

Carlsbad 1819

Like another Chouannerie

The Comte de Montlosier's swansong for the debased nobleman

September 19, 2017 by Nulle Terre Sans Seigneur

For a long time [the seigniors] are very feeble against the intendant, utterly powerless to protect their parish. Twenty gentlemen cannot assemble and deliberate without the king's special permission. If those of Franche-Comté happen to dine together and hear a mass once a year, it is through tolerance, and even then this harmless coterie may assemble only in the presence of the intendant: Separated from his equals, the seignior again is separated from his inferiors. The administration of a village is of no concern to him; he has not even its superintendence. The apportionment of taxes, the militia contingent, the repairs of the church, the summoning and presiding over a parish assembly, the making of roads, the establishment of charity workshops, all this is the intendant's business or that of the communal officers which the intendant appoints or directs. Except through his justiciary rights, so much curtailed, the seignior is an idler in public matters. If, by chance, he should desire to act in an official capacity, to make some reclamation for the community, the bureaux of administration would soon close his mouth. Since Louis XIV., the clerks have things their own way; all legislation and the entire administrative system operate against the local seignior to deprive him of his functional efficacy and to confine him to his naked title. Through this separation of functions and title his pride increases as he becomes less useful. His self-love, deprived of its broad pasture-ground falls back on a small one; henceforth he seeks distinctions and not influence; he thinks only of precedence and not of government.

— Hippolyte Taine, *The Origins of Contemporary France: The Ancien Regime* (1876)

François Dominique de Reynaud, comte de Montlosier, as an emigre in 1796, writes to Pierre Victor, baron Malouet, presenting himself (<https://archive.org/stream/deseffetsdelavio00mont#page/32/mode/2up>) as a partisan of moderation: "The revolution was a horrible thing. A counter-revolution, abandoned to exaggeration and violence, would become its counterpart. A new order of things, led by moderation and wisdom, will give us all the blessings of peace. It will bring us a healthy government, in keeping with our customs and our climate. Let us leave to the Orient the institutions which suit it; neither republic nor despotism are made for France. Its genius is remote from these two extremes, as its climate is from the torrid zone and the northern glaciers... I am a royalist; but I can not proclaim despotism. I abhor popular despotism, nor do I like the despotism of one."

And yet, surface impressions aside, he wasn't simply a member of the moderate constitutional-monarchist crowd of Mounier and Clermont-Tonnerre, as his stark defense of class stratification, and of seigneurial prerogative to exercise justice over one's vassals, made him a member of the counterrevolutionary camp. All the same, he fused it with a commitment to the principles of representative government.

Montlosier was driven by one overarching principle: *that the superior cannot be judged by the inferior*. However, he did accept much of the Revolution up to about early 1790. This was not an unusual opinion among the Second Estate, as their *cahiers de doléances* of 1789 do show a lot of internalized "enlightened" principles. "From the right of personal liberty arises the right to write, to think, to print and to publish," declare the nobility of Blois at the time. Not much else left for them to do except babble, anyway. They couldn't even heed the advice of "enrichissez-vous" because engaging in commerce was an offense strictly worthy of *dérogance* (loss of nobility).

Shortly after the Tennis Court Oath, on June 23, 1789 (<https://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/303/>), Louis XVI vainly tried to court the rising intransigence of the Third Estate with the affirmation of the principle of hereditary order and right to property that also includes income from seigniorial dues, while nonetheless conceding that all three estates collectively are the nation:

The King wishes that the ancient distinction of the three orders of the state be preserved in its entirety, as essentially linked to the constitution of his Kingdom; that the deputies, freely elected by each of the three orders, forming three chambers, deliberating by order, and being able, with the approval of the sovereign, to agree to deliberate in common, can alone be considered as forming the body of the representatives of the nation. As a result, the King has declared null the resolutions passed by the deputies of the order of the Third Estate, the 17th of this month, as well as those which have followed them as illegal and unconstitutional.

[...]

All property rights, without exception, shall be constantly respected, and His Majesty expressly understands under the name of property rights, tithes, rents, annuities, feudal and seigniorial rights and duties, and, in general, all the rights and prerogatives useful or honorary, attached to lands and fiefs or pertaining to persons.

And so Montlosier picked up from there, but drove it to a more hardline position.

