

14. PIUS VII IS DEPORTED FROM ROME

The French reaction to the excommunication was not long in coming. On the night between 5 and 6 of July of 1809, various pickets of cavalry occupied the various streets of Rome that led to the Quirinal; it included some troops being located to impede even internal communication; about 7 in the evening a group of infantry arrived at forced march, but in a very quiet manner, and encircled the palace of the pope.

Inside no one could sleep during the night. The movements of the troops were sensed by those inside the palace as they heard the silence and saw the darkness; this dramatic wait weighed on their souls.

Cardinal Pacca continues his narrative: “After a day filled with anxiety and a lot of work and without having been able to sleep the whole night, and not being able to hear any noise in the Plaza of the Quirinal or in the adjacent streets, it almost appeared that the danger had passed for that night, and I retired to my rooms to get some sleep. I hardly was in bed, when the chamberlain came to tell me that the French had entered the palace. I got up quickly and ran towards the windows and I saw a lot of people armed with their lighted torches were running in the garden looking for an open door so that they could get into the apartments. Also I saw other armed persons going down the servant staircase near the bakery. At the same time another armed group began to climb on ladders to the windows of the living quarters of the pope’s family servants on the street side that led to the Porta Pia, and breaking the glass with hatchets; they entered and ran to open the door to the Plaza so that all the soldiers could enter.”

The pope, dressed in a cope and stole, was in the room in which he usually held

audiences; he had a calm face. With him were gathered Cardinals Pacca and Despuig, some other prelates that lived in the palace, and other officials and notaries of the Secretariat of State. Meanwhile the attackers, with hatchet strokes, broke down the doors of the offices and got to the Holy Father; his door was open from inside to avoid major damage. The pope from his chair went to his desk; the two cardinals were on each side of him; the prelates and notaries were behind him in a semi-circle. When the door was opened, the first to enter was General Radet, who was the leader and director of the operation, followed by some French officials of the army, and two or three rebel Romans that had guided the French in their attack on the palace. Radet stood in front of the Holy Father with the rest on either side, and for a few minutes there was total silence; they looked at each other face to face without saying anything, and without moving. Finally General Radet with a white face and a trembling voice said to the pope:

“I have to fulfill a very painful and disagreeable commission, but having taken an oath of fidelity and obedience to the Emperor, I can do no less than fulfill it. In the name of the Emperor I must tell you to renounce the temporal sovereignty over Rome and over the Pontifical States; and if Your Holiness does not consent to do this, I have the orders to take you before General Miollis, who will indicate to you the place where you will be conducted.”

The pope, without moving, spoke with a firm, humble and dignified voice :

“If you believe that you ought to execute the orders of the Emperor because you have made an oath of fidelity and obedience, imagine in what form We must protect the rights of the Holy See, to which We too are bound by so many oaths; We cannot concede nor renounce that which is Ours; the temporal dominion belongs to the

Roman Church and We are only administrators. The Emperor can make small pieces of Us, but he will never obtain that from Us; also, considering all that We have done for him, We did not expect to be treated in this way.”

“Holy Father,” General Radet then said, “I know that the Emperor owes you a lot.”

“More than you know,” replied the pope; and then he continued, “And must We go alone?”

“Holy Father, you can take along with you your minister, Cardinal Pacca.”

And he, who was at his side, asked:

“And what orders do you give me? May I have the honor of accompanying him?”

The pope gave his consent, and the cardinal asked for permission to enter the next room, accompanied by two officials of the Guard, who acted as if they were admiring the room, but were listening to all that was said; he put on his cardinal robes, thinking that he would accompany His Holiness to the Doria House where General Miollis was quartered. Meanwhile the pope was drawing up in his own hand a list of the people who he thought should accompany him. Afterwards he went to his private quarters, but the chamberlains were not given sufficient time to prepare a suitcase with personal belongings of the pope so that he could have a change of clothing during the trip. The cardinal was able to get there and both, surrounded by guards, soldiers and rebellious citizens and walking with difficulty because of the damages to the doors, went down the stairs and crossed the great courtyard where there were waiting for them the French troops and peace officers.

They reached the great door of Monte Cavallo, where they met a line of carriages of General Radet and they saw in the plaza many Neapolitan soldiers that had arrived a few hours before to cooperate in the “great

business”; they put the pope in the carriage first and then the cardinal; the window on the side of the pope was closed and boarded up; then a guard closed the both doors of the carriage and locked them; once General Radet and a person named Cardini, a Tuscan marshal, had gotten into the outside seat of the carriage, they gave the order to leave. But instead of taking the road to the Doria palace, they went in direction of the Porta Pia although earlier they turned to the “grand road” to the Salaria Gate, which had been like all the rest of the gates of the city. Passing this gate they were met by horses in reserve, and while these were harnessed to the carriage, the pope reproved General Radet for having lied to him saying that he would take him to General Miollis and he lamented in the violent form they were leaving Rome without his followers, deprived of everything with only the clothing on his back. General Radet answered him that soon they would meet some of those whom His Holiness had requested in Monte Cavallo, with all their necessary baggage; and in order to speed up the departure, he sent a guard on horse to General Miollis.

A little later, the pope asked the cardinal if he had brought with him some money, and he replied:

“Your Holiness saw that I was arrested in your very apartment and I was not allowed to go to mine.”

They looked in their pockets, and in spite of their problems, they had to laugh because in that of the Holy Father they found one silver coin and in those of the Secretary of State there were three coins called “fat ones”. So they started their journey in a truly apostolic way, according to the words of the Savior directed to his apostles: “When you go on your way, take nothing for the journey: no bread, no two tunics, no money.” And so it was; they did not take along provisions, nor a

change of clothing other than what they were wearing; it was very uncomfortable, for the pope had only his cape and not even an extra shirt; they were going without money, with only 35 "*baiocchi*" between the two.

This journey, very slow and with great suffering for the pope, took them first to a place in Florence, where Cardinal Pacca was transferred to the fortress of Fenestrelle in the Piedmont for two years or more; Pius VII continued his journey to Viareggio, where he stayed overnight in a house which still exists today on Regia street; from there he was taken to Grenoble, where orders and counter-orders were sent and received by the French. From there he was returned to Savona, where he remained from the 17 August 1809 until 7 July 1811.