

Carlsbad 1819

Like another Chouannerie

Why the Bourbon Restoration failed

January 10, 2021 by Nulle Terre Sans Seigneur

The charter of Louis XVIII, the sinister mother of a restoration that restored nothing...

— Carl Ernst Jarcke, 1834

We are born, so to speak, before our own laws which are less the product of our experience than of our errors and our passions. We cannot affirm them on the authority of our fathers because the chain of time no longer exists for us.

— Etienne-Denis Pasquier, 1820

The short answer is journalists.

The longer answer...

The Anti-Napoleonic Coalitions were not keen until quite late for a defeated France to restore its legitimate dynasty. As late as March 1814 with the rejected Treaty of Chaumont (https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Chaumont), the option of keeping the Corsican usurper was still the default.

We do ultimately get to Napoleon's abdication, and per Bourrienne's "Memoirs of Napoleon Bonaparte," we have the scene of a France both joyous and anxious, Louis XVIII reclaiming his birthright, but all the same France encircled by foreign troops:

It is worthy of remark that Napoleon's act of abdication was published in the 'Moniteur' on the 12th of April, the very day on which the Comte d'Artois made his entry into Paris with the title of Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom conferred on him by Louis XVIII. The 12th of April was also the day on which the Imperial army fought its last battle before Toulouse, when the French troops, commanded by Soult, made Wellington purchase so dearly his entrance into the south of France. — [The battle of Toulouse was fought on the 10th not 12th April D.W.]

Political revolutions are generally stormy, yet, during the great change of 1814 Paris was perfectly tranquil, thanks to the excellent discipline maintained by the commanders of the Allied armies, and thanks also to the services of the National Guard of Paris, who every night patrolled the streets. My duties as Director-General of the Post-office had of course obliged me to resign my captain's epaulette.

When I first obtained my appointment I had been somewhat alarmed to hear that all the roads were covered with foreign troops, especially Cossacks, who even in time of peace are very ready to capture any horses that may fall in their way. On my application to the Emperor Alexander his Majesty immediately issued a ukase, severely prohibiting the seizure of horses or anything belonging to the Post-office department. The ukase was printed by order of the Czar, and filed up at all the post-offices, and it will be seen that after the 20th of March, when I was placed in an embarrassing situation, one of the postmasters on the Lille road expressed to me his gratitude for my conduct while I was in the service.

Louis XVIII having spent much of his life as an exile in England, began to adopt English habits of mind. Because of this and the pressure from Coalition forces, he conceded quite a liberal constitution for its time, the equally celebrated and reviled Charter of 1814 (https://www.napoleon-series.org/research/government/legislation/c_charter.html), itself preceded by the Declaration of Saint-Ouen (https://www.napoleon-series.org/research/government/diplomatic/c_ouen.html). "Louis XVIII put up some resistance; but, ultimately, he capitulated, and, by the articles of this capitulation, the frameworks of the revolution, its institutions, its forms, its code and even its senate were scrupulously respected," as the royalist historian Etienne-Pierre Lubis put it.

This Charter, the centerpiece of French politics for 15 years, had the deviously chimerical quality of being at once innovative and traditional. Written as a feudal grant and an electoral capitulation that reaffirms the fundamental laws of the realm, it at the same time authorizes civic equality, freedom of the press, freedom of religion, representative government, and other liberal gains. As such, it was the primary political battleground, and in the end analysis its contradictions brought down the Bourbons.

Despite a much exaggerated "White Terror" in 1815, itself largely popular violence that killed a few hundred at most (<https://www.h-france.net/forum/forumvol13/Triomphe1.pdf>) in the midst of anarchy after Napoleon's Hundred Days, many French officers with Bonapartist and republican sympathies remained. In 1822 alone, there were two attempts at a Bonapartist insurrection to overthrow the monarchy: by the "Four Sergeants of La Rochelle" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_Sergeants_of_La_Rochelle) as they were called, and by Jean Baptiste Breton (https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Baptiste_Breton#Du_complot_contre_le_roi_%C3%A0_l'ex%C3%A9cution) when he occupied the western commune of Thouars. The 'charbonnerie,' the French variant of the Carbonari, a quasi-Masonic secret society of republicans, was at work behind the scenes.

The Restoration was off to a seemingly good start. 1815 saw the election of the 'chambre introuvable,' dominated by ultra-royalists with a 2/3 majority. These were all landed men, and indeed the ultra deputy Frénilly stated that "Property would be in our eyes the real and sole principle of eligibility. What, in fact, is the basis of the state itself? The earth: and if that did not exist, it would have to be created in order to be able to rest on a fixed and invariable point. It is therefore on this that any sustainable construction must be based." The recent presence of occupying forces of the Coalition, numbering 1.2 million, and the desire for order had led to this result. Even much of the Parisian bourgeoisie, exhausted by Napoleon's Continental Blockade, voted for ultra deputies. The 'chambre introuvable' clashed with a largely moderate ministry, and it was at the urging of the duc Decazes, then Minister of Police, as well as the duc de Richelieu as PM, that the Chamber of Deputies was dissolved by Louis XVIII on Sep 5, 1816, having clashed with the government on restitution of emigre properties, budgetary laws, repression of Bonapartists, etc. This would be the start of many awkward scenarios of 'more royalist than the king' ultras becoming fiery parliamentary rabble-rousers. Decazes was quoted as saying: "It is necessary to dissolve the Chamber, because with it, there is no possible budget, no hope of stability, no possibility of bringing back the trust within and without, to restore credit, to resume France's rank among the nations, free from the yoke of the foreigner and the shame of tributes."