When things got more heated, his 1791 letter on *De la nécessité d'une Contre-révolution en France* reiterated the measures he supported as those necessary to "abolish the letters-de-cachet, to give a just measure to the liberty of the press, to put an end to all the privileges and all the onerous taxes, to make jobs and honors accessible to merit in all classes of citizens; it is this revolution which, by preserving the clergy around the altars, like the nobility around the throne, would have taught the people to respect all the legitimate inequalities of honors, wealth, and consideration." (p.1)

But dammit, a line had to be drawn. Crushing the estates, proclaiming the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, printing the demon paper money, arming the sansculotte militias — there it is. His words: "I am not a friend of this revolution, and although I sincerely desire the liberty of my country, I am attached to the distinction of ranks, as well as to the just prerogatives of the priesthood and the throne; and, as for the present principles of the revolution, we have arrived at a complete dissolution of the public order." (p.4)

Once more, it would be incorrect to consider Montlosier as just being a constitutional-liberal monarchist. Actually, it appears that his primary legacy today is his opposition to the Jesuits and to the ultramontanists. That he did, but it was from a fundamentally conservative impulse: the preservation of Gallicanism, similar to Jean-Baptiste Duvoisin and his own counterrevolutionism. In fact, one of his most striking justifications for his hostility to clerical ambitions was the fact that he faulted the Church's efforts to install the Peace and Truce of God as being an affront to the intrinsic noble prerogative of engaging in blood feuds!

One of the most famous French classical liberals, Benjamin Constant, a perpetual enemy of all hereditary privilege, nonetheless had to concede (http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/861#Constant_0452_467): "Where rights have disappeared, privileges can be a defense. For all their drawbacks, they are better than the absence of any intermediary power. To do without privileges, a constitution has to be excellent. Under despotism equality becomes a scourge."

Montlosier would have nodded, but then his interpretation of French history in *De la Monarchie française* is one of the most unapologetically pro-feudal works there is. Despised by economic and political liberals like Augustin Thierry (who was also an early proponent of studying history through economic class relations, and an influence on Marx and Engels), it is in retrospect regarded as an early contribution to medievalist historiography, important for the contemporary responses it provoked.

It is in part a reply to at least three prior historians: Boulainvilliers, Montesquieu and Henault. He departs from Boulainvilliers' more rigid Frank-Gaul distinction for the origins of nobility, choosing instead an analysis based on "ages" marked by different compositions of Roman, Gaul and Frankish customs, and different functions of the aristocracy. He departs from Montesquieu's strict focus on the court nobility, and from Henault's claim that the nobility was initially *just* the arms-bearing freemen, and that titled nobility was a Capetian innovation.

"The manners of three great nations [Romans, Gauls, Franks], this is where I have principally to turn my attention; I have to show how these peoples, having come to draw nearer to each other, have also come closer to their manners," is how he opens. He discounts interpretations of French institutions as being based purely on invasion, conquest or weak authority.

The distinction between allodial and tributary lands is held to be present in Gallic times, and thus the original status distinctions amount to *liberus* and *servus* in terms of land tenure: "The possessor of a free land is classed among ingenuous men [les hommes ingénus]: it is a sort of order of nobility. On the other hand, the possessor of a land subject to tribute is classed among the tributary men: they are the commoners of that time."

Franks and Gauls initially inhabited two separate legal spheres, in the Salic and Gallo-Roman laws, respectively. The *leudes* (warrior aristocracy) of the Franks are attached to the king, whereas the Gauls inhabit most of the boroughs. Eventually, marital and legal barriers are broken down, a process complete by the reign of Charles the Bald, and "Frank" comes to designate a freeman. (This is evident particularly in a 1315 edict by Louis X formally abolishing the status of slavery.)

Feudal government is dismissed as having any particular ethnic origin. Patron-client relationships are Roman, unfree labor (*coloni*) and serfs of the soil are seen all across sedentary agricultural civilization, the military benefice too finds a late Roman antecedent in the form of the *precarium*, nor are hereditary offices in any way a feudal form. Thus, he concludes feudal government to arise from the mixture of ethnic temperaments: "This government, which ends by showing the world an appearance of a new people, as well as of new customs and institutions, has, as we see, happened simply from the

rapprochement of two peoples, one of whom has land, the other of arms, one the severe manners of the Germans, the other the enfeebled manners of Rome; one accustomed to a wandering life and to forming bonds more military than civil ones, the other accustomed to a sedentary life and to forming civil rather than military bonds, having mixed themselves little by little, and having taken something reciprocally from one to the other."

