

Carlsbad 1819

Like another Chouannerie

Metternich and his secret police

April 4, 2018 by Nulle Terre Sans Seigneur

This is a belated response to a comment exchange between The Hapsburg Restorationist and Metternichian Theory that took place a few weeks ago, and republished as a standalone post. (<https://thewarforchristendom.wordpress.com/2018/03/15/the-paradox-of-metternich-a-dialogue/>).

THR quotes Kuehnelt-Leddihn on Metternich's regime learning too much from the enemy (the Jacobins) and assuming a leftist character in its Polizeistaat nature. I don't think that was the problem with it, however. First, we have to talk about the nature of the Holy Alliance and the concert system that the Metternichian project was devoted to.

The text of the Holy Alliance between Francis, Frederick William and Alexander, contained in Article II the statement that considering themselves all as members of one great Christian nation, the three allied princes looked upon themselves as delegates of Providence called upon to govern three branches of the same family, which in turn followed from the promise in Article I to lend aid and assistance to each other on all occasions and in all places, viewing themselves, in their relations to their subjects and to their armies, as "fathers of families."

Sure, the Holy Alliance was in some sense a fabrication in its attempt to create a Catholic-Orthodox-Lutheran royal bloc while appealing to unified Christendom of old. But slow down for a moment. This legitimist mythology of dynasticism, aristocratic hierarchy, martial prowess, faith and regionalism was a far superior one to the nationalist mythology of liberalism, constitutionalism, democracy, parliamentarism and "equality of nations."

Far from the legitimist-nationalist split being a story of elites vs. "the people," many European nations had traditions of popular monarchism. Russia need not be mentioned as it's well enough known; Ivan IV "the Terrible" was dear to the peasants' hearts and an esteemed character in their folklore, the Tsar as a paternal figure and protector from greedy boyars. Naples and Sicily had their Bourbon-loyal lazzaroni and a resistance movement against Piedmontese-led unification in the 1860s (which has in common historiography been dubbed "brigandage") at essentially the same time as the Confederacy in the American South, but lasting even longer. An unusually good NYT op ed rightfully dubbed this Italy's own Lost Cause (<https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/05/02/italys-own-lost-cause/>), and today

the Associazione culturale Neoborbonica (<http://www.neoborbonici.it/>), survive as the guardians of this lost cause. There is also no doubt that many Habsburg subjects in the Cisleithenian and Transleithenian provinces alike remained *Kaisertreue*.

The more important subtext in this, however, was its creation of a positive obligation for military intervention with the purpose of suppressing revolutions. As Friedrich von Gentz wrote at the turn of the 19th century: "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." The Holy Alliance manifested this belief.

The zenith of Metternich's diplomacy was correlated to the use of strongly repressive measures. Following revolts in Naples and Sardinia during 1820-1, Austrian troops remained stationed in the former until 1823 and in the latter until 1827. Hundreds of civil servants and professionals were purged, some Carbonari members publicly whipped. The Sardinian repression included 19 executions, 21 incarcerations, 54 death sentences in absentia and hundreds of military dismissals.

Lest this should appear heavy-handed, it must be remembered that around this time were hanging around many revolutionary madmen with ideas calculated to create geopolitical instability in hopes of some "purification" of the continent from alleged despots. One of which was the English radical Richard Carlile, whose screeds in his journal *The Republican* (here from an issue published in September 15, 1820 regarding the uprisings in Portugal) were by no means atypical, but quite normal of revolutionary opinion at the time (<https://books.google.com/books?id=7Ms9AQAAMAAJ&pg=PA74>):

The revolution of Portugal might be considered important, as Spain has now nothing to fear from that quarter in having a counter-revolution excited by the holy alliance of despots. On the side of the Pyrennees those despots can do nothing, and should Austria meddle with the internal affairs of Naples, it will become the duty of Spain, in self-preservation, to excite France to a revolt. The embers of revolution are scattered throughout the continent, and a total extinction of them cannot take place. Every breeze revives and increases them, and every attempt to quench will but render them more vivid. What will the despot of Russia say now when he hears of Naples, of Sicily, and of Portugal? It would be extremely important that France should regenerate at this moment, because it would fill up the blank between Naples and Spain, and keep up a line of communication. When France drives the Bourbons again, it will be all over with European despotism.

The Congress of Troppau, held in October 1820, authorizing military action against Neapolitan liberalism, qualified the doctrine of counterrevolutionary intervention like so: "...It is needless to prove that the resolutions taken by the Powers are in no way to be attributed to the idea of conquest, nor to any intention of interfering with the independence of other governments in their internal administration, nor lastly, to the purpose of preventing wise improvements freely carried out and in harmony with the true interests of the people. Their only desire is to preserve and maintain peace to deliver Europe from the scourge of revolution and to obviate or lessen the ills which arise from the violation of the precepts of order and morality."