The electoral system of the Restoration was complex and often amended, but the broad story is:

In its first couple of years: to be elected as a deputy, one must be at least 40 years old (subsequently lowered to 25), and pay a direct tax of 1000 francs. To exercise suffrage, the age was initially 30, subsequently lowered to 21, and pay a direct tax of 300 francs. The Chamber of Deputies had 402 members. Elections were indirect and had two stages, with the most highly taxed voters per 1000 inhabitants having the right to vote in the higher departmental college: "The college d'arrondissement elected candidates equal to the total number of deputies to be sent up by the whole department. Eight days later, the departmental college met, and in this final election at least half of the deputies chosen must be from the list sent up by the college d'arrondissement." Per Article 41 of the Charter: "The presidents of the electoral colleges shall be appointed by the king, and are ex-officio members of the college." The king could customarily fill the colleges with men who had dignified themselves by their service.

In 1817, the system was amended so that it "abolished the whole system of indirect elections and conferred a direct vote on every male citizen of thirty years or more who paid a direct tax of at least 300 francs. There was hereafter only one type of electoral college which was to meet in the chief town of the department."

When the Duc de Berry was assassinated by a Bonapartist in 1820, it was time to tighten up: "[The] law of 1820 restored the college d'arrondissement and allowed the members of the departmental college to vote in both colleges. The membership of the chamber of deputies was raised to 430, of whom 258 were to be elected directly by the colleges d'arrondissement, composed of all the qualified taxpayers, and 172 by the departmental colleges, which were to be made up of the most heavily taxed inhabitants equal in number to one-quarter of the whole body of electors in the department."

The intent was to keep the Chamber in the hands of landed men, but this did not work, since for the purposes of tax assessment any taxes on the rights of incorporation were counted as direct, thus allowing manufacturers, lawyers and other burghers a substantial presence.

The modern idea of electoral campaigning, canvassing, "getting out the vote," and whatnot was virtually unknown (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1872004>), and considered very uncouth:

It was not the custom for the candidate to do extensive campaigning, and there was apparently almost no interest in elections until after 1824, when, with the accession of Charles X, a real danger of a counter-revolution gradually aroused public opinion. In referring to the elections of 1824, a pamphlet published that year in Bordeaux compares French conditions to those prevailing in England in this regard:

“In France, campaigning is limited to intriguing in secret. One may wish to be named, but pride and self-respect forbid that this be made known in public. Ask a man in public if in the bottom of his heart he desires ardently to become a member of the chamber of deputies, he will answer you that he has never dreamed of such a thing.”

The names of the candidates did not even appear in the newspapers, and until nearly the end of the Restoration an election was in many districts hardly more than *une affaire de salon ou de cafe*, that is, merely an affair of personal relationships. The election of the successful candidate was looked upon as the bestowal of an honor from the ruling class. He had not yet come to be the appointed mouthpiece of his constituency. Democracy in government was not yet even understood. After the organization in 1817 of the Liberal “Comite Directeur” under Laffitte, Manuel, and Constant, public political speeches, at least in the larger towns, became somewhat more common. The custom arose also of sending out letters to prominent electors. Conservative opinion disliked this thoroughly and fought it. “The demagogic effrontery with which at the last election in Paris,” said the *Conservateur*, “a candidate appealed for the vote of a certain part of the electors; those printed letters scattered in profusion about the rooms of the election hall, in game rooms and goodness knows where else, with their appeals addressed in the name of the nation to all the friends of liberty, asking them to vote for ‘the friend of the people.’ One recalls the election of Robespierre and other friends of the people.”

All throughout, out of a population of roughly 32 million people in France, at no point did the total eligible electorate ever exceed 90,000 people at its peak. It was about 88,000 in 1829 and hovering around 70,000 during the first years of the Restoration.

Liberal victories depended on breaking the gentleman’s agreement of elections being a quiet and private affair. The duc de Broglie remarked in 1827 that “One sees now what has not been seen for years. One sees set up out of doors ‘hustings’ from which the candidates address the public, setting forth their principles, explaining their past, and making promises for the future.” This was in reference to the liberal canvassing campaigns known as *Aide-toi, le ciel t’aidera* ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aide-toi, le ciel t’aidera](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aide-toi,_le_ciel_t'aidera)). Liberals frequently could not present proper identification like baptismal certificates, tax returns, land deeds, and were rejected by colleges, thus starting fierce campaigns on their behalf to revise electoral lists.

Secret balloting was not a thing, and there was the expectation that people who worked under the government payroll ought to vote for ministerial candidates, as a basic matter of loyalty. Army officers, bureaucrats and even at times the King himself would exhort civil servants to support pro-government candidates.

