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1

Introduction: Has Metternich been Misunderstood?

Metternich and the Habsburg Monarchy

Prince Metternich was the greatest diplomat of his age, conducting the foreign policy of Austria from 1809 to 1848. He was also a, perhaps *the*, leading influence in her domestic affairs between 1815 and 1848. For almost the whole of this period the Habsburg Monarchy was a peaceful and prosperous place, while many other states in Europe were troubled by revolutions, radical republican and reform movements, secret societies, riots and changes of dynasty. Nothing like this happened in Austria. In Galicia in 1846, when exiled Poles attempted to spark off a revolution among the local Polish peasants, the latter slaughtered them spontaneously in the name of their Austrian overlord.[1] Even Lombardy-Venetia, by 1848 the most troublesome part of the Empire, was by common consent the best run part of Italy;[2] indeed, after revolts in Piedmont and the Papal States, Metternich would come under pressure from the local populations there to annex parts of these territories.[3] Finally, after Metternich's fall from power in 1848, which did spark off revolutions within the Monarchy, there was no republican or revolutionary takeover. The Habsburg dynasty remained popular, and the Emperor was cheered by the so-called 'revolutionary' crowds; Metternich's old colleagues – Kolowrat, Ficquelmont, Wessenberg and others – some of them colleagues since the Napoleonic Wars – simply took over the reins of government. True, matters got out of hand when the Hungarians broke their promises with respect to foreign, defence and financial affairs,[4] and when the Lombards and Venetians attempted to exchange rule by the House of Habsburg for rule by the House of Savoy; true, too, Austria had a parliament for a short while, but by the end of 1849 the revolutions were over, parliament ceased to exist and soon afterwards Metternich returned to Vienna to be a force behind the scenes until his death in 1859.

Whether his diplomacy can serve as a useful example today will be examined later on, although this book will not really concentrate on his diplomacy. If most books on his life and career[5] dwell almost exclusively and rather unoriginally on his foreign policy and love life, this one will examine most of the other questions that are usually raised about Metternich although seldom satisfactorily answered – did he run a police state, did he want to federalise the monarchy, was he an implacable opponent of nationalism, did his policies ruin the peoples of the Monarchy and drive them to revolution? Its main perspective will be an unusual one, examining why the Monarchy was at peace for so long, why there were so few domestic disturbances, why there was no republicanism in the Monarchy and very little real liberalism either, whether Metternich was in fact a reactionary. After all, he did not seek to restore the Holy Roman Empire, was happy to give Prussia leeway in North Germany, recommended legal and administrative reforms to the truly reactionary and absolutist sovereigns of Italy, respected the rule of law, refused to bow to the papacy and welcomed economic and industrial growth, while his monarchical masters presided over both quite an extensive state welfare system and a rather progressive legal one.

Still Metternich was no democrat or liberal and made no pretence to be one. So historians, most of whom, quite rightly, are democrats and liberals, have condemned him. They more or less agree with the critic who wrote in 1830:

> Never was a man more feared or detested than Metternich. From Belgium to the Pyrenees, from the frontiers of Turkey to the borders of Holland, there is only one opinion of this minister and it is one of execration. For it is he who has principally contributed to giving Europe its present political form, who has been the inventor and main spring of the Holy Alliance, that embryo of great events . . . Liberty has never had as dangerous an enemy as Metternich.[6]

In fact, all sorts of historians have condemned him – from Viktor Bibl, the German nationalist who denounced him as 'the demon of Austria',[7] directly responsible for the downfall of the Monarchy, to the conservative Henry Kissinger, whose admiration for Metternich's diplomacy between 1809 and 1822 nevertheless did not prevent him from also asserting that Metternich's domestic principles left the Monarchy in the last resort a lost cause.[8] Yet this is fantasy. The Monarchy was able to reinvent itself many times in the nineteenth century and to reform itself. In 1914, just as during the 'age of Metternich', almost no one was

calling for its demise. It disappeared as a direct result of its defeat in the First World War, which certainly cannot be blamed on Metternich. Was its demise somehow inevitable, stemming from long-term domestic problems? Certainly not. It clearly had problems, but if a man with even severe medical problems is run over by a bus, it seems safe to blame the bus for his death. Likewise, we should blame the end of the Monarchy on the First World War.

Let us return to Metternich. If Metternich can contribute little to the understanding of contemporary political thought or practice – diplomacy is quite a different matter – contemporary affairs should enable us to understand him much better. For Metternich's career was dedicated to waging a war on terror and he did this without resorting to torture, or undermining the rule of law, although he negotiated what would today be seen as international anti-terrorist conventions, employed a mild, if efficient, censorship and used a secret intelligence service (or police). This is what gave him his sinister reputation. Yet by the standards of today, it was all very small-scale, despite the fact that during his lifetime many more people were killed, more atrocities took place and the threat to established governments was much greater than today.

The Terrorist Threat

The terrorist threat came after the outbreak of the French Revolution. At first practically no one in Europe was troubled by events in France – enlightened despots after all had been introducing reforms all over the Continent. The Austrian Emperors, Joseph II and Leopold II, moreover, had a low opinion of the French royal family (including Marie Antoinette) and Leopold even declared: 'I have a sister, the queen of France, but the Holy Roman Empire has no sister, Austria has no sister. I can only act as the welfare of people's demands, not out of family interests.'[9] The Younger Pitt, for example, in his budget speech of 1792 said famously: 'There never was a time in the history of this country when from the situation of Europe we might not reasonably expect fifteen years of peace than at the present moment.'[10] But with the execution of the King and Queen of France, the declarations of war against so many European neighbours, the installation of the terror against domestic enemies on a huge scale, such complacency disappeared. Chateaubriand was to write: 'The Revolution would have carried me away had it not started in crime. I saw the first head carried on the end of a pike, and I drew back.'[11] By 1793, Pitt was complaining of the

French: 'They will not accept, under the name of Liberty, any model of government, but that which is conformable to their own opinions and ideas; and all men must learn from the mouth of their cannon the propagation of their system in every part of the world.'[12] When Fox accused him of making war on opinion, Pitt replied: 'It is not so. We are not in arms against the opinions of the closet, nor the speculation of the school. We are at war with *armed* opinion.'[13] That was always to be Metternich's defence.

