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New Views on Metternich

By Peter Viereck

I.

IN December 1950, at its annual meeting, the American Historical Association* entitled one of its major topics of discussion: "New Views on Metternich." Its choice of the word "new" certainly recalls, and possibly vindicates, a statement Metternich made well over a century ago: "In 100 years the historian will understand me better."¹

New views either on Metternich, or else on the entire Hapsburg empire, occur in such serious works of research, all published after World War II, as the following (to name just a few): Hannah Straus, *Attitude of the Congress of Vienna Toward Nationalism* (N. Y., 1949); Robert Kann, *The Multinational Empire* (N. Y., 1950); Walter Langsam, *Francis the Good* (N. Y., 1949); Jerome Blum, *Noble Landowners and Agriculture in Austria, 1815-1848* (Baltimore, 1948); Golo Mann, *Secretary of Europe* (New Haven, 1946); Arnold Whitridge, *Men in Crisis: The Revolutions of 1848* (N. Y., 1949); several monographs on Austria by R. John Rath in *Journal of Modern History* and *Journal of Central European Affairs*; Veit Valentin, *The German People* (N. Y., 1946).²

These writers no less than the present writer in his book *Conservatism Revisited* (N. Y., Scribner, 1949), remain definitely opposed to Metternich's repressive measures, so ably indicted in so many of the standard studies. "New Views" should not mean whitewashing but should mean: more criticism of the inherent contradictions of nationalism and of an abstract, too rapidly innovating liberalism; more respect for Metternich's civilized Europeanism, his Burkean conservatism, and his subtle psychological and social insights than is found in pre-1914 liberal histories like Charles Hazen's

* This paper was read and discussed on December 28, 1950 in Chicago at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association.

¹ *Lettres de Prince de Metternich à la Comtesse de Lieven, 1818-1819*, ed. Jean Hanoteau (Paris, 1909).

² Though strongly condemning Metternich's aristocratic social order as reactionary, Valentin points out his cosmopolitanism represents in some ways "the best inheritance from the Enlightenment." Best foreign-published post-war study, with new archives uncited by Srbik, is Corti's *Metternich und die Frauen* (Zurich, 1948).

Europe Since 1815, whose famous picture of a stage-villain Metternich typifies the Old View still standard in almost all books of wide circulation.

Nazi historians tended to oppose Metternich even more scathingly than any liberal. In this they followed that pro-Prussian, Metternich-loathing nationalist of the Bismarck era, Treitschke, who set the subsequent pattern of that "patriotic" historiography, against which Nietzsche warned in vain when he remarked — "*Deutschland, Deutschland über alles* — that is the end of German philosophy." One German nationalist called Metternich literally "the devil" for postponing the new folk-cult of the nation and for opposing his eighteenth century European rationalism to German romanticism. It might make an amusing research-chore to record how frequently the epithet "devil" or "Satan" is used against him in both the liberal and national Old Views. The fact that he was an ingratiating diplomat, a well-groomed, well-mannered Mephistopheles (Treitschke called him "the Adonis of the salons") made him seem all the more sinister.

Distrusted by honest liberals and by the new capitalist nationalists as well as by all revolutionary enthusiasts, Metternich was that un-enthusiastic, overcivilized product of cosmopolitanism sometimes known as "an aristocrat" (which means — and means more than — somebody who is at home in all capitals and in no suburbs). By unconsciously centering around this one vivid aspect, his few favorable historians during the nineteenth century (even assuming their freedom from cheap snobbism) misunderstood his lasting significance as much as did his many unfavorable historians. In other words, the favorable ones would praise and overpraise his finesse as a diplomat while minimizing as "outdated" his prophetically cogent *conservative* principles. A perfect example of this too favorable and not-favorable-enough one-sidedness is found in Albert Sorel's *Essais d'Histoire et de Critique* (Paris, 1883) :

"[Prince Metternich] deserved to govern Europe as long as Europe deserved to be governed by diplomacy. Without a peer in his age or in his style . . . Metternich remains by exterior grace, by the excellence of tone, the perfection of attitude, and the subtle knowledge of the proprieties an incomparable master."

A somewhat similar view is provided by Maurice Paléologue in *Romanticisme et Diplomatie* (Paris, 1924), who sees Metternich as purely a diplomat, but a diplomat of unequalled genius who "waged

the decisive struggle against Napoleon; through him Europe was able to topple the giant."

Peace-building diplomats often seem sinister to an outsider, if only because they meet in secret with foreigners and smile politely to enemies. His fellow diplomat Castlereagh (whom Metternich called "my alter ego" and of whom C. K. Webster has given us so impressive a New View) was usually linked with Metternich by contemporary liberals: they were said to be plotting diabolically together. An example is a now-forgotten book of sensational scandal-mongering, *Europäische Geheimnisse Eines Mediatisirten*, published uncensored in Hamburg, 1836 by an anonymous anti-clerical liberal and nationalist. The book blames Napoleon's "murder" on an exquisitely horrid plot of those three "conservative" fiends, Metternich, Castlereagh, and the Pope, the last allegedly "procuring poison" ("Borgia poison," of course!), which Metternich conveyed to Castlereagh, who conveyed it into poor Napoleon's diet on St. Helena.