More novel than the relationship of vassalage, however, is the commendation ceremony: "Tassilo, Duke of Bavaria, thus came, with the principal personages of his country, to place his hand in the hand of King Pepin. It was thus, under the first race, that the great officers of the state came to place their hands in the king's hand, by taking an oath for their office. This kind of recommendation, the most illustrious of all, is constantly recalled in the chartres, as of Frankish origin."

This all served to create a tempered style of rule, he claims. Matters of faith are primarily left to bishops convened in synods, and war is declared in the presence of *leudes*. The Edict of Paris passed in 615 by Chlothar II is cited to this effect.

The impoverishment of the fisc as new benefices were created, the increasing dominance of the mayor of the palace in the Frankish court, in conjunction with the fragmentation "when, by the progress of time, all the Gauls had become Frankish; when the Frankish manners had made everything bend under them, and that the whole of France was covered with seigniories, vassals, and castles, the royal authority being no longer, as formerly, the only center of protection, was to be weakened as these movements were consolidated" — led to the decline of the Merovingians, and with Saracen invasions on the horizon, paved the way for Charles Martel and the Carolingians.

A major constitutional change was to impose the oath of fealty not just on the *leudes*, but on all freemen. Montlosier was skeptical of its efficacy: "the royal authority was too remote; it found itself with private vassals without a usual and direct connection. That of the lords, on the contrary, was incessantly present."

The structure of ranks and status is summarized: "In the last days of our ancient monarchy, we were able to count four orders of persons, (1) the peers and the great officers of the crown; (2) an order of nobility; (3) a body of commoners and bourgeoisie; (4) the servants for wages."

These four classes in turn correspond, in modern times to, respectively, the peerage, the Second Estate, the commoners and the villeins/serfs.

Slaves have no property or civil existence. Tributaries do not own nor can they alienate their lands, but do remain in possession if they pay the tribute. For the nobles of the Second Estate, Montlosier writes: "The class of frank or ingenuous men, which corresponds to our order of nobility, has for its first character, to pay no tribute. To have full liberty, either of his person or of his possession, composes the principal attribute of "frankness." However, men of this class can enter, whenever they want, into homage and military service. They then become vassals. They are found more commonly under this title at a later period. They possess that kind of frank property called alleu [allod], at other times fiefs. They enjoy great privileges in the judiciary. They form, together with the grandees of the State, the assemblies of the Champs de Mars."

A high peerage-lower noble distinction is quickly drawn by Montlosier. The former is said to originate "from the favor of the prince and the occupation of the great offices," whereas the latter "of independence, resulting from the full liberty of his person, his family and his land." The peerage has

disadvantages, even if it is more dignified in a way: "The first of these nobles, although the most brilliant, may be regarded as precarious in some respects, since it is due to honors revocable at will, or given only for life; the other, on the contrary, is independent of the prince."

Noble prerogatives in waging private war and feuds are not the product of weak central authority, but intentional: "It is false that this right was torn from the weakness of the princes. One has only to read the Capitularies. They are full of dispositions which place on the same line the duties which the vassals have to render to their lords, and those which they have to render to the king." Even centuries later, these rights are reiterated in customary law codes such as the *Coutumes de Beauvaisis* and the *Etablissements de Saint Louis*.

The stigma attached to the term 'feudalism' is undeserved: "The word feudalism has been, for the men of letters, what the word aristocracy has been for the men of the revolution... Even today, if one comes to find unfree laborers somewhere, or serfs of the soil, as in Poland, Russia, or some other country, he does not fail to say that they are the remains of feudalism."

This is misleading, however, since the domestic and military service offered by unfree laborers served to progressively emancipate them, first to tributaries and ultimately into freemen: "It was also a favor of a high baron to allow the children of his relatives and friends to come and join the children of the house, to fill in their place, or jointly with them, the functions they were responsible for. At the same time that the vassal was fighting beside his lord on the field of battle, the son of this vassal, or *vasseletus* (*vasseletus*), together with the young son of the lord, or *damoiseau* (*domicellus*), began serving in the house. The lords thus sent their children to each other, to care for the horses, to serve at the table, to fill the offices of page and valet."

This practice, initially confined to high nobility, Montlosier says spread out throughout all domains, and so "abolished true slavery."

In the meantime, the increasing dichotomy between the court nobility and the free landed nobility hardens and acts as a harbinger of things to come:

As it was open to every one to go and offer his services, his property, his liberty, his affairs, under various conditions, to powerful persons, it was natural to choose the counts in preference to the important office of which they were clothed. However, it is not difficult to notice that two qualities were cumulated in them: that of count, which they held of the king, and that of lord, which they held of themselves. The former being only precarious, the latter being hereditary and belonging to them, it is probable that one will have expanded at the expense of the other. These two titles having thus intertwined with each other, it was no longer possible to separate them.

