperor, about France and the recent annexation. As they were about to leave, a fight broke out with local Swiss nationals, purportedly after some ferrymen on the docks insulted the Emperor. Marie Darthaz was hit over the head, possibly by an oar; outnumbered, his son fled the scene. Marie Darthaz died of his head injuries a few days later.⁶

Another attack on French nationals at the end of August 1860 led to a major degradation of Franco-Swiss relations. The incident involved not Savoyards but a delegation of about three hundred people from the Pays de Gex in the Ain department, and about three hundred Frenchmen living in Geneva. This group had traveled from Geneva via steamboat to attend the celebration in Thonon for the passage of the Emperor and Empress on their post-annexation tour of Savoy. The members of the delegation, led by the mayor of Gex, who arranged for the town's tricolor to be brought along in a wooden box and flown for the festivities, transited through Geneva uneventfully. Their return on the evening of August 31, however, proved perilous. As their ship approached the dock in Geneva, the passengers were greeted by a hostile crowd of people, who were whistling and booing the French arrivals, and crying familiar remarks such as "Down with Badinguet!" As the passengers disembarked, the Swiss positioned themselves so that the disembarking passengers were forced to file between them one by one, as they continued to shout insults. The crowd attacked the man carrying the box containing Gex's flag and grabbed it away from him, threatening to throw it into the Rhône. An assailant in the crowd also grabbed and then spat on the Napoleonic Sainte-Hélène medal that one of the inhabitants of Gex, a M. Chappuis, had been wearing in honor of the Emperor's uncle.

The mayor of Gex, who provided an account of the incident, believed that it had been premeditated, since the crowd seemed prepared and well-organized and the gaslights on the quay had been extinguished. He accused the Swiss radical and fierce anti-annexationist James Fazy of involvement. Fazy had been present on the quay when the boat arrived and who seemed to stand by without taking steps to put a stop to the incident. Fazy only intervened, the mayor claimed, after the theft of the flag, fearing that the riot was getting out of hand. "At this point he appeared in a window and with a few words, the crowd dissipated," the mayor wrote accusingly.⁷ The French consul in Geneva reported that similar demonstrations had been planned in other towns in the Vaud canton, in case the Gex deputation decided to make the return journey via a different

⁵ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 53, Marshall Castellane, commander of the 4th army corps to prefect HS, 14 July 1860.

⁶ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 53, draft, prefect HS to MI, MAE, 9 August 1860; AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 12, gendarmerie, 26th legion, company HS, arrondissement Saint-Julien to prefect HS in Chambéry, 8 August 1860; AN, F 1cIII (HS) 2, prefect HS to MI, 17 August 1860. This incident generated multiple reports; that of August 17 seems the most reliable.

⁷ AMAE, CPC, Suisse, Genève, 5, mayor of Gex to CF Geneva, 1 September 1860; mayor of Gex to CF Geneva, 3 September 1860.

port. The Genevan press, of course, presented a very different version of events. That of *La Nation Suisse*, a radical newspaper with which Fazy was associated, claimed that the French flag had been insolently unfurled on board the steamship, and that the French passengers had yelled out “disagreeable remarks for the Swiss, such as ‘long live the annexation!’”⁸ The French consul met with two representatives of the Genevan Council of State on September 3rd. They expressed their regret for the incident, but also argued that it could have been prevented, had they been warned in advance of such a large group of foreign nationals arriving in Geneva. They also insisted that the incident had been triggered by the French, reporting that one of the passengers had threatened to parade Gex’s flag through the streets, accompanied by cries of “Long live the annexation!”⁹

The Gex incident heightened tensions between Swiss nationals and the numerous Frenchmen living or working in Geneva. Rumors and reports filtered in to the French authorities that French citizens were being indiscriminately attacked by Swiss nationals in the canton. A M. Chiroussot Chambeaux from Paris, who happened to be in Geneva on business in early September, complained to the French consul in Geneva about a terrifying ordeal he had endured during the flaring of tempers the day after the incident involving the Gex delegation. Having taken a furnished hotel room in Geneva’s Hôtel de la Poste, he went to have himself shaved by the hotel barber, who, fastening the towel round Chambeaux’ neck, asked his client what he thought about the Gex affair. Chambeaux responded (“very drily,” he specified) that he deplored it. But his sentiments were not seconded by the barber, who retorted that he was disappointed that he had not himself been the one to throw the flag into the lake. A furious Chambeaux, got up, threw down the towel, and said that he wouldn’t deign to be touched by the barber. The barber slammed shut the door of the barbershop and attacked Chambeaux with an umbrella (though, thankfully, not with the razor blade.) Chambeaux escaped from the shop and ran into the hotel, the barber in hot pursuit, screaming insults and threats, until Chambeaux turned around and delivered, in his own words, “a well-deserved slap in the face.” The barber then rounded up some of his friends, and the mob chased Chambeaux through the hotel crying, “Into the water with the Frenchman, the Rhône isn’t far off!” while the hotel manager looked on in amusement. Chambeaux declared himself to be under the protection of the French flag and the French consul in Geneva, but one of his pursuers responded, “We don’t give a shit about your consul or you.” Chambeaux escaped out of the hotel’s back door and ran to the Consul’s residence for protection.¹⁰

It was not just in the city of Geneva or its canton that the annexation created difficulties for French nationals. On September 5, 1860, Maurice Sache, a boatman from the Savoyard town of Meillerie in the Thonon arrondissement, set sail with three of his workers from the Vaudois town of Bouveret, laden with a shipment of wood for Geneva. The prevailing winds forced them to lay anchor in the port of Vevey in the Vaud canton, where they were greeted with cries of fury, “Down with France! Down with Badinguet! Down with the crook! Down with the thief!” The anti-French demonstrators in Vevey tried to force the sailors to lower the French flag hoisted on the boat. As the sailors understandably refused to disembark from their vessel, the crowd began to pelt them with stones. According to the sub-prefect of Thonon, who spoke with the public prosecutor of the Vaud canton, some of the workers who were unloading boats at the port

⁸ AMAE, CPC, Suisse, Genève, 5, report no. 68, CF Geneva to MAE, 2 September 1860.

⁹ AMAE, CPC, Suisse, Genève, 5, report no. 69, CF Geneva to MAE, 3 September 1860.

¹⁰ AMAE, CPC, Suisse, Genève, 5, letter from L. Chiroussot Chambeaux to the CF Geneva, no date, but certainly the first wék of September.

ran to find reinforcements among those workers who were in the Swiss army. They enlisted help by claiming that the French had torn down a Swiss flag and trampled it underfoot. The young men grabbed their rifles and ran to the port; one spectator drew a gun and fired a hole through the French flag. Sensing the danger, two Swiss gendarmes, who had stood by and laughed at the insults hurled at the sailors, stopped the perpetrator from raising his gun again and firing on another flag. Sachet and the workers managed to continue on to Geneva, where they wisely refrained from hoisting their flag. But they made the mistake of raising the flag again after departing the city. When the ship arrived at Hermance, the last Swiss town on the right bank of Lake Geneva, two policemen boarded the ship and again demanded that Sache retire the flag. On his refusal, the police arrested Sache and one of the workers. Several Savoyard spectators were also arrested, though they were released the same evening.¹¹

Initially, the Haute-Savoie's prefect Petetin was not terribly concerned about these incidents, in spite of the fact that they had involved considerable threats of violence. Both Messieurs Darthaz senior and junior had been poorly regarded by their neighbors as troublemakers; the father had a reputation as a drunkard, while the son was described as "violent." Petetin admitted to the Minister of the Interior that it was entirely possible, if not likely, that the Darthazes had instigated the fight.¹² He also adopted a surprisingly cavalier attitude towards the Franco-Swiss tension. "The political question is part of the reason for these conflicts," he explained, "but the antipathy of the populations is the catalyzing factor that gets added to the mix. This antipathy is reciprocal; we shouldn't be overly surprised if the inhabitants of the Chablais and the Faucigny occasionally give in to challenges or provocations."¹³ Such a position would not prove to be sustainable in the face of these potentially dangerous recurring incidents. Just a few weeks later, Petetin authorized the sub-prefect of Thonon to accept an official invitation extended by authorities in the Valais canton, to the east of the Haute-Savoie, to attend the ceremony celebrating the inauguration of the canton's Simplon railway line. The newly-constructed railroad, entirely within the Valais' Rhône valley, linked the towns of Martigny, near the French border, and Sion. Wanting to preserve good relations with the canton, Petetin also felt that the Valais was a comparatively safe destination even in a time of diplomatic friction. Unlike the staunch Protestantism of Calvin's city, to which he attributed some of the tensions between Genevans and the Catholic Savoyards, the Valais was overwhelmingly Catholic. Petetin did, however, warn the sub-prefect to avoid Geneva, where opposition to the annexation had been the most inflamed. For his part, the sub-prefect told Petetin that he hoped to encourage the Swiss to consider extending the Simplon line through the Haute-Savoie to Thonon.

Events in Sion demonstrated the extent to which Petetin had misread the political situation and underestimated residual Swiss anger after the annexation. As with the earlier incidents on lake Geneva, the flashpoint proved to be the flags put on display during the ceremony. In an effort to underscore the international nature of the venture—the line was constructed in Switzerland by an Italian consortium near the French border—the train had been adorned with Swiss, Sardinian, and French flags. After the train pulled into the Sion station and the passengers had disembarked, a group of workers ran to the engine and tried to rip the French flag into pieces. A fistfight followed after Valaisian employees and members of the State

¹¹ AN, F 1cIII (HS) 2, report no. 34, gendarmerie, 26th legion, company HS, arrondissement Thonon to MI, 13 September 1860; report, SP Thonon to prefect HS, 8 September 1860.

¹² AN, F 1cIII (HS) 2, prefect HS to MI, 17 August 1860.

¹³ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 53, draft, prefect HS to MAE, 8 September 1860.

Council intervened to stop the protestors, arresting two of them. According to the sub-prefect, the demonstrators had been encouraged to attack the French flag by a correspondent in a Swiss newspaper.¹⁴ The Sion affair demonstrated that Swiss anger over the annexation, rather than remaining geographically restricted to the environs of Geneva, appeared to be spreading to the canton of Vaud, which did not even border Savoy, and to that of Valais. By October 1860 Petetin, with the support of the Minister of the Interior, finally seemed to grasp the dangerous state of public opinion. He requested the creation of two new brigades of gendarmes for the border towns of Gaillard and Thonon, specifically to ease the difficulties that local Savoyards had been encountering with the Swiss.¹⁵ In Switzerland, too, attempts were made to contain emotions and prevent them from getting out of hand. The State Council of the Vaud canton addressed a circular to the prefects, municipalities and citizens of the canton that was printed and posted on its own fees, informing the citizenry that “any manifestation against the colors of a nation is an insult and could become a *casus belli*.”¹⁶

Nevertheless, flags continued to be a particular source of conflict between Swiss and Savoyards on their shared border. In January 1861, M. Lance, the mayor of Bossey in the Haute-Savoie, crossed the border and entered a Swiss inn managed by a Piedmontese, an establishment that had a reputation as a frequent gathering place for workers for Geneva. While in the café, Bossey was accosted by Jean-Pierre Pelet, a Savoyard cooper who, evidently in an expression of defiance towards France, had just naturalized himself Swiss the previous month. Pelet was in the process of taking up a public collection in the bar to purchase a new Swiss flag to replace the one that the Swiss had hoisted out of defiance during the annexation, “to thumb their nose at the new French, the *annexés*, as they call them,” reported Lieutenant Cazejux, the investigating gendarme. In the course of his collection Pelet insulted Lance, resulting in a fistfight that the other clients in the tavern managed to break up. Cazejux reported that Lance had a reputation as a bit of a drunkard, which suggests that he was probably responsible to some extent for the escalation of the conflict.¹⁷ The most interesting aspect of the incident was the use of the pejorative term *annexé*—“the annexed”—as a contributing factor in this conflict. This was a term invented by the Swiss and employed throughout the 1860s to distinguish Savoyards from other Frenchmen of more ancient lineage. In a report written later in 1861, Cazejux related another incident that he had witnessed during which the Swiss had deployed this epithet. Some months earlier, two Swiss gendarmes had been escorting a prostitute from Geneva to Saint-Julien to turn her over to the public prosecutor. Upon arriving at the border, one of them, a brigadier, turned to her and sneered, “All right, you hussy of an *annexée*, you wanted the annexation, so your annexors can deal with you!” The prostitute stood her ground and retorted, “Better to be an *annexée* than a mean Swiss like you.” The Swiss gendarme was so infuriated by her defiance that he twisted her arm, causing her to cry out in pain.¹⁸

Policemen and gendarmes in the Haute-Savoie generally shared the hostility of civilians towards the Swiss government, for professional as well as personal reasons. In relating the story

¹⁴ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 53, copy, SP Thonon to prefect HS, 29 September 1860; draft, prefect HS to MAE, 30 September 1860.

¹⁵ AN, F 1cIII (HS) 2, draft MI to M Guerre, 11 October 1860; prefect HS to MI, 9 October 1860.

¹⁶ This néds to be cited.

¹⁷ AN, F 1cIII (HS) 2, no. 16, gendarmerie, 26th legion, company HS, arrondissement Saint-Julien to MI, no date, but probably late January or early February 1861.

¹⁸ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 12, gendarmerie, 26th legion, company HS, arrondissement Saint-Julien, sent from Limoges, to prefect HS, 28 October 1861.

of the brave Savoyard prostitute, the treatment of whom had particularly disgusted him, Cazejux described the tendency of the Swiss agents of order to make use of the Haute-Savoie as little more than a dumping ground for undesirables that they wished to expel from Swiss territory. He summarized the problem thus: “Every day the Swiss gendarmes conduct vagabonds to Saint-Julien whom they turn over to the public prosecutor. When these unfortunates have some money, they usually make them pay to have them taken by carriage from Geneva to Saint-Julien. When they have to come on foot, they’re generally in a very bad mood.”¹⁹ By the end of the decade, this situation had not improved. In June 1868, Saint-Julien’s sub-prefect ordered the police commissioner of Moillesulaz to escort a local troublemaker and his family to Swiss territory. He justified his actions as an opportunity to retaliate in kind. “On a daily basis the Swiss authorities throw onto French territory our nationals, and even foreigners, who lack regular papers or means of existence. So I think it’s high time to use reciprocity,” he directed.²⁰

From Tavern Squabble to Diplomatic Incident

Any of the incidents involving French and Swiss nationals along the border, had they escalated to a certain level, might have resulted in serious political consequences. Ultimately it was in the small town of Ville-la-Grand, a suburb of Annemasse, where one such incident led to a major diplomatic crisis between the two governments. Ville-la-Grand’s history made it perhaps more than especially vulnerable to flared tempers. As part of the territorial settlements of 1815, the town’s territory had been partitioned between Sardinia and Switzerland in 1816, with the greater part remaining in Savoy and the smaller part ceded to Switzerland and administratively incorporated into the Swiss commune of Presinge. By 1860 the Swiss territory was, however, home to the town’s two principal taverns—the Barbot and Chauffat inns—located just over the French border. The afternoon of Sunday, August 18, 1861 began innocently enough: it was the feast day of Ville-la-Grand’s patron saint, and both Swiss and Savoyards living in the vicinity came to enjoy the festivities, which were being jointly policed by French gendarmes sent from nearby Annemasse, Swiss gendarmes, and Swiss rural guards from Presinge and Jussy. The range of amusements included various games of skill or chance, including one called “Le Virelet,” which involved markers or tokens made of porcelain. This game was being run by two itinerant merchants, Jean-Baptiste Dacati and his wife Joséphine, both of them French nationals from the Ain who were living in Geneva. At some point during the afternoon, the French gendarmes decided that the Dacatis’ game of chance was not permitted under French law. Their brigade sergeant, Victor Darcier, asked them to pack up their game and move to nearby Swiss territory. Dacati and his wife complied with the request and reestablished their booth in the small square in front of the Chauffat and Barbot taverns. Satisfied that the game was no longer on French territory, the gendarmes returned to the center of town.²¹

At about ten-thirty in the evening, several Swiss gendarmes and rural guards appeared in the square and requested that the vendors pay a 1 franc tax on the game. While Joséphine Dacati calmly made the payment, nineteen year-old Savoyard Pierre Longet, a resident of Ville-la-Grand, insulted the Swiss agents, telling them “to go police their own country and leave the French alone on their territory.” Retiring from the game and sulking, Longet then made the unwise decision to have a last drink in the Chauffat inn before returning to Ville-la-Grand. This

¹⁹ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 527, CP Moillesulaz to SP Thonon, 2 June 1868; draft, SP Thonon to CP Moillesulaz, 5 June 1868.

²⁰ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 527, draft, SP Saint-Julien to CP Moillesulaz, 5 June 1868.

²¹ AN, BB 18 1637, copy, deposition of Victor Darcier, sergeant of the gendarmerie, 15 September 1861.

required him to cross into Swiss territory. As he set foot on the steps of the tavern, the Swiss rural guard Roch saw his opportunity and hit Longet squarely over the head with a stick. The gendarmes picked him up and brought him into the café. The Savoyards quickly sent word about the attack to Longet's father, Pierre Longet senior, who came running from town and hurried into the café. At the sight of his bloodied son, he screamed at the gendarmes, calling them "brigands," and was promptly arrested. Before long, a crowd of French nationals had gathered in front of Chauffat's establishment, though they remained safely on French territory. The crowd yelled at those inside the tavern to let the prisoners free, and intermittently pelted the building with stones and pebbles. One of the Swiss rural guards inside the establishment left by the tavern's rear exit and ran to alert the Swiss gendarmes at Jussy, who immediately came running to the scene. What happened next remained the object of fierce contention, but approximately three gunshots were fired, injuring nineteen year-old Séraphin Navonne, sixteen year-old François Peyroud, and lightly wounding Jean Bocard. In the confusion, it was unclear who had fired, but the French gendarmes' report claimed that a Swiss customs agent and two rural guards had been the shooters.

Longet senior and Longet junior were released from Swiss custody in late August, but by that point the incident had aroused passions on both sides of the border. In reporting the event to the Minister of Justice, Chambéry's senior prosecuting attorney used passionate language rarely seen in the normally detached bureaucratic voice of official administrative correspondence. "A few stones thrown against the tavern keeper Chauffat's house created no serious danger for anyone. Rather, we must admire the moderation of our nationals, who had been pitilessly driven back on their own territory by foreign gendarmes and even thrown onto the ground by their horses," he wrote. He characterized the violence as "a violation of both international law and human rights."²² The French government reacted quickly, sending an official French note to the Swiss government on August 26—before authorities had even finished their investigation. The note lay the blame for the incident firmly on the Swiss gendarmes, border guards, and forest guards. It argued that the Swiss had tried to impose the tax on a game that was in French territory; that Pierre Longet *fiils* had been violently and unjustly assaulted (though it conceded that this had occurred on Swiss territory); and that the French crowd gathered outside the inn had been threatened by the Swiss gendarmes who confined them on French territory, continued to exercise their authority while on French soil, and had then fired upon the crowd without prior warning.

The Swiss government's formal response, delivered on October 11, 1861, refuted the French perspective point by point. First, the Swiss note argued that due to the peculiar shape of the border in the square in front of the taverns, the Dacatis' game had literally been set up right on the border itself, partly in Savoyard territory and part in Swiss territory. The note concluded that if any portion of the game was on Swiss territory, the authorities had therefore had a legitimate right to collect the tax. They also argued that while Joséphine Dacati had simply paid the fine, Longet had interfered in a transaction that had not concerned him while under the influence of drink. Since he had continued to insult the gendarmes at the Chauffat inn, which was unambiguously situated on Swiss territory, the Swiss gendarmes had been perfectly within their rights to arrest and detain him. His injuries, the note argued, were probably the result of his physical opposition to the arrest, since the Swiss participants formally denied having hit him over the head; and the note reasoned that even in the event that he had been assaulted, the force

²² AN, BB 18 1637, PG Chambéry to MJ, 21 August 1861.

had been justified by his opposition. Finally, the Swiss argued that between the arrest of the Longets and the arrival of the Swiss gendarmes from Jussy the Swiss inside the inn had been “besieged” by the French crowd gathered outside, which had uttered threatening cries. The Swiss government claimed that it based the note on testimonies from supposedly “neutral” witnesses, including Chauffat’s brother, a barmaid from inside the tavern, and the two Barbot brothers from their own establishment. It also claimed that the gendarmes had given several warnings of their intention to fire.²³

Both the French and Swiss versions of the event contained inconsistencies and omissions, notably regarding the type of threats that had been uttered and the role that alcohol—clearly consumed in abundance during a town festival held on a Sunday—played in escalating what would ordinarily have been a minor quarrel. The Swiss described Longet’s drunkenness in great detail, claiming that while quarreling with the Swiss over the one-franc tax he had shouted, “I’m not afraid, I served with Garibaldi!” The diplomatic note characterized the crowd outside the tavern as large and menacing, shouting out statements such as “Set fire to the house and roast all its inhabitants!” The French documents, on the other hand, argued that the scale and violence of the Swiss reaction had been totally out of proportion to whatever provocations the French population had offered. The lieutenant commander of the gendarmerie in Saint-Julien, Cazejux, described the assault on Longet as vicious, and claimed that one bystander to the affair, a retired gendarme, had reproached the Swiss for their brutality in clubbing Longet. The Swiss response, he claimed, had been less than sympathetic: “One more time and he’ll walk again.”²⁴ The French documents also questioned the sobriety of the Swiss agents of order. Victor Darcier, the gendarme from Annemasse, reported that on entering the tavern, he saw the owner, Chauffat, calmly pouring out drinks to the Swiss agents inside, most of whom seemed to be completely intoxicated, while Roch, who had delivered the blow, was visibly agitated.²⁵

About the only point of the affair on which there was fairly widespread agreement that the Franco-Swiss border had been drawn in a confusing fashion through the Ville-la-Grand / Presinge area. Barbot’s tavern was situated just barely on the northwestern, Swiss side of Imperial road 206, the main dividing line between the two countries. The situation near Chauffat’s tavern was even more complicated, as there the border departed from the road and skirted briefly west directly in front of the entrance to the tavern. Technically the border was indicated by a marker stone and by the two chestnut trees planted directly in front of the entrance to the establishment. Yet the testimonies of witnesses indicated that almost no one involved in the conflict, including the gendarmes, was aware of the border’s exact position. Victor Darcier admitted *twice* in his deposition that he had not paid attention to the precise location of the border, even as he was requesting that the Dacatis move their game from the center of Ville-la-Grand to the other side of it. He and his colleague were satisfied that the Dacatis’ new location was in Switzerland, and Joséphine Dacati reported that she believed to be entirely on Swiss territory, because the French gendarmes had left her alone after that point.²⁶

²³ AN, BB 18 1637, copy of a letter, President of the Swiss Federal Council in Bern to Kern, plenipotentiary minister of Switzerland in Paris, 11 October 1861.

²⁴ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 12, gendarmerie, 26th legion, company of Haute-Savoie, arrondissement Saint-Julien, to prefect HS, 28 October 1861.

²⁵ AN, BB 18 1637, copy, deposition of Victor Darcier, sergeant of the gendarmerie, 15 September 1861.

²⁶ AN, BB 18 1637, copy of a letter, President of the Swiss Federal Council in Bern to Kern, plenipotentiary minister of Switzerland in Paris, 11 October 1861.

The credibility of the French perspective on the Ville-la-Grand affair was dealt a serious blow in November when Pierre Longet junior was arrested in the Delarue inn in the Swiss town of Chêne, after he had spent the day shopping in Geneva. This time, he and a friend had been involved in an altercation with some French peddlers from the Cantal, after Longet tried to interfere in their card game.²⁷ What little can be gleaned about Longet's personality from these two events suggest that Longet had an unfortunate tendency to become angry and aggressive when drunk. But the French persisted in their belief that Switzerland was primarily to blame for the Ville-la-Grand conflict. A confidential note in the Minister of Justice's files proclaimed the administration's official belief that the Switzerland's attitude towards the Ville-la-Grand incident was but the country's crowning expression of hostility towards France in the aftermath of the annexation. "Never has an official document more obstinately distorted the truth," wrote the author of the note. "This is an impudent challenge thrown to try the patience of the French government. It implies a decision made in Geneva to spread the hate and jealousy so carefully undertaken against us since the annexation, whenever there is any question of French interests, no matter how legitimate."²⁸ Prefect Ferrand of the Haute-Savoie echoed this sentiment in December, reporting three separate incidents that had occurred in Vevey, the town where the Savoyard sailors had been attacked earlier in the year. "The malevolence of the Vaudois against Savoisiens, their irritation regarding the annexed area is said to frequently lead to assaults and acts of brutality," he noted.²⁹

The Ville-la-Grand incident is an important illustration of daily life on the Franco-Swiss border in the newly-annexed Savoy. This border separated two very different political regimes, and its existence had advantages for both Savoyard and Swiss nationals. The inhabitants of Ville-la-Grand could drink more cheaply over the Swiss border, which is probably why the two most important taverns in town were located in Switzerland. They could also indulge in activities legally prohibited them in France, such as the Dacatis' game of chance, provided that they observed the rules imposed by Swiss regulations. The commune was jointly patrolled by the forces of order of both Switzerland and France, and the location of the border was defined in a general fashion, but its exact trace was unknown to most of the inhabitants and authorities of order, undoubtedly because it was so frequently crossed. Even as the annexation had maintained this existing economic situation by preserving the customs arrangement, it had drastically modified the political situation. The result was a peculiarly circular pattern of political culture. Diplomatic tensions between France and Switzerland trickled down to the decidedly popular world of the local village tavern—including taverns situated essentially on the border itself—and then helped fuel serious incidents between ordinary Swiss and French nationals. With the Ville-la-Grand incident, the tensions of the annexation came full circle, returning once again to the level of international diplomacy.

Swiss and Italian Agents: Myths and Rumors

During the annexation, the inhabitants of the Savoie department to the south had assisted their compatriots to the north in fighting Swiss claims to northern Savoy and staving off the threat of a Savoyard partition between France and Switzerland. Under ordinary circumstances, however, Switzerland had never exercised a great deal of influence in southern Savoy, which had

²⁷ AN, BB 18 1637, no. 590, PG Chambéry to MJ, 11 November 1861. Longet was condemned to 1 month of prison by the jury in Geneva.

²⁸ AN, BB 18 1637, handwritten note.

²⁹ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 53, draft, prefect HS to MI, draft, 11 December 1861.

few political or cultural ties to the Confederation and whose commerce was oriented to Grenoble and Lyon rather than to Geneva. Yet after 1860 fears of Swiss influence were powerful enough to spread even to the Savoie, notably after a major incident in Chambéry during the summer of 1861.

Sometime after one in the morning on the night of July 7–8 1861, a gunshot rang out in Chambéry's usually tranquil central square, the place Saint-Léger. The shot wounded the soldier on guard duty, grenadier Tureau, amputating most of his right ear and part of the thumb of his right hand. Tureau was sent to the military hospital, where it was confirmed that he had lost his hearing in that ear.³⁰ Chambéry's police commissioner immediately suspected that the motive for the crime might be due to anti-French opposition. "There are endless conjectures about the reason for this crime," he reported in a hastily-composed initial report to prefect Dieu, "but the soldiers believe it's due to hatred for the French uniform."³¹ The gendarmerie's own report echoed this concern; Dubuis, their commander, worried that the incident might "affect the sympathies that exist between the soldiers of the garrison and the inhabitants."³² When news of the crime became widely known later in the morning, the police commissioner tried to take comfort from the fact that the "former Sardinian population" seemed appropriately indignant by the act of violence. Composing an updated report to Dieu that morning, the commissioner concluded, "I think it must be due to a personal vengeance and not at all a demonstration against the French element." But he also introduced a new and intriguing theory: one of Swiss interference. Though Dieu had little evidence to support such an opposition, he suggested the involvement of the Swiss nationals employed at a local printing workshop, which did not seem to be doing sufficient business to support itself, yet somehow remained open. Hypothesizing that the shooting was part of a Swiss conspiracy to weaken the annexation through a divide and conquer strategy, the commissioner concluded, "I wouldn't be surprised if the goal of this affair was to seed elements of division between the annexed population and the garrison, in order to make the Emperor and the French unpopular."³³

The commissioner's supposition about Swiss malfeasance immediately caught prefect Dieu's imagination. Dieu linked the incident to some recent articles published in Swiss newspapers, which had claimed that Savoyards were unhappy with the annexation and specifically that the inhabitants of Chambéry had been complaining about the behavior of the troops stationed there. In his initial report to the Minister of the Interior's security service, Dieu borrowed the police commissioner's theory of Swiss plots. "Might this be an attempt to get people to believe in this claimed hostility [between French soldiers and Savoyards], and at the same time to give birth to it? I see no other motive." He went on to make the more probable claim that there were "exalted men" living in Chambéry who were funneling scandalously false reports about the nature of public opinion in Savoy to newspapers in Geneva, and suggested that these correspondents might have been involved in the crime.³⁴ Dieu also contacted the French consul in Geneva, informing him of the situation and indicating that he believed that the trace of the culprit would be found in a country "so easily open to criminals and to political refugees."³⁵ Marshall Chevalier not only agreed that Swiss nationals were the likely culprits, but encouraged

³⁰ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, gendarmerie, 26th legion, company Savoie, to prefect AM, 8 July 1861.

³¹ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, CCP Chambéry to prefect Savoie, 8 July 1861.

³² AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, gendarmerie, 26th legion, company Savoie, to prefect AM, 8 July 1861.

³³ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, CCP Chambéry to prefect Savoie, 8 July 1861.

³⁴ AN, F 1cIII (Savoie) 2, copy, prefect Savoie to MI, 8 July 1861.

³⁵ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, draft, prefect Savoie to CF Geneva, 8 July 1861.

Dieu to consider whether they might have had English accessories, as he continued to be troubled (he claimed) by English agents in Geneva. “I have no trouble believing that, under other forms or with other effects, the same secret influence is being exerted in Savoy.”³⁶

It is true that the availability of Genevan newspapers, which were in widespread circulation in both Savoyard departments, may have encouraged some quiet subversion. Consistently hostile to the imperial regime, these journals undoubtedly contributed to shaping public opinion in the province. That Swiss agents had been sent into northern Savoy to try to encourage adhesion to Switzerland during the critical months of 1860 is also beyond doubt. It is far more doubtful that these agents continued to circulate in the years after the annexation, and it is especially unlikely that they would have been in the far-distant Savoie department. Chevalier’s ludicrous notion of “English agents” was another holdover from the first half of 1860, when rumors had spread that the British government—the only Great Power that had opposed the annexation—had sent its own agents and spies into Savoy to work against the annexation. But the notion of Swiss subverters was an attractive one for Dieu and the other administrators, for it had the advantage of deflecting suspicion for the crime away from Savoyard natives. Barely a year into the annexation, when the difficulties of the post-annexation transition were becoming increasingly manifest and there were already tensions between the soldiers and the populations in Chambéry and elsewhere in Savoy, an assassination attempt by a Savoyard against a French soldier would have caused a major scandal. Dieu and the other administrators were therefore desperately hoping that the perpetrator would prove to be a foreigner, not a Savoyard.

Initially their hopes looked likely to be borne out. By the July 11, the police had identified a promising suspect, albeit on the basis of flimsy evidence, a man who had visited one of Chambéry’s brothels in the Rue de l’Hôpital militaire on the night of the assassination attempt. To the delight of the authorities, the unidentified man had spoken very poor French. As he undressed, the prostitute, Joséphine Gratiur, noticed that he was carrying a pistol in his belt. She made him place it on a table for safekeeping, but this caused him considerable embarrassment. The client remained in the establishment for about forty-five minutes before departing in a hurry, promising Gratiur that he would return shortly. The shooting had taken place shortly after his departure. Gratiur’s description of the suspect closely matched a suspicious laborer who had been reported the previous Sunday near the outskirts of Chambéry, where he had been seeking employment at one of the local tile factories. A resident of Italian-speaking Switzerland, the suspect had not managed to find a job and had subsequently left for Lyon. While the government pursued the suspect in Lyon, Dieu paid careful attention to soothing and managing public opinion in Chambéry. “I have made every effort to establish in public that the Savoisiens are completely unconnected to the crime; the garrison has attributed it either to the Swiss, to the Italians, or to a personal vengeance.” Though this was obviously a public relations tactic, Dieu seems to have been genuinely convinced that foreign influence might have been behind the incident. Referring to Chevalier’s letter, he wrote to the Minister of the Interior’s security service with several speculations: “Perhaps the same secret influence has appeared in Savoy? Perhaps it’s not unrelated to the assassination attempt? I’m giving precise instructions to try to clarify these questions. They have a certain importance, especially taking into account the fact that the day before the crime the English parliament was debating the annexation of Savoy to France.”³⁷

³⁶ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, CF Geneva to prefect Savoie, 9 July 1861.

³⁷ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, draft, prefect Savoie to MI, DGSP, 11 July 1861.

The welcome news of the apprehension in Lyon of the suspect emigrant laborer, Jean-Baptiste Cotelli, an Italian native, foundered on June 17 when Gratiur confirmed that Cotelli was not her suspicious client from the evening of the shooting. This discouraging development coincided with a fresh spate of hostile articles relating to the affair in Swiss newspapers; Dieu had several issues of the *Journal de Genève* and *La Nation Suisse* seized at Chambéry's post office.³⁸ Finding himself back to square one, the police commissioner warned Dieu that reopening the investigation would shift suspicion from Italian, Swiss or English agents back onto the Savoyard population—especially if, as the local court had requested, the police issued search warrants for residences in Chambéry. He confessed openly that he believed it would be better to drop the investigation:

I've tried to spread the news that the guilty party managed to escape across the border, in light of the active searches that have been recommended. (I took care not to be obvious about it.) This affair will be forgotten little by little, and in a while no one will think of it any longer. The important thing was to give a favorable direction to public opinion, and to convince the populations and the garrison that the guilty was foreign to the population and even foreign to Savoy. This result was obtained beyond my hopes, and I think it's a bad idea to try to undertake new investigations in Chambéry, for the correspondent to the Swiss newspapers won't neglect to talk about them and we'll have to once again clean up after the lively attacks of these papers.³⁹

Dieu agreed with the police commissioner. He confidentially reported to the Minister of the Interior's security service that he had encouraged the rumor that the perpetrator was "foreign to the Savoisien lands" and that public opinion basically accepted this theory.⁴⁰

Even though the Swiss trail had run dry during the investigation into the Place Saint-Léger shooting, Dieu continued to believe in the existence of underground foreign agitators. After being informed about local dissatisfaction with the administration's slow rectification of Sardinian titles, Dieu once again blamed the political fallout on foreign agents, "who seek to agitate the country [and] have exploited this to excite the spirits of Savoisiens against the French."⁴¹ Dieu also believed that Swiss agents had exacerbated the unexpectedly fierce tensions that had resulted from the 1861 incidents between Savoyards and members of the French military garrison in Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne.⁴² He attributed the salience and coherence of rumors about Franco-Savoyard tension to "a small group of perfidious enemies who seem to take their orders from Geneva. They are exploiting, with much astuteness, the smallest difficulties of the situation. They are especially on the lookout to exaggerate, to inflame the sentiments that might occur between people and represent them as expressions of a generalized discontent and public sentiment against France and the government."⁴³ Dieu also remained intrigued by the suggestion that English agents were operating in Savoy from a base in Switzerland. In an August 1861 letter to the Interior's security service requesting special funds for the secret police, Dieu spoke of English agents as though their existence were an affirmed fact. "English agents have long been working in Switzerland on incessant maneuvers against France, especially regarding the

³⁸ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, draft, prefect Savoie to MI, DGSP, 16 July 1861.

³⁹ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, CCP Chambéry to prefect Savoie, 17 July 1861.

⁴⁰ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, draft, prefect Savoie to MI, DGSP, 20 July 1861.

⁴¹ AN, F 1cIII (Savoie) 2, copy, prefect Savoie to MI, 19 September 1861.

⁴² See Chapter 2 for the details on these incidents.

⁴³ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, draft, prefect Savoie to MI, DGSP, 21 September 1861.

annexation of Savoy and Nice,” he wrote. “Without a doubt their secret influence has begun to show up in my department, because there are certain areas of light discontent, or complaints that have no reason to be there. I think it very important to launch investigations to know exactly what we’re dealing with in this respect.”⁴⁴

Nevertheless, the Swiss agent remained the predominant trope, no doubt due the continued assertion of the hostile Genevan press that Savoyards were unhappy with the annexation. The figure of the Swiss agent gradually coalesced into a recognizable archetype. He was inevitably from Geneva, and quite frequently was defined as a member of the large Savoyard colony established there. Other times he was simply a Swiss national who, for patriotic reasons, attempted to combat the annexation and Geneva’s resulting unfavorable geographic situation by convincing Savoyards to abandon France. The Swiss agent was invariably a “demagogue” or belonged to the “demagogic party”; occasionally, he was explicitly defined as Protestant, though in the overwhelmingly Catholic Savoy most Swiss from Geneva were presumed to be Protestant by default. Administrators casually applied the label of “Swiss agent” to several familiar figures from the anti-annexationist opposition of 1860. In an 1862 report about public opinion in his department, for example, Dieu offhandedly referred to Grégoire Hudry-Menos, one of the prominent anti-annexationists in 1860 and the editor of the Protestant newspaper *Le Glaneur Savoyard*, as a “demagogue and Swiss agent,” though there is no evidence to suggest that Hudry-Menos was engaging in pro-Swiss activities.⁴⁵ Hudry-Menos did publish two articles about post-annexation Savoy in the liberal, intellectual journal *Revue des Deux-Mondes* in 1862 and 1864, emphasizing the negative aspects of French rule. But he was hardly a Swiss activist.

By giving credence to the quasi-mythical figure of the Swiss underground agent, the French administrators imbued it with a tentative reality. As the Place Saint-Léger shooting revealed, the figure of the Swiss agent, both intentionally and unconsciously, served to explain the emergence of grumbling about the annexation and opposition to the government in post-annexation Savoy. Many administrators had difficulty believing that there might be any home-grown, native resentment to French rule in the annexed territory. The myth of the Swiss agent made it possible to explain embarrassing instances of home-grown discontent. The image of the Swiss agent had crystallized so successfully that by 1862, following a tip-off from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of the Interior’s General Direction of Public Security sent a confidential letter to Dieu asking him to investigate whether Swiss agents operating in the Savoie were responsible for spurring a recent spike in the number of Frenchmen who were emigrating to Geneva. He claimed that the number of French expatriates in Geneva had risen dramatically from about 6,000 to a total of about 18,000 in just two years. Reported the minister, “It would seem that this emigration can be attributed to the solicitations of Genevan agents whose efforts are directed at discrediting the French regime in the eyes of the inhabitants. These recruiting agents are even said to have convinced a certain number of our nationals to naturalize themselves Swiss.” The Minister of Interior confided that this problem specifically seemed to concern “the Savoisien populations.”⁴⁶ The rumor did have historic foundations. Savoy had always been known as a land that had historically provided a large number of emigrants to both France and Switzerland. But the notion that the inhabitants were being enrolled to be Swiss nationals was, to

⁴⁴ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, draft, prefect Savoie to MI, DGSP, 27 August 1861.

⁴⁵ AD Savoie, 9 M II 4, draft for grid report (15 December to 7 January), prefect Savoie to MI, 10 January 1862.

⁴⁶ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, MI, DGSP to prefect Savoie, 3 February 1862.

say the least, far-fetched. Dieu responded by gamely ordering an investigation. The squadron leader of the 26th legion of gendarmes in the department informed Dieu that there had been no sign of Swiss agents in the department, but that he had nevertheless issued special orders to the commanders in the arrondissement to actively prevent any such enrollments that might occur. Chambéry's central police commissioner also promised the prefect that he would step up discreet surveillance of Swiss nationals in the Savoie and confirm the reasons for their presence in the department.⁴⁷

Dieu's perception of Swiss agents was shaped by the fact that all three of the sub-prefects in the Savoie department in 1862 originally hailed from towns in the Haute-Savoie. When they learned of the Minister of the Interior's investigation of pro-Swiss enrollments, these three subordinates wrote to Dieu sharing their own thoughts on the matter. With their native knowledge of Savoyard emigration patterns, all three immediately and confidently rejected the idea that Swiss agents were operating in the Savoie, explaining that emigrants from the Savoie typically chose to go to Lyon, Paris, or Piedmont. Geneva was simply too far north to attract migrants from southern Savoy. But the three sub-prefects did find the rumor credible with respect to their northern home department. Sub-prefect Didier in Albertville, who had served in Thonon as the regent intendant of the Chablais during the annexation, recalled what he had witnessed during the spring of 1860—especially the activities of Savoyards residing in Geneva who had fought the annexation. “As for the maneuvers that the Swiss are supposedly using to get Savoisiens to leave the country, in order to discredit the French regime, this has just been waiting to happen,” he wrote. Reporting that some 27 Savoyards had naturalized themselves Swiss immediately after the annexation, Didier concluded, “This is a problem that is very difficult to solve, and Swiss propaganda will probably continue until the political situation encourages the Swiss authorities to put a stop to it.”⁴⁸ Similarly, Édouard Milliet de Faverges, who had served as regent intendant of the Maurienne in 1860 and remained in Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne as the sub-prefect during the following decade, remembered “certain active, ultra-advanced, reckless types who were upset when the Republic of 48 went to its end; these are the same who, after the annexation, thought to stir up Europe by declaring themselves Genevan citizens. In their isolation in Geneva, in their spite and their shame, perhaps they seek companions of their fault,” he wrote.⁴⁹

Faverges also advanced an alternate theory, one that connected the Swiss agitator to the religious tensions between Catholics and Protestant that were often paralleled by tensions between Savoyard and Swiss nationals. He hypothesized that the “18,000 Frenchmen” counted by the Minister of the Interior were in reality 18,000 Catholics, “among whom the French element is predominant.” He attributed the rumors of so many Catholic emigrants to Swiss concerns about the growth of the number of Catholics in the canton of Geneva. Not coincidentally, these Catholics had, of course, been culturally and politically Savoyard until this territory had been ceded by Sardinia to Switzerland in 1815. Appreciative of the input from his sub-prefects, Dieu summarized all these opinions for the Minister of the Interior. He suggested that even if no Swiss agents had managed to recruit individuals in the Savoie, they might try to do so in the more favorable Haute-Savoie.⁵⁰ Further rumors surfaced in the autumn of 1862 that

⁴⁷ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, no. 52? 57?, gendarmerie, 26th legion, company Savoie, to prefect Savoie, 9 February 1862.; CCP Chambéry to prefect Savoie, 4 March 1862.

⁴⁸ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, SP Albertville to prefect Savoie, 12 February 1862.

⁴⁹ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, SP Saint-Jean to prefect Savoie, 9 February 1862.

⁵⁰ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, prefect Savoie to MI, DGSP, 22 February 1862.

Swiss agents were recruiting among the soldiers stationed at the Chambéry garrison after four soldiers went missing at a morning reveille. Initially, two members of the 6th infantry line reported that a man calling himself a smuggler had approached them and offered 5,000 francs each to take up arms for Switzerland. Further investigations revealed that in fact, there had been no Swiss agents; instead, the soldiers had deserted of their own accord. And rather than being assisted by Swiss nationals in their flight, they had actually been assisted by two Chambériens—one an employee of the bridges and roads administration and the other a café owner whose establishment was promptly closed—who had lent them some civilian clothing to enable their escape.⁵¹

With its numerous investigations and public hand-wringing, the French administrations of the two Savoyard departments did more to create the idea of Swiss agents operating in Savoy than either the Genevan press or the presence of actual Swiss nationals in the two departments. But it also led to embarrassing and potentially damaging misunderstandings. If the goal of the Genevan press had, in fact, been to create tensions in Savoy by sowing seeds of suspicion between Frenchmen and Savoyards, then it succeeded, as evidenced by a September 1861 incident in Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne. That month, the Geological Society of France held a meeting in this southern Savoyard sub-prefecture. The municipality organized a banquet in honor of the gathering, but Saint-Jean's mayor, departing from established custom, omitted to open the dinner with a toast to the Emperor and to France. As it turned out, the mayor's omission resulted primarily from prudence: he explained to Dieu that the society had always maintained a purely scientific character and foreswore any overt political gestures. Due to the presence of Belgian and Swiss nationals at the dinner, and given the troubled state of Franco-Swiss relations in 1861, the mayor—committed to ensuring that the dinner went smoothly—also wanted to avoid any mention of the touchy and sensitive subject of the annexation. His prudence infuriated Dieu, who had heard a rumor that the Swiss delegates to the dinner had threatened to boycott the event should any reference to Napoleon III be made. It fell to sub-prefect Faverges to straighten the record. He informed Dieu that not only had the bust of the Emperor been proudly displayed along with the national colors, but the orchestra had played that well-known Bonapartist standard, the "Air of Queen Hortense." Faverges ended his report by characterizing the successful banquet as a major victory for Franco-Savoyard relations: "Geologists from other countries and the old departments noticed that Savoyards aren't so unhappy with the imperial regime, when they have showed themselves so be so kind, so courteous, and so animated with their guests. This assembly of distinguished persons from France in our humble valley will contribute to cementing the Annexation."⁵²

While the Swiss, and their erstwhile English allies, were the dominant focus of concern in Savoy, some concerns about Italian influence persisted in a low register. As the one-year anniversary of the annexation approached in April 1861, so did the deadline for the inhabitants of the annexed provinces to choose Italian naturalization over French citizenship. Chambéry's prefecture received numerous reports that "Piedmontese agents" were operating at different points in the department, working to convince Savoyards to naturalize themselves Piedmontese by claiming that the conscription laws were more favorable in their former country. Supposedly,

⁵¹ AN, F 1cIII (Savoie) 2, copy, gendarmerie, squadron leader to MI, DGSP, 22 August 1862; copy, MI, DGSP, to M Guerre, 12 September 1862; AD Savoie, 9 M II 4, draft for grid report (1 to 15 September), prefect Savoie to MI, 16 September 1862.

⁵² AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, draft, prefect Savoie to SP Saint-Jean, 7 September 1861; SP Saint-Jean to prefect Savoie, 10 September 1861.

the enrollers were claiming that Savoyards should become Italian to take advantage of a Sardinian law that granted an exemption from conscription to the eldest son of a man aged 50 years and over. Others were told that they could evade both French and Sardinian recruitment by becoming Piedmontese. As Sardinian subjects, it was claimed, they could not be called for duty in the French army, but as residents of Savoy the Italian government would not search for them there to enforce its own conscription laws. The rumors provoked Dieu into publishing an announcement throughout the department discouraging the inhabitants from believing the claims.⁵³ In the same month, Faverges reported that “an important Piedmontese person who has relations with diplomatic men is supposed to have said in a private circle that the great events of these recent times are without consistence, and that Savoy would not remain French.”⁵⁴

The southernmost provinces of the Tarentaise and the Maurienne were the two areas of Savoy where fears of Italian influence may have been equally strong as fears of Swiss influence. The Italian government had initially made an attempt to keep some of the eastern communes of the Haute-Maurienne in 1860, though the French government only permitted Sardinia to retain the Mont-Cenis plateau belonging to the commune of Lanslebourg. Furthermore, construction projects had attracted a considerable number of Italian laborers to the two valleys. In the Maurienne, the construction of the Mont-Cenis railway tunnel under the Alps linking the Savoyard town of Modane to Bardonecchia in Piedmont, had begun in 1857. After the annexation, the French government also began construction of a road leading to the Little Saint-Bernard pass in the Tarentaise, connecting the town of Séez to Piedmont’s Aosta Valley.

In August 1861, the sub-prefect of Moûtiers informed the prefect that approximately 40 “Garibaldian soldiers,” probably former volunteers in Garibaldi’s armies or discharged Italian infantrymen, had been engaged to work on the Saint-Bernard road project. He promised to keep them under careful surveillance, though he noted that “these individuals are not engaging in any kind of propaganda and have even abstained from discussing politics at all.”⁵⁵ In Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne, Faverges agreed that the Italian workers and their managers should be kept under surveillance, but remained skeptical of the idea that they might be trying to subvert the annexation. “More than once, the Piedmontese element has been signaled to me as a foyer of discontent and the source of cooling of public opinion regarding our annexation to France,” he wrote, “but this discontent, this cooling of sentiments and the importance of this element has been exaggerated.” Faverges did agree to look into the possibility of enlisting an agent to infiltrate the Piedmontese society established in the area.⁵⁶ As with the Swiss, however, the presence of Italian workers could occasionally be used to help defuse local problems. After the 1862 flag-stealing incident in Saint-Michel-de-Maurienne, Dieu was faced with a similar need to manage public opinion as he had in Chambéry during the Place Saint-Léger shooting. In an initial draft of his report to the Minister of the Interior’s Special Direction of Public Security, he wrote, “It would be better to accuse some drunk or perhaps one of the numerous Piedmontese workers who work in the country.” Ultimately, he decided not to make such a loaded suggestion and crossed it out of the final draft. He reported instead that public opinion was vacillating

⁵³ AD Savoie, 9 M II 4, draft for grid report, prefect Savoie to MI, 3 April 1861.

⁵⁴ AD Savoie, 9 M II 4, draft for grid report, prefect Savoie to MI, 16 April 1861.

⁵⁵ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, SP Moûtiers to prefect Savoie, 2 July 1861.

⁵⁶ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, SP Saint-Jean to prefect Savoie, 21 August 1861.

between blaming a local drunk, unhappy about the gendarmes' persistence at closing cafés at the prescribed hour, or one of the local Piedmontese workers.⁵⁷

Italian Agents in Nice and the "Garibaldian" Problem

The former ruling power may not have posed much of a threat in Savoy, but Italy was a major cause of concern to the administration in the Alpes-Maritimes. By the end of 1860 the new Italian kingdom occupied most of the Italian peninsula. But it had not yet captured Venetia, the second province Sardinia had initially hoped to wrest from Austria in 1859 (to say nothing of the Austrian south Tyrol or the Dalmatian littoral), nor the remaining papal territory of Lazio with its highly symbolically-charged capital, Rome. The fact that Italy's own unification was not considered complete after 1860 encouraged the tenacious spread of Italian irredentist rumors in the County of Nice, which had always aroused more passion in the hearts of Italian nationalists than French-speaking Savoy.

The most immediate Italian threat to the annexation was, ironically, posed by a man who never set foot in Nice again after 1860: Garibaldi. Whereas in Savoy the rumors of subversive Swiss recruiting agents were basically without real foundation, Garibaldi's activities cast an undeniable and powerful spell over the youths of the former County of Nice. No sooner had the territory passed to France than dozens of young Niçois left to go volunteer for Garibaldi's expedition to Sicily. Garibaldi's volunteers came from throughout Italy and from abroad, but it was hardly encouraging for the French administration that dozens of young men were eager to assist Garibaldi in the creation of the state that they or their fathers had just voted to leave. Little documentary evidence survives pertaining to the enrollments that occurred in the summer of 1860, due to the administrative confusion occasioned by the administrative transfer to French control. Most of the young men who left in hopes of serving with Garibaldi headed for recruiting camps in Genoa, and almost all decided to enlist of their own volition; many left letters and notes behind for their parents explaining their decision to leave. But quite a few were assisted in their flight or "enrolled" by agents or individuals who claimed to be in contact with Garibaldi's partisans. André Lord, a cobbler, reported that his twenty year-old son Honoré had disappeared from home on June 14, the day that the annexation formally went into effect. Lord believed that a former drum sergeant in the Sardinian national guard, Bonfils, had arranged for his son's flight.⁵⁸

The French administration interpreted the assistance given to the youths as a political act of defiance by the small but determined pro-Italian faction in the County of Nice. As the prefect explained to the Minister of the Interior's direction of public security, "The most advanced organs of the *Italianissime* party look for any means to protest against the annexation, to show the sentiments that they want people to believe are shared by the population, by making a display out of the devotion of young Niçois to the cause of Italian unity."⁵⁹ Among those who were identified as assisting the departure of young Niçois were known members of the pro-Italian faction, including a former colonel in the National Guard, Dayderi; the abbé Albert Cougnet; and the lawyer Pastore. The central police commissioner's investigations revealed that Cougnet had written a letter of recommendation to Garibaldi regarding the enrollees; he had also found a boarding pass for a steamship that made it clear that some of the young men had boarded the

⁵⁷ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, draft, prefect Savoie to MI, DGSP, 23 February 1862; AD Savoie, 9 M II 4, draft, grid rapport, prefect Savoie to MI, 4 March 1862.

⁵⁸ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 348, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 28 June 1860.

⁵⁹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 348, draft, prefect AM to MI, DGSP, 27 June 1860.

steamship under the pretence that they were taking a daytrip to Monaco.⁶⁰ The administration's suspicions were further aroused on June 25 by the warm farewell given to colonel Dayderi by Cougnet, Pastore, and several others when he boarded the steamboat *Dante* for Genoa. His friends shook Dayderi's hand, disembarked, and then clamored onto the jetty watching the steamship pull away from port and saluting the retreating figure of the former colonel.⁶¹

A second wave of enrollments for Garibaldi's armies took place in the early spring of 1861. As early as February 2, several dozen young men were reported to have boarded the steamship *Le Fébo* bound for Genoa to enlist in his armies. By the end of February, over 30 young Niçois had disappeared, and their devastated parents and relatives overwhelmed the city's police commissioner begging him to contact Italian authorities and locate their children.⁶² According to the central police commissioner, Hector Aussilloux, some had obtained legal travel visas from the Sardinian consul in Nice, albeit without their parents' permission. Some lied on the applications about their age in order to get the papers they needed; M. Antoine Thérèse informed the central police commissioner that his son Augustin, who had disappeared from home, had lied on his Sardinian naturalization act and declared himself to be 22 when he was actually only 18.⁶³ Others, who were unable to afford official transit papers, smuggled themselves aboard the steamships plying the Nice–Genoa route. At the beginning of March, a search of one of the steamships revealed no fewer than eight young men hiding in a secret compartment in the boiler room of the ship, where they had been concealed by one of the ship's stokers.⁶⁴ This particular incident caused prefect Gavini to request an interview with an employee of the Genoese steamship company, asking him to reinforce security. He was furious when, just a few weeks later, the police found three teenagers hiding inside one of the lifeboats, under the canvas cover. By the end of March Gavini sent the Genoese steamship company a warning letter, asking its directors to step up security measures and threatening to hold the company at least partially responsible for the young men's disappearances.⁶⁵ The young escapees sometimes tried to enter Italy by foot rather than sea. On June 29, 1861, the special police commissioner in Menton arrested six young men without papers between the ages of 16 and 19 who were attempting to cross into Italy on foot and get to Rome, where they had heard that Garibaldi was planning an invasion.⁶⁶

Parents in the County of Nice must have viewed these successive waves of youthful enthusiasm for Garibaldi with increasing worry. Many had overheard their children declare that they wanted to join Garibaldi, or were bombarded by repeated requests to allow them to volunteer. Jacques Gerben's son Edmond, who disappeared on January 31, had dined with his father as usual at one in the afternoon, but went missing for supper at seven. By ten in the evening, Gerben correctly guessed that his son had gone to Genoa, "as for some time he has been asking me if he could take service in the Sardinian armies." Asking around his neighborhood the following morning, Gerben discovered that his son had gone aboard the steamship pretending to

⁶⁰ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 348, draft, prefect AM to MI, DGSP, 27 June 1860; report, CCP Nice to prefect AM, no date.

⁶¹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 348, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 26 June 1860.

⁶² AMAE, CPC, Italie, Gênes, 1, MI, DGSP to MAE, 26 February 1861.

⁶³ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 348, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 8 February 1861.

⁶⁴ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 348, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 1 March 1861.

⁶⁵ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 348, draft, prefect AM to the director of the Genoa steamship company in Nice, 28 March 1861.

⁶⁶ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 348, CS Menton to prefect AM, 29 June 1861; CCP Nice to prefect AM, 1 July 1861.

see a friend off and to admire the vessel up close, and had then hidden himself aboard.⁶⁷ After openly expressing his desire to go volunteer, seventeen year-old Calinte Richier, originally from the tiny village of Molières, was sensibly put under the surveillance of a local priest, abbé Faraud. But Richier still managed to evade the priest by leaving early in the morning and traveling on foot instead.⁶⁸ The young men were clearly captivated by the romance and adventure of the journey, as well as the nationalist seduction of Garibaldi's exploits. But they were also attracted by tantalizing financial incentives. Emmanuel Mattia and Maurice Bovis, who were among the young men hidden in the steamship's secret compartment in March, both gave depositions explaining that they had heard that volunteers were receiving 1.50 francs a day from the enrollment committee in Genoa. Joseph Manca, who had been enrolled by a carpenter named Bordan, had also heard the rumor and immediately decided to enlist, as he was not even earning 1 franc a day in his current job.⁶⁹

The reality for those youngsters proved somewhat harsher upon their arrival in Genoa. The experience of Jean-Baptiste Tibaud, the sixteen year-old son of a Niçois wine merchant, appears to have been typical. He had been working in Cannes, but left his job when he heard rumors of a new enrollment campaign for Garibaldi's armies. Unable to afford to book passage to Genoa, he asked around to find out how to obtain free passage. He ultimately made contact with a man named Ancessy, a Niçois billiard-maker, who smuggled him on board the steamship *Fébo*. Ancessy took him to the prow of the ship to the crew's quarters, and succeeded in hiding him there, assuring him that he had successfully done the same for another young man eight days previously. The crew discovered the stowaway upon their arrival at Genoa, and brought him to the captain. When Tibaud told the captain and second officer that he planned to enlist under Garibaldi, the captain ordered him to be taken to the enrollment committee in Genoa.⁷⁰ For six days, Tibaud received the sum of 1.20 francs a day, but he was then refused any additional payment because he did not have proper papers. At that point, he asked to be returned home.⁷¹ Another young Niçois, Giovanni Battista Spinetta, sent his parents a poignant letter, replete with petulant teenaged angst, requesting that they cancel the false declaration he had made at the Sardinian consulate. With his French nationality restored, he hoped to escape the grim conditions in Genoa:

Dear parents,

Well, I can see that you don't care about me since I haven't received any answer to the last letter I sent, that's why I decided to write again to tell you that if you don't want to do what I asked, at least to ask you for a favor, to go to the Sardinian consulate and have me canceled from the register because my declaration is false and I've been arrested by the police.

If I'm cancelled from the register then I come under French conscription, and perhaps then I will get out. Don't tell them I'm in Genoa. At any rate I don't think

⁶⁷ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, copy of declaration of Jacques Gerbin, 1 February 1861.

⁶⁸ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 348, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 14 February 1861.

⁶⁹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 348, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 1 March 1861.

⁷⁰ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 348, copy of declaration of Honoré Tibaud and Jean-Baptiste Tibaud to CCP Nice, 18 February 1861.

⁷¹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 348, copy of declaration of Honoré Tibaud and Jean-Baptiste Tibaud to CCP Nice, 18 February 1861.

this will cost anything and they'll listen to you, so that's why I'm asking you this favor.

I'm in a very depressing barracks; who knows when I'll get out, and I don't know when I'll be returning.

Dear brother, please give my best to all my friends and anyone else who's asking about me.

So, my dear father, I'm waiting for a quick response in the return mail. I send my greetings to you all as I think you're all home: father, mother brothers, sisters, and parasites. Compliments to uncle Bernard and his family and uncle and aunt Curti.

Gio. Battista Spinetta.

I'm still waiting for someone who'll pay me enough for three months. That's all for now.⁷²

At least initially, the administration tried its best to locate these prodigal sons. When fifteen year-old Claude Nicolai disappeared at the end of July, 1860, the prefect immediately informed the commander of the gendarmes' brigades posted near the new Franco-Italian border and asked for help locating the young man. He also wrote to the mayor of Menton, the last major town in the County of Nice before the border, and asked him to keep a lookout. Not only were most of the missing minors still legally subject to their parents' authority, the flight of young men to a foreign country had international repercussions, and required careful monitoring by the foreign ministry. When sixteen year-old Louis Carro went missing in February 1861, the prefect asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs to do his best to find the missing teenager "in the interest of the protection that France should always grant its nationals."⁷³ But official patience was not inexhaustible, nor shared by all those involved in the tiresome task of chasing down errant teenagers. For some, it proved difficult to overlook the fact that the enrollments had conveniently rid the recently-annexed County of Nice of impressionable, excitable young men, many of them marginal or casual laborers, who otherwise might have troubled the administration. Certainly Hector Aussilloux, the city's central police commissioner, was not sorry to see them go. "The departure of these engaged men, far from having any serious consequences for our city, has on the contrary rid us of a band of troublemakers," he wrote to the prefect confidentially.⁷⁴ Similarly, when the Minister of the Interior informed his colleague at Foreign Affairs about the enrollments of the spring of 1861, he did so only reluctantly, remarking that the enrollments had "rid [Nice] of a mass of young men lacking morals or position, most of whom already served under the Garibaldian flag."⁷⁵

Garibaldian enrollments also presented the administration with the troubling prospect of what to do with the young volunteers when they returned to town. As the city's police

⁷² AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 348, letter from Giovanni Battista Spinetta to his father Joseph Spinetta, 4 March 1861. Spinetta ultimately returned to Nice on April 10 on the steamship *Eden*. AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 348, Consul of Italy in Genoa to prefect AM, 13 May 1861.

⁷³ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 348, draft, prefect AM to MAE, 6 February 1861.

⁷⁴ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, no. 585, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 2 February 1861.

⁷⁵ AMAE, CPC, Italie, Gênes 1, MI, DGSP to MAE, 26 February 1861.

commissioner warned in November 1860, many of the Niçois volunteers who had succeeded in obtaining high-level commissions in Garibaldi's armies would not be successful in retaining those grades when they transferred into the Sardinian army, and would therefore be coming back to Nice.⁷⁶ He predicted that the pro-Italian faction would try to use the opportunity of the disembarking volunteers to mount anti-French demonstrations.⁷⁷ As feared, problems relating to the return of the soldiers emerged in January. The Minister of the Interior's security service was particularly upset by the fact that French Garibaldian volunteers were continuing to wear their Garibaldian uniforms once they had returned to France, a situation that he informed his colleague at the Justice ministry "has notably created difficulties in the former County of Nice." He asked the Minister of Justice whether it would be possible to charge young men who had volunteered in Garibaldi's armies with violation of Article 21 of the Napoleonic code, the article that permitted the government to revoke the French citizenship of and expel those who had taken up arms in service of a foreign government.⁷⁸ The Minister of Justice agreed that the article might be applicable, but its application would prove problematic because it required a court procedure, which could easily lead to embarrassing and public legal debates "that would not be without political disadvantages." Ultimately, the Minister of Justice referred his colleague to another potentially useful decree, that of August 26, 1811. Though the decree was in conflict with many other French statutes and its legality had not been consistently upheld by French courts, its regulatory article 22 was still in force, and supported by Article 259 of the penal code. The first forbade French citizens in the service of a foreign government from wearing foreign cockades or uniforms; the second levied a six-month to two-year prison sentence on anyone publicly wearing a uniform that did not belong to him.⁷⁹

With this ammunition, the Minister of the Interior published a circular dated January 16, 1861, instructing the prefects to apply those articles against those who continued to wear their uniforms after receiving a warning. The circular left it to the prefects' discretion whether the circumstances warranted this repression, and recommended moderation in the application of the penalties.⁸⁰ These provisions were destined for application mainly, if not exclusively, in Nice and Savoy; a note in the Justice ministry's files directed that copies of the circular be forwarded only to the public appellate prosecutors of Aix-en-Provence and Chambéry, "as it doesn't seem that this outfit has been worn anywhere other than the former County of Nice and the other locations bordering Italy."⁸¹ Shortly thereafter, the public appellate prosecutor in Aix wrote to the Minister of Justice, confirming the immediate need for the regulations: on January 17, several young men had been spotted strolling through "the most frequented streets of [Nice]," and notably the public garden, dressed in their Garibaldian garb. On January 20, a more serious incident took place. While having supper at a Niçois inn, a French soldier of the 90th infantry line realized that several young men dressed in Garibaldian gear in the same establishment had absconded with his bayonet. A witness enabled the soldier and his reinforcements to arrest two young men, Collet and Ardoin, but not before the two had struck the commanding caporal and bitten his thumb; they were only subdued by the threat of the soldiers' bayonets. According to the report, a "numerous and hostile crowd" confronted the soldiers and pelted them with stones as they

⁷⁶ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 348, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 13 November 1860.

⁷⁷ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 348, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 13 November 1860.

⁷⁸ AN, BB 18 1621, A3 4017, MI, DGSP to MJ, 2 January 1861.

⁷⁹ AN, BB 18 1621, A3 4017, draft, MJ, to MI, DGSP, 11 January 1861.

⁸⁰ AN, BB 18 1621, A3 4017, MI, DGSP to MJ, 24 January 1861.

⁸¹ AN, BB 18 1621, A3 4017, handwritten instruction.

marched Collet and Ardoin off to the municipal prison.⁸² Collet and Ardoin received six and ten days, respectively, of prison time, a comparatively light sentence that deeply dissatisfied the public prosecutors in Nice and Aix-en-Provence.⁸³

When the second wave of Garibaldian volunteers returned in April 1861, the central police commissioner complained again that “the presence of these young men who have engaged in service abroad, without authorization, can only be a source of disorder, and will aggravate the disagreements that already exist.” Upon receiving this letter, the prefect, or one of his employees, scribbled a note in the margins that read, “I’m of the opinion that we should expel them, but consult the Minister.” In the formal letter that followed, Gavini hesitated about what course of action to follow. He argued that taking service abroad, the young volunteers had lost their French nationality. His first draft asked the Minister of the Interior’s security service “to expel them, or at least most of them.” He then changed his mind and crossed out the sentence, substituting the less draconian request for permission to expel only “those whose presence might present a danger to public security.” But he then closed the letter asking for authorization to use expulsion “any time it appears necessary, even for those individuals whose families have become French.”⁸⁴

Another wave of volunteers for Garibaldi’s armies took place during in May 1866, shortly before the outbreak of the Six Weeks’ War, pitting Italy and Prussia against Austria. By mid-month, 87 young Niçois had made their way to Ventimiglia, the first town in Liguria over the Franco-Italian border, where they received the sum of 1.25 francs per day while waiting to be enrolled.⁸⁵ As earlier in the decade, the enrollment campaign was not very well organized. On May 14, fifteen young volunteers had already returned dejectedly from San Remo, not having been able to be integrated. To gauge the impact of the impending conflict on the recruitment of volunteers, Gavini ordered the mayors of communes in the former County, “where it is to be supposed that the call of Italy would be best heard,” to report on the number of young, previously Sardinian men who had either joined the Italian army or Garibaldi’s volunteer battalions. The Ministry of the Interior received the results on June 20, a week into the conflict and the date Italy declared war on Austria. Only 90 young men from Nice and four from Menton were reported to have volunteered, 43 of whom had already returned home. This relatively small number was interpreted by the authorities in a positive light. The enrollments had not resulted in any disturbance of the peace in the city; in fact the only disturbance had been a group of young Italians who arrived on the train from Marseille at the end of the month and were immediately escorted by the police to the port and onto ships bound for Genoa.⁸⁶ Delighted by the relatively small number of volunteers and the city’s uninterrupted calm, the Minister of the Interior opined, “This fact strongly proves that the populations of the former County of Nice are identifying more and more with their new *patrie*.”⁸⁷ A final wave of enrollments took place in 1867 during Garibaldi’s abortive attempt to march on Rome.

Volunteers in the Garibaldian armies could at least be ordered not to wear their outfits in public, but this did not affect those Italian officers present in the former County. In the winter of

⁸² AN, BB 18 1621, A3 4017, PG Aix to MJ, 25 January 1861.

⁸³ AN, BB 18 1621, A3 4017, PG Aix to MJ, 11 February 1861.

⁸⁴ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 348, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 8 April 1861; draft, prefect AM to MI, DGSP, 13 April 1861.

⁸⁵ AN, F 1cIII (Alpes-Maritimes) 2, Notes, MI, DGSP, 16 May and 17 May 1866.

⁸⁶ AN, F 1cIII (Alpes-Maritimes) 2, Note, MI, DGSP, 28 May 1866.

⁸⁷ AN, F 1cIII (Alpes-Maritimes) 2, Note, MI, DGSP, 20 June 1866.

1860, a number of Niçois soldiers who had opted to become Italian citizens took their leave in Nice, where they wore their uniforms and weapons in public. Gavini later noted, “The officers would often meet up in the streets with French officers, and since both groups were waiting for a salute, it frequently happened that no salute whatsoever was exchanged. Given the current state of affairs, this could only lead to trouble.” Soon after his appointment to the department in January 1861, Gavini asked Italy’s Consul General in Nice, as well as several Italian officers of his acquaintance, to refrain from wearing their uniforms in Nice. The problem recurred in the spring of 1862. The colonel of the department’s gendarmerie was in Nice to inspect his brigades, and encountered an Italian captain in the street who caught his gaze but ostentatiously refused to salute him. The colonel, insulted, immediately confronted the captain and told him “that in France, it was customary to salute a superior officer.” Wishing to avoid a fight, the Italian officer backed down and admitted that he had been rude. The incident reached the central government in June, after members of the gendarmerie wrote directly to Napoleon III about their concerns. “The attitude of Italian soldiers on leave in this city, without being exactly provocative, is nevertheless disruptive. Special precautions should be taken, and perhaps the wearing of their arms prohibited,” the gendarmes had informed the sovereign.⁸⁸ In his initial draft response to the Minister of the Interior, Gavini agreed that it would be helpful to discuss the matter with the Italian authorities again, and also admitted that the city’s pro-Italian faction made it a point to escort such soldiers through the streets of town. In a later draft, however, the Gavini emphasized the subversive nature of Italian uniforms to an even greater extent. It was not merely the warm welcome given to Italian soldiers that was a problem, he argued, but the potential for “indoctrination” into the Italian creed that France should fear, particularly because the fledgling Italy, still in the process of consolidating itself, seemed to offer youths career opportunities that were unavailable in France. “Almost all of these officers are young, and have obtained rapid advancement that are only possible in a country such as Italy where the army is still being organized. The sight of these young men who have obtained elevated grades so quickly can only excite a sort of emulation among their compatriots, and encourage among them the Italian sentiment.”⁸⁹

Like Savoy, Nice experienced reports of agents who were attempting to encourage the inhabitants to become Italian citizens. A landowner named Honoré Revel in the town of Sainte-Agnès opted for Italian nationality in July 1861 and then tried to convince a number of his fellow townsmen to do the same. Revel told his fellow townsman Maurice Chaisio that the French government was a terrible government, and that it was better to be Italian. An uncomfortable Chaisio quickly informed the police commissioner of Menton.⁹⁰ Unlike Savoy, however, the proliferation of myths regarding Italian influence and subversion in the Alpes-Maritimes frequently coalesced into rumors that France would retrocede the County of Nice to Italy. With the unification of Italy on the mind of most European statesmen and the French government’s “imperial” foreign-relations tendencies in the ascendant after the annexation, it was not inconceivable to the inhabitants of the County that the French government might find a legitimate reason to trade Nice back to Italy in the interests of Great Power politics. In early 1861, the police commissioner of Saint-Martin-Lantosque reported that most notables believed that with Garibaldi’s assistance, Nice would soon be handed back to Piedmont, this time in

⁸⁸ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, MI, DGSP to prefect AM, 21 June 1862.

⁸⁹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, draft, prefect AM to MI, DGSP, 25 June 1862.

⁹⁰ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, CP Menton to prefect AM, 24 July 1861.

exchange for the island of Sardinia. This rumor was particularly widespread in La Bollène, Belvédère and Roquebillière.⁹¹ By May, similar retrocession rumors were circulating in normally much more tranquil Villefranche on the coast. Villefranche's mayor identified one inhabitant of his commune as spreading the rumors, and had not been particularly worried about it, but when he took a trip to Nice in May and met with the prefect, he "noticed that this rumor is very widespread in Nice. Tell me if I should take some precautions here [in Villefranche] or if I should step up the surveillance of the gendarmerie, because I can see that people are starting to gossip about it."⁹² In July 1861, two Italian workers settled in Marseille, spread word of an incipient insurrectionary movement in Nice destined to put an end to French rule. One of them, Ange Petalluga had been overheard to remark, "The government is hated [in Nice], and we'll find a good number of conspirators from Italy, including Prossi and Zicolli, lawyers from Florence, and Castelli, a businessmen in Livorna. Garibaldi's political friends are taking up collections in Nice, the proceeds from which Zicolli will distribute to those who come to the city to take part in the movement."⁹³

Representatives of the Italian government occasionally fanned the flames of these rumors. During the September 1861 delimitation of the new Franco-Italian border in Isola, Chevalier Fédérici, one of the Italian soldiers overseeing the delimitation, casually remarked to Isola's mayor, "These crosses that we're going to plant on the mountain would have been better in oak, but even though they're only in chestnut they'll last 20 to 25 years, and by then the borders will have changed. At least we hope so." Isola's mayor, taken aback, replied, "I don't know anything about that." But the police commissioner reported that Fédérici had met with several members of the "Piedmontese party" in Isola; he worried about the impression that the incident would have on Isola's inhabitants, especially "those whose sentiments and opinions are less than French."⁹⁴ In December 1866 and January 1867, retrocession rumors again surfaced, this time in Menton, following the voyage of France's General Fleury to Florence. In a tale that essentially inverted the 1858 Plombières arrangement, the rumor held that Victor Emmanuel would assist France in conquering its coveted Rhine territories from Prussia, and France in exchange would hand Nice back to Italy. Gavini attributed the rumor to subversive influences from nearby Ventimiglia.⁹⁵

In at least one case, well-intentioned French journalists helped to encourage retrocession rumors. M. Alziary de Roquefort, the editor of the reliably sycophantic *Journal de Nice*, which was practically the prefecture's organ, caused a minor scandal in 1868 during the visit of the Italian president of the Council of Ministers, General Menabréa. Roquefort published an article in the *Journal* claiming that a deputation of several Italians residing in Nice had visited Menabréa, and one of them had raised the question of the annexation and the desire of Nice to return to Italy. Alziary's article praised Menabréa for having immediately shut down that topic of conversation with a short speech, but the Italian consul in Nice nevertheless complained to the authorities. When Alziary was called to the prefect's office to explain himself, he admitted that he had heard about the incident secondhand from "an honorable person." The prefect's own investigations revealed that Menabréa had in fact met with some resident Italians, but that the

⁹¹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 343, AM, CP Saint-Martin-Lantosque, grid report to prefect AM (16 to 31 January 1861).

⁹² AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, mayor of Villefranche to prefect AM, 25 May 1861.

⁹³ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, prefect Boûches-du-Rhône to prefect AM, 22 July 1861.

⁹⁴ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, CS Isola, 20 September 1861 to SP Puget, 20 September 1861.

⁹⁵ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, draft, prefect AM to MI, 14 January 1867.

meeting had been a private one and the article had inflated the incident by referring to a “deputation.” Alziary agreed to correct the reference to the deputation in his September 6 issue of the newspaper, but refused to republish a Turinese newspaper’s formal refutation of Menabréa’s speech.⁹⁶

* * *

During the 1860s, the border countries of Switzerland and Italy were a key source of political and social unease in Nice and Savoy. The poor state of diplomatic relations between France and its two border countries frequently resulted in an atmosphere of tension for those living in the annexed territories. Switzerland cast a heavy shadow over the Haute-Savoie, and even influenced the administrators of the Savoie, which was not directly in the Swiss orbit. In the years after the annexation, whenever there was discontent in the two Savoyard departments, the possibility that Switzerland might have had a hand in it was never far from the minds of administrators. Similar fears of Italian influence predominated in the Alpes-Maritimes. Garibaldi’s repeated exploits on behalf of Italian unification naturally created difficulties in his home city of Nice, and Italy’s irredentist tendencies magnified the problem. French administrators remained alert to the possibility of subversive influences and occasionally subscribed to the powerful mythical notion of “subverters,” “agents” or “agitators,” who might try to “seduce” the newly-annexed populations away from France and towards a rival nation.

Occasionally, as in the Place Saint-Léger incident, the presence of foreign nationals in the annexed territories enabled convenient scapegoating, permitting the authorities to dodge the embarrassing problem of Franco-Savoyard or Franco-Niçois tensions. Yet these authorities did take the threat of foreign subversion seriously. As the next chapter shows, the notion of external Swiss or Italian interference in Nice and Savoy was terrifying because of the fear that it might reinforce *internal* opposition to the government—pro-Swiss or pro-Italian opposition that originated among Savoyards and Niçois themselves. The police commissioner in Isola had, after all, referred to a native “Piedmontese party,” and the French government constantly reported on the activities of the *Italianissime* faction in Nice and “pro-Swiss” party in Savoy. Who were the members of these factions, “those whose sentiments and opinions are less than French”?

⁹⁶ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, draft, prefect AM to consul of Italy in Nice, 21 September 1868; draft, prefect AM to MI, 5 September 1868.

Chapter 4 Imperial Politics and Separatist Opposition

By virtue of their unique history, Nice and Savoy were political anomalies under the French Second Empire. In the two provinces, the Restoration had meant the restoration of the House of Savoy, not the Bourbons; legitimism would have entailed loyalty to the Italian royal family; and the inhabitants had experienced neither the Orleanist interlude of the July Monarchy nor the republican experiment of 1848. The unanimity of the plebiscite in both provinces had provided Napoleon III with the evidence he needed to claim that their inhabitants' opinions about the annexation had been consulted. As the crowning expression of public opinion, the plebiscites permanently closed formal debate about the annexation. The moment for opposition had passed, and the government expected no further deviations from the universally expressed opinion. Less than two weeks after overseeing preparations for the plebiscite in the County of Nice, Napoleon III's personal envoy in the province, Senator Pierre Piétri, made this point explicitly. Reporting on the continued activities of the province's pro-Italian minority, he complained, "It was possible to vote 'no,' it was possible to abstain. Today, now that the decision has been made, legal opposition is no longer possible. Anywhere else this kind of attempt to incite a riot, against the will expressed by the entire country, would not be tolerated for a single hour."¹

Having joined France, Nice and Savoy became subject to the restrictions on freedom of speech, of the press, and of assembly imposed by the Second Empire on the rest of the country, severely limiting dissidents' options for political expression. From the government's perspective, politics in Nice and Savoy simply meant promoting Bonapartism, and by extension the annexation, while preventing the importation of disruptive political currents from abroad or indeed from elsewhere in France. As the prefect of the Savoie remarked in 1867, "This is an area where above all it's important to be concerned with long-term interests neglected under the Sardinian government, and where it would be imprudent to exercise political action that the situation doesn't require. All this would do is develop the seeds of division that exist, and we'd end creating parties. Of all places, the best politics here consist of good administration, in demonstrating every day to the Savoisiens the advantages of the annexation for the prosperity of their country."² Yet the government's optimism, backed by the plebiscite results, proved premature. The internal political opposition to the annexation in both Nice and Savoy that had been overwhelmed in 1860 never vanished completely.