Higher wealth correlated with (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2638827>) higher liberalism: “In 1827 it is reckoned that 202 deputies were centre-left and left-wing in their views, 230 centre-right and right-wing. Of those very wealthy members who paid 3,000-7,000 fr. in tax, 36 were left-wing and only 17 right of centre and of the four most wealthy two fell into each group.”

Despite such a limited electorate, Restoration France was effectively the closest there was to a mass media culture for its time, with newspapers being the true ruling organs of the land, and the Chamber at constant war with the Government. The likes of songwriter Pierre-Jean de Beranger (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierre-Jean_de_B%C3%A9ranger), who was basically Restoration France's version of Bob Dylan or Vladimir Vysotsky, demonstrated the beginnings of celebrity culture. Drinking establishments called guingettes were widely patronized, as were goguettes, which were almost a type of prototypical karaoke club.

Daniel L. Rader's *The Journalists and the July Revolution* recounts a situation where the literary eminence of Chateaubriand, having turned his back on the Villèle ministry (and later the hapless moderate Martignac ministry too) due to not receiving a coveted foreign policy post, had so fearsome a pen in his *Journal des Debats* that Charles X felt the need to pay him a 500,000 franc subsidy just so Chateaubriand wouldn't write mean things about him (he still did):

From any logical judgment, one would assume that Martignac would be warmly supported by the Debats, his new council being the most constitutionally royalist of the entire Restoration. The Debats was the most constitutionally royalist of all the newspapers. But there was one discordant note to spoil this harmony: Chateaubriand had been beaten in his well-publicized attempt to lead a new Cabinet. The wounds to his great pride were visible in the pages of the Debats. Martignac was a mere under-study; Chateaubriand the star.

Chateaubriand scorned the small favors offered by the new regime. He wanted only the post of Foreign Affairs and the dominant voice in the council. Martignac pleaded with Charles X to accept Chateaubriand, saying that his journalistic and political cooperation was essential. The King refused flatly, even stating that he would prefer Royer-Collard! When the Ministry of Public Instruction was later separated from that of cults, Bishop Frayssinous offered the position to Chateaubriand. But the writer had been so stung by the King's insults that he refused this portfolio, saying he would only accept the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In a further show of arrogance by the directors of the Debats, Bertin l'Aine [Debats editor] personally threatened to the King: **"The Ministry must behave well with me; if not I could easily break it like I did the other!"**

Jules de Polignac (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jules_de_Polignac), Charles X's last faithful Prime Minister, posthumously judged the Restoration's course in 1836 as "Embarrassment of the crown proved by the choice of sixty-two different ministers, in the space of fifteen years; successive weakening of the monarchical principle demonstrated by this single fact, that all the ministries without exception, on leaving office, left the royal power more faltering than they had found it on their accession."

Freedom of the press was in many ways the central issue of the Restoration, the never-ending bugbear. Liberals would sound like ultras, ultras become liberals, ministerial 'moderates' rendered impotent standing in the center, all over this perennial issue. The means of gagging the demonic press included demanding that all papers supply an expensive cash bond ('cautionnement') upfront for any legal purposes, raising taxes on paper itself, licensing of printing presses, and suchlike. These were all easily subverted, and many large newspapers were effectively joint-stock companies bankrolled by wealthy industrial magnates. When an editor or writer faced court charges, a quick cause-celebre raised in their defense would get them at most a fine and a brief jail sentence before being freed to resume their activity. One interesting fact about Restoration-era press regulations: proroguing the Chamber of Deputies would also discontinue any censorship tribunals attached to them, effectively giving the press total free reign during election season of all times.

The views of Joseph de Villèle, the Restoration's most successful and longest lasting PM, from 1821 to 1827, I have quoted before. (<https://carlsbad1819.wordpress.com/2017/07/02/joseph-de-villele-against-freedom-of-the-press-1817/>).

Jacques-Joseph Corbière (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacques-Joseph_Corbi%C3%A8re), another ultra-royalist MP, said that (https://books.google.com/books?pg=PA3&dq=Jacques-Joseph+Corbière&id=xWA0_aMWvhsC). "In representative governments, intrigues become aware of their smallness; they need accreditation, covering their frivolous and dangerous malignancy with the mask of a political party, just as factions use it to hide their depth; but there is no such thing as the same cause for alarm." Moreover, that "license is even more lethal to freedom than oppression: the latter can suffocate it for a long time; but the former destroys it forever."

The general conduct of government can be gleaned from a representative incident, that of voting the budget for 1822. Royalist historian Antoine de La Chavanne recounts (<https://books.google.com/books?id=uSEsk-CN5KcC&pg=PA30>):

Villèle asked for another twelve million more for the army, in anticipation of the eventualities which might arise in Spain and in the East. The reports on income and expenditure, read on February 26 in the Chamber of Deputies, were of no particular interest. The discussion opened on March 12.

It was long and got lost on a great number of subjects. From the second sitting, Benjamin Constant engaged in his ordinary violence against the progress of the government, or rather he exceeded it. He declared that the finances of France were the conquest of a party which exploited them at will; that the police were solely engaged in provoking crimes; that there was a traveling clergy whose exercises resulted in desecration in churches and dragonnades in the streets. He treated the ministers as authorized representatives of the Holy Alliance, and compared them to one of those scourges that Providence sends to the people in its anger. The right stood up, wanting to be cut off, and protested as they left the room.

