

Carlsbad 1819

Like another Chouannerie

Friedrich von Gentz, the law of nations and the decline of internoble solidarity

June 25, 2017 by Nulle Terre Sans Seigneur

[I must say, this essay is the closest one so far to the spirit of this blog. I do not like it quite as much as the one on Jules Barni, but nonetheless it is this that best foreshadows the subjects I will be talking about all throughout.]

It is obvious that it is not the material situation of the people that causes the uneasiness with which society is suffering. The anxiety that agitated them was an anxiety of mind aroused by discussions on the constituent principles of States. Those who raise these discussions often lack sincerity; They raise them deliberately, in order to produce troubles; It is a weapon which they wish to employ in private interests, and sometimes, according to their position, in political interests; They attack the very seat of the life of States by destroying their principle and organization. These men take a mask of freedom and announce themselves to the nations as liberators; So that their mission has an end, they proclaim that all princes are tyrants, that they must be resisted, that their governments are despotic, that they must be changed. To attain their end, all sorts of sophisms are employed; The most dangerous of all is to separate peoples from their governments and to put them in a position of constant distrust and hostility. This calculation of destruction is clever; For the people, always the strongest, must end by overthrowing any government whatsoever. This principle is the most dangerous of all that can be promulgated, since it engenders anarchy and renders all government impossible. In thus isolating the governments by putting kings on one side and the peoples on the other, doubts have first been raised about the nature and rights of sovereignty.

— Count Karl Ludwig von Ficquelmont, *Lord Palmerson, l'Angleterre et le continent* (1852) [[source \(https://books.google.com/books?id=UykPAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA237&output=text\)](https://books.google.com/books?id=UykPAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA237&output=text)]

“That Robespierre should reign? The spirit of freedom is not yet sunk so low. The glowing flame that animates each honest Frenchman’s heart not yet extinguish’d. I invoke thy shade, Immortal Brutus! I too wear a dagger; And if the representatives of France, through fear or favor should delay the sword Of justice, Tallien emulates thy virtues; Tallien, like Brutus, lifts the avenging arm; Tallien shall save his country.”

These words come out of the character of Jean-Lambert Tallien right before the closing of Act II of Southey and Coleridge's *The Fall of Robespierre* (1794).

Thermidor sets in.

What good was it, though? "The glowing flame not yet extinguish'd" was quite right. Tallien himself was a fervent Jacobin, an apologist for the September Massacres, a defender of Marat and one who voted in favor of the act that would violently end over 800 years of continuous monarchy since Hugh Capet.

The same person would now become a Thermidorian. Paul Barras, too, voted for the blade. Fouché was a prime participant in the dechristianization campaign of 1793 to install the Cult of Reason.

Here, then, were our Thermidorians. Montagnard nutjobs who wanted to cool down a little when the guillotine was getting a tad too close to their necks. To be fair, they did attempt to clamp down on abuses done in the name of public safety and for the first couple of years after 9 Thermidor, they capably mobilized *muscadin* street fighters against sansculottist opposition. However, Jacobinism began recouping by around 1797, especially with the Coup of 18 Fructidor after the royalist plurality in the prior election of the Directory in 1795 and their prospective victory in 1797 threatened to make Thermidor a tad too Thermidorian. Accordingly, the executors of the coup proclaimed: "Open your eyes Frenchmen, for it is high time you noticed the trap into which the King's friends and France's enemies wished to lure you. In order to put you back under the yoke which you have broken and so that you would think that you were returning there of your own volition, they placed corrupt men in all public offices; men who are as skillful as they are perverse. Men capable of turning the power that they had been given to defend and strengthen the People's liberty, against that very liberty." Persecutions of the clergy were resumed.

The policy of maintaining occupied "sister republics," particularly in the Low Countries, Italy and Switzerland, would begin and be exacerbated after Napoleon's 18th Brumaire, both as a bulwark against the newly reignited Franco-Austrian and Franco-British rivalries, also to export *liberte* and *egalite* abroad, and ultimately to turn them into kleptocracies for the war effort against the European coalitions.

In this tumultuous background lies the story of Friedrich von Gentz, a Prussian liberal who was to become a staunch Austrian counterrevolutionary and a pivotal man in inspiring the German Campaign of 1813, as a plenipotentiary of the Congress of Vienna, as enforcing order in the Danubian Principalities lying between Russian and Ottoman influence, and upholding legitimism above all potential usurpers and seditionists.

