

Carlsbad 1819

Like another Chouannerie

Aristocratic liberalism: a brief tour of an extinct tradition

April 28, 2017 by Nulle Terre Sans Seigneur

Can one be a liberal who hates the people? Liberalism and democracy are generally taken to be two inseparable sides of the same coin, but as any socialist will tell you, it need not be so. Indeed, it was not always so. Is there not some conflict between a contractual view of a bounded state where governors reciprocally guarantee certain rights to citizens, and a view of a General Will perpetually demolishing fences that the forces of “free expression” and ballot-box anarchy deem unworthy of standing? It seems there is. Of course, any aberration from democracy in a liberal state seems to be quickly corrected, either in the direction of more popular participation with disastrous results (First Spanish Republic, First Portuguese Republic, First Austrian Republic, etc.) or that of more popular participation with careful bureaucratic safeguards (most modern liberal democracies).

Still, the rule of law differing from the rule of the rabble, we will be looking at the dead transitory tendency that was aristocratic liberalism, which flourished during the period from the Bourbon Restoration to the July Monarchy (1814-1848) in France, but with a precedent in the conservative Monarchiens faction during the early stages of the French Revolution (1789-1791), who advocated for constitutional monarchy.

The essence of this aristocratic liberalism is a belief in constitutionalism, representative institutions and civil liberties, but a rejection of what we call “political freedom.” A nonpartisan monarch stands inviolable and infallible, but does not legislate directly, only through his ministers. A bicameral legislature votes on and enacts laws, but they are sanctioned and promulgated solely by the person of the king. Freedom of religion and equality before the law are guaranteed. However, political participation is strictly limited by census suffrage, restrictions on the press and restrictions on political assembly. These are, by and large, the principles of the Charter of 1814 which opened the Bourbon Restoration. The conception of liberty is one based on property, not on voice.

The aristocratic liberals were the epitome of bourgeois values. The term “bourgeois” has, of course, become one of opprobrium. The left associates it with reactionary capitalist robber barons extracting surplus value from powerless wage workers, whereas the right uses it as something of a synonym for an urban bohemian type with progressive convictions and a liberal-arts major, what is today often called a SWPL.

Neither of these are accurate. To help demystify what it means to be a burgher in spirit, a good place to start would be reading some of the topical literature coming out of the early modern Dutch Republic, the most bourgeois state of its time. From Pieter de la Court's *The True Interest and Political Maxims, of the Republic of Holland* (<http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/court-the-true-interest-and-political-maxims-of-the-republic-of-holland>) (1662) (pp. 31; 57; 330):

1.

And seeing the inhabitants under this free government, hope by lawful means to acquire estates, may fit down peaceably, and use their wealth as they please, without dreading that any indigent or wasteful prince, or his courtiers and gentry, who are generally as prodigal, necessitous, and covetous as himself, should on any pretence whatever seize on the wealth of the subject; our inhabitants are therefore much inclined to subsist by the forenamed and other like ways or means, and gain riches for their posterity by frugality and good husbandry.

2.

Next to a liberty of serving God, follows the liberty of gaining a livelihood without any dear-bought city-freedom, but only by virtue of a fixed habitation to have the common right of other inhabitants: which is here very necessary for keeping the people we have, and inviting strangers to come among us. For it is self-evident that landed-men, or others that are wealthy, being forced by any accident to leave their country or habitation, will never chuse Holland to dwell in, being so chargeable a place, and where they have so little interest for their mony. And for those who are less wealthy, it is well known, that no man from abroad will come to dwell or continue in a country where he shall not be permitted to get an honest maintenance. And it may be easily considered how great an inconveniency it would be in this country, for the inhabitants, especially strangers, if they should have no freedom of chusing and practising such honest means of livelihood as they think best for their subsistence; or if, when they had chosen a trade, and could not live by it, they might not chuse another.

3.