This chapter brings the threads of the previous chapters together as it discusses the tactics and content of oppositional political currents in Nice and Savoy that maintained a separatist agenda. Though they were a minority, those Niçois and Savoyards who had opposed the annexation in 1860 continued to work against the settlement under the Second Empire. In Nice, the anti-French, pro-Italian faction that had caused considerable worry in the first six months of 1860 threw itself into public expressions of dissent against the French government, expressing an irredentist desire to return to Italy. In Savoy, liberal opponents of the annexation grew bolder over the course of the decade, and in the Haute-Savoie gravitated increasingly in the direction of democratic Switzerland. These movements were sustained, encouraged and legitimized by the anxiety, discontent, and cultural tension that we explored in chapter 2, as well as by the government's paranoia about the possibility of subversion from abroad that we explored in chapter 3.

¹ AN, F 1cI 129, excerpt of a report from Senator Piétri in Nice to the MAE, 27 April 1860.

² AN, F 1cIII (Savoie) 1, grid report, prefect Savoie to MI, 8 April 1867.

* * *

Niçois Separatism in Municipal and National Politics

The near unanimity of the plebiscite notwithstanding, the annexation had never been universally favored in the County of Nice. The activities of the anti-French faction in the first six months of 1860 had been too visible to dismiss. And though mostly ignored at the time, due to the focus on the city of Nice itself, in more remote areas the change of nationality had literally divided small towns into two bitterly opposed camps, pro- and anti-French. Such was the situation in Breil, one of the most important towns in the Roya valley of the Niçois backcountry. The town's notables fell out spectacularly in the months following the plebiscite. In a letter to the prefect, written in shaky French and dated July 11, 1860, doctor Louis Boini accused two of his fellow townsmen, Baron Louis Cachiardy de Montfleury and abbé Charles Toesca, of deliberate persecution. Boini was vague—probably intentionally—about his political affiliation, but he seems to have harbored pro-Italian sympathies. He claimed to have drawn the wrath of the two men after having refused to sign two “libelous” tracts, one against Garibaldi and another denouncing the former Sardinian governor of the County, the marquis de Montezemolo, whom he referred to as a personal friend. Abbé Toesca, he claimed, had stopped and harassed him in the street, making fun of his use of the Italian language, while Cachiardy had supposedly called him a drunkard and a spy of the French gendarmerie. He pleaded to the prefect, in all innocence, “I don’t know any French gendarme,” and warned him against making Cachiardy the mayor or awarding him the Legion of Honor, which the French government was conferring on supporters of the annexation both casually and abundantly.³

Baron Cachiardy haughtily described the Boinis (father and son, both of whom were doctors) as having made trouble in the commune for the previous 18 years. Since the plebiscite, he claimed, the Boinis had accused him of having been paid by the French government to force the population vote in favor of France. He reported that on July 8, Boini had attacked him in public, accusing him of being a *traditore della patria*. Cachiardy accused the Boinis of being paid agents of the Sardinian government who were simply seeking revenge in the aftermath of the territory’s annexation to France. “When they saw that in spite of their pressure, their threats, not a single inhabitant joined them, they decided to take revenge on those who had unmasked them several times, and especially against the abbé Toesca and myself.”⁴ The competing denunciations of Boini and Cachiardy reveal how the annexation widened existing tensions in the small town. The two men accused each other of treason along a Franco-Italian cultural axis, with Cachiardy portraying himself as acting in the interests of France and Boini admitting his connections to the former Sardinian governor and to Garibaldi.

Undoubtedly neither of the men was blameless. In a private letter to his friend, the well-known pro-French Niçois journalist Victor Juge, Cachiardy confessed that “the perhaps-a-bit-over-energetic side that I took during the annexation has attracted the enmity of two or three troublemakers. Patience is not my favorite virtue,” he declared, and confessed that “at one point my defense was a bit energetic and I had to use means that are repugnant to me, but I had to respond to and stop these continual insults.” For Cachiardy, the struggle of the annexation had been exhausting and disillusioning. To the prefect, he had modestly written that he had supported the annexation out of his pro-French convictions. But in his letter to Juge, Cachiardy’s bitterness was evident. “So this is how I, who’ve borne coldly the insults and the defamations and have

³ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, letter from Dr. Boini to prefect AM, 11 July 1860.

⁴ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 346, letter from baron Louis Cachiardy de Montfleury to prefect AM, 24 July 1860.

responded only with disdain, I've been accused to the prefect as a slanderer and insulter by these three Piedmontese agents who for months have been supporting themselves by espionage and lies. And now orders have been given to investigate my conduct and my morality. Well, as you can see, things have really started out on the right foot.... To the devil with the French as well as the Piedmontese, and the heavens punish me if henceforth I ever give a straw for either."⁵

Throughout the fall of 1860, the tense situation in Breil continued to deteriorate. Complaints and accusations filtered in to the prefecture until the prefect finally asked the special police commissioner of nearby Fontan to investigate Breil's political circle, known as the Casino, "where scenes of disorder are known to occur frequently." Police commissioner Agneaux's report confirmed and amplified the atmosphere evoked by Boini and Cachiardy's letters. Agneaux described the club's 33 members as neatly divided into a pro-Italian and pro-French faction. He provided a list of the circle's most active members, and indicated that the pro-Italian faction included the mayor, Pierre Cottalorda, and doctor Louis Boini and his father. And the annexation was still a subject of lively debate. At a recent meeting, Louis Boini had brought up the subject of the annexation for discussion and had been fiercely contested by baron Cachiardy and abbé Charles Toesca, "both partisans of the Emperor." Agneaux promised to keep a close watch on developments in Breil.⁶

The case of Breil in the fall of 1860 demonstrates that the annexation aroused significant passions among ordinary Niçois, even in remote areas, and could easily become a political "wedge issue" with serious consequences. In short order a first-class political opportunist emerged on the scene ready to exploit the untapped potential of the annexation to further his personal ambitions. This was Henry Avigdor, a member of the influential Niçois Jewish banking family. In December 1860, during the first legislative elections in the newly-annexed department, Avigdor ran for election to the Corps Législatif against the imperial government's official candidate, Louis Lubonis, the former public prosecutor of the now-dismantled Niçois Court of Appeals and the interim governor of the County between April and June.⁷ Avigdor's political ambitions were clear early on. The ink had barely dried on the Treaty of Turin when Avigdor began to jockey for position as a legislative candidate. Napoleon III's envoy in the province, Senator Piétri was still in Nice, and was greatly worried, when Avigdor began to spread the entirely false word that Napoleon III had authorized him to present himself as a candidate to the legislature.⁸

Avigdor was careful not to position himself too overtly as a revisionist candidate. One of his election posters, for example, made an explicit connection between himself and the French sovereign: "Let us choose to represent us in Paris our co-citizen Count Henry Avigdor. In December 1848 he already showed his devotion to the Emperor. In 1851 he defended the treaty with France in the Turin parliament. In 1852, on June 19, he fought for our commercial franchises. Name Henry Avigdor."⁹ But Avigdor was clearly the oppositional candidate. In a

⁵ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 346, letter from Louis Cachiardy de Montfleury to Victor Juge, 26 July 1860.

⁶ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 346, two draft letters, prefect AM to CS Fontan, 15 September 1860; CS Fontan to prefect AM, 28 September 1860.

⁷ Surprisingly, Jacques Basso's thorough and widely-cited book on elections in the County, *Les élections législatives dans le département des Alpes-Maritimes de 1860 à 1939: Éléments de sociologie électorale* (Paris: Librairie générale de droit et de jurisprudence, 1968), which contains an extensive discussion about the official candidates of the Second Empire, has virtually no material about Henri Avigdor's 1860 election.

⁸ AN, F 1cI 129, Excerpt of a report from Senator Piétri in Nice to MAE, 27 April 1860.

⁹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 3 M 176, copy of an Avigdor ballot or poster.

letter written during the campaign, his opponent Lubonis described Avigdor's candidacy as a catch-all for the disgruntled. "The election will be quite doubtful because the discontented of all categories, and there are a lot of them, have grouped themselves against the official candidate to create a demonstration and to get a sense of their numbers."¹⁰ Avigdor's candidacy encountered its greatest success in the County's mountainous backcountry, where his electoral agents openly invoked anti-French feeling as they showered money on the local inhabitants to win support. In the days before the election, these agents traveled around the area, gathering and buying votes for Avigdor. In Peille, Avigdor's ringleader was the mayor, Jean-Baptiste Robini, who two months earlier had written to the prefect for help triumphing over his recalcitrant adjunct, Séraphin Blanchi.¹¹ At a meeting at M. Boglio's inn, the central meeting place for the candidacy, Robini told those gathered there, "There is 1 franc for each vote, as well as food and drink. If you have two hundred, three hundred, five hundred votes, that makes two hundred, three hundred or five hundred francs that you'll receive." Avigdor's agents also tried to enlist the help of Blanchi, who was instructed by Avigdor to "procure me lots of votes. You'll receive as many coins as you obtain votes." Electoral machinations also occurred in Blausasc, a dependent hamlet of Peille located west of it, where Avigdor's campaign was led by the municipal councilor Joseph Milla and the primary school teacher, André Deleuze.¹²

The election magnified the existing municipal tensions in Berre. In October the mayor Barraia had implored the prefect for assistance in establishing his authority over the town's citizens; in December Barraia, along with the curé, was among the main supporters of the Avigdor candidacy and made a number of anti-French remarks. The week before the election, Barraia invited the entire municipal council over to his house to discuss the construction of a communal oven, but instead launched into a rant against Lubonis, threatening to fire summarily any member of the municipal council who dared to vote for him. "He told them," reported the investigating gendarme, Taussaud, "that M. Lubonis was a bad sort who would never do anything for the area, and that he would do what he did at the time of the annexation, that he would sell out his country as he already sold Nice to France." Barraia promised them a meal costing 400 francs if Avigdor were elected. He also explained that he had given his word that the commune would vote for Avigdor, and did not want to go back on the promise. To all those who might have had objections to voting against the administration's wishes, Barraia was dismissive. "The prefect doesn't command you," he sniffed, a remarkable about-face from his sycophantic pleas for help of just three months earlier. Not surprisingly, Barraia's municipal archenemy, Pierre Barraia (known as "le Bello"), from whom he had sought the prefect's protection, raised objections, asking whether the mayor was going to post the official proclamation identifying Lubonis as the government candidate. The mayor promised to do so on Friday, but the poster was only displayed for a few hours before he had it removed and locked up in his office. Meanwhile, the mayor's adjunct and son-in-law distributed bulletins for Avigdor, but not those for Lubonis. Taussaud reported that the day before the election, preparations for the lavish, Avigdor-financed dinner were already well advanced.¹³

In Belvédère, the police commissioner of Saint-Martin-Lantosque was informed that the inhabitants were planning to vote for Avigdor because he had promised that within two years,

¹⁰ Basso, *Les élections législatives*, 82.

¹¹ See Chapter 2.

¹² AN, BB 18 1620 A3 3941, PG Aix to MJ, 15 December 1860.

¹³ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 3 M 176, gendarmerie, report of gendarme Taussaud, 8 December 1860.

they would be Italians again.¹⁴ In this poor and rural part of the former County, the money lavished by Avigdor and his partisans on the campaign could be decisive. One inhabitant of Coaraze, Victor Malausséna, told the mayoral adjunct, Etienne Mari, that Avigdor would provide food and drink to his electors, but Lubonis offered nothing. Honoré Mari, an innkeeper and member of the electoral committee, echoed Malausséna's sentiments, remarking that "Lubonis isn't paying anything, but Avigdor is, so we should vote for him. He had a meal ordered at the inn in Berre, and I sure hope he'll do the same in my inn." The libations may have been dependent on a victory, however, for during the election the electoral committee, stationed in the polling room, permitted the priest Jean-Marie Vérola to hand out Avigdor bulletins to the voters.¹⁵ In Fontan, a village administered as part of the nearby town of Saorge, word only arrived at 10:30 on the morning of the election that the government had designated Lubonis as the sole official candidate. The special police commissioner of Fontan read the telegram out to the president and secretary of the electoral committee. The secretary, Antoine Bonfante, the priest at the chapel in the tiny nearby hamlet of Berghe, read the telegram out loud to the electors in the room. But a controversy erupted when Bonfante misinterpreted the telegram and announced that all the votes for Avigdor would be considered null. This drew the wrath of Saorge's mayor Honoré Bottone and his brother, a priest in Fontan, who immediately protested, declared Bonfante's action illegal, asked that a citation be issued to Bonfante, and threatened to go to Nice to protest the election. "I fear many will abstain from voting due to the influence that the Bottones have on Fontan's population," the commissioner reported.¹⁶

A series of reports provided by M. Bertrand, police commissioner of the Sospel canton, provides the most detailed information about Avigdor's electoral campaign in the canton's eponymous and most important town. Sospel was the site of a prolonged and bitter battle between partisans of Lubonis and Avigdor. Bertrand was supported in his efforts on behalf of Lubonis' candidacy by Sospel's mayor, Alfred Borriglione, a relative of the future parliamentary deputy and mayor of Nice. Borriglione attempted to defuse the attraction of Avigdor's candidacy by emphasizing the fact that official candidate Lubonis was a native-born Niçois who would promote the interests of his province. In a speech given in Sospel on December 7, Borriglione reminded the electors that Lubonis was also the government's official candidate, proclaiming, "If the choice may in some way discomfit you, His Majesty the Emperor has presented you with the illustrious former magistrate, commander and lawyer Louis Lubonis, our Niçois compatriot." But Borriglione also hinted that the "favors" demanded of the government by the commune depended on its ability to support the official candidate during the election.¹⁷

An entire array of personalities in Sospel were arrayed against Borriglione and the departmental administration, including the mayor's two adjuncts, Pastoris and Maulandi, known as the Baron de Lazare; Alberti, the town hall notary and secretary, who was Maulandi's brother-in-law; and Pierre Vachieri, the town's former syndic, all of whom the police commissioner identified as seeking to use the election to further their own political ends. In the course of his reports, he identified all three as coveting the mayor's job, and singled out Maulandi, who took the lead for Avigdor, as trying to win favor with Avigdor in exchange for the latter's future

¹⁴ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 3 M 176, CS Fontan to prefect AM, 9 December 1860. The hamlet of Berghe actually has two sites, named Berghe-Inférieur and Berghe-Supérieur. Bonfante was stationed in the former.

¹⁵ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 3 M 176, declaration of Etienne Mari to police commissioners Malchissédéc and Bousquet, 10 December 1860.

¹⁶ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 3 M 176, CS Fontan to prefect AM, 9 December 1860.

¹⁷ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 3 M 176, CS Sospel to prefect AM, 7 December 1860.

support. By December 7, Bertrand had grown so concerned about the contact between Alberti in Sospel and Maulandi, then in Nice, that he wrote the prefect that he was going to try and intercept their correspondence. Even as the commissioner kept close watch on Avigdor's partisans in the area, he was busy trying to promote the government's official candidature, which he confessed had been made difficult because the government had not designated the official candidate until a relatively late date. By that time Avigdor's agents had already begun to hand out ballots inscribed with his name. Noting that the majority of the electors in his circumscription were illiterate and would not be able to write the name of the official candidate themselves, he requested and received printed Lubonis bulletins to distribute to them. A visitor from Menton also brought an additional 500 bulletins for Lubonis and then went north to campaign for Lubonis in Moulinet.¹⁸

The night before the election, Sospel's fatefully named Café de France was the site of a scene between Maulandi and a M. Blancardi, known as the Count of Villefranche. Maulandi confronted Blancardi and asked him for whom he planned to vote. Blancardi responded that although he had originally intended to vote for Avigdor, he had changed his mind once the government had designated the official candidate, and would vote for Lubonis. Disgusted, Maulandi replied, "Look how you're letting yourself be influenced by the government." The following day Blancardi received an anonymous, threatening letter written in semi-literate Italian, which read: "M. le Comte, If you do not maintain the word that you gave a month ago to give your vote to Seigneur Avigdor, pay attention for we are numerous and when we know the means will make you pay for it, when you least expect it, as has already happened to you before; however we hope that you will not give much importance to the despicable proclamations of the government and will keep your word."¹⁹

The day of the election was no less tense. Peasants who came in from the countryside to vote brought with them 1,117 Avigdor ballots (there were only 1,027 eligible electors in Sospel), and Bertrand estimated that a total of over 6,000 had been handed out in the area. For good measure the cabaret owner Jean-Baptiste Raibaud distributed additional Avigdor bulletins throughout the day. Bertrand had the extra Avigdor ballots that the electors brought him burnt on the spot, and patrolled the village on foot. The electoral battle continued right to the *salle de votation* itself in Sospel's town hall. To support the official candidate, the gendarme posted in the entryway of the polling room distributed Lubonis bulletins to electors who arrived empty-handed. Maulandi and Raibaud retaliated by positioning themselves on the staircase of the town hall and intercepting electors as they came in to vote. Rainoud, one of Sospel's forest guards, witnessed Maulandi ripping Lubonis ballots right out of the hands of two peasants on the staircase of the town hall. He also saw the sergeant of the gendarmerie confront cabaret owner Jean-Baptiste Raibaud, who had been distributing additional Avigdor bulletins throughout the day, saying "Get out of here, or else I'll arrest you." Raibaud left, but only after retorting: "I'm only doing the same thing as your gendarme."

Raibaud's report is a reminder that Avigdor's partisans were essentially employing the same kinds of tactics that the Bonapartist regime had been using for nearly a decade in the rest of France: mobilizing the vast resources of the administration to support its chosen candidates. Even Bertrand must have recognized this: in a letter to the Prefect, Bertrand admitted that the

¹⁸ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 3 M 176, CS Sospel to prefect AM, 8 December 1860.

¹⁹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 3 M 176, CS Sospel to prefect AM, 13 December 1860; anonymous letter to Comte Blancardi, no date, received 9 December 1860; translation of anonymous letter by CS Sospel.

gendarme had been supplied with Lubonis ballots but denied that he had engaged in any of the ballot-grabbing that Avigdor's partisans had. Nevertheless, Raibaud had made such a nuisance of himself during the election that Bertrand went to his café at 10:30 in the evening to serve him with a citation. Drunk and afraid that Bertrand was going to report everyone in the café, Raibaud shouted insults at him and made a scene. Bertrand unceremoniously took him to prison and allowed him to sleep off the alcohol. By eight the following morning, Raibaud had adopted an appropriately repentant attitude. Bertrand, who believed that Raibaud had acted largely under the influence of Maulandi, Vachieri and Pastoris, decided that the best course of action was to reprimand him severely in front of the Justice of the Peace and the local gendarmes before dropping the contravention altogether. In return for this surprisingly lenient treatment, Raibaud promised to behave in the future. Bertrand hoped that Raibaud's arrest would serve as a lesson to others in the town. "It demonstrated, in the eyes of the population, that while severe, I am also fair and well-intentioned. That's what I'm hearing from all sides, even from the Italian party, which is much more considerable than I had thought."²⁰

The election results in Sospel, which saw Avigdor receive 40 percent of the votes to Lubonis' 59 percent, showed that Borriglione, Bertrand, and the other agents of the French administration had succeeded in ensuring the success of the administration's official candidate. But it also reflected the genuine electoral battle that had taken place between the supporters of the two candidates. Bertrand claimed that over 100 of the 226 bulletins cast for Avigdor were in Pastoris' handwriting. The most committed pro-Avigdor campaigners, notably Maulandi and Pastoris, refused to give up. On the evening of December 10, members of the Italian faction, in groups of seven or eight, roamed the streets of town singing Italian songs and songs against the French government. They fled and hid upon encountering commissioner Bertrand in the street, who discovered that they had posted small scraps of paper in the streets of town denouncing those inhabitants who had not supported Avigdor's campaign. The sample forwarded by Bertrand to the Prefect took aim at Don Cariaschi, a priest and municipal counselor who, along with Sospel's vicar, M. Alberti, and Don Fulconis, a former grammar teacher, had been the only clergyman in Sospel not to back Avigdor. In shaking handwriting, the denunciation read "Don Cairasqui, sub-commissioner, that is to say more vile than a commissioner."²¹ In the face of the evident escalation of tensions in the town, Bertrand tried to put a brave face on the situation. "In spite of the fact that I am alone," he wrote, "you can count on me, M. le Prefect. I am not afraid of anything, and will be able to face this danger." Bertrand did, however, call the rural and forest guards to his office and recommend special vigilance.

In addition to the physical threats represented by the threatening posters and letters, rumors spread in the commune that Maulandi and Vachieri were gathering signatures for a legal protest against the conduct and outcome of the election, arguing that Bertrand and the gendarmerie had unduly influenced the vote. M. Albin, a road worker on the Sospel to Menton route, reported that on December 11 Maulandi had approached him and asked him to sign a document, presumably some kind of protest letter. To this, Albin had replied, "I don't want to sign anything against my government."²² An upset Bertrand defended himself against any possible accusations of misconduct, explaining to the Prefect that he had simply not had the manpower at his disposition to influence the election results in any meaningful way. He pointed

²⁰ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 3 M 176, CS Sospel to prefect AM, 10 December 1860.

²¹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 3 M 176, CS Sospel to prefect AM, 11 December 1860; anonymous poster attacking Cairasqui.

²² AD Alpes-Maritimes, 3 M 176, CS Sospel to prefect AM, 13 December 1860.

out that on the second day of the election, December 10, he had been assisted by only one gendarme—posted in the key position on the town hall staircase—as the sergeant of the gendarmerie had been sick in bed all day and the remaining gendarmes sent on mission to observe the elections in Castillon and Moulinet, the two other towns in the canton. For his part, he claimed that he had circulated through the village only to maintain order, not to force electors into supporting a particular candidate. Bertrand had reached his limit, and asked Maulandi in no uncertain terms to leave Sospel or face arrest. Maulandi departed the following day, December 12 for Nice, followed by Pastoris and his son a few days later.²³

Political separatism was not the exclusive driving force behind the Avigdor candidacy of 1860. The money that Avigdor had lavished on his campaign to buy food, and especially drink, undoubtedly swayed many electors. But the fact that the election served as the province's initiation into the electoral and representative system of their new government meant that the annexation was a natural campaign issue, and Avigdor and his partisans had clearly operated on the assumption that open questioning of the annexation and its supporters would secure votes. Reflecting on the Sospel election in one of his final reports, Bertrand clearly interpreted the tone and tenor of the Avigdor candidacy as anti-French. He declared, "In front of you, the notables put on polite faces and give you a warm welcome, they all seem French; but deep down, and behind your back, they would tear up the French government if they could."²⁴ Bertrand's indictment of local notables as duplicitous dovetails with the actions of Peille and Berre's municipal leaders. They had pressed French administrators for assistance enforcing their authority over the townsmen in the autumn, yet now dismissed the influence of the government and supported Avigdor's candidacy.

When the votes were tallied, the evidence of electoral manipulation became clear. Etienne Mari, the mayor's adjunct from Coaraze, made a trip to Nice to file a formal complaint about the conduct of the vote, which was then forwarded to the electoral commission charged with certifying the results. In Breil, Contes, Levens, L'Escarène, St-Martin-Lantosque, and Sospel, more votes were found in the electoral urns than there had been voters. The electoral commission decided to subtract the excess number of votes (twelve) from each candidate and assign them to the invalidated category but did not take further action because the overall results still favored Lubonis by a substantial margin. In some places the precautions taken by the administration bore fruit. Moulinet had been visited gendarmes before the election and on the second day of the voting, of 225 voters, only 4 voted for Avigdor, leaving Lubonis with a typically imperial result of 98 percent of votes cast. But this was not always the case; gendarmes had equally been dispatched to Castillon, but were less successful in overcoming the campaigning of the pro-Avigdor faction, where Avigdor received 57 percent of the votes cast. In other communes as well, detractors of French rule managed to find sympathetic ears. All five communes comprising the canton of Contes opted for Avigdor by considerable majorities ranging from a low of 59 percent in Châteauneuf to 90 percent in Berre, the site of Avigdor's 400 franc dinner. With just 40 percent of the votes, Avigdor did less well than expected in Peille, identified by the public prosecutor as the nerve center of his candidacy, where half the electors abstained, but he did very well in neighboring Peillon, capturing two-thirds of its votes. Surely it is not coincidental that Castellar—the town that had produced the greatest percentage of negative

²³ Avigdor apparently did hire people to circulate protest petitions alleging electoral corruption detrimental to his candidacy. Among them was one Edouard Franco, according to a letter dated 12 January 1861. AD Alpes-Maritimes, draft, prefect AM to MI, 12 January 1861.

²⁴ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 3 M 176, CS Sospel to prefect AM, 10 December 1860.

votes in the April plebiscite—gave the pro-Italian Avigdor 92 percent of its votes. Abstention was another problem. The infighting in Sospel probably encouraged voters (46 percent of them) who did not want to be harassed on the stairwell to stay home. The contest was surprisingly close in Nice itself, where Avigdor received 46 percent of the votes—although his total was dwarfed by the number of abstentions, as over 80 percent of electors in Nice did not turn up to the polls.

An intriguing coda to the Avigdor candidacy occurred on the evening of December 27. While passing by the customs office at the port, two police agents overheard the sound of men drinking, and shouts of “Viva Italia! Viva Garibaldi!” emanating from the closed doors of the Café de la Marine. The customs agents informed them the revelers were porters and sailors employed at the port and “some Garibaldians.” Having met up with two colleagues, the four policemen were nonplussed to encounter Septime-Nephtali Avigdor, Henri Avigdor’s youngest brother, loitering nearby. Police agent Vial reported that his two colleagues from Nice, agents Daniel and Raton, were particularly astonished to see a person of such high esteem “in such a place” late at night. Vial hypothesized—not without a degree of embarrassment—that Avigdor had been behind the noisy and public disturbance at the café. He believed Avigdor had paid the workers to create a disturbance and remained in the area to make sure that his agents were carrying out their task. Vial reported his belief that “probably all these workers that we see hanging about the streets are paid by someone who is against the French government, and who is seeking to cause a riot.” Vial’s account was seconded independently by another agent, Deblanchi, who had passed by the Café de la Marine an hour earlier and had heard the sound of young men singing Garibaldian songs. “It seems they were paid by M. Avigdor, since at the same time they were singing in the café, M. Nephtali Avigdor was in the place Bellevue at the port,” he wrote.²⁵

The unexpected depths of this oppositional electoral corruption during the department’s very first election was serious enough to warrant an investigation carried out by the Justice of the Peace of L’Escarène under the aegis of the Imperial Court of Appeals in Aix-en-Provence. The investigation was quickly aborted. In spite of the overwhelming evidence that Henri Avigdor had been personally involved in disrupting the election, the public prosecutor and the Minister of Justice agreed between the two of them not to begin legal proceedings against Avigdor precisely because of the “exceptional circumstances” of the Alpes-Maritimes. Lubonis had still won the election handily, encouraging the administrators to look the other way and drop the matter quietly. “The Sardinian government allowed a deplorable latitude to the maneuvers of all the parties,” commented the public prosecutor in Aix.²⁶ As in so many areas of governance, the administrators chalked up the affair to the aftereffects of years of poor Sardinian administration, coupled with the inevitable learning curve of the new practice of universal suffrage. None of the French authorities noticed the irony in the fact that the electoral system of the Second Empire had succeeded in producing a victory for Lubonis using similar tactics as Avigdor, who was outgunned only because the French administration had greater resources at its disposition.

Nice’s Pro-Italian Hard-Liners

The Avigdor candidacy was a fairly open attempt to exploit the unresolved tensions of the annexation. It demonstrated that the settlement of 1860 could be manipulated to mobilize

²⁵ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 348, two police reports, one by Vial, the other by Deblanchi to CCP Nice, 27 December and 28 December, 1860.

²⁶ AN, BB 18 1620 A3 3941, PG Aix to MJ, 15 December 1860.

opposition against the administration, even within the official political system of the Empire. But opponents of the annexation did not confine themselves to the restrictive political world of official candidacies and ballot boxes. Many of the pro-Italian campaigners who had caused the administration so much consternation in the first half of 1860, including Antoine Fenocchio, abbé Albert Cougnet, Jean-Baptiste Maiffret, and Charles Laurenti-Roubaudi remained in Nice and at the forefront of demonstrations that were openly hostile to the Imperial regime and to France.

Their absent hero and the city's native son, Garibaldi, cast a long shadow. As we saw in Chapter 3, many of the youths who left Nice to join the ranks of his armies did so for pecuniary rather than nationalist reasons. But members of the pro-Italian faction had assisted them as an expression of defiance toward the French government. On November 16, 1860, central police commissioner Aussilloux reported that Garibaldi's Niçois secretary, Basso, had invited some of the leading members of the pro-Italian faction to a private dinner, including one of Garibaldi's generals; abbé Cougnet; and Adrien Barralis, Nice's mayor between 1853 and 1857. That evening, the general himself gave another dinner to the same group at the Hôtel de l'Univers.²⁷ A few days later Aussilloux reported that some of those present at the dinner had written a letter to Garibaldi asking him to take a short sojourn in Nice.²⁸ This greatly upset the Alpes-Maritimes department's nervously incompetent first prefect Paulze d'Ivoy. Even though Aussilloux had merely reported the existence of the group's written request to Garibaldi, Paulze d'Ivoy wrote a characteristically bombastic report to the Ministry of the Interior's Internal Direction of Public Security and claimed that a deputation had actually been dispatched in person to Caprera to beseech the venerable Niçois freedom fighter for a visit to the city. "This is an absurd idea, because of everything Garibaldi has always thought, said and written on the subject of the annexation of Nice to France, that it is impossible in the current state of affairs that this should happen for a long time, not to say forever. It's already too much, and I would say that to a certain extent, it is a danger that anybody has been able to even consider such an idea in Nice and discuss it."²⁹ But the administration had to proceed without providing the Italianissimes with an opportunity to justify their anti-French activities on the grounds of French governmental repression. The Minister of the Interior exhorted Paulze d'Ivoy on at least two occasions to proceed with caution—indeed, with "extreme moderation"—and even directed the authorities to allow any private welcome-home celebrations in honor of Garibaldi to proceed without interruption. They were to be kept under careful surveillance, but were only to be broken up if they took on a public or explicitly political character.³⁰

In the early years following the annexation, the pro-Italian faction made several attempts to continue to celebrate Italian national holidays, particularly that of the *Statuto*. This holiday, established by the government of Piedmont-Sardinia to commemorate King Charles Albert's granting of the Sardinian constitution, the *Statuto*, during the revolutionary upheaval of 1848, took place annually on the first Sunday of June. In 1860 this date had fallen inconveniently between the conclusion of the plebiscite in April and the formal handover of Nice and Savoy to France on June 14. Recognizing that allowing the celebrations of the holiday to go forward would likely create embarrassing difficulties, the French government had asked the Sardinian government as well as its own handpicked interim administration not to permit the holiday to be

²⁷ AN, F 1cIII (AM) 2, no. 1110, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 16 November 1860.

²⁸ AN, F 1cIII (AM) 2, copy, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 19 November 1860.

²⁹ AN, F 1cIII (AM) 2, prefect AM to MI, 19 November 1860.

³⁰ AD Alpes-Maritimes, MI, DGSP, to prefect AM, 22 November 1860; MI, DGSP, to prefect, 30 November 1860.

celebrated in Nice or Savoy.³¹ The following year, however, the police received notice in May of defiant preparations for the 1861 holiday. Most of the rumors concerned Niçois participation in the celebrations planned in Ventimiglia, the Italian town just over the French border from Menton. The special police commissioner of Menton reported that a number of Niçois had journeyed to the city for the day. Many had come for no other purpose than to enjoy the day's festivities and take in the various spectacles, but others had come to give free reign to, in his words, "the hate that they have towards everything French, a sentiment that they will never lose a single opportunity to demonstrate." The commissioner provided a list of names of the most dangerous anti-French attendees, which included six Mentonnais, most of them from artisan or craft backgrounds. According to the police commissioner, all nine of the individuals had attended the festivities in Ventimiglia ostentatiously wearing cockades in Italian colors on their lapels and "made themselves noticed by the exaltation of their words, on the subject of the recent annexation of Nice to France and of its impending return to Italy."³²

Though these demonstrations of solidarity with Italy had not caused any disturbances, their activities clearly worried Menton's special police commissioner. In closing his report, he reflected on the events he had witnessed and posed the problem of national loyalties in a rhetorical fashion:

Certainly, M le Prefect, love of country is an innate sentiment for men, and it must be respected when it is sincerely felt from the heart. But can we, frankly, accept it with these people, who opted for French nationality, and who, in spite of that, never miss an occasion to insult a generous and powerful government with these cowardly and insulting invectives, a government that has already done so much for their country, and from which they are still expecting much more precious advantages?³³

The Statuto holiday also provoked concerns the following year. On June 1, abbé Cougnet, the fierce anti-French campaigner of 1860, celebrated a mass at the Saint-Augustin church attended, according to the police, by both Niçois and Italians. In an obvious deviation from the prescribed ritual, he ended the mass with a *Domine Salvum* for Victor Emmanuel, not Napoleon III.³⁴ As in the previous year, rumors circulated that the celebration of holiday would trigger an uprising of "Garibaldians" in Ventimiglia, and that inhabitants of the County of Nice would be descending along the Ligurian coast from Ventimiglia to Genoa to participate in anti-French demonstrations. All of these proved exaggerated; the police commissioner in Sospel, for example, acknowledged that four of the town's inhabitants had gone to L'Olivetta in Italy to have dinner with the lawyer Garatoi, a "co-disciple and friend"; but five or six others had gone to Ventimiglia simply to enjoy the dancing and festivities, and even to earn some money working as musicians.³⁵

Though not a Sardinian festival, the arrival on February 12, 1861 of the first annual Carnival in Nice to take place under French rule also provided the opportunity for trouble. In the days before the celebrations, rumors spread by the pro-Italian faction held that the French government was planning to tone down the traditional scale of the festivities. To deflate these rumors, the prefect gave orders to the police not to interfere with the celebrations unless they

³¹ AMAE, CPC, Sardaigne, Chambéry/Nice 14, telegram from Senator Piétri to MAE, 8 May 1860.

³² AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, no. 388, CS Menton to prefect AM, 3 June 1861.

³³ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, no. 388, CS Menton to prefect AM, 3 June 1861.

³⁴ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 3 June 1862.

³⁵ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, no. 226, CS Sospel to prefect AM, 7 June 1862.

took on the proportions of a riot.³⁶ When the day arrived, at least three police officers circulated to maintain order as much as possible. One of their chief tasks was to prevent people engaging in the annual festivities from throwing handfuls of flour at passersby on the interior of the promenade (an entertainment described as “more than savage” by the decidedly unamused commissioner Malchissédec.) Among those celebrants engaging in the activity was a well-known lawyer, Adrien Gilly. As police officer Denis Landrin passed in front of him on his way to join two of his colleagues, Gilly aimed a handful of flour directly in Landrin’s face, at “point-blank” range according to Malchissédec.³⁷ Under normal circumstances, Landrin’s dousing *à la meunière* would not have been particularly noteworthy, as Malchissédec noted that many of the city’s police officers, and presumably most of the spectators, had emerged from the day’s celebrations covered in flour. But the incident stood out because Gilly, a well-known member of the pro-Italian faction, had taken direct aim at Landrin.

When an understandably put-out Landrin ordered Gilly to follow him to the central police station, Gilly refused to go, yelling at Landrin and crying out that the police were “scum” and “assassins” and physically resisting to leave the Cours Saleya. According to Malchissédec, Gilly fought so determinately against the arrest that he and Landrin had stumbled against a stone bench and fell into the street. Another police witness, Bousquet, was even less generous towards Gilly, reporting that Gilly had not even fallen but had simply been jostled by the crowd and had banged into the bench. Not surprisingly, Gilly protested against the police version of his arrest. He claimed that he and his brother Edouard had been walking together innocently in the promenade when two unknown individuals came up to him and rudely asked whether he had just thrown flour at them. Gilly, who denied the accusation, nevertheless qualified the question as a ridiculous overreaction; he called the interpellation as “extraordinary,” given the day’s festivities, and said that his denial was interrupted by three police officers who pushed him abruptly into the ditch for the stream that ran through the side of the Cours Saleya, and trampled on his feet. “This inexplicable behavior occurred without my having gone against any infraction of ordinary or special police regulations, or without the slightest provocation by word or deed,” he wrote.³⁸ He then made a veiled reference to the city’s Franco-Italian tensions by alluding to the city’s “local divisions” and concluded that “such a regrettable incident would certainly not occur in any other French city.”³⁹

Malchissédec and Bousquet denied that the fight had involved three officers against Gilly. While Malchissédec conceded that Landrin, dripping with flour, “had not been able to restrain himself” from overreacting when a better course of action would have been letting the incident drop, he faulted Gilly for not accompanying Landrin and politely sorting out the matter out at the station. Both Malchissédec and Bousquet believed that Gilly had purposely created a scene to embarrass the agents of public order. As Bousquet wrote, “I’m not alone in thinking that M. Gilly was hoping in the circumstances to provoke a public demonstration against the French police, which he does not like. Moreover, his well-known antipathy against France and the more-than-coarse language that he and his brother used a few moments later in your own office, which you allowed me to respond to severely, tend to support my way of seeing this.”⁴⁰ With the police officers united against Gilly, Gavini and the public prosecutor summarily rejected Gilly’s

³⁶ AN, F 1cIII (AM) 2, prefect AM to MI, 14 February 1861.

³⁷ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, copy, report from commissioner Malchissédec to CCP Nice, 19 February 1861.

³⁸ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, copy, letter from Adrien Gilly to CCP, no date.

³⁹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, copy, letter from Adrien Gilly to PI, no date.

⁴⁰ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, copy, CCP to prefect AM, 20 February 1861.

accusations, and in a curt note, Gavini informed Gilly that the government was disinclined to pursue the matter.⁴¹

Because of their persistence in transforming ordinary activities into opportunities to embarrass the government and publicly question the annexation, many of the erstwhile leaders of the pro-Italian faction in Nice ultimately overstepped the limits of what the authorities were willing to tolerate. One such individual was Jean-Baptiste Maiffret, the famous “Le Padre,” who had made his anti-French sentiments quite clear during the first half of 1860 and had opted for Italian nationality after the annexation. The administration decided to get rid of him at the earliest opportunity. After Maiffret took a trip to Genoa in May 1861, Gavini toyed with the idea of forbidding him to reenter Nice, though this ultimately came to nothing.⁴² He would have his opportunity following an incident that occurred on New Year’s Day 1862. To ring in the new year, Maiffret made an ominous prediction in front of ten others in a hairdresser’s shop. “In 30 or 40 days,” the amateur soothsayer announced, “war will break out, and with Joseph [Garibaldi]’s help Nice will become Italian again, which she so ardently desires.” Among those present was M. Féraud, the Justice of the Peace of the town of Levens, who immediately warned Maiffret of the seditious nature of his speech. Maiffret scoffed: “I am Niçard, and free to say and do whatever I want.”⁴³ Maiffret apparently meant this seriously; in another incident Maiffret remarked in a café that the shadow of one of Victor Emmanuel’s fingers was worth more than Napoleon III’s entire body.⁴⁴ Féraud reported the incident to the central police commissioner of Nice, who arrested Maiffret on January 3 and had his lodgings in the rue Saint-François de Paule searched. Gavini could scarcely hide his glee at the arrest, describing Maiffret to the Minister of the Interior as “one of the most hostile men to the French administration, and the most capable of organizing a skirmish or project in favor of Italian unity and independence.”⁴⁵ Maiffret’s cache of seditious writings included texts in French, Italian and Niçard, the three major languages of Nice. Among the documents seized was a song of 75 couplets written in Italian called *Il pappagallo Romano* (“The Roman Parrot”), undoubtedly a reference to the Pope; two verses in French, the first called “The Departure of a True Niçois” (presumably the “true” Niçois was one who left the city after the French takeover); and a handwritten song written in Niçard called *Li Carota Imperiali* (“Imperial Carrots”). A letter from one of Garibaldi’s aides-de-camp, was also found, though its contents were not divulged.⁴⁶

In spite of the damning evidence, Maiffret was unexpectedly acquitted by the magistrates’ criminal court on January 17 thanks to the judges’ dubious interpretation of previous case law. Maiffret was not charged with “provoking mistrust of the government” or “hate of citizens against each other,” because Féraud’s testimony made it clear that Maiffret had not *directly* insulted France or French institutions, but had been limited to *predicting* the onset of war and a future revision of the County’s territorial status. Instead, the prosecution chose to indict him for “publication of a false rumor likely to trouble public peace.” The court, in contrast, found that the announcement of what it called *faits*, even those that might trouble public peace,

⁴¹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, draft from prefect AM to Gilly, 2 March 1861.

⁴² AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, draft, prefect AM to CCP Nice, CS Menton, CS Fontan, 4 June 1861; draft, prefect AM to CCP Nice, CS Menton, CS Fontan, 8 June 1861.

⁴³ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, draft, prefect AM to MI, 6 January 1862.

⁴⁴ Francesco Barberis, *Nizza Italiana: Raccolta di varie poesie Italiane e Nizzarde corredate di note* (Florence: Sborgi e Guarnirei, 1871), 18.

⁴⁵ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, draft, prefect AM to MI, 6 January 1862.

⁴⁶ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, draft, prefect AM to MI DGSP, 27 January 1862.

did not constitute an violation of the law prohibiting the publication of false news because Maiffret had made a mere prediction.⁴⁷ Upon Maiffret's acquittal, cheers broke out in the audience and Maiffret was congratulated by several pro-Italian co-disciples who attended the trial. French administrators were disgusted: Maiffret seemed to have escaped punishment even though he had defiantly predicted an event that openly challenged the territorial integrity of the French state. The central police commissioner and the prefect blamed the result on the unimpressive performance of the presiding Vice President and the sympathy of the two Niçois assessors on the court, with Gavini predicting darkly that other members of the pro-Italian party in Nice would view the court's decision as a "promise of impunity" that would encourage them to try similar activities.⁴⁸

Gavini and the public prosecutor of Nice initially planned to appeal the case to the court of appeals at Aix-en-Provence. The public prosecutor took issue with the legal reasoning behind the acquittal, arguing that Maiffret's words—implying an imminent territorial revision—could not be considered a mere prediction, as he had fixed a more or less precise date of 30 to 40 days within which a war and territorial reorganization would take place.⁴⁹ Moreover, the prosecutor argued that Maiffret had indeed violated the law against the spreading of false news and rumors. He had evidence that Maiffret had simply been repeating what he had read in a recent issue of the nationalist, anti-French Turinese daily *Il Diritto di Torino*, which had printed a retrocession rumor.⁵⁰ Even as the public prosecutor at the Court of Appeals reviewed the case, Gavini and the public prosecutor of Nice decided that the case against Maiffret might well go against them, particularly because the "lack of publicity" surrounding Maiffret's allegations might still fail to meet the standard required by the court. Rather than risk the embarrassment of seeing Maiffret acquitted again, Gavini decided to simply get rid of him. With Maiffret having opted for Italian nationality in 1860, it was a simple matter for the Prefect to request the Minister of the Interior's General Direction of Public Security for an expulsion warrant, which was granted in early February. In the late afternoon of February 16, Maiffret boarded the steamboat to Genoa. Mindful of his standing among the pro-Italian party in Nice, the central police commissioner had the event under surveillance, reporting that over 50 people had watched his departure from the jetty on which the lighthouse was situated. As the steamer drew even with the lighthouse, Maiffret delivered a final challenge to the administration as he shouted to his supporters, "My farewells to the prefect, Ansaldi and Féraud!" referring to the two key witnesses who had testified against him during the trial.⁵¹

Nor was this the last that the administration saw of Maiffret, who returned to Nice on the morning of September 21 on the steamship *Fébo* in order to take his family back to Genoa with him. He did not disembark, but entertained numerous visitors on board the ship under the watchful eye of the central police commissioner who, alerted by customs officials, stationed a police force at the port for the entire 36-hour duration of Maiffret's stay. Most of those who visited Maiffret on board were, in Gavini's words, "individuals known for their Italian sentiments." While the presence of police kept order in the port, the same may not have been true on board the *Fébo*; by two o'clock in the afternoon, its captain ordered the plank between the

⁴⁷ AN, BB 18 1644 A3 6191, CI Aix, Parquet, ACG, to MJGS, 2 February 1862.

⁴⁸ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, draft, prefect AM to MI, DGSP, 18 January 1862.

⁴⁹ AN, BB 18 1644 A3 6191, CI d'Aix, Parquet, ACG, 2 February 1862; AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, draft, prefect to MI, DGSP, 18 January 1862.

⁵⁰ AN, BB 18 1644 A3 6191, CI d'Aix, Parquet, ACG, 2 February 1862.

⁵¹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 17 February 1862.

dock and the ship removed, and gave orders to prevent anyone else from boarding the steamer. About 500 spectators watched the ship pull out of harbor the following evening. The commissioner provided Gavini with a list of 15 names whom he considered the most opposed to French rule and who had visited Maiffret.⁵²

Maiffret's activities seemed to confirm a stubborn and ingrained attitude of defiance among those Niçois citizens who had opted for Italian nationality after the annexation but had remained in the city. This problem became especially acute the following year. In January 1863, the Italian consul in Nice lodged a formal complaint with Gavini complaining that members of Nice's firefighting brigade were rudely insulting those Niçois inhabitants who had chosen to retain their Italian nationality and therefore came under the consul's protection. "The firefighters' behavior, if true, is that much more reprehensible because they are part of a corps organized by municipal authority," complained the consul, "and the insults are therefore addressed not only to individuals but to the nation of which I have the honor of belonging."⁵³ Gavini fired back an unusually irritated letter, denying not only that the members of the firefighting brigade had caused the incidents but all but laying the blame on "individuals belonging to the Italian nationality or those who, while not belonging to it, are always in the Garibaldian ranks."⁵⁴ He also contacted the Ministers of the Interior and Foreign Affairs, furious that members of the pro-Italian faction were in some sense hiding behind the protection of the consul.⁵⁵ The Minister of Foreign Affairs responded by not only asking the consul to restrain Italian nationals in Nice from "affecting provocative attitudes," but contacting the French ambassador in Turin, Sartigez, and asking him to apply pressure to the Italian government to transmit similar orders to the consul. Sartigez met with the Italian minister of Foreign Affairs in early February, who promised to intervene with his consul in Nice.⁵⁶

No sooner had Gavini handled the matter of the Niçois firefighters than another crisis involving an Italian national arose, this one involving a man of elevated stature: count Charles Laurenti-Roubaudi, the former deputy to the Turin parliament who had protested against the annexation alongside Garibaldi in the Sardinian Chamber of Deputies. After resigning his Niçois mandate out of protest in 1860, Roubaudi had regrouped and won election as a deputy from Palermo in 1861, but he continued to reside in Nice. Other than Garibaldi himself, no one had more impressive credentials to represent the pro-Italian faction of public opinion than Roubaudi. He was also the most prominent man to have visited Maiffret on board the *Fébo* in September. Roubaudi won reelection from Palermo in January 1863. A few days later, the government was startled to learn that the *Diritto di Torino* had published a formal address that had been sent to Laurenti-Roubaudi, supposedly signed by 200 Niçois citizens, imploring him to work for the revision of the status quo of 1860 so Nice would return to Italy:

Honorable Sir,

⁵² AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 22 September 1862; note from CCP Nice to prefect AM 22 September 1862; CCP Nice to prefect AM 23 September 1862; prefect AM to MI, DGSP, 23 September 1862.

⁵³ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, Consul of Italy to prefect AM, 7 January 1863.

⁵⁴ AMAE, MD, Italie, 40, copy of letter from prefect AM to Consul General of Italy in Nice, 12 January 1863. The draft version of this letter was even harsher than the final. "...individuals of the Italian nationality or those who, without belonging to it, are always in the ranks of the Garibaldian hoards, more Italian even than His Majesty the king Victor Emmanuel, and which creates for the august and loyal ally France the most serious embarrassments against which no government should have to fight." Alpes-Maritimes 1 M 347, draft, 12 January 1863.

⁵⁵ AMAE, MD, Italie, 40 MI, DGSP to MAE, 21 January 1863.

⁵⁶ AD Alpes-Maritimes 1 M 347, MI, DGSP to prefect AM, 29 January 1863; AMAE, MD, Italie 40, draft, MAE to MI, DGSP, 26 January 1863; draft, MAE to LF Turin, 31 January 1863; LF Turin to MAE, 9 February 1863.

The news of your nomination as deputy from the second college of Palermo has filled us with joy. We believe and we're sure we are not mistaken, in saying that the generous inhabitants of Palermo wanted to elect you as an independent and intelligent patriot, and especially, as the citizen of our poor city of Nice. In effect, it is not possible to remember you without remembering the unique election rigging Nice endured. Did you not, you and the illustrious Garibaldi, protest last in the Italian chambers, against those who wished to chase us from our *patrie* and sacrifice us to Bonaparte's greed? Thus, we and all Niçois who are groaning among the vile French police, we have learned with great joy that from the extremity of Sicily, Italians have called you back to this chamber where the echo of your holy protestations still reverberate.⁵⁷

A few days later, another nationalist Italian newspaper, Genoa's *Il Movimento di Genova*, picked up the story and reproduced the document together with a new address supposedly sent to Roubaudi from the "Nizzard exiles" living in Genoa.⁵⁸ Gavini immediately forbade the sale of these two issues in the Alpes-Maritimes. On February 2, the *Diritto* threw additional fuel on the fire by reprinting an address that Roubaudi had published to the electors of Palermo shortly after his reelection, acknowledging his intention to work in the parliament to obtain the territories of Rome, Venice and Nice for Italy. The address included rhetorical gems such as "The vote of the second college of Palermo has once again proclaimed solemnly to the world, Nice is Italian territory," and "May I one day see our flag flying on the Campidoglio, on the Palace of the Doges, then shall I say to you: 'Citizens of Palermo, Nice is still separated from her mother, from Italy; let us go take back from the foreigners the native soil of your liberator.'"⁵⁹ Roubaudi may have made Nice a third priority after Rome and Venice, but the declaration was openly irredentist.

The central police commissioner's investigations revealed that abbé Cougnet had given the original "Niçois address" reprinted in the *Diritto* to a local carpenter named Carlo Garziglia, who had gathered signatures and then sent it to Turin. Garziglia had been among the witnesses whose testimony had helped result in the acquittal of Maiffret the previous year; he had also been among those who had insulted members of the fire brigade.⁶⁰ Gavini refused to believe that the address had been inspired or composed in Nice. He suspected that the story of the document had been entirely fabricated in Turin, and that Cougnet and Garziglia had been inspired to draft such a document only after reading a rumor about it in the *Diritto*. Taking the temperature of public opinion, central police commissioner Hippolyte Lordereau reported that most people did not consider Roubaudi intelligent enough to have written the address to his electors, a piece of rhetoric many believed had sprung from Cougnet's quill.⁶¹ Whatever the exact details of the texts' composition, the government had on its hands a Niçois deputy to the Italian parliament who still had property and family in the city; who had publicly indicated his desire to undo the settlement of 1860; and who had contacts with elements of the anti-French opposition.

⁵⁷ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, MI, direction of printing and the publishing to prefect AM, 30 January 1863; *Il Diritto di Torino*, 28 January 1863.

⁵⁸ *Il Movimento di Genova*, 29 January 1863.

⁵⁹ *Il Diritto di Torino*, 2 February 1863.

⁶⁰ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 5 February 1863.

⁶¹ AN, F1cIII (AM) 2, copy, CCP Nice to MI, DGSP, 8 February 1863.

Exasperated, Gavini sent another stinging note to the Italian consul, the indignation of which reveals the extent to which he suspected the Italian government of giving covert support to Roubaudi and other members of the Italianissime faction. “Whether there’s been exaggeration in the number of people who joined this testimony of sympathy given to M. Laurenti-Roubaudi, I don’t care. I also don’t care to know who signed the address republished by the *Movimento*. But I do want to make one thing very clear, and that is that the system of agitation organized at Nice cannot long continue before it will irritate spirits and perhaps seriously compromise public peace,” he fumed. “Consequently, I have the honor of informing you that if your advice to your nationals remains as powerless as the moderation of the French police to stop these reprehensible excitations, I will find it necessary, to my regret, to take strict steps to forbid the presence in the department of those Italian subjects whose public opinion designates them as being the instigators of various activities by which the Italian demagogic party reveals and proclaims daily its hostility towards France.”⁶²

Gavini was true to his promise to take a more uncompromising attitude toward those “incorrigible men who are combating us here in an underground fashion.”⁶³ Just two days after his ultimatum to the Italian consul, Gavini proposed issuing warrants of expulsion for all three members of the Italian faction whom he held the most responsible for the appearance of the Niçois address: Garziglia, Cougnet, and Roubaudi.⁶⁴ In spite of Roubaudi’s elevated stature and the fact that he owned 5,000 to 6,000 francs’ worth of property in the department, Gavini still felt that his behavior justified an expulsion.⁶⁵ Yet the crafty Roubaudi used his influence to outmaneuver Gavini. Aware that the incident of the Niçois petition had seriously compromised him, Roubaudi met with ambassador Sartigez in Florence, and managed to convince him that his intentions were harmless. Having just met with the Italian minister of Foreign Affairs about the Niçois firefighting incident, Sartigez was entirely disposed to listen to Roubaudi’s soothing declarations. “He admits to regretting the fact that Nice, his homeland, has become a French department,” Sartigez reported, “and he says it with less difficulty that he is well aware that he and a couple of Niçards, the only people of this opinion, aren’t going to retake Nice from the Empire.” Not surprisingly, Roubaudi also remarked that from what he had heard the Niçois firefighters “might have provoked the attacks, to a certain extent,” but that he had nevertheless written to two or three of his friends in the city to “exhort them to the greatest respect for French authorities, both for themselves and on behalf of the Niçards who remained Italian.”⁶⁶ After lulling Sartigez into submission, Roubaudi told him that he was concerned about the possibility of being forcibly expelled from Nice, and pleaded for indulgence. His wife, he claimed, was sick, and only Nice’s mild climate would help cure her. The manipulation succeeded. “Count Roubaudi seems to me to be a man more pompous than practical, and more noisy than dangerous,” Sartigez concluded. None of the expulsion warrants were granted.⁶⁷

Garziglia, Roubaudi and Cougnet’s accomplice, wasted no time squandering his unexpected reprieve. Having gathered together sufficient funds from his pro-Italian friends,

⁶² AD Alpes-Maritimes 1 M 347, draft, prefect AM to consul of Italy in Nice, 2 February 1863.

⁶³ AN, F1cIII (AM) 2, copy, prefect AM to MI, 5 February 1863.

⁶⁴ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, report from CCP to prefect AM, 5 February 1863; draft, prefect AM to MI, DGSP, 7 February 1863.

⁶⁵ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, draft, prefect AM to MI, DGSP, 7 February 1863.

⁶⁶ AMAE, MD, Italie, 40, LF Turin to MAE, 9 February 1863.

⁶⁷ AMAE, MD, Italie, 40, LF Turin to MAE, 9 February 1863; AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, MI, DGSP to prefect AM, 21 February 1863.

Garziglia purchased a rowboat in April 1863 which he offered to the exiled Garibaldi as a gift. In a small but highly symbolically charged ceremony, the boat was christened the *Estella* by one of Garziglia's relatives, the abbé Garziglia of the Église du Notre-Dame-du-Port. Garibaldi politely declined the gift, since he already owned three similar boats in Caprera.⁶⁸ Upon hearing news of this latest demonstration, Gavini repeated his request for Garziglia's expulsion. This time it was granted, and issued on May 20.⁶⁹ The multitalented and bombastic abbé Cougnet managed to survive a few more years, but not on account of good behavior. In February 1863, in the midst of the conflict over the Niçois address and the firefighting brigade, Cougnet updated the tradition of peddling religious relics for the age of nationalism when he made the rounds of several cabarets in Nice showing off rags or strips of cloth that he claimed had been dipped in Garibaldi's blood.⁷⁰ In August 1863 Gavini again mentioned the possibility of expelling Cougnet and Roubaudi, though no further action was taken.⁷¹ Cougnet also continued to be a regular correspondent to the *Diritto di Torino*, which took every opportunity possible to feed Italian irredentist furor over Nice and the other "unredeemed" Italian territories. In early 1867, when Gavini discovered that Cougnet had helped to spread a new spate of retrocession rumors, he summoned the wily nationalist into his office and personally warned him against continuing his activities, or risk legal action or expulsion.⁷²

The threat was not idle. Cougnet was caught later that year trying to coerce young Niçois into volunteering for the latest abortive Garibaldian expedition, as he had earlier in the decade; he was seconded by the familiar Adrien Gilly as well as Casimir Basso, the brother of Garibaldi's Niçois secretary. By 1867, enrollments were a formally prohibited activity: the government had warned Frenchmen against Garibaldian enrollment in the October 30, 1867 issue of the *Moniteur*. The Minister of the Interior requested permission to begin legal proceedings against the three men and planned to issue search warrants at their residences to look for compromising documents. His colleague, the Minister of Justice, recommended a more expedient solution. Fearing that the investigation would take too long, allow the suspects to destroy damning evidence, and especially concerned about the publicity of such an investigation, the minister recommended that the government simply expel the three from the country.⁷³ On November 23, 1867, the Minister of the Interior issued expulsion warrants for Cougnet, Gilly, and another suspect, a commerce commissioner, Louis Perino. Even the Italian consul in Nice, who initially contacted prefecture to ask for a deferral of the execution of the warrant, acknowledged that Gilly and Perino had only received what they deserved.⁷⁴ In spite of his blusteringly violent rhetoric about his hatred for France, Cougnet proved to be inconsolable after his expulsion. Less than a month after his departure, he appeared in the office of the French consul in Turin, Eugène Poujade, proclaiming his innocence of any crime. His plea for clemency fell on unsympathetic ears. Poujade believed Cougnet had written a small notice in that morning's edition of Turin's *Gazetta del Popolo* that uncharitably accused Napoleon III of

⁶⁸ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, AM, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 27 April 1863; draft, prefect AM to MI, DGSP, 30 April 1863; copy of expulsion warrant for Garziglia, 20 May 1863.

⁶⁹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, draft, prefect AM to MI, DGSP, 30 April 1863.

⁷⁰ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 348, MI, DGSP to prefect AM 15 February 1863.

⁷¹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 348, draft, prefect to MI, DGSP, 22 August 1863.

⁷² AN, F 1cIII (AM) 1, grid Rapport, prefect AM to MI, February 1, 1867.

⁷³ AN, BB 18 1758, A4 7608, draft, MJ to MI, 16 November 1867.

⁷⁴ AMAE, ADP, Italie, 4, MI, DGSP, to MAE, 2 December 1867.

ordering the recent expulsions in Nice to purge the city of undesirable elements in preparation for spending a comfortable winter there.⁷⁵

The Separatist Tendency

The presence of individuals such as abbé Cougnet, Laurenti-Roubaudi, Adrien Gilly, and Charles Garziglia in post-annexation Nice demonstrates that there were a number of well-known and visible citizens who publicly adhered to a resolutely anti-French and pro-Italian stance. Unlike the mythical notion of foreign subverters sent from Italy, these men were all natives and residents of Nice, though they clearly maintained contacts abroad. But the French government's frequent claims that these men were all of Italian nationality were not, in fact, very solid. It is true that many of the most ardent pro-Italian campaigners had made declarations in 1860 and 1861 to retain their Sardinian (and after 1861, Italian) citizenship. Article 6 of the Treaty of Turin had enabled the inhabitants of Nice and Savoy to opt for Italian citizenship by submitting "a prior declaration, made to the competent authority, of the ability to transplant their domicile to Italy and of establishing themselves there." Roubaudi, Cougnet and Garziglia had all made such a declaration, which Gavini had noted to justify his requests for expulsion.⁷⁶ However the legal nationality of these men remained murky, primarily because they had not actually "transplanted their domicile" to Italy, as the article required. Even Gavini tacitly acknowledged this in 1863 when he reported in a confidential dispatch to the Minister of the Interior's security service, "In the year that followed the annexation ... a relatively considerable number of Niçois opted for Italian nationality; although this option has become null for most of them, who stayed in the area, it attests to their hostile sentiments toward France."⁷⁷

The vast majority of those who expressed pro-Italian sentiments in the Alpes-Maritimes had not, therefore, opted to assume Italian nationality. And while steadfast anti-French campaigners such as Roubaudi, Cougnet, Garziglia and Gilly were the most visible and aggressive proponents of pro-Italian sentiment, referring to them as the leaders of a "party" or "faction" probably exaggerates their coherence. Nice's pro-Italian sentiment is better described as a tendency, a way of thinking about the annexation during the transitional years of the 1860s. Only a very short distance separated the grumbling and resistance that we explored in Chapter 2 from seditious remarks, activities and protests that directly impugned the annexation. The separatist leaders were dangerous because, by proclaiming a revision of the 1860 settlement as a panacea to the disruptions that had followed in its wake, they propelled ordinary and expected discontent in a more politically-charged, separatist direction. Gavini noted this type of "contamination" in 1863:

The regime change could not occur without damaging interests, without breaking or modifying acquired positions. Different functionaries or administrators who would have lost by passing into the service of France had to leave, and regretted it. But a good number among them have families in the annexed territory, and they contribute, this is undeniable, to entertaining blind regrets for the past and the hope of political events that would once again link the destiny of the former County of Nice to those of Piedmont, which has become the new kingdom of Italy . . . Furthermore, there existed in Nice, before the annexation, a *laissez-faire*,

⁷⁵ AMAE, ADP, Italie, 4, Consul of France in Turin to MAE, 18 December 1867.

⁷⁶ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, draft, prefect AM to MI, DGSP, 7 February 1863.

⁷⁷ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 348, draft, prefect AM to MI, DGSP, 22 August 1863.

indeed even a license that went marvelously with the instincts of the boisterous part of the population. The regularity of the French administration and the active vigilance of the police have put an end to this state of affairs, to the satisfaction of honest people. This vigilance that ensures order is what the troublemakers call vexations, there is no doubt.... [the] Italianissimes try to get the population to believe, and are perhaps themselves persuaded, that the former dictator will one day or another snatch his home country from France ... and reconquer, with its nationality, the so-called free institutions that it has lost.⁷⁸

In managing the conflicts between Frenchmen and Niçois during the 1860s, the government faced the challenge of assessing their exact valence and significance. As early as January 1861, in reporting a fistfight that had occurred between a soldier and a civilian, the city's central police commissioner tried to determine whether its had been politically motivated. "Recently, fights have broken out fairly frequently between soldiers and bourgeois, and people have given them a certain political significance, often quite incorrectly. But it is true that in certain cases the root cause is due to ideas hostile to France," he wrote to the prefect.⁷⁹ Many of the incidents discussed in Chapter 2 had led to speculation about their connection to possible pro-Italian activity. The police were usually quite willing to attribute these types of conflicts to political expressions of defiance to the annexation, and occasionally assigned them motives that had not actually existed. In 1861, two fusiliers of the 90th infantry line, Lachat and Barney, got into a dispute at the ironically-named Café de la Paix. When their bill arrived, Barney, who had invited his colleague for drinks, confessed that he did not have enough money to pay. Waving his last franc in the air, he ran out of the establishment, leaving an indignant Lachat to foot the bill. Lachat followed him in hot pursuit, and the two soldiers indulged in fistfight in the middle of the street. According to the report of the gendarmes, several civilians passing by took advantage of the opportunity to enter the fray and attack both of the soldiers, and one of them, Théophile Martin, was quickly put under arrest.⁸⁰ Jumping to the conclusion that Martin harbored anti-French sentiments, the pleased central police commissioner explained that Martin had been thrown into prison ten days earlier for disturbing the peace. He identified Martin as "one of these systematic troublemakers [*tapageurs*], which we have recently spoken about and against which we have pronounced numerous condemnations." The gendarmes claimed that Martin had recently been found guilty for a similar assault, and Aussilloux also reported that on the same evening, in a nearby café, Martin had "made threats against the French."⁸¹ A week later, Martin was released from prison and the charges were dropped. Investigation revealed that Martin had actually been trying to put an end to the conflict, not join into it. He had attempted to pull the two combatants apart, and had used physical force only to protect himself from the soldiers' blows.⁸²

Cafés frequently brought the more engaged members of the pro-Italian opposition together with ordinary Niçois, who carried their everyday troubles and grumbles with them. In early 1861, Nice's Café de France became a regular meeting spot for M. Ancessy, the billiard maker who had been involved in recruiting youths for Garibaldi's armies. The café seemed to

⁷⁸ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 348, draft, prefect AM to MI, DGSP, 22 August 1863.

⁷⁹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, report no. 402, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 21 January 1861.

⁸⁰ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 346, report no. 538, Gendarmerie, 16th legion, company AM to prefect AM, 1 June 1861.

⁸¹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 346, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 31 May 1861.

⁸² AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 346, draft, prefect AM to MI, DGSP, 8 June 1861. Lachat and Barney received 20 days in prison for their behavior. Marshall of France, commander of the 4th army corps to prefect AM, 12 June 1861.

have become an informal meeting spot for the pro-Italian opposition. “Ancussy has taken over to the point where the owner, Rouchouse, who is almost always drunk, and whom I’ve already informed you about, seems to have abdicated all his authority,” the central police commissioner reported. “He is no longer but Ancussy’s passive instrument.”⁸³ The establishment of a M. Cognet, a wine seller, in the Faubourg Saint-Etienne, was also described as a meeting place for prostitutes and lowlifes, an establishment where young men habitually met to sing Garibaldian songs and indulge in seditious remarks. The ability to use a café for this kind of seditious activity largely depended on the tolerance of the owner; when young men began singing Garibaldian songs in M. Bottin’s cabaret in the Faubourg Saint Jean-Baptiste, Bottin quickly ordered them to shut up or get out.⁸⁴ But the results could be disruptive. At 11:45 p.m. on April 6, 1861, police inspector Helder Delafont and policeman Denis Landrin came across an extremely drunk Barthélemy Matheudi, a 50-year old fisherman residing in the Rue de l’Arc. In a high voice, Matheudi cried out, “*Merde* for France, long live Garibaldi! The French police are beggars, brutes, swine, I shit on their faces!” All of his screams were uttered in Niçard, “which nevertheless we understood perfectly,” the two officers reported. They were not inclined to be too forgiving of Matheudi, who swung his fists wildly and even attempted to bite them as they made their way to the police station. Even as he struggled, Matheudi modified his drunken cries to “Vive la France,” prompting Delafont and Landrin to conclude in their report that he must have been sober enough to understand the seditious nature of his words. The following day, a tearful Matheudi said that he was sorry and that he did not remember anything that had happened, but his reputation spoke volumes: he had been arrested on three prior occasions in the previous seven months for similar offenses.⁸⁵ Unlike a figure such as the abbé Cougnet or Laurenti-Roubaudi, Matheudi was probably not passionately committed to the cause of Italy. But under the influence of alcohol and in opposition to the agents of public order, Matheudi appropriated the language of the anti-French faction while resisting arrest.

A more premeditated example of seditious separatist opposition occurred at the beginning of 1863, on the evening of January 25, when a corporal of the 22nd infantry line, hurrying across the rue Victor to reach his barracks for reveille, was stopped by an unknown individual in the street, who asked him, “Are you French?” When the corporal responded in the affirmative, the other man hit him across the face violently with a stone and ran off.⁸⁶ A few months later, on a March evening, a Niçois carter named Jean-Baptiste Maïssa and his friends Passeron and Chabaud entered the café of M. Lacoste in the Rue de la Préfecture, where a number of French workers were already drinking. Maïssa cheerfully proceeded to sing a little song that included the verse, “Garibaldi is the only man who can save our dear Italy; the Niçois and the Italians will get together to cut the mustache off that dummy called Napoleon III.” Lacoste immediately asked Maïssa to leave his establishment, but Maïssa refused to go gracefully, shouting, “I won’t leave until I’ve torn some French swine to shreds!” A violent brawl ensued, with Maïssa assisted by Passeron and Chabaud, who added fuel to the fire by crying, “Vive Garibaldi! Vive Emmanuel [Victor Emmanuel]! Down with France!” In the ensuing struggle to detain Maïssa until the police arrived, Lacoste’s clothes were torn and tiles on the façade of the shop broken.

⁸³ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 348, report no. 1157, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 26 February 1861.

⁸⁴ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 348, report no. 1159, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 26 February 1861.

⁸⁵ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, report no. 144 by the police commissioner of the 1st arrondissement of Nice to the prefect, 7 April 1861. Due to the handwriting, it is difficult to tell whether the culprit’s name was spelled Matheudi or Mathendi.

⁸⁶ AN, F 1cIII (AM) 2, copy, CCP to MI, DGSP, 26 January 1863.

Maïssa apparently had stationed friends outside the café as reinforcements in the event of a fight.⁸⁷ Tried in the police court for seditious cries and rebellion, Maïssa and Gastaud each received a one-month prison sentence and Passeron received 20 days.⁸⁸ Maïssa's behavior did not correspond to his legal citizenship; he had not filed a statement with the Italian consul adopting Italian nationality at the time of the annexation.

Another site of public contention, as it had been in the troubled months leading up to the annexation, was the theater. In December 1862, a series of unfortunate incidents occurred at the Italian theater of Nice during performances of the Italian opera *Tutti in Maschera*. At the end of the third act, one of the performers, portraying a Turkish impresario, sang a cantata that proclaimed, "Viva Italia!" and extolled the country's virtues, including its scenery, music, and reputation for women of easy virtue. On December 5, the audience reacted audibly to the line with cries of "Encore! Encore!" which continued for ten minutes until the central police commissioner was called into the theater. Gavini identified the troublemakers as "young men belonging principally to the privileged classes of the city, and recognized for being Italianissimes."⁸⁹ But the troubles continued over the next few days: on the evening of the 10th, the same cantata resulted in some members of the audience applauding and shouting, while others booed and whistled. Gavini, who was in attendance that evening, found the scene so disturbing that he had the theater's director interrupt the performance, lower the curtain and make an announcement that the performance would be halted unless all of the untoward audience participation ceased. Gavini informed the Minister of the Interior that he would allow the opera to be performed again and would see what happened; if the result repeated itself, he would cancel the rest of the performances.⁹⁰

Disappointed ambitions or expectations undoubtedly played a role in promoting the appeal of the Alpes-Maritimes' separatist tendency. In May 1863, a priest at Nice's *petite seminaire*, the smaller of the city's two seminaries, sent the Minister of the Interior a startling anonymous denunciation against one of his colleagues, the vice superior abbé Michel Tribaudini, the establishment's Italian instructor. The writer portrayed Tribaudini as an Italian propagandist whose main goal was to instill pro-Italian sentiments in his students:

In his class [Tribaudini] has but one goal, and this is it: to deprecate French authors while exalting Italian literature. Most of his class time is filled with the most violent expressions against everything that might concern France, and the students are so imbued with these ideas that the French professors have real difficulty not in destroying these ideas but just weakening them. He denatures the military history of France and sees nothing in its military glories that can be compared to Italian bravura.

Teaching his students to value Italy's cultural productions over France's probably would have been sufficient to cast doubt on Tribaudini's reputation, but the author then went on to make a numbered list of the seditious remarks that he claimed Tribaudini had made in public.

Apologizing in advance for their crudeness, the author reported that he had only transcribed a selection of Tribaudini's choicest and most sensational epithets, which included "Fuck France

⁸⁷ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 348, CCP of Nice to the prefect, 8 March 1863; AN, F 1cIII (AM) 2, copy, excerpt of report from prefect AM to MI, 7 March 1863.

⁸⁸ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 348, note, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 21 March 1863; draft, prefect AM to MI, 25 March 1863.

⁸⁹ AN, F 1cIII (AM) 2, copy, prefect AM to MI, DGSP, 6 December 1862.

⁹⁰ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, draft, prefect AM to MI, 11 December 1863.

and all the French”; “I hope the Emperor won’t last longer than two years on his throne, and he won’t”; “If the French weren’t all cowards, they’d revolt and chase out the Emperor”; “The French are despicable, in 1831 they promised assistance and protests for the Polish and then had them shot”; and “Your Emperor is worse than a farce or a thief, or an assassin; he’s earned the guillotine ten times over. That’s what I think and I’ll swear to it on paper if necessary.” The author closed his letter by neatly summarizing up the state of affairs: “He is Italian, this man,” and asking the authorities to conduct an investigation into Tribaudini’s reputation and conduct.⁹¹

As the report of his remarks suggest, Tribaudini saw himself as an outsider and referred linguistically to France in distant terms (“your Emperor,” “the French.”). On the other hand, Tribaudini had been a member of Nice’s first post-annexation municipal council, and his signature featured prominently on the address sent by this body after taking up its 1860.⁹² What might have accounted for Tribaudini’s change in behavior—assuming that the denunciation was genuine? The annexation had not brought about an immediate change in the composition of the seminary’s instructors. Tribaudini had always been an exception at the seminary; he was a Niçois native in an institution that continued, into the 1860s, to be largely staffed by priests not originally native to the County, including instructors from the Aisne, the Jura, Corsica and even Ireland. But one change that had occurred after 1860 was that all of the courses were required to be taught in French, something that must have reduced the importance of the school’s Italian instructor. Tribaudini managed to survive the denunciation and was still teaching there in 1867, but perhaps unhappily: the bishop of Nice turned the direction of the institution over to the French Lazarists in 1866, which undoubtedly furthered its Gallicization.⁹³

The dramatic events taking place on the Italian peninsula over the course of the decade also affected the tone and magnitude of pro-Italian sentiment in the County. One major event was the Seven Weeks’ War of 1866, during which the Italian kingdom sided with Prussia in order to wrest Venetia—the prize it had been denied by Napoleon III in 1859—from the Habsburgs. The resulting peace settlement saw Austria cede Venetia to France, which in turn retroceded it to Italy, so the Austrians could avoid the shame of having to cede it directly to Italy. The police commissioner of Menton reported that the news of the Austrian cession of Venetia to France and the Emperor’s offer to broker peace between the belligerents had produced a remarkable effect on the population. “As soon as the news was made public by the mayor, the houses and all the establishments on the Rue Saint-Michel were decked out as if by enchantment,” he rhapsodized. But he also noted that the Italian nationalists, “those who are French by law, but not in their hearts,” were surprisingly sullen about a military conquest they might have been expected to celebrate. While he could not point to any specific anti-French activity, he theorized that this had to do with France’s participation in the peace settlement: the most ardent pro-Italians were disgusted by the fact that France was acting as a middleman in the transfer of Venetia to Italy and would have preferred that the territorial cession take place directly, so Italy would not owe any debts of gratitude to France.⁹⁴ In Nice, too, some were also unhappy about French meddling in Italian affairs. In August, a Niçois named Albert Fantagné, an employee at the Café de la Victoire, was denounced to central police commissioner Lordereau by his colleague Pelligrini, the conductor of a small seven- or eight-person orchestra at the café. To celebrate Austria’s impending cession of Venetia to France, Pelligrini decided to play that

⁹¹ AN, F 1cIII (AM) 2, anonymous denunciation of Michel Tribaudini, 20 May 1863.

⁹² AN, F 1cIII (AM) 2, address from municipal council of Nice, no date, but the cover letter dates it to July 1860.

⁹³ Françoise Hildesheimer, ed. *Les Diocèses de Nice et Monaco* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1984), 247–53.

⁹⁴ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 343, CP Menton to prefect AM, 6 July 1866.

imperial standard, “the Air of Queen Hortense.” This infuriated Fantagné, who spat onto the sheets of this most Napoleonic of musical scores and spent the better part of the evening making derogatory remarks about France and Napoleon III. Other members of Pelligrini’s entourage confirmed Pelligrini’s story.

When Fantagné was informed of the denunciation, he sent the Gavini a furious response—which he encouraged to have openly published in the pro-government newspaper *Le Journal de Nice*—categorically refuting the accusation as an “infamous lie ... and I deny it with all the power of my soul!” Fantagné explained that Pelligrini was obsessed with exerting revenge after a previous dispute between the two over a financial matter, which had led to a similar verbal quarrel and ultimately to the courts. Pellegrini’s goal, Fantagné claimed, was nothing less than arranging to “get me expelled from this beautiful land where I was born and raised.” Fantagné counterattacked by claiming that on the evening in question, Pellegrini had remarked, in Italian, “May an accident befall Napoleon and all the French!” and had followed with other similar insults. As for the musicians, Fantagné claimed that it had been they who had interpreted the selection of *La Reine Hortense* as an insult to Italy. By denouncing him, he claimed, the musicians were simply deflecting attention from their own behavior on the evening in question. Above all, Fantagné was concerned that the incident would destroy his chances of passing the exam, scheduled for the following month, to take a position with the indirect taxation administration. Fantagné’s story fits perfectly into the familiar script of Franco-Italian conflict during the 1860s. An innocent musical reference, performed in honor of an international event of importance involving Italy, led to competing denunciations on the usual Franco-Italian cultural axis. The incident also revealed how ordinary Niçois’ troubled relationship with the police helped sustain pro-Italian sentiment. Fantagné’s comments regarding police commissioner Lordereau’s behavior in the circumstance suggest that Lordereau had humiliated him in front of Pelligrini and the Italian musicians. “If impartiality and politeness are the first duties of all public administrators, the central police commissioner certainly did not live up to them this morning.” Fantagné accused Lordereau of going out of his way to portray him as a police informer in front of the musicians, that Lordereau had applauded them for “looking down on ‘people like me who make it their duty to run to the Commissioner every time they know something about their comrades.’ It’s an even worse lie than the first if such a thing were possible, because it comes from the chief of police who should always tell the truth, and I have never, ever, made any denunciation against anyone.”⁹⁵

Throughout the 1860s, government tended to interpret incidents of popular political opposition as an indication of the weakness of the pro-Italian opposition. In his report of July 1862, the public prosecutor of the appellate court in Aix dismissed the pro-Italian faction as informal and harmless. “Some noisy cabaret demonstrations, immediately followed by an energetic repression, are the only symptoms of [the party’s] existence and it’s almost exclusively after Sunday libations that these isolated scenes take place in the midst of an indifferent population,” he scoffed.⁹⁶ But whether it occurred at the ballot box, as in the Avigdor candidacy of 1860, or in the local tavern, political opposition to the Bonapartist regime in Nice in the 1860s consistently assumed an anti-French visage, usually with an Italian nationalist bent. Except to the extent to which pro-Italian activists accepted Garibaldi’s visions of radical and universal republican democracy, expressions of liberal and republican political opposition were

⁹⁵ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, letter from Albert Fantagné to prefect AM, 7 August 1866.

⁹⁶ AN, BB 30 370 3, PG Aix to MJ, 4 July 1862.

comparatively rare in the County of Nice under the Second Empire. This set the province apart from Savoy, which had a stronger liberal political tradition.