His two main works from the 1800s are relevant here: *On the State of Europe Before and After the French Revolution* (1804) and *Fragments Upon the Balance of Power in Europe* (1806).

These books are unique (but by no means unconventional in their views for the time) in that Gentz manages to synthesize Westphalian legal rationalism with a conservative-legitimist internationalism later defining the Concert of Europe, while still emphasizing a place for national identity and self-determination. By the 1810s, however, he would become more thoroughly Metternichian (operating largely in Vienna from 1809 onward) and sneer at liberal demands for "self-determination." By the 1820s and 1830s, his conversion to counterrevolution was absolutely rabid as is evident from his letters, attacking Chateaubriand for being too moderate, and developing a deep appreciation for Joseph de Maistre. Thus, Gentz's works in the 1800s were transitional, and his estrangement from his youthful principles ever growing. Let us see.

In a letter to Christian Garve dated 15 October 1790, he could write regarding (<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/026569147300300101>) the French Revolution: “The log of this revolution has been one of the hardest crashes ever to have affected the human race. It is the first practical triumph of philosophy, the first example of a form of government based on principles and a coherent, consistent system. It is the hope and consolation for so many old evils under which humanity sighs.” He adds that, even in light of unrest and excesses, that “the prospects for the future are more cheerful than the enemies portray them.”

Two years later, he was translating Edmund Burke’s *Reflections* into German, and moving on to *monarchiens* like Jean Joseph Mounier and Jacques Mallet du Pan.

Mallet du Pan was undoubtedly an incendiary critic, and condemned the militancy and fiscal debasement of the revolutionists thus (<https://books.google.com/books?jtp=50&id=i8xWAAAAMAAJ>): “To pillage and plunder either at home or abroad is now the law, the very condition of existence for the new world sprung up from the dregs and filth of Paris. Four thousand five hundred million in assignats infest the circulation, and they will amount to five thousand million before the end of the year. Does any one imagine, that the Revolutionists trouble their heads about their liquidation? No such thing; and no such liquidation could take place without great prejudice to one of their most essential projects that of dividing amongst the conquerors the conquered mortgage-lands, and to prolong the attachment of the people, by exempting them from all taxes. These two operations require that a portion of the fortunes of the emigres, and of others yet to be confiscated should be divided between the soldiers, and the inferior agents of the Republic. This has been already energetically demanded in the sections, in the clubs, and in the commune of Paris; and the Convention by a late decree has already settled the first lots. The remainder of the lands thus usurped, will serve for the estate of the nation, and its produce will form the revenue of the Republic; and it will stand in the place of taxes, which are no more to be proposed, to an armed and sovereign people.”

How Gentz must have nodded.

Having wiped out a good chunk of his youthful follies, Gentz developed a certain form of German nationalism in the 1800s that was neither liberal nor volkisch. Let us look at a statement from a letter to Prince Adam Czartoryski (<https://archive.org/stream/friedrichvongent00swee#page/122/mode/2up>), in 1806:

I am not an Austrian, a Prussian, an Englishman, or a Russian. At the same time may God keep me from being a cosmopolitan, a term which I abhor above all others, and which I regard as a real insult. I am a German, and I am German in every sense of the word. The liberty, the prosperity, and the glory of Germany — these in a nutshell are the objectives that lie closest to my heart. Since, however, these objectives in the present situation are so closely connected with the common good of Europe that Germany has not a single real interest that is not at the same time the interest of all its neighbors, and since anything that restores and sustains Germany also restores and sustains the entire social order, it is clear that no partisan or equivocal motive can ever guide me in my researches.

To many people, Gentz’s beliefs at the time would appear crypto-globalist. This is a very gross and chauvinistic error to make.

Gentz’s patriotism combined with a concern for a flourishing international order reflects a deep lineage of Christian political thought. Therefore, the great early Christian writer Eusebius of Caesarea (263-339), in Book IV, Chapter XIV of *Life of Constantine*, could allude to this idea of a sacerdotal empire: “Thus, the nations of the world being everywhere guided in their course as it were by the skill of a single pilot, and

acquiescing in the administration of him who governed as the servant of God, the peace of the Roman empire continued undisturbed, and all classes of his subjects enjoyed a life of tranquillity and repose. At the same time the emperor, who was convinced that the prayers of godly men contributed powerfully to the maintenance of the public welfare, felt himself constrained zealously to seek such prayers and not only himself implored the help and favor of God, but charged the prelates of the churches to offer supplications on his behalf."