An open or free burgership, with a right for all foreign inhabitants to follow their employments, being added to liberty of conscience in matters religious; it will certainly cause very great and populous cities, and incredible many conveniences and divertisements for all foreign inhabitants: so that all civil magistrates ought for that reason, were there no other, to endeavour it; and the more the better, if we observe that in such lands and cities, offices do exceedingly multiply, and are made profitable, and that then the rulers would have the power to prefer many, if not all their friends to make them to live in credit and ease. And consequently many offices and benefices for their friends.

Moreover, in such lands and cities there will be found naturally among the inhabitants diversities in religion, nations, tongues and occupations: so that there would be no occasions ministred to the few aristocratical rulers who govern our republick and cities, of dividing the people by artificial, and often impious designs, in order to govern them: for by these natural divisions, and the diversity of the peoples occupations, they may as peaceably and safely govern them, as in the open country; for in the great cities of Holland, and other cities filled with foreign inhabitants, as Amsterdam, Leyden, Haerlem, &c. there have been nothing near so many seditions against the rulers, as in other countries, and much less and worse peopled cities, unless when they have been stirred up to mutiny or sedition by a sovereign head. For in such a case, I confess that no countries or cities, great or small, are or can be at rest, and without uproars of the subjects against their rulers and magistrates, any longer than such a head pleaseth to leave such lands and cities in peace.

The overriding theme is the free and unencumbered pursuit of one's craft with freedom of conscience and religion. The conception of common weal is based not so much on a claim of some right to social insurance and public goods against a community embodied in a democratic state, but that of a representative assembly enacting resolutions and orders to maintain an economic federation from which a natural aristocracy ought to emerge. It is with this spirit in mind that the preeminent French doctrinaire Francois Guizot recommended that the suffragists "enrich themselves" rather than agitate for the vote.

The eternal burgher is defined by his desire for conflict avoidance, a devotion to workmanship and thrift, and a culture of free debate and political independence.

The true burgher cannot be an anti-statist, and it was an error of the classical liberals to believe this, as it is an error for the socialists to liken the burgher to some manorial lord. The distinctive features of the borough, such as its proto-representative town councils, its regulation of production by guilds, its fairs and market places — could only be gained through immediacy, the absence of any intermediary liege lords and instead a subjection solely to an ultimate royal granting a legal charter. This being "self-government." The triumph of modern liberal republicanism, then, constitutes in the fact that the borough ended up assimilating into and ultimately becoming *the* royal demesne, which proceeded to swallow all other legal relationships lower down the hierarchy, and thus bring the uniform and homogenized wonders of "self-government" to everyone within a fixed territory. The burgher cannot breathe safely without the iron fist at his disposal.

We mentioned Guizot earlier, and he was the undisputed leader of the French doctrinaire faction so prominent under both the Bourbon and Orleanist restorations. The faction tended to publish a lot in the journal *Revue des Deux Mondes*. He was a very capable memoirist. In between his Westphalianism, Guizot was very keenly aware of Christendom as the foundation holding European identity.

He thus writes (<https://archive.org/stream/memoirstoillustr04guiz#page/4/mode/2up>): "Europe is a society of peoples and states, at one similar and opposite, separated but not estranged; not alone neighbours, but relatives; reciprocally united by moral and material ties, which cannot be broken up; by

the intermingling of races, by community of religion, by analogy of ideas and manners ; by numerous and continued relations, whether industrial, commercial, political, or literary ; by advances of civilization, varied and unequal it is true, but all tending to the same ends. [...] Through all the differences and contests of the modern world a deep and dominant unity reigns in its moral life as in its destinies. Let us call it Christianity. In this is comprised our original character and our glory."