Metternich and others saw that something new had happened in France. The Revolution – and the causes of this transformation can be debated[14] – had turned into 'something which went far beyond the normal aggressions of international politics'.[15] The revolutionaries condemned their opponents as the enemies of mankind. They themselves now spoke on behalf of the 'people' and a doctrine of popular sovereignty, soon transformed into one of national sovereignty, became the basis for what has been called 'totalitarian democracy'.[16] The nation – in fact, the French – could now justify the physical elimination of all their enemies, domestic and foreign. As the abbé Sieyes wrote in his famous tract of 1789, *Qu'est-ce que c'est le tiers état?*: 'The Nation exists before all things. It is sufficient that its will is manifested for all positive law to vanish before it. In whatever manner a nation wills, it is sufficient that it does will: all forms are good, and its will is always the supreme law.'[17] It had to obeyed. In the words of St Just: 'You no longer have any reason for restraint against the enemies of the new order . . . You must punish not only traitors but the apathetic as well; you must punish whoever is passive in the Republic . . . We must rule by iron those who cannot be ruled by justice.'[18] Such a view was made real on 10 June 1794 with the law of 22 Prairial. Accused persons now lost the right to a defence lawyer and could be convicted on moral rather than material proof. Jurors could use their consciences to decide on verdicts if evidence was lacking. Political crimes now included criticising patriots or attempts to 'deprave morality'; not just plots against the security of the republic but even attempts to 'dilute the energy and purity of revolutionary principles' were now crimes. In short, mere criticism, or even suspicion of criticism or lack of positive support for the regime, could bring a guilty verdict. And the only punishment was death.[19] In Austria, meanwhile, Francis II insisted that the Austrian Jacobins who were arrested in 1794 were all given a fair trial in accordance with established Austrian jurisprudence.[20]

Another Jacobin was kind enough to explain the implications of the new, revolutionary French doctrine for foreigners:

> The citizens of a nation which is ruled by a tyrant [a Metternich or Pitt for example], a disturber of the public peace, should neither endure the vices of their leader, nor hinder him from being defeated, punished and consequently pursued wherever he may be. The citizens ought therefore not to oppose . . . the entry, passage or lodging of the French in towns and countryside which forms the retreat and perhaps the fortifications and ambushes of the leader, their enemy . . . To do so would be to render themselves his accomplice.[21]

Metternich, Gentz, Burke and others all saw through this. Pitt, again, expressed matters succinctly in Parliament:

> In what is called the government of the multitude, they are not the many who govern the few, but the few who govern the many. It is a species of tyranny, which adds insult to the wretchedness of its subjects, by styling its own arbitrary decrees the voice of the people, and sanctioning its acts of oppression and cruelty under the pretence of the national will.[22]

And he was right. St Just admitted in 1794: 'A revolution has taken place within the government but it has not yet reached civil society.'[23] Billaud-Varenne told the Convention, again in 1794: 'To put it bluntly, we must re-create the people that we wish to make free, for we need to destroy old prejudices, change outdated customs, restore jaded feelings, restrain excessive wants and annihilate deep-rooted vices.'[24] This was the language of future totalitarians, whether communists, fascists, Nazis or Islamists. Man and society had to be reshaped by a totalitarian elite to carry out, both at home and abroad, the will of the totalitarian party – in this case, the Jacobins. Metternich, for his part, never blamed the people. He had seen the revolutionary mob at work as a student at Strasbourg; he knew the revulsion that the execution of the King and Queen of France had caused in the ranks of the Austrian army; his family's Rhineland estates would later be overrun by the French; he realised his life's work would be devoted to resisting the Revolution in all its forms; but:

> Frenchmen of that day did not at all comprehend the Revolution; and, indeed, I do not believe, with a few exceptions, they ever succeeded in doing so. But this weakness is not the exclusive property of the French, for people in general do not even guess the true causes or the purpose of events which take place before their eyes.[25]

Events in revolutionary France, were, of course, extremely gruesome.[26] The events of 10 August 1792, when a mob brought the royal family back to Paris from Versailles, left over 1,000 people dead; the September massacres of the same year cost the lives of another 1,100–1,300 people. Then came the execution of the king in January 1793 and the arrest in June of the Girondins, who had voted against it. With their arrest came the so-called 'federalist revolt' of the provinces – some 49 departments in all, which repudiated the revolutionary Convention in Paris. Key towns were involved – Lyons, Marseilles, Caen, Toulon – and counter-revolutionary armies were raised. And all this came over and above the continued resistance in the Vendée. The result was the rise of the Committee of Public Safety in Paris as the true government of France and the execution of 3,000 enemies of the Republic a month by guillotine there. In the provinces either the regular army or 'revolutionary armies' led by 'representatives on mission' crushed the revolt. Thousands were executed by shooting or by being guillotined. Other methods were also used to speed things up. Collot d'Herbois at Lyons invented the *mittraillade*, shooting groups of prisoners at a time with cannons; Carrier at Nantes invented the *noyades*, herding groups of prisoners onto barges on the River Loire, taking them out at night and then holing the barges and leaving them to drown. (St Just, to give him his due, calmed Alsace without a single execution.) Finally, the revolution turned on itself. The Girondins had already met their fate; now, in turn the Hébertistes, the Indulgents and the Jacobins met theirs. According to Louis Blanc,[27] the 'White Terror' of 1795, which lasted more than a year, 'surpassed in horror even the September massacres, even Collot d'Herbois's wholesale shootings, even Carrier's drownings.' It was mere personal vengeance or, in Mathiez's giveaway phrase,[28] 'butchery inspired by no ideal'.

Altogether historians estimate that some 50,000 people died as a result of executions or imprisonment for political crimes during the revolution – mainly artisans and peasants, who lacked revolutionary zeal. (These 'traitors' were hated by the Jacobins even more than reactionary aristocrats and priests.) Yet some 300,000 people were also condemned to prison; and another 200,000 died in the civil wars in the Vendée. All in all, therefore, the cost in human lives of Jacobin 'totalitarian democracy' as a domestic experiment was enormous.[29] And, given that the experiment spread across Europe, which experienced war and invasion from the armies of the Revolution and Napoleon over a period of almost quarter of a century (1792–1815),[30] it is little wonder that 'democracy', French or European-style, was at a discount for much of the nineteenth century.