The heady full flavor of the liberal Old View is found in two nineteenth-century poets. Shelley wrote of England's conservative internationalist:

"I met Murder on the way.
He had a mask like Castlereagh."

Browning had his "Italian in England" say:

"I would grasp Metternich until
I felt his red wet throat distil
In blood thro' these two hands."

Contrast this with the view of the able English political thinker, F. A. Voigt. Craving a Europe-minded rather than national-minded statesmanship and a more peace-building diplomacy, Voigt laments in *The New Leader*, October 7, 1950: "There is not one politician who has the stature of a European statesman — of a Metternich, a Castlereagh." One more brief example of the new view is Professor Crane Brinton's remark in the *New York Herald Tribune*, October 9, 1949: "The defense of Metternich has long been needed." Ignorance of the new Srbik documentation, agrees Mr. Brinton, has resulted in "the standard American textbook notion of Prince Metternich" as "the tyrant who tried to turn the clock back in 1814."

The objective cause for new views is new documents and new interpretations of old documents. Equally important is the subjective

cause: the psychological need of our post-war age for both conservatism and internationalism after being disillusioned with the four forces symbolizing everything Metternich opposed: (1) disillusionment with nationalism, after its militarist and racist culmination in criminal Hitlerism; (2) disillusionment with high hopes once aroused by Russia's communist revolution and class-war radicalism; (3) disillusionment — after world depressions, inflations, and middleclass decline — with the optimistic nineteenth century faith in capitalism and all its related bourgeois values; (4) disillusionment with a well-meaning but often enfeebling liberalism and relativism.

Metternich's most typical remark — "l'Europe a pris pour moi la valeur d'une patrie"³ — would have sounded strange in nationalistic 1914 or the Bismarckian 1870's. Today it suddenly sounds familiar, like a motto of the western union, the Atlantic pact, the council of Europe, the U.N. Its urgent relevance today underlines the need for new views on Metternich. His Congress of Vienna spirit of European oneness and his limitation of the mischievous fetish of national sovereignty are perhaps the only way for the West to unite to prevent Soviet aggression today.

Today's task is to undo the nationalism that triumphed after 1848 and to restore a supranationalism tough enough to halt Russia and outlaw war. But it must be a union based on freedom, not on ruling classes. The internationalism of the Metternich era was too often limited to one class, the landed aristocracy and kings. Hence, it deservedly fell, teaching us that internationalism today must be rooted in all classes rather than in a favored few.

That Metternich's internationalism lacked wider roots, is partly his own fault (this easy-going, pleasure-loving *grand seigneur* so often failed to practice his preaching). But even more it is the fault of the Emperor Francis of Austria. To a great extent, the "Francis system" or the "Police Chief Sedlnitzky system"⁴ would be the proper name for the repressive side of the "system" named after a man who ruled his emperor in foreign policy but unfortunately not

³ Metternich to Wellington, 1824. Heinrich Ritter von Srbik, *Metternich*, 2 vols. (Munich, 1925): I, 320. This paper throughout draws heavily on Srbik for his unexcelled information and documents but not necessarily for his interpretations and certainly not for his politics. Prof. R. John Rath, a leading American authority on Austria, calls Srbik "the most outstanding Austrian historian of the past generation" in *American Historical Review*, July 1950, p. 898.

⁴ Srbik, I, 492-6; II, 226-31; and *passim* on guilt and folly of Sedlnitzky's police system, for which Metternich was blamed.

in internal administration. Sedlnitzky's police spies and censors were responsible to the emperor. And Francis, whose joy was the daily perusal of intercepted private mail, approved them. Liberals blamed Metternich for not halting Sedlnitzky's police-snoopings — Metternich, who vainly ordered the police to stop opening the mail of his very closest collaborator, Gentz. Gentz finally had to resort to secret messengers for his correspondence with Metternich.⁵

What repression Metternich was indeed personally guilty of, involved the pinpricks of censorship rather than the ax of such modern Progress as executions, concentration camps, forced labor, racial discrimination (not even to mention genocide).

Our traditional view of Metternich as a narrow-minded arch-reactionary must be revised in the light of the documents, including the Austrian and Hapsburg archives available after World War I. These are used comprehensively for the first time in Srbik's sprawling and unassimilated biography: *Metternich* (Munich, 1925), two volumes totaling 1430 large annotated pages, a work of magnificent scholarly research which still requires later scholars to digest and rigorously re-interpret its riches. Srbik and most of his sources, old and new, have never been published in English;⁶ are not widely enough known to change most American views on Metternich. The unpublished archives of the Metternich family at Plass, partly quoted by Srbik, contain untapped information that ought to be published (Metternich's published memoirs were tendentiously edited with arbitrary omissions). The Plass archives may now be in Prague.

A fair assessment of all available Metternichiana cannot ignore his constant appeals to his emperor to grant a more enlightened constitution, which would, in Metternich's own words of 1832, reconcile the "opposition between the monarchist principles and the democratic." His suggestions for a freer constitution also wisely advocated letting non-German nationalities, like the Italians and Slavs, have greater self-rule, getting officials of their own nationality instead of Germans. All such demands for an enlightened evolutionary con-

⁵ Srbik, I, 492-4.