Accordingly, he held a deep respect

(<https://archive.org/stream/memoirstoillustr04guiz#page/12/mode/2up>) for classical international law:

"Of the states subdued and the thrones erected by Napoleon, none survived him for the advantage of any; and, by a strange phenomenon, the only one of his generals who retained royalty held it not at his hands. The fact was, that Napoleon in his foreign policy disregarded the true tendencies of humanity. The tune has passed away for great territorial overthrows, accomplished solely by strokes of war, and regulated by the exclusive will of the conquerors. Scarcely are their strong hands withdrawn when their works are questioned, and attacked by the two powers which constitute the good and evil genius of our age, — the spirit of civilization, and the spirit of revolution. The first invokes the empire of justice in the bosom of peace; the second appeals incessantly to force, and endeavours to establish at all hazards, by anarchy alternated with tyranny, what it designates the reign of pure democracy. It is between these two powerful excitements that the present contest which embroils Europe, and will decide her future, is exclusively engaged. In this state of European society, respect for international law becomes with every well-regulated government not only an imperative duty, but a necessary precaution. In our days, the ambition which disturbs the world in contempt of this law, and for the gratification of its own desires, is equally senseless and criminal."

Note the contrasts between civilization and revolution. The phrase "anarchy alternated with tyranny" used to describe pure democracy even comes close to Sam Francis' own famous phrase, besides the obvious fact that no liberal today would even think of applying such language.

Contrast this to his militantly republican rival Adolphe Thiers. His demagoguery during a diplomatic crisis in 1840 between Muhammad Ali of Egypt (who seized power in the aftermath of Napoleon's invasion, and hence had a sentimental value among some French liberals as being the "Napoleon of the East," even though Egypt was still an Ottoman vassal at the time) and the Ottoman sultan, made France the odd country out among a Metternichian diplomatic coalition (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Convention_of_London_%281840%29) of Austria, Prussia, Britain and Russia in favor of the Ottoman Empire's claims, nearly leading to war. Thiers used France's support of Egypt as a form of extortion to try and coerce the Holy Alliance into restoring the Left Bank of the Rhine that Napoleon had annexed from the Holy Roman Empire but ultimately lost again in the Congress of Vienna of 1815 to the German Confederation. Invoking the completely bunk metaphysical idea of "natural borders" so contrary to any sense of legality, he declared like a Jacobin thug that "the famous days of the year 1793 [War of the First Coalition] should be revived. France should head the revolutionary movement in Europe and its frontier should be pushed forward beyond the Rhine." The crisis would be defused thanks to a succeeding Guizot canibet in 1841 signing the London Straits Convention the same year, agreeing to the terms of closing down access to non-allied warships crossing the Turkish Straits.

Unlike practically everyone alive today, Guizot considered representative government and democracy to be antonyms.

Indeed, using some admittedly creative casuistry, he likened democracy and hereditary aristocracy as being isomorphic (http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/878#Guizot_0470_185): "In the aristocratic system, an individual is born to a position of sovereignty merely because he has been born into a privileged class;

according to the democratic system, an individual is born to a position of sovereignty by the circumstance that he is born into humanity. The participation in sovereignty is in each case the result of a purely material fact, independent of the worth of him who possesses it, and of the judgment of those over whom it is to be exercised. It follows evidently from this, that aristocratic governments are to be classed among those which rest on the idea that the right of sovereignty exists, full and entire, somewhere on the earth—an idea directly contrary, as we have seen, to the principle of representative government.” Moreover, that: “The principle of the sovereignty of the people starts from the supposition that each man possesses as his birthright, not merely an equal right of being governed, but an equal right of governing others. **Like aristocratic governments, it connects the right to govern, not with capacity, but with birth.**”

That democracy is a degenerated form of aristocracy-by-majority where everyone is given the equal status of nobleman (which, in the end, is what egalitarianism means — equally distributing the privileges of nobility) is an old but powerful argument, how then does Guizot contrast it to “representative government”?