Many centuries later, the great Russian philosopher and theologian Vladimir Solovyov would lament in *Russia and the Universal Church* (http://www.strobertbellarmine.net/books/Solovyev--Russia_Universal_Church.pdf) that: "The modern nations, having shattered the papal monarchy which was the foundation of this imperfect but genuine unity, have had to substitute for the ideal of Catholic Christendom the fiction of the European balance of power. On all hands it is recognized, whether sincerely or not, that the true objective of international politics must be universal peace. Two equally obvious facts, then, are to be noted: first, that there exists a general consciousness of the solidarity of mankind and a desire for international unity, for the *pax Christiana* or, if you will, the *pax humana*; secondly, that this unity does not exist in fact, and that the first of the three problems of society is as far from being solved at the present day as it was in the ancient world."

Even in modern nations, this vision would take a while to die out. As late as 1681, the maverick French absolutist Jacques-Benigne Bossuet could still write a work in the old genre of universal history, and to promote frugality and labor as virtues, using the Romans as an illustration: "They raised the livestock, worked the land, denied themselves as much as they could, and lived by thrift and hard work. That was their life; and that is how they supported their families, whom they brought up to similar occupations."

All things considered, though an ostensible balance-of-power realist, Gentz was more, particularly in his later life. To begin, on his main writings from the 1800s.

Firstly, a justification for intervening to abort revolutions (<https://archive.org/stream/onstateofeurop00gentuoft#page/198/mode/2up>):

I do not conceive it to be universally true, “that a nation has no right to interfere in the domestic affairs of any other,” and I trust I shall not be singular in regarding it as liable to great exceptions. There are cases in which sound policy suggests, and the law of nations permits, an active intervention in the internal proceedings of a foreign country. Such a case arises when there happens in any, especially if it be a principal state of Europe, a disorder so great, general, and permanent (it must have all these qualities), as manifestly to endanger the neighbouring powers. Those powers are still more justified in not remaining inactive spectators of such disorders when there are several parties contending for the government of the diffracted: country upon various pretences ; and the right of legislation is disputed by a variety of claimants. I regard the French revolution as an event of this kind, not merely permitting, but absolutely requiring the active interference of other nations. The all-definitive principles upon which it was founded, the criminal excesses and contempt of every right that attended its progress, would have justified an early opposition. The constitution of 1791, instead of diminishing, strengthened and confirmed the right of interference ; for no one, even in France, will now deny that it was calculated to organize the anarchy, and of course to prolong the miseries of the unhappy country, and the dangers of it’s neighbours. What completed, and gave, as it were, the ultimate sanction to this right, was the scene that presented itself immediately after the introduction of that constitution. The popular members of the National Assembly, and the favourite orators of the clubs (the men who at that time governed the country), then poured forth the torrent of their abuse and calumny against all the governments of Europe ; they commenced an inveterate persecution of every ancient establishment, of every sacred principle that ensured the obedience of the citizen, and the safety of the throne ; they called Upon all people to throw off their allegiance ; and their speeches and writings were a series of reiterated insults that announced every day more openly the hostilities they were resolved to realize with other weapons.

Moreover, in response to assertions of the Revolution being motivated by domestic oppression, Gentz correctly points out the preponderance of enlightened reforms (e.g. Charles-Alexandre Calonne and Louis XVI), listing (<https://archive.org/stream/onstateofeurop eb00gentuoft#page/68/mode/2up>). “measures for encouraging industry, for extending commerce: while high roads, and canals, and plantations, and public edifices of every kind, began to enrich and embellish all countries.” He goes on to describe reforms in Russia, Denmark, Prussia, the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, Poland and so forth. That Gentz accurately portrays Louis XVI as a reformist monarch (<https://archive.org/stream/onstateofeurop eb00gentuoft#page/86/mode/2up>) in 1804 is impressive, given how long the opposite impression would end up surviving in popular memory.