⁶ However, portions of this Srbik material were used in English for the following English and American biographies: Raoul Auernheimer, *Prince Metternich, Statesman and Lover* (New York, 1940); Algernon Cecil, *Metternich* (London, 1933); H. du Coudray, *Metternich* (New Haven, 1936); Arthur Herman, *Metternich* (New York, 1932); F. de Reichenberg, *Prince Metternich in Love and War* (London, 1938). Of these, only du Coudray offers new insights and then mainly on his personality and his diplomatic finesse rather than on the historical function of conservatism.

servatism, demands secret at the time, were vetoed by the reactionary Emperor Francis, in contrast with Metternich's credo that "stability is not immobility"⁷ and that such concessions would forestall revolution.

The crowning irony: after his return from exile, his own writings fell victim to censorship. He hoped to influence opinion by printing his earlier (1844) "Aphoristic Remarks" about reforming the Hungarian constitution, which he had restored and Francis Joseph abolished. But the Police Minister suppressed these aphorisms, with the new monarch's approval, as inflammatory. Cf. *Das Tagebuch des Polizeiministers Kempen von 1848 bis 1859*, not published till 1931.

No wonder Metternich had shifted most of his energies to foreign diplomacy, lamenting privately in 1820:

My life has fallen at a hateful time. I have come into the world either too early or too late. . . . Earlier, I should have enjoyed the time; later I should have helped to build it up again; today I have to give my life to prop up the moldering edifice.⁸

He vouchsafed the Russian diplomat Nesselrode this startling admission: "I am always considered the rock of order, the obstacle to revolution and warlike enterprise, but I confess to you my innermost and secret thought is that old Europe and its form of government are doomed."⁹ However, he saw nineteenth-century liberals as likewise doomed, for in his eyes their system was limited to the capitalist middleclass. In 1831, a generation before Marx's *Das Kapital*, Metternich wrote: "The first instrument in the hands of the middle class is the modern representative system."¹⁰ And he went on to predict correctly that the next French Revolution would not be middleclass, as in the revolution of 1830, but proletarian. He warned that the French capitalists would suffer in twenty years the same revolution they were inflicting on the aristocracy in 1830. In the Paris of 1848 this came true.

Whether then or today, an exclusively bourgeois liberalism is no

7 In his "secret memorandum" for Tsar Alexander of Dec. 1820, *Memoirs*, III, 470.

8 Letter from Vienna, Oct. 6, 1820. *Memoirs*, III, 394-5.

9 Frederich de Reichenberg, *Prince Metternich in Love and War* (London, 1938), p. 434.

10 To which he added: "this caricature of the English constitution because it has none of the fundamental conditions whereby it could attain to its model." Letter to Wrede, 1831, quoted in E. L. Woodward, *Three Studies in European Conservatism* (London, 1929); p. 53. For more on this subject, see Bibl, *Metternich in neuer Beleuchtung; sein geheimer Briefwechsel mit Wrede, 1831-4* (Vienna, 1928).

more permanent as a base for an international Europe than the Holy Alliance of kings. Socialism is the base to which Metternich's thoughts increasingly turned as his aristocratic system approached its fall. He did not mean the class-war socialism of Marx, even less the bloodthirsty "national socialism" of modern fascism. In a letter to the French Premier Guizot, the phrase Metternich coined for himself was "socialiste conservateur"¹¹—meaning a peaceful class-harmonizing conservative socialism within a paternalistic traditional framework. This was one year before both men were overthrown. Also in 1847 he vainly urged the archdukes to increase the constitutional rights of the provinces. He did manage, just before his fall, to win their acceptance of his ancient plan of convoking delegates from all the provincial estates to an embryonic parliament in Vienna. But, ironically, the revolution of 1848 cut this short, making him ever after the scapegoat for all sins of the ruling class.

Where most statesmen saw only the political problems of nationalism and liberalism, he concluded: what really counts is the "social problem"¹² In 1849, while the victorious middle class was overthrowing kings, he added: "I shall die . . . not as a politician but as a socialist."¹³ Are these sentiments, contradicting his more frequent reactionary theory and practice, sincere or an epigram-loving pose? In any case they are psychologically fascinating, making it necessary to revise the Old View of Metternich "the narrow bigot." They lived on triumphantly in England in his friend and disciple, the young Disraeli, who called him his "inspiration" and named his Party "Conservative" at Metternich's suggestion.¹⁴ Echoing the latter's "socialiste conservateur," Disraeli meant by his "Tory socialism" an alliance of workers and aristocrats, against the capitalist laissez-faire Liberal Party, within the traditional framework of throne and altar, finally achieving the great social reforms of the 1870's.

In our time when the word "professor" is often an epithet meaning either absent-minded or subversive, it is interesting to note Disraeli's post-mortem characterization of Metternich in 1864: "The only

¹¹ Letter from Vienna, June 15, 1847. *Memoirs*, VII, 402.