Liberal Politics and Proto-Separatism in Savoy

As we saw in Chapter 1, Napoleon III's concession of the free-trade Zone in the Haute-Savoie department was presumed to have entirely shattered the pro-Swiss movement in northern Savoy, as it was generally believed that pro-Swiss feeling had rested mainly on the populations' economic need to maintain commercial networks oriented toward Geneva. In the Savoie department to the south, the liberal, pro-Cavourian, anticlerical and anti-annexationist current of opinion had been weakened, as many its members left the province for Turin, rallied to the annexation, or were sent (not to say exiled) elsewhere in France. For these reasons, government administrators in different branches of the civil service tended in the early years of the annexation to describe Savoy optimistically, though not realistically, as being something of a political *tabula rasa*—almost as though the province were a laboratory in which Bonapartism, the only political ideology that the government wished to encourage, could be cultured. As Chambéry's public prosecutor of the appeals court remarked in 1863, "Savoy has no political parties like the rest of France. Our internal dissensions are unknown. It owes this privilege to its former autonomy."⁹⁷ Yet it quickly became apparent that the liberal public opinion in Savoy may have been drowned out by support for the annexation in 1860, but had by no means been permanently silenced. From the earliest days of the annexation, in spite of the focus on the economic foundation of the pro-Swiss movement, the French had noted the association between pro-Swiss sentiment and the liberal and/or republican opposition in the Haute-Savoie. Commenting on the plebiscite returns in Bonneville in 1860, the sub-prefect of Gex hypothesized that the admittedly small numbers of abstentions in Bonneville could be ascribed to what he called the "Swiss and republican opposition."⁹⁸

During the decade following the annexation, the French government remained preoccupied by the attraction of Switzerland's liberal political system to political opponents in the neighboring Haute-Savoie. In 1863 the public appellate prosecutor in Chambéry, in an analysis that closely resembled Gavini's own perceptions of the pro-Italian party in Nice, linked the province's "red party" to both Swiss influence and to Savoyard habits of stubborn resistance. "The only important party we need to consider is the red party. Either because of the proximity of Switzerland, or because of the habits of opposition that reigned in Savoy under the Sardinian government the red party will probably be a difficulty if our institutions allow it."⁹⁹ And in 1865 he drew a distinction between those liberals who had rallied to the annexation in 1860 and the minority that remained in the opposition, which he qualified as anti-French: "Without a doubt, and thank goodness, the liberal party is not the same everywhere in Savoy. There where it's in the majority, it is French and supports the Emperor's government. Where it's in the minority on the other hand, it is republican and is a declared enemy. Really in Savoy there are only these two parties in politics. Republican or French."¹⁰⁰ But it was the prefect appointed in the Haute-Savoie in 1867, the viscount de Gauville, who probably assessed the Swiss danger most accurately. "Switzerland, our closest neighbor and our border for quite a substantial distance, has long coveted the province of the Faucigny and seeks to exercise its influence there with the aim of

⁹⁷ AN, BB 30 375 2, report no. 273, PG Chambéry to MJ, 9 May 1863.

⁹⁸ AN, F 1cI 129, SP Gex (Ain) to MI, 27 April 1860.

⁹⁹ AN, BB 30 375 2, report no. 363, PG Chambéry to MJ, 29 June 1863.

¹⁰⁰ AN, BB 30 375 2, PG Chambéry to MJ, 30 December 1865.

territorial gain. At the time of the annexation in the Bonneville arrondissement, Genevan political agents recruited a party represented by men of advanced ideas who attracted a certain number of inhabitants to them, thus, there exists in this part of the department a certain faction composed of men of more liberal inspirations than others, and who have kept unequivocal sympathies for Geneva under the appearance of devotion to imperial institutions.”¹⁰¹

The pro-Swiss tendency in the Haute-Savoie was somewhat more diffuse than the pro-Italian tendency in Nice, lacking visible, uncompromising, hard-line dissidents. But its presence was consistent, particularly in the Faucigny province. Like their counterparts in Nice, Savoyards also found creative ways of expressing political dissent. In the fall of 1861, a number of seditious posters appeared throughout the Haute-Savoie. The gendarmes in Cluses received an anonymous letter posted from the town of Arâches that read, “Down with the Emperor Napoleon.” Next to the text the author had drawn a small flag emblazoned with the unmistakable cross of Switzerland in its center, accompanied by a note that read, “Here’s the flag to which we want to belong.” The concise note left no doubt that the author was rejecting Napoleon III and France in favor of nearby Switzerland. On September 12, the same anonymous scribe left another note on the announcement board in Arâches usually reserved for municipal flyers and posters. It contained another drawing of the Swiss flag, accompanied by a drawing of the French tricolor with a note, “*Merde* for this one.” Perhaps intentionally, the colors on the French flag were incorrectly drawn, with the blue, which should have been placed near the hoist of the flag, swapped with the red. In addition to the artwork, the multitalented author thoughtfully contributed a short poem:

Victor sold us, but we love him as unworthy;
There are ten of us who want him. Down with Napoleon the swine.
Down with the French regent, they’re all the same clique.
I ask you to post this or you’ll find out why,
Long live Switzerland, we want one like her.¹⁰²

In this second notice, the author expressed a number of sentiments that questioned the political arrangement of 1860. The writing was not a *sui generis* attack on monarchy, for the author expressed an attachment to Victor Emmanuel, the former monarch, and declared that in spite of the fact that he had “sold” Savoy to France, Savoyards still harbored an attachment to their old dynasty. At the same time, the writer equated Napoleon III and the “French regent,” presumably a reference to the legitimist pretender, the Count of Chambord: in other words, he equated two monarchs with demonstrable authoritarian tendencies and juxtaposed them to Switzerland, a democratic republic. By the expression, “We want one like her,” the writer seemed to be gesturing towards republicanism: “a republic” like Switzerland’s, or at the least a more liberal state modeled on Helvetian lines. Perhaps the desire for a less repressive, more representative government explains why the author let Victor Emmanuel, who was hardly an

¹⁰¹ AN, F 1cIII (HS) 1, grid report, prefect HS to MI, 1 March 1867.

¹⁰² AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 12, report no. 408, gendarmerie, 26th legion, company HS, to prefect HS, 15 September 1861. This translation does not entirely capture the rugged charm of the original, with its uncertain spelling:

*Victor nous a vendu, mais nous l'aimont [sic] ainsi que des indignes
Nous sommes dix qui le veulent [sic]. A bat Napoléon le cochon.
A bas le Régent français, c'est tout la même clique.
Je te prie de l'afficher ou tu saura pourquoi.
Vive la Suisse, nous la veulent [sic], un tel.*

enlightened ruler, off the hook. Despite Cavour's death a few months earlier, Italy in late 1861 was still very much operating under the former prime minister's liberal shadow.

The gendarmes in Cluses—who could not have been pleased to learn that the author had associates (“there are ten of us”)—considered the possibility that the writings were the work of the famous “Swiss agents” so frequently evoked by administrators in Savoy. Privately, however they were more worried that these writings might be Savoyard in origin. After the seditious writings had been forwarded to Bonneville, the lieutenant of Bonneville's gendarmerie asked for a warrant to search the houses of those inhabitants of Arâches who, in his estimation, “professed a certain repugnance for French institutions.” The captain of the 26th legion was clearly unimpressed by the Arâchois' willingness to assist the investigation. He noted that the Arâchois appeared to be appropriately shocked by the writings, but felt that “it's just about certain that they must know the authors of these texts and that if they wanted to, they would be able to help us arrest them.”¹⁰³

Another set of similar seditious writings appeared in Annecy in February of the following year, when a gendarme found three pieces of paper nailed onto trees in the public garden. The gendarmes believed that had probably been tacked there during the night, when a masked ball at the theater had provided cover. The first read:

Savoyards
To arms
Let's trade our *patrie*
Arms
F. V. V. S. P.
Long live liberty
Death to tyrants.

The second read:

Long live Italy
Savoy, Italy, liberty.
No to France.
Down with Badinguet III.
F. V. V. S. P.

The third read simply, “Long live Savoy Free and Independent.”¹⁰⁴ The significance of the notation “F. V. V. S. P” remains unknown, but the rest of the writings expressed a similar perspective as those that had appeared in Arâches the previous year. This writer equated Italy with liberty; denigrated “tyrants”; used the familiar epithet of “Badinguet” for Napoleon III, and in the line “let's trade our *patrie*,” threatened that France could not necessarily count on Savoyard loyalties, as Savoyards might transplant them elsewhere. The expression “No to France” was a blatant refutation of the 1860 plebiscite. Unlike their colleagues in Bonneville, the gendarmes in Annecy took refuge in the comforting myth of the Swiss agent to explain the texts.

¹⁰³ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 12, report no. 408, gendarmerie, 26th legion, company HS, to prefect HS, 15 September 1861.

¹⁰⁴ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 12, gendarmerie, 26th legion, company HS, to prefect HS, 3 February 1862. In the absence of the originals, the only record of the posters is contained in the gendarmes' report. Unfortunately, the handwriting is very difficult to read. In his book on Savoy after 1860, Jacques Lovie, who also discussed the appearance of these writings, concluded that the third line of the first poster was illegible. This line is indeed quite difficult to read, but after many efforts to decipher it, I believe it reads *Traiterons nous notre patrie*, which might be translated “Let us trade away our country.”

“Everything led us to believe that the writings were the work of some Swiss annexationists and that the inhabitants of Annecy took no part in them,” wrote the commander of the Haute-Savoie’s gendarmes.¹⁰⁵ But this was a problematic interpretation of the writings, which did not mention Switzerland openly or even obliquely. Moreover, unlike the Faucigny, Annecy, the capital of the Genevois, had never been home to much enthusiasm for Switzerland. Situated outside of the free-trade Zone, it was a natural commercial and economic alternative to its much larger rival Geneva. It seems far more likely that the poster was the work of local Savoyard liberals, who were urging their co-citizens to retake liberties forfeited during the annexation. Taken together, all of these anonymous writings were less a genuine appeal for the restoration of the Italian dynasty or to Swiss nationalism than attempts to call into question the authoritarianism (“iron crown,” “tyrants,” “Badinguet III”) of France. The authors reminded Savoyards that, by looking to the two foreign countries that bordered their territory and had long influenced their history, they had other, seemingly more liberal political alternatives from which to draw inspiration. They looked to Cavourian Italy as a reminder of a liberal past, and to republican Switzerland as an attractive example of the liberal future, which seemed so unlikely in the repressive world of imperial France.

In the Haute-Savoie, Switzerland played a notable role in anti-governmental café discourse. On April 8, 1861, François Bouvéry, an itinerant peddler originally from Les Echelles in the Savoie department, got into a heated discussion in a café in Annecy. By his own admission, the conversation turned to the subject of the annexation, about which Bouvéry had little good to say. “The Swiss did well to burn the Emperor in effigy because he has behaved so shamefully towards those who took him in during his exile,” he announced, referring to Napoleon III’s period of exile in Switzerland prior to his return to France to stand for the election to the presidency of the Second Republic. Bouvéry pursued, “Victor Emmanuel and Garibaldi will soon take Savoy away from him and chase out the French.” He went on to reference the previous autumn’s diplomatic incident with the Gex delegation, smugly declaring that “the Swiss did a good job stealing the French flag in Gex and throwing it in the lake.”¹⁰⁶ Bouvéry later admitted that he had been drunk, but claimed that he had only uttered these words as a reprisal to insults directed at him by another café patron. Unfortunately for Bouvéry, the man sitting opposite him at the table happened to be a plainclothes police officer, who according to Bouvéry, “remained silent up to this point, and seemed to some extent to tolerate the conversation.”¹⁰⁷ The other patrons were not so tolerant: they threw Bouvéry out of the café. He was promptly arrested by the police, but managed to escape from his holding cell and fled into Switzerland for protection. Bouvéry’s references to the Italian monarch Victor Emmanuel, to Garibaldi, and to Switzerland, echo the liberal sentiments of the posters that appeared in the department in 1861 and 1862. While Bouvéry did not complain about the effects of the annexation, he did suggest that the ultimate revenge on Napoleon III would be France’s losing the provinces that it had just acquired. In fact, the administration had been surveying Bouvéry’s activities carefully since just after the annexation. In addition to an impressive record of previous arrests, Bouvéry was all the more suspicious because he had no fixed residence. Due to his frequent trips across the Savoyard-Swiss border, the police suspected him of smuggling anti-Imperial brochures from Geneva into France. He was condemned in absentia by the criminal court of Annecy to a year of

¹⁰⁵ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 12, gendarmerie, 26th legion, company HS, to prefect HS, 3 February 1862.

¹⁰⁶ AN, BB 24 687-709 S 63 5613, report no. 60, Imperial appellate court of Chambéry, office of the Public Prosecutor to the Minister of Justice, re: request for a pardon, 2 February 1864.

¹⁰⁷ AN, BB 24 687-709 S 63 5613, Petition from François Bouvéry to the Emperor for a pardon, 26 December 1863.

prison, a 500-franc fine and the cost of the trial. Two years later, having been expelled from Switzerland for fraud, Bouvéry was finally arrested in Saint-Julien and imprisoned in September, 1863.¹⁰⁸

As this incident suggests, the opposition that manifested itself in seditious speech could serve both political and personal ends. On October 1, 1861, François Bruchon and his friend Jean-François Reverchon entered the Laverrière café in Etrembières, a village close to Annemasse (Haute-Savoie), where they ordered a bottle of white wine and quickly became drunk. Several French railway employees were sitting at a nearby table when Bruchon raised his voice and began to make insulting remarks, declaring “Badinguet has been happy up until now, but he will succumb like his uncle, you remember the Allies in Paris! The *annexés* are imbeciles, the French are rogues, and as for me, I’m perfectly happy to be Swiss.” Eyewitnesses claimed that Bruchon’s remarks were pronounced loud enough for the other people in the establishment to hear, and particularly seemed to be addressed to an employee of the bridges and roads administration. The man got up, went over to Bruchon and Reverchon, and politely asked them to stop their behavior, noting that most of the people who were in the café were French and that he would not allow them to insult the Emperor or France. Bruchon continued to shout insults at the employee and the conflict began to escalate. Sensing that things might get out of control, Reverchon tried unsuccessfully to calm down Bruchon, and even tried to drag him out of the café. Overcome with anger, the insulted employee moved to forcibly remove them from the café, with the help of his fellow railway workers. Bruchon threatened them that he and Reverchon were not alone, crying, “If we had our pals here, you’d be in for it!” One of the employees ran to nearby Annemasse to request assistance from the gendarmes, but before they arrived, Bruchon’s “pals” had already intervened: five men burst into the café, attacked the railway workers with stones and clubs, and then ran out. Two of the workers were injured.¹⁰⁹

The tribunal of Saint-Julien found Bruchon and Reverchon guilty of insulting the Emperor and “inciting hate and enmity between citizens,” although the court found that there was insufficient evidence to convict them for the injuries to Rey and Bolon. They were each condemned to six months of prison, 500 franc fines, and the costs of the trial.¹¹⁰ The two men, who began their prison sentences at the end of December, both applied for a pardon from the Emperor, including a cancellation of the prison sentence and the fine. Bruchon blamed his conduct on the “captious quality of the 1861 vintage” he had consumed of a wine “reputed to irritate the nerves, and lead to acts of violence,” and noted that the two Frenchmen in the café had partaken of the same libation. But he also expressed regret for having insulted the sovereign and the French, “a people who whom Savoy is so happy to be annexed.”¹¹¹ In support of their request for a pardon, both men submitted certifications from the mayor of Annemasse that testified to their good character and devotion to the Emperor and to France. Bruchon, in addition, received the support of Hippolyte Pissard, one of the Haute-Savoie’s deputies to the legislature.

¹⁰⁸ AN, BB 24 687-709, S 63 5613, report no. 60, PG Chambéry to MJ, 2 February 1864; MI, DGSP to MJ, 20 February 1864.

¹⁰⁹ AN, BB 24 637-652 S 61 7749 and S 62 203 (these files are tied together, but are misfiled: Bruchon’s file is inside the folder labeled Reverchon, and vice versa). report on Bruchon, PG Chambéry to MJ, 5 February 1862; report on Reverchon, PG Chambéry to MJ, 6 February 1862; MJ, analysis of the request for a pardon, 26 February 1862.

¹¹⁰ AN, BB 24 637-652 S 61 7749 and S 62 203, Excerpt of minutes of the Tribunal of 1st instance for the arrondissement of Saint-Julien, 28 November 1861.

¹¹¹ AN, BB 24 637-652 S 61 7749 and S 62 203, Petition of François Bruchon to the Emperor for a pardon, ca. 18 December 1861; petition of François Bruchon to the Emperor for a pardon, 14 August 1862.

Bruchon's insults in the café illustrate the complexities of identity politics in Savoy in the years after the annexation. They were calculated to have maximum impact, as they took aim not only at the French but also, through the use of the familiar Swiss pejorative term *annexés*—at Savoyards themselves. Yet Bruchon could not have been satisfied to be Swiss, as he was not and never had been a citizen of that country. He was himself a Savoyard and French citizen, having been born in nearby Arthaz. Moreover, the mayor's letters testified that, contrary to the sentiments that Bruchon and Reverchon had uttered in the café, the two had actively worked to promote the annexation. Both had taken part in a pro-French demonstration, and Bruchon had "engaged other young men to vote like himself" prior to the plebiscite. For his part, Reverchon even claimed to have had fisticuffs with one of his own brothers who had planned to cast an oppositional vote in favor of Switzerland.¹¹²

In 1863 the public prosecutor of the Court of Appeals in Chambéry became interested in the political activities of a worker named Hippolyte Joseph Samain from Bonneville, who was signaled to as a member of the "demagogic party" and maintaining subversive political relationships to Geneva. Samain, who had been arrested three times previously for theft and had been condemned to banishment for six years, had returned to the town in violation of his expulsion. Though the courts had quickly condemned Samain to a new five-year prison sentence, Samain's political activities remained worrying. He had publicly insulted the Emperor on more than one occasion, and was also friends with three Bonneville residents named Colin, Coquille and Coupard, workers employed on the construction of a bridge in Bonneville, who shared his political opinions. Colin had recently been overheard in a Bonneville café declaring, "To hell with the Emperor, and his government." One of the three had recently been married, and at the wedding, the four men had belted out renditions of seditious songs, deliberately leaving the windows open so that they might be plainly heard. A police search of their dwellings revealed a panoply of seditious literature, including songs labeled "The War of Italy," "The Peace of Monarchs," "To the memory of the Pianori," "Songs for Pierre Le Rouge," and, perhaps the most compromising, a song called "La Marianne," undoubtedly dedicated to the female personification of French republicanism. The three had also been heard singing a song whose refrain went, "Let us avenge the peoples of the Earth, Let us emancipate the human race, By the republican canon." With this evidence in hand, the public prosecutor brought all of them to trial before the criminal court.¹¹³ The court sentenced Colin, who was not in town for the trial, to 6 months of imprisonment and a 500-franc fine for seditious crises and offenses against the Emperor, while the other two got off lightly with just 25-franc fines. The public prosecutor was a little disappointed with the result, feeling that the case had not sent a sufficient warning to the Emperor's political opponents. Nevertheless, he consoled himself with the hope that the publicity surrounding the trial would "have the effect to pushing back to Genevan territory the attacks that are too frequent against the Emperor and France and recommending prudence in their speeches and their actions to the numerous workers that the needs of business call onto French territory."¹¹⁴

The problem of pro-Swiss sentiment in Savoy was compounded by the porous nature of the Franco-Swiss border and the ease with which nationals of the two countries traveled between

¹¹² AN, BB 24 637-652 S 61 7749 and S 62 203, letter from Hippolyte Pissard, 16 December 1861; letter from the Mayor of Annemasse, 13 December 1861; letter from the Mayor of Annemasse, 14 December 1861; Petition of Jean-François Reverchon to the Emperor for a pardon, ca. 25 December 1861.

¹¹³ AN, BB 18 1666 A3 8259, PG Chambéry to MJ, 14 September 1863.

¹¹⁴ AN, BB 18 1666 A3 8259, PG Chambéry to MJ, 13 October 1863

them. Unlike the mythical “Swiss agents” conjured up by the government to explain instances of home-grown discontent, those Swiss nationals who entered France to make trouble generally did so openly, not secretly, and sometimes encountered local encouragement. Thus on May 16, 1864, a group of Swiss citizens numbering 80 to 100 men trooped through the Savoyard town of Monnetier-Mornex carrying the Swiss flag, stopped in front of M. Faurax’s hotel, and subsequently went back to Geneva. The local gendarme’s account of the population’s reaction to this episode revealed the danger of even a peaceful demonstration such as this. “Some inhabitants of Monnetier found this Swiss society to be annoying; while on the other hand, those belonging to the Swiss party, which is fairly numerous in this commune and finds its interests in Switzerland, thought this was an agreeable and inoffensive amusement.”¹¹⁵ At four in the morning one May dawn in 1863, a police agent was startled to notice a Swiss flag planted onto a tree on M. Vauthier’s property in a major thoroughfare in Saint-Julien. Investigations revealed that the previous night, an intoxicated Georges Novel and Louis Recout, two of Saint-Julien’s inhabitants, had crossed the border into the Swiss town of Perly, stolen a Swiss flag off a house, and then returned to Saint-Julien to hang it thoughtfully on Vauthier’s property. The two culprits excused their behavior out of their drunkenness, and a desire to have fun, but this was hardly a politically-neutral way to make mischief.¹¹⁶

More offensive was an incident in Moillesulaz the following month, when six Swiss nationals from the suburbs of Geneva, led by Paul Hudry, a plasterer from Chêne-Bougie, crossed into France and entered M. Dupraz’s inn. There they proceeded to direct vicious comments against the portraits of Napoleon III and Empress Eugénie hung on the wall. Hudry screamed that the Emperor was “scum, a bastard, a swine who should have his head cut off, that if it was up to me, I’d rip off his privates and his nails.” The portrait of the Empress also did not emerge unscathed, as Hudry called her a “whore, the leftovers from a brothel.” Dupraz’s customers were shocked and horrified, but did not dare intervene because they were outnumbered by the intruders. Their mission accomplished, Hudry and his associates quickly fled back to Swiss territory. With Moillesulaz located just over the bridge linking Swiss and French territory, Dupraz’s inn had been an ideal location to stage this episode of international verbal sedition. Hudry’s identity would probably have remained unknown had it not been for his Savoyard lover, Louise Pisatore, who confessed to the authorities that he had been among the six Swiss nationals at the tavern. She provided the police with a detailed description of his appearance. With the knowledge of the culprit, the criminal court condemned him, in absentia, to a two-year prison sentence and 500-franc fine.

Opponents of the Second Empire in Savoy denigrated Napoleon III as eagerly as their counterparts in Nice, viewing the sovereign as the personal embodiment of a sham democracy. During the celebrations in Sillingy (Haute-Savoie) for the Emperor’s annual feast day on August 15, 1864, Jean Coppier, a young worker from Annecy, interrupted a group of about thirty inhabitants who were playing a game of ninepins. He dramatically threw a 5-franc gold piece adorned with Napoleon III’s image onto the ground, and asked, “Who wants to put 50 *sous* against this Badinguet?” No one responded, and he persisted: “Who wants to cover this Badinguet?” and “Who’s going to put fifty *sous* against this Badinguet, I want to get rid of him.” Arrested for this offense against the sovereign, Coppier clumsily defended himself by claiming

¹¹⁵ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 12, copy of report from squadron leader, commander of the gendarmerie of the Haute-Savoie, 19 May 1864.

¹¹⁶ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 527, CS Saint-Julien to SP Saint-Julien, 18 May 1863.

that he hadn't meant to insult the Emperor and that the whole affair was a joke, but the court rejected his weak dissimulations.¹¹⁷ On March 29, 1868, Ferdinand Habert, a mail service inspector, was playing with his firearm in the parlor of M. Briganda's Hôtel Impérial in Lanslebourg (Savoie). Taking the bust of the Emperor from its place on the mantelpiece, Habert placed it on the dining room table and fired a gunshot through its left chest, shouting, "If no one else would kill him if he came through Lanslebourg, I'd do it myself!" Others reported him speaking to the bust, saying "Look, you asshole, I didn't miss you." He then proudly showed off his handiwork to the others in the room. One observer suggested that Habert repair the statue with cement, to which Habert replied, "No, no, I want to put a bit of red sealing wax there to imitate the blood." The owner of the establishment was so upset by the scene when she returned that she grabbed the bust and turned it over to some local children to break up and use for chalk. When the police became involved, they then had to retrieve the bust from the children.¹¹⁸

Though employed in Savoy, Habert may not have been Savoyard, as he had served in French armies prior to the annexation. Whether they were French, Savoyard or Swiss in origin, and whether the seditious speech had a purely political or separatist bent, the government worried about the effect that seditious speech would have on the assimilation of Savoy's populations into France. To put it differently, the issue of public morale was as much at stake as the issue of public morality. Ultimately the government was not always very consistent about applying this rule. When twenty-three year old Jean Magnin of Vimines (Savoie) was arrested in Chambéry in February 1862 for screaming out, "Down with the Emperor! Long live the Republic in Savoy!" the authorities were not terribly concerned because he had already accumulated an impressive record of arrests for vagabondage and public drunkenness. "The seditious words that he pronounced had no political significance in his mouth," explained prefect Dieu. "Limited in his excesses by the police, he found nothing better to do to express his resentment than to insult the Emperor and demand a government that would leave him free to do what he wanted."¹¹⁹ Yet an almost identical incident that took place in Chambéry the following year caused significantly more concern. Joseph Boutal, a soldier in the French army who was not a Savoyard native, overindulged in alcohol while in Chambéry on leave in 1863. While stumbling around town drunk, he shouted out "Down with the French! Vive la République!" The public prosecutor in Chambéry found that while this offense would not have been too grave by itself, it took on additional import because the offending speech had been uttered in a city only recently annexed to France.¹²⁰

Whereas in Nice denunciations usually occurred along a Franco-Italian cultural axis, in Savoy they typically featured a liberal or republican element. In 1868 the mayor of Charvonnex (Haute-Savoie), M. Romand, concerned that fellow townsman Eucher Niccolin was jockeying to take over his job, accused Niccolin, his brother Jacques Niccolin, and Laurent Peccoux of having publicly made the following seditious remarks: "The ministers and the Deputies are a bunch of thieves who are dividing up the cake, the government is a wobbly government that can't last much longer. Next January will be the starting point of the regenerating revolution that will overturn the Empire and give way to the Republic. The Empress, whom everyone says has so many noble qualities, is no more than an adventurer, an actress and a whore that the Emperor picked up at some ball." Further investigation revealed, however, that the accusation rested

¹¹⁷ AN, BB 18 1686, CI de Chambéry, PG to MJ, 9 September 1864.

¹¹⁸ AN, BB 18 1762 A4 7930, PG Chambéry to MJ, 9 April 1868; PG Chambéry to MJ, 18 May 1868.

¹¹⁹ AN, F 1cIII (Savoie) 2, Jean copy, prefect Savoie to MI DGSP, 6 February 1862.

¹²⁰ AN, BB 18 1666 A3 8259, PG Chambéry to MJ, 4 February 1863.

solely on Romand's testimony. No one else in the commune reported having heard Niccolin utter any such statements. Yet the incident did take an interesting turn, for the town's schoolteacher confessed that Peccoux had shown him a copy of the *Lanterne*, one of the country's most infamous republican journals in the late 1860s, and told him, "Take a look at this. I don't understand very much of it." Seditious speech questioning the stability of the government or Empress Eugénie's morals may not, in fact, have circulated in the small town, but republican journals certainly had. That Peccoux had shown the magazine to one of the most educated members of the community suggests that he was interested enough by its contents to ask for help deciphering them.¹²¹

As we saw in the previous chapter, public opinion and political concerns in the Savoie, at a further remove from Switzerland, did not always precisely replicate those of the Haute-Savoie. This department, which had witnessed government fears of both Swiss and Italian subverters, certainly provided its share of anti-authoritarian, liberal opposition to the Second Empire. But this opposition was normally not associated with Switzerland. In fact, what sympathy existed toward other states was said to be toward Italy, but these affinities were understood to be political rather than national. Administrators often discussed the "Italian party" or the "former Piedmontese party" and even occasionally used the expression *Italianissimes* in Savoie, and rarely, in the Haute-Savoie as well; but they did not, as in Nice, employ any of these terms to indicate an ethno-cultural longing for reincorporation into the Italian nation. They almost always reverted to the term to describe the existence of the old, mid-nineteenth century, Cavourian liberal opposition that had ultimately collapsed and been superceded by Sardinia's decision to transform itself into an Italian nation-state. Similarly, in both Savoyard departments Garibaldi was admired primarily for his republican convictions rather than his Italian (or Niçois) nationalism. When administrators referred to the existence of political radicals in the two departments, they often substituted the word "Garibaldians."

Thus political opposition in Savoie usually avoided pro-Swiss separatist references. Occasionally, the opposition did invoke Piedmont, not out of a desire to imitate or rejoin it but rather in sympathetic and nostalgic terms, or elegiac references to supposedly sacrificed constitutional liberties. Over dessert at a wedding in the spring of 1862, Joseph Martin, the mayor of Bourg-Saint-Maurice, "animated by drink," turned to his dinner companion, Madame Portier, the wife of one of the councilors at the imperial appellate court in Chambéry, and told her: "Do you know, Madam, whom you're sitting next to? I'll tell you, but try not to be too afraid. You're sitting next to a flaming Red, who once sat in the national parliament next to Italian liberals. So as you see, for a Red, I'm not too bad a devil, since his Majesty the Emperor named me the mayor." Sub-prefect Despigne described Martin as a member of the "advanced liberal party" in the Bourg valley, one who had supported the candidate of the opposition over the Bonapartist official candidate Hippolyte Pissard in the previous year's legislative elections. Prefect Dieu had received word that Martin's remarks had also included a jab at Napoleon III, that "he didn't like the Emperor because he hated traitors." Despigne reported that no one had heard Martin make such a remark, but that it would not have surprised him had it been shown to be true.¹²²

The Malaise of 1868–1870

¹²¹ AN, BB 18 1762, PG Chambéry to MJ, 27 December 1868.

¹²² AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, SP Moûtiers to prefect Savoie, 23 May 1862.

Political opposition to the government increased throughout France in the waning years of the Empire, even as Napoleon III himself attempted to reform the state along more democratic and representative lines. Throughout France, the lifting of restrictions on the press and assembly enabled forbidden political opposition to emerge from clandestine meeting places, the backrooms of printing houses and cafés, and into the open air. Nice and Savoy were no exception to the rule. Reports from the waning years of the Empire testify to a growing sense of unease among the administration in the two departments as the Emperor tinkered with the increasingly creaky political system. In his October 1869 tri-annual report, the public appellate prosecutor of the court of appeals in Aix-en-Provence wrote in October that he had been wracking his brains trying to find an appropriate historical parallel to apply to the reform of the Empire. “I can’t seem to find any [historical parallels],” he confessed. “We can’t establish a resemblance between now and the period that preceded the convocation of the Estates General. Then, the royalty was attempting to prevent, by means of concessions as timid as insufficient, the legitimate claim of the most sacred rights. It was powerless to erase from our soil the traces of ancient conquests, and the Revolution accomplished the work of national regeneration. Today the sovereign isn’t content with following public opinion, he’s exceeded those aspirations and he has conceded to the minority what the majority hadn’t yet claimed.”¹²³

From one perspective, the fact that the emergence of opposition in Nice and Savoy closely mirrored the rest of France ironically pointed to the annexed provinces’ increasing ties to the national whole—though this was a development that the Emperor and his administration would not have appreciated. On the other hand, in both Nice and Savoy, the growth of the opposition tended to reinforce its anti-French dimensions. Because Napoleon III had cast the annexation as a quintessentially “imperial” policy, opposition to the imperial regime, to an extent, could not help but reopen the question of the annexation itself. The recent liberation of the country from the most restrictive regulations governing freedom of speech and assembly encouraged open debate about whether the annexation had truly brought the benefits that had been promised earlier in the decade. As late as March 1867, the special police commissioner in La Roche (Haute-Savoie) confidently proclaimed that the notation “public opinion, attitude of different political parties” could be eliminated in the future from the monthly report of the canton and arrondissement because the state of public opinion appeared so satisfactory. Ironically, in the same report, he warned that, in spite of its quiescence, the pro-Swiss current was still a concern. “The Swiss party has never disappeared, although its numbers have fallen significantly since the annexation, but it is in a latent state. These opinions, which have but a purely economic interest, don’t dare show themselves openly.”¹²⁴

The commissioner’s dismissal of the pro-Swiss current as “purely economic” is a reminder that the French government consistently underestimated the extent to which the Savoyard pro-Swiss sentiment first observed in 1860 had had both economic and political foundations. But the affiliation between republican and “Swiss” contagion in the Haute-Savoie was growing more and more evident, and was also becoming increasingly centered on the Bonneville arrondissement in the Faucigny. This area had been most supportive of the idea of an annexation to Switzerland in 1860, and it was this area that consistently harbored the most anti-Imperial sentiment in the last years of the Empire. As the police commissioner of Bonneville reported in 1867, “The political sentiment of the inhabitants of this canton can be divided into

¹²³ AN, BB 30 389, PG Chambéry to MJ, 8 October 1869.

¹²⁴ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 310, CP la Roche to prefect HS, March 1867.

three main groups. The first includes intelligent and calm souls, who aspire towards the good order moral and physical of people and things; it is this party who voted for the annexation to France, and the clergy is part this group. The second includes those “advanced spirits” that no political regime would be able to satisfy, and that are commonly referred to as the Swiss party, while its members should really be characterized as red republicans. The third include lukewarm spirits, inert and ignorant who are seduced by the most frivolous reasoning, and who are at the mercy of the chiefs of the parties above.¹²⁵ By 1869 the public appellate prosecutor in Chambéry fretted that “Savoy might not follow truly and wisely liberal ideas, but might fall into exaggerated demagogy... in the Haute-Savoie, liberal ideas due to the proximity of Switzerland have made greater progress... the Conseil general includes many names belonging to democracy.”¹²⁶ By December, the monthly reports of public opinion reported “mediocre” political spirits in Thonon and frankly “bad” opinion in Bonneville, where young men were routinely leaving cabarets singing the outlawed Marseillaise and publicly declaring, “Vive la République!”¹²⁷

The political reports from Nice were also mixed. On the one hand, the expulsion of some of the remaining pro-Italian hardliners from Nice in 1867 such as Cougnet and Garziglia rid the Alpes-Maritimes of some longstanding troublemakers. Garibaldi’s failed expeditions and Italy’s own internal problems, including a violent civil war in the Mezzogiorno, probably also encouraged the government’s optimism. The public appellate prosecutor in Aix confidently remarked in 1869, “the Italian opposition continues to lose ground in this city, and it is likely that within ten years the annexation will have been accomplished in spirits and customs as much as it has by the physical fusion of the territories.”¹²⁸ Yet there were also some less encouraging developments. The oppositional newspaper *Le Phare du Littoral*, founded in 1865, was edited and written in the arrondissement of Grasse, but its anti-Imperial editorial slant meant that it had some sympathy for the pro-Italian tendency of the annexed portion of the department. Gavini complained that the *Phare*, “edited by Frenchmen, has nevertheless waved the Italian flag in Nice, and the evil that it’s doing from a political point of view is truly regrettable, especially because it’s hindering the fusion that the administration is trying to produce between the old French and the *annexés*.”¹²⁹ During the elections to the Corps Législatif in 1869, the Niçois mayor and official candidate François Malausséna won an overwhelming victory. A politically slippery man, Malausséna had initially been an opponent of the annexation, only coming around to support it once it appeared inevitable, and he played up his native Niçois origins to the hilt. In a not entirely complementary portrait of this consummate politician, the prosecutor in Aix warned the Minister of the Interior that “the city of Nice itself definitely presents elements of opposition that have scarcely been revealed by the unanimity of votes cast for M. Malausséna. This is because this opposition has a particular character; it is not against the imperial Government, it is against France, or, if you prefer, to the last-minute Frenchmen [*Français de la veille*]. But M. Malausséna, a man of the country par excellence, French the day afterward, has thus escaped from his original sin, and his skill in going easy on this weakness of his compatriots has succeeded in making himself, so to speak, the man of everyone.”¹³⁰ The literary, supposedly

¹²⁵ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 19, grid report, CP Bonneville to prefect HS, 1867, no date.

¹²⁶ AN, BB 30 375 2, CI de Chambéry, 11 April 1869.

¹²⁷ AN, F 1cIII (HS) 1, grid report, 31 December 1869.

¹²⁸ AN, BB 30 389, PG Aix to MJ, 6 January 1869.

¹²⁹ AN, F 1cIII (AM) 1, grid report, prefect AM to MI, 1 April 1868

¹³⁰ AN, BB 30 389, PG Aix to MJ, 6 July 1869.

non-political Niçard-language newspaper *La Mensoneghiera* applauded Malausséna's particularism in a May 1869 article, "We are glad for the skill that he deploys in order to paralyze this current from the exterior that aims at nothing less than absorbing the local spirit, obliterating the respect for our mores and customs, proscribing our language, destroying or denaturing the traditions of our great history."¹³¹

* * *

By the summer of 1870, the patriotic temperature of Nice and Savoy was tepid at best. The escalation of Franco-Prussian tensions in 1870 over the Hohenzollern candidature to the throne of Spain therefore posed a troubling problem. In the event of war between France and a rival power, how would the newly-annexed populations react? The evidence provided by routine reports about the influence of foreign affairs on public opinion in the two provinces was decidedly mixed throughout the decade. During the public relations blitz over French claims to Luxembourg following the conclusion of the Austro-Prussian War, the police commissioner of the Bonneville arrondissement had voiced serious concerns about the lack of enthusiasm for the government's foreign policy. "The cause of Luxembourg has never awakened in the hearts of most Savoisiens the patriotic enthusiasm of the war of 1866 between Italy and Prussia. This can only be explained because the Italian militia includes more than one friend or relative of the great majority of populations of this canton; and especially because true French patriotism has not yet taken root in the heart of the true Savoisien."¹³² In contrast, the Haute-Savoie's prefect had predicted in 1867, "There's no doubt that at the first sign of an armed conflict with Germany, patriotic sentiment will surge with unexpected vigor as much in the new department as on the soil of the *mère patrie*."¹³³

Chambéry's public prosecutor probably would have dissented from that opinion. on July 1, 1870, as he drafted the last report he would complete before the end of the Empire:

When speaking of the political sentiments of Savoy, it's always tempting to find them similar to the rest of France. The language is absolutely the same, the customs are scarcely different and the spirit in the countryside is about the same, at least in appearance, as in those parts of France that are the most anciently assimilated, a bit more misery and that's it. But when one looks closer one rapidly identifies numerous differences and one is soon struck by the isolation in which this small people has remained, by their tenacious patriotism, by their stubborn susceptibility, by their profound grudge regarding everything that is not of themselves, of their oblivious hatred against their Italian or French masters, and by their persistence of satisfying that hatred by all the means in their power, usually bad ones, and by the difficulties of all type that their administrators confront.¹³⁴

This was hardly a vote of confidence in the French patriotism of Savoy. In his own final monthly report, dated July 7, 1870, prefect Gavini of the Alpes-Maritimes complained about the Niçois-centrism displayed by the newly-founded republican newspaper in Nice, *L'Indépendent*, with which Malausséna was involved. "According to [*l'Indépendent*], the Niçois, in becoming French, have lost their freedoms. And this paper has added that if France doesn't watch out,

¹³¹ Basso, *Les élections législatives*, 87.

¹³² AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 19, CP Bonneville to prefect HS, 24 May 1867.

¹³³ AN, F 1cIII (HS) 1, grid report, prefect HS to MI, 30 April 1867.

¹³⁴ AN, BB 30 390, PG Chambéry to MJ, 1 July 1870.

she'll soon become the China of Europe."¹³⁵ Even before the news of the defeat of Sedan and the end of the Empire, some startling reports began to emerge. On August 4, the Haute-Savoie's prefect reported a surge in anti-patriotic activity in the most radical—and long the most pro-Swiss—part of the department, the Bonneville arrondissement of the Faucigny. "A few agitators who have relations with the radical party in Geneva are seeking to confuse the populations about the goal of the war, and have gone so far as to hope for our failure."¹³⁶

¹³⁵ AN, F 1cIII (AM) 1, grid rapport, prefect AM to MI, 7 July 1870.

¹³⁶ AN, F 1cIII (HS) 1, grid report, prefect HS to MI, 4 August 1870.

Chapter 5

Ut Prussiani Destruant Gallicos?

The “Other” Annexed Territories and the Franco-Prussian War

On October 10, 1870, M. Chaudordy, a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the Government of National Defense, sent a circular to all diplomatic agents in France and abroad, alerting them to a communiqué that Bismarck had sent on October 1 to the embassies and legations of the North German Confederation. Dismissing the French delegation’s protests that a Prussian annexation of Alsace and Lorraine would reduce France to the level of a second-rate power, Bismarck’s circular had implied an equivalence between Nice and Savoy and Alsace and Lorraine, and seemed to suggest that the 1860 annexation should diminish the significance of France’s impending territorial loss. “The cession of Strasbourg, Metz and the adjacent territory ... involves the diminution of French territory by an area almost equal to that gained by Savoy and Nice; but the population of the territory we aspire to exceeds, it is true, that of Savoy and Nice by three quarters of a million.... It is clear that a loss of 750,000 will not affect the position of France in regard to other Powers,” Bismarck’s circular read.¹ Chaudordy’s angrily-worded retort refused to acknowledge the implied equivalency of the two annexations, and protested that the theft of Alsace and Lorraine would certainly reduce France’s international standing. “What a nation gains from a territorial enlargement consented to by a neighboring state that suddenly became powerful is of little importance,” he wrote, in a remarkably dismissive reference to Nice and Savoy. “What it loses, on the other hand, as a result of a violent conquest inflicted on it by a victorious and henceforth menacing enemy simultaneously destroys its moral prestige, its material force, and its repose.” Chaudordy concluded, “From then on, that power is in decline. This is the situation we face, if we want to follow M. Bismarck in the comparison he has established between the annexation to France of Savoy and Nice, voted on by the inhabitants, and the separation of Alsace and Lorraine against their will.”²

Bismarck and the French government’s dispute was highly rhetorical. As Chaudordy correctly pointed out, the two events are not comparable insofar as the annexation of 1860 took place by diplomatic agreement and the impending German annexation of 1871 took place through conquest. Yet Bismarck—the chancellor of a country, Prussia, that had dramatically expanded its own territory in the wars of 1863 and 1866—did have a point. His communiqué reminded the French government that the borders of France were hardly immutable, and that France had also made recent territorial gains justified on the basis of strategic and national claims that were by no means dissimilar to those that Prussia was currently deploying to justify, even if retroactively, its acquisition of Alsace and Lorraine. Moreover, the French government was about to discover that a consensual territorial reconfiguration was not a guarantee against potential difficulties. Though German troops did not set foot on the territory of either Nice or Savoy, the question of a possible reversal of the 1860 settlement was a major feature of the Franco-Prussian war and its aftermath in the two annexed territories. The collapse of the Second Empire and the uncertain future of the hastily-established Third Republic very rapidly heightened the post-annexation malaise evident in the closing years of the imperial regime, bringing fears of cultural conflict in both provinces to a boil.

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¹ *The Times*, 7 October 1870.

² Circular to diplomatic agents of France abroad, 10 October 1870, in *Actes du Gouvernement de la Défense Nationale, du 4 septembre 1870 to 8 février 1871: rapports de la Commission et des Sous-commissions*, vol. 7 (Paris: Librairie des publications législatives, 1876), 171.

Separatism Emerges in the Alpes-Maritimes

In the Alpes-Maritimes, the fall of the Empire resulted in massive administrative confusion and worries about the state of public opinion, particularly pro-Italian sentiment. Shortly before nine in the morning on September 5, the day after the declaration of the Republic and the formation of the Government of National Defense, the bewildered Bonapartist prefect, Denis Gavini, telegraphed to Paris reporting a rumor that the editors of the newspaper *Le Réveil* had formed a provisional government for the department, and requested assistance, explaining, “Please send me instructions. I’m afraid of a collision between the French element and the Niçois element, represented by the municipality; this is urgent.”³ Founded July 1, 1870 largely in preparation for the July elections to the General Council and the August municipal elections, *Le Réveil* was an openly republican newspaper, but it seems, as Gavini pointed out, to have had a fairly strong “Niçois” component. Auguste Raynaud, a businessman recently elected to the General Council from the Nice-East canton, and Alfred Borriglione, a lawyer and relative of the mayor of Sospel who had opposed Napoleon III’s May plebiscite, were both members of the newspaper’s administrative council.⁴ By that afternoon, Gavini had formally resigned his position, passing his powers to an emergency five-member commission appointed by the department’s General Council. The commission included Raynaud; Louis Piccon (Sospel canton), a lawyer and former member of the Sardinian parliament; Constantin Bergondi (Saint-Sauveur canton), another lawyer; Prosper Girard (Nice west canton), a former adjunct to the mayor of Nice; and a military officer, colonel Alexandre Gazan. In the city of Nice, the new municipal council elected in August held its first and ultimately last meeting on the afternoon of September 4. The assembled members had designated an emergency commission of six members, which also included Piccon, Bergondi and Girard, as well as the banker Septime Avigdor. It would not be long before Piccon, Bergondi, Avigdor, Raynaud, and Borriglione’s incipient pro-Italian views would become publicly known.

The arrival on September 8 of the Alpes-Maritimes’ new prefect, Pierre Baragnon, a journalist and friend of Gambetta’s, did little to reassure public opinion. Baragnon has generally been regarded as republican and well-intentioned but woefully unprepared for the task of administering the department during a moment of crisis. With the city’s mayor François Malausséna held up in Paris (he would resign on September 13), Baragnon came to rely especially on the advice of Louis Piccon, appointing him the city’s interim mayor on September 11. He also made the enormous blunder of organizing municipal elections in Nice for September 25, in the middle of the unprecedented national unrest. The elections simply encouraged all the political forces disallowed under the Empire to jockey for influence, including the pro-Italian faction. On September 22, a new “Niçois Committee,” also known as the “Committee de l’Univers,” since it met at the Hôtel de l’Univers, held an electoral meeting in preparation for the municipal elections. At the meeting, whose main participants included Avigdor, Borriglione and Piccon, the group resolved to ask the soon-to-be elected municipal councilors to accept a mandate to ask the future National Assembly to separate Nice from France, and to obtain the return of all mobilized soldiers from the Alpes-Maritimes. The manifesto and the rumors of pro-Italian sentiment frightened Baragnon, who sent increasingly hysterical telegrams to the

³ Telegram no. 941, prefect AM to MI, 5 September 1870, 8:55 a.m., in Assemblée Nationale, *Enquête parlementaire sur les actes du Gouvernement de la Défense Nationale*, vol. 1, *Dépêches télégraphiques officielles* (Versailles, France: Cerf et fils, 1875), 32.

⁴ Jacques Basso, *Les élections législatives dans le département des Alpes-Maritimes de 1860 à 1939: Éléments de sociologie électorale* (Paris: Librairie générale de droit et de jurisprudence, 1968), 98.

government. “Hidden Italian activities will make the municipal elections very difficult in Nice. The French party, in great numerical minority, will be crushed by universal suffrage and by the activities of the past regime.”⁵ He cancelled the planned municipal elections and reimposed the state of siege on September 24, telegraphing that “the Niçois population is hostile and separatist.” Five minutes later, as if to underline his previous message, he telegraphed with the news that Nice was “separatist and Prussian.”⁶ Later that evening, Dufraisse reported on the Niçois committee’s activities, referring to it as a “Prussian party” and “Nice free city” committee. He described it as run by some notable indigenous bankers—undoubtedly a reference to Avigdor—and believed that the committee was already supposedly corresponding with the Italian government in Florence and even perhaps with Prussia.⁷ Fearful of the separatist composition of the municipality, he forced his erstwhile friend Piccon to resign after just ten days as mayor, along with the entire municipal commission delegated on September 4, and replaced it with a new municipal commission headed by the thoroughly appropriately-named Pacifique Clerissy.⁸ He also planned to demobilize the department’s armed national guard. Borriglione and Avigdor, sensing the danger, both left the city.

The Italian question quickly became a military consideration as well as a political one. On September 5, following some minor street demonstrations resulting from the announcement of the new republic, Colonel Petitjean of the 25th legion of the gendarmerie sent a concerned telegram to the Minister of War. “The small localities, without military resources, will be strongly embarrassed. Men of courage and initiative are harder to find here than you’d think. The Italian element is a danger in this area.”⁹ But Petitjean was also afraid of the possibility of socialist or radical interference, asking the minister to proclaim that the tricolor flag and not the red flag would remain the flag of the country.¹⁰ By September 6, rumors had spread that Garibaldi would shortly be arriving in Nice, ironically confirming in one fell swoop both of Petitjean’s fears.¹¹ The rumors of Garibaldi’s imminent arrival in Nice presented the administrators of Nice with a dilemma. They remained unsure whether his stated desire to support an embattled republican France was a genuine one, or disguised a plan to take advantage of the situation to revise the settlement of 1860 in his home city. Two days after assuming the reigns of the prefecture, Baragnon had informed the Government of National Defense that, should Garibaldi arrive in Nice, his administration would receive him enthusiastically since the general had recognized the newly-declared Republic. Yet Baragnon did seem to have doubts about the purity of Garibaldi’s intentions in coming to Nice. “Is there some other purpose [for his coming]?” he asked his superior rhetorically. “I’m being extremely cautious, but I need a lot of

⁵ Telegram no. 1,163, prefect AM to MI, 22 or 23 September 1870, 10:23 a.m., in Assemblée Nationale, *Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 37.

⁶ Telegram no. 1,311, prefect AM to MI, 24 September 1870, 5:25 p.m., in Assemblée Nationale, *Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 37.

⁷ Telegram no. 1,314, prefect AM to MI, 24 September 1870, 11:45 p.m., in Assemblée Nationale, *Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 37.

⁸ Basso, *Les élections législatives* 96–97; 122; Latouche, *Histoire de Nice*, vol. 2, 97.

⁹ Telegram no. 950, prefect AM to MI, 5 September 1870, 3:15 p.m., in Assemblée Nationale, *Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 32.

¹⁰ Telegram no. 953, colonel, 25th legion to Ministry of War, 5 ? September 1870, 9:45 p.m.. in Assemblée Nationale, *Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 32–33.

¹¹ Telegram no. 962, departmental commission to MI, 6 September 1870, 6:00 p.m., in Assemblée Nationale, *Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 33.

strength and support.”¹² By the following week, however, Baragnon seems to have decided that Garibaldi’s republican intentions were genuine. On September 17, he implored the Minister of the Interior to accept or reject Garibaldi’s offer for assistance, advising the government that if it accepted Garibaldi’s help he could take command of Garibaldian volunteers to defend the department.¹³ Rather than viewing Garibaldi as a potential threat that might destabilize the national situation in the recently-annexed territory, Baragnon felt that Garibaldi’s presence as a supporter of the Republic might actually counterbalance Niçois and monarchist conspiracies. “I’m not at all worried even about Nice during his passage,” he telegraphed on September 23, “for here the indigenous element conspiring with the neighboring monarchist element is more dangerous than the ardently republican element in any circumstances.” In the same telegram announcing the population of Nice as “hostile and separatist” he urged the government to authorize Garibaldi to come to the city “as a support to me and for the Republic.”¹⁴

Managing an influx of ragtag, disorganized “Garibaldian” volunteers from both France and Italy posed plenty of logistical problems for the departmental administration and the Government of National Defense, but they were a tempting resource that the government might use to support its flagging war efforts against the Prussians. In what was probably a fortunate development, Garibaldi did announce his intention to support France, but avoided Nice; entering the country at Marseille, he was sent by the government to organize a volunteer army to defend the east. Baragnon and his colleagues were less sanguine about the honorable intentions of the official armies of the Italian government. With the situation so uncertain and most of northern France overrun by the Prussian armies, it seemed entirely possible that the ominous predictions of Italian military interference in the department might be realized. The catastrophic military situation also highlighted the dangers of the woefully unfavorable border in the Alpes-Maritimes that France had agreed to in 1861, which left the County vulnerable from the Tende pass to the north of Fontan, as well as from the east from Ventimiglia. As early as September 10, Baragnon began signaling Italian troop movements toward the border near Ventimiglia, assessing their numbers at approximately 5,000 to 6,000 men; he was so alarmed that he ignored the chain of command and wrote directly to the French ambassador in Florence, Sénart, asking for an explanation. The extremely annoyed ambassador forwarded the message to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, more concerned about the breakdown in procedures than the Italian government’s activities. He characterized Baragnon’s concerns as “puerile,” claiming that the Italian government was naturally keeping an eye on the border for security reasons and that no more than 400 troops had been dispatched to San Remo and Ventimiglia.¹⁵ Still, the administrators of the department remained concerned about the intentions of the Italian government. Inevitably, administrators also had difficulty distinguishing between the Italian military, deserters from the Alpes-Maritimes, and Garibaldian volunteers. On September 19, the secretary-general of the department, M. Tavernier, warned that “four hundred Garibaldians want

¹² Telegram no. 1,013, prefect to MI, 10 September 1870, 10:30 p.m., in *Assemblée Nationale, Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 33.

¹³ Telegram no. 1,121, prefect to MI, 17 September 1870, 10:55 a.m., in *Assemblée Nationale, Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 35.

¹⁴ Telegram no. 11,188, general commissioner to MI, 24 September 1870, 1:25 a.m.; Telegram no. 1,209, prefect AM to MI, 24 September 1870, 5:20 p.m., in *Assemblée Nationale, Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 37.

¹⁵ AMAE, ADP, Italie 4, telegram, FL Florence to MAE, 11 November 1870, 10:20 a.m.; Telegram no. 1,038, prefect AM to Jules Favre, MAE, 11 September 1870, 8:56 p.m., in *Assemblée Nationale, Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 34.

to march and have weapons. Italian royal troops look for a pretext to enter.” That evening, Baragnon signaled the presence of an encampment of 25,000 Italian soldiers in the Piedmontese city of Cuneo, perilously close to the border and the Tende pass.¹⁶

Following the debacle of the aborted municipal elections, which demonstrated some amount of Niçois opposition to the war and the government, Baragnon grew impatient with what he viewed as Italian propaganda warfare. Several of Italy’s nationalist newspapers had raised the question of Nice as France’s military situation continued to deteriorate. This prompted Baragnon to turn to the old imperial method of dealing with the most strident members of the Italianissime faction: expulsion. In an October 2 telegram to Sénart in Florence, Baragnon complained, “The audacious and lying language of certain Italian newspapers has demonstrated that it’s time to tackle this evil at the root of the problem.... We’ve had no troubles or disorders so to say, but separatist intrigues require prudent and immediate repression. There will be no violent arrests, just invitations to a few people to leave.”¹⁷ Records from this first set of expulsions are scarce, but Baragnon undoubtedly acted to exile individuals he viewed as dangerous to security. On October 4, the government issued an expulsion warrant for Denis-Louis Ciaudo, an Italian military officer living in Clans, as well as to Émile Ugo, another Italian officer who was asked to leave, according to later November reports, “for having addressed very lively words to M. Baragnon, then the prefect of the Alpes-Maritimes.”¹⁸

The Government of National Defense would soon have its own lively words for Bargemon, who was called to Tours after just one month in the position of prefect to explain his conduct. In a series of rapid and confusing personnel changes, the department next received an interim administrator, Noël Blache, who was in the position for less than two weeks.¹⁹ But even this brief period was long enough to convince him that the Italian government might be plotting to take advantage of France’s weakness to reverse the settlement of 1860. On October 17, Blache sent a telegram to the Minister of the Interior, sharing reports from Ventimiglia of “secret enrollments engaged in by the enemies of France with the goal of invading Nice and declaring it Italian. I’ve taken dispositions to include in the enrollees, if they exist, some men who are secure to me. But to be ready for all eventualities give me the power to have here and keep five hundred soldiers that I can position as required and whom I’ll have directly at my disposal.”²⁰ It does not appear that these plans were ever realized, due to another personnel change.

Appointed on October 14, Blache’s successor as the prefect, Marc-Étienne Dufraisse, was a republican of impeccable credentials. Elected by the Dordogne department as a *Démoc-Soc* deputy to the Second Republic in 1848, he had been proscribed and exiled following Napoleon III’s 1851 coup, and had subsequently lived in Belgium and Switzerland until the Quatre

¹⁶ Telegram no. 1,165, prefect AM to MI, 19 September 1870, 10:08 a.m.; Telegram no. 1,177, general commissioner to Ministry of War, 11:25 p.m., in *Assemblée Nationale, Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 36.

¹⁷ Telegram no. 457, General Commissioner prefect to Sénart, Minister of France in Florence, 2 October 1870, 8:15 a.m., in *Assemblée Nationale, Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 38.

¹⁸ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, CCP of Nice to prefect AM, 16 November 1870; gendarmerie report, arrondissement of Puget, brigade of Saint Sauveur, 17 October 1870.

¹⁹ Jacques Basso claims that Blache was in power for exactly one week, 7 October to 14 October 1870, but it is difficult to confirm the exact dates due to the gap between the date of appointment and the date when he actually assumed his position at the prefecture. Basso, *Les élections législatives*, 97.

²⁰ Telegram no. 5,495, prefect AM to Ministry of War, 6 November 1870, 2:37 p.m., in *Assemblée Nationale, Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 47.

Septembre.²¹ Like Baragnon, Dufraisse was well-intentioned, but displayed evidence of rigidity and arrogance, a tendency to view himself as indispensable, and an authoritarian streak. Though he spent his first few days in Nice securing his position and looking for ways to get rid of Blache, Dufraisse later recalled that his primary mission during his stay in Nice was to “survey the activities of the separatist or Italian party and thwart the external intrigues, the maneuvers that the affiliates of this party were instruments of in the County.”²² Judging by a proclamation that he had printed and affixed throughout the department, anti-French activities do seem to have been uppermost in his mind. “Tranquility . . . would only be compromised by the worries that inspire your country to afterthoughts, that are understandable and not dangerous, but unfortunate, harmful to legitimate interests and to the moral peace necessary to their development. Your land is French from now on . . . Nice must remain, and shall remain, united to the great French family in times of good and bad fortune.” Dufraisse later admitted that this passage had been a mistake, and claimed that the line “Nice will and shall remain French” had been systematically defaced on the posters throughout the department.²³

As his proclamation revealed, Dufraisse planned to take a much harder line on the Italian question than his predecessors. He admitted later that he had felt that Baragnon had been far too conciliatory to the Niçois faction. Dufraisse believed that the separatist danger in Nice lay in the possibility of conspiracy of external Italian forces with traitors within the department. Unlike Baragnon, Dufraisse both disliked and distrusted Garibaldi, and wanted to prevent Italian “Garibaldian” volunteers from entering his department, even if they expressed a desire to fight. But he agreed with Baragnon that activities on the border should be monitored with suspicion, particularly after reading an earlier dispatch from Vice-Admiral Chopart in Toulon that read, “The inhabitants of Nice seem to be entirely disposed to fraternize with the Italians, whether they are bands or regular troops, the king of Italy is entirely capable of doing us a bad turn to reaffirm its wobbly crown.”²⁴ On October 30, Dufraisse reported that news of the capitulation of Metz had encouraged the “Italian party” to engage in demonstrations.²⁵ On November 6, a street demonstration in which Borriglione participated demanded arms for the mobilized national guard and the reinstatement of the city’s municipal council, concessions that Dufraisse was unwilling to make. Adding to Dufraisse’s problems was a new mouthpiece for the pro-Italian opinion. Whereas Baragnon had been upset about the reports and languages of newspapers published in Italy, Dufraisse was faced with the foundation of a home-grown, Italianophile, Italian-language newspaper, *Il Diritto di Nizza*. Edited by the lawyer Joseph André and printed in Nice, the newspaper published its first issue on November 6. The coincidence of the two events made a

²¹ Adolphe Robert, Edgar Bourlouton, and Gaston Cougny. *Dictionnaire des Parlementaires Français comprenant tous les Membres des Assemblées françaises et tous les Ministres français depuis le 1^{er} Mai 1789 jusqu’au 1^{er} Mai 1889* (Paris: Bourlouton, 1891) 2: 461–2.

²² Deposition of Marc Dufraisse, session of 13 November 1872, in Assemblée Nationale, *Annales de l’Assemblée Nationale, Compte-Rendu in extenso des séances, Annexes*, vol. 25 (Enquête sur les Actes du Gouvernement de la Défense Nationale) (Paris: A. Wittersheim and co., 1875), 131.

²³ Deposition of Marc Dufraisse, session of 13 November 1872, in Assemblée Nationale, *Annales de l’Assemblée Nationale*, vol. 25, 132; Jean-Baptiste Toselli, *Trois jours belliqueuses à Nice: ou, les intrigues d’une candidature governo-républicaine, conte historico-fantastique du XVIII^e siècle* (Nice: Typographie, lithographie et librairie S. C. Cauvin et co., 1871), 16–17.

²⁴ Deposition of Marc Dufraisse, session of 13 November 1872, in Assemblée Nationale, *Annales de l’Assemblée Nationale*, vol. 25, 134.

²⁵ Telegram no. 5,377, prefect AM to MI, Tours, 30 October 1870, 7:20 p.m., in Assemblée Nationale, *Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 44.

profound impression on Dufraisse, who sent a series of telegrams to the government in Tours. “The Italian element agitates strongly and unfortunately has for accomplices the Garibaldians who are conspiring against us on the Italian frontier. The activities of these men will end up creating very serious difficulties for me,” he reported. He quickly concentrated his efforts on making sure the French government was able to station enough soldiers and sailors in the area to keep it under control. After the 3rd battalion of Zouaves left Antibes on November 2, Dufraisse contacted the Minister of War and asked for the 96th infantry line to take its place, “for I may need them before long to preserve Nice for France. My word alone won’t prevent the danger we’re threatened with here.”²⁶ On November 11, Dufraisse contacted the Ministry of the Marine to request the dispatch of a ship, the *Caton*, to Nice. “I need help at all costs for tomorrow night, in order to prevent projected violence for Sunday. With your disciplined sailors, I will send back to the shadows the Italian flags that people are now manufacturing for display.”²⁷ Dufraisse also replaced the municipal commission again, this time headed by a pliant interim mayor, the baron Joseph Elisi de Saint-Albert.²⁸

Following in Baragnon’s footsteps, Dufraisse quickly turned to expulsion as a weapon. On the morning of November 9, Dufraisse sent a telegram to Sénart in which he drew a distinction between two factions in the city’s identity conflict, “Italian” and “Niçois.” In the first he placed “individuals who kept their Italian nationality after the annexation, who are *Italian subjects* but have never lived in Italy, even temporarily, and who have constantly remained in Nice.” The second, which he believed to be “reinforcing” the first, consisted of Niçois who were French citizens but “who would prefer to see Nice free like the principality of Monaco than return to Italy, but who would resign themselves to that in order to detach it from France.”²⁹ Fearful that these two factions would unite in favor of anti-French uprisings, Dufraisse asked Sénart for his opinion about the “legal methods of repression” he might use to discourage the activities of these factions. He also telegraphed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, requesting that he ask Sénart whether the Italian government would be likely to protest if he expelled members of the first group, “those members of the Italian party who are legally Italian subjects, but who in fact have continued to inhabit Nice.”³⁰

It is uncertain that the distinction that Dufraisse drew between “Italians” and sympathetic “Niçois” was ever clear except in Dufraisse’s own mind. For Dufraisse’s expulsion plans came dangerously close to foundering on the difficult and ambiguous wording of Article 6 of the Treaty of Turin, which had governed the procedure for the inhabitants of Nice and Savoy to request and maintain Sardinian citizenship. As we saw in Chapter 4, the government had not interpreted or applied this article very consistently in the 1860s. Thus, while the Minister of Foreign Affairs did forward the request to Sénart in Florence, he cautioned Dufraisse against optimism and warned that most of the inhabitants of Nice were probably legally French. “I must warn you that we’ve never accepted that the inhabitants of Nice who maintained their residence

²⁶ Telegram no. 5,493, prefect AM to MI, 6 November 1870, 2:35 p.m.; Telegram no. 5,495, prefect AM to MI, 6 November 1870, 2:37 p.m., in Assemblée Nationale, *Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 47.

²⁷ Telegram no. 5,559, prefect to Marine, Tours, 11 November 1870, 9:00 a.m., in Assemblée Nationale, *Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 48–9.

²⁸ Basso, *Les élections législatives*, 97.

²⁹ Telegram no. 5,549, prefect to French ambassador in Florence, 9 November 1870, 9:45 a.m., in Assemblée Nationale, *Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 48. Italics in the original.

³⁰ AMAE, ADP, Italie 4, telegram, prefect AM to Chaudordy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tours, 9 November 1870, 10:10 a.m.

there might remain Italians. At the time of the annexation they were invited to chose their nationality and in the case where they did not want to become French they were to establish residence elsewhere.”³¹ Though this was hardly a reassuring response, Dufraisse proceeded with his plans, and on November 12 began to issue expulsion warrants to those suspected of separatist activities.³² Émile Ugo, who had been permitted to return to Nice after his October expulsion, was caught in November participating in a street demonstration on the Place de la Préfecture, presumably that of November 6, “where his presence could only incite disorder.” Ugo’s second expulsion warrant was officially justified on the grounds of his having “shown in different circumstances his hostility against France.”³³ Hoping to undermine the new *Diritto di Nizza*, Dufraisse also delivered an expulsion warrant to Joseph André, the paper’s editor. André’s anti-French articles themselves would probably have sufficed to justify the expulsion, but to demonstrate his defiance of French authority, André had also removed himself from the conscription rolls.³⁴

Some of those targeted for expulsion in November had a longer history of opposition to the annexation, such as Antoine Fenocchio, the language teacher who had made trouble for the annexationists in the spring of 1860. In the ensuing decade Fenocchio had taken a position in Italy as an instructor at the Royal College of Savona, but his anti-French attitude had not changed; the central police commissioner reported that he made frequent trips to Nice, where he “always manifested by his paroles and activities his hostility towards France.” The commissioner also identified Fenocchio as a member of “the famous Niçois Committee whose goal was to unite the County of Nice with Italy or at least to make Nice a free city.”³⁵ Charles Perino, a commissariat de commerce who had been identified as one of the leaders of the Italianissimes and expelled in 1867, had been permitted to return in 1868. The central police commissioner reported that his hostility to France was still “very great” and that Perino had recently participated in the November 6 demonstration, “peaceful, it is true, but whose obvious goal was to create agitation and thus force the authorities to reestablish the National Guard as it had been organized, which would mean arming the Italian party.” He recommended reactivating the 1867 expulsion warrant, which was duly proclaimed on November 12.³⁶ Another longstanding opponent of the French government was the carpenter Carlo Garziglia, who had been twice expelled from Nice for separatist activities in 1863 and in 1869, and who received his third expulsion warrant in November. Toward the middle of the month, the police interviewed Joseph Bonet, a customs officer at the port, who had overheard Garziglia, overcome with rage at Garibaldi’s intervention in the war on behalf of France, shouting invectives at what he perceived as the freedom fighter’s treason. “That pig Garibaldi, who went to go help France, let him be crushed then!” Spitting violently on the ground, Garziglia continued his rant, yelling, “These Italians, these Italian scum who are transporting supplies into France, they should let France get trashed!” Bonet also reported that a few days previously, Garziglia had remarked, “If things go

³¹ AMAE, ADP, Italie 4, draft telegram, Ministry of Foreign Affairs to prefect AM, 9 November 1870.

³² Telegram no. 5,609, prefect to MI, 14 November 1870, 8:00 a.m., in *Assemblée Nationale, Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 50.

³³ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, copy of expulsion warrant for Émile Paul Blaise Ugo, 13 November 1870; report, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 16 November 1870.

³⁴ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 23 November 1870.

³⁵ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 12 November 1870.

³⁶ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 11 November 1870; copy of expulsion warrant for Perino, 12 November 1870.

well, we'll have two thousand by May; there are six hundred soldiers in Nice, we'll burn everything, starting with the functionaries, because we don't need any." After recording Garziglia's comments, the policeman carefully clarified in parentheses that the phrase "if things go well" meant "if Prussia came out on top of France." The administration immediately filed another warrant to expel Garziglia from Nice.³⁷

Even as he ordered these potentially controversial expulsions, Dufraisse tried to prevent public opinion from viewing them as an anti-Niçois purge. In a draft of a statement to be released to the newspapers, he wrote, "Police reports having indicated a certain number of individuals of foreign nationality abusing the hospitality accorded them in France and engaging in intrigues and hostile demonstrations, the prefect, using the right granted to him by the law . . . has expelled by warrants issued on the 12th and the 13th of this month, Perino, a commerce commissioner; Fenoglio [sic], a professor; and Ugo, officer, all three Italian subjects . . . No similar measure could have been nor was taken against any inhabitant of Nice with the French nationality."³⁸ By identifying the three men as foreigners of Italian nationality—even though they had roots in the County of Nice—Dufraisse portrayed them as outsiders working to thwart the French government, much as administrators in the 1860s had displaced internal threats to the annexation to the exterior. Meanwhile, the administration also kept watch on other suspicious inhabitants. The longstanding separatist Count Laurenti-Roubaudi came under suspicion again at the end of November. "He passes for being the principal stockholder in the journal *Il Diritto di Nizza* and people who think they're well informed have gone so far as to say that he is the founder of this paper, whose articles encourage the population to rebel against authority.... In all cases they say that he has great influence in the court of Florence and assure me that it's he who provoked and obtained the dismissal of prefect Baragnon," reported the police commissioner.³⁹ As for Garibaldi, even leading an army in November at Dijon did not modify Dufraisse's opinions of the Niçois native. If anything, his mistrust increased in December when he reported a rumor that Garibaldi had asked the Italian government to support the nomination of Louis Piccon as the prefect of Nice. "This maneuver confirms me in the impression I've always had that Garibaldi wants to return Nice to his country. Piccon is one of the leaders of the Italian party here, which is by no means a phantom as you might think in Bordeaux. There is an intrigue here whose consequences might be more serious than you think. Consider yourselves warned."⁴⁰

Though the city of Nice was the center of pro-Italian maneuvering and the focus of the government's attention, the chaos of the conflict, the revolving-door administrators, and the fears of resurgent pro-Italian nationalism caused the municipal rivalries and factionalism that had underpinned much of the anti-French sentiment in the Niçois backcountry under the Empire to reemerge with a vengeance. The prefecture received a number of anonymous denunciations claiming that anti-French campaigners were active in the countryside. At the end of November, a

³⁷ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, copy of report prepared by Louis Lémontey, police commissioner of the 2nd arrondissement of Nice, 18 November 1870. Garziglia was ultimately permitted to reenter Nice in April 1871, undoubtedly due to the personal intervention of a relative, B. Lapalu, an employee of the public prosecutor of Nice. Lapalu requested a stay of the expulsion warrant, promising that Garziglia "formally promises to live as a peaceful citizen." The CCP, remarkably, wrote that allowing Garziglia to return "offer[s] no political danger." The prefect compromised by allowing Garziglia to return without canceling the expulsion warrant. AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, letter, B. Lapalu to prefect AM, 2 April 1871; CCP Nice to prefect AM, 3 April 1871.

³⁸ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, draft report of prefect entitled "note for the newspapers," 16 November 1870.

³⁹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 4 M 81, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 25 November 1870.

⁴⁰ Telegram no. 5,932, prefect to MI and MAE, 12 December 1870, 10:05 p.m., in Assemblée Nationale, *Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 51.

man calling himself Denis Curretti sent a denunciation from Fontan to the public prosecutor in Nice, denouncing the unethical medical practices of Breil's medical officer Louis Boini. The Boinis, father and son, who referred to themselves as doctors, had been strongly identified with the pro-Italian faction in Breil in 1860.⁴¹ The 1870 denunciation described in graphic detail the botched deliveries that Louis Boini had performed on two pregnant women, who had died from the internal injuries they had sustained after Boini had wrenched the unborn fetuses from their bodies. In a short, final paragraph, as if playing a trump card, Curretti revealed that a decade of French rule had apparently done nothing to alter Boini's political preferences. "I should add that this man engages in unrelenting propaganda against France, with a few of his sort, and the authority had better reflect whether France should accord hospitality to people like these."⁴²

The veracity of Denis Curretti's tale was thrown into doubt when Fontan's mayor reported that the town had no inhabitant known by that name. His unsubstantiated identity notwithstanding, the author of the letter had correctly associated Boini with the Italian faction. The local justice of the peace acknowledged Boini's violent character and "Italian aspirations," though he claimed that he had not personally received any information to suggest that Boini was actively engaging in anti-French propaganda.⁴³ The situation in Breil worsened along with France's fortunes in the ongoing war. Shortly after the new year, a man named Joseph Roynal in Nice sent both the public prosecutor and Dufraisse a denunciation reporting on the latest news from Breil, which was hardly encouraging: "I've heard from Breil that yesterday morning, an unusual joy was felt and publicly displayed by members of the Italian party in Breil, and after information it seems to be the case that this joy was occasioned by news of the occupation of the Avron plateau by the Prussian army, which according to their ideas should precipitate the fall of Paris and the cession of Nice to Italy. It is truly regrettable that we can't manage to purge this country of certain villains, that republican France just like imperial France opens its protection to such disgusting personalities." Roynal went on to denounce the Boinis, suggesting that he may have, in fact, been the elusive Curretti:

The so-called Dr. Boini, notably, is Italian, and in two instances the Imperial government in spite of its shamelessness was forced to refuse him French nationality. This man, whose two murders most recently committed through the shelter of his profession have been proved by a judicial inquiry ... is more audacious than ever; he assures anyone who'll listen that he'll come out of this trial white as snow, when [the government] should send him to a penal colony or at the very least return him to his dear country by an expulsion. He will renew towards you the dirty maneuvers that he was accustomed to engage in toward the Imperial public prosecutors, . . . but a republican magistrate should be just before being merciful, especially when mercy does ill to a brave population, French in their hearts, that a few miserable people of Dr. Boini's caliber seek to disaffect.

The Italian party is making common cause with all the seeds of opposition. . . . Please, sir, concern yourself with the affairs of Breil and don't be surprised either by Nice, where you are working on behalf of the French party of this commune, because it is there that the former deputy Malausséna has his closest relatives, his

⁴¹ See Chapter 4.

⁴² AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, Denunciation, Denis Curretti to public prosecutor Nice, 29 November 1870.

⁴³ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, Justice of the peace of the canton of Breil to public prosecutor Nice, 1 December 1870.

most faithful servants, such as Veran, Toesca his uncle, Boini, Rey, Malaeria, Delerba, etc. And it's from this area that his fortune came, it's there that his wife was born, the niece of the lawyer and deputy Barralis who began to give him his consistency. Breil is a country to survey and to purge of Malaussénian chaff.⁴⁴

In addition to his accusations against Boini, Roynal's letter raised a number of recurrent themes. Like Dufraisse and other administrators, Roynal divided the separatist conflict into internal and external components. He identified Boini as an external "Italian" threat more than a native "Niçois" problem, but his reference to the "Malaussénian chaff" was also an indictment of the former mayor and deputy's provincial tendencies that had been so evident in 1870. Roynal also insightfully argued that separatism was gaining strength from all the scattered and disparate elements of opposition that had been forced underground during the imperial years.

By January, Dufraisse had grown so concerned by the possibility of pro-Italian uprisings by disgruntled—and armed—members of the department's mobilized national guard that he lobbied his superiors to have them reassigned, or more accurately exiled, elsewhere in France. He initially hit upon the idea of exiling them temporarily to garrisons on the Algerian coast, and believed that he had arranged the matter with the head of the military cabinet and the director of personnel in Bordeaux. The plan ultimately fell through, due to what Dufraisse believed was Gambetta's opposition.⁴⁵ On January 11 he again insisted on exiling mobilized soldiers from the department, "who would turn their arms against French authority."⁴⁶ On January 21, in a telegram that revealed that Dufraisse was only concerned about mobilized men from the territory of the former County of Nice and not the "French" Grasse arrondissement, he asked the ministers of the Interior and War to prepare to dispatch several squadrons of the 25th legion of the gendarmerie to ensure "the departure of the mobilized national guard of the Italian part of my department."⁴⁷ On January 22, he insisted on the presence of the gendarmerie because the government had scuttled his Algerian plans. "I need this force to bring the draft dodgers back to their corps, and to stop the deserters who are trying to leave the country."⁴⁸ That same day, he complained to the delegate of Foreign Affairs that the Government of National Defense simply did not appreciate the magnitude of the separatist danger he was facing. "The question of Nice has taken on proportions that the Bordeaux government doesn't seem to understand," he wrote. "These difficulties would have been considerably lessened had the government provided me with the authorization (which I supported with excellent political and even military reasons) to send the national guards mobilized from the formerly Italian part of the department to Algeria for a few weeks.... Whatever is said, the population of Nice and of the County has remained Italian in great majority."⁴⁹

Another reason Dufraisse had wanted to exile the mobilized national guard was because he remained fearful of the possibility of fraternization between Italians and Niçois in the area. In

⁴⁴ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, copy of denunciation, Joseph Roynal to public prosecutor Nice and prefect AM, 4 January 1871.

⁴⁵ Telegram no. 739, prefect AM to MI and War, 4 January 1871, 2:00 p.m.; telegram no 770, prefect AM to M. de Freycinet, delegate of War, 5 January 1871, 4:45 p.m., p. 52.

⁴⁶ Telegram no. 7,184, prefect AM to MI and War, 11 January 1871, 5:10 p.m., in *Assemblée Nationale, Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 53.

⁴⁷ Telegram no. 7,465, prefect AM to MI and War, 21 January 1871, 8:35 p.m., in *Assemblée Nationale, Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, p. 54.

⁴⁸ Telegram no. 7,469, prefect AM to delegate AM in Bordeaux, 22 January 1871, 9:45 a.m., in *Assemblée Nationale, Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 54.

⁴⁹ AMAE, ADP, Italie, 4, prefect AM to Comte de Chaudordy, 22 January 1871.