Montlosier emphasizes that nobles must be autarkic, self-sufficient, and dramatically laments their disconnect from governance at the hands of intendants and venal office-holders:

An order of nobility must exist, in a state, other than by alms; his honors ought to be anything but concessions of charity, or regulations of distress. If I open the book of the states of Tours in 1483, I find there respect for the proclaimed nobility and its consecrated privileges. "For the state of the nobility is necessary to the tuition and guard of the common weal; for it is the nerve and force of the kingdom." The ordinance of Blois, article 28, has the same expression: "That the principal force of our crown lies and consists in our noblesse."

Now, under Louis XIV and Louis XV, could I be told in what way was the nobility was necessary to the tuition, to guard and defend the common weal? Everything went without it; they were then obliged to grant it advantages no longer as before, because they were useful, but in order that they *might* be useful; no longer as before, because it was the nerve and force of the State, but only so that it could continue to serve as a decoration.

The "ancient people" — the higher warrior nobility and the seignors, were to be replaced by those he dubs the "new people" or "modern people." His words are very stark, for to him, this is not merely the succession of a new culture, but *the eradication of a race*: "He must bend under laws which his fathers have not known, and adopt the manners which his fathers have rejected. It is established as law of state that his persecutors are his judges, his inferiors his sovereigns. In this general reversal, the laws of France are deemed foreign, foreign laws have become the laws of France. The liberties of the ancient people are now called privileges, their ancient independence is called "barbarism," and their former government anarchy."

The passing of the great race, would occur in the following stages: "The nobility had in its lands men who were under its government; they were taken from it. It had the right of war; it was taken from it. It had the right of taxation; it was abolished. It had the custom of assembling itself in warlike festivals; they were suppressed. It had the right to coin money; it was taken. It had the right to be judged by its peers: it was instead sent to committees of commoners. It was of great importance not to pay tributes, but they were imposed regardless." (Some 150 different types of coinage ostensibly prevailed, until the right to mint gold and silver was usurped as a royal prerogative.)

How Montlosier cries out: the great seigniories deprived of vassalage, the great ords of their importance. No vassals but the king's, no barons but those of the state, all nobles reduced to royal immediacy. All fiefs in principle elevated back into allods again. Lockean freeholderism for all! And, of course, feudal duties exacted by idle and disempowered do-nothing paper nobility are unsurprisingly considered a cruel iniquity.

The final quotation from Montlosier I will sample is by far the most brutal. By this we know we're dealing with a hardboiled counterrevolutionary, even if a highly eccentric one:

In ancient times, when a gentleman was put on trial, it was by his peers, presided over by the lord suzerain, the dominant lord, or the count. The bailiffs having been instituted, as these bailiffs were ordinarily lords, the order of ranks was at least preserved. But when the men of the tributary class had seized the whole tribunal, a man of the noble class could not be brought before such judges without a violation of his laws and propriety.

There are men who regard as puerile and vain the suggestion that sufferings arose from the interchange of ranks in the judicial order. **I do not think there is anything more important in a state. To disfigure the ancient order of justice was only unjust; altering the order of the ranks was scandalous.**

Men of the lowest extraction were raised to the first offices and first dignities of the state. When the commoners arrived in the bailiwicks, formerly assigned to the counts or bailiffs, did they take the rank? When the commoners had made their invasion in the parlements of peers and barons, did they become henceforth peers and barons? All of them remained commoners.

It is a right which the common sense of nations has consecrated, that the superior can not be judged by the inferior. Major to minore non potest judicari. There is another one that is equally consecrated, namely that each one must be judged according to *his* law.

Unlike more modern racialists who emphasize the hereditary germplasm and regard custom as rather incidental, for Montlosier, the debasement of his own noble lineage was an act with repercussions as dire as an ethnic cleansing of a host population. In some sense, it must be regarded as right.

If, then, his vision was an aristocratic commonwealth where the high-blooded ruled over the commons and occupy the high offices, with the king standing by as the sacred right to feud and private war was exercised, and the bishops exercising their jurisdiction over oaths, wills, testaments and marriage (but otherwise doing no more) — the adoption of constitutionalism on his part should probably be regarded as an attempt to tie the hands of *le roi*. Between ministerial despotism and commercial-liberal propertarianism, the latter must have been more redeemable. Insisting on the division of powers and at the same time on the creation of a higher house where a hereditary peerage would sit — such was his initial reform proposal in 1789-90.