¹² Srbik, II, 298.

¹³ Bibl, *Metternich*, 380.

¹⁴ For these and other Metternich influences on Disraeli, see Moneyppenny and Buckle, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli* (new and rev. ed., New York, 1929); I, 997-1003, 1007, 1010. On Oct. 12, 1848 Disraeli wrote his exiled Austrian preceptor: "You are the only philosophical statesman I ever encountered. . . . I catch wisdom from your lips and inspiration from your example."

practical statesman who can generalize like a philosopher. . . . Had he not been a Prince and Prime Minister, he would have been a great *Professor*.”¹⁵

II.

“What will our friend Metternich say of this great triumph?” asked Nesselrode, the Russian foreign minister, in 1827. He was commenting on the victory of Navarino Bay, where the Turks were defeated by a treacherous surprise attack; and he answered his own question as follows: “He will repeat his old, tiresome principles; he will talk of right; — *vive la force!* It is might which rules the world nowadays, and I am very glad to find that I and my comrades can leave the regulating of affairs to the admirals. These are men to cut the matter short! Never has there been glory comparable to this moment!”

For one who sees Hitlerism and Stalinism as the logical outgrowth of such *Realpolitik*, Metternich reaches his greatest stature in his calm comment on Nesselrode’s gloating: “This,” said Metternich, “is how Carnot and Danton, and afterwards their imitators [read: Hitler and Stalin], thought and spoke. They were signally overthrown, however, by the same old and tiresome principles.”¹⁶

These two conflicting quotations sum up the issue between the “old principles” of peace-loving internationalism and the “*vive la force!*” of nationalistic *Realpolitik*.

“Not by speeches and majority votes are the great questions of the day decided . . . but by blood and iron”:— this overquoted phrase of Bismarck’s reflects a political universe incompatible with that reflected by Metternich’s remark at the Congress of Laibach: “Is there anything in the world today which can take the place of ink, pens, a conference table with its green cover, and a few greater or smaller bunglers?”¹⁷ Metternich’s aristocratic system depended on diplomacy. Democratic liberalism depended on what Bismarck dismissed as “majority votes.” Both systems preferred “speeches” to “blood,” “conference tables” to “iron.” Both sought to internationalize Europe. Both failed because of the civil war between them. The men of words of 1848, both the democrats and the aristocratic diplomats,

¹⁵ Letter to Lord Stanhope, Feb. 12, 1864. Money Penny and Buckle, I, 1010. Italics mine.

¹⁶ *Memoirs*, IV, 432.

¹⁷ *Memoirs*, III, 480-1.

were replaced by the men of action of 1870, whose "vive la force!" has Balkanized Europe's common international heritage into chaos.

The battle between right and right, as Lord Acton said, is more tragic than the battle between right and wrong. Both Metternich and the liberals of 1848 were right or at least shared the truth between them, for both sought a peaceful, ethical, cosmopolitan Europe. They should have joined their aristocratic and democratic half-truths against the whole-lies of their real enemies: the self-styled "realists" of *Realpolitik*, the racists, the militarists, the war-planning irredentists. Because the conservatives and liberals never joined their halves, these nationalist forebears of fascism could triumph, just as a similar disunity between left and right invites communism and fascism in Europe today.

Ever after the French Revolution of 1789, and again after 1815, middle class internationalism and aristocratic internationalism spent their energies in successfully undermining each other's claims on Europe's loyalty. Wounding each other fatally in 1848, they created a vacuum of loyalty, which nationalism filled by 1870. Nationalism, scourge of modern times and a leading cause of two world wars, was not so inevitable as commonly believed. It was merely the "lucky third" when the two rival internationalisms killed each other.

Many liberals combined internationalism with a liberal idealistic version of nationalism, such as Herder and Mazzini preached. The hope that nationalism would turn out to be liberalism is the optimistic Wilsonian error that destroyed liberalism and democracy in most of Europe. The decision of liberals to ally with nationalists is perhaps the most fatal mistake of the whole nineteenth century. In a Europe of overlapping nationalities, a Europe of endless Alsace-Lorraines, Schleswig-Holsteins, Sudetenlands, Polish Corridors, Transylvanias, Macedonias, and Triestes—in such a jigsaw-puzzle Europe, nationalism could in no case have asserted its claims except by unliberal blood-and-iron methods. Right from the start, this contradiction inherently doomed liberal hopes for a peaceful nationalism, even if it had never been provoked into still greater violence by the too rigid opposition of Metternich.

