

Document 4b: Le Bonapartisme et le parti de l'ordre /
Bonapartism and the Party of Order
Speech of the Prince-President at Dijon, June 1, 1851

France wants neither the return to the Old regime, whatever form it might be disguised behind, nor any attempt at deadly and unworkable utopias. It is because I am the enemy of both of these that she has placed her confidence in me. [...] If my government proved unable to realize all the improvements that it had in mind, the blame must be placed on the intrigues of the factions. For the past three years one can see that I was always supported by the Assembly when it was a matter of combatting disorder by threats of *compression*; but when I tried to do good, to improve the fate of the people, it denied me its support.

Document 4c: The objectives of the empire
Speech of the Prince-President at Bordeaux, October 9, 1852

[...] I say this with a frankness as far removed from pride as it is from false modesty, never has a people demonstrated in a more direct, spontaneous and unanimous way, the will to free itself from the preoccupations of the future, by consolidating in the same hand a power which cares for it. [...] It knows that in 1852 society was headed for ruin, because each party had consoled itself in advance about the general shipwreck in the hope of planting its flag in the debris that might float to the surface. It is pleased with me for having saved the ship simply by drawing near to the French flag. [...] I am not of the family of ideologues. To do good for the country, it is not necessary to install new systems; but above all to supply confidence in the present, security in the future. That is why France seems to want to return to the Empire. [...] In the spirit of rebellion, certain people say to themselves: 'the Empire means war'. Myself, I say: 'the Empire means peace.' Peace, for that is what France desires, and when France is satisfied, the world is peaceful. [...] I agree, however, that I have, as emperor, many conquests to accomplish. I wish, like it, to conquer by conciliation the dissident parties and to bring back into the stream of the great popular river the hostile currents which will be wasted without any benefit to anyone. I wish to conquer for religion, for morality, for prosperity, that still quite numerous part of the population which, in the middle of a country of faith and belief, barely knows the precepts of Christ; which in the middle of the most fertile land in the world, can hardly take advantage of basic necessities. We have immense amounts of uncultivated territory to clear, roads to build, ports to excavate, rivers to render navigable, canals to finish, our system of railroads to complete. We have across from Marseille [i.e., in Algeria] a vast realm to assimilate to France. We have all our great western ports to bring closer to the American continent with the quickness of those communications which we as yet lack. We have everywhere, finally, ruins to raise back up, false gods to bring down, truths to see triumph. That is how I understand the empire, if the empire is to be re-established.

—*Le Moniteur universel*, October 12, 1852

Translations are by Stephen Walton