Beat: Arts

Napoleon : From Exile to Eternity

Resting in Grandeur

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USPA NEWS - On a sunlit autumn afternoon , I made my way towards one of France`s most solemn military sanctuaries , the Dôme des Invalides . Its golden cupola rises majestically above the clear blue sky and visible from far beyond the banks of the Seine . As I enter Les Invalides , I find myself among a continuous stream of visitors who have come from every corner of the world .Different languages echo softly through the galleries , yet everyone seems to be drawn towards the same destination : the monumental tomb of Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte .Passing through the imposing entrance and beneath the richly decorated vaults , I gradually leave behind the noise of the crowd . Inside the church , a ceremonial silence begins to prevail . I walk slowly towards the circular opening beneath the Dome and stop at the balustrade .Below me lies an unforgettable sight .At the centre of the vast crypt stands the immense red sarcophagus of Napoleon I . Its monumental proportions , the harmony of the surrounding architecture and the light descending from the cupola create an atmosphere of solemn grandeur . Here beneath the Golden Dome , rests the man who once ruled an Empire and transformed Europe

The Emperor died in exile on the remote island of Saint Helena in 1821 . For almost two decades his grave remained thousands of kilometers away from Paris . By 1840 , however , the political climate in France had changed . King Louis-Philippe , the ruler of the constitutional regime known as the July Monarchy and officialy styled ,, King of the French ``decided that Napoleon `s remains should be brought back to France .By restoring Napoleon to French Nation , the King sought to transform a contested historical inheritance into a symbol of reconciliation , National Unity and French Glory . To create a setting worthy of the Emperor `s final resting place , King Louis- Philippe entrusted the project to Louis Visconti . The enormous sarcophagus , carved from red quartzite in Karelia , contains a series of coffins placed one inside another , protecting the remains of the Emperor .Around the tomb stand twelve sculpted figures of Victory , created by James Pradier . These monumental statues symbolize Napoleon `s military campaigns and victories .

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