Bignon, General Foy, Manuel accused of weakness and duplicity the conduct of the government vis-à-vis Italy, Greece, the Spanish colonies. Foy went so far as to say that the ministry was not French. Manuel, raising himself to the same tune of insulting recriminations as Benjamin Constant, had himself deprived of his speech.

Thus you had intransigent ultra-royalists as Francois-Regis de La Bourdonnaye (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fran%C3%A7ois-R%C3%A9gis_de_La_Bourdonnaye) declaring absolute fidelity to the Charter as a stand-in for the King, and brawling against any ministerial attempts to curb the press, raise the military budget, raise police funding, etc. The theory here was that Louis XVIII's Charter, being instituted by the grace of God, and formally added to the fundamental laws of the realm, meant that all of its assumptions, no matter their deferring to liberalism, are one with the person of the King and ought to be unconditionally defended. La Bourdonnaye in 1817 (<https://books.google.com/books?id=bl6MmSX5gBUC>):

If, on the contrary, the present state is the necessary result of our antecedents and of the government which we adopted, if the Charter was established in this order and for this order of things, to suspend it constantly in a situation which had to be foreseen at the time when it was given, is to declare that it is unenforceable.

He defended the free press by saying that the ministers were a party in their own right, and had to have their dealings publicly rebuked if need be:

Our institutions are not strengthened, because, without a plan and without a system, we walk at random; because, each minister has his different plan; because, in this moment still, one wants to be armed with opportunistic laws to arrive at the arbitrary power [the ministers], while the other tends to the same result, basing its success on the democracy of the property-owners [the liberals].

A good example of the gridlock caused by this was the failure in passing the Anti-Sacrilege Law of 1825. This involved creating a new category in the penal code, for “crimes committed in churches and other buildings consecrated to religious service,” and with harsh punishments specifically for desecrating the consecrated host. On this basis, a law that specifically defined sacrilege as profanation of sacred vessels or consecrated hosts, meriting the death penalty, was proposed by the Comte de Peyronnet.

The Charter of 1814 did, in principle, permit freedom of religion. On this basis the then ultramontane Felicite de Lamennais condemned the law as dishonest and atheistic, since it was being passed in a state of government that was indifferentist in the strict sense. Lamennais’ words:

What touching equality which unites under the same protection the belief of the Christian, who adores Jesus Christ; and the belief of the Jew, who blasphemes Him; the belief of the Catholic, who recognizes his God in the appearance of the sacred host; and the belief of the Protestant, who believes that this host is but a piece of bread!

The Chamber of Peers, most of it Gallican in sympathy, then went berserk about how the bill was part of a Jesuit plot against throne and Charter.

A very amusing anecdote is [shared here](https://www.jstor.org/stable/1878820). (https://www.jstor.org/stable/1878820). At one point during the debates, Louis de Bonald stated that “Society, in punishing the criminal, is after all merely returning him to his natural Judge, to the One who alone is able to forgive the crime which He alone can know, and for which He alone can apportion penalties.” The Chamber of Peers audibly gasped in shock at such a banal and obvious statement, and nearly had it expunged from the record. Yes, in 1825, the French peerage found that controversial.

The law did ultimately pass, watered down by amendments and unenforced as a dead letter.

The comte de Montlosier summarized the state of Restoration France best of all in his book “[De la monarchie française au 1er mars 1822](https://books.google.com/books?&id=m3hAAAAAcAAJ)” (https://books.google.com/books?&id=m3hAAAAAcAAJ).” He fires off a long series of rhetorical questions to highlight the chaos of the day:

Are there families in the state? Are there only individuals? What is the right of fathers over their children? What is that of the masters? Is it money that should have the preponderance in our lives? Is it honor? Are the men with money those that must be put on the front line? Businessmen, landlords or capitalists? Is it the Stock Exchange that should run the state? Is it the law schools? Is there a nobility in France, or not?

Did the revolution adopt the King, or is it the King who adopted the revolution? Is the Revolution a principle of glory or a principle of shame? Has she amnestied France and the King, or is it France and the King who have amnestied the revolution? Is the column erected at Valmy an admirable thing? Are they brave ones who saved the France of Louis XVIII, leaving Louis XVI in the irons? The courage that is boasted against the liberators of Louis XVI, what became of his assassins?

What is property, what is the right to inherit, what is the right to testation? Is it by the right of blood that I inherit: Filius ergo hoeres, or by civil law? Is it as head and legislator of the house that I have the right to test: dicat testator et erit lex, or is it only by a simple tolerance of the law? This is a domain that I create, that I shape with my hands; will this domain at my death remain whole, or will it be broken up and shared, as was the kingdom of France under Clovis? Here is a child of 20, the object of my affections; here is a little girl of six months who, when I died, has barely opened her eyes: will this one share my domain with my firstborn? Will the children of this girl with a foreign name, from a foreign country come to settle on this earth, impose their habits and customs on it?

Does the family correspond as in the past to the people, the house to the state? Families which deviate from the paths of opulence have for centuries been in the service of the state, will they abdicate the feeling of their hereditary elevation among families newly raised by crime or trafficking? On these questions and on a thousand others, of the same kind, France is today in uncertainty. One hundred million conflicts arise every day from this uncertainty.