It was around this time, too, that Metternich's diplomacy exerted its influence on Pope Pius VII to promulgate the brief *Ecclesiam a Jesu Christo* in 1821, condemning the Carbonari (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/25018108?seq=1>).

Interestingly, the Congress of Verona in 1822, the last of the great post-Napoleonic conferences of the Quintuple Alliance (dealing especially with the question of French intervention in Spain to restore Ferdinand VII to the throne), appears to have been the subject of a newspaper forgery that was once a popular conspiracy theory in American circles, about a supposed plot organized by the plenipotentiaries of the Congress of Vienna which survived for many decades after, to crush popular government worldwide. It was mentioned by Senator Owen and recorded (<http://clclibrary-org-denon.angelfire.com/verona.html>) in the 1916 Congressional Record. Funnily enough, even if it's clearly written to appear malevolent and Machiavellian, it's actually not a bad summary of the principles of the Holy Alliance.

Now if one were to make a more persuasive case for a Metternichian lapse into the methods of his foes, the suppression of some of the provincial diets' powers (the diets being regulated under Article XIII of the German Confederation's founding acts) as part of the countermeasures that would lead to the drafting of the Carlsbad Decrees, might count. In his memoirs, though, we read (<https://archive.org/stream/memoirsofprincem03mettiala#page/312/mode/2up>), the case that "Never could have [the framers] supposed that the unambiguous principle of representation by Diets should be changed into pure democratic principles and forms, and claims be grounded on this misunderstanding incompatible with the existence of monarchical States" — sound enough reasoning on the face of it.

The most notable and (in)famous aspect of the Carlsbad Decrees, of course, were its attempts to deal with the defects of the school and university systems, and the press. The academic professors had failed in their training of the youth by "following the phantom of a so-called cosmopolitan cultivation, filling the minds so susceptible alike to both true and error with empty dreams, and inspired them, if not with bitterness, yet with contempt and opposition to legally established order."

With regards to the free press, "only in a position of the most perfect peace" could Germany endure such a thing, and "amid a wild discord of opinions ... which shatters all principles, and throws doubt and suspicion on all truth." That is to say, taking action against republican fake news.

Until the Carlsbad Decrees were beginning to be loosened by the 1830s, they worked quite well. We have good testimony by the traveler W.C.W. Blumenbach, in his travelogue "Austria and the Austrians" published in 1837.

One of the stories he recounts (<https://archive.org/stream/austriaaustrians00blum#page/256/mode/2up>) is said to have taken place in Bavaria. The Aulic counselor by the surname of Behr, formerly burgomaster of Wurzburg, had taken some liberties in a speech on rights and government. King Ludwig proceeded to force him to do penance on his knees, in the public hall of the municipality, before the portrait of the king. After which, he read a lecture on the necessity of an inviolable supreme head of state, and stated that he had never intended any disrespect to the person or power of the king, reaffirming his faithful devotion.

Another source is quoted stating that any writings containing such words as "constitution," "liberty" and "independence" were heavily scrutinized by censors. Lancasterian schools established in Mantua, Brescia, Milan were shut down by a commissary of police for teaching "the rights of man" to their pupils.

It's quite likely there is an element of "black legend" storytelling here, but even if exaggerated it's probably not outright fabricated. Blumenbach quite smugly declares earlier that a multitude can never be a secret body. If the whole or a majority of the people become determined by the "force of moral

conviction” to change the established state of things, “no existing government can prevent them.” But the point is that in fact they could.

Besides the fissures in the Holy Alliance itself, it was when repression was being loosened that major issues started cropping up.

Whereas in the 1820s the Austrians had been quite swift and exacting on the Italian revolutionaries, with famous “martyrs” like the prison memoirist Silvio Pellico coming from that era, in the 1830s there were various amnesties and pardons being issued.

Far from these amnesties cooling radical passions, they only emboldened them even further. Witness the Monthly Chronicle’s 1839 issue and its essay “[Austria and the Italian Liberals](https://books.google.com/books?id=g0IFAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA154) (<https://books.google.com/books?id=g0IFAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA154>),” which after expressing indignation over what it calls a “farce” of an amnesty, proceeds to spin this tale of victimhood:

No country presents a more sad and singular spectacle than Italy; in no country do we behold a more terrible struggle between the governors and the governed for the emancipation of the human mind. The native princes, the foreign kings, the Popes themselves, are bound by one single tie, united for one sole end, that of repressing and stifling every liberal idea and every generous sentiment. In that unfortunate land, a groan, a sigh, or a single word may become a crime. The censorship, that Argus with its hundred eyes, broods over all, watching, scrutinising every thing; and the system of the Italian governments may be summed up in two words, and may be personified in two principles — force and ignorance. The career of letters which in England and France leads the man of genius to fame, honour, and fortune, in Italy points the gloomy path to imprisonment or exile.