Furthermore, Gentz points out a (<https://archive.org/stream/onstateofeurop eb00gentuoft#page/92/mode/2up>) 25-year period of relative peace between the Peace of Hubertusburg ending the Seven Years’ War in 1763 and the outbreak of the Revolution.

In *Fragments Upon the Balance of Power*, he draws a distinction between a qualitative equality of rights and an equality of enforcement in established rights, supporting the latter but not the former. Consequently, the balance of power is not innately related to equilibrating any set of material and economic resources, with balancing intervention permissible when: “It is only when a state with open wantonness, or under fictitious pretences and titles artificially invented, proceeds to such enterprises as immediately, or in their unavoidable consequences, prepare the way for the subjugation of its weaker neighbours, and for perpetual danger to the stronger, that conformably to sound conceptions of the general interest of the commonwealth.” This “extensive social commonwealth” consists of otherwise independent nations operating under Westphalian principles, but acts in concert on federal principles when an aggressor asserts itself. And certainly, Revolutionary France, with its “conquest of Holland, the loss of all the

German provinces on the left bank of the Rhine, the base subjugation of Switzerland, the fate of Italy, the danger of the Austrian monarchy" counts as such.

(<https://archive.org/stream/fragmentsuponba00gentgoog#page/n108/mode/2up>).

Such were the 1800s. By 1812, Gentz was writing against the Prussian reformer Baron vom Stein's advocacy of rekindling a nationalism among German princes right before the German Campaign of 1813 and in favor of a unification under Prussia afterwards. Gentz said: "To summon subjects to stand in judgment over their governments is outrageous under all conditions and unworthy of legitimate rulers."

So stark was Gentz's conversion to the Austrian conservative cause that his former intimate, the German-Jewish salon hostess Rahel Levin, would bitterly complain

(<https://archive.org/stream/friedrichvongent00swee#page/186/mode/2up>), that: "From Prussia he received all his education, the very nourishment of his old body and soul, freedom of thought. Teachers, comrades, friends, relatives – all Prussian, and all forgotten. And the reward? Metternich's acquaintance!"

But if this was the 1810s, then by the 1820s Gentz had ascended to Maistrean levels. In 1829 he railed against the liberal discontent in the final days of the Bourbon Restoration thusly

(<https://books.google.com/books?id=yHxJAAAACAAJ&pg=PA263&output=text>):

I am not obliged, without vigorous regret, to describe individuals who differ so much from each other in their principles, in their intentions, and especially in their morality, with one and the same hard name. But since they demand all the same sacrifices from the Crown, follow the same measures, and choose the same people as leaders, it is impossible not to regard them as the same party, working together in a new order of things. This party consists of three main sections.

Among the first are the revolutionaries in the narrower sense of the word; That satanic race, always ready to send the death-blow to society, to feed on its blood; Jacobins to life and death, they dream of nothing but a mob government and a frightening system. They secretly rejoice over the crimes of the first revolution, and sigh only after the moment when they would succeed in starting them all without a single exception. If they make any reproach, it is that they are frightened by their own frenzies, and have feared to make the most of them. They are also firmly resolved to deal with this in the future. Since they are not yet strong enough to stretch out their hand to the rule, they serve all those who, for whatever purpose, are working to overthrow the existing and wait for the moment when they open the abyss; to bury themselves, and to raise their own power on the ruins of the monarchy as well as on the corpses of those who destroyed it.

The second pale consists of abstract philosophers, who imagine that there are certain unchanging, hitherto unknown laws discovered by them, according to which alone states can be governed. Facts have no value for them; They only recognize general principles which they have developed from the nature of man. They treat the whole of mankind like a passionless mass, which is to be set in motion by a regular mechanism. They despise their idealistic height with contempt for the monarchical constitution, as a merely transitory form which must be maintained until the happy day when the people will have understood the full extent of their rights and all the improvements of their state.

The third class, on the other hand, consists of people of very positive sentiments, who see nothing but splendid children's games in all the sinful combinations which are intended to reconcile power with liberty, and no other form of government, at least for the French nation, but the unrestricted despotism by a loyal army. The dynasty of the Bourbons would be just as welcome as any other, if the past were not burdened by it. Their ambition, however, demands a new despotism, which has no obligation for past services, no consideration for older claims, and which can pour out the full abundance of his gifts over those to whom he owes his victory.