He essentially treats it as what we might call today a “meritocracy”:

“No one disputes that the true law of government is that of reason, truth, and justice, which no one possesses but which certain men are more capable than others of seeking and discovering. Faithful to this aim, representative government rests upon the disposition of actual power in proportion to the capacity to act according to reason and justice, from whence power derives its right. It is the principle which, by the admission of all, and by virtue of its simple appeal to the common sense of the community, is applicable to ordinary life, and to the interest of individuals themselves. It is the principle which confers the sovereignty over persons, families, property, only to the individual who is presumed to be capable of using it reasonably, and which withdraws it from him who is seen to be positively incapable. Representative government applies to general interests, and to the government of society, the same principle which the good sense of the human race has led it to apply to individual interests and to the control of each man’s private life. It distributes sovereignty according to the capacity required for it, that is to say, it only places actual power, or any portion of actual power, where it has discovered the presence of rightful power, presumed to exist by certain symptoms, or tested by certain proofs.”

These “certain symptoms” and “certain proofs” include: “The peerage, the right to elect and to be elected, the royal power itself, are attached to a capacity presumed to exist, not only after certain conditions have been complied with, but by reason of the position occupied by those men in whom the capacity is presumed, in their relations to other powers, and in the limits of the functions assigned to them. No one is recognised as possessing an inherent right to an office or a function.”

Hence the case for census suffrage and restrictions on political association and speech. These serve as forms of qualification, of uncovering who is fit to be a governor. The rabble organizing into political clubs for mob agitation and freely publishing slanderous lies in penny rags, serve as a hindrance to the discovery algorithm of representative government.

And by the same reasoning, Guizot establishes the divine right of kings (<https://archive.org/stream/memoirstoillust00fragoog#page/n54/mode/2up>)! I wish we had liberals like this: “Now there are cases in which equality before the law is a fallacy which equally outrages justice and policy, morality and reason. They are very superficial thinkers who declare that in a monarchy the inviolability of the monarch is a fiction. It is, on the contrary, the simple acknowledgment of a moral truth which human instinct has foreseen, and which has always sprung up again from the most overwhelming storms under which it may have succumbed for the moment. **When a single person has**

become the permanent symbol of a supreme social power, nothing can reduce him again to the condition of a subject, and the fiction lies with those who attempt to confine him within the common privileges. Nations may exist without kings, but kings are not open to trial.” (Chateaubriand would make the same case in *The Monarchy According to the Charter* [1814]).

Guizot, however, was a true believer in the power of public education. Indeed, his 1833 primary school law would be one of his personal points of pride and one of his most famous legacies.

In his memoirs, Guizot recognizes that the grand problem (something of a self-inflicted one, to be fair) facing governance today is the “governance of minds.” He rejected the idea (<https://archive.org/stream/memoirstoillust00fragoog#page/n24/mode/2up>) that the state should be neutral in public discourse: “The grand problem of modern society is the government of minds. It has frequently been said in the last century, and it is often repeated now, that minds ought not to be fettered, that they should be left to their free operation, and that society has neither the right nor the necessity of interference. Experience has protested against this haughty and precipitate solution. It has shown what it was to suffer minds to be unchecked, and has roughly demonstrated that even in intellectual order, guides and bridles are necessary. The very men who have maintained, here and elsewhere, the principle of total unrestraint, have been the first to renounce it as soon as they experienced the burden of power. Never were minds more violently hunted down, never less open to self-instruction and spontaneous development ; never have more systems been invented, or greater efforts been made to subjugate them, than under the rule of those parties who had demanded the abolition of all intermeddling in the domains of intellect.”

Displaying the bottlenecks of his bourgeois moderation, he rejects both the English laissez-faire approach and the radical republicanism of Condorcet. Recognizing that a little knowledge is often much more dangerous than no knowledge at all, Guizot comes up with this compromise in his bill, almost funny in how prudent it tries to be:

“To contend with this danger, I distinguished in my proposed bill two degrees of primary education. The one elementary and universally required in the most remote rural districts, and for the humblest of social conditions; the other more elevated, and destined for the working population, who in towns and cities have to deal with the necessities and tastes of civilization more complicated, wealthy, and exacting. I confined elementary instruction strictly within the simplest and most extensively practised branches of knowledge. To the primary instruction of a higher order, I assigned greater scope and variety, and while pre-arranging its principal objects, the bill added, ‘that it might receive the development which should be considered suitable, according to the wants and resources of particular localities.’ I thus secured the most extended advances to primary instruction where they would be most useful and natural, without introducing them in quarters where their inutility would be perhaps their least defect.