The conflict in the Restoration between a vociferous Chamber, a cornered and desperately repressive Council of Ministers, and an impotent King, he calls the "seesaw system." To Montlosier, the worst possible outcome of all this was that manufacturers, notaries and bankers were going to become the ruling class. Today, we can only *dream* of having nightmares this pleasant, but those were different times.

Of the left opposition: "They agree that the original request for the abolition of pecuniary privileges was a prelude to the abolition of honorary privileges; that what was then called freedom was fundamentally a desire for equality; that today's equality is the desire for superiority. They reveal to us that the anarchy demanded by the rights of man, was an instinct of the new France to destroy all of ancient France; and that the sovereignty of the people was a fiction to destroy all sovereignties. Let's see today if it's not the same..."

Montlosier still maintained his fidelity to the Charter, and his solution as such was to strengthen the preponderance of landed ultra-royalists, and give a more corporatist veneer to local governance. None of this could be implemented in these circumstances, either way. The questions he posed remained unanswered.

The critical period came from 1827 onward, when the Villele ministry ended and gave way to Martignac, an ineffectual moderate. Liberal political agitation was becoming ever more organized, the newspapers more radical, in conjunction with an economic downturn, was making France increasingly ungovernable. *Le National*, the eminent constitutionalist paper for which Adolphe Thiers wrote, was reconstituting "public opinion" as monarchy's foundation and equivocating it with the republic:

“Instead of submitting to the influences of courtiers, women, and confessors ... [The King] experiences the influences of public opinion affecting him gently and regularly. If that is true monarchy, it is also a true republic, but a republic without dangers.”

The liberal press was becoming increasingly obsessed with the Glorious Revolution of 1688, and began suggesting a similar course of action for France, as Armand Carrel hinted: “The People could if this were agreeable to its repose, improvise a Monarchy and an aristocracy which would prolong indefinitely the exile of the Monarchy. It must then, be free; it has in it the power, even more than the right.”

As 1830 was starting, political violence was swelling up in the form of a wave of arson attacks that occurred throughout Normandy. Daniel Rader writes:

Throughout spring, incendiarism continued to plague portions of Normandy. Between February 18 and July 7, 178 cases of arson were reported in this region. This bizarre activity, although probably largely a matter of aimless protest and psychological contagion, bore a political aspect because much of the fire-destroyed property belonged to liberals. The liberal press reported these crimes, but did not openly accuse the government of using so absurd a method to attack the opposition. In Falaise, most suspects who were questioned by police turned out to be domestic servants and poor feeble-minded young men and women, with no organization of any kind.

The nature of these arson attacks remains enigmatic to this day, but at the same time a wave of impoverished proles setting the libs' houses on fire ought to have said something.

By now, the monarchy was strongly committed to employing Article 14 of the Charter and the exercise of the royal prerogative to defuse this crisis. When the parliamentary session of March 1830 was being convened, the *Globe's* message to its readers was a thoroughly defiant posture of “Parliament is about to open and the Monarchy finds itself face to face with the nation ... There is nothing so dismal or humiliating for a great people as to be forced, each morning, to foresee or to frustrate the follies of an authority both menacing and despicable.” Hence, at this point it was all friend-enemy.

In his opening address, Charles X confidently reasserted his prerogatives, with the Chamber in response rebuking him through the infamous Address of the 221 (https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adresse_des_221), an event that has been much mythologized as a principled stand against despotism, not the avarice that it was. The Chamber was dissolved in May 1830 and new elections scheduled.

Charles X's proclamation in advance of the 1830 elections exhorted the voters: “Maintaining the Constitutional Charter and the institutions it founded has been and always will be the goal of my efforts; but, to achieve this goal, I must freely exercise and enforce the sacred rights which are the prerogative of my crown. It is in them that is the guarantee of public peace and your freedoms. The nature of government would be altered if the culprits weakened my prerogatives; I would betray my oaths if I suffered them.”

And yet, all but 7 of the 221 were re-elected in a landslide liberal victory.

At this point, the balance of power was as follows (ibid.):

What was the state of the political press at this late hour in the Restoration? Opposition subscription figures were higher than ever: Over 50,000 if we include the 3000 or more republican issues; while the Ultras, even encompassing eighty purists who bought the *Apostolique*, had less than 20,000 paid circulation. A few papers were not true to these trends: The *National* had not met its costs with only 1590, while *Le Temps* claimed a healthy 4000, but admitted that seven hundred of these were sold on street corners or traded by mail for provincial papers. The “1688” idea of switching dynasties was certainly established in most papers, excluding the *Debats* and the republican journals. Legal resistance or the Breton Association program was also uniformly praised by liberal editors.

The Ultra press, on the other hand, was so split that Polignac had been obliged to purchase a journal to express his opinions, and even in this he appeared defensive. And there was always Villele to worry about. Genoude and the *Gazette* made a last heroic attempt to induce Villele to come to Paris. In what the *Temps* called “adventurous negotiations” between Paris and Toulouse, the ex-Minister was urged to save the Monarchy by creating a moderate Cabinet. The interest in this possibility reached as far to the left as the *Debats*; Genoude reporting that Chateaubriand and Louis Bertin had offered a journalistic truce with the *Gazette de France*. Villele rejected these pleas. With no desire to risk his head, he had shrewdly begun to ingratiate himself with the Duchess of Orleans!