Montlosier's *De la Monarchie française*, interestingly enough, was commissioned in 1804 by the Corsican mountebank (<https://carlsbad1819.wordpress.com/2017/07/23/the-eighteenth-brumaire-of-fritz-pendleton/>). Napoleon Buonaparte. It wasn't finished until 1807. After the censors read it, its publication was delayed until the Restoration in 1814. It's pretty obvious why — the sheer elitism of it is poison to any national-egalitarian unity. As it ought to be!

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28 thoughts on “The Comte de Montlosier's swansong for the debased nobleman”

1. Imperial Energy says:
September 19, 2017 at 9:08 pm

Equality and absolutism go hand in hand though. The very things you describe would have happened (and did happen) under monarchy anyway.

Reading Jouvenel's On Power, is electrifying in this regard.

A few selections:

"We have only to listen to Saint-Simon's * bitter cries against Mazarin. Saint-Simon well understood that at the time of the Fronde a revolution happened, not of the tumultuous sort at which the Frondeurs tried their hand, but rather an invisible one, which was accomplished by the minister who was Richelieu's heir and Louis XVI's tutor. All his attention and care were devoted to abolishing in every possible way the distinctions of birth and to despoiling persons of quality of every sort of authority, for which purpose he tried to keep them away from affairs of state; to bringing into the administration people of as low extraction as his own; to magnifying their offices in point of power, distinction, credit and wealth; to persuading the king that as every noble- man was the natural enemy of his authority, he should prefer to them, to handle his affairs, men of no account, who could at the first sign of discontent be reduced to insignificance by having their employments taken from them as easily as the gift of them had raised them from insignificance; whereas the nobility, being already men of importance by reason of their birth, their marriage connections and often by their establishments, acquired through high office and ministerial patronage a formidable strength and became, for the same reason, dangerous to re- move from office. That was the cause of the entry into public life of men of the pen and the long robe and of the destruction, still felt and seen, of the nobility at a rate which will seem a prodigy; the men of the pen and the long robe well knew the means of hastening this destruction, and made their yoke worse every day until a point was reached at which the greatest nobleman in the land became of no use to anyone and became in a thousand and one ways dependent on the vilest plebeian."

Reply.

- Nulle Terre Sans Seigneur says:
September 20, 2017 at 7:03 am
 > Equality and absolutism go hand in hand though.

Tell that to the ~~Esoteric Order of Kim-il-Sung~~ Journal of Neoabsolutism, not me.

Reply.

- Imperial Energy says:
September 20, 2017 at 10:02 am
 RF would probably reply, correctly in our view, that the "leveling" and promotion of "equality" is an artifact of weak or divided power.

As our maxim has it: "A ruler only becomes a tyrant when they do not have enough power."

Reply.

- Michael Rothblatt says:
September 20, 2017 at 5:33 pm
 >RF would probably reply, correctly in our view, that the "leveling" and promotion of "equality" is an artifact of weak or divided power.

He would say that, yes. Then he would go on and say that it's the way things ought to be. Everyone should be equally powerless and equally nothing before the sovereign. And, if sovereign chooses to raise somebody above somebody else, well, that is merely on whim of the sovereign, and can just as easily be reversed tomorrow.

Reply.

- Imperial Energy says:

September 20, 2017 at 7:03 pm

There are two issues here. Firstly, a causal understanding of why "leveling" occurs. Secondly, assuming you have a secure sovereign, what the "positive vision" is of that sovereign/state.

It is an open question how useful feudal systems are – as models – given that they only show Power in a particular way.

Moldbug often charged that even if you were to go back to the "original" constitution of the U.S, what reason have you to think that the whole thing would not happen all over again – the same can be said with feudalism.

Reply.

- Michael Rothblatt says:

September 20, 2017 at 9:25 pm

Yes, there are two issues. My main problem with absolutism is: what's the point of it all if "positive vision" is North Korea? How are you supposed to stop all leveling tendencies that come from insecure Power by leveling everything?!

Of course, if "positive vision" is a proper order, then the unsolved problem is why would absolutist care about that?

The US constitution was badly designed from the outset, it was pozzed from the start.

Feudalism gave us thousand years of civilisation. Nothing lasts forever (it's folly to assume otherwise), and I would gladly have another thousand years of civilisation, fully knowing that it must end one day.