The Chamber of Deputies required that the prospect of a variable and indefinite extension should be left open to primary elementary instruction as well as to primary superior instruction. I did not feel myself bound to contend obstinately against this amendment, which met with almost general approbation; but it indicated a very slight conception of the end proposed in the bill by distinguishing the two degrees of primary education. It is precisely on account of its universal necessity that primary elementary instruction ought to be extremely simple and nearly always uniform. It was enough for social distinctions and the spirit of ambition in popular teaching to open schools in the same class of a superior order. A disposition to extend, from a mere idea rather than from absolute need, the first principles of instruction, is unworthy of legal encouragement. The object of the laws is to provide what is necessary, not to step in advance of what may become possible ; their mission is to regulate the elements of society, not to excite them indiscriminately.”

“Not stepping in advance of what may become possible,” nevertheless, Guizot opened up and sactioned a ratchet effect taking away schooling from the responsibility of parents and clergy. Whatever his intention, the laicist Minister of Public Institution of the Third Republic, Jules Ferry, would use the machinery built by Guizot to carry out heavily anticlerical compulsory school reforms in 1881 and 1882, who in turn reversed a school law establishing mixed Catholic and state schools by the staunch royalist Comte de Falloux during Napoleon III’s reign. Evidently, willy-nilly “regulating the elements of society” paved the way for quite the indiscriminate excitement.

But now let us fixate our attention on another curious contemporary figure: Comte de Montalembert. A Catholic and a classical liberal all the same, a friend of Lamennais and a historian of the Church, monastic orders and the saints, we will be looking at a book of his from 1855: *Political Future of England*. This was back when an observer might have reasonably concluded that England still had a political future, whereas today we know that it doesn’t.

Of the parliamentary radicals, he writes:

“The administrative reform [Ed.’s note: See also Karl Marx’s account of the Association for Administrative Reform (<http://marxengels.public-archive.net/en/ME0904en.html>)], of which this gentleman [Austen Henry Layard] is the champion, and which has made so much noise of late, will certainly be accomplished. This question is already decided in the minds of all enlightened men. They think of it as Wilberforce did of Parliamentary Reform at the beginning of this century. Wilberforce, the affectionate and pious friend of Pitt, said : “I am friendly to moderate reform at a proper time. The true policy of this country is to conciliate the honest. **A moderate reform would not strengthen the democrats’ hands ; on the contrary. But let us never hope to win the democrats ; they have ideal grievances and ideal advantages ; they cry for liberty, but what they want is power. The same reason which makes me condemn Grey’s makes me love moderate reform : Grey’s would enable democrats to carry their point, moderation would prevent them.** It is important to separate the real enemies of corruption from those who make reform a party watchword. . . Sure I am that no country was ever the worse for adhering to moral principles.””

Exactly. All you need to do is enact moderate reforms, and everything will fit in its place.

...

Woops.

Montalembert, however, has the good sense to predict this, and embarks on a truly outstanding description of the perils of mass education and the ensuing hunt for sinecures that threatens the integrity of government:

“The extension of education among the masses, by dislocating from humbler walks a vast number of individuals, has created so many new candidates for government offices ; and on the other hand, although the slow but incontestable progress of administrative centralisation has increased the number of places to be given, it is and will always be infinitely less than that of the candidates. Both, however, are increased and increasing. This is the great peril of English society. The evil is certainly as yet not near so great as it is in the nations of the Continent ; but England is already launched on that fatal slide. It is high time for her statesmen to see that a general immoderate pursuit of public office is the worst of all social diseases. It expands throughout the body of the nation a venal and servile leaven which has not the merit of correcting or excluding, even in those provided for, the spirit of faction and anarchy. It creates a hungry and greedy crowd capable of any violence to satisfy their appetite, and ready for any