The domestic crisis of legitimation was also beginning to erode France’s overseas prestige. Left with no other option, the July Ordinances (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/July_Ordinances) were enacted as a last-ditch effort. “No more Charter, no more political society ... Everyone is agitated, resistance has become the dominant principle, the duty of all citizens” was the cry of the papers. The July Revolution broke out days later.

The two best sources I know of documenting the last days of the Restoration are to be found in, i) the diaries of Martial de Guernon-Ranville (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martial_de_Guernon-Ranville), Minister of Education 1829-30, and ii) the memoirs of (<https://archive.org/details/souvenirsducomt00mont/>) the comte de Montbel (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guillaume-Isidore_Baron_de_Montbel).

Reading Guernon-Ranville’s diaries (<https://books.google.com/books?id=YONnAAAAMAAJ>), it becomes clear just how obsessed the Council of Ministers was with looking good in the papers, and constantly worrying about election cycles. It interfered with their capacity for long-term planning. A ministry session of December 16, 1829 had them discussing about whether it would be more effectively to payroll official ministerial papers, or to draft some law that mandate newspaper publishers issue corrections and retractions.

In response to the Address of the 221, he writes: “The King declared that he would never submit to such a pretension, which would tend to confuse all powers and reduce the crown to the last degree of debasement: ‘The chambers,’ said His Majesty, ‘have a constitutional means of expressing that the ministry does not have their confidence, and that is to reject its proposals; but they fail in their duty, ‘they usurp the royal power when they come in advance to declare that they do not want ‘to compete with such and such ministers whose intentions they cannot even know.’”

The huge topic then was the French invasion of Algeria. Back then it was still mostly a defensive measure against Barbary pirates and little else. In addition to planning the logistics, the Council of Ministers was very concerned with the question of how to time the expedition so that they look good in the papers and get reelected. Entry for April 10, 1830:

After the [expected] landing of our army in the middle of July, first it was objected, with great reason in my opinion, that if the success of the expedition were favorable to us, a failure would be extremely harmful to us, and that consequently it would be extremely imprudent to postpone the elections after such an event.

On the other hand, the annual electoral lists will not be closed until October 15; we wouldn't have time to get the budget, and we would fall back into the provisional.

The second proposition would not present the same inconveniences, and the elections could happily be undertaken under the influence of a first success which we must regard as very probable, according to the measures taken; but we must postpone any decision until we know precisely the probable day of departure.

This adjournment was adopted. Newspapers are becoming more hostile every day; but, further, they make every effort to undermine the African expedition, either by disclosing the secret of our strength, or by seeking to frighten the soldier on the dangers to run: I have reproduced my proposal for answers ; it was strongly opposed by the Prince de Polignac and definitively rejected.

The prince de Polignac, returning to my request, the board of Saturday, proposed a plan of conduct for each of the following assumptions:

1. The new chamber will offer a majority to the government;
2. The new chamber will arrive more hostile than that of the address [of the 221].

It was decided that in the first case, the government would propose several changes to the electoral laws, especially a law more effective than those existing against the license of the periodic press. As for the second case, which the majority of the council persists in regarding as hardly possible, we have not been able to come up with anything.

Later on, Guernon-Ranville writes: "I added that, if the expedition failed, it would appear to me to be fairly suitable for the King to dismiss unhappy or disqualified ministers; but that he should nonetheless dissolve the chamber and call for new elections which, under another administration, would perhaps take a direction favorable to power. The Prince de Polignac did not adopt any of these opinions; he said it would not be of dignity or of the justice to the King to make his ministers responsible for accidents of the sea or the back of a campaign."

When Normandy was burning under the brunt of arson attacks, the Council of Ministers was discussing, you guessed it, how to get our candidates reelected (May 16): "The council decided that two battalions of grenadiers and two squadrons of chasseurs would be sent to Calvados and La Manche on the spot under the command of a general officer. It's too little, but still better than nothing, and I hope that later we will get an additional shipment. The Minister of the Interior recalled the decision already taken for the dissolution of the chamber and the convening of electoral colleges. The King signed the order of dissolution; the colleges will meet on June 23 and the chambers on August 3. M. de Montbel seized this opportunity to entertain the council of the hopes that the prefects convey on this important matter; if their data is correct, the ministry could count on a majority of 30 or 40 votes. It would be little in ordinary times; but, under the circumstances, that would be an immense advantage."

After the ministry gets it ass handed to it by the ensuing liberal landslide, Guernon-Ranville shares the brilliant idea of the Council bringing forward "popular laws" like education reform, so that the libs will look bad by opposing it out of spite, and then "in the eyes of the country by refusing their support of

measures of generally recognized utility, they will be losing part of their moral strength.”