Future progressive, liberal, socialist and communist historians – particularly but not exclusively in France – however, tended to overlook all this. With the twentieth century and the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, with the creation of communist party cells around the world, and with the ideological claim that the Russian Revolution represented the proletarian revolution in world history, succeeding the French bourgeois revolution as predicted by Marxist eschatology, European historians on the whole swallowed the notion that both revolutions were essentially progressive, popular and inevitable. Only with the fall of communism in 1989 did it become fashionable – particularly in France due to the work of François Furet – to see the French Revolution once again as a dismal experiment in totalitarian democracy. Amazingly, a July 1989 poll by *L'Express* magazine found that on the bicentenary of the French Revolution, no less than 42 per cent of French history teachers in secondary schools agreed that between the Terror and Stalinism, 'there are differences, but they are phenomena of the same order'.[31]

In the other part of the revolutionary world of the late eighteenth century, the USA, the French Revolution meanwhile also had a huge impact. More even than Hamilton's financial measures, it was responsible for creating the first political party system there as Federalists and Democratic Republicans split over the significance of events in France. As in Europe, the first reactions were sympathetic, with even George Washington expressing sympathy. But very soon, Washington himself, his vice-president and successor, John Adams, and particularly Hamilton, were expressing their reservations. By 1793, Hamilton was denouncing the revolution in France as repugnant to the true principles of liberty. In 1794, he warned Washington: 'The example of France may be found to have unhinged the orderly principles of the People of this country and . . . a further assimilation of our principles with those of France may prove to be the threshold of disorganisation and anarchy.'[32] Washington's Neutrality Proclamation of 22 April 1793, and especially his Farewell Address of 17 September 1796 which denounced the 'tools and dupes' in America of a 'favourite (foreign) nation' (France), were meant, therefore, to separate the rational and enlightened American republic from its totalitarian sister republic. The dupes that Washington had in mind were people like Jefferson, Madison and Monroe, who all praised events in Paris. Yet by the end of the 1790s, particularly after the XYZ Affair of 1797–8, when Talleyrand as French foreign minister demanded huge bribes to meet with American diplomatic representatives, American opinion turned against France and Europe. In 1799, one federalist could even write: 'Who does not remember when foreign

influence, like the golden calf, seduced the multitudes from the worship of true liberty?'[33] And even the French ambassador as early as 1796 was reporting to Paris of Jefferson himself that he 'is American and, for this reason, he cannot sincerely be our friend. An American is the born enemy of all European nations.'[34] The events in France and Europe scared many decent, liberty-loving, progressive Americans by 1800 as much as they scared Metternich and, curiously, it was in his translation of Metternich's future secretary Gentz's *The Origin and Principles of the American Revolution Compared with the Origin and Principles of the French Revolution* that John Quincy Adams, the future president and son of president John Adams, emphasised that Gentz had rescued America from the slur that it shared the same principles as had determined the course of the French Revolution. The two, he said, were completely different: 'A modern philosopher may contend that the sheriff, who executes a criminal, and the highwayman, who murders a traveller, act upon the same principles; the plain sense of mankind will still see the same difference between them, that is here proved between the American and French revolutions. The difference between *right* and *wrong*.'[35] America, therefore, pursued its own course, appalled by what had happened in France. Repudiation of French atheism and deism was even decisive in furthering the Second Great Awakening – the great evangelical revival at the end of the 1790s that also celebrated American pragmatism and condemned European, especially French, intellectualism. The United States, therefore, became self-centred in focus, isolationist and pragmatic in temper and highly suspicious of European revolutionary theories.[36] Even Jefferson himself, after hearing the news of Waterloo in January 1816, and looking back on his own flirtations with the Revolution in France and his quarrels with his old adversary, John Adams, happily confessed, indeed explicitly apologised, to the latter in these words: 'Your prophecies . . . proved truer than mine; and yet fell short of the fact, for instead of a million, the destruction of 8 or 10 millions of human beings has probably been the effect of these convulsions. I did not in '89 believe that they would have lasted so long, nor have cost so much blood.'[37] Yet Jefferson, whose foreign policy as president for two terms after 'the revolution of 1800' had also been one of isolation from Europe, knew that Jacobinism or Bonapartism could never again trouble America. Metternich after 1815 was not so lucky. By 1817 a Protestant in France was jailed for proclaiming that within three months Napoleon would return following which 'the aristocrats, the priests, and the Catholics would have their heads cut off'.[38] The millenarian goal which underlay this enthusiasm was explained by a local official as follows:

> Bonaparte is no longer the ruthless despot who is returning to claim his leaden sceptre, but the hero who will bring forth the liberation of the people. Upon his return he will be appointed Protector of the Republic, and by a remarkable effect on the faithful, this Platonic dream will replace the cult of the true King. At the moment of this sinister metamorphosis, another great sacrifice will be needed, and just as in 1793 it will be necessary to found public felicity upon the extermination of priests, aristocrats, and royalists of all shades. After this deluge of blood and fire, a new light will appear and the first dawn of the new golden age will arise.[39]

Hence, after almost twenty-five years of war against totalitarian democracy and military despotism, Metternich still had to safeguard Europe from the very real threat that the whole cycle of revolutionary and military violence could start all over again. And that threat never ceased to exist during his whole, long tenure of power. Historians have far too easily forgotten this.

During the whole period 1815–1848, there was the danger that France in particular would attempt to undermine the 1815 settlement. In Roger Bullen's words, 'French condemnation of the Settlement was total; all parties were united in their opposition to it. For decades to come an attack on the Treaty [the second Treaty of Paris between a defeated France and the allies after Waterloo] was a necessary credential for patriotism.'[40] France, it was thought, had been humiliated by the loss of her so-called 'natural frontiers', by the indemnity imposed on her by the allies and by the allied army of occupation. So great was popular hostility to the 1815 settlement that Victor Hugo's ode to Boulogne, composed as late as 1840, had to be turned down by the town council since it implied that the current lack of war in Europe was merely a truce, a 'fragile peace resonating with silent struggles', and hoped that the French would soon avenge Napoleon by recapturing the Rhine; finally, it pledged 'an eternal hatred' for the criminal English nation which had 'mutilated' France.[41] After 1821 there was also the possibility that Russian ambitions to undermine the Ottoman Empire could upset the diplomatic status quo. Indeed, the Eastern Question, as this problem was called, might even allow France the opportunity to start a European war and overthrow the 1815 treaties. This almost happened in 1840, when Louis Philippe, King of the French since 1830, had to dismiss his bellicose prime minister Thiers, who wanted to start a European war over the Eastern Crisis. In Thiers's own words:

> I could not bear his [King Louis Philippe's] *paix à tout prix*. My *rêve* was a war by France and England against Austria and Russia. Such a war would have freed Italy and secured the independence of Turkey. *And there were half a dozen occasions when but for him we might have had one* [Author's italics]. The greatest blunder, however, that his *rage pacifique* betrayed him into was the Syrian affair. If he had stood by me for only two months we should have come out of it not merely successfully but gloriously.[42]

We shall return to this issue in Chapter 3 when Metternich's diplomacy will be discussed, but for the meantime, it should be noted that Metternich's fears that a liberal France might recommence the whole cycle of war and revolution during the period 1815–1848 were certainly justified.