We can deduce that these parties were probably Jacobins, doctrinaires and Bonapartists, respectively.

The evolution is striking. Gentz died in 1832. Had he lived to see the events of 1848, he probably would have been calling for lynch mobs against republicans.

Was Gentz a traitor to his national heritage? A diplomatic globalist cuckold?

Far from it. Gentz had transcended the rationalist squabblers in coffeehouses and salons to realize that primordial truth of the harmony of estates, as expressed for instance by the German poet Erasmus Alberus:

With classes three God filled the world
As best as best can be;
One class must teach, another feed,
The third 'gainst wicked lads must strive.
The first class is the clergy,
The second farmers true,
The third, that is the government.
With every class come its own tasks
And 'ware it dabbles in others!
No class deem itself better,
For God did make all three.
And if we lived in such a way,
The Paradise, it were here!
Yet who desireth good on Earth?
Eternity's what's better!

As to the question of whether the governing class is supranationalist aristocracy held by dynastic legitimacy, or an indigenously constituted national body politic, is of no great relevance, and as the Count of Ficquelmont said in the quote I placed at the beginning, such debates about "self-determination" are largely Machiavellian tools. But, certainly, we must prefer the former, for as Maistre said in the *Essay on the Generative Principle of Political Constitutions*: "No assembly of men whatsoever can form a nation. Indeed, such an enterprise should be ranked among the most memorable follies."

But, speaking of the final days of the Bourbon Restoration as in Gentz's letter from 1829, and of legitimacy, it is relevant that we take note of a legalistic argument (<https://books.google.com/books?id=n90G2HSeKDUC&pg=PA25&output=text>), made by an Orleanist apologist of the July Monarchy, Andre Marie Jean Jacques Dupin (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andr%C3%A9_Marie_Jean_Jacques_Dupin):

Hence he [Louis-Philippe] did not take up the arms of France, as if he had inherited it; He did not call himself Philip VII, as if it were the continuation of the other dynasty. In it, it all began. In a new way. He was freely chosen, freely accepted by the national wish; This is its LEGITIMACY, not quasi but full and entire, the purest, the most honorable, the truest. The furthest from usurpation. This legitimacy is all popular, it has earned him first of all the beautiful title of citizen-king.

This character of the accession of Louis-Philippe is not ideal, fantastic; It is real, it can not be misunderstood; It is literally written in the acts which have consecrated the elevation of the new dynasty. These acts, all conceived in terms of law, have a precise and rigorous meaning, which makes it impossible to evade its meaning and to disregard its effects.

The body of the French nation is a common stock of ideas, principles, interests, and sympathies; And that its adherence to the July Revolution, which would be qualified as an insurrection by the partisans of the fallen branch, would render it irreconcilable with them, and would become the first pledge of its fidelity to his engagements.

If there is in the world an absolute thing, and which does not admit more or less, it is legitimacy. It exists or does not exist; But quasi-legitimacy is the greatest of absurdities. If the elder branch is not validly fallen, if it has retained some rights, the younger branch, however close in degree it may be to the throne, is nevertheless considered to be usurping in the eyes of the logicians of legitimacy.

There is between her and her elders, as Bossuet said of the dauphin relative to the king, there is the whole thickness of a kingdom. There is more: in the eyes of the Legitimists, the Duke of Orleans, a relative of the fallen king, is more odious than a stranger. There are, therefore, only enemies of Louis Philippe, or friends who are not very intelligent of his political position, who can seek for him another title, another legitimacy than the national will...

To begin with, Dupin is caught in a trap. For he wants to appeal to a national will, a French national *corpus* that is marked by commonalities: principles, interests, ideas. But two things emerge: in the first place, the commonalities in question are not constant and sanctioned by prior art, but ever mutable and floating. In the second, he is using an argument from popular tradition to argue for a shattering of the royal succession, the *translatio imperii*. But is this very same popular tradition not intimately grounded in the traditions established by the same continuous royal succession now being uprooted? If popular will can annul and install new legitimacies because of a violation of some charter, how can legitimacy be the backbone of anything, and is it not participating in its own destruction?