baseness as soon as it is satisfied. **A people of place-hunters is the lowest of people.** There is no ignominy that it is not ready to undergo or to perpetrate. **The true administrative reform would then consist in stopping energetically this truly democratic tendency which increases the number of employments, and substitutes agents salaried by the government, and removeable at pleasure, for duties formerly unpaid, elective, or irremoveable which begins by extending indefinitely the influence and intervention of the ruling power, and ends by crushing it under the weight of its impatient cupidity, implacable hatreds, and impotent support."**

When will we get an Association for True Administrative Reform to agitate for this?

Charles de Remusat, a biographer of medieval scholastic Peter Abelard, close friend of Guizot, whose liberalism became more intense in his later years after his exile from politics following Napoleon III's coup, summarizes the principles (https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Page%3ARevue_des_Deux_Mondes_-_1841_-_tome_25.djvu/770) of the July Monarchy ten years into its reign as "one of those rare events which unite law, force, and passion. Law was the principle and the seal of it: popular passion put the instrument of force at the service of law, and fortune crowned this work of strength, passion, and justice. She gave the victory, and did not sell it. Never was so violent and so rapid a triumph so pure. The popular voice is true, when it called glorious the three days which brought the civic crown to a whole people."

Indeed, a civic crown it was, for Louis-Philippe was not "King of France," but rather "King of the French." Being the humble servant of the people, they had no issue, acting as masters, to force him to abdicate after only 18 years.

Remusat and his fellow doctrinaires made an error that one of their more reactionary predecessors — Pierre Victor, baron de Malouet, prominent advocate of constitutional monarchy in the early stages of the French Revolution, so brilliantly illustrated (<https://books.google.com/books?id=gshWAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA26&focus=viewport&output=text>):

"In the primordial state of a society, there is only one simple and positive compact: among all its members, which is this; "Let every thing be equally divided among us." There is nothing fictitious in this compact; it is founded on equity, and put in execution at the very moment of union. On the other hand, let us examine what happens in the progressive steps of a society which is constantly increasing in population. Here, new compacts are formed every day between those who possess, and those who have nothing. The rich say to the poor — "Work for us, and we will support you." This is a new convention, which annuls the primordial compact, and makes the order and harmony of the society rest on a new basis, viz. that of one active, governing and protecting power. Of what materials do you compose this governing power, if, on one hand, you wish to maintain the necessary treaty: "Work for us, and we will support you"; and on the other hand, you return to the primordial compact: Let every thing be equal among us! Is it not evident; that in this second period of society, you ought, above all things to provide employment, subsistence, and tranquility, for the non-proprietors, and an inviolable security for the person and fortune of the proprietors? If, by a specious and fatal theory, you seek to re-establish primeval equality in your society, do you not foresee that you will inevitably deprive the executive power of all its moral strength, and reduce it to its numeral strength only? If once you invest the immense multitude of nonproprietors with the public force, by what means will you be able to fulfill the last social compact — "Work for us, and we will support you?" By what means will you then protect private property?

Your legislative system is, therefore, founded on an anti-social basis, although its principle be deduced from natural right. Every political society, from its very beginning, and still more in its advanced state, is a deviation from natural right. But you seem to have lost sight of this great truth; you have suffered yourselves to be led astray by the specious pretenders to philosophy: You are become mere sophists in practice by their fallacious rhetoric, and the exaggerated consequences which you have deduced from vague principles."

Ouch.

An excellent idea for a social contract, by the way: "Work for us, and we will support you." I wonder when the distributists will abandon their fantasy of a society of small freeholder proprietors to realize this primordial fact of dependence between owners and users of a thing?