Certainly, the period was not to lack in revolutionary developments. In 1817, Serbia revolted against the Turks; in 1820–1 there were revolts and revolutions in Piedmont, Naples, Portugal and Spain; the Greek War of Independence began in 1821 and continued till 1829; 1825 saw the Decembrist revolt in Russia; in 1830, the Belgians revolted against the Dutch, and the Poles against the Russians; France also had a revolution in 1830, as did parts of Germany and Italy; in 1832, after a two-year nationwide campaign, the Great Reform Bill was passed in Britain, whose historical geography by now included Cato Street and Peterloo; the revolutionary secret society 'Young Italy' was formed in 1831 and linked in 1834 to 'Young Europe'; there was a relative relaxation of tension in the late 1830s and the early mid-1840s, but in 1846 Polish exiles attempted in vain to stir up the Poles of Austrian Galicia; the Corn Laws were repealed in Great Britain; and Pius IX was elected Pope; the year 1847 saw civil war in Switzerland and set the stage for the revolutions of 1848. Most of these events had local and particular causes. Yet as far as Metternich was concerned, several factors linked them all: the spread of new ideas, the resentment of unemployed, former bureaucrats and army officers of Napoleonic regimes, the role of the press and universities in spreading new ideas of nationalism, liberalism and democracy. But what concerned him most was the role of secret societies, explicitly dedicated to revolution and insurrection, sects which from time to time attempted to carry out such plans or to assassinate rulers. His main fear was always a return to 1793, something that was shared long after 1815 even by potential democrats. Thus Mazzini himself, the leader of Young Italy and founder of Young Europe, in a famous essay entitled *Thoughts on Democracy in Europe* published as late as 1847, could write:

> Even among the friends of democracy there are men who put their hands to the work with hesitation, and who sometimes appear seized with vague terror. One would say that the echo of that wild cry uttered some ten years since by a statesman speaking of the working classes, *'The barbarians are at our gates'*, still rings threateningly in their ears . . . There are men who no sooner hear the name of democracy than the phantom of '93 rises immediately before them. With them democracy means the guillotine surmounted by a red cap.[43]

So Metternich's fears, far from being the paranoid delusions of an unrepresentative, aristocratic Jeremiah, were actually shared by wide sections of society. Historians have never wanted to concede this. Yet we shall return to secret societies and insurrections presently. Before that it is necessary to make another point, to understand why, hitherto, there has been such a reluctance on their part to do so.

Metternich, 'Progressive' Historians and the Role of Social Forces

Traditionally, modern historians have always preferred instead to picture Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century as having been at the mercy of large forces which Metternich could neither understand nor control. For most of them his role was simply that of a latter-day Canute, attempting to hold back the tide of progress. This tide was fundamentally Marxist in nature, composed of a capitalist middle class, with demands for new or reformed constitutions and greater electoral power, and propelled by economic changes brought about by industrialisation.[44] Seen from this perspective, a 'progressive' warmonger like Napoleon or a 'progressive' terrorist like Mazzini deserved far greater praise than a peace-loving, conservative guardian of international law and domestic tranquillity such as Metternich. And today Metternich's reputation still stands lower than theirs.

This picture, however, needs a great deal of modification. In France, for example, it is now known that 1789 did not represent the overthrow of a feudal nobility by a capitalist bourgeoisie. On the contrary, there was a considerable land-owning bourgeoisie in place before the revolution of 1789. Indeed, it owned as much land there as the Church and aristocracy combined. It is also known that the capitalist middle classes played almost no part in the revolution. So it is difficult to see the events of 1789 as the overthrow of the feudal order by emerging capitalists.[45] After 1815, it was the landed bourgeoisie – an untitled aristocracy – that

gained most from the Revolution. And it dominated French political life for the whole period 1815–48, not in competition with the aristocracy but in alliance with it.[46] Nor was the latter forced out in 1830 – legitimacy was a political cause, not a social class.[47] The differences between legitimists and Orleanists were political and geographical, not social. The same landed class, therefore, continued to run France after 1830 and this was as true of Paris as the provinces. Indeed, far from representing the commercial middle classes, Parisian politics was also dominated by the landed bourgeoisie. In 1842, no less than 50 per cent of electors there described themselves as 'landowners' who were 'without profession'; only 29 per cent described themselves as belonging to the *professions économiques*.[48] The ruling class was a mixture of the old and the new, the titled and untitled landed elite, with large sections of the commercial bourgeoisie probably without a vote. Even under Louis Philippe, only one man in 170 had the vote and the main qualification was the amount of land tax paid. It might be argued, therefore, that it was the limited franchise that led to revolutions in France (it had an electorate of 90,000 under the Restoration and one of between 200,000 and 240,000 under Louis Philippe), although this is problematical. Belgium, after all, only gave the vote to 1 per cent of the population and was spared revolution in 1848. Charles X's real crime in 1830, rather, had been to annul the election results and to muzzle the press. The political system, insofar as it had demonstrated popular dissatisfaction, had worked. Louis Philippe's government, on the other hand, did not lose the ability to win elections. The trouble was that the king interfered too much and always kept his favourite in power, so that Guizot looked as if he was undefeatable. His opponents therefore started a reform campaign – they were not opposed to limited constitutional monarchy but simply wanted an equal chance to run it.

In Britain, too, there was hardly any social or political transformation between 1815 and 1848. Indeed, the survival of the economic and political power of the British aristocracy was clearly evident well into the twentieth century. After 1815, meanwhile, Lord Liverpool supported laissez-faire, the Duke of Wellington Catholic emancipation, Sir Robert Peel the repeal of the Corn Laws, and Lord Grey the Great Reform Bill, all without undermining the aristocracy's political position. To explain this, it must be remembered that the British aristocracy was well entrenched politically.[49] The House of Lords was part of the legislature and had the right of initiative; as the highest court of appeal, it exercised judicial functions of the highest order. Peers almost always formed a majority of the cabinet and through control of pocket

boroughs influenced the political composition of the Commons. As lords lieutenant of the counties they helped organise the militias and advised on appointments of justices of the peace. Through their territorial possessions, control of local councils, popular deference to their political leadership, not to mention their tradition of public service, they were usually respected figures. However, they never constituted a rigid political caste: the entry of Scottish representative peers, the changing episcopal bench, the influx of eminent soldiers, sailors and statesmen, not to mention the rapid extinction of even recent creations, meant that the composition of the upper house was always changing. Besides, the lords found that, along with the gentry, they could readily adapt to political change (what was Whiggery all about if not that?) and absorb rivals from the commercial world, while much of the electoral structure and social deference they profited from remained in place and proposals for land reform faltered. If the rise of the middle classes continued apace, it was not at the expense of the peers.[50]