One the other hand, what reason do we have not to think absolutism wouldn't end in disaster (or be disaster itself depending on what "positive vision" you have)? Economic incentives matter, but not as much as one would think (Moldbug took the argument from Hoppe, Hoppe took it from Dévots but in reverse–Dévots tried to convince the king that he would be richer if he abandoned mercantilism for laissez-faire, because then the king's subjects would be richer and thus also the king). As Aquinas warns (and Rothbard points out in his remark about Dévots), if sovereign cares only about the money & hoes, well, he can always earn the most (in the short term, but in the long term as well) if he simply sweats his subjects to their limits. But as we know, there are people who squander their inheritance, is there a reason to assume there would be no high time preference sovereigns? And besides, money isn't everything. In fact I may value many things above all the money in the world. Ancients spoke that instead of money, sovereign should work for honour & glory. But nay says Aquinas. That is no more conducive to good government than is sovereign working for money & hoes, because in that case the sovereign is beholden to fickle opinions, instead of being devoted to justice...

...IOW matters are not as simple as give someone unlimited Power, and PUF everything magically turns good because of structural incentives (and that from people who explicitly reject anything that even remotely resembles the concept of spontaneous order).

Reply.

- Imperial Energy says:

September 21, 2017 at 11:16 am

"My main problem with absolutism is: what's the point of it all if "positive vision" is North Korea? How are you supposed to stop all leveling tendencies that come from insecure Power by leveling everything?!"

You take him up on the "positive vision" thing. He has explicitly defended Aristotelian virtue ethics but has not said much about law.

Your worries are, of course, absolutely valid and there are 1001 ways that the whole thing could end up in a North Korea like situation.

There are two ways to think about this problem. There is the perspective of the "citizen/customer" and the perspective of the Elite or Power.

Power always wants more power. It wants power in order to be secure, strong and wealthy. What it wants is to have complete command and control over the men, money and materials in order to wage war.

Naturally, this will often run contrary to interests of the citizen/customer/serf.

RF's "hypothesis" or claim is that if Power is secure then Power will focus on the common good. It will do this, we assume, because doing good will keep its "customer base" or citizens loyal, so to speak.

However, the thing we are drawing attention to, with our Power Selection Theory, is that war is a factor that is not subject to the sovereign's control or subject to the design of the state.

Thus, NK is organised essentially as a "garrison state" because it is under constant pressure of attack or subversion from USG.

If the Kims had no external threats, would they run the country the same way? Probably not to the same degree.

Reply.

- Michael Rothblatt says:

September 21, 2017 at 12:29 pm

>Power always wants more power. It wants power in order to be secure, strong and wealthy. What it wants is to have complete command and control over the men, money and materials in order to wage war.

But if that's the case what would then Greater Amerikaner Reich be doing differently that the current BlueGov Empire? Sure secure Power and no democracy would allow for some different policies. All the money that is

now going into welfare could instead be going into war effort, for example. But, how is having an even more aggressive US rampaging upon the world an improvement of affairs?

>RF's "hypothesis" or claim is that if Power is secure then Power will focus on the common good. It will do this, we assume, because doing good will keep its "customer base" or citizens loyal, so to speak.

That is Moldbug's hypothesis. RF claim is that "customer base" ought to be loyal no matter what. In fact it is to be brainwashed into unyielding and unconditional submission. Not only economy, but the entirety of every individual's life is to be centrally planned, and there are to be no subsidiary institutions.

The difference between RF and Molbug is thus: Moldbug's secure sovereign can, owing to his security pursue any policy at all (Moldbug had his preferred ones, but that wasn't the point), while RF doesn't consider sovereign secure unless he's running North Korea.

>If the Kims had no external threats, would they run the country the same way? Probably not to the same degree.

That is true, but it's a small consolation. Choice between Hoxha and Brezhnev isn't much of a choice.

Reply.

◦ Imperial Energy says:

September 21, 2017 at 1:50 pm

"Sure secure Power and no democracy would allow for some different policies. "

This is where the three different types of state matter. 1: Government as a Charity. 2: Government as a business and 3: Government as a criminal enterprise lead into different directions.

RF is on the "charity" model – as are most other reactionaries. Modlbug's is the business model. So, yes that is an accurate distinction between the two that you made; perhaps, the characterization is unfair, though.

Reply.

◦ Michael Rothblatt says:

September 21, 2017 at 3:13 pm

>perhaps, the characterization is unfair, though.

