

**Volume 19**

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**History's Turning Points (8) –**  
**Ambitious Corporal – II**

**Lead: Historical study often helps reveal twists in the human journey. Consider history's turning points: the ambitious corporal's legacy.**

***Intro: A Moment in Time with Dan Roberts***

**Content: Napoleon Bonaparte was a daring and effective military commander, yet his lasting legacy may have been off the battlefield. He continued the destruction of aristocratic rule that began with the French Revolution in France and**

wherever his armies conquered. Though he created a modified aristocracy loyal to him and made himself Emperor of the French, this artifice collapsed when he was defeated and exiled. The Congress of Vienna 1815 tried to put the pieces back together again, but in the decades after Napoleon demonstrated a steady collapse of autocracy and the steady flowering of democracy.

One way this military autocrat helped to destroy tyranny was that wherever he went he established a legal system that brought the slowly dying aristocracy to heel in a way that benefited the people. The Napoleonic Code remains the system of law in 30

**countries and in many of parts of the world that were colonies of nations once ruled by Napoleon.**

**Perhaps his most dark and sinister legacy was nationalism. As he conquered he would force French institutions and values on the nations he took over. They naturally resented it and began to resist by asserting their own right to exist based on ethnic and religious distinctives. In the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, nationalism has helped bring on two world wars and continuing unrest in the world the Corsican Corporal helped create.**

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## Resources

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