In Germany, meanwhile, the most that the middle classes achieved was entry into the bureaucracy by part of the educated bourgeoisie, which was then usually absorbed into the ruling system by the device of 'service nobility'.[51] Inside the (by 1848) most troublesome parts of the Habsburg Monarchy, Lombardy-Venetia and Hungary, there is also little evidence that there was a problem from the rise of the middle classes. True, Paul Ginsborg has claimed that the 1848 Revolution in Venice was driven by a new (and apparently very small) class of commercial lawyers (some of whom were nobles), but his evidence is confusing and contradictory.[52] Much more reliable is the conclusion of Greenfield's exhaustive account of economic liberalism in Lombardy-Venetia during the Risorgimento which concludes:

> It would be natural to infer that Italian liberalism reflected a movement by the middle class to gain control of society. The defect of this thesis is that the liberal programme was initiated, expounded, and propagated, not by an aspiring and self-conscious bourgeoisie, with strong economic interests to serve, but by landed proprietors and groups of intellectuals, many of whose leaders were of the aristocracy . . . There is no evidence to colour the view that the liberal publicists were being pushed by a rising capitalistic class or were prompted to act as its mouthpiece.[53]

Certainly, the Austrian authorities in Lombardy-Venetia saw the Italian aristocracy as its main opponents.[54] As for Hungary, even under the

communist regime, the Institute of Historical Research of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences could inform us in an official national history:

> It is one of the anomalies of Hungarian social development that the change to bourgeois conditions depended little on the class which should have been responsible for the ideological transformation and for the practical realisation of the actual development, that is to say the bourgeoisie itself. It was the result of grave historical circumstances that when the time came for the actual change to bourgeois conditions, there was no bourgeois force capable of carrying out the task. The bourgeoisie of the royal towns in fact fought on the side of the court, defending feudalism against national independence as represented by the liberal nobility.[55]

It would seem clear, therefore, that 1848 was not the result of the rise of a capitalist middle class which, as a force of history in the Marxist sense, made Metternich pointless. The old 'progressive' Marxist framework for the period 1815 to 1848 must be abandoned, which is not to say, of course, that wider forces were not at work.

Perhaps other classes were to blame for revolutionary disturbances? Louis Chevalier once suggested that the real challenge to the status quo during this period came from the 'labouring and dangerous classes' in Europe's cities. The poorest classes, who had been forced to seek employment in the slums of Paris and other large towns, were so sickened by the crime, prostitution, hunger, begging and disease to be found there that their very humanity drove them to revolt.[56] David Pinkney, the American expert on the French Revolution of 1830, also believed there was some evidence for this.[57] However, research by Charles Tilley has shown that, whereas the greatest periods of migration and urban expansion in France were the late 1850s and 1870s, the periods of greatest political disturbance were 1830–4, 1847–8, 1851 and 1871. The growth of Paris was socially much more explosive after 1851 than before. Moreover, disturbances were just as common in slow-growing cities like Nimes or Grenoble as in quickly expanding ones as Bordeaux or Lyons. Other fast-growing cities such as Toulon, Marseille and St Etienne, however, experienced very few disturbances. Other conclusions can also be drawn from Tilley's work – for example, it was the older rather than the newer cities that experienced both political and social revolts, while it was the older classes of resident, not the new *Lumpenproletariat* which was too busy struggling simply to survive, that

participated in these revolts.[58] Tilley's evidence is supported by analyses of lists of those who were killed or wounded fighting on the barricades in Milan, Vienna and Berlin in 1848.[59] They came not from the 'dangerous classes' but from traditional trades, skilled workers or craftsmen who were neither uprooted or poor – the same types in fact as were described in 1789 as 'sans-culottes'. This research in turn is supported by that of George Rudé, whose analysis of the 'crowd in history' between 1789 and 1848 particularly, but not exclusively, in England and France, concluded that riots were of a pre-industrial kind with distinguishing features as follows:

> First, the prevalence of the rural food riot as the typical form of disturbance; second, the resort to direct action and violence to property; third, 'spontaneity' and lack of organisation; fourth, leadership drawn from outside the crowd; fifth, the crowd's mixed composition with the emphasis on small shopkeepers and craftsmen in towns, and weavers, miners and labourers (or peasants) in villages; and sixth, as a prime motive of rebellion, a 'backward looking concern for the restoration of lost "rights"'.[60]

All this seems acceptable. In 1830, for example, there was a spontaneous revolt in Paris when Charles X cancelled the election results; in 1848 in Vienna, crowds gathered after news reached the city of the fall of Louis Philippe in Paris; and in Milan in 1848 a similar crowd gathered after news arose of the fall of Metternich. Two further conclusions need to be drawn, however: the crowds were well-informed and they had political views about what needed to happen next. They also received outside leadership – from journalists and students as it often turned out – so that Metternich kept his eye on the committed revolutionaries (often journalists and students) who, after all, had always promised to provide that leadership. Clearly, there was a connection between these people and the larger forces at work in society even if these forces were not the ones associated with the rise of capitalism.

The growth of political consciousness and awareness in Europe between 1815 and 1848 had been influenced by a number of factors: student movements in the universities; the rise of the press; and a growing fashion for liberal and socialist ideas. Metternich knew and worried about all of these factors, although they were hardly regime-threatening. Still, from his point of view, students finally graduated to be civil servants, professors and men of influence. So they had to be checked. Journalists could spread subversive views. Liberals, by their very nature

were a danger, socialists even more so if they could influence the masses. The main student problem was represented by the *Burschenschaften* in the German universities. These examined constitutions, drew up ideal versions of their own and stimulated demands for change. By 1819, therefore, the German monarchs agreed to close most of them down and to restrict student activities. The movement revived between 1827 and 1832 with a body calling itself 'Germania', fêting a Polish revolutionary general (Dombrowsky) at Jena in 1832 and calling at a congress at Stuttgart that year for a revolution to promote German unity, but once again it was repressed.[61] In 1831, the universities of Turin, Modena and Genoa were also closed down by the local authorities as politically unreliable, while Metternich unsuccessfully tried to stop Austrian students visiting German universities and vice versa. (The constitution of the German *Bund* proved too difficult a problem for him.) He worried, too, about the establishment of new universities in the 1820s in London and Madrid.[62] Yet the student problem – insofar as one really existed – was easily dealt with. It was only in 1848 that students got a real chance to play at politics.