Chris and I have been at each other's throats since before he was an absolutist, or indeed a monarchist. His original reading of de Jouvenel was that monarchy is to blame for leading to democracy and all its ills. Afterwards he got into, among other things, Fascist literature and became enamoured with Statism and total Power, and his reading

changed. I am pretty sure from all the arguments that we've had over the years that I understand his vision. I may be unfair when I'm ranting, but I don't think I'm being unfair now.

- Imperial Energy says:

September 21, 2017 at 1:52 pm

The other critical distinction, along with business v charity (which usually ends up as criminal) is between empire (or large states) and small, city-like states.

If there were a range of states (Patchwork like) then the state has more incentives to not treat its citizens/customers poorly.

Reply.

- Michael Rothblatt says:

September 21, 2017 at 3:16 pm

>If there were a range of states (Patchwork like) then the state has more incentives to not treat its citizens/customers poorly.

But isn't that claim the exact opposite to the "Absolutist Model" which states that an immortal planetary sovereign would be the best (because he is the most secure)?

- Imperial Energy says:

September 21, 2017 at 4:03 pm

Again, *best* for whom is the operative question.

There is "reasoning from the point of view of the state" and then there is reasoning from an individual perspective – two very different things.

- Michael Rothblatt says:

September 21, 2017 at 8:32 pm

Hm. Something to think about. Thank you.

I think most people tend to do thinking about government from a sort of internalized "political harmony of interests" type reasoning: what's good for the state is good for its subjects. That is possibly the consequence of viewing state as charity as you say it: if state exists for the sake of its subjects than what's good for the state must be good for the subjects.

- Imperial Energy says:

September 21, 2017 at 10:27 pm

We don't share that assumption and perhaps it best, as a regulative principle, not to ascribe to it.

Power is Power.

Our latest post and the next two to follow explore this very issue.

2. Imperial Energy says:September 19, 2017 at 9:10 pm

Or this: "Historians of the sentimental school have sometimes regretted that royalty became absolute, while at the same time rejoicing that it installed plebeians in office. They deceive themselves. Royalty exalted plebeians just because it aimed at becoming absolute; it became absolute because it had exalted plebeians. It is always utterly impossible to build an aggressive Power with, aristocrats. Care for family interests, class solidarity, educational influences, all combine to dissuade them from handing over to the state the independence and fortunes of their fellows. The march of absolutism, which subdues the diversity of customs to the uniformity of laws, wars against local attachments on behalf of a concentration of loyalties on the state, douses all other fires of life that one may remain alight, and substitutes for the personal ascendancy of the notables the mechanical control of an administration—such a system is, I say, the natural destroyer of the traditions on which is founded the pride of aristocracies and of the patronage which gives them their strength. Resistance is, therefore, the business of aristocracies"

Reply.3. Imperial Energy says:September 19, 2017 at 9:11 pm

One final quote: "Our French kings moved on the same road. Some of them moved consciously, as in the case of Louis XI (1461-1483) , who is shown us by Comines as being "the natural friend of the middle class and the enemy of the great who could do without him." The other kings followed instinctively the same course. The natural requirements of Power made the fortunes of the common people. All those "little people," whom Dupont-Ferrier shows us staffing the Treasury Court and the Taxes Court, no sooner found their niche in the state than they set about advancing their own fortunes along with their employer's. At whose expense? The aristocrats'."

Reply.4. Pingback: The Comte de Montlosier's swansong for the debased nobleman | Reaction Times

5. Vladimir says:

September 21, 2017 at 1:22 am

The reference to the 18th century nobility of Franche-Comté is probably the same one I vividly remember from Tocqueville's "The Old Regime and the Revolution":

—

I find a memorandum addressed by the intendant of Franche-Comté to his successor in 1750, in which it is said that "the nobility of this section of country are of high rank, but very poor, and as proud as they are poor. The contrast between their former and their present condition is humiliating. It is a very good plan to keep them poor, in order that they shall need our aid and serve our purposes. They have formed," he adds, "a society into which no one can obtain admission unless he can prove four quarterings. It is not incorporated by letters patent; but it is tolerated, as it meets but once a year, and in the presence of the intendant. These noblemen hear mass and dine together, after which they return home, some on their Rosinantes, some on foot. You will enjoy this comical assembly."

—

Reply.

o Michael Rothblatt says:

September 21, 2017 at 8:34 am

What was done to nobility was so horrible that it even garnered the pity of some Revolutionaries. Thus Brissot writes

If any one class of citizens is the victim of the despotism and aristocracy of the great and rich... it is the poor nobility, that numerous class of gentlemen peasants bound by a hoary Gothic prejudice to their class...