January, Dufraisse continued to send reports about the numbers of “Garibaldians,” deserters and Italian volunteers amassed on the Franco-Italian border near Menton, in the area known as the Genoese Riviera. Occasionally he gave credence to wildly implausible rumors. In January, he reported a rumor that this group had managed to secretly hide a cache of 7,000 American-made Remington pistols and 2 million cartridges in Monaco “to retake the County by violence.”⁵⁰ In spite of the exaggerated nature of the report, the Foreign Affairs Ministry immediately contacted the consul in Genoa, Charles Diéudy-Defly, and asked him to work with agents in Monaco to investigate the matter. Defly’s agent traced the story back to an earlier rumor that predated the fall of the Empire.⁵¹ On the other hand, desertion does appear to have been a legitimate problem in the Alpes-Maritimes, even if Dufraisse overestimated the extent of anti-French fraternizing. By January 22, Dufraisse estimated that there were a total of about 400 draft dodgers and deserters of the class of 1870 and from the mobilized battalions, and that more than 400 individuals had crossed the border into Italy.⁵² He also reported that several hundred deserters and draft dodgers from the department who had fled into Italy to avoid their military service were now concentrated close to the Franco-Italian border in Ventimiglia and San Remo. Though Dufraisse had no reason to suppose that the deserters had left France for any other reason than avoiding military service, he referred to these deserters as “Niçois-Italians” and asked the foreign affairs delegate to request that the Italian government disperse them or move them to the interior of Italy.⁵³ On January 28, the day of the signature of the Franco-German armistice, Dufraisse estimated the number of refugees and draft dodgers in the Genoese Riviera at 15,000.⁵⁴

Savoy and France: “Are They Only Words”?

Though not as immediately worrisome as the situation in the Alpes-Maritimes, political problems related to the settlement of 1860 also emerged rapidly in the Savoyard departments after the Sedan disaster. In the Savoie, a departmental commission established in Chambéry to maintain public order nominated one of its members, Eugène Guiter, the new prefect.⁵⁵ The decision was accepted by the Government of National Defense, but when Annecy’s municipal council attempted to do likewise in the Haute-Savoie, an embarrassing situation arose. The council proposed Jules Philippe, a Savoyard known for his longstanding republican views, to the prefecture, but was subsequently informed by telegram that the Government of National Defense had appointed a second, rival prefect, Louis Jousserandot, a French émigré who had been living in Thonon since Napoleon’s 1851 coup.⁵⁶ The double appointment caused a sensation that quickly escalated into a scandal. On September 10, members of the “Liberal Committee of

⁵⁰ Telegram no. 7,184, prefect AM to MI and War, 11 January 1871, 5:10 p.m., in Assemblée Nationale, *Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 53.

⁵¹ AMAE, CPC, Italie, Gênes, 3, draft, MAE to CF Genoa, 12 January 1871; CF Genoa to MAE, 21 January 1871; CF Genoa to MAE, 23 January 1871; copy, report of M. de Moreuil, chancellor, to CF Genoa, no date.

⁵² AMAE, ADP, Italie, 4, prefect AM to Comte de Chaudordy, 22 January 1871.

⁵³ Telegram no. 7,468, prefect AM to MAE, 21 January 1871, 9:45 p.m., in Assemblée Nationale, *Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 54.

⁵⁴ Telegram no. 7,579, prefect AM to MAE, 28 January 1871, 12:37 p.m., in Assemblée Nationale, *Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 54–55.

⁵⁵ Jacques Lovie, *La Savoie dans la vie Française de 1860 à 1875* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), 488.

⁵⁶ Louis Dépollier, *Régionalisme et politique en Savoie: Jules Philippe, 1827–1888* (Chambéry, France: Librairie Dardel, 1939), 99.

Annecy” distributed a poster protesting against the possibility that Philippe might be revoked in favor of the man they portrayed as a Parisian parvenu.

A year ago, your votes called M. Jules Philippe to represent you. Ratifying your choice, the provisional government installed him at the head of our department...But by an incomprehensible action, they’ve just send us a new prefect, a stranger to Savoy. You must protest against this project! You must prevent it from happening! For it would be an offense to your dignity, and would demonstrate that your desires count for nothing in the decisions of the Government. Because you have the right, in this moment of supreme peril, to keep as your governor a man born in the country, whom you have acclaimed, who has your sympathies, who has shown that he was worthy.

It was perhaps unfair for the protesters to claim that Jousserandot, who though not Savoyard by birth had been living in the province for over a decade, was a “stranger to Savoy.” But the poster concluded by announcing a demonstration in favor of Philippe that evening on the Place de l’Hôtel de Ville.⁵⁷ Another poster encouraging participation at the rally gestured to expectations of decentralization. “Come calm and strong, as citizens who know how to make themselves respected, who want to establish order solidly, beside liberty, and have done with Parisian centralization and remain in control of the direction of their interests.”⁵⁸ The regionalist undertones of the protest in favor of Philippe were even more evident in a subsequent poster, this time signed by a “Radical Republican Committee of Annecy,” which proclaimed indignantly,

Jules Philippe replaced by whom?...

By a Lawyer from Paris!

A name you’ve never heard of, citizen Jousserandot!

Inhabitants of Annecy, will you allow this to happen?

Do ten citizens in Paris have the right to mistrust our sympathies?

We’ll respect theirs, if they respect ours.

Republic, decentralization, are they only words?⁵⁹

At the same time, a startlingly frank anonymous letter sent to the Minister of the Interior warned of the consequences of dismissing the favored Philippe: “Please arrange the prompt reestablishment of M. Philippe as prefect, or else we will retire our title as Frenchmen.”⁶⁰ The demonstrations worked: Philippe sent a telegram on January 11, remarking, “M. Jousserandot left yesterday at three in the afternoon. Last night numerous demonstrations on my behalf.”⁶¹

The successful elevation of a well-known, Savoyard republican such as Philippe to Annecy’s prefecture demonstrated that the Third Republic benefited from the support of the liberal and democratic opposition that had strengthened in both of the Savoyard departments in the closing years of the Empire. The arrival of the republic in Savoy also caused some of those who had opposed the annexation in 1860 out of their opposition to the Second Empire to rally in favor of the annexation and France. A good example was the new public prosecutor in Annecy, Mugnier, a former liberal opponent of the annexation who had been exiled from Savoy and sent to the interior of France for his convictions. After the Quatre Septembre, he successfully applied

⁵⁷ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 117, poster in support of Jules Philippe.

⁵⁸ Lovie, *La Savoie dans la vie Française*, 490.

⁵⁹ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 117, poster in support of Jules Philippe, 10 or 11 September 1870.

⁶⁰ AN, F 1bI 170 13, anonymous letter to Ministry of the Interior, 10 September 1870.

⁶¹ Telegram no. 598, prefect HS to MI, 11 September 1870, 12:15 p.m., in Assemblée Nationale, *Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 2, 86.

for a transfer to Annecy, and in a short speech that he made during his installation on October 12, Mugnier openly explained his change of heart: “In 1860, I was a Savoisien magistrate. The political regime of France did not have the sympathies of a certain number of my friends, nor my own. We fought the annexation, and when it occurred, we were sent far away from our country and from our interests. Our new *patrie* received us, I must say, with open arms; and I’m happy to bear witness to my gratitude today,” he began. “The Republic, born in the middle of immense troubles, of which it is not the cause, will dissipate them after chasing out the foreigners, and will establish freedom on largest bases. To attain this goal, it needs the devotion of all its children. In Savoy, we have the happy privilege of being without attachment to any party. Let us therefore be of the party of the Nation, let us affirm the Republic and make it loved.”⁶²

But this kind of Savoyard republican loyalty, like the Third Republic itself, was tenuous. The anonymous letter sent to the government on behalf of Philippe was a stunning statement of defiance during a time of crisis, and served as a reminder that the Franco-Prussian war was to severely test Savoyard loyalties after only a decade of French nationhood. Moreover, if some republicans such as Mugnier or Philippe rallied to the defense of the new French republic, the regime’s difficulties also emboldened the pro-Swiss facet of republican sentiment in the Haute-Savoie. Fears of Swiss interference appeared in the northern districts of the Haute-Savoie as early as September 6. That day, the sub-prefect of Saint-Julien, Joseph-Michel Guy, telegraphed to the Interior to report that “a band of Frenchmen living in Geneva, together with some Swiss nationals, most of them disreputable, had showed up in Saint-Julien and tried to mislead spirits and to bring the population and the young men called up to throw lots for military duty to acts of violence.”⁶³ Most of the attention paid to Swiss intentions, however, focused on the impact of the war on the neutralized Zone of the Haute-Savoie, which corresponded largely—though not entirely—to the free-trade Zone in the Thonon, Bonneville and Saint-Julien arrondissements of the department. Ever since the annexation, there had been constant disagreement on exactly what that “neutrality” meant in practice. The Swiss government consistently interpreted the Zone as being exactly equivalent to Swiss neutrality, meaning that the French government was not permitted to station troops on that territory; it maintained its right to occupy the Zone militarily, and unilaterally, if it so chose. The French government, understandably, argued that Switzerland could not occupy the territory without its prior authorization and invitation. As the news of the war grew increasingly grim, the question took on an understandable urgency in Savoy. Even before the Sedan disaster, the conservative, Catholic newspaper *Le Courrier des Alpes* had discussed whether “neutrality” meant that the inhabitants of the Zone were exempt from military conscription on behalf of France.⁶⁴

Most French observers believed that inviting Swiss occupation of the area would probably result in the *de facto* annexation of the Zone area, thus providing Switzerland with the territorial compensations that it had coveted and failed to acquire in 1860. On October 2, Jules Philippe wrote to the sub-prefects of his department and warned them about the news that “some worried souls are again spreading the idea of a possible annexation of Haute-Savoie to Switzerland. You must understand, M. le sub-prefect, such ideas are inopportune. We are linked

⁶² AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 79, letter from public prosecutor Mugnier, Annecy, to prefect HS, 12 October 1870; copy of speech delivered by public prosecutor Mugnier at his installation on 12 October 1870.

⁶³ Telegram no. 137, SP Saint-Julien to MI, 6 September 1870, 8:45, in Assemblée Nationale, *Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 2, 85.

⁶⁴ Lovie, *La Savoie dans la vie Française*, 509

by a legal and freely-consented contract to the destinies of France.”⁶⁵ Thonon’s sub-prefect responded the following day confirming that he had heard that “people more interested in the cares of their material interests than in sentiments of honor and patriotism,”—in other words, those more interested in peace than in prolonging the war—were actively spreading such rumors.⁶⁶ Given Bonneville’s reputation as the most politically-suspect, republican and pro-Swiss area of the Haute-Savoie in the closing years of the Second Empire, it is perhaps not surprising that the town produced the most serious effort to support the rights of Switzerland over the territory. On October 24, the town’s Republican Committee wrote to republican committees established in the sub-prefectures of Saint-Julien and Thonon asking for their opinion about “insisting on the neutrality reserved for certain portions of Savoisien territory by the treaties of 1815 and on the required steps to assure their execution by the Swiss government.” Bonneville’s republican committee initially received little support; Saint-Julien’s republican committee demurred, calling the project “premature” and arguing that it would simply create further difficulties, while Thonon’s rejected it out of hand.⁶⁷ Thonon’s sub-prefect was, nevertheless, concerned. “In the presence of the patriotic movement that has aroused our populations from one end to the other of France, would it be worthy of Savoy ... to run to our neighbors? Whose support will not, perhaps, be disinterested, and which would be encouraged in the direction of annexation, that certain organs of the Swiss press don’t disguise?”⁶⁸

As the historian Louis Dépollier has argued, many Savoyards presumed that the existence of the neutral Zone secured the Haute-Savoie, and thus the entire province, against the possibility of foreign invasion.⁶⁹ For some, then, invoking the occupation of the neutral Zone was not actually a disloyal or separatist maneuver, but a patriotic attempt to prevent the area from being overrun by the Prussians. This interpretation found particular support in the Savoie department to the south, even though none of the department’s territory formed part of the neutralized area in question. One citizen of Chambéry, Ernest d’Albane, who ran a printer’s shop in the Place Saint-Léger, the central square of the city, wrote and self published a fifteen-page brochure entitled *The Neutrality of Savoy*. The text republished several documents concerning the neutral zones established by the treaties of 1815 and a topographical map. “Threatened by a Prussian invasion, without arms, without munitions, without any other means of defense than the natural disposition of our soil, isn’t it our duty to ask Switzerland, our good neighbor, to execute the treaties of 1815 regarding the neutrality of Savoy?” the brochure asked. Its final page took the form of a short petition that could be torn off and passed around for signatures, and then sent back to Albane’s shop: “The undersigned adhere entirely to the spirit that dictated this brochure, and ask its editor to send to whomever it may concern, their expression of desire to see the treaties of 1815 executed regarding the neutrality of Savoy.” Albane seems to have been convinced that the security of Savoy and of France could best be assured by asking for Swiss military assistance, “to ensure that our country will not be soiled by the enemy,” and concluded by arguing that with Swiss forces ensuring the security of Savoy, the military force that would otherwise have been allocated to the Savoyard departments could be redeployed against the Prussians elsewhere. “We

⁶⁵ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 179, draft, prefect HS to the SPs HS, 2 October 1870.

⁶⁶ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 71, SP Thonon to prefect HS, 3 October 1870.

⁶⁷ Dépollier, *Régionalisme et politique en Savoie*, 121.

⁶⁸ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 71, SP Thonon to prefect HS, 26 October 1870.

⁶⁹ Dépollier, *Régionalisme et politique en Savoie*, 120; Marcel Usannaz-Joris, *De la neutralité de la Savoie: Étude d’histoire diplomatique et de droit international* (Paris: Librairie nouvelle de droit et de jurisprudence, 1901), 148–61.

will have done well for the *patrie* and rendered a great service to the Republic in permitting it to reallocate forces that would have necessarily been sent into our mountains if the Swiss had not come.”⁷⁰

In a strange turn of events, Savoie’s prefect Guiter—not bothering to contact his colleague Philippe in Annecy, who would have been directly affected by a Swiss occupation—began working to make this “patriotic” interpretation of invoking Swiss assistance a reality.⁷¹ On November 12, the *Patriote Savoisien*, Chambéry’s republican newspaper, published a communiqué Guiter had forwarded to it. “I have addressed the president of the Swiss Confederation, asking him if Switzerland intended to enforce the neutrality of a portion of Savoisien territory stipulated to its benefit by the treaties of 1815. The point is to know whether we might concentrate all our patriotic efforts on three fronts that, in the event of a Swiss response, would alone give access to the Prussians to invade us.”⁷² Guiter had apparently undertaken the measure with the consent of some of the members of the department’s General Council during its November 12 session.⁷³ The Swiss president responded that he would be more than happy to negotiate with the French government. When Guiter forwarded this news to the Government of National Defense in Tours, he was sharply informed that only the government could undertake such negotiations.⁷⁴ Guiter’s inexplicable maneuvering to engage Swiss assistance from his southern position in Chambéry was a clumsy if no doubt well-intentioned attempt to defend his department from the Prussians. But it exacerbated the longstanding, simmering pro-Swiss feelings in the Haute-Savoie. In November, the sub-prefect of Saint-Julien reported that “Things are going well, some are asking for Swiss occupation, others are opposing decrees.”⁷⁵ The sub-prefect of Thonon, like the administrators in the Alpes-Maritimes, was concerned by the possibility of desertion. After reading a report in the *Moniteur* that by December 30, all men between 21 and 40 would be mobilized for the war effort, he complained to Philippe, “In the interest of the political spirit of this area,” he complained, “which needs much special consideration due to its recent annexation, I would have preferred a less radical measure. I’m afraid there will be many draft evaders, in spite of our efforts.”⁷⁶

In spite of the confusing and chaotic course of the Franco-Prussian conflict, it is striking that in the two most politically fragile areas of the annexed territories—the northern districts of the Haute-Savoie, the city of Nice, and some of the County’s back-country cantons—rumors of territorial revisionism appeared almost immediately after the Sedan disaster. All three of the prefects who successively administered the Alpes-Maritimes between September and February ultimately identified Franco-Italian-Niçois conflict over Nice as a source of concern. Even in the

⁷⁰ *Neutralité de la Savoie: Documents sur la partie du territoire Savoisien neutralisée par les traités de 1815, avec une carte topographique* (Chambéry, France: Imprimerie E. D’Albane, 1870), p. 3.

⁷¹ Dépollier, *Régionalisme et politique en Savoie*, 122.

⁷² *Le Patriote Savoisien*, November 12, 1870.

⁷³ Usannaz-Joris, *De la neutralité de la Savoie*, 157.

⁷⁴ Lovie, *La Savoie dans la vie Française*, 510. On November 11, the day before his dispatch appeared in the *Patriote Savoisien*, prefect Guiter sent a strange telegram to Gambetta reporting the news that “clerical agitation for annexation to Switzerland has been signaled.” Given the Savoyard clergy’s traditional hostility to Protestant Switzerland, the rumor is extremely unlikely, and its appearance at the same time as Guiter’s Swiss diplomacy remains a suggestive but so far unexplained mystery. Telegram no. 555, prefect Savoie to Gambetta, 11 November 1870, 6:20 p.m., in Assemblée Nationale, *Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 2, 83.

⁷⁵ Telegram no. 272, SP Saint-Julien to M. Ranc, MI, Tours, 4:00, in Assemblée Nationale, *Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 2, 88.

⁷⁶ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 71, SP Thonon to prefect HS, 29 November 1870.

Savoie, normally the most impervious of the three annexed departments to rumors of territorial revision, interest grew in leveraging the Swiss prerogatives over the neutral Zone in order to defend the department, though for patriotic rather than separatist purposes. But the most significant phase of the conflict in the annexed departments occurred after the signature of the Franco-German armistice on January 28 and the preparation of hasty elections for February 8.

Nice's "February Days"

Organized in order to constitute a normalized, sovereign government able to sign a peace treaty with Germany, the first elections of the Third Republic were, in spite of numerous irregularities, the most free and fair Nice or Savoy had ever known. The inherent dangers of universal suffrage and fair elections became quickly apparent in the Alpes-Maritimes. Dufraisse decided to run for election, in spite of the obvious conflict of interest involved in his position as the sitting prefect. Though Dufraisse's telegrams to Bordeaux prove that he was well aware of the questionable legality of his candidacy, he believed himself indispensable to defending Nice from separatist maneuvers. "If I desist, all is lost," he pompously telegraphed to Bordeaux on February 7.⁷⁷ As elsewhere in France, a major preoccupation for voters was whether the elected representatives would support peace with Prussia or, like Gambetta, reject any shameful peace. The hasty and haphazard organization of the elections meant that there was hardly time for campaigning, but Dufraisse tried to position himself as a moderate candidate of order in the Alpes-Maritimes, committed to France and in favor of pulling the country definitively out of the war. The department's republicans, however, were divided and disorganized. The *Phare du Littoral* and the *Réveil* supported one republican list—which did not include Dufraisse—while the *Journal de Nice* supported an opposing list. With the exception of Dufraisse and the engineer Henri Lefèvre, the other republicans were not even in the department at the time of the election.⁷⁸

If the national situation of the country was a major issue for voters, the election also featured a regional dimension unique to the department: the republicans faced a slate of "Niçois" candidates championed by the *Diritto di Nizza* and the revived Niçois Committee: Louis Piccon, Constantin Bergondi, and Alfred Borriglione. Their election manifestos remained prudently moderate, focusing mainly on their attachment to peace and to the Republic. But there is evidence, according to several historians, that Piccon and Bergondi accepted a "secret mandate" drawn up by the Niçois Committee. They pledged not only to vote for peace, but to encourage Garibaldi to raise the question of Nice and its aspirations to the National Assembly; to support Garibaldi in obtaining a revision of the 1860 plebiscite; in the event that Garibaldi were not elected or did not want to raise the question of Nice's nationality, Piccon and Bergondi were to present a petition to the parliament "signed by a sufficient number of Niçois electors" asking for the revision of the 1860 treaty; if the petition idea proved impractical, then Piccon and Bergondi were to raise the matter of Nice before the assembly and support the cancellation of the plebiscite; if all else failed, they were to resign their mandate in protest.⁷⁹ Whatever the truth of the famous secret mandate, the Niçois candidates were hostile to the annexation and to Dufraisse's administration.

⁷⁷ Telegram no. 7,740, prefect AM to Interior, Bordeaux, 7 February 1871, 7:30 a.m., in *Assemblée Nationale, Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 56.

⁷⁸ Basso, *Les élections législatives*, 100–1.

⁷⁹ Mark Ivan [Henri Mouttet], *Le séparatisme à Nice (de 1860 à 1874)* (Nice: Imprimerie Niçoise, Verani et Compagnie, publication de *L'Ordre Social*, journal républicain des Alpes-Maritimes, 1874), 112–18.

Garibaldi, whose reputation had reached new heights thanks to his intervention in the war on behalf of France at the Battle of Dijon, was a universal candidate. He did not formally declare, sanction or invite his candidacy, but his name was quickly adopted by both republicans and separatists in the department. Both republican lists put Garibaldi's name at the top, as did the separatist *Dritto*. Garibaldi's popularity among both republican and "Niçois" candidates led Dufraisse to commit a major political blunder. Dufraisse stubbornly and foolishly refused to embrace Garibaldi, Nice's universally popular politician, as either a republican or French patriot. In a miscalculated political move, he demonized Garibaldi's candidacy as separatist and pro-war, publishing a letter of protest in most of the department's newspapers, including the quasi-official newspaper of the prefecture, *Le Journal de Nice*, complaining that their names should not and could not appear on the same republican ballot. "The candidacy of a prefect of the French Republic in Nice, and that of general Garibaldi, are radically incompatible. The election of this general, a candidate of Italian secession on the one hand and of the *guerre à outrance*, cannot be reconciled with that of a man [Dufraisse] who wishes to conserve Nice for France and who is inclined, furthermore, for peace."⁸⁰ Privately, Dufraisse predicted darkly to his superiors in Bordeaux that the election of separatist deputies to the National Assembly might "create difficulties so large that this country could be lost to us."⁸¹

The election resulted in Garibaldi, as expected, receiving the greatest number of votes, followed by Piccon, Bergondi and Dufraisse. Garibaldi's universal appeal—republican or separatist at will—is amply demonstrated by the fact that many of the inhabitants of the "French" arrondissement of Grasse cast their votes for him. Even sub-prefect Tardy at Puget-Théniers, who could hardly have been ignorant of the separatist murmurs circulating in the department since the autumn, encouraged Garibaldi's candidacy; in a handwritten circular destined to be sent to all the communes of the arrondissement, Tardy entreated the mayors "to prepare your *administrés* to cast their votes for the hero of Dijon, the magnanimous General Garibaldi."⁸² His election was interpreted by both separatists and republicans as an affirmation of their political ideas. Interpreting the victory of Piccon and Bergondi is more difficult. If voting for Garibaldi, Nice's most recognized celebrity, was not necessarily a separatist activity, to what extent were the votes cast for the "separatist" candidates actually expressing separatist desires? Jules Valéri, a lieutenant of the mobilized guard of the Alpes-Maritimes stationed in Toulon, sent the Niçois candidate Constantin Bergondi a letter on February 9 congratulating him on his election. "I received the voters' bulletins and your election manifesto which I read to our two companies; we all found it firmly loyal, so there was no pressure on my part, and the men ran to the urns to deposit the names of our true friends. I'm praying, my dear sir, that you'll be named, for no one better than you will be better able to take care of the interest of our *pays* in the National Assembly." Valéri's emphasis on Bergondi's defense of the local *pays* might be interpreted as separatist, or at the very least an affirmation that a native Niçois would be best equipped to represent the territory on a national level during a time of crisis, just as the inhabitants of the Haute-Savoie had earlier demanded the retention of their own Savoyard prefect Jules Philippe. But Valéri also sounded all the correct notes of French republican patriotism when he continued, "I have no doubt that the only names to emerge from the urns will be those who wish to defend the interest of the nation and to save, as you have expressed it so well in your profession of faith,

⁸⁰ *Journal de Nice*, 4 February 1871.

⁸¹ Telegram no. 7,646, prefect AM to Interior in Bordeaux, 2 February 1871, 8:30 p.m., in *Assemblée Nationale, Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 56.

⁸² AN, C 3522, Handwritten circular, SP Puget-Théniers to mayors of the arrondissement, 2 February 1871.

both honor and the Republic.”⁸³ In casting his vote for Bergondi, Valéri does not seem to have been primarily motivated by thoughts of separatism, and plenty of other Niçois voters acted likewise.

Even the annulled ballots from the election demonstrate the widely divergent sentiments of the electors, which ran the gamut from the patriotic to the treasonous. Two of the annulled ballots in the canton of Menton expressed extremely patriotic sentiments that Gambetta and the insurgent population of Paris would undoubtedly have applauded. One such ballot included a handwritten apposition that had resulted in the ballot’s being thrown out: “For war without mercy and without truce. We must go burn Berlin!” Another invalidated ballot read, “War to the death!”⁸⁴ On the other hand, two of the 169 voters in the back-country town of Drap expressed both a desire to end the war and their displeasure with the French by scribbling in Niçard, “Long live peace. No to *fayou*, we don’t want any,” on their ballots.⁸⁵ The term *fayou*, sometimes written as *fayot*, *faiou* or *fajou*, a slang word for a dried bean, was a derogatory term for the French in the County; it referred to the supposed differences in diet between those from the *Outre-Var* (called *mangeurs de fayots*, or “bean-eaters”) and the Niçois.⁸⁶ In the Sospel canton, one of the 701 votes cast was invalidated because the voter declined to name a candidate. Instead, he expressed a cold-blooded desire to see France vanquished, scribbling “*Ut Prussiani destruant gallicos. Utinam*” onto the ballot— “If only Prussia would destroy France.”⁸⁷

In the city of Nice, the excitement surrounding the result of the elections escalated into a three-day wave of street protests that quickly became known as the *Journées de Février*, or the “February Days.” There are few reliable accounts of how the demonstrations began, but all indications suggest that the days before the election witnessed a number of openly pro-Nice and pro-Italy demonstrations and rallies in favor of the *Diritto*’s “Niçois” slate of candidates. Honoré Bressa, the president of the Niçois Circle at the former Hôtel de la Poste in the Place Garibaldi, gave a public anti-French speech at the Place de l’Eglise du Vœu on February 5.⁸⁸ A thirty-eight year-old man from Sospel, Paul Truchi, was reported to have carried a Niçois flag in the streets of the city during a demonstration on February 6.⁸⁹ On February 8, the day of the election, the abbé Ignace Simon engaged in vigorous propaganda efforts in favor of the Niçois candidates; the violent language and furious insults that he directed toward the officers on duty at the polling station in the Place du Palais eventually caused them to throw him forcibly out of the polling station.⁹⁰ The demonstrations became more serious in the evening, when news spread that the initial election results had indeed favored the “Niçois” candidates. Crowds gathered in front of the prefecture and the Italian consulate, yelling “Long live Italy! Down with France! Down with the prefect!” According to the city’s public prosecutor, Maglione, the Niçois candidates Piccon

⁸³ AN, C 3522, letter from Jules Valéri, Lieutenant of the mobilized guard AM, 1st batallion, 83rd company, Toulon, Var, to Constantin Bergondi, 9 February 1871.

⁸⁴ AN, C 3522, Invalidated ballots attached to electoral report, arrondissement of Nice, canton of Menton, section of Menton.

⁸⁵ AN, C 3522, Invalidated ballots attached to electoral report, arrondissement of Nice, canton of Contes, commune of Drap.

⁸⁶ Robert Latouche, *Histoire de Nice*, vol. 2, *De 1860 à 1914* (Nice: Ville de Nice, 1954), 107.

⁸⁷ AN, C 3522, Invalidated ballot attached to electoral report, arrondissement of Nice, canton of Sospel, single section.

⁸⁸ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, CCP of Nice to prefect AM, 20 February 1871.

⁸⁹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, note, CP 1st arrondissement of Nice, “List of persons arrested and conducted aboard the frigate *La Couronne*,” 10 February 1871.

⁹⁰ AN, BB 24 727, PG Aix to Minister of Justice, 16 September 1871.

and Borriglione encouraged the crowd by making impromptu speeches; Maglione also reported that money had been distributed to members of the crowd to purchase their participation.⁹¹ Dufraisse reported in a telegram that the crowds had remained until three in the morning, and that their shouts had included calls of “Out with the French! Death to the French!”⁹²

The situation worsened on February 9, when Dufraisse ordered the closure of the *Diritto di Nizza*, which he blamed for helping to incite the riots. He also ordered a thorough search of the newspaper’s offices in the rue Pont-Neuf, claiming that evidence of an Italian conspiracy would be located there. At about four in the afternoon, the city’s mayor, M. Elisi de Saint-Albert; the prosecutor Maglione; and his substitute were escorted by the central police commissioner and several police agents to the *Diritto*’s offices to conduct the search. Their presence attracted a new crowd to the quarter, which protested against the measures taken against the newspaper and attempted to force their way in. Dufraisse sent a squadron of soldiers into the neighborhood to put down the riot, who were greeted with threats and pelted with stones. Only after the colonel of the gendarmerie, Colonel Petitjean, arrived with reinforcements, did the authorities manage to disperse the crowd, but the crowd then reassembled in front of the prefecture and began throwing stones at the façade and windows of the building. According to Maglione’s account of the incident, the gendarmes fired several rounds of blanks before reinforcements, in the form of sailors stationed in nearby Villefranche, hurried up to help them. In order to evacuate the square and adjacent streets of the neighborhood, the marines marched through the area with their weapons in their arms, dodging stones and sticks. The police closed off the streets around the prefecture and declared the area off limits to foot traffic, and also made some 30 arrests.⁹³

Having endured the assault on the prefecture the previous evening, Dufraisse decided on the morning of February 10 to take decisive measures. As his telegram to the Minister of the Interior indicates, he decided to arrest not only those caught demonstrating the streets, but those whom he believed to be involved even indirectly in a pro-Italian conspiracy: “To put an end to this, it is indispensable that I have the heads of the party of separation arrested. This measure will be taken during the day.”⁹⁴ He received the official sanction from the Minister of the Interior, who responded with two supportive telegrams. “[The Government] energetically approves the measures you have taken and, if necessary, shall send a commissioner to examine the facts and assist you. We know that you shall be both wise and firm.”⁹⁵ After receiving the first message of approval, Dufraisse ordered the central police commissioner to arrest “anyone designated for a significant length of time as being at the head of the Italian movement,” in Maglione’s words. Arrests were conducted on the narrow medieval streets of the Rue Saint-François de Paule and the streets around the prefecture, which led to a renewal of minor disorders, but the large number of soldiers prevented any serious uprisings.⁹⁶ To protest against the arrests targeting their political fellow-travelers, three of the recently-elected Niçois deputies, Piccon, Bergondi and Borriglione, sent a protest telegram to the Minister of the Interior, denouncing Dufraisse’s

⁹¹ Giuseppe André [Joseph André], *Nizza negli ultimi quattro anni* (Nice: Tipografia e litografia A. Gilletta, 1875), 340.

⁹² Telegram no. 7,826, prefect AM to MJ, 9 February 1871, 4:40 p.m.; Telegram no. 7,831, prefect to Interior in Bordeaux, 9 February 1871, 10:15 p.m., in Assemblée Nationale, *Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 57.

⁹³ André, *Nizza negli ultimi*, 341–342.

⁹⁴ Telegram no. 7,851, prefect AM to MI, 11:52 a.m., in Assemblée Nationale, *Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 57.

⁹⁵ Telegrams, MI to prefect AM, 10 February 1871, 1:25 and 4:25 p.m., annexes no. 38 and 41 in Assemblée Nationale, *Annales de l’Assemblée Nationale*, vol. 25, 159, 160.

⁹⁶ André, *Nizza negli ultimi*, 342.

emergency measures and accusing him of using excessive and unreasonable force to put down the demonstration.⁹⁷ Dufraisse defended himself, firing back a telegram that claimed, “No pistol shots with bullets were fired. The Niçois separatist population was repressed and remains so by simple patrols who circulate with their weapons in their arms, and who protected the prefecture against an all-out siege I faced last night. The three signatories of the telegram are the three leaders of the secessionist conspiracy.”⁹⁸ That evening, however, shots were exchanged after Dufraisse’s Secretary-General, Eugène Carré, left the prefecture guarded by a squadron of soldiers. Several shots were fired at him, and the soldiers returned three or four shots.⁹⁹

Dufraisse’s arrests on February 10 netted approximately 50 people, including eight men whom he identified as leaders of the party.¹⁰⁰ These were probably the eight prisoners whom the police commissioner of the city’s first arrondissement reported had been conducted on board the frigate *La Couronne* in the port of nearby Villefranche: the banker Louis Trabaud, originally from Moulins, a former member of the municipal council; Joseph Brès, a tradesman, banker, and former member of the municipal council; Joseph-Antoine Martin, a businessman involved with the publication of the banned *Dritto* newspaper; Victor Piccon, a wine merchant; Jean Verola, a lawyer originally from Comte in the back-country; Paul Truchi, the flag-waving participant in the riots, who hailed from Sospel; the abbé Ignace Simon, arrested for having tried to tear the sash off the uniform of the police commissioner of the third arrondissement, while he was arresting another demonstrator; and Jacques Zambelli, a tradesman, who had struck a lieutenant of the national mobilized guard.¹⁰¹ On February 11, Dufraisse published another proclamation displacing the blame for the riots on outside agitators. “The disturbers of your peace are foreigners, called or sent here by the committees that are plotting in Turin, Cuneo, Genoa as well as Nice, in order to ruin your city, either by hidden agitation or street disorders.” The proclamation warned that if the riots reignited, Dufraisse would immediately order the expulsion from France of every so-called “Piedmontese worker” in the city without a permanent fixed domicile in Nice.¹⁰² The separatist deputies Louis Piccon and Constantin Bergondi, both to maintain the superior moral authority they felt they had acquired over Dufraisse as well as help end the demonstrations, immediately issued a rival manifesto. “We ask that the good inhabitants of the capital stop exposing their noble chests to the bayonets and bullets of those who appear to be familiar with no other law than that of force,” they protested.¹⁰³ Dufraisse quickly had the police confiscate the deputies’ rival proclamation. On February 12, he arranged for the transfer of Trabaud, Brès, Martin, Victor Piccon, Verola and Truchi to the commander of the prison fort on the Île Sainte-Marguerite, just off the coast of Cannes.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁷ Telegram no. 7,853, prefect AM to MI Bordeaux, 10 February 1871, 4:40 p.m., in Assemblée Nationale, *Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 57.

⁹⁸ Telegram no. 7,853, prefect AM to MI Bordeaux, 10 February 1871, 4:40 p.m., in Assemblée Nationale, *Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 57.

⁹⁹ Telegram no. 7,868, prefect AM to MI, Bordeaux, 10 February 1871, 9:40 p.m., in Assemblée Nationale, *Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 58.

¹⁰⁰ Telegram no. 7,879, prefect AM to MAE, Bordeaux, 10 February 1871, 11:55 p.m., in Assemblée Nationale, *Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 58.

¹⁰¹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, note, CP 1st arrondissement of Nice, “List of persons arrested and conducted aboard the frigate *La Couronne*,” 10 February 1871.

¹⁰² André, *Nizza negli ultimi*, 335.

¹⁰³ André, *Nizza negli ultimi*, 336–7.

¹⁰⁴ André, *Nizza negli ultimi*, 326.

Dufraisse's hard-line approach succeeded. By February 12, the riots had largely ended. As early as February 13, shortly before leaving Nice to take up his seat in the National Assembly, Dufraisse was trying to downplay the seriousness of the conflict. "Whatever the separatist Italian newspapers say," he telegraphed to Bordeaux, "the troubles in Nice were repressed without a single drop of blood spilled. Nothing more serious occurred than the devastation of one of the façades of the prefecture."¹⁰⁵ The departure of the polarizing Dufraisse, which left Secretary-General Carré in charge, also helped to calm the situation.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, the February Days contributed to a pervasive climate of insecurity and fear in the city. Rumors persisted on February 14 and 15 that Garibaldi was planning to make a trip to Nice. Carré telegraphed to the government on February 15 that "no Garibaldian must be allowed to stay in Nice; some have already arrived; the commander of the subdivision took it upon himself to disarm them."¹⁰⁷ Anonymous denunciations multiplied and poured into the prefecture. One such letter, sent to Carré on February 17, expressed displeasure that the government had released some of those arrested during the riots: "Seeing as the police plans to free one of the sons of Antoinello, as well as their scum of a father, please at least ask them to keep his eye on these two devils who have taken advantage of the hospitality that France gave them to make the most trouble possible. There's another evil Italian named Galli, of L'Escarène, who writes in the *Diritto di Nizza*; these articles are the most revolting possible, both political and hostile to France; he's in all the associations, and right now, you may be sure that he's conspiring with his brothers, the loyal Italians." The author claimed that during the riots, Joseph Bovis, one of the businessmen involved with the publication of the *Diritto*, had directed the crowd from the windows of the newspaper's office to go and attack the façade of the prefecture.¹⁰⁸ Denunciations were also submitted to the prefecture by those of more humble means. A barely literate letter denounced five people, including some familiar oppositional figures from the previous November as well as from the 1860s: "[Adrien] Gilly who works with Trabaud at the bank is a troublemaker. [Émile] Ugo who works at [Septime] Avigdor's, is a major agitator. A man named Coppan [Jean-François Coppan] under the orders of Count Laurenti-Roubaudi distributed money. Investigate and you'll see! To the border with this scum!"¹⁰⁹

In spite of the letters' varying degrees of verisimilitude, the administration did investigate the tips it had received anonymously, and put a number of citizens under special surveillance in the days following the riots. Many had been indicated as separatists by the anonymous letters, in the pages of the newspapers, or had previously run afoul of the authorities. Such was the case of Adrien Gilly, the memorable author of the flour-throwing incident at the 1863 carnival and 1867 expellee. In the aftermath of the February Days, the lawyers at the Appellate Court in Aix, who were putting together the case against the leaders of the February Days, asked the prefecture to forward Gilly's previous judicial file as evidence to support their prosecution. The Secretary-General reported back that the file had been lost, but that it was well known that Gilly had been

¹⁰⁵ Telegram no. 7,940, prefect AM to MAE Bordeaux, 13 February 1871, 8:16 p.m., in *Assemblée Nationale, Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 59.

¹⁰⁶ In addition to his mandate from the Alpes-Maritimes, Dufraisse had also been elected as a deputy by the Seine department.

¹⁰⁷ Telegram no. 79, Secretary general to prefect AM in Bordeaux, 15 February 1871, 9:25 p.m., in *Assemblée Nationale, Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 60.

¹⁰⁸ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, Anonymous letter to secretary general AM.

¹⁰⁹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, Anonymous denunciation.

already expelled by the Empire “two or three times” for his hostility towards France.¹¹⁰ The government also delivered a fresh set of expulsion warrants. One went to Hippolyte Pécoud, a wine merchant, whose shop was identified by the public prosecutor as one of the longstanding secret meeting places of the pro-Italian faction.¹¹¹ The government also expelled Augustin Galli, an officer in the Italian military and native of L’Escarène in the back-country. The central police commissioner had identified Galli as an affiliate of the separatist party in November, and had recommended expulsion at that time. But it was only in February, after several anonymous denunciations confirmed that Galli had taken part in the February Days, that the police commissioner succeeded in securing an expulsion warrant, writing, “This man, still young, and of great energy, displays hostile sentiments toward France at every opportunity. He was one of the most ardent editors of the newspaper *Il Diritto* and his articles, it’s said, contained excessively violent separatist opinions.” Another man who had been signaled to the administration as a separatist in November was Jean-François Coppan. At the time, police commissioner Raynaud had not considered Coppan a sufficient threat to issue an expulsion warrant, though he had already acquired a reputation as an ardent separatist.¹¹² Expulsion warrants were drawn up for both Galli and Coppan on February 18, though both remained in town as late as February 23, long enough to engage in activities that confirmed their pro-Italian loyalties. Galli was overheard publicly bragging that he was immune from expulsion. “They’d have to arrest me,” he announced.¹¹³ The same day, Coppan had remarked, “Chase out the French!” during a meeting of the town’s Philharmonic Circle. Other participants in the February Days managed to evade capture. Alfred Borriglione, the only member of the “Niçois list” not elected to the National Assembly, fled to Genoa to avoid arrest. Honoré Bressa, the head of the Niçois Committee, also went missing, though rumor had it that he was hiding in Monaco during the day and returning home to Nice in the evenings.¹¹⁴

Many observers of the February Days blamed the demonstrations on the violent rhetoric of the banned *Diritto*. It had also been the symbolic center of the riots, as the suppression of the journal and search of its premises had dramatically magnified the protests. As one of the anonymous letters warned, “Above all, you must no longer allow this Italian journal to appear, because you’d never believe the evil that the *Diritto* has worked in Nice.”¹¹⁵ Dufraisse had immediately cancelled the *Diritto*’s rechristened successor, *Il Voce di Nizza*, which only managed to publish two issues on February 10 and 11. But the administrators running the prefecture while Dufraisse went to assume his seat in the National Assembly surprisingly permitted the newspaper’s third incarnation, *Il Pensiero di Nizza*, to begin publication on February 19. The *Pensiero* quickly followed in the *Diritto*’s footsteps and became the quasi-official newspaper of record for anti-French public opinion. The *Pensiero*’s rhetoric

¹¹⁰ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, Court of Appeals of Aix-en-Provence to secretary general AM, 2 March 1871; draft, report of secretary general AM to Court of Appeals of Aix, 2 March 1871.

¹¹¹ André, *Nizza negli ultimi*, 340. Pécoud’s name is spelled differently in different documents. Hippolyte vies with Hyppolite, while Pécoud is alternatively spelled Pecoud, Peccoud and Piccoud. As the 1872 *Annuaire des Alpes-Maritimes*, a directory of prominent administrators and personalities in the department, spells it Pécoud, it seems logical to adopt that spelling, which I will use throughout for consistency.

¹¹² AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 25 November 1870.

¹¹³ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 24 November 1870; CS Nice to prefect AM, 14 February 1871; copy of expulsion warrant for Galli, 18 February 1871. As we shall see in Chapter 7, the government would revisit this expulsion under entirely different circumstances in 1877.

¹¹⁴ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, draft, prefect AM to CCP, 18 February 1871.

¹¹⁵ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, Anonymous letter to the secretary general AM.

notwithstanding, many of the city's inhabitants agreed with Piccon, Bergondi and Borriglione that Dufraisse had used arbitrary, illegal and despotic measures to put down the conflict. They took evident delight in contrasting the repression of the February Days with Dufraisse's November manifesto that had soothingly announced his intention to administer the department "without recourse to exceptional measures, without ever striking the smallest blow at the law, to common law."¹¹⁶

One such observer was the Bonapartist municipal councilor Jean-Baptiste Toselli, the author of a multi-volume history of post-annexation Nice between 1867 and 1869. In spite of his endorsement of the annexation, Toselli's interest and attachment to his home province remained unbreakable. He found the government's actions in February reprehensible, far out of proportion with the actual situation, and quickly brandished his weapon of choice—the pen—to denounce it. In his *Three Bellicose Days in Nice: Or, the Intrigues of a Governo-Republican Candidacy, A Historical-Fantastic Tale of the Eighteenth Century*, Toselli recounted and interpreted the February Days as a natural Niçois reaction to eleven years of terrible governance. In this modern day "political fable," he witheringly satirized his main character Dufraisse as "Saint Marc de la Fraissière," roughly translated as "Saint Marc of the Strawberries," whom he characterized as a "republican of the day before, who liked giving himself titles without having them."¹¹⁷ With perhaps some justification, the text reduced Dufraisse to the figure of a self-serving, self-satisfied, and self-sacrificing buffoon who "fell after a little while into the same mistakes, into the arbitrariness and the brutal force like his predecessor, the advice and counsel of some courageous Niçois notwithstanding."¹¹⁸ Toselli's text is so highly satirical and replete with so many veiled illusions that it is difficult to separate the fact from fiction. He claimed, for example, that the rioters displayed banners labeled INRI, for *I Nizzardi Ritornaranno Italiani* ("the Niçois will return to being Italians"), but this was almost certainly artistic license, a colorful reference to the Biblical recounting of the sign posted by the Romans on Christ's crucifix designed to enhance the story's "medieval" and fable-like aspects.¹¹⁹

From this perspective, the authoritarianism of the Empire had merely given way to a republic of repression, in which the expression of Niçois sentiments was to be systematically persecuted. If Dufraisse's actions—the rounding up and imprisonment of those suspected of separatist activities—did not precisely constitute a purge, it took little imagination or exaggeration to interpret and portray them in such a light. Another point supporting Toselli's arguments about the government's overreaction was Dufraisse's longstanding opposition to the Italian idea. In the early 1860s, during his time in exile, Dufraisse had published several works arguing against applying the national principle to the organization of states, and against the unification of both Germany and Italy. Moreover, Dufraisse openly acknowledged that he harbored an anti-Italian bias and loathed the emergence of a unified Italy, which undoubtedly contributed to his mistrust and dislike of Garibaldi. "I had remained very irritated against the Italians, because of the events of 1859 and 1860," he confessed in his later deposition to the parliamentary commission investigating the acts of the Government of National Defense.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ André, *Nizza negli ultimi*, 195.

¹¹⁷ Toselli, *Trois jours belliqueuses*, 12.

¹¹⁸ Toselli, *Trois jours belliqueuses*, 49.

¹¹⁹ Toselli, *Trois jours belliqueuses*, 77.

¹²⁰ Deposition of Marc Dufraisse, session of 13 November 1872, in Assemblée Nationale, *Annales de l'Assemblée Nationale*, vol. 25, 131; Robert, Bourloton, and Cougny, *Dictionnaire des Parlementaires* 2: 461–2.

Together with the numerical victory of the “Niçois” candidates in the election, the February Days were widely viewed both in the department and in the rest of France as a major affirmation of the strength of the city’s separatist sentiments. It was difficult to overlook the fact that only Dufraisse’s narrow victory over Borriiglione had prevented the department from sending the entire slate of four “Niçois” candidates to the first seating of the new National Assembly.

The Bonneville Project and “Republic or Separation”

The elections to the National Assembly in the Savoyard departments, each of which elected five deputies, was not without its own surprises. Despite their lack of familiarity with the republican form of government—or perhaps because of it—the inhabitants of Savoy went against the national trend and voted overwhelmingly republican. The Haute-Savoie was one of just nine departments (ten if the unusual case of the Alpes-Maritimes is included) to elect a slate that did not include a single conservative deputy. Four out of the Savoie’s five deputies were also republicans, with only the Marquis Albert Costa de Beauregard, who barely clung to a pitiful fifth place, left to represent the conservatives who had triumphed so spectacularly in the rest of France. Like his colleague Dufraisse in the Alpes-Maritimes, the Haute-Savoie’s sitting prefect Philippe was among those elected, and made the journey to Bordeaux for the first session of the new assembly on February 13.

At virtually the same time that the situation at Nice reached its most tense, a less physically violent but no less rhetorically disturbing occurrence took place in Bonneville. On February 11, the town’s republican committee, led by the pharmacist François Dumont, renewed its resolution from the fall of 1870, announcing its intention to invite Switzerland to occupy the territory of the neutralized zone of the Haute-Savoie:

The Committee,

Considering that enemy armies are approaching our countries and are now no longer far off, and that our country may be invaded at any moment;

Considering that the absence of all the lifeblood of the country has deprived us of all means of defense;

Considering that the treaties of 1815 guaranteeing the neutrality of our territory and giving Swiss the right to occupy it militarily;

Deliberates, unanimously, to request the execution of the treaties of 1815, regarding this neutrality, and to entreat the Swiss Confederation to immediately occupy the neutralized territory.

The committee concluded its resolution by inviting the municipal councils in the arrondissement to transmit their own resolutions to Bonneville, and also encouraged private citizens to sign petitions in favor of Swiss occupation.¹²¹ The committee sent printed copies of the resolution to all of the municipal councils in the arrondissement, with some success; 35 additional communes in the arrondissement approved the resolution, including Taninges, Saint-Gervais, and Samoëns,

¹²¹ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 179, printed copy of the deliberation of 11 February 1871 by the Bonneville Republican Committee.

and the measure was defeated by Cluses' municipal council by just one vote. The committee in Bonneville also received 42 signed petitions in favor of the measure. The town dispatched two delegates to deliver it to the Swiss Federal Council in Bern.¹²²

Two related developments had encouraged the Bonneville resolution: the signature of the Franco-German armistice on January 28 and the results of the hastily-organized February elections. During this tense and uncertain interlude, even the pro-French administrators running the prefecture at Annecy toyed with the idea of inviting Swiss assistance. Undoubtedly inspired by the same patriotic sentiments that had motivated Eugène Guiter's maneuvers in the autumn, Camille Dunant, the administrator running the Haute-Savoie's prefecture while Jules Philippe took his seat in the National Assembly in Bordeaux, sent a telegram to the Minister of War on February 16 asking whether he should invite Swiss occupation of the neutral zone in the event that hostilities between France and Prussia were renewed after the armistice expired on the 19th. "The enemy may invade Savoy which may be defended, especially against the expected enemy, the Uhlans.... Decide also about an essential question for the Haute-Savoie, if we should ask for the occupation of Swiss troops of the territory of the department neutralized by the terms of the treaties of 1815."¹²³ But Dunant was mistrustful of the Bonneville declaration, and asked the town's sub-prefect whether it was true that the inhabitants of the area were signing a petition requesting Swiss *annexation* rather than mere occupation. The sub-prefect confirmed that the question was being discussed, "especially since the French electors have sent to the National Assembly representatives who are reportedly not favorable to the Republic," though no obvious petition campaign was taking place.¹²⁴ When he informed the Minister of the Interior about these developments, Dunant remarked that the true intention of the promoters of Swiss occupation in Bonneville was annexation to Switzerland, "notably in the event that France abandons the republican form." With the news that Switzerland had stationed a number of troops in Geneva, the French government sent several thousand troops to the Haute-Savoie.¹²⁵

As Dunant noted, the substantially monarchist profile of the parliament elected on February 8 was a devastating blow in the precociously republican Bonneville arrondissement, and undoubtedly prompted the Republican Committee's February resolution. Fears of the reactionary tendencies of the new parliament also encouraged separatist rumors in the more distant Savoie department. On March 4, Chambéry's republican newspaper *Le Patriote Savoisien* published a report from Albertville, whose author stated that fifty to sixty businessmen and entrepreneurs had met at the Hôtel de Ville on March 1st, and voted responses to a questionnaire sent by the newly-elected deputies about ways to fix the seriously damaged economy. The assembled delegates voted three resolutions: 1) maintenance of the Third Republic, or separation; 2) free and compulsory education; and 3) a reduction in the number of civil servants. The editors of the *Patriote* applauded the resolutions, including the first. "The republicans of Albertville say, 'Republic or separation.' Their thought is shared by all of Savoy, as the vote of 8 February abundantly demonstrated. It's probably for this reason that rumors have circulated in France and abroad claiming that there's a separatist movement in Savoy ... But if, in a more or less distant future, France imagined patching together a new monarchy to complete its ruin and decay, Savoy would have to rise up, and would rise up as a single man to say, Republic or separation. Until then, no de-annexationist tendency has appeared or will appear in our

¹²² Dépollier, *Régionalisme et politique en Savoie*, 125–7.

¹²³ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 114, draft telegram, 16 February 1871, 6:00 p.m.; also cited in Dépollier, 125.

¹²⁴ Dépollier, *Régionalisme et politique en Savoie*, 126.

¹²⁵ Dépollier, *Régionalisme et politique en Savoie*, 127.

country.”¹²⁶ On March 16, another article in the *Patriote Savoisien* expressed displeasure that the rest of France had sent so many reactionaries to the National Assembly, while the Savoyards had elected nearly all republicans. “Ten years of wearying domination did not curb our character or blight us into surrender,” the article declared. “We’ll be devoted and united without reserve to republican France, but we will know to retire from France if, God forbid, she has lost enough virility to deliver herself to the legitimists and Orléanists of the National Assembly, united and blessed by bishop Dupanloup.”¹²⁷

On April 12, with the Paris Commune in full swing, Thiers sent a circular to all the prefects and sub-prefects of the country, all the generals commanding divisions and subdivisions, the judges at the Courts of Appeal, and public prosecutors to be posted. In his characteristically uncompromising style, Thiers bluntly promised that “any attempts at secession attempted by any territory whatsoever shall be energetically repressed in France, as it was in America.” This chilling statement not only alluded to the United States’ bloody Civil War but also foreshadowed the vicious repression of the Communards that Thiers would orchestrate in May. Thiers’ proclamation did not specifically name Nice or Savoy, or the Commune, but his opposition to both were clear. Commenting on the dispatch, the *Patriote Savoisien* wrote sarcastically, “When M. Thiers talks about separatist attempts, is he, by chance, alluding to the program of Republic or Separation, accepted by everyone in Savoy, other than some Bonapartist reactionaries? A bit more clarity wouldn’t hurt; it would be good to know if, in the case that republicans might have their throats cut, we wouldn’t have the right to de-annex ourselves under threat of being severely repressed. The American secessionists weren’t in an analogous situation to ours; for them, the republic wasn’t in danger. Be that as it may, Thiers and his government can be assured, there won’t be any attempt at separation in Savoy as long as his influence suffices to prevent a royal restoration.”¹²⁸

In the wake of the signature of the Treaty of Frankfurt on May 10, Bonneville’s republican committee voted a new resolution on May 12, the day before the town’s new municipal council elected on April 30 held its first meeting. Compared to the earlier resolutions, which had cloaked separatist intentions behind the discourse of national defense, this third resolution bluntly and openly rejected the annexation settlement of 1860. “The parties that divide France are the incessant causes of civil war,” the members declared, in a reference to the Commune. In an extraordinary and unusual attack on the 1860 plebiscite, the Committee went on to declare the legal foundations of the annexation null and void, and Savoyards’ moral obligations to the French nation discharged:

Considering that our country furnished its support of men and sacrifices even though neutrality should have freed it from these burdens.

Considering that the vote of 1860, the work of imperial pressure, was by no means the free demonstration of the aspirations of our countries.

¹²⁶ *Le Patriote Savoisien*, no. 27, 4 March 1871.

¹²⁷ *Le Patriote Savoisien*, no. 52, 16 March 1871. The well-known and powerful bishop of Orléans, Félix Dupanloup was also Savoyard by origin.

¹²⁸ *Le Patriote Savoisien*, no. 45, 15 April 1871.

Believes that the populations of northern Savoy are by no means linked to the vote of 1860, and that they should decide again on their destinies.¹²⁹

The resolution was submitted to Bonneville's newly-elected municipal council, which, in a surprising move, adopted it. As with its February resolution, the Republican Committee, again headed by François Dumont, ordered that copies of this deliberation be printed and made available to the municipal councils of all the communes in the neutral Zone of northern Savoy in order to obtain support for the resolutions. The committee members included a cross-section of men in liberal or bourgeois professions: a merchant, a *rentier*, two attorneys and a lawyer. Mayors received their printed copies of the May declaration complete with a cover letter calmly explaining that the Committee wanted the municipal councils of the three arrondissements included in the neutral zone to "study, with all the attention it deserves, and with the independence that characterizes the children of our mountains, this question upon which the future of our country rests." The letter directed all deliberations and petitions be forwarded to Dumont, and in a parallel to the pro-French and pro-Swiss petition and address campaigns of 1860, suggested that citizens simply append their signatures onto the bottom of the printed declarations.¹³⁰ Prefect Philippe immediately warned the sub-prefects to dissuade the mayors from voting on the resolution; he also contacted the public prosecutor at the court of appeal in Chambéry and asked for assistance in halting the spread of the petition. In an official letter printed and sent to the mayors of the Bonneville, Saint-Julien and Thonon arrondissements, Philippe called the resolution "unconstitutional" and asked them to forward any copies of the "secessionist manifesto" that they had received.¹³¹

Bonneville's May resolution was less well received than that of February. This was partially due to the more settled military situation, with the hostilities permanently ended. But the increased emphasis of this resolution on revising the 1860 annexation rather than on the patriotic opportunities for defense afforded by the neutral Zone no doubt discouraged many from supporting it. Some mayors forwarded their copies to the sub-prefects, returned them unsigned to Bonneville, or simply discarded them. At least 23 towns in the Bonneville arrondissement and one in that of Saint-Julien did deliberate on the measure, and four communes in the Thonon arrondissement—Yvoire, Massongy, Excénevex and Publier—are known to have voted to adhere to the movement.¹³² Such was the worry about the May separatist movement that Bonneville's sub-prefect Louis-Emile Bargeton quickly drafted a short brochure that was published on May 24 in Cluses under the pseudonym of "E. Clamoux." The brochure, *To Whom Northern Savoy?*, refuted the May separatist theses one by one. Bargeton excoriated the Bonneville committee for "encouraging your compatriots to follow the road of cowards and ingrates" and warned that Savoyards were on the verge of acquiring a reputation for disloyalty: "Watch out that people don't say Savoy abandoned Italy because France was richer and more powerful, and now wants to abandon France because her immense resources have been diminished."¹³³ Bargeton also satirized the Committee's sustained emphasis on France's hopelessly partisan politics and penchant for civil war. "More about war with foreign powers, civil war, why not just say that all

¹²⁹ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 179, printed copy of the Republican Committee of Bonneville's deliberation of 12 May, 1871.

¹³⁰ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 179, cover letter to printed copy of 12 May 1871 deliberation by Committee of Bonneville.

¹³¹ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 179, printed letter from prefect HS to the mayors of the HS, 1 June 1871.

¹³² AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 71, SP Thonon to prefect HS, 3 June 1873; Dépollier 128–30.

¹³³ Clamoux, E. [Émile Bargeton]. *A Qui la Savoie du Nord?* (Annecy, France: J. Dépollier et co., 1871), 15-16.

Frenchmen are assassins, fratricides, cannibals who eat Savoyards at every meal?”¹³⁴ Bargeton sarcastically asked, not without basis, why mayors and employees who had voted enthusiastically for the annexation in 1860 and supported the Empire in the ensuing decade were now complaining that they had been forced to vote for France under imperial pressure.¹³⁵

At the end of June, the Minister of the Interior’s General Direction of Public Security contacted the two Savoyard prefects warning them that he had received a tip-off that dangerous agents, three Italians and one Russian, had been sent from Annecy and Chambéry to points throughout Savoy, “seeking to encourage the inhabitants to separation, and even soliciting the municipal council to imitate that of Bonneville.”¹³⁶ The exaggerated and unlikely nature of the reports must have provoked some amount of incredulity, but in Savoie, the prefect gamely contacted the sub-prefects, gendarmes and police commissioners and asked them to investigate the matter thoroughly. When asked about it, the head of the gendarmes’ squadron in Chambéry reported that he had not had any news of the suspected agents, but did not seem to consider the request unusual or exaggerated; indeed, he reported that “I can affirm that the arrondissement of Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne, the city, I mean, was extremely agitated in the sense of the annexation in question.”¹³⁷ Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne’s sub-prefect disagreed entirely, calling the rumor “absolutely incorrect.” Yet even as he affirmed that “no separatist tendencies exist in the Maurienne,” he conceded that “suggestions of this type would only succeed if attempts at a monarchist restoration were to shake France again.”¹³⁸ The sub-prefect of Moûtiers echoed this sentiment. “As long as the Republic is not threatened, such agents will have no luck provoking the slightest disorder in the arrondissement of Moûtiers.”¹³⁹ Convinced that the rumors had been without foundation, the prefect’s general secretary, Delachanel, reported optimistically to the Minister of the Interior. But in doing so, he inadvertently raised the question of loyalties. “Savoy has become frankly republican, especially since [the arrival of] the Republic, which promises the wise and necessary liberties that [Savoy] had and regretted; Savoy has poured out her blood and her gold for our unfortunate *patrie*, and will only allow herself to be swayed by separatist maneuvers as far as a monarchist restoration would push an important part of its inhabitants to rally to the republican standard that has for its motto, Republic or Separation!”¹⁴⁰

Separatism in the National Assembly

The effervescence of the February Days in Nice, and the defiant adherence of the Savoyard populations to a republic that seemed unlikely to survive, had resulted in the dispatch of ideologically polarizing deputations to the National Assembly in Bordeaux. It did not take long before the deputies were asked by their colleagues to account for the rumors of Niçois and Savoyard separatism that had filtered into the rest of France. The question of Niçois separatism came before the Assembly within a month of its formation, due to the legislature’s need to rule on the eligibility of many of its elected members, such as sitting prefects (including Dufraisse and Philippe) and foreign nationals (Garibaldi). In addition to the Alpes-Maritimes, Garibaldi

¹³⁴ Clamoux, *A Qui la Savoie du Nord?*, 17.

¹³⁵ Clamoux, *A Qui la Savoie du Nord?*, 19–20.

¹³⁶ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, MI, DGS, to prefects Savoie and HS, 24 June 1871.

¹³⁷ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, Squadron leader of the gendarmerie, Chambéry, 29 June 1871, to prefect Savoie.

¹³⁸ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, copy, SP Saint-Jean to prefect Savoie, 28 June 1871.

¹³⁹ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, SP Moûtiers to prefect Savoie, 27 June 1871; SP Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne to prefect Savoie, 28 June 1871.

¹⁴⁰ AD Savoie, 9 M II 8, report, secretary-general Delachanel for the prefect to MI, 1 July 1871.

had been elected from the departments of the Seine, home to Paris; the Côte-d'Or, the site of the Battle of Dijon, where Garibaldi and his armies had courageously engaged the Prussians; and that of Alger. Writing from Bordeaux to the President of the National Assembly five days after the election, Garibaldi politely and succinctly declined to take up these mandates, "as a last duty rendered to the cause of the French republic."¹⁴¹ But in a strange turn of events, Garibaldi's election to the Alger department was not ruled on until March, giving rise to a dramatic and—in light of the recent protests in Nice—potentially hazardous conversation about Garibaldi's own nationality. In a famous speech given on March 8, Victor Hugo, also elected as a deputy from the Seine, proclaimed Garibaldi's right to sit in the legislature on moral grounds. "France, overwhelmed in the presence of nations, encountered the cowardice of Europe," he declared. "Of all the European powers, none got up to defend this France that, so many times, took into her hands the cause of Europe. Not one king, not one state, no one. One man excepted...I do not wish to offend anyone in this Assembly, but I will say that he is the only general who fought for France, the only one who was not defeated."¹⁴² In the polarized atmosphere of the legislature, the left-wing deputies verbally cheered Garibaldi as a living symbol of republicanism, while those on the right protested. Deputy Baron de Jouvenel (Corrèze) shouted that Hugo's speech was "anti-French," and the legislature degenerated into chaos. Shouted down off the podium, Hugo dramatically descended from the dais, grabbed a pen from one of the stenographers, drafted a perfunctory resignation letter, and walked out.

Hugo's speech has gone down as the stuff of legend, but it is usually forgotten that the Assembly returned to the subject of Garibaldi's loyalties and raised the separatist question the following day, when the National Assembly ruled on the legality of Dufraisse's election. In its first few sessions, the Assembly had demonstrated its unwillingness to confirm the election of sitting prefects, which had led the prudent Philippe to resign his mandate on March 2.¹⁴³ Despite having been elected simultaneously as a deputy to the Seine department, Dufraisse stubbornly refused to follow this example, participating in the debate about prefectural incompatibility that followed Hugo's resignation on March 8. The politically inept Dufraisse argued that the Government of National Defense had legally permitted prefects to stand for election. This was the backdrop to the emergence of the separatist question. During the debate, the Niçois deputy Piccon, itching to embarrass Dufraisse and see him stripped of his Niçois mandate, had attempted to interrupt his enemy and had to be reprimanded by the president of the séance.¹⁴⁴ When the legislature again took up the matter the following day, Dufraisse insisted that the Assembly validate his election from the Alpes-Maritimes. He argued that his continued presence in Nice was indispensable in the face of the department's separatist conflict. Following his line of thinking from the previous four months, Dufraisse blamed the February riots on the convergence of internal and external threats. "The French colony of Nice and the Niçois friends of France were plunged into stupor and mourning. But in the middle of these difficulties, in the middle of this patriotic pain, of this respectable consternation, Italian subjects, Niçois who are French by law since the union but who remain foreign to France by the hatred that they bear towards her, rejoiced publicly at our reversals," he declared. "Thus I stayed with difficulty; I kept

¹⁴¹ *Journal Officiel*, 17 February 1871, session of 13 February 1871, vol. 3, no. 48, p. 95.

¹⁴² *Journal Officiel*, 12 March 1871, session of 8 March 1871, vol. 3, no. 71, p. 160.

¹⁴³ *Assemblée Nationale, Annales de l'Assemblée Nationale, Compte-Rendu in extenso des séances, Annexes*, vol. 1 (12 February to 11 March 1871) (Paris: A. Wittersheim and co., 1871), 132.

¹⁴⁴ *Assemblée Nationale, Annales de l'Assemblée Nationale*, vol. 1, p. 217

my functions as prefect, as defender of our threatened, citizens, stricken and especially insulted by this sacrilegious joy of foreigners, of ingrates, of bad citizens.”¹⁴⁵

Dufraisse then made the blunder of arguing that he had established an excellent record as a prefect, drawing him into a rhetorical battle with Piccon and Bergondi about the legality of the repressive measures that he had taken during the February Days. “During my administration,” he began, “I had no recourse to any exceptional measure...” At this point Bergondi broke in with the sarcastic interruption, “What about the municipal commissions?” referring to the multiple municipal commissions appointed by the administrators during the war. Dufraisse finished his sentence: “...or dictatorial procedure. The municipal council had been dissolved by a decree of the Government of National Defense and the municipal commissions had been instituted by the prefect Baragnon before my arrival in the department of the Alpes-Maritimes.” Bergondi interjected a second time: “What about the illegal arrests?” whereupon he was called to order by the president of the assembly and asked not to interrupt further.¹⁴⁶ Dufraisse then played into Bergondi and Piccon’s hands by raising the separatist question. “I held firmly to being named the magistrate who would represent Nice to French authority. There are, there, two strongly entrenched parties, that a general peace may perhaps calm, that time may bring together: The French party and the party of secession.” Unable to help himself, Bergondi interjected again: “It’s your absence that will calm the country.”

Dufraisse proceeded to publicly repeat his mistrust of Garibaldi. Ignoring the fact that Garibaldi had featured on the two republican lists as well as those of the separatists, Dufraisse defiantly proclaimed, “Whether general Garibaldi is partisan of the claim of Nice, I don’t know, and I don’t care to know,” but he then reminded the assembled deputies of Garibaldi’s hot-tempered remarks regarding Nice to the Sardinian parliament in 1860. “What is clear is that my greatest difficulties in the Alpes-Maritimes were created by the friends of general Garibaldi and I was obligated to expel several of them.” He argued—blissfully ignoring the electoral evidence from the Grasse arrondissement—that Garibaldi’s candidacy “whether it was on at his advice or without his knowledge, I won’t go into that, was a secessionist candidacy. That is what’s important for me to establish. So, I thought it important to oppose a French candidacy to the intentionally secessionist candidacy of general Garibaldi.”¹⁴⁷ Dufraisse concluded by repeating his longstanding anti-Italian views, indirectly blaming Garibaldi for France’s catastrophic defeat to Prussia. By unifying Italy, he argued, Garibaldi had provided a tantalizing precedent for Prussia’s German conquests. Convinced of his own self importance, Dufraisse ended his defense with a virtual ultimatum. “If you annul my election, you will weaken the power of the French party in Nice, and you will give, on the contrary, support to the party of separation. That is why, at the moment where the victorious power is tearing away Alsace and Lorraine, Metz and Strasbourg, I hold fast to remain the elected representative of the Alpes-Maritimes as a link between France and Nice, and as the representative of the unity of the *patrie*.”¹⁴⁸

Dufraisse’s speech immediately provoked Piccon and Bergondi to have a turn at the podium. In a speech characterized by unexpected humor and a lightheartedness of tone, Piccon carefully but powerfully refuted not only the legitimacy of Dufraisse’s election, but Dufraisse’s claims about the salience of Niçois separatism. He began on a self-deprecating but culturally significant note, claiming that he was nervous to speak in front of the National Assembly

¹⁴⁵ *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, 12 March 1871, session of 9 March 1871, vol. 3, no. 71, p. 163.

¹⁴⁶ *Journal Officiel*, 12 March 1871, session of 9 March 1871, vol. 3, no. 71, p. 163.

¹⁴⁷ *Journal Officiel*, 12 March 1871, session of 9 March 1871, vol. 3, no. 71, p. 164.

¹⁴⁸ *Journal Officiel*, 12 March 1871, session of 9 March 1871, vol. 3, no. 71, p. 164.

because his command of the French language wasn't sufficiently fluent. He also humorously remarked that there was nothing inherently shameful or antipatriotic in the historical ties linking Nice to Italy. "In Nice, there are sympathetic memories of the House of Savoy, to which we were united since the 14th century. Moreover, in our department, many have friends and relatives who remained in Italy and for whom sympathies have excited in spite of the annexation. But gentlemen, I think that there's no evil in this; I even think you should be quite reassured that the Niçois have kept sympathies towards the former Italian government, towards the House of Savoy, because, if ever Nice were separated from France again, you would be persuaded that the Niçois would also keep sympathies for France!"¹⁴⁹ According to the stenographer recording the session, this remark led to "general hilarity."

Having managed the remarkable feat of putting the assembled deputies at ease in the middle of a discussion about a serious matter of state, Piccon then reassured the assembled deputies that sympathy for Italy did not mean separatism. "There might have been a certain number of separatists at the beginning of the annexation, but in the 11 years since we've belonged to France, the number has become imperceptible," he said. Piccon then expounded on the "Niçois" perspective of the February Days that Toselli had earlier described in *Three Bellicose Days*: that the Government of National Defense, and Dufraisse's administration in particular, had been responsible for creating anti-French sentiment. Noting that the department had seen three prefects come and go in as many months, Piccon announced, "A party has been created not since the [proclamation of the] republic, but since the poor administrations that have succeeded each other; there's a separatist party, but this separatist party was created, I say it aloud, by our prefects, and wouldn't have existed if we had been administrated according to the laws; it was arbitrariness that produced separatists." Piccon walked the deputies through all of Dufraisse's supposedly objectionable actions: the municipal commissions he had appointed in various Niçois communes, his refusal to organize and arm the national guard, and even the suppression of the *Diritto di Nizza*, arguing that "in Paris there are newspapers that print in every language, and that doesn't worry anyone.... so we shouldn't be surprised, when we have freedom of the press, because I think freedom of the press extends to writing in the language people prefer, without which freedom of the press isn't complete." Having exhausted the laundry list of Dufraisse's administrative blunders, Piccon summarized: "After all that, is he surprised that a separatist party appeared?" He offered his own appreciations of how these administratively-provoked separatist tendencies might be dissolved. "There's a way to conciliate the two parties; but in order to do so, and I say it frankly, the Government, which represents the Assembly and in which we have the highest confidence, must send us prefects who have much skill and who will never provoke the population."¹⁵⁰

In the monarchist-dominated chamber, Piccon's discourse was doubly politically astute. His assertions—that a disorderly, capricious, and republican government employing illegal and arbitrary measures had been responsible for the February Days—received significant applause from the right-hand side of the chamber. It enabled him to explain away the February riots by returning to the notion of government provocation, while denying Dufraisse's contention that a preexisting separatist faction oriented toward Italy had been responsible. Piccon's wise decision to downplay the existence of separatism in the Alpes-Maritimes found support from an unexpected source: Denis Gavini, the Bonapartist former prefect of the Alpes-Maritimes. After

¹⁴⁹ *Journal Officiel*, 12 March 1871, session of 9 March 1871, vol. 3, no. 71, pp. 164–5.

¹⁵⁰ *Journal Officiel*, 12 March 1871, session of 9 March 1871, vol. 3, no. 71, pp. 164–5.

leaving the Alpes-Maritimes' prefecture in September 1870, Gavini had succeeded in securing election as a Bonapartist deputy from his home department of Corsica. He interjected a lively "It's true! It's true!" into the discussion when Piccon avowed that "the number of separatists has become imperceptible." Later, just before closure of the discussion, Gavini barged his way into the debate. Ignoring the reports he himself had composed on the subject of separatism while at the head of Nice's prefecture, he grandly announced, "I can affirm that during the past ten years no separatist elements appeared in any serious manner. I share the opinion of the Assembly to avoid prolonging this discussion; it could actually excite passions rather than calming them. As long as Nice is put under an effective administration, I assure you that Nice will remain French."¹⁵¹ As if to make sure that his voice was also on the record, the remaining Niçois deputy, Constantin Bergondi, then tried to take the floor, but was drowned out by cries for closure of the discussion. The assembled deputies went against the recommendation of the parliamentary bureau, voting to invalidate Dufraisse's election. In a coda to the affair, Bergondi attempted to reopen the debate and further embarrass Dufraisse the following day, by asking "to address the government on the measures taken in Nice by the prefect and Secretary-General of the Alpes-Maritimes against the freedom of the press and individual liberty," but did not succeed in getting it onto the day's agenda.¹⁵²

The Savoyard deputies, perhaps out of prudence, abstained from participation in the stormy discussions concerning Garibaldi and the separatist problem in Nice. Their turn would come in a heated debate shortly after the July 2 partial elections. The proposed law under consideration aimed to reform the organization and attribution of the departmental General Councils. Though Savoyard separatism had already by this time shown definite affinities to republicanism, it was ironically brought up by a legitimist deputy, Claude-Marie Raudot (Yonne), an advocate of decentralized government. During the debate, Raudot, who opposed the centralizing tendencies of conservative republican prime minister Adolphe Thiers and the Minister of the Interior, pointed out that Belgium included a French-speaking population with no desire to become part of France. He attributed this to better and more "liberal"—by this he meant more decentralized—Belgian institutions than those in France. "It's entirely natural," he concluded, "that the Belgians don't want to become French." Discussion turned to Savoy when an unidentified member of the assembly shouted out, "They weren't consulted!" The notion of consulting a French-speaking population about its national belonging, a precedent established only in 1860, immediately led Raudot to turn the discussion to Savoy. "Following treaties that have cost us dearly, Savoy was annexed to France, and you might have heard that recently there have been ideas of separation there." Raudot was interrupted by the Minister of the Interior, Lambrecht, who protested, "But no! That's not true!" Raudot pursued the matter. "That's what all the newspapers in the country have said. Well, gentleman, I ask you to note one thing. When you annexed Savoy, it had a permanent commission as there is in Belgium, it had decentralized institutions similar to Belgium's, and you took away its liberties!" Darkly predicting that Alsatians and Lorrainers were destined to go the way of the Francophobic Belgians if the French administration were not reformed and decentralized, Raudot concluded with a defense of regionalized decentralization. "Is it the truth that when we were Bourguignons, when we had our liberties, our administration composed of men from the *pays*, we were less good Frenchmen? ... Do you think that because we're proud of inhabiting *pays* where there are local institutions that

¹⁵¹ *Journal Officiel*, 12 March 1871, session of 9 March 1871, vol. 3, no. 71, pp 164–5.

¹⁵² *Journal Officiel*, 13 March 1871, session of 10 March 1871, vol. 3, no. 72, p. 167.

are lively and free, that we were less good citizens? ... It's your system of excessive centralization that has destroyed the energy of the nation."¹⁵³

Raudot's references to the 1860 annexation may have been but a excursus in the Assembly's consideration of the law, but it must have been a uncomfortable moment for the Savoyard deputies. It reminded the assembled deputies that not all of Europe's French-speaking populations, including Belgium's, instinctively or reflexively turned to France. In drawing a parallel to Belgium, Raudot openly questioned the international worth of the 1860 annexation treaty and discussed Savoyard separatism as though it were an established fact. Trying to control the heated debate, the Minister of the Interior, Lambrecht, delivered a challenge to the Savoyard deputies. "So we've heard that Savoy had better institutions than ours at the time of its union to France, and that its inhabitants have regretted the annexation. I ask to say one word on this topic. Whether there are in Savoy, or in the County of Nice, a few men who regret the former regime, who might be interested in remaining Italian or Swiss, that might be possible; but I hope that all the representatives of the annexed departments that are present will protest against the idea that Savoy might want to separate from France!"¹⁵⁴ It was unfortunate that the first of the Savoyard deputies to respond was François Taberlet (Haute-Savoie) of Evian, the most left-wing deputy elected from the department, for his defiant retort was hardly likely to reassure the deputies of Savoy's loyalty: "We are and we want to be Frenchmen, but on the condition that France stays republican!" The parliamentary stenographer recorded the word "noise," indicating the disturbances that followed this provocative and controversial statement.

It was left to Taberlet's colleague Clément Silva (Haute-Savoie) to mount a defense of Savoyard patriotism. Silva, who described himself during his discourse as "frankly republican," also linked Savoyard devotion to France to the fortunes of the Republic, though in a less confrontational manner than Taberlet. "When we became French in 1860, we did it with our whole hearts; but has there been no disappointment for us? We entered the great French family during the worst days, during the decadence of the Empire; we had the decadent Empire, the Mexican war, the war with Prussia; we have given our money and our children without afterthought; we have sealed the French pact, I can say it, with blood!" Acknowledging the existence of pro-Swiss feeling in 1860, Silva nevertheless concluded, "I believe I can affirm that we hold fast to France, and especially to republican France," leading to applause from the left-hand side of the room. Though Silva took a conciliatory approach as he defended the provincial honor of Savoy before the National Assembly, he still emphasized, as had Taberlet, the special attachment of Savoy to the republican form of government.

The Raudot-Silva debate demonstrated that the deputies of Nice and Savoy were well aware that discussions about the loyalty of one annexed province could lead to doubts about the other's. The minute Silva gave up the floor, the remaining Niçois deputy who had not yet publicly spoken of separatism, Bergondi, took the floor. Like his colleague Piccon in March, he began with a reference to his cultural heritage, apologizing for "hurting your ears with an accent that will seem foreign to you." He then proceeded to complain about the distorted electoral effects that had resulted from the fusion of the former County with the arrondissement of Grasse. Bergondi argued that it was undemocratic and unfair that in the recent recently-held partial elections, the candidates who had called for a revision of the 1860 plebiscite had won the majority of votes in the territory of the former County, but lost the election overall to the

¹⁵³ *Journal Officiel*, 11 July 1871, session of 10 July 1871, vol. 3, p. 1900.