“Would the chamber have the imprudence to reject the budget?”, he asks. “This refusal would constitute a real coup d’état ; it would be a whole revolution which would necessarily entail a complete transformation in our political organization: indeed, when the current budget expires, there should no longer be any legal contribution (if established, there would be no longer either voters or eligible representatives, hence the representative government would be broken, and from this new chaos would emerge the necessity, evident to all eyes, that the crown should seized dictatorial power in order to rebuild everything.”

A proposal to convene an Assembly of Notables, last used in 1787, was rejected. At one point Jules de Polignac even suggested returning to a corporatist/estate-based form of representation: “the Prince de Polignac has exposed a system which is quite attractive in theory, but the application of which would present perhaps insoluble difficulties; it would tend to refer to members by their interest group : so that land would appoint a number, trade would appoint its own, learned bodies would also have their representation, etc. The first of the drawbacks of this system is that it would require a complete overhaul of our social organization, and circumstances do not allow such work to be undertaken.”

The comte de Montbel, for his part, was of the view that “The intellectual and moral qualities of its members were of little importance. All their measures, all their acts were thwarted by public opinion in the press, in the Chambers, in the salons and even at court. The big deal now was the elections.” According to him, the July Ordinances were justified by the maxim of *salus populi suprema lex esto*. Most interestingly, he quotes Charles X’s solemn statement before the proclamation of the Ordinances:

I see with satisfaction that you agree on my right to use Article 14 of the Charter. The rest is a matter of expediency. Unfortunately, I have more experience than you gentlemen. You are not old enough to have been able to judge the Revolution in its beginnings. I remember what happened. Louis XVI’s first concession was the signal for his downfall. The factions of this period, while addressing protests of love and fidelity to him, only demanded the dismissal of the ministers; he gave in, all was lost. Today they claim to only want you, they say to me: “Dismiss your ministers and we will hear from you.” I will not dismiss you, gentlemen, first of all because you all inspire me with affection and confidence, but also because, if I were to bow to such demands, we would suffer the fate of Louis XVI. We will not be taken to the scaffold, we will be killed on horseback.

The Restoration soon fell, and Louis-Philippe, the “King of the French,” would be crowned by the monied interests. There were numerous repressions (<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/p/pod/dod-idx/death-in-the-fields-legitimist-refractaires-and-state.pdf?c=wsfh;idno=0642292.0037.012;format=pdf>), against legitimists, and at least four ministers — the Comte de Peyronnet, Guernon-Raville, Jean de Chanteleuze, and Jules de Polignac — were sentenced to life imprisonment before their pardon in 1836.

The “restoration that restored nothing” was interesting in that a representative government with less than 90,000 eligible voters was still a tumultuous chaos of parliamentary intransigence, licentious publishers, street violence and canvassing. The moral of the story: *representative government doesn’t work*. And how much worse with electorates that are so much larger now.

This entry was posted in [Historical insights](#), [Liberalism](#), [Monarchy](#). Bookmark the [permalink](#).

16 thoughts on “Why the Bourbon Restoration failed”

1. Aldon says:

January 10, 2021 at 10:14 pm**Christopher Sandbatch**

@TheRealPubliusx



The thing that people are missing, especially people who bought the whole Moldbug Cathedral thing, is that these purges and the corresponding confusion are evidence that the "Cathedral" doesn't exist. There is no regime stability right now.

5:36 PM · Jan 9, 2021



♡ 7 💬 Reply ↗ Share

[Read 6 replies](#)**Christopher Sandbatch**

@TheRealPubliusx



I enjoy the work you all do, but am constantly amazed that glowies like Yarvin convince you all the exact opposite of truth.

6:31 PM · Jan 9, 2021



♡ 💬 Reply ↗ Share

[Read 1 reply](#)**Christopher Sandbatch**

@TheRealPubliusx



There may have been a thing you could call the "cathedral" in the aughts when it was originally formulated, but purges indicate a *lack* of the thing, they do not vindicate the thing.

6:33 PM · Jan 9, 2021



♡ 💬 Reply ↗ Share

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The Cathedral is just the idea that the US government extends beyond the public sphere and into the private (he said academia and media, this could easily be extended into Big Tech). If anything this is a vindication of that.

— Imperium Press (@ImperiumPress) January 9, 2021

Christopher Sandbatch

@TheRealPubliusx



Man there is some real attachment to this cathedral heuristic isn't there.

Have any of you ever heard of Reinhart Kosselleck or Jurgen Habermas? I'm not trying to be a jackass (yet) just guaging the need for an article.

7:47 PM · Jan 9, 2021



Reply



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Christopher Sandbatch @TheRealPubliusx · Jan 9, 2021



Replying to @xctlot

The thing that people are missing, especially people who bought the whole Moldbug Cathedral thing, is that these purges and the corresponding confusion are evidence that the "Cathedral" doesn't exist. There is no regime stability right now.

TheFollower

@Earldormancy

It's certainly weaker than imagined if it needs purges

6:18 PM · Jan 9, 2021



2



Reply



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I wonder what you (blogger) make of the approve discussion. You've posted about disagreeing notably with Yarvin/Moldbug.

Reply

- Nulle Terre Sans Seigneur says:

January 10, 2021 at 10:53 pm

I've never used the term "Cathedral" so far as I remember, and I've always disliked that term. But I'm also not sure what the man above is trying to get at. He did mention Reinhart Koselleck, who I have read, and I suggested he look up Augustin Cochin.