The burghers wanted a king, but only a citizen-king who acted through his ministers and had no direct initiative of his own. The king was thus robbed of his royal demesne, and became, as we quoted Guizot earlier warning of the republican folly of trying to apply principles of legal equality to a symbol of supreme power, that "nothing can reduce him [the king] again to the condition of a subject, and the fiction lies with those who attempt to confine him within the common privileges." But that is exactly what both the Charters of 1814 and 1830 did, the former being more successful largely because Louis XVIII Charles X had many good ultra-royalist ministers like Joseph de Villele.

So, an attempt to build a civil society on popular monarchy and on representative institutions, could not last even with the shackles that the doctrinaires tried to restrain it with. For this was not representation as in the Reichstag of the Holy Roman Empire, based on obligations of social estates within an imperial circle, but individual representation through delegates in a national assembly based on competing factions trying to steer a desacralized political apparatus reduced to a mere means of expropriation and self-fulfillment. No consensus, prudence, virtue or tolerance can survive in these circumstances. The sovereign-subject/lord-tenant distinction abhors being blurred.

On the other hand, aristocratic liberalism ought not necessarily always be belittled as the guiding principle of a monarch. A monarch need not be an intransigent ultra-royalist in our time, and indeed few dynastic heirs these days are. Otto von Habsburg was famously a proponent of the Pan-European project and the EU. Hans-Adam II, Prince of Liechtenstein, is an avowed liberal democrat and localist. Henri, Grand Duke of Luxembourg, appears to be in a similar boat, judging by his [Christmas Eve address in 2016](http://www.wort.lu/en/luxembourg/christmas-eve-grand-duke-henri-s-christmas-address-to-the-people-of-luxembourg-585d4f1053590682caf16af6) (<http://www.wort.lu/en/luxembourg/christmas-eve-grand-duke-henri-s-christmas-address-to-the-people-of-luxembourg-585d4f1053590682caf16af6>). Unfortunately, whatever legislative power he realistically had was vanquished in 2008 when he had the gall to oppose a euthanasia bill, with every bill passed by the Chamber of Deputies from then on automatically receiving a royal signature.

A shame our democratic republics will never see another Guizot or Montalembert, not at any current rate.

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3 thoughts on "Aristocratic liberalism: a brief tour of an extinct tradition"

1. Michael Rothblatt says:

April 29, 2017 at 12:06 pm

To me it seems that the Restoration in France failed because both monarchist factions were wrong. Liberal royalists, the Orleanists didn't know what is it that they really wanted. Reactionary ultra-royalists, the Legitimists knew what they wanted (though what they wanted frequently made absolutely no sense), but were totally out of touch with reality. The relative success of Louis XVIII was the consequence of his willingness to work within the confines of political reality, whereas Charles X wasn't so prudent. Too bad, he could have shifted the country rightward with gradualist approach, instead he chose the revolutionary approach, without having the power to do so. IMHO the ideal solution would have been to gradually restore the church privileges, restore hunting privilege, tax exemption and ban on participation in the economy for the nobility, give restitution to the church and the nobility for the stolen property, restore the absolute monarchy with no suffrage (and decentralized according to the subsidiarity principle), but make governmental posts reserved for, and open solely to hereditary nobility (something similar to the Russian Mestrichestvo system comes to mind, so that nobility and **only** nobility can be in the state employ, from the lowest to the highest office, for as Hoppe pointed out, once state employment is open to everybody whether through meritocracy or democracy the genie's out of the bottle... Imperial China managed to stave off that genie by instituting imperial examination, census suffrage on the other hand is not capable of that) on one hand; retain Monarchien and early-Girondist economic reforms on the other (banalités, and corvées made no sense under contemporary technological conditions, and weren't just to boot — seeing that reciprocal obligations of nobility toward the peasantry were long gone, it made no sense for peasant obligations to remain; furthermore the abolishment of guilds wasn't some evil revolutionary strike against the organic social order, abolishment was demanded by guild journeymen themselves, and in reality guilds were rent-seeking institutions that enriched the masters at the expense of everyone else, I mean, to have to have a mastership in order to sell lemonade was just plain stupid; then there were internal customs... what were they for, except for causing famines?).

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