¹⁵⁴ *Journal Officiel*, 11 July 1871, session of 10 July 1871, vol. 3, p. 1901.

republicans, buoyed by their support in the Grasse arrondissement. “The inhabitants of the former County of Nice,” he remarked bitterly, “will be represented in this Assembly by candidates who had but the minority of their suffrages. By telling you the result of the elections, I’m mentioning one of the facts that causes a certain discontent in the *pays* I belong to. Its true voice is not heard, its true desires cannot be displayed; it makes it look as though we want something other than what we want.... We were united to a former French arrondissement that, while voting in the same election, has different aspirations, customs, needs and interests. I repeat, this is one of the principal causes of discontent that reigns in our *pays*. That’s the truth, gentlemen. If I had come to tell you that the majority of the Niçois want to stay French, would that leave them any less discontent?”¹⁵⁵

Bergondi had a legitimate point about the salient differences between the Grasse arrondissement and the County of Nice and the difficulties of governing them within the same department. He also correctly noted the electoral disadvantages of voting by list, rather than by arrondissement, which would have provided a more equitable distribution of parliamentary representation. But it is remarkable that he dared to use the example of the recent elections to advance that observation. In opposing an administrative arrangement that had successfully prevented the separatists from being elected, Bergondi argued that the situation had obstructed the true expression of Niçois wishes. Instead of referring to the elected deputies as republicans, he had even referred to them as “the list of candidates who ran on the opposite platform, that Nice continue to be French.” Bergondi’s highly-suggestive remarks were the most openly separatist made before the National Assembly. Yet even then, Bergondi still loudly and forcefully rejected the separatist label, which he ironically described with an Italian term. “Since our arrival in this assembly, a misfortune has befallen us, as we would say in Italian, *jettatura* [the Evil Eye], in that upon arriving in Bordeaux we found in a local newspaper the word separatist coupled to our names.”¹⁵⁶ In a reversal from his earlier remarks, which seemed to validate the legitimacy of separatist electoral activity, Bergondi followed in Piccon’s footsteps by blaming the government for its perceived lack of willingness to hold the Government of National Defense responsible for the February Days:

It would seem the members of the government have believed this qualification [of separatism], for it’s been impossible for us to obtain the slightest credibility for our remarks. Every time that we’ve wanted to indicate the means to end the discontent that reigns in Nice, every time we tried to share the measures that must be taken to arrive at this result, we haven’t succeeded in making ourselves heard favorably. Our population would like nothing more than to remain united to France; but it has been coerced into throwing itself into the arms of a party that wasn’t strong, that wasn’t numerous at the beginning, but has become so following blunders; and worse, following intolerable abuses of power that were committed, not only under the Empire, but more particularly under the government that has justly been called the proconsuls of dictatorship. . . . We witnessed and were submitted to quite unqualified arbitrary acts; the population was provoked into a riot, and the provocateurs of this riot, the authorities who themselves openly violated the law and liberty, have opened trials against those who were victims of their abuses of power. Today still, gentlemen, we have not

¹⁵⁵ *Journal Officiel*, 11 July 1871, session of 10 July 1871, vol. 3, p. 1902–1903.

¹⁵⁶ In modern Italian, the term has become *lo jettatore*.

seen justice done. . . . in spite of our lively insistence, we haven't obtained justice. I declare this before the Government: either it end its legal proceedings against those it is prosecuting, or it prosecutes everyone. We must not allow it to be said that in France, the penal law is a spider's web that stops the minimally guilty and allows the great culprits to get through.¹⁵⁷

Bergondi's speech was an angry and bitter indictment of Dufraisse's administration and defense of Niçois particularism. In the polarized atmosphere of the National Assembly, dominated by the triumphant monarchists, the scorn Bergondi heaped on the representatives of the Government of National Defense drew hearty applause and cheers from the conservative deputies.

The discussion of Niçois and Savoyard separatism in the National Assembly in 1871 established a peculiar political pattern. The Niçois deputies who had supposedly accepted a mandate to work toward the revision of the 1860 plebiscite downplayed separatism once they were seated in the National Assembly. They insisted on the particular history of the County, complained about its poor governance under successive French administrators, and exposed the distorting effects of its merger with the Grasse arrondissement, but stopped short of affirming separatist desires or intentions. Meanwhile, the self-proclaimed "French" deputy, Dufraisse, insisted that separatism was a real and potentially dangerous, if minority, political movement in the department. The irony was not lost on commentators. The *Pensiero* was offended and disappointed by what it saw as Piccon's spineless betrayal of the separatist cause, and retaliated by refusing to endorse him with the other Niçois candidates in the upcoming municipal elections. With the exception of Taberlet, the Savoyard deputies were also cautious. Silva, like the Niçois deputies, reminded the assembled deputies about the special history of Savoy and reiterated the province's evident adherence to the Third Republic, but did not endorse the "Republic or Separation" idea.

Foreign Threats and Crypto-Italians

Bergondi's protests about the County of Nice's poor governance notwithstanding, the department's pattern of being assigned short-lived administrators was not broken until July. Dufraisse's first replacement in February, Oscar Salvetat, who quickly acquired a reputation as a well-liked and competent administrator, remained in the position just three months before being replaced on July 5 by the marquis Raymond de Villeneuve-Bargemon. During these transitional months after the February Days, the city's inhabitants struggled to make sense of the election results and the riots. Dufraisse's telegrams and reports during the conflict, and his interventions in the National Assembly, gave voice to a widespread belief that the conflicts had been caused by subversive influences from Italy assisted by disloyal Niçois within the County itself. Prior to shutting down the *Diritto*, Dufraisse had referred to the *Diritto* as "a newspaper written in the Italian language, by Italian writers and subsidized by Italian capitalists," a sentiment he repeated in his remarks to the National Assembly, where he described it as "created by Italian sponsors, supported by the subventions of Italian subscribers, edited in the Italian language, by writers sent from Italy."¹⁵⁸ Overseeing the mass arrests of February 10, he claimed to have "noted among the arrested a fairly considerable proportion of Piedmontese who, according to police reports, had

¹⁵⁷ *Journal Officiel*, 11 July 1871, session of 10 July 1871, vol. 3, p. 1903.

¹⁵⁸ *Journal Officiel*, 12 March 1871, session of 9 March 1871, vol. 3, no. 71, p. 163; telegram no 7,831, prefect AM to MI, 9 February 1871, 10:15 p.m., in Assemblée Nationale, *Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 57.

recently crossed the border, sent no doubt by separatist committees from Turin and Cuneo.”¹⁵⁹ The following day he had issued his threat to expel all itinerant Piedmontese laborers from the city. Many of the city’s inhabitants agreed with Dufraisse and blamed the external influence of “Italians” colluding with crypto-Italian Niçois for the frightening demonstrations. A chilling anonymous denunciation dated March 8, 1871 simply demanded the expulsion of every single Italian national in the city: “Several Niçois republicans strongly encourage you to expel all the citizens who desire the ruin of Nice. They are part of the Italian nationality. You have the list of all the Niçois registered at the Consulate of Italy, it’s the only way to ensure peace. The interest of our city and of France demand imperiously this measure. We are counting on your firmness. Count on our recognition.”¹⁶⁰

The government’s continued surveillance of Italian troops and deserters amassed on the border encouraged these fears. One of the anonymous letters to the prefecture accused the longstanding separatist Count Laurenti-Roubaudi of harboring exiles and refugees. “Regarding the château of M. Laurenti, they told me that the exiles from Ventimiglia, that is to say the good Niçois that France had to chase out, are having meetings there at night in order to hatch their dirty plots. Couldn’t you survey it a bit closer?”¹⁶¹ Fears of contagion from across the border led the government to step up security between Nice and Ventimiglia, and to survey individuals making regular trips between Ligurian coastal towns and Nice. Such was the case of M. Alexandre Laurent, a former employee of the mail-coach service between Nice and several coastal towns. An anonymous denunciation claimed that Alexandre was an associate of several well-known Italianissimes:

M. le Préfet, if you want to have proof of the treason of the Avigdors, of the Malausséna, of the Vérolas and *tutti quanti*, it would be prudent to arrange for the secret observation, search, and arrest of Alexandre, the driver of the diligence between Nice and Genoa and Menton and Genoa. It is obvious that this man is the true intermediary of this anti-French machination, on every voyage he brings a great number of communications for the affiliates of Nice. It would be good to have a secret agent travel in his own diligence who would ensure intelligence with the *insurgés*, the causes of all our disorders.

A Frenchman and friend.¹⁶²

Following the prefecture’s receipt of this denunciation, Alexandre was put under observation after Hippolyte Benoît, the special police commissioner of the city’s train station, confirmed the existence of rumors that Alexandre was a separatist agent. Benoît reported that Laurent was supposed to be in close contact with Nice’s former mayor under the Second Empire, Malausséna, who was supposedly using him as an envoy of secret messages to Ventimiglia, San Remo, Savona, Genoa and Turin.¹⁶³ When Alexandre went to Menton at the end of March, he was kept under surveillance by the special police commissioner of Menton, though the commissioner reported that Alexandre was well aware that he was suspected of being a “Bonapartist agent.”¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ Telegram no. 7,879, prefect AM to Chaudordy, MAE, Bordeaux, 10 February 1871, 11:55 p.m., in Assemblée Nationale, *Enquête parlementaire*, vol. 1, 58.

¹⁶⁰ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, anonymous letter, Nice, 8 March 1871.

¹⁶¹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, anonymous letter to secretary general, 17 February 1871.

¹⁶² AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, anonymous denunciation of Alexandre, no date.

¹⁶³ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, CS Menton, confidential note.

¹⁶⁴ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, CS Menton, to prefect AM, 24 March 1871.

On the prefect's orders, the commissioner of Menton stopped Alexandre on March 30 and had him thoroughly searched. No seditious or suspicious messages were found.¹⁶⁵ Though the trial ran dry in this particular instance, searches of other citizens making regular trips into Italy proved more fruitful. A man named Jean-Baptiste Secco, who had left Nice in January, was arrested on the evening of July 10 by the agents at the customs post in Menton for transporting separatist brochures into the country, including the *Memorandum of the United Committees of Niçois Emigration* and *Nice under the Care of the Central Niçois Committee*. The authorities confiscated Secco's brochures and issued him a citation, though he escaped imprisonment.¹⁶⁶

The brochures confirmed that there were, in fact, some contacts between Niçois émigrés in Italy and supporters in Nice. Since the previous fall, rumors had filtered in to the department that committees grouping Niçois émigrés and exiles in Italy had appeared in major Italian cities, including Turin, Florence and Genoa. The brochure *Nice Under the Care of the Central Niçois Committee* had been published in 1870 during the war and was a straightforward revisionist history of the annexation from the Italian point of view, calling for a reversal of the settlement.¹⁶⁷ Secco's other brochure, the *Memorandum of the United Committees of Niçois Emigration*, had been written and published after the February Days. It devoted 29 out of its 37 pages arguing that the plebiscite of 1860 had been a work of imperial pressure and should therefore be nullified so that the European Powers should allow the citizens of Nice to choose their state of national belonging.¹⁶⁸ The brochure boldly featured the signatures of 30 members of the central Commission representing all the committees of Niçois emigration, which included some familiar names from the previous decade: Abbé Cougnet (expelled in 1867); Augustin Galli (expelled in February); Antoine Fenocchio (expelled in November); and Eugenio Lavagna (the editor of Ravenna's nationalist newspaper *Il Ravennate* and one of Garibaldi's correspondents).¹⁶⁹

Ultimately, however, the threat of crypto-Italians within the department was far more dangerous than that of scattered and generally impotent Niçois émigrés. Though Baragnon and Dufraisse had both resorted to expulsion, this was not always a practical option: as the Minister of Foreign Affairs had warned Dufraisse in November, many of those whom the government casually identified as "Italians," and thus "external" troublemakers, may have been legally French. Seven of the eight separatist leaders arrested on February 10 and then imprisoned on board the frigate in Villefranche had been born in the County of Nice, which made it difficult for the government to argue that they were Italians; the eighth, Trabaud, had actually been born in Moulins (Allier) to a Niçois or Italian father. The case of the wine merchant Hippolyte Pécoud is a good example of this problem. The government had delivered an expulsion warrant to Pécoud, whose shop was rumored to be among the secret meeting places of the pro-Italian faction, on February 13. Pécoud's wife Rose was determined to see him released. She sent the prefecture an initial request asking for cancellation of the warrant at the end of February, claiming that his arrest had been in error, but the authorities, still profoundly shaken by the February incidents, were hardly in the mood to be generous. Secretary-General Carré immediately had the mayor

¹⁶⁵ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, CS Menton, to prefect AM, 30 March 1871.

¹⁶⁶ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, CS Menton, to prefect AM, 10 July 1871; scribbled note in file, "responded to free Secco, but confiscate brochures and issue citation," 10 July 1871.

¹⁶⁷ *Nizza per cura del comitato centrale Nizzardo* (Florence: Galletti, 1870).

¹⁶⁸ Gian-Savino Pene Vidari, "Nice vu de la Presse de Turin 1870–1871," in Université de Nice, *Les Alpes-Maritimes 1860–1914: Intégration et particularismes, Actes du Colloque de Nice 1987* (Nice: Éditions Serre, 1988) 287.

¹⁶⁹ Pene Vidari, "Nice vu de la Presse de Turin," 284; 287.

and the Italian consul look up the registers to determine Pécoud's legal nationality, inquiring about this birthplace, his father's origins, and his residency in Nice. He was confident that the results would be in his favor, writing to the Sardinian consul, "Following the correspondence we've exchanged regarding the expulsions pronounced following the troubles that recently took place in Nice, I'm inclined to believe that you yourself believe Pécoud to be Italian."¹⁷⁰ In fact, the case was not clear-cut, as Pécoud had a quintessentially Sardinian lineage. He had indeed been born in the Piedmontese town of Alessandria, but to a Niçois father and a Turinese mother, while one of his grandparents was a Savoyard. He had been brought to Nice as a two-month-old infant and had lived continuously in Nice since the annexation. The Italian consul did, however, report that Pécoud and his family were listed in his register of Italian nationals established in Nice on the date of December 12, 1862.¹⁷¹

Rose Pécoud did not give up easily. She wrote the prefect in April declaring bluntly that "this [expulsion] warrant cannot be executed, since my husband has been French since the annexation treaty of March 24, 1860." Madame Pécoud conceded that her husband had made the formal declaration of intent to retain Sardinian citizenship to the Italian consul in 1860. She reasoned, however, that he had not taken up residence in Italy and thus had to be considered a French citizen by default. "He never moved his residence, even temporarily, to Italy, and consequently, this last condition unfulfilled, he has remained a French subject by the terms of Article 6 of the Treaty of 24 March."¹⁷² In her clear and powerfully reasoned letter, which brilliantly quoted the vague portions of the annexation treaty back to the French authorities in order to justify her husband's continued possession of French citizenship, the extraordinary Madame Pécoud came to the same conclusions as France's own Minister of Foreign Affairs the previous November. She exposed the ambiguities and difficulties that the citizenship provisions of the 1860 annexation had created, and the doubtful fashion in which the administrations under the Government of National Defense had interpreted and applied them. She apparently had a sufficiently strong case; the authorities left a marginal note on her letter, "Allow [Pécoud] to reenter without revoking the expulsion warrant," indicating their willingness to compromise.

The events of the spring and summer produced mixed signals in the County of Nice. At the end of March, the Aix Court of Appeals dismissed the charges against the arrested rioters in the February Days, enabling many of those who had been arrested in February to return to Nice. With the law of April 14 having dissolved the temporary municipal commissions established during the war, the long-delayed municipal elections in Nice finally occurred on April 30. In a vote that featured massive abstention by the electorate, the entire slate of candidates proposed by the Niçois Committee and the *Pensiero*, many of whom had been arrested or expelled between October and February, was elected: Joseph Brès, Joseph Bovis, Louis Trabaud, Alfred Borriglione, Honoré Bressa, Félix Ugo, and Hippolyte Pécoud all took a seat on the council.¹⁷³ Other Niçois patriots elected included Jean-Baptiste Toselli, the author of *Three Bellicose Days*, and Lucien Mereu, a close associate of Garibaldi's who had fought alongside him in the 1866 war against Austria. The municipal elections corresponded with a shift in the pro-Italian faction and in the pages of the *Pensiero* away from affirming "separatism" in public in favor of the more innocuous-sounding "revisionism."¹⁷⁴ On the other hand, the pro-French populations of the

¹⁷⁰ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, draft, prefect AM to Consul of Italy in Nice, 1 March 1871.

¹⁷¹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, Consul of Italy in Nice to prefect AM, 3 March 1871.

¹⁷² AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, letter from Rose Peccoud to prefect AM, received 5 April 1871.

¹⁷³ Basso, *Les élections législatives*, 124–125.

¹⁷⁴ Ivan, *Le séparatisme à Nice*, 156–75.

Alpes-Maritimes could at least take heart from the results of the July partial elections to replace Garibaldi and Dufraisse, where the pro-French republicans Fortuné Maure and Henry Lefèvre narrowly prevailed over the opposing “revisionist” candidates, Borriglione and Alexandre Milon. Borriglione’s statement of candidacy not only repeated condemnation for the “arbitrary acts” committed by the “dictatorships of so-called republicans,” but openly announced his attention to work for a revision of the 1860 plebiscite. “You have affirmed your aspirations,” the statement read, “against the plebiscite of 1860, imposed by the man of Sedan, and which was but a series of maneuvers he used to grab power and confiscate all of France’s liberties.... I shall be the interpreter of [these aspirations], asking the Assembly for a revision of this plebiscite; but I shall do so only by legal methods.”¹⁷⁵

In the calmer atmosphere of the summer, the defeat of Borriglione and Milon seemed to reverse the results of the February poll. As in the February elections, however, the results must be interpreted cautiously. The results, as Bergondi controversially pointed out in the National Assembly, revealed a stark division between the two former Sardinian arrondissements and that of Grasse, and suggest that “nativism,” if not actual separatism, had a major effect on the election. In the arrondissements formed from the County of Nice, Borriglione and Milon won the majority of ballots cast, Borriglione by a substantial margin of 3,000 votes over both Maure and Lefèvre.¹⁷⁶ They performed extremely poorly in the “French” arrondissement of Grasse. Borriglione was so stained by his affiliation with the separatist faction over the previous ten months that he received the pitiful sum of just 127 votes in the entire arrondissement of Grasse, a decline from the (also pathetic) 165 he had received in February.¹⁷⁷ Maure and Lefèvre’s strong showing in the Grasse arrondissement tipped the election in their favor. Maure, who originally hailed from Grasse, undoubtedly reaped considerable support in his home arrondissement just as Borriglione and Milon did in the former County. But in contrast to Borriglione, Maure and Lefèvre did manage to win a respectable portion of the votes in the former County. As Jacques Basso has argued, this election was the first of many in which the number of votes attributed to separatist candidates began to decline, to the republicans’ advantage.¹⁷⁸

The intervention of the Niçois writer and poet Jules Bessi on behalf of the republicans explains why the separatist candidates did not have a monopoly on Niçois votes. A writer of Nissard poetry, tourist guides, and other publications, Bessi had co-published the Nissard-language paper *Mensoneghiera* in 1868 and would go on to publish the *Bugadiera*, a journal of local literature, in 1872, and also became an assistant archivist at the departmental archives.¹⁷⁹ In 1871, to support Henri Lefèvre’s candidacy, Bessi self-published at least four short, cheap pamphlets called *Le Fouet* (*The Whip: a Political and Humorous Newspaper*) during the month of July. The publication, which was really a series of short brochures, took an anti-separatist, pro-Niçois and pro-republican editorial line. In the second issue, the *Fouet* excoriated the Niçois candidates elected in February for their political chameleonism, and pointed out the hypocrisy of their behavior in the National Assembly. “Up till now, our more-or-less Niçois representatives have continuously fooled us, telling the Assembly the opposite of what they promised to say. When Niçois deputies leave for Nice with the separatist spirit, they come back French; we can only expect that the frankly French deputies that we’ll send to Versailles will come back to us

¹⁷⁵ Ivan, *Le séparatisme à Nice*, 209–210.

¹⁷⁶ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 3 M 179, electoral tallies of the complementary elections of 2 July 1871.

¹⁷⁷ Basso, *Les élections législatives*, 141.

¹⁷⁸ Basso, *Les élections législatives*, 140.

¹⁷⁹ Michel Derlange, ed., *Les Niçois dans l’histoire* (Toulouse, France: Éditions Privat, 1988), 36.

more Italian than the Alfieri!”¹⁸⁰ *Le Fouet* also alleged that the municipal leaders had reduced the police presence in the city in order to facilitate further separatist demonstrations. “Everyone knows that the majority of our municipal council is separatist. Fine. Our councilors, in one of their stormy meetings, desiring to save on municipal expenses, unanimously voted to reduce the number of agents of public security. All the habitual offenders, all the homeless vagabonds couldn’t hope for anything better. With the brigade of policemen having noticeably diminished—to the great happiness of our councilors—noise and disturbances of the peace have spread throughout several of our neighborhoods.”¹⁸¹ As his involvement in Nissard publications demonstrated, Bessi was deeply invested in his identity as a Niçois: In one issue of the *Fouet*, he complained that too many of the city’s streets were named after foreigners, and suggested naming one after the Niçois naturalist Antoine Risso (1777–1845).¹⁸² But he saw no incompatibility between republicanism and Niçois interests. For Bessi, defending Niçois interests meant combating separatism.

Similar considerations prompted the formation of the Niçois Democratic Committee, a pro-Niçois, pro-republican political organization. Founded by count Ange Giletta, the Niçois Democratic Committee represented a remarkable attempt to sublimate the Franco-Italian division into a unified defense of the Third Republic. by Giletta himself explained to the administration that the organization’s stated intention was to oppose the separatists. “This committee formed around the time of the last elections to thwart the intrigues of the party of disorder that was demanding the revision of the plebiscite of 1860, and to put an end at the same time to the agitation of spirits, the perpetual causes of trouble in our city,” Giletta began. He admitted that there were Italian sympathizers among its members, but that the organization was committed to transcending this cultural conflict for the good of a higher and more pressing political need: the stability of the Republic. “I can’t hide anything from you. In our Committee there are many people who don’t deny their Italian sympathies, and others, among whom I have the honor to count myself, who have kept their French heart. Both groups have chosen to put aside our personal aspirations for the moment, and to prefer our political principles to any question of nationality, and to firmly support the current government of the republic. We have met on neutral terrain, and it’s incontestable that the Niçois Democratic Committee was able to exercise on July 2 a salutary pressure in the country, and that it obtained its goal.”¹⁸³

The statutes or bylaws of the Niçois Democratic Committee, submitted to the prefect for approval, evoked none other than “our great co-citizen Garibaldi” as the model political figure that the members of the organization hoped to emulate. In a perspective that echoed the departmental republicans’ adoption of Garibaldi in the February elections, the bylaws idolized Garibaldi *not* as an Italian nationalist, but precisely because he represented a universal republicanism that *transcended* national borders: “The goal of this association is to propagate republican principles among our populations, the application of which alone may return our country to the peace, tranquility and well-being that have been recently compromised... It calls on workers, capitalists and all republicans in general to group themselves around the democratic flag and assure the triumph of our cause in adhering to our program.” With this surprising language, recalling class struggle and the Commune more than the annexation, the bylaws

¹⁸⁰ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 3 M 179, *Le Fouet: Journal humoristique et politique paraissant à volonté*, no. 2 (28 June 1871), p. 22.

¹⁸¹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 3 M 179, *Le Fouet*, no. 3 (2 July 1871), p. 40.

¹⁸² AD Alpes-Maritimes, 3 M 179, *Le Fouet*, no. 3 (2 July 1871), p. 42.

¹⁸³ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 4 M 294, letter from count Ange Giletta to prefect AM, 16 July 1871.

continued by proclaiming the need “to support and affirm by all possible means the French republic, the first step towards the universal republic.”¹⁸⁴ During the July 2 partial elections, the Committee published an electoral manifesto confirming its engagement on behalf of the republicans. “Nice is the *patrie* of Garibaldi; Garibaldi is, for the entire world, the living incarnation of the republican idea. We recognize and share the sentiments of affection that you have for the nation from which you have been separated; these sympathies are natural, and no one would blame you for them. But above these aspirations that are confined within two borders, there’s a principal that includes the entire world; above the *patrie* there’s humanity; above the national flag there is the flag of the Universal Republic, against which all the attacks of reaction have turned.”¹⁸⁵ It is not clear whether the prefecture accepted the constitution of the Committee, but such language, which suggested a pan-European, internationalist perspective, would certainly have raised some eyebrows in the wake of the Commune. Nevertheless, Giletta hoped for official government support. “There’s no doubt that, on the one hand, instead of remaining inactive, we pursue with alacrity our victory, and if on the other hand we’re seconded, as we are certain of being, by the wisdom of the superior administration, in a little time, almost all Niçois will recognize sincerely in France its new and well-loved *patrie*, without worrying about any contradiction.”¹⁸⁶

Bessi and Giletta’s efforts indicated that republicans could make inroads into the County of Nice. But in certain areas, the separatists had still performed well. In the Niçois backcountry, with the exception of the town of Berre, every commune in the Contes canton favored the separatist candidates by substantial margins. Beyond the electoral statistics, police and gendarmes’ reports also confirmed the activity of the pro-Italian faction during the electoral campaign. The day of the complementary election, the Minister of the Interior’s General Direction of Public Security, on the advice of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, wrote to the prefect with intelligence that “the Italian party is engaging in this moment in Nice and the most active separatist maneuvers, and that even the municipal council is said to be mixed up in these maneuvers that Garibaldi passes for being the instigator. Please redouble your surveillance.”¹⁸⁷ In the Niçois back-country, the mayoral adjunct in perpetually-unreliable Castellar, returning the official vote-tallying reports to the prefect shortly after the by-elections, characterized the voting in town as “not brilliant but better than we were hoping.” He complained that his superior, Castellar’s mayor, had skipped the election altogether, while the rural guard had spent the day with “electoral agents of the Italian party, who spread propaganda furiously.” The adjunct nevertheless did close his report on a hopeful note, writing that “the moral result for the commune was quite good in spite of the abstentions, the lack of authority and influence, and the electoral maneuvers of all kinds that were used. They weren’t able to disturb the peace at night, as they had been hoping. We still had a respectable majority.”¹⁸⁸

The election would not have been complete without an incident in the separatist hotspot Sospel, where the gendarmes reported that a demonstration in favor of the separatist candidates Borriglione and Milon had “brought the entire population to its feet.” The gendarmes reported that almost all of the town’s electors trooped to the town hall with a tricolor emblazoned with the words “Borriglione and Milon” on it, led by music of the local Philharmonic Society. The

¹⁸⁴ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 4 M 294, copy of bylaws of the Niçois Democratic Committee, 1871.

¹⁸⁵ Cited in AD Alpes-Maritimes, 3 M 179, *Le Fouet*, no. 3 (2 July 1871), p. 44.

¹⁸⁶ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 4 M 294, letter from count Ange Giletta to prefect AM, 16 July 1871.

¹⁸⁷ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 350, MI, direction of general security, to prefect AM, 2 July 1871.

¹⁸⁸ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 3 M 179, mayor of Castellar to prefect, 3 July 1871.

gendarmes' terse report was vague, but they reported that "the demonstration led to recriminations from the French party," suggesting that the tone of the demonstration had been predominantly anti-French.¹⁸⁹ Further south, the members of the municipal council of the hamlet of Daluis, just north of the sub-prefecture at Puget-Théniers, signed and sent a protest letter to the government "out of the patriotism that attaches this commune to the *mère patrie* France." The council's members complained that Dominique Toesca, an employee of the roads and highways service, who was surveying the departmental road under construction at Daluis, had enthusiastically campaigned for the Italian party. The night before the election, Toesca had distributed stacks of bulletins with Borriglione and Milon's names on them as well as their electoral manifestos. When some of the townsmen scoffed at Toesca and told him that the separatist candidates had no chance in the town, Toesca—apparently a budding amateur political analyst—confidently retorted that one of the two candidates was bound to be elected, since the Italian party had just two candidates while the French party, with numerous candidates, would probably split the vote. Toesca's maneuvers failed in the end; only one ballot bearing the names of Borriglione and Milon (presumably Toesca's) was cast, but the mayor claimed that it was only the council's perseverance that had limited the damage Toesca's maneuvers might otherwise have caused. "In good as well as in bad fortune," the council proclaimed, "the commune of Daluis wishes to remain attached to France, and the undersigned protest with all their strength against the conduct of this agent of the administration who has openly and with impunity betrayed the government that supports him."¹⁹⁰

The news from the Breil canton was also discouraging, where the special police commissioner of Fontan reported that the elections were not as free as they should have been. He reported that the adjunct of the mayor of Breil, Bonfils, and the mayor of Saorge, Daveo, had openly supported the Italian candidates. In order to promote the Italian candidates without alienating the clergy, which favored the legitimist Viscount Hélion de Barrême, they developed printed ballots that listed both Borriglione's and Barrême's names. Most interesting was the observation that Baron Cachiardy de Montfleury of Breil had provided a virtual buffet of ballots in Fontan to satisfy any possible political palate: first, the purely separatist ballot featuring Borriglione and Milon; second, the hybrid separatist-legitimist ballot featuring Borriglione and Barrême; and even a seemingly incompatible, hybrid republican-legitimist ballot for Maure and Barrême. The pro-Italian efforts of Bonfils and Daveo proved effective in Breil and Saorge, which voted for the separatist candidates by 88 percent and 89 percent, respectively, but not in nearby Fontan, where the republicans won a surprising 81 percent of votes cast. The police commissioner remained concerned for the reputation of the canton. "They're not going to stop saying that all the electors belong to the Italian party and are demanding separation, which isn't the truth because, I repeat, this result is mainly due to the influence and the activity of Messieurs Daveo and Bonfils."¹⁹¹

Communards, Separatists, and Legitimists

The fact that it was during one of the National Assembly's debates about decentralization that the question of Savoyard separatism had been posed is a reminder that Niçois and Savoyard separatism emerged at a moment when both ends of the political spectrum were preoccupied

¹⁸⁹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, report no. 109, 25th legion of the gendarmerie, company AM, arrondissement of Menton, to commander, 7 March 1871. 3 July 1871.

¹⁹⁰ AD Alpes-Maritimes, letter from municipal council of Daluis to MI, 9 July 1871.

¹⁹¹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 3 M 179, CS Fontan to prefect AM, 3 July 1871.

with the question of recasting the relationship between the country's center and periphery. The July debate about the General Councils was but one piece of a far larger proposed law that the National Assembly's Committee on Decentralization submitted to the legislature on April 29, 1871. Presented by deputy Raudot, the Vice-President of the Commission and the legitimist who would raise the topic in July, the proposed law clearly took much of its inspiration from conservative ideas about restoring a more "organic" unity to the French state that supposedly had been lost following departmentalization in 1790. While it did not envisage suppressing the departments, the proposal would have created twenty-four "new" old provinces, along with one encompassing Paris, as administrative entities. The justification for the law trotted out familiar language that probably would have had some resonance in the newly-annexed territories: "An inhabitant of the Côte-d'Or, de Saône-et-Loire or the Yonne, is he a Côtédoirois, a Saône-et-Loirois, a Yonnais? The last peasant of these departments says, head held high, that he is Bourguignon, even if he ancestors weren't....wouldn't it be popular, the law that would return the glorious names of Brittany, Normandy Champagne, Lorraine, Dauphiné, Provence, Languedoc, and all the large provinces, integral parts of the history and the glory of France?"¹⁹²

Since the project did not envision restoring all the old provinces, especially the smaller ones like Saintonge or Béarn, it is not surprising that the tiny County of Nice was projected to be subsumed into a restored Provence. But the restoration of Savoy would also have been problematic. The smallest "resurrected" province by area, it would also have been by far the smallest province by population, with some 400,000 inhabitants fewer than the Limousin, and would have been smaller in both respects than even the rump Lorraine not annexed by Germany. To justify its continued presence, the authors of the proposed text of the law included a footnote explaining that "this province is quite small, but we should respect the clauses of the annexation treaty."¹⁹³ With this statement, the well-meaning Commission ignored the fact that the Treaty of Turin said absolutely nothing about the disposition of Savoyard territory once it entered France.

Paradoxically, Niçois and Savoyard separatism also had themes in common with the Paris Commune. Though their ideology remained vague and undefined, the Communards had essentially succeeded in securing the temporary secession of Paris from France, and they adhered to a more localized conception of political and social governance. The separatist opposition in the long-autonomous provinces of Nice and Savoy borrowed similar elements, arguing that natives were better equipped to administer the provinces and represent them at the national level. But in contrast to the situation in the neighboring Var and Boûches-du-Rhône departments, "Communards" or "socialists" did not have much of an impact in either of the two annexed provinces. Though not impressed with the general state of public opinion in the Alpes-Maritimes, the special police commissioner of the gare de Nice reported with satisfaction in the autumn of 1871 that the inhabitants of the former County did not appear particularly favorable to socialism. In fact, the danger seemed rather the opposite. As the commissioner noted, "all these insurrectional movements in France have contributed to determining the Niçois separatist party to affirm itself, and to proclaim loudly that it's better to belong to Italy, than to live stuck to a people that revel in agitations and political upheavals."¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² Annex 83 to session of 29 April 1871, in Assemblée Nationale, *Annales de l'Assemblée Nationale, Comptes-Rendu in extenso des séances*, vol. 2 (20 March to 12 May 1871) (Paris: A. Wittersheim and co.) 949.

¹⁹³ AN, C 2866, printed brochure with the proposed text of the law. The version printed in the *Annales de l'Assemblée Nationale* does not include the projected list of restored provinces, nor the footnote regarding the annexation treaty.

¹⁹⁴ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 356, CS Nice to prefect AM, autumn 1871.

Decentralization was thus not an exclusive interest of either the left or the right during the Terrible Year. The moderate republican Thiers government, consistent with the hardline tone of its April proclamation, opposed it out of hand. On August 2, 1871, Thiers and the Minister of the Interior unexpectedly attended the meeting of the parliamentary commission on decentralization. Thiers wasted no time making his opposition to its projects manifest, and he gestured to the recent events in Nice and Savoy to make his point. “You’re giving the departments quite considerable powers,” he lectured, “and you’re not taking into account that the general councils might abuse them. Ideas of disorder will find credit; you’ll have separatist general councils in Nice and Chambéry.”¹⁹⁵ Five days after blasting the commission, on August 7, Thiers and Jules Dufaure, the Minister of Justice, submitted a proposed law to the National Assembly that would impose severe penalties against affiliates of the International and against “the authors of separatist demonstrations in the annexed departments.” Section II of the explanation of the law left no doubt that this portion of the project specifically targeted the threat of separatism in Nice and Savoy:

In periodical writings, in electoral circulars, in the meetings prepared for the last elections, in audaciously peddled manifestos, demands have been made for the revision of the plebiscites that annexed, to France, several departments formerly belonging to the Kingdom of Italy; some have fearlessly expressed the desire to see these annexed territories separated from France, either by annexation to neighboring States, or to constitute independent States. The union of Savoy and of the County of Nice to France was submitted to the test of universal suffrage and results from the free consent of the annexed populations. By virtue of this consent, Savoy and the County of Nice have become integral parts of France. No one today, in defiance of a solemn contract, may propose either the return to the former state of affairs, or any other mode with the goal of removing from French national sovereignty, all or part of the annexed territories.¹⁹⁶

The articles of the proposed law provided that those convicted of affiliation to the International or of separatist activities would be subject to a prison sentence of two months to two years; a fine of 50 to 1,600 francs; and the deprivation of civic, civil and family rights along the lines of Article 42 of the Penal Code. Those brought under its conditions could also expect to be put under the surveillance of the police for five years. In addition to those penalties, separatists would be stripped of their French nationality.¹⁹⁷

* * *

The Franco-Prussian war shook the recently-annexed provinces of Nice and Savoy to their core. Profoundly dislocated like the rest of the country by the chaos of the war, the collapse of the central government, and the hasty organization of the new republican regime, Nice and Savoy’s inhabitants shared in the nearly universal outpouring of hatred for the Bonapartist regime in France in the wake of the Quatre Septembre. That meant that suddenly the entire legitimacy of the annexation, including the once-untouchable 1860 plebiscite, seemed to be up for question. With the country seemingly on the verge of anarchy and their compatriots conscripted for military duty in a war that looked hopeless, it is not entirely surprising that some

¹⁹⁵ AN, C 2866, minutes of the meeting of 2 August 1871.

¹⁹⁶ *Journal Officiel*, 23 August 1871, annex no. 475, session of 7 August 1871, vol. 3, no. 234, pp. 2902–2903.

¹⁹⁷ *Journal Officiel*, 23 August 1871, annex no. 475, session of 7 August 1871, vol. 3, no. 234, pp. 2903–2904.

ordinary inhabitants may have wondered—even if only briefly—whether joining the French nation ten years earlier had been a wise move. The elections of February 1871 represented the culmination of the double stress of the transition to a new political regime and the threat of foreign invasion. The organization of democratic elections allowed the inhabitants to express hitherto forbidden political preferences at a time when the country was still faced with the prospect of resumed hostilities with Germany. This unusual situation engendered the most open and confrontational questioning of the annexation of 1860 ever to appear in either province.

If the magnitude of the questioning of the 1860 settlement was unprecedented, the content of the separatist activities that emerged out of the Terrible Year tended to confirm the pattern of opposition first established under the Second Empire. In Nice, opposition ultimately coalesced around a revisionist, Nice-centered and Italian-inflected anti-nationalism. Many of the most active anti-French campaigners had already been in trouble with the authorities under the Bonapartist regime. Others, such as Borriglione and Raynaud, had been pro-French partisans in 1860 but turned away from their earlier position during the conflict. Prefect Dufraisse of the Alpes-Maritimes was probably describing only a minority of the population, but a vocal and restless minority, when he remarked in January 1871, “Detached from their former affections for the House of Savoy by the wars of 1849 and 1859, [the Niçois] allowed themselves to be annexed to imperial France in the hope that the Empire would mean peace. Disappointed in this hope by the dreadful war that we’re leading, this population, which would have been assimilated in time, has returned to its Italian sympathies and has displayed very hostile sentiments to France.”¹⁹⁸

In Savoy, the war revealed a preoccupation with what might best be called *conditional* nationalism, that Savoyards’ continued attachment to France hinged on the fulfillment of a number of conditions. The most important of these was the maintenance of the Third Republic. The inhabitants of the northern districts of the Haute-Savoie, long the most liberal and republican, were by no means convinced of the regime’s survival, for good reason; Bonneville’s multiple attempts to propose a Swiss solution to the conflict was dictated as much by political considerations as military or strategic ones. And after the February elections, with their two departments having gone against the national tide by electing a majority of republican deputies, Savoyards put an early and sustained emphasis on the importance of nurturing France’s wobbly republican regime. The “Republic or Separation” motto suggests that if, in the formulation of the historian Maurice Messiez, Savoy had indeed anchored itself to the republic, it was not always clear that that republic was French.¹⁹⁹

Public opinion in both provinces also displayed evidence of “nativist” or provincial tendencies, a withdrawing into the safety of the familiar, which manifested itself in the emphasis on the Second Empire’s perceived lack of respect for the particularities of the annexed territories. The separatist conflict in Nice gained much of its strength from the notion of “Nice for the Niçois”; even the separatist deputies publicly argued that the population had been goaded into the streets riots by poor administrators. In Savoy, too, the anonymous writer protesting against Jules Philippe’s possible replacement in September 1870 warned that Savoyards would discard their French nationality if their favored administrator, himself a strong defender of Savoyard particularism as well as republicanism, were replaced. In both Nice and Savoy, the political

¹⁹⁸ AMAE, ADP, Italie, 4, Dispatch, prefect AM Marc Dufraisse to MAE, 22 January 1871.

¹⁹⁹ Maurice Messiez, *1870–1871: La Savoie s’ancre à la République* (Chambéry, France: Société Savoisienne d’histoire et d’archéologie, 2006).

uncertainty severely disrupted ordinary inhabitants' capacity to engage in the "daily plebiscite" of repeated affirmation and belonging to the French nation they had joined in 1860.

Chapter 6 The Separatist Specter

On July 10, 1871, a bar brawl instigated by a heated political argument occurred in Nice's café de la Maison Dorée, resulting in serious injuries for several local residents. Shortly thereafter, the newspaper *Le Journal de Lyon* published a correspondence, ostensibly from Nice, claiming that the city's separatist tensions had once again exploded as they had in February. "A band ran through the city, furiously crying, Vive Garibaldi! Down with France! Death to the French! Death to Lefèvre!" the newspaper reported excitedly. "After having shouted these cries, the rioters stabbed the Gilly brothers, French entrepreneurs."¹

For all of France, the decade of the 1870s was a time of nervous anticipation. Alsace and Lorraine had been annexed to the newly-united, triumphant Germany, which continued to occupy much of northern France until 1873. The monarchist-dominated French parliament elected in February quickly organized official inquiries into both the Commune and the "Acts of the Government of National Defense," with the evident intent of characterizing both regimes as socialist, revolutionary, and dangerous to order. In addition to the specter of reaction—or revolution—Nice and Savoy continued to be haunted by the specter of political separation. The street riots of February in Nice, and the repeated efforts of Bonneville's republican committee to invite Swiss occupation of the neutralized zone of the Haute-Savoie, had taken place under the unusual circumstances of foreign invasion and political collapse. But while the constitution of a parliament for the Third Republic was an improvement over the ad-hoc Government of National Defense, the bitter fighting between the monarchist and republican political forces made the regime's survival questionable.

The overwhelming atmosphere of uncertainty that plagued the country in the first half of the 1870s prolonged the separatist effervescence of 1871. This chapter traces the manifestations of this separatist specter in the early years of the decade. Despite some initial encouraging signs of relative détente in the summer of 1871, events such as the Maison Dorée incident demonstrated that more than a decade after the plebiscite of 1860, the question of Nice and Savoy's annexation to France had lost none of its power to divide the citizenry and inflame national tensions. Throughout the 1870s, political leaders, administrators, police officers and gendarmes in all three of the annexed departments remained vigilant, monitoring the populations carefully for evidence of separatist activity. The ministers of the Interior, Foreign Affairs and the Interior's General Direction of Public Security expected to be kept fully apprised of these developments, determined not to permit any part of French soil to go, voluntarily or involuntarily, the way of Alsace and Lorraine.

* * *

A Niçois Détente?

At the time of the fight in the Maison Dorée and the incendiary newspaper article, tensions in Nice appeared to be abating. In spite of the fact that the election of moderate, pro-French republicans Lefèvre and Dufaure had been secured by the "French" arrondissement of Grasse, their victory seemed to signal that much of the population in the former County of Nice had grown weary of the near-constant Franco-Italian cultural conflict during the Terrible Year. Some Niçois recoiled violently at the continued spread of rumors in France that Nice was a disloyal, separatist city. Following the appearance of the *Journal de Lyon's* sensational article, a group of over 30 citizens, outraged by its allegations, addressed a collective letter of protest to

¹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 350, draft, prefect AM to the MI, DSG, 15 July 1871.

the newly-appointed prefect, marquis Raymond de Villeneuve-Bargemon, asking him to “put an end to the maneuvers that, if not stopped, will deliver a mortal blow to the prosperity of our city.” Disgruntled by the rumors, the petitioners argued that the dispatch had entirely falsified the event:

The attack committed against the Gilly brothers, who are Niçois, has nothing to do with the general political emotion. It’s clear that an interested person, for obvious reasons, has denatured and inflated this event. A rectification won’t suffice; justice must intervene to stop short these unworthy falsifications. That is why, interested as we are in supporting the honor and interests of Nice, which have been fraudulently attacked, we have the honor of asking you, *M. le Préfet*, to please transmit the desire of the true Niçois to the Minister of Justice, that the original author of the dispatch inserted in the *Journal de Lyon* and many others, be sought out, discovered and punished according to the laws against the authors of false news.²

Bargemon was only too happy to accede to a request that not only portrayed the city in a positive light, but revealed the genuine weariness of many of Nice’s inhabitants with constant accusations of separatist intentions. By the following day, he had confirmed with Nice’s telegraph bureau that the dispatch published in the *Journal de Lyon* announcing the troubles in Nice had not, in fact, been sent from the city. He asked to begin legal proceedings against the newspaper for publishing false news, and for authorization to publicly announce an official investigation into the source of the rumors.³ Like the petitioners, Bargemon played down the significance of the assault on the Gilly brothers, reporting that it had been nothing more than “a simple café fight...The two brothers Gilly, Niçois with French sentiments, were gravely wounded following a discussion of politics; cries hostile to France were shouted by a small group of drunken people, but there was no band of people running through town, and the inhabitants of the neighboring streets didn’t even learn about it until the next day.” Bargemon seems to have shared the concern of Niçois who feared the economic consequences that might result if the city, dependent on the income brought by wintering European elites, acquired a separatist reputation. “The news ... might gravely damage the interests of the population of the capital of my department, by giving credence from a distance that the city of Nice no longer offers safety to the numerous foreigners who pass the winter season here,” he wrote.⁴

A number of other events also contributed to a relative relaxation of separatist tensions in Nice during the summer of 1871. The passage of time eroded the initial outrage that had resulted from the street riots of the *Journées de Février*. The Aix Court of Appeals had dismissed the charges against most of the leading demonstrators in February, and two of those who were convicted, the abbé Ignace Simon and his brother Joachim, received only a light prison sentence of fifteen days each. Both applied for a pardon from the government two weeks after their conviction. As might have been expected, the Simon brothers received the official endorsement of the separatist-turned-autonomist deputies Piccon and Bergondi in making the case for their pardon. But in a surprise move, the recently-elected republicans, Maure and Lefèvre, also gave their official support to the proposal, perhaps out of a desire to promote political conciliation in

² AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 350, Protest letter to prefect AM regarding dispatch published in the *Journal de Lyon*, 14 July 1874.

³ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 350, draft telegram, prefect AM to the MI, 15 July 1871.

⁴ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 350, draft, prefect AM to the MI, DSG, 15 July 1871.

the department and put an end to the affair once and for all.⁵ The participation of the new deputies may also have reflected tacit recognition that the administrations of the Alpes-Maritimes since the Quatre Septembre had made some unfortunate mistakes in governance during the Franco-Prussian conflict, as the deputy Bergondi and the municipal councilor Jean-Baptiste Toselli had both argued.⁶ It could not be denied that neither Baragnon nor Dufraisse had shown much sensitivity or tact during their tenure as prefect. Whatever the exact explanation, Maure and Lefèvre's behavior indicates the deputies' desire to move past the events of February, or at least to display a united front in bringing the affair to a quiet conclusion.

Maure's support of the pardon nevertheless shocked and greatly displeased the Minister of Justice, Jules Dufaure, who had helped Thiers write the draft legislation against Communards and separatists submitted to the National Assembly in August. Dufaure immediately sent him a strongly-worded rebuke. "One of them preached revolt and insulted France for three days during the February elections, the other violently attacked an officer who was bravely accomplishing his duty and hit him with a bludgeon. For that the tribunal sentenced them to 15 days of prison, and you find that too severe. They should be absolved! So what's the point of our laws and our tribunals of repression? My dear and excellent colleague, so full of reason, do this favor to our poor justice and don't weaken it when it needs to be strengthened."⁷ The Court of Appeals of Aix-en-Provence agreed that the punishment inflicted on the defendants had been far too lenient. "Under any other circumstances, and if the affair hadn't been postponed for so long, they would have been condemned to at least six months' imprisonment," wrote the magistrates.⁸ Though it could not impose further fines on the two convicted men, the court firmly opposed extending a pardon to the Simon brothers.

A final occurrence that contributed to the easing of separatist tensions in Nice, and in Savoy as well, was the ultimate failure of Thiers and Dufaure's legislation against separatist activities. This half of the proposed law had never elicited the degree of enthusiastic support from the parliament or French public opinion as the measures against the Communards and members of the International. Moreover, with all of the deputies from Nice and Savoy essentially denying the existence of political separatism in their departments, there seemed to be little to legislate. Even the Alpes-Maritimes' resolutely pro-French newspaper *Le Phare du Littoral*, opposed the bill, calling it "one of the greatest blunders that the current government could commit....the truth is that the situation does not require any such exceptional measure; it may create troubles, disagreements, but hardly dangers to unity and the French nationality."⁹ When the parliamentary commission charged with examining the proposed law made its report to the National Assembly in February 1872, its reporter, the deputy Jean-François Sacase (Haute-Garonne), summarily dismissed the separatist provisions, reporting that the Commission, with the acquiescence of the Minister of Justice, had decided to split the two halves of the law and adjourn the report and discussion on the measures against separatists. Why the commission chose to do this is not clear, but it may have been due to infighting among its members. The fifteen-person commission included the former prefect of the Alpes-Maritimes, Marc Dufraisse, who—given his interventions in the National Assembly in March—likely supported the measure. But it

⁵ AN, BB 24 727, Second copy of request for pardon by Abbé Ignace Simon and Joachim Simon, with marginalia of Louis Piccon, no date, received 21 August 1871.

⁶ See Chapter 5 for their accusations against the administration of Dufraisse.

⁷ AN, BB 24 727, Excerpted copy of letter from MJ to Maure, 10 October 1871.

⁸ AN, BB 24 727, PG Aix to MJ, 16 September 1871.

⁹ *Le Phare du Littoral*, 6 December 1871.

also included the Marquis Costa de Beauregard of the Savoie, the only conservative member of the National Assembly elected from the two Savoyard departments in February, who almost certainly opposed it.¹⁰

The Persistence of Separatist Tension in the Alpes-Maritimes

All of these developments were encouraging, but many French administrators remained concerned about the displays of separatism that had appeared during the Terrible Year and warned against excessive optimism. Even small incidents could cause the issue to reignite and reoccupy public opinion. Both prefect Bargemon and the special police commissioner of the Gare de Nice, Hippolyte Benoît, were dismayed in December 1871 when the republican newspaper *Le Phare du Littoral* reprinted a recent exchange of correspondence between Garibaldi and Eugenio Lavagna, the editor-in-chief of one of Italy's more nationalist and irredentist newspapers, *Il Ravennate*, on the subject of Nice.¹¹ On November 12, Lavagna had written Garibaldi a public letter asking the venerable freedom fighter why he had not made any public declarations regarding his home city. Nice, according to Lavagna—one of the signatories on the *Memorandum of the United Committees of Niçois Emigration*—“trembles incessantly from the desire to return to the great Italian family.” As Garibaldi's short response of November 25 made abundantly clear, the ensuing decade had done little to diminish his bitterness about the loss of his home city, in spite of his support for the Third Republic. But he did seem to realize that he was caught between his nationalist and republican beliefs, dryly writing that “Nice is for me, a passionate question; if I don't talk about it, it's because I'm afraid of burning myself.” In prose that probably upset Frenchmen and Italians alike, Garibaldi called Nice the “apple of discord” between France and Italy. He blamed Napoleon III and the Italian deputies who had ratified the annexation treaty in equal measure, and while he insisted on the city's quintessential Italian character, he must have disappointed Italian nationalists by acknowledging that any change in its status was unlikely to occur. “To deny that Nice is Italian is to deny the light of the sun, and that's been abundantly proven. I'm certain that it wouldn't be difficult to accommodate the issue with the honest people of France, in proving to them the extent to which Bonaparte's plebiscite was a lie. But give me a way to communicate this to the jingoistic! That's where the question becomes terrible, where accommodation will be very difficult without spilling rivers of blood.”¹²

Le Phare du Littoral published the correspondence together with a remarkably balanced opinion piece that acknowledged Garibaldi's right to his opinions about Nice, but excoriated the attempts of Italian nationalists and newspapers, including *Il Ravennate*, to keep the dying embers of separatism alive. But neither the newspaper's intelligent coverage of the matter, nor Garibaldi's opinionated yet measured response, pleased Bargemon, who immediately forwarded a copy of the newspaper to the Minister of the Interior and complained about its effect on public opinion. “The question of the separation of the former county of Nice seemed to have been calming down for some time; I'm afraid this letter may bring it up again. This publication is occurring, moreover, just as the Consul-General of Italy is proceeding to count the country's nationals. The coincidence of these two facts is certainly likely to revive the passions that were

¹⁰ *Journal Officiel*, annex no. 879, 23 February 1872, session of 5 February 1872, vol. 4, no. 53, p. 1299.

¹¹ Lavagna's signature also featured on the *Memorandum of the United Committees of Niçois Emigration to the Honorable Representatives of the Powers to the Italian Government*.

¹² *Le Phare du Littoral*, 6 December 1871.

beginning to calm.”¹³ Special police commissioner Benoît was similarly gloomy. “The political situation of the Alpes-Maritimes is, and will be for a long time to come, difficult and strained. For six months we seemed to be entering a period of appeasement, when Garibaldi, in a letter that certain newspapers have had the bad grace to publish, managed to reanimate all these separatist aspirations.”¹⁴ Though Garibaldi had not actually provided any reason for those harboring pro-Italian sentiments to hope for his official support, the mere fact that the issue was being openly discussed in the department’s newspaper was enough to upset the authorities.

Significantly, the July 10 fight reported by the *Journal de Lyon* that had caused such emotion among pro-French citizens in Nice turned out to be far more serious, and far closer to the newspaper’s account, than the petitioners or prefect Bargemon had claimed. What had actually happened that evening, according to the October trial proceedings, began after Charles Ferrara, a carpenter, Joseph-Louis Arezzo, an eighteen-year-old cook, and a man named Ravel, entered the café de la Maison Dorée singing and shouting “Down with France! Death to the French!” The café owner refused to serve them, and they left briefly, but soon returned and sat down stubbornly in the door of the café, making a nuisance of themselves and yelling more insults. Among those patrons seated in tables in the café were four brothers, Charles, Félix, César and Joseph Gilly, and their uncle Louis. Ravel got up, went over to César and asked him, “Are you French?” When César responded in the affirmative, Ravel struck him in the head and a brawl ensued, during which César received injuries to his legs, Charles almost fainted after he was kicked in the genitals, and Félix suffered a knife wound in his left thumb. Ravel was apparently the most vicious of the combatants, injuring Joseph in the neck, pelvis and shoulder blade; Louis Gilly received a potentially fatal injury, from which he fortunately recovered, when Ravel grabbed him by the neck and stabbed him in the chest. The investigation also revealed that Ferrara was throwing punches while indicating to Ravel whom to attack. The court found the defendants guilty for the attack and for their seditious, anti-French remarks, and punished Arezzo and Ferrara to 18 months’ imprisonment (Ravel had fled Nice).¹⁵

The steep punishment inflicted by the court reflected the violent nature of the struggle. Most ominously, all of the attackers had been born and raised in Nice, and were therefore legally French citizens. Nor was this incident an isolated one. The supposed détente proved more superficial than actual in many regions of the County. Special police commissioner Benoît reported in June 1872 that Nice’s surface calm disguised separatist undercurrents. “What proves it is the frequency of acts of rebellion that often take the proportions of a revolt or riot. The police are powerless before the hostile acts of the population and they are obliged on a daily basis to call for assistance from military posts. In these struggles the soldiers are insulted, booed, and maltreated, addressed with cries in patois, ‘Down with *les Fayots!* (the French).’ These facts, to which people often don’t attach much importance, indicate the characteristic tendencies of antipathy and animosity towards France.”¹⁶ Benoît’s reference to the term *fayot* in the report confirms that the regional use of epithets to insult Frenchmen, which were so frequently heard in the annexed territories during the first decade following the annexation, remained common in the 1870s.

¹³ AD Alpes-Maritimes 1 M 348, draft, prefect AM to the MI, 6 December 1871.

¹⁴ AN, F 7 12243, CS of the Gare de Nice to the MI, no date but the notation “excerpted for Arms and Munitions” dates it prior to 15 December 1871.

¹⁵ *Le Phare du Littoral*, 14 December 1871, no. 305.

¹⁶ AN, F 7 12243, CS of the Gare de Nice to the MI, 25 June 1872. Benoît transcribed the word as *fayaux*.

Café conflicts that pitted “French” forces of order against locals were by no means confined only to the capital of the County. Just two months after Benoît submitted his report describing the “ideal-type” of separatist riot, a major incident that followed this script almost to the letter occurred in that perennial hotspot of the Niçois *arrière-pays*, the town of Sospel. For the gendarmes Bécu and brigadier Guirano, the evening of August 15, 1872 had begun uneventfully, as they performed their normal service in the town. At midnight, they asked cabaret owner Poulin to close his bar, the café Caremo, and invite the remaining patrons to leave. A half an hour later, after a second request from the gendarmes, Poulin finally succeeded in clearing the bar, but only because the patrons left the establishment carrying bottles of alcohol with them. Once outside, they continued to drink and indulge in festivities; several began an impromptu *farandole* dance, complete with a “Garibaldian” song whose couplets included “insults against the gendarmerie, as well as the word *fayot*, a derisory term used to qualify the French.” The gendarmes, trying to prevent an escalation of the disturbance, unsuccessfully asked the crowd to disperse, but Guirano’s attention was distracted by a figure hiding behind a tree carrying a long club. It turned out to be one of the town’s municipal councilors, Joseph Tardivo, who not only insulted the gendarmes but refused to drop his weapon or admit who he was until the gendarmes dragged him under a streetlight for a closer look. As the two gendarmes arrested Tardivo, the intoxicated onlookers attacked the outnumbered gendarmes. Tardivo managed to escape custody and ran off; Guiraud narrowly missed being struck in the head after someone threw a stool—presumably brought outside by one of the café patrons—at him. The angry crowd disarmed both of the gendarmes with carefully-aimed stones, breaking off the hilt of Guiraud’s sword and causing Bécu’s to fly out of his hand. Bécu loaded his pistol and fired clumsily, frightening off enough of the attackers to enable him to reclaim his saber. Waving it defensively in front of them, Bécu and his colleague retreated to seek reinforcements. Due to the darkness of the evening, the two gendarmes only recognized three of the rioters in addition to Tardivo. In their absence, Sospel’s mayor, M. Pastoris, managed to disperse the remaining outraged rioters, who were, in his own words “crying out for justice,” but only after promising them that he would order an inquiry into the affair. The morning after the conflict, Pastoris wrote a quick note reassuring prefect Bargemon that he was having the incident investigated.¹⁷

The following day, the gendarmes’ superior officer, lieutenant commander Chailliéry, arrived in Sospel to begin his investigation of the assault. He found the attitude of the municipal authorities obstructive and unhelpful. The justice of the peace, who had remained in bed even though he “must have heard from his lodging what was going on, like the rest of the population,” flatly said that he could not issue arrest warrants for the suspects without orders from the public prosecutor. The mayor similarly dragged his feet, entreating the gendarmes not to make any arrests until the following day “due to the over-excitation of men still under the influence of libations.” In the late afternoon Chailliéry, who asked his superior officer if he could circumvent the mayor and justice’s orders, received authorization from his superior officer to make arrests, and demanded that the Justice of the Peace issue warrants immediately for the arrest of the four men he had recognized: Tardivo, Jean-Baptiste Raybaud, Ange Truchi, and Julien Albert. But by this time, the authorities’ delaying tactics had enabled Tardivo and Raybaud to flee town. Chailliéry was deeply frustrated by the experience, glumly noting that “it would have been easy to arrest [Raybaud and Tardivo] if the justice of the peace hadn’t remained inactive, an inaction

¹⁷ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, Gendarmerie, 25th legion, company of AM, section of Menton, Lieutenant Commander Chailliéry to squadron head in Nice, 17 August 1872; Mayor of Sospel to prefect AM, 16 August 1872.

that I can only explain by the fact that he's Sospellois."¹⁸ Certainly Tardivo, an employee at the post office, seemed to expect that he would escape punishment. He had actually arrived in his office as usual the morning after the conflict, only slipping away after Chailliéry's arrival.

The most telling part of Chailliéry's report came in the closing paragraphs, where the lieutenant pondered whether the quarrel was the result of separatist fermentation in the town. In an unusual tone rarely seen in such reports, one that could best be described as an exercise in "thinking out loud," Chailliéry reported, "These disorders might be related to the activities of the separatist party, but the inhabitants have been quiet and stayed completely mute about this, and all I can give is my own appreciation," he wrote. But his suspicions were aroused by the authorities' behavior and the resemblance of the incident to a similar fight that had occurred in May 1871, which had resulted in scathing articles in the department's Italian-language separatist newspaper, *Il Pensiero di Nizza*. Chailliéry also had difficulty believing that the presence in Sospel of Alfred Borriglione, the separatist politician who had been narrowly defeated in the February and July 1871 elections to the National Assembly, was merely coincidental. "Borriglione, the lawyer in Nice, has been here for six weeks at his property; did he have a hand in this affair, as I suppose he did, or doesn't he care? Nothing is for certain, and I can't affirm anything." Unsure of mayor Pastoris' loyalties, Chailliéry made sure to hint to the mayor that he believed that Pastoris, the municipal council, and all the inhabitants of the town might be separatists, which had elicited furious and energetic denials. The mayor, Chailliéry reported, defended himself against the allegation by complaining that the separatists were trying to prevent Pastoris from doing his job, and he identified Tardivo as an *enragé* separatist. But Chailliéry had difficulty believing this explanation, since Pastoris had also hired Tardivo as his private secretary. As Chailliéry pointed out, "[Tardivo] passes for being Italian in every sense of the term, so why is the Mayor employing him? Last year the mayor was hardly on the Gendarmerie's side. This year, he has been fair, and he seems to definitively want to support us, has he changed his opinion? Is he sincere? That's what I can't tell." Chailliéry closed by grumbling, "The gendarmerie has done its duty, and is ready to do it again, but one brigade isn't sufficient; in Sospel, you'd need a company of infantry to do the job."¹⁹

Chailliéry remained unsure whether the incident was a simple drunken café fight or a separatist demonstration, but the special police commissioner in Nice, Benoît—perhaps interpreting the incident through the prism of his own experience in the capital—had no doubt whatsoever. "The inhabitants of this area, who belong essentially to the separatist party, engaged in acts of violence and rebellion against the gendarmerie that took the proportions of a riot," he informed the Minister of the Interior.²⁰ Moreover the gendarmes and police agents were not alone in ascribing the conflict to separatists. A few days after the incident, prefect Bargemon received a letter from an inhabitant of Sospel, calling himself "P. Tertres" (almost certainly a pseudonym), who denounced the "misfortunes" that had recently occurred in the town. Tertres claimed that the commune was essentially in the hands of separatists and that peace would have been maintained if the commune had been assigned "an outsider (*étranger*) justice of the peace, a

¹⁸ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, report no. 863, squadron leader commanding the gendarmerie of AM to prefect AM, 16 August 1872; Gendarmerie, 25th legion, company of AM, section of Menton, Lieutenant Commander Chailliéry to squadron head in Nice, 17 August 1872; copy, Gendarmerie, 25th legion, report no. 152, Chailliéry to squadron head in Nice, 19 August 1872.

¹⁹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, Gendarmerie, 25th legion, company of AM, section of Menton, Lieutenant Commander Chailliéry to squadron head in Nice, 17 August 1872.

²⁰ AN, F 7 12243, CS of the Gare de Nice to MI, 17 August 1872.

true Frenchman... But what do you expect? We have here a judge from the area, French in appearance, but Italian in reality: in the last few days, his son who's just arrived from Italy, has still been engaging in propaganda against France. Really, the authorities weren't thinking when they placed a judge from Sospel in an area bordering Italy." Tertres' use of the term "foreign" to mean a Frenchman sent from *outside* the County of Nice is a reminder that many of the inhabitants of Nice supported government efforts to increase its presence in the annexed provinces. "If you were aware of everything," Tertres wrote, "I'm convinced that you wouldn't hesitate a minute to solicit his replacement without waiting for new problems to trouble and dishonor the area, when most of the inhabitants are good Frenchmen and true republicans."²¹

Sospel's mayor, M. Pastoris, clearly understood that his reputation had been undermined by the incident and threw himself energetically into the task of damage control. On the 19th, three days after the conflict, he submitted a detailed defense of his actions to the prefect. He began by providing an assurance that the "scenes of disorder" would not happen again, but then lamented the fact that "people have given inexact or exaggerated versions of this affair." His report of the events generally followed Chailliéry's, but Pastoris scrupulously avoided employing the words "Italian" or "separatist" in discussing the incident, even though the gendarmes had openly questioned him on the role that separatism had played in the conflict. Exemplifying the "muteness" of the inhabitants noted by Chailliéry, Pastoris' only reference to the issue was to dismiss what he called "unrelated matters that have nothing to do with the essential question." He blamed the Sospellois' "copious libations," while also implicitly acknowledging the commune's longstanding reputation as one of the hardest towns in all of the County of Nice to govern. "The resistance to the agents of public order is a consequence of the impunity that used to be accorded to similar actions," Pastoris said in closing his letter.²² Like many administrators before him, he excused the behavior of its residents by reminding the authorities of the continued aftereffects of lenient Sardinian governance.

By this time, however, Chailliéry no longer had any doubts that the affair was intimately connected to the question of separatism. When his superior asked him for additional details on the incident, Chailliéry wrote, "The gendarmerie will always be the object of attacks from the separatist party. You know that the local authorities did not help the gendarmes at all." He was absolutely incensed that Pastoris, the Justice of the Peace, and other municipal leaders were trying to blame the gendarmes for the affair. "Since when are troublemakers allowed to grab a prisoner from the hands of the gendarmes under the pretext that the arrest was illegal?" he asked indignantly. Chailliéry applauded Guiraud and Bécu's conduct, emphasizing that they had been in an extremely dangerous position. "There were over 50 troublemakers attacking [the gendarmes], trying to disarm them, and forcing them up against the parapet of the river, and if they had succeeded in taking their arms, Guiraud and Bécu would have fallen into the abyss," he wrote, noting that during a similar event in May 1871, members of the crowd had shouted out, "Into the water!" Chailliéry also had harsh words for Borriglione, even though there was no evidence to suggest any involvement on his part. "During my time in Sospel, I met M. Borriglione several times. I didn't know him, so I asked him who he was, and I could tell by the way that he looked at me that my uniform annoyed him. He was creating publicity, and shaking people's hands. His presence in Sospel; the passage of the bishop; the conduct of the justice of

²¹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, letter, P. Tertres to prefect AM, 19 August 1872. This letter contains significant spelling errors, which suggests that the author's first language was probably Niçard.

²² AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, Mayor of Sospel to prefect AM, 19 August 1872.

the peace during these disorders, the power of Baron Ange Faquier, an Italian colonel, who was walking through the streets of Sospel on the 15th making a parade of his dress; isn't all this at least sufficient to show that the population of this area is still Italian?" So indignant was Chailliéry with his experience in Sospel that he even suspected that the difficulties that he, Guiarud and Bécu had experienced with the sluggish and unreliable telegraph service might have been the result of intentional interference. "Might the employees of the two bureaus be separatists?" he wondered.²³

The Sospel incident of 1872 reveals both continuities and ruptures in the persistence of Niçois opposition to French rule of the County. Viewed in the context of the local factional rivalries and the frequent anti-government protests that Sospel—and many other rural towns in the Alpes-Maritimes—had experienced during the 1860s, the incident was not, in fact, very different from its predecessors. Most of its elements remained the same: a café conflict ignited by alcohol and broken up by French forces of order escalated into a riot featuring the expression of anti-French sentiment. What *was* new in Sospel in 1872 was the gendarmes' and the administration's heightened awareness of the event's possible connection to separatist political forces. From the outset, the administrators suspected pro-Italian backsliding as one of the precipitating factors, and their investigations essentially confirmed this view. Chailliéry, for example, concluded that culturally, at the very least, the Sospellois were crypto-Italians. The head of his squadron agreed, warning the prefect that the local authorities were going to try to downplay the affair to "a simple conflict between drunks and gendarmes. That would be playing their game and we wouldn't know the truth... In this area, we must make France respected by that ungrateful part of the population that has been conspiring against it since its reversals."²⁴

Troubling reports also emerged in other areas of the Niçois backcountry. In early 1872, the sub-prefect at Puget-Théniers remarked on a recrudescence of "Italian sympathies" in the normally fairly reliable Saint-Sauveur and Saint-Etienne cantons of the Tinée valley.²⁵ As for the area around the sub-prefecture, his colleague, the special police commissioner of Puget-Théniers, reported that the separatist party in Puget was small but that "it does everything it can to create hatred of the acts of the government."²⁶ In another report, he wrote that the separatists were seeking supporters by liberally dispensing favors. "The separatist party plays a great role, which means that it seeks to show itself generous to certain people, either in the locality or outside it, and to attract this way as many partisans as possible."²⁷ The most prominent separatist in the canton of Puget-Théniers was the notary Jean-Baptiste Faraud, a regular correspondent to the *Pensiero*, whom the commissioner complained about on multiple occasions during the year 1872. "Sometimes he criticizes the acts of the higher administration, both local and governmental, among others in the issue of the said journal on today's date, Wednesday the 25th of September, against the higher administration of Puget-Théniers."²⁸

²³ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, copy, Gendarmerie, 25th legion, report no. 152, Chailliéry to squadron head, 19 August 1872.

²⁴ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, report 885, squadron head, commanding the 25th legion of the gendarmerie, company of AM, to prefect AM.

²⁵ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 407, report, grid format, SP Puget to prefect AM, 30 March 1872.

²⁶ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 407, report, grid format, CS of Puget to prefect AM, 25 September 1872.

²⁷ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 407, report, grid format, CS of Puget to prefect AM, 25 November 1872; report, grid format, CS of Puget to prefect AM, 25 January 1873.

²⁸ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 407, report, grid format, CS of Puget to prefect AM, 25 September 1872.

To the evident delight of the commissioner, Faraud, along with several other men from Puget, was arrested by the gendarmerie on January 18, 1873, for failing to report for service in the mobilized guard; the prisoners were then transported to Toulon. According to the sub-prefect, Faraud had counseled a large number of other young men from Puget not to obey their mobilization orders. But even this stroke of luck ended up upsetting the commissioner, who was surprised by the outpouring of support Faraud received from his friends and associates—some of them government employees. “On Saturday the 18th almost all the members of his party, notably the administrators who walk hand in hand with this man, who says he is a separatist to the bitter end, went to visit Faraud in prison.”²⁹ In spite of the fact that Faraud’s *Pensiero* contributions had criticized Puget’s mayor’s administration, the mayor defended Faraud. “Having received his education under the Sardinian regime,” the mayor wrote apologetically, “I’ll certainly admit that [Feraud] has kept a great sympathy for the Italian government, but this sympathy does not go so far as to declare himself hostile to the French government. On the contrary, I think we can affirm with all sincerity that he is a man of order and a good and honest citizen, and that if in 1871 he didn’t respond to the call that was made to him, it’s because that they had declared him improper for the military service in a first *conseil de revision* because of an indisposition he continues to suffer from, and furthermore because in the confusion that reigned everywhere at that time, there were those who said that they should leave and others who said they wouldn’t.”³⁰ Given the fact that the mobilization of conscripts for the war effort had indeed been chaotic, the mayor’s pleas for leniency were not entirely unfounded, but they fell on deaf ears. Prefect Bargemon responded unsympathetically, saying that refractory recruits deserved imprisonment and that in any case he could not interfere with the military’s decision to imprison them.³¹

As Faraud’s involvement with the *Pensiero di Nizza* demonstrated, this newspaper remained influential in the Alpes-Maritimes. In May of 1872, prefect Bargemon asked the special police commissioner of Nice for an overview on the influence of the *Pensiero* on the population. The commissioner painted a portrait of a newspaper constrained by limited circulation, but that nonetheless was helping to sustain the separatist movement. He reported that its influence was mainly confined to Nice’s old town on the left bank of the Paillon river, and it was hardly read or sold in the more recently-constructed “French” districts of the city on the right bank.

It is only accidentally, when an article is recommended by its insults and violence towards France, that the inhabitants of the Right Bank decide to buy it and read it. Then indignation bursts out, and for 48 hours that the impression lasts, people demand legal action and rigorous measures. Then the article’s forgotten, and that much more easily as this separatist newspaper writes in Italian is only rarely asked for by the French element. But on the other hand if the *Pensiero* doesn’t have much readership or appreciation among the inhabitants of the new city, it serves as a pasture to the entire population of Vieux Nice and contributes powerfully to entertain the aspirations of this separatist world, to revive the hatred that the Italianissimes have vowed to everything French. This newspaper, whose systematic hostility is well known, has created since the Quatre Septembre a crowd of difficulties for administrative authority. It has motivated riots, provoked

²⁹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 407, report, grid format, CS of Puget to prefect AM, 25 January 1873.

³⁰ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 354, Mayor of Puget Théniers to prefect AM, 23 January 1873.

³¹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 354, draft, prefect AM to mayor of Puget-Théniers, 25 January 1873.

anti-national demonstrations, and will continue for a long time to follow this line in the goal of wearing out French authority and irritating the inhabitants, whom it considers invaders.³²

With this powerful testimony from the police commissioner, the prefect then wrote to the Minister of the Interior complaining about the deleterious effects of the *Pensiero*. He particularly pointed to series of issues of May 18 through 21, 1872. “It isn’t possible to demand more overtly the separation of Nice from France and to attack more violent our country than the author of the responses to the *Gazetta di Torino* does [in these issues.]”³³ In addition to its base in Vieux Nice, the *Pensiero* was in widespread circulation in several of the mountainous cantons of the Niçois back-country, “where, under its influence, Italian ideas develop with great vivacity,” Bargemon reported.³⁴ The evidence would tend to support his assertion: During the Sospel incident, the head of Chailliéry’s squadron had reported on the presence of the newspaper in the taverns, cafés, and clubs and circles of the area. “The articles are strongly savored in these anti-French clubs, where the separatist question is always discussed,” the gendarme reported.³⁵

Stung by some particularly nasty May 1872 articles in the *Pensiero di Nizza*, Bargemon wrote a report to the Minister of the Interior discussing whether it was preferable to take a conciliatory approach to the pro-Italian faction or step up repression of the party. “Up till now, I’ve tried as much as it’s in my power to show the most conciliatory sentiments regarding these men who, for the most part, have only been thrown into the separatist party by a sentiment of disappointed ambition, by a blow to pride, since a large number of those who demand most highly today the return to Italy were in 1860 among the most active partisans of the annexation to France. This tolerance, far from having disarmed them, seems to have only the result of encouraging their attacks; you’ll see by the articles of the *Pensiero* that I’m sending you.” Bargemon continued by suggesting that the government consider the possibility of rehabilitating Thiers’ dead 1871 legislation against separatists in the annexed departments:

I’m tempted to wonder whether it’s not necessary to show the separatists clearly that France is determined to maintain its rights to the provinces that freely gave themselves to her.... The vote of this law falling like a threat on the head of the separatists would be a sufficient response to those who hope to the bitter end to lobby for the destruction of the 1860 treaties, an advertisement given to all those who think that following our misfortunes France might be disposed, out of weakness or a desire to gain favor with Italy, to abandon the annexed provinces or at the very least the former County of Nice. In seeing that the government is decided to show herself firm and energetic on this point and that conciliatory ideas are far from a sign of weakness, many of whose who have become separatist and Italians to follow the trend and because they believed in the possibility of Nice’s return to Italy, would attach themselves again to France as soon as they’re assured that they won’t be abandoned by it.³⁶

The *Pensiero* was such a constant source of stress for the administration that it is surprising that Bargemon never suppressed it outright. He may have been afraid that such an action would invite a repeat of the 1871 riots, which had begun in earnest at the newspaper’s

³² AD Alpes-Maritimes, 2 T 17, confidential note, CS Nice to prefect AM, 17 May 1872.

³³ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 2 T 17, draft, prefect AM to MI, May 1872.

³⁴ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 2 T 17, draft, prefect AM to MI, May 1872.

³⁵ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, report no. 885, gendarmerie, 25th legion, company AM.

³⁶ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 2 T 17, draft, prefect AM to MI, May 1872.

offices. In 1872 and again in 1873, Bargemon dismissed the idea of prosecuting the newspaper in the courts for “inciting hatred of citizens and the government” because he was convinced that sympathetic local juries would side with the paper. In February 1873 the Minister of the Interior’s press section suggested that Bargemon at least minimize the *Pensiero*’s influence by revoking the paper’s authorization to be sold in public in the streets, in kiosks, newsstands and other public places. Initially, Bargemon strongly disagreed with that idea, feeling that it would simply result in an escalation of the paper’s anti-French discourse. He was also feeling slightly more bullish about the paper’s ability to sustain itself: the newspaper had undergone a series of managerial changes that suggested management and financial difficulties. On another level Bargemon almost seems to have grown accustomed to the hostility of the newspaper. “With the state of public opinion such a forbiddance would only increase this newspaper’s hostility, without at all putting an end to the separatist propaganda that exists and which, unless unforeseen events occur, will always exist in this department.”³⁷ But on October 31, 1873, Bargemon’s patience with the *Pensiero* came to an end after he read an article in that day’s issue. He abruptly reversed course and published a decree forbidding the *Pensiero* from being sold on the streets in the department. “The terms of the article,” he wrote in the decree, “leave no doubt about the separatist opinions of this newspaper, and are likely to excite citizens to hate the government and to create worries at a time when this department and the city of Nice in particular have the greatest need for tranquility.”³⁸ Even Italy’s Consul General in Nice, Bargemon claimed in a note to the Minister of the Interior, had supported the suppression of a newspaper “little esteemed by honest people.”³⁹

Savoyard Separatism and Gambetta’s Whistle-Stop Journey

In the County of Nice, the question of separatism maintained its ethno-cultural, pro-Italian nationalist ideology in the early 1870s. In contrast, the early years of the Third Republic witnessed the increasingly pronounced affiliation between republicanism and pro-Swiss separatist ideas in the Savoyard departments. The nationwide atmosphere of expectant anticipation about the future of the Third Republic took on an especially uncomfortable dimension in Savoy, where uncertainty surrounding the form of the government translated into a feeling of unsettled national belonging as well. Writing in July 1872, the special police commissioner of Saint-Julien characterized the area as “frankly republican, the majority of the populations is loyally sympathetic to the current government and seems disposed to support it resolutely, all the while expressing hopes that the Republic be founded as soon as possible in a definitive manner and on solid and durable bases.” The commissioner went on to report the encouraging news that the separatist opinion had “completely disappeared.” But he apparently meant only that open manifestations of pro-Swiss sentiment, such as Bonneville’s multiple declarations of 1870 and 1871, had ceased; the state of public opinion was hardly reassuring. “I shouldn’t exaggerate, there isn’t a lot of patriotism in the country and still it diminishes and tends to subside to the extent that burdens appear and become ever heavier.... There are still many who subordinate their patriotism and their attachment to France to the form of its government, and the

³⁷ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 2 T 17, draft, prefect AM to MI, 1 May 1872; draft, prefect AM to MI, no date but certainly late February or early March 1873.

³⁸ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 2 T 17, copy of prefectural decree, 31 October 1873.