Protest must be registered against the habit of calling every anti-Metternichian a "liberal." Sometimes his opponents were genuine liberals or democrats, who may properly stir our sympathy. But in many important instances his so-called liberal opponents were not only

nationalists but militarists, racists, anti-semites, or proto-fascists, like the Slav-hating, war-glorifying Jordan, a leading "1848 liberal," whose oratory influenced the Frankfurt assembly to put nationalism before liberalism in the dispute with Polish liberals over Posen.¹⁸ It is noteworthy that, when forced to choose between liberalism and nationalism, most liberals chose the latter and ended up by supporting Bismarck's aggressions through the "National Liberal Party"—not to mention intolerant nationalists and anti-semites like Father Jahn and Richard Wagner,¹⁹ both often called "liberals" because anti-Metternichian. The poet Heine knew better, saying in 1832: "Although I am a Radical in England and a Carbonarist in Italy, I am no Demagogue in Germany for the entirely accidental reason that, with the triumph of the latter, several thousand Jewish heads, and precisely the best ones, would fall."²⁰

And did fall; which is why the cosmopolitan, racially unprejudiced Metternich was fighting not only the genuine liberals we sympathize with but also the racist and war-loving ancestors of nazism. In these so-called "liberal" German rebels against Metternich, Heine foresaw in 1834: "demonic energies, that brutal German joy in battle, the insane Berserker rage, Thor leaping to life with his giant hammer."²¹ The Dachau death-camps proved Heine right and justified the prophetic warnings of the internationalist Metternich against the reign of terror to which fanatic nationalism would inevitably lead. "I have a feeling of tenderness," wrote Heine, "for Metternich."²²

Two points should be made about the so-called "liberal opposition" to Metternich in Germany: (1) basically, as shown in its later support of Bismarck, this opposition was far more often nationalist than liberal, often an intolerant nationalism eager to break

18 For the texts of Jordan's popular speeches sacrificing liberalism to nationalism, with a curiously proto-Nazi sense of German racial mission against "inferior" Slavs, etc., see "Stenographische Berichte über die Verhandlungen der deutschen konstituierenden Nationalversammlung, durch die Redaktionskommission und in deren Auftrag von Professor Franz Wigard," 9 vols. (Frankfurt a.M., published by Johann David Sauerländer, 1848-49); I, 328, 426; II, 1143, 1146, 1150; VI, 4574, 4575; etc.

19 For Wagner's supposed liberalism and actual proto-nazism and for its direct influence on Hitler, cf. the two Wagner chapters in Peter Viereck, *Metapolitics; From the Romantics to Hitler* (New York, Knopf, 1941).

20 Martin Greenberg, "Heinrich Heine: Flight and Return," *Commentary Magazine* (New York, 1949), p. 229, col. 2.

21 Heinrich Heine, *Works*, tr. by C. G. Leland, V, 207-8.

22 Heinrich Heine, *Werke*, ed. by O. Watzel (Leipzig, Insel-Verlag), IV, 479.

the long peace of the Concert of Europe; (2) insofar as his opponents were indeed genuine, tolerant liberals in our western sense, they often tended to be abstract doctrinaires. Metternich tried to be what he called "*tout à terre, tout historique*." In contrast, they tried to transplant into Germany (or Italy) institutions that, suitable for England because they were originally evolved there, had no historic roots in central Europe. Metternich called parliamentary England the world's "freest country." But against transplanting these free institutions overnight into southern or central Europe, he quoted the familiar arguments of Burke about the need for orderly organic development. Whether true or false, these traditionalist-conservative arguments deserve at least to be pondered seriously by a generation that witnessed the tragic failure of liberal hopes in the Russian Revolution.

III.

The author would like to suggest the following tentative hypothesis towards shaping a unifying New View of Metternich. Since inner contradictions ruled out the chance for a truly liberal nationalism in the long run, perhaps the only two real alternatives were: (1) Metternich, with or without the reforms he advocated to his emperor, and (2) the aggressive German nationalism that threatened all Europe. Probably no free democratic alternative to both of these was possible in Germany during 1815-1848. If there were, the present writer would "prefer" it to the Metternich system. The repressive aspect of the latter's system can be defended negatively as the lesser evil of the two alternatives in this hypothesis. But on questions of personal freedom, it can never be defended as a positive good (except by reactionaries not seriously concerned with freedom in the first place).

The two real alternatives may be further characterized and elaborated. There was Metternich's internationalist Hapsburg monarchy, admittedly old-fashioned, slow-moving, illiberal, with censorship and with stupid, stubborn, authoritarian officials. Yet it prevented suicidal national and economic wars among the Danube people. It had through the centuries kept them within the fold of Western civilization as opposed to Turkish, Mongol, or tsarist rule. It acted as an irreplaceable *buffer* of peace protecting central Europe from the grinding millstones of Pan-German expansion from the west and Pan-Slav expansion from the east. One could call this monarchy

a benevolent despotism "tempered" not "by assassination" but by gentlemanly inefficiency. Then there was the intolerant German nationalism of Jahn, Arndt, Jordan, Richard Wagner. This in turn would (and did) have two results: (a) as Heine rightly foresaw, a militarist nationalist dictatorship far harder on civil liberties than Metternich's authoritarian, but not totalitarian, Carlsbad Decrees; (b) war and disunity for all Europe instead of the Congress of Vienna internationalism and peace.