Reply.

6. Philippe-Joseph Salazar says:

September 25, 2017 at 9:08 am

The French nobility “d’épée”, especially those members who lived good lives in Versailles’ gilded cage, thought they would gain more private liberty to do as they pleased if they could maneuver the nobility “de robe” to maneuver the populace. The former had a gripe against the absolute monarchy ever since it was formalized in the XVIIth century – their Fronde was their last breath, and was treasonous in intent and in deed; while the latter constantly resented and opposed the monarch, not only in their legal wranglings, and “combats d’arrière garde”, in their parliaments but also in their (erudite) writings that drove again and again the fantastic concept that the monarchy was in essence and in origin “elective”. The powdered fools paid for their folly on the guillotine, and deserved it. Far too many were spared in 1793 and at the Restoration. The robed lawyers for their part became the “bourgeois dynasties” which, to this day either directly (through inheritance of rent and cultural capital) or indirectly (through France’s “grande écoles” mindset and networks), govern what is left of France.

Reply.

o Michael Rothblatt says:

September 25, 2017 at 3:14 pm

>treasonous in intent and in deed

Treasonous? It was the accursed kings that were the traitors (starting with the “Iron King”). It was them that have for centuries undermined the very foundations of the society. It’s a shame that it was poor Louis-Auguste that paid the debt owed by that vile criminal, the so-called “Sun King.”

Reply.

o Philippe-Joseph Salazar says:

September 25, 2017 at 4:31 pm

Treasonous inasmuch as they failed to see that the remains of feudal power they still held they did thanks to the monarch who, true to his oath of maintaining “un roi, une foi, une loi”, defended them more than himself and his martyred family to his last breath. It is indeed an interesting feature of French Ancien Régime history to see how often the noblesse d’épée betrayed king and country – the Hundred Years War is a prime example when they went over to the English king “en masse”. It took Joan of Arc (or who she represented), from the populace, to shame (some of) them into realizing that the French monarch, unlike any other in Europe, was God’s anointed and not simply a baron with more power (which they thought the English king was, poor fools). Human self-distortions of history is always interesting as they often work against their perpetrators. As for Louis XIV he gave its fullest, and modern form to an idea (to be somewhat Hegelian) that germinated first with Philippe-Auguste but took time to reach its conclusion. The history of the French monarchy is consistent in this respect. Concerning “so-called”: in French there is a subtle distinction between “soi-disant” and “prétendu” (which both translate usually as “so-called”: he never called himself “le roi soleil” (so-called, “soi-disant”) but was lauded as such (so-called, “prétendu”). Again, this cosmic claim first appeared with Henri III, imbued as he was with Medicean, Plotinian, fantasies, and

fulfilled itself with Louis XIV. Finally Louis XIV owed no debt to any one except to whom he was bound by sacred rites (the French monarch received priesthood at the “sacre”, which is derived from “sacrament” – not even the Holy Roman Emperor did), and that is simply: God. So went the story. Neither good nor bad. A story.

Reply.

- o Michael Rothblatt says:

September 25, 2017 at 5:08 pm

Blasphemous pretensions of French monarchs aside (Sun King's propaganda would have us believe that God is but pale copy of his majesty), nobility had every reason to swear fealty to the English king and to fear and abhor “their own” for “their own” kings would have liked nothing better than to surrender them to the Jacquerie. Which I guess French monarchs eventually did do, in spirit, if not deed. And while English kings had proto-absolutistic pretensions, given the technology of the age, as well as opposition of the church and the aristocracy back home, they could have hardly created a centralized bureaucratic state across the Channel.

Reply.

- o Philippe-Joseph Salazar says:

September 25, 2017 at 6:23 pm

Agreed. When the Norman lords stopped using French, they lost the plot, and turned to a merchant called Tudor who could not even spell his name. And started to hunt foxes instead of Pict peasants, and to rely later on the poor Scots to build the Empire. History is a graveyard of illusions never lost, m'lord. I rest my case but shall let you have “le dernier mot”.

Reply.

7. Pingback: The STEEL-cameralist Manifesto Part 5A. The European Minotaur of War I: The Origins, Nature and Development of the Minotaur. – IMPERIAL ENERGY
8. Pingback: This Week In Reaction (2017/09/23) - Social Matter
9. Pingback: Boulainvilliers' project for aristocratic rejuvenation | Carlsbad 1819

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