A greater political consciousness was fostered by the growth of information about events elsewhere partly through a new travel literature but more particularly by the growth of the press. As far as travel literature was concerned, reports on Austria and Russia tended to be very critical while the French became infected by a Germanophilia, the influence of which among intellectuals meant that it was not unimportant for international relations.[63] It dated back to Madame de Staël's *Allemagne* of 1814 which had praised the Germans as an upright, honest, liberal race.[64] Henrich Heine in 1835, on the other hand, warned the French that: 'You have more to fear from a liberated Germany than the whole of the Holy alliance.'[65] The Germans, for their part took an added interest in Italy, a 'land of ruins' in Goethe's phrase. Yet Arndt, Mittermaier and Raumer, all of whom would later sit in the German National Assembly in 1848, in spite of visiting Italy, refused to believe in Italian unity. Raumer even condemned the idea as 'completely impracticable, unattainable, pernicious'.[66]

As far as the press was concerned, its growth had a huge impact on public opinion. Greenfield, for example, has commented on a 'Risorgimento of journalism' in Lombardy-Venetia before 'the third decade of the Restoration'.[67] M. S. Anderson has pointed out that the Press Association, founded in Denmark in 1835 to counter the censorship in force there, soon had branches throughout the country and was very influential in encouraging liberalism.[68] There were even occasional

press wars. For example, as we shall see below, the so-called 'Galician Massacres' of 1846 embroiled Metternich's State Chancellery in press exchanges with newspapers in France and Germany.[69] In Hungary, meanwhile, Metternich's support for the neo-conservatives was expressed through the *Világ* and opposed by Kossuth's *Pesti Hírlap*. It was in Britain and France, however, that newspaper sales expanded most quickly. By 1836, sales of London newspapers were almost three times what they had been in 1801. The pauper press expanded most quickly, however, establishing a new social base for a new type of campaigning journalism.[70] In 1781, only 76 newspapers and periodicals had been printed in England and Wales; by 1825, the number was 250.[71] In France, the rate of increase in press circulation was even greater. In 1814 the *Journal des Débats*, the best-selling newspaper, had a circulation of about 23,000. The total circulation of newspapers in Paris in 1830 amounted to only 60,000. By 1845, on the other hand, the latter figure, thanks to the founding of Girardin's cheap and steamy, *La Presse*, had shot up to 148,000.[72] Censorship, which was severe throughout Europe (Britain was the exception), curtailed further growth, but technological developments worked in the opposite direction. Steam power meant that newspapers by 1848 could print 16,000 copies an hour (compared with 500 an hour in 1815) – more than the entire circulation of *The Times* in 1815. The invention of the railroad and telegraph also meant that information could be collected and disseminated far more quickly by the 1840s; indeed, the first great international news agency was established in Paris in 1832.[73]

Politicians naturally were quick to see the importance of the press – indeed, Kossuth, Thiers and Cavour more or less made their careers out of it. Still others – Canning, Brougham and Palmerston are excellent British examples – took great care to establish good relations with editors. Palmerston indeed often wrote anonymous articles praising his own policies for insertion in friendly newspapers. Maybe this was just as well, since in France the press often acted irresponsibly, accusing the government of all sorts of crimes (complicity in the murder of the Duc de Berri in 1820, for example) while newspapers in Paris and Lyon in 1834 even called for the overthrow of the government.[74] It was no accident that the 1830 revolution in Paris was launched from the offices of the *National* by Thiers in 1830 or that in 1848 the majority of the members of the national government should have been on the editorial staffs of the *National* and the *Réform*.[75] The growth of the press, therefore, was a source of suspicion and fear for most governments between 1815 and 1848. Censorship could do much to restrain

irresponsibility, but on the whole the press was seen as instrumental in spreading new ideologies such as liberalism and socialism. (Nationalism will be dealt with in a later chapter.)

As far as liberalism was concerned, this amounted for the most part to a belief in progress and a desire for a constitution. Some constitutions were, of course, in place – the famously unwritten British one pre-eminently, but also the French constitutions of 1814 and 1830, the Belgian and Dutch constitutions after 1830 and the few constitutions granted after 1815 to the Southwest German states, notably Baden, Bavaria, Weimar, Württemberg and Hesse. Yet the franchise everywhere was extremely restricted – the Hungarian Diet allowed more men to vote for it before 1848 than the French Chamber[76] – and it is not at all clear that in themselves these constitutions aided either social peace or economic progress. Certainly states like Prussia, Piedmont and even Austria could make progress without them. Metternich worried that they would encourage discontent and false hopes, although it was not until the 1840s, even the late 1840s, that liberalism began to cause him real concern – and then on account of a spectacularly unexpected liberal pope and modest indications that local diets in Austria were showing unprecedented, if still small, signs of life. In fact, foreign parliaments had a mixed record. Arguably, British liberal and reform movements – factory reform, parliamentary reform, abolition of the slave trade, poor law reform, etc. – prevented revolution in Britain in 1848 but arguably, too, it was the 180,000 special constables, the 50,000 troops, the sand-bagging of London, the armed ships on the Thames and other military measures that saved the capital from the Chartists in April 1848.[77] The French parliament failed to demonstrate the same reforming zeal – *enrichissez-vous!* was Guizot's notorious advice, but it was the refusal of the French national guard to save the king amidst the chaotic scenes in Paris at the end of February that put an end to a previously stable regime. And revolution in Paris brought not liberal progress but the June Days and then Napoleon III. So international liberalism proved no great threat to Metternich; Guizot, in any case, had been cooperating with him diplomatically between 1846 and 1848.