How revolutionary, how dangerous really was this nationalism at the time of the Carlsbad Decrees in 1819? According to the liberal Old View, there was no danger of rebellion, no real conspiracy at all, only a "witch hunt" invented by the Machiavellian Austrian diplomat, with the Kotzebue assassination being an unrepresentative accident, misused by Metternich as a pretext for persecuting liberty. Yet the late Veit Valentin, author of the standard history on 1848 and certainly an opponent of Metternich, conceded in his later book, *The German People*, that there were several real conspiracies for violent revolt as well as the preaching of political murder to university students by the Jena "unconditional" faction, to which Kotzebue's assassin Sand belonged. Significantly this murderer was openly hailed all over Germany as a national hero by fanatics, some of whom dipped their daggers in his sacred blood. "This group" (says Valentin of Follen's "unconditionals") "wanted to wage political war by means of terrorism—by revolt, murder, and every kind of violence against the established authorities. Though only a small minority, it was very active. Sand's deed was the *result of a conspiracy*. Other conspiracies and an attempted assassination followed."²³

Although such rebels did try to wage political revolt against the authorities by murder and violence, Metternich's Carlsbad Decrees did not reply by murder and violence; nor did they reply by executions and mass-arrests without trial, in the fashion of today's "police state." Instead these Decrees relied mainly on censorship and on relatively mild surveillance of such dangerous inciters of a German-racist war of conquest as Jahn and his "gymnast" camouflage.

Without justifying the unjustifiable Carlsbad Decrees, one should be ever aware that these measures of Metternich were milksop compared with the racist, anti-semitic, war-plotting dictatorship favored

²³ Pp. 375-6 on the 1819 crisis. Italics mine.

by such influential anti-Metternichian agitators as Jahn.²⁴ Metternich said his aim in these repressions was to save Germany from "the dictatorship of such men as Jahn and Arndt."²⁵ Unfortunately Metternich after 1819 went beyond his restraint of this fierce German nationalism. He inexcusably censored academic freedom. Even so, this inquiry accused only 107 rebels in eight years in all Germany.

Since both nationalists and liberals were almost entirely middle class, the broad masses of central Europe were not involved in this struggle with Metternich or his Emperor. The masses craved, after the wars ended in 1815, the European peace he provided. Metternich's objection to capitalist dictatorship over the masses by middle class nationalists and liberals was not just an insincere slogan. His letters to his confidants, Hübner, Rechberg, and Prokesch-Osten,²⁶ imply Metternich really took his ideas of conservative socialism seriously. (Cf. also the letters between him and Wrede, edited by Bibl in 1928 from newly-found archives.) An example of such conservative socialism in action is the Hapsburg relief program in Northern Italy. On such an issue, the Emperor Francis and his minister agreed. In contrast with the middle class liberal credo of laissez-faire, this Hapsburg program established humane public works and social aid, resembling surprisingly — according to R. John Rath — the American New Deal. The following is from Professor Rath's monograph "The Hapsburgs and the Great Depression in Lombardy-Venetia, 1814-1818," *Journal of Modern History*, September, 1941:

By 1817, it was estimated that the funds which the Austrian government had given for its public works program in Italy had enriched the poorer classes by Fr. 5,000,000. The Austrian policy of taking care of the destitute masses in the Italian provinces by giving food and money

24 Cf. the Jahn chapter in Peter Viereck, *Metapolitics: From the Romantics to Hitler* (New York, Knopf, 1941) for documentation on Jahn's proto-nazism, based on citations from primary sources not used in English before. A book-length study of Jahn in English is overdue in view of his extraordinary influence in changing German nationalism from liberal to totalitarian. Mention may be made here of the article by Hans Kohn, "Father Jahn's Nationalism," *REVIEW OF POLITICS* (October, 1949), XI, 419-432.

25 Paul Wentzke, *Geschichte der deutschen Burschenschaft* (Heidelberg, 1919), pp. 118 ff., 131, 167-8, 181-3, 299-301. Heinrich von Treitschke, *History of Germany*, 6 vols. (New York, 1915-19), II, 432.

26 The foremost authority in America on these three Austrians of the Metternich school is Prof. Friedrich Engel-Janosi of the Catholic University in Washington, D. C. Supplementing Srbik's Metternich biography are Engel-Janosi's valuable biographies of these three men. Only two are available in American libraries (at Harvard, etc.): *Graf Rechberg* (Munich and Berlin, 1927); *Der Freiherr von Hübner* (Innsbruck, 1933).

to those incapable of employment and providing a public works program for others, is in its general outlines surprisingly similar to the public works and emergency relief programs initiated in our own country by the Roosevelt administration. . . . The actions of Francis I, meager as they were in comparison with the billion-dollar spending of our own times, did actually save many persons from intense suffering. . . . The financial condition of the Austrian government was so precarious that actual bankruptcy was feared. In spite of numerous difficulties, however, the Hapsburg monarch did earnestly endeavor to improve the lot of his Italian subjects, the hapless victims of a great depression. . . .

Be it added, in this connection, that Italy's overpublicized liberal "revolutions" of the 1820s and 1830 (really unrepresentative comic-opera putsches) were mainly limited to a small middle class (and army officer) minority, not representing the Italian masses, who prospered more under Hapsburg rule in Northern Italy than under most of their various Italian princelings.