And speaking of the French nation, a mere set of common ideas and even common kinship bonds is but an anthropological dictum, and not a politically instantiated entity capable of enacting constitutional changes. During Frankish times, the “nation” had a representation in the form of assemblies sanctioned by the Salic Law. It is only through such institutions of authority that a nation can have an actualized political existence as opposed to a mere biological existence of a divergent population group existing by drift and geographic separation.

Furthermore, the father of “citizen-king” Louis-Philippe: Louis Philippe Joseph, duc d’Orleans — would disgrace the line by becoming a revolutionist, voting for the decapitation of Louis XVI and changing his name to Philippe Égalité. That he would then get the blade himself was most deserved, but to enthrone his direct descendant also represents a moral debasement of the crown.

Let us not forget that the Charter of 1814 opened up with the sentence “Louis, by the grace of God, King of France and Navarre, to all those to whom these presents come, salutation” — a clear statement of both divine right and of monarchical primacy in that the king’s person is the initiator and granter of a charter. Moreover, owing to an increasing primacy of liberal deputies in the legislative elections of 1827 and 1830, restrictive measures like the July Ordinances were justifiable in light of preserving the integrity of the throne. Again, per Maistre: “There never existed a free nation which did not have seeds of liberty as old as itself in its natural constitution. Nor has any nation ever successfully attempted to develop, by its fundamental written laws, rights other than those which existed in its natural constitution.”

None other than Juan Donoso Cortes would undergo a similar evolution in his thought. In his 1834 essay *Consideraciones sobre la diplomacia*, he would take a stance on the July Monarchy much like Dupin, but even bemoaning it not being progressive enough:

When the revolution of July appeared in the eyes of all the peoples of Europe, no one believed that this great testament of legitimacy, and that great victory of a people who looked sovereign, would be reduced to the catastrophe of Charles X, and to the victory of the Charter. Just as the restoration had not only been a restoration of persons, but a restoration of principles, the revolution of July must have had the character of a revolution in ideas: just as it had fixed Europe according to its traditional principle, it seemed that it had to fix it according to the conqueror’s [Diplomacy’s] principle. Was Europe wrong when it thought that the dethroned restoration had to carry the beginning of its existence? Was it wrong to think that another principle should occupy the throne that left the first, just as another person occupied it?

...No. Europe should not believe it that way; For neither Europe nor common sense conceives a fact contrary to all the antecedents of history which is humanity, always identical with itself in the midst of the diversity of its revolutions. But Diplomacy believed it, and all have seen the consequences of its principles in the two nations which were the theater of its triumph.

What a changed man Donoso Cortes would go on to become.

But it was precisely that very same “Diplomacy” that kept Europe from the prospective “great victories of peoples” for a good few decades. And what were the consequences of Diplomacy’s principles? Which diplomacy? That of Austria and Count von Beust, or that of Prussia and Bismarck? If the latter, we must share the Donoso Cortes of 1834’s revulsion.

But nonetheless, Charles X and the Charter were truly blessings compared to what happened when “Diplomacy” began going in the opposite direction.

So unstable were the “self-determined” parliamentary mobs that emerged after the fall of men like Charles X, that in several European languages people had to come up with neologisms to describe the chaos.

In Italy, there was *trasformismo*.

In Portugal, there was *rotativismo*.

In Spain, there was *caciquismo*.

Trasformismo is the practice by which party bosses consistently form broad-tent centrist coalitions, for the purposes both of providing a faux security to the best extent that parliamentarist chaos can permit, and also to maintain a reliable, steady-state rate of plunder. It is a common practice to this day in multi-

party parliamentary democracies with proportional representation.

Rotativismo is where two major parties periodically rotate in power and attempt to exoterically present themselves as offering highly different programs while esoterically working in common. It is, of course, the dominant practice in the United States.

Caciquismo is the machine politics of patronage by party bosses. Although a fixture in American life nominally until the Pendleton Act 1882 and in reality for a few decades afterward, the effects of civil service professionalization and ensuing bureaucratization mean that it's now largely defunct in developed democracies. Ubiquitous in the Third World.

These three pathologies are all the sins of "self-government," and of national assemblies in particular, and in turn these primordial sins have spawned a great deal of derivative ones.