Socialism, of course, was even less of a threat, primarily since its development required the process of industrialisation to expand before it could become influential.[78] Still, the term had been coined, supposedly by the Frenchman Pierre Leroux in 1832. The idea went back at least to Babeuf's conspiracy and Buonarotti's account of Babeuf, published in France in 1828, revived interest in such ideas. Certainly by 1848 there were many socialist schemes to choose from in France: the

industrial plans of the Saint-Simonians; Fourier's blueprints for self-governing communities; Proudhon's anarchism; Blanqui's theory of class struggle and dictatorship; Louis Blanc's state-financed 'social workshops', not to mention Cabet's plan for *Icarie* – a communist island utopia. In England, too, there were socialist ideas around – Robert Owen might even have invented the term before Leroux. But thinkers such as Thomas Hodgskin and William Thompson were not much more advanced than Ricardo in their ideas and Owen's ideas were almost non-political – he advocated 'harmony communities' and 'cooperatives'. It is also difficult to see Chartism as having had any socialist input. Its most famous leader, Feargus O'Connor, was described as 'a radical tory anti-socialist', who himself described his Land Scheme of 1845 as about as socialist as the Comet. If O'Brien and Jones were more Marxist in outlook, they had little influence on the movement, for in the words of G. D. H. Cole, it produced 'no Socialist theories of its own – only echoes of Owen, of Louis Blanc and of Karl Marx, to which the workers for the most part refused to listen'.[79] Germany at this stage had not yet undergone much industrialisation, so socialist ideas were mostly imported there from France by people like Wilhelm Weitling and Ludwig von Stein. Indeed, the latter's best-known book, published in 1842, was entitled *Socialism and Communism in France Today*.[80] In Austria, there had been outbreaks of machine-breaking in Bohemian factories in 1844 and printing workers had organised self-help against the economic consequences of illness between 1834 and 1836, but no socialist movement had been allowed to develop. In 1844, two brothers, Charles and Joseph Schestag, spent two months in the Spielberg for having joined Weitling's League of the Just.[81] Marx and Engels had only begun their careers as revolutionaries (mostly spent in England, of course). But in 1844 they had published *The Holy Family* and in the winter of 1847–8 wrote *The Communist Manifesto*. Curiously, this may have been a reply to Mazzini's 1847 essay, already referred to, entitled *Thoughts upon Democracy in Europe*. For in that, Mazzini had demolished the case for utilitarianism, moderate liberalism and all kinds of socialism, utopian and scientific. Already in 1847, he had predicted the consequences of communism – totalitarian dictatorship. To make socialism work, he wrote:

> You must have an arbitrary hierarchy of chiefs, having the entire disposition of the common property: masters of the mind by an exclusive education; of the body by the power of deciding upon the work, the capacity, the wants of each. And these imposed or elected

> chiefs – it matters little which – will be, during the exercise of their power, in the position of the masters of slaves in olden times; and influenced themselves by the theory of interest which they represent, seduced by the immense power concentrated in their hands, they will endeavour to perpetuate it; they will strive by corruption to re-assume the hereditary dictatorship of the ancient castes.[82]

Thus Mazzini had made an absolutely correct diagnosis of the origins of communist dictatorship, even before Marx and Engels had written their manifesto.

Terrorism Again

With Mazzini, however, we must return to the problem of Metternich and terrorism. So far, the argument has been that Metternich was right to be concerned – as many contemporaries, even democrats and liberals in Europe and America were – lest the totalitarian democracy and violence associated with the period 1792–1815 should revive. This might occur if the European settlement of 1815 were overturned either by the diplomacy of France or by the conspiracies of revolutionaries. If historians have dismissed his fears, preferring instead to interpret him as a simple-minded reactionary unable to see the progressive forces of history at work with the rise of a new capitalist middle class, it has been demonstrated that this is their illusion, and that Metternich was more astute in looking out for other dangers. He was, of course, well aware of the rise of public opinion and the fashion for liberalism, but organised controls of the press and universities through international action made it possible to contain these factors. Yet he was also well aware – as modern research seems to confirm – that revolts in most of Europe seemed to be led by disaffected outsiders – often journalists, students, former employees of Napoleon's many bureaucracies or armies, political dreamers and fanatics, men who often formed or joined secret societies, and he was determined to pursue and crush them.

Metternich certainly never underrated the secret societies – particularly in Italy. He told his agent in Lombardy, the Chevalier de Menz in 1833:

> For many years all those who had pointed to the existence of a *comité directeur* working secretly for universal revolution were met everywhere only by incredulity; today it has been shown that this infernal propaganda exists, that it has its centre in Paris, and that it is divided

> into as many sections as there are nations to regenerate . . . Everything that refers to this great and dangerous plot cannot, therefore, be observed and surveyed with too much attention.[83]

Historians, again, however, have been traditionally suspicious of Metternich's obsession with terrorists. True, plots existed. Alexander I of Russia, for example, blamed the revolt of his Semenovsky guards on the sects and it is known that the Decembrists in 1825, just like the Hungarian Jacobins of 1794, were organised into two groups, one with a fairly liberal, another, which directed the first, with an outright revolutionary programme. But was there ever a European-wide conspiracy? In the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars the greatest revolutionary sect was undoubtedly the Carbonari. This is estimated to have had between 400,000 and 600,000 members and was known to have taken a leading part in the 1820 revolution in Naples. But that revolt was crushed and, since research seems to demonstrate that the organisation had confused aims and ideals save for Italian unity (i.e. it had radical and conservative, republican and monarchist, clerical and anti-clerical members), its influence has been rather written off.[84] Perhaps the true conclusion to draw, on the other hand, is that an organisation that could recruit up to 600,000 members, stage a revolution and unite all sorts of disparate elements should be treated very seriously. The Charbonnerie, the French version of the Carbonari, had 'only' 40,000–80,000 members according to historical research and 'only' succeeded in subverting a few French troops during mutinies in the 1820s.[85] Might not a similar conclusion be drawn? The mutinies were crushed but an organisation of that size that could help instigate mutinies in France is, again, one that needs to be treated seriously. The truth is that with just a bit more luck these organisations could well have changed the course of history. One surely need not dwell on contemporary parallels to make the point.

Yet it was from the 1830s that Metternich's worst nightmare seemed to emerge, personified by Mazzini. The latter was the mirror image of Metternich – drawn from the ordinary people, a proponent of international republicanism, a believer in the rights of man and a terrorist. Today, he is chiefly remembered as a writer – his collected works fill no fewer than 106 volumes and took almost ninety years to edit – yet in his time he planned and led revolutions and plotted assassinations. When he founded Young Italy in 1831 – having been expelled to France from Piedmont for Carbonari activities after an eminently fair trial – the statutes of the new organisation included the following:

> The means by which Young Italy proposes to reach its aims are education [propaganda] and insurrection, to be adopted simultaneously and made to harmonise with each other . . . Education, though of necessity secret in Italy, will be public out of Italy . . . Insurrection – by means of guerrilla bands – is the true method of warfare for all nations desirous of emancipating themselves from the foreign yoke.[86]