Or to shift the scene north and east: when the Polish liberals and nationalists of Galicia's nobility revolted against the Hapsburgs in 1846, the mass of Ruthenian peasants spontaneously rose up against this liberal-nationalist revolt and crushed it on behalf of the Hapsburg monarchy. (Of course, the Galician situation was complicated by national rivalries reinforcing class rivalries, enabling the monarchy to divide and conquer.) According to Robert Kann (*The Multinational Empire*, I, 226-227), ". . . the Austrian provincial governor [of Galicia], Count Francis Stadion (1806-49) . . . in the immediate pre-March era had submitted, with the backing of Metternich, a program of economic, cultural, and administrative reforms, culminating in the administrative partition of Galicia into Polish (western) and Ruthenian (eastern) parts. . . . The latter, though agreed to in principle by the Emperor Ferdinand, Metternich, and Kolowrat, never went legally beyond the paper stage. [The Revolution of 1848 intervened.] Nevertheless, the *practice* of the imperial provincial administration showed an increased understanding of the needs of the Ruthenian peasants."

IV.

The difference between an evolutionary, Burkean conservative like Metternich and a static, revolution-breeding reactionary like the Emperor Francis is brought out by Metternich's letter of Nov. 3, 1817, to his monarch. The letter very politely suggests the reforms needed

to safeguard an order of moderate conservatism in Italy and to prevent the provocation of anti-Hapsburg revolutions. Metternich's letter of 1817 tells Francis that North Italian "discontent" is caused by "the tedious progress of business, the design attributed to your Majesty of wishing to give an entirely German character to the Italian provinces, the composition of the courts, where the Italians daily see with sorrow German magistrates appointed to offices."

Next the letter lists Metternich's suggested remedies, showing his awareness of the new force of middle class capitalism ("progress of business") as well as of democratic liberalism ("a constitution") and nationality ("conciliate the national spirit"):

I think it my duty to repeat again, with the greatest respect, how important it would be, from a political point of view, to remove as soon as possible these defects and shortcomings in the most interesting part of the monarchy, to quicken and advance the progress of business, to conciliate the national spirit and self-love of the nation by giving to these provinces a form of constitution, which might prove to the Italians that we have no desire to deal with them as with the German provinces of the monarchy, or, so to speak, to weld them with these provinces; that we should there appoint, especially in the magisterial offices, able natives of the country.²⁷

Apart from such Italian reforms, Metternich in 1817 also urged freer institutions for the rest of the empire, with an embryonic parliament which, once started, would inevitably have assumed an ever greater governing power. Possibly central Europe might even have followed England's evolutionary road of 1832 towards a freer society instead of the revolutionary road of 1848 and 1918. His plans (to summarize from two different memoranda of 1817) included "a deliberative body of notables," partly elected by provincial diets and partly appointed, to represent the country in "scrutiny of the budget and every law." Far-sighted, in view of the Slav and Italian revolts that were to wreck the monarchy, is his plan of separate constitutions and separate chancellors for the chief national minorities, protecting them from the oppression of Germanization.²⁸

How did the emperor react to all these reforms, on which his minister recommended action "as soon as possible"? A whole decade later, after an almost fatal illness, Francis said to Metternich in

²⁷ *Memoirs*, III, 102-7. Srbik I, 476 ff.

²⁸ *Memoirs*, III, 74-87. Le comte de Hübner (A. J. Hübner), *Une année de ma vie (1848-1849)*, Paris, 1891; pp. 15-18. Srbik, I, 462-5.

1827: "Do you know what tormented me most when I expected to die? It was the thought of having left lingering on my table your report of 1817. But now, without losing a day more, I shall lay hold of the Council of State with it." After almost eight years more, at the end of 1834, Francis — whose motto for solving problems was "let's sleep on it"—promised Metternich, "Before the end of the year, this question [of the 1817 report] will be solved." . . . Francis died two months later.²⁹

Even earlier than 1817, there had been Metternich's demand of 1809 for modernizing Austria and his unheeded reform-plans of 1811.³⁰ Just before his fall he was at last winning acceptance from the archdukes for his ancient plan of convoking delegates from all the provincial estates to a representative body in Vienna. Hence, his initial self-confidence when the revolution of 1848 began: he wrongly assumed that his plan, which for the rebels was "too little and too late," would make revolution unnecessary.³¹

Too late! But did the victorious revolutionists offer any more feasible reform-program than that of the man they overthrew? Not if we accept at least some of the lessons he deduced from the French Revolution, in which he witnessed the results of giving the people, rapidly instead of gradually, a sovereignty for which they were not yet trained. He felt that the liberals who wanted this, and not he,

29 *Memoirs*, III, 74-87, 102-7. Hübner, 15-17. Srbik, I, 456-465.

30 Srbik, I, 456-60 discusses Metternich's enlightened but frustrated reform-plans of 1811. For further background on relations with anti-reform emperor, cf. I, 435-65.