Another remarkable oversight was Metternich’s unwillingness to curb reform clubs in Hungary, and the burgeoning [Hungarian casino movement](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/262692578_Istvan_Szechenyi_the_casino_movement_and_Hungarian_nationalism_1827-1848) (https://www.researchgate.net/publication/262692578_Istvan_Szechenyi_the_casino_movement_and_Hungarian_nationalism_1827-1848), that was acting as an incubator for radical tendencies.

“The what the fuck now?”

Yes, Hungarian nationalists actually discussed their plans in goddamned casinos. The seediness and immorality simply had no end in sight among these people. Certainly, one would find it difficult to conceive of a better way to destroy class boundaries. Now, “casino” in the 1820s and 1830s wasn’t the same as those with modern technology. It was more like “club.” But gambling facilities were there, in addition to libraries that apparently few attendees had an interest in reading. They liked drinking and smoking better. After the “moderate” István Széchenyi established the Nemzeti Casino in 1827, they started popping up all over the country, including for Jews and Croats.

Metternich apparently took a liking to Széchenyi, even sharing Széchenyi’s secret police reports with him in an attempt to dissuade his activities. Vienna refused to take action, believing the casino movement would simply collapse under the weight of factionalism. Such optimism proved ill-fated.

Now, the Holy Alliance fell apart over the differing interests between Austria and Russia on the Eastern Question (not to mention between Austria and Prussia on German unification), and the broader Quintuple Alliance broke over the non-interventionist and neutrality objections of Castlereagh and Wellington, which later morphed into the radicalism of Canning, Palmerston and Gladstone. With the rejection of [Talleyrand’s partition plan for Belgium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talleyrand_partition_plan_for_Belgium) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talleyrand_partition_plan_for_Belgium), proposed in the London

Conference of 1830 to deal with *that* revolution, so began the end of the legitimist moment in international politics and a return to more conventional balance-of-power realpolitik, though with increasingly insidious tools in that the European empires now freely promoted destabilizing national independence movements in a selective fashion to achieve their goals.

From [Gladstone's 3rd Midlothian speech on foreign policy](#).

(<http://www.liberalhistory.org.uk/history/extract-from-gladstones-3rd-midlothian-speech-on-foreign-policy/>). (1879), he says that “the foreign policy of England should always be inspired by the love of freedom. There should be a sympathy with freedom, a desire to give it scope, founded not upon visionary ideas, but upon the long experience of many generations within the shores of this happy isle, that in freedom you lay the firmest foundations both of loyalty and order; the firmest foundations for the development of individual character, and the best provision for the happiness of the nation at large.”

With such meliorist malarkey gaining traction and becoming ever more extreme in the minds and hearts of its proponents, we arrive at the point where the split today is between liberal internationalists, who take it to be their positive obligation to spread AIDS, and anti-war hippies (left and right), who take it to be their positive obligation to prevent any intervention whatsoever. They thus work in synchrony. Realists can tilt in either direction depending on how they evaluate the circumstances. But a programme based on an ethos of a *nouvelle ancien regime* and an unwavering commitment to legitimacy, is not only nonexistent, but a very queer and alien idea for many to even contemplate.

Yet this is precisely the problem at hand, how to cultivate an elite culture that echoes that of “the diplomatists” of old. Relying entirely on petit-bourgeois national-separatisms against globalism to do the work is untenable. You may want to do everything “in one country,” but the intrinsic rift between governors and governed will always create a sense of inter-elite affinity. One’s social rank is a target of homophily and kin altruism, and for all practical purposes is an “extended” phenotypic marker in its own right. Nationally-minded bourgeois elites who assortatively mate will eventually become endogamic clans perpetuating themselves within the state system, and because bourgeois elites are the chattering classes above all else, their rule will be obnoxious and kleptocratic like no other, indeed it *was* and remains so. Vilfredo Pareto’s “[The Parliamentary Regime in Italy](https://archive.org/details/jstor-2140103)” (1893) remains one of the best descriptions that is still relevant, and not just for Italy.

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I guess the Casino movement produced the cultural heritage of “german-style” playing cards edition with Obers and Unters being the characters from Schiller’s Wilhelm Tell (himself the Ober of acorns), which in Croatia are still called “the Magyars”, later produced by Wilhelm Piatnik for decades and

decades in the heart of Vienna. Every northern Croat has at least one playing set at home (the southerners have different games with spanish-style Venetian edition, "Treviso" and "Trieste").

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