The result was that almost immediately the existence of Young Italy was known. And very soon it recruited thousands of members in Italy. Accounts normally credit it with 50–60,000 members by 1833, but some estimates reach 140,000.[87] Mazzini also ran its newspaper – also called Young Italy (*La Giovine Italia*), of which there were six issues, all with more than 200 pages, three in 1832, two in 1833 and one in 1834, which were smuggled in by sailors to Italian ports. Metternich had his agents send him a couple of copies. But Mazzini's real concern was action and Young Italy was soon busy attempting invasions of Piedmont, while other agents went, Che Guevara-like, on ill-fated expeditions by ship against various parts of the Italian coast. Mazzini also agreed in 1833 to give a dagger – a stiletto he had on his desk – to Antonio Gallenga, whose aim was to assassinate King Charles Albert of Piedmont-Sardinia. Previously, in 1831, Mazzini had written the first of his 'open letters' to the king, beseeching him to take the lead in freeing Italy. Now he was plotting his death. Converted by Carlo Bianco's work of 1830, entitled *Of National Insurrectionary Warfare by Bands Applied to Italy*, Mazzini wanted action on the widest scale: insurrections, assassinations, propaganda and also an expanded organisation.[88] Hence in 1834 he organised Young Europe to promote revolution all over the Continent. Like some mad Brussels commissioner, he proclaimed: 'Europe is the lever of the world. Europe is the land of liberty; Europe controls the universe. Here is the mission of progressive development that encompasses humanity.'[89] The Pact of Young Europe was signed at Berne on 15 April 1834 by 17 founding members representing Young Italy, Young Germany and Young Poland. One potential version of Metternich's 'great and dangerous plot', therefore, had come into existence. Mazzini, like most terrorists, could talk in visionary and emancipatory language, often in deeply religious language:

> What is the present movement but an attempt at the practical realisation of [the Lord's] prayer. We are labouring that the development of human society may be, as far as possible, in the likeness of this

> divine society; in the likeness of the heavenly country, where all are equal; where there exists but one love, but one happiness for all. We seek the paths of heaven upon earth; for we know that this earth was given to us for our workshop; that through it we can rise to heaven; that by our earthly works we shall be judged; by the number of poor we have assisted, by the number of the unhappy we have consoled.[90]

However, Metternich was more concerned by the thought of how much violence such language would bring about, about how many would die as a result of insurrectionary warfare and revolution. Revolutionary goodness, he well knew, did not spare the innocent. So Radetzky's troops in Italy, many of them Italian, were informed about Mazzini's new organisation in 1833 as follows:

> When twelve years ago the sect called the Carbonari threatened civil order in the Italian states with its complete overthrow, His Majesty warned you, his subjects, of the harmful and seditious teachings of this sect and of their criminal and treasonous aims in order 324 of March 1821. This was made known to everybody in order to ensure that even the most inexperienced and careless men, from whom the leaders of this sect took care to conceal their aims, would know of them and hence would abstain from joining the Carbonari.
>
> The monarch's same fatherly care now compels him in view of recent events to issue the same order with regard to a no less dangerous sect, indeed, one which represents a higher form of Carbonari, called Young Italy. The aim of this organisation is the overthrow of existing governments and of the complete social order; the means which it employs are subversion and outright murder through secret agents.[91]

Troops who joined it or refused to inform on it were therefore guilty of high treason, but those who did provide information would be dealt with confidentially.

Throughout his period in office, therefore, Metternich's main concern was to protect Europe from revolutionary violence, which might once again engulf the Continent either if France were allowed to start a European war, as Thiers and others wanted, or if revolutionary sects like Young Italy succeeded in provoking revolutionary insurrections, as they regularly tried to do. (NB: It was a failed assassination attempt on Napoleon III in 1858 by Young Italy member Felice Orsini, with Mazzini's approval, that pushed the Emperor of the French,

himself a former member of the Carbonari, into conspiring with Cavour to start a war with Austria in Italy. Metternich's fears were not delusions). Metternich was only too well aware that political change between 1815 and 1848 usually came about violently as a result of revolutions and insurrections by people claiming to be democrats. Indeed, there was nowhere in the world at this stage where democracy seemed able to exist without violence. (Britain and the USA were not yet democracies and in any case still had very turbulent political episodes.) So seriously did Metternich fear a rerun of 1793 that according to one memoirist he used to warn his colleagues that if revolution did engulf Austria they themselves would all be executed by the revolutionaries.[92] The Archduke John and the King of Prussia certainly believed the same.

In 1846, however, revolution did strike the Habsburg Monarchy. Polish conspirators, organised from Paris, plotted to restore the Kingdom of Poland by seizing Krakow (technically a free state under the 1815 treaties) and from there stir up Austria's Polish province of Galicia.[93] The local Polish peasants, however, resisted the conspirators, whose supporters were found among the Polish lesser nobility or gentry, and slaughtered them and their allies – including some noble ladies – before loading the dead and dying onto carts which they then took to the Austrian authorities. Opponents of Metternich claimed falsely that the Austrian authorities had organised and paid for these 'Gallician horrors' which cost the lives of over 1000 people. Colonel Benedek was sent to put down the revolutionaries, which he did, but he also complained that the peasants were possessed of a bloodlust, which he saw at first hand when peasant auxiliaries, against his orders, slaughtered rebel prisoners he had taken. News that the peasants had sided with the Emperor (there was even a rumour that he had suspended the Ten Commandments) was spread around the Monarchy by a grateful government, but Metternich was once again made aware, as he had been throughout his long period in office, that the normal route for political change was bloody violence. This was why he had always taken what preventive measures he could – diplomatic conventions and alliances, exhortations to sovereigns and foreign ministers to abide by the 1815 treaties, censorship of newspapers, control of student bodies, not to mention sensible economic and welfare measures, and only very rarely military interventions, to keep the spectre of revolution at bay. Yet it could never be completely exorcised. The French wanted to revise the 1815 settlement, revolutionaries wanted to redraw the map of Europe and abolish, if not execute, kings and emperors, so that revolutionary war, totalitarian democracy along the lines of 1793, was always

on the cards. When news came of the fall of Louis Philippe in France, Metternich told his special envoy in Milan, Count Ficquelmont: 'You know what I have always thought about the solidity of the throne of July; I am not surprised by his fall . . . Europe finds itself again in 1791 and 1792! Will there be no 1793?'[94]

History never repeats itself and in 1848 the French were wise enough not to export their revolution across their frontiers. Which is not to say that revolution did not break out there anyway. Metternich was forced to resign, but this time, without French aid, the revolutions were quickly defeated. In exile in London, Metternich told everybody that he had been right all along, he had made no mistakes. This book will show that for most of the time, from his own point of view, he was probably correct.

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