³⁹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 2 T 17, draft, prefect to MI, 3 November 1873.

separatist movement would reappear inevitably if the government of the republic disappeared, or were seriously threatened.”⁴⁰

Savoyard separatism was, in some sense, the bulwark of the republican movement in Savoy: it was almost a kind of Savoyard “Mountain,” to borrow the terminology of the French Revolution, the most radical “action faction” of Savoyard republicanism. The distinction between this civic Savoyard separatism and the more ethno-cultural variety in Nice is especially evident with respect to their preferred publications. It would be difficult to locate Nice’s *Pensiero* on the traditional left/right political axis. Its overriding concern was not to engage national French political concerns but to disengage from France completely. Later in the decade, Edmond Magnier, the republican candidate in the 1877 elections, perfectly summed up the journal’s editorial line: “For the *Pensiero*, the populations of the former County of Nice should be completely disinterested by the form of the government of France. In its eyes, Bonapartism, monarchism, republicanism don’t exist, there is only Nizzardism.”⁴¹ In contrast, the newspapers qualified as “separatist” in the Haute-Savoie were all, without exception, republican newspapers. Every one of the major population centers of the Haute-Savoie had a republican newspaper, and each, according to the prefect, was contributing to the separatist problem. “One can’t doubt the maneuvers that are being put into place to attract the support of the populations of northern Savoy to express an opinion in favor of Switzerland and its institutions. Reading the *Journal de Genève* and the other newspapers printed in that city; the newspapers *Les Alpes* in Annecy, *L’Allobroge* in Bonneville, *Le Léman* in Thonon and *La Zone* in Saint-Julien is enough to convince the least incredulous: this is a national danger.”⁴²

Pro-Swiss sentiment, which continued to be most widespread in the precociously republican Bonneville and Saint-Julien districts of the Haute-Savoie, also existed in an attenuated register in the Savoie. In this southern department, at a farther remove from the attractions of Switzerland, the republican struggle was, correspondingly, less frequently and explicitly linked to pro-Swiss separatism. But a certain sense of separatist latency did persist nonetheless; as the police commissioner in Moûtiers characterized it, “the seed exists but there are no activities.”⁴³ Republican sentiment, on the other hand, was clearly on the rise. Chambéry’s fiercely republican *Patriote Savoisien*, which had frequently sounded the “republic or separation” theme in 1871, remained in widespread circulation. It continued to strike the “republic or separation” keynote, notably in an article in July 1872.⁴⁴ The special police commissioner of Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne noted in early 1873 that “radical” locals had been heard grumbling in a nearby café after reading an article in *Le Patriote Savoisien* alleging that the government’s recent nominations to the magistracy had not included enough of what the readers called “true republicans.”⁴⁵ By the end of the month, the sub-prefect in Saint-Jean clarified that it was the mayor himself who “responds to everything by saying that ‘there are too many monarchists in the high civil service.’ His radicalism is accentuating more and more, as

⁴⁰ AD Haute-Savoie, CS Saint-Julien to prefect HS, 7 July 1872.

⁴¹ AN, C 3229, *Protestation de M. Edmond Magnier, directeur-propriétaire de l’Événement, candidat des Comités républicains, contre l’élection de M. Roissard de Bellet, candidat officiel* (Paris : Imprimerie de Buisson et co., 1877), 43–44.

⁴² AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 53, draft, prefect HS to MAE ? 23 December 1873.

⁴³ AD Savoie, 9 M II 5, weekly grid report, police commissioner of Moûtiers, 23 February to 2 March 1874.

⁴⁴ AD Haute-Savoie, CS Saint-Julien to prefect HS, 7 July 1872. He signaled the issue of 4 July 1872, and, interestingly, noted that this newspaper was “read by the working class.”

⁴⁵ AD Savoie, 9 M II 5, weekly grid report, CS of Saint-Jean, 5 January 1873.

he's affirmed that the dissolution of the National Assembly alone can resolve this problem that causes him to fear, he says, for the fate of the Republic."⁴⁶ In the same report, the sub-prefect then turned to the question of separatism, indicating the continuing association of the two political currents. "Some only seem to be attached to France as long as she maintains the republican form of government. Thus, two people in the civil service, whom I can't name here, are supposed to have recently said the following words: 'Republic or Separation.'"⁴⁷

The affiliation between separatist ideology and republicanism in Savoy meant that the great republican leader Léon Gambetta's decision to make a trip to Savoy in the fall of 1872 presented both opportunities and pitfalls. The area's advanced republicanism suggested that his visit was likely to be favorably received, but it also opened the possibility that the separatist question might reappear. Gambetta's stated desire in Chambéry was, in fact, to give a speech commemorating the 80th anniversary of Savoy's *first* annexation to republican France in the autumn of 1792. Ultimately, events took a different course when Savoie's prefect unexpectedly cancelled the planned banquet. Instead, Gambetta received five separate batches of visitors in his apartment at Chambéry's Hôtel de Poste before making several visits to other towns in the department.⁴⁸ In his speeches and discourses in Savoie, Gambetta mostly remained on familiar ground. He reminded his audiences of the importance of the country's imperiled republican democracy and warned them of the threats of clericalism and reaction. But he did not neglect to strike some familiar Savoyard themes as well.

In an impromptu speech made to one of the delegations in his Chambéry hotel room, Gambetta made a pointed reference to a republican universalism that prevailed over the closed, exclusive tendencies of regionalism. "I, for one, am absolutely opposed to this legend that cuts France into pieces, that puts aside Bretons, Picards, Normans and Savoyards. No, no! In France, I know only Frenchmen, and if it's allowed the only ones whom I will put before the others are those outside our borders," he said, referring to the inhabitants of the lost provinces of Alsace and Lorraine.⁴⁹ At a private dinner on September 24, during which he announced (to thunderous applause) his intention to prolong his stay and travel throughout the Savoyard departments, Gambetta deployed the longstanding rhetoric of Savoy as a political *tabula rasa*, spared of the unfortunate political conflicts France had endured since the Congress of Vienna. "You've said to me, gentlemen: visit our country, journey through our towns and our villages, and you will encounter a homogenous population, ready for the practice of freedom, and which is ignorant of these party dissidences, these internal discords that, to our misfortune, drag on too long in other parts of France. I accept the good omen, gentlemen."⁵⁰ And in Albertville, which he reached on September 25, Gambetta appealed to the crowd by stressing the extent to which his voyage had cured him of the common and unfortunate stereotypes Frenchmen continued to harbor against Savoyards. "What strikes me about the voyage I'm taking," he announced at the appropriately-named Hôtel de l'Étoile du Nord, "is the incomplete and incorrect idea that people have of Savoy, to see the extent to which they are unfamiliar with you. People say that there are areas where there's a very strong, vigorous, democratic spirit, but they think that's only in small isolated areas, and only there. Not at all! Your country is remarkable among all parts of France

⁴⁶ AD Savoie, 9 M II 5, weekly grid report, SP Saint-Jean to prefect Savoie, 19 January to 26 January 1873.

⁴⁷ AD Savoie, 9 M II 5, weekly grid report, SP Saint-Jean to prefect Savoie, 19 January to 26 January 1873.

⁴⁸ Leon Gambetta, *Allocutions et discours prononcés par M. Gambetta pendant son voyage en Savoie, Septembre et Octobre 1872* (Paris: Édouard Blot et fils, 1872), vi.

⁴⁹ Gambetta, *Allocutions et discours*, 17.

⁵⁰ Gambetta, *Allocutions et discours*, 65.

because this energetic democratic spirit is not confined only to certain areas; it spreads onto all the roads, all the hamlets, in the cities and the countryside.... it is good, it is expedient, it is profitable for all of you to share this state of your spirits, to reveal it in order to dissipate prejudices, not only in France but on the other side of the Alps.”⁵¹ He also spoke warmly of Savoy as a land of refuge, a *territoire d'accueil*, from those proscribed or exiled after Napoleon III's 1851 coup d'état, conveniently ignoring the fact that the 1860 annexation had all but eliminated Savoy's ability to provide political refuge.⁵²

Following a short detour to Grenoble and the Isère, Gambetta reached the more politically problematic Haute-Savoie on September 28. In contrast to the comforting platitudes that had gone over so well in Savoie, Gambetta was forced to confront the question of separatism in nearly every major urban center in the Haute-Savoie, even those such as Thonon and Annecy where separatism had never proved as attractive as it had in the Saint-Julien or Bonneville arrondissements. Nowhere, in fact, was the question of French territorial integrity more obvious than at his first stop, in Thonon, where Gambetta received a deputation of men from the Genevan Society of Alsace-Lorraine, who came to pay homage to the venerable republican. Gambetta himself broke down in tears while speaking to the deputation about the lost provinces, and actually had to cut his speech short after slumping down into a chair sobbing publicly.⁵³ Later in the same evening, however, Ferdinand Dubouloz, the general councilor from the canton of Thonon, made a toast at a private dinner that evoked the “republic or separation” motto. “If separatist ideas really still existed in a part of the Haute-Savoie, we would be thrilled to have the opportunity today to demonstrate our sincere attachment to France,” Dubouloz began. “But if unforeseen circumstances required us to try once again a monarchical regime, oh! Then we would remember that close to us is a small country that has managed to conquer great freedoms, and wishes to maintain republican institutions. We would have this reminder, for there where liberty exists must exist also a *patrie*.”⁵⁴

Dubouloz's toast, which held out the possibility of transplanting Savoyard loyalties to Switzerland in the event of a monarchist restoration, was outrageous and clearly meant to be provocative. Gambetta responded in a dismissive tone, asking rhetorically, “My compatriots...do you think that France must be condemned ... by this last disaster to fall into dismemberment and voluntary dissolution?” He went on to retort that a France brought to her knees by defeat “is the one where we should say, there is the *patrie*.”⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the moment must have been an awkward one. The contrast between the fierce patriotism of the exiles from Alsace-Lorraine and the possibility of unpatriotic Savoyards hinting at a voluntary dismemberment of France could not have been more embarrassingly evident. One of the attendees at the Thonon banquet later shared his own opinions about the speech in a letter written to the newspaper *La République Française*. “I'm telling you in all frankness, Monsieur [the editor]; this [separatist] sentiment is current here, and it's in this sense that we have to understand what is called here the separatist opinion. There are no actual separatists, in the absolute sense of the word; but it would not be impossible to find potential separatists. In any case, you understand how the question is asked, and it's the monarchist gentlemen, troublemakers of Restoration who will decide whether people undertake this adventure.” Captivated by the rhetorical spell Gambetta had cast in responding to

⁵¹ Gambetta, *Allocutions et discours*, 79-80

⁵² Gambetta, *Allocutions et discours*, 84.

⁵³ Gambetta, *Allocutions et discours*, 146-147.

⁵⁴ Gambetta, *Allocutions et discours*, 148.

⁵⁵ Gambetta, *Allocutions et discours*, 149, 150.

Dubouloz, the witness remarked, “I understood why, in the middle of the day, when everyone else was full of joy, the deputation of Alsace-Lorraine left M. Gambetta’s crying. All were moved, penetrated simultaneously with sadness and recognition. We talked to them; they could only shake our hands, embrace us, swearing that they wanted to stay French, and would always want this. And now we’re talking about separatism here! No, no, sir, that’s not possible, and M. Gambetta brought it home to us in his discourse.”⁵⁶

Gambetta’s next stop, on September 30, was potentially the most hazardous. Bonneville was the town that had openly declared its intention to invite Swiss occupation of northern Savoy on several occasions during the Franco-Prussian war, and in 1872 the town remained true to its ambivalent reputation. At the 150-person banquet organized to celebrate Gambetta’s arrival, Bonneville’s mayor Constant Orsat—whose signature had featured on the May 1871 separatist resolution—laid the foundation for controversy by announcing, “We *montagnards*, we don’t have the language of beautiful words, but we have the language of the heart, the language of truth; we love the *patrie*, we love true patriotism; we love France and we want her, but understand us: we want republican France.”⁵⁷ Orsat was followed by his colleague François Dumont, a symbolically important speaker due to the fact that his grandfather had supported the first annexation of Savoy in 1792, but whose signature was the first on the printed announcement of the town’s May separatist resolution.⁵⁸ True to form, he announced, “I think I am speaking here for all of our compatriots, we’re no longer quite like our fathers, who loved France above the Republic; we love the Republic above France.”⁵⁹ Dumont then launched into a tirade against Napoleon III’s imperial regime.

Consistent with the sentiments that the Bonneville committee had expressed in 1871, Dumont was among the few Savoyards who dared question the free and fair nature of the 1860 plebiscite, openly equating it with Napoleon III’s national 1870 plebiscite sanctioning the liberalization of the Empire. Declaring that both had been characterized by massive imperial pressure, Dumont lamented, “Poor Savoy! Long balloted between France and Piedmont! We have learned, through all the misfortunes of preceding generations, to look not towards men, not towards countries, but to principles, to institutions especially ... We were sold, as we won’t call what happened an annexation, a free vote like that which occurred in 1792. No! in 1860, we were sold, the populations were intimidated, they were menaced with lovely hope of visiting Cayenne if they resisted the annexation; every means were used to get the timid to voted, and those who weren’t timid were granted lovely promises of roads and railroads.”⁶⁰

The controversial speech elicited laughter and applause, but also the parenthetical references of “noise” and “diverse movements” that nineteenth-century stenographers frequently used to indicate mixed reactions to a speech. Gambetta reacted to Dumont’s tirade with a much stronger rejection of separatism than he had made in Thonon. He began by announcing that what he had to say was “very delicate to express, due to the lying rumors that have been systematically spread about your national spirit.”⁶¹ He acknowledged that Savoy’s unique history as a longstanding border province helped to explain the appearance and attraction of separatist

⁵⁶ Gambetta, *Allocutions et discours*, 147-148.

⁵⁷ Gambetta, *Allocutions et discours*, 154.

⁵⁸ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 179, printed copy of the Republican Committee of Bonneville’s 12 May 1871 deliberation.

⁵⁹ Gambetta, *Allocutions et discours*, 163.

⁶⁰ Gambetta, *Allocutions et discours*, 163-164

⁶¹ Gambetta, *Allocutions et discours*, 165.

leanings: “In the toast that has just been made, what dominates is the republican passion of the Savoisien populations. We see that, tired of oscillations of fortune, weary, discouraged of having been time and again detached, attached, rejected and retaken, what has formed in Savoyard consciences is a sort of defiance and special susceptibility regarding the instability of France. That’s a delicate point to discuss, bitter especially for a man who puts nothing above France.” But Gambetta continued by arguing that the difficulties France continued to face did not constitute a reason to abandon France, reminding the audience that whatever Savoy had endured under both Bonapartes had been shared by the rest of the country. “Never forget, my friends, that the solidarity, the alliances, the true community of the soul, of the heart and of blood are founded and joined together in perils and misfortunes.” Throughout the speech, Gambetta played with the “internal” and “external” tensions of separatism, hinting rhetorically at the possibility that “separatism” was an exterior plot while also addressing its genuine foundation in the province. He alluded to “impure and sacrilegious thoughts” that were supposedly spread primarily by “agitators and superficial alarmists,” but still exhorted his audience not to equate their dislike of the monarchists for a dislike of the French nation. He ended with a defiant challenge to the monarchists. “I take the separatist idea, and I throw it into the face of my adversaries and tell them: Look! If you want the recovery of France and its development in the world, you must renounce your utopias and chimeras [a monarchist restoration] because today, to be a patriot and to be republican is the same thing, there is no recovery and diplomatic greatness possible without the Republic.”⁶²

Gambetta managed to avoid the subject of separatism during his brief stay in La Roche on October 1, but the question resurfaced at a dinner in Annecy attended by four deputies and several high-level mayors, adjuncts, and representatives to the departmental General and arrondissement councils. Louis Chaumontel, the mayor of Annecy and president of the General Council, gestured in the separatist direction by lamenting the liberties that Savoyards had sacrificed by leaving Piedmont to join France. Like Orsat’s speech in Bonneville, this was not exactly a rejection of French nationality, but nonetheless continued the uncomfortable tendency of republicans in the department to question the relative importance of national and political loyalties: “When, twelve years ago, not by conquest but by free will, we wanted to return into the great French family, the sacrifice for us was great. We returned to the *mère patrie* at the price of all our liberties, because above all we were French; in denying our personal interest, we knew very well that despotism would last only a time, and that freedom, sooner or later, would glimmer again on France, if not for us, at least for our successors.”⁶³ In Annecy and in Saint-Julien, the subject of Switzerland’s attractions also became more prominent. At another dinner held in Annecy, the parliamentary deputy François Taberlet encouraged Savoy to imitate Helvetian liberties: “Yes, it’s in Switzerland that we must go look for fertile examples; it’s there that Savoy must go look for inspiration of this spirit of conduct, this practical intelligence.”⁶⁴ When Gambetta reached Saint-Julien, Joseph Duboin, the deputy public prosecutor, began his toast by reminding those present that northern Savoy could easily have become Swiss in 1860 had it “claimed the nationality consecrated by the treaties of 1815 which assimilate it to the Helvetian Republic.” Duboin conceded that Savoy’s attachment to the French Republic—tellingly, not to France—had prevented this, but he proclaimed that northern Savoy’s special

⁶² Gambetta, *Allocutions et discours*, 168.

⁶³ Gambetta, *Allocutions et discours*, 176.

⁶⁴ Gambetta, *Allocutions et discours*, 200

interests with regard to the free-trade and neutralized zones still had to be respected, and that the Third Republic must be maintained at all costs. “It’s clear that Savoy, which has had under its eyes the example of Switzerland, may only be united to a people whose institutions are republican; France has become republican, Savoy has remembered it, and that is what makes Savoy indissolubly, we hope, attached to France, as long as France is republican.”⁶⁵

Gambetta seems to have understood that what some of these orators wanted was an acknowledgement that their annexation to France under the repressive Bonapartist regime had not come without frustrations and sacrifices. He was willing to provide that assurance. “Behind the Empire,” he said in Annecy, “you managed to perceive the true heart of France, and in spite of the disgust that you felt in your heart, you returned to the *patrie*! It’s that action on your part that engages us together, that links us to you forever.”⁶⁶ In Annecy Gambetta responded to the alternative national model provided by Switzerland—whose loose, federal structure provided another attraction to a long-autonomous province such as Savoy—by contrasting it to the infinitely preferable centralized unity of a democratic and free France. “You have at your doors a state that is a republic, a state that is free, which is wise, and which can give us an example of the practice of republican customs and all liberties, for example wisdom, economy and probity. It’s Switzerland: but Switzerland is a federal state, an ensemble of associated cantons. There is not that unity, that particular and special physiognomy...there’s no longer the union of associated provinces, it is not the Touraine associated to Provence, nor Picardy joined to Languedoc, nor Burgundy attached to Brittany, as the states are in the United States of America,” he proclaimed.⁶⁷ He also rejected the suggestion of conditional nationhood. “In spite of the legitimate attraction that the neighboring of Switzerland exerts ... you have proven even in the areas the closest to Switzerland, that French sentiment is vigilant and firm ... Allow me to believe that, whatever happens, there’s nothing to fear, nothing to doubt about this link cemented in misfortune.”⁶⁸

As in the former County of Nice, public opinion in the two Savoyard departments remained deeply troubled beneath the relative calm that followed the Terrible Year. A quiet but pervasive feeling remained that the populations were waiting for the outcome of the battle for the soul of the Republic, and were prepared to transplant their loyalties elsewhere should republican democracy die an untimely death at the hands of the conservatives. During his trip to Savoy, Gambetta did his best to ease this tension. All the orators had agreed with Gambetta that Savoy was and would remain firmly republican, and that the province was united behind Gambetta’s own efforts to support the struggling Third Republic. Behind that basic understanding, however, the orators’ views diverged on the relationship between Savoy and France, between republicanism and patriotism, and even on the nature of separatism itself. For some, such as François Dumont, separatism was a genuine and pragmatic response to the increasing threat of reaction from within the French government itself. For others, Gambetta included, separatism was a disloyal and unacceptable option.

The Persistence of Longstanding Tensions

With France militarily weak and politically divided—the last German troops were not evacuated from the country until late 1873—fears remained that an opportunistic Italy or

⁶⁵ Gambetta, *Allocutions et discours*, 208

⁶⁶ Gambetta, *Allocutions et discours*, 184.

⁶⁷ Gambetta, *Allocutions et discours*, 188.

⁶⁸ Gambetta, *Allocutions et discours*, 210.

Switzerland, perhaps supported by a vengeful and virile Germany, would take advantage of the situation to snatch Niçois or Savoyard territory or surreptitiously encourage home-grown separatist movements. This caused significant tensions between French and Italian authorities, especially in the former County. In the autumn of 1871, Italy's vice-consul in Nice sent Prefect Bargemon a furious letter after the *Journal de Nice* reprinted an violently anti-Italian article that had recently appeared in a Parisian newspaper. The vice-consul singled out for particular scorn the allegations that the Italian government had provided covert support to separatists in Nice and Savoy. "The loyalty imposed to neutral powers with respect to belligerents, the respect for the treaty of annexation of the County of Nice and Savoy to France, and the unshakeable principle of Italy not to create difficulties to its neighbor, as is publicly known, have been the constant line of conduct of the Italian government," he wrote forcefully. The vice-consul protested that, far from trying to influence separatists in the Alpes-Maritimes during the Franco-Prussian conflict, the Italian government had prudently abstained from sending ships to the port in Villefranche to protect its nationals—as it had to Marseille and Toulon—out of concerns for "sensitivity and deference towards the French government."⁶⁹

The French government remained concerned about the presence of Italian nationals on French territory, a situation exacerbated by the large number of immigrant workers in both Nice and Savoy. Following a tip from the Minister of Foreign Affairs in August 1872, shortly after the Sospel incident, authorities in the department began to worry about the activities of Urbano Rattazzi, the former Italian prime minister, who made a stop in Nice that summer. The special police commissioner reported rumors from Monaco that Rattazzi had met with separatist leaders, including an Italian named Joseph Carro, who had been expelled from both Monaco and Nice in 1871. "It seems obvious that the presence of Mr. Rattazzi in Nice, at this time of the year, can't be explained, and probably has to do with political questions. It wouldn't be surprising if this Italian personage had a mission of encouraging separatist maneuvers. They claim that he's been visited by M. Carro, to create an active agent who will accept the role of being a political voyager in the annexed departments."⁷⁰ By the following month, prefect Bargemon had decided that both Joseph Carro and his brother were likely separatist agents, and sent a dispatch to his colleagues in both of the Savoyard departments, warning them about the Carro brothers. "In the presence of the separatist intrigues which are taking place in the annexed departments, I think I should signal to you two Italian individuals who seem to me to have accepted the role of political envoys in these departments."⁷¹

The Carro incident had evident affinities with the "Swiss agent" and "Italian agent" themes that the administrators of the Second Empire had fallen back on to explain the emergence of opposition during the 1860s. But such rumors were particularly disturbing because they tended to spread in the areas of the annexed territories that had proved most receptive to separatist ideas in 1870–1871. At the end of March 1872, rumors spread that German and Italian officers were engaging in topographical studies on the territory of the Alpes-Maritimes. Most worrying was the news that Italians "with military airs" had been spotted in the Sospel canton sketching topographical maps under the pretext of leading hunting expeditions along the unfavorable Franco-Italian border.⁷² At the same time, the French consul in Genoa, Charles

⁶⁹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 350, Vice-consul of Italy in Nice to prefect AM, 9 September 1871.

⁷⁰ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, copy, Chevalier Nigra, Minister of Italy in Paris to MAE, 24 August 1872; CS of the Gare de Nice, confidential note, 25 August 1872.

⁷¹ AD Alpes-Maritimes 1 M 349, draft, report no. 201, prefect AM to prefects Savoie and HS, 20 September 1872.

⁷² AN, F 7 12243, CS Nice to MI, 29 March 1872.

Dieudé-Defly, reported a related rumor that an armed insurrection might take place in the Roya valley, just to the northeast of Sospel. One of his agents reported that several individuals involved in smuggling activities involving arms and munitions had left Nice to seek refuge in this mountainous part of the County, “where separatists supposedly prepare stores for a possible insurrection, which will break out during new political troubles they’re counting on in France.” The operation was said to be headquartered in the Piedmontese city of Cuneo, just over the Tende pass. Defly clearly had suspicions about the accuracy of the information, but nevertheless recommended special surveillance of this mountainous and remote area where bandits and smugglers had long been established.⁷³ Rumors of Italian agents making territorial surveys apparently circulated in Savoy as well; only in early September 1873 did Moûtiers’ police commissioner report that these rumors had finally disappeared, confirming that they had circulated earlier that autumn.⁷⁴

The government did little to dispel the spread of such rumors, and sometimes encouraged them. In October 1873, the Minister of the Interior’s Direction of General Security warned several prefects, including that of the Alpes-Maritimes, that the threat of Italian agents should be taken seriously. “Whatever foundation there is about the rumors running regarding military preparations made by our neighbors, and topographical studies to which they’re engaging on our frontier, it’s not in doubt that they have, for some time, maintained on our territory a personnel of agents who must be prudently, but actively, surveyed,” he wrote. Regarding the Swiss border, he reported that “refugees of the Commune” in Geneva were also seeking to enter France and create agitation. Unhappy with the quality of surveillance, the head of the Direction of General Security asked that it be stepped up as much as possible.⁷⁵ Other border towns such as Menton on the coast, though considered less separatist than those in the rural backcountry, also remained tense. In 1872 the special police commissioner of Nice noted that most of the Germans who were spending the winter season in the department were established in Menton, giving them ample opportunities to take “excursions that have the appearance of a healthy promenade, but are in reality military courses designed to facilitate their exact knowledge of the country.”⁷⁶ The following year, he reported that the Ministry of the Marine’s decision to shutter the sub-commissariat established there in 1860 had created significant security fears in the town. While acknowledging that the marine’s commissariat had not proven to be of great strategic benefit in Menton, Benoît maintained that it had nevertheless served the important political purpose of sustaining a visible sign of French power in this border area. “The men in the separatist world, recalling the recent suppression of the small garrison in Menton and the current decision of the marine, are practically spreading the word that this is the beginning of France’s evacuation from the area. In an annexed area where the French element must be imposed and where the functionaries enjoy a certain influence due to their situation, it is necessary to remind inhabitants of their true nationality and implant sentiments of patriotism in the spirit of the inhabitants, this measure is inopportune and impolitic.”⁷⁷

Fears of Swiss influence also persisted. Louis Peloux blamed for special scorn the influence of Genevan newspapers. “The Genevan press attacks every day the Catholics, whom they accuse of leading our country to war. The organs of this proof are widespread in the

⁷³ AMAE, CPC, Italie, Gênes, 3, Consul of France in Genoa to the MAE, 20 April 1872.

⁷⁴ AD Savoie, 9 M II 5, Weekly grid report, police commissioner of Moûtiers, 1 September to 8 September 1873.

⁷⁵ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 347, MI, Direction of General Security to prefect AM, 21 October 1873.

⁷⁶ AN, F 7 12243, CS of the Gare de Nice to MI, 29 March 1872.

⁷⁷ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, CS Nice to MI, 6 November 1873.

arrondissements of Thonon, Bonneville and Saint-Julien, that is the three provinces of the Chablais, of the Faucigny, and of the Genevois, that the Confederation seeks to assimilate to itself. The maneuvers of radicalism are a powerful means to entertain in these regions of our department a certain agitation in the spirits and a defiance of their interests regarding France.”⁷⁸

Another issue held over from the 1860s that took on increasingly political dimensions in both annexed provinces the early 1870s was the relationship between French civil servants and the inhabitants of Nice and Savoy. Administrators reported that a decade of annexation to France had done little to promote mutual sympathy between the *annexés* and the *Français de souche*. The administration in Savoy continued to find Savoyards overly sensitive, if not excessively proud, about their provincial identity. Writing of the populations of the Tarentaise, one of Savoy’s southern traditional provinces, in 1873, the sub-prefect of Moûtiers characterized them as “very sensitive on questions of national pride.”⁷⁹ Another common complaint, of even greater concern because of its direct relevance to the matter of pro-Swiss separatism, was that Savoyards were inconstant and fickle, likely to shift their loyalties whenever it best suit their material and political interests. “Cold and calculating,” was how the Haute-Savoie’s new prefect, Louis Peloux described the inhabitants of his department in 1873 before he had even taken his inspection tour of the territory.⁸⁰ The sentiment was echoed by sub-prefect Gaston Prunière of Thonon, who described the population of his arrondissement as “a cold people, little prone to impulsiveness and sentimentality, the Savoyards have above all the cult of material interests, and any Government that will assure order in the street, moral tranquility, and the extension of public fortune, entirely linked to private interests, will be acclaimed and supported in this country.”⁸¹ These insular characteristics combined to result in a population that supposedly had an excessive taste for autonomy and liberty. The sub-prefect of Albertville, in his report for New Year’s day 1873, reported that “the spirit of populations is generally good, with a great reserve of independence and a great aspiration to communal administrative freedom, which leads them to too much distrust of authority, and renders the action of self-proclaimed liberal men greater.”⁸² Prunière also noted that the presence of nearby Switzerland only served to reinforce and amplify this inherent provincial tendency. “The proximity of Switzerland has developed the taste of communal freedoms, and to a certain extent strongly compatible moreover with order, that of public liberties. This proximity of a republican country, prosperous, and tranquil, at least on the surface, caused them to welcome the revolution of the Quatre Septembre without fear, though without enthusiasm.”⁸³

The administrators in the Alpes-Maritimes made similar remarks about the inhabitants of the former County of Nice. Benoît, the special police commissioner, characterized the inhabitants of Nice as fickle in the extreme. “The Niçois, forgetting everything France has done for them, believed they could disengage themselves at the moment where our country was so cruelly afflicted by the Prussian invasion...they seek a way of avoiding the tax of blood, as the desertions at the time of the war made clear,” he reported in 1871.⁸⁴ Jules Bessi, the editor of the

⁷⁸ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 53, draft, Prefet HS? to MI? 25 September 1873.

⁷⁹ AD Savoie, 9 M II 5, report, grid format, SP Moûtiers to prefect Savoie, 6 April 1873.

⁸⁰ AD Haute-Savoie 1 M 70, draft, prefect HS to MI, 1 June 1873.

⁸¹ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 71, SP Thonon to prefect HS, 3 June 1873.

⁸² AD Savoie, 9 M II 5, grid, SP Moûtiers to prefect, 6 January 1873.

⁸³ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 71, SP Thonon to prefect HS, 3 June 1873.

⁸⁴ AN, F 7 12243, CS of the Gare de Nice to the MI, no date but the notation “excerpted for Arms and Munitions” dates it prior to 15 December 1871.

satirical political pamphlet *Le Fouet*, who had campaigned for the republicans in the July 1871 elections to the National Assembly, protested against the insular and exclusionist social tendencies of his compatriots. He noted that such behavior was hardly likely to encourage foreigners to continue to settle in the city for the winter season. “What can we say about certain logicians of our country who ... demand railroads and criticize endlessly the government that might provide them; who seek ways of attracting the greatest numbers of foreigners to their country, only to strike them with suspicion when they arrive?... This mania of limiting oneself to a narrow circle, in an area where we do everything to attract foreigners, seems pretty singular; but it has another inconvenience, of being unreasonable. That’s why we cry out against this system of exclusiveness, which seems to have run its course.”⁸⁵

As in the 1860s, the tensions between the populations of Nice and Savoy and the representatives of central government often centered on the allocation of places in the French civil service. The sub-prefect of Moûtiers’ December 1876 report could have been dated fifteen years previously, so accurately did it replicate the ongoing resentments between Savoyard and French populations regarding career opportunities. “Many inhabitants view with regret some French civil servants arriving in this country, complaining that all the jobs in Savoy aren’t occupied by Savoyards and they believe themselves wronged by this state of affairs,” he reported.⁸⁶ Yet from the administration’s point of view, there were still far too many natives employed in the civil service of the two departments. “The civil servants are largely from Savoy and are more Savoisien than civil servants,” sniffed prefect Peloux in 1873. “In the different administrations the procedures of hierarchical discipline are completely slack.”⁸⁷ The following year he continued to complain, “the magistracy ... is entirely in the hands of the Savoyards. Almost all the financial services, tax collectors, property managers, indirect taxation, public instruction, and so on are given to the inhabitants of the country. This is a serious matter for the government since, as I’ve indicated in far too many reports, the Savoyard is above all autonomous, and will sometimes go easy on his compatriot to the sometimes unconscious detriment of his service.”⁸⁸

An 1874 incident in Saint-Julien exemplified how continued tensions between Frenchmen and *annexés* could weaken government authority in two provinces where the administration most needed to strengthen it. For the religious feast of Corpus Christi, on June 7, the employees of different state administrations, the firefighting brigade, and a detachment of the 30th infantry line garrisoned in Saint-Julien, attended a great mass and procession in the town. But troubles occurred when Saint-Julien’s finance officer, M. Desmousseaux de Givré, a transplant from outside of Savoy, blithely took a seat on the high altar in an armchair reserved for a local guest of honor, right next to the recently-appointed sub-prefect, the Count de la Soudière. To signal their displeasure, the public prosecutor, two judges, the Justice of the Peace, and the bailiffs broke away from the procession in a huff as they were leaving the church, annoyed by Givré’s ignorance of precedence. The special police commissioner of Saint-Julien immediately suspected that the local newspapers would exaggerate the incident, and his worries were confirmed when he reported the following day that “the separatist notables and those with

⁸⁵ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 3 M 179, *Le Fouet: Journal humoristique et politique paraissant à volonté*, no. 5 (23 July 1871), 72–3.

⁸⁶ AD Savoie, 9 M II 5, grid, SP Moûtiers to prefect Savoie, December 1876.

⁸⁷ AD Haute-Savoie 1 M 70, draft, prefect to MI, no date but not long after taking control of the department, probably the summer of 1873.

⁸⁸ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 117, draft, prefect HS to MI, 13 August 1874.

advanced [political] opinions are talking about this extensively, they are seeking to inflate the facts and give it a political color, that is to say calling it a conflict between Frenchmen and Savoyards.”⁸⁹ As it turned out, it was not the republican and “separatist” *La Zône* newspaper but the local Bonapartist newspaper *L’Echo du Salève*—which normally could be counted on to support the administration—that added fuel to the fire by publishing a scathing article indicting Givré’s behavior. “It calls him a little rodent; the editors end by attacking the civil servants of all kind, who are siphoning from the budget, it claims. It reproduces verses copied, I think, from the works of Ponsard on honor and money, and makes malevolent allusions to the army. The captain and officer who commands the detachments are very irritated by this.”⁹⁰ That evening, in the town’s local *cercle* or salon, an incensed Givré, who believed that *L’Echo*’s editor, the lawyer Stanislas Goyon, had written the article (he was at the very least complicit in its publication), slapped Goyon in the face dramatically in front of the assembled company. The two got into a physical fight that had to be broken up by the other participants in the salon. “What scandals in this small town of Saint-Julien!” exclaimed the police commissioner. The episode was serious enough to result in the arrangement for a duel between Givré and Goyon. Cooler heads prevailed, and Goyon’s seconds never showed up.⁹¹

Prefect Peloux was furious, not only because the incident had escalated to such an extent but also because he was certain that Goyon would get off without punishment for his participation in the affair. “I fear that the Tribunal, which is composed only of natives, will not do their duty to protect these civil servants whose great shortcoming is to be very French, and neither Savoisien nor Bonapartist, and very opposed to radicalism. They only provide a warm welcome to functionaries of French origins as long as they share their radical and cosmopolitan opinions,” he complained. He also worried that Givré’s seemingly thoughtless occupation of the seat next to Soudière might compromise the recently-appointed sub-prefect in the eyes of the local population, even though Soudière himself had not had any involvement in the incident. “[M the Count de la Soudière] has tried, in vain, to break this barrier of coldness that French civil servants find when arriving in the department,” sighed Peloux. While faulting Givré’s conduct, the prefect still attributed his behavior primarily to the difficulty Givré had encountered as a French civil servant of a conservative government in a town riven by politics in an increasingly republican department. “[Givré] is very criticized in Saint-Julien. Equally hostile to the radicals and the Bonapartists who share influence in the city, he has not managed, given his ardor and his allure, and, let’s face it, his lack of tact, to take the position that a head of service should.... He rants and he raves, not without reason, against the lack of sympathy that is shown to French functionaries who aren’t Bonapartists or radicals.”⁹²

The worst problems occurred when Niçois and Savoyard civil servants in the two provinces became involved in separatist activities. As Chailliéry had found, Sospel’s Justice of the Peace had seriously hampered the gendarmerie’s investigation into the August 1872 conflict. And in Puget-Théniers, the special police commissioner in Puget-Théniers complained after the arrest of Jean-Baptiste Feraud in 1873, “it’s quite disagreeable to see that several civil servants are associating with the principal leaders of this party. It starts people talking ... to see functionaries take the side of people who show themselves in public as being the openly unfurled

⁸⁹ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 527, CS of Saint-Julien to prefect HS, 8 June 1874.

⁹⁰ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 527, CS of Saint-Julien to prefect HS, 13 June 1874.

⁹¹ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 527, CS of Saint-Julien to prefect HS, 13 June 1874; AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 117, draft, prefect HS to MI, 17 June 1874.

⁹² AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 117, draft, prefect HS to MI, 17 June 1874.

flag of the separatist party.”⁹³ In fact, those civil servants who were too outwardly favorable to Italian ideas in Nice could expect harsh treatment. In October 1871, prefect Bargemon asked the Minister of the Interior to fire the postmaster in the back-country hamlet of L’Escarène, M. Romulus Arnulf, whose longstanding reputation as an anti-French campaigner predated the Franco-Prussian war. “At various moments already, his demonstrations, overtly separatist and hostile to France, have attracted serious reproaches by my predecessors. From about 1868 an inquiry into his conduct occurred following violent dissensions in L’Escarène, that showed that M. Arnulf was the inspiration of the enemy party of the administration and of France, and profited from his position to spread Italian newspapers the most hostile to France, such as the *Movimento, Le Revere, Il Diritto, Le Pimgolo*,” reported the prefect. Following reports of renewed disturbances in L’Escarène in October 1870, the government had conducted another inquiry into Arnulf’s conduct. “The result proved that all Italian movements were fomented by M. Romulus Arnulf and his brother, a priest and schoolteacher in Italy. There were hostile proclamations, threats and fights in the street, cries of ‘Long Live Prussia!’ and ‘Down with France!’, and M. Arnulf was still the head of these movements. His anti-French propaganda was still signaled during the February and July elections, and in the presence of all these facts, I believe, M. le Minister, that it’s not possible for the administration to continue to be tolerant regarding a man who abuses to this extent the situation provided by the administration.”⁹⁴

Out of political necessity, the government tried to encourage greater and more sustained contact between Frenchmen and the inhabitants of the provinces. Nice’s special police commissioner Benoît, whom one might assume had more pressing concerns than promoting cultural unity, noted with satisfaction that large numbers of French nationals from the *Outre-Var* were wintering in Nice in December 1874. “The contact and presence of our compatriots may help extend the relations of interest and family between Niçois and Frenchmen, and modify, if this continues for a few more winters, the not-terribly-established ideas of the native populations regarding France,” he remarked hopefully.⁹⁵ With regard to the civil service, administrators almost inevitably countermanded local public opinion by requesting that Savoyards and Niçois be assigned to jobs elsewhere in France. “To proceed to a more complete fusion [of Frenchmen and Savoyards] it seems desirable that Savoyard civil servants be sent in greater numbers to the interior of France,” the sub-prefect of Moûtiers wrote in 1876.⁹⁶

Everyday Separatism

The fragile nature of the Third Republic, the ease with which rumors multiplied and spread, the persistence of cultural tensions between Savoyards and Niçois on the one hand and Frenchmen on the other, and the still-recent trauma of the Commune and separatist disorders of 1871 meant that French administrators in Nice and Savoy evaluated even everyday incidents to determine if they revealed evidence of anti-French sentiment. In the former County of Nice, flags and cockades caused a disproportionate amount of hand-wringing. In September 1872, an auditor in the weights and measures service attended the fair and festival in the town of La Croix, just to the north of the sub-prefecture at Puget-Théniers. Arriving in the town, the official was horrified to see the Italian national flag flying proudly next to the French flag on the Baron d’Auvare’s balcony, overlooking the square where the town dance was to be held. He also noticed that

⁹³ AD Alpes-Maritimes, grid report, CS of Puget-Théniers to prefect AM, 25 January 1873.

⁹⁴ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, draft, prefect AM to MI ? 4 October 1871.

⁹⁵ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 357, CS of the Gare de Nice to MI, 17 December 1874.

⁹⁶ AD Savoie, 9 M II 5, report, grid format, SP Moûtiers to prefect Savoie, December 1876.

twenty or so young men, who fired their muskets during the festival, were all wearing green ribbons mixed into the French cockades they were wearing. The official grew more uncomfortable by the fact that the French cockades had been made with violet ribbon replacing the red, which could not be found at La Croix or in Puget-Théniers. “It’s clear that the youths had the talent to avoid wearing the true French colors,” he wrote. But what shocked him the most was the fact that he was the only person in town at all perturbed by the ostentatious display of mixed signals of national belonging. “There were several priests, the tax collectors of Puget-Théniers, notables of the surrounding area: everyone blissfully watched the exhibition of Sardinian or Italian colors. I was the only one who had a painful impression.” When the upset official asked a musician and several other participants at the feats to explain why they were wearing Italian colors, he was told that it was the result of the Baron d’Auvare’s influence; for the baron’s brother, an artillery general in Italy, was then visiting La Croix. He reported that the inhabitants told him, “Well, what do you expect? With the Auvare family, everyone’s Italian in La Croix!’ ... I won’t hide the fact, *M. le Préfet*, that I was really tempted to telegraph to the Minister of the Interior.”⁹⁷

The auditor’s story was not entirely coherent: if red ribbons were unavailable in the area, then it would have been difficult to form either French or Italian cockades. But his visceral reactions to the perceived Italian elements of the festival were palpable, and it was certainly the case that regional festivals such as that held in La Croix invited opposition and incited worry. One event that caused concern in Nice in multiple years was that of the Assumption on August 15. In addition to its religious significance, the date was the feast day of both the overthrown Napoleon III and of Nice’s quasi-mythological, historic heroine, the washerwoman Cathérine Ségurana, who had supposedly led the Niçois charge against invading French and Ottoman armies in August 1543. It was this festival dear to Niçois hearts that was being celebrated in Sospel the night that Tardivo and his friends in Sospel had attacked the gendarmes in 1872. That year was also the first time since the fall of Empire that the festival was celebrated in Nice, where members of the *Pénitents Bleues* religious congregation set off fireworks in the Place Garibaldi in front of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Although it did not escape his notice that Cathérine Ségurana was the “liberator and Joan of Arc of this country,” the special police commissioner of Nice was actually more concerned by rumors that the festival was a pretext for an “imperialist demonstration” than by its regional and potentially separatist content.⁹⁸

But the festival’s connections to Italian nationalism became more pronounced in subsequent years. During the 1875 celebrations of the feast day, a large Italian flag appeared on the balcony of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher’s neoclassical-Baroque façade, supplemented by four other Italian flags, the British Union Jack, the American flag, and that of Spain which were hung from other buildings in the Place Garibaldi. Apparently, such decorations had been common for several years. “Since 1870 the tradition has developed of hanging on each side of the balcony, two enormous Italian flags to which very small French flags are added,” reported the central police commissioner. The practice had been forbidden in 1874, and thus the commissioner was not pleased by its reappearance in 1875. Following the police’s requests, the prior of the *Pénitents Bleues* removed the Italian flag placed on the façade of the chapel, but the local inhabitants were reluctant to remove the other four. And in the nearby rue Sainte-Claire, the police observed an Italian flag hung next to a red and white flag—the colors of the House of

⁹⁷ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, Auditor of Weights and Measures to prefect AM, 24 September 1872.

⁹⁸ AN, F 7 12243, CS of the Gare de Nice to MI, 16 August 1872.

Savoy. One of the street's inhabitants complained to the police, "If you take away the Italian flags then you have to remove the French ones also."⁹⁹ The gravity of the situation was compounded when word reached the police commissioner that the city's separatists were sending hostile dispatches to the Italian nationalist press, including Ravenna's *Il Ravennate*, about the French government's outlawing of the practice. According to the commissioner, the articles not only blamed the French authorities but excoriated the Italian consul in Nice for permitting "insults" to their flag.¹⁰⁰

In March 1876, police sub-inspector Barraya encountered a man named M. Ceriani driving his wagon on the chic *Promenade des Anglais* decked out with a French tricolor and an Italian flag, with the flag of the city Nice between the two of them. The authorities might have interpreted this display in a positive light, symbolizing the union of France and Italy in a province that had important cultural and historical ties to both states. But in an interesting and telling remark, the police commissioner complained that "the dualism that seems to be everywhere seemed even more obvious in this state." His use of the term "dualism" reveals the continued belief, at least among authorities, that displays of hybrid or mixed Niçois identities were still not desirable in the province. Barraya, whom the police commissioner specifically noted was himself a Niçois, removed both the Italian and French flags, leaving just that of Nice on the cart. Ceriani apparently understood what had caused Barraya's intervention; the following day, his wagon reappeared in the Cours Saleya, this time displaying flag of Nice between two French tricolors.¹⁰¹

A different kind of marker caused a problem in Annecy in 1873, where a local *curé*, abbé Mercier, wanted to erect a gravestone on the tomb of his predecessor Jacques Bouvet, who had died in 1829. But Mercier's proposed inscription made an uncomfortably ambiguous reference to Franco-Savoyard relations: "Here lies in peace Jacques Bouvet, of excellent memory, *Docteur ès droit*, professor of holy theology, intrepid missionary under 10 years of French persecution." Mercier likely intended for the inscription to memorialize the anti-clerical activities Savoy had endured during its previous annexation to France during the Revolution, not the annexation of 1860. Nevertheless, Annecy's mayor immediately contacted the prefecture, saying that these words "not only are inconvenient, but by their generality seems to denature the history of our annexation to France during this era, and to even now separate Savoy from France."¹⁰² Prefect Peloux agreed, ordering him to refuse authorization to an inscription that would be a "true separatist provocation."¹⁰³ Peloux also claimed that Mercier had written, or at least had inspired, an article that appeared in the newspaper *L'Univers*, against the prefect's administration.

In 1875 the government grew concerned about another type of memorializing in both annexed provinces: commemorative medals. In March, the Minister of the Interior's General Direction of Public Security requested information about Nice's plan to issue a commemorative medal in honor of the year's successful Carnival. Only since 1873 had the city of Nice formally planned, organized and overseen the celebration of mardi gras, in order to increase security and reduce the chaos of the traditionally unregulated activities associated with the popular festival.

⁹⁹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, CCP to prefect AM, 15 August 1875.

¹⁰⁰ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, CCP to prefect AM, 24 August, 27 August, and 30 August 1875.

¹⁰¹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, CCP to prefect AM, 2 March 1876.

¹⁰² AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 76, Mayor of Annecy to prefect HS, 5 December 1873; copy, Joseph Tavernier to Mayor of Annecy with proposed inscription, 29 November 1873.

¹⁰³ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 76, draft, prefect HS to Mayor of Annecy, 5 December 1873; draft, prefect HS to MI, DSG, 5 December 1873.

The planned medal was to feature the words *Nicae Civitas* on the front, with the arms of the city, and on the obverse the inscription “The population of Nice in recognition of the 1875 Carnival Committee.” Yet the year’s festivities had actually proved controversial, for the Committee went against public opinion when it awarded prizes to the floats entered in the parade. First prize went to a gigantic float dedicated to the inevitable Cathérine Ségurana, which depicted her draped in purple and gold robes, standing on a platform along with Niçois and Turkish soldiers brandishing sabers constructed out of cardboard. Critics panned the float, calling it “un-carnavalesque,” and declared that Ségurana’s dress had been copied from the curtain at the Italian theatre. They preferred the far more imaginative and appropriately grotesque float entered by M. Cuggia, which depicted a medieval château crowned by bats perched on its turrets, their wings dramatically outstretched, and supplemented with skeletons dressed in rabbit and cat fur. The Committee’s decision to award first prize to the lackluster depiction of the provincial heroine so disappointed the public that a spontaneous committee formed and took a collection to present a “prize of public opinion” to the *Ratapignata* (bat) float: a banner of scarlet silk with gold fringe, embroidered with a depiction of the float and the inscription, “To the bats, in remembrance of the carnival of 1875.” The banner was hung on a flagpole surmounted at the top by a golden bat.¹⁰⁴

Due to the controversy, Prefect Decrais, who had long been suspicious of mayor Auguste Raynaud’s commitment to France, hesitated over whether to recommend authorization of the commemorative medal. On the one hand, he acknowledged that the Carnival Committee had mounted a largely successful event that had attracted visitors as well as the winter residents, while also raising funds for the poor. But he went on to write, “The decisions, regarding the prizes awarded, were by no means all ratified by the public and by the press. Here also, politics seemed to have played a role, and the Committee, presided by an Italian and composed in great majority of Niçois, was unable, in the judgments rendered, to free itself completely from all bias and partiality.” In an initial draft of his letter, Decrais had been even more blunt in his assessment, writing that the Committee had not stood clear of “its Italian sympathies, and its separatist tendencies,” though he edited this language out of the final draft. Ultimately Decrais authorized the striking of the medal, but planned to use the occasion to send a warning to Raynaud and the municipality. “The information I requested of the Mayor,” he wrote, “should let him know that the Government is by no means uninterested in what’s happening in Nice, and that its attention is, on the contrary, constantly alerted to this city. That is a sufficient result, and I hope it will lead to another: that the question of nationality will have no part in the festival and celebrations of next year’s Carnival.”¹⁰⁵

Almost simultaneously, the authorities in Savoy faced a similar problem of deciding whether a commemorative medal might encourage unwanted political maneuvering. In July 1875 the two Savoyard prefectures, Annecy and Chambéry, sent delegates to Bern to present a medal thanking the Swiss federal government for its support of Savoyard soldiers during the Franco-Prussian war. Inscribed with the words “To the Swiss republic, the departments of Savoy are grateful for the care given to our soldiers of the Eastern army,” the medal’s obverse featured engraved allegories of France and Switzerland, depicted as two women shaking hands. During the presentation ceremony, the Savoyard delegates were received at the Swiss Federal palace, where they read an address entitled “To the Children of Free Helvetia” to Johan Jakob Scherer, the member of the Federal Council responsible for the Foreign Affairs ministry. The French

¹⁰⁴ Robert Latouche, *Histoire de Nice*, Vol. 2 (Nice: Ville de Nice, 1954), 166.

¹⁰⁵ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 360, draft, prefect AM to MI, 12 April 1875.

ambassador in Bern was highly upset by the fact that the delegates from the two Savoyard prefectures had not contacted the French embassy prior to making their presentation. While he scrupulously avoided using the “separatist” label, the ambassador’s typically veiled diplomatic language belied his fears that the event might provide an impulsion to homegrown separatist movements. With the memory of Bonneville’s 1870–1871 attempts to invite Swiss occupation and annexation of northern Savoy still fresh, the ambassador remarked, “Direct relationships established between two French cities and a foreign government could serve later as a precedent and open the way for less inoffensive steps. If we allow municipal councils of Savoy, outside of the prefects and the French embassy in Switzerland, to represent themselves by delegates to the Swiss government, we open the door to other municipalities following this example. At any time the Chablais and the Faucigny could undertake with the president of the Confederation a dialogue whose moral effect would be regrettable.”¹⁰⁶

The French ambassador’s pointed reference to the Chablais and Faucigny—the two traditional Savoyard provinces comprising most of the neutral and free-trade zones, and the most separatist—left no doubt that the underlying issue of concern for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was the possibility of Savoyard separatism. The Minister of Interior was also highly indignant, chastising the Haute-Savoie’s prefect Breynat for allowing the deputation to depart for Bern. “I find it highly unlikely that you could have been unaware up to the last minute of activities so difficult to keep secret, such as an open subscription or the sending of delegates, and I have real difficulty in explaining in any case that you didn’t feel the need to inform me about this beforehand.”¹⁰⁷ The prefect defended himself against the charges, explaining that the initiative had originated—naturally—during the republican and Savoyard Jules Philippe’s tenure as prefect. While promising to reprimand the mayor of Annecy and others involved in the project, he felt that it would actually be harmful to carry the rebuke any further. “Separatist ideas are losing importance every day.... giving a too great importance to such an old affair because it goes back to 1872 would expose us to thwart the French movement which is accentuating.”¹⁰⁸

As these incidents suggest, it was not always possible to discern whether the participants in these cultural and commemorative activities intended to make covert political statements by displaying flags, celebrating certain festivals, or having medals struck. But the French government’s reaction to them reveals the persistence of the national tensions that had appeared in the wake of the Franco-Prussian conflict. Some observers, in fact, were concerned that the government’s vigilance was actually having a counterproductive effect, giving disparate and fragmented separatist elements a unity and coherence that they never actually possessed. In responding to Bargemon’s letter about the possible subversive activities of the Carro brothers, Jules Philippe argued that government concern—indeed, government obsession—about Savoyard loyalties was in fact encouraging and sustaining the formation of separatist sentiments. “Not only have certain tendencies of annexation to Switzerland been exaggerated,” he wrote to Bargemon, “but still they’ve been created and are said to have appeared in certain northern arrondissements of the Haute-Savoie.”¹⁰⁹

* * *

The Franco-Prussian war was undoubtedly a rupture in the history of Nice and Savoy’s integration into France. It had clearly provoked some Niçois and Savoyards to openly question

¹⁰⁶ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 53, copy, French ambassador in Switzerland to MAE, 3 July 1875.

¹⁰⁷ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 53, MI to prefect HS, 24 September 1875.

¹⁰⁸ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 53, draft, prefect HS to MI, 5 October 1875.

¹⁰⁹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, prefect HS to prefect AM 25 September 1872.

the desirability of maintaining the settlement of 1860. Yet the war disguised remarkable continuities in the relationship between the annexed provinces and France. As in the 1860s, French administrators still found themselves stymied by their attempts to bring French administration to the two provinces, while Niçois and Savoyards remained suspicious and annoyed by their perceived arrogance and intrusion. The café fights in Nice and in Sospel, for example, were not appreciably different in form or content from similar incidents that had occurred in the 1860s. The inhabitants and administrators of these areas were still becoming accustomed to French rule. But these incidents caused significantly more concern than they had under the Second Empire because of the government's heightened awareness that French territorial integrity was not inviolable, as the German annexation of Alsace and Lorraine had demonstrated. Whether covert or overt, demonstrations of separatism in Nice continued to be oriented toward the alternative Italian nation-state, while in Savoy they drew strength from the attraction of democratic Swiss politics.

As we will see in the next chapter, the key factor hindering the banishment of the separatist specter in the annexed provinces would be the stability of the Third Republic. The conflict in Saint-Julien involving Givré, Goyon and Soudière had been inflamed by the cultural tensions between Savoyards and Frenchmen, but also by the political conflict between republicans and conservatives. Even as he denied that the pro-Swiss separatism in the department had any genuine or spontaneous support, prefect Jules Philippe conceded that “only in one case might public opinion be turned around [in a pro-Swiss direction],” he wrote to prefect Bargemon, “in the event that new political disruptions were to agitate France. It's in this sense that I've drafted all our reports to the government concerning this question, and I think I'm correct.”¹¹⁰ His prediction—that separatism's only chance in the Haute-Savoie was further political disorder—would be entirely borne out. In the increasingly republican Savoyard departments, the ignominious fall from power on May 24, 1873 of Adolphe Thiers, the architect of the conservative republic, and his replacement as the head of state by the reactionary Marshall Patrice de MacMahon caused a new upwelling of separatist murmurs. As the political battle over the Third Republic entered its final phase, so too did the question of separatism in Savoy. And separatism in Nice, though still retaining its pro-Italian dimension, would gradually and incrementally become inextricably linked to that same struggle.

¹¹⁰ AD Alpes-Maritimes, prefect HS to prefect AM 25 September 1872.

Chapter 7 Republic Over Nation

On July 20, 1873, the small town of Cluses in the Bonneville arrondissement of the Haute-Savoie hosted a regional musical festival. The resolutely non-political event brought together sixteen musical or choral societies of the arrondissement and several companies of firefighters. Under the watchful eye of Bonneville's brigade of gendarmes, the festivities began innocently enough, with the attendees gathering for a special musical mass at the parish church. But like the banquet campaigns in the months prior to the revolution of 1848, the celebratory dinner itself, which took place under the covered market hall, proved politically disastrous. Bonneville's band gamely struck up the forbidden national anthem, the Marseillaise, as the guests assembled at the banqueting tables. M. Blanc, a Bonneville lawyer who had signed the town's May 1871 resolution, and Joseph-Alfred Tétaz, the general councilor from the Taninges canton, gave the first few toasts, which began innocuously but gradually alluded to politics, and ended with repeated cries of *Vive la République!* When the floor passed to M. Suchart, the mayor's adjunct in La Roche-sur-Foron, the meeting became ever more political. The appalled gendarmes were particularly disturbed by Suchart's exhortations of "Death to Bonapartists, death to monarchists and kings, down with tyrants, the life of kings is the death of peoples, especially for us Savoyard peoples!" which the audience graciously punctuated by applause and a chorus of "*Vive la République!*" Another orator, M. Rana, a clockmaker in Sallanches, encouraged the audience, "Let's unite to this beautiful Switzerland, let us imitate her, only with her will we be happy," an excerpt that the gendarmes complained was "specifically designed to encourage separatist maneuvers." The banquet ended at five in the afternoon, with Bonneville's band again parading through the streets of Cluses paying the Marseillaise.¹

The dismissal of Thiers on May 24 and his replacement by an avowed partisan of monarchist restoration, Marshall Patrice de Mac Mahon, highlighted in stark relief the Republic's tenuous moorings. The arrival in power of the new "Moral Order" regime was the most serious crisis the Third Republic had encountered since the elections of February 1871. Republicans throughout the country were thrown onto the defensive. The incidents at the Bonneville musical festival at Cluses were among the first examples of a wave of separatist and republican activities in the Haute-Savoie in the months following Thiers' fall. In the Alpes-Maritimes, the fall of Thiers had less immediate political impact, but the prospect of a resolution to the ongoing Franco-Italian separatist conflict seemed distant. Yet in both Nice and Savoy, the period between 1873 and 1878 witnessed the gradual exorcism of separatist sentiments in both of the annexed territories. This chapter examines how and why the strengthening of republican sentiment throughout France in the 1870s proved to be the undoing of separatism as a feasible oppositional movement in both Nice and Savoy.

* * *

The Moral Order in the Haute-Savoie

The new prefect sent by the Moral Order to the Haute-Savoie, the conservative Louis Peloux, quickly arranged to make a *tourné de révision*, or an inspection trip, through his department. One of the main reasons for his journey, as he reported to the Minister of the Interior shortly before his departure, was to investigate the nature and strength of the separatist current in the department; he suggestively noted that Philippe had left him no information on the subject.²

¹ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 117, gendarmerie, company of HS, arrondissement of Bonneville, report of 20 July 1873.

² AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 70, draft, prefect HS to MI, 1 June 1871.

On his return, he wrote a comprehensive account of his impressions. Culturally, he found little to attract the inhabitants of the Haute-Savoie to Switzerland—or, less comfortingly, to France. His portrait of the Savoyard population focused mainly on its autonomous characteristics. “The smallest peasant ... loves in reality neither Italy, nor Switzerland, nor even France. He likes his hometown (*clocher*), and although he often emigrates to look for his fortune elsewhere, he returns voluntarily and wears very highly his love for his native country,” Peloux wrote. “Successively balloted from one country to another, [the Savoyard] exercised on Piedmont an influence that he can’t hope to have in France, and he finds himself relegated to the background. Since Piedmont has become Italy, all the links of affection have been broken; the Faucigny and the Chablais don’t really love Switzerland either. They feel strongly that they would be isolated, that Geneva would do nothing for them, since this town which absorbs almost all their products would have no intention of giving them any special advantages.” But Peloux did sense that the area’s natural economic market in Geneva, and Switzerland’s decentralized structure, was encouraging northern Savoy, even if reluctantly, to gravitate towards its northern neighbor. “By their commercial relations and by the currents of their business, they find themselves led along to the market of Geneva, and this city and other localities on the shores of Lake Geneva attract to them all the foodstuffs and productions of the country. The Faucigny (the *arrondissement* of Bonneville) doesn’t want to be annexed to Switzerland unless it’s allowed to form an independent canton. That is the secret thought of some of its inhabitants, which is combated by other interests, and by the clergy.... From this situation there’s a certain touchy bad humor, which causes them to consider everything that is not Savoisien as foreign.”³

In this initial report, Peloux discussed culture and economics but remained largely silent about the influence of republican politics on the separatist question. In subsequent reports he gave greater weight to the political dimension of the problem. On June 12, he noted the attraction of the area to Thiers’ conservative republic. “This form of government has many partisans in Savoy which is autonomous and sees her neighbors administer themselves under the regime of the Helvetican Confederation,” he reported.⁴ A week later, he expanded on this idea, explaining, “The republican form of government is not frightening in Savoy, where it’s believed it can be combined with parliamentary practice, of which the best spirits in this department are partisans. But above all, people want a government that ensures tranquility, the certainty of tomorrow, and the respect of local liberties that the inhabitants enjoyed under the Sardinian regime.”⁵ It probably did not occur to Peloux that in the political turbulence following Thiers’ removal, France was far less likely to ensure tranquility, autonomy or the respect of liberties than Switzerland.

Such were the waters Peloux was navigating prior to the disastrous Cluses banquet. Peloux, who had recently granted authorization for a successful banquet held by the mutual-aid society of Thonon, had been hesitant to authorize the Cluses gathering, not least because the planned program—which had been approved by Jules Philippe before his dismissal—included a toast to the Republic. He decided to write to the mayor of Cluses, informing him that no political speeches or activities of any type could be permitted, while confidentially warning the Minister of the Interior that this decision would be heavily criticized by republican newspapers. On July 9, the organizing commission for the festival submitted a signed document agreeing to this

³ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 70, draft, prefect HS to MI, no date, but it clearly dates to shortly after Peloux’s arrival in the department.

⁴ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 70, draft, prefect HS to MI, 12 June 1873.

⁵ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 70, draft, prefect HS to MI, 19 June 1873.

condition.⁶ Clearly the existence of the document had not been enough to guarantee good behavior. After the incident, Cluses' mayor Ferdinand Dupuis, the president of the organizing commission, confessed that the program had been troubled from the start. "The state of spirits in my arrondissement has been such since May 24 that anything might serve as a pretext for a demonstration," he wrote. Not only had he encountered difficulty getting the agreement signed, Dupuis had received a tip-off from some friends that a plan had been hatched to interrupt him as soon as he took the floor at the banquet. The original plan called for Dupuis to be interrupted by cries of "Long live artichokes, long live potatoes, long live the Republic!" To prevent that from happening, Dupuis had decided not to take the floor at all, but the attendees found other ways to embarrass him. When he and the sub-prefect arrived for dessert, he was stunned to note that "they'd made a pretense of not having kept reserved seats for us and beginning the meal without us." When the speeches began, Dupuis desperately tried to prevent Tétaz from making a toast, but that Tétaz had absolutely insisted that he wanted to "talk about harmony." And when Dupuis and the sub-prefect flounced dramatically out of the room to signal their displeasure at the political nature of the speeches, they were accompanied by cries of "Vive la République!"⁷ The infuriated Peloux immediately instigated legal proceedings against the banquet's organizing committee and the orators who had transgressed the prohibitions on political speech. The public prosecutor in Chambéry was entirely prepared to prosecute, but due to legal technicalities was ultimately only able to pursue four members of the banquet commission. Tétaz and Suchard could not be indicted.⁸

The state of public opinion in the Saint-Julien arrondissement was, if anything, even more precarious than that of Bonneville. On the prefect's request, Saint-Julien's special police commissioner sent Peloux in October a comprehensive "general physiognomy," a document listing the political parties in the arrondissement, complete with annotated remarks about all of its notables. Under the heading "republicans," the police commissioner included such familiar and prominent names as doctor Amédée Chautemps, a member of the Haute-Savoie's General Council, who was described as "moderate, but very influential and essentially separatist"; the pharmacist César Duval, a member of Saint-Julien's municipal council, who was said to be "very separatist" and to "engage in lots of propaganda, especially among soldiers"; and the lawyer and former deputy public prosecutor Joseph Duboin, among the orators during Gambetta's 1872 voyage, who was described as "one of the most influential leaders of the party . . . during the choral and international societies, he dominates the group of young men, the disorderly and exalted, whom he uses to further his interests. A superstitious Jacobin . . . separatist and insists on the substitution of the word 'autonomous' for that of 'separatism.'" These three men were all involved with the publication of the town's republican newspaper, *La Zone*. In addition to these elites, however, the physiognomy also included men of humbler backgrounds, including Joseph Piccolet, who was listed as a "radical, very exalted, very violent, and very separatist"; Piccolet's father Jean, a café owner and member of Saint-Julien's municipal council; as well as another café owner, François-Pierre Mottaz, described as an "arch-separatist" who had "run after a civil servant with a gun" after the Quatre Septembre. His brother, Christian Mottaz, was "an unintelligent but very dangerous colossus who tried to chase away the *curé* during the Quatre

⁶ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 117, draft, prefect HS to MI, DSG, 3 July 1873; copy of document signed by the organizing commission of the musical festival, 9 July 1873.

⁷ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 117, mayor of Cluses to prefect HS, 22 July 1873.

⁸ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 117, PG Chambéry in Lyon to prefect HS, 23 July 1873; PG Chambéry to prefect HS, 23 August 1873.

Septembre.” François Gras, a butcher from Saint-Julien who by 1873 had relocated to Geneva, was said to have “clubbed Saint-Julien’s agent of police after the Quatre Septembre and ran through the streets with a gun threatening to kill functionaries.” Without exception, all of the men whom the police commissioner identified as “separatists” were grouped under the list of republicans, and the commissioner concluded his description of the republicans by further stating that these leaders were highly successful in mobilizing “agitation” and “disorder” among those of more humble backgrounds. As the commissioner remarked, “All those listed above are the militant group, these are the men who brought the movement of the Quatre Septembre ... all they need to do is pay them to drink for them to create the demonstrations commanded by the clever, who prudently stand aside. There are about 12 separatists, and almost all the others are likely to become separatists if they haven’t already.”⁹

Both the Bonneville and Saint-Julien arrondissements witnessed forbidden commemorations celebrating the anniversary of the declaration of the Third Republic on September 4. In Saint-Julien, a number of well-known republicans enjoyed a private dinner at François Mottaz’s inn. The group included Joseph Duboin and César Duval, as well as the deputy Clément Silva. According to the special police commissioner of Saint-Julien, the dinner was disguised as a simple hunting dinner. He was unable to share details about the meeting because it had been planned with great discretion, to the point where the participants gathered in a room away from the street to ensure privacy. Nevertheless, the commissioner overheard the participants singing the Marseillaise and indulging in several toasts to the Republic. When the meeting broke up at eleven, most of the participants returned home, but some of the younger men accompanied Duboin to his house, where the group drank and sang until one in the morning.¹⁰

More lively was the scene in Cluses, whose hapless mayor Dupuis, still recovering from the incident at the musical festival, faced a street insurrection. In what was probably not a wise decision, Dupuis had organized a police court proceeding on September 4 against one of the artisans at the nearby clock workshop, to punish the worker for having yelled, “Vive la République!” to some local gendarmes after they confronted him for disturbing the peace at night. The worker received the maximum penalties at the trial, which was well attended and “somewhat agitated the turbulent and working class segment of the population.” At eight in the evening, a fire was set on one of the flanks of the nearby 4,000-foot Chevran mountain. According to the mayor, the appearance of the fire was coordinated with several gunshots, all of which attracted the inhabitants of Cluses onto the streets. Many of the students enrolled at the clockmakers’ school ran through the town yelling “Vive la République!” The mayor observed that the incident appeared to have been planned, and some of the spectators seemed disinclined to help restore peace. Dupuis observed, “Certain well known people, among them a bailiff of the justice of the peace named Dessaix, seemed to be encouraging the students, and offering them drinks.” The gendarmes quickly brought the students under control, but later in the night there were a few more anonymous cries of “Down with Henry V” and “Long live the Emperor!” and “Vive la

⁹ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 70, document labeled “general physiognomy of political parties in Saint-Julien.” I tentatively assign the date of October 10 to this document. The Piccolet reference dates this definitively to after October 5, and in his letter to the prefect on October 10, the special police commissioner of Saint-Julien notes that he is attaching is a “detailed tableau” or “political map” Peloux had requested. AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 527, CS Saint-Julien to prefect, 10 October 1873.

¹⁰ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 527, CS Saint-Julien to prefect Haute-Savoie, 5 September 1873.

République!”, as well as a “Down with the Justice of the Peace!” referring to the police audience of that morning.¹¹

In spite of its position as the northernmost of the Haute-Savoie’s arrondissements, abutting the shores of Lake Geneva, the Thonon arrondissement displayed less enthusiasm for separatism than those of Bonneville and Saint-Julien. Sub-prefect Prunière reported in June 1873 that “there are no open activities, but I wouldn’t say that there aren’t among a certain part of the population some annexationist tendencies toward Switzerland.” He specified that this sentiment only existed in certain communes bordering the lake and particularly in the westernmost canton of Douvaine, which was closest to Geneva and had the most sustained daily contact with that city. Like many administrators before and after him, Prunière cautioned against openly working against what separatist tendencies existed, which might “give them too much importance.”¹²

The October report sent by Prunière’s replacement in the Thonon sub-prefecture tended to confirm Prunière’s observations. He described populations well aware of the advantages they had received from the annexation and concluded, “If there existed in the Chablais a few hesitations on the subject of separation, these hesitations are becoming rarer and rarer, and I think I can say that the great majority doesn’t envision retiring from France at all.” Yet even if political debate did not take a predominantly separatist turn in the Thonon arrondissement, the populations were far from politically disengaged. The sub-prefect reported that on market days, the rural inhabitants of the countryside, who did not normally read newspapers, still discussed what he referred to as “the great question”—whether the republic would be maintained or the monarchy restored. “You hear such things as the following: ‘They say that on the fifth of next month, we’ll have a new king.’ ‘Do you believe,’ said another, ‘that we’re going to have a king?’” It cannot have been coincidental that such discussions were livelier in the Douvaine canton, the most Swiss and separatist of the arrondissement. There, the ideal-type conversation transcribed by the sub-prefect went, “‘With a king,’ one says, ‘we’ll be more stable and will be able to manage business better.’ ‘But with the Republic,’ say the others, ‘we’ll have more liberty.’” The populations may not have been separatist, but the sub-prefect did not find them very patriotic either, and concluded that they “demand, above all, tranquility, and will submit without effort to any government that can assure them of it.”¹³

The Free-Trade Zone: the Separatism of Economic Advantage

Peloux’s reports following his *tournee de révision* had stressed the extent to which the northern districts of the Haute-Savoie were economically oriented toward Geneva. He would quickly have the opportunity to learn firsthand how dangerously destabilizing the combination of political and economic discontent could be in the area. For the political effect of Thiers’ dismissal was simultaneously joined in the summer of 1873 by an economic dispute of specific concern to the inhabitants of the free-trade Zone inaugurated in 1860, which encompassed much of the politically-sensitive Bonneville, Saint-Julien and Thonon arrondissements.¹⁴ The taxation

¹¹ AD Haute-Savoie, Mayor of Cluses to prefect HS, report on events of 4 September 1873, no date.

¹² AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 71, SP Thonon to prefect HS, 3 June 1873.

¹³ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 71, SP Thonon to prefect HS, 31 October 1873. Eugen Weber mistakenly cites the date of the quote as 2 June 1873; apparently he misread a footnote in Jacques Lovie, *La Savoie dans la vie Française de 1860 à 1875* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), 555.

¹⁴ Inhabitants of the Zone were exempt from paying customs duty on products purchased in Switzerland; the free-trade Zone also substantially lowered the prices of certain goods the French government sold by monopoly relative to their price elsewhere in France, in order to ensure Savoyard retailers’ competitiveness with retailers in Geneva.

conflict had a long gestation. In September 1871 and January 1872, to support the payment of its heavy war reparations to Germany, the National Assembly had voted to establish new consumption taxes on several goods, including chicory, matches, paper and shale oil. Even as the law was being debated, concern about its effects had emerged in the Zone. On September 2, 1871, four of the Haute-Savoie's five deputies, led by Clément Silva, introduced an additional article to the bill reiterating the inviolability of the free-trade Zone. "Regarding the part of the department of the Haute-Savoie situated outside the customs line determined by the imperial decrees of 12 to 18 June 1860, the rights and exemptions of the Zone are reserved and maintained such as they resulted from the vote of annexation to France." Silva's purpose in submitting the amendment was to address a potentially problematic line in the proposed law that provided for future regulations delimiting the taxes' application zones. He and the other deputies expressed concern that these zones might result in dismantling the 1860 Zone. "New zones!" Silva exclaimed. "But that's what we don't want. We have a perfectly determined, perfectly delimited zone, and there's nothing to determine or delimit," he announced to the parliament. Not unexpectedly, Silva reminded the deputies that the Haute-Savoie's Zone, which essentially affirmed the previous zone under the Sardinian regime, had helped to eliminate pro-Swiss support in 1860. "Some wanted to stay Italian, others wanted to become French or Swiss ... the Swiss annexationists had no hostility to France, quite the contrary; but there were important circumstances of locality, of proximity, of commerce, that attracted a party of Savoy to ask for its annexation to Switzerland." Silva couched his amendment in the need to protect and respect the 1860 annexation treaty. "'Do you want to be French?' we were asked. 'Yes and Zone,' we responded. Thus the contract was accepted; it must be executed; it cannot be broken. The entire question consists in explaining the spirit of this formula." Silva retired his amendment for consideration after receiving the assurance of the reporter of the session, as well as the Minister of Finances, that the rights enshrined by the treaty of 1860 would be "scrupulously respected."¹⁵

But determining the "spirit" of the Zone turned out to be the main issue, as it quickly became apparent that its inhabitants interpreted the "rights" granted by the arrangement far more broadly than the government. When the new taxes had first gone into effect in March 1872, their application in the Zone had provoked lively protests. Constant Orsat, the General Councilor elected from the Chamonix canton, quickly introduced a protest resolution to the departmental General Council's April 4, 1872 meeting. Following deputy Silva's line of thinking, the resolution backed a far broader interpretation of the rights supposedly enshrined by the Zone, protesting "against the application on the neutralized territory of all taxes that might threaten the exemption rights, on the faith of which and on the common consent of the contractual parties these populations voted their annexation to France."¹⁶ The then-prefect Jules Philippe had disagreed with this "tax-exempt" interpretation of the Zone. When the taxes went into effect, he had a special notice posted throughout the department explaining the official government position that the new taxes were interior consumption taxes that had nothing to do with customs duties or the Zone. Nevertheless, Philippe had prudently refrained from opposing Orsat's resolution, which was unanimously adopted by the Council.¹⁷ At the following day's meeting,

¹⁵ *Journal Officiel*, 3 September 1871, session of 2 September 1871, vol. 3, no. 245, pp. 3165–66.

¹⁶ Although the free-trade and neutral Zones of the Haute-Savoie were not the same, many people used the two terms interchangeably.

¹⁷ Minutes of the meeting of the General Council of the Haute-Savoie, 4 April 1872, in *Conseil Général de la Haute-Savoie, Rapports du préfet et procès-verbaux des séances*, 1872: no. 1 (Annecy, France: Aimé Perrissin et co., 1872), 134.

Orsat added fuel to the fire by reporting that although the taxes were being imposed in the Haute-Savoie, they were not being applied in the Pays de Gex in the Ain, even though the two territories were supposed to be governed by the same tax and duty provisions. Philippe immediately gave orders to suspend the collection of the new taxes in the Haute-Savoie until the question had been resolved.¹⁸ After the Arrondissement Council of Thonon took another resolution against the taxes in July 1872, the General Council renewed its resolution on August 22 in a show of solidarity. The reporter also noted that “everything leads us to believe, M. le Prefect tells us in his explanations on the matter, that this determination [the suspension of application of the taxes] will remain definitive.”¹⁹ The French government subsequently organized a commission to investigate the legality of the matter. It found that “indirect consumption taxes” were applicable even in a zone freed from the usual customs taxes, and declared that the failure to collect them in the Pays de Gex had been an accidental oversight. In October 1872 the Minister of Finances wrote to Philippe confirming the government’s position.²⁰ But the government was not administratively prepared to begin collecting them until 1873.

Thus, in an instance of spectacularly bad timing for the conservatives, it was left to the post-Thiers Moral Order government to collect unpopular taxes established by the outgoing government. On June 30, 1873, Peloux issued a prefectural circular announcing that as of July 10, the new consumption taxes would go back into effect in the duty-free Zone of the Haute-Savoie and the neighboring pays de Gex. The effect in Saint-Julien was instantaneous. On July 13, the town’s municipal council took a new resolution denouncing the new taxes as incompatible with the provisions of the Zone and warning that “[the law] will have the effect of raising by at least 25 percent the average price of the goods in question, which are [presently] sold at the same price in Saint-Julien as in the canton of Geneva, and thus will destroy this branch of commerce in Saint-Julien.” Following the earlier approach of Silva and Orsat, Saint-Julien’s municipal council justified its opposition by reminding the government that the Zone had been established to weaken the pro-Swiss movement of 1860, prevent the dismemberment of northern Savoy for economic reasons, and make “Yes and Zone” a legitimate vote. Its members contested that the Zone meant “assimilation to commercial Switzerland of the zone territory, freeing it from taxes of all types on merchandises and foodstuffs.” The end of the resolution became more confrontational. “Considering that, since 1860, to satisfy needs that it’s not our place to discuss here, the city of Saint-Julien has imposed enormous sacrifices on itself that have created an exorbitant debt that it cannot confront except by extraordinary taxes and local city taxes (*taxes d’octroi*)...the Council asks that the commune of Saint-Julien remain free of all taxes—customs taxes, consumption taxes, interior taxes or others under any type of name—that might threaten the rights and franchises of the Zone, and notably the new taxes on chicory, matches, paper and shale oil.”²¹

¹⁸ Minutes of the meeting of the General Council of the Haute-Savoie, 5 April 1872, in Conseil Général de la Haute-Savoie, *Rapports* 1872: no. 1, 136.

¹⁹ Minutes of the meeting of the General Council of the Haute-Savoie, 22 August 1872, in Conseil Général de la Haute-Savoie, *Rapports* 1872: no. 2, 330–331.

²⁰ Minutes of the meeting of the General Council of the Haute-Savoie, 23 August 1873, in Conseil Général de la Haute-Savoie, *Rapports* 1873: no. 2, 360–62.

²¹ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 70, Excerpt of deliberation of the municipal council of Saint-Julien, extraordinary session of 13 July 1873.