Reply.

- o Debora says:

March 29, 2021 at 10:34 pm

Hi Carlsbad,

Another informative and well-written post. I couldn't find contact details anywhere on your blog pages. Is there any way you could say hi @ – debpubliher@gmail.com ? It's a business enquiry.

I'd really appreciate it.

Thank you.

Reply.

- o Nulle Terre Sans Seigneur says:

March 29, 2021 at 10:52 pm

I'm on Twitter @pompilivs. Follow me and send a DM.

Reply.

2. Pingback: Why the Bourbon Restoration failed | Reaction Times

3. theplantationsite says:

January 12, 2021 at 2:18 pm

Good to see you back.

It's remarkable how even in "properly limited democracy" there's still such insanity and chaos.

Reply.

- o Karl says:

January 15, 2021 at 11:46 pm

Apologize for going O.T. but this tweet of yours is very interesting: "The way Malesherbes would permit the encyclopedistes to publish, but give trouble to their critics. In Spain, counter-Enlightenment priest Fernando de Ceballos was censored by the Council of Castile." Have you written about this subject before?

Reply.

- o Karl says:

January 15, 2021 at 11:51 pm

My question was addressed to Nulle Terre Sans Seigneur of course.....

Reply.

4. Pingback: Criminalizing Complaints + Friday Reads – The American Sun

5. Aldon says:

January 16, 2021 at 3:05 am

The most recent Moldbug substack just shows he's just there to advance Silicon Valley class interests from a different angle. Everything he says is justifying that.

— Stalin Groyper (@Stalin_Groyper) [January 13, 2021](#)

He completely has some mystical view of power like it means anything more than being able to influence people to do what you want them to.

— Stalin Groyper (@Stalin_Groyper) [January 13, 2021](#)

If your definition of power excludes control of some of the most influential organizations on earth, then it's just flat out false.

— Stalin Groyper (@Stalin_Groyper) [January 13, 2021](#)

Even more posts against Moldbug.

Reply.

- [Nulle Terre Sans Seigneur](#) says:

[January 16, 2021 at 10:05 am](#)

Yes, the “Big Tech has no power at all” essay was horrid.

Reply.

6. fjwawak says:

[January 25, 2021 at 8:43 pm](#)

You are mentioning Freemasonry (or quasi-masonry). What is your view of Masonic influence during those times? Some people seem to downplay the role of Freemasons and it's probably true Freemasonry and secret societies were fashionable those days. OTOH, great popes of 19th century warned about Freemasonry a lot. Not surprising, given Freemasons are Satanists. Still, was their influence on politics so strong?

Reply.

- [Nulle Terre Sans Seigneur](#) says:

[January 26, 2021 at 10:43 pm](#)

Masonic structure for revolutionary organizations was ubiquitous – Carbonari in Italy, Charbonnerie in France, Philomaths in Poland, Setembrismo in Portugal, Ethniki Etaireia in Greece, and no doubt many examples I'm missing.

The Alta Vendita is probably the closest we have to a Masonic master plan that is recorded in history.

Reply.

- fjwawak says:

[January 31, 2021 at 12:35 pm](#)

Yeah, Alta Vendita. Almost forgot about it.

On a slightly different note. You are pushing forward the idea that realist social order is based on social distinctions and the Christianity (Catholicism) shaped this order to be based on family/clan/birth rather than civic/meritocratic/bureaucratic grounds if I understand it correctly.

Would you go as far as to say that the latter is incompatible with Christianity? Entirely incompatible or in the long term incompatible? I am asking this question because some traditionalist Christians seem to be content with the idea of Christian democracy. The reasoning goes like this: monarchy is better than democracy but Christian democracy is better than secular monarchy because the sacral is more important than the temporal. And then they go about defending freedom of speech. My guess is that this reasoning is flawed and that any kind of society can't be Christian and remain the same.

To put it differently, does Christianity gravitates toward particular kind of society that is more or less feudal in nature and fades out when society transfers to something else? Or is it as for example in Spandrell's view that familial/feudal social order develops into centralized liberal/socialist bureaucracy and Christianity was right there in the begining of this process just by accident of history?

Besides, I disagree with secular right that religion is just useful social technology. It seems like reduction going too far. I hope the previous paragraph does not sound like that. My aim here is proper relationship between sacerdotium and imperium as you put it when your blog started.

Reply.

- Nulle Terre Sans Seigneur says:

January 31, 2021 at 1:40 pm

The form of government is a thing indifferent provided it accommodate and serve the faith. But monarchy has many advantages in its own right, and the zenith of Christendom was under the monarchical form, so having both is optimal, even if not *strictly* essential. Ex Laodicea has written a lot on the Christian commonwealth, e.g. his "Arthurian republicanism" posts.

Reply.

- Karl says:

February 1, 2021 at 9:01 pm

"The Alta Vendita is probably the closest we have to a Masonic master plan that is recorded in history."

There is something better: <https://www.conspiracyarchive.com/2015/07/28/the-so-called-schwedenkiste-swedish-box-the-most-significant-illuminati-archive/>

Reply.

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