Whether or not internationalism is conducive to the health of commoners or not, it is both inevitable and essential for the ruling classes in its creation of a shared culture for running foreign affairs. Thus, men like the aforementioned Count von Ficquelmont – a French-born Austrian minister whose family spread throughout Europe; Charles-Joseph, 7th Prince of Ligne – a subject of the Austrian Netherlands (present Belgium) who accompanied Catherine II of Russia to a tour of her Crimean possessions, who mingled with aristocracy throughout Europe and documented it in his wonderful memoirs; Karl Nesselrode – the half-Jewish Baltic German baptized Anglican who served under the Russian Empire. Colorful figures of the *ancien regime*, now unthinkable.

The real question is not whether we ought to have committed ethnoparticularists working solely for some idea of a "national interest," or the Globohomo Bathhouse Alliance (as Chateau Heartiste dubs it) run amok.

The question is whether your internationalists are going to be men of the Holy Alliance, or Davos Men. When Europe rose to overthrow its kings, it made its decision: it wanted the Davos Man. Today it is suffering the consequences.

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6 thoughts on "Friedrich von Gentz, the law of nations and the decline of internoble solidarity"

1. [Imperial Energy](#) says:

[June 25, 2017 at 7:16 pm](#)

Thank you for the head's up to this essay. Your scholarship is astounding.

A quibble.

"The question is whether your internationalists are going to be men of the Holy Alliance, or Davos Men."

You assume that the conflict is between Church and Corporation, God and Gold, Merchant and Priest, Government as a Charity and Government as a Business.

There is a third class of possibilities:

Guns and not Gold or God.

The Military College and not the Business school or the Seminary.

The Military and not the Corporation or the Church.

The Soldier and not the Merchant or the Priest.

The Supreme Commander and not the Chief Executive or the Pope.

USG's military has ties to every single military in the world, including its enemies and frenemies.

General Sisi restored order in Egypt. Sisi spent time in both British and American staff colleges. No doubt, the Red Government gave him the green light to restore order, despite whatever protestations the Blue Government might have. Indeed, President Sisi's visit to the White House was rather welcoming and successful.

Furthermore, Musharraf, and many other Pakistani officers, have taken courses in England. The same is true all over the Middle East.

Thus, the officer class could serve as an international ruling elite.

In general, the military in Muslim countries are hostile to both terrorists and the Muslim Brotherhood.

Officers, who are generally a reactionary caste, are perhaps, paradoxically, better candidates to bring about peace and security than the so called peace-makers. If you want war, have a "peace-process" but if you want peace, make a deal.

Just keeping the possibility of the "old boys network" open.

Reply.

2. Michael Rothblatt says:

June 27, 2017 at 11:25 am

It's not really the case that there wasn't any economic resentment. It's all the consequence of Colbertism really. Third of France's population were wandering beggars, and even though Louis XVI was a reformist (and a best king France has had in a long time, at least in the matters of character, and intention), he did not actually succeed in passing any reforms, seeing that vested interests Colbert had set up had stopped him at every turn. And against advisement of Turgot the king supported the American War of Independence which drained the State's coffers. Many nobles were as poor as the peasants, many even poorer than the relatively well-to-do peasants. The destitute nobility resented the king (indeed the early stages of the Revolution were dominated by the nobility, even the likes of de Maistre supported the summoning of the Estates General), and abused their remaining manorial privileges to exploit the peasantry (nobles weren't being particularly malicious, they simply did the only thing that they could do in order to feed their families; others who couldn't rely on manorial privileges were forced to such a work as for example being a carrier of sedan-chairs!), thus fueling the resentment of peasantry against the nobility. Clergy did not fare any better. This is one of the reasons for the appearance of revolutionary clergy in France. From Jean Meslier to the likes of Jacques Roux, even the parts of clergy were thoroughly radicalized. So with everybody resenting everybody else, and huge swaths of population desperate and without any investment in the fate of the country what could one expect to happen? It was the entire Zeitgeist, to simply pin it on the influence of propagandists and philosophes would be a gross mistake (but one that

reactionaries eagerly make, because then they can absolve the Ancien Régime itself of any faults, and advocate with a straight face the glorious muh mercantilism). I mean there was a reason why those darned philosophes were so influential. There was a widespread dissapointment with the establishment. Still, in spite of everything things WERE getting better (which is the sole reason why Enlightenment stooges could invent the Idea of Progress in the first place), and the Revolution put an end to that process, and instead of liberty and progress we got a century of slaughter, followed by a century of decay.

Reply.

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