Saint-Julien's sub-prefect informed his superior that he believed other communes within the Zone would follow Saint-Julien's example.²² For his part, Peloux immediately suspected more than narrow commercial motives behind it. "All the agitation that they're trying to create and will only too certainly succeed in creating has two goals: one, to get the government to renounce this tax and preserve the Zone, and the other to de-popularize the government, the administration, and even France to the benefit of secessionist ideas. The radical party has also picked up on this and is taking the opportunity to disaffect the populations." He also claimed that parliamentary deputies Folliet, Silva and Chardon had gone to the Ministry of Finances and received an assurance from the minister's Secretary General that the measure would not include the populations of the Zone. A few days later, Peloux severely reprimanded the mayor of Bonneville, who had contacted the mayors of Thonon, Saint-Julien, and Gex—the four major population centers of the Zone—and asked for their help organizing a protest movement against the imposition of the new taxes. He was particularly upset by the mayor's decision to appeal to public opinion in the pages of the *Allobroge*, Bonneville's republican newspaper. Peloux also objected to what he saw as political opportunism. He complained, "This campaign against the law of indirect taxes is much more an electoral question, inspired by the desire of winning popularity."²³ By July 19, the sub-prefect in Saint-Julien had intercepted two copies of a printed petition against the new taxes to the President of the Republic, signed by the familiar republican César Duval. The petition carefully laid out the protesters' argument that the taxes were unconstitutional under the agreements of 1815. It claimed that the previous year's suspension of the tax's application had been definitive, and repeated that any such tax constituted an evisceration of the rights enshrined in the *Oui et Zone* formula of 1860. "The government," announced the petition, "must respect its own engagements.... [the taxes] would constitute the absolute negation of the franchises conceded at that time ... The zone would be no more than a dead letter, since any products imported there could be so treated under the pretext that it's simply a consumption tax." It ended with a robust promise of staunch opposition. "The populations that are complaining have faithfully executed the contract established in 1860 between them and the French government; they have given the most striking proof of their devotion to the *mère-patrie*; they will be ready still to make all sacrifices; but they will bring to the defense of their rights just as much energy as they have displayed to the national cause. For them, it's a question of principle, on whose answer the future of their country depends."²⁴

Saint-Julien's sub-prefect, Jean-Jacques Bessey, believed the petition was being sent to all of the mayors in the three arrondissements, as well as to as many inhabitants as possible. "It's the beginning of active propaganda," he warned. "I firmly believe that this question of the tax, though very unpopular, would never have led to serious protests were it not for the activities of the radical and separatist party...[the inhabitants of the countryside] will be told that the Zone is threatened, that it has been destroyed, and they will undoubtedly believe it easily. It therefore seems useful to reassure them otherwise, because I don't think the new tax really worries them much on its own, due to the ease with which they think they'll be able to get around it. If it stops being a threat then it will no longer be a powerful means of opposition."²⁵ On July 24, the mayor of Evian, the Baron de Blonay, signaled his intention to oppose the taxes in the Zone by refusing to sign any report that might be issued by employees of the customs regime. He warned the

²² AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 70, SP Saint-Julien to prefect HS, 16 July 1873.

²³ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 70, draft, prefect HS to MI, 17 July 1873.

²⁴ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 70, printed letter addressed to the President of the Republic.

²⁵ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 70, SP Saint-Julien to prefect HS, 19 July 1873.

prefect that the departmental General Council would reject the taxes. Blonay also claimed that the Haute-Savoie's deputies were blaming the taxes on the Moral Order government, and "thus seek to render unpopular the current government and administration that represents it in the Haute-Savoie."²⁶

Prefect Peloux seemed bewildered and annoyed that his administration was having to confront the backlash from a measure that had been planned under the Thiers regime. "The collection of this tax was prescribed by the previous government—it's being applied by the current government because it's not for a government to modify the basis of a tax that obliges the universality of citizens," he wrote to the Minister of the Interior at the end of July.²⁷ Such was the outcry in the Zone that local leaders decided to hold an open meeting on August 2 to discuss the taxes. Perhaps to ensure that it would not be broken up by government opposition, the organizers chose to hold the meeting on Swiss territory, at the Brasserie Jutz in the Eaux-Vives quarter of Geneva. Turnout to the meeting in Geneva suffered from the decision to hold it on Swiss territory, with only 6 attendees from the Bonneville arrondissement.²⁸ Attendance from the Saint-Julien arrondissement, on the other hand, was significant and included some of the most noted names of the "radical-separatist" faction on the special police commissioner's physiognomy: Théobald Dupont, the former sub-prefect who had been fired in May; Amédée Chautemps and his brother, the mayor of Valleiry; Joseph Duboin; Alexis Chatenoud, a doctor and member of the Conseil Général all attended. The gendarmerie kept a careful watch on the meeting, but they were powerless in the face of the snowballing petition campaign. One of the gendarmes reported to his superior on July 31 that "regarding the petitions to protest against taxes on matches and chicory, it's certain now that all the municipal councils have signed it, but all this was done with much discretion, such that the gendarmes haven't seen any of them."²⁹ By August 2, the sub-prefect of Bonneville reported that nearly all the mayors and municipalities of his arrondissement had signed the petition against the taxes.³⁰ On August 4, Saint-Julien's gendarmes reported that the mayor of Annemasse had sent two copies of the printed petition to all the mayors of his canton, addressed to the President of the Republic, together with a letter of invitation to collect signatures.³¹ Meanwhile, the three arrondissement councils whose territory encompassed areas of the Zone, Bonneville, Thonon and Saint-Julien, also voted resolutions declaring that the collection of the taxes were not legally applicable to the Zone.

The political sympathies of the list of the attendees at the Genevan meeting suggests that republicans, particularly those of a "separatist" bent, were—as Peloux had foreseen—successfully using the perceived threat to Savoyard interests represented by the tax to encourage political mobilization. Prefect Peloux was unshakeable in his belief that the effervescence over the taxes was separatist activity. For the next scheduled meeting of the departmental General Council, he invited all of its members to dinner, as well as high-level administrators from Annecy and all the heads of various administrative departments. He was thus dismayed when rumors of a potential boycott reached him. "I'm told from various sources that some of the

²⁶ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 70, draft telegram, prefect HS to MI and Minister of Finances, 25 July 1873.

²⁷ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 70, draft, prefect HS to MI, 30 July 1873.

²⁸ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 70, gendarmerie, arrondissement Bonneville, 2 August 1873; gendarmerie, arrondissement Bonneville, 4 August 1873.

²⁹ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 70, gendarmerie, arrondissement Bonneville, 31 July 1873.

³⁰ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 70, SP Bonneville to prefect HS, 2 August 1873.

³¹ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 70, gendarmerie, 22nd legion, company HS, arrondissement Saint-Julien, to squadron leader Annecy, 4 August 1873.

members of the General Council have written to their colleagues, saying that twelve of them attended the meeting in Geneva, and that they decided that they wouldn't accept my invitation to dinner, without even responding, and that they invited the others to join them." While he believed that most would probably attend the dinner, it confirmed his belief in a separatist conspiracy. "The taxes in the zone are the pretext. But in reality, it's opposition, organized from the radical or separatist point of view. The minutes of the Genevan meeting in today's issue of *L'Union Savoisiennne* is undeniable proof. It's impossible to say more clearly than M. Duboin has that, from the point of view of the advantages to be gained from France, the Zone wants to remain French in name; but that it is, by interest and by heart, with Switzerland."³²

Though the rumors of a nefarious dinner boycott ultimately proved unfounded, the issue of the taxes came to a head at the departmental General Council's meeting on August 23, with Peloux in attendance. Speaking on behalf of the Council's first commission, Alexandre Curral, the councilor from the Sallanches canton, outlined in precise detail why the commission had decided to support the earlier resolutions of the three concerned arrondissement councils. Arguing that taxes on consumption and fabrication should be assimilated to customs taxes in the area, Curral shared the commission's belief that "at the time of their annexation to France, the inhabitants of the zone might have believed that the benefit of customs immunity included, even indirectly, a complete exemption from fabrication taxes, otherwise known as consumption taxes."³³ Warning that the imposition of the taxes would lead to "general discontent, the ruin and pure loss for the treasury of retail commerce on the taxed products, and demoralization by smuggling," Curral and the Commission summed up the general belief that "their application would be a manifest violation of the annexation vote, a violation against which the General Council believes it must again protest."³⁴ Peloux felt compelled to rebut the Commission's report by laying out the government's argument. He read out the letter from the Minister of Finances, who not only rejected the opponents' argument that the consumption taxes were merely another term for customs rights, but sounded the all-important note of republican equality and universalism in the face of what appeared to be special privileges accorded to this area of the department. "We must not dispense the neutralized territories from collecting these internal taxes that support the rest of France. Otherwise, they would be exempt from the sacrifices required for the liberation of territory, which would be in opposition to the higher principle of equality in the distribution of public charges."³⁵ The General Council's members remained unmoved. Two of its members, including Constant Orsat, cynically remarked that the government had not responded to any of the issues Curral had raised in his exposé. In a unanimous vote, the Council upheld the Commission's report and the protest.

Though Peloux and the government blamed opposition to the taxes on the "radical separatists," opposition to the measure does not, in fact, seem to have been calculated on the conservative/republican political axis, but rather based on calculations of economic advantage. In other words, those communes inside of the Zone and submitted to its special regulations opposed a universal imposition of the 1871 taxes; those outside, notably Annecy, which benefited from its

³² AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 70, draft, prefect HS to MI, 9 August 1873.

³³ Minutes of the meeting of the General Council of the Haute-Savoie, 23 August 1873, in Conseil Général de la Haute-Savoie, *Rapports* 1873: no. 2, 355.

³⁴ Minutes of the meeting of the General Council of the Haute-Savoie, 23 August 1873, in Conseil Général de la Haute-Savoie, *Rapports* 1873: no. 2, 358.

³⁵ Minutes of the meeting of the General Council of the Haute-Savoie, 23 August 1873, in Conseil Général de la Haute-Savoie, *Rapports* 1873: no. 2, 361.

position on the frontline of the customs border, supported their extension to the Zone. Thus Saint-Julien's Bonapartist newspaper *L'Echo du Salève*, for example, which was not normally to be found taking similar positions to well-known republicans, publicly announced its opposition to the taxes. In July the paper disputed not only their legality under the provisions of the Zone but also argued bluntly, and undoubtedly accurately, that applying them was not a politically smart move. This article caused an angry reader to publish a letter to the editor in the issue of July 19 that opponents were misinterpreting the agreements governing the Zone. The reader, who signed his letter "a proprietor of the Free-Trade Zone," generally supported the government's more narrow interpretation of the Zone, but raised the stakes by interpreting the opposition as unpatriotic. "The role of the press is to enlighten populations not only on their rights but on their duties. But in the present circumstances, is it not a more important duty to pay the tax destined to repurchase and lift up France? We have, it is true, paid our debt of blood in the last war, but the soil of our Savoy was not trampled on and ravaged by enemy hordes; and our populations are intelligent and patriotic enough to understand that they shouldn't complain, when those whose houses were pillaged or burnt, whose women and children were cowardly massacred, pay with resignation and without a murmur the taxes voted constitutionally by the representatives of the people." *L'Echo du Salève* published the reader's protest, but reiterated its belief that the government was making a political mistake by insisting on applying the taxes in the area. It ended with a surprisingly robust defense of the Savoyard exceptionalism that the Zone inherently represented: "And what will prevent the government, under the pretext of consumption taxes, from establishing new such taxes, if all it has to do is qualify them in this way to extend them to northern Savoy, and then we would wonder what would remain of the vote in 1860, *Oui et Zône?*"³⁶

In contrast to the *Echo du Salève*, Annecy's Bonapartist newspaper *Le Mont-Blanc*, which was not submitted to the Zone regime, fully supported a universal application of the taxes. The paper speculated that the meeting in Geneva, ostensibly about the application of the burdensome taxes, was really a cover for separatist machinations. "The Swiss separatists are showing signs of unrest: they are supposed to meet tomorrow—in Geneva naturally—to consult on how to safeguard the franchises of the customs Zone, that are threatened, it seems by the application to the territory of the zone of tax laws, presented and voted under the principedom of M. Thiers, on paper, chicory and matches. Our deputies, we're told, are at the head of the movement, which is propagated by the newspapers that they inspire in Bonneville, Saint-Julien and Thonon; ... the former editors of *La Savoie du Nord*, having become Swiss citizens out of spite of France, aren't strangers to this, and we'd be surprised if an ovation weren't given to them at the meeting tomorrow. Savoy is French, quite French, and there's no question of putting it up for bid. The populations of the Zone know that neither Annecy nor the government have ever dreamed of depriving them of the franchises the Empire granted them. Those who spread such contrary rumors know what purpose they have in mind for doing so.".. The editors of the *Mont-Blanc* shared the administration's official point of view that it was frankly unpatriotic for Savoyards to refuse to pay taxes that were supposed to help the country recover from the terrible debt burden imposed by the recent war. "The principal of equality requires that taxes be paid by all citizens. We mustn't forget that the arrondissements of the Zone of the Haute-Savoie and of

³⁶ *L'Echo du Salève*, 19 July 1873.

the Ain must, like those who haven't been privileged with these franchises, pay their quota of the ransom of France," the paper concluded.³⁷

The General Council's resolution in defense of the rights of the free-trade Zone was a dismaying defeat for Peloux and the authorities of the Moral Order, as even the conservative members of the Council had voted against the taxes. Above all, what terrified the government was the fact that republican politics and the defense of regional interests were overlapping with the economic interests of the inhabitants of the Zone. And all three of these currents had a distinctly Helvetian outlook. Moreover, the tremendous opposition to the taxes also demonstrated increasingly sophisticated and effective political mobilization. Peloux's August reports testified to his growing siege mentality. In the wake of the Cluses banquet incident, he pleaded for more support from the Minister of the Interior against the banquet organizers because he felt overwhelmed by the Zone controversy and insufficiently supported by the government. "As the government, in the question regarding the agitation around the collection of indirect taxes, seems to be, following your last dispatch, holding an extreme reserve regarding the leaders of this agitation, it matters still that in a question of public/political order, there must be no hesitation. Without that we'll be overwhelmed from all sides."³⁸ Ordinary Savoyard conservatives also found the increasing politicization of the anti-tax campaign very distressing. The local schoolteacher in the small town of Andilly (arrondissement of Saint-Julien), M. Mairot, wrote a concerned letter to Peloux warning him about the political agitation that had been caused by discussion of the new taxes. "I believe these movements are anti-French, and I cannot associate with them," he declared. "The demonstrations, in appearance directed towards maintaining certain franchises, are linked to the separatist movement by agitators who are fooling the people as to their true interests, and entertain malevolence against the civil servants who've come from the old departments, and against higher authority." He closed by remarking, "You'd think you're in an enemy country."³⁹

Republican Mobilization in Saint-Julien and Bonneville

Peloux had plenty of reasons to feel overwhelmed. The voluminous and unusually complete files pertaining to political activity in northern Savoy after the fall of Thiers, particularly in the arrondissement of Saint-Julien, attests to the remarkably active republican mobilization in the Haute-Savoie, which escalated in intensity from the fall of 1873. Many of the most ardent republicans continued to combine republican rhetoric with separatist discourse. One of the most confrontational examples of this twinning occurred at Félix Pissard's Café National in Saint-Julien. The establishment had come to the attention of the authorities in early September, when the special police commissioner in Saint-Julien confiscated a copy of a petition against the consumption taxes at the café. Printed and put into circulation by Pissard himself, the petition had received 40 signatures. This particular café featured an unusual layout, with two floors that attracted quite distinct clientele. Local administrators, functionaries and "a few bourgeois" gathered on the first floor. The more middle-and working-class elements of Saint-Julien, the "workers and solicitors' clerks," preferred the ground floor, where they "engage in the most hostile remarks against society and especially against France. These political conversations often degenerate in noisy scenes," reported the special police commissioner of Saint-Julien.

³⁷ *Le Mont Blanc*, 1 August 1873.

³⁸ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 117, draft, prefect HS to MI, 21 July 1873.

³⁹ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 79, letter from a schoolteacher in Andilly to prefect HS, 7 August 1873.

Just such an event occurred in the ground floor room on October 5. The police commissioner reported overhearing “outrageous remarks about himself and all French administrators.” Entering the café, he found that four men were animatedly discussing the political situation of France. One of them, Joseph Piccolet, “got up and began to talk most violently against religion and the clergy, addressing everyone in the café. Then he talked about the administrators, saying that they were all men paid by the Government to do nothing but walk around all day with their canes in their hands. He finished by saying ‘We’ve only seen such things since we’ve become French. To put a stop to it all, we need a revolution.’” Piccolet’s colleague, a M. Dubosson, joined in the conversation, calling back at him. “Every since we’ve been a part of this country that I hate, the French have given me so much misery that I’d like to see the Rhône flood their country completely. Down with the French!” A third patron, a M. Duchasal, said, “This has gone on far too long, we aren’t French and we never shall be. This won’t last long.” The report noted that the three were talking “very loudly in such a way as to be heard by everyone who was in the establishment.” At closing time, Piccolet, who ran into a patrol of gendarmes, insulted them and said, “I’m not French, and I never will be!”⁴⁰ Piccolet received a 50-franc fine for insulting the gendarmerie. His outburst has come to be repeated and cited by multiple historians, notably by Jacques Lovie in his monumental study of Savoy.⁴¹ But they have not always provided sufficient context to the remark. Piccolet’s remarks were certainly separatist in tone and content, but they served a definite political purpose. He and his associates had been discussing French politics when the police commissioner entered the café, suggesting that they were preoccupied with the national state of the country. His scorn for French government employees fit the longstanding Savoyard pattern of distrust and contempt for the government’s transplants and their perceived well-to-do airs. But in the post-Thiers context it also reminded those present that such administrators were the principal agents of the Moral Order’s thinly-disguised efforts to keep the President of the Republic’s seat warm for a potential monarch. The fact that Piccolet was obviously trying to make as much noise as possible, addressing all the occupants of the room “in such a way as to be overheard,” also suggests that he wanted to attract publicity and notoriety.

For the special police commissioner of Saint-Julien, the New Year of 1874 did not begin on an auspicious note. In celebration of the holiday, the mayor, most of the members of the town’s municipal council, and numerous other administrators in the town attended a reception organized by the sub-prefect. To signal their ongoing displeasure with the administration, César Duval and another member of the municipal council, Alexis Hoffmann, both absented themselves from the sub-prefect’s reception.⁴² Even with Duval absent, the commissioner was terribly embarrassed when Saint-Julien’s mayor cornered him in the middle of the salon and asked point-blank in front of the assembled company, “I’d certainly appreciate your opinion, *M. le Commissaire*, on the burning question of the moment, you’re very intelligent and I’d like to

⁴⁰ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 117, tribunal of Saint-Julien to prefect HS, 14 October 1873. The author of the report only identified Piccolet by his surname, but the police commissioner’s “physiognomy” notes that a Joseph Piccolet “has just been condemned to a 50-franc fine for insults.”

⁴¹ Both Eugen Weber in *Peasants Into Frenchmen* and Tamara L. White in *Forest and Peasant Politics in Modern France* borrow Jacques Lovie’s discussion of the incident in *La Savoie dans la vie Française*, 560.

⁴² On the police commissioner’s 1873 physiognomy, Hoffmann was listed as “exalted, a cobbler and landowner in Saint-Julien, he is a fairly influential member of the municipal council; rumors has it that he fathered a child with his sister, violent character.”

hear your opinions on the subject. What do you think about separatism in Savoy?" The shocked commissioner managed to provide a fairly measured response:

That's a big question, *M le Maire*, that would ask for more time to be discussed, and someone more knowledgeable than me. But since you've asked me my opinion I'll tell you what I think. I think that the inhabitants of this area are generally attached to France. But I've had the difficulty of seeing that a small number of individuals, the exception that proves the rule, profess hostile opinions towards our country, not only in intimate conversations but also in public. I think this part of the population won't find much support in the area, and won't be good at it; but it's prudent to watch out against these people who enjoy the applause of foreign newspapers hostile to France, but who might later seek by any means, if not the approbation then at least the indifference or the weakness of the inhabitants of their country.⁴³

As soon as the shaken commissioner got home, he transcribed his response and sent a note to prefect Peloux, evidently seeking reassurance that he had answered the question appropriately. "Is this a trap, or a pasquinade? Or simply a lack of education. I really don't know," he confessed. The commissioner was particularly discomfited by the fact that the incident had occurred in front of so many republicans, including the mayor's adjunct François Mérard (listed as "a freethinker and separatist, and editor of the *Zône* on the commissioner's physiognomy); and François Barbier (listed on the same document as a "fairly influential lawyer, moderate and very energetic"). Worst of all was the fact that café owner Jean Piccolet had been standing just opposite the commissioner during the episode. Piccolet was the father of Joseph Piccolet, the man arrested in October for his seditious cries ("I'm not French and I never will be!")⁴⁴ And Jean Piccolet's café in Saint-Julien, described by Saint-Julien's police commissioner as "the meeting place of all the radicals in the locality," was a notable site of political speech.⁴⁵ Shortly after the November 1874 municipal elections in Saint-Julien, a party was held for the victorious republicans in the café, where the participants sang such patriotic ditties as "The flesh of the Girondins." The deputy Clément Silva was among the participants, and as the event wound down, he addressed a group of about forty of the participants, saying "My friends of order, I know that you are devoted to us." This group then dispersed into the street singing the Marseillaise, where they were promptly scolded by the gendarmes.⁴⁶

Since Swiss radicals often participated in political meetings in Savoy, Savoyard republicans returned the favor and made the journey into Switzerland. At the end of September 1873, deputy Clément Silva took a trip to Geneva, where he presided over a banquet of 250 to 300 French republicans living in the city. The dinner had been organized to celebrate the evacuation of the last remaining German soldiers from French territory.⁴⁷ In October 1874, Joseph Duboin and César Duval both attended the membership meeting of a Swiss organization called the Patriotic Union of the Countrysides in Perly, Switzerland, just a kilometer from Saint-Julien. The society, organized by "free-thinkers, freemasons and old Catholics," in the

⁴³ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 527, CS Saint-Julien to prefect HS, 3 January 1874. In the physiognomy of the department, Jean Piccolet was listed as the brother of Joseph, but in this report and several subsequent reports the special police commissioner identified Jean Piccolet as the father of Joseph.

⁴⁴ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 527, CS Saint-Julien to prefect HS, 3 January 1874.

⁴⁵ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 527, CS Saint-Julien to prefect HS, 12 April 1875.

⁴⁶ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 527, CS Saint-Julien to prefect HS, 25 November 1874.

⁴⁷ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 527, CS Saint-Julien to prefect HS, 30 September 1873.

contemptuous estimation of Peloux, was a left-wing organization active in the predominantly Catholic rural communes surrounding Geneva that had been attached to Switzerland in 1815. The meeting occurred in a house conveniently located next door to the café Soldini, leading the prefect to scoff that “this popular assembly was just a meeting for Genevans who spent a few hours at Perly sitting around drinking white wine.” Dubois and Duval remained in Perly after the meeting, spending the night in one of the Soldini café’s rooms with some of the leaders of the organization. Dubois made a speech and “tried to demonstrate all the advantages of a fraternal and democratic union between Savoy and Switzerland.”⁴⁸ Such incidents, even when they did not feature pro-Swiss content, helped to solidify the widespread idea that republicanism in the Haute-Savoie had a pro-Swiss bias.

Peloux fought back against the escalation in political mobilization, notably by restricting the republican newspapers in the department. Among them was César Duval and Joseph Dubois’s *La Zône*, which the special police commissioner described as “neglecting no opportunity to malign France while its editors verbally and publicly proclaim their attachment to their new *patrie*.”⁴⁹ The deciding factor for the restriction on the *Zône* appears to have been a December 1873 article entitled “The Separatist Question,” which analyzed a correspondence that had recently appeared in a newspaper in Cologne.⁵⁰ In the Savoie department to the south, the government was also clamping down on republican and “separatist” newspapers. In September, Chambéry’s prefect refused authorization for the sale of a *feuilleton* that the deputy Nicolas Parent had earlier published in the *Patriote Savoisien*. Calling the brochure nothing more than “the worst kind of electoral propaganda” and Parent “the most dangerous agent of revolutionary (and when necessary separatist) propaganda in Savoy,” the prefect flatly rejected authorization for sale of the brochure.⁵¹ On the advice of the Minister of the Interior, the prefect withdrew authorization for public sale and colportage of Chambéry’s *La Gazette du Peuple* on October 29. In issuing the decree, the prefect added an additional reason for the withdrawal of official authorization beyond that indicated by the Minister of the Interior. “I thought it necessary to add other reasons, pulled from the separatist thesis that’s discussed right now in the radical and anti-French press of the two departments of Savoy. It seemed that the opportunity was ripe to refute in a few official lines this absurd thesis, that radical leaders seek to spread. ... At a time when the Italian party here, which seems to have taken control of the *Gazette du Peuple*, unmasks its projects more and more, it seems, we think, a good idea, in French interests, to take the defensive attitude that the situation requires.”⁵² The prefect’s use of the word “Italian” underlines the continued use of the word in the Savoie to mean “liberal” in the old “Piedmontese” liberal-democratic sense more than to describe an incipient sense of pro-Italian revisionism.

To combat the continued café problem, Peloux introduced new regulations for cabarets, taverns and cafés that went into effect on January 17, 1874. They required that these establishments be shut during religious offices and after 8:00 in the evenings. The reaction was immediate and negative. According to the special police commissioner in Saint-Julien, the inhabitants were casually referring to the measure as “the return of the *Buon Governo*,” the expression frequently used to refer to the Restoration in Piedmont-Sardinia. For obvious reasons this was not a political equivalency that the French government wanted to encourage, its

⁴⁸ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 53, copy, prefect HS to MI, 22 October 1874.

⁴⁹ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 527, CS Saint-Julien to prefect HS, 19 February 1874.

⁵⁰ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 527, CS Saint-Julien to prefect HS, 4 December 1873.

⁵¹ AD Savoie 16 T 10, draft, prefect Savoie to MI, DGSP, 4 September 1873.

⁵² AD Savoie, 16 T 10, draft, prefect Savoie to MI, DGSP, 29 October 1873.

conservative tendencies notwithstanding. Ever attuned to the latest rumors, Joseph Duboin wasted no time publishing an article in *La Zone* with the title “The Return of the *Buon Governo*” on January 23. The rumors engendered by the measure also attacked the Peloux personally, claiming that he was jealous of the repressive exploits of his colleague, the prefect in Chambéry, and had resorted to the measure in an attempt to outbid his rival in repression, having “found no better way to succeed in molesting the populations.”⁵³ By January 23, the special police commissioner wrote bluntly, “Almost everyone is discontent. And this unhappiness has translated by more or less violent critiques against your administration and the government. The hostile have no difficulty persuading others, especially the *cafétiers*, the business owners most directly concerned by the decree.”⁵⁴

As this report made clear, the café decree caused particular resentment because the regulations not only stifled political speech but also, like the application of the 1871 taxes to the Zone, threatened economic livelihoods. Again the effect on those living close to the Swiss border was greatest. *Cafétiers* and tavern-keepers worried that customers would simply take their business to Swiss establishments, while the significant business that they received from Swiss customers, notably from weekend pleasure-parties from Geneva, would evaporate. “They say that you’re supporting the interests of the Swiss bar managers, our neighbors,” reported the special police commissioner of Saint-Julien. He further reported that a protest petition was being circulated in several communes closest to the border, including Bossey, Archamps, and Collonges-sous-Salève, and that the inhabitants were already trying to figure out ways to get around the regulations. “They say that this will be the ruin of the principal commerce of these localities ... They are wondering if the decree that prescribes closure during offices, only applies to mass, or whether it equally includes vespers, casuists, and there are a lot of them in the Zone; they say that the word ‘offices’ only means mass, and add that the Catholic Church doesn’t consider absence at the vespers as a sin, so it’s impossible that the prefect’s regulation is more severe than religion itself!”⁵⁵

In late 1874 the special police commissioner of Moillesulaz, the border town and customs post on the Foron river dividing Gaillard from the Genevan suburbs, described the Savoyards established in Geneva as “our worst enemies.”⁵⁶ Certainly their influence was amply demonstrated by events in Moillesulaz in July. The backdrop was a festival organized by the mutual-aid society called the *Union Savoisiennne*, a Genevan organization supporting Savoyards established and living in Switzerland. The festival was clearly intended to demonstrate harmonious Franco-Swiss relations and was an opportunity to bring Savoyards from both sides of the border. The bridge on the Foron, which was the border between the two countries, was gaily decorated with an triumphal arch, while the streets sported decorations of both Swiss and French flags. The banquet itself took place in an orchard, and brought together local notables, including the mayor and adjunct of Gaillard and the president of the organization. But trouble occurred when Pierre Veyrat, the organization’s treasurer and accountant—and the brother-in-law of Alexis Chatenoud, the General Councilor of the Frangy canton—gave a toast in honor of Gambetta. He proclaimed the venerable republican to be the only citizen opposed to monarchist intrigues, the only man who could support the coming of what he called the “True Republic,”

⁵³ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 527, CS Saint-Julien to prefect HS, 17 January 1874;

⁵⁴ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 527, CS Saint-Julien to prefect HS, 23 January 1874.

⁵⁵ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 527, CS Saint-Julien to prefect HS, 23 January 1874.

⁵⁶ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 310, CS Moillesullaz to SP Saint-Julien, 4 December 1874.

and denounced Gambetta's assailants at the Gare Saint-Lazare as assassins.⁵⁷ When one of the assembled company warned Veyrat that he was being foolish to speak publicly when there were probably undercover police agents in the area, Veyrat publicly scoffed, declaring that the police should not be allowed to infiltrate and survey public meetings.⁵⁸

Veyrat was not without his supporters at the meeting, although he appeared visibly disappointed by the light applause he received. But once the applause was over, a few of the assembled company began to sing an impromptu round of the outlawed Marseillaise. Most of the gathered attendees hurriedly left the scene out of fear of violating the restrictions on political speech. With the special police commissioner of Moillesulaz in hot pursuit, Veyrat quickly ran across the bridge over the Foron back into Switzerland, eluding the commissioner, who received profuse apologies from M. Fontanel, the president of the Union Savoisiennne. Other attendees were equally compromised by the unexpected turn of events. Gaillard's mayor and adjunct quickly found themselves under suspicion, as the authorities felt had that they not reacted quickly and decisively in the circumstances, leading the sub-prefect of Saint-Julien to reprimand both of them.⁵⁹ While displeased by the political activity, the prefect thought he detected "general reprobation" at the unexpected political turn of the meeting, and took comfort in the fact that "if perhaps people desire the Republic, they at least want it calm and dignified, free of the control of the incompetent, the scheming, and the violent who dishonor it."⁶⁰

The Moillesulaz incident testified to the continued danger of public meetings that were explicitly supposed to remain non-political. Because of its lackluster track record at keeping public meetings within their narrowly-prescribed contours, the administration remained wary of any types of public meetings, even when they appeared to stay within the narrowly-prescribed rules of the government. In August 1874, when the musical society of Thonon's firefighting brigade took a trip to the Swiss town of Vevey to give a concert with the Choral Society of Geneva, the event was a complete success and provoked no Franco-Swiss tensions nor any proto-Swiss political demonstrations.⁶¹ Yet the prefect took the opportunity to inform the Minister of the Interior that the number of meetings and reunions were multiplying in the communes bordering Lake Geneva as well as throughout the entire Faucigny, and as far as possible, all meetings and unions should be discouraged because the administration was expending so much effort trying to prevent them from becoming politicized.⁶²

After the turbulence that had occurred at the Bonneville musical festival in 1873, it is astonishing and inexplicable that the authorities authorized the same event the following year. Held in Sallanches, the 250-person banquet attracted musicians from all over the arrondissement, from as far away as Megève and Chamonix. The first toast, by the sub-prefect of Bonneville, which even Peloux found "a bit bland," nevertheless set the desired politically-neutral tone and was widely viewed as a success. Observers noted with satisfaction that M. Revuz, commander of the firefighting brigade of Cluses, who had participated in the anti-governmental speeches the previous year, got up, crossed the room in his uniform, and came to clink glasses with the sub-prefect after the speech. The only possible cause of concern was the third toast, given by Alexandre Curral, the General Councilor from Sallanches canton, who began his speech with the

⁵⁷ This was a reference to the June 10, 1874 assault of Gambetta at the Gare Saint-Lazare in Paris.

⁵⁸ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 53, draft, prefect HS to MI, 10 July 1874.

⁵⁹ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 53, draft, prefect HS to MI, 24 July 1874.

⁶⁰ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 53, draft, prefect Haute-Savoie to MI, 10 July 1874.

⁶¹ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 53, gendarmerie, 22nd legion, company HS, arrondissement Thonon, 20 August 1874.

⁶² AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 53, draft, prefect HS to MI, 11 August 1874.

famous motto of Alexandre Dumas' 1844 novel *The Three Musketeers*: "All for one and one for all!" It could hardly have escaped notice that the expression had been adopted as a traditional Swiss motto.⁶³ Curral went on to discuss the sympathies that Switzerland, America, and Italy deserved, and ended by speaking warmly of France, "of whom the Savoyards are the youngest children, but not the least loved." His speech was greeted by applause, which featured cries of "Vive M. Curral!" and "Vive la République!" The sub-prefect, while admitting that there was nothing overtly objectionable with the speech, clearly felt uncomfortable, as he "felt the need to greet this speech with a slightly cold reserve."

In his initial report on the banquet, Peloux portrayed the event as rather a success, especially given his impression that "the arrondissement of Bonneville passes, not without reason, to be largely under the influence of strongly advanced political opinions."⁶⁴ Two days later, however, Peloux had changed his mind, after reading a report from the sub-prefect of Saint-Julien about another public celebration in that arrondissement. The festival in question had not resulted in any speeches that could have been considered political, but the presence of an Italian-born entrepreneur seemed to trigger renewed doubts in Peloux's mind about Savoyard loyalties, since the area still had so many links to Switzerland and to Italy:

Outside of the fact itself, and of the consequences that one might draw from these gracious words exchanged in this circumstance, it should be noted that there continues to be in the spirit of the populations, especially among those who take some interest in politics, a certain work that is not precisely favorable to us. This country has been so often balloted between the different nations to which it's been annexed, that it envisages without too much moral hesitation, but with great prudence, the possibility of a change that would return it to Italy. In these prudent demonstrations fairly cleverly disguised, [Savoy] creates the possibility of claiming later the expression of opinion favorable to Italy. It's thus that I signaled to you ... the festival of the meeting of bands in Sallanches, canton of the arrondissement of Bonneville. The General Councilor, M. Curral, cited with praise the maxim of All for One, One for All—so well practiced by the citizens of Helvetia.⁶⁵

Tellingly, Peloux initially wrote "that would return it either to Italy or to Switzerland," before crossing out "or to Switzerland" from the final copy, as Savoy could not be "returned" to a country of which it had never been a part. The edit nevertheless belied Peloux's continued concern that France had far more to fear from pro-Swiss sentiment than from pro-Italian sentiment in the Haute-Savoie.

In the years following the dismissal of Thiers, with the Third Republic under the threat of restoration, Savoyard separatism, linked as it was to Savoyard republicanism, experienced a notable upswing. The police commissioner of Moillesulaz cautioned the sub-prefect in Saint-Julien against underestimating this sentiment, diffuse though it was. "I also noted, as much here, on this point of the Haute-Savoie ... some tendencies in the direction of separatism. It is only a underground symptom, it's true, but it is real. Up until now, it has seemed impossible to me to find the point of departure for these aspirations and it would be even unwise to research them too much, at this moment, to give the impression of taking them completely seriously, but I

⁶³ This motto gained ground as an unofficial motto in Switzerland during the second half of the nineteenth century, particularly after the last inter-cantonal civil war of 1847, the Sonderbund War.

⁶⁴ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 117, draft, prefect HS to MI, 11 August 1874.

⁶⁵ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 117, draft, prefect HS to MI, 13 August 1874.

nevertheless thought it was my duty to signal to you this fact without exaggeration, but only after acquiring the certainty that a certainty exists.⁶⁶

The Limitations of Separatist Rhetoric in Savoy

Even as the republicans in the Haute-Savoie deployed the rhetoric of separatism in order to manifest their opposition to the reactionary tendencies of the government, the limitations of that approach became increasingly manifest. As an inherently regional discourse, separatism had little appeal at the national level. It was also bound to be stained with the disgrace of the country's recent loss of Alsace and Lorraine. For ordinary Savoyards engaging in political activities in the localized world of the neighborhood café, this was not a problem. But it was a longstanding thorn in the side of political leaders. As the 1871 sessions of the National Assembly demonstrated, political leaders had to treat the subject of separatism with caution in the legislature. Over the next few years, political and administrative elites in Savoy continued to deny publicly and vehemently that they had any ties to separatist political projects, and usually argued that the question of separatism had been entirely invented thanks to rumors and false reports spread indiscriminately by the press.

In 1871, the first president of the appellate court in Chambéry, Dupasquier, gave a deposition to the parliamentary commission investigating the Paris Commune. Dupasquier reported at length about working-class agitation, “Communards” and members of the International in the Savoyard departments. He had no qualms accusing the most left-wing deputy elected from the two departments, Nicolas Parent (Savoie), of maintaining regular communications with these “revolutionary” elements. But he dismissed the separatist agitation in the Haute-Savoie as nothing more than, in his own words, a “straw man” used by the “revolutionaries” of the Quatre Septembre to help them gain and later retain their temporary influence.⁶⁷ Even this relatively mild interpretation of the separatist problem was too much for the Savoyard representatives. The Haute-Savoie's five deputies sent a collective protest to the president of the Commission rejecting two passages in Dupasquier's report: the first on the supposedly Communard tendencies of administrators in the department, and the second against his remarks concerning separatism.⁶⁸ During Gambetta's 1872 stop in Annecy, the deputy André Folliet had pointedly remarked in his toast, “When a country has given so many proofs of its patriotism, it's hard to understand behavior that consists today of denigrating the republican sentiment of our country, in portraying them as separatist sentiments.”⁶⁹ For Folliet and his parliamentary colleagues, “separatist” was a slanderous epithet hurled at them by conservative political enemies to discredit republicanism in Savoy.

As Folliet foresaw, the identification between republicanism and separatism in Savoy might easily backfire. For if the conservatives could not discredit and defeat the liberal deputies and administrators on republican grounds, they might be able to do so on separatist grounds, since separatism had far less political credibility. The evidence suggests that the conservatives did resort to the separatist label to attack their most formidable enemies. The Haute-Savoie's

⁶⁶ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 310, CS Moillesullaz to SP Saint-Julien, 4 December 1874. Underlines in the original.

⁶⁷ Assemblée Nationale. *Enquête parlementaire sur l'insurrection du 18 Mars: Annexe no. 740 to procès-verbal de la séance du 22 décembre 1871*, vol. 1, Rapports (Versailles, France: Cerf, imprimeur de l'Assemblée nationale, 1872), 491.

⁶⁸ Assemblée Nationale. *Enquête parlementaire sur l'insurrection du 18 Mars*, vol. 3., Pièces justificatives, 395.

⁶⁹ Léon Gambetta, *Allocutions et discours prononcés par M. Gambetta pendant son voyage en Savoie, septembre et octobre 1872* (Paris: F. Polo, Bureaux du journal *La République Française*, 1872), 190.

former prefect Jules Philippe had a long and storied history of defending Savoyard provincialism and particularism, but he had always fought his compatriots' separatist tendencies, and he had constantly denied that separatism had any legitimate or home-grown support. Yet the conservative authorities turned to allegations of separatism to justify his replacement in the wake of Thiers' dismissal. An undated note in his government personnel file, probably written shortly before he was removed, accused Philippe of having "arrived in the post that he occupies today surrounded by men all professing very advanced opinions, partisans of separation, or rather of the autonomy of Savoy (because we can't forget that Savoisiens are neither French, nor Swiss; they are Savoisiens and nothing beyond that)."⁷⁰ The letter portrayed Philippe as a prisoner of these radical separatists, and even suggested that he had somehow been involved in the Bonneville republican committee's activities, though the facts show that Philippe had moved decisively to shut down the separatist project there: "The government has a prefect, a direct representative who does not belong to himself and is not master of his actions, who has been obliged, in order to have the support of former friends now managers, to write on several occasions to sub-prefects to have to follow the initiative of the presidents of republican committees and conform to their injunctions--such a fact is supposed to have happened in Bonneville, 18 or 20 months ago.)" The memorandum ended by recommending that the government fire Philippe and appoint a non-Savoyard in his place. "It would be better for the government to take the lead and give the Haute-Savoie a prefect foreign to the area and free of all local influence. It's an error, it's said, to believe that in Savoy we need civil servants who continue today to represent the former system, the old way of things, in the eyes of these populations. By giving a body to these hopes, the Government will be certain to give the conservative party the strength that it lacks to banish to the shadows this small core of discontents who seek to frighten, with the help of the separatist question."⁷¹

The authors of this memo correctly identified that Savoyard republicans were using separatist discourse, and accused Philippe of doing likewise. But it is clear that what that the administration really objected to was not separatism, but Philippe's republican politics and his popularity in the department as a Savoyard native. As the authors noted, "He has acquired among the populations of the department and especially in the arrondissement of Annecy a certain personal influence that should not be underestimated."⁷² Moreover after his removal, his successor Peloux, citing his "numerous and good relations with the entire deputation," correctly predicted that Philippe would immediately form an important core of the republican opposition.⁷³

Privately, the actual national and/or antinational sentiments of some prominent political leaders was less clear-cut. Of the Savoyard deputies to the National Assembly, Clément Silva was frequently targeted and vilified by the conservatives as a separatist. His background made him an easy target. Originally of Italian origin, the Chambéry-born Silva had been identified with Switzerland during the annexation. It was frequently claimed that in 1860, Silva had been among the most active pro-Swiss campaigners; he and his father had both been offered Swiss citizenship after the annexation, and his father, a medical doctor, had accepted the offer and gone to practice in Geneva. As a deputy from the Haute-Savoie, Silva advocated forcefully and successfully on a national level for the special privileges of his northern Savoyard constituents, as demonstrated by his 1871 intervention in the Assembly in defense of the Haute-Savoie's Zone. More

⁷⁰ AN, F 1bI 170 13, letter in Philippe's personnel file, no date.

⁷¹ AN, F 1bI 170 13, letter in Philippe's personnel file, no date.

⁷² AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 70, draft, prefect HS to MI, 1 June 1873.

⁷³ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 70, draft, prefect HS to MI, 12 June 1873.

significantly, there are indications that Silva may have maintained some pro-Swiss sympathies, or at the very least contacts and friends in Switzerland. Silva had been present at a number of the events and activities where fairly open pro-Swiss rhetoric had been espoused. He was listed on Saint-Julien's police commissioner's 1873 physiognomy as a "fairly violent" separatist who "voted against the annexation in 1860 and at that time engaged in active propaganda in favor of Switzerland."⁷⁴ On the other hand, when he reported on Silva's September 1873 trip to the republican banquet in Geneva, the commissioner acknowledged that Silva seemed to have abandoned his earlier pro-Swiss attitude. "M. Silva is of Italian origin, he has kept good relations with this country where he has relatives, and during the annexation, he was one of the most ardent adversaries of the annexation of Savoy to France. Now he seems to have given up that idea, and often testifies to his attachment to France."⁷⁵ Republicanism was so thoroughly imbued with elements of separatist discourse in northern Savoy that Silva, as one of the most engaged and active deputies from the Savoyard departments, was bound to come into contact with some of separatism's adherents in the Haute-Savoie. His familiarity with known separatist adherents and presence at incidents where the subject was discussed can simply be explained by his position as a successful grassroots leader.

Whatever his private beliefs and inclinations regarding Switzerland, Silva's support of republicans in the Haute-Savoie earned him the ire of the government. As in the case of Jules Philippe, the government denounced his activities on both separatist and republican grounds. Wrote Peloux to the Minister of the Interior:

M. Silva, Suissophile, freemason, and radical has never skipped an opportunity to raise trouble against France and its representatives in the area. Recently still, at the time of the elections, he went into overtime to rally and conduct to the urn entire groups of electors that were carefully prepared by fraternal and copious libations; and the evening of the vote, when these *triumphateurs* sang the Marseillaise and attracted the gendarmerie, the report noted the presence of deputy Silva in the cabaret in the middle of his brothers and friends. Recently, in an interview with an employee who happily has still remained unshaken by such radical seductions, M. Silva told him that he had addressed a report to the Minister of the Interior on the discontent that he noticed on his return from Paris among the populations of the Saint-Julien canton and that this discontent came, he wrote, from the poor direction of the higher-level administration of the department. He supposedly talked about the successive changing of employees at Saint-Julien, a measure that according to him is said to have annoyed the inhabitants. Finally he is supposed to have concluded by saying that if the populations manifest certain tendencies of disaffection towards France, they must be attributed to the vexations produced by departmental administration. It's in large part to these maneuvers that we should attribute the disarray that remains among functionaries in Saint-Julien in spite of the successive purges operated here. A good number of the employees of the different administrations, surrounded, flattered, by the leaders of the radical party, will end up being influenced and falling into their hands.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 70, document labeled "general physiognomy of political parties in Saint-Julien."

⁷⁵ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 527, CS Saint-Julien to prefect HS, 30 September 1873.

⁷⁶ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 70, draft, prefect HS to MI, 28 November 1873.

Peloux's letter about Silva's activities suggests that Silva had not actually been engaging in separatist propaganda. Rather, he understood and sympathized with the legitimate grievances that many of the inhabitants of Saint-Julien had against the Moral Order's administration, including the rotating-door replacement of republicans by conservatives and "purgings" of administrators. Silva was merely pointing out the undeniably true fact that disgruntled inhabitants did express their frustration by falling back on separatist rhetoric and complaining that they might take on another nationality.

As Thiers' conservative republic gained legitimacy and ground in France, the contradictions of the Savoyard separatist position grew increasingly obvious. The most ardent republicans were strongly engaged in the national battle for the soul of the country, but separatism professed the entirely incompatible desire to disengage from the country. Such a conditional attitude became increasingly undesirable in public, while positive affirmation of support for France became *de rigueur*. At the opening of the Haute-Savoie's fall 1874 General Council session on October 19, the president, the moderate republican and former mayor of Annecy, Louis Chaumontel, made a speech urging both political and national unity. "I can't help myself from condemning these elements of discord, I'd say even of civil war, that ardor and the bad faith of parties assembles under the qualifications ... of 'conservatives' and 'radicals,' as if the nation should be divided into two camps. After our disasters, there should be but one party, the national party.... We reject energetically the separatist ideas imputed to us; inhabitants of the Haute-Savoie, we do not despair of our true *patrie*; we shall not abandon it because it is in trouble and misfortune; we are French by blood and heart, and have faith in the future."⁷⁷ Considering that two years earlier, during Gambetta's stop in Annecy, Chaumontel had complained about the liberties that Savoyards had sacrificed in joining France, Peloux was quite pleased with this display of pro-French sentiment.⁷⁸

A legal battle that erupted in Saint-Julien at the end of 1874 best illustrates the increasingly untenable nature of the separatist strategy. In October, the special police commissioner identified the paradoxical fact that Joseph Duboin, César Duval, and their associates were defending themselves against allegations that they held separatist views. "They are not less disposed to protest in the columns of the *Zone*, against an administration that treats them as separatists and surveys them as such."⁷⁹ Two days later, the commissioner remarked that Duboin and Duval were afraid they would lose followers. "I told you that these two were the head of the radical-separatist party of Saint-Julien, and in spite of their well known activities, wouldn't hesitate to attack the administration on this question of separatism that is profoundly at heart to them, because they feel that the day that they shall be unmasked they will lose a fair number of their naïve partisans."⁸⁰ The commissioner's remarks were prescient. Three days after Saint-Julien's municipal elections on November 22, M. Cassagne, one of the participants in the Bonapartist newspaper *L'Echo de Salève*, wrote a controversial letter to the Minister of the Interior in which he accused the members of the new municipal council of being separatists. The letter came to public attention after another newspaper, the legitimist *L'Union Savoisiennne* republished it. In retaliation, the entire municipal council filed a legal complaint against Cassagne, denying the accusation and seeking damages for defamation.

⁷⁷ Minutes of the meeting of the General Council of the Haute-Savoie, 19 October 1874, in Conseil Général de la Haute-Savoie, *Rapports* 1874: no. 2, 290.

⁷⁸ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 70, draft, prefect HS to MI, 20 October 1874.

⁷⁹ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 53, copy, prefect HS to MI, 22 October 1874.

⁸⁰ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 53, draft, prefect HS to MI, 24 October 1874.

The lawyer and council member handling the municipal council's case was none other than Joseph Duboin. Thus in a bizarre and ironic twist of fate, the separatist Duboin went on record arguing that there was no such thing as separatism, while his conservative opponents, eager to use any possible means to tarnish the luster of their republican enemies, went out of their way to demonstrate that their enemies were, in fact, separatists. As difficult as it must have been, Duboin threw himself into the challenge. After casting doubt on Cassagne's integrity—including the fact that he had been refused reentry into the army—Duboin tried to establish that the epithet of “separatist” was a crime of *lèse patrie*. Referring to the abortive 1871 legislative project to establish criminal procedures against separatists, Duboin argued that people like Cassagne, who carelessly bandied about the term “separatist,” had convinced people in the government that there actually *were* separatists in the Haute-Savoie. He accused Cassagne of publicly raising the matter of separatism in his letter in an attempt to encourage the National Assembly to take up debate on Thiers' stalled 1871 legislation against separatists in Nice and Savoy. On behalf of the plaintiffs, Duboin asked the court to impose on Cassagne a fine of 2,000 francs in damages and interest, as well as have the judgment published in the newspapers of the two Savoyard departments and the *Journal Officiel*.⁸¹

This performance was an impressive and blatant exercise revisionist denial for Duboin, who in October 1872 had told Gambetta, “Savoy is indissolubly, we hope, attached to France, as long as France shall be republican,” and who two months earlier had been overheard in Perly demonstrating the advantages of a “fraternal and democratic union” between Savoy and Switzerland. Cassagne, who had featured on the 1873 physiognomy of the department as a “clerical Bonapartist,” was assisted in his defense by his collaborator on the *Echo du Salève*, the lawyer Jacquemard. Cassagne and Jacquemard argued that in publishing the offending letter, Cassagne had simply been trying to make a public statement about his perceptions of the municipal council that had been elected on November 22, which he called the “queue of individuals who are always in all anti-French demonstrations and who applauded the speech pronounced by an orator during the passage of Gambetta in Saint-Julien.” In what must have been a terribly embarrassing moment for Duboin, Cassagne grandly read aloud Duboin's own 1872 toast to Gambetta to the court. He also reminded the court that there had been a pro-Swiss party in 1860, and argued that he could not be charged with defamation because he had not designated any of the municipal councilors by name.

Separatist denialism won the day. The public prosecutor sided with Duboin and followed his line of argument. He argued that there were no separatist tendencies in Savoy, acknowledged the prolonged national struggle over the form of the regime, and even compared Savoy to the patriotic lost provinces. The special police commissioner summarized his discourse: “If new misfortunes overtook the country, Savoy would bear witness to the same devotion and patriotism as our brothers of Alsace-Lorraine.... All the parties have the hope of seeing the government of their preference be founded in France, and those who have republican opinions, which weren't separatist under the imperial regime, can't currently be separatist now that France has the needs the support of everyone.”⁸² The Procureur of the Republic concluded that the crime of defamation was perfectly and clearly illustrated in the article, and that the plaintiffs had the right to a fair reparation. After deliberation the tribunal did, in fact, find in favor of the defendants, but it threw out the counts of defamation and of exciting hatred among citizens, admitting only a

⁸¹ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 527, CS Saint-Julien to prefect HS, 24 December 1874.

⁸² AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 527, CS Saint-Julien to prefect HS, 24 December 1874.

simple offense. It fined Cassagne just a quarter of the damages sought by the plaintiffs, 500 francs, and ordered that the judgment be published in three local newspapers. Cassagne immediately launched an appeal of the judgment and hired a lawyer from Chambéry to represent him. According to the special police commissioner, Cassagne planned to present “a compilation of clippings from various newspapers from the annexation forward to establish the existence of a separatist party in the two departments. He’ll demonstrate also that the tendencies have been updated, as argued in an article in the *Revue de France*.”⁸³

It was a strange reversal of fortunes that a Bonapartist such as Cassagne should have sought so desperately to prove that separatism was a danger while a republican such as Duboin should have denied the existence of separatism so vehemently. Under the weight of its own internal contradictions, separatism ultimately collapsed in Savoy. After 1875, discussions of separatism grew uncommon in the Savoyard departments. Prominent separatists such as César Duval and Joseph Duboin had never really been anti-French. They were simply committed to a particular version of France, a republican France. As republicanism gained legitimacy and the growing support of the majority of the population, republicans found it far more effective to combat the conservatives by fighting in favor of republican France, rather than threatening to withdraw from a monarchist France. To put it another way, once republicans refused to tolerate the possibility of a monarchist restoration, they closed the door on the separatist option.

Republicanism and Separatism in Nice

In contrast to the longstanding alliance between republicanism and separatism in Savoy, the two political ideologies were hostile enemies in the Alpes-Maritimes. The July 1871 complementary elections had, after all, pitted two self-identified republicans against two “revisionists.” But even as early as the spring of 1871, there were hints that republicanism might provide a way to reconcile the Franco-Italian conflict. During his brief three-month stint as the Alpes-Maritimes’ prefect, Oscar Salvetat, like the republican deputies elected in July, grasped that republicanism could serve as an ideological antidote to the poison of separatism. Shortly before his departure from Nice, Salvetat issued a proclamation that emphasized the importance of the Republic in turning the inhabitants away from separatist temptations. “Do not isolate yourselves, join in the movement of France; you can stay yourselves, if you want, but don’t stay on the sidelines. Be part of the great French family,” the proclamation read. By proclaiming that the inhabitants of the County could remain Niçois, Salvetat argued that being Niçois and French were not incompatible. His proclamation also hinted at the ideological instability and political machinations of the department’s separatists. “Reject the perfidious advice of those who wish to fool you. Calculate your interests coldly, they attach you to France, and Republican France will continue the fecund work that has already begun. . . . As for me, I take with me the regret of not having led to its end this fusion that I began, and I hope that, happier than I, my successor will see the day where the words of Frenchman and Niçois will have but one single and identical meaning, that of citizens of the great French Republic.”⁸⁴

Some Niçois agreed with Salvetat that the republic was the key to dissipating the separatist conflict. In his *Three Bellicose Days*, Jean-Baptiste Toselli had frequently returned to the republican theme. He argued that the Republic as experienced by Nice under Dufraisse’s

⁸³ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 527, CS Saint-Julien to prefect HS, 6 February 1875.

⁸⁴ Mark Ivan [Henri Mouttet], *Le séparatisme à Nice (de 1860 à 1874)* (Nice: Imprimerie Niçoise, Verani et Compagnie, publication de *L’Ordre Social*, journal républicain des Alpes-Maritimes, 1874), 223–224.

administration was simply the repression of the Empire in another guise. “The Republic, we repeat, is in theory the legal government par excellence, the one under which we must fear the least riots, civil war. ...What does it matter if the arbitrary changes its form, take on the name of Republic!... We still have before us the arbitrary. What does it matter if oppression, changing hands, calls itself liberty! It is still for us only oppression. The true Republic is the one that lasts. It’s in lasting that it demonstrates that its actions aren’t in conflict with its principles.”⁸⁵ Count Ange Giletta’s Niçois Democratic Committee had also represented a remarkable attempt to transcend a provincial Franco-Italian conflict by refocusing attention on the national conservative / republican conflict. It is worth noting that the Committee made a number of statements that even replicated the Savoyard conception of separatism, placing republicanism ahead of all other considerations. In its July election manifesto, the Committee announced, “The Committee has decided that it will support only those candidates who will engage themselves formally, for the day when the National Assembly might change the form of government, to resign from their mandate, and declare that Niçois electors intend to reclaim their freedom of action.”⁸⁶ According to the contemporary journalist Marc Ivan (the pseudonym of the republican Henri Mouttet), who published the newspaper *L’Ordre Social*, the manifesto had also stated, “[Supporting the republic] won’t prevent us from keeping our national sympathies deep inside our hearts, and claiming them if, to the misfortune of peoples, this Republic perishes.”⁸⁷ Like the Savoyard separatists, the Committee carefully balanced considerations of regional and national sentiment, only to subordinate them to the overarching importance of maintaining the stability of France’s juvenile republican democracy. Nice’s distinct, autonomous history was kept in reserve as leverage: the foundation for the County’s electors to cut and run should the French nation take a leap backwards into the monarchist camp.

For the most part, however, republicans, separatists, and conservatives remained separate and opposing political forces in the Alpes-Maritimes in the early 1870s. Salvétat’s republican universalism could not have been more different from that of his successor in the prefecture in July 1871, the marquis Raymond de Villeneuve-Bargemon. A former legitimist, Bargemon was sufficiently ideologically conservative that the authorities did not feel the need to replace him in 1873 after the fall of Thiers’ government.⁸⁸ Bargemon spent his first two years in the position combating separatists and republicans alike. Even the Minister of the Interior had, in December 1871, hypothesized an entirely nonexistent connection between Niçois separatism and “demagoguery,” shortly after hearing about Garibaldi’s letter that the *Phare du Littoral* had republished. “This publication is, in effect regrettable; but at least it specifies the true nature of separatist tendencies, in making it clear their narrow alliance with demagogic ideas; our conduct regarding one and the other should be inspired by the same principles; in administering with prudence and firmness, we’ll remove any pretext for the regrets of separatists, and the same for the hopes of revolutionaries.”⁸⁹ The Minister had little to fear. Indeed, on several occasions republicans attempted to win votes by denouncing their opponents as supporters of separatism. In 1872, for example, David-Désiré Pollonnais, who had occupied the position of General

⁸⁵ Jean-Baptiste Toselli, *Trois jours belliqueuses à Nice: ou, les intrigues d’une candidature governo-républicaine, conte historico-fantastique du XVIII^e siècle* (Nice: Typographie, lithographie et librairie S .C. Cauvin et co., 1871), 106–107.

⁸⁶ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 3 M 179, *Le Fouet*, no. 3 (2 July 1871), p. 44.

⁸⁷ Ivan, *Le séparatisme à Nice*, 215.

⁸⁸ Ivan, *Le séparatisme à Nice*, 232–33.

⁸⁹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 348, MI to prefect AM, 11 December 1871.

Councilor from the Villefranche canton since the annexation, successfully ran for mayor of Villefranche by accusing his competitor, the chevalier François de May, of being a separatist.⁹⁰

The Limitations of Separatist Discourse in the Alpes-Maritimes

This situation began to change after 1873. As in the Savoyard departments, separatist political leaders in the Alpes-Maritimes had to be careful not to overstep the boundaries of accepted political rhetoric. The parliamentary deputies elected by the separatist faction in 1871, Bergondi and Piccon, had to navigate difficult waters, representing the separatist faction in Nice but disassociating themselves from it at a national level. During the 1871 sessions of the parliament, they had prudently concentrated on complaining about the poor governance of the County and Dufraisse's repressive emergency measures. They did not identify themselves with the movement nor attempt to further the aims adhered to in the secret separatist mandate. Eventually they ran aground on the rocky shores of this difficult position. If one were to pinpoint a date when separatist ambitions in the Alpes-Maritimes began to decline, there is none better than the evening of Sunday, April 19, 1874. The event was a Franco-Italian banquet at Nice's Hôtel de Grande Bretagne given by mayor Auguste Raynaud and the president of Nice's Chamber of Commerce in honor of delegates from the Italian city of Cuneo, the first Piedmontese town over the Tende pass. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the long-proposed railroad linking the two cities. An affair of both departmental and international importance, the banquet attracted a veritable array of notables, including the president of Cuneo's Chamber of Commerce; members of the railroad syndicate formed in 1871; municipal councilors and adjuncts; representatives from the department's General Council and that of Var; mayors of notable cities in the department, and engineers. Raising his glass before this distinguished company, deputy Piccon destroyed his carefully-cultivated political career with one drunken, ill-judged, and extraordinarily melodramatic speech:

In the presence of these dear Italian compatriots, my heart trembles with joy, and I feel reborn within me all my aspirations and all my Italian sentiments. I have the firm confidence that, in a time that I don't believe to be far off, this beautiful Nice, this Iphigenia, this heroic sacrifice, this ransom of Italian independence, will return to her true *patrie*. For that, I would be willing to sacrifice all my interests and my family, and you know how much I love them. If, on this great day, I'm no longer in this world to salute the return of Nice to the motherland, my ashes, electrified, I'm certain of it, will reignite to allow me to take part in the communal celebration!⁹¹

As described by his separatist colleague Auguste Raynaud, "a glacial silence from all the guests greeted the words of M. Piccon." Raynaud hurriedly tried to assuage the awkwardness of the moment by changing the subject and proposing a toast to the speedy completion of the proposed railroad line.⁹² But news of Piccon's indiscretion spread like wildfire. The republican *Phare du Littoral* published a transcript of the speech on April 22, which was quickly picked up and republished in newspapers around the country. Prefect Bargemon requested a formal explanation from Raynaud, who lamely attempted to excuse Piccon's speech as "resulting from

⁹⁰ André Cane, "David-Désiré Pollonnais: Premier conseiller général du canton de Villefranche après le rattachement du Comté de Nice à la France, Ancien maire de Villefranche," *Nice Historique* 81 no. 4 (Oct.–Dec. 1978): 160.

⁹¹ *L'Ordre Social*, 23 April 1874.

⁹² AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, mayor of Nice to prefect AM, 25 April 1874.

the overexcitement from the place and the circumstances, which prevented him from judging the significance.”⁹³ In a letter to his friend Juliette Adam, the wife of the republican Edmond Adam, Gambetta wickedly remarked, “Europe is up in arms against Signor Piccon and he’s more silent than God about the incident. There’s nothing as terrible as deputies on vacation!”⁹⁴ *L’Ordre Social*, Mouttet’s newspaper, ran a series of scathing articles not only attacking Piccon, but accusing Raynaud of complicity in the affair for not having immediately and forcefully denounced the speech.⁹⁵ With the scandal showing no signs of abating, Piccon bowed before the inevitable circumstances and sent his formal letter of resignation to the President of the National Assembly on April 28. Read out before the assembled representatives during the session of May 12, the letter was primarily a defense of his own actions. Piccon called the *Phare du Littoral*’s transcript of his toast “apocryphal,” all while admitting that he did not remember precisely what he had said. What he did manage to recollect, of course, conveniently and dramatically softened the newspaper accounts of his toast. Piccon remembered that he had “said that the cession of Nice had been for Italy a sacrifice made to her greatness; that if, at the beginning, I had been hostile to the annexation, that I had loyally accepted since then that the annexation had become a fait accompli; that if we might, at Nice, conserve some sympathies for our former *patrie*, these sentiments must never degenerated in agitation and that our pays must remain calm; that, if ever its return to Italy became possible, that could only occur following treaties freely consented to by the two nations, and that this event in any case might only occur at a time when I shall have long been in my grave.”⁹⁶

The affair took a dramatic—if not melodramatic—turn when Piccon’s separatist colleague in the National Assembly, Constantin Bergondi, committed suicide on May 6, shooting himself in the temple with a revolver. In actual fact, Bergondi’s suicide was probably at best only tangentially related to the Piccon incident; he was generally regarded as a melancholic and depressed man.⁹⁷ Coming so soon after Piccon’s verbal self-destruction, Bergondi’s literal self-destruction could not but invite speculation that the two incidents were related. In *L’Ordre Social*, Mouttet wrote, in both a gleeful and elegiac tone, “Bergondi had to either renounce his party, by affirming from the heights of the tribune his devotion to France and declaring that there was no longer anything in common between himself and the revisionist party, and it was not in his character to perform such an act; or approve the words of M. Piccon and resign.... Stuck between the promises that his oath had rendered sacred, and the dark future that opened before him, M. Bergondi preferred to die.”⁹⁸

Because of its overt elegy to separatism, the Piccon incident provoked some emotion in Savoy. “The words pronounced in the Alpes-Maritimes by deputy Piccon will probably give newspapers friendly to Prussia a new occasion to agitate the separatist question in the spirit of our populations,” sighed the Haute-Savoie’s prefect Peloux, no doubt referring to the Genevan press.⁹⁹ Just as the July 1871 discussion of Savoyard separatism in the National Assembly had encouraged Bergondi to intervene on the subject of Nice, the reading of Piccon’s resignation letter in the legislature three years later prompted a vigorous Savoyard response. The

⁹³ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, mayor of Nice to prefect AM, 25 April 1874.

⁹⁴ Robert Latouche, *Histoire de Nice*, vol. 2, *De 1860 à 1914* (Nice: Ville de Nice, 1954), 111.

⁹⁵ *L’Ordre Social*, 23 April 1874; 25 April 1874; 26 April 1874.

⁹⁶ *Journal Officiel*, 13 May 1874, session of 12 May 1874, vol. 6, p. 3235.

⁹⁷ Michel Derlange, ed., *Les Niçois dans l’histoire* (Toulouse, France: Éditions Privat, 1988), 32.

⁹⁸ Ivan, *Le séparatisme à Nice*, 365.

⁹⁹ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 53, draft, prefect HS to MI, 28 April 1874.

conservative deputy from Savoie, the marquis Albert Costa de Beauregard, hastily took the floor to affirm Savoyard patriotism in the face of the unpatriotic sentiments expressed by his fellow former Sardinian. “It mustn’t enter into the thoughts of anyone here that Savoy or its representatives stand by what has just occurred in Nice,” he said, to an approving chorus of “*très bien!*” and “*Non, non!*” Gesturing to the continued political struggle between republicans and monarchists, Beauregard declared the overriding need for unity to overcome separatist threats. “Against these anti-French aspirations, we must all oppose the affirmation of our patriotism. We may be, in Savoy, divided by opinions, and alas, we are; but before God and the country, I affirm that today, as during the disastrous war of 1870, republicans and monarchists shall always rally to the cry of *Vive la France!*”¹⁰⁰

But the affair appeared to have few immediate ramifications beyond the annexed territories. France’s special police commissioner for the international train station in Ventimiglia took issue with a Havas dispatch dated April 28 claiming that the Piccon affair had provoked a “Garibaldian demonstration” near the Franco-Italian border. “Nothing,” he reported, “happened in Ventimiglia that might have provided a likely or unlikely foundation for such news. The eleven kilometers of road that separate this locality from the French frontier are pretty much deserted, there are scarcely a few miserable cabarets frequented by smugglers and the lowest types of people. I’ve learned of not the slightest tumult.”¹⁰¹ The French consul stationed in Genoa also contributed a lengthy report, using the incident as a touchstone to gauge local sentiment in Liguria on the matter of Niçois separatism and the continued impotence of the Niçois émigré committees in Italy:

The news of this strange protest, made at a time when nothing seemed to provoke it, was first of all welcomed with a kind of stupor mixed with incredulity,” he reported, “but when the doubts as to its reality were removed, people vainly tried to figure out what could have led M. Piccon to depart from the prudence that his high position, as well as his previous actions, should have imposed on him. No one saw in this deplorable incident a new local demonstration or a recrudescence of separatist sentiment, which the majority of the inhabitants of Nice positively do not share. Everyone knows here that, if it [this sentiment] produced with a certain violence during our disasters, it was then skillfully exploited and pushed to the forefront by a few fanatics and still by an even greater number of schemers. The committees instituted to propagate and popularize in Italy the ideas of separatism to her benefit have seen all their efforts struck by sterility. General Garibaldi himself, we have to at least acknowledge, has never encouraged the guilty maneuvers that they asked to shelter under his name.”¹⁰²

The Monarchist-Separatist Alliance and the Decrais Interim

Prefect Bargemon’s reaction to the Piccon affair demonstrated a sudden change of heart. Bargemon had not shied away from using repressive measures to fight separatism between 1871 and 1873. Yet in 1874, his reaction to the Piccon scandal was strangely muted. He was also lenient on Raynaud and resisted calls for his resignation. In May, the Minister of the Interior received an anonymous denunciation that claimed Raynaud had known ahead of time that Piccon

¹⁰⁰ *Journal Officiel*, 13 May 1874, session of 12 May 1874, vol. 6, p. 3235.

¹⁰¹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 348, CS international train station of Ventimiglia to prefect AM, 30 April 1874.

¹⁰² AMAE CCP Italie, Gênes, 3, report no. 118, French consul in Genoa to MAE, 28 April 1874.

was planning to make the outrageous toast. Asked by the Minister of the Interior to elaborate on the matter, Bargemon replied that he thought it unlikely, as even Piccon's good friends had been shocked by the indiscretion. Bargemon confessed that Raynaud had been well known for his proto-Italian views even before the Quatre Septembre, but indicated his desire to continue to support him in his position. He claimed that Raynaud had "separated from his former friends and has rendered to the administration since 1871 real services," and repeated his belief that the replacement of Raynaud would have to wait until after the next regularly scheduled municipal elections.¹⁰³ The changing national political situation explains Bargemon's about-face toward the separatists. The sudden departure of the two deputies left two seats vacant in the department for the upcoming October 1874 partial elections. Over the summer, as Bargemon planned for the elections, he came to identify the department's republicans as his primary enemies. Operating on the assumption that the enemy of his enemies were his friends, Bargemon tacitly allied himself with the separatists, notably Raynaud and his municipal administration. He was more than willing to take support where it found it, even among those whose primary motivating desire was their disinclination toward France and the annexation settlement. For their part, the separatists also saw opportunity in the alliance. Weakened by Piccon's indiscretions, Bergondi's suicide, and Garibaldi's disengagement, it provided them with a chance to preserve the influence they had unexpectedly gained during the Franco-Prussian conflict.

The 1874 monarchist-separatist alliance under Bargemon's aegis vindicated prefect Baragnon's 1870 remark that "the indigenous element conspiring with the neighboring monarchist element is more dangerous than the ardently republican element."¹⁰⁴ The elections pitted two republican candidates against two conservative "revisionists," the Niçois baron Eugène Roissard de Bellet and Joseph Durandy, the General Councilor from the Guillaumes canton. "Without returning to this fait accompli [the annexation]," Roissard and Durandy announced in a joint electoral manifesto, "we have nonetheless kept sympathies for a country whose sacrifices, troubles and joys we long shared."¹⁰⁵ In spite of Bargemon and the *Pensiero's* support, the alliance failed. The republicans, Léon Chiris, a general councilor from the Grasse arrondissement, and Gaspard Médecin, the mayor of Menton and the general councilor from that canton, won both of the open seats. *Le Temps* reflected with cautious optimism on the results of the elections to the National Assembly, pleased to see Chiris and Médecin "erase the sad memory of M. Piccon." But the newspaper qualified the success by reminding the danger posed by the conservative-separatist alliance, warning that "ten thousand votes gathered by the separatist candidates against fourteen thousand for the French candidates is too many, it's far too many...we know well that separatism is far from being able to claim for itself this number of suffrages; reaction has made common cause with it."¹⁰⁶ With his electoral strategy a failure, Bargemon resigned from the prefecture. The department's General Council quickly moved to distance itself from the events of the election. In late October, three days after the Haute-Savoie's General Council had publicly refuted the separatist thesis in its own department, the Alpes-Maritimes' General Council unanimously approved a pro-French resolution submitted by Désiré Pollonnais of Villefranche. Pollonnais denounced rumors and accusations of "separatism"

¹⁰³ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 357, MI to prefect AM, 30 May 1874; prefect AM to MI, 6 June 1874.

¹⁰⁴ Telegram no. 1,118, prefect AM to MI, 24 September 1870, 1:25 a.m., in *Assemblée Nationale, Enquête parlementaire sur les actes du Gouvernement de la Défense Nationale*, vol. 1, *Dépêches télégraphiques officielles* (Versailles, France: Cerf et fils, 1875), 32.

¹⁰⁵ Basso, *Les élections législatives*, 126.

¹⁰⁶ *Le Temps*, 20 October 1874.

as political maneuvers, conveniently ignoring the fact that he owed his own electoral success as the mayor of Villefranche to this tactic:

Highly preoccupied by the agitation that, in recent days, people have tried to spread in several areas of the département; Convinced that the distinction that one has attempted to make between the Frenchmen of origins and the annexed Frenchmen can have only perils for the appeasement so necessary to the spirit of our populations; Convinced still that the rumors spread and repeated in the press on the sentiments that animate them against France, are absolutely contrary to the truth, and are that much more regrettable given that it's always right before electoral periods that they are scattered and peddled with particular energy; Considering that under these circumstances, and in the presence of unfair accusations that have been produced, it's the duty of the General Council, organ and representative of the sentiments and the wishes of the department, to protest highly and to inform the Government and the Nation of the true spirit that reigns in the annexed arrondissements of the Alpes-Maritimes; The Council believes it is performing an act of reparation and justice in declaring that the populations it represents are sincerely attached to France, and they do not ask at all to separate their interests from those of the great French family, in spite of the irreproachable memory that a part of the inhabitants might have kept for their former *patrie*.¹⁰⁷

The tenure of the new prefect who succeeded Bargemon, Albert Decrais, represented an interim period for Nice. He was conservative, but in a prudent and careful fashion, and had no intention of relying on separatists to bolster the support of the government in the former County. Unlike his predecessor, who had courted mayor Raynaud, Decrais mistrusted the mayor's pro-Italian leanings. Shortly after taking over the head of the administration, a clearly annoyed Decrais arranged a private meeting with Raynaud and confronted him with the extensive evidence of his pro-Italian sympathies. At the meeting Raynaud downplayed the continued existence of separatism in the department, blaming it on, in the words of the prefect, "the French democratic press." But the prefect was not so easily biased: he pointed out that the city's municipal council was in some ways undermining its own sentiment of devotion to the government by continuing to allow the publication of the *Pensiero di Nizza*. He indicated to Raynaud that it was widely believed that the mayor and the municipal council were quietly supporting the newspaper, and that unless Raynaud acted to shut it down at once, then he himself would be forced to believe the rumors. Raynaud defended himself by claiming that he was hoping to launch a new pro-French (and French-language) newspaper. Decrais supported this effort, hoping to use a "divide and conquer" strategy to drive a political wedge between Raynaud and the former mayor, François Malausséna. But he did not let Raynaud off the hook easily, also confronting him about the handsome portrait of Garibaldi that was hung in the municipal council's meeting room, surveying its every decision. He insisted that Raynaud have the portrait removed. "What possible reasons," he asked Raynaud during their meeting, "do you have to oppose the indignation of the conservatives, for whom Garibaldi represents both the revolutionary spirit and anti-French passions?" Raynaud calmly responded that Garibaldi's portrait was not intended to signal revolutionary or separatist intentions, but rather, to embellish

¹⁰⁷ Minutes of meeting of the General Council of the Alpes-Maritimes, 22 October 1874, in Conseil Général du département des Alpes-Maritimes, *Rapport du préfet et annexes, procès-verbaux des délibérations*, 1874: no. 2 (Nice: S. C. Cauvin et co., 1874), 173–74.

the room next to portraits of Pope VIII, of Bouchage, the prefect of Nice under the First Empire, and other famous men associated with Nice. He said he would take measures to get rid of it, perhaps installing it in a future municipal museum. Decrais agreed that it would be preferable for public opinion for the mayor to handle the issue than for the government to issue a directive confiscating the portrait.¹⁰⁸

Shortly after arriving in the prefecture, Decrais planned an inspection tour through his own department in the spring of 1875, visiting some of the most remote locations in the Tinée and Roya valleys of the backcountry. He found an unexpectedly warm welcome in many communes. When he heard about the prefect's trip, the mayor Théophile Bottenez of Fontan wrote to Decrais welcoming him to the town and to the department, and asking him to ignore any rumors that might have reached him about the loyalty of its inhabitants. "There was a time, M. le prefect, where malevolence tried to portray us as a party hostile to France and her institutions, and qualify us with the label of separatists and men of disorder, which was unknown to us. Allow us to tell you that they tried to fool you and shamefully lied, and that the sole enthusiasm that shines forth today so spontaneously, and the joy that radiates in us all proves the contrary to you. We are today for France what we were for our former *patrie*, and already the soil of France is wet with the blood of our children." Bottenez's letter made it clear that he was aware of the Roya valley's reputation for separatist sentiments. Protesting against those sentiments, Bottenez concluded by asking the prefect to continue various promised communal reforms.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, when Decrais arrived in mountainous Saint-Étienne-de-Tinée, the mayor pronounced a toast to Decrais in which he struck all the politically conservative chords cherished by the Moral Order, declaring that "the inhabitants of Saint-Étienne have always loved and united authority and religion." But like Bottenez in Fontan, the mayor repeated the language of devotion to France, while transplanting the motto of Nice—*la Fidelissima*, the most faithful—to France. "We shall always love the French *patrie*," the mayor announced grandly in his toast, "to which we loyally and sincerely gave ourselves in 1860, and speaking here in the name of our General Counselor, who gave me a special mandate, I strongly affirm the profoundly French and patriotic sentiments that animate all the inhabitants of the Canton of Saint-Etienne, sentiments that will never cease, and by which we and our children will follow the destinies of France in good and in bad fortune, having but one desire: to deserve from France the title of very faithful (*très fidèles*) that the kings of Savoy once bestowed on us."¹¹⁰ This speech represented a remarkable rhetorical synthesis of the provincial and the national, for originally, the motto had referred to the great faithfulness of Nice to the House of Savoy.

Separatist demonstrations and activities did not disappear in the Alpes-Maritimes after 1874. Yet even these incidents suggested an evolution in the concerns of the separatists. In 1875, one of the city's most famous Italianissimes, Antoine Fenocchio, who had been working as a high school teacher in San Remo, just over the Italian border, unexpectedly reappeared in the city. Police agents found him frequenting the Café de la République, where he was overheard bragging, "I've recently had a letter from one of the most important republican politicians of France. It said that before three months are up, France will once again be under the Bonapartist regime following a coup d'état. The author of the letter is so convinced of the imminence of a coup that he's rented a 4,000 franc apartment in San Remo in case he has to make a quick

¹⁰⁸ AMAE, MD, Italie, 42, copy, prefect AM to MI, 28 January 1875.

¹⁰⁹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 357, letter from Théophile Bottenez to prefect AM, 18 May 1875.

¹¹⁰ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 357, letter from Saint-Etienne de Tinée (written as Saint-Etienne du Mont) to prefect AM, 19 May 1875.

getaway. If you come to San Remo, I'll show you the letter and you'll be surprised to see the signature on it." On another occasion, Fenocchio was heard praising Victor Emmanuel's government. He spoke of the sovereign and added, "If all nations had a king like that, there'd be no need to talk about the Republic." He spoke of supposed secret agreements between Prussia and Italy against France. "War," he said a second time, "will occur under Bonapartist domination before the end of the year."¹¹¹ Fenocchio also remarked that he "hated France" and, in a surprisingly prescient rant, declared that president of the Republic Mac Mahon "had received 8 million francs to prepare a coup d'état."¹¹²

The central police commissioner immediately had Fenocchio detained and brought into his office for questioning, then informed him that the 1870 expulsion warrant was still in effect. Fenocchio appealed for help to the Italian Vice-Consul in Nice, writing, "As I already explained to you out loud, I confirm that since the annexation, I've never been involved in anything against France, against the peace of the country, and while I've kept my national sentiments I've never expressed ideas hostile to France."¹¹³ The consul obligingly intervened on Fenocchio's behalf. As a favor, Decrais granted Fenocchio an eight-day delay of his expulsion, which he promptly used to complain about his situation in the pages of the *Pensiero*. Fenocchio's reappearance and seditious conversations at the Café de la République belied the shift in separatist concerns. While he held fast to anti-French language and expressed hopes that foreign powers, notably Prussia, might assist Italy in a military campaign against France, Fenocchio was also deeply interested in the political future of France. The reference to a Bonapartist coup, to the dubious republican Mac Mahon's plans for the country, and "talk about the Republic" indicated that in the Alpes-Maritimes as in Savoy, the separatists were becoming drawn into the national and—critically—very French conflict over whether the Republic would be maintained or suppressed.