31 Srbik, II, 245-86. Du Coudray, *Metternich*, p. 357, summarizes in the following brief paragraph the Srbik material on Metternich's efforts to the very last minute to forestall the revolution of 1848 by reforms from above and by summoning a central Austrian assembly:

"Metternich at last succeeded in forcing his views on the council. An imperial letter, which announced to the Estates of Lower Austria the summoning of delegates from all the provincial diets of the Empire, was drafted and dispatched to the president of the Landhaus, Montecuccoli. The point is of great importance, for it helps explain Metternich's serenity. He counted on this decree, extorted at the eleventh hour from the reluctant archdukes, to avert a catastrophe the next morning when the delegates met. For thanks to it their demands for reform had been forestalled; they could talk in peace. He thought he had safeguarded the monarchy."

However, Montecuccoli—historians offer various explanations for his conduct—never made use of this important document! On March 13, Metternich resigned, overthrown not by any widespread mass revolution but (according to Srbik) by the palace intrigue of Kolowrat, Archduke John, Archduke Francis Charles and his ambitious wife Sophia. They hoped to further their several private interests by sacrificing Metternich as scapegoat to the revolution. Meanwhile the Police Chief Sedlnitzky, so zealous against imaginary revolutionary plots, did little to safeguard Metternich when at last a real one occurred but stood by in mysterious negligence.

were freedom's enemies. In this he was partly — though only partly — correct, as shown by the miserable end of all the liberal revolutions of 1848. Almost every nation participating in '48, found itself more despotically governed afterwards than before. The Hungarians lost the constitution that Metternich had earlier restored to them; the French got the dictatorship of Napoleon III; the Prussians got their Iron Chancellor; and the Germans got Prussia . . .

Psychologically the present beginning of a more favorable view of Metternich is part of an atmosphere where conservatism in general is becoming more useful, more needed, less harmful and stultifying than it often was in the past. In Europe's Victorian era, civilization was stuffy and stodgy: conservatism at its worst. At that time it was healthful — in fact, indispensable — to stir up placid reality and to poke pompous old civilization in the ribs. But today, in the era of terror and total war and atom bombs, today the real Old Fogey is the doctrinaire radical modernist: the dully "daring" bohemian rebel against conservatism. In this chaotic age, when there are few artistic or political traditions left to overthrow, culture is less threatened by conservative conventionality than by the rheumatic jitter-bugging of our aging *enfants terribles*. Today the whole world is *terrible*. This means that conservatism and traditionalism, besides giving us some assured values to cling to in the tempest, give a truer and more independent criticism of the age than the maintenance of that fashionable radicalism which merely adds to the tempestuous, *terrible* reality already existing.

While almost all American texts go too far in their anti-Metternich direction, it would be dangerous to have the pendulum swing too far in his favor. An example of the latter was the post-Srbik biography of Metternich by Algernon Cecil, who even tried to justify the stifling and stupid book-censorship of the Carlsbad Decrees (by means of an unintentional, amusing, and frequently found mistranslation.)³² This kind of extremist "new view" on Metternich, this kind of jus-

³² Cecil, *Metternich*, pp. 173-4: ". . . The Ministers of the German States assembled at Carlsbad . . . were agreed that the censorship should extend to pamphlets and books of less than twenty pages in length. . . . Offensive to minds accustomed to reach political conclusions on the strength of paragraphs and headlines, the notion that revolutionary changes cannot wisely be entertained without at least some twenty-pages worth of study will scarcely provoke industrious intellects. . . ."

Here the "boner" is that the German printers' expression "zwanzig Druckbogen" in 1819 meant not "twenty pages" but "320 pages," 16 pages being then calculated as one "Druckbogen." This *gaffe* recurs even in very scholarly books.

tification of thought control, is dangerous because today academic freedom may be in danger again from censorship. Today our necessary opposition to communism may drive us into the mistake of unnecessary repressions.

Metternich's greatest mistake, transforming him from an enlightened, peace-making, Burkean conservative into a harmful reactionary, was getting into a panic over the Red Menace of his day: the French Revolution. This proves his relevance, even that of his mistakes, to our own day. For we must never let panic over the Russian Revolution lead to the suppression not merely of our treasonable communist fifth-column but also of non-treasonable independent thinkers with refreshingly unorthodox ideas. Therefore, let us end with a little known and perhaps surprising statement by Metternich about thought control (recorded by Baron Hübner shortly *prior* to Metternich's fall, so that it is not merely wise-after-the-event.) It is a statement Metternich himself should have heeded in 1819 and is just possibly a warning for us of 1951:

[The Emperor Francis] followed my advice in everything on foreign policy. He did not do so in internal affairs. . . . Attributing a perhaps exaggerated importance to the secret societies . . . he thought he found the remedy against the evil in a minute surveillance of the would-be intellectual classes exercised by the police, who thereby became one of the chief instruments of his government; . . . in short, in a moral closing of the frontiers. . . . The result was a dull irritation against the government among the educated classes. I told that to the emperor; but on that point he was unshakable. All I could do to lessen the grievous results, I did. . . . If in 1817, even as late as 1826, the emperor had adopted my ideas on the reorganization of the diets, we would be perhaps in a position to face the tempest. Today it is too late. . . . It is useless to close the gates against ideas; they overleap them. . . .³³

33 Hübner, pp. 15-21 (March 1, 1948) and *passim*.