The Elections of 1877 and the Death of Niçois Separatism

The 1874 elections and the interim period under Decrais generally confirmed that republicanism was a more inclusive and flexible platform for political success than the narrow ideology of separatism. Alfred Borriglione, the separatist political candidate in the February and July 1871 elections, publicly abandoned his earlier separatist position and rallied to the Third Republic in 1876. In February of that year, running as a republican in the new Nice-Ville (Nice 1) circumscription, Borriglione handily won election to the Chamber of Deputies established by the constitutional laws of 1875. His moderate statement of candidacy emphasized his commitment to the regime: "The constitution of 25 February inaugurated a regular and definitive government, the Republic; I will lend to this government and to its illustrious head, Mac Mahon, my most loyal and devoted support by supporting the constitution of February 25 with the aim of consolidating and not destroying it."¹¹⁴ Deprived of the direction and support of Borriglione, Piccon and Bergondi, separatism as a viable political force in the Alpes-Maritimes continued to lose ground.

Only the intervention of the conservative government, as in 1874, prolonged its bitter end. Following the Alpes-Maritimes' now longstanding tradition of firing competent administrators and replacing them with polarizing ones, the prudent and thoroughly anti-separatist Decrais was replaced in 1876 by the reactionary Henri Darcy, whose political

¹¹¹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 19 September 1875.

¹¹² AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, CCP Nice to prefect AM, 1 October 1875.

¹¹³ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, translated copy of a letter from Fenocchio to Vice Consul of Italy.

¹¹⁴ Basso, *Les élections législatives*, 110. The "Constitution" referred to the constitutional laws of 1875.

affiliations were a perfect match for those of the Moral Order government, on the defensive after the republican success in the 1876 elections. Less than a year later, on May 16, 1877, President Mac Mahon fired his republican cabinet, provoking the period known as the Seize Mai crisis. As the historian Susanna Barrows has argued, this was perhaps the defining moment of the Third Republic, the moment when the regime finally managed to transcend its origins as an unwanted compromise. In the Alpes-Maritimes, the crisis proved to be an opportunity for Darcy, who was so conservative that he managed to survive the prefectural purge that followed the appointment of the monarchist Broglie ministry: he was one of just nine prefects in all of France not replaced after the Seize Mai.¹¹⁵ Darcy's main mission following the dissolution of the Chamber of Deputies in June was to support the government's efforts to secure the election of as many conservative deputies as possible. Of the three constituencies in the Alpes-Maritimes formed out of the former County, Borriglione's looked so solid that the government chose not to run an official candidate against him. But the government saw opportunity in the other two constituencies. Both included towns in the backcountry that had long provided evidence of latent separatism: The second circumscription of Nice included the towns of Breil, Contes, L'Escarène, and Sospel; that of Puget-Theniers included Guillaumes, Saint-Sauveur and Villars. The Puget circumscription was an unexpected bonus for the conservatives. It had only become available owing to the poor health of the incumbent republican deputy, Henri Lefèvre, who was unable to run for reelection and died in July.

With the republican form of government hanging in the balance, Darcy resurrected the monarchist-separatist alliance that Bargemon had first forged in 1874 and systematically courted alliances with hard-line separatists to support candidates of the Moral Order. The conservative Niçois baron Eugène Roissard de Bellet needed comparatively little assistance from the prefect in Nice's second circumscription. Eager to win reelection to the seat he had been denied in 1874 and had finally obtained (in an uncontested circumscription) in 1876, Roissard de Bellet displayed no qualms whatsoever deploying the rhetoric of separatism to attract voters. Running against the republican Edmond Magnier, he emphasized his exalted status as a native of the County to great effect. In a letter he sent the mayor of Roquebillière on September 8, Bellet complained about Magnier's status as a *Français d'outre-Var*:

Allow me to tell you that, at the moment, the republican committee ... is patronizing the candidacy of an unknown who has never come to Nice and who knows neither our language nor our interests. He presents no guarantee, and the population of your commune, which has always shown good sense and intelligence, does not want to separate its interests from those of Nice, in giving a foreigner a warm welcome, or in responding to the invitations that he will address them. We must not forget that this man is the adversary of the government and the enemy of our institutions and that, here, we want peace and order; that we are moderate republicans, conservatives, and above all that we are Niçois.¹¹⁶

With Roissard benefiting from established networks of influence in the former County, prefect Darcy focused most of his efforts in 1877 on the Puget constituency, where the selection of the Moral Order's candidate was still intimately connected to the separatist question. Both republicans and conservatives scrambled in the summer of 1877 to find a candidate for the

¹¹⁵ During the Seize Mai, 77 prefects out of a total of 86 were moved or replaced.

¹¹⁶ AN, C 3229, *Protestation de M. Edmond Magnier, directeur-propriétaire de l'Événement, candidat des Comités républicains, contre l'élection de M. Roissard de Bellet, candidat officiel* (Paris : Imprimerie de Buisson et co., 1877), 48–9.

circumscription, and both courted the politically slippery Joseph Durandy. Since his electoral defeat in 1874 Durandy had, like Borriglione, publicly come out in favor of a conservative Third Republic; as a result he had also, like Borriglione, become a mortal enemy of the remaining separatists. Although the evidence is fragmentary, it appears that Darcy unenthusiastically accepted Durandy as the conservative candidate, *faute de mieux*, in spite of Durandy's public declaration of support for the republic. For his part, Durandy certainly believed himself to be Darcy's chosen ally. In an 1878 deposition, he explained, "After the Seize Mai, and after the death of M. Lefèvre, I accepted the candidature. There was no question of any other candidate. Even the prefect, M. Darcy, accepted my candidacy. We were in agreement."¹¹⁷ But soon the limitations of the arrangement became clear. Darcy was relying on separatist voters in order to defeat the republicans' candidate, the baron Charles de Saint-Cyr, and Durandy's abandonment of separatism was a major handicap to that plan. As Darcy reported to the Minister of the Interior, "Durandy, who hasn't said his last word, has the separatists for personal enemies," and as late as June 29, Darcy was claiming that "the republican party ... is disposed to campaign with the separatists."¹¹⁸ By August, a better plan was being set in motion. The Broglie administration had been planning to run duke Louis Decazes, the sitting Minister of Foreign Affairs, in the Libourne circumscription (Gironde), but by July opposition against Decazes in the Gironde was mounting and his election was no longer assured. The government then went shopping around the country looking for an additional, more auspicious circumscription in which to place Decazes, and began investigating the possibility of running him in Puget-Théniers.¹¹⁹ As the Decazes candidacy became increasingly likely, Darcy unceremoniously abandoned Durandy—leaving him free to pander to separatist voters.¹²⁰

Darcy's about-face was evident in his treatment of Jean-Baptiste Faraud, the infamous separatist notary in Puget-Théniers who had been prosecuted as a draft-dodger in 1873 and had long been a contributor to the *Pensiero di Nizza*.¹²¹ Initially, in June, Darcy had telegraphed to the Minister of the Interior informing him that Faraud was to be suspended and prosecuted for wrongdoing in his post. Darcy had ordered the measure in order to warn Faraud not to oppose Durandy or the administration. "As the principal chief of the separatist and radical party in the arrondissement," he explained, "political interest recommends that legal proceedings be initiated immediately."¹²² But with the abandonment of Durandy, a better opportunity presented itself: blackmailing Faraud into supporting the monarchist candidate. He announced his change of plans in an August telegram:

My motives were that the guilty party was going to be, according to the public prosecutor, suspended for several months; this penalty would have a great moral effect and that, moreover, we might sweep [Faraud] into better sentiments by the hope of [a] pardon; finally he was one of the principal leaders [of the] party [i.e., the separatists] hostile to the candidate that we were supporting then; but I'm told the irregularity he's reproached with is not serious, and he'll simply be

¹¹⁷ AN, C 3229, Deposition no. 2, Durandi [sic], Puget, 25 April 1878.

¹¹⁸ AN, C 3229, telegram, prefect AM to Minister of public instruction, 29 June 1877, 8:10 a.m.; telegram, prefect AM to MI, 24 September 1877, 6:30 p.m.

¹¹⁹ *Journal Officiel*, 6 December 1878, vol. 10, p. 11503.

¹²⁰ The parliamentary commission investigating the election came to the same conclusions about Darcy's change of tactics regarding the separatists. *Journal Officiel*, 6 December 1878, vol. 10, p. 11507.

¹²¹ See Chapter 6 for information on Faraud's activities between 1871 and 1873.

¹²² AN, C 3229, telegram, prefect AM to MI, 28 June 1877.

reprimanded. Furthermore we need him to support the new candidacy and he belongs to the party [the separatists] that's now planning to back this candidate. So it's very important to adjourn the judgment after the break. We'll have him out of fear and out of hope that the investigations will be definitively abandoned.¹²³

The following day, Darcy sent a telegram informing the Minister of the Interior that Faraud had already begun campaigning on the prefecture's behalf. On August 12, Darcy received confirmation that the justice ministry would drop Faraud's case.¹²⁴ With this series of exchanges, the government placed an avowed, well-known, and long-surveyed separatist, a leading contributor to the *Pensiero di Nizza*, on its payroll. To encourage the support of the newspaper itself, on August 7, Darcy informed the Minister of the Interior that he had asked the Minister of Justice to cancel the remaining prison sentence of the manager of the *Pensiero*, who had been condemned to a two-month prison sentence.¹²⁵

Faraud and his associate Joseph Auquier, the mayor of La Penne, just south of Puget-Théniers, were instrumental in mid-September at forcing the mayors of the arrondissement to sign petitions and addresses "inviting" Decazes to run in the arrondissement.¹²⁶ Duke Decazes, who wanted to be absolutely assured of an electoral victory, did not formally accept the Puget candidacy until late September, and only on a number of conditions. One was that he did not want to run against a separatist; he seems to have believed that Monsignor Sola, the bishop of Nice, was himself a separatist and would use his influence on the clergy of the arrondissement to Decazes' detriment.¹²⁷ But Darcy confidently responded that the separatists would be on his side. "Of the two conditions indicated in your telegram yesterday," he wrote in a secret coded telegram to the Minister of the Interior and to Decazes at Foreign Affairs, "the first is more than filled since separatist agents and newspapers have taken the side of the Minister of Foreign Affairs."¹²⁸ Decazes' personal assistant secretary arrived in the department on September 24 to personally help his boss prepare his electoral campaign. As for the chameleonic Durandy, who was hoping to stay in the race by switching his alliance to the republicans, Darcy ratcheted up the pressure to force Durandy to resign his candidacy. After enduring Darcy's harassment throughout September, including threats to fire Durandy's brother from his position as a justice of the peace in Nice, Durandy finally pulled himself out of the race on September 25, and offered to help Darcy prepare the elections by encouraging his friends and supporters to vote for Decazes.¹²⁹

This occurred in due course at a secret dinner held for Durandy's former partisans on October 4. The overall tone of the dinner, held in the town of Villars, appears to have been fairly pro-Italian. Darcy asked the sub-prefect at Puget to invite the Italian consul in Nice, the Marquis de la Penne, and the sub-prefect asked whether he could also invite the retired Italian general

¹²³ AN, C 3229, telegram, prefect AM to MI, 9 August 1877.

¹²⁴ AN, C 3229, telegram, MI to prefect AM, 12 August 1877, 6:00 p.m.

¹²⁵ AN, C 3229, decoded telegram, prefect AM to MI, 7 August 1877, 10:40 a.m. Presumably this was Joseph André, still the guiding spirit of the newspaper, but I have not found any documentation that gives the name of the individual in question.

¹²⁶ *Journal Officiel*, 6 December 1878, vol. 10, p. 11504.

¹²⁷ Sola resigned his position in October 1877. Though his resignation was only tangentially related to the Decazes candidacy and had more to do with his relationship to the Vatican, Darcy and the central government were concerned about the bishop's influence and the timing of his resignation. Some sources claim that Sola, a native of the former County, was ordered to resign by the Pope out of a Papal desire to Gallicize the Alpes-Maritimes.

¹²⁸ AN, C 3229, Telegram no. 10, prefect AM to MI and MAE, 23 September 1877.

¹²⁹ AN, C 3229, Telegram no. 16, prefect to MI, 25 September 1877.

Baron Léotardi, who was originally from Puget.¹³⁰ According to four separate depositions taken in Puget-Théniers following the election, the authorities arranged for the presence at the meeting of M. Audoly, a native Niçois from Saint-Martin-Lantosque who had opted for Italy after the annexation and had gone to work in Italy as a retainer of King Victor Emmanuel II. Honoré Pastoret, the president of the Conseil Général for the neighboring Var department, reported that at the dinner, Audoly made a speech “to demonstrate to the friends of M. Durandy that the success of M. Decazes was assured, and that they would be engaging in patriotic activity by supporting his candidacy,” and noted that Durandy’s announcement that he was retiring his candidacy followed shortly thereafter.¹³¹ Two of the depositions explicitly made the connection between Audoly’s visit and separatism, noting that the canton of Saint-Sauveur was the most separatist in the Puget arrondissement. As M. Mardelli, a lieutenant of the gendarmerie in Puget-Théniers, reported, “My sergeant told me that this retainer of the King came to Saint-Sauveur to obtain votes in favor of the Duke, knowing that almost all of them were separatists.”¹³² The secret Durandy dinner in October showed just how far the administration was willing to go to encourage the Decazes candidacy. The administration was now bringing in Niçois nationals who had opted to join the Italy over France in 1860 to encourage separatist support for the conservative candidate. According to the notary Charles Durandy in Puget-Théniers, Audoly continued to engage in what was probably separatist-inflected conservative propaganda in the communes around Villars and La Blaie right up to the day of the election, and after the election received the Cross of the Legion of Honor for his service to the conservative cause.¹³³ Audoly was later a guest of honor at a dinner Darcy arranged following the election.¹³⁴

Despite being cobbled together just days before the election, Decazes’ election manifesto struck some familiar particularistic chords. One was the longstanding idea that the circumscription, entirely formed out of the old County of Nice, had the luxury of not having excess baggage, of ignoring the “unimportant” political debates (i.e., those about republicanism) that had “plagued” France for so long. “There are no political parties here. You have told me that you are enamored of order, peace, labor; Frenchmen for only 17 years, you are unable to feel as keenly as elsewhere certain preferences, certain antipathies that originated in a time where you were part of another state. You intend to support without a second thought any power that will assure a liberal, stable, and peaceful regime.” The manifesto also played on the idea that the inhabitants of Puget-Théniers owed a double debt of gratitude in supporting the official candidate designated by a government headed by Mac Mahon, “the trophy of the glorious war that rendered Italy to Italians and France to yourselves.” As a *parachuté* candidate selected at the last minute, Decazes also had to find a way to overcome the fact that he was as foreign to the area as any other *Français d’outre-Var*. “You have thought of me, Minister of the government of the French republic, in order to provide witness of your attachment to France and to peace. My candidacy creates between us links that no one shall break; it attaches me to your country; it makes me, in some way, one of you, and the natural defender and devoted of your dearest interests.”¹³⁵

¹³⁰ AN, C 3229, telegram, prefect AM to SP Puget, 29 September 1877, 4:00 p.m.; telegram, prefect AM to SP Puget, 30 September 1877, 11:30 p.m.; telegram, SP Puget to prefect AM, 1 October 1877, 9:30 a.m.

¹³¹ AN, C 3229, Deposition no. 3, Honoré Pastoret, Puget, 25 April 1878.

¹³² AN, C 3229, Deposition no. 6, Mardelli, 27 April 1878.

¹³³ AN, C 3229, Deposition no. 5, Charles Durandy, Puget, 26 April 1878.

¹³⁴ AN, C 3229, Deposition no. 3, Honoré Pastoret, Puget, 25 April 1878.

¹³⁵ AN, C 3229, Election manifesto of Duke Decazes to electors of the arrondissement of Puget-Théniers.

In both circumscriptions, the electoral campaign in September and October ran the gamut from the merely corrupt to the brutal. While it is not within our scope to detail every misdeed of the election, the evidence suggests that supporters of Decazes and Roissard de Bellet used separatist rhetoric and deployed anti-French sentiment whenever it seemed likely to further their cause. Jean-Baptiste Borelli, an “Outre-Var” schoolteacher in the hilltop town of Peillon, reported that Roissard and his agents had harassed him on multiple occasions to support the conservative candidacy. After Borelli refused in person to support Roissard during a private meeting at Roissard’s house on the Promenade des Anglais, the pressure on him became increasingly severe. He reported that after October 1st, the *Pensiero* began to publish scathing articles attacking French schoolteachers from the Outre-Var, including himself. The local Inspecteur d’Académie interviewed Borelli several times, threatening to move him elsewhere or to fire him, and forbade Borelli from responding to or writing against the *Pensiero*’s articles. A secret police agent sent to Peillon interviewed locals “to try to find witnesses capable of compromising my situation,” Borelli claimed. “He told me at the tobacco store, in the company of two agents of M. Roissard, that he had been sent to survey me and that I would soon be revoked. I responded to him: ‘If you’re a spy, I look down on you and I’m not afraid of you. You despise the French, what do I care? Tell your boss, M. Roissard, that he’s going about things the wrong way to be a deputy.’”¹³⁶ Borelli’s story was independently corroborated by other sources, one of which claimed that the Peillon’s mayor had told another municipal councilor, “If the schoolteacher engages in the slightest propaganda in favor of M. Magnier, I’ll have him fired; M. Roissard promised me that.”¹³⁷

The republican candidate running against Roissard de Ballet, Magnier, recounted a perilous trip he had taken to campaign in Lantosque on October 7 that repeated the longstanding pattern of hostility to French authority in the rural backcountry. Upon his arrival, Magnier was accosted by the mayor, Joseph Passeron, the adjunct and the rural guard, who had forbidden the delegates of republican committees to hang up Magnier’s electoral manifesto. When Magnier asked the mayor for an explanation, Passeron grew angry. “He told me that if I didn’t know the laws, then I shouldn’t have the audacity to present myself, that I was nothing less than a Bonapartist and a Communard; that I was coming to this area to create trouble and anarchy. I observed a cold and hard countenance. Then the mayor, exasperated my moderation, ran almost right up to me, shook his fist right at my nose, and cried with all the force of his lungs, that I was a foreigner, a *forestier*, an enemy.”¹³⁸ The mayor’s adjunct then grabbed a club and brandished it at Magnier, yelling “Out with the foreigner, chase him out!” Similar incidents took place in a number of communes. Castellar’s mayor, M. Tiberti, and his supporters ambushed a small group of republicans from the Republican Committee of Menton who were holding a meeting in the town the night before the election. The gendarmes arrested two electors for shouting, “Vive la République! Vive Magnier!” in response to Tiberti and his group’s cries of *Va fuori d’Italia!* (“Get out of Italy!”)¹³⁹ The prisoners were transferred to Nice and arbitrarily detained for four days. These examples of anti-French language, complete with an identification of the territory as

¹³⁶ AN, C 3229, Deposition (unnumbered) of Jean-Baptiste Borelli, Peillon, 29 April 1878. Eight days before the election, Roissard actually did arrange to exile the schoolteacher in Roquebillière to the Var; *Protestation de M. Edmond Magnier*, 8.

¹³⁷ AN, C 3229, *Protestation de M. Edmond Magnier*, 12.

¹³⁸ AN, C 3229, *Protestation de M. Edmond Magnier*, 15–16. In Niçard, as in Italian, the term *forestier* is a synonym for *étranger*.

¹³⁹ AN, C 3229, *Protestation de M. Edmond Magnier*, 9; Deposition no. 2 / letter of Louis Drouhot, 24 April 1878.

Italian, demonstrate how the anti-French rhetoric common throughout the 1860s and 1870s was simply updated and repackaged for the 1877 elections.

Not all of the supposed separatists adhered to the monarchist-separatist alliance. On September 28, Garibaldi sent a letter from Caprera to the republican electoral committee of Menton, asking his co-citizens to vote for Magnier—in other words, against the separatist-backed Roissard.¹⁴⁰ This was a boon to Magnier, who referred to the great republican in his own statement of candidacy released on October 2, as he tried to combat his own non-Niçois handicap. “They will tell you that I am a foreigner among you. This is a lie. I’m from the Midi of France. I’m an elector and landlord in the Var. I have considerable interests in the Alpes-Maritimes. I’m therefore from the County of Nice just like my adversary ... You must respond to the call of your glorious compatriot, the heroic defender of Dijon, Garibaldi!”¹⁴¹ Garibaldi’s letter was also supposed to be printed separately by two printing houses in Nice and Menton, but the public prosecutor refused to authorize them and the printers were pressured into canceling their orders. The republicans forwarded the letter to the republican papers *Le Mentonnais* and *Le Progrès des Alpes-Maritimes*, both of which republished it in their October 6 issues. In a follow-up editorial entitled “Does that suffice?”, *Le Mentonnais* wrote, “Can you really hesitate between a clerical and reactionary Baron protected by a *Pensiero*, and the sincere republican indicated by Garibaldi?...Edmond Magnier is more than just the republican candidate of the second circumscription, he is Garibaldi’s candidate. Does that suffice?”¹⁴² On the morning of October 7, the day the two papers’ issues featuring Garibaldi’s letter were to be delivered, the government had both newspapers confiscated. The authorities claimed that proper copyright procedures had not been followed and that Garibaldi’s letter constituted an offense of “inciting to mistrust and hate of the government.”¹⁴³

The episode of Garibaldi’s letter is a stunning example of the conservatives’ political opportunism. The reappearance of another familiar face from the 1870s underlines the point. As we saw in Chapter 5, Augustin Galli, an Italian military officer from L’Escarène, had been issued an expulsion warrant by Dufraisse on February 18, 1871, following the upheaval of the February Days. Considered a separatist hardliner, Galli’s name had also appeared on numerous anonymous denunciations sent to the prefecture after the demonstrations.¹⁴⁴ But by 1877 Galli had experienced a change of heart. Perhaps inspired by Garibaldi’s own support of Magnier, Galli openly supported the republicans. He received Magnier on a visit to L’Escarène and accompanied him to Breil and Sospel; he also spent part of October traveling in the area of Nice and Menton campaigning on Magnier’s behalf. Unable to make use of Galli as he had Faraud in Puget-Théniers, and unwilling to permit his republican proselytizing, prefect Darcy cleverly reactivated the 1871 expulsion warrant. When Galli returned to L’Escarène on the evening of the October 10, four days before the election, the gendarmes served him with the expulsion warrant and gave him 24 hours to leave France. Galli retorted that he was going to appeal the expulsion order to the Italian consul in Nice, and left for the city the following day.¹⁴⁵ The Alpes-Maritimes

¹⁴⁰ AN, C 3229, *Protestation de M. Edmond Magnier*, 51.

¹⁴¹ AN, C 3229, *Protestation de M. Edmond Magnier*, 54.

¹⁴² *Le Mentonnais*, 6 October 1877, vol. 2, no. 71.

¹⁴³ AN, C 3229, deposition no. 3, Gustave Labour, 24 April 1878; *Protestation de M. Edmond Magnier*, 51–52.

¹⁴⁴ See chapter 5 for Galli’s activities during the Terrible Year.

¹⁴⁵ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, draft, prefect AM to commander of the gendarmerie in Nice, 8 October 1877; gendarmerie, 23rd legion, company AM, sector of Nice, brigade of L’Escarène, report no. 47, 10 October 1877; report no. 188, 11 October 1877.

thus witnessed the highly unusual scene of a prefect using a separatist expulsion warrant to expel a man for what amounted to a *lack* of commitment to separatism. This pattern of selective expulsion was repeated elsewhere. Breil's mayor, baron Cachiardy de Montfleury, had helped secure the annexation in 1860, but his monarchism led him to fully support Roissard de Bellet in 1877. Cachiardy de Montfleury arranged for the expulsion of an Italian worker of republican convictions, Baptistin Toselli, while another Italian national, Augustin Guillermi, was allowed to remain in Breil, "in his tavern, to engage in the most unhealthy propaganda in favor of M. Roissard."¹⁴⁶ In Sospel, the gendarmes stood by and did nothing when a man named Ricci, an Italian customs agent from Genoa, "supported ardently and in a provocative fashion the candidacy of M. Roissard."¹⁴⁷

The *Pensiero di Nizza*, as expected, fully endorsed the monarchist candidates. In two September articles, it referred to the republican candidate as *foresteri*.¹⁴⁸ On October 14, the day of the election, the *Pensiero* bluntly wrote, "Those who vote for M. Roissard are voting for Nice and those who vote for Magnier are voting for this current of foreign influence that intends to replace the local element, to push us aside like so many pariahs and make itself the master everywhere in the administration of this country."¹⁴⁹ The *Pensiero*'s language, though harsh, was only to be expected from the official newspaper of the separatist party. Far more extraordinary was the fact that shortly before the election, the prefecture's quasi-official newspaper *Le Journal de Nice* ran a number of articles with a fairly openly separatist bent. One slyly played on the idea of Magnier's "foreignness" as an outsider to the County. Reporting on Magnier's visit to Breil, the *Journal de Nice* claimed, "Two hundred and fifty electors acclaimed M. Roissard to the cry of *Va fuori stranieri!* (Get out foreigner!) *Vive le Baron!*" The infinite, unknown, great Magnier, decided not to enter Breil except at night. Foreigner! End your discourses, hold your tongue, it's not necessary, our brave Alpines want people other than you as a representative, they have nothing to do with you, go back to your country!"¹⁵⁰ Despite the similarities to the Lantosque incident, Magnier denied that such an incident had taken place, but protested against the fact that the newspaper was "exciting against the republican candidacy the susceptibility of former Italians and the stubborn patriotism of Frenchmen fixed in the arrondissement of Nice."¹⁵¹ Throughout the backcountry, mayors made both the *Pensiero* and the *Journal de Nice* widely available in communes in both circumscriptions while refusing to display republican newspapers. In Drap, Joseph André, the separatist director of the *Pensiero*, hovered about in the polling room, chatted with the mayor, and intimidated the voters who came in to vote.¹⁵² In Moulinet, the *Journal de Nice* was hung along with the *Pensiero* from the door of city hall, and the mayor "invited the citizens to read the furious attacks against the republican candidates."¹⁵³ In L'Escarène, Augustin Galli's hometown, these two newspapers were set out right on the table next to the electoral urn.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁶ AN, C 3229, *Protestation de M. Edmond Magnier*, 9, 10.

¹⁴⁷ AN, C 3229, *Protestation de M. Edmond Magnier*, 10.

¹⁴⁸ AN, C 3229, *Protestation de M. Edmond Magnier*, 46.

¹⁴⁹ AN, C 3229, *Protestation de M. Edmond Magnier*, 49–50.

¹⁵⁰ AN, C 3229, *Protestation de M. Edmond Magnier*, 40, *Journal de Nice*, 6 October 1877;

¹⁵¹ AN, C 3229, *Protestation de M. Edmond Magnier*, 41.

¹⁵² AN, C 3229, *Protestation de M. Edmond Magnier*, 17.

¹⁵³ AN, C 3229, *Protestation de M. Edmond Magnier*, 14.

¹⁵⁴ AN, C 3229, *Protestation de M. Edmond Magnier*, 27.

The heavy administrative backing enabled Decazes and Roissard to win narrow victories over their republican opponents—good news for Decazes, who, as the government had feared, lost the election in the Gironde. On October 15, the day after the election, Decazes’ assistant sent a telegram to the Legitimist pretender, the Count of Chambord, informing him of the good news of his election.¹⁵⁵ But the conservative gamble made by the Decazes and Roissard backfired spectacularly. The electors were incensed, and the conservatives’ appeal to separatism did not help their cause. The *Journal de Nice*’s transparent smear campaign against Magnier certainly managed to offend at least one native Niçois: a letter sent to the *Progrès des Alpes-Maritimes* expressed outrage that the official newspaper of the prefecture had printed “insulting cries for his compatriots, with a double meaning.” The author declared, “I am a true Niçois, a pure Niçois, and I carry in my heart, as much as possible, the love of the city that gave birth to me. I am not however among those who say: Get out of Nice, no co-citizens! I think the word *pays*, in its larger sense, is synonymous with *patrie*! That’s what I hear all Frenchmen say, wherever they are from. So why is an official French journal publishing statements that are so wounding to true patriots? ... What would the *Journal de Nice* say if the republican newspapers of the locality said that in the arrondissement of Puget-Théniers, Duc Decazes had been received to the cries of *Va fuori stranieri?*”¹⁵⁶

The events in Castellar, particularly the cries of *Va Fuori d’Italia!* seem to have provoked special bitterness. Mayor Tiberti and his supporters managed to have the republicans he had ambushed in town brought before Menton’s justice of the peace in a police court proceeding in early November, before the resignation of the Broglie ministry. The justice sentenced one republican to two days in prison and a fine; another to one day in prison and a fine; and the rest were slapped with small fines. Reporting on the trial, *Le Mentonnais* praised Justice Filippi’s handling of the sentence, as Filippi remarked that he would have liked to have been able to sentence everyone who had been yelling on the night of October 13, including those who had yelled *Va fuori d’Italia!*¹⁵⁷ On November 17, the paper opined sarcastically, “Naturally M. Filippi who is *French*, finds it hard to believe that a *French* mayor would allow *Frenchmen* to sing a truly *anti-French* song in a *French* village. We’d like to signal to the higher level authorities, to the Prefect, and if necessary to the Minister, the tendency of the Mayor of Castellar to authorize his citizens to sing the famous, but unpatriotic *Va fuori d’Italia!*”¹⁵⁸ But in the deposition that he gave in 1878, one of the republican defendants, Louis Drouhot, reported that Filippi had been among the conservatives’ most eager supporters, had carefully monitored Drouhot’s activities during the election campaign, and “was radiant to have been able to catch republicans” at the trial.¹⁵⁹

After the Broglie’s resignation in December, the republicans of the Alpes-Maritimes acted quickly. Shortly after the New Year in 1878, the “Republican Committee of Nice,” headed by Borriiglione, wrote to the new republican prefect asking for the cancellation of the expulsion warrant against Augustin Galli. The committee conveniently ignored that the 1871 decree had been issued by the Third Republic’s Government of National Defense. They erroneously referred

¹⁵⁵ AN, C 3229, Telegram no. 38, sub-head of the cabinet, Foreign Affairs, to Count of Paris, 15 October 1877, 9:45 a.m.

¹⁵⁶ Cited in AN, C 3229, *Protestation de M. Edmond Magnier*, 40–41.

¹⁵⁷ AN, C 3229, *Protestation de M. Edmond Magnier*, 57.

¹⁵⁸ *Le Mentonnais*, 17 November 1877, italics in original. Cited in AN, C3229, *Protestation de M. Edmond Magnier*, 57.

¹⁵⁹ AN, C 3229, deposition no. 2 / letter of Louis Drouhot, 24 April 1878.

to it as a “former imperial decree,” and were mute about Galli’s well-founded reputation as a pro-Italian campaigner in 1871. Instead, they praised Galli’s republican patriotism: “This citizen’s honorability is perfectly known, and the only wrong he may be reproached with was to have recommended the republican candidate to his political friends, in spite of being a foreigner.”¹⁶⁰ In his brochure, Edmond Magnier described Galli as “enjoying the consideration of everyone, Italians and French ... living [in L’Escarène] as a sage, giving his co-citizens the example of the love of the laws and profound respect of ideas of freedom.” Magnier waved away the issue of the February 1871 expulsion as “having been taken in the midst of an effervescence and inextricable confusion, and which was the result of an error since, through the intervention of the Italian consul in Nice, supported by the immense majority of the population, it was never executed.” Separatism could not long survive in Nice when one of its former adherents, a man with demonstrable links to the military of the former ruling power, had taken a public stand against the “separatist” candidate and was now being described as “an honorable landowner, a man of good intentions, whom French authority tore away from his home, from his family, from his property.”¹⁶¹

The 1877 elections represented the double bankruptcy of separatism in the Alpes-Maritimes as a political force. At the most basic level, separatist rhetoric—particularly when deployed in such an opportunistic and vicious fashion—failed to convince many, if not most of the voters. Instead, it aroused the anger of the electorate. More importantly, it revealed how out-of-date the idea of political separation had become. Had the conservatives at any time suspected that separatists were a dangerous political force or that a retrocession of the province was likely, they would have eschewed the alliance. It was only because separatism had become weak and marginal that the authorities of the Seize Mai—who were themselves operating from a position of weakness, as they tried to impose authoritarian rule on a country that did not want it—believed such an alliance was feasible. Jean-Baptiste Borelli, the schoolteacher in Peillon, may have best summarized the separatist agitation in 1877. In concluding his deposition, he flatly remarked, “the Roissard candidacy.... is a clerical and anti-French candidacy. If the election is invalidated, we’d destroy in one blow this unfortunate antipathy that still exists against the French, thanks to the pernicious doctrines of the Italian press of Nice! Our *montagnards* showed in this circumstance how much they like liberty and independence, and the vote of October 14 should be cancelled.”¹⁶²

The elections of 1877 also provide an opportunity to contrast the level of government interference with the plebiscite of 1860. There is no evidence to demonstrate that the 1860 plebiscite had witnessed anything even remotely resembling the massive, government-directed electoral fraud of 1877, which was organized, funded and directed from the highest levels of the government to the lowest levels of municipal administration. To be sure, in 1860 the government of the Second Empire had clearly allocated significant resources into procuring a “yes” vote, and local notables had been instrumental in securing the French victory. But the fact that Savoy and Nice had not yet been sovereign French territories had limited the government’s room for maneuver. Napoleon III had had neither the time, nor the established networks within the provinces, nor—most significantly—the *need* to do more than work through informal channels of power to secure the victory of the “yes” vote in 1860.

¹⁶⁰ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, letter from the republican committee of Nice to prefect AM, 9 January 1878.

¹⁶¹ AN, C 3229, *Protestation de M. Edmond Magnier*, 11–12.

¹⁶² AN, C 3229, deposition (unnumbered) of Jean-Baptiste Borelli, Peillon, 29 April 1878.

The Parliamentary Investigation: the Confirmation of Separatist Denial

Launched following the formation of the Dufaure ministry in December, the parliamentary investigation into the 1877 elections revealed the two Alpes-Maritimes' candidacies connections to separatism and resulted in renewed discussion of separatism in the legislature. The investigation was by no means an easy task. Fired from the Alpes-Maritimes' prefecture shortly after the new administration took over, prefect Darcy proved every bit as efficient at destroying the incriminating evidence of electoral corruption as he had in organizing the Moral Order's candidacies. One of the first assignments of the new prefect, Henri Doniol, was to turn over any evidence of Darcy's machinations. Doniol apologetically wrote that he couldn't be much help. "When I took possession of this prefecture," he explained, "I hardly found anything in the prefect's cabinet except empty cartons. The offices remained pretty much apart from the political measures undertaken by my predecessor, who only associated the secretary general and the head of the cabinet."¹⁶³ In spite of such difficulties, the parliamentary commissions investigating both Decazes' and Roissard's elections submitted their preliminary reports to the Chamber of Deputies on February 22, 1878.

Led by its chair, Albert Joly (Seine-et-Oise), the parliamentary commission investigating the Decazes candidacy recommended that the Chamber invalidate the election. When the final report was brought to the Chamber floor for a vote in December, Decazes protested that his entire candidacy had been a *patriotic* attempt to *encourage* French integration of the former County, not a transparent attempt to garner support from separatist sympathizers. "I only accepted [the candidacy]," he announced before the assembled deputies, "when I realized that this would be an opportunity to determine the populations of the former County of Nice a overwhelming demonstration of French sentiments.... that's why, I repeat, I accepted and even encouraged the help of all these, even those who belonged to what they call here the separatist party, who wanted to cry with me, Vive la France! Gentlemen, you have blamed me; I don't know why."¹⁶⁴ This was the same tactic that Decazes had used when the commission had taken his deposition earlier in the year. He claimed that he had been "touched" by the addresses voted by municipal councils throughout the Puget-Théniers arrondissement—the ones Darcy had sent Auquier and Faraud to force the mayors to sign. "He told us," reported one of the commission's members, "that he had viewed it as a happy thought to link even more tightly to the great French family populations that entered it only yesterday, in representing them in the Parliament with a deputy who was also a member of the Government."¹⁶⁵

At the time, the commission had not found this explanation convincing; the initial report drily noted that "the arrondissement of Puget-Théniers was no less animated by French sentiments when it was represented in Parliament by our colleague M. Lefèvre, a simple republican deputy."¹⁶⁶ It was no more convincing in December. Joly responded to Decazes' pleas by lambasting the duke for trying to hide behind the banner of patriotism and indicting Darcy for his willingness to work with the separatists. "As soon as it became necessary to find some circumscription somewhere, anywhere at the end of France, where the duke Decazes could prevent, behind a mandate of deputy, the loss of his portfolio, immediately prefect Darcy became, out of patriotism, the friends of those whom his patriotism excluded a minute before.

¹⁶³ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 357, draft, prefect AM to MI, 18 December 1877.

¹⁶⁴ *Journal Officiel*, 8 December 1878, vol. 10, no. 333,

¹⁶⁵ *Journal Officiel*, 24 February 1878, session of 22 February 1878, vol. 10, pp. 1978–80.

¹⁶⁶ *Journal Officiel*, 24 February 1878, session of 22 February 1878, vol. 10, pp. 1978–80.

What he needed to succeed, was this separatist element,” Joly declared. But Joly pursued the matter by arguing, paradoxically, that separatism had no real consistency or legitimacy:

The separatists existed, that is true, but today no they longer exist as a party. (*Très bien, très bien!*) There are still some agitators who, in a shameful interest, raise from time to time their pretended separatist flag; there’s still in Nice a newspaper edited in Italian, the *Pensiero*, openly hostile to France; there are still here and there a few agents more noisy than dangerous; but there are no longer soldiers, and France has conquered, in the Alpes-Maritimes as everywhere else, its national unity. (applause). It only lacks those provinces that the Empire caused it to lose. . . . Surely *M. le duc* Decazes won’t claim that on those who voted for the ministry of the Seize Mai were friends of France, while the adversaries of the Moral Order were separatists. (Applause to the left and center). The question of separatism, thus reduced to its real proportions, had no other purpose for the duke Decazes than the support that the prefect considered indispensable to obtain success over the opposing candidate. And it was to obtain this support that they had no fear to engage in shameful, antinational compromises. . . . Voilà, gentlemen, these are the patriotic means that were used in the interests of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to obtain the support of separatist agents. This is how they teach these populations to love and respect France! They attach them to the *patrie* by threats, violence and corruption.¹⁶⁷

In this speech, Joly not only exposed the political opportunism of the Decazes candidacy. He opposed the very idea that separatism could ever have assisted the conservative cause, because it had no real existence. The commission’s final report, which Joly read aloud to the Chamber, went even further. It argued that Darcy’s conduct had been that much more reprehensible because his activities ran the danger of reuniting and re-crystallizing the disparate remnants of this long-impotent faction: “[Darcy] went so far as to address himself to this unnamed party, that calls itself ‘separatist’ just to give itself the impression that it exists. It’s to this so-called party that Darcy had no fear of giving a type of consistence in using it to support the candidacy of duke Decazes.”¹⁶⁸ The evidence of malfeasance was so overwhelming and the tactics employed so egregious that by the crushing majority of 338 to 49, the legislature invalidated Decazes’ election.

In contrast to that of Decazes, the investigation into Roissard de Bellet’s election proved more acrimonious. There was no lack of evidence of electoral manipulation and voter intimidation. Edmond Magnier, the defeated republican candidate, published a short pamphlet detailing many of the irregularities that had occurred during the election, and as with the Decazes candidacy, the investigating commission received numerous petitions and letters of protest. Nevertheless, the commission’s members were divided on whether the facts collected by the commission, as incriminating as they were, merited an invalidation. One point in favor of Roissard was the fact that although he had self-identified as a conservative candidate, he had not been an official candidate of Mac Mahon and had not been identified as such on the white posters that the government’s official candidates received. This fact weighed heavily in the commission’s recommendation to the parliament. By a margin of 15 to 6 with 5 abstentions, the commission voted to recommend that the Chamber validate the election. But it was clear that the

¹⁶⁷ *Journal Officiel*, 8 December 1878, vol. 10, no. 333, p. 11601.

¹⁶⁸ *Journal Officiel*, 6 December 1878, vol. 10, no. 331, p. 11507.

sentiments of the commission were not unanimous; even as its chair submitted the commission's report, one of its members, deputy Jules Mathé (Yonne), warned the deputies that he planned to argue against the report and in favor of an invalidation when the election came up for a vote.¹⁶⁹

The Chamber of Deputies voted on the Roissard election on May 13, in an acrimonious debate that pitted Horteur, Mathé and Roissard de Bellet against each other. Mathé fought like a demon against the commission's recommendation, arguing that "white posters alone don't make an official candidacy."¹⁷⁰ His lengthy speech detailed some of the most egregious incidents of the Roissard campaign, including the Castellar incident, and he concluded by defiantly remarking, "Now that the Chamber has heard all the facts, I hope that it will not, by validating the election, associate itself with the Seize Mai which, together with the separatists, tried to elect the candidate of reaction."¹⁷¹ Roissard, like Decazes, claimed that he had always had French interests at heart in running for the seat. Following in the footsteps of Piccon and Bergondi in 1871, Roissard denied that his candidacy had featured any links to separatism. He acknowledged the County's links to Italy as "sentiments of friendship and of recognition that we honor and of which we are proud." But he went on to argue that the notion of "separatism" was being used against him and his co-citizens. "These are sentiments that, at different moments, have been exploited against us in a way injurious to our character and prejudicial to our interests." He then offered to submit to the assembled representatives a copy of the 1874 deliberation of the Alpes-Maritimes' General Council, of which he had been a member, that had rejected similar allegations of separatism.¹⁷²

The investigating commission's chair, Jules-François Horteur, represented the majority of the investigating commission that recommended validating the election. As a republican, he was in the unenviable position of having to defend the clearly less than squeaky-clean election of a conservative. But this difficulty was compounded because Horteur was also a Savoyard, elected from the Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne circumscription in 1876. Separatism was therefore a particularly delicate subject for Horteur. He began by repeating the report's conclusions—that Roissard had not been an official candidate, and that fewer mayors had been changed, fewer cafés shut down, and fewer civil servants moved relative to other departments. As he continued, however, Horteur became defensive about Savoyard loyalties. "I belong, gentlemen, to a department that, like the department of Alpes-Maritimes, was annexed in 1860. Under the National Assembly and since the elections of 1876, this accusation of separatism against my compatriots has been occasionally brought to this tribune; it has always been energetically and highly rejected by my honorable colleagues of the Savoie and the Haute-Savoie. ... Well, I protest against these allegations of separatism that have been imputed to our departments annexed in 1860." Blissfully ignoring the fact that Savoyard separatism was hardly the issue before the tribune, Horteur was nevertheless concerned that the discussion of separatism in the contemporaneously-annexed County of Nice might reignite unwelcome inquiries about the state of Savoyard separatism.¹⁷³ "It's clear that we have, like the electors of the Alpes-Maritimes, kept a touching remembrance of our former nationality, and in particular of our former king, Victor Emmanuel; it's clear that we have in Italy friends, compatriots who remained there at the moment of the annexation; but that is the only memory that we have kept, we have no others, and

¹⁶⁹ *Journal Officiel*, 23 February 1878, session of 22 February 1878, vol. 10, p. 1918.

¹⁷⁰ *Journal Officiel*, 14 May 1878, session of 13 May 1878, vol. 10, p. 5151.

¹⁷¹ *Journal Officiel*, 14 May 1878, session of 13 May 1878, vol. 10, pp. 5158–5159.

¹⁷² *Journal Officiel*, 14 May 1878, session of 13 May 1878, vol. 10, p. 5163.

¹⁷³ *Journal Officiel*, 14 May 1878, session of 13 May 1878, vol. 10, pp. 5160–5161.

as to allusions to our future ambitions, they are as childish as the allegations raised here.”¹⁷⁴ The Chamber, satisfied with Horteur’s explanations and the commission’s report, voted 228 to 158 to validate Roissard’s election.

The parliamentary discussion of the malfeasance of the two Alpes-Maritimes candidacies consummated the official storyline of separatist denial that had begun in the first sessions of the National Assembly in 1871. Even as their members exposed Darcy, Decazes and Roissard’s alliances with separatists to win votes for the conservative candidates, the investigating committees consistently denied that separatism was a genuine or coherent political phenomenon. Whether they encouraged the Chamber to overturn the election, as Joly did regarding Decazes’ election, or pressed for its validation, as Horteur did for that of Roissard de Bellet, the investigating deputies refused to entertain the notion that separatism was anything other than a passing phenomenon of political opportunism.

* * *

Between 1874 and 1878, the question of the political and territorial separation of either Nice or Savoy from France went from being a matter of genuine political concern to a matter of widespread indifference, if not outright denial. During this time, a gradual uncoupling of the annexation’s cultural tensions from national politics occurred. In the Savoyard departments, separatism was, in some sense, a victim of republicanism’s success. From 1860 forward, political divisions had underpinned the pro-Swiss separatist current. It disappeared because its proponents, the province’s most ardent republicans, ended up winning over the majority of public opinion to the republican cause. The unifying power of the republican ideal proved to be a far greater and more effective source of political mobilization than the threat of political separation ever could have been. In contrast, the separatists in the Alpes-Maritimes gradually lost the influence they had gained through the crisis of the Franco-Prussian conflict and the subsequent moral high ground they had fortuitously reaped thanks to Dufraisse’s clumsy administration. Desperate to preserve what was left of their influence, the hardline separatists made a fatal mistake when they chose to cast their lot with the monarchists. Exploited by the conservatives in 1874 and 1877 in their quest to destroy the Third Republic from within, pro-Italian separatism lost what little credibility it had retained.

In both Nice and Savoy, the years 1878 and 1879 provided ample evidence of the calming effect of the victory of the republicans and consequent stabilization of the Third Republic. A secret police agent reported on the effect of Mac Mahon’s resignation from the presidency in January 1879 in Moillesulaz, that border site linking the Haute-Savoie and the suburbs of Geneva that had so often brought partisans of Switzerland, Savoy and France to blows. “The news of the resignation of the President of the Republic and of the nomination of M. Grévy has caused great joy in Geneva and in our surroundings; everywhere, in the street, in the cafés, Genevans as well as French, are saying with satisfaction: ‘Finally, this time, we have a solid republic.’”¹⁷⁵ It seems somehow fitting that Auguste Raynaud’s connections to separatism finally caught up with him during the Seize Mai crisis. On October 23, during a dinner given by the prefect in honor of Decazes, Raynaud made a speech that apparently recalled a little too closely the links between the Niçois and Italy.¹⁷⁶ Borriglione moved in for the kill and defeated Raynaud in his reelection bid as mayor of Nice in January.

¹⁷⁴ *Journal Officiel*, 14 May 1878, session of 13 May 1878, vol. 10, p. 5164.

¹⁷⁵ AD Haute-Savoie, 4 M 310, CS Moillesulaz to prefect HS, 31 January 1879.

¹⁷⁶ Latouche, *Histoire de Nice*, vol. 2, 114.

On September 21, 1878, Borriglione participated in a banquet held at the Italian theater to celebrate the anniversary of the proclamation of the First Republic in 1792. The festivities featured the previously forbidden anthem, the Marseillaise, and a speech by the architect Brun, the president of the banquet. “On September 29, eight days after the proclamation of the [First] Republic in France, the city of Nice invited General Anselme into its walls. If party passions have denatured the facts, and tried to spread the idea that it was fear that inspired the municipal council, the bishop and the principal inhabitants to demand the protection of the French, this is a gratuitous injury to the brave inhabitants of the *patrie* of Masséna and of Garibaldi. It was voluntarily, of its own movement, and with enthusiasm, that the population of Nice demanded to become part of the French republic.” In previous years, this speech would have provided ample opportunities for anti-French demonstration. Yet in 1878 the police commissioner reported that the speech “was loudly applauded from all parts of the theater, even in the boxes, without the slightest sign of dishonesty.” The only incident that did take place ironically demonstrated just how far separatism had mutated by this time. When the crowd came out of the theater, a small group gathered outside the theater yelled out, “Separatists!” to the spectators filing out of the building. The remark went completely ignored. That same evening, the police noticed a note pasted on the wall of the prefecture, next to a guard’s box, replete with nasty remarks about some of those present at the banquet. It was removed before the police commissioner could find out its contents, but another note discovered by a market inspector announced, “Official Dispatch of 21 September 1878. Nice, 8:00 p.m. A handful of Former Separatists? And after that devoted to the 15th of August! Known enemies of the republican regime... calling themselves republicans (out of interest of course), gave a private, intimate banquet in the room of the Municipal [theater]. A few Niçois acrobats made—incomprehensible speeches.”¹⁷⁷

The author of this poster seemed to be trying to remind passersby that Borriglione and others had not always been the impeccable pro-French republicans who had given the triumphant banquet at the theater. For Borriglione, as for so many, the separatist fears of the early 1870s were now to be brushed aside as a foolish and youthful dalliance.

¹⁷⁷ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 349, handwritten note entitled “Official report of 21 September 1878.”

Conclusion

This dissertation began with the observation that few territorial realignments in European history have begun as auspiciously as France's annexation of Nice and Savoy in 1860. And ultimately that optimism was justified; the political and cultural assimilation of the two provinces into France proved successful. As I have shown in the preceding chapters, however, not even the overwhelmingly favorable economic, geographical and cultural constellation of 1860 could entirely overcome the residual legacy of eight hundred years of governance under the House of Savoy, the frustrating process of adapting to an unfamiliar political culture, and the trauma of a war that was both unexpected and catastrophic. In his talk at the Sorbonne, Ernest Renan warned that favorable circumstances do not a nation make. "We have now seen what things are not adequate for the creation of such a spiritual principle, namely race, language, material interest, religious affinities, geography, and military necessity. What more, then, is required?"¹

Renan's answer was "the daily plebiscite" of consent, of voluntary adhesion and the desire for common existence. France may have won the plebiscites of April 1860 in Nice and Savoy, but it took somewhat longer for it to become the victor of the inhabitants' "daily plebiscite." As Renan himself noted, adherence to a nation is an action that requires forgetting as much as it does remembering.² Memories, experiences, and aspirations, including those not wholly compatible with a new political arrangement, have a historical "half-life," one that continued after the inhabitants of Nice and Savoy put their ballots in the electoral urns in April 1860. Gaston Prunière, the sub-prefect in Thonon during Theirs' tenure as president of the Third Republic, may have best expressed this fact in 1873. "Time and patience are required for a moral annexation," he observed, "which is always longer and more difficult than an annexation *de fait*, even a freely consented one."³

This half-life especially influenced the development and expression of oppositional political culture in Nice and Savoy. The annexation of 1860 occurred at what may have been the political apex of the Second Empire, just as the imperial state was poised to enter its Gibbonesque "decline and fall." The annexation was virtually the only major foreign-policy success of Napoleon III's regime, and even then it came at the price of an Italy that was larger, and far less pliant, than the Emperor had anticipated. From the heights of his Italian diplomacy, the Emperor undertook a disastrous foreign policy that resulted in France's diplomatic isolation. Domestically, the decade of the 1860s also proved increasingly restive. Whether Napoleon III enacted his subsequent political reforms out of a genuine desire to democratize, or in order to patch-repair the increasingly evident cracks in the imperial edifice, the pace of opposition to the regime accelerated rapidly after 1865 in the annexed territories.

One of the major arguments of this study has been that Nice and Savoy can be fruitfully studied comparatively rather than in isolation. This comparative approach has shown that the opposition that emerged in the two provinces after the annexation was quite similar in form. In both provinces, the arrival of administrators from France engendered tensions that became a part of everyday life. In both provinces, the French government tried to explain away instances of opposition by blaming them on subversive influences from neighboring Switzerland and Italy. And in both, political movements described as separatist—expressing the desire to join a polity other than France—appeared, each of which did attract a core of hardline supporters whose

¹ Ernest Renan, "Qu'est-ce qu'une nation? Conférence faite en Sorbonne, le 11 Mars 1882," in *Œuvres complètes de Ernest Renan*, ed. Henriette Psichari (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1947) 1: 903.

² Renan, "Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?," 891.

³ AD Haute-Savoie, 1 M 71, SP Thonon to Prefect HS, 3 June 1873.

names recurred in various contexts throughout the twenty years following the annexation: César Duval, Joseph Duboin, and François Dumont in Savoy; Joseph André, Antoine Fenocchio, Adrien Gilly, the abbé Cougnet, Count Laurenti-Roubaudi in the former County of Nice.

The content and valences of these separatist movements, on the other hand, in spite of evident affinities, proved distinct in Nice and Savoy. Separatist opposition in Savoy coalesced around Savoyards' remarkably precocious political opposition to the repressive government of the Second Empire and, after 1871, opposition to those conservatives at the national level who longed to discard the compromise of the Third Republic. Savoyard separatism naturally found its outlet in Switzerland, a stable, prosperous and democratic state with which much of the northern half of the province had long had important economic and historical ties, and which also offered the tantalizing example of a decentralized and representative political system. While histories of the annexation have discussed the opposition to the arrangement by some prominent liberals within Cavour's orbit, especially those in Chambéry, political considerations have been strangely absent from discussions of the pro-Swiss movement in northern Savoy in 1860. It has generally been assumed that the movement rested entirely on economic and commercial concerns that were largely resolved by the concession of the free-trade Zone. In fact, as I have demonstrated, political opposition to the annexation in the territory that became the Haute-Savoie underpinned the pro-Swiss movement as much as economic considerations. In comparison to this politically-charged separatism, Niçois separatism always featured a stronger ethno-cultural basis, one that viewed the annexation of Nice as a violation of the national principle, rather than its consummation. For much of the two decades after the annexation, Niçois separatism was primarily fueled by the belief that Nice rightfully belonged to the Italian nation than by the exact form of the French government. Yet once the separatists began to abide by the rules of the political game in the Third Republic's regularly-scheduled elections, they too were drawn into the political struggle over the future form of the regime. Paradoxically, the successful foundation of republican democracy in France by the end of the 1870s proved to be equally successful in neutralizing the threat of separatism in both provinces.

Historians have tended to downplay the notion that separatism was ever envisaged as a real political alternative in either territory. This was the perspective of Henri Mouttet, the author of one of the first works to discuss the question of Niçois separatism, *Separatism in Nice*, which he published in 1874 shortly after his paper, *L'Ordre Social*, had been suppressed by the government. He essentially reduced the separatist question to a matter of political opportunism.⁴ It is certainly true that separatism in both Nice and Savoy always had an opportunistic component: one has only to read the election manifestos of campaigners in the Alpes-Maritimes from Henri Avigdor in 1860 to the Niçois list in the 1871 elections to see that. It is also true that the various administrators in Nice and Savoy, by referring to these groups as "parties," may have lent them a greater degree of coherence than they ever actually had. However, I have also argued that separatist movements, while they represented a minority of the inhabitants in both annexed provinces, were not merely illusions, in spite of their fluid and diffuse nature. Political opportunism fails to explain the duration and persistence of these movements over time. Separatism would not have had such unexpected longevity had it not resonated with ordinary Niçois and Savoyards who clearly did experience frustration and disappointment with the annexation in the two decades following the signature of the Treaty of Turin. I have argued that

⁴ Mark Ivan [Henri Mouttet], *Le séparatisme à Nice (de 1860 à 1874)* (Nice: Imprimerie Niçoise, Verani et Compagnie, publication de *L'Ordre Social*, journal républicain des Alpes-Maritimes, 1874).

the alternative political visions proposed by separatism drew strength, legitimacy and support from the inevitable cultural tensions that appeared in Nice and Savoy after centuries of separate and distinct governance. Such tensions were expressed in tavern fights, anonymous denunciations, and other incidents that testify to the continued robustness of popular culture in the late nineteenth century. These expressions of popular culture helped ordinary inhabitants negotiate the relationships between national and political identities.

Throughout the two decades following the annexation of 1860, separatism consistently sketched a traceable geography. A number of areas in Nice and Savoy proved to be especially receptive to separatism, as measured by both informal instances of popular cultural opposition and by electoral statistics. In the County of Nice, the small villages in the mountainous and isolated Roya and Bévéra valleys of the backcountry provided regular evidence of separatist, or at least provincial, anti-French sympathies. In Savoy, the precociously republican Bonneville and Saint-Julien arrondissements of the Haute-Savoie, which also corresponded to the neutral and free-trade Zones connecting them economically and even militarily to Switzerland, consistently produced an anti-French, pro-Swiss discourse, even though daily relationships between the inhabitants of these districts and the Swiss could be (and often were) mutually antagonistic. At the same time, separatism maintained a palpable geographical pragmatism. The comparative weakness of separatist sentiment in the Savoie department when compared to the Haute-Savoie is especially revealing of this pragmatism. With its aristocratic, historic capital, the Savoie department had long harbored important liberal sentiments similar to those expressed in the northern districts of the Haute-Savoie. But the Savoie's geographical position—too far south to be Swiss, cut off from Italy by the physical barrier of the Alps—rendered it a far less fertile terrain for separatism, as there was no other alternative polity that the department could feasibly join. Sporadic reports of Swiss and Italian influence did appear, and the newspaper *Le Patriote Savoisien* gamely deployed its “Republic or Separation” slogan, but the department's inhabitants never evinced interest in separatism to the same degree as those of the Haute-Savoie or the Alpes-Maritimes.

The cultural and historical differences separating Nice and Savoy from the rest of France were by no means simply overcome with the triumph of the Republic at the end of the 1870s. But the foundation of the Republic helped sublimate these tensions out of the realm of political possibility. With the Third Republic established and the free-trade Zone in place, the pro-Swiss movement lost much of its appeal. César Duval, the radical from Saint-Julien, spent much of the 1870s associated with the separatist faction. He had circulated petitions against the application of consumption taxes in the Haute-Savoie's free-trade Zone; had helped edit the fairly openly separatist paper *La Zone*; and had also been involved in much of the anti-government activity in the arrondissement, notably in rowdy democratic meetings in cafés and taverns. Once the Third Republic was secure, Duval threw himself energetically into its embrace. Elected mayor of Saint-Julien in 1881, he won admission to the Chamber of Deputies in 1883 and served in the legislature until his death in 1910.⁵ Duval's counterpart in Nice was Nice's longstanding mayor and parliamentary deputy, Alfred Borriglione. Borriglione had impeccable separatist credentials. He hailed from Sospel, the town on the Bévéra river that had produced a steady stream of separatist disorders throughout the 1860s and 1870s. A “Niçois candidate” to the National

⁵ Adolphe Robert, Edgar Bourloton, and Gaston Cougny. *Dictionnaire des Parlementaires Français comprenant tous les Membres des Assemblées françaises et tous les Ministres français depuis le 1^{er} Mai 1789 jusqu'au 1^{er} Mai 1889* (Paris: Bourloton, 1891) 2: 541–2.

Assembly during the chaotic elections of February 1871, he had taken refuge in Italy following the street riots and had even made a suspicious appearance in his hometown at the time of the major August 1872 uprising there against the gendarmes. Yet Borriglione had also displayed remarkable political skills. By the middle of the 1870s he had found far more political opportunities in the Third Republic than separatism had ever offered. By embracing the Republic and France, Borriglione bridged the metaphorical gap between French and Niçois; the physical gap, the Paillon river, between the “French” new town on the city’s right bank and the “Italian” historic center; and even managed to leap over that other frontier, the Var, dividing the “French” arrondissement of Grasse and the “Italian” territory of the former County.

If Duval and Borriglione both abandoned separatism, neither abandoned particularism or regionalism. In both Nice and Savoy, separatism gave way to a coherent regional political style that guarded local interests and privileges and looked to the Third Republic as the defender of those interests. In both provinces, the plebiscite of 1860 was constantly held up as the historical contract between citizens and their government enshrining and protecting those interests. In the Haute-Savoie, politicians such as Duval fiercely guarded the privileges granted by the Free-Trade Zone, while the continued presence of the not-entirely congruent Neutral Zone preserved a level of diplomatic friction between the Swiss and French governments. In Savoie, the inhabitants protested for the maintenance of the Court of Appeals in Chambéry, which was threatened with closure and transference to Lyon on several occasions at the end of the century. In Nice, Borriglione, as mayor and deputy, ran the city as a virtual political machine, and showered attention both on the Niçois old town and the modern French city.

It would be incorrect to say that there were no separatist or regional tensions after 1880. In Nice particularly, the French government continued to keep a careful watch on activities that might have indicated a renewal of separatism. Even then, the nature of particularism itself was changing. By 1880, Nice resembled less and less the small Italian city it had been in 1860. Europe’s elites continued to flock there for the winter season. Less glamorously, immigrants from the economically-troubled Italy also arrived in ever-increasing numbers, and the city entered a period of unprecedented demographic and economic growth. Thus even as Nice became Gallicized, it became increasingly internationalized. In the glamorous, cosmopolitan, and internationalized atmosphere of Belle Epoque Nice, the old Franco-Italian identity conflict itself grew outmoded. The persistence of an Italianate, Niçois-and-Italian-inhabited old city at the center of an international metropolis no longer caused the worry and concern that it once had; instead, it was but one national “colony” surrounded by others, including English, Germans, and Russians. The Niçois writer and republican Jules Bessi had been prescient in 1871 when he had refuted the separatists in the pages of *Le Fouet* by saying, “It’s not at all the foreigners who will become the masters of the city, as people say ridiculously; but the Niçois who will absorb the foreigners and make other Niçois out of them.”⁶ With this remark, Bessi correctly saw that the very notion of what it meant to be “Niçois” was bound to undergo a transformation, with the ethno-cultural, historical concept displaced in favor of a hybrid, cosmopolitan identity.

Nice’s separatist newspaper *Il Pensiero di Nizza*, remarkably, continued to publish until 1895, when the government finally shut it down during another period of Franco-Italian diplomatic tension. Yet even this shining beacon of separatist hopes lost some of its luster after the 1870s. In 1881, when the government was preparing to implement a new press law that made

⁶ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 3 M 179, *Le Fouet: Journal humoristique et politique paraissant à volonté*, no. 5 (23 July 1871), 73.

newspaper owners civilly responsible for the articles published in them, the paper's owner, Joseph Bovis—another Niçois involved in various uprisings in 1871—wrote to the prefect declaring his intention to cease being the owner of the newspaper. “For some time now I’ve lived quite apart from the struggles of parties and individual competitions and I spend most of the year in the countryside where even if I wanted to, it would be impossible to exercise oversight on the articles that are being published,” he wrote.⁷ Bovis clearly wanted nothing more to do with a paper whose established anti-governmental editorial slant might result in compromising him personally and financially. As for the *Pensiero*'s manager and guiding spirit, Joseph André was among those rare Niçois who never came around to accepting French domination over the city—though he did, ironically, apply for and obtain French citizenship in the 1880s. During a banquet attended heavily by Italians and given in honor of the anniversary of Garibaldi's birth on July 4, 1893, André made a toast desperately trying to reclaim Garibaldi for Italy, arguing, in the words of the police inspector, “that it was wrong for Niçois and Frenchmen to call [Garibaldi] a Frenchman, because he was Italian in his soul.”⁸ Time, however, made André seem seriously out of date. Whereas in 1875 André had published his separatist manifesto *Nice During the Past Five Years* in Italian, his 1897 opus to the continued salience of separatism, *Music and Separatism*, was released in French, a fitting testimony to the bankruptcy of his political ideas.

The bankruptcy of the Italian party in Nice might most poignantly be expressed by the submission in 1885 of an application on behalf of a priest named Albert Cougnet for permission to establish residency in France and obtain eventual naturalization. In 1883 Cougnet, who was of course the same abbé Cougnet whose involvement with the separatists had resulted in his 1867 expulsion from the country, had become the curé for the lovely hilltop town of La Roquette-sur-Var, about 15 kilometers from Nice.⁹ The French government accepted the request for residency and naturalization based largely on the very favorable recommendation of La Roquette's mayor, François Baudoin, who sent a favorable evaluation of Cougnet to the authorities:

As a citizen, Abbé Cougnet is worthy of the greatest consideration: he is a liberal patriot par excellence, devoted to society, to the Republic, and to France, the nation that he wishes to adopt. ... We will never forget the memory of the allocution he pronounced on August 15, 1884, to the children of the town who had just made their first communion...He finished by exhorting them to pray for France, our *patrie*, so that it will faithfully accomplish in the Far East the glorious role of civilization that it has undertaken...If France, and the Republic, have numerous supporters, curé Cougnet is one of them. He makes it his duty not only to pray for the Republic on Sundays and other feast days, but he celebrates July 14th civilly and religiously. Every year, after a mass including the blessing of the Flag, he takes part in a democratic and patriotic banquet, and his first toast is to France...Thanks to his good advice and his influence, France will count among her children the citizen and curé Albert Cougnet, a Frenchman in heart and in spirit.¹⁰

⁷ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 2 T 17, letter from Albert-Joseph Bovis to prefect AM, 23 July 1881.

⁸ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 1 M 348, CS Nice to prefect AM, 4 July 1893.

⁹ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 4 M 547, table giving the state of foreign priests filling parish functions in the diocese of Nice, 12 November 1887.

¹⁰ AD Alpes-Maritimes, 4 M 547, report from the mayor of La Roquette, 4 July 1885.

It is a delicious irony that the man who had viewed the annexation of Nice to France as the worst kind of Napoleonic imperialism was now dedicating himself to teaching children the importance of spreading French imperialism on a global scale. What prompted his “conversion”? Baudoin was clearly not a disinterested person by submitting this letter on Cougnet’s behalf, having described himself in the letter as a childhood friend. Also, the fact that the letter repeatedly emphasized Cougnet’s pro-French credentials suggests an awareness that Cougnet’s antecedents were not entirely favorable. Nevertheless, by undertaking to apply for the French citizenship that he had rejected in 1860, Cougnet was making a strong affirmative statement. At the ripe age of 60, the desire to return to his home province must have been a powerful attraction. The decision to re-naturalize himself French required him to assemble a dossier and pay the not inconsiderable sum of 175 francs, 25 centimes. Ultimately, having spent fifteen years living in the Ligurian town of Savona, Cougnet seems to have had second thoughts about the desirability of being Italian, a sentiment reinforced by the gradual transformation of cultural tensions within Nice and the greater range of political views that could be expressed in the functional democracy of the Republic versus the economically and politically-troubled Italy.

National and International Perspectives

The trajectory of Nice and Savoy after 1860 is not merely of interest to regional history, but an important part of the national history of nineteenth-century France. Historians such as Eugen Weber have argued that developments such as universal compulsory primary schooling, military conscription, mass literacy, and the arrival of modern transportation networks, especially the railroad, are responsible for the modernization, integration and assimilation of provincial France into a coherent national whole. The story of Nice and Savoy suggests that the course of national politics played an equally significant role in facilitating or hindering national integration. Opposition to Napoleon III’s imperial regime helped encourage the rise of separatist ideas in both provinces in the closing years of the Second Empire, while the unsettled years of the early Third Republic dismayed republicans in both provinces, as well as those who simply wished for political stability after the catastrophic Franco-Prussian war. The stabilization of national politics helped banish the specter of separatism, which had all but vanished in Nice and Savoy by 1880, a year before the first of the Ferry Laws was signed, providing for universal primary education and encouraging widespread literacy. In some parts of the annexed provinces, notably the Niçois back-country, the familiar agents of modernization did not arrive until well into the twentieth century. The Nice–Cuneo train line, for example—the discussion of which in 1874 had provoked Piccon’s “regenerated ashes” speech—was not completed until 1929. Political modernization may therefore have trumped economic and cultural modernization in Nice and Savoy.

Such a perspective encourages a significant rethinking of the Second Empire. Following the republican triumph of 1871, this regime was long vilified as the most hated of French regimes in a French version of “Whig history.” Recent historical work on the Second Empire has rehabilitated some of the regime’s legacy, but has focused mainly on its economic and cultural contributions to “modernity.” The experience of Nice and Savoy suggest that the Second Empire, in spite of its authoritarian tendencies, was influential in the shaping of modern French political and national identity. The regime led a disastrous foreign policy, but its domestic policies, designed to sustain the “well-ordered police state,” may have had unintentionally integrationist effects. By adhering to regularly-scheduled elections and maintaining an effective civil service, the regime encouraged mass political mobilization, albeit in a carefully controlled fashion. In this

respect it may be instructive to compare the situation of the Second Empire to that of imperial Germany. As the historian Margaret Lavinia Anderson has convincingly argued, an authoritarian regime can contribute to the emergence of democratic culture.¹¹ Ultimately, the modern synthesis of French nationalism and republicanism may have resulted less from explicit attempts to implement republican ideology, as in 1792 or 1848, than out of opposition to the Second Empire and the reactionaries of the early Third Republic. The Second Empire may have served as the laboratory bell jar in which democracy and republican nationalism could be successfully cultured.

The intersection of politics and provincialism in Nice and Savoy also prefigure the divergent political and cultural avenues that French regionalism would take in the late nineteenth century. Separatism never attracted the interest of Jules Philippe, the prefect of the Haute-Savoie and staunch Savoyard, who defended his province's history and culture from attacks in the French press and even in the Corps Législatif in the 1860s, but also defended France from the separatist machinations in the Haute-Savoie. He had no difficulty reconciling provincial and national identity within the Republic. Henri Sappia, a proud and convinced Niçois, was a contributing writer to the separatist *Diritto di Nizza* in 1870. By the 1890s his views had moderated. He founded the journal *Nice Historique*, dedicated to publishing articles about the history and culture of the County of Nice, and became affiliated with the Occitan regionalist organization *Le Félibrige*. From a less optimistic perspective, the alliance of reactionary politics with defense of regional interests during the 1870s in the Alpes-Maritimes, especially in the 1877 elections, ominously prefigured the emergence of figures such as Charles Maurras and Maurice Barrès at the end of the century, who linked reactionary politics and a hierarchical conception of society with a desire to return to the imagined, territorial, "organic" unity of the old French provinces. In a similar vein, it had been a legitimist who had argued in the parliament in 1871 that Savoy's decentralized liberties had been forfeited when the Duchy had become French.

The questions raised by the annexation also encourage a rethinking of France's distinctiveness in mid-nineteenth century Europe. The country has often been regarded as an early and well-defined European nation-state after 1815. It is not usually considered to be part of the great European movement of the 1860s towards national unification, except as an incidental player in the unification of Italy and Germany. It is undoubtedly true that other than Britain, France in 1860 was farthest along the path of development toward the modern, territorial nation-state. But France's annexation of Nice and Savoy complicate that picture. During the 1860s, France was negotiating the same drive towards national unity and coherence as Germany and Italy, albeit on a smaller scale: it is not stretching the truth to say that the annexation of Nice and Savoy was the "unification of France." Moreover, in Nice and Savoy, as in Germany or Italy, this process had both a domestic and international dimension. Both of the provinces remained profoundly influenced by states beyond their borders, Switzerland and Italy, as well as by the French government's reactions to the perceived threats represented by those alternative states.

Finally, the 1860 annexation also highlights in stark relief the tensions between liberalism and nationalism in nineteenth-century Europe. Just as Prussia faced domestic liberal opposition from members of its parliament and foreign opposition from the more liberal southern German states during its own drive to unite the German Confederation's loosely-affiliated states into a

¹¹ Margaret Lavinia Anderson, *Practicing Democracy: Elections and Political Culture in Imperial Germany* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000).

modern nation-state, many liberals in French-speaking Savoy opposed the annexation because it subsumed them into an illiberal and authoritarian, albeit national, state. The motto of “Republic or Separation” is striking reminder that the idea of gathering all people of a single nationality into one state was not always as powerful as has been supposed. Nationalism’s contradictions are also readily apparent in Nice, where French nationalism faced competition from a competing pro-Italian nationalism that was able to muster just as many historic and cultural arguments for Nice’s inclusion in Italy as Napoleon III’s government mustered in favor of a French Nice. In these and other ways, the annexation is a surprising microcosm, a miniature case study illustrating most of the political transformations and contradictions of nineteenth-century Europe.

Modern Reverberations

Even as the possibility of revising the settlement of 1860 receded into improbability after the 1870s, the annexation left a number of issues that would remain unresolved or controversial into the twentieth century. France’s cancellation of the free-trade and neutral Zones in the Haute-Savoie after the First World War was not without controversy, and provoked a significant backlash in the department. Under the fascist dictatorship of Mussolini, Italian nationalists once again revived the question of Nice’s nationality and put it on the list of Italy’s remaining unredeemed territories. French-speaking Savoy attracted comparatively little enthusiasm from Italian nationalists, though it was coveted by Mussolini, eager to retake the cradle of the Italian royal family. It was no accident that Nice was the first territory invaded by Italy in the summer of 1940, and that the Italian occupation zones in France included areas of both Nice and Savoy. Only the German takeover in 1943 put a definitive end to Italian nationalist dreams of recapturing the “ransom” of 1860.

In some ways, the annexation was only fully completed at the conclusion of the Second World War. In 1947 France’s borders with Italy in both Nice and Savoy were revised in its favor, rectifying the enormously strategically unfavorable border in Nice to which Napoleon III had acquiesced in 1861 and restoring to France the small bits of the territory that had remained Italian. Most significant was the reincorporation of the sliver of Niçois territory in the Roya valley, including the two communes of Tende and La Brigue. One hundred and thirty-seven years after their first vote in 1860, the inhabitants of Tende and La Brigue were again asked by plebiscite whether they wanted to join France or remain in Italy. The populations voted heavily in favor of France. It may raise eyebrows to note in passing that General de Gaulle also made a cynical and ultimately abortive attempt after the war to acquire Italy’s French-speaking Aosta Valley for France on the basis of national self-determination. The idea foundered based on the opposition of the Allies, leaving the Aosta Valley as the last historically French-speaking territory in the former Kingdom of Sardinia that survives in present-day Italy. One final indication that the 1860 annexation has truly ended was Italy’s announcement in 2008 that it would close its consulate in Chambéry, which it had maintained continuously for 148 years.

Does the annexation of Nice and Savoy help us to understand the many other examples of national fusion that have taken place in the ensuing 150 years? To return to the example of Alsace and Lorraine that so greatly influenced the work of Ernest Renan, it is clear that the majority of the inhabitants of Alsace-Lorraine did not want their forced annexation to Germany in 1870. But the reintegration of the province into France from 1919 after a half-century as part of the German Empire was a difficult one, even though the French government made far more concessions to the area’s regional particularities—notably in the religious domain—than they had in Nice and Savoy. During the interwar period, an autonomist political movement not unlike

the separatist movements in Nice and Savoy emerged in Alsace, though it ultimately foundered. A contemporary parallel might be the long lasting and unexpected tensions that followed in the wake of the reunification of Germany in 1990. Though the case of post-1989 Germany obviously presents many contrasts to that of the 1860 annexation, the parallels are suggestive. The collapse of the Communist bloc and the prospect of German national reunification was greeted with virtually unanimous support in both East and West Germany (though, as in 1860, not without some concern from other European powers). More than two decades later, few would question the territorial integrity of the reunified Germany or the legal foundations of reunification, but forty years of separate existence under an entirely different political system has left an indelible mark on the populations of the former East Germany, as have the unexpected traumas engendered by the reunification process.

If the primary national dynamic of the nineteenth century was one of fusion, however, the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have encouraged the ascendancy of attempts to bring about national fission, even in once supposedly stable nation-states such as Spain or the United Kingdom. In Nice and Savoy, politically marginal groups such as the *Ligue Savoisiennne* or the *Ligue pour la Restauration des Libertés Niçois* have attacked the Treaty of Turin and especially the plebiscite of 1860, proclaiming the right of the two provinces to recover their independence. But their political programs reveal how different the context of 2010 is from that of 1860. The idea of a retrocession of Nice to Italy, the predominant revisionist idea in Nice in the 1860s, has never been more dead than it is at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Not even the most nationalist of Niçois has much interest in the troubled, politically-chaotic, economically-moribund Italy. Instead, as the focus has become increasingly regional and inward looking, autonomism has become more important. The glamorous, wealthy, and (most importantly) lightly-taxed neighboring city-state of Monaco probably best represents what modern-day separatists aspire to when they advocate the secession of Nice from France. In Savoy, wealthy and prosperous Geneva, in wealthy and prosperous Switzerland, still exerts an important influence on the wealthy and prosperous Haute-Savoie. Most of the major population centers in the northern districts of the Haute-Savoie, such as Saint-Julien and Annemasse, are now simply Genevan suburbs. But as in Nice, pro-Swiss separatism has also largely faded away in favor of Savoyard autonomism.

Virtually no one believes that an independent or autonomous Savoy or Nice is anywhere on the horizon. Slightly more realistic is separating Savoy from the modern Rhône-Alpes region and forming its own smaller region, much as Alsace, Brittany or Burgundy have their own present-day regions within France. And yet everywhere in Europe the nation-state appears to be on the defensive. The demise of the Franco dictatorship in Spain and the tacitly accepted “pact of forgetting” has given way to questions about the extent of devolution to regions in that country, particularly to the Basque countries and Catalonia. Probably the most worrying case is Belgium. Fifty years ago not many Europeans would have predicted that the cultural and economic tensions between Flanders and Wallonia that have characterized Belgium since its creation in the 1830s would have put the issue of Belgian statehood up for discussion. Since 2007, Belgium has experienced near continual government instability arising from these tensions that have been exacerbated by the complicated institutions of the federal Belgian state. The ongoing difficulties have led to open questioning of whether Belgium will survive as a nation.

France, of course, is clearly very different from either Spain or Belgium, but it is not clear that it will be able to defy the move away from the traditional territorial nation-state. As Renan predicted, nations themselves are not permanent fixtures: the fact that they require

forgetting as well as remembering suggests that they may be created and destroyed in fairly rapid order. “Nations are not eternal,” he warned. “They had their beginnings and they will end. A European confederation will very probably replace them,” he predicted. The European Union has not replaced Europe’s nation-states, but it does seem to have incubated modern forms of regionalism that are both anti-national and pro-European. Does this mean that in Nice and Savoy, today’s inhabitants will cease to engage in the work of the daily plebiscite—despite the fact that the majority of the territories’ inhabitants were not born there? That seems unlikely. All that is certain is that the factors that encourage or disrupt the daily plebiscite of adherence to a nation have always been numerous, and that they continue to shift rapidly and dramatically in the twenty-first century. Let us allow Renan to speak for us one final time. “Human wills change,” he remarked, “but what is there here below that does not change?”¹²

¹² Renan, “Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?”, 905.

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